

པཌ་མེ

Pema

Chinese: Banma Xian

班玛县



roll/neg: 48:0a

subject: wide angle view of town and environs

location: Pema Dzong པདྨ་རྫོང་།, Golog མགོ་ལོག་། Tibetan Autonomous

Prefecture, Tsongöñ མཚོ་སྒྲོལ་

[Ch: Banma Xian 班玛县, Guoluo 果洛TAP, Qinghai Province]

approx. date: winter 1995/1996

comment: Pema, literally 'lotus', apparently named for the Buddhist tantric master, Guru Padmasambhava, is a geographic flower in Golog's generally harsh environment. Several hundred meters lower than most of the prefecture, the area is of stunning beauty. Despite its remoteness, 760km from Xining, it attracts Chinese settlement. County population is about 20,000, with 8.5% claimed to be Chinese. A site visit left the impression that percentage probably understates the true number.
(View from the east.)

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e. **Pema Dzong [Ch: Banma Xian]**

i. **Brief description and impressions**

Although part of Golog, Pema Dzong བཤམ་མིན་ (Ch. Banma Xian 班玛县) is a distinct variant of the harsher,

higher landscape and even the wildness of the Golog nomads. Filling a relatively small area - 7,150 square kilometers - in the southernmost portion of Golog TAP, Pema's position on the upper reaches of the Dadu River, the principal watershed of northeastern Kham, suggests a geographical and cultural link with the Kham region. Historically Pema does have affiliations with Kham, since Tibetans moved into the Pema districts from Kham soon after the Tibetan conquest of the Kham region in the early Tibetan Empire period¹. In later periods Pema also owed much to lamas from Kham on whose efforts the expansion of religious activity from the 16th Century onwards was based.

Pema nevertheless regards itself as a Golog place, cradle of the Golog clans who all claim roots in the area². Geographically it does form a transition from the elevated snowy plateaux of the rest of Golog to a more temperate zone of dense forests and even agricultural land. Travelling to Pema along the highway from Darlag 170 kilometers to the northwest, the route gradually drops down from broad high rolling plateaux to a landscape of grazing valleys and river-gorges reminiscent of Kham, but where the pastoralists are still clearly Amdowa. Once across the Darlag-Pema county boundary, however, a proliferation of extraordinary Buddhist sites reveals the enigmatic distinctiveness of Pema's religious life. For 60 kilometers on the approach to Pema along the valley of a Dadu tributary, groups of chöten and small gönpas dot the landscape, unlike sites seen in any other Tibetan areas except Dzamthang which adjoins Pema to the south. "Pema", literally meaning "lotus" in Tibetan, apparently takes its name from the Buddhist master Guru Padmasambhava, or Guru Rinpoche, a particularly revered figure among the Nyingmapa and Jonangpa who dominate Pema's religious life. The beauty of this mysterious area, closed to outsiders by the Chinese, is striking.

¹ *Anduo zangzu shiliue (Brief History of the Tibetans of Amdo)*, p. 17

² *Guoluo zangzu shehui (Tibetan Society in Golog)*, p. 42

Reaching the county town, called Sailaitang 赛来塘 under the Chinese administration, one is immediately struck by the dramatic difference between it and anything else seen in Golog. At an elevation of around 3,700 meters, the town is much lower and warmer than any other Golog county towns, allowing for some cultivation in the river valley [see photo 48:19a, p. 2347]. The town has been laid out on the typical T-plan, but trees have been planted along its streets, its red-roofed compounds lie in neat quarters and a scattering of outlying locations on the west side of the river, and a quiet, almost tranquil atmosphere pervades it [see photo 48:0a, p. 2326]. Compared to the rough and ready towns of upper Golog, Pema feels like a holiday resort. Chinese immigrants have found it the most appealing destination in Golog. Its mild climate and agricultural capacity offset its remoteness from Qinghai Province's capital, Xining, 760 kilometers away.

But Chinese from Sichuan, rather than Qinghai, have found their way to Pema. Although the Chinese have split Tibetan areas from each other by imposing different Chinese administrative divisions over them, Pema is accessible by several secondary routes from Sichuan Province, from the regions of Ngawa and Serthar to which it was always linked by trade routes in historical times. While journeys to Pema via these roads are still arduous and distant from the Chinese heartland, Sichuan people are famously willing to seek economic opportunities, and in any case are driven by dire population pressure at home to do so. Pema thus has a higher contingent of Chinese settlers than any of the high-elevation Golog towns, running the shops and manning the work units which make up most of the town. Tibetans, and some Hui, contribute to the town population too, but the immediate town is being transformed into a Chinese enclave, despite the dynamic Tibetan cultural activity outside it.

Pema is still a predominantly nomad pastoral county, with few natural resources to exploit except for its forest areas in the south. But its temperate and attractive environment make it vulnerable to Chinese immigration. In a county of fewer than 20,000 Tibetans adjacent to Sichuan Province, Chinese immigration does not have to be a tide to overwhelm the Tibetan majority. Buddhist activity here is unusually strong and vibrant, but it needs to be underpinned by real autonomy if Pema is to preserve its Tibetan identity.

ii. **Historical background**

Originally a domain of the Qiang, Tanguts and Tuyuhun, Pema and the whole Golog region was incorporated into the Tibetan Empire in the early 7th Century. Since then Pema has developed into a dynamically Tibetan

enclave, characterized by the fierce independence of its Golog clans and the vitality of Nyingma and Jonang Buddhist activity there. Threatened by the colonial ambitions of the Ma clan in the first half of the 20th Century, Pema has been taken over by the Chinese in the second half. Armed resistance, crushed in 1958, has been succeeded by a determined struggle to preserve Tibetan culture and religion.

iii. **Current demography**

By official count, Pema had 18,872 residents in 1990³. Tibetans were reported as numbering 17,017⁴ (90.5%) and Chinese 1,521⁵ (8.5%). By the end of 1994 population was recorded as essentially unchanged at 19,100⁶, an increase of 1.7% over a four year period. The annual rate of population growth would have been about 0.4%, a level so low as to strain credibility in the face of mild Chinese immigration and a Tibetan population which has not given up childbearing. A small number of Hui and other ethnic minorities are also officially counted among the population⁷. Additional demographic details relevant to Pema can be found in Tables 12 and 23 [see pp. 175 and 1599] and Charts 52 and 52a [see pp. 2212 and 2213].

On-site observation strongly suggests Chinese numbers in Pema have been under-reported. As a town with one of the mildest climates in Amdo, agricultural capacity and road links into Sichuan Province, Chinese immigration to Pema has been markedly higher than in any other Golog town except the prefectural capital Machen. The commercial sector resembles counterparts in the more sinicized Tibetan-area towns rather than the rough frontier marts of Golog. New economic immigrants, security forces and older Chinese transferees from the early occupation era would certainly total more than official figures. Additional Chinese immigrants will be attracted to this pleasant town as the volume of commerce increases and transport links are inevitably improved. As in other Golog towns, it will not take more than a few thousand incoming Chinese to seriously erode the current

³ *Chinese Population Statistics Yearbook 1990*

⁴ *Social and Economic Statistical Yearbook of Qinghai 1992*

⁵ *Tabulation on China's Nationality: 1990 Census Data*

⁶ *Statistical Yearbook of Sichuan 1995*

⁷ *Tabulation on China's Nationality: 1990 Census Data*

majority Tibetans enjoy in the county. Tibetan natural population increase, even without the imposition of birth control policies, can never match the potential volume of Chinese immigration.

iv. **Administrative and control apparatus**

Pema's Government and Party apparatus occupies an integrated compound along the main long street of the town, the central administration block newly built in blended Sino-Tibetan decorative mode housing County Government, Communist Party, NPC and CPPCC offices. Ordinary barrack-style residential accommodation left over from an earlier era houses the government unit employees. A grand neo-imperial gate fronts the compound, flanked by twin slogans exhorting "develop Pema's economy" and "strengthen nationalities' unity", the second result presumably dependent on the first directive. Within the compound a new Government Hostel, whose Chinese name, Lianhua Binguan 莲花宾馆 echoes the town's Tibetan name "lotus", has been built to accommodate visiting cadres.

The county tax and finance offices have separate compounds on the northern approach to the town, like the Government-Party complex consisting of newer though modest administration blocks and rows of residential barracks for employees. Within the town center, the Agricultural and Construction Banks provide infrastructural support for expected economic development, a process obviously underway in the county town. The most modernized official unit premises in town belongs to the County Construction Engineering Company along the road edging the river, where a three-story office block has recently been built, announced by an ostentatious gate [see photo 48:9a, p. 2343].

Control units presently occupy original socialist compounds located at scattered locations through the town. On the opposite side of the street from the Government-Party complex, the County PSB, Court, Procuratorate and PSB Detention Center all form an interconnected enclave of identical barracks in the midst of which stands the jail [see photo 48:9a, p. 2343]. This facility, constructed along similar lines to other detention centers in Golog with turreted guard towers and a high walk-around wall nevertheless lacks the extreme grimness of those built in the harsher climatic regions. In its immediate environs, families go about their daily lives and primary school children pass right under its outer guard tower on their way to school. But gun ports in the towers still face

outwards as well as inwards, allowing defense against any direction of attack. The Chinese colonial control posts knew they had to be prepared for opposition from the populace at large as well as those incarcerated.

The County PAP and a PAP Squadron are stationed on a corner block further towards the north end of town, quite a small compound for a town of this size. Nothing distinguishes their spartan quarters from others seen in every county town in Tibetan areas. The PAP also maintain a Hostel adjacent to the bus station along the road leading to the lumber works and abattoir. Security personnel are conspicuous and vigilant on the streets of the town, a tightly-closed place. Pema's outstanding scenic beauty and cultural endowments make its restricted status particularly puzzling. Transportation deficiencies seem the only valid reason for its continued closure.

v. **Economy**

Per capita rural net income in Golog TAP was 750 yuan in 1992⁸, although the prefecture's 1994 GDP per capita was 2,426 yuan⁹, a significant difference in a region where most of the county-level GDP derives from pastoral production. Income of the mixed agricultural-herding population segment in Pema is likely to be even lower, as farmers consistently earn less than pastoralists. No county-level statistics for Golog TAP could be obtained for the report. It is China's practise not to include the value of extracted natural resources as a component of county or prefectural production. China considers itself, on the authority of its current Constitution¹⁰, to be the owner of natural resources, including within nationality autonomous areas. Facilities set up to process extracted minerals or manufacture products from them are often operated by the province, thus removing statistical evidence of their productivity from county and prefectural-level economic reports.

Most Tibetans in Pema rely on pastoralism for their livelihood, although some agriculture has also been practised in the region, usually in conjunction with grazing, since historical times. In the vicinity of the county town little cultivation is seen, except for a few Chinese growing vegetables on the outskirts of town to supply local needs, but the flat well-watered river valley obviously has greater agricultural potential which will almost certainly be

⁸ *China Nationalities Economy 1993*

⁹ *Statistical Yearbook of China 1995*

¹⁰ *The Constitution of the People's Republic of China*, 4 December 1982, Article 9

utilized as the Chinese population increases. To meet current grain requirements, the County Grain and Oil Office maintains a large compound in town, with an attached Grain and Oil Company office facing onto the street [see photo 48:9a, p. 2343]. Like the Government-Party complex the compound has recently received a grand neo-imperial gate topped with gold tiles.

As in other Golog county towns, a facility has been installed in Pema to exploit local pastoralism. The Pema County Meat Processing Works and abattoir lie beyond the southern edge of town, a smaller and less mechanized concern than those in Gade, Darlag and Matö since Pema is less of a purely nomadic pastoralist area. Herds seen in the lower pastures of Pema certainly appeared less robust than those at higher elevations. The mechanism of harvest is exactly the same, however. Pastoralists camp outside the abattoir to deliver their animals, then trucks leave filled with frozen meat to be sold in Chinese markets far away.

Pema Tibetans have gone a step further than those in Darlag in trying to balance the provision of so many animals to the Chinese market with Buddhist doctrines of compassion and cyclical existence. A huge chöten currently rises just outside the walls of the abattoir [see photo 48:19a, p. 2347]. The identity of the builders, and source of funding for the chöten, was not ascertained. Already nearly forty feet tall from the base up to the upper plinth, it will be a truly impressive structure when completed. Construction methods appear to be basically traditional but are augmented by use concrete reinforcement for some structural elements [see photo 48:18a, p. 2351].

Chinese reform-era commercial influence is more apparent in Pema than any of the other Golog county towns. Pema's commercial area occupies the cross street running down from the T-junction and the immediate vicinity around the junction, consisting not only of newly-built shops but new-looking merchandise, a phenomenon not characteristic of the nomad towns where the selection of goods matches the basic needs of the tough tent-living pastoralists. Pema's commercial sector more closely resembles that of a small county town in the Chinese interior, and the influence of Sichuan is obviously significant here. Almost all the shops are run by Chinese, offering the more fashionable and varied merchandise that can be brought from Sichuan rather than the shoddier manufactures of Qinghai or Gansu. On the street Chinese pedlars, food vendors and artisans operate as they do in Lhasa, in much smaller numbers of course but duplicating the economic immigrant pattern found throughout Tibetan areas inside and outside the TAR.

Fewer Hui have come to Pema because the skin trade has less importance here and it is farther from their networks in other parts of Qinghai and Gansu, but some have opened restaurants or operate small street stalls selling Hui foodstuffs such as bread. The state-run Nationalities Trade Company has a noticeable physical presence in Pema with a pair of older grey two-story buildings facing the main street and a large compound stretching behind, but shows far less activity than the private businesses in town. In the typical ratio for county towns, Tibetans participate principally as consumers in the commercial sector, and Chinese primarily as entrepreneurs. Chinese consumers will of course increase with intensified Chinese immigration, a certainty in this pleasantly mild region with connections, albeit through other Tibetan areas, into populous and entrepreneurial Sichuan.

As the upper reaches of the Dadu River descend south towards Dzamthang in Ngawa T&QAP, its drainage area becomes heavily forested, providing valuable lumber resources which the Chinese have inevitably exploited. The County Lumber Processing Factory, on the road to the abattoir, is the town's only other visible industrial facility, an extensive compound in which stockpiles of logs foreshadow the heavy cutting that occurs further south [see photo 48:15a, p. 2349]. Lumber felled in Pema would mostly be transhipped out of the county into Ngawa Prefecture, itself a heavily-exploited lumber region where lumber industry facilities could better handle Pema's logs than shipment to distant Xining. Forests of virgin timber, the most extensive such stands in Qinghai Province, exist in southern Pema¹¹. Since forestry resources are extracted in other Tibetan areas there is no reason to suppose the same does not happen in Pema.

A gold mine near Daka 达卡 west of the county town operates in Pema, and other deposits of gold and oil shale are recorded in Chinese sources, but the report has no details of their exploitation.

vi. **Educational and medical facilities**

The authorities have paid due attention to educational facilities in Pema's county town, providing a primary school and a Nationalities Middle School. The most notable point about the primary school, once its standard low-rise layout and apparently adequate number of buildings are observed, is its location behind the county jail.

¹¹ *China Nationalities Economy 1993*, essay on Golog TAP, p. 109

Children must walk directly past it to attend school. They will have no illusions about the fate of non-conformists under the Chinese system, as they themselves are assimilated into it via Chinese education.

The Nationalities Middle School, a newly-built facility adjacent to the Lumber Processing Factory compound, again raises the paradox within Chinese education in non-TAR Tibetan “autonomous” areas. The Chinese have made efforts in the last decade to improve educational opportunities for Tibetans, and have widely introduced Tibetan-language classes in non-TAR Tibetan areas. The basic purpose of education remains, however, the production of citizens subsumed into the Chinese social, economic and cultural world under the policy of “ethnic fusion”. In heavily-Tibetan demographic and cultural areas like Golog the process will require much time and effort, especially as Tibetans in such areas are almost by inherently resistant to the Chinese way. Both peoples are persistent, the Tibetans in their determination to preserve their own culture and the Chinese to exercise control. The hypocrisy of the term “autonomy” applied to the Tibetan-area administration is easily visible in the creation and operation of schools. The educational system is designed to expedite Chinese aims which have shown themselves to be corrosive to legitimate autonomy.

Pema has both a County Hospital and a Tibetan Medicine Clinic. The latter, built within the last few years, may function at a more active level than is often the case for these units, constructed to show official support for nationality traditions. The Nyingmapa, traditionally concerned with Tibetan medicine, is the strongest Buddhist sect in the county and may ensure local input regardless of official funding. No definite information on the subject was gathered.

vii. **Culture**

The Pema county town, pleasant though it is, embodies nothing structurally of Tibetan culture. It consists entirely of functional Chinese constructions with only the new Government-Party complex paying the minimum of respect to Tibetan architectural traditions by the inclusion of some slight Tibetan external decorative features. Immediately beyond the confines of the town, however, Pema becomes determinedly and exuberantly Tibetan. Traditionally-dressed nomads and farmers populate the countryside and visit the town, like Gologs from the high country apparently little touched by their contact with the Chinese control and commerce machine. Functioning

Buddhist sites proliferate . Everything the Tibetans themselves do in Pema attests to their preference for their own cultural traditions, a phenomenon observed in other areas where Tibetans still have a choice of expression.

The Chinese have made a base for themselves in the county town, where the process of commercial dominance, assimilation of local children through education, and the gradual increase of the Chinese population through economic immigration unfolds in its familiar pattern. Chinese long-resident in Tibetan-area county towns often develop a sense of community towards the place where they spent most of their lives, almost never by choice, and many of the Chinese in Pema fall into this category, well aware of its advantages of clean environment, space, and peaceful atmosphere. Newcomers will not be so committed or sensitive, but will impact the local economy and social fabric with alarming rapidity as has been seen throughout Amdo, Kham and the TAR. Accelerated Chinese economic development and accompanying Chinese immigration threaten Tibetan autonomy more deeply and subtly than the first thirty years of the Chinese occupation, harsh though they were. They obscure the fundamental element of pervasive Chinese control while appearing to offer attractive economic benefits and, compared to the past, a measure of cultural expression.

viii. **Religion**

Few counties within the TAP's surpass Pema for the richness of its religious activity. Before the Chinese religious persecutions of 1958, Pema had 23 gönpas within its boundaries and over 2,500 monks¹², an astonishingly high count for an area that may have had a Tibetan population of only 7,000-8,000 people¹³. Because most of the monks in Pema followed the Nyingma tradition, many did not live permanently in monasteries so these institutions were often smaller in physical size than Gelug establishments, but their distribution throughout the area and the vitality of both monk and lay activity made Pema the most flourishing religious center in Golog.

After 1958 and during the Cultural Revolution Pema's religious sites suffered closure and destruction as did monasteries (and mosques and churches) everywhere, but since the religious reforms of c.1980 all have been re-opened. Monks numbers, however, have been reduced by official Chinese quotas to around 1,500, a proportion

¹² *Bright Mirror of Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries in Qinghai*, p. 18

¹³ *Guoluo zangzu shehui (Tibetan Society in Golog)*, pp. 42-48

of the original number higher than average but still severely diminished considering the total Tibetan population is said to have doubled since 1958. New monasteries were being founded in Pema even after the Chinese occupation. The Nyingma are by far the predominant order, having established 20 monasteries within the county area. 2 others are Jonang, whose strength lies in the Golog-Ngawa region, and 1 is Kargyu¹⁴, whose influence is paramount in Nangchen, Kyegudo and Tridu.

Despite the official restrictions on numbers of monks, Pema remains an energetically Buddhist area. On the approach to the county town along the upper watershed of the Dadu River, the countryside is virtually sprinkled with chöten, singly or often in groups or lines, and generally constructed from unplastered stone. Another feature of the area are square towers of prayer flags, such as the two huge towers in the river valley just south of the county town, composed of thousands of individual prayer flags and flanked by lines of massed prayer flags at ground level [see photo 114:19, p. 2355]. The largest Buddhist site close to the town is the Chagri Gönpam Drögong Gönpa རྩོད་གཤམ་གྱི་དགོན་པ་འཕམ་འབྲས་སྒྲོང་དགོན་པ།, 4 kilometers to the south along the river valley. Built

by a lama from the Nyingma Kathog Gönpa in Payül in 1937, the monastery had 300 monks when closed by the Chinese in 1958. Although it was restored in 1984 through donations from local Tibetans, it now has only 61 monks according to an official source¹⁵. Pilgrim activity is nevertheless constant at this enigmatic site, a mandala of Guru Rinpoche consisting of a temple atop a small hill surrounded by 128 stone chöten [see photo 48:22a, p. 2353].

Another Nyingma monastery built at the same time and also associated with Kathog Gönpa, the Dogongma Gönpa མདོ་གོང་མ་དགོན་པ།, stands next to the highway 30 kilometers north of the town. Its intriguing collection of structures consists of a lhakhang, residences and a nine-story stone tower amidst a garden of stone chöten, with a prayer flag tower beyond the nearest village. The monastery apparently had 47 monks in 1958 and now has the same number after re-opening¹⁶, but in reality probably has many more than the official quota allows.

¹⁴ *Bright Mirror of Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries in Qinghai*, p. 18

¹⁵ *Bright Mirror of Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries in Qinghai*, pp. 283-284

¹⁶ *Bright Mirror of Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries in Qinghai*, p. 284

Golog's oldest monastery and largest Jonang foundation, the Akyonggya Gönpa Dongag Shedrubling ཨ་རྟོག་གླ་ཐོང་ག་ཤེད་རུབ་ལྷོང་, was originally founded as a Nyingma gönpa in 1367 but converted to the

Jonangpa soon afterwards. Located ten kilometers south of the Pema county town in the original Golog heartland, it had 125 monks before closure in 1958. Restored in 1980, it now has 65 monks¹⁷. The Nyingma Drubchen Gönpa རྒྱལ་ཆེན་དགོན་པ།, considered the most influential monastery in Pema, started as a tent gönpa in 1527 under the patronage of the “Zuoqin Monastery” (Tibetan name not learned) of Dege. After it was destroyed by Mongol troops in the 17th Century it was later rebuilt at its present site in the extreme southern tip of Pema. Before closure in 1958 it had 500 associated monks, of whom 300 were long-term residents. In 1981 it was restored through donations from monks and lay people, and had almost 100 monks in c.1990¹⁸. Nomads from outside Pema are among its constant attendants.

Religious activity at monastic and lay levels is unusually high in Pema. It is likely this could not be the case without official tolerance. This would be consistent with the greater tolerance observably accorded in areas where Gelugpa establishments are lightly represented, or even absent. Pema must be considered a low-risk county from the perspective of the Chinese authorities: lacking any Gelug monasteries¹⁹, isolated from large influential Tibetan settlements, and closed to outsiders by Chinese order. Its flourishing Buddhist life should not therefore be taken as evidence of a more liberal attitude on the part of the Chinese State towards Tibetan religious practise. In Pema the Chinese merely show pragmatism. Control does not have to reach to total destruction to be effective. For the reasons just mentioned Pema does not represent a serious risk to internal security and ethnic tension, so can be left to pursue its “normal” religious activities. Should these be over-stepped, control mechanisms can be activated to restore the Chinese-directed order more firmly.

ix. History

¹⁷ *Bright Mirror of Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries in Qinghai*, pp. 387-388

¹⁸ *Bright Mirror of Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries in Qinghai*, p. 281

¹⁹ *Bright Mirror of Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries in Qinghai*, p. 18

Tanguts and other Qiang peoples inhabited Pema and the Golog region at least two thousand years ago, and before that even earlier ancestors of the Qiang²⁰. Probably from around the early 3rd Century AD, when the Han Dynasty in China disintegrated, Golog developed into the central territory of the powerful Tangut confederation and by the 6th Century an outreach of the Tuyuhun Empire, after the Tanguts became allies of the Tuyuhun. First the Tanguts, and then the Tuyuhun, were conquered by the Tibetans in the 7th Century, however, and Golog and most of the Tuyuhun territories were incorporated into the Tibetan Empire. Some Tanguts and Tuyuhun remained in their original territories following the Tibetan conquest, but as Tibetan migration to the region increased they were gradually absorbed into the Tibetan population. Variant traditions of the precise origins of Golog Tibetans claim that they moved into Golog from Kham 1200 years ago, at the time of the Tibetan conquest, or that they came from Ngari in Western Tibet 200 years later²¹.

Golog's demographic history is complicated by the constant migrations of the pastoralists over wide areas, as clans moved in and out of the region. Tibetan clans found in Golog today all claim roots in Pema, some having moved from Ngawa and Serthar 600 years ago and gradually spread through the rest of Golog as the population increased²². During the waves of Mongol invasions into Amdo in the 16th and 17th Centuries some Mongols also penetrated Malho and even crossed into Golog, but those who settled there became mingled with the Tibetans²³, their identity preserved only in the names of a few small clans.

Pema has been controlled by local Tibetan chieftains since the collapse of the Tibetan imperial administration in the 9th Century. The Kingdom of Ling extended into Pema and as far north as Machen until the 17th Century, but after Dege began to take over some of Ling's territory with support from the Qosot Mongol leader Gushri Khan around 1641²⁴, the power of individual Golog chieftains appears to have increased, and until the present day their reputation for independence has remained legendary. Despite the Gologs' hostility to outsiders, Buddhism was an active force there since early times, the earliest monasteries, now vanished, dating at least as

²⁰ *Anduo zangzu shilüe (Brief History of the Tibetans of Amdo)*, p. 16

²¹ *Anduo zangzu shilüe (Brief History of the Tibetans of Amdo)*, p. 17

²² *Guoluo zangzu shehui (Tibetan Society in Golog)*, p. 42

²³ *Anduo zangzu shilüe (Brief History of the Tibetans of Amdo)*, p. 19

²⁴ R.A. Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, p. 83

far back as the 13th Century²⁵. Pema's oldest surviving monastery dates from 1367. The strongest Buddhist influences came from Nyingma and Jonang traditions, both of which became so well established in Golog that even the ascendancy of the Gelugpa in other parts of Amdo from the late 17th Century onwards had no concrete effects in Pema, where no Gelug monasteries have been established.

The Gologs' independence was finally threatened in the 20th Century by the Hui Ma clan who, having established themselves as de facto rulers of Qinghai despite the nominal control of the Chinese Republican Government, tried to extend their control into southern Amdo and Yushu. Beginning in 1920 the Ma sent several armed expeditions into Golog, occupying the Palyül Gönpa north of Pema in 1936. Gologs resisted the intrusion into their territories fiercely, but a devastating punitive campaign against them in 1938, extending until 1940, resulted in decimation of the Tibetan population and destruction of monasteries.

Although the Chinese Communists defeated the Ma along with the Guomindang in 1949, they too had plans to colonize Amdo. The Communist advance into the remote pastoral areas was slow, but by 1952 they had reached Golog and begun to organize a Communist administration. In 1955 Pema was made one of four counties within the Golog TAP. Tibetan armed resistance to the Chinese occupation and control measures, starting in the Golog areas in 1956, erupted into an Amdo-wide revolt in 1958. Chinese reprisals at the time involved the closure of monasteries, punishment of thousands of Tibetans and the intensified collectivization of herdsman, a policy with disastrous results for the pastoral economy. Less harsh economic and cultural policies initiated since the late 1970's have alleviated the extreme miseries of the first 25 years of Chinese occupation, but Golog remains subject to overall Chinese control and exploitation of its pastoral resources. Pema remains closed to foreign visitors, a sign that the Chinese have yet to be confident of their status there.

x. **Summary comment**

Compared to the dismal prefectural capital Machen and the spartan nomad towns of the high plateaux, Pema seems like an unexpected jewel in Golog. Buddhism has survived and revived as a powerful force and even the county town, so often an ugly architectural conglomeration of the stages of Chinese control and exploitation process, is pleasantly coherent, exuding the atmosphere of a functioning community. But while these impressions

²⁵ *Bright Mirror of Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries in Qinghai*, p. 18

may stand on their own merits, they should not obscure the underlying nature of the Chinese presence. Even if the countryside is almost magically Tibetan, and the town is peaceful and attractive, it is still a Chinese administrative outpost and attracts increasing Chinese settlement.

The remotest and highest towns of Amdo and Kham, such as most of Golog's county towns, stand in least imminent danger of Chinese population influx, protected as they are by environments abhorrent to Chinese sensitivities and agricultural traditions. They do not offer the most attractive opportunities for commercial development. A town like Pema, however, offers much to Chinese immigrants especially from the direction of Sichuan. Climatically mild, distant but not ultimately inaccessible, a familiar if modest urban environment, Pema shows development potential. A relatively high Chinese population has already established itself in the town, a base on which to build another generation of residents and a small pool of commercial and service-industry consumers. Sichuan entrepreneurs have already guided the town's commerce mostly into their hands. The trend will continue, inevitably fuelled by China's population pressures and an economic boom that encourages commercial values over all others. It is easy to forget that the charming and beautiful county of Pema represents Chinese control and colonization, and another denial of Tibetan autonomy in the "autonomous" areas.

Sites tagged on photographic panoramas not accompanying text report

Panorama labels:

Pema/Banma

frames 48:1a-12a, 12pc

Agricultural Bank
Bureau of Meteorology
Bus Station
Chöten (under constr.)
Cinema
Communist Party
Construction Bank
County Abattoir
County Const./Engineering Co.
County Court
County CPPCC
County Government
County Hospital
County Meat Processing Factory
County NPC
County PAP
County Prison
County Procuratorate
County PSB
Finance Office
Government Hostel ('Lotus Hotel')
Grain and Oil Co.
Lumber Processing Factory
Nationalities Middle School
Nationalities Trade Co.
PAP Hostel
PAP Intermediate Brigade
Primary School
Tax Offices
Tibetan Medicine Clinic
to Chagri Gönpa'm Drogong Gönpa
to Matö, Machen, Xining
to Sershül, Kangding, Chengdu
TV Broadcasting Office
Xinhua Bookshop



roll/neg: 48:9a

subject: town center section with Government, CCP, PSB, etc.

location: Pema Dzong པམ་རྫོང་།, Golog མགོ་ལོག་ Tibetan Autonomous

Prefecture, Tsongön མཚོ་སྒྲོན་

[Ch: Banma Xian 班玛县, Guoluo 果洛TAP, Qinghai Province]

approx. date: winter 1995/1996

comment: Pema's environment is as beautiful as the name 'lotus' implies. The town itself succeeds as an administration center, but seems to have made little effort to harmonize with its superb surroundings. In the foreground is the County Construction Co. The large compound at center is the Grain and Oil Co. Across the street are the County Government, CCP, NPC and CPPCC. County PSB, Court, Procuratorate and Detention Center are to the right.
(View from the east.)

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roll/neg: 48:17a
subject: PSB Detention Center
location: Pema Dzong པམ་རྫོང་།, Golog མགོ་ཁོང་། Tibetan Autonomous

Prefecture, Tsongön མཚོ་སྔགས་

[Ch: Banma Xian 班玛县, Guoluo 果洛TAP, Qinghai Province]

approx. date: winter 1995/1996

comment: Pema, which means 'lotus' in Tibetan, is in a gentler climate in a relatively low area (~3,700m) by Golog standards. But the county jail still conforms to the fortress-like prison design seen elsewhere in the prefecture. Three prisoners, possibly monks (red and yellow clothing items), are sitting in the sun. A PAP guard can be seen near the left end of the front wall. Despite possessing some of Golog's finest scenic and cultural attributes, Pema is tightly closed to foreigners.
(View from the east.)

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<u>roll/neg:</u>	48:19a
<u>subject:</u>	new chöten under construction adjacent to County abattoir
<u>location:</u>	Pema Dzong པདྨ་རྫོང་།, Golog མགོ་ལོག་། Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Tsongöñ མཚོ་སྒྲོལ་། [Ch: Banma Xian 班玛县, Guoluo 果洛TAP, Qinghai Province]
<u>approx. date:</u>	winter 1995/1996
<u>comment:</u>	The base of this huge chöten is complete only to the plinth, but is already several stories tall. Its only neighbor is the County abattoir. Juxtaposition is no accident. Tibetan herders are of two minds over selling their animals to Chinese-run abattoirs, which truck frozen carcasses to distant, non-Tibetan markets. Some Tibetans are resentful, claiming they are exploited, yet benefits to the local Tibetan economy are substantial. The construction of such a conspicuous offertory adjacent to the abattoir speaks loudly of the social, spiritual and economic dilemma created for Tibetans by development Chinese-style. (View from the east.)
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48:15a

Pema: Forestry Department area, lumber stockpile

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roll/neg: 48:15a
subject: Forestry Department office and timber yard
location: Pema Dzong པཨ་རྫོང་།, Golog གཤོ་ལོག་། Tibetan Autonomous
 Prefecture, Tsongön རོ་ཆོ་སྤོན་།
 [Ch: Banma Xian 班玛县, Guoluo 果洛TAP, Qinghai Province]
approx. date: winter 1995/1996
comment: Golog is largely devoid of timber resources. But Pema Dzong is at a lower elevation and its steep valleys are a rich forestry zone. Where resources exist, exploitation is bound to follow, and so it has been in Pema. The Chinese Constitution asserts that all natural resources are property of the State, arousing considerable resentment among Tibetans. Article 118 assures “due consideration” will be given the “interests” of autonomous areas. There is little visible evidence to suggest that Tibetans decide those interests.
 (View from the east.)
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48:18a

Pema: detail new chöten under construction

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roll/neg: 48:18a

subject: detail of base of large chöten under construction

location: Pema Dzong པཨ་རྫོང་།, Golog མགོ་ལོག་ Tibetan Autonomous
Prefecture, Tsongöñ མཚོ་སྔག་

[Ch: Banma Xian 班玛县, Guoluo 果洛TAP, Qinghai Province]

approx. date: winter 1995/1996

comment: A gigantic chöten, structurally complete up to the plinth, stands at the gate of Pema County's abattoir. The construction appears to be of traditional design but employs some modern construction technology. The outer beam of the cantilevered plinth is being built of reinforced concrete. The massive core of the chöten is an intricate network of radiating stone bearing walls which will support the upper body of the chöten. Projects such as these reflect well on the resilience of Tibetan people and their commitment to their culture. (View from the east.)

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48:22a

2 km south of Pema: Chagri Gönpa'm Drogong Gonpa

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<u>roll/neg:</u>	48:22a
<u>subject:</u>	Chagri Gönpam Drögong Gönpa ལཱ་ཅག་མ་རི་དགོན་པ་འཆ་འབྲེས་སྒོང་དགོན་པ།
<u>location:</u>	Pema Dzong པདྨ་རྫོང་།, Golog མགོ་ཁྲིམས། Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Tsongön མཚོ་སྒྲོན། [Ch: Banma Xian 班玛县, Guoluo 果洛TAP, Qinghai Province]
<u>approx. date:</u>	winter 1995/1996
<u>comment:</u>	This mandala of Guru Rinpoche takes the form of a temple, surrounded by more than 108 chöten. Subsidiary temples mark the compass points. Four km from Pema town's heart, the temple is relatively new, built only in 1937 by a Lama from Payül Kathog Gönpa. At closure in 1958 there were 300 monks.
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<u>roll/neg:</u>	114:19
<u>subject:</u>	square prayer flag tower near Chagri Gönpam Drögong Gönpa ལཱཅགས་ཅི་དགོན་པ་ལ་འབྲུག་སྒྲོང་དགོན་པ།
<u>location:</u>	Pema Dzong པདྨ་རྫོང་།, Golog མགོ་ལོག། Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Tsongön མཚོ་སྔོན། [Ch: Banma Xian 班玛县, Guoluo 果洛TAP, Qinghai Province]
<u>approx. date:</u>	winter 1995/1996
<u>comment:</u>	Just across the river from Pema Dzong's south end, on the way to Chagri Drögong Gönpa, are two large, rectangular towers made up of thousands of individual prayer flags. The valleys around Pema Dzong are unusually rich in active Buddhist sites, with a particularly high concentration of chöten
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