

Administration

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Summary: Dzongkar Choede is both a spiritual community and a complex living institution, and its administration exists to create the stable conditions in which monks can study, practice, and live together. The monastery is guided by the Abbot (Khenpo), with daily discipline overseen by the disciplinarian (Gegu or Gekö) and communal recitation led by the chant master (Umzé). A general administrative committee manages finances, buildings, supplies, records, and external relations; further committees cover the school, healthcare, kitchen, library, ceremonies, and fundraising. Monks also belong to smaller residential communities known as khangtsens, which preserve the closeness of a small community within a monastery of several hundred.

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How the Monastery Is Organized

Dzongkar Choede is both a spiritual community and a complex living institution. Prayer assemblies, philosophical study, the education and care of young monks, food preparation, healthcare, maintenance, finances and relations with the wider community must all be carefully coordinated.

The monastery's administration exists to support these shared responsibilities. Its purpose is not administration for its own sake, but to create the stable conditions in which the monks can study, practice and live together in harmony.

Spiritual Leadership and Shared Responsibility

The monastery is guided by the Abbot, traditionally known as the Khenpo. As its senior spiritual leader, the Abbot safeguards the monastery's religious direction, educational tradition and communal well-being.

The Abbot does not carry every responsibility alone. The work of the monastery is shared among senior monks, appointed or elected officeholders, committees, teachers and members of the monastic community. Each role contributes to the functioning of the whole.

In this way, leadership reflects a central Buddhist understanding: no part of the community exists independently. Spiritual practice, education, discipline, care and practical service depend upon one another.

The Abbot

The Abbot provides overall spiritual guidance to the monastery. His responsibilities include protecting the monastery's religious lineage and traditions; guiding its spiritual and educational direction; presiding over important ceremonies and communal occasions; advising teachers, administrators and members of the monastic community; representing the monastery in important religious and public matters; and supporting the unity and long-term welfare of the Sangha.

The authority of the Abbot is understood primarily as a responsibility of service. He is entrusted with preserving the teachings and helping the community remain faithful to its purpose.

Monastic Discipline and Communal Life

Daily discipline and the orderly conduct of communal life are traditionally overseen by the disciplinarian, known in Tibetan as the Gegu or Gekö.

The disciplinarian helps coordinate the daily monastic timetable and ensures that communal activities are conducted with attentiveness and respect. His responsibilities may include overseeing attendance at prayers and assemblies; standards of monastic conduct; study and debate schedules; the observance of communal rules; the organization of religious gatherings; and the peaceful resolution of difficulties within the community.

Discipline in a Buddhist monastery is not intended simply as external control. It creates a shared rhythm that supports mindfulness, ethical conduct and consideration for others.

Prayer and Ritual Responsibilities

Prayer assemblies and ritual ceremonies require their own forms of leadership and coordination.

The chant master, traditionally known as the Umzé, leads communal recitations and helps preserve the monastery's liturgical traditions. Working with the Abbot, disciplinarian and other senior monks, the chant master helps ensure that prayers and rituals are conducted correctly and transmitted to younger generations.

Other monks may be assigned responsibilities for preparing the prayer hall, ritual objects, offerings, musical instruments and ceremonial materials. What visitors experience as a single ceremony is therefore the result of careful preparation and collective service.

General Administration

The monastery's general administration manages the practical affairs that enable the community to function from day to day.

An administrative committee or office works under the monastery's governing structure and in consultation with its spiritual leadership. Its responsibilities may include managing income, expenditure and accounts; maintaining monastery buildings and facilities; organizing food, supplies and transportation; coordinating construction and development projects; keeping institutional records;

communicating with government bodies and other organizations; receiving visitors and handling correspondence; and supporting the monastery's school, healthcare services and community programs.

Although these tasks may appear separate from religious practice, they make the continuation of that practice possible. Maintaining a kitchen, repairing a roof or preparing an annual budget can also be understood as service to the Sangha.

Education and the Monastic School

Education is one of the monastery's central responsibilities. Dzongkar Choede's monastic school combines traditional Buddhist learning with subjects needed for life in the contemporary world.

The school's administration works in coordination with the monastery's general governing body. A committee, assisted by the principal and vice-principal, oversees academic, educational, financial and developmental matters.

Teachers supervise classes, examinations, memorization, scriptural study and debate. Guardian teachers live with younger monks in their residential houses and care for their daily welfare, homework and monastic formation.

This structure brings together education, pastoral care and administration. The development of a young monk is not treated merely as academic progress, but as the gradual formation of knowledge, discipline, compassion and responsibility.

Committees and Areas of Service

Different areas of monastic life may be entrusted to particular committees, officeholders or groups of monks. These can include philosophical and academic studies; examinations and curriculum; the monastic school; healthcare and care for elderly monks; kitchen and food supplies; buildings and maintenance; religious ceremonies; library and textual preservation; guest accommodation; finances and fundraising; and communications and external relations.

The precise composition of these bodies may change over time according to the needs of the monastery. The guiding principle remains continuity of responsibility rather than dependence on a single individual.

The Role of the Monastic Assembly

The monks themselves are not merely recipients of administrative decisions. The monastic assembly — the Sangha — is the living body of the monastery.

Important matters are discussed through established monastic procedures and with the involvement of senior monks, officeholders and the wider community where appropriate. Some responsibilities are assigned by the governing body, while others may follow traditional processes of nomination, appointment or election.

Consultation helps maintain continuity between generations and reminds every monk that the well-being of the institution is a shared responsibility.

The Khangtsen Communities

Within the wider monastery, monks may also belong to smaller residential communities traditionally known as khangtsens. These communities provide a more immediate structure of companionship, care and mutual responsibility.

They help organize accommodation and daily support and can offer young or newly arrived monks a sense of belonging within the larger institution. Senior members assist younger monks in adapting to the monastery's routines, expectations and communal life.

The khangtsen structure allows a monastery of several hundred monks to retain the closeness and mutual care of a smaller community.

Resolving Difficulties

Differences and misunderstandings can arise in every human community. At Dzongkar Choede, the purpose of conflict resolution is not to determine winners and losers, but to restore understanding and communal harmony.

Concerns may be addressed through discussion with teachers, senior monks, the disciplinarian or members of the administration. Listening, respect and responsibility are emphasized. The dignity of the individuals involved must be protected alongside the well-being of the community.

This approach reflects the understanding that conduct affects not only the individual but the entire network of relationships in which monastic life takes place.

Administration as Practice

The visible life of a monastery — its prayers, teachings, debates and ceremonies — depends upon a large amount of quieter work. Accounts must be maintained. Meals must be planned. Children must be cared for. Buildings must be repaired. Guests must be welcomed. Elderly and unwell monks must receive attention. Books and sacred objects must be preserved.

These responsibilities are not regarded as separate from the spiritual life of the monastery. When carried out attentively and for the benefit of others, administration becomes a form of practice.

Through shared leadership, clear responsibilities and collective service, Dzongkar Choede seeks to preserve its traditions while responding wisely to the needs of a changing world.