

Keutsang East (*Ke'u tshang shar*)

Location and Layout

This small monastery, located northeast of Se ra between Keutsang West (Ke'u tshang nub) and Purchok Hermitages (Phur lcog ri khrod), today lies in ruins. It takes over an hour to walk to the site from Se ra, but only about twenty minutes from Keutsang West.



Little remains of Keutsang East (Ke'u tshang shar). The ruins can just barely be seen on the mountainside in the center of this picture.

History

Before 1959, the hermitage belonged to Purchok Hermitage. There are two conflicting reports concerning the founder of the hermitage. One contemporary Tibetan historian identifies the founder as the first Purchok incarnation Ngawang Jampa (Phur lcog sku phreng dang po ngag dbang byams pa),¹ the cofounder of Purchok Hermitage. Another Tibetan scholar identifies the founder as Ke'u tshang 'jam dbyangs blo gsal.²

¹ Dge bshes ye shes dbang phyug, *Ser smad thos bsam nor gling grwa tshang gi chos 'byung lo rgyus nor bu'i phreng ba* [*A History of the Sermé Tösam Norling College: A Garland of Jewels*] (Bylakuppe: Ser smad par khang, nd), 42.

² Dung dkar blo bzang 'phrin las, *Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo* [*The Great Dungkar Dictionary*] (Krunq go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2002), 93. It is unclear whether this is an alternative name of one of the Ke'u tshang bla mas, or whether the figure got his name from the fact that he was a monk of the Keutsang West monastery.

Like all of Se ra's hermitages, this one had an assembly hall and monks' quarters, and was home to about ten permanent monk residents. It was renowned for having a particularly holy statue of Avalokiteśvara. Like the Maitreya (Byams pa) statue at Keutsang West, this Avalokiteśvara was supposed to emit rays of light to guide to the pure land the minds of deceased persons brought to the funeral grounds located at the base of the mountain.

Apart from these few details, we know nothing about this hermitage or its history at the present time. The monks of Phur lcog tell us that they have chosen not to rebuild Keutsang East for fear that this will siphon off resources from the rebuilding of Purchok Hermitage, the restoration of which they see as their primary responsibility.