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The Fifteen Great Demons of Children

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If one delves into Tibetan ritual texts pertaining to child-rearing, and for the sake of comparative references, looks for more related writings, one would quite often come upon a term called *byis pa'i gdon chen bco lnga*. Sometimes it is mentioned in ritual texts in the prayers to be recited by the ritual master to expel forces harming children. It also appears in the name of a ritual, e.g. *byis pa'i gdon chen bco lnga'i mdos* which authors of ritual texts habitually instruct to employ in cases when children encounter obstacles.¹ *Byis pa'i gdon chen bco lnga* apparently denotes a group of demons who can endanger children, as sPo bo gter ston bDud 'dul rdo rje (1615-1672) has described them, together with some other demons, as those who "can interrupt the lifespan and vital energy of children" (*byis pa'i tshe srog la bar du gcod par byed pa*).² Modern western scholars seem to be unfamiliar with this group of demons, since most essential reference works of Tibetan religion do not bother to make mention of it.³ Only a small number of scholars have paid attention to it, owing to their devotion to the re-publications of Tibetan

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¹ See e.g. Mi pham rgya mtsho, *Srid srung byis pa 'tsho ba'i gto bu mang ljon pa*, in *gSung 'bum/Mi pham rgya mtsho* (TBRC W23468, Paro, Bhutan: Lama Ngodrup and Sherab Drimey, 1984-1993), vol. 7(dhī), bl. 398, line 2; bl. 399, line 2.

² See bDud 'dul rdo rje, *sNying thig tshe yang phur gsum las dbang chen byis pa lha lnga'i dril sgrub*, in *Spo bo gter ston bdud 'dul rdo rje'i zab gter gsungs 'bum* (TBRC W22123, Darjeeling: Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1997), vol. 6 (cha), bl. 208, line 1-2.

³ See e.g. René Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet, the Cult and Iconography of the Tibetan Protective Deities* (Mouton & Co., Publishers, 1956), pp. 310-311.

medical paintings, in which the pictorial form of the fifteen demons are occasionally included.⁴ Besides, Schwieger has publicized the drawings of "the fifteen great *gdon* of children" on cardboard that were supposed to be used in rituals and are preserved in the National Museum of Tuva.⁵ According to the already published pictures with their accompanied captions, it seems that there are two groups of demons under the same designation *byis pa'i gdon chen bco lnga*. However, none of the scholars have discussed the relationship between these two groups of demons in greater detail. Moreover, some relevant questions were also left unanswered, e.g., how the fifteen demons annoy children, what features the fifteen demons possess, etc. In view of the fact that until now no research on this topic is available, this article will try to resolve the abovementioned issues by exploring Tibetan ritual and medical texts pertinent to the subject.

In the System of Tibetan Ritual Texts

A direct way to decipher the term *byis pa'i gdon chen bco lnga* would be to look into the ritual text named *byis pa'i gdon chen bco lnga'i mdos* (abbr.: *D*), if it is at all available, and to see whether it contains explicit descriptions of the fifteen demons. A text under this title does exist and is in at least four anthologies of ritual texts, one of which is a collection of various *gto* and *mdos* rituals from rediscovered treasure (*gter ma*). These four versions in the four anthologies can be categorized into two groups. While two are from exactly the same printing blocks, the block prints of the other two are entirely identical.⁶ According to the colophon, this text was written by Myang Ting

⁴ Yuri Parfionovitch, Fernand Meyer and Gyurme Dorje eds., *Tibetan Medical Paintings, Illustrations to the Blue Beryl Treatise of Sangye Gyamtso (1653-1705)* (London: Serindia Publications, 1992), vol. 2, pp. 261-262, nos. 69-99, 115-130; Ian A. Baker, *The Tibetan Art of Healing*, paintings by Romio Shrestha (New Delhi: Timeless Books, 1997), pp. 84-85; Wangle, Byams pa 'phrin las eds. 王镛·强巴赤列编译注释, *Bod lugs gso rig rgyud bzhi'i nang don bris cha ngo mtshar mthong ba don ldan* 四部医典系列挂图全集 (Bod ljongs mi dmang dpe skrun khang, 西藏人民出版社, 1986), pp. 315-318, nos. 53-82; 92-106.

⁵ Peter Schwieger, "Tuvian Images of Demons from Tibet", *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 15(2008): pp. 331-336. Schwieger has summarized scholars' knowledge on this term.

⁶ The four versions are 1) *gTo 'bum mdos chog nyer mkho'i rigs phyogs gcig tu bsdebs pa dgos 'dod kun 'byung* (Thimphu: Kunsang Topgay, 1978), bl. 185-191, 2) *gTo 'bum: a collection of various gto and mdos rituals from the famed rediscovered teachings of the past* (microfiche, New York: Institute for Advanced Studies of World Religions, [197-]), bl. 185-191, 3) *gTo 'bum: Collection of exorcism (gto) rituals as used in Bhutan* (TBRC W27411, Thimphu: Kunsang Topgay, 1978), bl. 363-369, 4) *Mdos*

'dzin bzang po, who is said to have lived in the eighth century.⁷ Clues of the nature and of the date of the text suggest the antiquity of the concept under the term *byis pa'i gdon chen bco lnga*. In the prayer, which is the main part of the text and is to be recited by the ritual master while implementing the *mdos*-ritual, the names of the fifteen great *gdon* that threaten children are listed. Moreover, their appearance and the type of trouble they could give rise to are also portrayed. These descriptions, which are in two-line verses with seven syllables each, provide a vivid picture of the demon assemblage that can bring enormous trouble to children. Regarding the type of trouble these demons usually generate, the succinctness of the verses makes it difficult to ascertain their precise meaning. More associated texts were thus consulted. These include 1) a manuscript from Dunhuang (*Byis pa'i gdon chen bco lnga zhi bar byed pa'i gzungs*, *Pel.tib.0739*), which contains a surviving segment of a ritual text, in which incantations and prayers for pacifying the fifteen great *gdon* of children were written down,⁸ 2) a *gto*-ritual text for pacifying the *gdon* of children (*Byis gdon zhi ba'i gto bcos*, abbr.: *TC*),⁹ 3) a teaching to householders written by the 'Brug pa bka' brgyud master Sangs rgyas rdo rje (1569-1645) (*Khyim pa la phan pa bsgrub pa'i yan lag dang po gdon chen bco lnga zhi bar byed pa'i thabs 'chi med bdud rtsi'i bum bzang*, abbr.: *DB*),¹⁰ and 4) a text written in 1847, which includes *dhāraṇīs* and prayers for pacifying the fifteen great *gdon* of children (*Byis pa'i gdon chen bco lnga bzhi bar byed pa dang gzungs le tshan brgyad*, abbr.: *LTG*).¹¹ All four texts consist of passages depicting the names

chog nyer mkho phyogs bsdus dgos 'dod kun 'byung: a collection of mdos rituals for use in various Tibetan Buddhist practices carefully edited from various corrupt manuscripts and blockprints (microfiche, New York: Institute for Advanced Studies of World Religions, [198-]), bl. 363-369. While 1) and 2) are from the same printing blocks, the block prints of 3) and 4) are identical.

⁷ While describing Zhwa padma dbang chen gyi gtsug lag khang, TBRC denotes it to be a dGe lugs pa temple in Nyi ma lcang ra shang, Mal gro gung dkar rdzong affiliated to Se ra byes, which was founded in about 700 by Myang Ting 'dzin bzang po.

⁸ Jin Yasheng, Monique Cohen eds., *Tibetan Documents from Dunhuang in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, vol. 8, Fonds Pelliot Tibétain 0714-0849 (Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, 2009), p. 30.

⁹ Two versions of this text are available to the author. One is collected in a manuscript compilation: *gTo 'bum dgos 'dod sna tshogs re skong bkod pa: a collection of mdos and gto rituals as followed in Sikkim in the Nyingmapa tradition* (Gangtok, Sikkim: Sherab Gyaltzen Lama, 1978), bl. 662-665. The other is in a ritual collection in modern typographical script: *gTo bcos kyi dkar chag: gTo 'bum dgos 'dod sna tshogs kyi cho ga* (Gangtok: Sikkim Government Press, 1968), 207r1-209v2.

¹⁰ In *gSung 'bum/_Sangs rgyas rdo rje* (TBRC W23556, Kathmandu: Acarya Shedup Tenzin, 1995-), vol. 2, bl. 577-608.

¹¹ This text is preserved in microfiche in Special Collections Department of Leiden University Library.

and appearances of the fifteen demons, as well as the troubles they could bring about, except for *PT 0739*; on account of its deficiency, the appearances of fourteen demons are missing in *PT 0739*. The delineations of the fifteen demons in the last two texts (*DB* and *LTG*), the dates of which are more certain and are later, are almost identical. This involves the majority of the first part of *DB* and nearly the whole text of *LTG*. The majority of the first part of *DB* was quoted from *sTong chen po rab tu 'joms pa'i mdo* (abbr.: *TR*), as the author Sangs rgyas rdo rje has indicated, which is proved to be true by a collation of *DB* with *TR*. A further comparison makes it evident that nearly the whole text of *LTG* is very likely an excerpt out of *TR*; moreover, the passages concerned in *DB* and *LTG* have the same beginning and ending.¹² As for the other two texts that were searched out for clarifying the troubles which the fifteen demons cause, *TC* obviously has a very different nature; and *PT 0739*, though much shorter, seems to share several similarities with *TR*, *DB* and *LTG*. A crosscheck has justified that *PT 0739* contains passages in agreement with *TR*.¹³ Accordingly, *PT 0739*, *TR*, *DB* and *LTG* can be regarded as being in the same text lineage. *TC*, on the other hand, contains only eleven of the fifteen demons. Besides, some of the demons' names and appearances described in *TC* deviate remarkably from their parallels in the other texts. Hence, *TC* should be treated separately. Descriptions of the fifteen demons in the abovementioned texts are summarized according to text character in the following table. Each demon is enumerated in the sequence of its name, appearance and the afflictions it could cause.

¹² The passage 2v1-5v2 of *DB* is quoted from 82v4-84r6 of *sTong chen mo rab tu 'joms pa'i mdo*, which is collected in *bKa' 'gyur (sDe dge par phud, TBRC W22084, Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Chodhey Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1976-1979, vol. 90 (pha), 63v1-87v1)*. The passage 1v2-8r3 of *LTG* corresponds to 82v4-84r6 in *sTong chen mo rab tu 'joms pa'i mdo*. Having paid homage to the Three Jewels, the author of *LTG* paid homage to *sTong chen mo rab tu 'joms ma (dkon cog gsum la phyag 'tshal lo) /stong chen mo rab tu 'joms ma la phyag 'tshal lo)*. This gives a clue to the association of the text with *TR*.

¹³ The first half of *PT 0739* (1r1-1v1) corresponds to 83v6-84r3 in *TR*, while the latter half (1v2-2r4) is in agreement with 83r3-7 in *TR*.

	<i>D</i> ¹⁴	<i>TC</i> ¹⁵	<i>PT 0739, TR, DB, LTG</i>
1	'jam pa po ba glang gzugs khod kyi byis pa mig 'phrul byed	'jam pa po rkyang gi gzugs byis pa'i ming ni bsgyar ¹⁶ bar byed	'jam pa po ba lang gzugs mig ¹⁷ ni rab tu 'gyur ¹⁸ bar bgyid
2	ri dvags ¹⁹ rgyal po ri dvags ²⁰ 'dra byis pa lkug dang skyug ²¹ par byed	ri dvags rgyal po ri bdvags 'dra zas rnams mi za skyag ²² par byed	ri dags ²³ rgyal ri dvags 'dra skyugs pa mi ²⁴ bzad ²⁵ skyug par 'gyur
3	skem byed gzhon nu'i gzugs byis pa mchin pa dar bar byed	skem byed gdon gzhon nu 'dra byis pa'i lus ni 'dra bar bar ²⁶ byed	skem byed gzhon nu'i gzugs skem byed pas ni byis ²⁷ pa 'gul
4	brjed ²⁸ byed va yi gzugs byis pa 'bod cing brang 'byin byed ²⁹	brjed ³⁰ byed gdon va yi gzugs khro bzhin rku ba'i sgra yang 'byin	brjed byed va 'dra 'gre ³¹ zhing de ltar sgra yang 'byin/ /dbu ba dang ³² ni kha chu 'dzag
5	khu tshur can bya rog gzugs khu mtshur 'chang zhing byed cing na	khu tshur can bya rog gzugs byes ³³ pa sgar chen bya rog 'byin	khu tshur ³⁴ can bya rog gzugs khu tshur ³⁵ 'chang zhing 'gyed ³⁶ par bgyid
6	ma mo	--	ma mo

¹⁴ *Byis pa'i gdon chen bco lnga'i mdos*, collected in *gTo 'bum* (gter ma) etc., c. 8th century, see footnote 6. The four versions as indicated in footnote 6 are compared. Variations are signified in the footnotes, in which K represents text 1) and 2) as indicated in footnote 6.

¹⁵ See footnote 9. The two versions indicated in footnote 9 are compared. The manuscript was used as the basis of comparison. Variations of the other text collected in *gTo bcos kyi dkar chag* (abbreviated to T) are signified in the footnotes.

¹⁶ T: bsgyur.

¹⁷ PT 0739: myig.

¹⁸ PT 0739: 'gyur=gyur.

¹⁹ K: ri dvags=ri dag.

²⁰ K: ri dvags=ri dag.

²¹ K: skyug=kyugs.

²² T: skyugs.

²³ DB: dvags.

²⁴ PT 0739: myi.

²⁵ DB: zad.

²⁶ T: bar bar=bar.

²⁷ LTG gysis?

²⁸ K: /brjed=rje.

²⁹ K: byid.

³⁰ T: brjid.

³¹ LTG: 'ug?

³² PT 0739: nga, there is a blank space before the syllable nga.

³³ T: byis.

³⁴ PT 0739: tsur.

³⁵ PT 0739: tsur.

³⁶ PT 0739, DB, LTG: 'byed.

	bud med gzugs byis pa rgod cing brang 'byin byed		mi yi gzugs rgod ³⁷ cing de bzhin sgra yang 'byin
7	dza mi ka rta yi gzugs byis pa nu ma 'thung mi ster	dza mi ka rta yi gzugs nu zho mi 'thung sgra yang 'byin	dza mi ka rta yi gzugs nu zho nu bar ³⁸ mngon mi ³⁹ dga'
8	'dod pa can rdo rje gzugs byis pa gnyid logs ngu bar byed	--	'dod pa ⁴⁰ can rdo rje'i gzugs mal na gnyid log ngu bar 'gyur
9	nam gru khyi yis ⁴¹ gzugs byis pa lce la sos 'char 'jug	--	nam gru khyi yi gzugs lce la sos ni 'cha' ⁴² bar bgyid
10	srul po phag gis gzugs ku co 'don cing sgra yang sgrog	srul po'i gdon phag gi gzugs ku co 'don cing sgra yang 'byin/ /sbu ba skyug cing kha chung dzag ⁴³	srul po phag gis gzugs ku co 'don cing sgra yang 'byin
11	ma 'gags byed pa byi ba'i gzugs byis pa sna tshogs na bar byed	ma dga' rta byed byis pa'i gzugs ⁴⁴ rnam rgan mchog gi gzugs su ston/ /sna yis ⁴⁵ dri la chong bar byed	ma dga' byed pa byi la'i gzugs rnam pa sna tshogs gzugs su 'gyur
12	bya yi lag can ⁴⁶ shang shang gzugs byis pa snal ba'i dri 'byin byed	--	bya 'dab chags gzugs mnam pa'i ⁴⁷ dri ni 'byung bar 'gyur
13	gnya' lag can bya 'gag gzugs byis pa 'gul pa 'gag bar byed	nam kha'i gdon bya yi gzugs byis pa ⁴⁸ mgrin pa 'gag par byed	gnya' lag can bya gag gzugs mgul pa ⁴⁹ rab tu 'gag ⁵⁰ par 'gyur
14	bzhin rgyal	bzhin rgyan gdon	bzhin rgyan ⁵²

³⁷ PT 0739: dgod.

³⁸ LTG: par?

³⁹ PT 0739: mngon mi=mngon bar myi.

⁴⁰ PT 0739: 'dod pa='dod.

⁴¹ K: yi.

⁴² PT 0739: 'cha.

⁴³ T: sbu ba skyug cing kha chung dzag=lbu ba skyags zhing kha chu 'dzag.

⁴⁴ T: gzugs.

⁴⁵ T: yi.

⁴⁶ K: can=can 'dab chags.

⁴⁷ PT 0739: mnam pa'i=rnal ba'i.

⁴⁸ T: pa'i.

⁴⁹ DB: 'gul pa.

⁵⁰ PT 0739, DB: 'gags.

	'ug pa'i gzugs byis pa rim gyis 'debs par byed	'ug pa'i gzugs rim kyi 'debs shing ⁵¹ khru bar byed	'ug pa'i gzugs rims kyis ⁵³ btab cing 'khru bar 'gyur
15	mig 'changs ba pha vang gzugs byis pa skyigs ⁵⁴ bus 'debs par byed	ming 'chang 'don ⁵⁵ pha vang gzugs rngam zhing sgyid bu mig ⁵⁶ par byed	mig ⁵⁷ 'phyang ba ⁵⁸ pha vang gzugs skyigs bu dang ni sdam ⁵⁹ pa 'byung

This initial assortment shows that disagreement of depictions exists among the diverse versions and text lineages, which makes a general conclusion difficult. Since the text group of *TR*, which is collected in the *rGyud 'bum* section of the Tibetan *bKa' 'gyur*, predominates, descriptions in the text group of *TR* are interpreted in the following as a reference. Noteworthy deviations are indicated in the footnotes.

	name	appearance	type of trouble
1	'jam pa po	in the form of an ox ⁶⁰	eyes droop severely?
2	ri dags rgyal po	like a stag	not only nausea, but also vomiting ⁶¹
3	skem byed	in the form of a youth	emaciated and trembling ⁶²
4	brjed byed	in the form of a fox	rolling on the ground and making sounds, frothing and drooling ⁶³
5	khu tshur can	in the form of a crow	hold the fist and open
6	ma mo	in the form of a human being ⁶⁴	excited and making sounds ⁶⁵
7	dza mi ka	in the form of a horse	doesn't get pleasure in sucking mother's milk
8	'dod pa can	in the form of a vajra	crying while sleeping in bed
9	nam gru	in the form of a dog	chew on the tongue while

⁵² PT 0739, LTG: brgyan.

⁵¹ T: 'debs shing=btab cing.

⁵³ PT 0739: gyis.

⁵⁴ K: kyigs.

⁵⁵ T: gdon.

⁵⁶ T: mid.

⁵⁷ PT 0739: myi.

⁵⁸ LTG: pa.

⁵⁹ DB, LTG: rngam.

⁶⁰ TC: in form of a wild ass.

⁶¹ TC: not eating and vomiting.

⁶² D: child's liver expands.

⁶³ D: shout and exhale.

⁶⁴ D: in the form of a woman.

⁶⁵ D: restless and exhales.

10	srul po	in the form of a pig	being fed bawling and making sounds
11	ma dga' byed pa ⁶⁶	in the form of a cat ⁶⁷	various features change forms⁶⁸
12	bya yi lag can	in the form of a bird ⁶⁹	exhaling fragrant smell
13	gnya' lag can ⁷⁰	in the form of a gray duck ⁷¹	the throat is entirely blocked
14	bzhin rgyan ⁷²	in the form of an owl	caught by epidemic and got diarrhea
15	mig 'phyang ba ⁷³	in the form of a bat	start hiccuping and gasping

To sum up, the names of these fifteen demons are, except for some variations in spelling, mostly in agreement with those of the Tuvini-an images listed by Schwieger. These names are also consistent with the captions of the drawings under the designation "the fifteen great demons which influence children, as generally known"⁷⁴ (*byis pa'i gdon chen bco lnga yongs grags*) which are included in the medical paintings commissioned to illustrate the famous commentary *Vaidūrya sngon po* written by Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653-1705).⁷⁵

In the System of Tibetan Medical Literature

The drawings for the 72nd chapter of *Vaidūrya sngon po* include, in addition to the aforementioned fifteen demons, one other demon group, which also relates to children, the members of which are nonetheless very different.⁷⁶ The portraits of this additional group of

⁶⁶ D: ma 'gags byed pa, TC: ma dga' rta byed.

⁶⁷ D: in form of a rat, TC: the body of the child manifests itself in the form of an eminent elderly.

⁶⁸ D: to get all kinds of sickness.

⁶⁹ D: in the form of a *shang shang* bird.

⁷⁰ TC: nam kha'i gdon.

⁷¹ TC: in the form of a bird.

⁷² D: bzhin rgyal.

⁷³ D: mig 'changs ba, TC: mig 'chang 'don.

⁷⁴ Translation by Fernand Meyer and Gyurme Dorje, see Yuri Parfionovitch, Fernand Meyer and Gyurme Dorje eds., *Tibetan Medical Paintings, Illustrations to the Blue Beryl Treatise of Sangye Gyamtso (1653-1705)*, vol. 2, p. 261, no. 84, drawings for the 72nd chapter ("Curing child diseases", *byis pa'i nad gso ba*) of *Vaidūrya sngon po*.

⁷⁵ The complete title of *Vaidūrya sngon po* is *gSo ba rig pa'i bstan bcos sman bla'i dgongs rgyan rgyud bzhi'i gsal byed vaidūrya sngon po'i ma lli ka*, see TBRC W1PD3 (Pe cin: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2005), vol. 2, bl. 129-144.

⁷⁶ They are under the heading "*gso ba rig pa'i gdon chen bcu gnyis sam las mkhan gnyis*

fifteen demons appear twice in the same medical painting. Besides the abovementioned position (drawings for Chapter 72), their portrayals, which are basically the same but only in different postures,⁷⁷ constitute the drawings for Chapter 73 ("Curing child diseases caused by demons", *byis pa'i gdon nad gso ba*) of *Vaidūrya sngon po*. Their double presence seems to imply the importance of this second group of demons in treating child disease in the Tibetan medical tradition. In order to verify this assumption, important medical texts, which are listed in the following, were examined:

1. *sByor ba brgya pa dang yan lag brgyad pa'i snying po bsdus pa sog*s by Nagarjuna, *Zla ba mngon dga'*, Vagbhata (Chapter 3: *byis pa'i gdon gso ba*).
2. *Yan lag brgyad pa'i snying po bsdus pa* by Vagbhata (*sDe dge bsTan 'gyur*)
3. *gTSang stod zin thig dang yang thig* by Dar ma mgon po (11 cent.) (Chapter 82: *byis gdon gso ba*).
4. *Yan lag brgyad pa'i snying po bsdus pa* by rNam rgyal grags pa bzang po (1395-1475) (Chapter 88: *byis pa'i nad gso ba*).
5. *gSo rig 'bum bzhi* by dPyad bu khri shes (Chapter 68: *byis pa'i gdon nad gso ba*)
6. *rGyud bzhi* (lcags po ri par ma) (Chapter 73: *byis pa'i gdon gso ba*).
7. *rGyud bzhi'i gsal byed vaidūrya sngon po* by Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653-1705) (Chapter 73: *byis pa'i gdon nad gso ba*).
8. *rGyud bzhi'i 'grel chen las/ man rgyud le'u re gcig nas le'u gya bzhi bar gyi 'grel ba* by TShe rnam (1928-2005) (*gsung 'bum*, section 9: *byis pa gso ba*)

In the related chapters of all these texts, the names of the demons that can bring trouble to children are enumerated. Except for a few exceptions, their names are basically in agreement with those cited in the medical painting mentioned above. Nevertheless, their number differs among twelve, fourteen and fifteen. Compared with the de-

sprul gzhi lha chen bcas bco lnga", which was translated by Fernand Meyer and Gyurme Dorje to "according to medical science, [the following are] the great demons [who influence children and] number twelve, or fifteen with the addition of their two active [emissaries] and Mahādeva who is their manifestational basis", see Yuri Parfionovitch, Fernand Meyer and Gyurme Dorje eds., *Tibetan Medical Paintings, Illustrations to the Blue Beryl Treatise of Sangye Gyamtso (1653-1705)*, vol. 2, p. 261, no. 68.

⁷⁷ They are under the heading "primary and secondary causes of demonic [influence] among child diseases" (*le'u bdun gsum pa byis pa'i gdon gyi rigs*), see *ibid.* no. 115.

pictions in the ritual texts, according to which the number of the type of trouble the demons could bring is mostly not more than two, these texts itemize the symptoms of being possessed by each of these demons, the amount of which varies from four to more than twenty. Besides, none of the texts describes the appearances of these demons, although they are illustrated in the abovementioned medical painting and some of them can be surmised from their names.

Examined from the consistency of the names of the demons as well as the symptoms specified, the above medical texts can be classified into three groups. Text Nos. 1 & 2, the depictions of which are approximately identical and are the most elaborate of all the texts, can be regarded as one group. A careful comparison shows that text Nos. 6-8 share the same source, which is understandable, since they are *rGyud bzhi*, a classic of Tibetan medicine, and its commentaries. Moreover, text Nos. 4-8, the depictions of which are the shortest among the three groups, belong very likely to the same text tradition, in view of the fact that there is very little discrepancy in the delineation concerning the names, the number of the demons and the symptoms of the disease.⁷⁸ Text No. 3, on the other hand, having medium length of description among the three groups, is to be dealt with separately. That many of its delineations exhibit likeness to those of group 1 makes text No. 3 look like a condensed form of text Nos. 1 & 2, with many of their contents being left out. The names of the demons and the symptoms of possession are sorted out in Appendix I. Each name of the demons is preceded by a number according to the sequence of their presence in the texts and is followed by the symptoms resulting from their possession. For the sake of an easier side-by-side comparison, the sequence of the symptoms appearing in the third text group was chosen as a standard in the table, while the symptoms listed in the first and the second text groups were reordered. Interpretations of the symptoms are to be found in Appendix II.

It is observable that the number of the demons relating to child diseases varies among texts. While texts Nos.1-3 (group 1 & 2) introduce twelve demons, text Nos. 4-8 (group 3) put two/three more demons forward in addition to the twelve. On account of a comprehensive examination, their names are listed below.

⁷⁸ It is worth mentioning that text No. 5 is a Bon treatise on Tibetan medicine. Its author dPyad bu khri shes was the son of the legendary founder of Bon-religion gShen rab mi bo, see Namkha'i Norbu, *Zhang bod lo rgus Ti se'i 'od* (Peking: Bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, 1996), p. 65.

group	group 1	group 2	group 3
text	text Nos. 1&2	text 3	text Nos. 4-8
1	skem byed	skem byed	skem ⁷⁹ byed
2	skem byed brjed byed	sa ga	sa ga
3	lug thug gdon	lug thug	lug gdong ⁸⁰
4	khyi yi gdong	khyi gdon	khyi gdong ⁸¹
5	yi dvag	yi dvags	yi dvags ⁸²
6	bya gdon	bya gdon	bya gdong ⁸³
7	srul mo	srul mo	srul mo
8	grang ba'i srul mo	lus hrul	grang ba'i srul mo
9	srul mo long ma	lung ma	srul mo long ba ⁸⁴
10	bzhin rgyan can	bzhin rgyas can	bzhin rgyas ⁸⁵
11	nam gru	nam gru	nam gru
12	nam gru skem mo	nam gru skyem [skem] mo	nam gru skem po ⁸⁶
13	--	--	rgyal po
14	--	--	bsen mo
15	--	--	lha chen po ⁸⁷

Roughly speaking, few discrepancies pertaining to the designations of the first twelve demons are noticeable in the eight medical texts. These twelve demons were further categorized by most texts into "the five possessing a male body" (*skyes pa'i gzugs can lnga*) and "the seven possessing a female body" (*bud med gzugs can bdun*), except for text No. 3 which does not refer to these two expressions at all and text No. 4 which, without specifying the characteristics of the first five demons, only uses the term "possessing a female body" (*bud med lus can*) to introduce the sixth to the twelfth demons. All of the texts in group 3 refer to two additional demons *rgyal po* and *bsen mo*, and except for text No. 4 they entitle both demons "the two workers, messengers *rgyal po* and *bsen mo*" (*las mkhan pho nya rgyal po bsen mo gnyis*). Text No. 8 even cites one more demon "the manifestation basis, the great god" (*sprul gzhi lha chen po*) to make the number of this group of demons total fifteen.

Discernible differences exist between the demons portrayed by medical literatures and those by ritual texts. In regard to the members of the group of demons, only four demons (*skem byed*, *nam gru*, *srul po/srul mo*, *bzhin rgyan*) were recruited by both the ritual and the medical traditions, in which their roles are very different. Apart from the members, the quantity of the demons in both traditions is not entirely identical, either. Compared with the ritual texts that nearly

⁷⁹ Text 4: skyem [skem]; text 5: skem [skem].

⁸⁰ Text 4: gdon [gdong].

⁸¹ Text 4 & 5: gdon [gdong].

⁸² Text 4 & 5: dags [dvags].

⁸³ Text 4: gdon [gdong].

⁸⁴ Text 4: long ba=long ma; text 5: srul mo long ba=srul po'i ling [long] mig.

⁸⁵ Text 4: gshing [bzhing] rgyas.

⁸⁶ Text 4: skem po=skyem mo [skem po]; text 5: skem po=skem pa [po].

⁸⁷ Appears only in text No. 8.

homogeneously name the group of demons "the fifteen great demons of children" (*byis pa'i gdon chen bco lnga*), only one half of the medical literatures are willing to grant the demons a group designation; among them only two have indicated their numbers. While text No. 3, the earliest in terms of the date of composition, referred the demons group as "the twelve great demons of children" (*byis pa'i gdon chen bcu gnyis*), the latest text, No. 8, designated them as "the fifteen great demons of children" (*byis pa'i gdon chen bco lnga*).⁸⁸

The increased amount of demons was probably a development by the medical texts which were completed later. That the first twelve demons are related to child diseases had undoubtedly reached a consensus in the medical literature. At the beginning of chapter 73 of *rGyud bzhi*, the demons of children (*byis pa'i gdon*) were specified as follows:

Their types (*rigs*) are said to be twelve, [namely] the five kinds having a male body and the seven having a female body, [they are] the manifestations of the son of Mahādeva who possesses six faces (*skem byed gzhon nu gdong drug gi sprul pa*).⁸⁹

Similar narrations were found in most of the other texts.⁹⁰ The recruitment of the two demons *rgyal po* and *bsen mo* into this group of twelve demons took place at first in a silent manner. *rGyud bzhi*, as well as texts Nos. 4 and 5, included "the two workers, messengers, *rgyal po* and *bsen mo*" in the individual indications (*bye brag rtags*) of possession of each demon without explaining the reason or their

⁸⁸ Text No. 3: *byis pa'i gdon chen bcu gnyis*; text No. 5: *byis pa'i gdon chen*; text No. 6: *byis pa'i gdon*; text No. 8: *byis pa'i gdon / byis pa'i gdon chen bco lnga*.

⁸⁹ *de rigs skem byed gzhon nu gdong drug gi /sprul pa skyes bu'i gzugs can rnam pa lnga /bud med gzugs can bdun te bcu gnyis bshad/* See *rGyud bzhi (grva thang par ma*, TBRC W29627, Pe cin: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2005), p. 406; *rGyud bzhi (lcags po ri par ma*, TBRC W30134, Leh: T.S. Tashigangpa, 1978), 144v1-2. The appellation *skem byed gzhon nu gdong drug* was already authenticated by text No. 3 to be the son of Mahādeva: *skyem [skem] byed gzhon nu gdong drug de/ dbang phyug chen po'i sras su btsas/* see *Dar ma mgon po, gTSang stod zin thig dang yang thig* (TBRC W2DB13635, Pe cin: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2006), p. 348.

⁹⁰ Text Nos. 1 & 2: *sngon gyi skem byed bsrung ba'i phyir/ gdon ni skyes pa'i gzugs can lnga/ bud med kyi ni gzugs can bdun/ lha chen po yi sprul pa yin/* see Nagarjuna, *Zla ba mngon dga'*, Vagbhata, *sByor ba brgya pa dang yan lag brgyad pa'i snying po bsdus pa sogs* (TBRC W00PD1011354, Pe cin: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2006), p. 575; text No. 4: *byis pa'i gdon nad gdong drug sprul pa ni/* see *Yan lag brgyad pa'i snying po bsdus pa*, in *bsTan 'gyur (sDe dge*, TBRC W23703, Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Choedhey, Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1982-1985), vol. 198, 52v6; text No. 5: *gdon ni byis sba'i [pa'i] gdon chen skyem [skem] byed gzhon nu yi/ sprul pa skyes pa'i gzugs can rnam pa lnga/ bu mad [bud med] gzugs can bdun dang bcu gnyis yod//* see *dPyad bu khri shes, gSo rig 'bum bzhi* (TBRC W1GS4, Pe cin: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2006), p. 493.

derivation. A short passage at the beginning of the preceding chapter 72 (*byis pa'i nad gso ba*) of *rGyud bzhi* helps to clarify the relationship between the twelve demons and the two added later:

Regarding the circumstances relating to demons, although there are many [demons], the demons of children number twelve, which are produced by the two workers, messengers, *rgyal po* and *bsen mo*.⁹¹

This passage simultaneously confirms the amount of the demons of children to be twelve. *Vaidūrya sngon po* made a further attempt to remove the vagueness concerning the identity of the two demons *rgyal po* and *bsen mo* by quoting an earlier text. Exactly the same passage was also cited by one other famous medical literature *Mes po'i zhal lung* to introduce the types (*rigs*) of demons relating to children (*byis pa'i gdon*).⁹²

It is said in *brGyad pa'i snying po bsdu pa* that the twelve demons of children are the manifestations of the son of Mahādeva who possesses six faces, [namely] the five having a male body and the seven having a female body. [If added by] the two workers, messengers, [their number would come to] fourteen. *rGyal [po]* and *bsen [mo]* both are supplemented from other places.⁹³

The last sentence of this passage would surely arouse the curiosity of readers. A passage in the beginning section of the preceding chapter 72 (*byis pa'i nad gso ba*) of *Vaidūrya sngon po* appears to be a good explanation of the query where the two demons come from.

⁹¹ *gdon rkyen mang yang byis gdon bcu gnyis yod/ las mkhan pho nya rgyal bsen gnyis kyis byed//* see *rGyud bzhi (grova thang par ma, TBRC W29627)*, p. 396.

⁹² Blo gros rgyal po, Blo bzang chos grags, dKon mchog chos grags, *Mes po'i zhal lung* (TBRC W30438, Pe cin: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2005), vol. 2, pp. 429-430. Blo bzang chos grags, one of the authors of *Mes po'i zhal lung*, was the fifth Dalai Lama's court physician. For *Mes po'i zhal lung* and the role of Blo bzang chos grags, see Olaf Czaja, "The Making of the Blue Beryl—Some Remarks on the Textual Sources of the Famous Commentary of Sangye Gyatsho (1653-1705)", in Schrempf, Mona ed., *Soundings in Tibetan Medicine, Anthropological and Historical Perspectives* (Brill: Leiden/Boston, 2007), p. 347, fn.6, p. 348, fn. 10, p. 350, fn. 19, pp. 357, 361.

⁹³ *de yang brgyad pa'i snying po bsdu pa/ skem byed gzhon nu gdong drug gi sprul pa skyes bu'i gzugs can lnga bud med kyi gzugs bdun te byis gdon bcu gnyis/ las mkhan pho nya gnyis te bcu bzhi stel rgyal bsen gnyis ni gzhan nas kha bkang [read bskang] ste bshad ces dang/* see Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *rGyud bzhi'i gsal byed vaidūrya sngon po*, vol. 2, p. 1085. The text *brGyad pa'i snying po bsdu pa* cited in this passage is not the same as text Nos. 1&2.

Regarding the circumstances relating to demons, although there are many [demons], in fact the demons of children number twelve and their transformer the two workers, messengers: *rgyal po* is the owner of property (*dkor bdag*) who belongs to the Eight Classes of Gods and Spirits (*sde brgyad*) and *bsen mo* is a type of female demon. The fourteen [demons] explicitly indicated here are harmed by those who say that together with the manifestation basis, the great god [the number of the demons] amounts to fifteen.⁹⁴

Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho has not only elucidated the origin of the two demons, but also expressed his objection to include the manifestation basis, the great god (*sprul gzhi lha chen po*) into this group of demons. This objection suggests the existence of the statement that the group of demons numbers fifteen, which should already have become quite popular in the seventeenth century. The same position was claimed in *Mes po'i zhal lung*, in which it says:

Generally speaking, "the fifteen great demons of children" are said to be known by all, nevertheless, here, in the perspective of this very great tantra, the demons of children are said to be fourteen: the five possessing a male body, the seven possessing a female body, and the two workers, messengers *rgyal po* and *bsen mo*.⁹⁵

The "fifteen great demons of children known by all" indicated in this paragraph should be equivalent to those illustrated in the medical painting under the heading "the fifteen great demons which influence children, as generally known" (*byis pa'i gdon chen bco lnga yongs grags*), i.e., the fifteen great demons of children depicted in the ritual texts discussed above. Their designation could have been interfered with by some authors of medical literatures in efforts to make the

⁹⁴ *gdon rkyen ni mang yang ngo bo byis gdon bcu gnyis yod cing/ de'i kha bsgyur las mkhan pho nya rgyal po ste sde brgyad kyi khongs su gtogs pa'i dkor bdag dang/ bsen mo ste mo gdon gyi rigs gnyis/ 'dir dngos bstan bcu bzhi/ sprul gzhi lha chen po bcas bco lngar bshad pa rnam kyis 'tshe bar byed pa* Similar narrations on *rgyal po* and *bsen mo* are found in a later text *rGyud bzhi'i brda' bkrol rnam rgyal a ru ra'i phreng ba'i mdzes rgyan*. In the beginning of its chapter 72 (*byis nad gso ba*) it says: *las mkhan pho nya ni kha bsgyur byed pa po/ rgyal ni dkor bdag sen mo ni mo gdon gyi rigs te mo 'dre dang gson 'drer grags sol/* see Lung rigs bstan dar (birth 18 cent.), *rGyud bzhi'i brda' bkrol rnam rgyal a ru ra'i phreng ba'i mdzes rgyan* (TBRC W29482, Pe cin: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2005), p. 347.

⁹⁵ *spyir yongs grags su byis pa'i gdon chen bco lnga zhes bshad kyang/ 'dir rgyud chen 'di nyid kyi dgongs par byis gdon skyes pa'i gzugs can lnga/ bud med kyi gzugs can bdun/ las mkhan pho nya rgyal bsen gnyis te bcu bzhi bshad pa*, see Blo gros rgyal po, Blo bzang chos grags, *dKon mchog chos grags, Mes po'i zhal lung*, vol. 2, p. 431.

group of demons described in the medical tradition number fifteen. The result of such endeavor was that, in addition to the traditionally acknowledged twelve demons and the later accepted two workers/messengers by authoritative medical works, "the great god" (*lha chen*) was taken in the group.

Although both *Vaidūrya sngon po* and *Mes po'i zhal lung* recognize only fourteen demons, the assertion of fifteen demons was still maintained in later medical writings. For example, text No. 8 says:

As is said in *sNying po bsdu pa* that "[they are] manifested by the great god", the fourteen great demons of children, having been counted together with the manifestation basis, the great god, become the fifteen great demons of children.⁹⁶

The verse in *sNying po bsdu pa* was also cited by another medical text *rGyud bzhi'i brda' bkrol nam rgyal a ru ra'i phreng ba'i mdzes rgyan*, which was written around the eighteenth century, to support the proposition of the fifteen great demons. The second sentence of its chapter 73 (*byis gdon gso ba*) reads:

It is said that there are the well-known fifteen demons of children; however, here, the above twelve [demons] together with *rgyal po* and *bsen mo* both make fourteen. Moreover, it is said in *sNying po bsdu pa* that "[they are] manifested by the great god". Together with the manifestation basis, there are fifteen.⁹⁷

Nevertheless, none of the texts that have included the manifestation basis, the great god in the group of demons, have devoted space to describe the symptoms of the children when being possessed by it. This confirms that the great god was in fact constrainedly taken into the group.

A main reason why later medical writings still concede the fifteen demons could be that authors of the significant medical literatures *Vaidūrya sngon po* and *Mes po'i zhal lung* both somehow support the statement of the fifteen demons. Although *Mes po'i zhal lung* claimed that according to *rGyud bzhi*, the number of the demons should be fourteen, it continued in the following section to expound the way of

⁹⁶ /*snying po bsdu pa las/ lha chen gyis ni sprul pa yin/ /zhes pa ltar byis pa'i gdon chen bcu bzhi dang sprul gzhi lha chen po bcas bgrangs nas byis pa'i gdon chen bco lnga'o/* see TShe rnam, *rGyud bzhi'i 'grel chen*, in *gSung 'bum/ TShe rnam* (TBRC W29701, [lHa sa]: [s.n.], [2004?]), vol. 5 (cha), 92v1-2.

⁹⁷ *yongs grags byis gdon bco lnga bshad kyang 'dir gong gi bcu gnyis dang rgyal bsen gnyis bcas bcu bzhi bshad la snying po bsdu pa/ lha chen gyis ni sprul pa yin zhes pa sprul gzhi bcas bco lnga yod/* see Lung rigs bstan dar, *rGyud bzhi'i brda' bkrol nam rgyal a ru ra'i phreng ba'i mdzes rgyan*, p. 351.

mending by casting off substitutes, etc, in which the fifteen demons illustrated in the ritual text system are included. It explains in detail about the form and the color of the substitutes for each of the fifteen demons as well as the direction of their placement in the ritual, so that the readers would be impressed by the author's knowledge of ritual application.⁹⁸ In the same way, the author of *Vaidūrya sngon po* demonstrated his proficiency in rituals for eliminating hindrance. In his other work *Man ngag yon tan rgyud kyi lhan thabs zug rngu'i tsha gdun sel ba'i katpu ra dus min 'chi zhag gcod pa'i ral gri* Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho also explicated the form and the color of the substitutes to cope with each of the symptoms, plus the direction in which the substitutes should be placed in the ritual.⁹⁹ Surprisingly enough, Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho said in the beginning of this chapter (No. 106: *byis gdon gso ba*), while explaining the type of the demons of children (*byis gdon*), that:

Concerning the type, it was taught that there are twelve, [namely] the five male demons and the seven female demons. Moreover, together with the workers *rgyal po* and *bsen mo* both, [as well as] the manifestation basis, the demons of children are renowned as fifteen.¹⁰⁰

Instead of being consistent with his own position in *Vaidūrya sngon po*, Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho approved of the argument, that was opposed by himself, here in *Dus min 'chi zhag gcod pa'i ral gri*. This answers the question why the group of demons illustrated in the medical painting in accordance with the Tibetan medical system totals fifteen. It's no wonder that this statement has been maintained by authors of medical literatures in later generations.

Concluding Remarks

The designation "the fifteen great demons of children" denotes two different groups of demons in Tibetan literature. One is often referred to in Tibetan ritual texts and is well known by many Tibetan

⁹⁸ Blo gros rgyal po, Blo bzang chos grags, dKon mchog chos grags, *Mes po'i zhal lung*, vol. 2, pp. 432-433.

⁹⁹ Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Man ngag yon tan rgyud kyi lhan thabs zug rngu'i tsha gdun sel ba'i katpu ra dus min 'chi zhag gcod pa'i ral gri* (TBRC W23739, Leh: T. S. Tashigangpa, 1978), 151r2-151v3.

¹⁰⁰ */rigs ni pho gdon lnga dang mo gdon bdun/ /bcu gnyis gsungs shing las byed rgyal bsen gnyis/ sbrul gzhi bcas pa byis gdon bco lngar grags/* see Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Man ngag yon tan rgyud kyi lhan thabs zug rngu'i tsha gdun sel ba'i katpu ra dus min 'chi zhag gcod pa'i ral gri*, 150v4-5.

scholars. The other which appears occasionally in Tibetan medical literatures is however not unanimously acknowledged. Compared with the former group of demons, which through its existence in the Tibetan Tunhuang texts as well as in the literature of rediscovered treasure (*gter ma*) is proved to have a long tradition; the latter was formed much later in a gradual manner. Instead of being fifteen all along like the former group, the number of the demons of the latter group grew from the conventional twelve, to fourteen, and eventually to fifteen. No later than the seventeenth century the group of fifteen demons was specified in the Tibetan medical literature. Its formation was undeniably a consequence of the influence by the renowned designation "the fifteen great demons of children". Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, the famous author of Tibetan medical writings, contributed to this development. Whether he was the originator needs further investigation. Nevertheless, attributable to his important role in the Tibetan history, he, with his equivocal attitude in his different works, has preserved on the one hand the tradition of the authoritative medical literature *rGyud bzhi*, and on the other hand fostered an innovative system which has continued until the present age.

Appendix I

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Texts 1&2	Text 3	Texts 4-8
<p>1. skem byed -yang dang yang du mgo bo rdegs -mig gcig mchi ma 'dzag</p> <p>-so 'cha' -phyogs gcig nyams shing lus rengs la/ rngul bcas skye¹⁰¹ ba rengs pa -bshang ba khu tshur la bcang -nu zho la mi dga' -skad gsang nyams -sngangs shing ngu -tshil khrag dri bro -mig ni gnyi ga dmar -yang lag nyes nyams pa'am 'chi ba kho nar byed par 'gyur -kha yo -kha chu skyugs pa -mi bzad par gyen du blta -yid mi dga' -mkhur tshos mig dang smin ma gcig g.yo</p> <p>2. skem byed brjed byed</p> <p>-dran pa nyams -lbu bar skyug -nu ma rang lce so yis 'debs -gyen du lta -yang dang yang du skra 'bal -bshang dang gci ba 'byin -rke ba 'gugs pa -rnam par 'dud cing glal -rkang lag smin mas gar yang byed</p>	<p>1. skem byed -mgo bo sdebs [rdeb] -mig nas mchi 'dzag -lus dang skye [ske] rengs -nu zho 'bor -skad nyams -ngu la sngags [dngangs] -ljag [zhag] tshil dri bro -mig gnyis dmar -'chi'am yan lag nyams par byed</p> <p>2. sa ga -gnyid yar -dran nyams -lbu skyug -nu ma bzas -gyen lta -skra 'bal ci -bshang lci [gci] 'byin -ske gug</p>	<p>1. skem¹⁰² byed -mgo rdeb¹⁰³ -mig gcig mchi¹⁰⁴ ma 'dzag -rngul mang -skyig -so 'cha' -mjing pa rengs¹⁰⁵ -bshang kha sbar mos 'chang¹⁰⁶ -zho mi 'thung¹⁰⁷</p> <p>2. sa ga -gnyid med -dran nyams¹⁰⁸ -lbu bar¹⁰⁹ skyug -nu ma lce la sos 'debs¹¹⁰ -gnam du blta¹¹¹</p>

¹⁰¹ Text 1: skyi.

¹⁰² Text 4: skyem [skem]; text 5: skom [skem].

¹⁰³ Text 4: rdebs [rdeb].

¹⁰⁴ Text 4 & 5: 'chi [mchi].

¹⁰⁵ Text 4: mjing=jing [mjing], text 5: mjing=jing; text 5: rengs=rings [rengs].

¹⁰⁶ Text 4: bshang kha=gshang [bshang] khar, sbar mos=spar mo; text 5: sbar=spar; text 7: bshang kha=bshang kha sogs la.

¹⁰⁷ Text 5: zho mi 'thung=nu mi 'byung ['thung].

¹⁰⁸ Text 8: snyams.

¹⁰⁹ Text 4: lbu ba; text 5: sbu [lbu] bar.

¹¹⁰ Text 5: sos 'debs=so 'deb [sos 'debs]; text 6 & 8: sos 'debs=so 'debs; text 7: lce la=lce la sogs par.

¹¹¹ Text 4: gnam du blta=gnam la lta [blta]; text 5: gnam du blta=gnam (du) lta.

-kun tu gyo -gnyid yang rims -khrag ni rnag gi dri bro		
3. lug thug gdon -mkhun -'khru -slon par byed pa -lbu ba skyugs pa -sbo zhing rkang pa lag pa dag 'dar -mig gcig skrang pa yan -lud pa skyigs bus 'debs -chang pa sdom -skom dad che -gnyid yar -so yis mchu gnon -yan lag sdud rengs -lug thug dri bro -skad gsang dma' -mdog mi sdug -gyen du lta zhing dgod pa -bar du 'gugs -rims kyis 'debs -brgyal	3. lug thug -'khun -khru ['khru] -skyug -'dar -sags [dngangs] pa -skom -cham 'debs -gnyid yar -ma mchu sos gnon -yan lag bsdud ¹¹² rengs -lug thug dri ma bro	3. lug gdong ¹¹³ -'khun -sbo ¹¹⁴ 'khru skyug -rkang lag 'dar -glo mang ¹¹⁵ -mig dmar skyig ¹¹⁶ -khu tshur 'chang ¹¹⁷
4. khyi yi gdong -'dar -rngul -mig ni 'dzums pa -lce dang so mchu dang rkan sgra 'byin -skyugs -bshang ba'i dri 'byung -khyi skad 'byin -ba spu ldang ba -rgyab tu gug	4. khyi gdon -'dar -rngul -mig 'dzum -bshang ba'i dri 'byung -khyi skad 'don	4. khyi gdong ¹¹⁸ -lus 'dar -rngul -mig ¹¹⁹ 'dzum -rkan rdeb ¹²⁰ -'khru skyug -dri ma che bar 'ong
5. yi dvags -yang yang sngang ¹²¹ -'khru zhing slon byed -lud pa lu	5. yi dvags -sngangs -'khru slon -lud pa lu	5. yi dvags ¹²² -dngangs shing ¹²³ -'khru skyug byed pa ¹²⁴ -glo lu ¹²⁵

¹¹² reads sdud.

¹¹³ Text 4: gdon [gdong].

¹¹⁴ Text 4: lbo [sbo]; text 5: sbos; text 7: sbo la.

¹¹⁵ Text 5: glo mang=skyigs bu glo mang.

¹¹⁶ Text 4: skyig=skrang [skyig]; text 5: skyig=skrang.

¹¹⁷ Text 5: bcang.

¹¹⁸ Text 4 & 5: gdon [gdong].

¹¹⁹ Text 4: mi [mig].

¹²⁰ Text 4: sdebs [rdeb]; text 5: rdebs [rdeb].

¹²¹ Text 1: sngang [sngangs].

¹²² Text 4 & 5: dags [dvags].

¹²³ Text 4: rnang cing [dngangs shing]; text 5: bsngang dang 'ong zhing skyugs pa dang.

¹²⁴ Text 5 miss.

<p>-glal -lus ni bskyod cing gyo ba dang skem zhing rengs -ba spu ldang -glo bur ngu -skom -mi ro'i dri dang ldan -khu tshur sdom -rims kyis 'debs -mdog mi sdug -mchi ma 'dzag</p>	<p>-gyal -spu ldang -ngu -skom -mi ro'i dri ldan -khu tshur sdebs [rdeg]</p>	<p>-gyal mang -kha kha -sha lus skam¹²⁶</p>
<p>6. bya gdon -mtshan mo skye la nyin mo 'bri -'khru bar byed -lce rkan lkog mar rma 'byung -lus lhod -'jigs -bya yi dri dang ldan -thor bur na -tsha la gnag tshigs dag tu ni yang yang 'byung -kha'am bshang sgo 'gags pa -rims kyis 'debs</p>	<p>6. bya gdon -'khru bar byed -lce rkan lkog mar rma 'byung -lus lhod -'jigs -bya dri bro ba</p>	<p>6. bya gdong¹²⁷ -tsha ba skye -'khru -lce lkog rkan la 'brum thor 'ong¹²⁸</p>
<p>7. srul mo -'khru ba -skyigs bu -skom -slon zhing 'dar ba -mtshan mo gnyid yar -gcin ni sri ba -lto sbos -lus snyom -lus lhod ba -sbu gshor ba -kha ltar dri ni mnam pa</p>	<p>7. srul mo -khru¹²⁹ -skyug par byed -slon 'dar -mtshan gnyid yar -gcin skom -sbo</p>	<p>7. srul mo -'khru skyug -skyigs bu¹³⁰ -skom dad che</p>
<p>8. grang ba'i srul mo -'dar ba -zur gyis blta ba -'khru la rgyu ma 'khrog -yan lag logs gcig grang ba dang cig shos dro</p>	<p>8. lus hrul -'dar -zur mig blta -'khru rgyu 'khru -lus gzhogs gcig dro gzhogs gcig grang</p>	<p>8. grang ba'i srul mo -lus 'dar -mig zur blta¹³¹ -rgyu 'khrog¹³² -ngos gcig tsha la ngos gcig grang¹³³</p>

¹²⁵ Text 4: glo lu=lbo [glo] lu; text 5:glo lus [lu].

¹²⁶ Text 5: skem.

¹²⁷ Text 4: gdon [gdong].

¹²⁸ Text 4: lkog=lkog [kyog]; text 5: lkog=skog [kyog], rkan=rgan [rkan]; text 6 & 7: lkog=kyog; text 8: 'brum thor 'ong=thor pa 'ong.

¹²⁹ read 'khru.

¹³⁰ Text 4: skyigs lbo [bu]; text 5: skyig [skyigs] sbos.

¹³¹ Text 4: lta [blta]; text 5: lta; text 7: mig zur blta=mig zur gyis blta.

¹³² Text 7: rgyu ma 'khrog.

¹³³ Text 5: ngos cig tsha la nges [ngos] cig grang; text 6: ngos cig tsha la ngos cig grang.

-ngu -skom -zhag ltar dri ni mnam	-ngu -skom -zhag dri bro	
9. srul mo long ma -mthong ba nyams -mig skrang -mig na gya' -slon pa -glo bar gyur pa -lud pa -nu zho 'gras -gnyid chung -nya yi dri dang ldan yang na dri ni skyur bcas -rims -bshang ba sla zhing mdog mi sdug dri nga bskus pas myur du skam -skyigs bu -mi dgod -mdog mi sdug/ mdog nyams -nga ro rtsub	9. lung ma -mthong ba nyams -mig skrang -mig na -gnyid chung -nya dri bro	9. srul mo long ba ¹³⁴ -mig mi gsal la skrang ¹³⁵ -'khru skyug -tsha skye -glo lu -zho mi 'dod
10. bzhin rgyan can -rkang pa dang lag pa gdong ni mdzes pa -yi ga 'chus -rtsa ni nag por snang ba yis lto ba khyab -yan lag na ¹³⁶ -ba gcin lta bu'i dri 'byung -rims kyis 'debs	10. bzhin rgyas can -rkang pa dang lag pa gdong mdzes -yi ga 'chus -rtsa ris nag -gcin dri bro	10. bzhin rgyas ¹³⁷ -bzhin ¹³⁸ mdzes -tsha skye -zas mi 'dod -lto ba rtsa yi dra ba nag pos khyab ¹³⁹
11. nam gru -bshang ba sngo zhing sla ba -skyigs bu -kha ni yo zhing dmar ba -gnag cing sngo ba -lud pa lu -lug thug drir ldan -rims 'debs skem -mig dang rna ba sna med cing mi ¹⁴⁰ 'gul	11. nam gru -bshang ba sngo -skyigs -kha yo dmar -gnag cing sngo ba -glo -lug thug dri ldan	11. nam gru -sngon por 'khru ¹⁴¹ -skyigs bu -kha yo -tsha ba skye ¹⁴² -pags ¹⁴³ mdog sngo

¹³⁴ Text 4: long ba=long ma; text 5: srul mo long ba=srul po'i ling [long] mig.

¹³⁵ Text 4: skrang=sgrang; text 5: mig [mi] gsal sgrang pa 'ong.

¹³⁶ Text 1: ni.

¹³⁷ Text 4: gshing [bzhing] rgyas.

¹³⁸ Text 4: gzhin [bzhin].

¹³⁹ Text 5: rtsa yi=rtsi'i [rtsa yi]; text 6 & 8: lto ba=lto la; text 7: lto ba rtsa yi=lto ba la rtsa'i.

¹⁴⁰ Text 2: mig.

¹⁴¹ Text 4: por=mo [por]; text 5: por=po; text 7: mdog sngon por 'khru.

¹⁴² Text 8: skyes.

¹⁴³ Text 4 & 5: lpags [pags]; text 6 & 8: lpags.

<p>12. nam gru skem mo</p> <p>-skra 'byi -skad gsang zhum -bshang ba kha dog sna tshogs 'byung -ngu -bya rgod dri ldan -lto bar rtsa yi mdud pa chags -lce yi dbus ni dma' ba -rkan ni gnag gyur de spang bya¹⁴⁴ -kha zas mang du zos kyang byis pa gang zhig lus skem byed -lus kun ni rims kyis 'debs par 'gyur ba -zas la mi dga' -mdog mi sdug -yun ring na bar byed pa -lto ba rmen bu zlum po 'byung -skom pas nyen -mig nyams pa</p>	<p>12. nam gru skyem [skem] mo</p> <p>-skra 'byid ma -bshang ba kha dog sna tshogs 'byung -ngu -bya rgod dri dang ldan -lto bar rtsa'i mdud pa chags -lce yi dbus ni dma' ba -rkan ni gnag 'gyur de spang bya -kha zas mang zos byis pa skem</p>	<p>12. nam gru skem po¹⁴⁵</p> <p>-tsha ba skye¹⁴⁶ ba -skra 'byi¹⁴⁷ -skad chung -kha dog sna tshogs 'khru¹⁴⁸</p>
<p>--</p>	<p>--</p>	<p>13. rgyal po -dngangs¹⁴⁹ -'dar -mig ldog¹⁵⁰ -tho rangs ngu¹⁵¹</p>
<p>--</p>	<p>--</p>	<p>14. bsen mo -bying¹⁵² -'thibs -tsha skye¹⁵³ -srod dus ngu¹⁵⁴</p>

¹⁴⁴ Text 2: gyur='gyur; spang=sbang.

¹⁴⁵ Text 4: skem po=skyem mo [skem po]; text 5: skem po=skem pa [po].

¹⁴⁶ Text 5: skya [skye].

¹⁴⁷ Text 4, 6, 7, 8: 'byid; text 5: 'bya ['byi].

¹⁴⁸ Text 5: kha dag [dog] sna tshags [tshogs] 'khru.

¹⁴⁹ Text 4: sngang [dngangs]; text 5: bsngang.

¹⁵⁰ Text 5: bzlog [ldog].

¹⁵¹ Text 7: tho rangs ngus [ngu].

¹⁵² Text 5: byin [bying]; text 7: byings [bying].

¹⁵³ Text 5: bskyed.

¹⁵⁴ Text 8: ngu=na.

Appendix II

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Text 1&2	Text 3	Text 4-8
<p>1. skem byed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -head beats repeatedly -one eye drips tears <p>-grind teeth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -one side (of body) gets weak and body paralyzed, neck with sweat and paralyzed, -shit held in clenched hands -dislike mother's milk -voice gets weaker -terrified and cry -with the smell of fat and blood -both eyes are red -extremities detrimentally degenerated or simply die -mouth crooked -vomit saliva -irresistibly look upwards -mind displeased -cheeks, eyes and one eye-brow move 	<p>1. skem byed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -head beats -tears drip from eyes <p>-body and neck paralyzed</p> <p>-reject mother's milk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -voice gets weaker -cry and terrified -with the smell of fat <p>-both eyes are red</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -die or extremities degenerated 	<p>1. skem byed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -head beats -one eye drips tears -sweat a lot -hiccuping -grind teeth -neck paralyzed <p>-palms hold excrement</p> <p>-doesn't drink mother's milk</p>
<p>2. skem byed brjed byed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -memory degenerated -vomit bubbles -bite mother's nipple and own tongue with teeth -look upwards -pluck hairs repeatedly -emit excrement and urine -neck crooked -bow down fully and yawn -hands dance and feet trip, eyebrows raised -moving all the time -catching an infectious disease in sleep -with the smell of blood and pus 	<p>2. sa ga</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -not going to sleep -memory degenerated -vomit bubbles -bite mother's nipple <p>-look upwards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -pluck hairs -emit excrement and urine -neck crooked 	<p>2. sa ga</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -sleepless -memory degenerated -vomit bubbles -bite mother's nipple and (own) tongue with teeth -look at the sky
<p>3. lug thug gdon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -groan -diarrhea -vomiting -vomit bubbles -upper belly, arms and legs tremble <p>-one eye swelling above</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -eject phlegm by hiccuping 	<p>3. lug thug</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -groan -diarrhea -vomiting <p>-trembling</p>	<p>3. lug gdong</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -groan -diarrhea with vomiting <p>-arms and legs tremble</p> <p>-cough a lot</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -eyes are red, hiccuping

<p>-with binding fist</p> <p>-with great thirst</p> <p>-not going to sleep</p> <p>-teeth bite lips</p> <p>-limbs holding together and paralyzed</p> <p>-with the smell of a ram</p> <p>-low voice</p> <p>-with unpleasant color</p> <p>-look upward and laugh</p> <p>-crooked in the middle</p> <p>-catching an infectious disease</p> <p>-faint</p>	<p>-terrified</p> <p>-thirsty</p> <p>-catching colds</p> <p>-not going to sleep</p> <p>-teeth bite lower lip</p> <p>-limbs holding together and paralyzed</p> <p>-with the smell of a ram</p>	<p>-holding fist</p>
<p>4. khyi yi gdong</p> <p>-trembling</p> <p>-sweating</p> <p>-eyes closed</p> <p>-tongue, teeth, lips and palate make sounds</p> <p>-vomiting</p> <p>-emit the smell of excrement</p> <p>-produce the voice of a dog</p> <p>-body hairs rise up</p> <p>-back crooked</p>	<p>4. khyi gdong</p> <p>-trembling</p> <p>-sweating</p> <p>-eyes closed</p> <p>-emit the smell of excrement</p> <p>-produce the voice of a dog</p>	<p>4. khyi gdong</p> <p>-body trembling</p> <p>-sweating</p> <p>-eyes closed</p> <p>-make sounds with palate</p> <p>-diarrhea with vomiting</p> <p>-emit odor</p>
<p>5. yi dvags</p> <p>-terrified repeatedly</p> <p>-diarrhea and vomiting</p> <p>-cough and spitting out phlegm</p> <p>-yawning</p> <p>-body moves and shivers, emaciated and paralyzed</p> <p>-body hairs rise up</p> <p>-cry suddenly</p> <p>-thirsty</p> <p>-having the smell of a corpse</p> <p>-clenching the fist</p> <p>-catching an infectious disease</p> <p>-with unpleasant color</p> <p>-drip tears</p>	<p>5. yi dvags</p> <p>-terrified</p> <p>-diarrhea and vomiting</p> <p>-cough and spitting out phlegm</p> <p>-yawning</p> <p>-body hairs rise up</p> <p>-cry</p> <p>-thirsty</p> <p>-having the smell of a corpse</p> <p>-clenching the fist</p>	<p>5. yi dvags</p> <p>-terrified</p> <p>-diarrhea with vomiting</p> <p>-coughing</p> <p>-yawning a lot</p> <p>-not speaking at all</p> <p>-muscle and body become skinny</p>
<p>6. bya gdong</p> <p>-fever rises at night, diminishes at daytime</p> <p>-diarrhea</p> <p>-tongue, palate and throat have lesions</p> <p>-body is lazy</p> <p>-frightened</p> <p>-having the smell of a bird</p> <p>-ill dispersedly</p>	<p>6. bya gdong</p> <p>-diarrhea</p> <p>-tongue, palate and throat have lesions</p> <p>-body is lazy</p> <p>-frightened</p> <p>-with the smell of a bird</p>	<p>6. bya gdong</p> <p>-having a fever</p> <p>-diarrhea</p> <p>-tongue, throat, and palate have lesions¹⁵⁵</p>

¹⁵⁵ Text 6 & 7: tongue crooked, palate has lesions.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - joints often become black when having a fever -mouth or anus being blocked -catching an infectious disease 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7. srul mo -diarrhea -hiccuping -thirsty -vomiting and trembling -not going to sleep at night -urine retained -swollen belly -body is dull -body is lazy -shaggy hair -halitosis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7. srul mo -diarrhea -vomiting -vomiting and trembling -not going to sleep at night -lack of urine -swelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7. srul mo -diarrhea with vomiting -hiccuping -with great thirst
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8. grang ba'i srul mo -trembling -look askance -diarrhea with intestinal rumbling -one side of the limbs are cold and the other side is hot -crying -thirsty -with oil-like smell 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8. lus hrul -trembling -look askance -intestinal diarrhea -one side of the body is hot, the other side is cold -crying -thirsty -with the smell of oil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8. grang ba'i srul mo -body trembles -eyes look askance -intestinal rumbling -one side (of the body) is hot, the other side is cold
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9. srul mo long ma -vision deteriorated -eyes swollen -stain in eyes -vomiting -coughing -having mucus -hates mother's milk -sleep little -having the smell of a fish or acid smell -catching an infectious disease -excrement is thin and with unpleasant color, bad smell, dry quickly by smearing -hiccuping -no laughter -body color unpleasant/faded away -howling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9. lung ma -vision deteriorated -eyes swollen -eyes ache -sleep little -with the smell of a fish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9. srul mo long ba -eyes unclear and swollen -diarrhea with vomiting -having a fever -coughing -dislikes mother's milk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10. bzhin rgyan can -beautiful legs, arms and face -feel repulsion in swallowing food -black vein artery filled in belly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10. bzhin rgyas can -beautiful legs, arms, and face -feel repulsion in swallowing food -vein artery in black shape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10. bzhing rgyas -beautiful face -having a fever -dislikes food -belly filled with black net of vein artery

-limbs ache -emit smell of urine -catching an infectious disease	-with the smell of urine	
11. nam gru -blue and thin excrement -hiccuping -mouth crooked and red -(skin color) black and green -cough and spitting out phlegm -having the smell of a ram -catching an infectious disease and emaciated -eyes and ears without guidance and motion	11. nam gru -blue excrement -hiccuping -mouth crooked and red -(skin color) black and green -coughing -having the smell of a ram	11. nam gru -diarrhea with blue excrement -hiccuping -mouth crooked -having a fever -skin color green
12. nam gru skem mo -growing bald -voice cowardly -multicolored excrement -crying -having the smell of a vulture -vein knot appears in belly -tongue low in the middle -palate black and drenched -eat a lot but become thin -whole body catches infectious diseases -dislike food -color unpleasant -ill for a long time -round indurate sore appears on belly -afflicted by thirsty -vision deteriorated	12. nam gru skyem [skem] mo -growing bald -multicolored excrement -crying -having the smell of a vulture -vein knot appears in belly -tongue low in the middle -palate black and drenched -eat a lot but become thin	12. nam gru skem po ¹⁵⁶ -having a fever -growing bald -low voice -diarrhea with multicolored excrement
--	--	13. rgyal po -terrified -trembling -eyes rolling over -crying at daybreak
--	--	14. bsen mo -dull -gloom -having a fever -crying in the evening

¹⁵⁶ Text 4: skyem mo [skem po].

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The Scrupulous Use of Gifts for the Saṅgha: Self-Ennoblement Through the Ledger in Tibetan Autobiography¹

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Introduction

 It is now well known that the large Buddhist monasteries of premodern Asia, like their Christian counterparts in Europe, were deeply enmeshed in economic matters.² Concurrently, Buddhist and Christian monks themselves frame the involvement of clerics in finances as a dangerous union of renunciation and wealth

¹ The author would like to thank Khenpo Kunga Sherab (University of Toronto) for his assistance in this project.

² Our understanding of the intricate economic affairs of Indian Buddhist monasteries is due in large part to the scholarship of Gregory Schopen. See in particular his papers included in *Buddhist Monks and Business Matters: Still More Papers on Monastic Buddhism in India* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004). Also see Jonathan A. Silk, *Managing Monks: Administrators and Administrative Roles in Indian Buddhist Monasticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). Two important sources on economy in Chinese Buddhist monasticism are Jacques Gernet, *Les aspects économiques du Bouddhisme dans la Société Chinoise du V^e au X^e siècle* (Saïgon: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1956)—translated into English as Jacques Gernet, *Buddhism in Chinese Society: An Economic History from the Fifth to the Tenth Centuries*, trans. Franciscus Verellen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995)—and Michael J. Walsh, *Sacred Economies: Buddhist Monasticism & Territoriality in Medieval China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010). On Tibetan Buddhist monastic economy, see Melvyn C. Goldstein, "The Circulation of Estates in Tibet: Reincarnation, Land and Politics," *Journal of Asian Studies* 32, no. 3 (1973): 445–455; Robert J. Miller, "Buddhist Monastic Economy: The Jisa Mechanism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 3, no. 4 (1961): 427–438; Georges B. J. Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping: The Education of a Tibetan Buddhist Monk* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 42–44; Giuseppe Tucci, *The Religions of Tibet*, trans. Geoffrey Samuel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 158–162; and Martin A. Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State in Tibetan Buddhism: The Foundations of Authority in Gelukpa Monasticism* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 61ff. Also, see Christian Jahoda's "Socio-Economic Organisation of Village Communities and Monasteries in Spiti, H.P., India: The Case of a Religious Administrative Unit (*chos gzhis*)," in *Discoveries in Western Tibet and the Western Himalayas: Essays on History, Literature, Archaeology and Art (Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the IATS, 2003)*, ed. Amy Heller and Giacomella Orofino (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 215–240. The monastic economies of medieval Europe is a well-developed field of study. See, for example, Barbara H. Rosenwein, *To Be the Neighbor of Saint Peter: The Social Meaning of Cluny's Property, 909–1049* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

leading to sin. Nearly two centuries before Luther attacked the Church's sale of indulgences in 1517, the medieval Spanish arch-priest Juan Ruíz's *Book of Good Love (Libro de buen amor)*, circa 1330, eloquently positions monastic wealth at the root of a monk's sin. Ruíz conveys an image of monks cursing money and its evils in sermon, while hoarding it "in cups and glasses in the monastery," likening the covetous clerics to vultures and crows anxiously awaiting a wealthy patron's demise.³

As vast wealth flooded through the gates of the Tibetan monastery of Zha lu, founded in the mid-eleventh century,⁴ an array of literature expounding the dangers of money for monks gradually came to fill its libraries. In the polymath Bu ston rin chen grub's (1290–1364) fourteenth-century letter of advice to Zha lu's future abbots,⁵ an important piece of the monastery's literature,⁶ Zha lu's eleventh abbot Bu ston⁷ offers short, pithy distillations of advice—what he

³ Juan Ruíz, "The Evils of Money and Drink," in *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources*, ed. Olivia Remie Constable, trans. Jill R. Webster (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 289.

⁴ On the history of Zha lu monastery, and its patronage and riches, see Roberto Vitali, *Early Temples of Central Tibet* (London: Serindia, 1990), 89–145. When I refer to the "monastery of Zha lu" in this article, I am referring to a large monastic complex, which includes, according to Zha lu's literature, a "lower/main Zha lu" (*zha mthil*), that is Zha lu itself, and the adjacent hermitage-monastery of Ri phug.

⁵ Bu ston rin chen grub, *Mkhan po gdan sa pa la snyan skul gyi yi ge*. Please see the bibliography for complete references to Tibetan texts. This is paired with another of the abbot's texts, *Mkhan slob dge 'dun dang bcas pa'i spyi la snyan bskul ba'i yi ge*. Together, according to Ter Ellingson, these two texts are considered to constitute a "monastic constitution" (*bca' yig*) for Zha lu monastery, although they are not formally designated as such. See Ter Ellingson, "Tibetan Monastic Constitutions: The Bca'-yig," in *Reflections on Tibetan Culture: Essays in Memory of Turrell V. Wylie*, ed. Lawrence Epstein and Richard F. Sherburne (Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 205–230. Bu ston, moreover, refers to his *Mkhan po gdan sa pa la snyan skul gyi yi ge* (fol. 89r) as a final testament (*kha chems*).

⁶ Bu ston's *Mkhan po gdan sa pa la snyan skul gyi yi ge* is referred to in the biography of the abbot Zha lu lo tsā ba (1441–1528) wherein it is mentioned that this master performed the duties of abbot as described in this text and also that the abbot read Bu ston's testaments to the Saṅgha. See Kurtis R. Schaeffer, *The Culture of the Book in Tibet* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 28 and 177 n. 36; and *Zha lu gdan rabs*, 236. Blo gsal bstan skyong himself recalls that when he was 54 years old, he read the second of Bu ston's testaments, *Mkhan slob dge 'dun dang bcas pa'i spyi la snyan bskul ba'i yi ge*, to an assembly of monks and nuns at Ri phug. *Rang gi rnam thar du byas pa shel dkar me long*, 656.

⁷ Although Bu ston was the eleventh abbot of Shalu, he is credited with inaugurating a scriptural college (*bshad grwa*) for esoteric and philosophical studies, founding the mountain-side hermitage of Ri phug (see the note above), and for initiating his own Buddhist tradition or school, known as "Bu ston's System" (*bu lugs*), which significantly contributes intellectually to Tibet's Buddhist tradition, par-

terms "methods of achievement" (*sgrub thabs*) to his successors. The first of these methods urges future abbots to guard their minds against the inevitable influx of donations, to be wary of thieving attendants, and to refrain from individually seizing the possessions of their deceased brethren.⁸ A much more recent text describes disagreements between the inner monastic officials (*las sne nang khul*) of Zha lu from the 1930s to 50s and includes a lengthy account of embezzlement (*lkog zas*) by one of Zha lu's "chief officers" (*no yon*).⁹ The issue of monks and finances, and its soteriological dangers, is also extensively explored in the nineteenth-century autobiography of one of Zha lu's great masters, Blo gsal bstan skyong (b. 1804).¹⁰ This highly detailed autobiography, broadly representative of other Tibetan monastic autobiographical works, frequently includes passages that might be described as ledgers—highly detailed records describing the protagonist's receipt and use of monastic donations.

This article explores these ledger-like passages as a literary strategy through which the autobiographical protagonist not only becomes dissociated from the sin incriminated by his inevitable immersion in finances, but which also intimates the autobiographer's spiritual advancement. In order to outline this special function of the financial ledger in Tibetan autobiography (*rang rnam*), I examine Blo gsal bstan skyong's financial records in the context of his wider reflections on monastic finances, clerical sin, and the genre of Tibetan autobiography. Furthermore, I juxtapose Blo gsal bstan skyong's self-representation of scrupulousness¹¹—literally woven out of his financial records—against the master's assessment of another cleric's financial scrupulousness in the genre of Tibetan sacred biography (*rnam thar*). To this end, I examine Blo gsal bstan skyong's appraisal of 'Khrul zhig tshul khriims rgyal mtshan's (1399–1473)¹² virtues in economic transactions in the former's *Zha lu Abbatial History*.¹³ 'Khrul

ticularly in the areas of epistemology, monastic discipline, and the exegetical traditions of the *Kālacakra Tantra*.

⁸ The section is entitled: *longs spyod kyis brel bar mi 'gyur ba'i sgrub thabs. Mkhan po gdan sa pa la snyan skul gyi yi ge*, fol. 86r.

⁹ See Smon skyid bsod nams rdo rje, *Zhwa lu dgon pa'i las sne nang khul ma mthun pa'i gyod don skor*.

¹⁰ Blo gsal bstan skyong, *Rang gi rnam thar du byas pa shel dkar me long*.

¹¹ I mean scrupulous in the senses of both being attentive to details and concerned with avoiding wrongdoing.

¹² 'Khrul zhig tshul khriims rgyal mtshan is the fourth abbot of Zha lu in the lineage following Bu ston rin chen grub. His biography is found on pages 139–164 of the *Zha lu gdan rabs*.

¹³ Blo gsal bstan skyong, *Dpal ldan zhwa lu pa'i bstan pa la bka' drin che ba'i skyes bu dam pa rnam kyis rnam thar lo rgyus ngo mtshar dad pa'i 'jug ngogs*. This text is referred to as the *Zha lu gdan rabs* in this article's footnotes.

zhig's portrayal closely resembles Blo gsal bstan skyong's self-representation in the sense that both monks are soteriologically ennobled by scrupulousness; in each story, narratives of financial transactions constitute (external) testaments to protagonists' (internal) soteriological advancement. In both cases, readers are presented with evidence of financial dealings that implies the protagonists' unfaltering renunciation of worldly pleasures, and their resolute and selfless dedication in nurturing the worldly edifices that support an otherworldly body of teachings. These portrayals, differ, however, in that the autobiography is additionally bolstered by the inclusion of the ledger.

For Blo gsal bstan skyong, the ledger stands at the heart of what exalts sacred Tibetan autobiography (*rang rnam*) over biography (*rnam thar*): it is a quintessential embodiment of Tibetan autobiography's explicit self-characterization as "truth."¹⁴ Blo gsal bstan skyong's ledger-like passages are a drastic expression of his autobiography's promise to be a "transparent" (*gsal ba*) account of his life and constitute thereby, an extreme of his autobiography's self-assertion to constitute "the real"¹⁵—Blo gsal bstan skyong specifically refers to his text as an "unadulterated," or "raw" (*ma bcos pa*) account of his life. Though ledgers that provide "truthful" or "real" testimony to the protagonist's soteriological elevation, Blo gsal bstan skyong's spiritual status is *literally measured* in the precision of numbers. The autobiographical ledger is a literary tool that "proves" the protagonist's soteriological advancement through a running tally of financial scrupulousness that testifies to an inner detachment from, and exaltation above, the desires that trap beings in *samsāra*.

Autobiographical Ledgers in Blo gsal bstan skyong's Autobiography

Blo gsal bstan skyong's detailed financial records provide readers with an account of the protagonist's receipt and use of monastic donations. Donations listed may be in a myriad of forms, including liquid capital, precious objects, food, services, or other valuable items. The text may describe or imply the liquidation of donations into capital, or note the use of donated items. A typical example, quoted be-

¹⁴ On the importance of truth in *rang rnam*, see Janet Gyatso, *Apparitions of the Self: The Secret Autobiographies of a Tibetan Visionary* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 106–107.

¹⁵ For theoretical musings concerning discourses of the "real" or "empirical" past in narrative, see Hayden V. White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

low, describes Blo gsal bstan skyong's involvement in the acquisition and use of goods and currency in the monastery. He describes the rationale for a certain project, the financial resources used in the project's execution, from whom donations were acquired, where donated goods were allocated, and his own role in the use of money, gifts, contracts, and interest. Blo gsal bstan skyong recalls,

[To] support the *Medicine Buddha Pūjā* at Zha lu, [we received] 50 *srang*¹⁶ even, and I established a capital fund of 132 *srang* for the newly established memorial service for the Omniscient One Bu ston. . . . On the fourth day of the sixth month, in the *Kālacakra Temple*...[we] created a brand new enormous butter lamp pot, decorated with red coins (?), that could fit 18 pieces of butter, which cost 38 *ṭam srang* [in total]. She dpon rnam rgyal provided 30 *srang* to support a year's worth of butter lamp offerings; I provided [an additional] 20 *ṭam srang*; all totaling 50 *ṭam srang*. I petitioned the great lama's office (*bla brang*) [that we] needed to collect interest on this money, so I was granted a letter with a stamp (*phyag dam*) on it, with an agreement. [At] lower Zha lu, [I offered] a robe and begging bowl to the two great abbot statues in the Silver Stūpa Room, and [I also offered] a robe and begging bowl to the Buddha [statue] at the Temple of Sixteen Arhats.¹⁷

Blo gsal bstan skyong continues to recount in this passage that he offered robes to a particular statue at Ri phug; that he received a pair of rosaries, each from a certain treasury officer (*rtsis dpon*); how he carried out a number of repairs to Zha lu, as well as to some of its holy objects; and how he successfully raised funds for the creation of a group of painted scrolls (*thang kha*). The passage is effusive in its detail, noting, for example, the size of the coral beads on the rosaries he received, that he gave one of these rosaries to a silver statue in the Kālacakra Temple, the precise nature of the repairs he carried out to

¹⁶ Throughout this article, I do not translate Tibetan terminology for money. On the values of these sums of money, see Wolfgang Bertsch, *The Currency of Tibet: A Sourcebook for the Study of Tibetan Coins, Paper Money, and Other Forms of Currency* (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 2002).

¹⁷ *zha lur sman bla sgrub mchod kyi rten dngul srang lnga bcu tham pa dang / kun mkhyen bu ston chen po'i dus mchod gсар sbyor byas par srang brgya dang sum cu so gnyis kyi ma rtsa sbyar ba. . . / zla ba drug pa'i tshes bzhi la dus 'khor lha khang. . . zangs dmar la dngul gyi kha brgyan yod pa rgya mtsho mar khal bco brgyad 'gro ba gсар bskrun gyis 'gro song Tam srang sum cu so brgyad song / lo 'khor mar me 'bul thebs she dpon rnam rgyal lags nas dngul srang sum cu dang 'di nas Tam srang nyi shu bcas bsdoms Tam srang lnga bcu tham pa bla brang chen por gsol 'debs kyi lo ltar dngul bskyed zhu rgyu'i phyag tham kyang don smin stsal / zha mthil dngul gdung lha khang / mkhan chen rnam gnyis / gnas bcu lha khang du thub dbang bcas la snam sbyar re dang lhung bzed / Rang gi rnam thar du byas pa shel dkar me long, 641–642.*

a drum stand, the types of materials he used in the creation of the *thang khas*, the overall costs for each of the projects that he oversaw, and the costs of certain materials needed to complete the projects. These detailed, ledger-like passages, commonly encountered in Tibetan monastic autobiography, portray Blo gsal bstan skyong—an important figure of Zha lu's monastic community—enmeshed in, and reflecting upon, the intricate economies of Zha lu and other Tibetan monasteries during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Blo gsal bstan skyong narrates—in passages like the one mentioned above—his immersion in constant exchanges of goods and currency, for services rendered or received, vis-à-vis numerous individuals and organizations. When spearheading projects, for instance to create or repair texts, woodblocks, painted scrolls, shrines, *stūpas*, statues, and the structures and rooms of the monastery, our protagonist purchases materials such as lumber (*shing cha*) and employs craftsmen—artists, tailors, or carpenters depending on the project—as well as workers and helpers (*las mkhan*). He also gives provisions for monastic congregations who officiate varieties of *pūjās* (*mchod pa*) and other ceremonies by providing congregational tea services (*mang ja*) and monetary donations (*'gyed*).¹⁸ He establishes and manages financial "trusts" (*thebs rtsa*; *ma rtsa*) to fund regular rituals such as the reading of the Buddhist canon.

As an acknowledged ritual master of his day, Blo gsal bstan skyong is paid by the Tibetan government in Lhasa to officiate a variety of state rituals (*sde pa gzhung gi rim gro*),¹⁹ including "ritual cake" (*gtor ma*) rituals, "thread-cross" rituals (*mdos*), and "army expelling" rituals (*dmag zlog*).²⁰ From private individuals and families, Blo gsal bstan skyong receives donations in various forms, such as offerings for the dedication of merit for the dead (*mchod bsngo*) and cremation

¹⁸ In some instances, Blo gsal bstan skyong may provide a congregation of monks with "provisions for an entire day" (*nyin khyong gi bsnyen bkur 'gyed*). See *Ibid.*, 646.

¹⁹ On one occasion, at the age of 45 in the *earth-monkey* year (1848–9), Blo gsal bstan skyong is requested to perform a state ritual (*sde pa gzhung gi rim gro*), involving the burying of two types of *sri* demons, "enemy *sri*" (*dgra sri*) and "*sri* that deteriorate wealth" (*phung sri*). On the latter, see Stan Royal Mumford, *Himalayan Dialogue: Tibetan Lamas and Gurung Shamans in Nepal* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 157. On the various types of *phung sri* and how *dgra sri* and *phung sri* are to be buried, see René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet: The Cult and Iconography of the Tibetan Protective Deities* (Graz, Austria: Akademische Druck-u. Verlagsanstalt, 1975), 517–518.

²⁰ See *Rang gi rnam thar du byas pa shel dkar me long*, 640–1. On *dmag zlog*, see James Gentry, "Representations of Efficacy: The Ritual Expulsion of Mongol Armies in the Consolidation and Expansion of the Tsang (Gtsang) Dynasty," in *Tibetan Ritual*, ed. José Ignacio Cabezón (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 131–163.

offerings (*gdung 'bul*). Nearly every folio recounting Blo gsal bstan skyong's adult life details some type of gift exchange or financial interaction with people, including monks, lamas, rulers, families, and merchants; as well as monastic officials (*las sne khag*), including storekeepers (*gnyer pa*), treasurers/stewards (*phyag mdzod*), and accountants (*rtsis dpon*); government chiefs (*zhabs pad*) and ministers (*bka' blon*); and monastic offices, such as those for general monastery affairs (*spyi so*), monastic corporations/households (*bla brang*), and monastery land-holdings (*gzhis ka*).²¹

In the course of providing and receiving services, products and donations, paying out fees and wages (*gla yon, phogs*) in either currency or goods, or setting up and contributing to trust funds, Blo gsal bstan skyong accepts or dispenses a variety of currency and goods. Passing through his hands throughout his life are currencies in the forms of silver and gold coins (e.g., *dngul srang, rgya dngul srang, gser zho*), "horse hoof" ingots (*rta rmig ma*);²² and goods, such as barley, statues, tea blocks, painted scrolls, texts, fabric, robes, stone drums (*rdo ting*), gongs (*'khar rnga*), fabric, carpets (*grum rtse, tshogs gdan*), and much more.

In addition to recalling teachings and empowerments given and received, and pilgrimages and projects undertaken, the protagonist's adult life recounts the particulars of financial interactions and gift exchange. In ledger-like passages, Blo gsal bstan skyong notes precise amounts of money, including currency type and denomination; the kind, appearance, quality, place of origin, or value of objects given and received; the names and positions of individuals, families, or organizations involved in financial exchanges; the dates (including the year, season, month, and day) of transactions; details of new income brought into specific trust funds, including income from liquidated objects or agricultural holdings;²³ and calculations of changes to the balances of monastic trusts according to new acquisitions. Blo gsal bstan skyong sometimes even specifically notes the trusts from which and to which funds are withdrawn or deposited.

These records convey many things: the normalcy of Blo gsal bstan skyong's (and more generally, other monks' and lamas') involvement in finances and funded projects. They underscore the protagonist's status as a central node in the administration of Zha lu, and his dedication in nurturing the monastic community. These records also indicate the protagonist's influential status in multiple echelons of Ti-

²¹ On the concepts of *bla brang* and *gzhis ka*, see Goldstein, "The Circulation of Estates in Tibet: Reincarnation, Land and Politics."

²² *rta rmig ma* is defined as "a lump of silver bullion like a horse's hoof" in H. A. Jäschke, *Tibetan-English Dictionary* (Taylor and Francis, 1881), 211, column 2.

²³ See *Rang gi rnam thar du byas pa shel dkar me long*, 663.

betan monastic and secular society, and they reveal his integrity and skill in diplomacy in the eyes of powerful. These records furthermore highlight Blo gsal bstan skyong's talents in fund-raising and his selfless efforts in nurturing Zha lu's tradition through building the physical edifices (texts, buildings, shrines, and so forth) that protect and preserve Zha lu's teachings. As such, the ledgers serve as fertile venues for the exposition of the Buddhist perfections (*pha rol tu phyin pa; pāramitā*) in the autobiographer's character: in these records, we witness Blo gsal bstan skyong exude virtues of determination (*brtson 'grus; vīrya*), skillful means (*thabs; upāya*), insight (*shes rab; prajñā*), and so forth.

But these extensive records also constitute a response to the perceived soteriological dangers implicated in the protagonist's immersion in finances. Following my examination of Blo gsal bstan skyong's biographical account of 'Khrul zhig tshul khrims rgyal mtshan's economic virtues immediately below, I will explore how these ledgers epitomize "proof" of scrupulousness held up for readers' scrutiny, and how, as "real" records, these ledger-passages are quintessential embodiments of—and hence strengthen—the autobiography's self-characterization as "truth."

Scrupulousness in Monastic Biography (*rnam thar*)

In his monumental *Zha lu Abbatial History*, Blo gsal bstan skyong includes in his biography of Zha lu's fourth abbot, 'Khrul zhig tshul khrims rgyal mtshan, the latter's final testament to Zha lu's monastic assembly.²⁴ Amid a series of recollections, self-assessments, and prescriptions,²⁵ the abbot both praises his own scrupulous behavior re-

²⁴ Especially fertile material for the Tibetan biographer, final testaments (*bka' chems; zhal chems*) often contain a distillation of a lifetime of experience, which both constitute a master's choicest advice to his followers and capture the essential qualities that make a biographical subject exemplary. 'Khrul zhig's final testament issues advice derived from the struggles and triumphs of the abbot's tenure. Thrust onto Zha lu's throne amid a fierce congregational quarrel, 'Khrul zhig recalls how, even as an inexperienced abbot, he held the crumbling institution together through engendering an attitude of disciplined endurance (*sdug sran*). In typical monastic "final testament" style, 'Khrul zhig presents an image of his now realized "self," which emerges out of the successful conquering his life's struggles, coupled with exhortations to his congregation to mimic his behavior. 'Khrul zhig implores his disciples to strive for mutual understanding (*thugs mthun*) and to cultivate pure monastic discipline (*tshul khrims*) amid the inevitable difficulties of monastic life. See *Zha lu gdan rabs*, 163.

²⁵ Lamenting, for instance, that the community failed to complete the carving of woodblocks for the collected works of the Zha lu monastic tradition's forefather,

garding his use of donations and encourages his monks to follow in his footsteps, recalling that he has never squandered *even a trace* of the offerings he has received from sponsors. Having benefited from sponsors' donations "virtuously"—that is, in ways supporting the Buddhist teachings but not for his own comforts or interests—'Khrul zhig applauds his own virtuous financial conduct. He says to his monks,

I'm getting older now. I'm not sure [exactly] when I'll die, but since the few donations (*cha rkyen*) I've received, that were intended for me, have all been allocated virtuously [in support of the dharma]—I've never wasted even the most minuscule amount of the benefactors' donations (*rdzas*) that I've gradually received—I can now die without regret.²⁶

Reading 'Khrul zhig's retrospection as advice befitting any abbot, we learn that abbots who scrupulously use monastic donations in service of the dharma, rather than in service of their sensuous desires, are exemplary—they have nothing to regret when taking stock of their lives.

Elaborating further on proper conduct regarding the acquisition of donations, 'Khrul zhig sternly warns his assembly to never request donations from sponsors—either directly or indirectly. He says, "bleeding [our patrons] dry, indirectly soliciting [them] through flattery [or] hustling [them out of money] would furnish few opportunities for [our] Saṅgha to pursue its pure livelihood!"²⁷ The abbot prefaces this point by forewarning his disciples to abstain from actively seeking donations to fund his own memorial. 'Khrul zhig says, "since there's no [monetary] foundation [set aside for my] funeral service and so forth, no such preparations should be made!"²⁸

In his statement, the abbot reminds his Saṅgha (*dge 'dun*), here meaning the monks of Zha lu in particular, about two ways of collecting donations that prohibit "pure" (*rnam dag*), or acceptable livelihood for Buddhist monastics: flattery (*kha gsag*) and indirect solicitation or "hinting" for money (*gzhogs slong*). These join "giving some-

Bu ston rin chen grub, 'Khrul zhig urges the monks to prioritize text production in the future. *Ibid.*, 163.

²⁶ *nged kyang na so rgas / nam 'chi mi shes par 'dug pas / rang la sems pa'i cha rkyen sen sen byung ba rnam sbyin bdag gi rdzas chud zos med tsaṃ du byung rim gyis dge phyogs su btang bas 'gyod med kyi lugs lags da lta bem rig ma bral tsaṃ yod na'ang / Zha lu gdan rabs*, 162. I am uncertain of the meaning *sen sen*. It may signify a meaning similar to *chung chung*, "very small."

²⁷ *kha gsag gzhogs slong khrag btsir rrag rtsir gyi rnam pas dge 'dun la'ang 'tsho ba rnam dag tu 'gro shas chung ba 'dug / Ibid.*, 163

²⁸ *dus mchod sogs gzhi rten med pas gshoms pa'ang ma 'dug. Ibid.*, 163.

thing to get something" or "calculated generosity" (*rnyed pas rnyed pa 'tshol ba*), attempting to make one's living through force or expropriation (*thob kyis 'jal ba*), and hypocrisy (*tshul 'chos*)—specifically, pretending to have virtues that one does not have—to form a list of five unsavory means of livelihood (*log 'tsho lnga*) for Buddhist monks.²⁹ Underscoring the abbot's evocation of proper Buddhist ethics for monks is his disinterestedness in his own post-mortem commemorations—highlighting, as it were, a union of outer ethics and inner perfection. Here, the master serves as a perfected model of Buddhist transformation in an ecclesiastical context: he epitomizes selfless detachment in body, speech, and mind; he is the antipathy of self-interested greed that manifests in the monastery through the use of donations for personal use.

'Khrul zhig's self-representation as a principled, and hence spiritually perfected abbot is paralleled by Blo gsal bstan skyong's concise descriptions of the former's virtuous use of donations. Blo gsal bstan skyong writes for instance,

When ['Khrul zhig] was 70 years old, he made a [monetary] foundation based on what was offered [to him] for [ceremonies for] the living and the dead. During the great ceremonies at Zha lu-Ri phug, he provided splendid food [out of that foundation] to 1,500 monks for a period of five days, and presented donations to the monastery and the individual monks.³⁰

'Khrul zhig's biographer, Blo gsal bstan skyong, thus carefully weaves narrative documentations together with the former's quoted utterances, convincingly fashioning a portrayal of an abbot whose enlightenment is demonstrated, among other ways, through the ecclesiastical virtue of scrupulously receiving and allocating donations.

By virtue of its presence within the genre of sacred biography (*rnam thar*) 'Khrul zhig's exemplarity of scrupulousness, like other positive qualities narrated in his biography, fulfills the genre's goals and expectations without additional elaboration or "proof." Every

²⁹ See Geshe Sonam Rinchen, *The Bodhisattva Vow*, trans. and ed. Ruth Sonam (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications, 2000), 234, note 30.

³⁰ *dgung lo bdun cu bzhes pa'i tshe gshin gson gyi dad 'bul byung ba'i dngos po rnams la gzhi byas te zhwa lu ri phug tu dus mchod chen mo'i skabs dge 'dun stong phrag phyed gnyis la bsnyen bkur zhag lnga dang 'bul ba 'gyed bcas gya nom pa gnang. Zha lu gdan rabs*, 158. The expression 'bul ba 'gyed is unclear to me and may refer to a larger offering ('bul ba) to monks of higher ecclesiastical rank, and smaller offerings ('gyed) to monks of lower status. Alternatively, 'bul ba may refer to the donations intended for the monastery in general, and 'gyed, to offerings for individual monks.

action committed by the protagonist is thoroughly ideal; indeed, *rnam thar* constitutes nothing other than an enlightened enactment—a perfectly orchestrated spectacle for its readers' spiritual benefit.³¹ This basic hermeneutical logic of the text is supported by special markers scattered throughout the narration that testify to the biographical subject's enlightened status. These include the narration of 'Khrul zhig's former lives as enlightened masters, testimony to his ritual successes and clairvoyance, his utterances of prophecy, his corpse's generation of miraculous relics, and a host of other astonishing deeds amounting to a familiar template of Tibetan sacred biography that testifies to the protagonist's enlightenment.

Scrupulousness in Ecclesiastical Autobiography (*rang rnam*)

Mimicking the words uttered above by his biographical subject, Blo gsal bstan skyong similarly portrays himself as a realized Buddhist master who is utterly disinterested in the riches that flood into Zha lu monastery and pass through his hands. Like his character, 'Khrul zhig, the autobiographer recalls that whatever donations he receives, he uses "virtuously," that is, in support of the dharma, and Blo gsal bstan skyong also prohibits the unscrupulous acquisition of donations, citing the same perverse means of livelihood (*log 'tsho lnga*), in verse. To assert the disinterest with which donations pass through his hands, Blo gsal bstan skyong, moreover, reminds his readers of the inherent insubstantiality of all material entities, highlighting, like 'Khrul zhig, the soteriological advancement underpinning his outward behavior. Blo gsal bstan skyong states that donated wealth has no virtue beyond what good it can temporarily and relatively perform in its service to the Buddhist teachings and their material edifices. One of Blo gsal bstan skyong's statements that illustrates this scrupulousness opens with the autobiographer's promise to make use of donations—which he calls composite phenomena (*'dus byas*)—as a root of virtue (*dge rtsa*) for the rest of his life. He continues,

It makes no difference to me if someone were to use [things
of mine] left over after I pass away.

³¹ On the spiritual functions of *rnam thar*, see Janice D. Willis, "On the Nature of *Rnam-thar*: Early Dge-lugs-pa *Siddha* Biographies," in *Soundings in Tibetan Civilization*, ed. Barbara Nimri Aziz and Matthew Kapstein (New Delhi: Manohar, 1985), 304–319.

I've never deceived [my patrons through] flattery (*kha gsag*),
 indirect solicitation (*gzhogs slong*), calculated generosity
 (*rnyed pas rnyed pa 'tshol [ba]*),
 Cons (*thob 'jal*), or pretending (*tshul 'chos*) [to be virtuous].
 Whatever wealth [I've received] that was given through
 [donors'] faith,
 I've distributed as offerings to the Saṅgha, and as charity,
 without remainder.³²

Like his biographical subject 'Khrul zhig, Blo gsal bstan skyong hence makes use of the exemplarity of scrupulousness as a forum to expose his own soteriological advancement. Blo gsal bstan skyong points out that he recognizes donations as composite phenomena (*'dus byas*), that is, he realizes the inherent transitoriness of donated objects, asserting their uselessness beyond supporting the dharma and helping suffering beings.

Scrupulousness in donations is a major theme in Blo gsal bstan skyong's autobiography and the author continuously and dramatically refers to his immunity from becoming sensuously attached to any (donated) object. In another verse, which he characterizes as "an example of negative conduct" (*smad pa'i dpe*), Blo gsal bstan skyong writes,

Miserly hoarding religious donations is but the basis of a ruined
 destiny.
 Desirously ingesting delicious food is but the cause of piss and
 shit.
 Compared to those [worthless consumptions], an accumulation
 of the wealth of listening to the holy dharma,
 Is the zenith of the most meaningful [holy activity].³³

Unlike 'Khrul zhig's representation of scrupulousness in biography (*rnam thar*), however, Blo gsal bstan skyong's own scrupulous self-representation in his autobiography includes the ledger—passages that far exceed in detail and precision anything included in Blo gsal bstan skyong's biographies of the Zha lu masters.

On one occasion, Blo gsal bstan skyong ends one of his ledgers with a passage, quoted below, which features the author's reflections

³² *shi nas lhag lus sus za yang nged la ni khyad par med do // kha gsag zhogs slong rnyed pas rnyed pa 'tshol // thob mjal [=thob 'jal] tshul [']chos g.yo sgyu ma byas shing // dad pas byin pa'i dngos po gang dang gang // lhag ma med par mchod sbyin zhing du bsngos // Rang gi rnam thar du byas pa shel dkar me long, 628.*

³³ *ser snas dkor nor bsags kyang phung krol gzhi // sred pas zhim dgu gsol yang bshang lci'i son // de dag las ni dam chos thos pa'i nor // bsags pa don ldan rab kyi yang rtse yin // smad pa'i dpe / Ibid., 540.*

on monastic economy, sin, and autobiography that furnish us with a fertile context to illuminate the function of his autobiographical ledgers. The ledger-like passage is typical in its excessive detail. Blo gsal bstan skyong begins,

In the fourth month (*hor zla*), we built an iron lattice at Ri phug's Kālacakra Temple. The iron lattice itself cost 69 *ngul srang* and 7 *sho*. At this time the [cost of the] wages and food of the craftsmen increased. After that, we put [two statues] behind the iron lattice: [a statue of] Bu ston [called] Infinite Life Holder—on which I myself had spent 63 Chinese *ngul srang* for the image's materials—and a silver statue of White Tārā, The Wish-fulfilling Wheel, which [was made by] substances [paid for], again, [by myself] with 70 Chinese *ngul srang*. That day, I also offered a congregational tea service to all the monks, along with a coin (*ṭam kha*) [given to] each.³⁴

Blo gsal bstan skyong continues to construct his exemplary self in the forthcoming introspective analysis through concatenating the ignoble behavior he has avoided in the past, and which he will continue to avoid in the future: seeking out sponsors, collecting offerings, and performing "village rituals" (*grong chog*). The author asserts that his readers can, in fact, see (*gzigs pa*) these avoidances in the text, and as such, the exemplarity of his actions should be taken to be "evident," or "transparent" (*gsal ba*). This transparency of virtuous behavior manifests most emblematically in the copiousness of the author's financial ledgers: it is the effusive detail itself of these passages—its precise measurements—that successfully shrouds the entire work, and the behavior of its protagonist, in a discourse of "truth."

The author continues his reflection by reiterating that he conducts himself through refraining from the same aforementioned inappropriate strategies for attaining money—such as flattery (*kha bsags*), hinting (*gzhogs slong*), or trickery (*thob 'jal*)—and implies, as he does above, that these external behaviors testify to his internal realization of emptiness. Again, disinterestedness in donations serves as a venue to reveal inner realization. Blo gsal bstan skyong ends his contemplation by assuring his readers that collecting wealth, however scrupulously, is itself not the best means of generating the virtuous roots

³⁴ *hor zla bzhi pa'i nang du ri phug gi dus 'khor lha khang gi lcags dra gsar 'dzugs byas te lcags dra rang la dngul srang drug cu re dgu dang zho bdun song zhing / 'di skabs kyi bzo ba'i gla lto 'phar du song / de nas kho bo rang gis sngar rgya dngul spang drug cu re gsum sku rgyur byas nas bzhengs pa'i bu ston tshé 'dzin mītha' yas dang / yang rgya dngul srang bdun cu sku rgyur byas pa'i sgrol dkar yid bzhiin 'khor lo'i dngul sku lcags dra'i nang du bzhugs su gsol / de nyin dge 'dun rnamis la yang mang ja 'gyed Tam ka re dang bcas pa phul / Ibid., 620.*

that lead to enlightenment—a distinction reserved, perhaps, for meditation on emptiness. Blo gsal bstan skyong writes,

I don't need [to gain] profit [from] business and [collecting] interest. In the past, I've never sought out sponsors, collected offerings, or rushed along [to perform] village rituals (*grong chog*) and I won't start acting like this in the future either! You have seen that [to be the case in this text]; [my behavior] is thereby surely transparent (*gsal ba*). Although I've received a small amount of wealth from monasteries like Zha lu, there was never a time when I didn't [somehow] pay back the [monasteries] donations. In these circumstances, therefore, I used everything virtuously. Although I myself ascribe very little value to them, I made these faithfully offered illusory riches—which in themselves amount to a mere water-drop [of value]—meaningful.

Although I've served [others through allocating donations], I've never tried to profit in the name of virtue and it's not the case that I've sinfully accepted donated property through the various aberrant techniques such as flattery (*kha bsags*), hinting (*gzhogs slong*), or trickery (*thob 'jal*). I basically understand that one unconditioned virtue (*'dus ma byas kyi dge ba*) is better than a thousand relative virtues (*'dus byas kyi dge ba*), and I have a firm belief in emptiness (*de kho na nyid*). Therefore, [just because] I've collected wealth [from donations], it is nevertheless not the case that [I regard this activity] to be the single highest root of virtue.³⁵

Blo gsal bstan skyong concludes this passage by asserting that he has not written about his scrupulousness out of pride (*rlom sems*), but rather from an impulse of wanting to gladden the hearts of those attached to him and to train his disciples in his own example.³⁶

Financial scrupulousness—or, the quality of "never having wasted the faithful offerings given by others"³⁷—is the best advice or highest goal (*'dun ma drag shos*)³⁸ that Blo gsal bstan skyong promises to ful-

³⁵ *tshong dang bun khe mi dgos sbyin bdag btsal nas 'bul sdud byed pa dang / grong chog rgyug pa sogs sngar ma byas shing da byed par mi 'gyur pa ni zgiz pas gsal ba lags / zha lu sogs dgon pa'i dkor ni phran tshogs byung rung phar dkor lan bcal ba med pas 'dir kho bos dge phyogs su btang ba 'di dag shin tu snang chung rung / gzhan gyi chu thigs re tsam dad pas phul ba'i sgyu ma'i longs spyod la snying po grub pa'i phyir byas kyi / brnyed dge ba la btags nas kha bsag [=kha bsags] dang / [g]zhogs slong dang / thob 'jal sna tshogs kyis sdig pa'i nor blangs pa las byung ba ni ma yin no // 'dus byas kyi dge ba stong las 'dus ma byas kyi dge ba gcig dga' ba'i go bar re tsam dang de kho na nyid kyi yul la mos pa brtan po yod pas kho bo zang zing gi longs spyod bsgrubs nas dge rtsa rab kho na yang ma lags so // Rang gi rnam thar du byas pa shel dkar me long, 620–621.*

³⁶ Ibid., 621.

³⁷ *gzhan gyis byin ba'i dad rdzas chud zos su ma song ba.* Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

fill. Yet readers of his autobiography do not simply have to take the author at his word here; Blo gsal bstan skyong's copious financial records, included for his readers' scrutiny, validate the autobiographer's self-characterization as a venerable exemplar with regard to financial scrupulousness. Blo gsal bstan skyong need not explicitly applaud his scrupulousness (an act which might indicate conceit); instead, he painstakingly includes the data—his ledgers—that convincingly lead his readers to discover his virtue for themselves. These ledgers, thus, I suggest, constitute one of the literary strategies used by Tibetan autobiographers to negotiate the tension characteristic of the *rang rnam* genre, which, as Janet Gyatso writes, "results from a pair of conflicting social norms: one requiring that persons refer to themselves with humility and the other that religious teachers present themselves as venerable exemplars."³⁹ The ledger is also a strategy to bolster the strength of the genre of autobiography; as I will argue below, it is part of what exalts autobiography, according to Blo gsal bstan skyong, over biography.

Biography (*rnam thar*), Autobiography (*rang rnam*), and the Ledger

In his memoir, Blo gsal bstan skyong proclaims the superiority of autobiography (*rang rnam*) over biography (*rnam thar*)—despite the fact that the master was a prolific biographer himself—for *rang rnam*'s ability to deliver "truthful" or "real" testimony for the protagonist's soteriological elevation. Although such rhetoric is common and certainly expected in autobiography, when we reflect upon Blo gsal bstan skyong's ledger-like passages in this context, it appears that these financial records can lend considerable power to Tibetan autobiography's self-representation as truth.

Even the title of Blo gsal bstan skyong's autobiography, *Clear White Crystal Mirror*, reflects the text's insistence that this memoir is truthful. At the beginning of his life story, Blo gsal bstan skyong asserts that the text's very *raison-d'être* is to be candid: the author argues that he has conceded to write his autobiography only to prevent the lies (*brdzun*)⁴⁰ of his later would-be biographers. In defending the creation of his autobiography, Blo gsal bstan skyong surmises that his conduct might be farcically recalled in a future biography, just as, he writes, people conjure up absurd ideas such as "because of the

³⁹ Gyatso, *Apparitions of the Self: The Secret Autobiographies of a Tibetan Visionary*, 105.

⁴⁰ *Rang gi rnam thar du byas pa shel dkar me long*, 478.

way a cow sleeps, she has a calf born with a crooked cheek."⁴¹ As such, Blo gsal bstan skyong writes that readers of such a hypothetical biography would be unable to discern a truthful record of his life amid a biographer's "heaps of lies," and "false speech"—subject matter consisting of overstatements and detractions (*sgro skur*).⁴²

Biographers, according to Blo gsal bstan skyong, make lamas into "charlatans" or "phonies" (*zog po*) through exaggerating virtue and understating vice. Blo gsal bstan skyong even insists that, of hagiographers, only autobiographers are capable of writing the truth—whatever a biographer composes of his subject is likely to be lies. To support his point, Blo gsal bstan skyong adds the following quotation from the writings of G.yung ston rdo rje dpal (1284–1365):

In almost all biographies (*rnam thar*) composed by masters' disciples,
Lamas are made into charlatans through famed praises.
For this reason, an autobiography (*rang gi rnam thar*) composed by oneself,
Should be written concisely, having avoided exaggerations and denigrations.⁴³

Thus the author's compulsion to write the *truth* about himself becomes an excuse for writing his own hagiography, an action that might seem to implicate arrogance. The autobiography is hence a much needed antidote to the potential dishonesty inherent in a biographical record. This convenient compulsion not only effectively drapes the autobiography in its compulsory shroud of humility, but it also publicizes the work's commitment to veracity.

An autobiography, writes Blo gsal bstan skyong, is sure to obstruct lies, because it constitutes an "unadulterated" or "unfabricated" (*ma bcos pa*) record of one's virtuous conduct.⁴⁴ Following his promise to be truthful, to present a "raw" account of his virtuous activities, Blo gsal bstan skyong presents his ledgers, his evidence of virtue—his "hard data" that cannot be distorted by either competing accounts

⁴¹ *ba'i nyal lugs kyis be'u ldan skyog skye ba. Rang gi rnam thar du byas pa shel dkar me long*, 477.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 478. *sgro skur* is short for *sgro 'dogs pa* and *skur ba 'debs pa*. *sgro 'dogs pa* means "to overstate," as in embellishing something with additional qualities, while the phrase *skur ba 'debs pa* means "to understate," as in understating disreputable qualities. These are considered to be complementary methods in the distortion of a biography.

⁴³ *slob mas brtsams pa'i rnam thar phal cher ni / che brjod grags pas bla ma zog por gtong // des na rang gi rnam thar rang gis ni // sgro bskur [=skur] spangs nas mdor bsdu yiger bkod // Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

of his life or by his faithful disciples' fanciful commemorations. Blo gsal bstan skyong's autobiography presents itself as the gold standard of truth against which all other versions of the master's life pale in terms of their veracity. This standard of truthfulness—which provides convincing testimony for the protagonist's soteriological elevation—is achieved through the ledger's "raw" or unedited nature.

Conclusion

Blo gsal bstan skyong's data of financial interactions is woven through his life story, bolstering the autobiography's self-representation as "raw" (*ma bcos pa*) reality. As such, the ledgers carefully conceal the author's actual mechanics of production or "fabrication" (*bcos pa*). These ledgers present the truth to Blo gsal bstan skyong's readers, perhaps, in the same way that "truth" is presented to the viewers of the news with excerpts of what media scholar John Fiske terms "raw reality" in *Television Culture*. Fiske writes,

The "truth" exists only in the studio, yet that "truth" depends for its authenticity upon the eyewitness and the actuality film, those pieces of "raw reality" whose meanings are actually made by the discourse of the studio, but whose authenticating function allows that discourse to disguise its productive role and thus to situate the meanings in the events themselves.⁴⁵

Blo gsal bstan skyong's ledgers work to fabricate the reality of his scrupulousness and the implications of enlightenment that this reality explicitly indicates in his text.

This article has presented one Tibetan monastic's response to the anxiety—often articulated by clerics themselves—that monks and money make unsuitable, and spiritually deleterious, bedfellows. Blo gsal bstan skyong directly confronts the perceived dangers of this union, and argues that a monk's full immersion in finances can convey a cleric's inner disinterestedness with wealth, which in turn testifies to an inner detachment from the clinging to apparent (but ultimately insubstantial) forms that generate suffering. Immersion in financial transactions becomes a venue for the demonstration of spiritual enlightenment.

Tibetan autobiography (*rang rnam*), at least in this one instance, creatively responds to anxieties over monks and money through its powerful "transparent" and "raw" (*ma bcos pa*) self-characterizations.

⁴⁵ John Fiske, *Television Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 290–291.

Opposed to the aggrandizement and exaggeration that marks the Tibetan genre of sacred biography (*rnam thar*), according to Blo gsal bstan skyong, Tibetan autobiography is concerned with imparting "truth," a compulsion that merges with this genre's rhetoric of extreme humility. Unlike *rnam thar* and other Tibetan historiographical styles that might be described as "smooth-running,"⁴⁶ the monastic autobiography, replete with ledger-like passages, presents a rugged veneer—rich in records of "rawness"—that drapes the narrative of a life in a shroud of the "real." The autobiographer's artistry lies in navigating the layers (or perhaps we might call them voices) of the text; that is, interpreting the data and its meaning for readers.

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⁴⁶ On the idea of the "smooth-running" history, see Allan Megill, "Grand Narrative' and the Discipline of History," in *A New Philosophy of History*, ed. Frank Ankersmit and Hans Kellner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 151–173. On the various narrative modes of Tibetan historiography, see Per K. Sørensen, "Introduction," in *Rare Texts from Tibet: Seven Sources for the Ecclesiastical History of Medieval Tibet* (Lumbini International Research Institute, 2007).

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Constructing Images of Gönpö Namgyel: a Hero or a Villain ?

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Introduction

he Nyarong region is strategically situated in the center of Eastern Kham¹. The Nyachu River (Ch. Yalong Jiang River), a tributary of the Drichu River (Ch. Chang Jiang River), flows through the region from northwest to south, and undulating mountain ranges surround it providing a natural barrier discouraging intrusion from outsiders.

The people of Nyarong, known throughout history for their fierce and warlike character, were skilled in building fortresses at strategic vantage points, and were masters of unique offensive and defensive tactics. Throughout the course of the Qing Dynasty, Nyarong was always an unruly and troublesome region, where banditry was rife and conflicts among indigenous leaders frequent. As a result, the Qing government was compelled to send as many as seven large-scale military expeditions to suppress indigenous leaders' resistance and check their territorial expansions. One such expedition was against Gönpö Namgyel (1799-1865), a local pönpo (*dpon po*, hereditary chieftain) in Nyarong.²

The earliest chief of Nyarong is said to have been the monk Sherap Gyeltsen. In 1253, as a reward for tying a knot in an iron club in Emperor Kublai Khan's presence in 1253, he was granted a chief's official seal and documents. Thus his family became known to the local populace as Chakdü pöntsang (*lcags mdud dpon tshang*, the official family who tied a knot in an iron [club]). But it is unclear how strong a leadership he provided or how extensive his jurisdiction really was.

¹ Nyarong has an area of 8,674.7 square kilometers and is located at 30.23'-31°23'N and 99°37'-100°54' E. To the east, it borders on Tawu and Drango; to the north, it is contiguous to Kardzé and Derge (Degé); to the south, it is adjacent to Litang and Nyachukha; to the west, it adjoins Palyül.

² According to the Chinese official record, the Qing launched altogether seven expeditions to the Nyarong region, two of which were supposed to be against Gönpö Namgyel. See *Xinlong xianzhi* (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1992), 5-8.

Further it seems that since the fourteenth century the region consisted of various decentralized polities.³ While sometimes these various political entities formed alliances among themselves, they were frequently involved in internal strife as well. In 1373, it is recorded that five indigenous leaders (Ch. *tusi*) of Chakdū ruled the region.⁴ Later in the early eighteenth century, intense family feuding forced a division in the Chakdū family resulting in the Upper Chakdū family in Dagé and the Lower Chakdū family in Rinup. Both branches were granted the title of tongpön (*stong dpon*, chief of 1,000 households).

Yet another split was forced to resolve the rivalry for the chieftaincy between two brothers of the Lower Chakdū family in Rinup, known as Old and Young Pelgön. The Middle Chakdū family, which descended from Young Pelgön, was formed in the area between the Upper and Lower Chakdū families. Young Pelgön was Gönpoten's father and Gönpo Namgyel's great-grandfather. Both Young Pelgön and his son Gönpoten are said to have been killed by assassins sent by Old Pelgön, the chief of Lower Chakdū.⁵ When Gönpo Namgyel's father Norbu Tsering was chief, his authority was enhanced only through marriage alliances with the wealthy and powerful Akar family and with the support of six comparatively powerful sons-in-law, minor headmen under the Upper Chakdū family. At this time, the Middle Chakdū family began to enjoy a certain authority and power in the area.⁶ Later Gönpo Namgyel established a more extensive web of marriage alliances. He married his seven daughters not only into the families of his own subordinate headmen, but also into headmen families under the jurisdiction of the Upper Chakdū family in Dagé,

³ According to Chinese sources, this event took place when Sherap Gyatso, a disciple of Lama Yeshebum at Kathok monastery, accompanied the Sakya master Phakpa Lodrö Gyeltsen to teach the Dharma in Dadu in 1253. After he returned to Nyarong, he continued to live as a monk, and placed his elder sister in charge of the official seal and document. See Xirao E-re, "Xinlong gongbu langjie xingwang shi", in *Ganzi zangzu zizhizhou wenshi ziliao xuanji*, vol. 3 (1985): 1-2. However, there is insufficient evidence to determine whether Sherap Gyatso had jurisdiction over the entire Nyarong region or whether there were other chiefs (Ch. *tusi*) ruling the region as well. See *Xinlong xianzhi*, 1992, 5.

⁴ In accordance with *Xinlong xianzhi*, the Ming emperor Zhu Yuanzhang conferred titles on the indigenous leaders of five areas in Upper Chakdū and one region in Lower Chakdū. See *Xinlong xianzhi*, 1992:5.

⁵ Young Pelgön was forced to move to Kharnya between Upper and Lower Chakdū. But later his older brother, fearing that he might contend for the chieftaincy again in the future, had him secretly killed, and had his family moved to Gyaré. When the younger brother's son Gönpoten came of age, he gradually freed himself from his uncle's control, and became the dominating power in Gyaré. Thus his family was called Gyaré pönchung (the minor official of Gyaré), also known as the Middle Chakdū family. See Yelé Tsültrim, *Lcags mdud mgon rnam pa'i lo rgyus rag rim brjod pa* (manuscript), 1-2.

⁶ Yelé Tsültrim manuscript, 2-3.

and also into powerful families in the neighboring Derge, Trehor, Litang and Tawu regions.⁷ In this way, he gradually extended his family's sphere of influence over neighboring areas, laying a foundation for his future expansion into the region.

In the early nineteenth century, harboring a grudge against the neighboring chief of Drango for killing Gönpo Namgyel's older brother, Gönpo Namgyel and his men constantly attacked the Drango region. This led to the first Qing military expedition against the Middle Chakdü family in 1817 in response to the request from the chief of Drango and his relative by marriage the Chakla "king" in Dartsedo. But, the Qing troops were only able to capture empty fortresses, as Norbu Tsering and Gönpo Namgyel and their men escaped into the forested valley and continued to attack them. Finally the Qing troops had to retreat by falsely claiming that "the chief of the rebels was killed in a fire," and they granted the territory of the Middle Chakdü family to the Upper and Lower Chakdü families.⁸ But soon Gönpo Namgyel was able not only to recover regions under his family's jurisdiction, but also to force some tribes, who were neither under the jurisdiction of the Upper or Lower Chakdü families, to surrender to him. From 1837 onwards Gönpo Namgyel engaged in battles to unify the Upper, Lower and Middle parts of Nyarong. Upon receiving the appeal for protection from Dagé, one of the Nyarong chieftains, in 1849 the Qing government dispatched 6000 soldiers commanded by Sichuan governor Qi Shan to suppress the disturbance. The Qing troops were unable to defeat him, so Qi Shan, in an attempt to conceal his failure, offered him amnesty in order to claim victory. But as soon as Gönpo Namgyel agreed to accept it, Qi and his troops retreated. Later Qi reported to the emperor that Gönpo Namgyel had already pledged allegiance to the Qing, and requested that the official title of Local Administrator (Ch. *zhangguan si*) of the seventh rank be conferred upon him. However, when the button as a sign of rank and the official robes arrived, Gönpo Namgyel not only refused them but also proclaimed his disgust by ordering the regalia thrown into the Drichu River.⁹

As the first Qing expedition against him did not weaken his strength, in the mid-nineteenth century Gönpo Namgyel quickly rose to become the paramount regional power by annexing large areas of neighboring territories through sheer military force. According to a popular saying in the Nyarong region, he subjugated "the eight districts of ten thousand" (*Nyang khri sde brgyad*), including almost the

⁷ Yelé Tsültrim manuscript, 5.

⁸ *Xinlong xianzhi*, 1992, 6-7; see also Yelé Tsültrim manuscript, 4.

⁹ See Xirao E-re 1985:14-17; Chen Yishi, "Qingdai zhandui shijian zai zangzu diqu de lishi diwei yu yingxiang," (1), *Xizang yanjiu*, no. 2 (1986): 37-42.

whole of Kham up to Dartsedo.¹⁰ He conquered not only the territory of the five Hor hereditary chieftains (Tib. *dpon po*),¹¹ but also the domains of Derge, Litang, and Chakla—three of the four regional powers.¹² He became so powerful that he was able to champion the idea of an independent kingdom of Kham, and his rise to power contested the authority of both the Qing and the Lhasa governments. In 1862, he gained control over Sino-Tibetan trade and communication routes, disrupted Qing official postal services and stopped the transportation of provisions and funds for Chinese troops stationed in Tibet. Since the Qing government was preoccupied with numerous rebellions in its territories and such external challenges as the Opium Wars, it could not spare much military force to suppress his insurgency.

For the Tibetans Gönpo Namgyel's control of the region had a serious impact on the tea trade between China and Tibet. He also posed a serious threat to the government of the Dalai Lama because of his anti-Buddhist stance. Thus, in response to the appeal of the indigenous leaders and people of the Derge and Trehor regions for assistance against the Nyarong invaders, in early 1863 the Lhasa government dispatched troops to suppress Gönpo Namgyel and his rule, resulting in his final defeat.¹³

The defeat of Gönpo Namgyel in 1865 made it possible for the Lhasa authority to extend its administrative rule in Nyarong by appointing a High Commissioner (Tib. *Nyag rong spyi khyab*) to govern the region and assert its influence in other parts of Kham. Thereafter, until Zhao Erfeng forcibly annexed Nyarong in 1911, the Lhasa government used the region as a base to advance its interests in Kham. In particular, it superintended the affairs of the Derge and Hor regions which had been freed from Nyarong invaders. The imposition of Lhasa authority over the region had a major impact on power relationships in the area. It complicated the already intricate relations among the various Tibetan communities since not all the local rulers who were contesting for authority and self-rule welcomed the replacement of Gönpo Namgyel by Lhasa authority, as well as straining the relationship between the Qing and Lhasa. Thus, it intensified contradictions among the diverging imperial, colonial and local forces in Kham, which led to a crisis of rule in Kham in the

¹⁰ Tashi Tsering, "Nyag rong Mgon po nam rgyal: a 19th Century Khams pa Warrior," *Soundings in Tibetan Civilization*, Barbara Minri and Matthew Kapstein, eds. (New Delhi: Manohar, 1985)204; *Litang xianzhi*, (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1992), 7; Aten Dogyeltsang, *A Historical Oration from Khams: the Ancient Recitation of Nyag rong*, (Dharamsala: Amnye Machen Institute, 1993), 81-83.

¹¹ *Viz. Drango, Khangsar, Mazur, Trehor and Beri.*

¹² Xirao E-re, 1985:6-25; Aten Dogyeltsang, 1993:81-82.

¹³ There are different versions about the end of Gonpo Namgyel. For details, see Xirao E-re, 1985, 35.

late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This affected the overall situation of Central Tibet and loosened the hold of Qing nominal rule over Kham. As a result, the “Nyarong issue,” especially Gönpo Namgyel and his expansions, was always important for contemporary Qing policy makers and frontier officials to deliberate, and also a subject of great interest among historians and scholars.

Under the circumstances, contemporary evaluations of Gönpo Namgyel and his military expansion in both official Chinese and Tibetan records were rather negative, denouncing him as “a sinister rebel” and “a ruthless devil who disturbed the peace and order of the region.” The evaluation of individual historical figures, however, has always been influenced by the historian’s particular perspective, which is subject to the theoretical, political and ideological concerns of the day. As a result, historiographical constructions of Gönpo Namgyel’s image from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are quite diverse, leading some to portray him as a hero and others to denigrate him as a villain. Later writers adopt a more ambivalent attitude toward him.

Based on the available primary and secondary sources in Tibetan, Chinese and English, this paper explores the aforesaid factors in the construction of images of Gönpo Namgyel. The historiographical construction of historical figures is rather complex and ambivalent. This study provides an opportunity to consider various pressures that bear on that complexity, including the role of the historian’s ideological focus, the bias of official documents, and the influence of contemporary politics and academic concerns. I will show that the different perceptions of Gönpo Namgyel are the outcome of periodic constraints and the ideological motives of the writer or historian. Though the focus of this paper is not to appraise Gönpo Namgyel as a historic figure or to discuss his expansions, nevertheless as we review various accounts some illumination of these issues will result. We hope that this exploration will complement our knowledge of the many facets involved in appraising this controversial figure.

Chinese Historiographical Construction of Gönpo Namgyel

There are numerous Chinese historical accounts of Gönpo Namgyel, consisting of Qing official records, historical accounts published during the Republican period and lastly the works of historians influenced by the Marxist approach to history. As I have stated in the introduction, Qing policy makers, frontier officials and historians portrayed him as a rebel and a villain, as did historians in the Republican

period and in Taiwan. Whereas some Marxist historians, under the guiding principle that peasant insurgence and rebellions were essential driving forces of history, recast Gönpo Namgyel as a "class hero" in the post-liberation era, others who also had equipped themselves with the Marxist theory of class struggle and class analysis have censured him as a feudal lord engaged in territorial expansion and exploitation of the serfs.

The Traditional Chinese Perspective

For centuries the model for historical writing in China was deeply influenced by Confucianism and the Qing policy makers, frontier officials and historians were no exception. They naturally viewed the disruption of order as the greatest crime and revolt as anathema. They also praised harmonious social relationships, vilified rebellion and placed great emphasis on showing the greatness of the reigning dynasty. Therefore it is no wonder that traditional Chinese writings condemned Gönpo Namgyel as "a sinister rebel" and "a ruthless villain." The bias against those who rebel against authority in traditional historical practice dictates a discursive strategy depicting the rebels as cruel and unworthy oppressors of the people. This also determines the tone and style of language used in the relevant accounts. These biases are well revealed in memorials by Qing frontier officials and edicts recorded in *Qing Veritable Records*.

On the twenty-fifth day of the first month in the twenty-ninth year of the Daoguang reign (1848), Chengdu General Yu Cheng and Sichuan governor-general Qi Shan sent a memorial concerning Gönpo Namgyel's earlier activities:

Relying on his obstinacy, the wild barbarian Gönpo Namgyel of the Middle Zhandui [Chakdü] region has not abided by the law, and he came out of his lair to stir up trouble [in the gion] ...Having bullied and humiliated the various *tusi*, (he) not only killed their subjects and pillaged their money as well as livestock, but also robbed the tea packages and other possessions (of traveling tradesmen). Though the territories of various *tusi* were nibbled at by him, none of them could do anything about it.... This wild barbarian dared to be parochially arrogant by relying on his fierceness and stubbornness, and had the effrontery to plan to occupy Litang¹⁴

¹⁴ See "Buluman lingdao de nongnu qiye," collected by Mi Hongwei and Kasa Zeweng (for internal circulation only), 1986, 15-16. See also Qi Shan, "Sichuan sheng qi tongbing jingong zougao," in *Baxian dan-an*, in Sichuan Archives, cited from Chen Yishi, 1986 (2): 47-53.

To achieve their purpose, Yu and Qi employed pejorative language and adopted a tone of denunciation, using derogatory phrases such as “came out his lair” (*chuchao*), “stirred up troubles” (*zishi*) and “fierce and stubborn” (*xiongwan*). Such phrases are commonly applied to all rebels. Gönpo Namgyel is singled out as a “wild barbarian,” rather than a “civilized subject.” “Wild barbarian” is reserved exclusively for minority groups in the Qing Empire. It is a reflection of the Sinocentric sense of superiority over all other non-Chinese people, which was also inherited by the Manchu rulers in their dealings with frontier peoples.

In addition, the negative portrait of Gönpo Namgyel in official reports not only shows the dominance of Confucian ideology, but more practical concerns as well. Officials often distorted and exaggerated facts for political purposes. On the one hand, officers wanted to portray their actions in the best possible light to the Qing court, and on the other hand, they saw the reports as means of advancing their own interests. The exaggeration and distortion of the facts in Yu Cheng and Qi Shan’s joint memorial, quoted above, provides a good example. To convince the emperor and his court that it was imperative to suppress the disturbances caused by Gönpo Namgyel, Qi and Yu exaggerated the situation by claiming that Gönpo Namgyel would seize Litang to obstruct the main road to Tibet. As later historians have shown, Gönpo Namgyel’s attack on Litang was much more personal. It seems that Gönpo Namgyel did not initially aim at controlling the main road, but he attacked Litang to avenge the Litang *depa*’s (*sde pa*) refusal to wed Gönpo Namgyel’s daughter.¹⁵

In another memorial Qi Shan gives an account to the Qing court of his victory over Gönpo Namgyel, providing a glowing report of his efforts in subduing Gönpo Namgyel and his army. He reports that he and his men achieved “splendid” results on the battlefield, writing, “After we had used both guns and cannons, the barbarian thieves were not able to withstand, [so] they all fled.” He goes on to say that “our troops vigorously pursued them and killed numerous barbarians.” In reality, the actual fighting was limited and Qi relied on a policy of appeasement, offering titles and rewards for their acceptance of Qing authority. The military campaign was only a secondary factor in the “defeat” of Gönpo Namgyel.

In the same report Qi gives an account of the Qing army’s retreat from Nyarong, presenting it as a victorious event, portraying Gönpo Namgyel as “a rebel who honestly showed repentance for his past wrongdoing” and willing to return territories he had seized. Accord-

¹⁵ See Qi Shan, cited from Chen Yishi, 48.

ing to Qi, he admitted that his revengeful attack against the Litang *tusi* was presumptuous, and that he would take responsibility for his "crime." From what we know this is clearly not the case. Judging from Gönpo Namgyel's later activities, it is obvious that Qi Shan exaggerated Gönpo Namgyel's willingness to submit. There is also no evidence to show his army was destroyed. But the relevant account in the *Biography of Qi Shan* goes so far as to overstate Qi Shan's merits; Qi Shan is said to have ordered the Han Chinese and local troops to chase them away and kill their leaders. In May, when troops were sent to suppress the disturbance, all "the wild barbarians" were believed to offer back the seized lands and people as they feared Qing military power.

Official accounts of Gönpo Namgyel's later activities also demonstrate the discursive strategy for presenting the unworthiness and brutality of the rebels. They describe territories extending over 10,000 *li* tormented by Gönpo Namgyel. In the first year of the Tongzhi reign (1862), it was reported that his troops again laid siege to Litang, disrupting the Sichuan-Tibetan main road and obstructing the tea trade route. All the people in the territories under the jurisdiction of the various *tusi* in Kham and the parts of Kham subordinate to Central Tibet "could not bear the suffering he inflicted upon them."¹⁶

Another memorial states that even the Mingzheng *tusi* (Chakla Gyelpo, Tib. *Lcags la rgyal po*), who had always been cautious and followed orders, also demolished the postage station because Gönpo Namgyel had invaded his territories. Consequently, Jing Wen, the newly appointed High Commissioner to Tibet (*amban*, Ch. *zhuzang dachen*), was unable to continue his journey. Likewise, most of the transportation corvée labor (Tib. *rkang 'gro lag 'don*) for official business was also delayed.¹⁷ In addition, according to the memorial sent by the High Commissioner to Tibet, Man Qing and others,

Having gathered together the Dege (Tib. Sde dge) *tusi*, the barbarian chief Gongbu Langjie (Gönpo Namgyel) harassed territories of various *tusi*, including Huo-er Zhanggu (Tib. Hor Brag 'go). They would arrive at Zhaya (Tib. Brag g-yab), Gongjue (Tib. Go 'jo) and other places via Batang and Jiangka ('Jo mda') soon. His son Dongdeng Gongbu (Tongdé Gönpo) laid siege to Litang, and also destroyed the main roads and bridges, opened and read the official reports and tied up the translators. Meanwhile, when Qimei Gongbu (Chimé Gönpo), a brave war-

¹⁶ See "Zhupi zouzhe: minzu lei," Dossier 1337, no.1, collected by the Chinese No. 1 Historical Archives. Cited from Chen Yishi, 1986 (2):48. Also see *Qing shilu zangzu shiliao*, Vol. 9:4309; *Qing Shilu: Muzong shilu*, Vol. 56,10-11.

¹⁷ *Qing shilu zangzu shiliao*, Vol. 9, 4305-4306. Also see *Qing Shilu: Muzong shilu*, Vol. 45:46v-47v.

rior under Gönpo Namgyel who led a large number of rebels, arrived at Sanba (Tib. Zam pa), they robbed the Chinese official in charge of military grain and supplies of his luggage, and seized memorials and official documents sent from Central Tibet.¹⁸

Man Qing and others also reported that the rebels of Nyarong seized the region under the jurisdiction of Drayab, and killed many headmen and common people in a small area of Chamdo. The rebels forced the rest to surrender, and ransacked their possessions and livestock. In sum, the rebels led by Gönpo Namgyel were presented as villains who not only harassed the neighboring *tusi* and killed their subjects, but also disrupted the flow of official documents and business.

Unlike studies by Marxist historians who are concerned with the social course of the revolt, most official documents never discuss the revolt's underlying causes. Zhang Ji, a Qing official stationed in Nyarong in the 1890s, made an unusual observation. He took note of the rampant natural disasters in the area and speculated that such hardships might be an underlying cause of the revolt.¹⁹ Zhang's linking of natural disasters with Gönpo Namgyel's activities is surprising. Traditional Chinese historical writing rarely connects natural disasters with social unrest.

Some favorable accounts of Gönpo Namgyel can also be found in Chinese historical writings because of the great importance most traditional historians attached to imparting factual information. For instance, though the Chinese official Zhang Ji generally had a rather negative view of Gönpo Namgyel, he did include some favorable remarks about him.²⁰ In the section about Gönpo Namgyel's birth and childhood, the author writes,

Gönpo Namgyel was born of a god of the Snow Mountain. From birth he had great arm strength, and also grew to be a brave and wise man. As a result, most of the (neighborhood) children were under his command when playing games. He not only was skilled at racing horses, but also practiced swordsmanship every day. Every time he looked around and boasted

¹⁸ *Qing shilu zangzu shiliao* 9. Also *Qing Shilu: Muzong shilu*, Vol. 56:10; 58:58.

¹⁹ Zhang Ji was sent to Nyarong when the Sichuan Governor-general Lu Chuanlin was attempting to restore Chinese rule to the region.

²⁰ As a Chinese official who traveled all over Nyarong region, Zhang investigated its situation, gave a detailed account of its system and witnessed the devastation caused by the war. Zhang Ji, *Ding zhan ting zhilüe: panli pian*. (Beijing: Huayuan chubanshe, 2003): 99-117.

himself, 'Why did the heaven let me be born among these barbarians?'²¹

Through such back-handed compliments this passage maintains a sense of Chinese superiority, portraying Gönpo Namgyel as someone who loathed being born among barbarians. It is as if at once he aspired to be born among the civilized, namely the Chinese, and had that been so, he would have been a great hero. Nevertheless, while the author uses rather favorable language to describe the rebel, including his noble birth, excellent skills and aptitude for leadership even during his childhood, it is as if all of this were wasted due to his unfortunate birth into a non-Chinese family.

Confucian historians in the Republican period and later in Taiwan also adopt similar views to those of most Qing officials who considered Gönpo Namgyel "a villain" and "a bandit." The similarity is not surprising because they primarily base their study on Qing official documents and are guided by the same Confucianist philosophy of history. In response to British encroachment in Central Tibet in 1904 and later Sino-British negotiations over the Tibetan issue in the early part of the twentieth century, Chinese nationalist feelings had increased steadily. In particular, late Qing imperial control in Kham brought Tibet into contemporary Chinese consciousness. As a result, during the Republican era there was renewed interest in the region and a proliferation of writing on Kham (Ch. Xikang). Since most of these books deal with only general information—whether social, historical, geographical or political—about Kham, the accounts of Gönpo Namgyel's revolt are rather brief, some consisting of only a line or two.²² A few articles on Nyarong appeared in *Kangdao Yuekan*, a journal specialized in the study of Kham area at the time.²³ However, articles and books published during the Republican era shared assumptions similar to the Qing officials about Gönpo Namgyel and his military expansions and continued to use the same pejorative languages found in earlier texts:

During the reign of Xianfeng emperor, the four *tusi* in Nyarong were annexed by Gönpo Namgyel. As a sinister, ruthless and vicious person, he had the ambition to annex Xikang so as to re-

²¹ Zhang Ji, 2003, 109.

²² See Chen Zhongwei, *The Xikang wenti*, (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1930), 20.

²³ See Zhu Zuming, "Gailiu qian de zhanhua tuqiu," in *Kaodao Yuekan*, vol. 6, no. 1, (1944):30-37; Chen Qitu, "Zhanhua gailiu shimo," *Kangdao Yuekan*, vol.1, no.3, (1938):16-18. Ouyang Shubei, "Zhanhua tuqiu zhi guoqu yu xianzai," *Kangdao Yuekan*, vol.1, no.12, (1939): 17-22. Chen Shengchao, "Zhanhua shizheng shilu," *Kangdao Yuekan*, no. 4 (1939):21-30; Xu Wenchao, "Zhunhua shangzhan qu diaocha ji," in *Kangdao yuekan*, vol.1, no. 4 (1939): 59-73.

sist Central Tibet in the west and Sichuan Province in the east. The various *tusi* in Kham were all docile and obedient to him, either ceding territories or paying tribute to him, and none of them dared to challenge him. In the first year of Tongzhi reign, a dispute started because Gönpo Namgyel seized the tea bought by the Central Tibetans....²⁴

It is clear from the quoted passage that this description is based on official Qing documents, especially a few lines that seem to quote the exact wording of the original memorials. Almost verbatim passages can be found in *Xikang Tujing: Jingyu pian* by Ren Naiqiang and *Xikang niaokan* by Li Yiren. Li in particular retains such derogatory terms as “rebel chieftain” and “the lair” in his introduction to the geographical position of Nyarong County, when he discusses the place where the “rebel chieftain” Gönpo Namgyel and his father lived.²⁵

Although some Taiwan historians engaged in Tibetan studies, including research on Xikang, their interest in the political implications and historical significance of Xikang in general and the “Nyarong issue” in particular diminished over time. Indeed, I have so far found only one relevant article focusing on the subject: Sun Zihe’s article, “The Revolt Led by Gönpo Namgyel in the Sichuan Borderlands in the Late Qing.” Sun discusses not only the revolts led by Gönpo Namgyel and his father, but also the measures taken in their aftermath and the impact of their revolts. In addition to the relevant documents in *Qing shilu* (the Veritable Records of Qing), Sun bases his study mainly on the memorials and other primary sources written by Qing officials cited in Chen Yishi’s articles, which will be discussed in the next section. He therefore follows the traditional evaluation of Gönpo Namgyel as “a disturber of the peace” and “a villain.”²⁶

The Marxist Historian’s Perspective

With the establishment of communist rule in China in 1949, there was a shift in historical writing. The new generation of Chinese historians influenced by a Marxist/materialist interpretation of history tended to focus on the masses who were viewed as the true “makers of history.” With this new trend, there was a special emphasis on class

²⁴ Hu Jilu. *Xikang jiangyu sugu lu* (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan), 1928.

²⁵ Ren Naiqiang. *Xikang tujing: jingyu pian*, Li Yiren. *Xikang zonglan* (Shanghai: Zhengzhong shuju), 1946, 29.

²⁶ See Sun Zihe. “Qingmo chuanbian gongbu langjie zhi luan,” in *Xizang lishi yu renwu* (Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan), 1995, 29-57.

struggle as the primary agent for change, and the peasant movement became the main subject of historical inquiry.²⁷ The Marxist tendency to glorify uprisings as a just movement against oppression opposes the traditional Confucian model with its negative depiction of rebellions.

Under these political, ideological and academic circumstances, Marxist historians began to recast Gönpo Namgyel according to a theory of class struggle and class analysis. Among Marxist historians, there was a natural bias in the selection of sources and facts. Even when they used Qing official sources they ignored what they believed to be accounts that “slander the peasant revolt.” In the 1950s, a new type of narrative account began to appear. A good example of this trend is the internal report written by members of the Sichuan Nationalities Investigation Team in 1959. In a romantic account somewhat reminiscent of Robin Hood, Gönpo Namgyel was for the first time praised as the leader of a “serf uprising” against the feudal lords:

The participants grew from a few thousand to over 10,000. The three-year long uprising, involved Zhandui (Chakdü), Kardzé, Dergé and other regions, and its impact extended to Eastern and Southern Kham as well as Central Tibet. Having routed the armed forces of the feudal class and either driven out or killed the members of the feudal class, including *tusi* (indigenous leaders) and others, the masses of the uprising occupied the domains of the *tusi* and replaced their regimes. They immediately opened the storehouses of the *tusi* to distribute the grain, gold, silver and clothes to the masses; they also burned the deeds and account books kept by *tusi*, and abolished *u lag* (corvée labor). But the internal organization was not sound because the leaders of the uprising became corrupt in the later stage of the uprising and took some erroneous measures, so it failed eventually under the suppression of the local feudal ruling class in collusion with the feudal force in Central Tibet.²⁸

Xizang jianzhi (A Brief Tibetan Annals) published in 1963, based mainly on the 1959 report, depicts Gönpo Namgyel and his movement as “a large scale serf uprising:

²⁷ For a detailed discussion, see , James Harrison, *The Communists and Chinese Peasant Rebellions: A Study in the Rewriting of Chinese History* (New York: Atheneum), 1971.

²⁸ See the report of the investigation by Sichuan Nationality Investigation Team in 1959, cited by Xuming. “Gongbulangjie shi nongnu qiye lingxiu ma?” in *Xinan minyu xuebao*, no. 1(1980):20-35.

In 1887 a serf uprising led by Buluman (Tib. Bu long ma, “the blind boy,” Gönpo Namgyel’s nickname) broke out in Chakdü. Having first defeated the feudal armed forces of the indigenous leader of Zhandui and killed the ferocious *tusi*, the insurrectionary army confiscated all his possessions and property, and proclaimed the abolishment of corvée labor. After fighting in one place after another in Chakdü, Dergé and Kardzé for three years, they not only drove out the indigenous leaders of Khangsar and Mazur into exile, but also forced the indigenous leader of Derge to flee to the west bank of the Drichu (Jinsha) River to seek refuge with the ruling clique of serf-owners in Central Tibet. The serfs in various regions rose in force and spirit at the news, responding to the uprising with full support.²⁹

The struggles to resist land rent and corvée labor broke out one after another. After the insurrectionary army achieved initial victory, Bulongma and others became arrogant, and began to lead a corrupted life. Disunity developed within the uprising leadership, and they cut themselves off from the masses. Not long after, they were defeated by the indigenous leader in collusion with the serf-owners of Central Tibet. Bulongma led the remnants of his army retreating to Nyarong, but they were surrounded. At last (he and others) were burned alive in a fire set by the serf-owners, and the uprising failed.

It is evident from the two paragraphs quoted above that one group of Chinese historians portrays the incident exactly as other historians deal with a typical “righteous” peasant uprising. As the following features will be discussed in more detail below, here I would like briefly to touch upon them. First, like most studies on peasant revolts by communist historians, we see the thread of class antagonism that runs through these paragraphs. Second, communist historians typically stress or focus on activities that show the progressiveness of peasant revolts as a whole, including the distribution of wealth of the “ruling class” among the masses, the destruction of deeds and account books and resistance against land tax and corvée labor. Finally, the reasons given for the uprising’s failure are also typical: disunity, the corruption of the leadership and their aloofness from the masses, their mistaken measures and so forth.

However, the changing political, ideological and academic atmosphere since the 1970s has had an impact on intellectual life, leading also to some new developments in studies of peasant revolts. Following the demise of the “Gang of Four” in 1976 and subsequent academic liberalization in China, though much attention continued to be

²⁹ The year is incorrect. It should be 1848. *Xizang jianzhi*, 1963, 27-29.

focused on the subject of peasant rebellions, the criteria for evaluation and style of academic discussion and perspective on peasant rebellions as a whole changed accordingly. Because productive forces rather than class struggle were emphasized as the primary motive force in history, there was room for a less positive appraisal of the role of peasant uprisings. While the perceived importance of class struggle receded into the background, so, too did the need to portray China's peasant rebellions as part of a glorious proto-revolutionary tradition, leading inexorably toward communist victory in 1949. On the contrary, historians have begun the task of reevaluating the character of various peasant uprisings, stressing the many "backward" aspects of the movements. Furthermore, since a comparatively open style of academic discussion prevails in China, conferences and writings on the topic of peasant rebellions often reflect an exciting spirit of controversy.³⁰

Once again Gönpo Namgyel became the subject of new studies and a number of interesting articles about him were published. This caused heated debate among historians as to the nature of the uprising and the status of Gönpo Namgyel. There emerged two opposing views of him. One group, including some books and articles from the late 1970s and even through the 1990s, continued to present him as a leader of serf rebellion. The other group considers his activities as exemplifying "contradictions within the governing class," and condemns him as a feudal lord engaged in territorial expansion and the exploitation of serfs. And yet another historian has proposed that what began as an anti-Qing revolt developed into a "tribal" war, with Central Tibet becoming involved in 1863.

One of the representative pieces of the first group, an article by Zeng Wenqiong, is a case in point that demonstrates a unique discursive structure and shows how political, ideological and academic factors bear on the construction of a "righteous" leader of a serf uprising, as well as the historiographical reconstruction of the uprising itself.³¹ Zeng's article still adopts the typical framework of studies on peasant wars in China popular at the time. Because the main theme of Zeng's article, like most other studies on peasant wars in 1950s and 1960s, argues that the revolt led by Gönpo Namgyel was a just serf uprising, the theme of class and class struggle features in every aspect of his discussion and approach.

³⁰ Elizabeth J. Perry, ed. *Chinese Perspectives on the Nien Rebellion* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1981), 3; Liu, Kwang-ching, "World View and Peasant Rebellion: Reflection on Post-Mao Historiography." *Journal of Asian Studies* 11 (1981):295-326.

³¹ Zeng Wenqiong, "Shijiu shiji zhongye chuankang diqu de yici nongnu da qiye," in *Xinan minzu xueyuan xuebao* 1 (1979):30-39.

The author claims that the revolt occupies an undeniable position in the history of Chinese peasant wars and that it provides new materials for the study of the history of class struggle against serf-owners by serfs. Probing the causes of the uprising, he cites first the *Collected Works of Mao Zedong* concerning the frequency of peasant uprisings as a sign of the intensification of class antagonism and national conflict. He moves on to the many anti-Qing revolts in western Sichuan Province to show how oppressive government drove the people to rebellion and that the masses were living in dire poverty. Looking at the general situation in Kham, Zeng enumerates not only the land and livestock taxes, usury and commercial exploitation as the means of economic plunder, but also details the religious oppression and persecution of the serfs. Finally, the natural disasters lasting for a few years prior to the uprising and the excessive exploitation of the serf-owners in Nyarong are recounted as the specific causes of the uprising. In sum, the serfs were leading a miserable life without sufficient food and clothes, and they were exploited and oppressed by the Tibetan feudal serf-owner class. But above all, the author cites the miserable life of the serfs ultimately to show the intensification of class conflict in Tibetan society in Kham, which Marxists take as the motive force of history.

Zeng's examination into the political program and measures of the revolt is a perfect example of the extremes to which some Marxist historians will go. Faced with a lack of any information in the relevant Chinese official sources, Zeng digs up a 1950s field report and then reinforces it with findings of his own field investigation in the region. He also lists "positive" political activities, stressing aspects that reflect the progressiveness of the revolt, namely the distribution of wealth, the destruction of deeds and account books, and the resistance to land taxes and corvée labor. In his description of the political activities and measures taken by the "serf uprising" in Dergé, first he offers a slightly more detailed account of the former issues based on his own findings in a field investigation. He then cites the report of the late 1950s about the relevant measures adopted by Gönpo Namgyel with the help of his aide, Lugu Tsering (Achö Lugu):

In regions occupied by the insurrectionary army, it is stipulated that the masses do not provide corvée labor or pay tribute to either the Central Tibetan government or the *tusi*. However, the grain, firewood and grass presented to the *tusi* by the masses in the past should be handed over to the insurrectionary army.³²

³² Zeng 1979:34. See also the field report known as "Bu Lungba Serf Uprising."

To further prove that the insurrectionary army must have laid down a series of measures other than the above-mentioned few, he quotes from the *History of Zhandui* to show that Lugu Tstring was considered such a wise and resourceful man that he would have definitely drawn up more stipulations.³³ He comments that more detailed information of the relevant issues awaits further investigation and research. Moreover, as he recounts the different stages of the “serf uprising,” he repeatedly points out that it is the appeal of its political programs and revolutionary measures that helped win the support of the people.

Like most Chinese communist historians, the author comments on the uprising as a part of the peasant wars, and even though the hope for an outcome for the government is poorly defined, he still speaks highly of the uprising. He attributes the ambiguity of the uprising’s goals to the limitations of the social and historical conditions of time and location. Zeng argues that it is impossible to create a regime out of the void created by the theocracy in the feudal serfdom of Kham, where “deities” were ubiquitous. However, in spite of all his ambiguity, the author maintains the uprising’s significance should not be discounted, and argues that Gönpo Namgyel and his uprising was not a localized incident but part of a widespread peasant uprising movement in China in opposition to Qing rule. In his own words,

The great significance of (the serf uprising) should be viewed as an important component of the great patriotic anti-Qing revolutionary struggles by the whole Chinese nation, rather than a revolt limited to Kham only. Kham is far away from Inland China, but the fate of the Tibetan people is closely linked to that of the various ethnic groups in China. The whole history of the serf uprising proves the (following) truth: the revolutionary struggles of the Tibetan people will not succeed without the victories of those of various ethnic groups led by Han Chinese. When the revolutionary struggles of the various ethnic groups headed by the Taiping Revolution failed, the Tibetan serf uprising also ended along with them. The truth fully shows that the various ethnic groups in China, who have fought and won together, have shared a common fate since time immemorial. The nation has been founded by them together, and history has also been written together by them with their blood.³⁴

As we can see from this paragraph, Zeng’s account of the uprising’s significance follows the guiding principle that Tibet has always been part of China. Indeed, this principle is the unquestioned ultimate

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Zeng 1979:37.

goal toward which most Marxist historians understand the flow of Tibetan history. It is interesting to note the concrete reasons for the failure of the uprising cited by this author. Basing his reasoning on new findings from his field investigation, he adds another reason to the typical ones discussed above—sabotage by enemies hidden within the uprising. Zeng argues that the “serf uprising” led by Gönpo Namgyel, like all other peasant wars lacking the complete support and guidance of the proletariat and the Communist Party, was doomed to defeat.

What merits our special attention is the author’s particular discussion about the uprising’s participants, and how he attempts to reconcile apparent contradictions in Gönpo Namgyel’s class origins. The author notes that while the poorest layers of Kham society—*khorpa* (*khor pa*), *trepa* (*khral pa*) and some poor monks—are the basic participants in the “serf uprising,” the serf-owner class represented by *tusi*, headmen and high-ranking lamas in monasteries had always been the target of the “revolutionary army’s attacks.” He further points out that though the insurrectionary army had such great political vitality first and foremost because it put forward slogans representing the interests of the serfs, such important factors as the class nature of the basic participants who fought for the realization of the slogans and the revolutionary resolve of the leadership should not be overlooked. Turning to the leadership of the “serf uprising,” Zeng holds a positive view of Gönpo Namgyel’s role in the uprising, even though a contradictory account of his family background is evident:

According to the folk stories, Bulongma, one of the main leaders of the insurrectionary army, was born in a poor serf family in Boré village, Zhandui. Since his youth, he participated in activities against the oppression and exploitation by *tusi* and headmen. He had gradually become a mature leader of the serfs in the class struggles. But the documents clearly recorded that Bulongma was born in a *tusi* family.... It is evident (from the official document) that after Luobu Qili (Norbu Tsering) was killed, his land and property was first confiscated by the Qing, then was awarded to indigenous leaders who supported the Qing in its suppression of him. Here for the time being I will not investigate whether his son Gönpo Namgyel’s status had been lowered to that of serf; however, it is certain that he would not let the Qing and other indigenous leaders get away with their deed of ‘killing his father and seizing his property.’ No matter what kind of family background Bulongma had and what his purpose of joining the uprising at the beginning was, judging from his struggles against the Qing dynasty and the fifteen *tusi*, his activities were beneficial to the insurrectionary army from start to the finish. It is especially praiseworthy that

he did not surrender to the enemies when facing death in the final fight against them, showing the revolutionary determination of the serfs.... Other leaders of the uprising, all born in poor serf families, also fought bravely and charged at the head of their men. In particular, none of them wavered or turned coat when they were surrounded.... The heroic deeds of these many leaders not only represent the majority of the insurrectionary army, but also fully reflect the Chinese nation's spirit of fighting to the finish against their enemies.³⁵

It is clear from the quoted passage that Zeng seeks to distinguish the leader Gönpo Namgyel's social origin or family background (Ch. *chusheng*) from his "class attributes" (Ch. *jieji shuxing*) or the class which he served.³⁶ In fact, the stress on "class attributes" makes it possible to have a positive appraisal of Gönpo Namgyel in spite of the conflicting materials about his family background. In addition, the fact that all other leaders were born as serfs also supports the author's claim that Gönpo Namgyel's activities served the interests of the serf class. Thus, by resolving the problem of the criteria for being a progressive serf leader, Zeng manages to praise Gönpo Namgyel as a loyal heroic leader of the uprising who served the serf class and fought to the finish against his enemies.

Finally, in terms of the language used to describe the uprising and the sources selected for this purpose, Zeng follows a typical Marxist approach, glorifying the peasant wars and criticizing the "ruling class." Zeng writes most enthusiastically about the uprising, filling his article with praise and a tone of admiration. For instance, in the account of the battles, the soldiers are portrayed as brave and heroic, and Gönpo Namgyel's three sons are depicted as excelling in the martial arts and skilled in battle. Meanwhile, Gönpo Namgyel himself is extolled as a leader who enjoyed the full support of the people, shared weal and woe with the common soldiers, and who strictly disciplined his army so that not the slightest harm might be inflicted on the people. And Gönpo Namgyel's refusal to accept the official title of the sixth rank and their spirit of fighting to the finish rather than surrendering in the decisive battle demonstrate the firmness of the serfs' revolutionary spirit. By contrast, derogatory words and criticism are reserved for the ruling class, the enemy of the peasants. The *tusi's* army is criticized as being fierce as wolves and tigers in a time of peace, but complete pushovers in battle. Qi Shan, the general dispatched to quell the revolt in Nyarong by the Qing court, is criticized as a representative of the landlord class, and his "scandalous"

³⁵ Zeng 1979:36.

³⁶ See Harrison 1971, 57.

behavior to “expedite” his retreat by staging a fake victory is also exposed. Though he occasionally quotes the official records to corroborate his argument, he mainly bases his accounts on oral reports, *i.e.*, the findings of various field investigations, including his own. He tends to select those official documents supporting his view of the uprising, but ignores anything contradicting his argument without analysis or explanation. Even when the very passage he quotes contains information opposed to his central theme, he makes no effort to resolve the problem. For example, to contrast the contradictory accounts of Gönpo Namgyel’s family background in folk stories and the official documents, the author quotes Sichuan Governor-general Luo Bingzhang’s memorial to emperor Tongzhi. But he does not explain its negative view of Gönpo Namgyel, which presents him as a greedy and vicious person who seized the territories and official seals of other *tusi*. While the general trend of research on peasant wars, is to dismiss these official documents as “slandering the peasant class,” historians like Zeng generally ignore them in their study on peasant wars.

Turning to the second group of articles, representatives are “Gongbu Langjie shi nongnu qiyi lingxiu ma?” (Is Gönpo Namgyel a leader of a serf uprising?) by Xu Ming and “Zhandui *tusi* Bulu bingbian zayi” (A discussion of the riot led by Bulongma, a *tusi* in Nyarong) by Shangguan Jianbi.³⁷ Like those of the first group of articles, Xu’s article is also based on class analysis, but his selection of relevant documents is different from that of Zeng, and he also offers a contrasting image of Gönpo Namgyel. Unlike Zeng who generally dismisses the official documents, Xu quotes extensively from them to present the history of the Nyarong region since 1728, when the *tusi* of Nyarong submitted to the Qing dynasty. This is a history of frequent disturbances and wars, especially against the Qing dynasty.

Based on local history, he concludes that the revolt led by Gönpo Namgyel should be distinguished from others, and he examines it in connection with the general behavior of the feudal serf owners in Nyarong throughout Qing history. He holds that their activities, whose purpose was to restore and expand their power weakened by the Qing government, were actually “revolts” to fight for the interests of their own class and for the high-handed power to exploit the people of their own ethnic group. In Xu’s introduction, he notes the diverse evaluation of Gönpo Namgyel in academic circles. In his opinion, the question of Gönpo Namgyel’s class status is the key to judging the nature of the revolt led by him.

³⁷ Shangguan Jianbi. “Zhandui *tusi* bulu bingbian zayi,” in *Xinan minzu xueyuan xuebao*, no. 1 (1980): 27-35.

According to Xu, to determine whether Gönpo Namgyel was a serf-owner or a leader of the serf uprising, it is necessary to examine the measures and policies adopted under his rule. That is to say, one can only understand fully whose interests Gönpo Namgyel represented by examining whether his measures supported the serfs or the feudal regime. Xu quotes extensively from the Qing official Zhang Ji's account, and an eyewitness account of Gönpo Namgyel and his activities by Yele Tsültrim, a contemporary of Gönpo Namgyel, a monk and fellow Nyarong man.³⁸ He presents Gönpo Namgyel as an ambitious military expansionist who aimed at extending his sphere of influence in Kham, and a ruthless butcher who persecuted and oppressed the people. Far from being the sympathetic leader of serf uprising, he in fact not only demanded substantial amounts of both grain and livestock whenever he seized territories, but is also said to have burnt down houses and killed anyone who could not escape. In the regions he took over he placed individuals from the serf-owner class in official positions and coerced the local people to provide corvée labor to build official residences for him. As a result, it is said that the Tibetan people in Kham rose against Gönpo Namgyel one after another since they did not support his policy of feudal exploitation and brutal massacre. Xu argues that because Gönpo Namgyel led military expeditions in Kham to expand his own sphere of influence and to oppose the rule of the Qing court and Central Tibet, his measures were those of the feudal serf-owner regime. Moreover, Gönpo Namgyel's measures did not conform to those of the serf revolution at all. What deserves our attention is Xu's claim that it does not matter much whether Gönpo Namgyel was born into a *tusi* family or not, but that Gönpo Namgyel acted as a member of the feudal serf-owner class and the army under his leadership definitely did not take part in a serf uprising.³⁹

To refute the evaluation of Gönpo Namgyel as the leader of a serf uprising, Xu raises questions about the authenticity of a few major historical facts. These include information about Gönpo Namgyel's family members and his family background, his military expeditions in certain regions and the causes for the revolts. In conclusion, Xu characterizes the revolt as the rise of a local chief who sought to gain great personal power and expand his dominion. He goes on to say that other historians with a rather positive view of Gönpo Namgyel have failed to use Tibetan and Chinese historical materials that truthfully record the relevant events. More importantly, Xu feels that some authors who wrote about Gönpo Namgyel relied too heavily on the

³⁸ Yelé Tsültrim's manuscript.

³⁹ See Xu 1980:20-26.

1959 field report, which he criticizes as neither comprehensive nor objective.

Following similar objectives, Shangguan argues that to judge the nature of war, one should mainly take into consideration whose interests it serves, whose interests the leaders of the war represent, what kind of slogans it proposes and what benefit it brings to the people. Again relying on both official Chinese documents and Tibetan historical materials, Shangguan also considers the revolt led by Gönpo Namgyel as a pillaging war waged by the serf-owner class. He argues that the war was not to overthrow the feudal serf-owner regime, but to establish feudal rule in Kham with Gönpo Namgyel reigning as a local despot. Meanwhile, the war brought great suffering to the common people, who were forced to migrate to various places and could not pursue normal productive activities. It led to rule by yet another serf-owner, rather than freedom from enslavement by the serf-owner class.

Like Xu's argument, in the sections about the historical background of Gönpo Namgyel's revolt, Shangguan holds that the war waged by Gönpo Namgyel's family was a reactionary war, neither beneficial to safeguarding national unification nor helpful in uniting against foreign invaders. Shangguan relates that the major oppositions straining Chinese society in the mid-nineteenth century changed from tensions between the landlord class and the peasant class to imperialism versus the Chinese nation and feudalism versus rule by the people. Thus, only the Tibetan people's struggles against invasion by the foreign imperialists or struggles against conspiracies to split the country or resistance to oppression and exploitation by feudal forces within the country are acceptable as motive forces for the progress of the Tibetan region. Though it was at the height of the Tibetan people's struggle against foreign invaders at that time, the war waged by Gönpo Namgyel is not viewed as a patriotic anti-imperialist one since none of his subordinates had ever participated in the struggle against foreign Catholic churches entering the Tibetan regions. On the contrary, to achieve its goal of extending its ruling power and building the Kham region into an independent "kingdom," the feudal serf-owner class in Kham, represented by Gönpo Namgyel's family, took advantage of not only the local Tibetan people's resistance against the Central Tibetan government and the ruling group of the Gelukpa monasteries, but also their struggle against national oppression by the Qing dynasty.

Shangguan also devotes a section to how Gönpo Namgyel used religion to advance his interests and to expand his power. Because of the negative evaluation of Gönpo Namgyel shared by both Xu and Shangguan, it is natural for them to quote the official Chinese and Ti-

betan documents that are so critical of Gönpo Namgyel and his military expeditions. Thus, they also inherit their harsh derogatory language and critical tone.

It is interesting to note that sometimes a historian's position can change with the passage of time. Chen Yishi originally viewed Gönpo Namgyel as the leader of a serf uprising in one of his earlier articles,⁴⁰ but his 1986 article portrays Gönpo Namgyel as an ambitious *tusi* and a big serf-owner who engaged in wars of territorial expansion.⁴¹ In a footnote, the author mentions that he has come around to a different opinion, but he does not explain why. Commenting that a historical figure is usually as much censured as praised, he only briefly refers to the fact that while Gönpo Namgyel was depicted as an outstanding hero in the relevant field reports and some folk stories, he was also severely scolded as a devil who took pleasure in killing in other folk stories. The author attributes the positive evaluation to Gönpo Namgyel's policy of light taxation and corvée labor in the regions he conquered, and attributes the negative view to his annexation of the territories of neighboring *tusi* as well as his heavy hand against Tibetan Buddhism. His later presentation is apparently also based on official Chinese documents since he quotes extensively from them. In many ways Chen's later account is more balanced both in terms of language use and treatment of the subject. Chen avoids using popular political phrases and judgmental wording, and his evaluation is also more balanced. He does not completely adopt the standard Chinese perspective of total condemnation, but instead considers Gönpo Namgyel to be a courageous and insightful Tibetan leader with an independent understanding of politics and religion. Politically, Gönpo Namgyel is portrayed as a *tusi* attempting to expand his power with the ultimate purpose of gradually uniting the entire Tibetan area. His policy of light taxation and corvée labor is understood as progressive because it is offered in exchange for the serfs' being at his command. As for his attitude toward religion, Chen points out that he was strongly against Tibetan Buddhism which "poisons" people's minds and advocates resignation to one's fate. More interestingly, unlike others, Chen refrains from discussing Gönpo Namgyel's class status an important factor in understanding the events in Nyarong. Chen maintains that Gönpo Namgyel's struggles against the Qing dynasty is a somewhat progressive movement. In addition, because of his policies and his struggle against religion, Gönpo Namgyel, praised by the local Tibetan people even now, de-

⁴⁰ Cited from Chen 1986, 3:53. Also see Chen Yishi and Zeng Wenqiong. "Lüelun 1889 nian chuanbian Zangzu diqu Sala Yongzhu lingdao de nongnu qiyi," *Xinan minzu xueyuan xuebao*, no. 3, (1984): 51-56 (80).

⁴¹ Chen 1986, parts 1-3.

serves to be regarded as an outstanding figure in Tibetan history. Nevertheless, Chen also notes that he too exploited and oppressed the serfs as a serf-owner. According to Chen, the wars of territorial expansion and annexation led by Gönpo Namgyel at the later stage led to adverse consequences for Kham society and economy. Furthermore, the long-term wars also brought disaster to both the Tibetan and Han Chinese people. In sum, when Gönpo Namgyel's activities are regarded as a whole, he does not deserve to be lauded as the leader of a serf uprising, let alone to be held up as a 'hero among the people'.

Still some other accounts written later than those of Xu and Shangguan fail to note the existence of the ongoing debate, but simply present whatever facts they deem veritable and draw conclusions accordingly. A short paragraph about the relevant events in the book entitled *Xizang Jianshi (A Brief History of Tibet)*, without any reference to class struggle and class analysis, presents the events in Nyarong as a series of armed riots, including the attempt of Gönpo Namgyel and his father to extend their influence to the territories of the neighboring *tusi* in Kham.⁴² A similar approach is found in another slightly longer account by Xu Jun from 1999.⁴³ The sources, language and tone of these accounts are similar to that of Chen's 1986 paper. In keeping with the more open political, ideological and academic atmosphere since the late 1970s in China, clearly these authors can afford to have a less positive appraisal of the role of serf uprisings and to refer freely to the official documents to advance their arguments. Furthermore, as the perceived importance of class struggle recedes into the background, the authors are able to engage in historical investigation itself without applying class analysis and class struggle to almost every aspect of historiography.

However, there are four more accounts that continue to extol Gönpo Namgyel as the heroic leader of a large-scale serf uprising even though they were published after Xu's and Shuangguan's articles.⁴⁴ The first, a paper entitled "The Serf Uprising Led by Bulongma" written in 1986, is mainly based on folk stories circulating in Gönpo Namgyel's home region.⁴⁵ The second is an account in the *Xinlong Xianzhi (Gazetteer of Nyarong County)* published in 1991,

⁴² *Xizang Jianshi* 1985.

⁴³ "Qing ji dui chuanbian de renshi yu juece, jianlun zhandui wenti de youlai," in *Kangding minzu shifan gaodeng zhuanke xuexiao xuebao*, 8, no.1 (1999):16-27.

⁴⁴ Ding Ren, "Buluman qiren," *Xinan minzu xueyuan xuebao*, No.4 (1992): 40-45; Zheng Qin, "Shilun Gongbu Langji qiren," in *Kangding minzu shifan gaodeng zhuanke xuexiao xuebao*, No. 00 (1987): 41-47.

⁴⁵ Mi Hongwei & Kasa Zeweng 1986. "Buluman" is the Chinese transliteration of the Tibetan *bu long ma*, meaning "the blind boy," the nickname for Gonpo Namgyel.

which chronicles the relevant historical events in Nyarong and contains a biographical sketch of Gönpo Namgyel as one of its outstanding historical figures. Judging from the content of the biographical sketch, the facts are clearly derived from folk stories though no sources are listed.⁴⁶ Like Zeng's article, both these articles predictably present a rather positive evaluation because Gönpo Namgyel is revered as an outstanding hero by the local people. Likewise, the discursive framework, the choice of sources, the language and tone are rather similar to those of the first group, especially Zeng's. The only difference is that the 1986 article is more detailed than Zeng's, but the gazetteer account is much shorter. In the first account, Gönpo Namgyel's family history, the process of his unification of Nyarong region, his military expeditions against neighboring *tusi* and his struggles against both the Qing and Central Tibetan armies are much more detailed and vivid. All the complementary information seems to enhance Gönpo Namgyel's image as the brave and resourceful leader of a serf uprising, who represents the interests of the people and whose revolt is progressive. For instance, to show that Gönpo Namgyel cared for the poor even as a child, he is said to have often distributed food to poor children from his family pantry. Furthermore, to present Gönpo Namgyel as someone representing the interests of the people, in addition to the favorable policies of tax-exemption and abolition of corvée labor described in Zeng's article, he is said to have carried out three other well-received policies. The first was the equal distribution of confiscated land among male serfs, and the second allowed immigrating subjects of conquered *tusi* to live among the families of the insurrectionary army so as to prevent internal disturbances. The third, which was strongly supported by the serfs and broke the bonds between serf-owners and serfs, was the abolition of marriages among families who were well-matched in social status, and his advocacy of having poor men marry women from rich families and poor women men of rich families. Finally when Gönpo Namgyel conquered a *tusi*, he ordered that the official seal, robes, etc. bestowed on that *tusi* by the Qing court be disposed of; he was said to proclaim: "I am not going to be an official of the old fool emperor, but I am going to be an official of us poor."⁴⁷

A historian with a different evaluation of the initial and later stages of the event is Ya Hanzhang, a prominent Chinese scholar of Tibetan studies. He holds that the revolt led by Gönpo Namgyel in 1849 was an anti-Qing rebellion, and also marks the beginning of open

⁴⁶ *Xinlong xianzhi*, 1992, 377-378.

⁴⁷ See Mi Hongwei and Kasa Zeweng, 11.

resistance against the Qing rulers by the people of Kham. But he argues that the anti-Qing revolt became a tribal war with Central Tibet becoming involved in 1863.⁴⁸

Tibetan Historiographical Construction of Gönpo Namgyel

Like the Chinese evaluations of Gönpo Namgyel, the Tibetan construction of him is also far from uniform. On the one hand, Gönpo Namgyel has been considered a villain, a military expansionist and an enemy of Buddhism by contemporary Central Tibetans and fellow Khampas from neighboring regions. On the other hand, Tibetans in his home region and some Tibetan Marxist historians are rather positive, extolling him as a local hero and the leader of serf uprisings.

In comparison to Chinese reports, it is surprising to note that there are only a few primary or secondary Tibetan sources on Gönpo Namgyel publicly available. The Tibetan sources in the public domain consist of only a few petitions submitted by the local Khampas to the Lhasa government, oral accounts collected by others and a few relevant studies by later historians. There is also an account of Gönpo Namgyel and his activities written by a contemporary monk in Nyarong, which vividly reflects on how fellow Tibetans of the time viewed him. In the discussion of Gönpo Namgyel's family origin, he is depicted as greedy, cruel, irascible, envious of others and one who mistreated his servants. It recounts in detail how Gönpo Namgyel slaughtered people and demanded corvée labor to build residencies for himself. It also gives a detailed account of how people of various regions in Kham rose in armed struggle in resistance to his oppression and his policy of brutal massacre. In brief, he is shown as a bloodthirsty devil who seized the territories of other local rulers by sheer force, massacred innocent people, blasphemed against "sacred" religion and defied the authority of both Central Tibet and the Qing.⁴⁹

In view of his robbing the best tea in the custody of the Tibetan government trade representative and his annexation of the territories of the neighboring *tusi*, it is understandable that the Lhasa government and the people of neighboring regions judged him so negatively. In the report sent by the chief of Litang, Gönpo Dramdül and Khuwo Gelong Lozang Jinpa to the Tibetan government, they refer to Gönpo Namgyel as a destroyer of Buddhism and the happiness of

⁴⁸ See Ya Hanzhang, *The Biographies of the Dalai Lamas* (English Edition). Wang Wen-jiong, trans. (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1991), 99-100. The Chinese edition was published in 1985.

⁴⁹ Yelé Tsültrim's manuscript.

sentient beings, and a bandit cursed for a long period who robbed the people of Kham of the opportunity for happiness. They also describe his forces as “bandit troops,” who not only harassed their regions, but also blocked the courier stations between Tibet and China.

The dominant image of Gönpo Namgyel in Tibetan sources as generally antagonistic toward Buddhism and particularly hostile towards the authority of religious figures is worth looking at. In addition to the report stated above, there is an oral account cited by Tashi Tsering in a paper presented at the 1982 IATS conference that states: “Though A Mgon believed in Buddhist doctrines of karma and rebirth, he had no faith in incarnate lamas generally—only in those who could perform convincing miracles before his very eyes.”⁵⁰ Later writings by Sherap Özer, a prominent lama of Kelzang Monastery in Nyarong, present Gönpo Namgyel’s attitude towards Buddhism as ambivalent. He built a *chokhang* (*chos khang*, shrine room) on the top floor of his residence, but he also took local lamas hostage. Local people had different perceptions of Gönpo Namgyel’s attitude towards Buddhism. An oral account cited by Sherap Özer states that one local lama commented that Gönpo Namgyel was an incarnation of the devil while another two monks claim that he was an incarnation of a protective deity.⁵¹

The local view of Gönpo Namgyel contrasts sharply with the official view presented in government records and works by historians. One of the earliest attempts to take into account local views was the 1959 field investigation carried out by the Sichuan Nationalities Investigation Team. According to this investigation, people from his home region portrayed him as a chivalrous leader performing various deeds to alleviate the sufferings of the poor peasants. Among the locals, Gönpo Namgyel’s exploits are told in a mythical way; in fact some even believe that he was not killed by the Lhasa army and was able to escape. Some Chinese historians attempt to dismiss this favorable account of a “reactionary” feudal lord by denying it any veracity. And certainly, like all other oral materials, there are limits to their accuracy, especially since these accounts were collected decades after the event. Neither can we exclude the possibility that local people interviewed by the investigators might have their own hidden agendas to provide a positive evaluation of him simply because their ancestors were actively involved in his military expeditions, or these stories served, at least in part, as propaganda for Gönpo Namgyel

⁵⁰ “A Mgon” refers to Gonpo Namgyel. See Tashi Tsering, “Nyarong Gonpo Namgyel: a 19th Century Kham pa Warrior.” In Barbara Nimri Aziz and Matthew Kapstein, eds. *Soundings in Tibetan Civilization* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1985), 207.

⁵¹ Sherap Özer “Xinlong gongbu langjie xingwang shi,” in *Ganzi zhou wenshi ziliao xuanji*, 3 (1985):1-44.

and his followers. Still, it is equally possible that local families have handed down favorable stories, because they in fact directly benefited from Gönpo Namgyel's activities. In sum, oral accounts do indicate that Gönpo Namgyel enjoyed some popular support and that he had the respect of the local people because of his popular policies. Even Qi Shan, the Qing official sent to suppress the revolt, had to admit that Gönpo Namgyel was "strongly supported by the local Tibetans,"⁵² and Zhang Ji also commented that "at that time, he was able to command all the people in Nyarong."⁵³

In the early 1980s, Gönpo Namgyel began to attract the attention of a number of young Tibetan scholars living abroad and inside China. While Tibetan writers in China adopt a Marxist approach, Marxist historians are also divided in their stand on the issue. Gönpo Namgyel is still praised as the leader of a serf uprising in Ge Le's *Ganzi zhou shihua* published in 1984. Though the author is aware of the controversy over the evaluation of Gönpo Namgyel, curiously enough he only mentions such conflicting views in a footnote without any explanation of the inconsistency. The author often quotes from Zeng's article and *The Biographies of the Dalai Lamas* by Ya Hanzhang, both of which have a rather positive evaluation, and it is natural that his account follows a similar line as the group represented by Zeng's article discussed above. Thus, its discursive framework and choice of sources, language and tone conform to those of this group. But, compared with other historians such as Zeng, Ge Le draws on new folk stories about Gönpo Namgyel's childhood and youth, especially the story of how he became blind. In these stories, Gönpo Namgyel is depicted as a brave and resourceful man with high aspirations, gregarious and sociable. In contrast to Zeng, Xu and Shangguan, Ge Le does not examine in detail his reasons for classifying him as a leader of serf uprisings. In particular, the problem of the class attributes applied to Gönpo Namgyel is not used as an important criterion for evaluating him as compared with other accounts. Instead, based on the information that Gönpo Namgyel's father was killed and his family properties confiscated, the author infers that his family status had probably fallen and possibly been degraded to serf status. Meanwhile, to show that Gönpo Namgyel's hatred for the Qing dynasty and other *tusi* for killing his father and seizing his family properties as a possible cause for his revolt, the author cites the relevant account by Yelé Tsültrim, whereas he ignores completely

⁵² See Zhupi zouzhe: minzulei, no, 3, Dossier No. 1334. Collected by the Chinese No. 1 Historical Archive, cited from Chen 1986:47-48.

⁵³ Zhang Ji, 2003, 109.

the fact that the book presents an overwhelming negative image of Gönpo Namgyel.⁵⁴

We also find Gönpo Namgyel acclaimed as the leader of the serf uprising in the *Xinlong xianzhi* published in 1992. Relevant accounts, again, are based on the field report of 1959, and continue to extol him as a leader of serf uprisings, and a fighter for the interests of the common people. Furthermore, he is accorded a short biography as an outstanding historical figure. The account given in this Nyarong gazetteer reflects popular local sentiments and portrays him favorably, in an almost folkloric style.

In 1985, an article by Sherap Özer presents our subject as an ambitious military expansionist destroying the stability and peace of the region. Similar sentiments are found in the brief relevant account in *Bod kyi lo rgyus rags rim g.yu yi phreng ba*⁵⁵ and the short comment by Pelkar Rinpoché of Lingchu Monastery,⁵⁶ both of which give only the bare outline of the events. I will focus on Sherap Özer's article since it attempts to present a complete history of the rise and fall of Gönpo Namgyel. Having noticed the ongoing debate over how to evaluate him, the author points out in his introduction that, in order to probe into what actually happened, he systematically engaged in verifying and collecting relevant information about his family background, his family's social standing and his life story. Sherap Özer has not only conducted a profound investigation in the Nyarong region, but also consulted both the Chinese and Tibetan sources; thus, his account is so far the most exhaustive and comparatively balanced in treatment of the subject. His account finely details Gönpo Namgyel's family background, his childhood, the process of his unification of the whole Nyarong region and his successive armed struggles against the Qing armies. It also describes in detail his occupation of the territories held by other *tusi*, his defeat by Central Tibetan troops, his ambivalent attitude toward Tibetan Buddhism, the corvée labor and taxes he levied and his system of military service. However, readers should bear in mind that since most of the information outside the official records has been collected from folk stories, it is unsurprising that a favorable presentation of Gönpo Namgyel and his activities emerges. But unlike other studies which take one-sided views either of condemnation or praise, his account is full of nuance incorporating both favorable and negative views of Gönpo Namgyel. In explaining the

⁵⁴ Ge Le. *Ganzi Zangzu zizhizhou shihua* (Chengdu: Sichuan minzu chubanshe, 1984), 199-213.

⁵⁵ Chappel Tseten Püntsock and Nordrang Urgyen. *Bod kyi lo rgyus rags rim g.yu yi phreng ba* (Lha sa: Bod ljongs Bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 1991).

⁵⁶ See Pelkar Rinpoché Tupten Tsering n.d. This short article evaluating Gönpo Namgyel was published for internal circulation only (2002).

praise of people in the Nyarong region, the author maintains that people recount Gönpo Namgyel's "heroic deeds" to express their hatred toward the severe exploitation and oppression by Central Tibetan government officials resident in Nyarong. He concludes that Gönpo Namgyel is indeed a tragic historical figure, and that although his whole life has a legendary flavor, in the end he is not worthy of emulation by others. He reminds us that during his childhood, he is thought to have been a fanatic believer in settling personal scores, and that when he came of age, he appears to have been corrupted by his growing power and influence to the degree that his ambition was unbound. As someone who bore grudges and was bloodthirsty, his rule and the measures he took did not reap benefits for the common people. Although Sherab Özer generally considers him to be a military expansionist, he argues that he obstructed the unification of the "motherland," and undermined the unity of nationalities as well as the prosperity and stability of the nation. Again, as I have already discussed, contemporary political concerns related to the "Tibetan issue" in China nowadays, such as the unification of the "motherland" and the unity of nationalities, are all reflected in Sherap Özer's criteria for the evaluation of a historical figure.⁵⁷

Additionally, a few Tibetans in exile have also written some accounts of Gönpo Namgyel. Most notably Tsepon W.D. Shakabpa's *Tibet, A Political History* adopts a traditional view of Gönpo Namgyel by portraying him negatively and describing his rule in Kham as "a reign of terror."⁵⁸ Indeed, the Tibetan edition of Shakabpa's book is even more scathing, describing him as "the enemy of Nyarong" and his activities as "plundering the various regions of Kham."⁵⁹ Shakabpa gives the reason for the Tibetan government's attack on Gönpo Namgyel as a result of a petition received from local people, writing, "Six thousand refugee families poured into Lhasa from Dergé, Horkhok, Litang, Chatreng, and Dzakhok. They submitted petitions to the Tibetan government for help, and in 1863 the government sent troops to Nyarong under the command of Kalön Pulungwa and Dapön Trimön."⁶⁰ It is evident that Shakabpa takes a Lhasa-centric view of Gönpo Namgyel, not surprising given that Shakabpa was an important Lhasa official.

A study by Tashi Tsering, a Tibetan historian in India, presents a relatively balanced picture of Gönpo Namgyel without either demon-

⁵⁷ Sherab Özer 1985, 1-44.

⁵⁸ Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa, *Tibet, a Political History* (New Haven: Yale University, 1967), 187.

⁵⁹ Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa, *Bod kyi srid don rgyal rabs* (Kalimpong: Shakabpa House, 1976), Vol. 1, 42-45.

⁶⁰ Shakabpa 1967, 187.

izing or glorifying him to the extreme. Tashi Tsering's article is one of the most exhaustive accounts of Gönpo Namgyel that is comparable to the article by Sherap Özer. Like the latter's, Tashi Tsering's article tends to concentrate and emphasize local elements, and he draws heavily on interviews with local informants. Since the study is mainly based on the author's interviews with Gönpo Namgyel's descendants and accounts by contemporary local lamas, it contains some new information. For instance, in the discussion of Gönpo Namgyel's character, the author recounts the curse inflicted upon him by the Tibetan government and the Dergé ruler's invoking the gods and praying for an end to his power as one of the reasons for his abnormal behavior. No other account mentions these episodes.

Tashi Tsering's study is particularly interesting for the attention he gives to underlying local perspective, which is completely obscured in official accounts. The subaltern perspective of the local Nyarong population concerns the reason for the Tibetan government's intervention, the local view of Tibetan government forces, the Tibetan government's betrayal of Gönpo Namgyel and his family, and local reactions to his death. All these aspects are suppressed in the official documents and also in accounts that demonize Gönpo Namgyel and his followers. Nyarong people are said to maintain that the Tibetan government intervened at the instigation of the *ambans*. In addition, contrary to Shakabpa's claim that the Tibetan government troops were revered as "celestial troops" and strongly supported by the local people, the author claims otherwise: "The people of Kham were not especially happy at the arrival of the Tibetan government force because they looted and inflicted much violence upon the local population." Next, based on his interviews with Gyaré Nyima Gyeltsen and Wuli Dapön Dogyeltsang Rapten Dorjé of Upper Nyarong, the author describes how Gönpo Namgyel and his family were betrayed by the Tibetan government.⁶¹

In sum, although Tashi Tsering provides a wealth of information about Gönpo Namgyel, his study reveals contemporary political concerns among exile Tibetans. Tashi Tsering describes Gönpo Namgyel's campaigns in a positive light as unifying Kham. He describes the Lhasa government's defeat of Gönpo Namgyel and his army as "exterminating him through deceit and treachery" and goes on to say that with his defeat, "Tibet lost the last wall that might have stopped expansionist Chinese designs." He sees Gönpo Namgyel's rise as resisting the encroachment of Manchu rule in Kham.

⁶¹ Tashi Tsering 1985, 196-214.

Conclusion

The construction of historical figures is always a complicated and ambivalent undertaking, upon which various subtle and not-so-subtle pressures play their part. Ideological focus, biases in official documents and the influence of contemporary politics as well as academic concerns have all colored the picture of Gönpo Namgyel that various authors have left us. It should be clear from this paper that the image of Gönpo Namgyel has shifted between that of a loathsome destroyer of peace to that of a tragic folk hero. He has been cast by some as the leader of oppressed serfs while others portray him as nothing more than a self-serving warlord.

Since Gönpo Namgyel infringed the vested interests of the Tibetan government in Lhasa, the neighboring chieftains and “kings” as well as the Qing court, they naturally portrayed him negatively. Both in official Tibetan and Chinese accounts Gönpo Namgyel appears as a destroyer of the peace and stability of Kham. Confucian antipathy toward social unrest among traditional Chinese historians led them to adopt a disparaging view of Gönpo Namgyel, and to disregard out of hand anything positive about him.

In contrast, under the influence of the new trend in China to write a “history of the people” and the ideological concern of glorifying peasants revolts, Chinese Marxist historians of the 1950s recast him as “the leader of the serf uprising” representing the interests of the common people. The “new history of the people” approach shifts its focus from the ruling class to the common people—what the Marxist historians call “the maker of history.” For them official documents were full of “slandering of the common people.” Thus, these historians mainly sought out field investigations to glorify Gönpo Namgyel’s heroic deeds, but totally dismissed any evidence from official documents that was contradictory or challenged their arguments.

In the late 1970s, there was room for a less positive appraisal of the role of peasant uprisings. Consequently, a heated debate arose over the evaluation of Gönpo Namgyel: was he “a leader of the serf uprising” or “an ambitious feudal lord engaging in territorial expansion and wars of plunder?” Some continue to wax lyrical about his revolutionary spirit and his heroic struggles against the oppression and exploitation of the counter-revolutionary ruling class. But others consider him not only an ambitious military expansionist trying to extend his sphere of influence in Kham, but also a ruthless butcher persecuting and oppressing the people.

In sum, it is apparent from the above portrayals of Gönpo Namgyel that historical discourse relies on prevalent discursive strat-

egies that frame historical figures in narrative structure, which reflects the concerns of the period. We have seen how prevalent biases against social disruption in the relevant official Chinese records have led authors to employ derogatory language and pursue a discursive strategy that demonizes Gönpo Namgyel as much as possible. Other typical examples are found in studies of the Chinese peasant rebellions in general, and the relevant studies of Gönpo Namgyel in particular. In the general framework of peasant rebellion studies of the 1950s and 1960s, studies of Gönpo Namgyel tended to praise his activities and to dismiss official documents that denounced him. Even where evidence is lacking to pursue research on certain aspects of Gönpo Namgyel's revolt, *i.e.*, his "slogans," programs and policies, they invariably follow the standard framework, mentioning it even in brief.

Thus we are left with a changing image of Gönpo Namgyel that shifts from brigand leader, whose objective was to plunder and conquer, to that of leader of a serf uprising or nationalistic leader who unified Kham. I hope to have demonstrated that truth emerges only by looking at the spectrum of possibilities and to try to see which of the various lenses have produced a particular picture at various times of this dynamic regional figure.

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Physical, Cultural and Religious Space in *A myes Bar dbon*. Written and Oral Traditions of a *gnas ri* in Amdo¹

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Tibetan Representations of Landscape

Tibetan Bon and Buddhist religions have recorded their canons, rituals, hagiographies and histories in detail, establishing the written word as the dominant form of knowledge transmission through the centuries, and therefore assigning to it a privileged place in Tibetan society as a whole. Nevertheless, Tibetans have also been passing down a rich oral culture for generations, too often overshadowed by the large amount of textual sources available. Compared to the written texts, oral narratives present quite a different religious and cultural *scenario* to what local ordinary Tibetans identify themselves with, thus providing us with an understanding of the richness of those aspects of Tibetan culture not included into the established canons.

Before the spread of Buddhism in the eighth century, Tibetan religious life was dominated by Bon religion and the substratum of indigenous beliefs, those classified as “folk religion” by Tucci.² Defining the Bon religion of Tibet is not an easy task, as with the term Bon we touch upon several issues. In general, Bon is understood as referring to the pre-Buddhist beliefs and practices of the Tibetans, but one must be careful to distinguish this from the organized Bon religion, which, with its monastic institutions, canonical collections, and philosophical systems represents effectively one of the schools of Tibetan Buddhism which began to take shape only after the tenth century A.D.

In those pre-Buddhist times, certain mountains acquired a special status and played a major role in the elaboration of myths, the formation of community identities and the conception of political power.³ The natural space was thus sacralized in order to pacify, propitiate and consolidate

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² See Tucci, 1970, pp. 205-214.

³ See Huber, 1999, pp. 26-27 and Karmay, 1996, “The Cult of Mountain Deities and its Political Significance” in *The Arrow and the Spindle*, pp. 432-450.

deities' power, and to ensure their protection both in individual and community life. Praying and offering to local deities (*yul lha*)⁴, often dwelling on high mountains (called mountain gods [*ri lha*]), could be exchanged with happiness, good health and prosperity only for the local people. The nature of this relationship was contractual and to a certain degree even equal because of the non-transcendental status of this class of deities.⁵

In order to avoid a frequent theoretical misunderstanding concerning the cult of Tibetan mountain deities as an animistic cult, one fundamental clarification ought to be made: the mountain is the abode of the deity and not the deity itself. Thus, Tibetan mountain deities cannot be considered as souls permeating the mountainous features of the landscape; they are rather separated entities dwelling in the mountains.

The later spread of Buddhism elevated the position of local deities, placing them in a higher though less familiar pantheon. An interesting case in point is the classification of the level of enlightenment achieved by the most revered mountain deities according to the ten stages of the bodhisattva, (*bhumī*).⁶ However, the conversion of local deities and mountains to Buddhism was more a matter of reinterpreting the pre-existent Bon institutionalized rituals than a substantial transformation; in fact, Buddhism made its way into Tibetan society by partially maintaining the indigenous religious practices in order to be gradually accepted in the local context.

The "buddhistization" of a *yul lha* and its dwelling mountain includes a defined sequence of ritual actions, as it is also usually recorded in pilgrims' guidebooks. First, a lama whose spiritual powers are accredited "opens the gate to the (sacred) place" (*gnas sgo phye*). Then, lamas and yogins perform Buddhist rituals in order to subdue and convert ('*dul ba*) the local deity, by asking him to promise that he will protect the Dharma and will not fight against it; while *gter ma* might also be hidden in the mountain. A date to commemorate the conversion of the *yul lha* (*gnas 'dus*) is set according to the Tibetan calendar. Moreover, a celebration is held once a year and a bigger celebration takes place once every twelve years, usually on the same

⁴ Tibetan landscape is populated by a myriad of local deities *yul lha*, who act both as protectors and wrathful gods, depending on the ability of the local community to please them. They are grouped as '*jig rten pa'i lha*, mundane deities, and classified into the following categories: *klu* (naga spirits dwelling in the water), *gnyan* (kind of spirit usually dwelling in trees and rocks), *btsan* (kind on spirit-demon), *sa bdag* and *gzhi bdag* (protective spirits of the ground), *gdon* (kind of demon), '*dre* (kind of demon), *sri* (kind of demon), *srung ma* (protectors) and *dgra lha* (war gods). See Khyung thar rgyal, 2000. See also De Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1998, pp. 203-252.

⁵ See Karmay, "The Local Deities and the Juniper Tree: A Ritual for Purification (bsang)" in Karmay, 1998, pp. 380-412 and Karmay, "The Cult of Mountain Deities and its Political Significance" in Karmay, 1998, pp. 432-450.

⁶ For example, A myes rMa chen sPom ra, the most important mountain deity in Amdo abiding on A myes rMa chen mountain, is classified as *bcu pa chos kyi sprin*, the highest stage of attainment on the bodhisattva path. See Dung dkar blo bzang 'phrin las, 2002.

astrological year when the mountain's gate was open, according to the twelve-year cycle of Tibetan astronomy.

Landscape, in its sacralized representations, is a recurrent topic in religious literature. The organization of the natural space into mandalas, and the extensive production of catalogues and guidebooks for pilgrimages to sites disseminated on the whole Tibetan land have developed into cultural models for interpreting the landscape, echoed in oral traditions. Detailed descriptions on specific places were learned by heart and recounted by people, not only for religious purposes but also for aiding with orientation in the space.⁷

Folk stories and cultural references connect Tibetan people to the territory they inhabit and provide a mental map of the land where special and common spots are linked together by both residents and travelers. Spatial and temporal paths have relevant implications for building group memory and identity, as this process is based on the reiteration and reproduction of cultural models by means of remembering and transmission. Tibetans' relationships with the land are thus filtered through a comprehensive set of specific semantic references and cultural values, where landscape elements happen to be conceptualized through the inclusion of aesthetic, emotional and spiritual-religious qualities. In particular, people refer to physical components such as landforms, water features and vegetation through familiar images rooted in Tibetan culture.

In this sense, as the following oral account about the *Bar dbon* area in Amdo will show, in Tibetan communities the description of natural features reveal a certain degree of shared collective imagination. The representation of the landscape is based on a coherent cognitive model and reflects a holistic gnoseological approach where history, religion, myth and geography produce a *unicum*, whose understanding necessarily requires a multi-faced approach.

A myes Bar dbon: The Geographic Setting

A myes Bar dbon is a mountain standing 3816 m above sea level, located in the Amdo area of mTsho lho (Ch. *Hainan* Prefecture), south of Kokonor Lake. More precisely, Bar dbon is situated around 200 km south of Chabcha county (Ch. *Gonghe* county), north of Longyang Gorge (Ch.

⁷ The "unity of the Tibetan conception of space" is conceived in terms of an interdependent relationship among elements constituting the landscape: "a mountain is usually associated with a lake, and in that case, the first is regarded as the father, and the second as the mother." See Buffetrille, "Reflections on Pilgrimages to Sacred Mountains, Lakes and Caves" in McKay, 1998, pp. 18-34. In fact, the production of cognitive patterns, *ecotopes*, is based on a process of cultural understanding of the natural environment. So-called traditional societies in different cultural contexts rely on such patterns to make sense out of ethnoecological classifications. See Hunn and Meilleur, "Towards a Theory of Landscape Ethnoecological Classification" in Johnson and Hunn, 2010.

Longyang xia), and east of bLong po gSer chen mountain⁸. It is situated in the middle of the grasslands, where only a few houses used by nomads during wintertime can be seen.

A myes Bar dbon or A myes War won: Interpreting the Name and the Spelling Question

In the textual sources, A myes Bar dbon is found with two different spellings: A myes Bar dbon and A myes War won, due to the fact that in Amdo dialect the pronunciation is the same.

A *myes* is the traditional kinship term for “grandfather” in spoken Amdo dialect. Most mountain deities in this area, including the best known A myes rMachen sPom ra in mGo log area, are actually revered by local people as “a *myes*”. The wide usage of this term as a toponym for those mountains that are abode to each tribe’s protective deity reflects an intertwined relationship between the mountain and the local community, and could eventually signify the establishment of a direct kinship between the local tribe and the deity abiding on the mountain, considered as their ancestor.

The meaning of “Bar dbon” is not so obvious. In fact, the explanation I introduce here is based on what was reported by the interviewees; further textual research might provide a clearer understanding. “Bar” literally means “the middle, middle part”, in this case, as it is referring to the mountain, it might mean “a mountain in the middle of a range or the middle mountain in a range”. However, in order to clarify and contextualize the meaning of “bar”, we must look at the following word “*dbon*”.

In fact, “*dbon*” means “grandchild”, so “*bar dbon*” could eventually be understood as the “grandchild born in the middle”, not the first nor the last of a vague number of grandchildren, likely related to rMa chen sPom ra. In the following paragraph I will attempt to draw out in detail the kinship between A myes Bar dbon and A myes rMa chen sPom ra, as it is commonly acknowledged and explained by local people.⁹ Another unlikely interpretation for “*dbon*” is its meaning as “*dbon gsas*”: practitioner of Bon rituals, a word still common in Amdo spoken Tibetan.¹⁰

⁸ See Tshe lo, 2010, pp. 59-60. See map (1).

⁹ It said that A myes rMa chen sPom ra has nine sons, nine daughters and numerous grandchildren. However, different traditions in different areas claim that their local mountain deity is part of the family tree of A myes rMa chen sPomra, so there is a plurality of contrasting versions on this matter.

¹⁰ *dBon gsas* or *dpon gsas* is the name of the fourth part of the *Bon sgo bzhi mdzod lnga*- Four ways and the Treasury, one of the two main systems of classification for the Bonpo teachings, believed to be directly taught by Shenrab Mibo. In the *dPon gsas* section, instructions for psycho-physical exercises are presented, including the system of *rDzogs*

War won is the other and less common name of the mountain¹¹, explained as a phonetic calques from the Mongolian language, whose introduction into Tibetan language can be connected to the long lasting presence of Mongolians in Amdo, particularly intense during the Yuan (1279-1368) and Qing dynasties (1644-1901). The appropriateness of this spelling could be justified by the great and widespread occurrence of Mongolian-based phonetic calques for many toponyms in the area of Kokonor, created after the occupation of the area by Mongolians during the second half of the Qing dynasty.

In the Mongolian dialect still spoken in some areas of Amdo, "*war won*" means "on the west side of...". This possible explanation implies that something located to the east of *War won* mountain is considered very relevant for the characterization of A myes Bar dbon itself, to the point that the mountain's name reflects this relational spatial arrangement. Interestingly, A myes rMa chen is geographically located on the south-east of A myes Bar dbon, arousing the question whether the name *War won* might be referring exactly to the location of A myes Bar dbon by reference to the most powerful mountain deity in Amdo.

However, the Mongolian-based calques in the Amdo region were mainly introduced ex novo, in order to designate new settlements of Mongolian armies and civilians or relevant strategic areas. An example is a toponym like Ulan, a place on the northern bank of Kokonor Lake. "*Ulan*", a Mongolian word, meaning "red", was later phonetically loaned in Tibetan as "*dBus lam*" and thus semantically reinterpreted with the meaning of "the road to Central Tibet".

It is difficult at this point of the research to establish the ancient etymology of this name, but from another point of view, this kind of unsolved linguistic question proves the high degree of interaction and the process of exchange and syncretism taking place over centuries in this multicultural border area of historical Tibet.

Different folk accounts about kinship ties between A myes Bar dbon and A myes rMa chen

It is said that Bar dbon faces the direction of A myes rMa chen. Even though they are separated by hundreds of kilometers, these two mountains are tied together by kinship relation, a linkage generically expressed as "*sbra che chung*", "big and small tent" with an immediate reference to the

chen meditation. See Karmay, "A General Introduction to the History and Doctrines of Bon" in *The Arrow and the Spindle*, pp. 111-112.

¹¹ Personal communication by Om chen from sNgags pa Research Center of Xining, (Xining 18 April 2011).

Tibetan nomads' custom of different generations' members of the same family living in adjacent tents.¹²

Bar dbon is in fact usually considered the third son, and in other accounts the second son, of A myes rMachen sPom ra. Interestingly, sometimes Bar dbon is also called rMachen sPom ra's grandchild.

In another version, it is told that Bar dbon is an old man without children, and for this the reason A myes rMa chen sPom ra would have given him one of his own sons, dGra 'dul. Bar dbon is thus considered not a son of rMa chen sPom ra, but rather his older blood-brother: in this event the linkage to the rMachen sPom ra family is stressed as well as in the precedent version, though this degree of kinship between blood-brothers makes their status more equal than father-son. According to this same version, Bar dbon's wife is a very young girl living on A myes dGo rtse, a mountain in the southern area of mTsho lho.

**A myes Bar dbon, bla ri of sGo me tribesmen:
who are the people of sGo me?
Etymology, legends and distribution of sGo me tribe**

The Tibetan saying "*sa 'go'i la btse gcig, sde 'go'i dpon po gcig*" or "every place has one *la btse*¹³, every group has one chief", emphasizes how traditionally the exercise of political power was interdependently linked to the worship of the local deity and how both the temporal and spiritual authorities played a major role in the process of formation and reinforcement of the local group's identity.

A myes Bar dbon is the *bla ri*¹⁴ of sGo me tribe. *Bla ri*, "mountain (where the) soul (abides)", is a pre-Buddhist concept of a spiritually powerful place where the entire local community can get spiritual energy for life. This implies that every member of the tribe should practice the prescribed rituals and make the required offerings to ensure the health of his own *bla*: by sharing the process of worship to the abiding deity, the connection among tribesmen is reinforced. Every year on the thirteenth day of the

¹² See Namkhai Norbu, 1990, pp. 48-56.

¹³ *La btse*, also spelled as: *la btsas*; *lab rtse*; *lab tse* is a structure of wooden poles, prayers flags and arrows which covers the place on the peak of a mountain where the deity abides. When a *la btse* is set, first a wide deep square hole in the ground should be dug, this is called "*lha mkhar*" or "*gsas mkhar*", the castle of the deity; people believe that this is the place where the deity actually lives. See photo (1) of the *la btse* set on Bar dbon peak. It has been suggested by Karmay (conference at Minzu University, Autumn 2010) that "it is probable that the term *la btsas* also refers to a landmark on a mountain top before it became a ritual term."

¹⁴ *bLa ri* and *lha ri* are almost homophonous, whose literal meaning is respectively soul mountain and deity mountain, are often interchangeably used. As already outlined in note 3, this definition does not imply an animistic approach, the mountain is in fact the abode of the soul or the abode of the deity.

sixth month of the Tibetan calendar, sGo me tribesmen gather on the peak where the first *la btse* was set to make offerings and perform rituals to the deity abiding there. A myes Bar dbon deity belongs to one of the five categories of protective deities (*'go ba'i lha lnga*)¹⁵, and it is usually identified as a *dgra lha*, alternatively spelled as *sgra bla*¹⁶, which is a kind of protective god in charge of the protection of individuals and the entire tribe from enemies.

The first mythical chief of sGo me tribe was sGo me dGe gnyen, a very tall and fat man with a terrifying appearance, riding both a horse and a mule at the same time because of his enormous body size. According to local memories, the story of sGo me tribe can be dated back six hundred years. It started as a tribal confederation made up of three subgroups: *sGo me smad mdo bar gsum*, upper, lower and medium sGo me. This division is referred to the territory occupied by the tribe, whose entire extension is from the southern bank of Kokonor Lake in the north until the margins of mGo log in the south, and from the boundary with mTsho Nub in the west until the town of Khrika in the east. Today the sGo me tribe includes a population of around one hundred thousand and more than eighty villages. Each of the three subgroups is further divided into three units, so sGo me tribe is also called "the nine tribes of sGo me".

The etymology of the name "sGo me" or "fire on the gate", is explained by people in different ways.¹⁷ Elders from today's sGo me village say that an ancient anonymous writer used this name for the first time and then its use was spread throughout the area. A second common recount narrates that a great lama came to sGo me from the south, bringing such prosperity and happiness to local people that, in order to reward him, they gave him a beautiful girl to marry. They had many children, and the third one chose to become a monk, he spent many years in retirement and meditation, his name was Grub chen sGo me. The name of sGo me was given to the tribe after him.

According to the most detailed accounts from the areas surrounding Ting gya and Sa phyug monasteries, and to a survey about toponyms carried out in the 1980s by the county government of Khrika, this name first appeared sometime around 900 A.D.

At that time, a big plague had spread from the northern part of the Yellow river to this area, causing the death of thousands. No medical treatment was available and the situation deteriorated until suddenly a

¹⁵ The five categories of protective deities are: *pha lha* the paternal god, *ma lha* the maternal god, *zhang lha* the maternal uncle god, *dgra lha* the god protecting from enemies or war god (see note 1), *srog lha* protecting one's life. See Nagano and Karmay, 2008, p. 45.

¹⁶ *sGra bla* is almost homophone with *dgra lha*, so the two words are often indistinctively used without regard to their literal meaning. *sGra bla* literally means "sound soul" and *dgra lha* literally means "enemy god", both refer to a kind of spiritual energy that affect individual and community life and are connected to the local sacred mountain.

¹⁷ See sGo me lo rgyus rtsom sgrig lhan tshogs in Qinghai Zangzu 2010.2, pp. 40-43.

lama and a yogin arrived from Kham. In order to rescue the population from the disease, they did circumambulations and prayed, and then they proclaimed: "In the lower part of this place there is a valley which is like the entrance gate (*sgo*) to this place, over there the wind blows without obstacles towards our direction. If you want to stop the plague, you have to set fire (*me*) to that gate, otherwise the disease will kill everyone."

Locals immediately arranged for a big fire and the flames burned high in the sky, after one day and one night the plague gradually disappeared. They were deeply grateful to the lama and the yogin, so the two masters agreed: "From now on, this place is called *sGo me* "fire on the gate". Every family should avoid impure behavior and build an altar at the place where the fire was set; every traveler and pilgrim should keep the custom to set a fire when passing through this place; build stupas, temples and monasteries."

A myes Bar dbon: symbolization and sacralization of the landscape in one oral account¹⁸

sGo me tribesmen say that A myes Bar dbon is the centre of Asia and the only mountain which can breathe (*dbugs len pa'i ri bo 'di ma gtogs med*). Locals from the pastures surrounding Bar dbon mountain say that after a weather station was built very close to the *la btse* on the peak of Bar dbon, the mountain stopped breathing and now it is becoming like other mountains.¹⁹

The full name of A myes Bar dbon is *Bar dbon dung ri dkar po*, "white conch-shell shaped mountain", because local people see its shape like an upside down white conch shell with the open part corresponding to the top of the mountain,²⁰ where the *la btse* was set on one of the nine peaks of Bar dbon for the first time by Sangs rgyas rDorje²¹, after an accurate geomantic analysis of the surrounding landscape.

Located in the middle of the grassland of Ra lung, Bar dbon resembles a black golden vajra on a piece of silk, delimited by four columns which also divide the sky and the earth (*gnam sa'i ka bzhi*)²². These four columns are themselves mountains, whose names are listed as follows:

¹⁸ See photos (2) and (3) of two speakers: Chos dbyings rgya mtsho from Sa phyug village and dBal mgon skyabs from *sGo me* village.

¹⁹ See photo (4), the weather station on the peak of Bar dbon.

²⁰ See photo (5) of the white conch-shells held by the 'cham dancer at Ting kya monastery.

²¹ Sangs rgyas rDorje could be the same lama cited in the history of Sa phyug monastery, see the following paragraph.

²² *gNam sa'i ka bzhi* are natural columns, mountains which support the sky and prevent it from falling down, and at the same time they represent a connection between the sky and the earth.

- A ma Zor dgu mountain (complete name: A ma Zor dgu gangs dkar phyogs las rnam rgyal);
- mThon po rdza rgan, one of the peaks of bLon po ser chen range;
- sGo me lab tse, another peak of bLon po ser chen;
- (Missing).

Four special stones were chosen by Sangs rgyas rDo rje to be in charge of the protection of this sacred mountain (*ri'i srung ba bzhi*):

- A large square stone called *tshogs chung rdo rgan*;
- Two piled stones under the ground of Ting kya monastery;
- *rnga lan rdo rgan*;
- *stag g.yag gnyis* (tiger and yak) at the foot of the mountain.

The peak of Bar dbon is flat like two golden plates and it is a very good place to hide *gter ma*. Between the two plates there is a small silver hill and on its top there was a throne in the past. This is like the heart of the mountain, shaped like a *norbu*, and it is also the access point to Bar dbon (*gnas sgo*).

There are two golden belts, which are the two paths leading to the peak: *rdza lam gong* and *rdza lam zhol ma*. There is no road between bLong po gSer chen and A ma Zor dgu, apart from the one passing through the peak, walked only by the *gzhi bdag*²³. It travels as follows: from gLong po gSer chen it arrives in Dum pa'i kha lam, then it goes up to Bar dbon, arriving in Nag rgan sgang nag. Once it reaches the peak of Bar dbon, it goes down to gSer gzhon sgang, and finally it reaches the top of A ma sgo rdzong. On one peak of Bar dbon there is a throne sustained by eight lions: nine dragons drinking water sit on it, they look towards the feet of Bar dbon but if a lake were located there, they wouldn't be able to drink that water (because the dragons are on the top of the mountain, too far from the foot).

At the foot of the mountain there are some hills, which are the disciples of Bar dbon. Lay people can set foot on the first one. When the sky is clear, from the top of Bar dbon you can see all the hills. At the end of the road there is a grey mountain, it is said that it is an abode of Padmasambava. Some old lamas noted that this place is good for the practice of both the present and the future realization of one's prayers (*tshé 'di phyi gnyis ka*), so many people go there. It is said that in the past there was a meditation cave where Sangs rgyas rDo rje meditated.

Looking from the top of Bar dbon, in one's sight, there is A myes Pandit and there are three *la btse*. Looking at an even closer distance there is a hill

²³ See note 2.

called "prayer flags' hill", and on the top of that hill there is a *dar shing*²⁴ justly covered in prayer flags.

There is another special dwelling called "stair of tables", which is located under *rdo rgan*, one of the four protectors of the mountain (*sri'i srung ba bzhi*) mentioned above. Approaching one's sight there is Sha rgan mountain and an old tree; and in ancient times there was also a small meditation house. Coming closer again, there is Dar lung sna kha which in the past housed four wooden pillars in the ground, found on the top of rGya ri.

Radiating far in the distance, A myes sgo rdzong guards the entrance to Bar dbon, that is said to be the access point to a *gter kha*. For those who are lucky and hold special spiritual powers, it is possible to see the face of the guard and they can also see that the place looks like a golden deer, even though for others it looks like a lining tiger.

Regarding the monastery of Ting kya, it is usually said that the shape of the area where the Ting kya monastery was built resembles the nose of an elephant, like the long rope used by herdsman to fetch yaks. It is situated in the middle of two mountains which are like the horns of a dragon; on both sides of the dragon's mouth there is a small valley.

The Iconography of A myes Bar dbon deity: A small painting from Ting kya Monastery

I was able to find only one iconographic representation of the deity abiding on A myes Bar dbon mountain, a small painting owned by Ting gya Rimpoche refiguring an anthropomorphic figure riding a white horse.

In his left hand he holds a bowl containing four *nor bu 'od 'bar*. On the top of them there is a *dung dkar g.yas 'khyil* (turning right white conch-shell), symbolizing the shape of A myes Bar dbon mountain. In his right hand he holds an arrow (*mdung*), which might be a direct reference to the martial origin of this deity. *Yul lhas'* iconography in Amdo was in fact primarily inspired to the victorious generals of the past Tibetan empire or to the local tribal chiefs. Following the later conversion of Tibetans to Buddhism, local deities maintained their fierce warrior-like nature, but their role was reinterpreted as they were invested as protectors of the Dharma.

His hat might be a *rigs lnga*²⁵, however, it is quite interesting to notice that the hat worn by the monk-dancer, playing the role of the Bar dbon

²⁴ A *dar shing* is a tall wooden pole covered with prayer flags along its whole length and is a representation of the sun, the moon and a jar on the top. The sun and the moon are symbols for the sky where *lha* dwell, the jar signifies the water where *klu* dwell.

²⁵ (*rGyal ba*) *rigs lnga* literally means "five Buddha families", it refers to the families or aspects of Buddha: Vairocana, Akśobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha and Amoghasiddhi. *Rigs lnga* designates the ceremonial crown with five points. We cannot be sure if the hat in the picture is actually a *rigs lnga* because even if the shape looks similar, there

deity during the *cham* dancing performance in the courtyard of the monastery, is a completely different one. It is a felt hat, called *phying zha*, usually worn by Tibetan nomads for protection from the rain. This detail confirms the suggestion that local deities such as *yul lha*, *skyes lha* and *dgra lha* (*sgra bla*) are strictly linked to the local community and are mundane deities who don't hold a much higher position than human beings, and should be pleased to bring benefits to people, as much as in any other kind of human relationship.

The Local rNyingmapa Monasteries

Ting kya dgon pa

According to the story told by the Fifth Ting kya Rimpoche, the rNyingmapa monastery was initially a *ri khrod* where Padmasambava meditated after the foundation of Samye sometime in the eight century. The stone, where his footprint was impressed, is buried under his statue in the Main Prayer Hall '*du khang* of today's Ting kya monastery.

Ting kya maintained its status as a place for meditative retirement until 1781, when it was transformed into a monastery by Ting kya snyan grags rgya mtsho. The religious tradition speaks about precise extraordinary signs manifested from the sky: at noon white clouds arouse from the earth and suddenly assembled, while a crush of thunder rumbled in the sky. Ting kya snyan grags rgya mtsho walked until the point where clouds arose and he found the stone with the footprint of Padmasambava. It was exactly in that place that the '*du khang* was to be built.

In order to draw an accurate map for the construction of the monastery, Ting kya snyan grags rgya mtsho prayed and meditated for further signals from the sky; he recalled many times the eight names of Padmasambava²⁶ and finally the *zhi khrod dam pa rigs brgya*²⁷ appeared to him together with an octagon made of light. According to that shape, he forged the plan for the Main Prayer Hall and built it on the foot-printed stone. The top of the roof was shaped like a *rgyal ba rigs lnga* crown²⁸.

The monastery was enlarged in 1718, thanks to the effort of the first reincarnation lama, and for the following centuries it enjoyed great fame in mTsho lho, until the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, when it suffered

are only three golden points. Compare photos (6) and (7) showing the painting and the costume representing Bar dbon deity.

²⁶ Padmasambhava is said to have taken eight forms or manifestations representing different aspects of his being - wrath, pacification, etc. (1) *Guru U rgyan rDo rje 'chang*, (2) *Guru Sakya seng ge*, (3) *Guru Pad ma rgyal po*, (4) *Guru Pad ma 'byung gnas*, (5) *Guru blo ldan mchog sred*, (6) *Guru Nyi ma 'od zer*, (7) *Gu ru rDo-rje gro lod*, (8) *Guru seng ge sgra sgrags*.

²⁷ *Zhi khrod dam pa rigs brgya* One hundred peaceful and wrathful deities.

²⁸ *rGyal ba rigs lnga* see *rigs lnga* note 16.

major damages. It was only in 1985 that the monastery was reopened to monks and gradually returned to normality. Since 2003, the present reincarnation lama of Ting kya has been supporting the restoration of the Main Prayer Hall and the building of a new, bigger hall.

Sa phyug dgon pa

Sa phyug is a rNying ma pa monastery located six km outside of Chabcha county, in the village of Sa phyug. The construction of this monastery was prophesied by Padmasambava and it was actually built with the patronage of the three subgroups of the sGo me tribe in 1695, when the Main Prayer Hall was erected and thirty monks moved in. In 1831, Khams Sangs rgyas rDo rje was made up of twelve prayer halls, three protector's temples and three teahouses. During the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) the monastery underwent serious damage, and it was rebuilt in the 1980s on a hill due to flooding in the valley. Presently, approximately fifty monks live in the monastery.²⁹

Written Sources

The gsol mchod of Bar dbon

The following text is recited by heart by the monks of the monastery of Ting gya. I later found a handwritten copy of the same text in a private house in the village of Sa phyug. When I asked other villagers about the *gsol mchod* of Bar dbon, they confirmed this very same version:

*Bar dbon gsol mchod/
kyee dge mtshan stong 'bar bar dbon dkar bo zhes/
sa 'dzin chen por gnas pa'i dge bsnyen che/
yum sras blon 'bangs lha klu sde brgyad bcas/
dkar phyogs skyong ba'i dgra lha chen po la/
gsol lo mchod do bcol ba'i 'phrin las mdzod/*

Translation:

Invocation to Bar dbon

Oh! The white Bar dbon blooming with thousands of auspicious omens!

He is a religious devotee³⁰ who abides on the big mountain!

The mother and son, the minister and the attendant,³¹

²⁹ See Qinghai sheng Hainan Zangzu Zizhizhou Fojiao Xiehui, 1999, pp. 402-404.

³⁰ *dGe bsnyen* means religious devotee and can be referred both to Bon devotee and Buddhist devotee.

The eight categories of gods and nagas³²
 To the great *sgra bla*³³ who protects the virtuous gods³⁴,
 Perform the magical actions you have promised!

**The description of A myes Bar dbon deity
 according to a longer contemporary *gsol mchod***

From: *dKar phyogs dgyes pa'i dgra bgegs zil gnon*, written by the Eleventh Reincarnation Lama of Ting kya, Kun bzang Padma Nam rgyal

[...] O A Hu bar dbon dung ri dkar po/ dung gi skyes ri mtho po/ rdza phyi rdza gsum dang nang rdza gsum// nang rdza gsum gyi dang po na bzhugs nas/ g.ya' ma sngon mo'i khri steng na bzhugs nas/ spang ri ser po'i gdan steng na bzhugs nas// a myes bar dbon dung ri dkar po/ dgra 'dul stobs ldan dbang phyug/ 'khor mi nag rta nag stong gi bskor nas// phar 'gro rnam la rgyab brten byed nol tshur 'ong rnam la bsu ba yid nol/ dgra bgegs chams la 'phab nas/ stong gsum kha lo bsgyur nas// srid gsum zil gyis gnon nas// nyi zla cha lang sdebs nas//

pha ring bu (sic!)³⁵ rgyud kyis skyes lha'i rgyal po a myes dgra 'dul// a dgra 'dul/ lan gsum bos/ ye rgyab ri klad 'da' smug ri// gter bdag dpal gyi ri bol/za lde mig gnyis kyi bdag poll/ sgom rdzong g.yang gi phyug mo//gzhi bdag rnam la dngos grub ster nol// lam 'gro rnam la gdong grogs byed nol// bka' srung dbang drag bstan skyong//

g.yas na a myes ba yan// rgyab na blon po gser chen// g.yon na zor dgu phyug mol// mdun na rma rig sum brgya drug bcu// dbo yi tshwa mtsho dkar mol// lha mo stong gi bla mtsho// mtsho sngon khri gshog rgyal mol// (rang rang gzhi bdag bar 'dir bris) rang rang bka' 'khor bran g.yog/ phar ri g.yas la gnas pa/ tshur ri g.yon la gnas pa/ 'bab pa chu la gnas pa// 'gro ba lam la gnas pa// mtho ba mkha' la gnas pa// 'tsher sa chu mig la gnas pa// sa 'di' sa bdag/ yul 'di' gzhi bdag/ mchod mchod bstod kyi srung ma// mchod rang 'khor gyi srung ma/ pha myes brgyud kyi srung ma/ khyed rnam gyi zhal du bdud rtsi bsang gi mchod pa// gser skyems phud kyi mchod pa dam pa 'di' bul lo// [...]

³¹ Mother and son recall the basic relation of kinship of A myes Bar dbon. The political and social structure is evocated by naming his minister and attendant as part of his entourage.

³² The eight categories of gods and nagas, *lha klu sde brgyad* or *lha srin sde brgyad*, refer to the eight types of mundane spirits who can cause either help or harm, but remain invisible to normal human beings. It is a different classification for the mundane deities 'jig rten pa'i lha, explained in note 2. See De Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1998, pp. 203-252.

³³ See note 9.

³⁴ *dKar phyogs* literally means the white part. It also has the meaning of waxing moon or the light half of a month. Its extensive religious meaning is the side of virtue, positive forces, virtuous gods. On the contrary, *nag phyogs* means the black part, and waning moon; in a religious sense it means the side of evil, negative forces and evil gods.

³⁵ Read *du*.

Translation:

Oh! A myes Bar dbon!

White conch-shell shaped mountain, high mountain born from a conch-shell!

There are three external slates and three inner slates, you dwell in the first of the three inner slates,

You dwell on the top of ten thousands blue slates,

You dwell on a cushion made of a yellow hill covered with meadows.

A myes Bar dbon, white conch-shell shaped mountain,

The powerful lord who conquers enemies,

Surrounded by an entourage of black (lay) people and black horses,

Support those who depart and welcome those who return.

Pacifying enemies and obstructers,

Dominating the three thousands fold universe,

With your brightness overcome the three realms of existence,

Conjoin sun and moon like a pair of cymbals.

A myes dGra 'dul (Subjugator of enemies),

King of the deity of birth from the patrilinear lineage,

A myes dGra 'dul:

"Purple mountain going above the mountain behind",

"Mountain of the glorious guard to the *gter kha*",

"Owner of the two keys",

Give spiritual powers to the powerful goddess Zor dgu of the auspicious meditation castle and to the *gzhi bdag*,

Be a friend to those who travel, protect the Dharma with subjugating and wrathful actions.

On the right there is A myes Ba yan,

On the back bLon po gSer chen,

On the left Zor dgu Phyug mo,

In front there are three hundred sixty members of rMa chen sPom ra family.

Salt white lake of dBo, spiritual lake of thousand Lhamo, Khri gshog rgyal mo of Kokonor,

(Each *gzhi bdag* at this point writes) we servants dwell on the right of the mountain over there,

On the left of the mountain over here,

In the rain, on the paths, in the high sky, in the springs of the abandoned pasture lands.

In the presence of all of you,

Protective spirits of this land, protective spirits of this place,

Guardians of offerings and praises,

Guardians of self ripening karmic fruition of the ritual offerings,

Guardians of the ancestors,

We present the best offering of *chang* libation, the best offerings of ambrosia and smoke.

Conclusions

The worship of local deities and, by extension, of their abiding sacred mountains—whose origins are not easy to trace—appeared for the first time as an important component of Bon religion before the eighth century, and have survived until present day. In fact, even though both the landscape and the ancient gods were tamed and converted by the advent of Buddhism, the essence of their function for the local community was preserved, and the linkages between the social groups and their territories were reinforced.

Since ancient times, Tibetans have been cohabitating in Amdo areas with other ethnic groups: Han, Hui Muslims, Mongolians and other smaller minorities. Relationships were often contrastive and violent, due to the sharp diversity between Buddhism and Islam and because of land disputes between autochthonous people and immigrants from inland China. When the government of the Dalai Lama was set in Central Tibet, Amdo Tibetans were never completely under the rule of Lhasa, the political organization of Amdo being based on a scattered system of local chiefs without a central power. The change of toponyms bears witness to the fact that the arrival of different groups coincided with the reversal of the previous political control and the establishment of a new ruling power, while Tibetans were mainly playing a subjective role.

I think it should be suggested that, despite multiple external influences and invasions, the connection between strong tribal socio-territorial identities and their local landscapes and gods was a key factor in the preservation of Tibetan autochthonous traditions.

The sporadic Mongolian occupation of Amdo, continuative during the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) through the establishment of a military banner system and the later immigration to western Amdo, broke the previous territorial organization of Tibetan tribes, but the local group identity continued to remain strong.³⁶

Afterwards, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Amdo Tibetans experienced the brutal regime of the Hui Muslim warlord Ma Bufang (1903-1975) who made every effort to elevate the social and economic position of Muslims, persecuting Tibetans and other minorities in the area under his control. Many Tibetan monasteries were destroyed, and Labrang monastery was continuously occupied from 1917 until the 1940s. Sadly, during that time a genocidal war was conducted against the Tibetan

³⁶ See Sonam Dorje, 2009, pp. 29-37.

nomads of mGo log and in some places the entire population was massacred.³⁷

In the more recent past, the spread of the Chinese communist revolution and the subsequent foundation of the People Republic of China in 1949 had a destructive impact on Amdo: religious issues were outside the realm of communist concern and the limits imposed over religious freedom came to a climax during the Cultural Revolution, when monasteries were locked, monks persecuted and forced to marry, and pilgrimages forbidden for more than ten years.³⁸

Nevertheless, nowadays Tibetan pilgrims are resolutely back on the paths of their protective gods and their religious traditions once more, and though influenced by the changing of times, are still surviving.

Despite the fact that the traditional organization of the landscape based on tribal agreements has been substituted by a reorganization of the landscape within the Chinese administrative units' system, Tibetan communities still regularly experience rituals and pilgrimages. The unity of the landscape and its cultural narratives has been split into villages, counties and fenced pastures, but the sense of belonging to the traditional articulation of tribes continues to exist.

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³⁷ See Ceng Qian, 2008, pp. 60-63. See also Nietupski, 1999.

³⁸ See Huber, 2002, pp. 1-15 and Pirie, 2005.

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Map of the area.



Photo (1) The *la btse* on the peak of Bar dbon.



Photo (2) Chos dbyings rgya from Sa phyug village.



Photo (3) dBal mgon skyabs from sGo me village.



Photo (4) The weather station on the peak of Bar dbon.



Photo (5) The white conch-shells held by the 'cham dancer at Ting kya monastery.



Photo (6) A painting of Bar dbon.




Photo (7) The 'cham costume.

Some Remarks on the Textual Transmission and Text of Bu ston Rin chen grub's *Chos 'byung*, a Chronicle of Buddhism in India and Tibet*

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For János, wherever he may now be.

he *Chos 'byung* or the *Origin of the [Buddhist] Dharma*, the now famous chronicle of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism that Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290-1364) authored sometime between 1322 and 1326, has been known to non-Tibetan Indo- and Buddhological scholarship for over a century.¹ Because of its author's consummate command of the Tibetan Buddhist canonical literature and his numerous citations therefrom, this long treatise has played a significant, albeit a not always sufficiently appreciated, role in our understanding of how Buddhism developed in the Indian subcontinent and in his native Tibet. Of course, one of the main reasons for its in-

* Manuscripts listed under C.P.N. catalog numbers refer to those that I was happily able to inspect, now two decades ago, in the Nationalities Library of the C[ultural] P[alace of] N[ationalities] in Beijing, and of which I was most of the time able to make copies. My translations sometimes include additional information that I believe is implicitly embedded in the original Tibetan text. However, I have dispensed with signaling most of these in square brackets for optical and aesthetic reasons. But anyone familiar with Tibetan will no doubt be able to recognize where I did add to the Tibetan text and be able to judge for him or herself whether these extras are on target or outright misleading. Almost all the references to Tibetan, texts or terms and names, have been standardized. The "Bibliographic Abbreviations" includes only those sources that are referred to three or more times. And, lastly, it should be understood that when the texts only provide the Indo-Tibetan or Sino-Tibetan designation for a year, there is a slight overlap with the following year of the Gregorian calendar, so that, for example, strictly speaking, the *rab byung* (*prabhava*) [= fire-female-hare] year of the first Indo-Tibetan sexagenary cycle should be given as "ca. 1027" and not as "1027."

¹ For further specific references, see my "The Textual History and Early Transmission of Bu ston Rin chen grub's *Chos 'byung*, a Chronicle of Buddhism in India and Tibet," which is under preparation.

fluence is that ever since its appearance from Bu ston's fecund pen, the *Chos 'byung* also enjoyed a high measure of renown among his fellow Tibetan scholars, even to the extent that one, namely, Gnyag phu ba Bsod nams bzang po (1341-1433), wrote a summary of it in 1378.² As a direct result of its popularity, sets of printing blocks were carved for it on at least four occasions in Central and East Tibetan monasteries. The first of these was prepared in the early 1470s at Bu ston's erstwhile seat of Zhwa lu monastery. It was part of the project for printing his collected oeuvre that Mkhän chen IV 'Khrul zhig Tshul khriṃs rgyal mtshan (1399-1473), abbot of this institution from the end of December of 1440 to 1467, conceived and initiated not long before his passing. However, this project was never fully realized. Aside from the *Chos 'byung*, he was only able to have blocks carved for a few of his other writings, including, I rather suspect, Bu ston's famous 1359 treatise in which he deals with what makes enlightenment possible (*tathāgatagarbha*), the well-known *De bzhiṃ gshes pa'i snying gsal zhiṅ mdzes par byed pa'i rgyan*.³ Judging from the numerous entries in the extant biographical literature, Bu ston's chronicle was studied by many fourteenth and fifteenth century scholars, and not only by those who had either been his disciples or disciples of his disciples, etc., or who had close connections with Zhwa lu itself. But the text first went "public" with this Zhwa lu print and, as a direct consequence, we begin to find it quoted in a much more broad spectrum of literary sources by intellectuals who belonged to different religious affiliations. Other sets of printing blocks were subsequently carved in Lhun grub steng in Sde dge under the supervision of Zhu chen Tshul khriṃs rin chen (1697-1774), some-

² See *Chos 'byung rin po che'i gter*, Jo nang dpe tshogs, vol. 11 (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2008), 275-312.

³ This might explain why Gser mdog Paṅ chen Shākya mchog ldan (1428-1507) was able to refer to it in, for example, his undated replies to queries posed to him by Mus Rab 'byams pa Thugs rje dpal about his controversial 1482 *Gser gyi thur ma* study of Sa skya Paṅḍita's (1182-1251) *Sdom gsum rab dbye*, for which see *Complete Works*, vol. 23 (Thimphu, 1975), 386, 407. The thirty-nine-folio Lhasa Zhol print of Bu ston's work was translated and studied in D. Seyfort Ruegg, *Le traité du tathāgatagarbha de Bu ston Rin chen grub* (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1973), but printing blocks for an edition in seventy-four folios were also carved and deposited in 'Bras spungs monastery's printery at a so far unknown time, for which see H. Eimer, "Der Katalog des Großen Druckhauses von 'Bras spungs aus dem Jahre 1920," *Studies in Central & East Asian Religions* 5/6 (1992-3), 30, no. 246. This work is also sometimes wrongly attributed to his student Sgra tshad pa Rin chen nram rgyal (1318-88), most probably because he authored a commentary on it; see, for example, Gung thang Dkon mchog bstan pa'i sgron me's (1762-1823) incomplete study of Tsong kha pa Blo bzang grags pa's (1357-1419) 1408 *Drang ba dang nges pa'i don nram par phyed ba'i bstan bcos legs bshad snying po* in his *Collected Works*, vol. 2 (New Delhi, 1975), 549-50.

time between 1739 and the year of his passing, and then in Lhasa from 1917 to 1919, as part of the very first printing of his complete works. A noteworthy feature of this Lhasa Zhol print — this holds also for the many prints of his other writings that are contained in this edition — is that it is cluttered with numerous interlinear notes and glosses. The origin of many of these annotations is still unclear. Though it is certain that a substantial number undoubtedly postdate Bu ston by various margins of sorts, it is probable that some of these were found in one or another manuscript which the editors, who included the controversial Rdo bis Shes rab rgya mtsho (1884-1968),⁴ had at their disposal. To be sure, we can also not *a priori* rule out the likelihood that these later editors had themselves insinuated some of them into their final texts. There also exists a Bkra shis lhun po print for the *Chos 'byung*, but it has so far resisted an accurate dating. Lastly, a host of manuscripts of the text are known to be extant, of which only one rather late exemplar has been published.⁵ This particular exemplar exhibits several differences from the Lhasa Zhol print.

As far as its architecture is concerned, the text of the *Chos 'byung* falls into four main sections. In the first, Bu ston sought to provide a hermeneutic program for the understanding of Buddhism *per se*. To be sure, he was not the first Tibetan scholar to begin his study of the

⁴ For his interesting life that ended in tragedy, see H. Stoddard, "The Long Life of Rdo sbis Dge bshes Shes rab rgya mtsho," *Proceedings of the 4th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies Schloss Hohenkammer - Munich 1985*, ed. H. Uebach and Jampa L. Panglung (München: Kommission für Zentralasiatische Studien Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1988), 465-471, and two panegyric volumes: *Dge ba'i bshes gnyen chen po shes rab rgya mtsho*, comp. Mtsho sngon zhing chen srid gros kyi slob sbyong dang rig gnas lo rgyus u yon lhan tshogs (Xining: ?, ?1996) and Phun tshogs, *Rje btsun pra dnya sa ra mchog gi srid zhi'i legs tshogs 'dod rgur 'jo ba'i mdzad 'phrin dang rdo sbis grwa tshang gi gdan rabs dad gsum nor bu'i chun po* (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1998), and Lha rams pa Skal bzang rgya mtsho's recent bilingual Tibetan-Chinese biography, *Rje btsun dam pa shes rab rgya mtsho'i rnam thar* (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2010). For his philosophical encounter with his erstwhile student Dge 'dun chos 'phel (1903-51), see, briefly, D.S. Lopez, Jr., *The Madman's Middle Way. Reflections on Reality of the Tibetan Monk Gedun Chopel* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 234 ff. For reasons of space, Lopez did not mine his critiques to the full, but future studies of twentieth century Tibetan Madhyamaka thought should definitely include these as well as those that are not mentioned in Lopez's piece, *The Critics* [pp. 230-44]. We are still in the dark about Rdo bis' editorial principles. Suffice it to mention that he laid down some editorial criteria for the correct spelling of Tibetan verbal forms in his *Dus gsum gyi rnam gzhag blo mun sel ba'i 'od snang la zhu dag gnang ba'i skabs kyi dpyad gtam*, *Collected Works*, vol. 3 (Xining: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1984), 452-6. This work was written at the behest of officials of the Central Translation Bureau [*krung yang* < Ch. *zhongyang*] rtsom sgyur las khungs] in Beijing.

⁵ BUM. This manuscript is differently filiated from the printed versions of the *Chos 'byung*.

history of Buddhism in this way. A full documentation and analysis of the precursors of the architecture and contents of this portion of Bu ston's text would lead us too far afield, but suffice it to point out here that these have their parallels in what we find in such works as the ecclesiastic chronicle that is attributed to Nyang ral Nyi ma'i 'od zer (1124-92) and those by *Lde'u Jo sras and Mkhas pa Lde'u — both belong to the thirteenth century, the latter apparently to its third quarter.⁶ In short, this aspect of Bu ston's work is far from unique and, indeed, represents a tradition that was already well established in Tibet. Thusfar, the oldest available reflex of this genre is the second Sa skya pa patriarch Slob dpon Bsod nams rtse mo's (1142-82) *Chos la 'jug pa'i sgo* of circa 1167. Much more an introduction to Buddhism, with an appendix on its developments in India and Tibet, than a fullfledged chronicle, Bu ston knew this work well. While there is no evidence that he was directly familiar with the other three histories just mentioned, he himself reports that he was acquainted with several other specimen of this genre. Thus he writes, in 1326, in response to a query Rin chen ye shes addressed to him about his *Chos 'byung*, that he had a knowledge of the chronicles written by Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge (1109-69) — this influential Bka' gdams pa scholar was an important teacher of the Slob dpon for some eleven years —, Gtsang nag pa Brtson 'grus seng ge (?-after 1195), Khro phu Lo tsā ba Byams pa'i dpal (1172-1237), Chag Lo tsā ba Chos rje dpal (1197-1264) and Mchims Nam mkha' grags (1210-85).⁷ Unfortunately, except for what appears to be a manuscript of Gtsang nag pa's short work, which is still awaiting publication, none of these have been

⁶ Of the three manuscripts and one recently printed text of Nyang ral's study, NYANGA abruptly stops at NYANG, 379 [NYANGb, 445, NYANGm, 407b]. From hereon I will do as if Nyang ral is the author of this work, although my student D. Hirshberg has cast very serious doubt upon this in his forthcoming dissertation. For the other two works, see my "Dating the Two Lde'u Chronicles of Buddhism in India and Tibet," *Études bouddhiques offertes à Jacques May, Asiatische Studien / Études asiatiques* XLVI.1 (1992), 468-91 — this paper is now in need of several corrections —, and S.G. Karmay, "The Origin Myths of the First King of Tibet as Revealed in the *Can-Inga*," *The Arrow and the Spindle. Studies in History, Myths, Rituals and Beliefs in Tibet* (Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point, 1998), 292; this is a revised version of an earlier paper published in *Tibetan Studies. Proceedings of the 6th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies Fagernes 1992*, vol. 1, ed. P. Kvaerne (Oslo: The Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, 1994), 413-4. The wording of portions of the colophons of the works by Nyang ral, Lde'u Jo sras, and several manuscripts of the *Dbu' / Sba bzhed* corpus suggests a close affinity among them in the sense that they may very well have been written in a kindred literary and religious milieu.

⁷ Untitled, *Thams cad mkhyen pa bu ston rin po che'i gsung rab thor bu ba*, *The Collected Works of Bu ston* [and Sgra tshad pa], Lhasa Zhol print, part 26 (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1971), 192.

recovered so far.

The next two major sections of the *Chos 'byung* delineate the inception and development of Buddhism in India and Tibet — the rather disappointing survey of Buddhism in Tibet ends in a listing of Indian and Indic *Paṇḍita*-s and Tibetan translators —, and the fourth and last section is a catalog of the translated scriptures to which he had access. The well-known English rendition of the text published now some eighty years ago by E. Obermiller included neither the section on these *paṇḍita*-s and translators, nor the catalog of translated scriptures.⁸ Nishioka Soshū published an edition and study of this catalog in Japanese,⁹ and Satō Hisashi published earlier a Japanese rendition of the chapter on Tibet.¹⁰ But the only complete translations of the *Chos 'byung* into a foreign language are the ones into Chinese by Guo Heqing and Pu Wencheng.¹¹ Mention must of course also be made of the regretted J. Szerb's critical, annotated edition of its chapter on Tibet, including the listings of *paṇḍitas* and translators, which is based on the four abovementioned prints plus two handwritten manuscripts of unclear filiation.¹² Szerb's book is a carefully executed piece of work, one that he was ever so tragically unable to finish. H. Krasser completed a very substantial number of the entries in the enormous critical apparatus of his edition, and we must all be grateful for his selfless labors. One source not used by Szerb for his edition is Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu's (1698-1755) undated notes on and summary of Bu ston's narrative of the *Chos 'byung*'s section on Tibet.¹³ But in all fairness, even if he had used it, it would have added precious little of substance to his work and, indeed, apart from a tenuous bibliographic value, it also has virtually none for the present paper.

The phenomenology of Tibetan book culture and the modes and speed with which knowledge and texts were or could potentially be disseminated in traditional, pre-1959 Tibet are still by and large uncharted areas of research. We also know virtually next to nothing about the specifics of the technology of Tibetan writing. The kinds of

⁸ Obermiller (1931-1932).

⁹ Nishioka Soshū, "An Index to the Catalog Section of 'Bu ston's Chronicle of Buddhism,' I, II, III [in Japanese]," *Tōkyō daigaku bungakubu bunka kōryū kenkyū shisetsu kenkyū kiyō* 4 (1980), 61-92; 5 (1981), 43-94; 6 (1983), 47-201.

¹⁰ A Japanese translation of the Lhasa Zhol print's section dealing with Tibet can be found in Satō (1977: 845-73).

¹¹ See, respectively, Guo (1986) and Pu's *Budun fojiao shi* (Lanzhou: Gansu Minzu chubanshe, 2007). I thank Mr. Sun Penghao, my student at Renmin University, Beijing, for drawing my attention to Pu's work, which unfortunately is not [yet] available to me.

¹² Szerb (1990: XIII-IV).

¹³ TSHE, 539-52; TSHE1, 196-200.

pens and paper that were in use or the different styles in which a book could and did make its physical appearance are subjects that still remain to be explored to any degree of detail, not to mention where paper and writing instruments were actually manufactured, when not imported. The recent work by Dpal bsdus is indeed a good beginning.¹⁴ In his youthful 1624 commentary on Sa skya Paṇḍita's unprecedented *Rol mo'i bstan bcos*, *Treatise of the Musical Arts*, Sa skya monastery's twenty-eighth grand-abbot A mes zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga' bsod nams (1597-1659) mentions an old manuscript of his precursor's work which, he stipulates, was written with an "iron pen" (*lcags smyug*) on golden-hued paper (*shog bu gser mdangs can ma*).¹⁵ And he estimates that this manuscript dates from the time when Sa skya Paṇḍita was alive and well, that is, from the first half of the thirteenth century. This is a not insignificant datum.

A similar kind of ignorance confronts us when we open a Tibetan book. The varieties of punctuation and punctuation graphs that we find used in them, the different ways in which the written text is spatially organized on the piece of paper that has now morphed into a book page, and even the different ways in which the colophons organize such relevant bits of information as the identity of the author, the place and time of his or her composition, the person or persons at whose behest a work was written, and the ways in which the identity of the scribe is given, all these items still need to be looked into and accounted for in a systematic and sustained way.¹⁶ And we can go on and on. A work like the one M.T. Clanchy wrote for writing, penmanship, and early England's book culture and production or, more close to the Tibetan cultural area, even something more limited in scale like O. von Hinüber's booklet on Indian *Schriftlichkeit*, are im-

¹⁴ *Bod kyi yi ge'i rnam bshad seng ge'i nga ro* (Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2004).

¹⁵ *Rig pa'i gnas lnga las bzo rig pa'i bye brag rol mo'i bstan bcos kyi rnam par bshad pa 'jam dbyangs bla ma dges pa'i snyan pa'i sgra dbyangs blo gsal yid phrog 'phrin las yongs khyab*, *Collected Works*, vol. 6 (Kathmandu: Sa skya rgyal yongs gsung rab slob gnyer khang, 2000), 534.

¹⁶ But see J.I. Cabezón, "Authorship and Literary Production in Classical Buddhist Tibet," *Changing Minds. Contributions to the Study of Buddhism and Tibet in Honor of Jeffrey Hopkins*, ed. G. Newland (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 2001), 233-63, M. Clemente, "Colophons as Sources: Historical Information from Some Brag dkar rta so Xylographies," *Rivista di Studi Sudasiatici* 11 (2007), 121-58, and O. Almogi, "How Authentic are Titles and Colophons in Tantric Works in the Tibetan Canon? The Case of Three Works and Their Authors and Translators," ed. O. Almogi, *Beiträge zur Zentralasienforschung*, Bd. 24 (Halle: International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies GmbH, 2008), 87-126, and their references to the secondary literature.

portant desiderata for Tibetan studies,¹⁷ though truth be told C.A. Scherrer-Schaub, K.R. Schaeffer, and S. van Schaik have now begun to till the fields in significant ways of this area of scholarship.¹⁸ However, what is clear is that until the second half of the twelfth century, all Tibetan books were written out by hand and circulated by means of copying, lending and borrowing — we still have no idea of the mechanisms by which manuscripts were formally lent out by their institutional or private owners. Much later, Zhwa dmar IV Chos grags ye shes (1453-1524) notes in his 1517 biography of 'Gos Lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal (1392-1481) that the latter was able to borrow two or three volumes at the time of the Tanjur-canon from the library of Snar thang monastery's 'Jam dpal lha khang.¹⁹ We also still know dismally little about the history of libraries and reading²⁰ in the Ti-

¹⁷ See, respectively, *From Memory to Written Record. England 1066-1307* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), *Der Beginn der Schrift und frühe Schriftlichkeit in Indien*, Abhandlungen der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse, Jahrgang 1989-Nr. 11 (Mainz: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur / Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH, 1989).

¹⁸ See her "Towards a methodology for the study of old Tibetan manuscripts: Dunhuang and Tabo," *Tabo Studies II. Manuscripts, Texts, Inscriptions, and the Arts*, ed. C.A. Scherrer-Schaub and E. Steinkellner, Serie Orientale Roma LXXXVII (Rome: Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 1999), 3-36, "Tibet: An Archeology of the Written," which is forthcoming in *Old Tibetan Studies Dedicated to the Memory of R.E. Emmerick*, ed. C.A. Scherrer-Schaub (Brill: Leiden, 2011), Scherrer-Schaub and G. Bonani, "Establishing a typology of the old Tibetan manuscripts: a multidisciplinary approach," *Dunhuang Manuscript Forgeries*, ed. S. Whitfield (London: The British Library, 2002), 184-215 [= *Ibid.*, *The Cultural History of Western Tibet. Recent Research from the China Tibetology Center and the University of Vienna*, ed. D. Klimburg-Salter, Liang Junyan et al. (Beijing: China Tibetology Publishing House, 2008), 299-337], Schaeffer's *The Culture of the Book in Tibet* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), and van Schaik's "Towards a Tibetan Paleography: A Preliminary Typology of Writing Styles in Early Tibet," which is forthcoming in *Manuscript Cultures: Mapping the Field*, ed. J. Quenzer and J.-U. Sobisch (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012). The recent publication of Grong khang Tshe ring chos rgyal, *Gangs can yig srol 'phel rim skor gyi gleng gdam yid kyi rang sgra* (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 2010), 166 ff., offers an interesting narrative about the different types of scripts that are used in Central, East, and Northeast Tibet, although we need to swallow hard several times when he speaks of scripts that were allegedly developed in pre-Khri srong lde btsan times.

¹⁹ *Dpal ldan bla ma dam pa mkhan chen thams cad mkhyen pa don gyi slad du mtshan nas smos te gzhon nu dpal gyi rnam par thar pa yon tan rin po che mchog tu rgyas pa'i ljon pa* [*dbu can* manuscript], C.P.N. catalog no. 003259(11), 14a [= ed. Ngag dbang nor bu (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2002), 33].

²⁰ For "the art of reading in Tibet," see the pioneering paper of A.C. Klein, "Oral Genres and the Art of Reading in Tibet," *Oral Tradition* 9 (1994), 281-314. For some notes on the "Kagyü attitudes towards abooks and book learning," see D. Martin, "The Book-Moving Incident of 1219," *Edition, éditions: l'écrit au Tibet*,

betan cultural area. But we do know that by the beginning of the ninth century there were both imperial and monastic [and perhaps even private] libraries in cultural Tibet, and there is ample evidence that, in later times, wealthy noble families also owned private libraries that were kept separate, as they were in the case of temples and monasteries, from the more secular institutional archives in which such documents as muniments, taxation records, land and labor contracts and the like were safeguarded. Often called *dkar chag*, many if not all monasteries, estates, and palaces had their own inventories of precious objects, from the statuary and sepulchres of their saints to their collections of books and ritual bells, drums, paintings and other sacred objects. These existed either as separate documents or in larger treatises that dealt with the history of the institutions in which they were housed. Not many of these have been published so far. But a truly significant literary event would be the publication of the *dbu can* manuscript of the monumental *dkar chag* of the new monastery of Chos 'khor sde chen that Karma bstan skyong dbang po (1606-42), the last of the Gtsang pa Sde srid rulers, had built right above Bkra shis lhun po.²¹ If memory serves, it was compiled and written by 'Jam dbyangs Kun dga' bsod nams lhun grub (1571-1642) of the Sa skya pa school's Rtse gdong Residence, the slightly incomplete and beautifully calligraphied manuscript originally consisted of three hundred and ten folios. It is now inaccessibly stored away in either the basement of the museum in Lhasa, or somewhere in 'Bras spungs monastery. Several such inventories were also written for Sa skya and its temples, albeit on a less comprehensive scale, and a particularly significant one is found in the eighth and last chapter of the study of the monastery and its ruling families Gtsang Byams pa Rdo rje rgyal mtshan (1423-98) completed in 1475. Worthy of a full analysis in its own right, we learn there that the various temples already housed tens of thousands of manuscripts and printed works, including manuscripts (*phyag dpe*) that had belonged to Ba ri Lo tsā ba Rin chen grags (1040-1111), Mal Lo tsā ba Blo gros grags (ca. 1100), 'Khon Dkon mchog rgyal po (1034-1102) — he was Sa skya's founder —, 'Khon Sgyi chu ba (ca. 1100), Gnang Kha'u ba Dar ma rgyal mtshan (ca. 1100) and the first four patriarchs, from Sa chen Kun dga' snying

evolution et devenir, ed. A. Chayet et al., *Collectanea Himalayica* 3 (Munich: Indus Verlag, 2010), 201 ff.

²¹ C.P.N. catalog no. 004351. I first drew attention to this work in my "On Some Early Tibetan *Pramāṇavāda* Texts of the China Nationalities Library of the Cultural Palace of Nationalities in Beijing," *Journal of Buddhist and Tibetan Studies* 1 (1994), 24, n. 4. This short-lived journal has gone the way of all flesh and is now defunct.

po (1092-1158) to Sa skya Paṇḍita.²² Unfortunately, we have so far nothing of the kind for Zhwa lu monastery or Ri phug, Bu ston's primary places of residence for most of his adult life.

The most common form of the reproduction of books in Tibet was of course that of copying by hand. At times, an author would himself cause to make copies of a work he had just written in order to send it to his colleagues for their perusal and criticism and, he would hope, enjoyment. To be sure, this also provided him with an opportunity to make a name for himself, especially if he were at the beginning of his career. Uncertain how often this was done, an interesting, if still fairly isolated, case in point is Bu ston's very own *Chos 'byung*. Indeed, that we have Rin chen ye shes' reaction to the *Chos 'byung*, to which I referred above, was in the first place due to the simple fact that Bu ston had sent him and others — unfortunately, he does not name them — a copy of his work for the purpose of soliciting their comments. At other times, copies of the author's own writings were sent as presents and, on occasion, as enclosures (*rten*) of letters. An example of this is Mkhas grub Dge legs dpal bzang po (1385-1438). He writes at the end of his undated letter to a Dge bshes Sangs rgyas bzang po that he encloses copies of two biographies (*rnam thar*) of Tsong kha pa, a long and short one.²³ Though this is little more than a half-educated guess, these two *rnam thars* were quite possibly his well-known large-scale study of his teacher Tsong kha pa's life and his much shorter work on the same that is contained in a collection of his more brief literary pieces.²⁴

Very few Tibetan autograph manuscripts have survived, so that virtually all manuscripts and prints are ultimately copies of an almost always-elusive original. As a result of the copying process, we often have multiple exemplars of one and the same work and, as is to be expected, these are as a rule not textually identical. Most of the

²² See his *Sa skya mkhon (sic) gyi gdungs rab rin po che'i 'phreng ba*, incomplete ninety-folio *dbu can* manuscript, Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project, Reel L 591/4, 86a and 77a.

²³ See his *Gsung thor bu ba rnam phyogs gcig tu bsdoms pa*, *Collected Works* [Lhasa Zhol print], vol. Ta (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1981), 639. For books as objects of exchange or "religious gifts" (*chos kyi sbyin pa/bya, deyadharmā*), see the remarks in Schaeffer, *The Culture of the Book in Tibet*, 125 ff. For the notion of such *deyadharmā*-gifts, see G. Schopen, "The Phrase 'sa prthivīpradeśat caityabhūto bhavet in the *Vajracchedikā*: Notes on the Cult of the Book in Mahāyāna," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 17 (1975), 147-81.

²⁴ These are the well-known *Rnam thar dad pa'i 'jug ngogs*, *Collected Works* [of Tsong kha pa, Lhasa Zhol print], vol. Ka (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1981), 5-146, and the lesser known *Gtam rin po che'i snye ma*, *Gsung thor bu ba rnam phyogs gcig tu bsdoms pa*, *Collected Works* [of Mkhas grub, Lhasa Zhol print], vol. Ta (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1981), 562-93.

time, if the aim was simply to make a copy, the resultant texts show simple omissions and kindred relatively minor errors related to spelling and other oversights caused by careless, ignorant or sleepy copyists. Doubtless, there were also times when these copies were willfully and purposefully edited in one way or another by a scribe or scholar, especially when, setting himself over and above the text, he was motivated by personal or sectarian concerns. Thus, in the ensuing editorial process, entire passages could be, and indeed often were, deleted from or added to the "original text," thereby changing it forever. To be sure, many possible examples can be adduced for this. The famous "autobiography" of emperor Srong btsan sgam po (ca. 569-649), the *Bka' chems ka khol ma*, is a good case in point. A "treasure-text" (*gter ma*) Atiśa (ca. 982-1054) allegedly recovered from a hole in a beam of Lhasa's Gtsug lag khang in *circa* 1049, it was never printed and copies circulated only in handwritten form. Incidentally, to designate this work a *gter ma* or to hold that Atiśa was an actual revealer of such texts, a *gter ston*, as is not infrequently found in the later Tibetan literature, may not be altogether uncontroversial and in fact is a bit of a stretch if so stated without tongue in cheek. Even if Atiśa, the person and the circumstances under which he recovered this and other cognate treatises generally do not fit the description of a *gter ston* that we find delineated in such later works on these themes as, for example, in Rdo grub chen III Kun bzang 'jigs med bstan pa'i nyi ma phrin las kun khyab dpal bzang po's (1865-1929) brief survey of the subject,²⁵ apologists and defenders of the *gter ma* tradition often do signal him as a *gter ston* and these works as a *gter ma*-s. Gu ru Chos kyi dbang phyug (1212-70) does not note either Atiśa or the *Bka' chems ka khol ma* in his early study of the incipient *gter ma* tradition, but the great Ratna gling pa (1403-76) mentions both in his 1464 study of the same — he calls the *Rgyal po bka' chems*,

²⁵ See Tulku Thondup, *Hidden Teachings of Tibet. An Explanation of the Terma Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism*, ed. H. Talbott (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1997), which includes a translation of Rdo grub chen III's undated *Las 'phro gter brgyud kyi nram bshad nyung gsal ngo mtshar rgya mtsho*, *Gsung 'bum*, vol. 2, ed. Bkra shis (Chengdu: Si khron dpe skrun tshogs pa/Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2006), 475-539. See also the remarks in J. Gyatso, "Drawn from the Tibetan Treasury: The *Gter ma* Literature," *Tibetan Literature. Studies in Genre*, ed. J.I. Cabezón and R.R. Jackson (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1996), 147-69, and A. Doctor, *Tibetan Treasure Literature. Revelation, Tradition, and Accomplishment in Visionary Buddhism* (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 2005), 19-30, and 52-71, for an edition and translation of 'Ju Mi pham rgya mtsho (1846-1912) undated piece on distinguishing a *bona fide* from a fraudulent *gter ma* revealer. Mi pham's text is structurally anomalous, since it begins with *yang dang por...*. This strange opening remark strongly suggests that the original text was left incomplete, and that it was therefore perhaps never intended to be published as it stood.

the *Shog dril ma* — and states that its counterparts, the *Bka' chems 'ong ba 'dod 'jo* by the master (*slob dpon*), and the *Bka' chems dar dkar gsal ba* of the queen,²⁶ were also recovered by Atiśa.²⁷ Ratna gling pa is not insensitive to the fact that he is a bit on thin ice to include these in his account of the *gter ma* genre of literature and that these writings are not quite of the same stripe as your normal everyday *gter ma*. The reason for their inclusion, he writes, is *inter alia* because even if the distinction between "new" (*gsar ma*) and "old" (*rnying ma*) does not hold for Srong btsan sgam po's writings, all Buddhist traditions in Tibet take them to be authoritative (*tshad ma*) and non-controversial (*rtsod med*) texts.²⁸

In his polemic work of 1442-3 on the dates of the historical Buddha and the Tibetan calendar, the *Rtsis la 'khrul ba sel ba*, 'Gos Lo tsā ba wrote that some unidentified scholars suggested a scenario of the number of years that had passed since the nirvāṇa of the Buddha on the basis of the *Bka' chems ka khol ma*'s narrative of the wanderings of the famous Jo bo statue depicting the Buddha when he was twelve years old, peregrinations that are framed in a rough chronological sequence.²⁹ They thus claimed that when the statue was finally in-

²⁶ Both witnesses of Ratna gling pa work — see below n. 27 — have *slob dpon gyis bka' chems 'ong ba 'dod 'jo*, but, for example, *Bka' chems ka khol ma*, ed. Smon lam rgya mtsho (Lanzhou: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1989), 4, 235, 315, has it that *Bka' chems zla ba 'dod 'jo*, and not *Bka' chems 'ong ba 'dod 'jo*, was written by Srong btsan sgam po's [sixteen] ministers (*blon po*) and not the master (*slob dpon*) — it would appear that the latter confusion is the result of a misreading of the abbreviated *skung yig* graph-cluster of *slob dpon*.

²⁷ See, respectively, *Gter 'byung chen mo*, *The Autobiography and Instructions of Gu ru Chos kyi dbang phyug*, vol. 2 (Paro, 1979), 75-193, and *Gter 'byung chen mo gsal ba'i sgron me*, *Selected Works of Ratna gling pa*, vol. 1 (Tezu, Arunchal Pradesh: Tibetan Nyingmapa Monastery, 1973), 54-5 [= *Ratna gling pa'i gter chos*, vol. 2 (Darjeeling, 1977-79), 61]. Gu ru Chos kyi dbang phyug's work should be viewed as essentially a defense of his own activities as a *gter ston* and the *gter ma* texts he recovered. His treatise may very well have been prompted in part by a critique of him and at least one of the works he recovered that we encounter in a tract that is attributed to Chag Lo tsā ba Chos rje dpal (1197-1264); see D. Martin, *Unearthing Bon Treasures. Life and Contested Legacy of a Tibetan Scripture Revealer with a General Bibliography of Bon* (Kathmandu: Vajra Publications, 2009), 114.

²⁸ *Gter 'byung chen mo gsal ba'i sgron me*, 56 [= *Ratna gling pa'i gter chos*, vol. 2, 62].

²⁹ 'GOS, 11b. From its printer's colophon, in 'GOS, 49b, we learn that, underwritten by Sryan snga Ngag gi dbang phyug grags pa (1439-90) of [Phag mo gru] Gdan sa mthil, the blocks were carved for it in 1466. The scribe of the script used for the printing blocks was Bsod nams bzang po; the carver (*brkos kyi 'du byed*) was Bkra shis rgyal mtshan and the editor for both (*do dag par byed pa po*) was the layman Bsam grub grags from Byang. What remains to be determined is to what extent, if at all, he had revised his work in the twenty-three intervening years, especially in view of Grwa phug pa Lhun grub rgya mtsho's 1447 treatise on chronology that was written in exceedingly critical reaction to it, for which see below n. 63.

stalled in the Gtsug lag khang or Jo khang in Lhasa, roughly some three thousand and five hundred years had passed since the Buddha's nirvāṇa. The transmissive instability of the passage that they used for this calculation is quite evident when we juxtapose and compare the readings of the four different recensions of the *Bka' chems ka khol ma* that are so far more or less widely available.³⁰ 'Gos Lo tsā ba, too, was keenly aware of this instability and the presence of different manuscripts having inconsistent readings. For one, it led him to comment that, while the original manuscript (*dpe ngo bo*) of the text had been placed in the reliquary chapel (*gdung khang*) of Bya yul [monastery and was therefore no longer accessible], the extant copies suffer from various interpolations and elisions, so that roughly dating the Buddha's nirvāṇa on its basis cannot be said to be reliable (*yid brtan pa ma yin*) and that for this reason the number of elapsed years cannot be calculated with a measure of authority.³¹ More than four centuries hence, Brag dgon Zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rgyas (1802-after 1871) said as much in his celebrated 1864 history of Buddhism in Amdo.³² This raises such questions as

³⁰ The passage in question can be found in *Chos [b]rgyal srong btsan sgam po'i bka' chems*, *The Literary Arts in Ladakh*, vol. 1 (Darjeeling: Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1972), 379, *Chos rgyal srong btsan sgam po'i bka' them* [= *chems*] *bka' khol ma*, *Ma 'ongs pa'i lung bstan gsal ba'i sgron me*, vol. 1 (Leh, 1973), 640 ff., *Bka' chems ka khol ma*, ed. Smon lam rgya mtsho (Lanzhou: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1989), 31 ff., and *Srong btsan sgam po'i rnam thar bsodus pa*, tbc.org, 14a ff. Needless to say, the readings of these four texts are often at great variance with one another. For remarks on this work, see Chab spel Tshe brtan phun tshogs, "Lha sa gtsug lag khang gi lo rgyus bshad tshul zhib mjug byas pa," *Chab spel tshe brtan phun tshogs gyi gsung rtsom phyogs bsgrigs* (Beijing: Krung go'i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, 1993), 34-60 — my thanks to my student Ian J. MacCormack for this important reference —, H. DeCleer's review of J.I. Cabezón and R. Jackson, eds., *Tibetan Literature. Studies in Genre* (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1996) in *The Tibet Journal* 23 (1998), 77-91, and R.M. Davidson, "The Kingly Cosmogonic Narrative and Tibetan Histories: Indian Origins, Tibetan Space, and the *Bka' chems ka khol ma Synthesis*," *Lungta [Cosmogony and the Origins]*, ed. R. Vitali] 16 (2003), 64-83. For a Chinese translation of the Lanzhou "edition" of this work, see now Lu Yajun, tr., *Zhujian shi - Songzan ganbu de yixun* (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 2010).

³¹ The full text reads in 'GOS, 18b: *de yang bka' chems kyi yi ger grags pa ni mang po la grags pas bkod pa tsam ste / rgyal po srong btsan sgam nyid kyis bkod pa'i yi ge gtsang ma yin na shin du bka' btsan pa yin mod kyi / ding sang gi yi ge rnam la mang nyung dang gzhung mi mthun pa mang du mthong zhing / jo bo rjes ka ba bum pa can dang nye ba'i gdung las phyung ste bris pa'i dpe ngo bo bya yul gyi gdung khang du btsud nas da ltar gyi yi ge ni gzhan gyi blo la rags rim zhig gnas pa bris pa yin no / zhes kyang 'byung bas shin du yid brtan pa ma yin phyir lo grangs rnam tshad mas grub pa ma yin no //.*

³² BRAG, 694; for his marvelous work, see now G. Tuttle, "Challenging Central Tibet's dominance of history: *The Oceanic Book*, a nineteenth century politico-religious geographic history," *Mapping the Modern in Tibet*, ed. G. Tuttle, Beiträge

the limits of manuscript authority in Tibetan writing and what constitutes an authoritative edition, if something of this nature ever existed in the Tibetan Buddhist world.

It stands to reason that the sociology of knowledge in Tibet was affected with the advent of blockprinting. This technique that allowed for a different way in which knowledge could be disseminated most probably had its inception, albeit on quite local scales, around the turn of the thirteenth century, although this could perhaps be pushed back into the second half of the twelfth century.³³ But the precise degree to which printing may have had an impact on and thus changed the Tibetan intellectual landscape when it became more widespread has yet to be determined. In Central Tibet, the carving of printing blocks took off in a respectable but by no means universal way only during the first half of the fifteenth century. Why this should have been so is not at all obvious and is something that, too, still needs to be studied. The economic resources for projects of this kind had already been in place for a long time, so that their putative absence until that period could not have been an inhibiting factor. We may have to consider issues that have to do with developments in the monastic curricula and, what is of course quite related to these, the extent and depth of the demographic shifts that must have taken place from the villages and countryside to the monasteries. In some cases, we have to take into account the felt need to keep certain texts, especially those that have to do with esoteric teachings, away from the public eye. Accordingly, how decisions were made in particular or in general with regards for what text or textual corpus printing blocks were to be carved, and why, are as yet unknown quantities as well. For example, why were in Rtsed thang, most probably sometime between 1434 and 1445, printing blocks carved for Vasudhararakṣita's and Zha ma Lo tsā ba Seng ge rgyal mtshan's twelfth century translation of Dignāga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya* and not for the earlier rendition by Kanakavarman and Mar thung Lo tsā ba Dad pa shes rab?³⁴ We know that both leave quite a bit to be desired

zur Zentralasienforschung, Bd. 24 (Halle: International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies GmbH, 2011), 135-72.

³³ In addition to the literature cited in my "Faulty Transmissions: Some Notes on Tibetan Textual Criticism And the Impact of Xylography," *Édition, éditions: l'écrit au Tibet, évolution et devenir*, ed. A. Chayet et al., *Collectanea Himalayica* 3 (Munich: Indus Verlag, 2010), 441-63; see now also Xiong Wenbin "Tibetan Buddhist Scriptures Published with the Financial Aid of Members of the Yuan Dynasty's Imperial Family [in Chinese]," *Zhongguo zangxue* 3 (2009), 91-103, which was written as a supplement to Shes rab bzang po's earlier "Investigating Tibetan Language 'Yuan Blockprints' [in Chinese]," *Zhongguo zangxue* 1 (2009), 41-50.

³⁴ A few notes on this print may be found in my "Two Mongol Xylographs (*hor par ma*) of the Tibetan Text of Sa skya Paṇḍita's Work on Buddhist Logic and Epis-

in terms of their philological reliability, but several, almost rhetorical, questions naturally emerge of their own account: Did the printing of the first rather than the second have something to do with the perceived and actual differences in the quality of their translations? Was it because Rgyal tshab Dar ma rin chen (1364-1432), who had used this particular translation as the basis for his own commentary on the text, was in particular good standing with the political powers that were in Rtsed thang?³⁵ Or did other still to be disclosed factors, such as, more mundanely, ready access to the manuscript of their translation, play a role in this decision? To be sure, there was already in place a longstanding tradition in Tibetan learning of philological and text-critical scholarship, itself a function of the presence in mind of the possible vicissitudes and various forms of contamination that can and do occur in the process of translation from Sanskrit to Tibetan and that can and do occur during the transmission of handwritten manuscripts and their repeated copying. Among many other possible examples, we may single out the following as important witnesses to the Tibetan philological and text-critical spirit: Bu ston's studies of the *Samputatantra* of 1336 and the *Vajrodaya* of 1342, the critical edition of the Tibetan translation of Candrakīrti I's (?9thc.) *Pradīpodyotana*-commentary on the *Guhyasamājantra*, which Tsong kha pa completed in the 1410s, and Mkhas grub's undated study of Dhar-

temology," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 16 (1993), 289-90. The much later Sku 'bum print of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* was also based on their translation, see the detailed paper of H. Yaita, "On the Sku 'bum Version of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* [in Japanese]," *Journal of the Naritasan Institute for Buddhist Studies*, 21 (1998), 19-50, and also his "The Tibetan Text of Dignāga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, Sku 'bum Edition [in Japanese]," *Journal of the Naritasan Institute for Buddhist Studies*, 27 (2004), 77-113.

³⁵ See his *Tshad ma mdo'i rnam bshad* [*Tshad ma kun las btus pa'i rnam bshad mthar 'dzin gyi tsha gdung ba 'joms byed rigs pa'i rgya mtsho*], *Collected Works* [Lhasa: Zhol print], vol. Nga (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1981), 333-588, a work that he wrote between 1424 and 1432. By contrast, Dge ba rgyal mtshan (1387-1462) is much less enthusiastic about Vasudhararakṣita's and Zha ma Seng ge rgyal mtshan's rendition, for which see, for example, his *Tshad ma kun las btus pa zhes bya ba'i rab tu byed pa'i rgyan*, *The Collection (sic) Works of the Ancient Sa skya pa Scholars*, vol. 1 (Dehra Dun: Sakya College, 1999), 406. The forty-two-folio *dbu med* manuscript of the *Tshad ma kun las btus pa'i rgya cher bshad pa rgyan gyi me tog* by Dar ma rgyal mtshan (1227-1305), alias Bcom ldan Rig[s] pa'i ral gri, that has recently come to light shows that the author's exegesis is based on Vasudhararakṣita's and Zha ma Seng ge rgyal mtshan's text as well, but at the same time shows some significant departures from it. Dar ma rgyal mtshan's study is so far the oldest Tibetan commentary, if not the oldest one überhaupt, on Dignāga's tract that is currently available. For the latter in particular, see my and A.P. McKeown's forthcoming *Bcom ldan ral gri (1227-1305) on Indian Buddhist Logic and Epistemology: His Commentary on Dignāga's Pramāṇasamuccaya*.

makīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika*. The rather fundamental difference that prevailed among these three scholars was, of course, that only Bu ston was a superb Sanskritist. This enabled him to make well-founded and independent judgements about the philological accuracy of the different Tibetan translations and the Sanskrit manuscripts to which he had access. Tsong kha pa is not known as a Sanskrit scholar, so that we may assume that his many references to the readings of "Sanskrit" or "Indian manuscripts" are taken from the earlier commentarial literature, including that of Bu ston, and do not really reflect his own scholarship *per se*. Yet his edition must on all counts be considered a commendable piece of work. Though Mkhas grub was also not quite at home in Sanskrit, his comments do indicate how often a finely honed intellect like his could be right on the money when it came to disentangling a passage's awkward philological knot. It is a curiosity that, just as in Buddhist and other intellectual circles of the Indian subcontinent, so, too, in Tibet, the patterns and causes of textual contamination, and the theoretical considerations that might be brought to bear on them, were for some reason never thought to be worthy of a full articulation, let alone a thorough analysis.

The impact printing had on Tibetan textual criticism and scholarship in general has to date also been barely examined. For now, it is safe to say that, with the advent of more widespread printing in the fifteenth century, we begin to witness the emergence of a slightly different kind of philological tension in the intellectual practices of a select number of scholars. Whereas the earlier textual problems that I signaled in the literature were by and large caused by the different readings of handwritten texts or, in the case of the canonical literature, on competing variations in their translations and their correspondence of lack of it with, when available, the original Sanskrit manuscript[s], the emergence of printed texts added an additional variable in the equation. A growing awareness of the presence of conflicting readings of one or the other manuscript (*bris ma*) and a print (*par/spar ma*) of the same work can now be observed where, I think it not irrelevant to emphasize, Tibetan scholars generally did not *a priori* privilege one recension over the other. Examples of comparisons between the handwritten text and the print are legion and more turn up every day.³⁶ Though the onset of printing has doubt-

³⁶ Several examples come immediately to mind. Writing in 1468, Nor bzang rgya mtsho (1423-1513) compares the reading of 'GOS, 11b, with that of a handwritten manuscript in his *Legs par bshad pa padma dkar po'i zhal lung las rtsis 'phro gsal bar byed pa'i sgron me* [1681 Dga' ldan phun tshogs gling print], 2a. Zhwa dmar IV compares time and again a print of the *Dgongs gcig* text of Dbon Shes rab 'byung gnas (1187-1241) via statements placed in the mouth of his uncle 'Bri gung 'Jig

less significance for Tibetan social and intellectual history, I think it would nonetheless be counterproductive were we to overestimate the implications and influence printing as such had for and on Tibetan intellectual and cultural practices in general. For I believe it is fair to say that the available evidence so far suggests that these did not run very deep and, indeed, were by and large rather surprisingly superficial. To be sure, printing a work potentially provided a vehicle and a guarantee for its more widespread dissemination, but the availability of printing blocks was by no means a guarantee that prints from them enjoyed a greater circulation. There are thus many examples for the fact that, for whatever reason, prints could also be rarities. Brag dkar Zhabs drung records that he had seen a print of the biography of Men ju (< ?Ch. Minzhou) Dpal ldan bkra shis (1377-after 1445) that extended up to his sixty-eighth year.³⁷ He writes that he does not know where a print of this work might be and says that he had drawn from it *in extenso* "because [its] transmission (*dpe*

rten mgon po (1143-1217) with other readings; see his 1516 *Dam pa dgongs pa gcig pa'i gsal byed* (Bir: The Bir Tibetan Society, 1992), 20, etc. [= *Collected Works*, vol. 2 (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2009), 695, etc.], Glo bo Mkhan chen Bsod nams lhun grub (1456-1532) signals a discrepancy between the text of his erstwhile teacher Gser mdog Pañ chen's undated *Blo gros bzang po'i dri lan* [*Collected Works*, vol. 23 (Thimphu, 1975), 1-25], and the print of his *Sdom pa gsum gyi dris lan chen mo*; see his *Sdom pa gsum gyi rab tu dbye ba'i dka' ba'i gnas rnam par 'byed pa zhib mo rnam 'thag*, *The Collection (sic) Works of the Ancient Sa skya pa Scholars*, vol. 2 (Dehra Dun: Sakya College, 1999), 80a [159]. The *Sdom pa gsum gyi dris lan chen mo* is doubtless the large treatise subtitled *Gser gyi thur ma* [*Collected Works*, vols. 6-7 (Thimphu, 1975), 439-648 and 1-230]. It was written in 1481 and the printing blocks were carved only two years later in 1483. Glo bo Mkhan chen's own work is dated the hen-year, for which there are therefore several candidates: 1489, 1501, 1513, and 1525. Another example is found in Se ra Rje btsun Chos kyi rgyal mtshan's (1469-1544/6) *Rgyas pa'i bstan bcos tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi don 'grel rgyal tshab dgongs pa rab gsal zhes bya ba le'u dang po'i dka' ba'i gnas la dogs pa gcod pa* [Se ra, Byllakuppe, print], 66a [= *Se ra rje btsun chos kyi rgyal mtshan gyi gsung pod dang po*, ed. Jigs med bsam grub (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2006), 110], where he refers to a problematic reading in a print of Rgyal tshab's *Pramāṇavārttika* commentary subtitled *Thar lam gsal byed*. The print in question must be the one in two hundred and forty folios, dated 1449, of which a copy is located under C.P.N. catalog no. 004732; see my "A Minor Text-Critical Problem in the Dga' ldan rtse Xylograph of Rgyal tshab Dar ma rin chen's (1362-1432) *Pramāṇavārttika* Commentary," which is under preparation.

³⁷ BRAG, 684; his biography is found in BRAG, 679-84. For the annotated Chinese translation of this passage with many references to Ming sources on him, see the *Anduo zhengjiaoshi*, tr. Wu Jun et al. (Lanzhou: Gansu renmin chubanshe, 1989), 640-5; see further Chen Nan, "A Study of Dazhi Fawang [in Chinese]," *Zhongguo zangxue* 4 (1996), 68-83, and also Toh Hong-teik, *Tibetan Buddhism in Ming China*, Harvard University dissertation (Cambridge, 2004), 180-2. My friend Shen Weirong has been able to secure a copy of a rare manuscript of a Chinese translation of a substantial biography of this fairly important figure.

rgyun) was exceedingly rare." Presumably, then, the information he was able to provide on his life was based on the notes he had taken when he had access to this print. Dpal ldan bkra shis' life was an interesting one and one hopes that a print of his biography is still extant in one or the other library. Among other things, in 1404, he went to Ming China with his uncle Drung chen Dpal ldan rgya mtsho as the guest of the court of the Yongle Emperor (r. 1402-23). Later, he functioned as an interpreter for Karma pa V De bzhin gshegs pa (1384-1415) and became his disciple until the master's death. A regular visitor of the Ming court and a beneficiary of its largesse, an entry for 1428, the third year of the Xuande Emperor (r. 1425-34), in Bragdkar Zhabs drung's survey of his life, notes that he restored with imperial support a temple of the monastery of Lhun grub bde chen, which he had constructed in 1417. Among other items, this monastery housed a Chinese Buddhist canon (*rgya yig gi bka' 'gyur*), several collections of the Tibetan canon, and other manuscript treasures such as the Chinese and Tibetan versions of the large *Avataṃsakasūtra* written in gold ink.

Traditional Tibetan culture with its intellectual production of letters was bichromatic and confined to, and placed in, the service of the Buddhist and Bon religions and their institutions. That is to say, until the twentieth century, the Tibetan cultural area had no newspapers or any other publishing outlet of "popular" literature. Regardless of their subject-matter, the printing of Buddhist works — I am not sure when printing blocks began to be carved for Bon po works — that had in one way or another to do with religion was, perhaps with the exception of "state-subsidized" printing on the part of the Dga' ldan pho brang and the Potala from the mid-seventeenth century onward, and Sde dge's Lhun grub steng from the eighteenth century onward, always a very local and, indeed, a relatively haphazard and unsystematic endeavor. Given the unusually numerous printing projects Dalai Lama V Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617-82) funded and initiated, one may very well draw the conclusion that he realized, and was able to harness, the power of the printed word as an important propaganda tool that could be used towards the legitimization, consolidation and centralization of his political and spiritual power over Central Tibet and other regions. Small and larger printeries were indeed associated with some monasteries, and much later with the libraries attached to the residences of noble families, but it is fair to say that they never really sought to attract a mass audience.³⁸ For this reason, and irrespective of the fact that we are

³⁸ For these, see F. Robin, "Note préliminaire concernant les imprimeries non monastiques au Tibet," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 15 (2005), 1-25.

speaking of blockprinting and not of printing by movable type, the introduction of printing in the huge area dominated by Tibetan culture was unable to have the profound impact this "new" technology had upon its introduction in fifteenth century Europe. The relatively [not absolute!] scarcity of natural resources such as wood for the printing blocks and paper for printing, and their attendant relatively high cost, may also have been sufficiently prohibitive for its widespread use and no doubt exerted negative pressures on its development. These factors notwithstanding, it is worth briefly to pause before the circumstance that until the twentieth century only very, very few Tibetan literati ever deigned to write anything in the vernacular. And it is fair to say that, throughout the history of Tibetan writing of some thirteen hundred years,³⁹ there was, with some noteworthy early examples, virtually no secularization of Tibetan letters. The result of this was that the hegemony of monks and men of the cloth in general and the rule by petty dictators, benign and malignant, never came under a real threat by the introduction and dissemination of ideas that were different from the monochromatic ideology of a certain kind of Buddhism in particular in which the secular and the religious were inextricably intertwined. Their violent replacement was to come from the outside in 1959.

Given the above comments in point form, it should now not be surprising that the text of the *Chos 'byung* also fell victim to the various pitfalls of transmissive corruption. Though critical of several other points in Bu ston's work, there is only one occasion where, for example, Dpa' bo II Gtsug lag phreng ba (1504-66) found it necessary explicitly to point out that there was a problem with a reading of the print to which he had access. We now know that this must have been the Zhwa lu print of the early 1470s and I will return to his remarks below very shortly. Gser mdog Paṅ chen most likely also used this print for his remarks in his 1502 history of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist logic and epistemology.⁴⁰ This is of course not to say that he was unfamiliar with the *Chos 'byung* prior to its Zhwa lu "publication." He most definitely was. The biographical and autobiographical litera-

³⁹ For a penetrating reexamination of the beginnings of Tibetan writing, see now S. van Schaik, "A New Look at the Tibetan Invention of Writing," *New Studies of the Old Tibetan Documents: Philology, History and Religion*, Old Tibetan Documents Online Monograph Series, vol. III, ed. Y. Imaeda, M.T. Kapstein and T. Takeuchi (Tokyo: Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Languages, 2011), 45-96, but see also, albeit with very serious reservations, Grong khang Tshe ring chos rgyal, *Gangs can yig srol 'phel rin skor gyi gleng gdam yid kyi rang sgra*, *passim*.

⁴⁰ *Tshad ma'i mdo dang bstan bcos kyi shing rta'i srol rnams ji ltar byung ba'i tshul gdam du bya ba nyin mor byed pa'i snang bas dpyod ldan mtha' dag dga' bar byed pa*, *Complete Works*, vol. 19 (Thimphu, 1975), 27.

ture of the late fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries provide ample evidence for the popularity of Bu ston's text and, indirectly, for the fact that a good number of handwritten copies must have been in circulation. In his quite remarkable 1454 study of the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, Gser mdog Paṅ chen refers to a statement Bu ston had made in the catalog portion of the *Chos 'byung* that turns out to be text-historically somewhat troubling.⁴¹ Aside from addressing a rather controversial issue concerning the authorship of two important works, the observations made by Gser mdog Paṅ chen indicate that several interesting and not altogether insignificant variant readings were present in his copy when compared with the corresponding passage of the *Chos 'byung*'s Lhasa Zhol print,⁴² and I plan to take a closer look at this particular concundrum on a separate occasion.

A disciplined critic of his forebears, Dpa' bo II was himself an excellent and critical historian and, let truth be told, was demonstrably far more in tune with problems of Tibetan historiography than was Bu ston. It should therefore not come as a surprise that he voiced his disagreement with him in several places. In contrast to the issue he raised about the state of the text of the *Chos 'byung* to which I briefly referred earlier, these others have to do with what he felt was Bu ston's own position on historical events. Thus, in his opinion, they are quite unrelated to any alleged or real contamination that may have befallen the text of the *Chos 'byung* in the course of its *Tradierung*. One of these devolved on the year in which Bu ston says emperor Khri srong lde btsan was born, namely the earth-male-horse year, that is, the quite impossible year 718.⁴³ Dpa' bo II mentions this year after he dismisses the veracity of the hare-year, 739 or 751, that he had apparently found in one of the texts of the *Rba [= Sba] bzhed*⁴⁴

⁴¹ *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i man ngag gi bstan bcos mngon par rtogs pa'i rgyan 'grel pa dang bcas pa'i snga phyi'i 'brel rnam par btsal zhiing / dngos bstan kyi dka' ba'i gnas la legs par bshad pa'i dpung tshogs rnam par bkod pa / bzhed tshul rba rlabs kyi phreng ba*, *Complete Works*, Vol. 11 (Thimphu, 1975), 167-8.

⁴² BU, 939 [BU1, 230, BUM, 1266]; see also Guo (1986: 250).

⁴³ DPA', 297 [= Huang-Zhou (2010: 118-9)], *ad* the passage in Szerb (1990: 18) [Obermiller 1932: 186, Satō 1977: 852, Guo 1986: 171] and BUM, 1186. Note the difference of exactly two duodenary cycles between 718 and 742, which is a water-male-horse year! For the life and times of Khri srong lde btsan, see Chab spel Tshe brtan phun tshogs and Nor brang O rgyan, *Bod kyi lo rgyus rags rim g.yu'i phreng ba*, Stod cha (Lhasa: Bod ljongs dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 1989), 276-333, and the Chinese translation in *Xizang tongshi*, trs. Chen Qingying, Gesang yixi [= Skal bzang ye shes] et al. (Lhasa: Xizang guji chubanshe, 1996), 125-50; see also Sde rong Tshe ring don grub, *Xizang tongshi. Jiexiang baoping* (Lhasa: Xizang renmin chubanshe, 2001), 106-10, an important work on Tibetan history that appears to be currently banned.

⁴⁴ For this work, see below n. 45. Sa skya Paṅdita seems to differentiate between a *Rgyal bzhed*, a *Dbā' bzhed*, and a *'Ba' bzhed* in his *Thub pa'i dgongs pa rab tu gsal*, for

to which he had access.⁴⁵ Although none of the latter state in what

which see the 1734 Sde dge print in SSBB 5, no. 1, 25/4; he also seems to distinguish between a *Rgyal bzhed*, a *Dpa' bzhed* — *dpa'* and *dba'* are easily miscarved — and a '*Bangs bzhed* in his *Skyes bu dam pa rnams la spring ba'i yi ge*, for which see SSBB 5, no. 30, 332/1, and J. Rhoton, tr., *A Clear Differentiation of the Three Codes* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 234. The editions of these two works in *Sa skya gong ma rnam lnga'i gsung 'bum dpe bsdur ma las sa pañ kun dga' rgyal mtshan gyi gsung pod gsum pa, Mes po'i shul bzhaq* 15, ed. Dpal brtsegs bod yig dpe rnying zhib 'jug khang (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2007), 96 and 395, have no variant readings except *dba'* for *dpa'* in the latter! The spelling of some of these titles are no doubt the result of manuscript contamination, as 'Brug pa Sangs rgyas rdo rje (1569-1645) points out in his 1626 reply to a work by Klu sgrub chos kyi rgyal mtshan, then abbot of Ngam ring monastery in Byang, that must be placed in the context of an earlier series of debates between these two scholars that ultimately had their origin in disputes that were launched some sixty years previously between the Sa skya pa scholar Mang thos Klu sgrub rgya mtsho (1523-94) and 'Brug chen IV Padma dkar po (1527-96) of the 'Brug pa sect of the Bka' brgyud pa school. Thus Sangs rgyas rdo rje notes in his *Ngam ring mkhan chen klu sgrub chos kyi rgyal mtshan pas brgal lan gsang gsum rdo rje'i snying po mchog tu grub pa'i gtam, Collected Works*, vol. 5 (Kathmandu: Shri Gautam Bud[d]ha Vihara, 1995), 225-6, that *rba* and *dpa'* are identical, being based on archaic *versus* updated terminologies (*brda' gсар rnying*). And in the *Shing rag*, a response to 'Brug pa Sangs rgyas rdo rje's *Srid gsum rnam par rgyal ba'i dge mtshan*, Klu sgrub chos kyi rgyal mtshan had apparently stated that, while for the majority of Sa skya pa, *Rba bzhed* and '*Ba' bzhed* were different texts, he believed that *rba* and '*ba'* were archaic/outdated terms (*brda rnying*) and that, furthermore, the print of the *Thub pa'i dgongs pa rab gsal* was contaminated (*ma dag*). This may very well be a reference to the late fifteenth century Gong dkar print of this work.

⁴⁵ See the passages in SBb, 4 and 8. The other versions of the *Sba bzhed* only have the first, namely the year in which he was born, for which see SBp, 3-4, SBch, 87, the Chinese translation of SBch in Tong-Huang (1990: 4) and another version of the *Sba bzhed*, the *Dba' bzhed*, published in Pasang Wangdu-Diemberger (2000), makes no mention of either. Cognate with these are also the passages in Khri srong lde btsan's biography that we find in MES, 168, 174 [for MES, see below n. 75]. Dpa' bo II evidently had access to a text of the *Sba bzhed* that was similar to the one of SBb. In the print of his work, that is, DPA'(p), the long quotations from the *Sba bzhed* are reproduced in smaller characters than what appears to be Dpa' bo II's work as such, which therefore would indicate that it was inserted at a later date. The one responsible for its insertion is not known — it may have been Dpa' bo II himself — but it must have been done before the text was committed to the printing blocks in the second half of the sixteenth century under the sponsorship of the ruling family of Bya in Lho stod, with Tshe dbang dar po as one of the master carvers. As is evident from DPA'(p), 661 [DPA', 651], Tshe dbang dar po was a contemporary of Dpa' bo II. The text itself, as were at least two of the first three sections (*skabs*), was written at the behest of a ruler (*sa skyong*) by the name Bsod nams rab brtan, who still needs to be identified. The only Bsod nams rab brtan known to me, who would fit chronologically, is the scion of the Lha rgya ri family. For studies of the *Sba bzhed* and its recensions, see Faber (1986), Tong Jinhua, "Lun 'Bashi'," *Zangzu Wenxue Yanjiu / Bod kyi rtsom rig zhib 'jug* (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 1992), 64-85 — it was first published in *Zangxue Yanjiu Wen* (Lhasa: Xizang renmin chubanshe, 1989), ?-? —, Ph. Denwood, "Some

Remarks on the Status and the Dating of the *Sba bzhed*," *The Tibet Journal* XV (1991), 135-48, Dbyangs can mtsho, "<Sba bzhed> kyi rtsom pa po dang de'i lo rgyus rig pa'i rin thang la dpyad pa," *Krung go'i bod kyi shes rig* 4 (1996), 79-86, M.T. Kapstein, "The Chinese Mother of Tibet's Dharma-king: The Testament of Ba and the Beginnings of Tibetan Buddhist Historiography," *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism. Conversion, Contestation, and Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 23-37, esp. n. 11, pp. 212-4, and Bis mdo Rdo rje rin chen, "<Sba bzhed> las 'byung ba'i don chen 'ga'i dogs dpyod," *Bod kyi yig rnying zhib 'jug*, ed. Kha sgang Bkra shis tshe ring (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2003), 450-5. I do think that we can safely bypass the hypothesis formulated by Kapstein that "the monk of Snyas, Ldum bu Ma ni arga [= ?artha] siddhi [= ?Nor bu don grub]," the scribe of *Sbb*, might just refer to Ldum bu [ba] Don grub dbang rgyal, and that, quoting an indication of this in an early essay by the very regretted E.G. Smith, now reprinted in his *Among Tibetan texts. History & Literature of the Himalayan Plateau*, ed. K.R. Schaeffer (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2002), 243, the latter "was one of the Fifth Dalai Lama's inner circle." [On the same page, Smith goes so far as to ascribe the ?1685 *Vai durya dkar po* study of calendrical astronomy to him, a work that is otherwise usually attributed to the Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653-1705), the *de facto* ruler of Tibet from 1685 to his death. Leaving the door ever so slightly ajar, this does not seem possible. If the Sde srid were not its author, then the occasions on which the 1688 *Vai durya g.ya sel*, equally attributed to him, gives a third-person mention or reference to Ldum bu would indeed be hard to explain away; see, for example, *Vai durya g.ya sel*, vol. 1 (Dehra Dun, 1976), 165. Further, Lo tsā ba Chos dpal (1654-1718), who had studied with Ldum bu ba [or: Zlum po ba], also makes no allusion to his putative involvement with the writing of the *Vai durya dkar po*. But, given the Sde srid's status, this may have been a sensitive issue. In any event, the Lo tsā ba's undated *Skar nag rtsis kyi dri lan skor phyogs bsdus*, *Collected Works*, vol. 5 (Dehra Dun, nd), 142-66, 166-87, contains very politely formulated questions posed directly and explicitly to the Sde srid about some passages of his *Vai durya dkar po*.] Ldum bu, whose name is *always* given as "Don grub dbang rgyal," and thus *sans* "nor bu," only has one single entry in Dalai Lama V's own listing of those teachers with whom he had studied the subject of astrology and calendrical astronomy; see his 1670 *Record of Teachings Received. The Gsan-yig of the Fifth Dalai Lama Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho*, vol. 1 (New Delhi, 1970), 32-6. And the colophon of his 1657 *Rtsis skar / dkar nag las brtsams pa'i dris lan nyin byed dbang po'i suang ba*, *Collected Works*, vol. 20 (Gangtok, 1994), 671-2, does not even mention Ldum bu among those to whom he felt indebted for his understanding of the subject. In addition, I believe that Kapstein's remark about Dalai Lama V's "intense interest" in the *Sba bzhed* certainly overstates the case and needs to be tempered. Not only does Dalai Lama V not once mention the text, let alone its various recensions, in his long three-volume autobiography, but we notice that he repeats in his own chronicle only those passages, by paraphrase and identified or unidentified citation, that were already quoted by Dpa' bo II, whose work he knew so well and whom he never fails to put down — the new political situation in Central Tibet that ensued upon the very recent [1642] defeat of the Gtsang pa ruling house and their Karma Bka' brgyud pa chaplains seem to have demanded this from him. In other words, it is not at all certain, indeed it is improbable, that, unlike apparently his other nemesis Sog bzlog pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1552-1624) and later on the Sde srid, he had actually consulted a manuscript [or manuscripts] of the *Sba bzhed* [or any other cognate text] which, if it were otherwise, might have suggested he had taken more than a pedestrian interest in this work. Dalai Lama V cites

year Khri srong lde btsan's father Khri lde gtsug brtan, alias Mes Ag tshoms, was killed, one of them, the version published in Beijing, does claim that his son was eight [= seven] years old when he ascended the imperial throne as a result of his father's violent death. For Dpa' bo II, Khri lde gtsug brtan was born in 680. Again, citing a *Sba bzhed*, he also has it that he died at the age of sixty-three [= sixty-two], that is, in 742.⁴⁶ No such figure is found in any of the extant versions of the *Sba bzhed*, but he employs it to dismiss its putative claim that Khri srong lde btsan was born in a hare-year on arithmetic grounds. On the other hand, in his 1643 chronicle, Dalai Lama V gives Bu ston the benefit of the doubt for this [mis]dating and, by exculpating him from any responsibility, is willing to lay the blame for this date on a scribe's carelessness; we read there:⁴⁷

the *Sba bzhed* in the following passages of his *Bod kyi deb ther dpyid kyi rgyal mo'i glu dbyangs* (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1991), 52-4, 60, 62-3, 66 [= Z. Ahmed, tr., *A History of Tibet by Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho Fifth Dalai Lama of Tibet*, Indiana University Oriental Series, vol. VII (Bloomington: Indiana University Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1995), 51-2, 58, 61, 65-6]. Each of these quotations is retrievable from Dpa' bo II's chronicle. Lastly, a very minor quibble: In spite of the tantalizing parallel Kapstein draws between a narrative of the *Sba bzhed* and *1 Kings* of the *Old Testament*, I now do not think it fruitful to elicit potential confusion when he [and I myself and others!] have rendered *Sba bzhed* by *Testament of Ba*. To my knowledge, the usage of *bzhed* nowhere remotely resembles the English usage of "testament," — the term that comes close to this is *bka' chems* which he elsewhere [p. 149] does translate as "testament" —, so that Sba Gsal snang did not write his *bzhed*, *Claim*, as a testator. With finely-tuned eyes for these things, S. van Schaik and Iwao Kazushi identified two pieces from the narrative among the Tibetan manuscripts found in Dunhuang/Shazhou, for which see their "Two Fragments of the *Testament of Ba* from Dunhuang," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 128 (2009), 477-87. Given that the cave in which these and other manuscripts were found was most probably sealed in *circa* 1006 — see Rong Xinjiang, "The Nature of the Dunhuang Library Cave and the Reasons for its Sealing [tr. V. Hansen]," *Cahiers d'Extrême Asie* 11 (1999), 272 —, these fragments predate all the other versions of this work. For more recent publications of and anent *Dba' bzhed-Sba bzhed-Rba bzhed* texts, see my "A Hitherto Unknown Tibetan Religious Chronicle From the Early Fourteenth Century," which is in press in *Zangxue xuekan / Journal of Tibetan Studies* 7 (2011) and my "Notes on the Diffusion of the Translations of the Large *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* (*Yum rgyas pa*) in Early Tibet," which is under preparation.

⁴⁶ DPA', 293, 303. This means that he passed away in 741, the *lcags sbrul* year, or in 742, the *chu rta* year. Needless to say, many of the dates the Tibetan historians have given for the Tibetan emperors are not reliable, and I refer to Sørensen (1994) for the relevant remarks and summaries of earlier work.

⁴⁷ Dalai Lama V, *Bod kyi deb ther dpyid kyi rgyal mo'i glu dbyangs*, 53: *m khas pa chen po bu ston zhabs kyi gsung phal cher tshad mar gda' bas / rgyal po sa rta la 'khrungs par gsungs pa 'di yig mkhan gyis nor ba'i rgyun 'byams pa zhiig yin nam /* [= Ahmed, tr., *A History of Tibet by Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho Fifth Dalai Lama of Tibet*, 51].

*mkhas pa chen po bu ston zhabs kyi gsung phal cher tshad
mar gda' bas / rgyal po sa rta la 'khrungs par gsungs pa 'di
yig mkhan gyis nor ba'i rgyun 'byams pa zhig yin nam /*

Because the oeuvre of the great scholar, the reverend Bu ston, is by and large authoritative, is the statement that the emperor was born in the earth-horse year a transmissive continuation of a mistake on the part of a scribe?

Thus, the authority vested in an author can render him virtually blameless for real or imagined errors. In her long and rewarding article on textual criticism during the Song period, and much else besides, S. Cherniak has made a number of important observations about Chinese textual critics in general, one of which is that they "do not take textual changes to be the inevitable fruit of an intrinsically corruptive process of transmission."⁴⁸ Tibetan critics appear to reflect the opinion of the late Indian Buddhist scholar Haribhadra (ca. 800)⁴⁹ in that they accept that the opposite is the case, namely, that textual change is the inevitable result of the transmission of multiple copies. Clearly, the upshot of Dalai Lama V's remark is that Bu ston's work was the victim of an unscrupulous process of textual contamination and that he could not be held responsible for this apparent lapse. He also uses this occasion to make a negative comment against Dpa' bo II for not being sufficiently precise in marking off his disagreement with his own view on the issue, and criticizes his scholarly method as being one that "whiles away a spring day" (*sos dus kyi nyi ma 'phul byed*), that is, his was an exercise in fruitlessness; lest we forget, Dpa' bo II was an important member of the Karma sect of the Bka' brgyud school. Given that the civil war that pitted 'Bras spungs against the

⁴⁸ See her "Book Culture and Textual Transmission in Sung China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 54 (1994), 13.

⁴⁹ Reading the colophon of the Tibetan translation of a version of the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitāsūtra*, we learn that he was credited with editing (*zhu dag*) this sutra; see *Bka' 'gyur*, vol. 28, no. 0026, ed. Krung go'i bod rig pa zhib 'jug lte gnas kyi bka' bstan dpe sdur khang (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2007), 844. In another edition of the sutra, translated by the Newar Paṇḍita Śāntibhadra and Nag tsho Lo tsā ba Tshul khrims rgyal ba (1011/2-ca.1070) in the *Bsod nams rgyun 'byung monastery of Kathmandu*, Haribhadra himself states that he had seen many volumes with different readings and had thus taken it upon himself to collate these into a correct text; see *Bstan 'gyur*, vol. 51, no. 0099, ed. Krung go'i bod rig pa zhib 'jug lte gnas kyi bka' bstan dpe sdur khang (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2000), 848. I have not been able to identify the monastery where the translation took place in J.K. Locke, S.J., *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal* (Kathmandu: Sahayogi Press PVT. LTD., 1985).

Gtang pa Sde srid in Shigatse with the Karma Bka' brgyud hierarchs as their main allies had just come to an end in favor of 'Bras spungs and the *bla brang*-corporation of Dalai Lama V in particular, no love was lost between him and the Karma Bka' brgyud establishment.

Another favorite target of the Dalai Lama was Paṅ chen Bsod nam grags pa (1478-1554), who was in much greater proximity to his own sphere of influence and spiritual home at 'Bras spungs monastery than Dpa' bo II. Indeed, the Dalai Lama's *bla brang* of 'Bras spungs' Gzims khang 'og ma residence that was managed by the extremely savvy, influential, and sectarian Bsod nam chos 'phel (1595-1657), alias Bsod nam rab brtan, was at logger-heads with the Gzims khang gong ma incarnation series of 'Bras spungs monastery that had originated with the Paṅ chen. Sprul sku Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1619-56) was the contemporary, third representative of this series that, in the perception of especially Bsod nam chos 'phel, and perhaps Dalai Lama V privately shared this view, was their spiritual rival and perhaps even competed with the Gzims khang 'og ma for economic resources.⁵⁰ Never mind that Grags pa rgyal mtshan had apparently also been put forward as a viable candidate for the subsequent re-embodiment of Dalai Lama IV Yon tan rgya mtsho (1589-1616), a candidacy that had gone nowhere for reasons that still remain to be fully examined. In an entry for roughly the middle of the year 1639 in his autobiography,⁵¹ Dalai Lama V notes how the Zhal ngo, that is Bsod nam chos 'phel, had commented rather caustically on an account embedded in a series of reverential petitions to the previous re-embodiments (*'khrungs rabs 'gsol 'debs*) of the Gzims khang gong ma series that Bkra shis rgya mtsho, the chant master of 'Bras spungs' huge Tshogs chen assembly hall, had recently composed. The latter had begun his work with the Kashmirian master Śākyaśrībhadrā (1127-1225) and his re-embodiment Bu ston. The

⁵⁰ See, quite briefly, S.G. Karmay, "The Fifth Dalai Lama and his Reunification of Tibet," *The Arrow and the Spindle. Studies in History, Myths, Rituals and Beliefs in Tibet* (Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point, 1998), 514, where the year of Grags pa rgyal mtshan's passing is mistakenly given as 1654. Dalai Lama V quite clearly states in his autobiography that after a severe and acute illness with high fever (*gnyan tshad*), he passed away on July 5, 1656; see *Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho'i rnam thar*, Stod cha [vol. 1] (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1989), 493. To be noted is that he simply calls him *sprul pa'i sku* and, quite tellingly, is silent on his re-embodiment. The very same date is also found in Jaya Paṇḍita Blo bzang 'phrin las' (1642-1708) biographical sketch of Grags pa rgyal mtshan in his *Thob yig* of [the very end of] 1702, for which see his *Collected Works*, repr. L. Chandra (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1981), 58. Pp. 41-58 of the latter deal with his life and the lives of his earlier re-embodiments.

⁵¹ What follows is taken from *Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho'i rnam thar*, Stod cha [vol. 1], 183.

Zhal ngo made the point that Paṅ chen Lama Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan (1570-1662) and Gling smad Zhabs drung Dkon mchog chos 'phel (1573-1644/6), then the thirty-fifth abbot of Dga' ldan monastery, had said that this did not tally with what was found in "the author's colophon (*mdzad byang*) of a work of Paṅ chen Bsod nams grags pa." I have not been able to isolate what is being alluded to in the colophons of the Paṅ chen's œuvre that are available to me through tbrc.org. Further, I also do not understand what kind of objections the Paṅ chen Lama may have had, for his own undated piece on the successive re-embodiments (*skyes pa'i rabs*) of the Gzims khang gong ma is as follows: Chos kyi byang chub [*Dharmabodhi] – Śākya dpal bzang [b]o [= Śākyaśrībhadrā] – Gser sdings pa Chos sku 'od zer (?1214-92) – Bu ston – Grub chen Kun dga' blo gros (1365-1443) – Paṅ chen Bsod nams grags pa, etc.⁵² Could his reservations have stemmed from Bkra shis rgya mtsho having failed to include the precursors to Śākyaśrībhadrā and from having omitted Gser sdings pa in this chain of re-embodiments? To be sure, aside from his apparent re-entry into Tibetan religious history as the protector-deity Rdo rje shugs ldan, one who belongs to the *rgyal po* class of demonic deities, Grags pa rgyal mtshan as such did not entirely disappear from the Tibetan scene. Sum pa Mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor (1704-88), for one, writes in the entry for the wood-sheep year [February 7, 1655 – January 26, 1656] of his chronological tables, which he appended to his 1748 chronicle, that he was reborn as none other than Khang zhi bde skyid rgyal po, that is, the Kangxi Emperor (b. May 4, 1654) of the Qing dynasty! Being a chronological impossibility, this entry must have been a rumor of later vintage. Suffice it to say that he does not once suggest that Grags pa rgyal mtshan had in fact morphed into the *rgyal po* deity of Rdo rje shugs ldan. The printing blocks of his collected œuvre, including those for his chronicle, were carved in an inelegant "typeface" in the monastery Usutu/Üsütü-yin süme/juu [Ch. Wusutu zhao],⁵³ the badly smudged reproduction of the print of his chronicle offers the following reading of this pas-

⁵² *Gsung thor bu ba phyogs gcig tu bsdebs pa rnams, Collected Works*, vol. 5 [Ca] (New Delhi, 1973), 81-3. In my essay cited above in n. 1, I discuss the various series of re-embodiments in which the tradition has given Bu ston a place.

⁵³ J.W. de Jong, "Sum-pa Mkhan-po (1704-1788) and His Works," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 27 (1967), 210-1. This monastic complex comprising five different structures of which one carries the name Usutu-yin juu, is located some twelve kilometers from Kökeqota in Inner Mongolia; for a description, see I. Charleux, *Temples et Monastères de Mongolie-intérieure*, Archéologie et histoire de l'art 23 (Paris: Éditions du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, Institut nationale d'histoire de l'art, 2003), 58 and the enclosed CD under [13].

sage⁵⁴:

*bod kyi de'i rgyal po ni gzim [read: gzims] khang gong ma
sprul sku grag rgyan zer ba na [or: ni] chag [read: chags]
sdang gi gtam kho nar zad da (sic) /des na dpon bsod nam
chos 'phel na [or: ni] lo 'dir 'das nas khong dge lugs la
thug zhen che bas chos srung ba'i tshul bzung nas dge lugs
pa skyong zhes grags pa bden nam ? /*

By contrast, the typeset volume of the same work that was published quite recently in China has turned the second half of this passage into a veritable unintelligible word salad, for we now read⁵⁵:

*bod kyi de'i rgyal po ni gzim khang gong ma sprul sku grag
rgyan zer ba ni chag sdang gi gtam kho nar zad de /nges ni
dpon bsod nam chos 'phel ni lo 'dir 'das nas khong dge lugs
la thug zhen che bas chos srid de'i tshul bzung nas dge lugs
pa skyong zhal grogs po bde nor ram snyam /*

A. Chattopadhyaya and S.K. Sadhukhan ventured to translate the first as⁵⁶:

That the particular Tibetan king is the incarnation of gZim-khañ goñ-ma as said by Grags-rgyan is nothing but a biased statement. dPon bsod-nams chos-'phel died in this year. Due to his much devotion to dGe-lugs he assumed the role of the protector of the religion and the saviour of the dGe-lugs-pa as per popular belief. I think, this is true.

Obviously, the translation that G. Dreyfus offered a few years thereafter in his survey of the history of the Rdo rje shugs ldan cult is a palpable improvement⁵⁷:

⁵⁴ 'Phags yul rgya nag chen po bod dang sog yul du dam pa'i chos 'byung tshul dpag bsam ljon bzang, *Collected Works*, vol. 1, repr. L. Chandra (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1975), 570.

⁵⁵ *Chos 'byung dpag bsam ljon bzang*, ed. Dkon mchog tshe brtan (Lanzhou: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1992), 898.

⁵⁶ *Tibetan Chronological Tables of 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa and Sum pa Mkhan po*, The Dalai Lama Tibeto-Indological Series-XII (Sarnath: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1993), 238 — I consciously sidestep the earlier and wholly failed attempt at a translation of Sum pa Mkhan po's tables by B.P. Singh in 1991.

⁵⁷ "The Shuk-den Affair: History and Nature of a Quarrel," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 21 (1998), 236. This essay recurs in a slightly

The assertion that this Tibetan spirit (*bod de'i rgyal po*) is Drak-ba Gyel-tsen, the reincarnation of the Upper Chamber, is just an expression of prejudice. Thus, I believe that the rumor that it is Sö-nam Chö-pel, who after passing away in the same year, is protecting the Ge-luk tradition having assumed the form of a dharma protector through this ["great concern for the Ge-luk tradition,"] is correct.

Following the edited text as given in an earlier reproduction of the tables and chronicle⁵⁸ — this is not —, he thus read *bod 'di'i rgyal po* — if not used as definite articles of personal pronouns, then the deictic particles *'di* and *de* mean "this" and "that" — instead of the more curious and rather unclear *bod kyi de'i rgyal po*, and read the final two words as *snyam mo /*. Tibetan grammar dictates that *bod de'i rgyal po* renders "the *rgyal po* of that Tibet," and it is only *bod kyi rgyal po de* that can be translated as "that Tibetan *rgyal po*." The term *rgyal po* is ambiguous, for it can either mean "king, emperor," or it can indicate a particular class of demonic beings that inhabit the vast Tibetan demonological depository. All that I can say for now is that prior to this entry of his tables Sum pa Mkhan po uses *rgyal po* only in the sense of the former. To the chagrin of a number of fellow Dge lugs pa adherents, Tibetan as well as foreign, the present Dalai Lama has banned his propitiation and evocation.⁵⁹ Though quite relevant in this connection, the text in these chronological tables of the entry for the year 1657 is quite badly transmitted.

Although the Paṅ chen gives the very same years of birth for Srong btsan sgam po, that is, the fire-female-ox year [617], and Khri srong lde btsan as Bu ston had done,⁶⁰ Dalai Lama V is now much

modified form on the official website of HH the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet at www.dalailama.com.

⁵⁸ Ed. L. Chandra (Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1959), 70-1.

⁵⁹ For additional background information, see *The Worship of Shugden. Documents Related to a Tibetan Controversy* (Dharamsala: Department of Religion and Culture, Central Tibetan Administration, nd) and the detailed *Dorje Shugden History* that Trinley Kalsang has compiled at www.dorjeshugdenhistory.org. His translations should be used with caution, however. Other websites concerning Rdo rje shugs ldan can also be fruitfully consulted.

⁶⁰ G. Tucci, *Deb t'er dmar po gsar ma. Tibetan Chronicles by Bsod nams grags pa*, vol. 1, Serie Orientale Roma XXIV (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1976), 145, 151 [17b-8a, 24a], and also the text in *Deb ther dmar po gsar ma*, ed. Don grub (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1989), 17, 23, and the translation in Huang Hao, *Xin Hongshi* (Lhasa: Xizang remin chubanshe, 1987), 18, 24. Writing in 1539, the Paṅ chen stipulates that Srong btsan sgam po was born in the fire-ox year, one thousand four hundred and forty-nine years after the Buddha's nirvana. The date of the latter was the subject of a good deal of

debate, as is illustrated in D. Seyfort Ruegg, "Notes on some Indian and Tibetan reckonings of the Buddha's Nirvāṇa and the Duration of his Teaching," *The Dating of the Historical Buddha / Die Datierung des historischen Buddha*, Part 2 (Symposium zur Buddhismusforschung, IV, 2), ed. H. Bechert (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 263-90. Not translated by G. Tucci, the second chapter of the Paṅ chen's chronicle on the genealogy of the rulers of Shambhala contains the necessary chronological details to make sense of what he says about things having to do with chronology in the third chapter on Tibet's imperial period; see the texts in *Deb t'er dmar po gsar ma*. *Tibetan Chronicles by Bsod nams grags pa*, 6b-14b, and *Deb ther dmar po gsar ma*, 6-14, as well as the translation in Huang Hao, *Xin Hongshi*, 7-14. In his deliberations, he mentions Mkhas grub's commentary on the first chapter of the *Vimalaprabhā* of 1434, the *Dpal dus kyi 'khor lo'i 'grel chen dri ma med pa'i 'od kyi rgya cher bshad pa de kho na nyid kyi snang bar byed pa*, *Collected Works* [Lhasa Zhol print], vol. Kha (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1981), 145, 150, 155-7, 878 - p. 156 contains an intraline gloss "twelve," signaling either that the number was initially omitted by a careless scribe or carver when the text was being prepared for printing, or that the original manuscript was corrupt. The text of the Paṅ chen's chronicle published by G. Tucci also suggests by way of an interlinear note that the *chu pho rta* [year, 879 B.C.], the date given for the historical Buddha's enlightenment in Mkhas grub's work [on p. 878], is a "corrupt wording" (*yi ge ma dag*), and both it and the Tibetan text published in Lhasa have a note to indicate that the Paṅ chen alludes once to the position of a Jo nang pa scholar. The biographies of Zhwa lu Lo tsā ba Chos skyong bzang po (1441-1528) by his disciple Skyogs ston Lo tsā ba Rin chen bkra shis (ca. 1480-1540) and A mes zhabs suggest that Zhwa lu Lo tsā ba took serious exception to some of the views Mkhas grub had expressed in this and other Kālacakra-related writings; see the 1517 *Rje btsun zhwa lu lo tsā ba'i rnam par thar pa brjed byang nor bu'i khri shing, dbu med* manuscript, C.P.N. catalog no. 002790(9), 16a, and the *Dpal dus kyi 'khor lo'i zab pa dang rgya che ba'i dam pa'i chos 'byung ba'i tshul legs par bshad pa ngo mtshar dad pa'i shing rta*, *Collected Works*, vol. Pa, *dbu med* manuscript, C.P.N. catalog no. 003204, 140a [= *Collected Works*, vol. 19 (Kathmandu: Sa skya rgyal yongs gsung rab slob gnyer khang, 2000), 270]. Mkhas grub was Dga' ldan khri pa III, the third abbot of Dga' ldan monastery. It is therefore noteworthy that Dga' ldan khri pa XIV Rin chen 'od zer (1453-1540) does not once allude to his 1434 treatise in his 1517 study of religious chronology (*bstan rtsis*), though he does briefly note a *bstan rtsis* text Mkhas grub had written in 1437, some three years after his study of the *Vimalaprabhā*'s first chapter; see *Bstan rtsis gsal ba'i sgron me*, *dbu med* manuscript, C.P.N. catalog no. 002324 (1), 23b. As far as I am aware, such a work was never included in the various printed editions of his collected œuvre. The Paṅ chen writes that, though Mkhas grub's treatise was unclear about the year in which the Buddha was born, he took it to have been the fire-horse year [915 B.C.]. The generally accepted life-span of the Buddha is eighty years, so that his nirvāṇa took place in 834 B.C. This then means that the Paṅ chen was of the opinion that Srong btsan sgam po was born in 617. See further Tshe tan Zhabs drung 'Jigs med rigs pa'i blo gros' (1910-89) *Bstan rtsis kun las btus pa* (Xining: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1982), 34, who cites A kyā II Blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1708-68) for a different interpretation of Mkhas grub's incomplete remarks. The relevant passage in Nor brang O rgyan's recent study of the fifth Dalai Lama's chronicle, the *Dpyod kyi rgyal mo'i glu dbyangs kyi 'grel pa yid kyi dga' ston* (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1993), 146-7, does not help here. To be noted also is that the latter's Western dates for events that happened during Tibet's imperial period are not always

less charitable in his judgment and he writes in continuation of the above passage:

*gang ltar chos rje bsod nams grags pa sogs 'ga' zhig gis /
rgyal po khri srong lde btsan sa rta la 'khrungs pa dang /
chos rgyal srong btsan sgam po me glang la 'khrungs par
byed pa ni / gtsug lag rtsis kyi gzhung lugs la blo gros kyi
'jug pa shar ba zhig gis brtags tshe lo grangs bcu gnyis
tsam mi 'grig pa'i mu cor gyi gtam du zad do //*

Whatever the case may have been, the fact that some such as Chos rje Bsod nams grags pa, etc. have Emperor Khri srong lde btsan be born in the earth-male-horse year and Chos rgyal Srong btsan sgam po in the fire-ox year is but a nonsensical tale of simply not accounting for the twelve-year cycle when this is examined by one in whom has dawned an understanding of the scholarly tradition of astrological / astronomical science.

The ire he displays against the Paṅ chen and other stock-opponents with some regularity in his chronicle shows how Dalai Lama V was on occasion unable to maintain a clear boundary between scholarly displeasure and intellectual dissatisfaction, on one hand, and an obvious contempt, in which the scholarly, the personal, and the political had become indistinct and diffuse, on the other. The Paṅ chen's position on the chronological conundrum that was briefly discussed in note 60 can be better understood now that his own work on religious chronology (*bstan rtsis*) of 1529 — as he says, some two thousand three hundred and sixty-four years upon the Buddha's passing — has been published.⁶¹ Omitting the gloss, his view is quite plain:

*ṭik chen de nyid snang ba las //
ston pa'i 'khrungs lo mi gsal yang //*

[gloss: *mkhas grub rjes dgung lo lnga bcu ba shing stag la
rtsis / de yang ston pas sangs rgyas pa'i phyi lo zla bzang
la rtsa rgyud gsungs des / lo gcig gam gnyis su bstan / de
nas lha dbang la sogs pa'i chos rgyal drug dang / grags pa*

reliable.

⁶¹ What follows is taken from his *Bstan rtsis rin po che'i phreng ba, Paṅ chen bsod nams grags pa'i gsung rtsom nyer mkho dang drang nges phyogs bsgrigs* (Xianggang: Zhang khang gyi ling dpe skrun kung zi, 2002), 207-8.

*la sogs pa'i rigs ldan dgus rim pa bzhin lo brgya brgyar
chos bstan pa sogs rtsis pa las [read: lus] so // phyis gyi
mkhas pa kha cig ston pa lcags sprel la 'khrungs nas gya
gcig pa lcags 'brug la rtsa rgyud gsungs pa dang lo de nyid
la mya ngan las 'das par bzhed do //*

*me rta yin pa'i bstan rtsis dang //
phal cher mthun shas che bar mngon //
de la bsams nas bdag gis ni //
chos 'byung yid kyi mdzes [b]rgyan du //
'di yi steng nas rtsis pa ste //
mkhas pa rnams kyis dpyad mdzod cig //*

Despite the fact that the Teacher's birth year is unclear
From Mkhas grub's *Tik chen de nyid snang ba*,

{gloss: Mkhas grub rje did a calculation at the age of fifty in the wood-tiger year [1434]. Further, due the fact that the Teacher pronounced the *Kālacakramūla-tantra* to Sucandra the year subsequent to his enlightenment, he taught it for one or two years.⁶² Thereafter, one depends on the fact that each of the six religious kings [of Sambhala] such as *Devendra etc. and each of the nine Kalkin rulers [of Sambhala] such as Yaśas, etc. respectively taught the tantra etc. for one hundred years. Some later scholar[s]⁶³ averred (*bzhed*) that the Teacher was born in the iron-monkey year [961 B.C.], that he pronounced the *Kālacakramūlatantra* at the age of eighty in the iron-dragon year [881 B.C.], and that he passed beyond suffering in that very year.}

⁶² See Mkhas grub, *Dpal dus kyi 'khor lo'i 'grel chen dri ma med pa'i 'od kyi rgya cher bshad pa de kho na nyid kyi snang bar byed pa*, 149-50. This point is quite controversial and will have to be revisited on a future occasion. For now, see Sum pa Mkhan po's lengthy discussion of Mkhas grub's work and the reactions engendered by it in his *'Phags yul rgya nag chen po bod dang sog yul du dam pa'i chos 'byung tshul dpag bsam ljon bzang*, 356-68 [= *Chos 'byung dpag bsam ljon bzang*, ed. Dkon mchog tshe brtan, 539-59].

⁶³ The gloss of unknown provenance refers here at least to Grwa phug pa Lhun grub rgya mtsho'i dpal (ca.1400-60) and his 1447 study of *Kālacakra* computational astronomy, which its colophon titles *Dpal dus kyi 'khor lo las 'byung ba'i rtsis kyi tshul la yang dag pa'i ngag sbyin pa legs par bshad pa padma dkar po'i zhal lung*. For the relevant passage, see *Rtsis gzhung pad dkar zhal lung*, ed. Yum pa (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2002), 83-9 [= 1681 Dga' ldan phun tshogs gling print, 56b-61b].

It is evident that it is by and large for the most part
 consistent
 With the religious chronology for the Buddha's nir-
 vāṇa
 Being the fire-[male-]horse year [915 B.C.].
 Having considered this, I,
 In my *Chos 'byung yid kyi mdzes rgyan* [of 1529],
 Did a calculation on its basis.⁶⁴
 May scholars reflect on this!

He then writes:

thub pa mya ngan 'das pa nas //
lo grangs stong dang bzhi brgya dang //
zhe dgu 'das pa'i me glang la //
chos rgyal srong btsan sgam po 'khrungs //

In the fire-ox year [617], forty-nine and
 One thousand four hundred years
 After the Seer's passing,
 The religious king Srong btsan sgam po was born.

We should note in passing that the fact that the Paṅ chen composed his *Bstan rtsis* and his chronicle of the Bka' gdams pa school during his first year as the fifteenth abbot (*dga' ldan khri pa*) of Dga' ldan monastery, and this is of course hardly an accident.

All the prints as well as the manuscript of the *Chos 'byung* have it that the construction of Bsam yas monastery was completed in the *sa mo yos* year which, if anything, elicits the quite unsustainable equivalent of 799.⁶⁵ None of the historians mentioned thusfar has taken issue with this date by expressly mentioning Bu ston. Quite aware that "many documents" did so, Dpa' bo II himself is inclined to the view

⁶⁴ *Bka' gdams gsar rnying gi chos 'byung yid kyi mdzes rgyan, Two Histories of the Bka' gdams pa Tradition* (Gangtok, 1977), 205 [= *Ibid.*, vol. 11 (Mundgot: Drepung Loseling Library Society, 1982-90), 331. The text of the first is based on a print from newly carved printing blocks that were prepared at the order of A kyā Ho thug tu (< Mon. *qutuytu* [= 'phags pa]) II [= Blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan], who noticed that the existing print had so many errors that he called for a new "edition." However, he did not live to see the first print from these blocks. This happened only in the water-rat year [1772], when this work was printed in the Potala with [']De mo No mon han (< Mon. *nom-un qan* [= *chos kyi rgyal po*]) VI Ngag dbang 'jam dpal dge legs rgya mtsho (1726-77) having written a concluding prayer in his Gzim[s] chung Rig gnas kun gsal residence.

⁶⁵ Szerb (1990: 28) [Obermiller 1932: 186, Satō 1977: 852, Guo 1986: 171] and BUM, 1190.

that its construction was finished in the *chu [mo] yos* year, that is, in 763. But writing about a hundred years after Dalai Lama V, Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu pointed out that "a supreme scholar like Bu [ston]" (*mkhas mchog bu lta bu*) could hardly be faulted for this. The mistake in the "year's element[-designation]" (*lo khams*)" was simply an error on the part of a careless scribe.⁶⁶ But we may as well face it. It cannot be denied that the *Chos 'byung* is extraordinarily weak when it comes to providing dates for events and Bu ston's discussion of the year in which the Buddha passed away is the only other place in his entire oeuvre, where, although he really remains uncommitted, we witness him making an attempt to achieve some sort of chronological precision.⁶⁷ But even there, in the final analysis and when all is said and done, he leaves us with a sense of incompleteness and, perhaps, even with a sense of intellectual disappointment. Then again, maybe we should not feel this way. For it is quite possible that, unlike many other Tibetan experts in the computational astronomy of the *Kālacakratantra* corpus, Bu ston realized that the data provided by this corpus were unable to provide such calculations for events that happened long ago, especially when the relevant sources only gave the barest chronological details about their occurrences. It is thus perhaps not surprising that not one Indic scholar who wrote about the *Kālacakra's* computational astronomy — I am here thinking in particular of the two luminaries Abhayākaragupta (ca. 1065-1125) and Śākyasrībhadrā — ever ventured to calculate the important dates of the Buddha's life, let alone the year of his nirvāṇa-passing, by resorting to this corpus. Earlier, in his 1319 commentary on Haribhadra's (ca. 800) *Abhisamayālamkāravivṛtti*, Bu ston had taken the established Sa skya pa position, namely that the historical Buddha had passed to nirvāṇa in 2133 B.C., as his own point of view. Thus, he stated that three thousand four hundred and fifty years had elapsed since the year of his writing, namely, the earth-female-sheep year, 1319.⁶⁸ The other place where he attempts to put forward a more sophisticated chronology is in the section on the "correct year" (*lo dag, śuddhavarśa*) of the *Kālacakratantra* corpus in the fifth chapter

⁶⁶ TSHE, 547; TSHE1, 198.

⁶⁷ This passage was studied in C. Vogel, "Bu-ston on the Date of the Buddha's Nirvana," *The Dating of the Historical Buddha / Die Datierung des historischen Buddha*, Part 1, ed. H. Bechert (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 403-14.

⁶⁸ *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i man ngag gi bstan bcos mngon par rtogs pa'i rgyan ces bya ba'i 'grel pa'i rgya cher bshad pa lung gi snye ma*, *The Collected Works of Bu ston* [and Sgra tshad pa], Lhasa Zhol print, part 18 (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1971), 725.

of his 1326 treatise on astronomical computation.⁶⁹ Even if this essay is not the place for its analysis, it is worthwhile to note that the recently published study of this work which Blo gros dpal bzang [po] wrote in the spring of a *yongs 'dzin* (**paridhāvin*) year while he resided in Lhun grub steng, in Gnyal smad, adds a few interesting details to this passage.⁷⁰ At the outset, the author mentions a Sku zhang Chos rje and a Shākya dbang phyug as his teachers of the subject — the former is most likely none other than Rin chen mkhyen rab mchog grub (1436-97), alias Mkhyen rab Chos rje, a member of the Zhwa lu Sku zhang family and an erstwhile abbot of 'Phan po Nā lendra monastery.⁷¹ But it is in its section on Buddhist chronology *per se* that the author lets us in during which *yongs 'dzin* year he had composed his work, for he writes there that he had completed it one hundred and seventy-three years after Bu ston's *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* commentary. Hence, the year in which the author had written his work could only have been 1492, and this tallies quite well with the fact that he twice cites 'Gos Lo tsā ba. In addition, it also allows us to identify with greater certainty the Sku zhang Chos rje as none other than Rin chen mkhyen rab mchog grub! The catalog of the library holdings of several of 'Bras spungs monastery's chapels lists three works that appear to be comments on Bu ston's *Dpal dus kyi 'khor lo'i*

⁶⁹ See his *Dpal dus kyi 'khor lo'i rtsis kyi bstan bcos mkhas pa rnams dga' bar byed pa*, *The Collected Works of Bu ston* [and Sgra tshad pa], Lhasa Zhol print, part 4 (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1971), 778-83 [= ed. Bsod nams phun tshogs (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1987), 181-6], and also the partial translation in J. Newman, "The Epoch of the *Kālacakra Tantra*," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 41 (1998), 334-7.

⁷⁰ *Mkhas pa rnams dga' bar byed pa'i dgongs pa rab tu gsal ba*, Jo nang dpe tshogs 16 (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2010), 221-4; my discussion of its authorship is based on information given on pp. 251-2, 191, 215-6, 223 of this work.

⁷¹ See D.P. Jackson, *The Early Abbots of 'Phan po Nalendra: The Vicissitudes of a Great Tibetan Monastery in the 15th Century*, Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde, Heft 23 (Wien: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien Universität Wien, 1989), 27-8; Zhwa lu Lo tsā ba's 1497 biography of this man is available in a seventy-two folio *dbu med* manuscript at tbrc.org under W1CZ2158, and a synoptic version is found in Ri phug Blo gsal bstan skyong's (1804-after 1874) *Dpal ldan zhwa lu pa'i bstan pa la bka' drin che ba'i skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar lo rgyus ngo mtshar dad pa'i 'jug ngogs* [*History of Zhwa lu*] (Leh, 1974), 167-90. For more recent studies of Nā lendra monastery, see especially the late Mkhan chen Tshul khriims rgyal mtshan's *Rong ston smra ba'i seng ge'i gdan sa dam pa dpal nā lendra rnam par rgyal ba'i sde'i gdan rabs chen mo ngo mtshar gtam gyi rgya mtsho*, *Nā lendra'i dgon gnas nyams gso bya tshul sogs zin bris*, and *'Phan po nā lendra'i lo rgyus bsdu pa ngo mtshar gtam gyi snying po*, vol. 2, ed. Gangs ljongs rig rgyan gsung rab par khang (Lanzhou: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, nd), 425-99, 500-7, 508-24.

rtsis kyi bstan bcos mkhas pa rnam dga' bar byed pa; these are⁷²:

1. Shākya dbang phyug, *Mkhas pa rnam dga' bar byed pa'i dgongs pa rab tu gsal ba*
2. Rgyal ba Bya bral ba Dge 'dun dpal, *Mkhas pa dga' byed kyi dka' ba'i gnad rnam gsal bar byed pa'i sgron me*
3. Dge slong Dus zhabs pa Shākya dbang phyug, *Mkhas pa dga' byed kyi lde mig rtsis kyi man ngag bdud rtsi'i thigs pa*

The first is no doubt our text. Its attribution to Shākya dbang phyug is most probably based on a misreading, for the colophon does *not* state that he was its author. A Blo gros dpal bzang is registered in the aforementioned catalog as the author of a lengthy work on computational astronomy titled *Skar rtsis kyi mdor bsdus gsal bar byed pa'i legs par bshad pa nyi ma'i 'od zer*,⁷³ and he may very well have been the author of our treatise. Our Blo gros dpal bzang [po] can thus by no stretch of the imagination be equated with the well-known Lo tsā ba Blo gros dpal bzang po (1282-1354 / 1299-1353), one of Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan's (1292-1361) premier disciples and erstwhile abbot of Jo nang monastery from 1338 to his passing.

Now Dpa' bo II's sole reference to the printed text of the *Chos 'byung* occurs in connection with his discussion of the various listings of the first Tibetan monks who were ordained by the Bengali monk Śāntarakṣita and his associates in the second half of the eighth century under the aegis of Khri srong lde btsan. A limited dossier of these lists as they appear in different writings was first investigated in detail by G. Tucci, who already noted *inter alia* that these men basically fall into two groupings, one in which six individuals are mentioned, and one which contains seven.⁷⁴ The men so categorized are known to most available later sources as either "the six examined individuals" (*sad mi drug*)⁷⁵ or "the seven examined individuals" (*sad mi*

⁷² 'Bras spungs dgon du bzhugs su gsol ba'i dpe rnying dkar chag, comp. Karma bde legs et al., Smad cha [2] (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2004), 1863, nos. 021346-8, 021350.

⁷³ 'Bras spungs dgon du bzhugs su gsol ba'i dpe rnying dkar chag, 1862, no. 021338.

⁷⁴ Tucci (Part Two, 1986: 12 ff.) and below n. 121; see also the discussion in Khang dkar (1985: 186-228).

⁷⁵ sbb, 59 [sbb, 51, sbch, 156], the Chinese translation of SBch in Tong-Huang (1990: 45) and MES, 236. The same is found in DPA'(p), 356 [DPA', 360] via the text cited from an "extensive [version of the] *Sba bzhed*." MES is of uncertain authorship, in spite of the fact that the publisher has wrongly attributed it to Nyang ral; see the note in J. Szerb, "Two Notes on the Sources of the *Chos 'byung* of Bu ston Rin chen grub," *Reflections on Tibetan Culture. Essays in Memory of Turrell V. Wylie*, ed. L. Epstein and R.F. Sherburne (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 143, 146, n. 4, and the entry in Martin (1997: 31). The penultimate page is unfortunate-

bdun) — the alternative expression *sad mi mi bdun* is also occasionally used in the literature.⁷⁶ Neither expression occurs in the recently

ly missing and the last Tibetan mentioned prior to the colophon in fol. 150b [MES, 300] is Mi la ras pa (?1040-?1123), so that his *floruit* may be the *terminus ante quem* of its date of composition and / or of the manuscript. The incomplete colophon, which begins [and ends] on fol. 152a, states that the manuscript belonged to the monk Shakya [read: Shākya] rin chen who was affiliated with 'Bri gung monastery. The close textual relationship that exists between this work's biography of Khri srong lde btsan, Nyang ral's chronicle and the *Sba bzhed-s* still requires detailed investigation.

⁷⁶ For the expression *sad mi bdun*, see *Lde'u Jo sras in JO, 123, Mkhas pa Lde'u in LDE'U, 302 and in an interlinear note of the chronicle of 1283 by Ne'u Paṇḍita Grags pa smon lam blo gros in Uebach (1987: 100-1) [NE'U, 21, NE'U1, 19, Wang-Chen 1990: 116] — the toponym *ne'u* [sometimes also *snel* and *nel*] should probably have to be corrected to *sne'u*. The same is also met with in Cha gan Dbang phyug rgyal mtshan's 1304 history of the *Lam 'bras* transmission, in CHA, 7a, Tshal pa Kun dga' rdo rje's (1309-64) *Deb ther dmar po*, ed. Dung dkar Blo bzang phrin las (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1981), 37 [Chen Qingying and Zhou Runnian, trs., *Hongshi* (Lhasa: Xizang renmin chubanshe, 1988), 33], in a manuscript of the *Rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* (Dolanji: Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre, 1973), 425 [Sorenson 1994: 369-70] — its attribution to Bla ma dam pa Bsod nams rgyal mtshan (1312-75) remains problematic —, in the 1422 chronicle by Rgyal sras Thugs mchog rtsal, in THUGS, 263, and in Mang thos' 1587 study of Buddhist chronology, in MANG, 52. As for Ne'u Paṇḍita's work, I see no reason to depart from H. Uebach's dating of 1283 in Uebach (1987: 16-7), and instead date it to 1343, as is done by several later sources cited in Seyfort Ruegg, "Notes on some Indian and Tibetan Reckonings of the Buddha's Nirvāṇa and the Duration of his Teaching," 274, n. 53 — we may add here that, strictly speaking, Bu ston does not "refer" to him in his undated *'Dul ba spyi'i rnam par bzhas pa*, as the latter maintains; rather, a sublinear note attributes to him a statement which the text as such but prefixes by *kha cig*, "some"; see *The Collected Works of Bu ston* [and *Sgra tshad pa*, Lhasa Zhol print, part 21 (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1971), 128 [= ed. Dpal brtsegs bod yig dpe rnying zhib 'jug khang, *Collected Works*, vol. 21 (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2008), 163]. The exact provenance or veracity of this note cannot be ascertained. On the other hand, the cognate expression *sad mi mi bdun* is encountered in NYANG, 271 [NYANGa, 429, NYANGb, 312, NYANGm 294a], where these [unidentified] seven men are singled out as a special grouping within some one hundred and forty who had been ordained by Śāntarakṣita. We also find this expression in Rje btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan's (1147-1216) RJE, 84/1, RJE1, 104/2 and RJE2, 272/2, in another recension of Tshal pa's chronicle (Gangtok: Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, 1961), 17b [Inaba Shōju and Satō Hisashi, trs., *Furan tebuteru (Hu lan deb t'er - Chibetto Nendaiki)* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1964), 94], in Bla ma dam pa's 1341 history of the *Lam 'bras* transmission, in BLA, 7 [BLAM, 3b], in RGYAL, 205 [Sorenson 1994: 369-70], and in U rgyan gling pa's (1323-?67) 1352 PBT, 416-7, and the 1393 or 1395 *Lo paṅ bka'i thang yig* and the *Blon po bka'i thang yig* of between 1368 and 1393 — both are attributed to U rgyan gling pa! — in the BTSL, 403, 449, 488. The dates for the last two are taken from A.-M. Blondeau, "Le *Lha-dre bka'-than*," *Études tibétaines dédiées à la mémoire de Marcelle Lalou* (Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 1971), 42. The evidence for their putative authorship by U rgyan gling pa needs to be revisited. Not surprisingly, the expression recurs in TSHE, 547; TSHE1, 198. Finally, 'Brong bu Tshe ring rdo rje's fine study of the various listings of these

found text of the *Dbā' bzhed*.⁷⁷ As will be shown below, there is very little consistency as far as the number or the names of these men is concerned, and Mkhas pa Lde'u even quotes the phrase "the thirteen examined individuals [who] renounced the world" (*sad mi bcu gsum rab tu byung ba*).⁷⁸ Evidently, the tradition [or traditions] surrounding these events and the names and identities of the individuals who allegedly played a role in them are contaminated and multimorphous and, most likely for the better part, invented.

Dpa' bo II discusses the question of these different groupings and the identities and names of the individuals in considerable detail by comparing various accounts, and it is in this context that he alleges that there was a problem with the print of the *Chos 'byung* with which he was working. To be sure, the passage in question, or, for that matter, the entire section on the development of Buddhism in Tibet, does not cast Bu ston in the light of a shining historian. Even without the text-critical conundrum proffered by the reading of the Zhwa lu print of the *Chos 'byung* for which he can be hardly blamed, he provides us with a fairly muddled and confusing account of two varying [and, perhaps, competing] groupings. He first rather curtly observes in the *Chos 'byung* that, in a sheep-year [?779], twelve monks of the [Mūla]Sarvāstivāda school were invited to Tibet so as to determine whether or not institutionalized, monastic Buddhism could take hold in this country, and that ultimately seven men "were selected and ordained as monks."⁷⁹ After these laconic remarks anent the background to the ordination of the "seven examined individuals," three prints of the *Chos 'byung*, but *not* the Lhasa Zhol one, continue by saying:

*rgan gsum ni / sba ma ṅdzu śrī / gtsang de we ndra / bran
ka mu ti ka / gzhon gsum ni / 'khon nā ge ndra / pa gor bai
ro tsa na / rma ā tsā rya rin chen mchog go // bar pa glang
ka ta na / rab tu byung ba mtshan ye shes dbang po yin la /
mkhan po dā na śī las byas zhes kha cig zer ro // mkhan po
bo dhi sa twas byas nas / thog mar bya khri gzigs rab tu
byung bas / mngon shes lnga dang ldan par gyur to // de*

first ordained Tibetan men came to my attention after this article was completed; see his "Bod kyi sad mi'i skor gyi gleng gzhi thog ma," *Krung go'i bod rig pa* 4 (2001), 122-38.

⁷⁷ We would have expected the term in the relevant passage of the *Dbā' bzhed* in Pasang Wangdu - Diemberger (2000: 69-72, 17a-b).

⁷⁸ LDE'U, 358. His enumeration of these thirteen consists of one grouping of seven and one of six men, for which see below.

⁷⁹ Szerb (1990: 28-30) [Obermiller 1932: 190, Satō 1977: 857, Guo 1986: 174] and BUM, 1191.

*nas sba gsal snang / 'ba'/sba khri bzher sang shi ta / pa gor
bai ro tsa na ra kṣita / ngan lam rgyal ba mchog dbyangs /
'khon klu'i dbang po srung ba / rma ā tsā rya rin chen
mchog / gtsang legs grub dang bdun rab tu byung ba'i
mtshan / ye shes dbang po dang / dpal dbyangs la sogs pa
yin / sad mi mi bdun yin zer ro //*

[Scenario One]

Some have alleged: The three older ones:

- [1] Sba Ma ñdzu śrī
- [2] Gtsang De we ndra
- [3] Bran ka Mu ti ka.

The three younger ones:

- [4] 'Khon Nā ge ndra
- [5] Pa gor Bai ro tsa na
- [6] Rma ācārya Rin chen mchog.

The middle one:

- [7] Glang Ka ta na.

[?Sba Ma ñdzu śrī's] ordination name was Ye shes dbang po and [that the function of] the abbot was performed by Dānaśīla [and not by Śāntarakṣita].⁸⁰

[Scenario Two]

After the [office of the initiating] abbot was enacted by Śāntarakṣita, inasmuch as at first

- [1*] Bya Khri gzigs had renounced the world, [the latter] became endowed with five paranormal cognitions. Subsequently,

- [1] Sba Gsal snang
- [2] 'Ba' / Sba Khri bzher
- [*3] Sang shi ta

⁸⁰ Citing an unidentified "chronicle" (*lo rgyus gcig*), THUGS, 263, refers to a similar but not identical scenario.

- [4] Pa gor Bai ro tsa na rakši ta
 [5] Ngan lam Rgyal ba mchog dbyangs
 [6] 'Khon Klu'i dbang po srung ba
 [7] Rma ā tsarya Rin chen mchog
 [8] Gtsang Legs grub

were ordained and the names in religion of these seven were "Ye shes dbang po," "Dpal dbyangs" etc. They are called the *sad mi mi bdun*.

Szerb indicated in his edition that, in opposition to the other prints, the Lhasa Zhol one has a sublinear gloss: « — It is also said that: 'Since the emperor passed on at the age of fifty-six [= fifty-five] in the iron-male-horse year [790], Bsam yas was built in the iron-male-tiger [year, 750]}' » (*rgyal po lcags pho rta lo pa lnga bcu rtsa drug la 'das pas bsam yas lcags po stag la rmang bting zer ba'ang 'dug*). It also presents a somewhat different account of what I have called Scenario One. Namely, it has "Sba / Dba' Ra tna ra kti[read: kṣi] ta" for "Gtsang De we ndra [= Lha'i dbang phyug]" for the second of "the three older ones" and "Gtsang / Rtsangs De we ndra" for "Rma ā tsā rya Rin chen mchog" as the third of the "three younger ones." Further, in Scenario Two, the Zhwa lu print [as well as those of Bkra shis lhun po and Sde dge] has by contrast to the one from the Lhasa Zhol one / (*shad*) between 'Ba' / Sba Khri bzher and Sang shi ta, suggesting that we must reckon with two individuals. Given that Bya Khri gzigs does not belong to the *sad mi mi bdun* group, this would then result in a total of eight "examined individuals," which contradicts the number seven given by the text itself. As will be seen below, this conundrum was noted by Dpa' bo II and thence by Tucci.⁸¹ A reminder: it is not unimportant to recognize that Scenario One is not necessarily Bu ston's own position on the matter, since he places this in the mouth[s] of "some[one] (*kha cig*)."

A lengthy interlinear gloss in the recent print of Dpa' bo II's work takes a passage from what it calls the "extensive version of the *Rba* [= *Sba*] *bzhed*" as its point of departure for a discussion of the various listings of these first Tibetan men of the cloth.⁸² Upon inspection, it turns out that this passage is clearly closely affiliated to the narrative of the same in the recension of the *Sba bzhed* that was recently published in Beijing,⁸³ although the *variorum* that follows its reproduc-

⁸¹ Tucci (Part Two, 1986: 18).

⁸² DPA'(p), 354-6 [DPA', 359-60].

⁸³ The text is found in SBB, 57-9. SBB, 61-2 refers to "another position" (*lugs gcig*), which is glossed as deriving from "another extensive [version] of the [*Sba*] *bzhed*" (*bzhed rgyas shos*). This narrative is also found in DPA'(p), 359-60 [DPA', 364],

tion below does suggest the existence of some significant differences between the two. Thus, the Beijing version of the *Sba bzhed* states with the interlinear notes in « » and my own additions in []:

dus der rje blon rnam rtsed^a bro dang longs spyod^b la yengs^c pa dang /^e de yan chad bod la dge slong gi ming yang med pa las bsam yas kyi rtsig rmang thams cad byi khung byas te^d lha khang dang rten rnam la mchod pa dang zhabs tog byed pa med pas /^e btsan po thugs ma bde nas 'bangs rnam la chos bya bar rigs so zhes gsungs^f nas /^e de^e nas^e yos^g kyi lo'i dpyid zla ra ba'i ngo la /^e slob dpon gyis thams cad yod par smra ba'i sde /^e dbus pa bye brag tu smra ba bya ba'^h dge slong bcu gnyis spyang drangs nas /^e zhang blon gyi bu tsha mchims legs «bzang» la sogs paⁱ la^e slob dpon gyis rgya gar^e skad bslabs pa las /^j mchims a nu'i bu shakya^k dang / pa gor na^l 'dod «he 'dod kyang zer» kyi bu pa^e gor^e bai ro tsa na dang /^e sba rma gzigs «khri bzher yang zer» kyi bu ratnar^m /ⁿ sba^o khri bzher gyi bu^p sang shi ta yang zer ba de^q dang / zhang nya bzang gi bu lha bu^r dang / lha bse btsan dang /^s shud pu khong sleb la sogs^t kyis skad lobs / mchims legs bzang^u la^e sogs pa zhang blon gyi bu tsha gzhan^v mang zhig gis ni skad ma shes so / blon po 'gos^w na re /^e nged blon po rgan^e po^e rnam la long ma mchis pas a tsa ra'i skad lob^x mi khom pas rgan po'i chos zhu^y zer bas /^e slob dpon gyis a pha dang /^e a ma'i skad don thog tu phebs^z te /^e don^e la^e rgya skad dang mthun par bod skad mkhyen zhing byang ba dang / bod skad du chos bshad pas sam skri ta'i skad ma dgos pas / slob dpon gyi zhal nas / bod byang chub sems dpa'i sprul pa'i skad yin pas chos byar btub po gsung bas /^{aa} btsan po'i zhal nas /^e slob^e dpon^e nga'i bod la dge slong med pas nga'i zhang blon dag la dge slong btub bam ces^e zhus pa'i^{ab} lan^e du^e /^e btub pas sad par bya gsungs nas skad lobs pa^{ac} tsho las thog mar bod la dad pa che ba'i sba^o «sang shi ta yang zer» khri gzigs^{ad} dge slong byas^{ae} ma^e thag^e tu^e mtshan sba^e dpal dbyangs su btags / mngon par shes pa lnga^{af} dang ldan pas /^e btsan po dgyes te de'i zhabs spyi bor blangs te khyod bod kyi rin po

where it, too, is predicated of "another extensive *Sba bzhed*" (*sba bzhed rgyas shos*). This means that we must reckon with at least two "extensive" recensions of the text. Whether one of these corresponds to Sde srid's substantially annotated manuscript of the text, the *sba bzhed tshig sna ring mo*, as quoted in the *Vai dūrya g.ya' sel*, vol. I (Dehra Dun, 1976), 29, is as yet unclear. But we need to be aware that the text of sbb is itself an artificial construction of the editor, as it is based on a not altogether clearly articulated use of three different *Sba bzhed* manuscripts.

*che yin no^e zhes bka' btsal nas^e mtshan kyang sba^o ratna
zhes btags te /^{ag} bod kyi rab tu^e byung ba la snga ba de yin
no /*

- ^a DPA'(P), DPA': *rtse.*
- ^b DPA'(P), DPA': *omit dang longs spyod.*
- ^c DPA'(P), DPA': *g.yengs.*
- ^d DPA'(P), DPA': *add 'dug /.*
- ^e DPA'(P), DPA': *omit.*
- ^f DPA'(P), DPA': *gsung.*
- ^g DPA'(P), DPA': *lug.*
- ^h DPA'(P), DPA': *smra ba'i.*
- ⁱ DPA'(P), DPA': *rnams for tsha mchims legs «bzang» la
sogs pa.*
- ^j DPA'(P), DPA': *pas for pa las /.*
- ^k DPA'(P), DPA': *add pra bha.*
- ^l DPA'(P), DPA': *he.*
- ^m Read *ratna.*
- ⁿ DPA'(P), DPA': *rba khri bzher gyi
bu khri gzigs sam
sang shi ta dang
for sba rma gzigs
«khri bzher yang
zer» kyi bu
ratnar/.*
- ^o DPA'(P), DPA': *rba.*
- ^p DPA'(P), DPA': *add khri gzigs sam.*
- ^q DPA'(P), DPA': *omit yang zer ba de.*
- ^r DPA'(P), DPA': *btsan.*
- ^s DPA'(P), DPA': *omit this entire phrase.*
- ^t DPA'(P), DPA': *leb rnams.*
- ^u DPA'(P), DPA': *gzigs.*
- ^v DPA'(P), DPA': *omit pa..gzhan.*
- ^w DPA'(P), DPA': *mgos rgan.*
- ^x Text has *lob.*
- ^y DPA'(P), DPA': *zhu'o.*
- ^z Text has *phabs.*
- ^{aa} DPA'(P), DPA': *have saṃskṛta'i skad med kyang bod
byang chub sems dpa'i sprul pa'i skad yin
pas chos byar btub gsungs te sgom lung
phog go / from dang / to gsung bas /.*
- ^{ab} DPA'(P), DPA': *pas.*
- ^{ac} DPA'(P), DPA': *have slob dpon gyis btub bam sad cig
gsungs te skad bslabs pa after lan pas.*

^{ad} DPA'(P), DPA':	add <i>rab tu phyung ste.</i>
^{ae} DPA'(P), DPA':	add /.
^{af} DPA'(P), DPA':	<i>lŋga'i mŋgon par shes pa.</i>
^{ag} DPA'(P), DPA':	<i>zhes thogs /.</i>

At that time when the construction of Bsam yas⁸⁴ was completed, the Lord (*rje*) and his ministers diverted themselves in celebration and amusement,⁸⁵ and, due to the fact that up to that time there was not even the name for a monk in Tibet, the entire structure of Bsam yas was barren and empty of monks. Because there was no one to make offerings to and worship the temples and religious objects (*rten*), the Mighty One was unhappy and, saying to Śāntarakṣita: "It will be appropriate that the population gets involved with religion", the master then invited twelve monks of the Magadha-Vaibhāṣika of the Mūlasarvāstivāda school in the first spring-month of the hare-year. The master (*slob dpon*) having taught the Indian language [Sanskrit] to Mchims Legs «bzang», the son of his *zhang blon* [minister belonging to the families of the imperial fathers-in-law] etc., Khri srong lde btsan ordered that:

- [1] Shākya, the son of Mchims A nu,
- [2] Pa gor Bai ro tsa na, the son of Pa gor Na 'dod
«also called He 'dod»,⁸⁶

⁸⁴ For the various names of this monastery, see A. Chayet, "Contribution aux recherches sur les états successifs du monastère de Bsam-yas," *Tibet. Civilisation et Société*, ed. F. Meyer (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1990), 109-17.

⁸⁵ Both sbb, 57 and sbp, 54 [sbch, 154, Tong-Huang 1990: 44] as well as MES, 234, indicate that the celebrations lasted twelve years; we find the same in LDE'U, 355. Neither Nyang ral nor *Lde'u Jo sras or Ne'u Paṇḍita have anything to report here, but Bu ston writes that they took place over a thirteen year period! — see Szerb (1990: 28) and BUM, 1191 —, as does THUGS, 261.

⁸⁶ He was, of course, one of the first two men to bring the Rdzogs chen teachings to Tibet. NYANG, 317-8 [NYANGa, 506, NYANGb, 368-9, NYANGm, 341b] notes that Khri srong lde btsan was visited by Vajrasattva in a dream who suggested to him that he send two Tibetan monks to search for the Bka' Rdzogs pa chen po in India. Allowing for rather serious orthographic instability, according to the reading of NYANGm, both men, Rtsang The lag and Rtsang Legs grub, were sons of Dpal gor He 'dod. On the other hand, the other editions all have simply a "son of Spa[P]a gor He 'dod and Rtsang[s] Legs grub, the son of Rtsang[s] The legs," a reading that would seem preferable. After having been ordained and taught the art of translation by Śāntarakṣita, they were given gold dust to cover the expenses for their trip and dispatched to the Indian subcontinent.

- [3] Ratna, the son of Sba Rma gzigs «also called
Khri bzher» — the son of Sba
Khri bzher is also called Sang shi ta,
[4] Lha bu, the son of Zhang Nya bzang,
[5] Lha bse btsan [also a son of Zhang Nya
bzang?], and
[6] Shud pu Khong sleb, etc.,

should study the language as well. A good number of other sons of the ministers of the in-laws of the imperial family (*zhang blon*) such as Mchims Legs bzang etc., had not known the language. As Minister 'Gos rgan⁸⁷ had said: "Since our senior ministers have no leisure and no free time to study the language of the master (*a tsa ra*), they ought to request religious teachings for old men." The master knew the father and mother tongues of the Tibetans and was pure in the

⁸⁷ Only the cognate passage in MES, 234, gives "Khri bzang" as his name; a 'Bro *zhang* Khri bzang is noted in one of the Dunhuang documents — see Thomas (1951: 9, 11) — which might just indicate that "Khri bzang" was either a not altogether uncommon name, or, not entirely unlikely, a title [?as well]. Insofar as he is mentioned by this very same name elsewhere in the versions of the *Sba bzhed* and MES itself, *rgan* must be taken adjectivally in the sense of "old" or "senior". His full name appears to have been 'Gos [or: Mgos] Khri bzang yab lhag [or 'Gos {or: Mgos} Khri bzang Yab lhag], which we find in Sbb, 17 — this is missing in the corresponding passage in SBp, 13 [SBch, 101, Tong-Huang 1990: 14] — in an entry when Khri srong lde btsan had just become emperor at a very young age. The addition of the epithet *chen po*, "great," to his title of "minister" might suggest that he was already a senior minister at this time. It is also affixed to his basic title in Sbb, 35, again there is no corresponding passage in the other versions, in an entry just prior to the narrative of the construction of Bsam yas. The *Sba bzhed*-s first note him as one of the pro-Buddhist ministers, together with *zhang* Nya bzang; see Sbb, 16, and SBp, 13 [SBch, 101]. A similar passage is contained in NYANG, 433 [NYANGb, 509, NYANGm, 468a]. He must be identical to "Mgos Khri bzang yab [or: Yab] lag" of the listing of ministers in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* in Bacot-Thomas-Toussaint (1940-46: 102, 132) and Wang-Chen (1992: 40, 160). Furthermore, Nyang ral includes him in what is, again, *allegedly* his *gter ma*-biography of Padmasambhava in a grouping of six ministers of Khri srong lde btsan, and among those who petitioned Padmasambhava, just prior to his departure from Central Tibet, for guidelines when performing their office; see the *Slob dpon padma'i rnam thar zangs gling ma* (Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1989), 88-9, 151-2, and the translation in Erik Pema Kunzang, *The Lotus-Born. The Life Story of Padmasambhava*, ed. M.B. Schmidt (Shambhala: Boston & London, 1993), 100-1 and 158-9. With some interesting variants, these passages are also reproduced in his chronicle in NYANG, 325-6 and 363-4 [NYANGa, 519-20 and 583-4, NYANGb, 378-9 and 427-8, NYANGm, 350b-1a and 389b-90a] where, however, in the second of these passages, Khri bzang yab lhag's name does not appear.

realization that, in substance (*don la*), Tibetan was on par with Sanskrit. And, inasmuch as Sanskrit was unnecessary since he explained the religion in Tibetan, the master said: "Because Tibetan is the wondrous language of the bodhisattva [= ?Avalokiteśvara],⁸⁸ the Tibetans are able to practice religion." Thereupon the Mighty One (*btsan po*) — the emperor — asked: "Oh master, since there are no monks in my Tibet, will my *zhang blon* be capable of monkhood?" The master replied: "We should examine whether they are capable." And from among those who had studied the Sanskrit language, at first, Sba Khri gzigz «also called "Sang shi ta"», one of great faith in Tibet, was made a monk. He was immediately thereafter named "Sba Dpal dbyangs." Insofar as he was endowed with five paranormal cognitive faculties, the Mighty One was delighted and, having placed his head at his feet, said: "You are a jewel of Tibet." Hence, he was also called Sba Ratna; he was the earliest of the Tibetan monks.

The text continues:

*btsan po na re / slob dpon gyis nga'i zhang blon dad pa can^a
da dung rab tu phyung cig ces^b zhus pas / sad cig gsungs
nas sba^c gsal snang dang / sba khri bzher dang /^b pa gor na
'dod «he 'dod kyang zer» kyi bu^d bai ro tsa na dang / ngan
lam rgyal ba mchog dbyangs dang / rma a tsa ra^e rin chen
mchog dang / la^f gsum rgyal ba'i^g byang chub dang drug^h/
dge slong byas te /ⁱ ming yang^b ye shes dbang po^j dang / de
la sogs par btags nas sad mi drug rab tu byung ngo / «sba
dpal dbyangs la rgya nag skad sang shi ta zer / la la khri
bzher gyi bu sang shi ta zer / sba gsal snang skya ba'i dus
ming / de nas sems bskyed zhus nas dang rab tu byung nas
ming ye shes dbang por slob dpon bodhi satwas btags /*

⁸⁸ This remarks confronts us head on with a major problem, since the earliest references to the Tibetan area being the domain that is protected by Avalokiteśvara, that is, of which he is the patron Bodhisattva, occurs in mid to late eleventh century texts. This is either an interpolation or it is simply the earliest reference to this notion, period. I myself am inclined to hold that this is an interpolation. It is of course true that Tibet's imperial period knew of various Buddhist cults, including one that centered on Avalokiteśvara; see S. van Schaik, "The Tibetan Avalokiteśvara Cult in the Tenth Century: Evidence from Dunhuang Manuscripts," *Tibetan Buddhist Literature and Praxis*, ed. R.M. Davidson and Chr. Wedemeyer (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 55-72.

*bzhed 'bring po las gtsug lag khang tshar / zhal ma bsros
bar du gsal snang rab tu byung / rgya skad bslabs pa rnams
kyang de dus lobs / rab tu byung ba yang de dus su byung
bar bshad»*

- ^a DPA'(P), DPA': omit *bstan po to can*.
^b DPA'(P), DPA': omit.
^c DPA'(P), DPA': *rba*.
^d DPA'(P), DPA': omit *pa gor to kyi bu*.
^e DPA'(P), DPA': *ātsar*.
^f DPA'(P), DPA': *las*.
^g DPA'(P), DPA': *ba*.
^h DPA'(P), DPA': *lnga*.
ⁱ DPA'(P), DPA': add *gsal snang la sngar sems bskyed zhus
pa'i tshe btags pa'i*.
^j DPA'(P), DPA': add *btags*.
^k DPA'(P), DPA': *pa*.

The Mighty One then said: "The master must presently ordain my faithful *zhang blon*" Śāntarakṣita saying: "Let us examine them!", the six:

- [1] Sba Gsal snang,
 [2] Sba Khri bzher,
 [3] Vairocana, the son of Pa gor Na 'dod <also called
 He 'dod>,
 [4] Ngan lam Rgyal ba mchog dbyangs,
 [5] Rma A tsa ra Rin chen mchog and,
 [6] La gsum Rgyal ba'i byang chub

were made monks and, having been given names such as "Ye shes dbang po" etc., these were the six examined individuals who had renounced the world. «Sba Dpal dbyangs was called "Sang shi ta" in Chinese; some allege that Sang shi ta was the son of Khri bzher; "Sba Gsal snang" was his name when a layman and then, after he had resolved to effected an enlightened frame of mind, the master-bodhisattva named him "Ye shes dbang po." The [*Sba*] *bzhed* of intermediate length (*'bring po*) states that Gsal snang was ordained between the completion of Bsam yas monas-

tery and prior to its consecration⁸⁹; that those who had studied Sanskrit, were studying it at that time, and also that their ordination took place at that time before the consecration.»

The various names of the leading members of the Sba [or: Dba', Dbas] family present us with problems that cannot be dealt with here. Much more work needs to be done to unravel the identities and roles played by them, but suffice it to say here that Sba Gsal snang figures in some listings of those individuals who were ministers during the second half of Khri srong lde btsan's reign.⁹⁰

While in substance identical, but in length more synoptic, it is quite clear that the different readings of the just-cited passage in the Paris [and Chengdu] recension of the *Sba bzhed* and in the anonymous biography of Khri srong lde btsan are indicative of their close filiation with one another.⁹¹ "Dba'," "Sba," and "Dbas" being variants, the recently published text of the *Dba' bzhed* is editorially a great deal more distant from them as far as this passage is concerned.⁹² To be noted also is that despite the frequent textual identity of the Paris and Beijing recensions of the *Sba bzhed*, as well as the *Dba' bzhed*, Bu ston's *Chos 'byung* is only cited in the first and not in the latter and, we should add, it is also not quoted in the anonymous biography.⁹³

⁸⁹ This may very well be a reference to the text in Pasang Wangdu-Diemberger (2000: 69, 17a). The same passage of this intermediate redaction is also paraphrased in an interlinear note in DPA'(p), 354 [DPA', 359]: *bsam yas tshar nas zhal sro ma byas pa'i bar der rab tu byung bar bshad*.

⁹⁰ JO, 121 and LDE'U, 301; but see also 'Brong bu Tshe ring rdo rje, "Dba' gsal snang gi me che'i lo rgyus skor gyi dpyad brjod," *Krung go'i bod rig pa 2* (2005), 37-48.

⁹¹ SBP, 49-51 [SBCh, 154-6, Tong-Huang 1990: 44-5] and MES, 234-6.

⁹² Pasang Wangdu - Diemberger (2000: 69-70, 17a-b).

⁹³ SBP, 54 [SBCh, 160]: *Gsung rab rin po che'i bang mdzod - bang mdzod* is semantically identical to *mdzod*. This seems to have been first noticed in Faber (1986: 39-40) and also by Jampa L. Panglung Rinpoche in Uebach (1987: 103, n. 473), though it went unrecognized in the translation of Tong-Huang (1990: 48). Dpa' bo II also felt compelled to refer to Bu ston, where the relevant passage occurs in Szerb (1990: 41) and BUM, 1198; see DPA'(p), 339 [DPA', 392]; see also Huang-Zhou (2010: 220). Both are discussed in Uebach (1987: 103, n. 473), who observed that Dpa' bo II cited Bu ston's *Chos 'byung*. Things are a little complicated. Dpa' bo II does indeed *prima facie* cite the *Chos 'byung*, but one important variant reading in his citation is not retrievable from those for this passage in the manuscripts of Bu ston's text that Szerb used, namely, *brtse min*. They have *tsen min*, *rtsen mun*, and *rtsen min*, which but reflect the difficulty of finding a Tibetan phonetic approximation of Chinese *jianmen*. Dpa' bo II's quotation thus retains the reading *brtse min* that we also have in SBP, 54 [SBCh, 160]. My impression therefore is that Dpa' bo II did not cite directly from the *Chos 'byung*, but rather, as now appears likely, from a quotation of Bu ston's work in a text of the *Sba bzhed*. As we will briefly

This means, of course, that the manuscript [not necessarily the text] on which the Paris edition is based must be dated to not earlier than the third decade of the fourteenth century. The narrative of the anonymous biography adds nothing of intrinsic interest to the dossier we already have, but we should cite it, if only for the sake of completeness:

dus der rje blon rnams rtsed bro dang longs spyod la yengs pas / bsam yas kyi rtsigs rmang thams cad byi khung du byas te / lha khang la mchod cing zhabs tog med pas btsan po thugs ma bde / 'bangs rnams la chos bya bar rigs so zhes gsol nas / slob dpon gyi^a rgya gar gyi skad slob pas / sba gsal snang dang / sba khri bzher sang shi ta dang / pa dkor na 'dod kyi bu bai ro tsā na dang / mchims a nu'i bu shā kya dang / shud pu khong sleb la sogs pas skad lobs / mchim^b long gzigs la sogs pa zhang blon gyi bu tsha mang zhig snyung nas skad mi lobs pas / blon po mgos rgan gyi mchid nas / slob dpon rgan pa rnams la long ma mchis pas / a tsa ra'i skad slab mi khom pas / rgan chos su mchi zhus pas / slob dpon gyi^a bod kyi a pha dang a ma'i skad don thog tu phebs te / chos skad dang mthun par mkhyen nas / bod skad du chos bshad pas sa« skri ta'i skad slob ma dgos / bod byang chub sems dpa'i sprul pa'i skad yin pas / chos byar stub po gsungs / de nas lug lo'i dpyid zla ra ba'i ngo la / slob dpon gyis thams cad yod par smra ba'i sde / dbus pa bye brag tu smra ba'i dge slong bcu gnyis spyan drangs nas bod skad sbyang ba dang / btsan po'i zhal nas nga'i blon po dge slong med pas / nga'i zhang blon rnams la de btub bam mi btub ces bka' stsal ba'i lan du / btub pam sad par bya gsung^c nas / bod la dad pa che ba 'ba' khri gzigs dge slong byas ma thog^d tu mngon par shes pa dang ldan pas / btsan po dgyes te de'i zhabs spyi bor blang^e nas khyod bod kyi ratna yin no ces bka' stsal bas ming kyang sba ratna ces btags te / bod kyi rab tu byung ba la snga ba de yin no / btsan po na re / slob dpon nga'i zhang blon dad pa can da rung rab tu phyung cig ces gsungs pas / sad cig gsung nas sba gsal snang dang / 'ba' khri zher sang shi ta dang / pa gor 'dod kyi bu bai ro tsā na dang / ngan lam rgyal ba mchog yangs dang / sma a tsa ra rin chen mchog dang / la gsum rgyal ba'i byang chub drug dge slong byas te / ming kyang ye shes dbang po dang / dpal dbyangs la sogs pa

see below, the *brtse min* reading was the result of a popular etymology that had nothing to do with the original Chinese term.

btags nas sad mi drug rab tu byung /.

^a read *gyis*; ^b read *mchims*; ^c read *gsungs*; ^d read *thag*; ^e read *blangs*.

We have just seen that one recension of the *Sba bzhed* cites the *Chos 'byung*. The relationship between both texts is symmetrical and reciprocal, for Bu ston also cites a recension of the *Rba bzhed* [= *Sba bzhed*], and we may add that this is the only time in the main body of his *Chos 'byung* where he quotes the title of a work written by a Tibetan, aside from the one brief nod at Lo tsā ba Rin chen bzang po's (958-1055) *Sngags log sun 'byin*, a study of apocryphal and spurious tantric texts.⁹⁴ The context in which he refers to the *Sba bzhed* is found in connection with his citation of a passage from Sa skya Paṇḍita's 1217 biography of his uncle and master Rje btsun — it is part paraphrase, part citation, though encapsuled by the quotative: *chos rje sa skya pa'i zhal nas...zhes gsungs so //*.⁹⁵ There, Bu ston reads the text as saying that there is a prophecy in the elusive **Vimalaprabhāvākarāna* where the phrase "in the land of the red faces" (*gdong dmar gyi yul du*) refers to Tibet.⁹⁶ From Chinese and other sources, we know of the early Tibetan custom of smearing faces with a red substance, probably vermilion.⁹⁷ Bu ston suggests, in an uncommitted way, that the *Sba bzhed* explained the "land of the red faces" to be *rgya*, which here can only indicate *rgya nag*, that is, China. Now the phrase *gdong dmar gyi yul* occurs in the *Sba bzhed* texts in the following context. On behalf of his son Khri srong lde btsan, Khri lde gtsug btsan dispatched some five envoys, including one named Sang shi with a box (*sgrom bu*)⁹⁸ to the court of the Xuanzong Emperor (r. 713-756) for acquiring

⁹⁴ BU, 741 [BU1, 82, BUM, 992] and Obermiller (1931: 137) and Guo (1986: 71). It is not frequently cited, but this must be the same text Glo bo Mkhan chen refers to as the *Chos log sun 'byin* in his *Sdom pa gsum gyi rab tu dbye ba'i dris lan lung gi tshad ma 'khrul spong dgongs rgyan*, *Rgyud sde spyi rnam gsal byed sogs* (Dehra Dun, 1985), 253. Ny[w]a dbon Kun dga' dpal (1285-1379) cites several passages from this work in his post-1371 *Gzhi lam 'bras gsum las brtsams pa'i dris lan yid kyi mun sel*, ed. 'Bras Rab 'byams pa Dkon mchog chos kho et al. (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2006), 102 ff.

⁹⁵ *Bla ma rje btsun chen po'i rnam thar*, SSB 5, no. 17, 148/2; this passage is also cited by Mang thos in MANG, 45.

⁹⁶ BU, 818 [BU1, 138, BUM, 1097] and Obermiller (1932: 108) and Guo (1986: 120); on the problem of identifying the text in which this prophecy occurs, see now also Uebach (1987: 157, n. 1059).

⁹⁷ See P. Pelliot, *Histoire ancienne du Tibet* (Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, 1961), 5, n. d., and also the various notes in S. van Schaik in earlyTibet.com.

⁹⁸ sBb, 5 [sBch, 90, sBp, 5]; Tong-Huang (1990: 6) suggest here *xinhan*, which together may be interpreted as a "message in a box." For the passages that follow, see also A. Macdonald, "Une lecture des P.T. 1286, 1287, 1038, 1047 et 1290. Essai sur

Buddhist scriptures. According to the *Sba bzhed*, this must have taken place sometime between the years 733 and 737. Parenthetically, as far as our Tibetan sources go, we only find this legation mentioned in these texts, as well as in later writings that are expressly related to them or one or other recension, and nowhere else, not even in Nyang ral's work which, as is known, depends to a large measure on a version of the *Sba bzhed*, or on another work that contained much of the same information, for its narratives of the imperial period from Khri srong lde btsan onward. Chinese sources note that diplomatic intercourse between the two courts was a rather frequent affair but, not unexpectedly, none contain the observations made in the *Sba bzhed*-s. When the party arrived at the narrow pass of Ke'u lo/le, an expert diviner (*ju zhag mkhan*)⁹⁹ of a certain governor (*dbang po*) of Bum sangs, who himself was a courtier¹⁰⁰ of the Chinese imperial court, related that in three months from today a Bodhisattva would arrive as an envoy from Tibet, the Western region, whereupon he drew for him what he would look like, the shape of his body, and his features. The governor of Bum sangs brought this to the emperor's ear, and the latter immediately sent an envoy, ordering him not to allow the Tibetan party to be detained and to ensure that they be given offerings. Upon their arrival, the Tibetan envoy(s) — the *Sba bzhed* texts always use the singular, suggesting that Sang shi played the preeminent role in this pentad which is not surprising when we keep in mind that he appears to have belonged to the Sba clan — was hon-

la formation et l'emploi des mythes politiques dans la religion royale de Srong btsan sgam po," *Études tibétaines dédiées à la mémoire de Marcelle Lalou* (Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 1971), 379 ff.

⁹⁹ For *ju zhag* = Ch. *zhouyi*, that is, *Yiqing*, *Book of Changes*, see R.A. Stein, "Saint et divin' un titre tibétain et chinois des rois tibétains," *Journal asiatique* CCLXIX (1981), 261, 269, n. 87. In a note, *The Blue Annals*, tr. G. Roerich, 251, presumably via his learned informant Dge 'dun chos 'phel (1903-52), already identified *ju zhag* as a "system of prognostication," although it is not registered in his dictionary; see Y.N. Roerich, *Tibetan-Russian-English Dictionary with Sanskrit Parallels*, ed. Y. Parfionovich and V. Dylykova, Issue 3 (Moscow: Nauka Publishers, 1985), 171. This expression is comparatively rare in Tibetan texts. Of the available dictionaries, it is only listed in *Dung dkar Blo bzang 'phrin las' Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo* (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig dpe skrun khang, 2002), 874, though its status as a loan word was not explicitly recognized. Be this as it may, it also occurs in NYANG, 418 [NYANGb, 490, NYANGm, 451a] — the first has *rgya nago gi ju zhag mkhas pa*, "Chinese diviner," the other two wrongly have: ...*ju yag mkhas pa* — in connection with Khri gtsug lde btsan's (806-41) plans to build a temple along the lines of the Gtsug lag khang, Bsam yas, and Skar chung, where the diviner searched for an appropriate site. Thence, we encounter it in MES, 111.

¹⁰⁰ Only SBP 5 [SBch 90] prefixes his name by *snyan snga na*, which Tong-Huang (1990: 6) render by *yuxian dachen*, "grand-official." For the interpretation of *bum sangs dbang po* that I tentatively follow, see Pasang Wangdu-Diemberger (2000: 49, n. 121-2).

ored in a way that somewhat reduces the credibility of the narrative. For not only did a Chinese monk greet him respectfully (*phyag byas*), but also when he was lead before the emperor, the latter too greeted him in the same fashion, whereupon the Sang shi presented him with the message. After an exchange of pleasantries, including an offer by the emperor to make him a minister of his court, he was asked what it was he desired, to which the envoy replied: "If you wish to do me good, I request a text in one thousand *bam po*¹⁰¹ of the Buddha's pronouncements." The relevant passage of the Beijing text of the *Sba bzhed* — it is also found in Dpa' bo's work — then reads as follows:¹⁰²

*rgya rje na re / ki'u li^a te^b gcan zan^c gyi 'phrang la song
rtsa na'ang gnod pa ma byas par rim 'gro cher byas byung
/ bum sangs dbang po'i ju zhag mkhan na re'ang l^b khyod
byang chub sems dpa'i sprul par 'ong zer / hwa shang
mngon shes can gyis kyang khyod la phyag byas / khyod kyi
spyod pa dang sbyar na'ang sangs rgyas kyi lung nas l^d
lnga brgya'i tha^e ma la gdong dmar gyi yul du dam pa'i
chos kyi khungs 'byin pa'i dge ba'i bshes gnyen 'ong bar
lung bstan pa de'ang khyod yin par gor ma chag ngas
kyang grogs bya'i^f zer^g te / mthing shog la gser chus bris
pa'i chos bam po stong gnang /*

^a DPA'(p), DPA': *le*.

^b DPA'(p), DPA': omit.

^c DPA'(p), DPA': *gzan*.

^d DPA'(p), DPA': *na /*.

^e DPA'(p), DPA': *mtha'*.

^f The editor corrects to 'o';

DPA'(p), DPA': *yi*.

^g DPA'(p), DPA': *gsungs*.

The Chinese Sovereign (*rje*) said: "Even if you had gone to Ki'u li, a mountain pass with wild animals,¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ For this term, see lastly my "Some Remarks on the Meaning and Use of the Tibetan Word *bam po*," *Zangxue xuekan* 5 (2009), 114-32, and the literature cited therein.

¹⁰² SBb, 6-7; see also the corresponding passage in DPA'(p), 297-8 [DPA', 301] and Huang-Zhou (2010: 120-1).

¹⁰³ SBp, 6 [SBch, 91-92, Tong-Huang 1990: 7] has but a few minor variants, the most important one being *ki'u li'u (ke'u le'u) yi 'phrang la* - the phrase in brackets is the correction proposed by Tong-Huang -, with *te* missing as in Dpa' bo II's text. MES, 172-3, reads somewhat differently: *rgya rje na re khyod lam du zhugs pa'i dus su yang : ju zhag mkhan po na re : bho de sad ta'i sprul pa ha shang mngon shes can gyis kyang khyod la phyag byas : khyod kyi spyod pa dang sbyar nas sangs rgyas kyi lung nas lnga brgya'i tha ma la : gdong dmar gyi yul du dam pa'i chos khungs 'byin pa'i dge ba'i*

you would have been respectfully received, without having come to harm. Also the *Zhouyi* expert of the governor of Bum sangs had said that you would come as a wondrous manifestation of a Bodhisattva. Even a clairvoyant monk has saluted you. In connection with your behavior as well, it is certain that the prophecy in a text of the Buddha that at the end of five hundred years a spiritual friend will come who will give the source of the holy *dharma* in the land of the red faced ones, is you. I, too, shall assist you." And he gave him a text (*chos*) of a thousand *bam po* in length, which was written with gold ink on dark blue paper.

Given this passage, Bu ston's allegation that the *Sba bzhed* identified *gdong dmar gyi yul* with *rgya* [*nag*] was therefore justifiably criticized by Dpa' bo II, who concludes, after paraphrasing a passage from the *Sba bzhed*, that the text's *gdong dmar can gyi yul* is unequivocally Tibet.¹⁰⁴ Bu ston's citation of the prophecy of Vimalaprabhā is one of an apparent, but still not identified, canonical source, which undoubtedly because of its relative vagueness enjoyed great contextual versatility among Tibetan historiographers. To date, the earliest source to make a reference to this passage and land that can be dated is Bsod nams rtse mo's history which refers here to a passage from the **Vimalaprabhāparipṛcchāsūtra*.¹⁰⁵ Subsequently, 'Gos Lo tsā ba quoted it in full, together with a few additions made by Bsod nams rtse mo's nephew Sa skya Paṇḍita, and criticized it severely in his *Rtsis la 'khrul ba sel ba*.¹⁰⁶

Lastly, it is only the supplemented *Sba bzhed* that has an opening phrase in which the author pays homage that is followed by a line indicating what the subject-matter will be, and it is precisely there

bshes gnyen yong par lung bstan khyod yin par nges : ngas kyang grogs bya'o zer nas : mthing shog la gser gyi bris pa'i bam po stong gnang byar dga' ches :

¹⁰⁴ DPA'(p), 169 [DPA', 168]; see also Huang-Zhou (2010: 12) where *bu* was rendered as *zi*, instead of being identified as a reference to Bu [ston]. As is evident from DPA'(p), this passage occurs in an interlinear note. Of interest is that, in this particular reference, the latter but has *Rba bzhed*, whereas we know from the other quotations found in his lengthy analysis of the reign of Khri srong lde btsan that he had access to perhaps as many as five or more versions of the text.

¹⁰⁵ The *Lha mo dri ma med pas zhus pa* (**Devivimalaprabhāparipṛccha*) is cited in the *Chos la 'jug pa'i sgo*, SSBB 2, no. 17, 343/1/3, to the effect that Buddhism will come to the "land of the red face[s]" two thousand and five hundred years after the nirvana of the Buddha. This very same text and passage — the only variant is "two thousand five hundred or eight hundred" — is cited in NYANG, 165 [NYANGA, 245, NYANGb, 186, NYANGm, 105a].

¹⁰⁶ See, respectively, the *Bla ma rje btsun chen po'i rnam thar*, 147/1-8/2, and 'GOS, 12a-4b, 19a-20a.

that we meet once again with "red faces"¹⁰⁷:

rigs gsum mgon po'i rnam 'phrul gyis //
sha za gdong dmar 'dul mdzad pa //
mes dbon gsum la phyag 'tshal te //
bka' tshig yi ge zhib mo bri //

Paying homage to the three, the ancestor and grand-
 sons,¹⁰⁸

The pacifiers of the red-faced flesh-eating de-
 mons,

By being wondrous emanations of the three
 types of protectors,

We shall write a detailed official document.

To call the Tibetan citizenry "red-faced meat-eating demons" is hard-ly flattering. It reminds one of the ways in which the Mongols conquerors of Tibet are addressed in especially the *Lha' 'dre bka'i thang yig* and the *Blon po'i bka'i thang yig*, and in the prophesies of the more "orthodox" revelatory texts of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century. In the entry for *gdong dmar can gyi yul*, *Dung dkar Blo bzang*

¹⁰⁷ SBp, 1 [SBch, 83, Tong-Huang 1990: 1]. For an analysis of this passage, see R. A. Stein, "Tibetica Antiqua IV: La tradition relative au début du bouddhisme au Tibet," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* LXXV (1986), 171, n. 6, and also G. Uray, "Contributions to the Date of the *Vyutpatti* Treatises," *Acta Orientalia Hungarica* XLIII (1989), 10-1.

¹⁰⁸ For the term *dbon*, see H. Uebach, "Notes on the Tibetan Kinship Term *dbon*," *Tibetan Studies in Honour of H.E. Richardson*, eds. M. Aris and Aung San Suu Kyi (Westminster: Philips and Aris, 1979), 301-9. The meaning of "grandson" is also found in Buddhaguhya's *Bhoṭasvāmidāsalekha*, in S. Dietz, *Die buddhistische Briefliteratur*, Asiatische Forschungen, Band 84 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1984), 259-60: "Durch den Spur rgyal Tibets, den Herrn aller Schwarzhäupte Khri srong lde'u btsan, den Sohn des Ag tshoms mes und Enkel des Rlung nam 'phrul gyi rgyal po [= Khri 'dus srong, vdK], ist die Bodhisattvareinkarnationsreihe des Srong btsan sgam po, der Verkörperung des Avalokiteśvara, nicht unterbrochen worden" (*bod kyi spur rgyal mgo nag yangs kyi rje // khri srong lde'u btsan ag tshoms mes kyi sras // rlung nam 'phrul gyi rgyal po'i dbon po yis // srong btsan sgam po spyang ras gzigs kyi sku // byang chub sems dpa' sku rgyud gdung ma chad //*). For an earlier translation of this quatrain, see R.A. Stein, "Saint et divin' un titre tibétain et chinois des rois tibétains," 257-8, n. 64, where he also says that "ce texte doit être <apocryphe> (vers 850 ou après)." Elsewhere and later, he suggested that it was written "entre 850 et 1000(?)," and observed that, for reasons that are yet to be clarified, Bu ston reproduced it in full in his 1342 *Rnal 'byor rgyud kyi rgya mtshor 'jug pa'i gru gzings*, *The Collected Works of Bu ston* [and Sgra tshad pa], Lhasa Zhol print, Part 11 (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1968), 136-8; see his "Tibetica Antiqua IV: La tradition relative au début du bouddhisme au Tibet," 185, n. 39. A somewhat annotated version of the text was published in the *Legs rtsom snying bsdus*, ed. Phur kho (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 1991), 135-45.

'phrin las' recently published Tibetan-Tibetan dictionary suggests that it had been understood in three different ways.¹⁰⁹ Possibly basing himself on Bu ston's [mis]interpretation, he first relates that the *Rba* [= *Sba*] *bzhed* used it to refer to China. He then says that Sa skya Ngor Mkhan chen Bsod nams lhun grub had identified it as referring to Tibet — this Bsod nams lhun grub is of course none other than Glo bo Mkhan chen.¹¹⁰ Lastly, he mentions Bo dong Lo tsā ba Nam mkha' bzang po who, in his *Bstan rtsis legs bshad nor bu'i phreng ba*, had interpreted it to indicate *kla klo'i yul* (**mlecchadeśa*), that is, "land of the barbarians [here: Muslims]," in accordance with the Kālacakra corpus.¹¹¹ A disciple of Lo tsā ba Byang chub rtse mo (1303-80), this Nam mkha' bzang po flourished in the second half of the fourteenth century and also seems to have been known as Stag lung Lo tsā ba.

All this raises the question of the possibility of a relationship other portions of the *Chos 'byung* may have with one or the other, or even with both recensions of the *Sba bzhed*. A number of Japanese and Western scholars have briefly dealt with this question in several comparative studies of the various accounts of the Bsam yas debates of presumably the middle of the second half of the eighth century. Of the latter, F. Faber argued that the *Chos 'byung*'s exposition of the debates precisely indicates a probable indebtedness to both recensions; he writes¹¹²:

He [Bu ston, vdK] probably...had access to both editions [of the *Sba bzhed*, vdK] known to us today... But without doubt he has had a copy of the longer edition [the supplemented *Sba bzhed*, vdK]...as he quotes information contained only in that edition.

¹⁰⁹ *Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo*, 1117.

¹¹⁰ See his reply to question no. 5 in his *Mi'i dbang po mgon po rgyal mtshan gyi dris lan rgyal sras bzhad pa'i me tog*, *Collected Works*, vol. III (New Delhi, 1977), 26-7. In all fairness, the view that the phrase indicated Tibet was already held by Bsod nams rtse mo and Sa skya Paṇḍita, as well as by Nyang ral and 'Gos Lo tsā ba [in 'gos, 19b].

¹¹¹ This may be the little *dbu med* manuscript of a *Bstan rtsis* of his work that is cataloged under C.P.N. catalog no. 002317(1), to which I do not have access. For Islam in this corpus, see now J. Newman, "Islam in the Kālacakratāntra," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 21 (1998), 311-71.

¹¹² Faber (1986: 42, 48 ff.); see BU, 887-90 [BU1, 187-90, BUM, 1193-8] and Obermiller (1932: 191-6), Satō (1977: 859-63), Guo (1986: 175-8), and Szerb (1990: 34-42). The narrative of 'Dul 'dzin Mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, in his 1557 study of the Rnying ma pa's literary and spiritual traditions, is obviously based on the *Chos 'byung*; see the *Sangs rgyas bstan pa'i chos 'byung dris lan nor bu'i phreng ba* (Gangtok, 1981), 215-9.

This cannot be entirely maintained. In my opinion, Bu ston's very brief discussion of this debate, its preliminaries and aftermath does not quite warrant such a view, the more so since, we have seen that, firstly, his only explicit reference to the text is faulty and arguably anomalous for one who is otherwise such a meticulous scholar and, secondly, we now know of three, or perhaps even four earlier scenarios of the debate that parallel the narratives [not: narrative] of the published texts of the *Sba bzhed*.¹¹³ Furthermore, as Faber himself has noticed and as we saw above, the supplemented *Sba bzhed* cites a passage of the *Chos 'byung*, in which the two key-Chinese terms for the interlocutors of the debates, *dunmen[pai]* (*ton/ston mun*), "Instantaneists, Simultaneists," and *jianmen[pai]* (*tсен min, rtsen mun*), "Gradualists," are given their Tibetan equivalents *cig car ba* and *rim gyis pa*. Whence Bu ston has taken these is at present unknown. To be sure, these equations were not first made in the *Chos 'byung*, for juxtapositions of these phonemic representations of the Chinese terms and their Tibetan equivalents are of course already found in the *Bsam gtan mig sgron* of Gnubs Sangs rgyas ye shes (?783-?896/7) and Lha 'Bri sgang pa's (12th c.) much later survey of the debate.¹¹⁴ However, this state of affairs does not detract from the peculiarity that earlier, datable historical literature, namely Nyang ral's work in particular, elicits explanations of these that are obviously based on what D. Seyfort Ruegg has called "pseudo-etymologies."¹¹⁵ Now when we compare the relevant passage with its cognates in the *Sba bzhed* texts, we witness again the peculiar and text-historically puzzling relationships that unquestionably exist, on one hand, among Nyang ral's work, the two *Sba bzhed*-s individually and the anonymous biography, and between the recensions of the *Sba bzhed*. For whereas the

¹¹³ This includes Lha 'Bri sgang pa (12thc.), on whom see H. Eimer, "Eine frühe Quelle zur literarischen Tradition über die Debatte von Bsam yas," *Tibetan History and Language: Studies Dedicated to Géza Uray on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. E. Steinkellner, Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde, Heft 26 (Wien: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien Universität Wien, 1991), 163-72. A descendant of Yum brtan, Glang dar ma's (died 841) eldest son, Lha 'Bri sgang pa's dates are not known so far. He must have been alive in 1193, the year in which he acted as a functionary during Spyan snga Grags pa 'byung gnas' (1175-1255) ordination as a monk, for which see the **Spyan snga grags pa 'byung gnas kyi sku tshe'i ring byung ba'i don chen 'ga'i lo tshigs, Rlangs kyi po ti bse ru rgyas pa, Gangs can rig mdzod 1*, ed. (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1986), 446 [= *Brlangs kyi po ti bse ru*, in *The History of the Gnyos Lineage of Kha rag...* (Dolanji, 1978), 377].

¹¹⁴ See, respectively, the *Sgom gyi gnad gsal bar phyé ba bsam gtan mig sgron* (Leh, 1974), 118-86, 65-118, — see also Seyfort Ruegg (1989: 66-7) — and H. Eimer, "Eine frühe Quelle zur literarischen Tradition über die Debatte von Bsam yas," 168: *ston min cig car 'jug pa dang / tсен min rim gyis 'jug pa gnyis...*

¹¹⁵ Seyfort Ruegg (1989: 63, n. 120).

supplemented *Sba bzhed* has here virtually the same reading as Nyang ral [or should we reverse the relative chronology implied by this statement?] and the anonymous biography — it is immediately preceded by the quotation from the *Chos 'byung* on the import of these Chinese expressions —, this is not the case for the Beijing recension of this work. The passage in Nyang ral, the supplemented *Sba bzhed* and the anonymous biography state in all their text-critical complexity, a number of aspects of which I have obviously been unable to dissolve successfully¹¹⁶:

*btsan pos rgya'i ston pa'i^a chos 'di^b min^c nam^b byas pas^d
ston min pa bya bar grags / drang srong bzod pas^e /^f lus la
me spar nas mchod pa phul bas^g /^h sems can^f la brtse ba'i
sgo nas tshogs bsags pa gal che byas pas / btsan po na re /
lus la me spar ba'i brtse ba de yang /ⁱ chos min nam byas
pas^j brtse^k min pa bya bar grags so //*

^a SBch/p: *pas*.

^b NYANG/b/m: omit; MES: *de chos*.

^c NYANGm: *men*.

^d NYANGm, SBch/p, MES: add /.

^e MES: *pa bas*.

^f MES: omits.

^g NYANG, SBch/p,

MES: omit.

^h NYANGm, MES: omit.

ⁱ SBch/p, MES: omit.

^j SBch/p: add /.

^k SBch/p, MES: *brtsen*.

Because the Mighty One had said: "This is not the doctrine of the Chinese teacher?," this position became known as *ston min pa*, 'that which is not of the teacher.' Because the sage Bzod pa had said: "The gathering of the accumulations of merit and gnosis on account of having loving kindness for sentient beings, exemplified by giving offerings through setting fire to one's body, is vital," they became known as 'those who are not kind' due to the Mighty One saying in response: "Is not also the loving kindness consisting of setting fire to one's body dharma?"

The Beijing text of the *Sba bzhed* states the matter somewhat differently, albeit also a trifle obscurely, in the following words¹¹⁷:

btsan pos rgya'i ston pa'i chos 'di bag tsam mnam ba^a min

¹¹⁶ SBch, 160 [SBp, 54, Tong-Huang 1990: 48], NYANG, 398 [NYANGb, 465, NYANGm, 287/2-288/2], MES, 241-2.

¹¹⁷ SBb, 64-5.

*nam byas pas ston min pa bya bar grags / gcig shos na re /
drang srong bzod par smra bas lus la me btang nas kyang
mchod pa phul bas sems can la brtse ba'i bsam pas tshogs
gsog pa gal che zer bas / rgyal po na re / lus la me gtong
ba'i brtse ba de yang chos min nam byas pas brtse min pa
bya bar grags /*

^a Read *pa*.

Because the Mighty One had said: "Is not this doctrine of the Chinese teacher a trifle suspect [lit. a trifle smelly]?", it became known as 'that which is not of the teacher.' Another had said: "According to what is stated by the seer Bzod pa^a, namely, gathering the accumulations of merit and gnosis consisting of a loving thought for sentient beings by means of giving an offering even through having set fire to one's body, is vital." Thus, inasmuch as the emperor replied: "Is not also the loving kindness of setting fire to one's body dharma?", they became known as 'those who are not with loving kindness' (*brtse min pa*).

^a At my peril, I emend the text to *drang srong bzod pas smras pas!*

Do the *Sba bzhed* recensions, Nyang ral and the anonymous biography give credence to these pseudo-etymologies? The answer is flatly, no! Firstly, it is certain that the correlates of *cig car ba* and *rim gyis pa* were known to the Tibetans of the ninth and twelfth centuries. Indeed, we find these pairs unambiguously used in both the *Sba bzhed* texts, Gnubs Sang rgyas ye shes' (9th c.) well-known *Bsam gtan mig sgron*, Nyang ral's work, and other authorities. And secondly, these are placed in the mouth of the emperor who, as the sources tell us, was conversant in neither Sanskrit [or some other Indo-Aryan medium] nor Chinese, inasmuch as he required interpreters in both languages during the proceedings of the debates, and someone else. The etymology of *rtsen / brtse min pa* is of course also rather puzzling, for it too would fit quite well with the kind of things that went on in the way of self-immolation among the followers of the Chinese position. In fact, it stands in flat contradiction with what is transmitted about Kamalaśīla and Ye shes dbang po.

Furthermore, it is not all that obvious that Bu ston relied "solely" on one or other *Sba bzhed* texts for the narrative of the debate or, what should not be ruled out, of the yet to be unearthed cognate

texts of the *Bla bzhed*, or even *Rgyal bzhed*, the existence of which was first indicated by Sa skya Paṇḍita. The evidence adduced for this or, perhaps better, the evidence that can be adduced, is simply too thin for such a conclusion. Seyfort Ruegg formulated a more sober and circumspect judgment in his assessment of the possible intertextual relations that may exist among them, though he does not discuss the relative textual position of the anonymous biography. In terms of the *Chos 'byung*, he states that Bu ston's source for the debates "may well have been a *Sba bzhed*; at any rate, the accounts of [the debates, vdK]...we find in both texts are clearly closely related."¹¹⁸ And he observes in connection with the putative relationship between Nyang ral's text and the two recensions of the *Sba bzhed*, that certain differences in their accounts may be due to the circumstance that Nyang ral may have used ancient records of the Nyang/Myang clan, possibly then of Nyang/Myang Sha mi, that are reflected in what he perceives to be a different and more positive assessment of the Chinese teachings.¹¹⁹ Moreover, he quite rightly notes that the variant readings found in the two *Sba bzhed* texts are certainly not more grave or significant than those met with in Nyang ral's text and the *Sba bzhed*s individually. This observation certainly undermines the more sweeping scenario that is occasionally voiced, namely that Nyang ral had incorporated in his chronicle "long passages" of the supplemented *Sba bzhed*.

Both the *Sba bzhed* and the *Dbal bzhed*, as well as the anonymous biography, record the emperor's delight with the ordination of the first Tibetan men and his overbulliance which, they allege, resulted in him wanting to have his wives who did not reign (*btsun mo srid ma zin pa*) and all the sons of his *zhang blon* to take religious vows as well. This did not sit well with the members of his court, and the more soberminded among his ministers objected with rather compelling fiscal and strategic arguments to the effect that, the state being then charged with their maintenance, the imperial coffers would be overburdened and the military would be undermined because of the absence of sufficient manpower. Ultimately, Khri srong lde btsan relented, but his intemperate attitude to the newly introduced Bud-

¹¹⁸ Seyfort Ruegg (1989: 70).

¹¹⁹ Seyfort Ruegg (1989: 90-1). I do not think that we can readily assent to his interpretation of the phrase uttered by Khri srong lde btsan upon the defeat of Hwa shang Mahāyāna, namely *don la mi mthun pa tsam mi 'dug ste*, by his paraphrase "in substance there was no disagreement between the two opponents," which he proposes to indicate that Nyang ral [?or better, Khri srong lde btsan] was not unfavorable to the Hwa shang. In my view, it ought be rendered as: "There was no mere disagreement in substance," meaning that the disagreements were significant and serious.

dhist faith, which he was the first to elevate to a state religion, was an ominous sign. Later, the reportedly rather excessive devotion to Buddhism on the part of his grandson Khri gtsug lde btsan, alias Ral pa can, would become one of the causes for the 841-2 persecution that virtually wiped Central Tibet clean of its major institutions — one cannot help but notice that this persecution occurred almost at the same time as the one that raged in Tang China from 842 to 845. Much later Tibetan sources suggest that his fratricidal elder brother Glang dar ma (803-42) had a hand in this. On the other hand, more contemporary sources suggest that he may not have been necessarily ill disposed towards Buddhist institutions.¹²⁰

But let us now turn to Dpa' bo II's text-critical remarks concerning the aforementioned passage of the *Chos 'byung*.¹²¹ Of interest is that the passage he quotes from "the extensive recension" of the *Sba bzhed* omits Sba Khri bzher, so that it has a total of five men who were ordained subsequent to the earlier ordination of Sba Khri gzigs. Another point he makes there is that, although a substantial number of texts, including Bu ston's *Chos 'byung*, write "Bya Khri gzigs", the name is in fact a corruption (*yi ge nyams*) of "Sba Khri gzigs." As for the different listings of the first ordained Tibetans, Dpa' bo II then writes anent what we have called Scenario Two:

*kha cig rba bzhed kyī sad mi drug po'i legs gsum gyi tshab
tu gtsang legs grub brjes / ngan lam gyi 'og tu khon klu'i
dbang po bcug pa la sad mi bdun byed par snang ngo /*

Some sources exchange Legs gsum of the six exam-

¹²⁰ On the question of the historical import of the manuscript of Pelliot tibétain 134 in connection with Glang dar ma's turbulent reign, see lastly C.A. Scherrer-Schaub, "Prière pour un apostat — Fragment d'histoire tibétaine," *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 11 (1999), 217-46, in which she quite convincingly argues that the 'Wu'i dun brtan for whose benefit (*sku yon*) this prayer is dedicated is none other than Glang dar ma. Whereas such a work is not registered in the *Lhan* [or: *Ldan*] *dkar ma* catalog, the *'Phang thang ma* lists a little work on Madhyamaka by a certain Btsan po Dba' dun brtan, the orthography of which is but yet another scribal mishap; see *Dkar chag 'phang thang ma / Sgra sbyor bam po gnyis pa*, ed. Bod ljongs rten rdzas bshams mdzod khang (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2003), 57. Scherrer-Schaub's essay and this datum may have some repercussions for the way in which we need to view this last emperor of imperial Tibet. The misidentified, anonymous chronicle of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism [see n. 45] in a collection of *Dba' / Sba bzhed* texts has it *inter alia* that he founded the temples or monasteries (*gtsug lag khang*) of Khra sna and Spa gro Stag go phug po che, and that his wife Tshes spong za Btsan mo 'phan founded the temple or monastery of Bsam grub lcam bu; see *Dba' bzhed*, ed. Longs khang Phun tshogs rdo rje, Gangs can rig mdzod 56 (Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 2010), 291.

¹²¹ DPA'(p), 356-7 [DPA', 361]; see also Huang-Zhou (2010: 168).

ined individuals of the *Rba* [read: *Sba*] *bzhed* with Gtsang Legs grub and, having inserted 'Khon Klu'i dbang po after Ngan lam, appear to create seven examined individuals.

At this juncture, he also states, in obvious connection with the Zhwa lu print of the *Chos 'byung*, that:

bu ston chos 'byung du'ang par brko dus zhuz dag pas nyams pa yin nam kun mkhyen bu ston lta bu 'di tsam la mi 'khrul mod kyang thog mar bya khri gzigs rab tu phyung bas mngon shes lnga dang ldan par gyur to // de nas rba gsal snang / rba khri bzher / sang shi ta / pa gor bai ro tsa na / ngan lam rgyal mchog / 'khon klu'i dbang po srung ba / rma rin chen mchog / gtsang legs grub dang bdun rab tu byung ba'i mtshan ye shes dbang po dang dpal dbyangs la sogs pa yin / sad mi bdun yin zer ro zhes rba khri gzigs dang po dang gsum pa gnyis kar lan re grangs / khri bzher gyi bu sang shi ta zhes pa'i bu dang rnam dbye chad / gcod mtshams nyams pas ming gnyis su song / dgu pa'am brgyad grangs nas mi bdun yin zhes pa dang / rba ratna'i ming ye shes dbang po yin pa 'dra ba sogs nag nog che bar snang ngo //

Is it a corruption introduced in Bu ston's chronicle by the editors at the time when the blocks were being cut? Although a scholar like the all-knowing Bu ston would indeed not err in merely something like this, inasmuch as Bya khri gzigs had first renounced the world, he would have been the one endowed with the five types of paranormal cognition. Then, the names in religion of the seven initiated ones: Rba Gsal snang, Rba Khri bzher, Sang shi ta, Pa gor Vairocana, Ngan lam Rgyal mchog, 'Khon Klu'i dbang po srung ba, Rma Rin chen mchog, Gtsang Legs grub, were "Ye shes dbang po," "Dpal dbyangs" etc. They are called the "seven examined individuals." Rba Khri gzigs, the first, and the third Rba Khri bzher are counted twice and the word "son" and the case ending (*rnam dbye*) in *khri bzher gyi bu sang shi ta* were omitted. Since the dividing punctuation-line (*gcod mtshams*) became corrupted, two names came about. Enumerating nine or eight, the text states these involved seven individuals. And there appears to have been a great deal of confu-

sion about the name of Sba Ratna seemingly being "Ye shes dbang po" etc.

Finally, as a further testimony to the problematic transmission of the names of the first ordained monks in the *Chos 'byung*, the *dbu med* manuscript of this work has a rather different text for the first part of the various prints in which Bu ston mentions another take on the names of the first seven ordained Tibetans; it states¹²²:

rgan 3 ni dbas ma ñdzu shrī [sublinear gloss: *rgyal po lcags pho rta lo pa lnga bcu rtsa drug la 'das pas bsam yas lcags po stag la rmang bting zer ba'ang 'dug*] / *dbas ratna rakṣita* / *bran ka mu ti ka* / *gzhon 3 ni* / *'khon nā ge ndra* / *pa gor bai ro tsa na* / *rtsang pa de wentra'o* // *bar pa glang ka ta na* / *rab tu byung ba'i mtshan ye shes dbang po yin la* / *mkhan po dā na śī las byas zhes kha 1 zer ro*

[Scenario One]

Some have alleged: The three older ones:

- [1] Dbas Ma ñdzu shrī {sublinear gloss: it is also said that: "Since the emperor passed on at the age of fifty-six [= fifty-five] in the iron-male-horse year [790], Bsam yas was built in the iron-male-tiger [year, 750]}."
- [2] Dbas Ratnarakṣita
- [3] Bran ka Mu ti ka.

The three younger ones:

- [4] 'Khon Nā ge ndra
- [5] Pa gor Bai ro tsa na
- [6] Rtsang De wentra.

The middle one:

- [7] Glang Ka ta na.

[?Dbas Ma ñdzu shrī's] ecclesiastic name was Ye shes dbang po and that the function of the abbot was performed by Dānaśīla [and not by Śāntarakṣita].

¹²² BUM, 1191.

To be noted, again, is that the manuscript has the same interlinear note as the Lhasa print. Further, even if it does not share with the four prints the same orthography for the clan name Dbas/Sba/Dbā'/Dpal, it does share with the Lhasa print the enumeration of the same individuals in Scenarios One and Two. However, like these prints, it has no *shad* / between 'Ba Khri bzher and Sang shi ta.

Now Tucci discussed the problems surrounding the identities of these first Tibetan monks almost fifty years ago. Little wonder, then, that we must now take some exception to two of his comments on Bu ston's listings. For one, he argued that Bu ston was politically motivated when he included 'Khon Klu'i dbang po [= 'Khon Nā ge ndra rakṣita, 'Khon Klu'i dbang po srung ba — *srung* and its variants *bsrungs* and *bsrung* are homophones], an ancestor of the 'Khon clan to which the ruling families of Sa skya belonged. That is to say, the fact that Bu ston placed him in the listing of the first Tibetan monks was due to the crucial importance Sa skya played at the time of his writing as Central Tibet's center of political power, albeit for the Mongol overlords.¹²³ This argument can now be safely dismissed, for the very simple reason that there is a much earlier precedent for his appearance among these “seven examined individuals,” one with which Bu ston was most probably quite familiar and which he obviously did not need to make up for political or diplomatic reasons. Writing more than a hundred years before him, Rje btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan already mentions 'Khon Klu'i dbang po in these very terms¹²⁴.

¹²³ Tucci (Part Two, 1986: 16-7).

¹²⁴ RJE, 84/1. For an in depth discussion of various scenarios offered in Sa skya scholarship such as the writings of Rje btsun, see A mes zhabs 1629 study of Sa skya's ruling families, *Sa skya gdung rabs ngo mtshar bang mdzod*, ed. Rdo rje rgyal po (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1986), 13. Rje btsun's genealogy is partly followed in the introduction of Shar pa Ye shes rgyal mtshan's (?1222-?1287) biography of 'Phags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1235-80) of 1283, for which see *Bla ma dam pa chos kyi rgyal po rin po che'i rnam par thar pa rin chen phreng ba, The Slob bshad Tradition of the Sa skya Lam 'bras*, vol. 1 (Dehra Dun, 1983), 291 ff. The very same genealogy is equally registered by Bla ma dam pa in BLA, 6-7 [BLAM, 3a-b], where the first seven Tibetan monks are also enumerated with their names in Sanskrit and Tibetan, namely the three older ones: Dbas Ratnarakṣita Rin chen srung ba — he is said to have been the first of these —, Bha Dznyā nedra rakṣi ta Ye shes dbang po srung ba, Ratna indra rakṣi ta Rin chen dbang po srung ba, the middle one Glang Su ga ta varman rakṣi ta Bde bar gshegs pa'i go cha srung ba, and the three younger ones: Pa gor Bai ro tsa na rakṣi ta Rnam par snang mdzad srung ba, 'Khon Nā gendra rakṣi ta Klu'i dbang po srung ba and Gtsang De wendra rakṣi ta Lha'i dbang po srung ba. This listing is quite different from the one we encounter in RJE2, for which see below, and in *Rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long*, for which see RGYAL, 204-5 [Sørensen 1994: 369-70].

*de 'ang bod kyi dpal 'phrul gyi rgyal po khri srong lde
btsan gyi sku ring la sgra sgyur gyi lo tsā ba sad mi mi
bdun zhes bya ba las gzhon gsum gyi nang nas mkhas par
byed pa 'khon klu'i dbang po zhes bya ba yin no //*

Now, during the lifetime of the illustrious majestic emperor of Tibet Khri srong lde btsan, the one who acted as a scholar from among the three younger ones in [the grouping of] the so-called "seven examined men," the *lo tsā ba*-s who translate, was [an individual] called 'Khon Klu'i dbang po.

And elsewhere this same author had it that¹²⁵:

*sa yi bdag po nyid kyis rgyun du mchod pa'i sad mi mi
bdun las gzhon pa gsum du grags pa'i nang nas / yon tan
dpag tu med pa dang ldan zhing tshul khrims dri ma med
la / mngon par shes pa mnga' zhing rdzu 'phrul thogs pa
med pa dang ldan pa / 'khon klu'i dbang po'i bsrung ba
zhes bya'o //*

From among the renowned three younger ones in the grouping of the seven examined individuals who were continuously worshipped by the Lord of the Earth Khri srong lde btsan himself, there was an individual called 'Khon Klu'i dbang po'i bsrung ba with immeasurable qualities and stainless ethics, with prescience and unimpeded wondrousness.

In the preamble to his undated commentary of the *Vajravīdāraṇā-dhāraṇī* where he details its history of transmission in Tibet, Rje btsun writes that it was translated into Tibetan during the second half of Srong btsan sgam po's life, and adds that it was the earliest Buddhist text that was rendered into Tibetan (*bod la bsgyur ba la 'di snga ba yin no //*). To my knowledge, this is an unprecedented statement. He then proceeds to give what amounts to the earliest datable listing of the *sad mi mi bdun*. Equating them once again with translators, he writes¹²⁶:

¹²⁵ RJE2, 277/2. I owe this very important reference to Khang dkar (1985: 204). The little canonical work is found in TT, vol. 19, no. 745 [# 750], 241/5-7 [Dza, 265b-6b].

¹²⁶ RJE2, 277/2.

*rgan gsum / gzhon gsum / bar pa ni btsun pa ye shes dbang
po bya ba yin te / de dang bdun no // rgan gsum ni dbas
manydzu shrī dang / gtsang shī lendra dang / bran ka mu
ki ta'o // gzhon gsum ni / pa gor bai ro tsa na / 'khon klu'i
dbang po dang / gtsang de bendra rakṣita'o //*

The three older ones, three younger ones; the middle one was called Reverend (*btsun pa*) Ye shes dbang po; together with him, seven. The three older ones: Dbas Manydzu (*sic*) shrī, Gtsang Shī lendra [Tshul khrimś dbang po] and Bran ka Mu ki ta. The three younger ones: Pa gor Vairocana, 'Khon Klu'i dbang po and Gtsang De bendra rakṣita [= Lha'i dbang po srung ba].

I do not understand why Rje btsun, or the source to which he had access, relegated Ye shes dbang po to the middle rather than the most senior position, as we find in most other authorities. Both available versions of the *Sba bzhed* make it plain that "Ye shes dbang po" is the name in religion of Gsal snang, who was ordained by Śāntarakṣita in Mang yul prior to his ultimate departure for and sojourn in Central Tibet.¹²⁷ The texts of the *Sba bzhed* and the *Dbā' bzhed*, as well as Nyang ral's chronicle, agree that after Śāntarakṣita had passed away the emperor appointed Sba Gsal snang, alias Sba Ye shes dbang po, as the first Tibetan religious leader (*ring lugs*)¹²⁸ of the Buddhist community. And this is somewhat supported by an undated manuscript from Dunhuang, which can only be dated to not later than the first half of the eleventh century. There Dba' btsun ba Yes she [read: btsun pa Ye shes] dbang po and Dba' Dpal dbyangs are listed, in this order, among Śāntarakṣita's disciples.¹²⁹ Arguably, in-

¹²⁷ SBP, 11-2 [SBCh, 98-9, Tong-Huang 1990: 13], SBB, 11-2, and MES, 180-1. This narrative is missing from Nyang ral's treatise.

¹²⁸ On the title of *ring lugs*, see Chen Jianjian, "Tibetan *ring lugs* — An Investigation into the Evolution of the Term — Studies of Old Tibetan Terms from Dunhuang Texts, 1 [in Chinese]," *Zhongguo zangxue* 3 (1991), 134-40; a shorter version of this paper was published by the same author under her Tibetan name "Bsod nams skyid" as "Ring lugs zhes pa'i tha snyad kyi go don 'gyur tshul la rags tsam dpyad pa," *Tibetan Studies. Proceedings of the 6th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies Fagernes 1992*, vol. 2, ed. P. Kvaerne (Oslo: The Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, 1994), 781-8. For another view, see M. Walter, "The Significance of the Term *ring lugs*: Religion, Administration and the Sacral Presence of the Btsan po," *Acta Orientalia Hungarica* 51 (1998), 309-19.

¹²⁹ Thomas (1951: 85-6); see also SBB, 62, SBP, 53 [SBCh, 159, Tong-Huang 1990: 47], and MES, 240 — only the latter uses the term *chos dpon* instead of *ring lugs*. The manuscripts of Nyang ral's work have here the unintelligible combination of *chos dpon du ring lugs*; see NYANG, 396 [NYANGb, 462, NYANGm, 424b]. When he left

dicators of Ye shes dbang po's senior and superior status are that he is listed first and that *btsun pa*, "reverend," is only affixed to his name. Of course, there is nothing in the book that would preclude us to conjecture that Rje btsun had included 'Khon Klu'i dbang po so as to further the respectability of his family. But it is clear that as far as Bu ston was only following a well-established tradition, invented or not, and did not fudge his sources in order to make a flattering statement in consonance with the political realities of his time. These items notwithstanding, 'Khon Klu'i dbang po inclusion is perhaps not entirely free from controversy. Indeed, Dpa' bo II cites a passage from the *Lo rgyus chen mo*, the *Great Annals* that is attributed to Khu ston Brtson 'grus g.yung drung (1011-75), in which he does *not* figure among a grouping of the six men who were the first ordained Tibetans!¹³⁰

We can also not give our unqualified assent to another one of Tucci's arguments, this one a bit confusing, for Bu ston having included Glang Ka ta na in his listing of these men. Glang Ka ta na but figures in the *Chos 'byung's* listing of what I have called Scenario One. This by no means necessarily reflects Bu ston's own position, although we can be sure it was the one held by Mang thos! Tucci argues furthermore that the latter is identical to Rlangs Sugatavarman - *glang* and *rlangs* are of course homophones — according to the listings in the later history of Ngor chen Dkon mchog lhun grub (1497-1557) and Ngor chen Sangs rgyas phun tshogs (1649-1705).¹³¹ But the Tibetan sources do not suggest that these two names refer to one and the same individual, and we cannot assume that this was the case just because the *Chos 'byung's* Scenario One has Glang Ka ta na and the chronicle of Rgyal sras Thugs mchog rtsal, an undated fragment of an unidentified chronicle,¹³² and the portion of the history attributed to Ngor chen Dkon mchog lhun grub have Rlangs/Glang Sugatavarman occupy the "middle" (*bar pa*) position. A branch of the Rlangs clan did not *de facto* achieve political paramountcy in Tibet until the 1350s under the leadership of Ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal

for Lho brag to embark on a lengthy meditative retreat, the emperor appointed Sba Dpal dbyangs as *ring lugs*; see SBB, 64, and SBP, 54 [SBCh, 160, Tong-Huang 1990: 48]. Whereas MES, 241, has here simply [and wrongly] *slob dpon*, "master," the manuscripts of Nyang ral's treatise use the term *chos dpon*, "master of religion"; see NYANG, 397 [NYANGb, 464, NYANGm, 425b].

¹³⁰ DPA'(p), 357 [DPA', 361-2]. For the *Lo rgyus chen mo*, see the note in Martin (1997: 26).

¹³¹ Tucci (Part Two, 1986: 16).

¹³² THUGS, 263, and the anonymous *Bod gangs can du bstan pa dang bstan 'dzin ci ltar byon pa'i rag rim gcig bsdus te phyogs gcig tu bsgrigs pa'i zin ris* (sic) (Gangtok, 1976), 668-9. We will see below that he is also listed by Cha gan albeit not in the center-position.

mtshan (1302-64), who himself had been appointed myriarch of Phag mo gru myriarchy on September 23, 1322. If so, one would have to wonder why we do not expressly encounter his name in the *Padma bka' thang* or, for that matter, the *Bka' thang sde lnga*, for these works surfaced when he was gaining or was in firm control first of Dbus and then of Gtsang as well. An enigma, a Glang Ka ta na is nowhere registered in the extant genealogies of the Rlangs clan or in Ta'i si tu's autobiography. In the latter, Ta'i si tu but indicates that there was a connection between the Rlangs and the 'Khon families as long ago as the second half of the eighth century. During a difficult political meeting held in Rab btsun sometime around the year 1351, he had made a speech in which he remarked on the close teacher-disciple relationship that had existed between 'Khon Klu'i dbang po and the "spiritual friend" (*dge bshes*) Rlangs Khams pa Go cha.¹³³ At first glance we may consider this a rhetorical ploy on his part in his attempt to provide a historical precedent that might be used towards a reconciliation of sorts with the powers at Sa skya and its 'Khon family. But was it one? It is curious or was *this* politically motivated that, earlier, Bla ma dam pa had even gone so far as to suggest, in an apparently unprecedented fashion, that both Rlangs Khams pa Go cha and Thon mi Sambhoṭa were responsible for the creation of the Tibetan script in the first half of the seventh century!¹³⁴ One of the two major genealogies of the Rlangs clan briefly observes that Rlangs Khams pa Go cha and Rlangs Khams pa Bai ro tsa na [= Vairocana] were two Tibetan translators of Buddhist scripture. And it says rather vaguely that they lived "during the lifetime[s] of the three *rgyal po me[s] dbon*," that is, in Tibet's imperial period.¹³⁵ Some colophons of a Tibetan rendition of the *Śatasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*¹³⁶ associate

¹³³ See his *Bka' chems mthong ba don ldan*, *Rlangs kyi po ti bse ru rgyas pa*, ed. Chab spel Tshe brtan phun tshogs, *Gangs can rig mdzod 1* (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1986), 205.

¹³⁴ BLA, 6 [= BLAm, 3a]. This is absent from *Rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long*, which only registers Thon mi as the author of the Tibetan script; see Sørensen (1994: 167 ff.).

¹³⁵ See the anonymous RLANGS, 37 [RLANGS1, 176].

¹³⁶ See my forthcoming "Notes on the Diffusion of the Translations of the Large *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* (*Yum rgyas pa*) in Early Tibet." See also the Dalai Lama V's *Record of Teachings Received. The Gsan-yig of the Fifth Dalai Lama Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho*, vol. 4 (New Delhi, 1971), 301. Rlangs Khams pa Go cha is already mentioned in connection with this sutra in NYANG, 394; NYANGb, 461 has here "Glang 'Khams Go cha," and NYANGm, 423b, "Glang Khams Go cha." NYANG, 398 [NYANGb, 465, NYANGm, 427b] refers to a Khams pa Go cha as a Senior Interior Minister (*nang blon chen po*), who was dispatched to Lho brag by Khri srong lde btsan to fetch Sba Ye shes dbang po in order that he put a stop to the spate of self-mutilations and suicides that ensued in the aftermath of the debates between the parties led by Hwa shang Mahāyāna and Kamalaśīla. Khams pa Go cha must have felt a sense of urgency, for his sovereign had told him that he would be ex-

Rlangs Khams pa Go cha with an early translation of this text and indicate that he flourished in the second half of the eighth century. This means that at least the time-period presumed by Ta'i si tu's assertion is right on target and that he was not subordinating history to his ideological and political ambitions and will. Strangely and inexplicably, the list of names of the Tibetan translators in the prints and the manuscript of the *Chos 'byung* consistently prefix Khams pa Go cha's name by "Nyang" and not "Rlangs," but there is enough evidence for holding that this is an old contamination and/or "carvo" of the text.¹³⁷ The by far shorter genealogy of the Rlangs clan but mentions a Su ka/ga ta go cha, that is, *Sugatavarma, as the second son of Gser pa Rgyal 'bring shang rdzong and the younger brother of Rgyal btsan klu bzher.¹³⁸ On the other hand, he figures much more prominently in the longer, more thick description of the Rlangs clan as a contemporary of Padmasambhava and Myang/Nyang Ting nge 'dzin bzang po, but not explicitly as having been one of the "examined individuals."¹³⁹ As is suggested by the citation from Yar lung Jo bo Shākya rin chen sde's chronicle of 1376 in the next paragraph, a scion of the 'Khon family had even taken a sister of Rlangs Khams pa Lo tsā ba as his wife! Further, A mes zhabs equates Rlangs Khams pa Lo tsā ba with Rlangs Bde bar gshegs pa go cha bsrungs pa.¹⁴⁰ So far, the earliest source for his inclusion in the listing of these men is the 1304 history of the *Lam 'bras* teachings by Cha gan Dbang phyug rgyal mtshan, for which see below, and the same recurs in Tshe

ecuted were he not to find him and be unsuccessful in having Sba Ye shes dbang po return to the court. In SBb, 65, he is called Interior Minister (*nang blon*) Khams pa, and Minister (*blon po*) Kham pa in SBch, 161 [Tong-Huang 1990: 49], SBp, 55; MES, 242, has the problematic [and nonsensical] "Interior Minister Minister" (*nang blon blon*) Kham[s] pa. The question is whether this man and Rlangs Khams pa Go cha are one and the same and my surmise is that they are.

¹³⁷ Szerb (1990: 114) and BUM, 1230. We find the same "Nyang Khams pa Go cha" noted in the Lhasa Zhol print of the catalog section of the *Chos 'byung* anent the translation of the *Śatasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*, for which see Nishioka, "An Index to the Catalog Section of 'Bu ston's Chronicle of Buddhism' I, "Tōkyō daigaku bungakubu bunka kōryō kenkyū shisetsu kenkyū kiyō 4 (1980), 68. Nyang Khams pa Go cha is also registered in the listing of the first translators and men of religion in the Sde dge print of the PBT, 415. On the other hand, the cognate listing in the *Lo pan bka' i thang yig*, in BPSL, 404, has "Khams pa Go cha."

¹³⁸ See the anonymous *Lha rigs rlangs kyi skye rgyud*, *Rlangs kyi po ti bse ru rgyas pa*, ed. Chab spel Tshe brtan phun tshogs, Gangs can rig mdzod 1 (Lhasa: Xizang minzu chubanshe, 1986), 21, and the *Rlangs kyi gdung rgyud po ti bse ru*, another manuscript of the text [pp. 97-159], in *The History of the Gnyos Lineage of Kha rag...* (Dolanji, 1978), 146.

¹³⁹ RLANGS, 91-6 [RLANGS1, 316-28].

¹⁴⁰ *Sa skya gdung rabs ngo mtshar bang mdzod*, 12-3.

dbang rgyal's 1447 study of the Mar pa Bka' brgyud pa tradition.¹⁴¹ Neither Cha gan nor Tshe dbang rgyal is known to have had an axe to grind with this listing.

Judging from several of his remarks in his chronicle, Yar lung Jo bo enjoyed excellent relations with Bdag chen Kun dga' rin chen (1339-99), the seventeenth grand-abbot of Sa skya monastery. It was most likely through him that he was granted access to some of Sa skya's most "private" documents, the family chronicles of that branch of the 'Khon clan that had founded and controlled, if not always wholly successfully, Sa skya and her estates. In fact, his exposition of the early history of this clan in his chronicle is surprisingly comprehensive and it appears to have been used rather extensively later on by Stag tshang pa Dpal 'byor bzang po in his compilation of 1434 [and somewhat beyond].¹⁴² The passage from Yar lung Jo bo's chronicle to which I should like to draw attention has to do with the fortunes of the family during the reign of Khri srong lde btsan and its nuptial ties with the Rlangs clan. The text states¹⁴³:

*de'i dus su bod na sprul pa'i rgyal po khri srong lde btsan
bzhugs pa'i sku ring la / za hor gyi mkhan po zhi ba 'tsho
gdan drangs / de'i slob bu bod kyi btsun pa la snga ba sad
mi mi bdun du grags pa yod / rgan gsum /^a gzhon gsum /^a
bar pa^b dang bdun yod pa la / bar pa rlangs^c khams pa su ga
ta warma rakši ta zhes bya ste / bod skad du bde bar gshegs
pa bsrung ba zhes bya'o //
dkon pa rje gung stag ni blo che zhing 'jig rten gyi bya ba
la mkhas pas /^d rgyal po'i nang rje bo^e yun ring du byas /
de'i ming 'khon dpal po che zhes kyang grags so // des
brlangs^c khams pa lotstsha ba'i bu mo brlangs^c za sne
chung ma bya ba khab tu bzhes pa la / sras gnyis byung
ba'i che ba des /^a dba' ye shes dbang po dang / rang gi
zhang po'i thad du rab tu byung ste / 'khon klu'i dbang po
bsrung ba zhes bya'o //
'ga' zhig gis^d mkhan po zhi ba 'tsho yin la / slob dpon rang*

¹⁴¹ *Lho rong chos 'byung*, ed. Gling dpon Pdama skal bzang and Ma grong Mi 'gyur rdo rje, Gangs can rig mdzod 26 (Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 1994), 368.

¹⁴² See the *Rgya bod yig tshang chen mo*, ed. Dung dkar Blo bzang 'phrin las (Cheng du: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1985), 307-8; for a translation from the University of Washington manuscript of the text, see E.G. Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts. History & Literature of the Himalayan Plateau*, ed. K.R. Schaeffer, Studies in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001), 104. It turns out that Dpal 'byor bzang po was the uncle of the better known Stag tshang Lo tsā ba Shes rab rin chen (1405-77).

¹⁴³ YAR, 142-3 [YAR1, 137-8].

*gi zhang po yin zer ro // gang ltar yang / lo tstsha ba gzhon
gsum gyi nang nas thugs rab che ba / 'khon na ga inda^f
rakṣi ta zhes pa sngags dang mtshan nyid kyi yon tan phun
sum tshogs pa mnga' bas / de nas 'khon la grags pa chen po
byung ba yin no //*

^a YAR1 omits.

^c YAR *brlangs*. ^e YAR1 *kha*.

^b YAR1 adds *gcig*.

^d YAR omits. ^f YAR1 *itra*.

At that time, during the time when Khri srong lde btsan, wondrously emanated ruler (*sprul pa'i rgyal po*), dwelled in Tibet, Śāntarakṣita, abbot from Za hor, was invited. As for his ordinandi (*slob bu*), the Tibetan monks, the earliest were known as the seven examined ones. As for those who were the seven, to wit, the three older ones, the three younger ones, and the middle one, the middle one was one called Rlangs Khams pa Su ga ta varman rakṣi ta; in Tibetan he was called Bde bar gshegs pa [add: *go cha* (= *varman*)] bsrung ba.

Inasmuch as Dkon pa Rje Gung stag was of great intelligence and learned in the ways of the world, he acted for a long time as head of the [?imperial] household (*nang rje bo*). He is also known as 'Khon Dpal po che.

He took for his wife Rlangs za [better: *bza'*] Sne chung ma, the sister of Rlangs Khams pa Lo tsā ba, and the eldest of the two sons that were born to them took his vows in the presence of Dba' Ye shes dbang po [bsrung ba]¹⁴⁴ and his own maternal uncle; he was called 'Khon Klu'i dbang po bsrung ba.

Some alleged that while the officiating abbot was Śāntarakṣita, the officiating preceptor (*slob dpon*) was his own maternal uncle.¹⁴⁵ Whatever the case might have been, since the one called 'Khon Na ga indra rakṣi ta, the one with the highest spirituality among the three younger translators, was of excellent en-

¹⁴⁴ Gtsang Byams pa Rdo rje rgyal mtshan has *slob dpon zhi ba mtsho*, "Master Śāntarakṣita," instead of Yar lung Jo bo's *dba' ye shes dbang po*; see his *Sa skya mkhon* (*sic*) *gyi gdungs rab rin po che'i 'phreng ba*, 4b.

¹⁴⁵ On the basis of his name in religion, Stag tshang Lo tsā ba dismisses the allegation that he was ordained by his maternal uncle in his 1477 study of this family, the *Dpal ldan sa skya pa'i 'khon gyi gdung rabs 'dod dgu'i rgya mtsho*, *dbu med ms.*, C.P.N. catalog no. 002437, 8a.

dowment in mantric and philosophical Buddhism, great renown accrued henceforth to the 'Khon.

The succinct passage on the history of Buddhism in Tibet by Slob dpon Bsod nams rtse mo makes no mention of any *sad mi*.¹⁴⁶ In 1278, U rgyan pa Rin chen dpal (1230-1309) wrote a short royal genealogy (*rgyal rabs*), apparently or apocryphally on behalf of Emperor Qubilai.¹⁴⁷ Like the better known genealogies written by Rje btsun and 'Phags pa,¹⁴⁸ he, too, does not refer at all to the first ordained Tibetans and thus his work will also not detain us here.

In addition to the dossier on the "seven examined individuals" presented by Tucci and Khang dkar,¹⁴⁹ we can now draw brief attention to the following other listings of the "examined men" - the names given below are given exactly, warts and all, as they are found in the texts -, each of which predate Bu ston's *Chos 'byung*:

I. *Lde'u Jo sras¹⁵⁰

[1] Ca Dpal dbyangs, the earliest one (*snga ba*)

¹⁴⁶ See the *Chos la 'jug pa'i sgo*, SSBB vol. 2, no. 17, 343/2.

¹⁴⁷ *Rgyal rab[s] kyi[s] phreng ba*, *dbu med* ms., C.P.N. catalog no. 002898(8), fols. 13. Though not attested in the text itself, U rgyan pa's undated biography by his disciple Bsod nams 'od zer, does link its composition to Qubilai; see the *Grub chen o rgyan pa'i rnam par thar pa byin rlabs kyi chu rgyun* (Gangtok, 1976), 120 [Ibid., ed. Rta mgrin tshe dbang, Gangs can rig mdzod 32 (Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 1997), 171]. *Rgyal rabs kyi phreng ba*, fol. 13a, mentions Činggis Qan as a world-conqueror, but nowhere Qubilai himself and, in MANG, 65, 68, Mang thos refers to and quotes [or, better, paraphrases] passages from fols. 7b and 9a of this little treatise. For the environment in which U rgyan pa had written the latter, see my "U rgyan pa Rin chen dpal (1230-1309), Part Two: For Emperor Qubilai? His *Garland of Tales about Rivers*," *The Relationship between Religion and State (chos srid zung 'brel) in Traditional Tibet*, ed. C. Cüppers (Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2004), 299-339.

¹⁴⁸ These were edited in G. Tucci, *Deb t'er dmar po gsar ma. Tibetan Chronicles by Bsod nams grags pa*, vol. 1, Serie Orientale Roma XXIV (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1976), 127-35.

¹⁴⁹ Khang dkar (1985: 225).

¹⁵⁰ JO, 123-4. This listing is of course quite problematic were we to accept that this Lha lung Dpal gyi rdo rje is the same as the one who, according to wide-spread Tibetan opinion, ended up assassinating Glang dar ma in 842. Snyag Ku ma ra (*sic*) [read: Gnyags Ku mā ra] is probably to be identified as Gnyags Dznyā na ku mā ra [Jñānakumāra] or Ye shes gzhon nu; for him see the Gnyags family chronicle by Chos nyid ye shes of 1775, the *Gnyags ston pa'i gdung rabs dang gdan rabs*, ed. Rta mgrin tshe dbang, Gangs can rig mdzod 31 (Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 1997), 91-7. Already NYANG, 275 [NYANGA, 436, NYANGb, 317, NYANGM, 299a], states that he was a translator-Sanskritist under Khri srong lde btsan's father Khri lde gtsug btsan (r. 712-54/5), alias Mes ag tshom[s].

- [2] Gsal snang
- [3] Ngan lam Rgyal mchog dbyangs, the highest among the monks of a noble family (*btsun pa*)
- [4] Lha lung Dpal gyi rdo rje
- [5] Ā tsa [ra] Rin chen mchog, the highest among those of acute intellect (*blo rno ba'i rab*)
- [6] La gsum Rgyal ba'i dbang phyug
- [7] Bai ro tsa na, the highest among scholars (*mkhas pa'i rab*),

and then we have the other list:

- [1] Ā tsa rya Ye shes dbang po, the earliest one
- [2] Gnyan Ā tsa rya Dpal dbyangs, the highest among the learned one[s]
- [3] Rma Rin chen mchog
- [4] Snyags Ku ma ra
- [5] Nam mkha' snying po, the highest in spiritual power (*mthu*)

II. Mkhas pa Lde'u¹⁵¹

[The earliest monks, the two *ban dhe* (< *vandya*) of the Rba [family]

- [1] Sba Gsal snang
- [2] Sba Gsal sbyar
- [3] Btsun pa Ngan lam
- [4] Lha lung Dpal gyi rdo rje
- [5] Rin chen, the sharp-minded (*blo rno ba*)
- [6] Rgyal ba byang chub, [?who took his vows] three times (*lan gsum*)
- [7] Mkhas pa Bai ro tsa na

[The earliest elder (*gnas brtan*, **sthavira*)]

- [8] 'Or Rgyad kha phun
- [9] Sman Shākya
- [10] 'Gar Shākya
- [11] Snubs Nam mkha' snying po, the one of great magical power
- [12] Yon tan snying po, the sharp-minded
- [13] Myang [Rlangs] Khams pa Go cha, the sharp-minded with intelligence

III. Ne'u Paṇḍita¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ LDE'U, 358.

- [1] Rad na, the son of Rba Rmang gzigs
- [2] Shākya pra bha, the son of 'Chims A nu
- [3] Legs grub, the son of Rtsangs The len tra
- [4] Rba Dpal dbyangs
- [5] The son of Zhang Nyang bzangs
- [6] Hong len, the son of Shud
- [7] Rba Gsal snang

IV Cha gan¹⁵³

- [1] Pa kor Bai ro tsa na rakṣi ta
- [2] Dbas Dznya na in tra rakṣi ta
- [3] Bha Ratna intra rakṣi ta
- [4] Snyegs Sku ma ra intra rakṣi ta
- [5] Glang Su ga do varman rakṣi ta
- [6] 'Khon na ga intra rakṣi ta
- [7] Rtsang Dhe ba intra rakṣi ta'

Finally, a recently published chronicle of still unknown authorship that can most likely be dated to the first half of the fourteenth century records the following four alternate views on the examined seven [I transliterate and translate the passage, warts and all]¹⁵⁴:

dba' rad na [gloss: *rba lha lod kyi bu dpa' khri bzangs rab tu phyung ngo*] / *mchims* [gloss: *mchims a nu'i bu*] *shākya pra bha* / *rtsangs legs grub* / *dpa' 'or bai ro tsa na* / *zhang lha bu* / *shod bu khong len* / *dba' ye shes dbang po* [gloss: *dba' gsal snang* / *dba' ye shes dbang po* / *dba' rad na rnam rnam grangs su 'chad pa snang ngo //*] *dang bdun slob dpon zhi ba 'tshos rab tu phyung ngo //*
kha 1 nas dba' rad na / *dba' gsal snang* / *'ba' khri bzher sang shi ta* / *bai ro tsa na* / *ngan lam rgyal ba mchog dbyangs* / *dma' rin chen mchog las /rgyal ba'i byang chub dang bdun du 'chad la* /
kha 1 nas dba' manydzu shrī varma / *rtsangs the se na tra* / *bran ka mu ti* [gloss: *bran kha gu kha*] / *glang su kha*

¹⁵² NE'U, 21 [NE'U1, 19]. The first listing in THUGS, 263, corresponds to Ne'u Paṇḍita's grouping.

¹⁵³ CHA, 7a.

¹⁵⁴ Anonymous, *Rba bzhed (sic!), Dba' bzhed*, ed. Longs khang Phun tshogs rdo rje, 287; on this work, see my "A Hitherto Unknown Tibetan Religious Chronicle From the Early Fourteenth Century," which is forthcoming in *Zangxue xuekan / Journal of Tibetan Studies* 7 (2011).

[gloss: *in tra zer*] / *bai ro tsa na* / 'khon klu'i dbang po /
rtsags bai na tra rakṣi ta dang bdun du 'chad cing /
kha 1 nas dba' manydzu shri varma / *bran ka sgo'i dbang*
po bsrung ba / *rtsangs lha'i dbang po bsrung ba* / *bai ro tsa*
na / *klu'i dbang po bsrung ba* / *gzhon nu bsrung ba* / *lce*
khyi 'brug dang bdun du 'chad do //

[1] Dba' Rad na [gloss: Dba' Khri bzangs, the son of Rba Lha lod was ordained], Mchims [gloss: the son of Mchims A nu] Shākya pra bha, Rtsangs Legs grub, Dpa' 'or Bai ro tsa na, Zhang Lha nu, Shod bu Khong len, Dba' Ye shes dbang po [gloss: Dba' Gsal snang, Dba' Ye shes dbang po, and Dba' rad na appear to be the same]; the seven were ordained by Master Śāntarakṣita.

[2] Some state the seven to be: Dba' Rad na, Dba' gsal snang, 'Ba' Khri bzher sang shi ta, Bai ro tsa na, Ngam lam Rgyal ba mchog dbyangs, Dma' Rin chen mchog las, and Rgyal ba'i byang chub,

[3] and some state the seven to be: Dba' Manydzu shri varma, Rtsangs The se na tra, Bran ka Mu ti [gloss: Bran Kha gu kha], Glang Su kha [gloss: it is alleged {his name was} In tra], Bai ro tsa na, 'Khon Klu'i dbang po, and Rtsags Bai na rakṣi ta,

[4] and some state the seven to be: Dba' Manydzu shri varma, Bran ka Sgo'i dbang po bsrung ba, Rtsangs Lha'i dbang po bsrung ba, Bai ro tsa na, Klu'i dbang po bsrung ba, Gzhon nu bsrung ba, and Lce Khyi 'brug.

What can we do with these many disparate lists of the first ordained Tibetan men? How are these to be interpreted if not in the sense that somewhere along the line the tradition dropped the ball and is here wholly unreliable? There is of course a tradition in India and Tibet that the ordinandus (*mkhan po*, *upādhyāya*) lends part of his own name in religion. Strictly speaking, the ordinandus is technically called the *upasampatprekṣin* and the *upādhyāya* is the one who looks after the ordinandi upon their ordination. Nonetheless, it would appear that one and the same individual played both roles and, indeed, in many, if not all, relevant sources it is the *upādhyāya* who relinquishes part of his name to the ordinand. This was clearly the case with Śākyaśrībhadrā who lent the second part of his name, *śrībhadrā* / *dpal bzang po* to his *ordinandi*. Thus, Stag tshang Lo tsā ba was certainly not claiming anything that was bafflingly new when he

wrote in his autocommentary on his *Grub mtha' kun shes* of 1463 that the seven *sad mi* all received *rakṣita*, the final element of Śāntarakṣita name, as part of their name by virtue of the latter being their ordaining abbot.¹⁵⁵ This would lend further credence to Cha gan's listing. But Stag tshang Lo tsā ba then goes on to say that while such an exchange of names is used for a present-day ritual (*da ltar gyi cho ga*), it is "absent in earlier rituals (*sngon chog = sngon gyi cho ga*), in the 'come here[, oh monk]' (*tshur shog = ehi bhikṣu, dge slong tshur shog*),¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ For what follows, see his *Grub mtha' kun shes nas mtha' bral grub pa zhes bya ba'i bstan bcos rnam par bshad pa legs bshad kyi rgya mtsho* (Thimphu, 1976), 113-4 [= ed. Dpal brtsegs bod yig dpe rnying zhib 'jug khang, Gsung 'bum pod dang po, Mes po'i shul bzhang, vol. 29 (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2009), 182-3].

¹⁵⁶ This statement will have to be looked into with greater care. For variations with the *ehi bhikṣu* formula in the various *vinaya* traditions, see briefly Jin-il Chung's recent *Handbuch für die Buddhistische Mönchsordination bei den Mūlasarvāstivādins* (Gimpo: Institute for Buddhist Scriptures in Korean Translation, 2011) 7, n. 4. The *ehibhikṣukā upasampadā* (*tshur shog gi bsnyen par rdzogs pa*) type of ordination is of course noted in many sources; see, for example, Vasubandhu's (4thc.) *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* in L. de La Vallée Poussin, tr., *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu*, Tome III, Chapitre 4, *Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques*, volume XVI (Bruxelles: Institut Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1971), 60-1. Among many discussions, a particularly fine survey of the so-called "self ordination" (*rang byung gi bsnyen par rdzogs pa, svāma upasampadā*) [of the historical Buddha, etc.] versus the *tshur shog gi bsnyen par rdzogs pa* is found in Rong ston Shākya rgyal mtshan's (1367-1449/51) large commentary on the *Vinayakārikā* by 'Phags pa Sa ga'i lha [Ārya Viśākhadeva], a disciple of a certain 'Phags pa Dge 'dun 'bangs [Ārya Saṅghadāsa], in *Dul ba me tog phreng rgyud kyi rnam 'grel tshig don rab tu gsal ba'i nyi 'od*, *Collected Works*, vol. Ta [9], ed. Bsod nams tshe 'phel (Chengdu: Si khron dpe skrun tshogs pa/Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2008), 126 ff. The text of the *Vinayakārikā* is found in SDE, vol. 45, no. 4128 [# 4123], 287/2-304/6 [Shu, 1b-63a], and Rong ston comments are anent the passage on 287/6-7 [Shu, 3b-4a]. According to the colophon of the *Vinayakārikā*'s Sde dge print, the Nepalese, that is, Newar scholar (*bal po'i mkhas pa*) Jayākara and the Tibetan Sanskritist Prajñākīrti [Shes rab grags] co-translated Viśākhadeva's work in, most likely, the eleventh century at the behest of Lha bla ma Zhi ba 'od (1016-1111). And Rong ston and Vanaratna (1384-1468) subsequently revised this translation. Of the first catalogs of the Tanjur, Dbus pa Blo gsal's early fourteenth century catalog of a/the Snar thang Tanjur, one of the two catalogs of Karma pa III Rang byung rdo rje (1284-1339), the 1362 catalog that was compiled by Byang chub rgyal mtshan et al., and the one that Mnga' ris Chos rje Phyogs las rnam rgyal's (1306-86) compiled of a/the Byang Ngam ring Tanjur — this catalog is wrongly attributed to Sgra tshad pa Rin chen rnam rgyal (1318-88) — only give the author's name and dispense with name[s] of the translator[s]; see, respectively, *Bstan bcos kyi dkar chag*, eighty-one-folio *dbu med* manuscript, C.P.N. catalog no. 002376, 48a, *Bstan bcos 'gyur ro 'tshal gyi dkar chag*, *Collected Works*, vol. Nga (Lhasa, 2006), 711, *Bstan bcos 'gyur ro 'tshal gyi dkar chag yid bzhin gyi nor bu rin po che'i za ma tog*, *The Collected Works of Bu ston* [and Sgra tshad pa] [Lhasa print], part 28 (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1971), 543-4, and *Bstan bcos 'gyur ro 'tshal gyi dkar chag dri med 'od kyi phreng ba, Jo nang dpe tshogs*, vol. 23, ed. Ngag

dbang kun dga' 'jam dbyangs blo gros (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2010), 156. Bu ston's 1335 catalog of the Zhwa lu Tanjur mentions the name of the author as well as that of the translators albeit without the place-name with which Jayākara might have been associated; see *Bstan 'gyur gyi dkar chag yid bzhin nor bu dbang gi rgyal po'i phreng ba, The Collected Works of Bu ston* [and Sgra tshad pa], Lhasa print, part 26 (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1971), 612. The other catalog that Karma pa III had compiled as well as Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po's (1382-1456) 1447 catalog of the Tanjur at Brag dkar theg chen gling monastery in Glo bo Smon thang mention only the names of the author and the Tibetan translator Shes rab grags [= Prajñākīrti]; see, *Rje rang byung rdo rje'i thugs dam bstan 'gyur gyi dkar chag, Collected Works*, vol. Nga (Lhasa, 2006), 580, and *Bstan bcos 'gyur ro 'tshal gyi dkar chag thub bstan rgyas pa'i nyi 'od, Collected Works*, vol. 4 (Dehra Dun: Sa skya Centre, 1999?), 598 [= *Evam bka' 'bum 7/20, Mes po'i shul bzhaq*, vol. 138, Dpal brtsegs bod yig dpe rnying zhib 'jug khang (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2010), 296]. In other words, there is no question of any consistency among these early catalogs! Further, only the catalogs of 1335 and 1362 as well as the one by Mnga' ris Chos rje state that text consists of five *bam po* units. The other catalogs that were mentioned above are silent on this matter. The fourteenth century Bka' gdams pa scholar from Snar thang monastery Bsam gtan bzang po has the same five *bam po*-s in his 1356 commentary on the *Vinayakārikā*, for which see *Me tog phreng rgyud kyi ti ka bla ma'i legs bshad rgya cher bshad pa legs bshad rgya mtsho, Bka' gdams gsung 'bum phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 38, ed. Dpal brtsegs bod yig dpe rnying zhib 'jug khang (Chengdu: Si khron dpe skrun tshogs pa / Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2007), 179. On the other hand, Rong ston explicitly observes that it was not five but six *bam po* units in length, and this is also the measurement of the text that is contained in the Sde dge print. The "all-knowing lama" to whom Bsam gtan bzang po on occasion makes reference is a certain Dka' bzhi pa Shes rab seng ge. This Snar thang master's own undated summary and commentary on the *Vinayakārikā*, which was petitioned by a certain Shes rab bzang po, can be found in *Rare Sa skya pa Commentaries from Nepal* (Delhi, 1977), 1-29, 31-243, and is subtitled *Legs bshad rgya mtsho*. The Dka' bzhi pa makes no mention of either the length of the *Vinayakārikā* or its translators, but he does note at one point, on p. 241, that three thousand four hundred and thirty-four years had elapsed from the Buddha's passing to a water-female-hen year. Given that the Bka' gdams pa communities at Snar thang generally held that the Buddha passed away ca. 2133 B.C., this can only mean that the water-female-hen year in question is 1333. A major intellectual figure of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Rong ston has now come into his own in D.P. Jackson, "Rong ston bKa' bcu pa: Notes on the title and travels of a great Tibetan scholastic," *Pramāṇakīrtiḥ. Papers dedicated to Ernst Steinkellner on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday*, ed. B. Kellner et al., Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde, Heft 70.1 (Wien: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien Universität Wien, 2007), 345-60, and the literature that is cited therein. The concluding remarks in his undated work, which he wrote while residing in Gsang phu sne'u thog monastery, suggests a somewhat different story concerning the text's translations — for what follows, see 'Dul ba me tog phreng rgyud kyi rnam 'grel tshig don rab tu gsal ba'i nyi 'od, 633-4. Namely, he first writes in the ensuing verse that:

lo paṅ gang gis bsgyur ba ni //
 'phags pa'i pho brang byang phyogs su //
 lha rgyal bla ma zhi ba 'od //

dam chos skyong mdzad sku drin la //
chos dbyings gtsug lag khang chen du //
mkhas pa dza yā a ka ra /
snyegs tshul pra dznya kirti yis //
gsol ba btab nas bdag gis bsgyur //
dges des thub bstan rgyas par shog //

By which translators and paṇḍitas the text was translated:
 I translated the text after I was petitioned,
 By the scholar Jayākara and Snyegs tshul Prajñākīrti.
 In the great Chos dbyings [Dharmadhātu] temple,
 During the lifetime of the divine king, Bla ma Zhi ba 'od,
 The pretector of the holy religion,
 In the citadel of the Noble Avalokiteśvara, in the northern region,
 May the Sage's Teaching spread by the virtue engendered through this work.

Obviously, there is something awry here. We probably have to read *sku ring la* instead of *sku drin la* and I have translated this line accordingly. The notion that Jayākara and Snyegs Prajñākīrti had requested this translation is contradicted by all the entires of this translation in the early catalogs and the identity of "me" rests quite obscure. In short, I am not in the position to suggest a solution to this problem. The verse is then followed by a statement in prose to the effect that the text was first translated by the Indian Mūlasarvāstivādin monk-*paṇḍita* Jayākara-gupta and Lo tsā ba Bsnyel 'or Prajñākīrti — note the variant clan affiliation of the Prajñākīrti in the verse! Then, the Nepalese *paṇḍita* Jayākara and the Tibetan translator Prajñākīrti subsequently revised the earlier translation. The colophon of the Sde dge print suggested that Rong ston and Vanaratna later revised the revised translation. According to Gser mdog Paṅ chen's biography of Rong ston, the latter first met Vanaratna in *circa* 1426, on which occasion he availed himself of the opportunity to study Sanskrit grammar with the master from Chittagong as well as the Cakrasamvara and other texts; see *Rje btsun thams cad mkhyen pa'i bshes gnyen shākya rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i zhal snga nas kyi rnam par thar pa ngo mtshar dad pa'i rol mtsho*, *Complete Works*, vol. 16 (Thimphu, 1975), 310. Vanaratna apparently gave him a manuscript copy of Śarvavarman's *Katantra* during this time. Rong ston does *not* mention Vanaratna in his *Vinayakārikā* commentary, and expresses his debt only to Mkhan chen Blo gsal ba and Dmar ston Chos rje. Gser mdog Paṅ chen stipulates, on p. 311 of his biography, that he studied the *Vinayakārikā* with the Snar thang scholar and its fourteenth abbot Lnga rig Dpang ston Grub pa shes rab (1357-1423). It is possible that the "Mkhan chen Blo gsal ba" is none other than this Grub pa shes rab. The absence of any overt mention Vanaratna from Rong ston's *Vinayakārikā* commentary might therefore suggest that he had written it prior to his meeting with the former. Yet, he does on occasion modify a rendition or refer to and correct an explicitly earlier translation (*sngon 'gyur*) of the text; see, for example, *'Dul ba me tog phreng rgyud kyi rnam 'grel tshig don rab tu gsal ba'i nyi 'od*, 254, 454. Gser mdog Paṅ chen states in *Rje btsun thams cad mkhyen pa'i bshes gnyen shākya rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i zhal snga nas kyi rnam par thar pa ngo mtshar dad pa'i rol mtsho*, 360, that he completed this and other works in the earth-male-dragon year [1448], while Nam mkha' dpal bzang, another one of his biographers, writes that Rong ston composed this work the age of eighty-five [=four]; see *Bla ma dam pa rong ston chos rje'i rnam par thar pa phrin las rgyas shing rgyun mi chad pa'i rten 'brel bzang po*, *Collected Works* [of Rong ston], vol. Ka [1], ed. Bsod nams tshe 'phel (Chengdu: Si khron dpe

etc." He also notes that in the ordination practices of the [Mūla]sarvāstivāda *vinaya*, which is *the* corpus of canon law that prevailed in Tibet, the affixes of the names in religion are *dpal* (*śrī*), *bzang po* (*bhadra*), and *snying po* (*garbha*). This would mean that Śāntarakṣita was not Kamalaśīla's *ordinandus*, and that the latter may very well have become his disciple after his ordination.

Thusfar, then, Dpa' bo II's text-critical note on the problematic reading of the passage on the "examined men" of the Zhwa lu print of the *Chos 'byung*. One of the findings of this paper is that, as far as the inclusion of members of Sa skya's 'Khon family and the Rlangs clan among these men, one cannot but conclude that the differences in the various listings in the sources that belong to the latter half of the thirteenth century and beyond have absolutely no connection with the political realities of Central Tibet under Mongol and Sa skya rule and Phag mo gru rule during this time. This is not altogether unimportant. It signals a measure of intellectual integrity of these sources that may have been whittled away a bit with the remarks made to the contrary in the secondary literature. Another finding is of course that, from the twelfth century onward, there was no consensus among the Tibetan historians regarding the identities of the first young Tibetan men who had been "examined" and then ordained. Apparently, this was one of the many records of late Tibetan imperial history that had been irretrievably expunged.

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BLA	Bla ma dam pa Bsod nams rgyal mtshan, <i>Bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam par thar pa ngo mtshar snang ba</i> , <i>Sa skya lam 'bras Literature Series</i> , vol. 16 (Dehra Dun: Sakya Centre, 1983), 1-121.
BLAm	Ibid. <i>dbu med</i> ms., C.P.N. catalog no. 002799(7), fols. 50.
BRAG	Brag dgon Zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, <i>Mdo smad chos 'byung</i> , ed. Smon lam rgya

skrun tshogs pa/Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2008), 168. D.P. Jackson, *The Early Abbots of 'Phan po Nalendra: The Vicissitudes of a Great Tibetan Monastery in the 15th Century*, 8, indicated that the sources differ on the year of his passing, from *circa* December 30, 1449, to sometime in 1451, but they appear to agree that Rong ston composed his study of the *Vinayakārika* towards the very end of his long life.

- mtsho (Lanzhou: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1982).
- BTSL U rgyan gling pa, *Bka' thang sde lnga* [based on the Sde dge print], ed. Rdo rje rgyal po (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1986).
- BU Bu ston Rin chen grub, *Bde bar gshegs pa'i bstan pa'i gsal byed chos kyi 'byung gnas gsung rab rin po che'i mdzod*, *The Collected Works of Bu ston* [and Sgra tshad pa], Lhasa Zhol print, part 24 (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1971), 633-1055.
- BU1 Ibid. [allegedly based on the Sde dge print], ed. Rdo rje rgyal po (Beijing: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe, 1988).
- BUM Ibid. *Bu ston rin chen grub kyi gsung 'bum*, ed. Dpal brtsegs bod yig dpe rnying zhib 'jug khang, 24 [24/28/3] (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig dpe skrun khang, 2008), 807-1414.
- CHA Cha gan Dbang phyug rgyal mtshan, *Lam 'bras kyi bla ma bod kyi lo rgyus rgyas pa bod bstan pa'i 'byung 'dems ma, dbu med ms.*, C.P.N. catalog no. 002864(4), fols. 92.
- DPA' Dpa' bo II Gtsug lag phreng ba, *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston*, Stod cha, ed. Rdo rje rgyal po (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1986).
- DPA'(p) Ibid., *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston* [Delhi print], vol. 1 (New Delhi, 1980).
- 'GOS 'Gos Lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal, *Rtsis la 'khrul ba sel ba* [Pho brang rgyal bzangs smon mkhar print], fols. 49.
- JO Lde'u Jo sras, *Lde'u chos 'byung*, ed. Chos 'dzoms (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1987).
- Khang dkar Tshul khriṃs skal bzang (1985), *Bstan pa snga dar gyi chos 'byung 'brel yod dang bcas pa'i dus rabs kyi mtha' dpyod 'phrul gyi me long* (New Delhi: Western Tibetan Cultural Association).
- LDE'U Mkhas pa Lde'u, *Rgya bod kyi chos 'byung*, ed. Chab spel Tshe brtan phun tshogs and Nor brang O rgyan, Gangs can rig mdzod 3 (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1987).
- MANG Mang thos Klu sgrub rgya mtsho, *Bstan rtsis gsal ba'i nyin byed lhag bsam rab dkar*, ed. Nor brang O rgyan, Gangs can rig mdzod 4 (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1987), 1-251.
- MES Anonymous. *Byang chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po chos rgyal mes dbon rnam gsum gyi rnam thar rin po che'i phreng ba* (Paro, 1980).

- NE'U Ne'u Paṇḍita Grags pa smon lam blo gros, *Sngon gyi gtam me tog phreng ba*, Bod kyi lo rgyus deb ther khag lnga, eds. Ldan lhun Sangs rgyas chos 'phel et al., Gangs can rig mdzod 9 (Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 1990), 1-54.
- NE'U1 Ibid., *Sngon gyi gtam me tog gi phreng ba...with other rare historical texts from the library of Burmiok Athing T.D. Densapa* (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1985), 1-50.
- NYANG Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer, *Chos 'byung me tog snying po sbrang rtsi'i bcud*, ed. Nyan shul Mkhyen rab 'od zer et al., Gangs can rig mdzod 5 (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1988).
- NYANGa Ibid., Manuscript "A" (Paro, 1979).
- NYANGb Ibid., Manuscript "B" (Paro, 1979).
- NYANGm Ibid., ed. R.O. Meisezahl, *Die große Geschichte des tibetischen Buddhismus nach alter Tradition Rnying ma'i chos 'byung chen mo* (Sankt Augustin: VGH Wissenschaftsverlag, 1985).
- PBT U rgyan gling pa, *Padma bka' thang* [based on the Sde dge print] (Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1988).
- RGYAL ?Bla ma dam pa Bsod nams rgyal mtshan, *Rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* [based on the Sde dge print], eds. Rgyal sras Ngag dbang blo bzang and Mgon po rgyal mtshan (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1982).
- RJE Rje btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan, *Bla ma sa skya chen po'i rnam thar*, SSBB 3, no.5, 83/3-87/3.
- RJE1 Ibid., *Ga ring rgyal po la rtsis bsdus du btang ba'i yi ge*, SSBB 4, no.95, 104/1/6-4/6.
- RJE2 Ibid., *Rdo rje rnam par 'joms pa'i rgyud kyi gsal byed 'od zer can*, SSBB, vol. 4, no. 122, 277/1-82/2.
- RLANGS Anonymous, *Rlangs kyi po ti bse ru che dge yig tshang dang / mi rgyud grol thabs*, *Rlangs kyi po ti bse ru rgyas pa*, ed. Chab spel Tshe brtan phun tshogs, Gangs can rig mdzod 1 (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1986), 29-99.
- RLANGS1 Ibid., *Rlangs kyi gdung rgyud po ti bse ru*, *The History of the Gnyos Lineage of Kha rag...* (Dolanji, 1978), 159-337.
- SBb Sba Gsal snang, *Sba bzhed*, ed. Mgon po rgyal mtshan (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1980).
- SBch Ibid. *Bashi*, ed. Tong Jinhua and Huang Bufan (Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1990), 83-210

- SBP Ibid., *Une chronique ancienne de Bsam yas: Sba bzhed*, ed. R.A. Stein (Paris: Publications de l'Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1961)
- SSBB *Sa skya pa'i bka' 'bum* [Sde dge print], vols. 15, Comp. Bsod nams rgya mtsho (Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, 1968-9).
- THUGS Rgyal sras Thugs mchog rtsal, *Chos 'byung rin po che'i gter mdzod bstan pa gsal bar byed pa'i nyi 'od*, ed. Bu byung Dbang 'dus, Gangs can rig mdzod 17 (Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 1991).
- TSHE Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu, *Bu ston kha ches mdzad pa'i chos 'byung rin po che'i mdzod las / rig pa 'dzin pa tshe dbang nor bus nye bar btus pa'o*, *Collected Works*, vol. IV (Dalhousie, 1973), 539-52.
- TSHE1 Ibid., *Kaḥ thog rig 'dzin tshe dbang nor bu'i bka' 'bum*, ed. Padma dbang chen rdo rje et al., Bar cha [vol. 2] (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2006), 196-200.
- TT *The Tibetan Tripitaka, Taipei* [= Sde dge] Edition, 72 vols., ed. A.W. Barber (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1991).
- YAR Yar lung Jo bo Shākya rin chen sde, *Yar lung chos 'byung*, ed. Dbyangs can (Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1988).
- YAR1 Ibid., ed. Ngag dbang (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1989).

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lHa bla ma Zhi ba 'od's Eighth Century Bronze from Gilgit

Lobsang Nyima Laurent

*This paper is dedicated to the monks of Dangkhar,
Heirs of the great translator and royal monk,
lHa bla ma Zhi ba 'od (1016 – 1111).*

In 1973, an officer of the Indian Government registered an exceptional bronze belonging to the monastery of Dangkhar (Tib. *Brag mkhar*) under the Antiquities and Art Treasures Act.¹ The bronze was simply labelled “Buddha” and was dated to the tenth-eleventh century. It is in all likelihood the last time that anyone took any historical interest in this statue, and with good reason as the Buddha had been then locked away by the monks as the most precious and potent living image in their possession, displayed only on rare occasions for the sake of the local community.

In 2010, the members of the restoration team led by the Graz University of Technology were granted the opportunity to view the statue.² It was evident at first glance that the Buddha was not just any kind of bronze, but was indeed a unique work of art. Moreover, it was also apparent that the juxtaposition of two inscriptions on the pedestal, the first one in Sanskrit and the second in Tibetan, would provide a rather different dating. The restoration team was eventually allowed to take photographs of the statue as part of the documentation work. Later that summer, the author was personally entrusted with the study of that bronze.

During the fieldwork which followed in summer 2011, we had hoped to further study the statue in order to compare the recording of the inscriptions based on the photographs taken the previous year. Our request was, however, apologetically denied. In the interim, the monks had performed a divination (Tib. *gzan rtags 'phen pa*) *vis-à-vis* the future of the image, the outcome of which was final. The statue would no longer be shown in public. Yet, the

¹ The fortress-monastery of Dangkhar is located in the Spiti Valley (Tib. *sPi ti*), H.P., India. The Tibetan spelling retained here follows the name of the current monastic complex *Brag mkhar bkra shis chos gling*. The former “capital of Spiti” is also recorded under other denominations such as *Brang mkhar*, *Grang mkhar*, or *Grang dkar* in Tibetan historical sources; see Laurent forthcoming.

² The documentation and restoration of the old monastic complex of Dangkhar started in summer 2010 under the supervision of Prof. H. Neuwirth and DI C. Auer (Institute of Architectural Theory, Art History and Cultural Studies, Graz University of Technology, Austria). The restoration project has been entirely funded by Mr. M. Weisskopf without whom the present research could not have been conducted. The annual reports are available online; see <http://www.savedangkhar.tugraz.at/>.

monks renewed their request and insisted that we proceed with the study of the bronze and its inscriptions.

This paper thus presents some preliminary observations and remarks on this unique artwork. The first section is devoted to the bronze *per se*. The inscriptions are treated in the following section, while a general discussion attempts to situate the production and journey of this remarkable statue. By doing so, we hope that the wishes of the monastic community of Dangkhār shall be fulfilled.

I. Physical description & stylistic analysis

The bronze from Dangkhār [Fig. 1] shows a Buddha seated in *vajraparyāṅkāsa* (Tib. *rdo rje'i skyil krung*) on an impressive dais, with the hands held in *dharmacakra mudrā* (Tib. *chos kyi 'khor lo'i phyag rgya*). A sumptuous cushion is placed on a sophisticated pedestal which bears two inscriptions on the front side. A separately cast mandorla (Skt. *prabhāmaṇḍala*, Tib. *'od kyi dkyil 'khor*) can be inferred due to the presence of two slots at the back of the pedestal and a protruding lug-slot behind the cushion [Fig. 2]. The bronze measures twenty-six centimetres in height and is made of brass.³ Extensive silver and copper inlays were used to embellish the cushion, the undergarment, the eyes, and the lower lip of the Buddha.

The modelling of the body delineates a sturdy silhouette. Some visible features such as the hands and cheeks are fleshy. The face is rather oval and the head slightly oversized. The nose is broad and flat. The eyes are slanted and made of silver inlays. The mouth seems faintly pursed with the upper lip summarily delineated and the lower lip inlaid in reddish-brown copper. Altogether, these physical traits generally conform to the Kashmiri style of Buddhist cast bronzes.⁴

The clothing of the Buddha deserves particular attention. A symmetrically draped garment falls in concentric folds towards the navel which appears underneath. In the back, the folding of the garment follows a similar wavy pattern. The hem of the garment is draped over the left shoulder while its lower part covers the left knee [Fig. 3-4]. A peculiar V-shaped neckline reveals an undergarment made of copper and silver roundels, with similar fabric also visible at the ankles. The addition of a V-shaped neckline to the traditional monastic robe (Skt. *kāśāya*) is a distinctive feature of many Kashmiri bronzes produced in the eighth and ninth centuries. This iconographic innovation, as we shall discuss, seems to have originated in Central Asia before being specifically promoted among the Buddhist communities of Śāhi descent.

³ As recorded by the Indian Government Officer in 1973.

⁴ For a detailed list of these characteristics; see Pal (1973 : 729-30 and 1975 : 30).

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The cushion on which the Buddha is seated is not only an aesthetic marvel but also a technical feat of casting. The front edge of the cushion is ornamented with pearl and flower roundels extensively inlaid in silver and copper, while on the sides of the cushion different floral roundels with boldly outlined petals are presented. The top of the cushion is also finely decorated with roundels and arabesque-like motifs. Small copper inlays were also used on both side edges and on top of the cushion. The rear section of the cushion bears no motifs. Finally, a fringe of tassels runs around the upper part of the pedestal below the cushion. Other Buddhist bronzes from Kashmir-Gilgit display the same consummate skill in the rendering of textile motifs. The roundel and floral design is believed to reflect strong Sasanian and Sogdian influences; a cultural trend that developed throughout Asia between the seventh and the ninth centuries.⁵

As for the pedestal, it is a large rectangular throne made of stylised stones and architectural features. The composition is dominated by a central *yakṣa* (Tib. *gnod sbyin*) placed between two columns and a pair of lions. The spirit is seated cross-legged and wears a *dhoṭī* inlaid in copper and silver stripes. His eyes are inlaid in silver while his mouth is made of copper. The symmetrical composition of the pedestal is completed with two roaring lions depicted in profile while their heads face forward. The combination of decorative elements, such as stylised stones, columns, *yakṣa*, and lions, is commonly found on the pedestals of bronzes attributed to the regions of both Kashmir and Gilgit.⁶

Among the many bronzes cast from these two areas, two statues offer more than just fortuitous similarities with the Buddha from Dangkhar. First and foremost is the well-known Buddha of the Norton Simon Foundation [Fig. 5],⁷ and secondly a bronze now preserved at the Potala Palace in Lhasa [Fig. 6].⁸ These three bronzes share not only close stylistic resemblance, but more remarkably a number of technical aspects. Their cushions, for instance, display the very same skill in the use of silver and copper inlays to create roundel motifs. In addition to the rich Central Asian textile pattern, structural similarities also include the stylised stone base with its architectural elements, and figures. The face of the Buddha from Lhasa, along with the uncovered parts of the neck, right arm, hands, and feet, were later painted with cold gold hence dissimulating their original appearance. Compared to the bronze from Dangkhar, the head of the Norton Simon Foundation sculp-

⁵ See Heller (2006 : 178-83).

⁶ Additional figures such as the portraits of donors, bodhisattvas, griffins, birds, and deer may also be represented. For stylistic similarities with the rock base of the bronze from Dangkhar; see Von Schroeder (1981 : fig. 15F, 16A, and 16B).

⁷ For a complete description of the Simon Foundation bronze; see PAL (1973 : 731-35 fig.5 and 1975 : 92 fig.22a,b) and also Von Schroeder (1981 : 118 fig.16A).

⁸ For the bronze conserved in the Li ma lha khang inside the Potala Palace; see Von Schroeder (2001 : 106-9 fig. 19 A-C) or again (2008 : 46-47 fig. 6).

ture seems rounder and less chubby. However, both faces are arguably alike in the stylistic treatment of the eyes, the mouth, the elongated earlobes, and the curly hair.⁹ As for the garb of those three Buddhas, the hem of their upper garment (Skt. *uttarāsaṅga-saṃghāti*) fall behind the left shoulder in careful folds and cover the left knee in the very same way.¹⁰

A detailed comparison of these images, based on stylistic and technical criteria, incontrovertibly shows that these bronzes were manufactured around the same time by artisans belonging to the same atelier or guild. In an attempt to identify the figures of the donors represented on the pedestal, Pal has discussed the possibility that the bronze in the Norton Simon Foundation might have been commissioned by the king Jayāpīḍā Vinayāditya (c.779 – 813) of Kashmir.¹¹ As we shall see, the dedicatory inscription engraved on the bronze from Dangkhar provides an approximate dating but suggests a different origin.

The V-shaped neckline conundrum

As suggested earlier, the apparition of a V-shaped neckline on the *saṃghāti* may possibly be more than just an iconographical innovation induced by a cultural trend. This element, which is often referred to as a cloud collar or cape in recent publications, is believed to have been popular during the Sasanian period (c. 224-651) before being promoted by Central Asian tribes such as the Śāhis and the Tocharians, according to von Schroeder.¹² It does not only appear on later Kashmiri images of Buddhas but also decorates the

⁹ The head of the Buddha from Dangkhar has lost some of its relief due to considerable rubbing off as the original curly hair behind the left ear still attests. The extremity of the nose was possibly polished or damaged too.

¹⁰ The folds of the hem draped over the left shoulder of the Buddha from Dangkhar appear sketchier and may have been rubbed off a little. The adjustment of a mandorla at the back of the bronze may also explain why some elements were not executed with the same attention to detail. Compare for example the hair pattern at the back of each head.

¹¹ Pal's argument is thin but deserves to be reported here when he suggests that "of the four figures, the two located centrally are no doubt more important than the others. The male, wearing a diadem of pearls, holds what appears to be a musical instrument of some sort [...] If the male was meant to represent a king, rather than a mere musician, then one might identify him as Jayāpīḍā, who is known to have been accomplished in all the performing arts." It follows that "the female of course would represent his queen, and the bearded figure carrying a garland may portray his minister". As for the monk knelt behind the queen "he is very likely the royal preceptor, or an important monk such as Sarvajñamitra" who was a contemporary of king Jayāpīḍā. Pal sensibly concludes that whether or not his identification is accurate "such a spectacular bronze could hardly be anything less than a royal benefaction"; see Pal (1975 : 25-6) In a later publication, however, Pal has suggested a second reading based on a stylistic comparison with a stone stele where a similar female figure holding a pot is the goddess earth, and the whole scene is interpreted as Māra's defeat; see PAL (2003 : 28-29).

¹² See Pal (1973 : 735-36 and 1975 : 25, 41) Von Schroeder (1981 : 108).

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figures of the donors that are often represented on the pedestals of those bronzes. It had been assumed that the collar-cape innovation reflected the ethnic origin of the donors, or the artists, and could possibly denote the social status of the former. In addition to the imitation of garment designs, the high quality execution of these bronzes and the dedicatory inscriptions often recorded on their bases prove that these images were commonly commissioned by wealthy patrons such as local sovereigns and royal family members.¹³

As an iconographical novelty, the V-shaped neckline and other regal adornments were eventually associated with representations of Buddha Vairocana (Tib. *rNam par snang mdzad*).¹⁴ Tantric literature produced in the sixth and seventh century was influential in establishing Vairocana as the teacher of tantra *par excellence*.¹⁵ A lengthy discussion of this corpus of texts would however exceed the scope of the present paper.¹⁶ The socio-political

¹³ For instance the crowned Buddha in the Rockefeller Collection which was donated by Śaṅkarasena, the great lord of the elephant brigade, and her wife, Princess Devaśriyā; see Von Schroeder (1981 : 118 fig.16B) Also, the remaining pedestal of a lost bronze preserved in the Rubin Museum of Art where two of the four donors are the Queen Śrī Paramadevi Maṅgalaḥṣikā and the King Śrī Paṭola Deva Śāhis Vajrādityanandi from Gilgit.; Von Hinüber (2007 : 41-2 pl.6).

¹⁴ The role of the V-shaped collar-cape in the iconographical development of Vairocana remains problematic and, as suggested by Heller, "cannot yet be fully assessed nor used exclusively to determine the identification of Vairocana"; See Heller (1994 : 75-76).

¹⁵ In Mahāyāna literature, the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (Tib. *mDo phal po che*) already contains some "proto-tantric" elements. This sūtra was seminal in disseminating Vairocana's role as the cosmic Buddha and promoting his cult throughout Asia. The last chapter of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, which is independently known as the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* (Tib. *sDong po bkod pa'i mdo*), details the spiritual journey of Prince Sudhana (Tib. *Nor bzang*) and opens with an apologetic account of the historical Buddha as the emanational embodiment (Skt. *nirmāṇakāya*, Tib. *sprul sku*) of Vairocana. This narrative eventually found its artistic expression inside the main temple (Tib. *gtsug lag khang*) of Tabo Monastery founded in 996. Sudhana's pilgrimage is here depicted on the southern wall of the temple, as part of a complex iconographical programme which serves a three dimensional architectural and artistic representation of Sarvavid Vairocana's maṇḍala (Tib. *kun rig rnam par snang mdzad kyi dkyil 'khor*). For a review of "proto-tantric" elements in the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*; see Osto (2009) For the art and history of the monastic complex of Tabo; see Klimbur-Salter (1997 & 2005) For the depiction and narrative of Prince Sudhana in the main temple at Tabo; see Steinkellner (1995 & 1996).

¹⁶ Among the early so called esoteric canon, works such as the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana* (Tib. *De bzhin gshegs pa dgra bcom pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba gzi brjid kyi rgyal po'i brtag pa phyogs gcig pa zhes bya ba*), the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṅgraha* (Tib. *De bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi de kho na nyid bsdus pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*), and the *Mahāvairocanābhisambodhi* (Tib. *rNam par snang mdzad chen po mngon par rdzogs par byang chub pa rnam par sprul pa byin gyis rlob pa shin tu rgyas pa mdo sde'i dbang po'i rgyal po zhes bya ba'i chos kyi rnam grangs*) were instrumental in establishing Vairocana as the teacher of tantra and initiated the shift from Buddha Śākyamuni to the figure of Vairocana. For the significance of yoga tantra and the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṅgraha* within esoteric Buddhism in India and Tibet; see Weinberger (2003) For the *Mahāvairocana Tantra*; see Hodge (2003).

environment of their production, as demonstrated by Davidson, contributed to the maturation of tantric literature through the internalization of medieval models revolving around the embodiment of kingship and the exercise of dominion.¹⁷ In this new paradigm, “the Buddha was depicted as a king with his crown, clothed in all the ornaments of royalty” and would now extend his benevolent and mighty power over his specific dominion or maṇḍala.¹⁸ In this process, Kashmir did not only become a major repository of learning and practice for esoteric Buddhism (Skt. *Mantrayāna* Tib. *sngags kyi theg pa*), but assumed the function of a laboratory for new iconographical forms. The V-shaped neckline may well have been an aesthetic response of a regional *élite* to the pervading epiphanies of Lord Vairocana in tantric literature.

In this regard, some bronzes manufactured in northwest India during the eighth and ninth centuries ambiguously represent a fusion of Buddha Śākyamuni (Tib. *Shākya thub pa*) and the transcendent Vairocana. For example, the striking altarpiece preserved in the Rockefeller Collection is paradigmatic of the aesthetic conflation between these two figures that are often shown making the gesture of the turning of the wheel. While the crowned Buddha seated on a lotus between a pair of stūpas displays all the attributes of a body of enjoyment (Skt. *sambhogakāya*, Tib. *longs sku*), the two deer and the dharma wheel on the pedestal suggest that the sculpture represent Śākyamuni's first sermon.¹⁹ The study of the dedicatory inscription indicates that the donors were members of nobility from Gilgit and dates the sculpture to the first half of the eighth century.²⁰

Furthermore, the recast of Śākyamuni's enlightenment in tantric terms and his subsequent conflation with Vairocana is clearly indicated in a short *sādhana* composed by Jayaprabha (Tib. *rGyal ba'i 'od*) around the end of the eighth century and the beginning of the ninth century. The passage is worth citing:

On a lion throne, upon a lotus, is seated the Bhagavān, Vairocana, with a golden complexion, crowned uṣṇīṣa, and satin garments. It is said that Śākyamuni's clothing, colour, and form can also be venerated thusly.²¹

¹⁷ In particular chapter 4 “The Victory of Esoterism and the Imperial Metaphor”; Davidson (2002 : 113-68).

¹⁸ See Davidson (2002 : 168).

¹⁹ See Von Schroeder (1981 : 118 fig.16B).

²⁰ For the names of the donors and the translation of the inscription see footnote 13 and Von Schroeder (1981 : 118 fig.16B).

²¹ We are grateful to Dr Amy Heller for drawing our attention to this passage and its implications to the subject at hand.

pad ma seng ge gdan de la sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das rnam par snang mdzad gser gyi kha dog thor tshugs dang dbu rgyan dang cod pan can dar la'i stod g.yogs dang smad g.yogs can nam |

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The Tibetan idiom *ji skad du*, which usually marks a reported fact or quotation, highlights that by the ninth century the idea of interchangeability between the two figures is rather common in tantric literature. Moreover, this passage also implies that early representations of Vairocana must not have departed greatly from those of the historical Buddha, and therefore did not necessarily follow strict textual antecedents. This situation probably corresponded to a formative phase during which artists were not necessarily familiar with the emerging tantric literature but had to answer the specific demands of instructed patrons, hence contributing to the progressive establishment of new iconographical forms.

Consequently, the statues preserved at the Norton Simon Foundation and at the Potala in Lhasa are instrumental in understanding the bronze from Dangkhar and its genesis. As stated earlier, these three bronzes were without a doubt cast by the same artisan-craftsmen. Despite the great stylistic and technical similarities, the Buddha from the Norton Simon Foundation possesses a somewhat classical facture, if not archetypal, that the two other avoid. The historical Buddha, Śākyamuni, is shown with his right hand in *bhūmiśparśamudra* (Tib. *sa gnon*) symbolising the moment of his enlightenment. Furthermore, his body displays the marks of Buddhahood such as the *ūrṇā* (Tib. *mdzod spu*) on his forehead. The thirty-two *mahāpuruṣa lakṣaṇa* (Tib. *skyes bu chen po'i mtshan*) were initially understood to be the physical characteristics of Siddhārtha Gautama attained upon his enlightenment. This might explain why, as a possible early attempt to represent Vairocana, the *ūrṇā* was omitted from the forehead of the Buddha preserved in Dangkhar. As for the upper garment, the elegance of the drapery is the aesthetic pinnacle of earlier Buddhist statuary. Except for the V-shaped neckline, the upper garment worn by the Buddha from Lhasa, which falls in large and graceful arcs, perfectly matches the one found on the Buddha from Dangkhar. These three images thus offer a significant iconographical sequence, which may not necessarily reflect a chronological order, where the artisan-craftsmen progressively incorporated "dress novelties" while conforming to the main canonical requirements.

Compared to the classical depiction of Śākyamuni, it is now quite evident that the artists responsible for the bronze from Dangkhar attempted to integrate or accommodate new concepts. The V-shaped neckline worn in an impossible fashion is after all emblematic of a period of iconographical adjustment. Whether the statue from Dangkhar can be formally identified as a representation of Lord Vairocana is ultimately of little significance as other bronzes produced in Kashmir-Gilgit during the eighth and ninth century demonstrate that an iconographical conflation based on emerging tantric

shak ya thub pa'i cha byed dang kha dog dang dbyibs ji skad du grags pa 'ang rung ste |; see (P 3489: 361b).

literature and socio-cultural norms existed between the historical Buddha and his transcendent form.

II. The inscriptions

There are two inscriptions engraved on the lower part of the pedestal [Fig. 7]. The first one is recorded in proto-śāradā script while the second inscription is written in Tibetan *dbu chen*. The first inscription, which runs on two lines, helps to identify the name of the donors, their origin, and the date of donation. The second inscription, which was added later on in the lower right hand corner of the base, provides the name of a single individual.

I. The main inscription on the base reads as follows:²²

/1/ # saṃ 88 mārga śu di 15 deyadharmo yaṃ śākyabhikṣuṣuṣṭikavarmanā sārddhaṃ mā
/2/ tāpitroḥi ācāryopadhyāyebhyaḥ | (rādāhu)puru(śa)kena (paphaṭonena)

“In the Year 88, on the 15th day of the bright half of Mārga[śirṣa]. This is the pious gift by the Śākyabhikṣu Vīkavarman together with his parents, the teachers and instructors. Together with the (Rādāhu)-Burusho Paphaṭona (Papharṭana).”

II. The second inscription reads:

lHa bla ma zhi ba 'od

The style of the dedicatory inscription is consistent with other inscribed bronzes from Kashmir-Gilgit. The reading of the first line and the first half of the second line is almost certain. The beginning of the inscription is preceded by the *siddhaṃ* symbol and opens with the date of donation. The bronze was offered in the year 88, on the fifteenth day of the month *Mārgaśirṣa* which corresponds to the months of November-December.²³ In conformity with the hundred-year revolution based *laukika* era, the exact century is not mentioned as a result of which the calendar year for that figure can be either 712 or 812. The main donor is the Buddhist monk (Skt. *śākyabhikṣu*) Vīkavarman. The second syllable is not absolutely certain and an alternative reading such as *vīra-*^o cannot be excluded. The other donors mentioned are the mother and father (Skt. *mātāpitarau*) of Vīkavarman as

²² We are entirely indebted to Prof. Oskar von Hinüber without whom this inscription would have remained silent. The following translation and analysis are the fruits of his generosity and erudition; personal communication, February 2012.

²³ Prof. von Hinüber remarks that a reading 87 of the two figures cannot be excluded but seems less likely; personal communication, February 2012.

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well as his teachers (Skt. *ācārya*) and preceptors (Skt. *upādhyāya*). The sentence ends with a concluding punctuation character (Skt. *daṇḍa*).

The reading of the second half of line two is highly conjectural and the possible designation of an additional donor as *puruṣakena* is of utmost importance. As noted elsewhere by von Hinüber, compounds in *°puruṣa* or *°vuruṣa* may reflect an early form of the word Burusho.²⁴ In this context, the additional contributor named Paphaṭona, or alternatively Papharṭana, must have been from the Upper Indus. The occurrence of a Burusho name would hence connect this bronze to Gilgit as it was expected from the stylistic point of view. The composition of the inscription and the consistent use of case endings suggest that the name of the last benefactor must have been added slightly later. The reason for the commissioning and meritorious donation is not stated.

The reading of the Tibetan inscription does not pose any problem. The name of Zhi ba 'od, and the title (Tib. *lHa bla ma*) associated with it, refers to a member of the royal family of the Guge-Purang Kingdom (Tib. *Gu ge Pu hrang*) in West Tibet.²⁵ Although most of the biographical details of his life remain unknown, the main information regarding this charismatic figure of the later dissemination of Buddhism (Tib. *bstan pa phyi dar*) can be summed up as follows.

Born Yongs srong lde in the dragon year 1016, the third son of King lHa lde (r. 996 – 1023/4), and younger brother of Byang chub 'od (984 – 1078), he came to be known as Pho brang Zhi ba 'od when he received his full ordination at the age of forty, in 1056. lHa bla ma Zhi ba 'od was a disciple of the notorious *lo tsā ba* Rin chen bzang po (958 – 1055) and eventually became the first translator of royal descent. He translated six major works, commissioned the translation of at least three other texts,²⁶ and most certainly took part in the religious council held in Tholing (Tib. *mTho lding*) where he must have spent most of his life.²⁷ As the religious centre of the kingdom, Tholing was the recipient of a variety of pious benefactions and constructions. Zhi ba 'od and his nephew King rTse lde, for instance, were responsible for the edification of the three-storey gSer khang which involved the commitment of more than two hundred master-artists and artisans. The temple was completed within five years in 1071.²⁸ Zhi ba 'od also bestowed the main temple of Tholing (Tib. *dBu rtse*) with clay statues representing the complete cycle of

²⁴ "Auf eine ethnische Zugehörigkeit scheinen die auf *°puruṣa* oder *°vuruṣa* endenden Komposita zu deuten, wenn man darin eine frühe Form des Wortes « Burusho » sehen darf." ; see Von Hinüber (2004 : 146).

²⁵ For his complete royal title *bod kyi dpal lha btsan po*; see Karmay (1980 : 3).

²⁶ For a detailed list of his translation works and subsequent analysis of their colophons; see Karmay (1980 : 4-10).

²⁷ The religious council (Tib. *chos 'khor*) of Tholing started in the fire dragon year 1076 and is believed to have lasted for a year and a half; see Vitali (2003 : 65).

²⁸ See Vitali (1996 : 311-316) and (1999).

Sarvavid Vairocana (Tib. *Kun rigs*).²⁹ Finally, lHa bla ma Zhi ba 'od is remembered for his religious ordinance (Tib. *bka' shog*) issued in 1092 in which he severely condemned apocryphal works, perverted tantras (Tib. *sngags log*), and called for the upholding of the *bka' gdams pa* tradition.³⁰ The demise of the royal monk and translator in the iron hare year 1111 marks the end of the later diffusion of Buddhism in West Tibet.

It is unfortunately unclear how the royal priest and translator found himself in the possession of an eighth century bronze from Gilgit. This does not represent, however, an isolated case as religious objects and implements of great value would easily be bestowed as tokens of political allegiance or religious fervour. Besides, many such objects, Kashmiri bronzes in particular, found their way into the belongings of the royal family of West Tibet.³¹ The concluding section of this paper attempts to retrace the journey of the bronze from Dangkhar and must henceforth be taken with all due caution.

III. From Gilgit to Spiti: a narrative

Based on stylistic criteria, it has long been assumed that the Buddha Śākya-muni in the Potala collection and the one from the Norton Simon Foundation were connected to the Palola Śāhis of the Gilgit Valley [Fig. 8] although no tangible evidence has ever been available to provide definite ground. In this regard, the Buddha from Dangkhar with its dedicatory inscription confirms that these three images were undeniably executed by specialist artisans belonging to the same region, if not the same atelier, and approximately at the same time.

According to the date given in the inscription (712/812), the period of production of these bronzes can thus be inferred as being the first half of the eighth century.³² This period does not only correspond to a culmination of Buddhist artistic patronage under the reign of King Nandi-

²⁹ By doing so, Zhi ba 'od seems to have followed in Byang chub 'od's footsteps and conformed to a religious and artistic trend as his older brother adopted a similar iconographical programme when he had the monastery of Tabo renovated in 1041/2; see footnote 15 for the bibliographical references.

³⁰ See Karmay (1980 : 11-17).

³¹ For example, three bronzes conserved at Tashigang (Tib. *bKra shis sgang*) in Upper Kinnaur (Tib. *Khu nu*), H.P., bear the Tibetan inscription of Lha Na ga ra dza (988 – 1026), Ye shes 'od's younger son; see (Thakur 1997 : 971) In addition to these three images, at least fifteen other inscribed bronzes belonging to the former have been documented; see Von Schroeder (2001 : 84) Also, a Buddha from Kashmir-Gilgit with a two line Sanskrit inscription engraved on the base on which the name of king rTse lde (Tib. *mNga' bdag chen po rTse lde*) was later added; see Heller (2001).

³² Von Schroeder surprisingly dates the production of the Buddha Śākya-muni from the Potala 7th century while the bronze from the Norton Simon Foundation is dated 750 – 850; see Von Schroeder (1981 : 118 fig. 16A and 2001 : 106-9 pl. 19A-C).

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vikramādityanandi,³³ who ruled the kingdom of Belur (Tib. *Bru zha*) in the Gilgit Valley between c. 696 – 715,³⁴ but also precedes the conquest of the area by the expanding Tibetan Empire sometime between 720 and 745. A dating of a century later seems therefore less likely.

Despite the paucity of historical data regarding the Palola Śāhis of Gilgit, the small kingdom of the Upper Indus once hosted a thriving Buddhist culture as indicated by the recovery of Buddhist manuscripts, the presence of petroglyphs, rock inscriptions, and the high quality Buddhist bronzes produced in the area.³⁵ Wealthy groups of donors, which often involved *donatrices* of royal decent, played an active role in commissioning or donating images of great value. Their names and titles came down to us in the form of dedicatory inscriptions. Occasionally, they were represented on pedestals and book covers, clothed in their most flamboyant attire.

As suggested earlier, the feudalisation of early medieval India and the promotion of esoteric Buddhism (Skt. *Mantrayāna* Tib. *sngags kyi theg pa*) through the agency of royal or aristocratic patronage hence prompted aesthetic innovations. In this regard, the artists of north-western India, those of Kashmir and Gilgit in particular, gradually incorporated novelties based to a greater or lesser degree on written sources. This formative phase of iconography played an essential role in the depiction of Buddhas, notably as universal rulers (Skt. *cakravartin* Tib. *'khor los sgyur ba*), rendering their identification sometimes difficult.³⁶

As art historians often struggle to find textual antecedents to iconographical models, the apparition of a V-shaped neckline on Buddhist bronzes reaffirms the role performed by socio-political norms in the production of new doctrinal forms and their material illustrations. The formal identification of the Buddha from Dangkar remains thus problematic. It can be seen as Buddha Śākyamuni at best, as an artistic attempt to illustrate the transcendental nature within the plane of immanence or, from the art historical point of view, as a possible early representation of Vairocana.

³³ Among the most spectacular bronzes donated by King Nandivikramādityanandi is the Crown Buddha Śākyamuni preserved in the Pritzker Collection. The statue was commissioned in 715/16 and bears many structural similarities with the three Buddhas discussed in this article; see Heller (2006 : 181-83) Also, a bronze of a Buddha holding a scripture in his left hand from the Pan-Asian Collection, which was donated in 714/715 by the king of the Belur Kingdom and which is dubiously identified as Tathāgata Akṣobhya by von Schroeder; see Von Schroeder (1981 : 118-119 fig. 16C) Both bronzes display the figure of King Nandivikramādityanandi on their base. As shown by von Hinüber, the Bhagadatta family of Gilgit was a “truly devoted Buddhist royal family”; see Von Hinüber (2003).

³⁴ The geographical delimitation of the Belur Kingdom has been subject to much discussion; see Denwood (2008 : 13-15)

³⁵ For a comprehensive monograph on the Palola Śāhis of Gilgit; see Von Hinüber (2004).

³⁶ Quite surprisingly, a bronze from Gilgit depicting a Buddha holding his hands in *dharmacakra mudrā* is nominally identified as Lord Viśvabhū thanks to a dedicatory inscription dated 723/24; see Von Hinüber (2007 : 40-1).

Whatever the initial intention, the Buddha commissioned by the Śākya monk Vīkavarman in the year 712 must have appeared perfectly canonical when it was offered about three hundred and fifty years later to the rather conservative lHa bla ma Zhi ba who never missed the opportunity to describe himself as a Śākya'i dge slong.³⁷

While cultural ties between West Tibet and north-western India during the late tenth and eleventh centuries involved the comings and goings of Tibetan translators, Indian paṇḍitas, master craftsmen, artisans, and merchants, it is yet our contention that the Buddha of Vīkavarman might have found its way to West Tibet through the matrimonial alliance formed between the royal family of Guge and the Kingdom of Gilgit.

It is 'Od lde (993 – 1037), Zhi ba 'od's older brother, who sealed this alliance. Following his accession to the throne of Guge-Purang in 1024, the new king incorporated Maryül (Tib. *Mar yul*) to the kingdom and settled in Shel from where he administered his dominion.³⁸ It is probable that he married rGyan ne of Gilgit in the fire ox year 1037 in order to secure the north-western border of the kingdom. Unfortunately, the situation deteriorated quite rapidly and 'Od lde had to undertake a military campaign against the Muslim Qarakhanid Turks (Tib. *Gar log*) of Gilgit that same year. The King of Guge was defeated and made prisoner. He eventually escaped and died of poisoning when he reached the capital of Balti (Tib. *sBal ti*). His demise was quickly followed by the sack of Tholing still in the year 1037.³⁹

This episode certainly highlights the political ties and friendly relationship that existed between the two Buddhist kingdoms. Whether the sumptuous bronze of Vīkavarman was offered to 'Od lde following his wedding with rGyan ne is a matter of pure speculation. It seems certain, however, that the statue from Gilgit came into 'Od lde's younger brother's possession only after 1056 when Yongs srong lde had his name changed into lHa bla ma Zhi ba 'od as it came to be inscribed on the base thereafter. The fine depiction and the high degree of execution of that bronze must undoubtedly have appealed to the royal monk. Moreover, as a translator and a monk himself, the dedicatory inscription written in the holy language of Sanskrit and the pious gift of a *śākyabhikṣu* from the past surely stirred his sense of filiation and orthodoxy.

How long the bronze remained in the possession of the royal monk and translator, and how it ended up in the Spiti Valley is an altogether different matter. Again, it seems plausible that an object of such prestige must have been passed down from one generation to the next, or in this case from un-

³⁷ See Karmay (1980 : 3).

³⁸ The kingdom of West Tibet was referred to as *mNga' ris skor gsum* and included the regions of Guge, Purang, Piti, Upper Kinnaur, Zaskar (Tib. *Zangs dkar*), and Ladakh (Tib. *La dwags*) also known as Maryül.

³⁹ These events were reported in various Tibetan sources and commented at length by Vitali; see Vitali (1996 : 281-93).

Lha bla ma Zhi ba 'od's Bronze from Gilgit

cle to nephew as it is not clear whether Zhi ba 'od ever had any offspring.⁴⁰ It is therefore through his nephew King rTse lde that Zhi ba 'od's personal belonging might have reached Spiti. This hypothesis is supported by a short passage in the *mNga' ris rgyal rabs* which recalls that when King rTse lde was brutally murdered by a dissident branch of the royal family, three of his sons found refuge at Sang brag Brang mkhar, a toponym which suggests that a fortified palace could have overlooked the Spiti river as early as the last quarter of the eleventh century.⁴¹

This short detour through the land of speculative history should not obliterate the remarkable contribution of this bronze to the study of epigraphy, art, and history of Buddhism. From the eighth century up to today, the Buddha now preserved at Dangkhar Monastery in the Spiti Valley has been protected and worshipped as a unique image of devotion, acquiring over the centuries the longevity and sanctity of its guardians.

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⁴⁰ See Heller (2010 : 65-7).

⁴¹ See Vitali (1996 : 125). This passage is of utmost importance for the history of Dangkhar. In the present state of preservation, the fortress-monastery bears no architectural, epigraphic or iconographical evidence of dating back to this time. Furthermore, a rounded fortified tower known as Takkar (*Brag mkhar*) has also been documented in Zanskar; see Howard (1995 : 81-2).

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Figure 1

Buddha from Dangkhar. 8th century, Gilgit. Bronze with silver and copper inlay, 26 cm high. Front view.

Photo: L.N. Laurent, 2010. Retouching: M. Lindén, 2012.
Photograph © Lobsang Nyima LAURENT



Figure 2

Buddha from Dangkhar. 8th century, Gilgit. Bronze with silver and copper inlay, 26 cm high. Top view.

Photo: L.N. Laurent, 2010. Retouching: M. Lindén, 2012.
Photograph © Lobsang Nyima LAURENT



Figure 3

Buddha from Dangkhar. 8th century, Gilgit. Bronze with silver and copper inlay, 26 cm high. Back view.

Photo: L.N. Laurent, 2010. Retouching: M. Lindén, 2012.

Photograph © Lobsang Nyima LAURENT

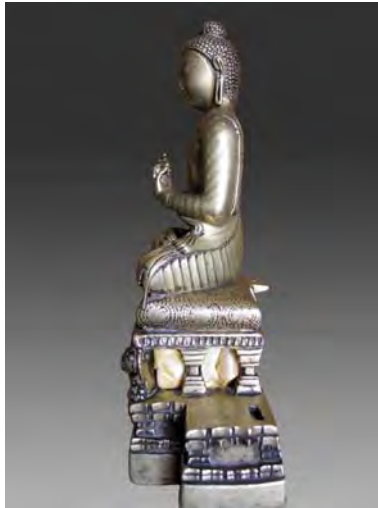


Figure 4

Buddha from Dangkhar. 8th century, Gilgit. Bronze with silver and copper inlay, 26 cm high. Side view.

Photo: L.N. Laurent, 2010. Retouching: M. Lindén, 2012.

Photograph © Lobsang Nyima LAURENT



Figure 5

Buddha and Adorants on the Cosmic Mountain, c. 700 India: Kashmir, 675-725
Bronze with silver and copper inlay. 13-1/4 x 9-1/2 x 4-3/4 in. (33.7 x 24.1 x 12.1 cm)
F.1972.48.2.S. Photograph © The Norton Simon Foundation, Pasadena



Figure 6

Buddha Śākyamuni delivering the first sermon in the Deer Park of Sarnāth
North-Western India: Patola-Shahi of the Gilgit Valley; 7th Century
Potala Collection: Li ma lha khang: inventory no 1383. (Photo: Ulrich von Schroeder,
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Figure 7

Detail inscription. Buddha from Dangkhar. 8th century, Gilgit. Bronze with silver and copper inlay.

Photo: L.N. Laurent, 2010

Photograph © Lobsang Nyima LAURENT

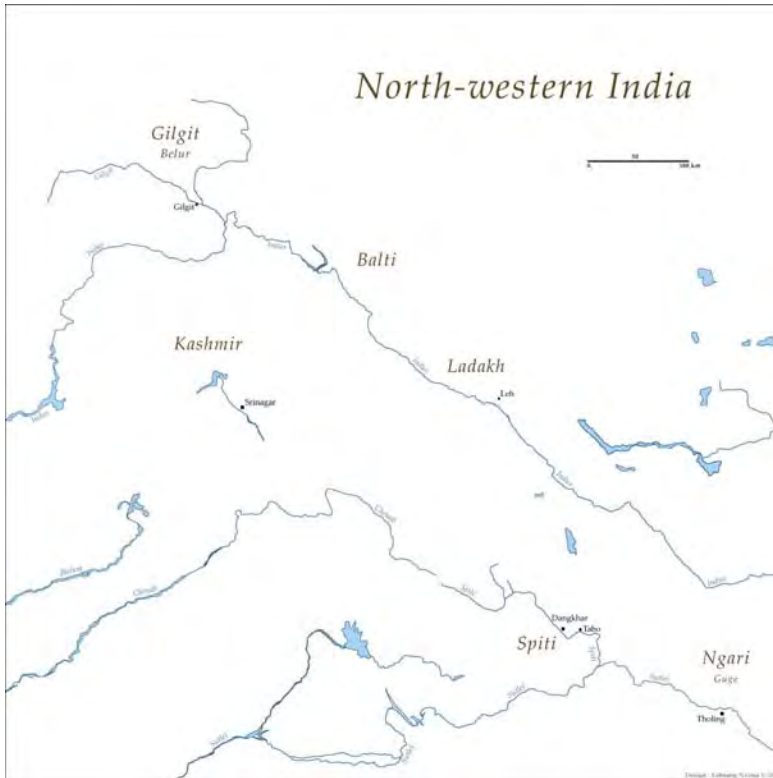


Figure 8

Map. North-western India.

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