

LETTERS TO THE KHANS  
Six Tibetan Epistles of Togdugpa Addressed to the Mongol Rulers  
Hulegu and Khubilai, as well as to the Tibetan Lama Pagpa<sup>1</sup>

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It has been known for a very long time that the Mongolian kings of Persia known as the Ilkhans had close connections with some Tibetan monks during the last half of the 13th century. It has been known that some Tibetan monks, not yet identified by name, were physically present there near the Caspian Sea. But views about the nature and significance of this relationship have developed, especially in more recent decades as relevant texts on the Tibetan side have come to light. In this essay in honor of Elliot Sperling, author of one of the truly eye-opening and even game-changing essays in this area of concern written 24 years ago, today we venture a rather modest goal of introducing and translating just a few interesting letters from a collection that has only very recently been made available to the world at large. This is in effect a footnote to Elliot Sperling's "Hulegu and Tibet," utilizing materials that were not available at the time he composed his essay.<sup>2</sup> A thorough coverage for this body of letters is something we propose to do neither now nor in the future, but we do nourish the hope that there will be a number of studies by Tibetanists, Mongolists, Iranists and so on that will take these fascinating documents into account. We introduce the letters by looking first at what can be known about the letter writer, then say a little about letter writing in general in those times, ending with a brief discussion about the particular set of letters that we have chosen to translate into English. One of our aims along the way is to emphasize the importance of letters as highly useful sources for Tibetan history. As one means toward this end we have appended a small bibliography of letter translations and studies that we know to exist.

### The Letter Writer, Togdugpa

While we will concern ourselves with only one of them, there are two different Tibetan letter collections from the period of the mid-13th century that have appeared quite recently. To the best

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1 This essay began and was nearly completed during our tenure as fellows at the Israel Institute for Advanced Studies, Jerusalem, during the academic year of 2013-2014. While there we particularly benefited from our meetings with Choi Soyung who shared our interest in Hulegu's connections with Tibet, the subject of her thesis listed in the bibliography below.

2 We ought to add that, within the general field of Tibetan-Mongol relations during the time of the Yüan, some exemplary work is being done by Karl-Heinz Everding. For an introduction to his most recent work in this area, see now Everding, "Introduction to a Research Project." Although some reference is made to it below, we haven't had the opportunity to closely study a new book by Olaf Czaja, *Medieval Rule in Tibet*, although it has a very important chapter about the first half of the 13th century that is much recommended (ch. 3, pp.89-108).

of our knowledge, these had their first public notice in an academic essay thanks to Leonard W.J. van der Kuijp of Harvard University.<sup>3</sup> The authors of these two letter collections were in fact closely related to each other. The author of the one, Chenga (1175-1255),<sup>4</sup> who became the 4th abbot of Drigung Monastery in 1234, was the paternal uncle as well as the ordinator of the author of the other, Togdugpa.<sup>5</sup> The life of the former is relatively well known, but here it is the latter letter writer that concerns us. So it is discouraging to find that there seems to be no full biography available for Togdugpa. Although short and weak on details, there are three fairly good sources for information about him in the *South Gorge Dharma History*,<sup>6</sup> *A Thousand Eye-Opening Lights*,<sup>7</sup> and the *Blue Annals*. For present purposes it would suffice to summarize what these three sources say, but we will begin with information from a recent history of the Drigung Kagyu School.

According to this modern source, his full and more standard name is Gyelwa Rinpoche Dragpa Tsondrü.<sup>8</sup> It says he was born as the son of the brother of the Chenga himself, and took ordination at the feet of that same Lord (Chenga). Later on while Chenga was occupying the abbot's chair of Drigung, he appointed his nephew to the headship of Densatil.<sup>9</sup> Once when

3 See Leonard Kuijp, "Faulty Transmissions," p.449, where he makes reference to something in a letter by Togdugpa contained in his letter collection at p.225, as well as a letter written to one Dus-'khor-ba (apparently the Imperial Preceptor by that name) at pp.228-229. Occasional mention has been made of the letter writer; as a recent example see Yoeli-Tlalim, "Islam and Tibet," p.9.

4 I.e., Spyan-snga Grags-pa-'byung-gnas. We supply here a few names that are often repeated in their phonetic forms, preferring to use short forms of the names in order to make the reading easier for non-Tibetanists. His works have been published under the title *The Collected Works (Gsung-'bum) of Grags-pa-'byung-gnas (1175-1255), a Chief Disciple of the Skyob-pa 'Jig-rten-gsum-mgon*. This volume is very rich in letters, although we haven't been able to determine how its contents may or may not correspond to the (same?) letter collection recently published in the 151-volume *Drigung Collection*. The story of this very same person, there called Chenga (Spyan-snga), is told briefly in Petech, *Central Tibet and the Mongols*, p.88. Some of Chenga's letters have now been made use of in Czaja, *Medieval Rule*, pp.90-91 *et passim*.

5 Thog-brdugs-pa is one of several ways his name may be spelled in the Tibetan sources (more on this below). Petech, *Central Tibet and the Mongols*, p. 88, says they were "half brothers." Here Petech definitely means Togdugpa when he mentions "rGyal-ba Rin-po-c'e (1203-1267)," since the more official form of his name is Rgyal-ba Rin-po-che Grags-pa-brtson-'grus. There is a brief passage on him in English in Shakabpa, *Hundred Thousand Moons*, vol. 1, p.251: "Yönchen Sangyé Kyap's son, Gyelwa Rinpoché Drakpa Tsöndru or Gyelsé Tokdukpa, held the seat at Tel Monastery. His relative, Nyené Dorjé Pel, who was the leader of Kazhi, was designated as the myriarch upon being called to service by Gyelwa Rinpoché. Since he held the seat at Tel, he was called Pakdrupa, and since his capital was at Nedong, he was called Nedongpa. Lang Lhasik's descendents mainly became monks and made great efforts to learn about religion. They took the name Chenna upon ascending to the seat of Tel, becoming lords of religion and politics. Some of them received authorization from Sakya to be myriarchs and thus implemented laws."

6 See the listing of "Tibetan Histories Cited by English Titles" below, just before the final bibliography. This history was composed in 1446-1451.

7 *Mig 'byed 'od stong*. For this work and more information about it, see Per K. Sørensen & Sonam Dolma, *Rare Texts from Tibet: Seven Sources for the Ecclesiastic History of Medieval Tibet*, Lumbini International Research Institute (Lumbini 2007), pp.15-20 [introduction], 59-103 [text]. It was composed in 1418.

8 Rgyal-ba Rin-po-che Grags-pa-brtson-'grus. This modern history of the Drigung School calls him Phag-gru Rgyal-ba Rin-po-che; see 'Bri-gung Dkon-mchog-rgya-mtsho, *'Bri gung chos 'byung*, p.357.

9 Here spelled Gdan-sa-thel, although Gdan-sa-mthil is a frequent spelling. It was very common in those days for young people to begin their monastic careers under the direction of their uncles. It was likewise common that the position of abbot was passed from uncle to nephew.

lightning struck in the monastery's courtyard he remained wrapped up in the Dharma teachings, and for this they nicknamed him Togdugpa. Because of the honors and services he received from the Upper Hor,<sup>10</sup> his activities were extensive, but nowadays only a few works by him remain, including his *Sandalwood Rosary of Questions and Answers*.<sup>11</sup> He accomplished an edition of the sermons of the *Three Past Masters*, and composed a table-of-contents for them.<sup>12</sup> For details about how he personally obtained the myriarchy of Pagmodru (Phag-gru Khri-skor) and so on, the modern author tells us to have a look at two earlier works, the *South Gorge Dharma History* and *A Thousand Eye-Opening Lights*.

It is indeed true that *A Thousand Eye-Opening Lights*, composed in 1418, contains a brief sketch of Togdugpa's life.<sup>13</sup> So does *The South Gorge Dharma History* composed somewhat later, in 1446-1451. If we put these two together with the account in the *Blue Annals*, dated 1476-1478, we may accept that these supply practically the entire sum of 'general knowledge' about his life. In the end it is clear that not all that much is known, although of course the testimony of his letters, and of his other works if they were available, could add further details.

Togdugpa was born in eastern Tibet, the first of four eminent sons of the Great Donor Sangs-rgyas-skyabs and his wife named Bram-ze Ye-shes-mtsho-rgyal in the Water Female Pig year, or 1203 CE.<sup>14</sup> He took his first vows in his 15th year (1217) and received his monastic name Grags-pa-brtson-'grus. It is said that when he went to Central Tibet to meet his uncle a year later, he was given a blessing whereby the realization dawned on him that all *dharmas* are in a state of equality. At age 19 (1221) he went to Drigung to receive the vows of full monkhood. He continued staying with his uncle and did spiritual practices that resulted in an ability to transform external appearances. In his thirty-third year, a Wood Female Sheep year, or 1235, he went to serve as the head of the Headquarters, and remained there at Densatil for thirty-three years. He was able to manifest miraculous powers, as for example when a thunderbolt with a meteor came down he wrapped it up in his robes. For this he received the nickname Lightning's Conqueror or Lightning's Equal.<sup>15</sup> He had a number of visionary experiences, until finally his fame filled

10 Stod Hor, of Upper Hor is a way of referring to the western parts of the Mongol world.

11 *Zhus lan tsan dan gyi phreng ba*. This is not the title of our letter collection, and in any case a letter collection would not be called a questions-and-answers text, a distinct genre of Tibetan literature. It would appear that this text is available to the author of the modern Drigung history, but it doesn't seem to have reached publication to the best of our knowledge.

12 The *Three Past Masters* most definitely means the founder of the Drigung Kagyu named 'Bri-gung Chos-rje 'Jig-rten-mgon-po Rin-chen-dpal (1143-1217), together with the two most prominent of his immediate disciples, the already-mentioned Chenga along with Sphyan-snga Shes-rab-'byung-gnas (1187-1241).

13 The relevant passage is published in Per K. Sørensen & Sonam Drolma, eds., *Rare Texts from Tibet*, at p.74.

14 The spelling for the mother's name supplied in the *South Gorge Dharma History* seems more likely to be correct: 'Brom-za Ye-shes-mtsho. Here, too, instead of being called a Great Donor (Yon-chen) the father is called a *nephew* (*dbon*), which could of course be read as *chief* (*dpon*). For an alternative sketch of the life of Togdugpa, one may see now Czaja, *Medieval Rule*, pp.93-94, note 18.

15 The two nicknames are just two different spellings of the same: Thog-brdugs-pa and Thog-thub-pa.

the earth, and the King Hulegu became his primary sponsor, giving an immeasurable amount of offerings.<sup>16</sup> Then the Kings of Singala, Tirhut and Yatsé<sup>17</sup> offered him many gifts including a Five Family initiation crown made of conch shell and so on. He died on the eighteenth day of the eleventh Mongolian month of the year Fire Female Hare, or 1267.<sup>18</sup> At his cremation there were many signs of saintly death. His followers included the Siddha Smon-lam-'bar, who demonstrated the prodigy of bleeding milk instead of blood, and a number of others. Togdugpa was succeeded in the abbot's chair by his younger brother with the name that means *twelve*, Bcu-gnyis-pa Rin-chen-rdo-rje.<sup>19</sup>

Togdugpa has a special importance in the field of Tibetan art history. His monumental tomb chorten, the first in a series of eight such chortens, was a magnificently ornamented structure that took twelve years to complete. Dismantled during the Cultural Revolution, the images of deities, Dharma protectors and offering goddesses that once covered them nowadays command exceptional interest in the world of Asian art. Many of these sculptures were recently displayed in an exhibition in New York, and a huge and richly detailed book about them has been published.<sup>20</sup>

## The Letters

The letter collection of Togdugpa contains nearly 70 letters of various lengths. We believe that the collection is arranged roughly in the order in which they were written. It is at least possible to see that earlier letters mentioning Mongke Khagan are near the beginning, with letters closer to the end of the letter author's life being located near the end. There are neither a lot of dates nor so much immediately datable information in these letters, and our impression that they are chronological arranged will need to be tested in a more complete study in the future.

16 We choose to use the form Hulegu (without any diacritic marks), although of course the 'g' is silent or nearly so, as is proven by the more usual Tibetan form Hu-la-hu, and the forms found in European sources such as Ulaui and Alau, these last-mentioned being among the many forms discussed by Paul Pelliot, "373: Ulaui."

17 The Tibetan spellings here are Sing-ga-gling, Ti-ra-hu-ti and Ya-tse. The first is the island of Ceylon, the second is Tirhut, located in the area of upper Bihar, while the third is a kingdom in western Tibet, although its territory is now in the northwestern corner of Nepal.

18 Or, since the date is quite late in the Tibetan year, it is likely he died early in the year 1268, although we are not sure of it.

19 He was abbot from 1267 until his death in 1280. Just as an interesting side issue, we think it was likely his name that inspired the name of the Ilkhan Gaikhatu who ruled great Persia from 1291 until his death in 1295. On some coins, in Arabic and Uighur script, we find the name Irenčin Turci or Iranjin Durji. This name that appears on coins of the Ilkhan Gaikhatu (d. 1295) is one he received from the Bakhshis. It has been understood, quite reasonably, to be the Tibetan name Rin-chen-rdo-rje. Grupper, "The Buddhist Sanctuary," pp.50-52, has a slightly differing, but not necessarily contradictory explanation, concluding that the name can be explained as a Guhyasamāja initiatory name (they ought to end in *-vajra*), and that the initiation would have taken place simultaneously with his royal consecration performed on June 29, 1292.

20 The artworks were on display at the Asia Society Museum from February to May of 2014, in an exhibition co-curated by Olaf Czaja and Adriana Proser. For the book, see Olaf Czaja, *Medieval Rule in Tibet*.

That letter writing was common in those days perhaps goes without saying, but it does seem likely that with the new establishment of a postal relay system in Tibet, and at a date very close to the time when Togdugpa's letters were written, would have not only facilitated but even encouraged the writing of letters. According to Petech, the only recent academic we know of who wrote about Tibet's Mongol-period postal system in any detail, the first postal stations were in place in Amdo area by the late 1250's, while they were established in Central Tibet in 1269.<sup>21</sup> This postal relay system was called in Tibetan *'jam*, and the postal stations were called *'jam-sa*.<sup>22</sup> We believe that the postal system must have been in place in western Tibet when Togdugpa was writing his letters.

It would be interesting to delve more into the history of letter writing, both in Eurasia at large as well as in Tibet in particular. Not very many studies have been done on Tibetan epistles, unless we count the Tibet-language translations of Indian letters that are included in the Tibetan canon, covered by the excellent work of Siglinde Dietz.<sup>23</sup> Still, there have been some studies of particular letters or small bodies of letters.<sup>24</sup> It would of course be desirable to have a general study of Tibetan letters considered in tandem with Tibetan texts on the subject of letter writing. Texts on letter writing are known on the Persian side from around the middle of the 13th century.<sup>25</sup> It would therefore be good to know if any Tibetans had the idea to write one of these manuals at such an early date. Our general impression is that all the readily available examples of the letter-writing manuals called *Yig bskur rnam gzhag*, were written during the last three centuries, which does tend to lessen their relevance for our present concerns.<sup>26</sup> We should say, too, that our two letter collections, together with the two collections of Sakya Paṇḍita and Pagpa of course,<sup>27</sup> rank among the earliest extensive examples of their kind.

21 See Petech, *Central Tibet and the Mongols*, pp.61-68. It only stands to reason that the setting up of an efficient mail system through the greater part of Eurasia would have encouraged and facilitated more frequent writing of letters. Bear in mind that the letters to Hulegu translated below would have needed to travel over 2,600 miles to reach their destination.

22 For various spellings of the term in other parts of the Mongol Empire, see the discussions by Paul Pelliot, "255: Iamb" and Paul Pelliot, "Sur *yam* ou *jam*."

23 Siglinde Dietz, *Die Buddhistische Briefliteratur Indiens*. Also worthy of mention are the English translations of some of these Indian Buddhist letters, based on their Tibetan versions, as part as a more general treatment of Indian epistles, in Shyamalkanti Chakravarti, *Patralekha*.

24 For a listing of works in western languages, see the Appendix below. It might seem to some that the most celebrated letters ever received from a Tibetan were the Mahatma Letters, which certainly caused much discussion in various parts of the world in their day, although we do not propose to discuss them here. Firstly and most importantly, they were not written in Tibetan. The appended bibliography contains everything we could find at this moment about epistles written in Tibetan. Added together, they hardly amount to a significant beginning for a genre that we believe ought to be one of the most important sources for understanding Tibetan history.

25 Rypka, "Poets and Prose Writers," pp.620-621, makes reference to two Persian treatises about letter writing from approximately the same period, one of them written by Hulegu's close adviser the famous astronomer Naṣīr al-Dīn Tūsī (1200-1273). An earlier one, *An Exploration of the Approaches to Letter-Writing* by Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad Mu'ayyadal-Baghdādī dates to around 1182 to 1184.

26 A survey of the genre may be found in Hanna Schneider, "The Formation of the Tibetan Official Style."

27 Six of Sakya Paṇḍita's letters have been translated by the late Jared Rhoton as *addenda* to Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyaltsen, *A Clear Differentiation of the Three Codes*, pp.201-270.

Without pretending to adopt any technical procedures of diplomatics, a task we leave for others, we could still make a few simple observations about the letter collection as we have it.<sup>28</sup> First of all, it is not a collection of the original physical letters. This may seem to go without saying, but the fact of the matter is that information is lost, or even possibly deliberately transformed, in the process of transferring the words from one medium to another. That is to say that the physical aspects of the original letter could have had things of importance to say to us if the original physical letter were available (depending on how it was folded, sealed, marked on the outside and so on; the possibility of scientific testing of the material elements). Although we believe the letters are essentially untouched as far as their content is concerned, we have no way of proving this to persons of unusual skepticism. That the letters as we have them are not entirely complete is proven by an interesting *mchan*-note that someone added to the collection at p. 230 saying how some pages were lost. As mentioned already, we believe they are likely to be in chronological order. Apparently somebody was keeping a record of these letters as they were sent, and it is this record, or a secondary copy of it, that was passed on to us.

According to an appended list found at the end of the collection, during the first centuries it was transmitted by a select lineage of persons. This lineage spans eight generations, beginning with no. 1 being none other than Togdogpa himself, as follows:

1. Rgyal-ba Rin-po-che. 2. Grub-thob Smon-lam-mgon. 3. Bla-ma Zhang-ston Seng-ge. 4. Bla-ma Rdor-'dzin-pa. 5. Bla-ma Rin-chen-gzhon-nu. 6. Nyer-gnyis Rin-po-che. [i.e. Nyer-gnyis-pa 'Dzam-gling-chos-kyi-rgyal-po (1335-1407), abbot of Drigung]. 7. Gnam-gang Rin-po-che. 8. "Myself," A-nanda.

This last-mentioned "A-nanda" is without a shadow of doubt in our minds the renowned Drigung abbot Kun-dga'-rin-chen (1475-1527).<sup>29</sup> We might extract from this lineage information the reasonable probability that it was Grub-thob Smon-lam-mgon who compiled the original letters into the collection now available.

The letters share certain formal characteristics. After a title indicating their content, presumably added by someone other than the letter writer himself (perhaps by the just-mentioned Grub-thob), they very frequently open with verses of praise, in some part and at some point praising the addressee more or less directly. Often the individual verses follow a particular order in their subject matter, such as Buddha, Dharma and Sangha; or Body, Speech and Mind [perhaps adding Quality and Activity]. We will point out in our footnotes (or in square brackets) these themes, since this is likely to help readers to better see what these mildly poetic and therefore somewhat

28 For approaches that involve the formal analysis of documents, what is often known as *diplomatics*, see for examples, Dieter Schuh, *Erlasse und Sendschreiben*, pp.158-176; and Hanna Schneider, "The Formation of the Tibetan Official Style."

29 One reason for our certainty is the fact that a nearly identical lineage may be found for the Golden Manuscript of the collected works of Phag-mo-gru-pa Padma-rdo-rje, where we find, in vol. 3, fol. 192v, the following: 1. 'Gro-mgon (i.e., Phag-mo-gru-pa). 2. Skyu-ra (i.e., 'Jig-rten-mgon-po). 3. Rje Sp[y]an-snga (i.e., Spyan-snga Grags-pa-'byung-gnas). 4. Rgyal-ba (i.e., Togdogpa). 5. Bcu-gnyis-pa. 6. Dbang-bsod. 7. Grags-she-ba. 8. Tshul-rgyal-ba. 9. Grags-byang-ba. 10. Slob-dpon Shes-don-pa. 11. Gnam-gang Rin-po-che. 12. *Bdag* ('myself,' meaning Kun-dga'-rin-chen).

opaque verses are about. The verse section is followed by prose that may be divided, most usually, into three parts. The first part reminds the addressee of their good relations in the past, of earlier encounters, of gifts once received or friendly cooperations that have linked their larger groups. The second part actually contains the request. It is impressive to see how directly these requests were made, reflecting a considerable degree of temerity or, indeed, *chutzpah*, bearing in mind the awesome power of the rulers to whom they were made. Finally, there is the *letter support* (*yig-rten*) section enumerating the desirable objects sent along with the letter. Perhaps we ought to add a fifth section for ‘good wishes,’ but these are so brief and perfunctory it hardly counts as a section, and even if sometimes we find a bit of colophon information (again, presumably written by the compiler rather than the letter author), there seems to be no rule.

It will be an interesting task for the future for someone to generalize about these letters in light of letters written throughout Eurasia during the time of the Mongol Empire. The letters exchanged between Mongolian rulers and their European counterparts have a particularly long history of study.<sup>30</sup> While by no means the first of these letters, the letters associated with Hulegu are the more interesting for present purposes. One such letter was sent by Hulegu from his residence in Maragha to Louis IX, King of France in 1262.<sup>31</sup> In it Tibet is explicitly mentioned as part of a listing of peoples whose rulers had been forced to submit to Mongol power. In fact, Tibet is listed twice in a row with two different spellings, the likely explanation being that the second was written only as a correction of the first one after it had been misspelled: “Teubets” and “Tubets.” As usual with such letters sent by the Mongol rulers, one thing that *was* spelled out quite clearly was the fate of peoples who had resisted them in the past, and by implication the necessity for cooperation in the present. Surely the alliance forming in the same year between the Mamluks and the Golden Horde to the north was making plain to Hulegu the importance of making his own alliance with the Franks.

In this letter written on his own initiative Hulegu emphasizes his successes, particularly the taking of Baghdad, boasting of killing “two thousand[s of] thousand[s of the Caliph’s] men.” Although that would seem to work out to two million, the usual estimates place the number of deaths somewhere between one hundred thousand and one million.<sup>32</sup> He boasts of his conquest of Aleppo and Damascus, and of hanging their rulers’ heads at the gate of Tabriz as an example to others. For obvious reasons he doesn’t even mention the defeat suffered by his own army two years earlier at the hands of the Mamluks at Ain Jalut.<sup>33</sup> To call attention to it would not

30 The earlier studies were reviewed in Denise Aigle, “Letters of Eljigidei,” pp.144-145. These letters, with only a few notable exceptions, are available to us today only in their Latin translations, although presumably first composed in Mongolian. The early studies listed therein include most notably a work by Laurent Moshem published in 1741 and one by Abel-Rémusat published in 1824.

31 We rely here on the edition of the Latin letter by Paul Meyvaert, “An Unknown Letter of Hulagu,” pp.252-259, and the English translation of Malcolm Barber, *Letters from the East*, pp.156-159.

32 The Latin text reads *duo milia milium pugnatorum necauimus*, where it is clear that the overly high number covers only the fighters killed, without including any civilian population. The civilians would need to be added in order to come up with a complete number of people who lost their lives, so it seems quite sure that the number of two million is at best an exaggerated estimate.

33 On this, see Peter Jackson, “The Crisis in the Holy Land in 1260.”

have been very politic. Indeed, this defeat may have been his immediate reason for proposing a mutually beneficial alliance with European powers against the Mamluks. Letters of similar alliance-forming intentions would continue to be sent by his royal Ilkhanid successors for the following half century.

We are also fortunate to have a reply to Hulegu from Pope Urban IV dated 1263. This letter was regarded as a kind of Papal Bull, with its title based on its *incipit* being *Exultavit cor nostrum*.<sup>34</sup> This letter seems to respond to the very same letter that had been sent to the King of France. In his reply, the most interesting thing for present purposes is that the Pope had been given to understand — either from the letter itself, or from the words of the envoy, or both — that Hulegu was inclined to accept baptism into the Christian faith. This may bear some significance for something we will look into presently, which is the question of the nature and extent of Hulegu's Buddhist identity.

So we invite the readers of these letters to ponder how the alliance between Buddhist lamas and Mongol rulers may have worked out in real practice. It may be difficult to comprehend how a man like Hulegu, undeniably responsible for the violent deaths of so many people, could hope for absolution. In the popular image of the Mongol armies, people are likely to imagine ruthless killers free of conscience. But we think that, like all humans, they tended to feel regret for their misdeeds. For the early Chinggisid period, we have very interesting arguments and evidence of regret in a recent study, and to this we send the interested reader.<sup>35</sup> Regret and the possibility for redemption could have swayed Hulegu's mind in favor of Buddhism, or at least we can find reasons in these letters to think so.

## Hulegu and Buddhism

There was a time not so long ago when it was usual to regard religion as a matter of extreme ambivalence or disinterest among the early Mongols. Although there may be something to this idea, two recent books, Johan Elverskog's *Buddhism and Islam on the Silk Road*, especially its chapter 3, and most recently Mostafa Vaziri's *Buddhism in Iran*, demonstrate that the spirit of our age is changing, and people are more willing to accept that some of these early Mongol rulers took their Buddhism quite seriously on some level or another. At least some see indications the khans had a degree of personal interest. An essay by Sam Grupper has made an impressive case against the once-prevailing view by arguing for Hulegu's acceptance of a Buddhist identity.<sup>36</sup> This identity is indicated perhaps above all by his patronage of Buddhism, in particular his building during the years 1261 to 1265 of

34 For this, see Karl-Ernst Lupprian, *Die Beziehungen der Päpste*.

35 See Humphrey & Hürelbaatar, "Regret as a Political Intervention."

36 Grupper, "The Buddhist Sanctuary," in fact argues for a Buddhist orientation of Hulegu's father Mongke before him. See Kedar, "Multilateral Disputation," for an interesting discussion of the interreligious debates of 1254 and after, although it ends with the conclusion that Mongke regarded his own Mongol belief in the sky god, and not Buddhism, as the supreme truth behind other religions.



a highland monastery of Labnasagut in Armenian lands, with a land grant made in 1259.<sup>37</sup> And in agreement with Grupper, we would say that he must have taken his Buddhism seriously enough to pass on that identity to the Ilkhans, his own descendents, for three more generations. With only a brief hiatus, the Ilkhans reigned as Buddhists into the first decade of the 14th century. Hulegu passed his Buddhism on to his son and successor Abaga, who passed it on to his son Arghun, who passed it on to his son Ghazan. These rulers continued their Buddhist identity under circumstances inimical enough that it must have meant a great deal to them.

Among the matters that seem to be settled by the letters we have translated, one is this: There is indeed positive evidence that Hulegu became a Buddhist in a formal way, as a Buddhist layperson.<sup>38</sup> To follow Grupper, Hulegu's early contact with Buddhism may be confirmed by an inscription dated 1255 that demonstrates his attendance at teachings of a Ch'an monk named Hai-yün (1202-1257 CE), and his subsequent donations toward the reconstruction of a temple. This attitude of support and patronage of Buddhism was normal among other contemporary members of the ruling family. And Hulegu continued his contacts (or attempted contacts) with Hai-yün during the time he was battling the Assassins. Clearly his interest was much more than a casual one-time attendance at Buddhist teachings.

Our letters demonstrate that there was one particularly widespread Buddhist lay practice that Hulegu was taught to observe by his Tibetan Buddhist teacher Togdugpa. This is the *uposatha* observance, something common to Buddhists of all countries.<sup>39</sup> Some scholars think it comparable to the *sabbath day* in monotheistic religions, although the connection is a rather feeble one without very much to recommend it, beyond both being regularly recurring days for special religious observances. On particular days of the month, Buddhist believers for a day keep eight vows that bring them somewhat closer to the lives of the monastic community. In effect, it is a renewal of the ordinary vows of a lay Buddhist, only with the addition of just a few among the many vows required of the monks. These vows are usually taken formally albeit simply, perhaps repeating the words after they are pronounced by a monk, starting with the Refuge and continuing with a line for each of the eight vows (this is clarified in letter no. 39). Although there is a degree of variation in local practices, Buddhist laypersons are more likely on those special days to visit monasteries and involve themselves in activities such as offerings or chanting and perhaps listen to readings or teachings given by the monks, or engage in devotional and meditative practices.

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37 Although the general location of this monastery appears to be quite well known, I haven't heard that there have been any attempts to excavate the site. There are other places in the Persian realm that have been understood in the past to have been Ilkhan Buddhist establishments, but about this connection there is very little that seems to be conclusive. For the latest word on these sites, see Azad, "Three Rock-Cut Cave Sites."

38 Cf. the statement of Spuler, "Although there is no definite evidence that the Ilkhan was a formal Buddhist, he was at any rate well disposed toward that religion" (as quoted by Grupper, p. 8).

39 We choose to use the Pāli version of the name *uposatha*, if just for the reason that this form may have greater recognition value. The Sanskrit may be *upoṣadha*, the Tibetan being *bsnyen-gnas*.

The main text quoted in our letters for the practice of the *uposatha* is one called the *Vasiṣṭha Sūtra*,<sup>40</sup> or in Tibetan, the *Gnas'jog pa'i mdo*.<sup>41</sup> The Tibetan text was translated by a pair of translators consisting of the Indian Sarvajñadeva and the Tibetan-born translator of the Ska-ba clan named Dpal-brtsegs. These translators were known to have been active in the late Imperial Period, in the first two decades of the 9th century.<sup>42</sup>

We have not translated the several-page-long citation from the *Vasiṣṭha Sūtra* in letter no. 39. Our reasons for not doing so are firstly that the quotation, although seemingly identical in subject matter, differs in some other ways that will require closer study in the future. Perhaps it represents an independent translation of the same Indic text, we simply do not know yet. This issue deserves a separate study of its own by someone specializing in Buddhist *sūtra* literature.

The most surprising thing in all this for the historian is that this same *Vasiṣṭha Sūtra* is one of only a few that were explicitly used a half century later at the beginning of the 14th century by the celebrated historian Rashid al-Din.<sup>43</sup> This, along with the *Maitreya Prophecy* to be mentioned presently, must have had a continuing significance during the early Ilkhanid rule. Long ago, in 1982, Gregory Schopen wrote an article about these scriptures on the basis of a still earlier work by Karl Jahn,<sup>44</sup> and it is to these that we refer the interested reader.

As for the *Maitreya Prophecy*...<sup>45</sup> it can be no accident that in letter 39, almost immediately after the very lengthy citation from the *Vasiṣṭha Sūtra*, we find a brief quotation from a *Maitreya Prophecy*. This particular quotation is precisely on the subject of the *uposatha*, and especially concerns which days of the months it ought to be performed. Rashid ad-Din quoted other verses

40 The Derge canonical version of the text does not have the Sanskrit title in Tibetan transliteration, so the Sanskrit title ought to be regarded as a reconstruction. The reader should not let our use of a Sanskrit title give them the impression that there is a Sanskrit version easily available. This is not the case, and like Schopen, “Hīnayāna Texts,” p.227, we have no knowledge of the existence of a Sanskrit text.

41 There are two scriptures in the Pāli canon that are called *Vāseṭṭha Sutta*, but neither one of them is relevant, since they do not mention the *uposatha* observance. Their message is that Buddha regards as a true Brahmin a person of good qualities, that one is not a Brahmin simply by virtue of birth or name. Yet we do find the practice of *uposatha* featured in other Pāli scriptures like the *Dhammika Sutta*, to name a particularly significant one.

42 It is of some interest to note that our letters have a slightly different version of the title, calling it the *Gnas mchog gi mdo*, but *Gnas-mchog* may be superior to *Gnas-jog* as a rendering of the Sanskrit personal name Vasiṣṭha. We see no special significance in this, except that it might create unnecessary confusion in someone's mind.

43 Jahn, “Kamālaśrī,” pp.100-102, gives his own abridged description of the content of the *sūtra* on the basis of the Arabic.

44 As Jahn, “Kamālaśrī,” p.82, points out, the *Life of the Buddha* was composed in 1305 or 1306 based almost entirely on information from his resident informant, a Kashmiri teacher named Kamalaśrī. The latter has sometimes been identified with the Indian (moreover probably a South Indian Andhran) Buddhist teacher Pha-dam-pa Sangs-rgyas (d. 1105 or 1117), who did indeed have Kamalaśrī as one of his ordination names. For obvious chronological reasons there is no way they can possibly be identified one with the other. Still other Kamalaśrīs are known to history.

45 Grupper, note 87 on p. 37, says that Schopen, in his “Hīnayāna Texts,” p.232, identifies the particular text of the *Maitreyavyākaraṇa* intended. For the latest edition see Li & Nagashima, “*Maitreyavyākaraṇa*.”

in translation from the same text that relate to the coming of Maitreya.<sup>46</sup> The conjunction of these two texts does surprise us because it fits with evidence we have from widely disparate 'outside' sources.

It is known to us from a nearly contemporary Armenian source, the historian Kirakos Ganjakec'i (1203-1275 CE, writing in around 1267 about events of 1261-1265) reporting that the Buddhist monks "worship everything, but most of all Šakmoni [Śākyamuni] and Madrin [Maitreya]."<sup>47</sup> We may draw from this that the present and future Buddhas were very likely there to be seen, in the form of images, in temples of the Ilkhans.<sup>48</sup>

It is very interesting that our letter no. 16, addressed to Hulegu, brings Ajātaśatru into the picture as an example of a person who committed evil deeds, yet was redeemed by confessing and taking refuge in Buddha. A contemporary of the historical Buddha, Ajātaśatru was the heir and successor of Bimbisāra as king of Magadha who managed through warfare to expand his father's realm considerably. Along the way he not only responsible for the death of his own father, in collusion with Siddhārtha's arch-nemesis Devadatta, he plotted to kill the Buddha himself. Buddhists are hardly of one accord about the level of his subsequent attainment as a Buddhist. He still had to suffer from the karmic consequences when he was killed at the hand of his own son. Some even go so far as to say that he had to go on to suffer through three rebirths in the hells. Still, our letter makes him a Bodhisattva of the sixth Ground, a very high attainment indeed, falling just short of the three pure Grounds that precede complete Enlightenment. Clearly Hulegu, who might easily identify with a king who fought for the expansion of his territory, was meant to consider his chances for achieving a clear conscience as superior to those of the patricidal Ajātaśatru.<sup>49</sup>

## Political Relations in and out of Balance

Although we do not wish to overly predispose anyone's interpretation ahead of time, we should say a few words about political aspects.

46 Schopen's article, pp.228-229. Schopen believes the Arabic / Persian verses must have been directly based on an Indian or even Kashmiri original, but now it seems to us more likely the Tibetan text would have been the one available there in Persia. Still, this problem of the texts and their languages needs a fresh and thorough study.

47 Quoting Grupper, p.31. In *circa* 1269 yet another Armenian historian wrote similarly, although in a more hostile vein; see Grupper, p.33. Evidently Hulegu had images of both the historical Buddha and the future Buddha sculpted as icons for Buddhist worship in the temple of Labnasagut (Grupper, p.35).

48 Although this point would require more investigation, it has been usual in Tibetan monastic temples to have a separate chapel for the future Buddha Maitreya, and it does not seem likely that there would be, in one single temple chamber, two centrally located images of the present and future Buddhas. However, it can indeed sometimes be found that the main icons for worship are three figures representing the Buddhas of past, present and future. In any case, triadic groupings of icons are much more common than dyadic groupings in general (outer door-protecting dyads being exceptions), and for what may after all be largely aesthetic reasons.

49 There are scholars who argue that Ajātaśatru was never really a Buddhist, but became rather a Jainist. For what is probably the best manageable summary of sources on his life, see Zeyst, "Ajātasattu."

In *The Testimony of Situ* (at p. 110), Tai Jangchub Gyaltzen proclaims, with the sense of pride often detectable in his work as a whole, in this case pride in the accomplishments of his own school,

“After the departure of Mongke Khan to the heavens [in 1259], Secen Khan (Khubilai) was still dwelling in the capital of China when all the land-protectors stationed in Tibet were made to withdraw except for those of the Pagmodrupa. On account of the cordial relationship between the brothers Hulegu and Khubilai our land-protectors were left in place here.”<sup>50</sup>

The letters presented below do tell us significant things about the politics of the age. Here and there, given the general (but not uniform) tendency of the Mongol rulers to grant to full-time religious renunciates, regardless of their religion, exemption from conscription and taxation, the price of these privileges was to remember the rulers in their prayers, particularly prayers for health and longevity.<sup>51</sup> Assurances that such prayers are being done are frequently found in the letters. The Mongols may well have believed in the effectiveness of prayer, but we think they also recognized a method of extracting professions of support and loyalty from the clergy, and by consequence the goodwill of the people who respected the clergy.

Togdugpa was the medium through whom Hulegu was able to retain his political commitments in Tibet, including what was for him a significant tax base in the form of his appanages. Togdugpa on his part surely had the welfare of his own school in mind, hoping to gain privileges and support for the Pagmodrupa. Both sides were making use of each other, each one conscious of his own political position, of their mutual needs as well as their disparate aims. One is impressed on the one side by what would seem the most servile obsequiousness, but in the last letter in particular, one wonders instead at Togdugpa’s *chutzpah*. Perhaps *chutzpah* is not the right word exactly, since he was no doubt aware that for Hulegu he was indispensable. In fact, what most impresses us in this letter is the sense that Togdugpa was able to balance and make use of what he knew about the interrelations between the three most powerful figures standing above him, Khubilai, Pagpa and Hulegu.<sup>52</sup>

It would appear that later historians, writing well after Khubilai had risen to the position of Great Khan, did not very much appreciate Togdugpa’s position, important as it was, just because

50 We understand that the *yul-bsrungs*, here translated as ‘land-protectors,’ mean not only the head of the military force, but the military force itself, although Petech, *Central Tibet and the Mongols*, p.88, translates “resident commissioner.” According to Petech (p.88, but see also p.16), the *yul-bsrungs* served as the local secular representative of the various Mongol rulers who received appanages in Tibet.

51 For the best general discussion of this we know of, see Peter Jackson, “The Mongols and the Faith of the Conquered,” especially pp.264-268.

52 One may well wonder what happened to Togdugpa after these letters were written. Although, as we said before, the dates of the letters (the ones we have translated) are mostly not secure (roughly 1259 through 1265), it seems he did not live for very long, perhaps only a year or two longer. Togdugpa’s life story, while emphasizing as is typical for hagiographical accounts the signs of saintly death that occurred during his funerary rites, says nothing about the cause of death. This is true of many saintly biographies, so we ought to hesitate to make conclusions on that basis. From other sources, studied in Sperling, “Hülegü” p.131 and Czaja, *Medieval Rule*, p.104, we learn that Togdugpa died in the 18th day of the eleventh month (i.e., February 13th) of the year 1267, cause of death unspecified, just 17 days after receiving a gift-bearing delegation from Hulegu (and Hulegu, we ought to point out, had died in 1265!).

history eventually turned in a different direction. Togdugpa's plan to bring more territory and subjects under the power of Hulegu and his own Pagmodrupa school would finally fail.<sup>53</sup> It is likely for these reasons that the history writers of later generations have had little to say about him. In fact, this information doesn't come through so clearly in the histories as it does in our letters. It is for this very reason that these letters are so important for historical understanding. The letter itself can be an agent, can have formative power, in the creation of the political conditions the letter writers will have to live with, or not.

#### THE SIX LETTERS IN TRANSLATION

### 13. A Prayer of Aspiration Made for King Mongke and Prince Hulegu

*Mo mgo rgyal po dang rgyal bu hū la hu la smon lam btab pa*, pp.148.1-150.2

Om svasti!

By the blessings of the Three Jewels,  
the Yidam and the lama,  
may we enjoy auspiciousness, prosperity,  
long life, good health, and general welfare.

For King Mongke and the Bodhisattva Prince Hulegu, for the sons and brothers both elder and younger along with the entire family lineage, may there be long live, good health and general welfare.

In the presence of the one who has become  
lord of this great earth, the Bodhisattva Prince  
Hulegu, the Rinpoche Pagmodrupa<sup>54</sup>  
makes this petition.

After completed the accumulation of merit, in order to gain Awakened Buddhahood fully, the Bodhisattva Prince who has gained control over many kingdoms, has given two large *bre* of gold each,<sup>55</sup> and a golden bowl each to glorious Pagmodru and precious Drigung

53 Petech, *Central Tibet and the Mongols*, p. 89, with reference to the period following Togdugpa's death: "The original appanage of Hülegü was indeed enormous. In the west it included a large tract in mNa'-ris... The *dpon c'en* Kun-dga'-bzañ-po proposed to rDo-rje-dpal an exchange of this vast but remote estate with the much nearer sNa-dkar-rtse in Ya-'brog. The proposal was rejected, whereupon the *dpon c'en* eliminated by poison the mNa'-ris administrator... [and] that region passed under Sa-skya rule." The *dpon c'en*, or *dpon chen*, mentioned by Petech held that position in *circa* 1270-1275. Compare now Czaja, *Medieval Rule*, pp.102-103, note 47, where this episode is considered in much greater detail.

54 Rin-po-che Phag-mo-gru-pa is name of the position that was occupied by the letter writer himself, as abbot of Phag-mo-gru. Our letters are fairly consistent in spelling the name of Hulegu as Hu-la-hu.

55 Tibetans usually used the word *srang* as the practical weight measure for precious metals. One *bre* of silver ought to equal eight *srang* of silver, or four *srang* of gold (since gold had double the value of silver in recent Tibetan times; but during the Mongol period silver is likely to have been more like one tenth the value of gold). Later in our letters on we will find more mentions of "large *bre*," which probably means the *balish*. *Balish* (Persian for *pillow*) was a large unit for precious metals, evidently cast in ingots, used in the Mongol empire, an amount of very approximately two kilograms. For further discussion see Henry Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, vol. 1, p.116.

Thel.<sup>56</sup> Specifically, at Pagmodru, to my humble self,<sup>57</sup> a Great ‘Ja’-sa for the worship of Heaven<sup>58</sup> and a walking stick with gold decorations topped by a rock crystal knob arrived. Then, to the monastic community staying at the glacial mountain Ti-tse,<sup>59</sup> four great *bre* of silver arrived as financial support for the worship of Heaven. For all the great lamas (*bla-chen*) you had temples built and for the building of monastic institutions you have given many *bre* of gold. We keep these things in mind.

As a ritual service for the Prince’s physical health (*sku*) and in order to have an unceasing flow of virtues for as long as the eon lasts, we have dedicated in front of the statue of Pagmodru perpetual butterlamps. For regular food support of the monastic community, for the building of the many-doored Drigung *chorten*, you have given a *bre* of gold. And in front of the many-doored *chorten*, the silvered copper butterlamps are perpetually burning, dedicated to the good health of the princely father and sons.

In general these days, being born into a lineage of princes, you are one of great merit, but this is the result of having accumulated a great store of merit in past lives. Such roots of virtue have made you the lord of all the monks who are following Śākyamuni, and more specifically by taking ownership of this precious Kagyü school you have accumulated a great wave of accumulated merit. Even more specifically you have taken the ownership of Pagmodru, and keep it in your heart. Keeping virtue in the beginning, middle and end, the ritual services for the bodily health of the princely father and sons will result in great merit, such that there will be a transmission of only wheel turning kings,<sup>60</sup> and it will serve as cause of one day becoming a completely awakened Buddha.

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56 I believe that part of the reason for our confusion about the value of the *bre* is the fact that it was originally supposed to correspond to the Indian *drona*, perhaps adopted during the early 9th century reign of Emperor Ral-pa-can (although some date its adoption in the early 7th century), while the Mongols originally based their monetary standards on those of China, but went on to use their own as a standard against local standards (both continuing to exist simultaneously, thus explaining why our letters have to emphasize that they are talking about *large bre*, meaning the Mongolian standard).

57 We think *nga’bu* is just another spelling for *ngan-bu*, a humilific self-reference, literally meaning ‘bad son.’ But perhaps the literal meaning of *nga’bu* is intended, since it means, when analyzed syllable-by-syllable as ‘I worm,’ and this, too, would seem to work as a perfectly fine humilific.

58 ‘Ja’-sa is borrowed from *jasa*, the Mongolian word for their own *customary law* in general, but also for edicts (the more usual Tibetan understanding of it), tribute and still other meanings. The expression *gnam mchod-pa* means the making of ‘offerings to Heaven,’ in other words, to the ruler.

59 Westerner sources, following Indians, most often refer to this holy mountain as Mount Kailash. Usually Tibetans spell the name Ti-se, and its identification with Kailash has generated much controversy among the traditional scholars. But here we seem to find a more authentic old spelling Ti-tse, more closely corresponding to the Zhang-zhung name that can be interpreted in that language as meaning ‘Water Summit.’ Since Zhang-zhung *ti* could mean not only water but also *river*, the name may demonstrate awareness that most of the rivers of South Asia have their sources nearby (the Indus, Sutlej, Ganges, Brahmaputra, etc.).

60 What this seems to be saying is that Hulagu will in future take rebirth as wheel turning kings exclusively.

As an accompaniment for the letter, please find one blessed image of Rje Rin-po-che,<sup>61</sup> one golden *vajra*, a cloak that once was worn by the lama, as well as a protection wheel.<sup>62</sup>

This letter was written at the time when the offerings of a walking stick and so on were received from the Bodhisattva Prince Hulegu.<sup>63</sup>

## 16. Epistle to the Bodhisattva Prince Hulegu

*Rgyal bu byang chub sems dpa' hu la hu la springs pa*, pp.153.5-156.5

Oṃ svasti!

Supreme glory of glories, glory of all beings,  
without equal, unequalled, equal to all Buddhas,  
unsurpassed supreme lama, supreme over all,  
may all beings be overcome by the King of Dharma.

King of might, source of all needs and desires,  
Indra among sages, embodiment of compassion  
who does away with sangsaric suffering in the Three Realms,  
we pay homage to this source of happiness.

To one who has completely crossed over and become free  
from the quagmires of sangsara's Three Realms,  
who has made fully clear the solar rays of the Three Precious  
and dispelled the darkness of sangsara, to you we pay homage.

To the Bodhisattva Prince Hulegu, who has become a master of the Buddha's teachings, the Rinpoche Pagmodrupa makes his request.

The great Bodhisattva Prince who has a firm faith in the precious Kagyü, first and foremost among the royal line who made offerings to the Lord Chenga Rinpoché,<sup>64</sup> is skilled in making the Three Precious flourish, has the eye of Dharma, is unconfused in causes and effects of deeds both virtuous and nonvirtuous. Yet the deeds a king must perform are extensive like a great wave, so if some small injury occurs to his opponents — [whether] done with affection [or with] intolerance

61 Here as elsewhere in our letters *Rje Rin-po-che* surely refers to the letter writer's uncle Chenga, mentioned in our introduction. It seems likely, but not sure, that he had already died by this point. He most definitely died before letter no. 16 was written.

62 Here the word translated as 'cloak,' *phyam*, must be short for *phyam-tshe*, as we find on the next page of our text, at p. 151.4. The 'protection wheel' mentioned here must mean some type of amuletic diagram. The gift of a golden *Vajra* is significant here, since it, too, belongs to the realm of Buddhist Vajrayāna. Under some circumstances, the gift of a *Vajra* may even signify recognition of the right to teach Buddhist *tantra* and confer initiations. Or at the very least it indicates the recipient must be a tantric initiate.

63 It is likely the compiler who is responsible for this last sentence. We imagine this letter, written well after Togdugpa had attained the rank of abbot in 1235, dates to soon after his first contacts with the Mongol rulers. Since Mongke must have still been alive when this letter was addressed to him, the letter dates before Mongke's death in 1259 (as should letter no. 16 as well).

64 This means his uncle Chenga who had died in 1255.

— there is no sinful deed and nonvirtue that cannot be purified if confessed in accordance with the sermons of the Teacher.

When the Buddha was abiding in the world, the King Ajātaśatru committed the four or five inexpiable sins.<sup>65</sup> Then he suffered from the sickness of the pox called *Me-dbal-nag-po*.<sup>66</sup> A voice came from the sky saying, “You, O Great King, on the eighth day of the coming month, the ground will split open and swallow you up,<sup>67</sup> and in your next life you will go to hell.” Then in the presence of the Buddha Blessed One who was accompanied by that king of physicians named Jīvaka, he confessed his sins, his sins were purified, and he found acceptance for a suitable Dharma teaching, becoming a Bodhisattva of the sixth ground.

The Bodhisattva Prince, thinking along these lines, confessed all sins in the presence of the Three Precious, and then engaged in a great wave of virtues motivated by exceptional altruism. As part of this general great wave of virtuous deeds you made an offering of incalculable *bre* of gold and *bre* of silver for meritorious constructions, with the building of the worship support Auspicious Many-Doored *chorten* being foremost among them.<sup>68</sup> You made your instructions in accordance with the religious principles of Śākyamuni and the legal system of the king, and also made offerings to this place [to Pagmodru] of *bre* of gold. In general the Buddha’s teachings, and specifically Pagmodru, you took under your care. Bear these things in mind.

In conformity with the instructions of the Bodhisattva Prince, we need to engage in the practice of the profound Dharma by following after these: the scriptures of the Buddha Blessed One, and the life stories of these three ‘fathers and sons’, the Dharma Lord Pagmodrupa, the Dharma Lord Precious Drigungpa, and the Dharma Lord Chenga Rinpoche.

In order to engage King Mongke (Mo-go) and Bodhisattva Hulegu, the elder and younger brothers, with yet other descendants of the royal line in the cultivation of virtue,<sup>69</sup> we have made an

65 The translation *inexpiable* is normal, however the *mtshams-med lnga* are perhaps more accurately called the five types of sin that call for immediate punishment in the lowest of hells. These five are: 1. patricide, 2. matricide, 3. killing an Arhat, 4. creating divisions in the monastic community, and 5. drawing the blood of a Tathāgata with evil intent.

66 *Me-dbal-nag-po* is a name describing the pustules of a particular type of contagious disease, most likely the plague or an equally serious type of pox. The name means ‘black flame tips’, or ‘hot dark peaks’, probably meant to describe the shape of the pustules. One book, Yeshi Dhonden’s *Healing from the Source*, p. 202, identifies *me-dbal* with Sanskrit *visarpa*, and identifies this as *erysipelas*, more popularly known as St. Anthony’s fire.

67 The syllables *sas bar mthongs phye nas* were emended to read *las thar mthongs phyi nas*, although this is uncertain. Generally *mthongs phye* ought to mean *opened the skylight* or something similar. We may see the phrase in its context in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya* (ACIP version): *chos thams cad 'byung ba med par bstan pa las kyang, byang chub sems dpa' rgyal ba'i blo gros la sas par mthongs phye nas de 'chi ba'i dus byas pa dang sems can dmyal ba chen por ltung ste | de ni stong pa nyid la ma dad cing stong pa nyid [006a] du smra ba la khong khro ba byas pa yin no zhes gsungs so.*

68 The Auspicious Many-Doored *chorten* mentioned here is very likely the one made at Drigung for Togdugpa’s uncle Chenga who died in 1256. For the several Auspicious Man-Doored *chortens* located at Gdan-sa-mthil, including one made for Togdugpa himself, see Olaf Czaja, “The Commemorative Stupas at Densathil, a Preliminary Study,” Christian Luczanits, “Mandala of Mandalas,” and of course Olaf Czaja, *Medieval Rule in Tibet*.

69 We have read *slob* here in place of the text’s *sleb*. Mongke’s name is spelled as Mo-go here.



all-out effort in the Dharma teachings and virtuous practices. As we said above, motivated by an exceptional aspiration for supreme Enlightenment, one accumulates the accumulations of merit and full knowledge, goes for refuge to the Lama, keeps the vows of the *uposatha*, moral discipline, virtuous deeds done under the influence of the altruistic thought to attain Enlightenment, acting for the sake of sentient beings, cultivating the life of the Bodhisattva, visualizing the deities in the generation stage after receiving tantric empowerments of the Great Vehicle, while understanding the un-generated nature of the deity in the completion stage, and then meditating on the two stages as indistinguishable, this being the profound significance of empowerment, it being the mantra recitation that brings clarity to it...<sup>70</sup> For putting into practice the true purpose of these the most important thing is veneration for the Lama. If these things are taken to heart and practiced, it becomes a Dharma for becoming Buddha in full Awakening in one body and one lifetime, so please do take them to heart. As a ‘letter support’ gift we have sent one set of all four types of relics from the Lord Rinpoche (Rje Rin-po-che).<sup>71</sup>

### 39. Precepts for the Bodhisattva Prince Hulegu on the Ritual for the Eight-Limbed Uposatha

*Bsnyen gnas yan lag brgyad pa'i cho ga rgyal bu byang chub sems dpa' hu la hu la gdams pa*, pp.187.3-196.3, but notice that the quoted passage from p. 191 to 195 has not been translated here.

Om svasti!

We begin by prostrating with veneration to the Indra among sages, the King of the Śākya clan, who began by making the aspiration for supreme Awakening, then practiced the way of Awakening for three incalculable eons actualizing the two accumulations until he at last became Buddha.

Whoever aspires to higher rebirths among humans or gods, whoever aspires to the realization of Awakening or ultimate peace, must keep the eight-limbed *uposatha*.

Bringing an end to all the suffering of worldly life, this practice will serve as the lamp for animate beings, bringing Enlightenment to the world.

For a person who has complete and perfect faith, one who aspires to do away with the sufferings of sangsara, the limitless benefits of keeping the *uposatha* have been taught in the *Sūtra of Brahmin Vasiṣṭha's Request*.

<sup>70</sup> In this long and breathless sentence Togdugpa starts with the initial refuge taking that generally defines being a Buddhist and then ascends on to the three vows: those of ethical disciplines, bodhisattvic altruism, and tantric practice. We put the three dots here just because it seems as if the author could have gone on and on, but held himself back from doing so.

<sup>71</sup> Here again, this surely means the letter writer's uncle, Spyan-snga, who died in 1255. For the four-fold set of types of relics, see Yael Bentor, "Tibetan Relic Classification."

At the right time for taking the *uposatha* vow, which is to say on such days as the 15th, 30th and 8th of the month or during the Month of Buddha's Miracles, one must think the following: 'I must attain complete Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings. In order for that to happen, I must take the precious vows of the *uposatha* and keep them.' Then place the palms together and perform the repetition of these words pronounced by the teacher:

"Teacher, think upon me!

I who bear the name *so-and-so*, starting from this very moment  
and for as long as life continues, take refuge  
in the best of all those who walk on two feet,  
the Enlightened One.

I take refuge in the best of all that is free of desire,  
the Dharma.

I take refuge in the best of the assembly,  
the Saṅgha.

Teacher, please think upon me!

I who bear the name *so-and-so* ask you, the teacher,  
please accept me for the *uposatha* rite."

Repeat this three times,. Then the teacher says,  
"This is the way," to which the student responds,  
"So be it."

"Teacher, think upon me!

Just as the holy Arhats of the past,  
for so long as they lived gave up killing  
and abstained from killing,

I, the one named *so-and-so*, shall do likewise  
starting now and each and every month  
on the 15th, the 30th and the 8th  
or on one or the other.

Through this first branch I follow the advice of the holy Arhats, I complete their practice and will do as they did.

Furthermore, "Just as the holy Arhats for as long as they lived  
did not take what was not given them,  
did not perform unchaste sexual actions,  
did not speak in lies, and also gave up the following:  
intoxicants such as grain beer and prepared beer,  
circumstances of indecency, song and dance,  
instrumental music;  
the wearing of garlands, perfumes, jewelry and colors;  
large thrones and seating cushions,

high thrones and seating cushions,  
and also gave up eating food after the noonday heat,  
abstaining from food after the midday meal.

Like them, I who am named *so-and-so* shall also,  
starting now and each and every month from now on,  
on the 15th, 30th and 8th,  
or on one or the other,  
shall give up taking what is not given to me,  
shall not perform unchaste sexual actions,  
shall not speak in lies, and will also give up the following:  
intoxicants such as grain beer and prepared beer,  
circumstances of indecency, song and dance,  
instrumental music;  
the wearing of garlands, perfumes, jewelry and colors;  
large thrones and seating cushions,  
high thrones and seating cushions,  
and will also give up eating food after the noonday heat,  
abstaining from food after the midday meal.  
Through these eight branches I follow the advice of the holy Arhats,  
I complete their practice and will do as they did.  
This is the way. May it be so.”

Hereby you obtain the precious vows of your *uposatha*. Whether it is the 15th, the 30th or 8th of the month, you rise up early in the morning and wash yourself. In the presence of a receptacle of the Precious Ones, imagine in the space in front of you all the Lamas, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and perform the seven-limbed offering starting with prostration, then offerings, confession of sins, rejoicing in the roots of virtuous acts performed by others, making a prayer requesting the turning of the wheel of Dharma, making a request to the Buddha not to pass beyond the world of suffering and finally, to dedicate the roots of virtue of this act to the attainment of complete Awakening. Then think how you must obtain complete Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings, and with this aim in mind you will keep the vows of the *uposatha*. For the length of a full day and night, abandon killing any sentient being that exists. Taking what is not given, non-celibate activities, and telling lies are abandoned. There must be no drinking intoxicants, singing or dancing. There is no smearing of fragrances on the body and no application of cosmetics. One must neither sit nor sleep on a large platform decorated with such things as gold and silver. One must neither sit nor sleep on a platform with legs any higher than one cubit. One must not eat after the noon meal. For one full day one must strive for all roots of virtue on the side of the good. For the period later in that day until the next morning, you should dedicate the merits by saying, “By the roots of virtue for keeping the moral discipline like this, may I obtain complete Awakening.”

If this moral discipline is kept it will result in auspiciousness in the present live, and in the future all the glory of comfort and goodness will be utterly complete, and after death one will not be reborn in the three lower realms, but on that occasion will be reborn among the gods or humans instead, and finally through realizing supreme Awakening will become an Enlightened One.

According to the *Questions of Vasiṣṭha Sūtra* ...

...

...<sup>72</sup>

Teacher Saint<sup>73</sup> says,

“If you are equipped with these eight limbs,  
then grant the vows of the *poṣadha* to men and women alike  
so that they may achieve bodies of the gods that act as they wish.”

According to Maitreya, if you observe this eight-limbed *uposatha* on the 14th, 15th, or likewise at half-month or the eighth day, or in the Miracle month, you will be exceptional in my [future period of] teaching.<sup>74</sup>

On the day of keeping the *uposatha* vows, you must think, “I will obtain complete Enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.” The vows of the *uposatha* restore the moral precepts vows of the Bodhisattva. When you recite the essence mantra after visualizing the *yi-dam* deity, it becomes an observance of the vows of the tantric Wisdom Holder (Vidyadhāra).

Your own mind is from the beginning not formed by anything.  
In the middle it abides in no particular place.  
Finally it will never cease anywhere.  
Therefore the mind is devoid of production, ceasing and abiding.  
It is the center of space unadulterated by interfering thoughts (*vikalpa*). If you practice in this way, if you realize the generation and completion as being inseparable, these are the precepts for becoming Buddha. Therefore please practice them.

These key instructions for practice  
were written at the monastery of Pagmodru.  
By whatever roots of virtue result from this  
may all beings obtain Awakening.

Advice addressed to Prince Hulegu. Completed.<sup>75</sup>

72 The quote that continues from p. 191 line 4 through p. 195, line 3, has not been translated here.

73 Here the Teacher Saint (*Slob-dpon 'Phags-pa*) most definitely means Nāgārjuna. In his *Letter to a Friend*, Derge Kanjur version from Vienna site, we find: *dgra bcom tshul khrims rjes su byed pa yi/ /yan lag brgyad po 'di dag dang ldan na/ /gso sbyong 'dod spyod lha lus yid 'ong ba/ /skyes pa bud med dag la stsol bar bgyid.*

74 This text was discussed in the introduction.

75 This last line is presumably an addition by the original editor of the collection.

#### 40. A Request to Lama Pagpa

*Bla ma 'phags pa la zhus pa*, pp.196.3-199.2

Oṃ svasti!

[Buddha]

Oh Blessed One, relative of the sun, an Indra among sages,<sup>76</sup>  
may the lightrays of your compassion fill the ten quarters of the universe,  
banishing the darkness of the six types of beings in sangsara.  
May the Śākya King be victorious over all beings.

[Dharma]

The holy and immaculate Dharma free of passions  
is identified with scripture and clear understanding.  
A peace beyond all *prapañcas*,<sup>77</sup> this mother of the Victors of all time  
may it prove victorious over the qualities of peace and liberation.

[Saṅgha]

Well versed in the precious source of Victors of the three times,<sup>78</sup>  
and making real the Path of the saintly ones,  
the treasure mine of qualities of the supreme sons of Munīndra,  
may the learned monastic assembly be victorious.

[prosperity]

The teachings of Buddha are the shared wealth of beings,  
while you are like the supreme king of the island of jewels  
fulfilling the hopes of beings, whatever they need and desire,  
oh best of men, like the king of *nāgas*.<sup>79</sup> May Pagpa be victorious.

[learning]

Of unlimited knowledge and talent, well versed in all the five sciences  
that are the butter-like essence of the scriptures and treatises  
drawn out from the milk ocean of the Teacher's sermons.  
May Pagpa be victorious!

[fame]

Your banner of renown spreads in all directions  
in the kingdoms of the great kings and owners of the world,  
lama of the king and protector of all beings, like a wishgranting tree.  
May Pagpa be victorious!

<sup>76</sup> This line is composed of common epithets for the historical Buddha.

<sup>77</sup> A difficult term in both Hindu and Buddhist sources, it might be understood as ego-based mental tendencies to interfere with our experience of the external world, in order to make palatable illusions out of it. We find the word used again in the next letter we have translated, below.

<sup>78</sup> Our text reads *sems gsum*, where we believe *dus gsum* was intended.

<sup>79</sup> Nāgas are mentioned in this context for their role as guardians of mineral deposits and hidden wealth.

[morality]

With the pure sandalwood incense of your perfect moral conduct  
you dispel the odor of sins, the faults and three poisons of libertines,  
pure and beautiful lotus with stamens  
free of any mud of fault. May Pagpa be victorious!

[body]

Your body well formed through incalculable merit accumulation,  
just as the moon is ornamented by the constellations of stars,  
entirely beautified by the marks of virtuous qualities,  
source of all benefits. May Pagpa be victorious!

[speech]

With a fine voice like the Kalapiñka bird, with Brahma melody,  
like the roaring of the lion or the thunderclap,  
showering down a steady rain of the nectar of holy Dharma  
well spoken. May all beings be victorious through Pagpa!

[mind]

In the *maṇḍala* of your mind as pure as the sky,  
all knowables of the three times without exception  
are clearly illuminated like the rays of the sun, such is  
your limitless wisdom. May Pagpa be victorious!

Your knowledge unlimited and imponderable as it is,  
your actions are like the sky with neither center nor circumference  
such that even if I cannot comprehend them in their entirety,  
still, by praising them just slightly may I attain Awakening.

Further to that, in the hallowed presence of the teacher Pagpa, the protective lord of all sentient beings, the master of the precious teachings of our blessed teacher the Buddha, I, the Śākya Bhikṣu Pagmodrupa have a request to make. We ask the Teacher Pagpa to recall how the Lord Great Sakya and the lord Pagmodrupa were teacher and disciple, how the Dharma Lord [Sakya Paṇḍita] with a group of attendants met us in the Yarlung valley and from then on became of one mind. At the time when the Dharma Lord with his disciples were on their way to Mongol lands they met the Lord Rinpoche at Drigung and had discussions and so on.<sup>80</sup> Of these things Lama Pagpa is surely aware. When the Dharma Lord Chenga Rinpoché went to benefit others [i.e. passed away], in the matter of the construction of icons of Buddha's Body, Speech and Mind, these were accomplished both publicly and privately by both the

80 Here our author wants to remind Pagpa of two historic connections between their two schools. The first was the Pagmodrupa founder's discipleship and study of *Goal Including Path (Lam-'bras)* teachings under the Sakya master Kun-dga'-snying-po. I believe the second incident alluded to here may be the 1225 meeting in Samyé Monastery between Sakya Paṇḍita and Dbon Shes-rab-'byung-gnas. However, Yarlung Valley and Samyé are not in the same place, so this isn't certain. Still other incidents demonstrating cordial relationship between the two schools are discussed in Czaja, *Medieval Rule*, pp.95-96. Yet another encounter, a much less cordial one, is said to have occurred in around 1234; for this see Martin, "Crystals and Images," p.185.

*presence of Pagpa*,<sup>81</sup> the Dbon-chen Shākya-bzang-po and their disciples. We,<sup>82</sup> too, would repay their kindness and make offerings with reverence to those icons. Now we pray that you would keep we residents of Pagmodru in mind and favor us in the future. At present someone is being sent for an audience with the King, one named Chief Rin-chen-shes-rab, and we ask that you would take charge of arranging this audience.<sup>83</sup> As an accompanying gift I am sending for your devotions a miraculous Indian volume of the holy *Eight Thousand* scripture made in gold.<sup>84</sup> May we obtain complete Buddhahood!

#### 47. Request for Lama Pagpa on the Occasion of his Visit [of 1265]

*Bla ma 'phags pa byon dus su zhus pa*, pp.211.3-214.3

Oṃ svasti!

[body]

Personage well endowed with a supreme body  
adorned with hosts of good qualities,  
one cannot get enough of looking at you.  
All beings who see you find it fruitful. To you we prostrate.

[speech]

Your voice, melodious and loud as the lion's roar,  
overcomes the wrong views of your opponents in debate.  
With the constant flow of stainless Dharma's nectar  
you serve the needs of beings. To you we prostrate.

[mind]

Fully freed and pure is the *dal* of your mind,<sup>85</sup>  
devoid of all *prapañcas* and made of sky-like purity.  
With the rays of the sun that is your wisdom  
you vanquish the darkness in the three realms. To you we prostrate.

81 It isn't sure if our author is saying that Pagpa was physical present at these proceedings or not. Dbon-chen is of course Dpon-chen, title for the secular arm of the Sakya school based in Tibet. The particular Dpon-chen mentioned here was appointed in 1243 and died in 1270. He was responsible for major building projects at Sakya Monastery.

82 Here we have *nga-'byag*, later spelled *nga-'jag*, but in both cases we interpret it as *nga-cag*, the first-person plural pronoun.

83 We haven't managed to identify who this Dpon Rin-chen-shes-rab might be.

84 The usual word is used here as elsewhere in these letters, *yig-rten*. It literally means *letter support*. It was normal Tibetan practice to send gifts along with letters. The volume mentioned here would have been made with letters of golden ink. For many examples of these Indian palm-leaf manuscripts, see the recent study by Jinah Kim, *Receptacles of the Sacred*. The majority of the surviving examples by far are of the *Eight Thousand*.

85 A syllable may be missing in the first line of the verse, so it is perhaps fixable as *dal-du 'gro*, or *dal-'gro-du*... On the other hand, it seems more likely *dal* is short for mandala, as we find in other writings, such as one by Red-mda'-ba written 150 years later.

[qualities]

Hence your talents are unlimited  
and have subdued the owners of the world with Dharma.  
To beings tormented by the emotional afflictions (*kleśas*)  
you offer respite. To you we prostrate.

[actions]

Your actions are completely effortless and unforced.  
Just as the sun eliminates darkness without any bias,  
your deeds, equal to the sky, civilize beings.  
To you the king of Dharma we prostrate.

The supreme king of men, with the crown of his head,  
bowed down at your feet.<sup>86</sup>

Like the king of *nāgas* you brought down the rain of Dharma.  
After ripening countless postulants, have you not  
come to the Land of Snow that now forms the center of the Teachings  
in order to protect beings with your compassion?

Was your travelling unimpeded, without any harm?  
Did you arrive well and in good health?  
Were you not troubled by the length of the journey?  
Was your precious body not worn out?

Have you not served to spread the teachings of the Sage  
in all the regions of the world where you have gone?  
In Dbus-gtsang that is the center for spreading the Victor's teachings,  
you are the very personification of affection, like our dear mothers,  
serving the needs of sentient beings. Your arrival is most welcome.

Writing from the glorious Pagmodru, the precious headquarters, a chorten of the Victor, to  
one who serves as refuge of all the worlds including the gods, one graced by the ornaments of  
precious learning in both scripture and commentary, in both *mantra* and *sūtra* philosophy, and in  
both scriptural authority and reasoning, to the great teacher Pagpa, I the Śākyabhikṣu and *bandhe*  
beggar-man have a matter to discuss.<sup>87</sup>

All of the efforts by the Great Personage Himself, under the leadership of the King and the  
royal lineage, to bring beings in Jambu Island to maturation through the holy Dharma, and mature  
those capable of spiritual advancement by means of the four things that attract followers,<sup>88</sup> if you  
have not grown weary of these efforts it would be a favor to us.

86 The Tibetan expressions might not be intended to be read literally, but just as a way of saying that the Mongol ruler became his follower, accepting him as his teacher.

87 In the letter itself, it isn't clear what matter the letter writer wished to discuss

88 The traditional explanation of these four things is to give what is needed in terms of both material goods and teachings, to speak nicely and with a pleasant voice, to help others with their aims, and to act in ways consistent with your words.



In general you have served as master of all who have entered the door of the teachings in the land of Tibet and more specifically we would recall the deep connections between the past masters in the form of teacher-disciple relations. Once again, you have made via A-san-dog-min-pa<sup>89</sup> a gift of an official decree and some amazing incense of China. Now we understand that you have returned up [toward Central Tibet], that you are on your way. We were quite delighted and send as gifts to accompany our request three items: a fine robe made of *ther-ma*, a *si-gla*<sup>90</sup> and a superior horse.

Through the virtue of these gifts indicating a mountain of merit,  
may each and every being without exception equal to the sky  
leave the ocean of sangsaric sufferings behind  
and attain the supreme perfect Awakening!

### 67. Offered to the Great King Khubilai

*Rgyal po chen po go pe la phul ba*, pp.233.6-236.5

Oṃ Svasti!

Through the blessings of the Lamas,  
the divine Yidams and Three Precious,  
may the Prince be of good health  
and all the kingdom be at peace.

To all the affectionate Buddhas of  
the fields of Victors in the ten directions  
and to all the Bodhisattvas  
I make my prayer with veneration.  
and ask that they bless us.

All the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas,  
all who engage in vowed behavior,  
may they have perfect auspiciousness and happiness  
through the great blessing of truth.

Because there is no one to rival you in the great earth of Jambu Island you have been made lord of all who are born and move. Because of your perfectly full faith and wisdom you possess the great light of Dharma. You have become lord of the completely enlightened Buddha's teachings. In your presence, Great King, I Rinpoche Pagmodrupa make my request.

89 This is evidently the name and/or title of the envoy. It seems to contain the Turkish word Dökman/Dökmen. Soyoung Choi suggests the Dog-min element could be *tümen*, with meaning of a ruler of 10,000. Perhaps A-san would be the Mongol name A-san (perhaps Aslan?), but this isn't sure. It would be good to identify this person, but so far we have not succeeded.

90 We assume that in place of *si-gla*, *si-hla* was meant. The Tibetan word is a borrowing from Sanskrit *silha*, meaning olibanum, most likely meaning frankincense or a closely related type of aromatic resin. *Ther-ma* is a kind of handwoven woolen cloth. A particularly good quality was made in Tsethang.

By force of the merit and aspirations of past lives, this royal line of Chingis Khan<sup>91</sup> has become ruler of the great earth, so that all beings have come to rely on them. More particularly, his royal highness during the time he was a Bodhisattva Prince as well as after the enthronement as king, has at all times shown his favor to the animate beings and the teachings. On a more private level he has also shown favor to all of our envoys. For this all of our teachers are in your debt. On our part, too, we shall make aspiration prayers for all the royal line on the Mongol side. To the best of our abilities we shall obey the law in all sincerity of heart. As far as Tibet is concerned, we shall do whatever is of benefit to the general good without getting involved in any of the impassioned rivalries (*chags-sdangs*) of the *bande*.<sup>92</sup> We have done whatever we could to be of service to the teachings. Particularly, we know the importance of the royal person (*sku*), His Highness the Great King, for the teachings as well as for all the human communities, and so we have been strenuous in performing rituals for the health of the royal person.

Now we have a matter for the future we wish to ask of you. In past times the Lord Sakyapa and the Lord Pagmodrupa have been in teacher-disciple relationships, such that meanwhile through the present time we have had a profound connection and good mutual relations. More specifically, in this the current year the Lama Dharma King has been in good health and arrived with an easy path in the territory of Central Tibet.<sup>93</sup> As teacher-disciple we held meetings with him and furthermore improved our relationship of teacher-disciple. In every respect we requested his favor and he granted it. We had a number of discussions.

From then until now we have asked that you keep us in your favor in every area. Particularly in the area of the human community, Hulegu's share here is the community of one myriarchy.<sup>94</sup> However, at present there are under our power only five chiliarchies. Bearing in mind that this is the case,<sup>95</sup> we have remained in our task of serving as court priests who continuously make

91 Our text gives the name as Ji-'gir Rgyal-po, using the Tibetan word for 'king' (*rgyal-po*).

92 The term *bande* is usually used to mean monastics who are wandering far from their monasteries, and although it does mean *monastic* (although likely not a fully ordained monastic), it doesn't carry the sense of respect that is usually accorded to monks. This is so even though it probably is a borrowing of Sanskrit *vandya* or *bhadanta*, which we believe to have been quite respectful. The Tibetan word may have some connection with the similarly sounding Japanese-derived term *bonze*, in the sense that the words probably share a common origin (see the entry "*bonze*" in Henry Yule, *Hobson-Jobson*, p.105).

93 Here "Lama Dharma King" means Pagpa ('Phags-pa). The date of Pagpa's arrival in Tibet, as well as the date of the letter, would have to be 1265, or perhaps the following year 1266 CE. The letter writer died in 1267, so that is the latest possible date of composition.

94 The term *mi-sde* is here translated 'human community,' meaning secular affairs in general. It is generally contrasted with *lha-sde*, meaning the religious affairs, particularly the monastic community. In some contexts *mi-sde* may mean governmental estates, while *lha-sde* may refer to the estates belonging to monasteries. The word translated here as 'myriarchy' is *khri-skor*, meaning *circle of ten thousand*, while the word 'chiliarchy' translates *stong-skor*, meaning *circle of a thousand*. If we do the math, the letter writer is saying that the Pagmodrupa at that time only had under their power half the territory that they were supposed to have. Compare Petech, *Central Tibet and the Mongols*, p. 90: "It had the name of a myriarchy, but in reality was not even equivalent to half a chiliarchy." For a study of the geographical extent of Pagmodrupa rule, see now Czaja, *Medieval Rule*, p.97, note 37.

95 Here we are reading *bzhed-pa* in place of *bzhing-pa*, although this is not sure.

aspiration prayers on behalf of the royal brothers, both the elder and younger brothers. So we ask for a human community<sup>96</sup> that has not been assigned to another. If this is found acceptable, we shall make the request ourselves to the side of Hulegu. If the request is found unreasonable, then this school of ours will have a large name but a small body. We will not keep up with our counterparts and appear not to be capable. So these two chiliarchies ought not be split off, and we request that the power over them be assigned to our headship.<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, all those who are related to us as disciples should be under our rule. We request your favor in this matter.

May whatever virtues have been done by all creatures,  
that will be done and likewise are being done,  
whatever is good in pure ground such as this,  
may it all serve for the good in every way.

#### APPENDIX ONE

### A Bibliography of Studies and Translations Related to Tibetan-language Letters and Letter Writing in Post-Imperial Times

Note: Certain classes of letters of Tibetan origins were not intended to include here, such as the letters received from Tibetan Mahatmas, as for instance Koot Hoomi, by early members of the Theosophical Society and its offshoots. These were apparently put to paper without the prior existence of any Tibetan-language original, as was a curious document called “A Letter from Do-Ring, Scribe of the 9th Panchen Lama of Tibet to Wing-On, His Friend, concerning the Inner Life.” While described as “The Urga Manuscript,” its original language, if there ever was one apart from English (frequent use of words such as ‘cosmic,’ ‘cosmos,’ ‘astral’ and ‘etheric’ strongly suggests composition by a western occultist of Neo-Platonist inspiration), is never clarified. However, we base ourselves on the versions of this document made available on the internet, having no way at present to make reference to the original publication (of 1949?). Another internet phenomenon is the making available of authentication letters signed by Tibetan lamas identifying persons as reincarnations. These have often been interpreted or translated, but we have still not made any reference to them. The same goes for letters associated with the Karmapa reincarnation controversies. These would be interesting subjects for separate studies. Even in view of these exceptions, this list should not be regarded as a complete one despite our efforts. In particular, letters from archives have been made available (the Kundeling Archives [Bonn, Germany] especially comes to mind), but these remain in large part untranslated and unstudied, and in any case are not supposed to be included in this list.

96 Reading *mi-sde* for *mi-bde*. The reasons why there were only half the number of chiliarchies needed to make a myriarchy is given in *The Testament of Situ*, p.113, although we will not go into the complicated geographical here.

97 Here the unusual terms *mgo-bu* and *she-mo* (*she-mong?*) are used, so our understanding is tentative.

- Anonymously translated, "Translation of a Letter from the Tayshoo Lama to Mr. Hastings, Governor of Bengal, received 29th of March 1774," appended at pp.196-198 to John Stewart, "An Account of the Kingdom of Tibet," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, vol. 47 (1778), pp. 188-198. Of course Tayshoo Lama is here an interesting spelling for Tashi Lama (the Lama of Tashilhunpo Monastery), meaning the Panchen Lama.
- Bray, John, and Tsering D. Gonkatsang, "A Letter from the Dalai Lama," *Ladakh Studies*, vol. 26 (November 2010), pp.24-30.
- Cüppers, Christoph, "A Letter Written by the Fifth Dalai Lama to the King of Bhaktapur," *Journal of the Nepal Research Centre*, vol. 12 (2001), pp.39-42.
- Engelhardt, Isrun, "Mishandled Mail: The Strange Case of the Reting Regent's Letters to Hitler," *Zentralasiatische Studien*, vol. 37 (2008), pp.77-106.
- Funnell, Victor, "Cecil Polhill-Turner and Tibet," *Asian Affairs*, vol. 33, no. 2 (July 2001), pp.238-241. Tharchin delivered his letter to the Dalai Lama XIII, who wrote a letter in response (translation supplied) dated Dec. 31, 1927.
- Ishihama Yumiko, "An Aspect of the Tibet, Mongol and China Relationship in the Late 17th Century from the View of Tibetan Letter Format—Based on the Letters of the Fifth Dalai Lama, the Regent Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho, and the Mongolian Prince Galdan," *Journal of Asian & African Studies*, vol. 55 (1998), pp.165-189. In Japanese, with English abstract on pp.165-166.
- Jackson, David, "Sa-skyia Paṇḍita's Letter to the Tibetans: A Late and Dubious Addition to his Collected Works," *Journal of the Tibet Society*, vol. 6 (1986), pp.17-23.
- Jagchid, Sechen, "A Mongol Text Letter from a Tibetan Leader to the Manchu Ministers," *Central Asiatic Journal*, vol. 17 (1973), pp.150-163.
- Jampa Samten, "Notes on the Thirteenth Dalai Lama's Confidential Letter to the Tsar of Russia", in Roberto Vitali, ed., *The Earth Ox Papers, Tibet Journal*, Special Issue, vol. 34, no. 3 to vol. 35, no. 2 (Autumn 2009 to Summer 2010), pp.357-370.
- , & Nikolay Tsyrempilov, *From Tibet Confidentially: Secret Correspondence of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama to Agvan Dorzhief, 1911-1925*, Library of Tibetan Works & Archives (Dharamsala 2012). This contains texts, facsimiles and translations of twenty-four letters.
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## APPENDIX TWO

### A Complete List of the Epistles of Togdugpa

Source: *Phag gru'i spyan snga rgyal ba thog brdugs pa'i bka' 'bum las: 'Bri gung du slob dpon rnam gnyis la springs pa*, in: *'Bri gung bka' brgyud chos mdzod chen mo*, vol. 43, pp.135-237.

Note: Even though this is a collection of letters, the cover title supplies the title of the first letter only (this means that here there is no proper title that covers the collection as a whole). The entries in bold are the ones that we have translated into English entirely or in part.

- 1 'Bri gung du slob dpon rnam gnyis la springs pa, pp.136.1-138.5.
- 2 'Gro ba'i bla ma chos rje rin chen la 'di jo bo la tse ba la spring pa, pp.138.5-140.1.
- 3 Mkhan po brag mgo ba la spring pa, p.140.1-.5.
- 4 Rig pa gsum por bas zhus pa, pp.140.5-141.5.
- 5 Bla ma lho pa la spring pa, pp.141.5-142.4.
- 6 Slob dpon sgom rin la spring pa'i mchod brjod, p.142.4-.6.
- 7 Dge bshes dbyar thang pa la spring ba'i mchod brjod, pp.142.6-143.5.
- 8 Dbon ston pa dar ma seng ge la springs pa, pp.143.6-144.2.
- 9 Dge ba'i bshes gnyen brtson 'grus seng ge la, p.144.2-.5.
- 10 Dpon ston dar ma la springs pa, pp.144.5-145.4.
- 11 Rgyal bu'i gur rtsar bzhugs pa'i bla mchod rnams la springs pa, pp.145.4-146.1.
- 12 'Dzog khyim tshul khirms mgon po gnyis la spring ba, pp.146.1-148.1.
- 13. Mo mgo rgyal po dang rgyal bu hū la hu la smon lam btab pa, pp.148.1-150.2.**
- 14 Rgyal bu cho ma 'khar la spring ba, pp.150.2-151.4.
- 15 Slob dpon ldum ra ba la spring ba, pp.151.4-153.5.
- 16. Rgyal bu byang chub sems dpa' hu la hu la springs pa, pp.153.5-156.5.**
- 17 Bka' yig ri pa spyi la gdams pa yin, pp.156.6-160.4.
- 18 Rnge [~rje?] tsha ba slob dpon sgom gzhon la springs pa, pp.160.4-161.5.
- 19 Tsa par ba slob dpon grags rin la springs pa, pp.161.5-164.6.
- 20 Chos rje brtse ba xxx zhes bya ba rtsa par ba slob dpon grags pa rin chen la gdam pa, pp.164.6-165.4.

21. Gtor gnyer ba la gsungs pa, p.165.4-6.
22. Ti tser mang skol skol ba'i mchod brjod, pp.165.6-166.3.
23. Ti tser ri pa rnams bzhud dus su mdzad pa'i gsol 'debs, p.166.3-6.
24. Mkhan po gung ldem la springs pa'i mchod brjod, pp.166.6-168.3.
25. Bla ma mtsho brang ba rnam gnyis la springs pa, pp.168.3-170.1.
26. Dge ba'i bshes gnyen chen po la springs pa, pp.170.1-171.6.
27. Dge ba'i bshes gnyen shes rab seng ge la springs pa, pp.171.6-173.1.
28. Dri ma med pa'i 'od 'di shes rab byang chub la gdams pa, pp.173.1-176.2.
29. Chos rje spyen snga rin po che la gsol ba 'debs pa, p.176.2-6.
30. 'Bal zhus pa, pp.176.6-178.1.
31. Yang 'bal dbus pa, p.178.1-4.
32. Bla ma yul skyong la springs pa, pp.178.4-179.1.
33. Slob dpon jo sras la springs pa, pp.179.1-181.6.
34. Slob dpon rin chen seng ge la springs pa, pp.181.6-183.6.
35. Dge bshes chus pa la, pp.183.6-184.6. End title: Dge bshes mtshus pa la.
36. Sprul sku ting nge 'dzin la, pp.184.6-185.3.
37. Tshong dus kyi sa gzhi byin gyis brlab pa rkyang chung la kar mdzad pa, pp.185.3-186.3.
38. Dpon brtson la springs pa, pp.186.3-187.3.
- 39. Bsnyen gnas yan lag brgyad pa'i cho ga rgyal bu byang chub sems dpa' hu la hu la gdams pa, pp.187.3-196.3.**
- 40. Bla ma 'phags pa la zhus pa, pp.196.3-199.2.**
41. Tshong 'dus kyi rmang 'jog pa'i dus su mdzad pa, pp.199.2-200.4.
42. Ri pa rnams bzhud dus su mdzad pa, pp.200.4-201.3.
43. Rgyal po a nan ta'i bla mchod zhu ba la byung dus mdzad pa, pp.201-207.1.
44. Dbon po e ban dog xx [~li/yi?] la springs pa, pp.207.1-208.2.
45. Springs yig 'ga'i mchod brjod [poetic prefaces to several letters], pp.208.2-210.2.
46. Slob dpon sgom gzhon la springs pa, pp.210.2-211.3.
- 47. Bla ma 'phags pa byon dus su zhus pa, pp.211.3-214.2.**
48. Rgyal bu cho ma 'khar la springs pa, pp.214.1-215.1. It is addressed to Jumqur.
49. Jo bo rgyal chen la springs pa, pp.215.1-220.3. Colophon title: Shākya'i dge slong phag mo gru pas // dbon dge ba'i bshes gnyen rdo rje 'byung gnas la gdams pa'o.
50. Slob dpon lha chen la gdams pa, p.220.3-4.
51. Dpon thugs rje yon tan la springs pa, p.220.4-5.
52. Bla ma chos kyi rgyal po la zhus pa, pp.220.5-221.4.
53. Dge ba'i bshes gnyen chu mig pa la springs pa, pp.221.4-222.4.
54. Bla ma rin chen la spring ba, pp.222.4-223.3.
55. Rin po che lha pa la spring ba, p.223.3-6.
56. Rgyal bu hu la hu la spring ba, pp.223.6-225.6. This is a letter to Hulegu but we did not translate it.

57. Bcom ldan 'das rnam par snang mdzad kyi bstod pa slob dpon rgyal mtshan dpal gyis zhus pa, pp.225.6-226.6.
58. Slob dpon rgyal ba dpal la spring pa, pp.226.6-227.1.
59. Byang grags la, p. 227.1-2.
60. Slob dpon jo sras gnyis la springs pa, pp.227.2-228.3.
61. Slob dpon dus 'khor ba la springs pa, pp.228.3-229.4.
62. Slob dpon phyag na la springs pa, pp.229.4-230.1.
63. Slob dpon yul skyong la spring pa, pp.230.1-231.1.
64. Dpon mo e re gan lags spring pa, p.231.1-231.3.
65. Dpon mo ol ca dang mo 'ge de mur la spring ba, pp.231.3-232.1.
66. Bla ma chos kyi rgyal po dbus gtsang gis sa cher byon dus rin po che nyid mjal du byon nas 'bul ba mchod pa'i dus mdzad pa, pp.232.1-233.6.
- 67. Rgyal po chen po go pe la phul ba, pp. 233.6-236.5.**
68. Smon lam ma rig mun sel, pp.236.5-237.4. Not a letter, this is an aspiration prayer, for dedicating merit.
69. [Incipit] Rgyal ba'i bka' 'bum gyi brgyud pa ni. Not a letter, this is a transmission lineage, its content discussed in our introduction.

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ACIP = Asian Classics Input Project.

Vienna site = Resources for Kanjur & Tanjur Studies.



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