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A Late Proponent of the Jo nang gZhan stong Doctrine: Ngag dbang tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho (1880–1940)

Filippo Brambilla¹

1. *The resurgence of Jo nang scholasticism*

 Although the doctrines and leading early figures of the Jo nang tradition have been the focus of increasing scholarly attention over the past thirty years, much has yet to be written about developments in the tradition during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The goal of this paper is to shed light on this later period by focusing on one particular Jo nang thinker, Ngag dbang tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho (1880-1940). In order to contextualize his distinctive view and style, I will begin by sketching the historical evolution of the Jo nang tradition across Central and Eastern Tibet, and by providing some biographical and doctrinal information about Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho's main teacher, 'Ba' mda' Thub bstan dge legs rgya mtsho (1844-1904).

The Jo nang came to prominence as a distinct tradition of Tibetan Buddhism during the fourteenth century, after Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1292-1361) had settled in the valley of Jo mo nang. This site, located in gTsang, had been a well-known place for retreat at least since the time of Kun spangs thugs rje brtson 'grus (1243-1313), who founded the first monastery there and is credited with having gathered and merged seventeen different instruction lineages of the completion stage of the *Wheel of Time Tantra (Kālacakratāntra)*, the sixfold *vajrayoga (rdo rje rnal 'byor yan lag drug pa)*.² It was precisely through this practice that Dol po pa gained the realization on which he based his particular understanding of emptiness.³ Presenting the relative and the ultimate

¹ This research was generously supported by Khyentse Foundation. I would sincerely like to thank Prof. Klaus-Dieter Mathes for his support and supervision, Dr. David Higgins for correcting my English and for his valuable suggestions, and mKhan po 'Jam dpal blo gros, mKhan po Chos kyi dbang phyug, mKhan po dKon mchog bstan 'phel, Prof. Luo Hong 罗鸿, and Dr. Martina Draszcyk for their great help.

² See Henning 2009, 238-239.

³ See Stearns 2010, 16-18.

respectively as the object of consciousness and the object of wisdom, he maintained that relative phenomena are empty of a true, intrinsic essence (*rang gi ngo bo bden pas stong pa*), whereas the ultimate truth is empty of other (*gzhan stong*) in the sense of being empty of relative adventitious stains but not of its true, intrinsic essence (*rang rang gi ngo bo bden pas mi stong pa*).⁴ This position became the hallmark of Dol po pa's tradition, which he referred to as Great Madhyamaka (*dbu ma chen po*).⁵ The Jo nang trace the sources of this doctrine along two parallel

⁴ See Dol po pa, *bDen gnyis gsal ba'i nyi ma*, 110-110.: "The first [point, the actual defining characteristics of the two truths.] Any object of consciousness, being fundamentally empty of a true intrinsic essence, is the defining characteristic of the relative truth. And any object of the genuine wisdom of the Noble Ones, being fundamentally not empty of its true, intrinsic essence, is the defining characteristic of the ultimate truth." *dang po ni/ rnam shes kyi yul gang zhig /gshis la rang gi ngo bo bden pas stong pa ni/ kun rdzob bden pa'i mtshan nyid dang / 'phags pa'i ye shes dam pa'i yul gang zhig /gshis la rang rang gi ngo bo bden pas mi stong pa ni/ don dam bden pa'i mtshan nyid de/*. And *Ibid.*, 110.-110.: "Since the relative does not actually exist, it is self-empty, and it appears to consciousness, but not to wisdom. And since the ultimate does actually exist, it is not empty of self [but] empty [of] other, and it appears to wisdom, but never to consciousness." *kun rdzob ni/ don la med pas rang stong dang / rnam shes la snang gi ye shes la mi snang ba dang / don dam ni/ don la yod pas rang gis mi stong pa gzhan stong dang / ye shes la snang gis [em. gi] rnam shes la gtan nas mi snang ba yin te/*. See Mathes 1998, 459.

⁵ According to Broido 1989, Dol po pa referred to his Great Madhyamaka as a view (*lta ba*), based on a rather experiential perspective, in opposition to the more rigid category of tenet system (*grub mtha'*), based on logical and philosophical arguments. Moreover, Broido noted that Dol po pa never used the term *gzhan stong* in reference to a view or to a tenet system. Although Broido's distinction between these two categories makes sense, I believe they are often loosely adopted by Tibetan scholars. Moreover, while I could find only one case where Dol po pa referred to the Great Madhyamaka as a view (see Dol po pa, *bDen pa gnyis kyi rnam par dbye ba'i 'ja' sa*, 287), there are instead a number of instances in which he referred to it as a textual tradition (*gzhung lugs*). In his *Fourth Council (Bka' bsdu bzhi pa)*, as well as in other texts, Dol po pa also referred to his doctrine as that of the Kṛtayuga (*rdzogs ldan gyi chos*), the Age of Perfection, and to his commentarial tradition as the Kṛtayuga Tradition (*rdzogs ldan gyi lugs*). Favoring a doxographical perspective, Dol po pa took the *Wheel of Time Tantra* as textual basis, and, applying plainly dogmatic criteria, grouped the entirety of the Buddhist teachings into four qualitatively different ages. Of course, he maintained that the Age of Perfection represented the highest of the four. See Kapstein 2000, 110-116; Mathes 2008, 75-78; Stearns 2010, 94-95, 135-137. Tāranātha (1575-1634) was probably the first of the Jo nang pas to refer to their own doctrine as Empty of Other Great Madhyamaka (*gzhan stong dbu ma chen po*). Buchardi 2007 (10-12) points at him as an example of a scholar who used the term *gzhan stong* as meaning both tenet system and practice tradition (*sgom lugs*), and to define the Empty of Other Madhyamaka (*gzhan stong dbu ma*) as a view and meditation (*lta sgom*). A more extensive look at Tāranātha's collected works reveals that he used the terms Great Madhyamaka, Empty of Other, and Empty of Other Great Madhyamaka interchangeably and referring

lineages originating in India: the meditative tradition (*sgom lugs*) of the five treatises of Maitreya and the 'Bro lineage of the *Wheel of Time Tantra*. These two are respectively known as the *sūtra* and the *mantra* lineages.⁶

The Jo nang pas prospered in Central Tibet until the mid-seventeenth century, when, after the death of Tāranātha (1575-1634) and the reunification of Central Tibet under the power of the Fifth Tā la'i bla ma Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617-1682), all their monasteries within that region were gradually converted into dGe lugs institutions.⁷ However, their tradition managed to survive and recover in A mdo, where a series of monasteries had been founded starting from the early fifteenth century in the areas of 'Dzam thang and rGyal rong. The tradition later flourished in rNga ba and mGo log as well.⁸ In particular, gTsang ba dgon, in 'Dzam thang, became during

to either a view, a tenet system, both (*lta grub*), or a view and meditation. Later Jo nang scholars followed the example of Tāranātha.

⁶ In *The Lamp of the Moon: Doctrinal History of the Jo nang* (*Jo nang chos 'byung zla ba'i sgron me*), mKhan po Blo gros grags pa clearly distinguishes these two lineages (see *Jo nang chos 'byung zla ba'i sgron me*, 5-19) and reconstructs their development from India into Tibet. For a translation of relevant passages from this text, see Sheehy 2007. For a more detailed account of the Jo nang mantra lineage, see Sheehy 2009a.

⁷ In the mid-seventeenth century, the regions of dBus and gTsang were unified under the power of the dGe lugs tradition and the Fifth Tā la'i bla ma Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617-1682). One of the key figures behind the dGe lugs political agenda of that time was bSod nams chos 'phel (1595-1657), the treasurer of dGa' ldan pho brang, who requested the military support of Gushri Khan (1582-1655) and the Qoshot Mongols against the ruler of gTsang, Karma bstan skyong dbang po (1605-1642). In 1642, after the order of bSod nams chos 'phel, Gushri Khan led his armies to defeat the ruler of gTsang and eventually enthroned the Fifth Tā la'i bla ma as the new King of Tibet. Politically bound to the former regime of gTsang, and holding a doctrinal view that was in sharp contrast with that of the dGe lugs pas, the Jo nang pas found themselves in a very unfavorable position. Their main monastic seat in gTsang, rTag brtan dam chos gling, was effectively converted into dGe lugs in 1658, when it was renamed dGa' ldan phun tshogs gling. This happened also due to the insistence of the dGe lugs 'Jam dbyangs sPrul sku (1635-1723), the First rJe btsun dam pa, who was the son of the Tüsheet Khan Gombodorj (1594-1655), and who had been recognized as the rebirth of Tāranātha. Eventually, all the Jo nang monasteries of gTsang followed the same fate as rTag brtan dam chos gling. See Karmay 1998, 504-517; Bareja-Starzyńska 2009-2010; Sheehy 2010; Stearns 2010, 72-80; Schaeffer 2013.

⁸ One of the first Jo nang monasteries in Eastern Tibet, Chos rje dgon, was founded in 'Dzam thang around 1425 by Drung dka' bzhi ba Rin chen dpal (1350/1351-1435), also known as Ratnaśrī. He was born in rGyal mo tsha ba rong, but studied in gTsang under the guidance of one of Dol po pa's main disciples, Phyogs las rnam rgyal (1306-1386). In the later part of his life, Rin chen dpal was urged by his master to leave for the East in search of a proper location for a new monastery. Once arrived in 'Dzam thang, he converted the local Bon pos and founded Chos

the course of the eighteenth century the new monastic seat of the Jo nang sect.⁹ The heirs of Dol po pa were eventually able to keep his legacy alive even during the turbulent times of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Thanks to the great efforts of personalities such as Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa (1920-1975) and Ngag dbang yon tan bzang po (1928-2002),¹⁰ around fifty Jo nang monasteries are currently

rje dgon. According to the Jo nang pas, the founding of this monastery had been foreseen by Dol po pa himself. Notably, Rin chen dpal authority was recognized by the Ming 明 imperial court, and he was granted the title of Hongjiao Chanshi 弘教禪師. For a detailed account of the history of Chos rje dgon between the fifteenth and the seventeenth century, see Sperling 2009, 158-166. See also Gruschke 2008, 71-73. For the history of the Jo nang monasteries in the area of 'Dzam thang, see Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa, *Jo nang chos 'byung zla ba'i sgron me*, 104-516. For the history of the main Jo nang monasteries in the area of rNga ba, see *ibid.*, 516-533.

⁹ The monastery of gTsang ba was established after the settlement of Ngag dbang bstan 'dzin rnam rgyal (1691-1728) in 'Dzam thang. Born in gTsang, he surprisingly received his Jo nang training in that region when all the Jo nang monasteries were supposed to have been already officially converted since years. In fact, as it turns out reading Ngag dbang bstan 'dzin rnam rgyal's biography by Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa, as well as those of his relatives and former lineage holders Blo gros rnam rgyal (1618-1683) and Cha lung ba Ngag dbang 'phrin las (1654-1723), the Jo nang pas endured the dGe lugs intervention and continued to teach their doctrine and practices in gTsang at least until the late twenties of the eighteenth century. Blo gros rnam rgyal and Ngag dbang 'phrin las also travelled as far as Mongolia to transmit their teachings and visited 'Dzam thang, where Blo gros rnam rgyal spent about eleven years. Ngag dbang bstan 'dzin rnam rgyal studied with Ngag dbang 'phrin las and, among others, the Fifth Paṇ chen Blo bzang Ye shes (1663-1737). He left for the East in 1714, and, in 1717, he reached the area of Yar thang, in mGo log, establishing the monastery of mDo sngags bshad sgrub gling. On the same year, Ngag dbang bstan 'dzin rnam rgyal arrived in 'Dzam thang, where the Fifth Chos rje rGyal ba lhun grub grags pa (1674-1736) offered him his own quarters as a present. See Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa, *Jo nang chos 'byung zla ba'i sgron me*, 67-75, and 170-171. See also Gruschke 2008, 72-76, and Sheehy 2010 and 2011.

¹⁰ Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa and Ngag dbang yon tan bzang po were respectively the ninth and the tenth *vajracārya* of gTsang ba monastery. The main teachers of Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa were 'Dzam dngos Kun dga' ngag dbang (1873-1936), Ngag dbang tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho (1880-1940), Ngag dbang rdo rje bzang po (1893-1948), Ngag dbang bstan pa gsal byed (1878-1953), and Ngag dbang smon lam bzang po (1887-1952). The most important works of Blo gros grags pa include the *Great Exposition on gZhan stong* (*gZhan stong chen mo*; the full title reads *rGyu dang 'bras bu'i theg pa mchog gi gnas lugs zab mo'i don rnam par nges pa rje jo nang pa chen po'i ring lugs 'jigs med gdong lnga'i nga ro*), and the *Doctrinal History of the Jo nang* (*Jo nang chos 'byung*). The latter, together with its *Supplement* (*Lhan thabs*), constitutes the most comprehensive and up to date historical source on the Jo nang school. Many of the works of mKhan po Blo grags were transcribed by his most important disciple, Ngag dbang yon tan bzang po, who supported his guru during the hardships of the Cultural Revolution. Later he had a key role in the revival of

thriving in Eastern Tibet, in the Chinese provinces of Sichuan 四川 and Qinghai 青海. Outside Tibet, one monastery was founded in Shimla, in India, twenty years ago. A few years later, a further monastery was founded in Nepal.¹¹ The Jo nang tradition is now enjoying a certain degree of popularity among Chinese Buddhists,¹² and a handful of its adherents have started to transmit their teachings in the West.¹³

the Jo nang tradition. In fact, between the end of the eighties and the early nineties, Yon tan bzang po had several meetings with the Tenth Paṅ chen (1949-1989), Nga phod ngag dbang 'jigs med (1910-2009), and the then President of the Buddhist Association of China, Zhao Puchu 赵朴初 (1907-2000). These contacts allowed him to obtain some support for the reconstruction of monasteries and for the reprint of several texts. Two of the main students of Yon tan bzang po are the present *vajracārya* of gTsang ba monastery, sPrul sku 'Jigs med rdo rje (b. 1944), sPrul sku 'Jam dbyangs blo gros, and mKhan po Kun dga' shes rab gsal byed (b. 1936). For a detailed biography of Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa, see Kun dga' shes rab gsal byed 2014. For more details about his works, see also Sheehy 2007, and Duckworth 2008. For a biography of Ngag dbang yon tan bzang po, see "Juenangpai Ji Juenang Disishiliu Dai Fawang Zhizun Shangshi Awang Yundeng Sangbu Lüezhuan."

¹¹ The monastery of rTag brtan phun tshogs chos gling, in Shimla, was originally dGe lugs. Around 1997, the current Tā la'i bla ma presented it to the Ninth rJe btsun dam pa, and appointed him as the representative of the Jo nang tradition in India. The monastery in Nepal, rTag brtan shes grub chos gling, was founded in the early 2000s by sPrul sku bKra shis rgyal tshan, in Pharping.

¹² Two of the most notable Jo nang exponents who have gathered a relevant number of Chinese students are sPrul sku 'Jam dbyangs blo gros and mKhan po Chos kyi dbang phyug. The former has been studying mainly as a student of Yon tan bzang po and was enthroned as a *sprul sku* at gTsang ba monastery. He has now well-established contacts with the Chinese academic environment, and is involved in several projects in 'Dzam thang. These include the construction of an imposing Kālacakra *maṇḍala* palace and the development of professional schools, where children are being taught Tibetan and Chinese language and are given the opportunity to study traditional arts and medicine. mKhan po Chos dbang, who is a student of mKhan po Sangs rgyas rin chen, spends most of his time between his monastery, dGon pa la kha, and the city of Xi'an 西安, where most of his Chinese students reside. Like 'Jam dbyangs blo gros, he is also very fluent in Chinese and involved in a number of projects aimed at improving local education. Moreover, it is worthwhile mentioning Jinding si 金顶寺, a monastery located in the city of Baoji 宝鸡, in Shanxi 陕西. This represents a unique example of a Chinese monastery following the Jo nang tradition. Jinding si was founded in 2001 by a Han Chinese, Master Minghshu 明舒, who was first ordained as a Chan 禅 monk, but became a direct disciple of sKal ldan rgya mtsho at Chos sgar monastery in 'Dzam thang in 1993.

¹³ Among the very few Jo nang pas who are actively trying to establish their teaching outside Tibet and China, there are mKhan po 'Jam dpal blo gros (mKhan sprul rin po che) and mKhan po Chos kyi snang ba. Born in mGo log, mKhan po 'Jam dpal blo gros has studied in monasteries belonging to different traditions. He eventually found his main guru in the Jo nang Ngag dbang blo bzang 'phrin las (1917-1999),

In the early nineties, Matthew Kapstein recovered and made accessible the collected works of Dol po pa, Tāranātha, 'Ba' mda' Thub bstan dge legs rgya mtsho (1844-1904), and a number of important texts by Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa. Since then, Western and Chinese scholars have made notable progress in the study of the history and the doctrine of the Jo nang,¹⁴ and the availability of major Tibetan works of the tradition has steadily increased due to a series of publications undertaken by its current exponents.¹⁵ Several key presentations of the *gzhan stong* doctrine have attracted the attention of contemporary scholars, focusing mainly on the early phase of this tradition in Tibet and its possible Indian Buddhists antecedents, whereas the later transmission and developments of the Jo nang philosophical system from the downfall in gTsang up to the present days remain little explored. If we consider the period following the middle seventeenth century on the basis of the textual sources currently available, there is a conspicuous absence of doctrinal

at Chos thang monastery, and practiced Kālacakra in a three years retreat under his supervision. In 1997, he received the title of "Nonsectarian Scholar" (*chos lugs ris med kyi mkhan po*) from Ngag dbang blo bzang 'phrin las. In 2000, mKhan po 'Jam dpal blo gros left for India, and finally settled in Australia in 2003. Since then, he has founded the Rimé Buddhist Institute, published several books, and focused on the transmission of the practice of Kālacakra, giving teachings in various countries in Europe, America, and Asia. In the summer semester of 2016, mKhan po 'Jam dpal blo gros spent three months teaching as a visiting professor at the Department of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies of the University of Vienna. During this period, he kindly read the *gzhan stong* works of Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho with me, and shared his knowledge of the subject. As for Chos kyi snang ba, he has been a student of Yon tan bzang po. In 1997 he became the abbot of the Jo nang monastery in Shimla, and held this position until the enthronement of mKhan po Kun dga' 'tshams chung, in 2013. Since then, he has started to give teachings and bestow empowerments abroad.

¹⁴ Assuming that most of the readers are somehow familiar with the main English publications, I would like to draw the attention to the studies by Chinese scholars as well. Relevant publications include: She Wanzhi 余万治 and A Wang 阿旺 1990 and 1991, focusing on the history of Chos rje monastery and its relationship with the Ming 明 court; Xu Decun 许得存 1993a, the Chinese translation of Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa's *Doctrinal History of the Jo nang*; Pu Wencheng 蒲文成 1993, which is a broad study of the Jo nang from the origin in central Tibet up to nowadays; She Wanzhi 余万治 1991, Xu Decun 许得存 1993b, Shi Da 史达 2006, and Huang Yingjie 黄英傑 2008, discussing the Jo nang *gzhan stong* doctrine.

¹⁵ In particular, it is worthwhile mentioning the *Jo nang dpe tshogs*, published by Mi rigs dpe skrun khang since 2007, the *Jo nang mdo sngags rig pa'i dpe tshogs*, published by Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang in 2009, and the *Jo nang e wan shes rig dpe tshogs*, also published by Mi rigs dpe skrun khang since 2012. Moreover, the proceedings of the annual Jo nang debate meetings are being published yearly, mainly in the form of questions and answers (*dris lan*).

treatises earlier than those authored by 'Ba' mda' Thub bstan dge legs rgya mtsho and Blo bzang mchog grub rgya mtsho¹⁶ in the second half of the nineteenth century. Living Jo nang masters explain this *lacuna* by noting that the primary focus of Jo nang adepts during these centuries was practice rather than scholarship. Thus, it is regarded as a period that produced many realized meditators, but no renowned scholars. It is not unlikely that relevant texts dated to this period will eventually emerge from A mdo, but the fact that none of them found their way into the present monastic curricula makes it unlikely that these works would be particularly innovative or influential. As the writings of the two above-mentioned scholars opened the way for more Jo nang authors, such as 'Ba' mda' dGe legs' disciple Ngag dbang tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho and Blo gros grags pa, it is possible to trace the resurgence of the Jo nang scholasticism to the middle of the nineteenth century. Significantly, this period also overlaps with the advent of the nonsectarian (*ris med*) movement in Khams.

An in-depth study of the mutual influence that Jo nang pas from A mdo and Khams pa advocates of ecumenism may have had on each other goes well beyond the scope of the present paper. Still, a preliminary survey of mKhan po Blo gros grags pa's history of the Jo nang tradition provides a clear indication that a series of fruitful exchanges took place during that time. It turns out that many of the *vajra* masters of gTsang ba monastery,¹⁷ such as Ngag dbang chos 'phel rgya mtsho (1788-1865),¹⁸ Ngag dbang chos kyi 'phags pa (1808-1877),¹⁹ Ngag dbang chos 'byor rgya mtsho (1846-1910),²⁰ and Kun dga' mkhas

¹⁶ According to mKhan po Blo grags (*Jo nang chos 'byung zla ba'i sgron me*, 306-309), Blo bzang mchog grub rgya mtsho was a young monk when dPal sprul rin po che went to 'Dzam thang, around 1854. Therefore, he must have been more or less a contemporary of 'Ba' mda' dGe legs. mKhan po Blo grags recounts that Blo bzang mchog grub spent several years studying at 'Bras spungs, where he eventually attained the title of *dge bshes*, and hence became commonly known as Dza 'go dGe bshes. According to Sheehy 2007, his *Jo nang System of Tenets (Jo nang grub mtha')* is now included among the curricular material of several Jo nang monasteries. The collected works of Dza 'go dGe bshes have been published by Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang in 2012, and his *Miscellaneous Writings (gSung thor bu)* have been recently made available by the Jonang Foundation on BDRC's website (www.tbrc.org).

¹⁷ The following four are, respectively, the first, second, fourth, and fifth *vajracarya* of gTsang ba monastery in 'Dzam thang.

¹⁸ For a biography of Ngag dbang chos 'phel rgya mtsho see Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa, *Jo nang chos 'byung zla ba'i sgron me*, 181-188.

¹⁹ For a biography of Ngag dbang chos kyi 'phags pa see *Ibid.*, 188-195.

²⁰ For a biography of Ngag dbang chos 'byor rgya mtsho see *Ibid.*, 201-207.

grub dbang phyug (1862-1914),²¹ as well as 'Ba' mda' dGe legs himself, shared a relationship with key figures of the nonsectarian movement like 'Jam mgon Kong sprul (1813-1899) and rDza dPal sprul rin po che (1808-1887). In fact, most of these Jo nang scholars spent years at dPal sprung and rDzogs chen studying with Kong sprul and dPal sprul, who also visited 'Dzam thang respectively around 1848²² and 1854.²³

One of the most fascinating figures in this later phase of the Jo nang tradition was in fact Ngag dbang tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho. Before presenting a brief biography of him and laying out the main characteristics of his doctrinal approach, it is necessary to say a few words about his main teacher, 'Ba' mda' dGe legs.

2. 'Ba' mda' Thub bstan dge legs rgya mtsho²⁴

'Ba' mda' dGe legs was considered to be an emanation of Nā ro pa (1016-1100), Kun dga' grol mchog (1507-1566), and Tāranātha, but also of Candrakīrti (c.570-c.650), who is significantly regarded by the dGe lugs pas as the key figure of their Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka tradition. Moreover, Blo gro grags pa recounts that, when in meditative equipoise, 'Ba' mda' dGe legs could remember one of his previous lives as 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa (1648-1721/22) at Bla brang bkra shis 'khyil, one of the largest dGe lugs monasteries in A mdo.²⁵ Born in the village of 'Ba' mda', not far from 'Dzam thang, Thub bstan dge legs rgya mtsho spent some of his formative years²⁶ in the regions of rDza chu kha and sDe dge, in Khams. In that period, he seems to have focused on the exoteric study of the Five Classes of Great Scriptures (*gzhung chen bka' pod lnga*), usually considered as the core of the dGe

²¹ For a biography of Kun dga' mkhas grub dbang phyug see *Ibid.*, 207-218.

²² *Ibid.*, 184 and 189-190.

²³ *Ibid.*, 190. See also Ricard 2017, 24-25 and 56-57.

²⁴ For a biography of 'Ba' mda' dGe legs see *Ibid.*, 412-424. See also Kapstein 1997, 462-467, and Cabezon 2015.

²⁵ See Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa, *Jo nang chos 'byung zla ba'i sgron me*, 412-413, and 419. For an historical account of Bla brang monastery, see Nietupski 2011.

²⁶ See Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa, *Jo nang chos 'byung zla ba'i sgron me*, 413-414. According to Blo gros grags pa, 'Ba' mda' dGe legs left 'Dzam thang when he was seventeen years old and returned at the age of twenty. Therefore, he must have studied in Khams approximately between 1861 and 1864. It must be noted that while Blo gros grags pa counts people's age according to the Tibetan custom, namely, that of taking one person's year of birth as the year one, I present these data following the Western age reckoning.

lugs scholastic curriculum.²⁷ Although this same curricular model is currently adopted also by Jo nang monasteries in A mdo, it is not clear when they began following it.²⁸ It is worth noting, however, that in the biography of one of the earliest Jo nang exponents in 'Dzam thang, the First Chos rje rGyal ba bzang po (1419/1420-1487),²⁹ the Five Classes of Great Scriptures are already listed among his subjects of study. 'Ba' mda' dGe legs pursued these studies at Ser shul, the largest dGe lugs monastery in rDza chu kha, and at rDzogs chen, where, in particular, he received teachings on the *Sūtras on the Perfection of Insight* (*Prajñāpāramitāsūtras*) from mKhan po A dkon (dKon mchog 'od zer; c.1837-c.1897), the abbot of the Śrī Siṃha college. Even though there is no precise information about who his main dGe lugs teacher was, Blo gros grags pa informs us that 'Ba' mda' dGe legs continued to study the literature of that tradition on his own³⁰ and had recurring pure visions where he could discuss difficult points of the scriptures with 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa and Thu'u bkwan.³¹ Whoever ignited his interest in the dGe lugs scholastic curriculum, it is clear, as Matthew Kapstein has noted, that 'Ba' mda' dGe legs "adheres, throughout almost all of his commentarial writing on non-tantric subjects, to the dGe lugs pa tradition of Bla brang."³²

At rDzogs chen, 'Ba' mda' dGe legs studied with dPal sprul rin po che as well. Then, he moved to dPal spung, where he was trained by Kong sprul in the Six Dharmas of Nā ro pa (*nā ro chos drug*). 'Ba' mda' dGe legs subsequently developed a profound affinity with the bKa' brgyud teachings and, in the later part of his life, became the *vajracārya* of g.Yu thog, a monastery belonging to this tradition, where he founded a retreat centre and lived his last years. It is worthwhile noting that, as g.Yu thog is located about ninety kilometers from 'Dzam thang, a good relationship has grown between this Karma bKa' brgyud monastery and the Jo nang institutions of the region. In fact, many of g.Yu thog's current *mkhan pos* have received part of their education at Jo nang monasteries in 'Dzam thang, such as Chos thang and gTsang ba. In about 1864, 'Ba' mda' dGe legs left the area of sDe

²⁷ The Five Classes of Great Scriptures are those of Pramāṇa, Madhyamaka, Prajñāpāramitā, Abhidharma, and Vinaya. For more details about the curricular models of the dGe lugs pas and of other traditions, see Dreyfus 2003, 98-148. For a study on the recent adaptations of the monastic curricula of non dGe lugs institutions, see Pearcey 2015.

²⁸ See Kapstein 1997, 466.

²⁹ See Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa, *Jo nang chos 'byung zla ba'i sgron me*, 113.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 415.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 419-420.

³² See Kapstein 1997, 464.

dge and returned to his birthplace, where he continued his Jo nang training, mainly under the supervision of Ngag dbang chos 'phel rgya mtsho and Ngag dbang chos kyi 'phags pa at gTsang ba monastery.³³ After about twenty years, he went to the retreat of bKra shis lha ri and mastered the practice of Kālacakra following the instructions of one of its most renown practitioners, Ngag dbang chos 'dzin dpal bzang po (?-c.1899), also known as Lha bzo bla ma.³⁴ Later, 'Ba' mda' dGe legs moved his quarters to the hermitage of dGe 'phel and was eventually appointed at g.Yu thog.³⁵

In considering the extensive works of this author, it is rather surprising that one looks in vain for any systematic presentation of the *gzhan stong* doctrine. The reason proposed by contemporary Jo nang exponents is simply that 'Ba' mda' dGe legs passed away before he had the chance to compose such a text.³⁶ Although this could well be the case, it does not really explain why he invested so much energy presenting dGe lugs material in the first place. It seems possible that, in the wake of the ecumenical movement, 'Ba' mda' dGe legs felt the need to update the monastic courses of study in order to revive Jo nang scholasticism. Kapstein suggests that he decided to appropriate curricular sources from Bla brang motivated by the firm belief that he was the incarnation of 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa, and by a sincere admiration for the dGe lugs scholastic tradition. Without abandoning a *gzhan stong* position, 'Ba' mda' dGe legs would have dealt with it as a rather esoteric doctrine implicitly pervading all the teachings of the Buddha.³⁷

³³ See Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa, *Jo nang chos 'byung zla ba'i sgron me*, 414.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 415.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 417, 423.

³⁶ From personal conversations with mKhan po Chos dbang, at dGon pa La kha, and mKhan po Chos bzang, in Chengdu, in 2015. This anecdote is also mentioned in Sheehy 2009b, 2.

³⁷ For a discussion on 'Ba' mda' dGe legs's doctrinal approach, see Kapstein 1997, 463-467. Also Dol po pa and Tāranātha followed similar approaches. According to Kapstein, apart from his qualitative classification of the buddhist teachings, Dol po pa resorted to esotericism maintaining that, whereas the actual intention of the *Sūtras on the Perfection of Insight* is mostly hidden, their essence is the same as that of the *Wheel of Time Tantra*. Kapstein noted that, when commenting on the *Sūtras on the Perfection of Insight*, Dol po pa mostly refrained from forcing his *gzhan stong* view into these texts, but he presented it whenever their unclarity could be taken as implying what he held as the definitive meaning of the discourses of the third wheel of the doctrine, or of the tantras. See *Ibid.*, 457-460. Moreover, Mathes has pointed out how Dol po pa did something similar also in his commentary on the *Highest Continuum (Uttaratantra)*. Distinguishing a common and an uncommon presentation, Dol po pa commented this treatise in accordance with the first mode, without imposing his definitive view, and asserted that, on the relative level, there

According to mKhan po Blo grags, there is no doubt that the view held by 'Ba' mda' dGe legs was in line with Jo nang gZhan stong. In his former life as 'Jam dbyang bzhad pa, he realized the profound mode of abiding by analytical meditation and in accordance with the intention of Nāgārjuna's *Collection of Reasonings (Rigs tshogs)*. Then, as 'Ba' mda' dGe legs, he gained a completely nonconceptual and direct realization of the ultimate as presented by the Jo nang tradition.³⁸ In his historical works, Blo gros grags pa also recalls a significant episode which occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century, when Kun dga' mkhas grub dbang phyug invited 'Ba' mda' dGe legs to give teachings at gTsang ba monastery. On this occasion, 'Ba' mda' dGe legs spent about two months teaching his *Summary of the Six Yogas (sByor drug spyi don)*,³⁹ a text that he had composed to clearly distinguish between emptiness of self (*rang stong*) and emptiness of other in the context of the practice of the completion stage of Kālacakra.⁴⁰ It is also noteworthy that, in this particular text, 'Ba' mda' dGe legs presents specific issues both from the perspective of what he holds as his own tradition (*rang lugs*), which in this context clearly proves to be the one of Jo nang, and from the perspective of other great scholars (*mkhas mchog gZhan dag*), generally corresponding to that of the dGe lugs tradition. In fact, Jo nang mkhan pos agree that the *Summary of the Six Yogas* and others of his works on the *Wheel of Time Tantra*, such as the *Stages of Meditation of Kālacakra (Dus 'khor sgom rim)*⁴¹ and the *Exposition of the Powerful Ten Syllables (rNam bcu dbang ldan gyi*

are buddha qualities and *kāyas* that are produced and conditioned. However, Dol po pa's ultimate view becomes clear in his *Mountain Doctrine (Ri chos)*, where, applying the uncommon presentation, he referred to passages from the *Highest Continuum* discussing an unconditioned buddha-element that is empty of other, completely transcendent, and permanent in the sense of being beyond time. See Mathes 2008, 76-84. Considering Tāranātha, Kapstein noted that he also adopted an approach consistent with that of Dol po pa. For Tāranātha, there is a qualitative distinction between the three wheels of the doctrine, and the Empty of Other Madhyamaka is presented most clearly and explicitly in the discourses of the third wheel. However, he maintained that all the three wheels have a single intention and even in the first and the second wheel it is possible to find passages that clearly teach the Great Madhyamaka. In fact, in his two commentaries on the *Sūtra on the Heart of the Perfection of Insight (Prajñāpāramitāhrdayasūtra)*, Tāranātha made clear that the hidden, definitive meaning of the *Perfection of Insight* is that of the ultimate empty of other. See Kapstein 1997, 460-461.

³⁸ See Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa, *Jo nang chos 'byung zla ba'i sgron me*, 420-21.

³⁹ The full title of the text reads: *dPal dus kyi 'khor lo'i rdzogs rim sbyor ba yan lag drug gi spyi don legs par bshad pa rdo rje bdud rtsi'i chu gter*.

⁴⁰ See Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa, *Jo nang chos 'byung zla ba'i sgron me*, 421.

⁴¹ The full title of the text reads: *dPal dus kyi 'khor lo'i rdzogs rim sbyor ba yan lag drug gi sgom rim grub pa'i lam bzang sku bzhi'i rgyal sar bsgrod pa'i shing rta*.

rnam bshad),⁴² both implicitly and explicitly teach *gzhan stong*.⁴³ Thus, 'Ba' mda' dGe legs would have presented the emptiness of other only in his esoteric teachings, and, more precisely, in those related to the practice of Kālacakra. Nonetheless, as already mentioned, the living Jo nang tradition maintains that his broader exposition of the doctrine has remained incomplete due to an untimely death.

Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho left no indication that it was his intention to fill gaps left by his teacher, and we also cannot take for granted that he maintained a position identical or consistent with that of 'Ba' mda' dGe legs. Still, it is worthwhile noting that Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho's writings build on many of the subjects his teacher dealt with, such as the Collected Topics (*bsdus grwa*) and the *Sūtras on the Perfection of Insight*, and cover what was left out of his master's collected works: an organic presentation of the Jo nang doctrine and the discussion of its most characteristic features. Therefore, we can expect that the study of Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho's view will yield insights into some of the main philosophical issues that preoccupied both him and 'Ba' mda' dGe legs, and thus increase our knowledge of key developments in Jo nang doctrine during their time.

3. *The Life of Ngag dbang tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho*⁴⁴

Ngag dbang tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho was born in 1880 in Rab kha, about ten kilometers northwest from 'Dzam thang. His father was mGo log bKra tshe, son of A skyong rGyal mtshan of the A lcags 'bri family, and descendant of Seng ge thar. His mother was gSer bza' Lab sgron. At the age of thirteen, he took up residence at the retreat of bKra shis lha ri and started the preliminary practices of Kālacakra under the guidance of the same teacher who had trained 'Ba' mda' dGe legs, Ngag dbang chos 'dzin dpal bzang po. From him, he received the name Ngag dbang tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho. He practiced following the explanations of Ngag dbang chos 'dzin for about three years and experienced signs proving his progress along the path of the *Wheel of Time Tantra*. When he reached the age of seventeen, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho received further instructions for the generation stage and

⁴² The full title of the text reads: *dPal dus kyi 'khor lo'i yang snying rnam bcu dbang ldan gyi don bshad pa rin chen sgron me*.

⁴³ From personal conversations with mKhan sprul rin po che, mKhan po Chos dbang, and mKhan po Rig pa'i rdo rje.

⁴⁴ For a biography of Ngag dbang tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho, see Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa, *Jo nang chos 'byung zla ba'i sgron me*, 482-496. See also *Jo nang mdo sngags rig pa'i dpe tshogs*, Vol. 19, 1-4.

gained a stable and vivid experience of the manifestation of several deities. With the passing of time, Ngag dbang chos 'dzin gave him also the empowerments and the instructions for the six branches of *vajrayoga*, starting from the three isolations (*dben gsum*) of body, speech, and mind. Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho first realized the general and particular signs of experience, and then the key points of the practice.⁴⁵ While in bKra shis lha ri, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho also received the reading transmission of all the collected works of Dol po pa from Kun dga' mkhas grub dbang phyug, otherwise known as Ngag dbang don ldan.⁴⁶

In 1899, after the death of Ngag dbang chos 'dzin, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho went to the mountain retreat of dGe 'phel and became a student of 'Ba' mda' dGe legs. He spent about three years studying with 'Ba' mda', focusing in particular on his lengthy commentaries on the *Ornament of Clear Realization* (*Abhismayālamkāra*) and the *Sūtras on the Perfection of Insight*. It was during this period that Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho composed the *General Outline of Collected Topics* (*bsDus grwa spyi zur*),⁴⁷ a work belonging to the indigenous Tibetan genre of Collected Topics, long used in Sa skya and dGe lugs monasteries to debate key points of Buddhist epistemology.⁴⁸ 'Ba' mda' dge legs passed away in 1904, but, around 1908, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho was able to receive the reading transmission of more of his writings from Ngag dbang chos 'byor rgya mtsho, the fourth *vajracārya* of gTsang ba, who had been one of 'Ba' mda' dge legs' closest disciples. From him, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho also obtained several other transmissions,⁴⁹ including that of Tāranātha's commentary on the *Tantra of Tārā Yoginī* (*Tārāyoginītantra*).⁵⁰

⁴⁵ See *Jo nang mdo sngags rig pa'i dpe tshogs*, Vol. 19, 1-2.

⁴⁶ See Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa, *Jo nang chos 'byung zla ba'i sgron me*, 482-483.

⁴⁷ The full title reads: *bsDus grwa'i spyi zur gyi don 'ga' zhiig rab tu gsal bar byed pa rin po che'i sgron me*.

⁴⁸ For a discussion of the *bsdus grwa* genre, see Tillemans 2016.

⁴⁹ See Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa, *Jo nang chos 'byung zla ba'i sgron me*, 485.

⁵⁰ The *Tantra of Tārā Yoginī* was one of the latest Highest Yoga Tantras (*anuttarayogatantra*) to be introduced into Tibet. No original Sanskrit text is available. The Tibetan translation of the text is not included in any edition of the *bKa' 'gyur*, but it is contained in the collected works of Tāranātha together with seven other relevant texts: the commentary to the Tantra, the history of its transmission, and the instructions for the practice and the rituals related to this wrathful eight-armed Tārā. Tāranātha received the transmission of the *Tantra of Tārāyoginī* from the Indian Mahāsiddha Buddhaguptanātha around 1594. For a history of the *Tantra of Tārāyoginī* see Tāranātha's *sGrol ma'i rgyud kyi byung khungs gsal bar byed pa'i lo rgyus gser gyi phreng ba* and its translation in Templeman 1981. See also Roth 2008. For a biography of Buddhaguptanātha, see Tāranātha, *Grub*

At the age of twenty-nine, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho settled in the monks' quarters of gTsang ba. He soon began to gather a group of students, including Ngag dbang blo gros tshul khrim, who would have later become a leading teacher at Chos thang monastery. Among other subjects, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho taught Collected Topics, Abhidharma, Prajñāpāramitā, the *Wheel of Time Tantra*, and Dol po pa's *General Commentary on the Doctrine (bsTan pa spyi 'grel)*.⁵¹ He remained based in 'Dzam thang for the next fifteen years, during which he received the reading transmission of all the collected works of Tāranātha from Kun dga' mkhas grub dbang po, and the two became close friends. Moreover, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho received empowerments and instructions from the rNying ma Nyag bla gter chen, Lha tshe dge slong, and Khams sangs gter ston. During these years, he composed some of his major works,⁵² such as *Removing the Anguish of Holding to Extremes (mThar 'dzin gdung 'phrog)*⁵³ and the *Illuminating Light Summary (sPyi don rab gsal snang ba)*.⁵⁴

Around 1925, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho moved back to bKra shis lha ri, where he spent most of his time.⁵⁵ When some of his works, such as *Removing the Anguish of Holding to Extremes*, were included in the curricula of a few monasteries in mGo log, they drew the attention of a prominent dGe lugs master, A mdo dge bshes 'Jam dpal rol pa'i blo gros (1888-1936).⁵⁶ It is not clear whether the two ever met or whether they were just in epistolary contact, but, according to Blo gros grags pa, A mdo dge bshes expressed his glowing appreciation of Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho's writings and tried to convince him to go to Lha sa to teach the *Wheel of Time Tantra*, offering a full sponsorship. Apparently, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho declined this generous offer. At

chen buddha gupta'i rnam thar rje btsun nyid kyi zhal lung las gzhan du rang rtoḡ gi dri mas ma sbags pa'i yi ge yang dag pa.

⁵¹ See Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa, *Jo nang chos 'byung zla ba'i sgron me*, 485-486

⁵² *Ibid.*, 486.

⁵³ The full title reads: *Kun mkhyen jo nang pa chen po'i dgongs pa gzhan stong dbu ma'i tshul legs par bshad pa mthar 'dzin gdung 'phrog*,

⁵⁴ The full title reads: *Kun mkhyen jo nang pa'i bzhed dgongs dbu tshad kyi gzhang spyi dang gung bsgrigs te dpyod pa'i spyi don rab gsal snang ba.*

⁵⁵ See Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa, *Jo nang chos 'byung zla ba'i sgron me*, 487.

⁵⁶ A descendant of gNubs chen sangs rgyas ye shes (ninth century), A mdo dge bshes was mainly trained in the dGe lugs tradition, but had a special relationship with the rNying ma as well: he studied with 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po (1820-1892) and was considered as the emanation of dPal sprul o rgyan 'jigs med chos kyi dbang po (1808-1887). He was also one of the main teachers of the Chinese monk and translator Fazun 法尊 (1902-1980). For more details about A mdo dge bshes, see Bde legs rab rgyas 2004. For more details about Fazun, see Tuttle 2005 and Sullivan 2007.

the age of fifty, he built a new retreat hut in Rwa 'ob, settled there, and started to teach many students. Occasionally, he visited gTsang ba monastery to give teachings and, later, he moved to its upper retreat center, where he resided for a few years.⁵⁷

In 1935, after a battalion of the Red Army passed through the area of 'Dzam thang during its Long March,⁵⁸ Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho left for mGo log. There, he met the Ninth Paṅ chen, Blo bzang thub bstan chos kyi nyi ma (1883-1937), and received from him the transmission of the *Prayer of Sambhala* (*Sham bha la'i smon lam*).⁵⁹ At the same time, he obtained from Khra dge slong Tshul khriṃs dar rgyas the transmission of the *Ocean of Clouds of Praises of Mañjuḥṣa* (*'Jam dbyangs bstod sprin rgya mtsho*), by Tsong kha pa (1137-1419).⁶⁰ This was possibly the only occasion on which Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho traveled outside the reaches of 'Dzam thang. By the end of 1935, he headed back to his retreat in Rwa 'ob where he continued giving teachings to whoever came to visit him. In 1937, Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa, who was then seventeen years old, came to meet Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho at his retreat and commenced studies under his guidance.⁶¹ In the same period, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho established a contact with A gter dpa' bo chos dbyings rdo rje (1895-1945), a renowned *gter ston* from mGo log, who is said to have revealed scriptures recognizing him as the rebirth of great teachers from the past: the Mahāsiddha Kambalapāda (tenth century)⁶² and Tsong kha pa's main disciple, rGyal tshab dar ma rin chen (1364-1432). Current proponents of the Jo nang tradition maintain that Tshogs gnyis was also a rebirth of Nya dbon kun dga' dpal (1285-1379), one of the direct students of Dol po pa. Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho passed away in the leap year of 1940. Blo gros grags pa relates that, when his physical remains were cremated, a great, bright halo appeared in the sky, myriad rainbows pierced the retreat from all directions, and a luminous path made of five-colored spheres rose

⁵⁷ See Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa, *Jo nang chos 'byung zla ba'i sgron me*, 488-490

⁵⁸ For a detailed account of the Red Army's passage through the regions of rGyal rong and rNga ba, see Li and Akester 2012.

⁵⁹ The full title of this brief text, composed by the Third Paṅ chen Blo bzang dpal ldan ye shes (1738-1780), reads: *Sham bha lar skye ba'i smon lam/ dpal ldan dang po'i ring lugs ma/*.

⁶⁰ See Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa, *Jo nang chos 'byung zla ba'i sgron me*, 491.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 491-492.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 492-493. The Tibetan text reads *lwa ba*. This seemingly refers to the Mahāsiddha Kambalapāda, known in Tibetan as Lwa ba pa, La ba pa, or Wa ba pa. Together with Niguma, he is considered as a key figure in the early transmission of the Six Dharmas of Niguma (*ni gu chos drug*). See Tāranātha, *Zab lam ni gu chos drug gi gzhung 'khrid ma mo'i lhan thabs kha skongs*, 1001-1002..

above his hut.⁶³ For his disciples, these were clear signs that Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho had finally reached the pure land of Sambhala.⁶⁴

4. *The Conciliatory Approach of Ngag dbang tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho.*

In the course of his life, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho composed a substantial corpus of texts, comprising altogether thirteen volumes. The corpus covers a broad range of subjects including the Empty of Other Madhyamaka (*gzhan stong dbu ma*), Pramāṇa, Collected Topics, his commentaries on the *Sūtras on the Perfection of Insight*, and the practices and rituals of the *Wheel of Time Tantra*. Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho's collected works are currently available in their original *dbu med* edition through the digital archive of the Buddhist Digital Research Center (BDRC). Only three of his texts have been republished in 2009 in a revised *dbu can* edition: *Removing the Anguish of Holding to Extremes*, the *Illuminating Light Summary*, and *Dispelling the Darkness of Partiality* (*Phyogs lhung mun sel*⁶⁵).⁶⁶ These three represent a significant

⁶³ See Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa, *Jo nang chos 'byung zla ba'i sgron me*, 494-496.

⁶⁴ See *Jo nang mdo sngags rig pa'i dpe tshogs*, Vol. 19, 3-4.

⁶⁵ The full title reads: *Kun mkhyen chen pos mdzad pa'i grub mtha'i rnam bzhag don gsal gyi 'grel ba phyogs lhung mun sel*.

⁶⁶ While *Removing the Anguish of Holding to Extremes* and *Dispelling the Darkness of Partiality* are included in the collected works of Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho, the *Illuminating Light Summary* is not. The original *dbu med* edition of the latter is available on BDRC's website (www.tbrc.org) as a separate text. These three works have been published in 2009 by Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang in its Si khron dpe skrun tshogs pa series under the title *Ngag dbang tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho'i dbu ma gzhan stong phyogs bsgrigs*. The publication was made possible by Douglas Duckworth in collaboration with the Jonang Foundation. In the same year of 2009, Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang published these three works also in the nineteenth volume of its *Jo nang mdo sngags rig pa'i dpe tshogs*, a collection of texts by Tāranātha, 'Ba' mda' dGe legs, and Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho. These two editions from 2009 are mostly identical. *Ngag dbang tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho'i dbu ma gzhan stong phyogs bsgrigs* contains a short introduction by Michael Sheehy, where he points out the diversity of *gzhan stong* interpretations within the contemporary Jo nang and briefly outlines the relationship between 'Ba' mda' dGe legs, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho, and Blo gros grags pa. Moreover, Sheehy distinguishes the view of Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho from that of Blo gros grags pa on the basis of a note that Phan bde rgya mtsho, the present *sprul sku* of Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho, wrote for him. However, both the transcription and the translation given by Sheehy are problematic. The transcription with corrections noted reads: *ngag dbang tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho dang ma ti rin po che gnyis kyi gzhan stong gnyis kyi mi 'dra ba'i gnad de gang yin zhes pa la/ spyir khongs gnyis kyi dgongs pa mthar thug 'gal mi srid kyang / gnas skabs gsungs tshul la/ ma tis bde gshegs snying gi ngo bo de nam yang stong nyid dang rten 'grel [correct: 'brel] ma yin par gsungs la/ tshogs gnyis rgya mtshos ni/ thun*

example of late Jo nang philosophical literature and are studied by present day Jo nang pas as the main *gzhan stong* works by this scholar.

In *Removing the Anguish of Holding to Extremes*, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho follows the example of other great Jo nang scholars such as Dol po pa⁶⁷ and Phyogs las rnam rgyal (1306-1386)⁶⁸ and presents the Empty of Other Madhyamaka according to the three-fold structure of ground (*gzhi*), path (*lam*), and result (*'bras bu*). Notably, he divides the ground section into the two rubrics of the 'ground of relative phenomena' (*kun rdzob rnams kyi gzhi*) and the 'ground of *dharmatā*, i.e., wisdom' (*chos nyid ye shes kyi gzhi*). This text also includes a presentation of the two truths and a concise commentary on Maitreya's *Highest Continuum* (*Uttaratantra*).

Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho's *Illuminating Light Summary* is organized into sixteen chapters providing further elucidation of key points already treated in *Removing the Anguish of Holding to Extremes*, and thus offers a particularly cogent example of the author's views. In particular, the main issues discussed concern whether *dharmatā* is dependent arising (*rten 'brel*), whether it is truly established (*bden par grub*), whether it is an affirming negation (*ma yin dgag*) or a nonaffirming negation (*med dgag*), how it is free from elaborations (*spros bral*), and how, in the meditative equipoise of the noble ones (*'phags pa'i mnyam bzhag*), it appears as endowed with all the supreme aspects (*rnam pa thams cad pa*). It is worthwhile mentioning that, in this text, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho analyzes also key differences in the ways Nya dbon pa and Tāranātha present the path of preparation (*sbyor lam*).

mong gi bshad ltar bde gshegs snying gi ngo bo yang stong nyid dang rten 'grel [correct: 'brel] *min* [correct: yin] *par gsungs bas gtso bo mi 'dra sa de de yin snyam*/. I translate Phan bde rgya mtsho's words as follows: "What is the key point regarding the difference of the respective *gzhan stong* [positions] of the two Ngag dbang tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho and Ma ti Rin po che? In general, their final intentions cannot be contradictory. However, considering [their] provisional (*gnas skabs*) way of teaching, Ma ti asserts that the essence of buddha nature is never emptiness and dependent arising, whereas Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho asserts that, according to the common explanation, even the essence of buddha nature is emptiness and dependent arising. Therefore, [I] think that the main point in which they differ is this." Although I have no access to the original handwritten note by Phan bde rgya mtsho, the negation in the assertion of Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho must be either a writing mistake or a transcription error. If it weren't so, Phan bde rgya mtsho's words would be contradictory. Misled by that reading, Sheehy is correct, but he misses to make the necessary conjecture.

⁶⁷ See Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan, *Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho*.

⁶⁸ See Phyogs las rnam rgyal, *gZhi lam 'bras bu'i ngo sprod yang dag don gsal sogs*.

As for *Dispelling the Darkness of Partiality*, it constitutes possibly the only known commentary on a particular work by Dol po pa, which Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho refers to as *The Clear Meaning of the Presentation of the Tenets Systems* (*Grub mtha'i rnam bzhag don gsal*). Dol po pa's text, which in fact consists of a concise exposition in verses of the various views of Buddhists and non-Buddhists, does not appear in his collected works under this or any another title, but is included in his biography by Kun spangs chos grags dpal bzang po (1283-1363).⁶⁹ As noted by Stearns, Kun spangs pa mentions that Dol po pa had been insistently invited to China by the Yuan 元 emperor Toghon Temür (Huizong 惠宗, 1320-1370), and, although he never managed to honor this request, he did compose that text specifically for the sovereign.⁷⁰

Throughout these works, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho exhibits a strong inclusivist⁷¹ tendency towards dGe lugs positions. Because this approach profoundly shaped his unique perspective on Jo nang doctrine, in the remainder of this paper I will attempt to highlight its main features and provide a few relevant examples. Of course, the details of Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho's doctrine require a more comprehensive investigation and will be the subject of future publications.

While the dGe lugs milieu of 'Ba' mda' dGe legs is somehow puzzling and incomplete, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho's biography provides more precise information about his contacts with figures from this tradition. At the outset, it is interesting to note that Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho established such connections only in the later part of his life, between 1925 and 1935, after he had already composed his main writings. Actually, it was precisely due to his literary production that Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho drew the attention of dGe lugs personalities such as A mdo dge bshes. It is hence not unreasonable to assume that this influence might have come first directly from 'Ba' mda' dGe legs and then from his disciple Ngag dbang chos 'byor rgya mtsho. All these elements reinforce the supposition that Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho's works reflect the unwritten *gzhan stong* position of 'Ba' mda' dGe legs, which possibly culminated in a further attempt to relate the *rang stong* model to the Jo nang system.

⁶⁹ See Kun spangs chos grags dpal bzang po, *Chos kyi rje thams cad mkhyen pa'i skyes rabs khyad par du 'phags pa*, 270-275.

⁷⁰ See Stearns 2010, 29-31.

⁷¹ Here, I follow Paul Hacker's definition of inclusivism as consisting in "claiming for, and thus including in, one's own religion, what really belongs to an alien sect." In this sense, inclusivism means to accept an opposing doctrine as subordinate or as a preliminary step towards one's own tenet. See, for example, Hacker 1995, 244. For a discussion about interreligious inclusivism in the broad Buddhist context, see Kiblinger 2004 and 2005.

One could say that a degree of inclusivism is already essential to the *gzhan stong* view in that *rang stong* must be accepted in order to account for the mode of being empty which characterizes relative phenomena and adventitious stains. That is, *gzhan stong pas* do not reject the *rang stong* view, but, restricting the scope of self-emptiness to the relative, recognize and emphasize its value as a necessary preliminary step leading to the definitive understanding of the ultimate. However, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho moved towards an even more inclusivist Jo nang *gzhan stong* position by accepting that not only the relative, but also *dharmatā*, the ultimate truth, can be discussed in negative terms, and by adopting a number of positions which are distinctively *rang stong*, if not specifically dGe lugs. In fact, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho consistently selects and depicts key issues by first confining the *rang stong* understanding of such specific matters to the mere provisional level or to a given perspective, which cannot but be lower than that of the wisdom of the noble ones' meditative equipoise. Thereby, he shows how, within that framework, typical dGe lugs positions could be accepted by the Jo nang pas as well. Afterwards, he proceeds with what he considers the definitive explanation of the same topic, portraying his view in line with that of Dol po pa, or at least according to his own interpretation of Dol po pa's words.

Depending on how it is applied, inclusivism can be perceived as either an appreciative or pejorative way of incorporating another's doctrine. An appreciative approach acknowledges the validity and distinctiveness of a given position and seeks to coordinate and reconcile it with other valid viewpoints. From this standpoint, the doxographical reframing and distorting reinterpretation of someone else's position for the sake of validating and even valorizing one's own position is nothing more than misappropriation. I submit that while Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho limits the *rang stong* view to a perspective which is essentially lower than that of Great Madhyamaka, he shows a profound understanding and a frank appreciation of that position, to such extent that one could question whether his true goal was that of skillfully defending *gzhan stong* from its detractors or making the whole *rang stong* system more palatable for the Jo nang. Although it is likely that most dGe lugs pas would not be particularly flattered by Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho's efforts, there is little doubt that his inclusivist strategy offered him the best possible prospect of reconciling the Jo nang *gzhan stong* and the dGe lugs *rang stong* doctrines, thus facilitating productive intersectarian dialogue rather than fueling heated polemics as had been all too common in preceding centuries. In fact, this scholar's distinctive style in dealing with opposing views is that of taking into consideration a specific doctrinal point which is normally held by Jo nang as a mistaken dGe lugs theory,

or vice versa, and, instead of refuting it, showing how it could become a common ground.

The conciliatory approach of Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho becomes clear in his *Removing the Anguish of Holding to Extremes*, where he distinguishes three perspectives one can adopt to define *dharmatā*, the ultimate truth:

Hence, there are three different modes of asserting *dharmatā*, luminosity, the essence of emptiness, from the perspectives of three different subjects. [This is] because there are the [following] three [perspectives].

[1] In view of how [*dharmatā*] manifests for the nonconceptual wisdom of the noble ones, it is claimed to be, among other things, the indistinguishability of ground and result, as well as the completely pure *dharmatā* [which is] the nature of the ground [and] inherently possesses all [the qualities of] separation [and] maturation such as the ultimate [ten] strengths, the suchness of sentient beings which is also the suchness of the Noble Buddhas, and that which transcends dependent arising.

[2] In view of how that emptiness, which is the object of such wisdom, manifests as the object of another reasoning consciousness, it is claimed to be, among other things, an object of knowledge, an element, a sense-base, a universal, a particular, one, not contradictory, a nonentity, a nonaffirming negation, and the absence of the true [existence] which is the *negandum*.

[3] In view of how it appears as an object of intellect, namely, as a term or a concept, the *dharmatā* manifesting for such [mind] is claimed to be, among other things, dependent arising, a conceptual imputation, and a different delimitation of a single essence with the *dharmins*.⁷²

The first, higher perspective is thus that of the nonconceptual wisdom of the noble ones. This, for Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho, is essentially the view of Great Madhyamaka. On the basis of a direct, nonconceptual experience, *dharmatā per se* is realized as possessing all buddha

⁷² Ngag dbang tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho: *mThar 'dzin gdung 'phrog* (A), 183-183: *des na chos nyid 'od gsal stong pa nyid kyi ngo bo yul can mi 'dra ba gsum gyi sgo nas khas len tshul mi 'dra ba gsum yod de/ 'phags pa'i ye shes rnam par mi rtog pa'i ngor 'char tshul la ltos nas gzhi 'bras dbyer med dang gzhi'i rang bzhin rnam dag gi chos nyid la yang don dam pa'i stobs sogs bral smin thams cad rang chas su yod pa dang sems can gyi de bzhin nyid de sangs 'phags kyi de bzhin nyid kyang yin pa dang rten 'brel las 'das pa sogs su khas blangs pa dang / ye shes de'i yul gyi stong nyid de rigs shes gzhan gyi yul du 'char tshul la ltos nas shes bya dang khams dang skye mched dang spyi dang bye brag dang gcig dang mi 'gal ba dang dangos med dang med dgag dang dga' [em. dgag] bya'i bden med sogs su khas blangs pa dang / sgra dang rtog pa rnam kyi blo'i yul du snang tshul la ltos nas de'i ngor shar ba'i chos nyid rten 'brel dang rtog btags dang chos can dang ngo bo gcig la ldog pa tha dad pa sogs su khas blangs pa dang gsum yod pa'i phyir rol/.*

qualities and completely transcendent in that it goes beyond dependent arising. This is the actual, nonrepresentational ultimate (*rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam*). On the other hand, both the second and the third perspectives present only the representational ultimate (*rnam grangs pa'i don dam*). In fact, although these latter two still deal with the same topic, they do it only indirectly, being conceptually determined, and entailing descriptions that are in line with *rang stong* positions. In the second perspective, *dharmatā* is the object of wisdom but is analyzed through the filter of a separate reasoning consciousness, and is thereby understood only in negative terms, as the nonaffirming negation held by *rang stong pas*. In the third perspective, *dharmatā* is taken only as a conceptual or linguistic construct, and therefore reduced to an intellectual postulate. Here, ultimate truth is equated with dependent arising and only conceptually distinguished from the relative, just as in the dGe lugs tenet system.

Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho further stresses the provisional validity of presenting *dharmatā* as a nonaffirming negation when he discusses the way it is posited from the perspective of negating the *negandum* (*dgag bya bkag phyogs*). At the beginning of his *Illuminating Light Summary*, he explains:

First. The analysis about how, in regard to all phenomena, there is no consummate emptiness which is essentially other than that very absence of true establishment, [i.e.,] the *negandum*.

The subject (*dharmin*; *chos can*): that absence of true establishment in regard to what is apprehended in the clinging mode of ignorance, the belief that all phenomena from form to omniscience are real.

[Predicate:] there is no emptiness, mode of abiding of phenomena, which is essentially other than it, [i.e., their absence of true establishment]. [This is] because [of the following reasons].

[1] An emptiness [of phenomena] that is subtler than [the one taught] from the perspective of negating the *negandum* in the the middle discourses, [i.e., the *Sūtras on the Perfection of Insight*, has not been taught in the last wheel together with Mantra[yāna].

[2] In the teachings of the Great Omniscient Dol po pa, the fundamentally existing relative or the relative fundamentally existing has been said to be the subtle self of phenomena. However, it has not been said that [there is] any self of phenomena which is subtler than that, and the fundamentally existing relative has the same meaning as the truly established relative and the inherently established relative. If that is so, also the subtle selflessness of phenomena, which is the negation of the subtle self of phenomena, must be the absence of

inherent establishment [of] form and so forth, or that very absence of true establishment [of] form and so forth.⁷³

In this passage, the fundamentally existing relative (*kun rdzob gshis la yod pa*), the relative fundamentally existing (*gshis la kun rdzob yod pa nyid*), the truly established relative (*kun rdzob bden par grub pa*), and the inherently established relative (*kun rdzob rang bzhin gyis grub pa*) are all synonyms for a mode of (wrongly) apprehending relative phenomena as truly existent or truly established. Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho calls it 'subtle self of phenomena' (*chos bdag phra ba*), whereas its negation, the absence of true existence of relative phenomena, would be their 'subtle selflessness' (*bdag med phra mo*). Although Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho here claims that this was taught by Dol po pa as well, in fact, the term 'subtle self' does not occur even once in Dol po pa's collected works. Rather, the distinction between a 'subtle' and a 'coarse selflessness' (*bdag med grags*) turns out to be more typical of dGe lugs treatises. For example, as noted by David Seyfort Ruegg, it is discussed by the Second 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa, dKon mchog 'jigs med dbang po (1728-1791), in his *Jewel Garland of Tenets Systems (Grub mtha' rin chen phreng ba)*. According to this dGe lugs scholar, the 'coarse selflessness' would be the emptiness of a self-sufficient, substantially existent self, whereas the 'subtle selflessness' would be the absence of an actual real self.⁷⁴ Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho uses the expression 'subtle selflessness' only to stress the fact that Dol po pa never taught any self of phenomena which goes beyond the one representing the impossibility of an actual true existence of relative phenomena, which corresponds to the *negandum*. Moreover, when Dol po pa, in his *Autocommentary to the Fourth Council (bKa' bsdu bzhi pa'i rang grel)*,⁷⁵ lists, among other things, the relative, the selves of persons and phenomena,

⁷³ Ngag dbang tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho: *dPyod pa'i spyi don rab gsal snang ba* (B), 194-195: *dang po/ chos thams cad kyi steng gi dgag bya bden grub med pa de nyid las ngo bo gzhan du gyur pa'i mthar thug gi stong nyid med tshul la dpyad pa ni/ gzugs nas rnam mkhyen gyi bar gyi chos thams cad bden 'dzin ma rig pa'i zhen stangs su bzung ba ltar gyi bden grub tu med pa de chos can/ khyod las ngo bo gzhan du gyur pa'i chos rnam kyis gnas lugs stong nyid med de/ dgag bya bkag phyogs nas bka' bar ba sher phyin las phra ba'i stong nyid zhig 'khor lo phyi ma sngags dang bcas pa las ma gsungs pa'i phyir dang / kun mkhyen dol po pa chen po'i gsung rnam su/ kun rdzob gshis la yod pa'am gshis la kun rdzob yod pa nyid chos bdag phra ba yin par gsungs kyi/ de las phra ba'i chos bdag gang yang ma gsungs shing / kun rdzob gshis la yod pa ni kun rdzob bden par grub pa dang kun rdzob rang bzhin gyis grub pa dang don gcig nyid yin la/ de yin na chos bdag phra ba bkag pa'i chos kyi bdag med phra mo yang / gzugs sogs rang bzhin gyis grub pa med pa'am gzugs sogs bden par grub pa med de nyid yin dgos pa'i phyir dang / ...*

⁷⁴ See Ruegg 2002, 228-229. See also, as pointed out by Ruegg, dKon mchog 'jigs med dbang po, *Grub mtha' rin chen phreng ba*, 105.

⁷⁵ The full title reads *bKa' bsdu bzhi pa'i don bstan rtsis chen po'i 'grel pa*.

consciousness, and so on, he does indeed refer to the misconception of their 'fundamental existence' (*gshis la yod pa*) as the extreme of exaggeration.⁷⁶

It must be noted that here, for Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho, the scope of the negation is not phenomena *per se*, but is limited to the misconception of their true establishment. Therefore, within this framework, the *negandum*, true establishment, and the ground of the negation, relative phenomena, are the same for the the Jo nang and the dGe lugs traditions. Ultimately, the Jo nang pas would include also relative phenomena within the category of the incidental stains that must be purified from the ground of the negation, which they equate with buddha nature.⁷⁷ However, as long as it is made clear that *dharmatā* is fathomed through the negation of the self of relative phenomena, the Jo nang pas can agree on it being a nonaffirming negation. Moreover, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho emphasizes that, from this very standpoint, not only the second but even the last wheel of the doctrine does not teach an emptiness (here understood as the true nature or the mode of abiding of relative phenomena) that is subtler

⁷⁶ See Dol po pa, *bKa bsdu bzhi pa'i rang grel*, 40-45. For a translation of these pages, see Stearns 2010, 210-213.

⁷⁷ See, for example, Tāranātha, *sNgon med legs bshad*, 631.-631.: "Therefore, the essence of teaching the selflessness of phenomena through many synonyms is precisely that, in that self-cognizing, unchanging, all-aspected buddha nature, it is not established any phenomenon whatsoever that is an appearing and well-known incidental stain." /*de bas na chos kyi bdag med rnam grangs du mas bstan pa'i snying po ni/bde gshegs snying po rang rig 'gyur med rnam pa thams cad pa de la/ glo bur dri ma swang zhing grags pa'i chos gang yang ma grub pa 'di nyid yin nol*. On the same page (631.), Tāranātha presents also how the Jo nang pas can take relative phenomena as the ground of negation and their true establishment as the *negandum*: "This being so, the mere empti[ness] of true establishment, the *negandum*, of all phenomena such as form, the ground of negation, is accepted as the meaning of selflessness of phenomena. ..." /*des na dgag gzhi gzugs sogs chos rnam dgag bya bden grub kyis stong pa tsam chos kyi bdag med pa'i don du 'dod pa nil...* In their uncommon exposition, the Jo nang pas also distinguish the *negandum* and the ground of negation in relation to the three natures (*trisvabhāva; rang bzhin gsum*). The perfect nature (*pariniṣpanna; yongs grub*), which is equated with the ultimate truth, is then taken as the ground of negation, while the imagined (*parikalpita; kun btags*) and the dependent (*paratantra; gzhan dbang*) natures are the *negandum*. See Dol po pa, *Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho*, 216.-216.: "Ultimately, the empty ground is the perfect [nature], *dharmatā*, the ground which is empty of even the dependent [nature]." /*mthar stong gzhi gzhan dbang gis kyang stong pa'i gzhi chos nyid yongs grub yin pa'i phyir don gcig go*. See also *Ibid.*, 219.-219.: "Hence, also [in] this [passage], it has been said that the perfect [nature, i.e.,] *dharmatā*, which is empty of imagined and dependent [natures], is ultimately existent. Therefore, the ultimate is properly established only as empty of other." /*des na 'di yang kun brtags dang gzhan dbang gis stong pa'i chos nyid yongs grub don dam du yod par gsungs pa'i phyir/ don dam gzhan stong nyid du legs par grub bo//*. See also Mathes 2000 and Tillemans 2004.

than relative phenomena's absence of true establishment. For him, the main distinction between the teachings of the middle and the last wheel of the doctrine is in fact drawn on the basis of two different methodological perspectives: that of negating the *negandum* (*dgag bya bkag phyogs*) and that of affirming the distinctive qualities (*khyad chos sgrub phyogs*) which correspond to all the ultimate buddha qualities.⁷⁸ The first of these two perspectives is the way in which *dharmatā* is explicitly taught in the discourses of the middle wheel, while the second coincides with the teaching mode of the last wheel and Mantrayāna.

Still, these two distinguishable modes of discourse and knowledge deal with the same topic: the same *dharmatā*. What changes is the way it is posited. When understood just in an analytical manner, by negating the *negandum*, *dharmatā* is precisely the nonaffirming negation held by *rang stong pas*. Nonetheless, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho points out that this *dharmatā*, which is realized through analysis and hence in a conceptual manner, is not the emptiness of definitive meaning that is nonrepresentational (*rnam grangs ma yin pa'i nges don gyi stong nyid*), but just representational emptiness (*rnam grangs pa'i stong nyid*):

Query: That mere selflessness analyzed through the reasoning of dependent arising and so on, [namely, that which] in the *Wish fulfilling Jewel of Madhyamaka* (*dBu ma yid bzhin nor bu*) is referred to [as] 'emptiness analyzed through inferential reasoning,'⁷⁹ is

⁷⁸ See Higgins and Draszczuk 2016 (Vol. 1, 238-242), where it is noted how also the Eight Karma pa Mi bskyod rdo rje (1507-1554) adopted a similar distinction between a negating and an affirming orientation, that he associated with the Madhyamaka tradition of Nāgārjuna and the Siddha tradition of Saraha. Recognizing the contextual value of these opposing perspectives in that the former is suitable for discarding the reificatory tendencies of the ordinary dualistic consciousness, whereas the latter properly brings to light the prediscursive nature of wisdom, Mi bskyod rdo rje regarded them as complementary. See also Mathes 2008 (354-356), where it is shown how 'Gos lo tsā ba gZhon nu dpal (1392-1481) distinguished the methodological approaches of the second and the third wheels of the doctrine, but maintained that they relate to the same reality. For 'Gos lo tsā ba, the second wheel follows the method of nonaffirming negation and establishes through analysis that relative phenomena are empty of an own essence. This is a preparatory step for the teachings of the third wheel, which follow the method of affirming negation and disclose the ultimate truth as experienced in direct cognition. Thereby, apart from the lack of an intrinsic essence of defilements, also the experience of a nonconceptual awareness occurs. 'Gos lo tsā ba refers to this as "awareness-emptiness" (*rig stong*).

⁷⁹ Tāranātha, *dBu ma yid bzhin nor bu*, 94: "The emptiness analyzed through inferential reasoning and also the absence of concepts in which the relative is left as it is (*rang sor 'jog*) perceive mere object-universals and entities. Therefore, [these]

representational emptiness. But why is it said that it is not the emptiness of definitive meaning that is nonrepresentational?

Reply: That [is] the mere nonaffirming negation of refuting the two [types of] self which emerges via inference. [However,] it is said that it is not the emptiness which is the consummate mode of abiding replete with the parts [of] the distinctive qualities, [i.e., all buddha qualities].⁸⁰

The words of sMon lam, a monk currently studying at the monastic college of gTsang ba, in 'Dzam thang, may help us to understand how the Jo nang distinction between representational and nonrepresentational emptiness also relates to the scope of the negation:

The Jo nang pas call 'representational emptiness' that empt[iness] of true establishment, the *negandum*, in regard to form and so on, the ground of negation. And [they] call 'nonrepresentational emptiness' that wisdom which is established inwardly, on the level of the yogic mind, as the leftover [of] the empt[iness] of the relative, the *negandum*, in regard to the ultimate, the ground of negation. That is ultimate truth and also buddha nature.⁸¹

Thus, the emptiness understood by a reasoning consciousness through an analysis that proceeds by negating only the true establishment of relative phenomena, but not phenomena themselves, is representational, or conceptual. On the other hand, the nonrepresentational or nonconceptual emptiness is that which is directly realized by the yogic mind, disclosing itself as the absence of all relative defilements, including phenomena, finally removed from the ground of negation which is then a positively qualified buddha nature.

do not mentally engage solely with the definitive meaning itself." *rjes dpag rigs pas dpyad pa'i stong nyid dang / |kun rdzob rang sor 'jog pa'i rtog med kyang / |don spyi tsam dang dngos la dmigs pa'i phyir/ |nges don de nyid kho na yid byed min/.*

⁸⁰ Ngag dbang tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho, *dPyod pa'i spyi don rab gsal snang ba* (B), 195.-196.: 'o na dbu ma yid bzhin nor bu las/ *rjes dpag rigs pas dpyad pa'i stong nyid dang / zhes rten 'brel la sogs pa'i rigs pas dpyad pa'i bdag med tsam de rnam grangs pa'i stong nyid yin gyil/ rnam grangs ma yin pa'i nges don gyi stong nyid ma yin par gsungs pa ci yin zhe nal de ni rjes dpag gi ngor shar ba'i bdag gnyis bkag pa'i med dgag tsam po del khyad chos cha shas rdzogs pa'i gnas lugs mthar thug gi stong nyid ma yin par gsungs pa yin tel/.*

⁸¹ Personal message, May 31, 2017: *gzugs sogs dgag gzhi'i steng du dgag bya bden grub kyis stong pa de la jo nang pas rnam grangs ba'i stong nyid zer gi yod pa dang / dgag gzhi don dam gyi steng du dgag bya kun rdzob kyis stong shul du tshur rnal 'byor ba'i blo ngor grub pa'i ye shes de la rnam grangs ba ma yin pa'i stong nyid zer gi yod pa red/ de ni don dam bden pa dang bde gshegs snying po'ang red lags/.*

In his *Illuminating Light Summary*, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho further discusses the representational emptiness as follows:

In short, representational emptiness consists in [1] the emptiness that is only established in the context of conceptual analysis and inference, and in [2] the emptiness that is only explicitly taught by the middle wheel. [This is] because [of the following reasons].

[1] The former, that selflessness free from elaborations, is not the emptiness appearing as the ultimate one which has all the [supreme] aspects. Moreover, since that inference [of] the subject is conceptual, it is not free from the elaborations of object-universals and the elaborations of dualistic appearances. Therefore, also the emptiness which is the object of that [inference] is not the real [one] which is free from elaborations.

[2] Although the latter, emptiness to the extent that it is explicitly taught in the middle wheel, is subtle selflessness and free from elaborations, it is not the ultimate one which has all the [supreme] aspects.⁸²

Therefore, inasmuch as emptiness, the true nature of phenomena, is understood in an analytical or inferential mode, it entails the medium of its object-universal (*don spyi*) and is realized only indirectly, without the complete abandonment of conceptual elaborations. Moreover, although the second wheel's teachings do effectively discard all elaborations, they explicitly posit *dharmatā* as nothing more than sheer nothingness. In both cases, the ultimate being dealt with is only representational, whereas the nonrepresentational emptiness is the one that is fully qualified with all the ultimate aspects, and is clearly and explicitly taught in the last wheel of the doctrine, from the perspective of affirming its distinctive qualities. Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho explains:

However, that emptiness which is explicitly taught in the middle wheel is not clearly taught in an explicit way in that middle wheel itself as the ultimate one which has all the [supreme] aspects. Therefore, it is explained that the scope of what is taught in that [middle wheel] is not

⁸² Ngag dbang tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho, *dPyod pa'i spyi don rab gsal snang ba* (B), 197.-197.: *mdor na rjes dpag rtog bcas kyi dpyad ngor grub pa tsam gyi stong nyid dang / 'khor lo bar bas dngos bstan tsam gyi stong nyid ni rnam grangs pa'i stong nyid yin te/ snga ma bdag med spros bral de don dam pa'i rnam pa thams cad par 'char pa'i stong nyid ma yin pa dang / de ma zad yul can rjes dpag de rtog bcas yin pas don spyi'i spros pa dang gnyis snang gi spros pa ma bral bas/ de'i yul gyi stong nyid kyang spros bral mtshan nyid pa ma yin pa'i phyir dang / phyi ma 'khor lo bar ba las dngos su bstan tshod tsam gyi stong nyid ni/ bdag med phra mo dang spros bral yin kyang don dam pa'i rnam pa thams cad pa ma yin pa'i phyir ro//*

[that of presenting such emptiness as] the ultimate one which has all the [supreme] aspects, but in general [emptiness] is the ultimate one which has all the [supreme] aspects.

[This is] because precisely that feature of the mere nonexistence of phenomena from form to omniscience as real entities, [i.e.,] the *negandum*, is established as the ultimate one which has all the [supreme] aspects.⁸³

Hence, it is precisely that nonexistence of phenomena taught in the second wheel that is positively qualified by the third wheel's teachings as what possesses all the ultimate buddha qualities. This corresponds to how *dharmatā* is directly realized by the nonconceptual wisdom of the noble ones in their meditative equipoise, a state that is completely free from elaborations.

Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho's conciliatory approach is also conspicuous in his discussion about whether *dharmatā* is dependent arising or not, and about the way it is ultimately established. In both cases, he follows the two steps mentioned above: he first presents the topic in a general way, in line with *dGe lugs* positions, and then gives a definitive explanation of the same issue, this time in line with the Jo nang *gzhan stong* doctrine.

Whether *dharmatā* is equated with dependent arising is a major dividing line between *dGe lugs* and Jo nang thinkers.⁸⁴ Tsong kha pa holds that both the relative and the ultimate truth are dependent arising, whereas for Dol po pa the ultimate completely transcends dependent arising.⁸⁵ In his own style, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho first

⁸³ Ibid., 197.-197.: 'on kyang 'khor lo bar ba las dngos su bstan pa'i stong nyid de/ don dam pa'i rnam pa thams cad par 'khor lo bar ba de nyid las dngos su gsal bar ma bstan pas/ de las bstan tshod de don dam pa'i rnam pa thams cad pa ma yin par bshad pa yin gyi/ spyir ni don dam pa'i rnam pa thams cad pa yin te/ gzugs nas rnam mkhyen gyi bar gyi chos rnam dgag bya bden dngos su med tsam gyi cha de nyid don dam pa'i rnam pa thams cad par grub pa yin pa'i phyir te/.

⁸⁴ See Hopkins 2008, 361-362.

⁸⁵ Dol po pa clearly states that the ultimate cannot be dependent arising in his *Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho*, 463.-464.: "Query: in the *Fundamental Stanzas on the Middle Way* it is said: 'Since there is no phenomenon whatsoever that is not dependent arising, there is no phenomenon whatsoever that is not empty.' Therefore, as whatever is dependent arising is emptiness, whatever is emptiness must also be dependent arising. And since whatever is dependent arising is empty of self, all [types of] emptiness are only the empty of self. Reply: since someone thinks so, it has to be explained that, although such passage says that whatever is dependent arising is emptiness, it does not say that whatever is emptiness is dependent arising. If it is accepted that whatever is emptiness is dependent arising, all the synonyms of the empty ground, such as ultimate, *dharmatā*, [and] authentic limit, are emptiness. Therefore, one would have to accept that they are dependent arising, and even that they are conditioned, impermanent, false, deceptive, and so on." /'o na/ rtsa ba shes

points out that even the Jo nang pas would accept that, in general, *dharmatā* is dependent arising. However, he specifies, this cannot mean that the ultimate arises dependently on causes and conditions. For him, there can only be a logical interdependence: the logical relationship of *X* existing in dependence on *Y* that is found by a dualistic, ordinary mind. For example, *dharmatā* can be taken as dependent arising just in the sense of being the object which is logically dependent on wisdom, the subject. This is most evident in his *Illuminating Light Summary*:

Second. The general analysis about whether the ultimate *dharmatā* is dependent arising or not.

The emptiness of form and so forth being empty of inherent existence, [i.e.,] the *negandum*, in general, is dependent arising. [This is] because, although the ultimate, [i.e.,] emptiness, is not the dependent arising [of] causes and conditions, it is established in dependence upon, among other things, *dharmas*, [which are] the empty ground, and wisdom.⁸⁶

Again, just as he presents *dharmatā* as representational emptiness from the perspective of negating the *negandum*, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho does not follow the Jo nang extraordinary presentation wherein the empty ground (*stong gzhi*) is equated with the ultimate truth.⁸⁷ Here, the object to be negated is only the mistaken superimposition of relative phenomena's inherent establishment, and, therefore, the empty ground corresponds to phenomena themselves. Accordingly, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho explains that the ultimate can be conceptually understood as dependent on either such phenomena (being their true nature) or wisdom (being its object). However, for the nonconceptual wisdom, all the relative aspects, the dualistic

rab tu/ gang phyir rten 'byung ma yin pa'i/ chos 'ga' yod pa ma yin pa/ de phyir stong nyid ma yin pa'i/ chos 'ga' yod pa ma yin no/ zhes gsungs pa'i phyir rten 'brel gang yin stong nyid yin pa ltar stong nyid gang yin yang rten 'brel yin dgos la rten 'brel gang yin rang stong yin pas stong nyid thams cad rang stong kho na yin no snyam du 'ga' zhig sems par gyur na de'i phyir brjod par bya ste/ lung des rten 'brel gang yin stong nyid du gsungs pa yin gyi/ stong nyid gang yin rten 'brel du gsungs pa ni ma yin no/ gal te stong nyid gang yin thams cad rten 'brel yin par 'dod na ni/ don dam chos nyid yang dag pa'i mtha' la sogs pa stong gzhi'i rnam grangs thams cad stong nyid yin pa'i phyir/ rten 'brel yin par 'gyur zhing / 'dus byas mi rtag pa brdzun pa bslu ba la sogs par yang 'dod dgos la/.

⁸⁶ Ngag dbang tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho, *dPyod pa'i spyi don rab gsal snang ba* (B), 199.-199.: *gnyis pa/ don dam chos nyid rten 'brel yin min gyi spyi don dpyad pa ni/ gzugs sogs dag bya rang bzhin gyis grub pas stong pa'i stong nyid de spyir ni rten 'brel yin te/ don dam stong nyid de rgyu rkyen rten 'brel ma yin kyang / ye shes dang stong gzhi chos can sogs la ltos nas grub pa yin pa'i phyir te/.*

⁸⁷ See note 77.

appearances, and the mental elaborations, including that of *dharmatā* being dependent arising, are completely exhausted:

According to the common path of reasoning of Madhyamaka and Pramāṇa,⁸⁸ that ultimate *dharmatā* is dependent arising, namely, it is dependent[ly] established [in the sense that], in general, it is established in dependence on *dharmas*, [i.e.] the empty ground, and wisdom and so forth. However, for the nonconceptual wisdom of the noble ones, it is not dependent arising. [This is] because, after all the conventional marks [of] experience are exhausted into the *dharmadhātu*, only the own distinguisher of *dharmatā* nakedly appears for the wisdom of the equipoise of the noble ones. [Why?] Because, for such mind of the equipoise, in the ascertainment of that *dharmatā* does not occur even the slightest appearing part which is dependent arising, and, therefore, for that wisdom [of] the equipoise, *dharmatā* is not dependent arising. [Why?] Because for that [wisdom], the elaboration of dependent arising with regard to *dharmatā* has ceased.⁸⁹

To clarify his position, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho argues, with support from the *Fundamental Stanzas on the Middle Way* (*Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*), that, since *dharmatā* is ultimately the consummate, intrinsic nature of phenomena, it can be posited unilaterally (*mtha' gcig tu*) as such, without depending on any other phenomenon:

Being *dharmatā* the ultimate sphere of luminosity, it necessarily follows that it is unreasonable to say it is dependent arising, because, in the excellent discourses of the Omniscient One, his disciples, and the Great

⁸⁸ The Pramāṇa system presupposes the existence of particulars (*svlakṣaṇa*; *rang mtshan*) as real entities, whereas this is not accepted by Madhyamaka. These two conflicting systems were integrated in distinct manners by different Tibetan scholars (see, for example, Duckworth 2015b, and Hugon 2015). Although further study is needed to understand how Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho intends to combine the two into a “common path of reasoning of Madhyamaka and Pramāṇa” (*dbu tshad thun mong pa'i rigs lam*), it is here evident that he associates it with the presentation of the mere representational emptiness.

⁸⁹ Ngag dbang tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho, *dPyod pa'i spyi don rab gsal snang ba* (B), 205.-206.: *don dam chos nyid de dbu tshad thun mong pa'i rigs lam ltar spyir stong gzhi chos can dang / ye shes sogs la ltos nas grub pa'i ltos grub kyi rten 'brel yin kyang / 'phags pa'i mi rtog ye shes kyi ngor rten 'brel ma yin tel/ 'phags pa'i mnyam bzhas ye shes kyi ngor myong snang kun rdzob kyi mtshan ma thams cad chos kyi dbyings su zad nas/ chos nyid kyi rang ldog 'ba' zhig rjen char du shar ba yin phyir/ mnyam bzhas gi blo de'i ngor chos nyid de 'jal ba la rten 'brel gyi snang cha cung zad kyang mi 'byung bas/ mnyam bzhas ye shes de'i ngor chos nyid rten 'brel ma yin pa'i phyir tel/ de'i ngor chos nyid la rten 'brel gyi spros pa 'gags pa'i phyir/.*

Venerable One,⁹⁰ it is extensively asserted that *dharmatā* is not dependent arising. If [someone maintains this,] there is no pervasion. [This is] because [of the following reason]. The Omniscient One and his disciples asserted that *dharmatā* is not dependent arising. [This] means that [1] the *dharmatā* established by valid cognition does not depend on the coming together of signs of the relative experience for the mind, and [2] it is not that such *dharmatā*, which is the empti[ness] of true [existence], without being something that can be posited unilaterally as the consummate nature of all phenomena, is merely posited in dependence on another phenomenon.

[Why? This is] because [of the following reason.] In the *Fundamental Stanzas on the Middle Way* it is said that 'nature'⁹¹ is not [artificially] created, nor is it dependent on something else.'⁹² Hence, the emptiness of phenomena is in accordance with what has been asserted [in this passage. That is, it] possesses the two particular [features]: it is not adventitious due to causes and conditions, and it is not dependent, [namely, it is not a] nature posited as such on the basis of a few dependent [things].⁹³

Another fundamental distinction between the positions held by Jo nang pas and dGe lugs pas stems from the discussion about whether *dharmatā* is either ultimately established or not.⁹⁴ Once again, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho tries to clarify and reconcile their opposing views. In his *Illuminating Light Summary*, he begins his response to this issue by listing two points of contrast between these masters, and then covers how these are understood by Tsong kha pa and Dol po pa:

Fifth. The analysis about the general meaning of asserting that *dharmatā*, the sphere of luminosity, is truly established.

⁹⁰ Here, as in most Jo nang works, Dol po pa and Tāranātha are simply referred to, respectively, as the Omniscient One (*kun mkhyen*) and the Venerable One (*rje btsun*).

⁹¹ Both the Tibetan terms *ngo bo* (or *ngo bo nyid*) and *rang bzhin* translate the Sanskrit term *svabhāva*. Taking 'essence' and 'nature' as synonyms, in this paper, I translate *ngo bo* as 'essence', and *rang bzhin* as 'nature'.

⁹² *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* XV.2cd: *akṛtrimah svabhāvo hi nirapekṣaḥ paratra ca*.

⁹³ Ngag dbang tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho, *dPyod pa'i spyi don rab gsal snang ba* (B), 199.-200.: *chos nyid don dam 'od gsal ba'i dbyings te rten 'brel du khas len mi rigs par thal/ kun mkhyen yab sras dang / rje btsun chen po'i gsung rab rnams su/ chos nyid rten 'brel ma yin par rgya cher gsungs pa'i phyir na ma khyab ste/ kun mkhyen yab sras kyi/ chos nyid rten 'brel ma yin par gsungs pa ni/ chos nyid tshad mas grub pa blo ngor kun rdzob myong ba'i mtshan ma 'dus pa la mi ltos pa dang / bden stong gi chos nyid de chos rnams kyi mthar thug gi rang bzhin du mtha' gcig tu 'jog tu med par chos gzhan zhig la ltos nas bzhag pa tsam ma yin pa'i don yin pa'i phyir tel/ rtsa shes las/ rang bzhin gang yin bcos min dang / gzhan la ltos pa med pa yin/ /zhes chos rnams kyi stong nyid de rgyu rkyen gyis ma bcos pa dang / ltos pa 'ga' zhig la ltos nas rang bzhin du bzhag pa'i rang bzhin ltos pa ma yin pa'i khyad par gnyis ldan du gsungs pa ltar yin pa'i phyir tel.*

⁹⁴ See Hopkins 2008, 331-342.

In general, truly established, ultimately established, thoroughly established, inherently established, established in terms of intrinsic essence, and so on are synonyms.

Most of the greatest scholars such as the venerable guru [Tsong kha pa] Blo bzang grags pa took those [synonyms] as having a different meaning from established as ultimate, established as mode of abiding, established as true nature, and so on. Then, [for them,] that feature of phenomena being empty of being inherently established is not [that of] the former five [synonyms], such as truly established, but it is [that of] the latter three, such as established as ultimate. Therefore, they accepted that, even though it is established as ultimate, it must not be ultimately established, and so on.

The Great Madhyamika Charioteer of the Land of Snow, the Omniscient Jo nang pa, [and his] disciples accepted that the ultimate *dharmatā* is truly established, ultimately established, and so on, and that the relative *dharmins* are not truly established, ultimately established, and so on. In general, [they] distinguished the truly established, ultimately established, thoroughly established, inherently established, established in terms of intrinsic essence, and so on into the two: the truly established mode of abiding and so on, and the truly established which is the *negandum* and so on. Hence, [they] considered the 'truly established *dharmatā*' and so on as the former, the truly established mode of abiding and so on, and the 'not truly established *dharmins*' as the not truly established *negandum*.

[This is] because [of the following reasons].

[1] If there were the tru[ly] established which is the *negandum*, it would be the one to be found by the insight realizing the ultimate from a perspective associated with [relative] experience. The truly established mode of abiding is the one to be found by the insight realizing the ultimate from a perspective wherein, for [the insight] itself, there is not even the slightest relative experience. And since in the insight realizing the ultimate not even the slightest sign of [relative] experience can arise for the mind, [the Jo nang pas] accepted the tru[ly] established which is the *negandum* as the unestablished basis (*gzhi ma grub*), and the truly established mode of abiding as the established basis (*gzhi grub*).

[2] Now, if a relative phenomenon were to exist as the object found, i.e., what is found for the wisdom of the equipoise of the learners, that could not but become as the self of phenomena, which is the *negandum*. The ultimate emptiness does exist as the object found by the wisdom of the equipoise of the learners, but, apart from being the consummate mode of abiding, it must not become at all as the self of phenomena. Therefore, it has been said that '*dharmins*, the relative,

are not truly established; *dharmatā*, being the ultimate, is truly established.⁹⁵

The two sets of terms that are here enumerated by Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho are:

- I. Ultimately established (*don dam par grub pa*); truly established (*bden par grub pa*); thoroughly established (*yang dag par grub pa*); inherently established (*rang bzhin gyis grub pa*); established in terms of intrinsic essence (*rang gi ngo bos grub pa*), i.e., independently established.
- II. Established as ultimate (*don dam du grub pa*); established as mode of abiding (*gnas lugs su grub pa*); established as true nature (*chos nyid du grub pa*).

For simplicity, these two sets can be reduced to the twofold distinction between (I) what is ultimately established and (II) what is established as ultimate. Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho shows that, for Tsong kha pa, the two sets of terms are fundamentally different because, while *dharmatā* can be (II) established as ultimate, it is never (I) ultimately established.

⁹⁵ Ngag dbang tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho, *dPyod pa'i spyi don rab gsal snang ba* (B), 211-213.: *lnga pa/ chos nyid 'od gsal ba'i dbyings bden grub tu gsungs pa'i spyi don la dpyad pa ni/ spyir bden par grub pa/ don dam par grub pa/ yang dag par grub pa/ rang bzhin gyis grub pa/ rang gi ngo bos grub pa sogs don gcig yin la/ rje bla ma blo bzang grags pa sogs mkhas mchog phal cher gyis/ de dag dang don dam du grub pa dang / gnas lugs su grub pa/ chos nyid du grub pa sogs don mi gcig par byas nas/ chos rnam rang bzhin gyis grub pas stong ba'i cha de bden par grub pa sogs snga ma luga po ma yin kyang / don dam du grub pa sogs phyi ma gsum po yin pas don dam du grub kyang don dam par grub pa sogs yin mi dgos par bzhed la/ gangs can gyi dbu ma'i shing rta chen po kun mkhyen jo nang pa yab sras kyis don dam chos nyid ni bden par grub pa/ don dam par grub pa sogs yin la/ kun rdzob chos can rnam ni bden par grub pa/ don dam par grub pa sogs ma yin par bzhed pa ni spyir bden par grub pa/ don dam par grub pa/ yang dag par grub pa/ rang bzhin gyis grub pa/ rang ngos nas grub pa sogs la gnas lugs bden par grub pa sogs dang / dgag bya'i bden par grub pa sogs gnyis re phye nas chos nyid bden par grub ces sogs ni snga ma gnas lugs bden par grub pa sogs dang / chos can rnam bden par ma grub ces pa sogs ni dgag bya'i bden par ma grub pa la dgongs pa yin te/ dgag bya'i bden grub yod na don dam rtogs pa'i shes rab kyis myong snang dang bcas pa'i sgo nas rnyed rgyu zhig yin la/ gnas lugs bden grub ni don dam rtogs pa'i shes rab kyis rang gi ngor kun rdzob myong snang cung zad kyang med pa'i sgo nas rnyed rgyu zhig yin pa dang / don dam rtogs pa'i shes rab la ni blo ngor myong snang gi mtshan ma cung zad kyang 'char mi srid pas dgag bya'i bden grub ni gzhi ma grub pa dang / gnas lugs bden grub ni gzhi grub par bzhed pa'i phyir dang / yang na kun rdzob kyi chos zhig slob pa'i mnyam bzhag ye shes kyi ngor rnyed rgyu'i rnyed don du yod na/ de dgag bya'i chos bdag tu 'gyur ba las 'os med la/ don dam stong nyid ni slob pa'i mnyam bzhag ye shes kyi rnyed don du yod kyang gnas lugs mthar thug tu 'gyur ba las chos bdag tu rnam pa kun tu 'gyur mi dgos pas chos can kun rdzob bden par ma grub/ chos nyid don dam par bden par grub ces gsungs pa'i phyir ro/.*

In fact, for Tsong kha pa, it is necessary to distinguish two senses of the term 'ultimate' (*paramārtha; don dam*). Ontologically, as all phenomena ultimately lack any existence and essence, there is nothing that can be accepted as (I) ultimately established or real. Emptiness itself cannot be (I) ultimately established. On the other hand, when drawing the distinction between the two truths, the ultimate nature of phenomena is presented as antithetical to their relative nature, and, in this sense, emptiness, the true nature of phenomena, can legitimately be (II) established as ultimate.⁹⁶ As for Dol po pa, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho points out that he drew a further distinction between (I.A) the truly established mode of abiding (*gnas lugs bden par grub pa*) and (I.B) the truly established which is the *negandum* (*dgag bya'i bden par grub pa*). For him, (I.A) the truly established mode of abiding refers only to *dharmatā*, and it can be found only by the nonconceptual wisdom realizing the ultimate in the meditative equipoise, which is a state completely devoid of conceptual elaborations and of even the slightest relative experience. On the contrary, the true establishment of *dharmas*, relative phenomena, is never found by the nonconceptual wisdom of the noble ones, and it can just be taken as (I.B) the truly established which is the *negandum*. Therefore, for the Jo nang, when the first group of terms is understood as referring to *dharmatā* only, it can be equated with the second set. All these terms are consequently taken as synonymous, and hence *dharmatā* can be both (I) ultimately established and (II) established as ultimate. Thus, Tsong kha pa and Dol po pa would agree that there is no problem in taking *dharmatā* as (II) established as ultimate, whereas it is not possible to accept that relative phenomena are established in the same manner as *dharmatā* because this would be tantamount to admitting the existence of a self of phenomena. Moreover, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho equates Tsong kha pa's view, wherein the (I) ultimately established is taken as the ontological impossibility of the self of phenomena, with a 'common assertion of the two truths' (*bden gnyis thun mong gi khas len*).⁹⁷ When clearly set in such framework, Tsong kha pa's position is considered acceptable even for the Jo nang pas.

⁹⁶ See Thupten Jinpa 1998, 283-285.

⁹⁷ Ngag dbang tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho, *dPyod pa'i spyi don rab gsal snang ba* (B), 216.-216.: "The Omniscient One, the Great Jo nang pa, [accepted that,] in terms of the common assertion of the two truths, if *dharmatā* is truly established, it must become as the self of phenomena. Nonetheless, although *dharmatā* is the truly established mode of abiding and so on, it must not become the self of phenomena." *thams cad mkhyen pa jo nang pa chen pos/ bden gnyis thun mong gi khas len gyi dbang du byas nal chos nyid bden par grub na chos bdag tu 'gyur dgos kyang / chos nyid gnas lugs bden par grub pa sogs yin kyang chos bdag tu 'gyur mi dgos tel*.

5. *The Legacy of Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho*

A detailed comparison between the position of Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho and those of other late Jo nang scholars is a *desideratum* for future research. As a prelude to such a study, it is important to note that, despite the fact that the most famous student of Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho was mKhan po Blo gros grags pa,⁹⁸ the living Jo nang tradition holds their views as equally valid yet different.⁹⁹ The *gzhan stong* doctrine, as already mentioned, can accommodate a degree of inclusivism in that it requires the acceptance of self-emptiness where relative phenomena are concerned. Blo gros grags pa simply follows this trend by explicitly incorporating the definition of self-emptiness into that of emptiness of other,¹⁰⁰ and mostly refrains from discussing the ultimate truth in *rang stong* terms.¹⁰¹ In this sense, he retains a more conservative view than Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho, who dares to include distinctive *rang stong* positions into his ordinary assertion of *dharmatā*. According to the oral accounts of several modern-day *mkhan pos*, this

⁹⁸ See note 10.

⁹⁹ From personal conversations with mKhan po 'Jam dpal blo gros, mKhan po Chos dbang, mKhan po Chos bzang, dGe bshes dNgos grub dpal, dGe bshes Blo bzang chos 'phel, mKhan po Rin chen rgya mthso, and mKhan po Rig pa'i rdo rje.

¹⁰⁰ See Duckworth 2008, 61-62.

¹⁰¹ This, confirmed by discussions with the Jo nang exponents mentioned in note 99, is what emerges from a first superficial reading of Blo gros grags pa's *Great Exposition on gZhan stong*. I have been able to identify just one brief passages where even Blo gros grags pa seems to accept that, in the common presentation, one can explain the representational ultimate (*rnam grangs pa'i don dam*) as dependent arising. In this way, Blo gros grags pa leaves some room for an interpretation compatible with that of Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho, but he does not further discuss this point nor seems to apply the conciliatory approach discussed above. See Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa, *gZhan stong chen mo*, 320-321: *spyir kun rdzob bden pa dang rnam grangs pa'i don dam pa thun mong ba'i tshul la ni rten 'brel stong pa'i thad nas phan tshun gcig gcig gis yin pa yod pa'i don go tshul yod del kun rdzob gzung 'dzin gyis bsdus pa'i chos thams cad spyir rten 'byung sgyu ma lta bu yin pa'i gnad kyis don dam dpyod pa'i blos rigs pa du mas chos rnam bden med du gtan la 'bebs tshe yang gzung 'dzin gnyis bsdus kyi rtog pa'i yul mtha' dag la dmigs nas de ltar dpyod pa kho na yin pas tshul de lugs ltar na blos byas rtog pa'i yul gyis bsdus pa'i gzugs nas rnam mkhyen gyi bar mtha' dag stong pa rten 'byung gi don dang rten 'byung stong pa'i don du nges shes khyad par ba 'drong du yod pa'i cha nas snang tshul de lugs kyi bden pa gnyis bsdus mtha' dag stong pa dang rten 'brel phan tshun 'gal med kho nar nges pas bden med kyi chos thams cad la rten 'brel gyis khyab cing rten 'brel gang yin bden grub kyis stong pa yin pas kyang khyab dgos pa'i phyogs nas rten 'brel dang stong pa'i yin pa yod pa'i phyir/. See also *ibid.*, 145-145: *ye gzhi chos dbyings nyid rang lugs la rten 'brel du 'jog pa ma yin tel dbyings de sgra rtog gi ngo tsam du phan tshun ltos grub kyi rten 'brel du 'char rigs kyang don dam gnyis med ye shes kyi ngor ni kun rdzob ltos grub kyi mtshan ma sogs spros pa mtha' dag dang legs par bral ba'i phyir/.**

divergence in the views of Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho and Blo gros grags pa reverberated in those of their successors, leading to the two distinct doctrinal lines which exist today.

A central figure in the transmission of the teachings of Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho was Ngag dbang blo bzang 'phrin las (1917-1999).¹⁰² Even though he wasn't a student of Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho, his main teachers were Ngag dbang bstan pa rab rgyas, who had been a disciple of 'Ba' mda' dGe legs, and Ngag dbang blo gros tshul khrim, who studied directly under Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho. Notably, in his *Jewel Lamp (Rin po che'i sgron me)*¹⁰³ Ngag dbang blo bzang 'phrin las copied and rearranged passages from seven of the sixteen chapters of Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho's *Illuminating Light Summary*, adding some minor changes. The late abbot of 'Brogs dge dgon, mKhan po Kun dga' dpal ldan rgya mtsho (1964-2013), and the present head of the monastic college of gTsang ba dgon, dGe bshes Blo bzang chos 'phel, both former students of Blo bzang 'phrin las, stand out among the followers of Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho. On the other hand, most of the disciples of Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa are said to adhere to his more orthodox view. Kun dga' shes rab gsal byed (1936), from lCam mda' dgon pa, and mKhan po Sangs rgyas rin chen, from dgon pa La kha, are two great devotees of Blo gros grags pa.

6. Concluding Remarks

The conciliatory approach of Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho is striking in the extent to which it is willing to accept typical *rang stong* positions as analytical preparations for the move into the sphere of the ultimate. The reconciliation of *rang stong* and *gzhan stong* proceeds from the distinction between their different perspectives. That of affirming the distinctive qualities, being consistent with the standpoint of the ultimate wisdom of the noble ones, corresponds with the Jo nang Great Madhyamaka, portraying an ultimate which is endowed with all the supreme buddha qualities, and which utterly transcends relative experience and conceptual elaborations. On the other hand, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho is also open to the provisional adoption of ordinary perspectives wherein the ultimate is not directly realized by nonconceptual wisdom, but rather analyzed by coarser types of mind. These deal with concepts and imputations only, and attempt to define *dharmatā* by merely discarding what it is not. On this level, Tshogs

¹⁰² See Kun dga' dpal ldan rgya mtsho 2005.

¹⁰³ The full title reads: *Kun mkhyen jo nang ba'i bzhed dgongs gzhung chen spyi'i babs bzhin cung zad gsal bar byas pa rin po che'i sgron me*.

gnyis rgya mtsho admits that such representational ultimate can be adequately described by distinctive *rang stong* positions. Accordingly, *dharmatā* can be a nonaffirming negation, and can be defined as dependent arising in the sense of being the object logically established in relation to wisdom, the subject. Moreover, in the ordinary assertion of the two truths, Tshogs gnyis rgya mtsho accepts Tsong kha pa's view in that he avoids the ontological qualification of *dharmatā* as truly or ultimately established.

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Ratsag Monastery and its Vajrayoginī Nāro Khecarī Statue

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he monastery of Ratsag (ra tshag) is a popular pilgrimage site located in the Yab (yab) Valley in Tolung (stod lung), near Lhasa.¹ The date of the founding of Ratsag Monastery is unclear, but appears to have taken place in the early 11th century. According to Go Lotsawa ('gos lo tsA ba, 1392-1481), and several other Tibetan historians, the monastery was built in Yab by Nanam Dorje Wangchug (sna nam rdo rje dbang phyug, 976-1060).² Nanam Dorje Wangchug was a student of Lume Tshultrim Sherab (klu mes tshul khriims shes rab, b. 10th century), a central figure of the Buddhist revival, and specifically of the revival of the Vinaya, which took place in Tibet during this period. Based on Go Lotsawa's dating of the Gyal Lhakang (rgyal lha khang) in Phenyul ('phan yul) to 1012, and his mention that Ratsag was founded before this, Hugh Richardson suggested that the foundation of Ratsag dates to somewhere between 1000 and 1012.³ Richardson noted, however, that the Ratsag pillar inscription, which he re-translated, makes no mention of Dorje Wangchug and instead states that it was Ra Bende Yontan Gyalpo (rwa ban de yon tan rgyal po) who built a temple (*gtsug lag khang*) on this site under the patronage of the noble Segu (se 'go) family.⁴ Richardson further notes that even if Bende Yontan Gyalpo simply rebuilt or renovated Ratsag at a later date, this still does not explain the lack of mention on the pillar inscription of Dorje Wangchug, whose name one would certainly expect to appear if indeed he was the original founder.⁵

Apart from identifying Nanam Dorje Wangchug as the founder of the monastery, some contemporary Tibetan pilgrimage guides also attribute its original construction to Ra Lotsawa (rwa lo tsA ba, 1016-

¹ The name of the monastery is spelled in a variety of ways depending on the source. Spellings include "rwa tsag," "rwa tshag," and "ra tshag."

² Roerich, 75.

³ Richardson, 538.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 537-538.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 539. For an argument supporting Dorje Wangchug see Akester, 200-201.

1128(?)).⁶ According to this variant of the story, Ratsag was one of 108 monasteries that Ra Lotsawa had pledged to build in order to purify karmic defilements accrued through his often violent ritual activities, which involved killing a number of bodhisattvas.⁷ This famous translator and teacher specialized in the wrathful practices of the tantric deity Vajrabhairava, which he brought to Tibet from Nepal. According to this narrative the "ra" (rwa) of "Ratsag" refers to Ra Lotsawa's clan name and "-tsag" (*tshag*) refers to "*tsag su tsu*" (*tshags su tshud*), meaning "efficient" or "successful"- thus signifying Ra Lotsawa's successful or well-organized completion of the full set of 108 monasteries, and this one in particular, which was the last of the set.⁸

It is unclear if the Ra Bende Yontan Gyalpo mentioned in the pillar inscription has any direct relation to Ra Lotsawa, although they appear to share the same clan name. Despite the early history of the monastery being inconclusive, the site today continues to be closely associated with Ra Lotsawa by the local community. Michael Akester, however, suggests that the association of the temple with Ra Lotsawa may have been exaggerated from the 15th century onward, when the site became home to Gelug (dge lugs) Vajrabhairava practitioners.⁹

According to the resident monks of the monastery, when Ra Lotsawa first arrived and stayed at Ratsag, he engaged in retreat on the location where the current small protector chapel (*mgon khang*) is located.¹⁰ On this spot he then built a clay statue of Ekavāra-Vajrabhairava out of many small pieces of clay (*mtheb skyu*), each of which was separately blessed with the recitation of 100,000 *Yamarāja* mantras of the deity.¹¹ The new statue, together with a statue of the protector Kālarūpa, are together currently the principal objects of veneration in the protector chapel. The Vajrabhairava sculpture is a replica of the one destroyed during the Cultural Revolution but contains the remaining fragments of the original, which were placed inside the new work.

⁶ chos 'phel, 99 and bshes gnyen tshul khriims, 239.

⁷ The source for this account appears to be Desi Sangye Gyatso's (sde srid sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, 1653-1705) *Yellow Beryl* (*bai DUrya ser po* [bshes gnyen tshul khriims, 239]).

⁸ chos 'phel, 99.

⁹ Akester, 200.

¹⁰ Also see chos 'phel, 99.

¹¹ Ibid. According to a resident monk this statue was executed in the style of Ra Lotsawa (*rwa lugs*), although there is no evidence that such a style existed. Akester does not mention the belief that the clay statue was made by Ra Lotsawa, but instead notes a claim that it was made by Tsongkhapa (tsong kha pa, 1357-1419), although there is no mention of this in Tibetan sources (Akester, 202).

During his stay at Ratsag, Ra Lotsawa is said to have interred the hair of ten million *ḍākinīs* into a *stūpa* (Image 1) for the sake of freeing sentient beings of the future from the negative karmas which cause illnesses.¹² The *stūpa*, known as the Stūpa of Karmic Illness (las nad 'bum pa), was damaged during the Cultural Revolution. It has, however, been renovated and is often repainted with whitewash. As it is said that circumambulation of this *stūpa* has the capacity to heal even very serious illnesses that cannot be cured by medicine, people continue to visit Ratsag to perform circumambulations and prostrations.

The largest statue in the monastery is a two-storey high sculpture of Maitreya, flanked by a statue of Tsongkhapa. The Maitreya statue is a reconstruction of the original statue, which was of the same height. It sits inside the main assembly hall (Image 2), which has four pillars, together with walls which still display remains of old murals. The main temple building housing the assembly hall is three storeys high, as it was previously. The first floor contains the assembly hall while on the second floor one finds the Khecarī chapel (mkha' spyod lha khang), its famous Vajrayoginī statue (Image 3), as well as an actual footprint (*zhabs rjes*) of the deity. It is this statue which is, or rather was, the principal object of veneration at Ratsag. Today the original statue, which was lost during the Cultural Revolution, has been replaced by a smaller replica. According to all written Tibetan accounts the original statue used to be the principal meditational object, or more literally "commitment support" (*thugs dam gyi rten*), of the Indian tantric yogi Nāropā (c. 11th century), although the earliest known textual mentions of the statue appear to date from the 14th century.¹³ The original metal alloy statue was apparently about one and a half feet high.¹⁴ The statue was so sacred that it was believed to possess the potential to "liberate through seeing" (*mthong grol*).¹⁵

The full traditional narrative surrounding the statue, its role as Nāropa's personal object of devotion, its invitation to Yab, and its journey and stay in Tibet, are all recounted in a brief history entitled *The History of the Statue of Venerable Nāro Khecarī at Ratsag* (*rwa tshag rje btsun nA ro mkha' spyod ma'i sku'i chos 'byung lo rgyus*), a translation of which can be found at the end of this article.¹⁶ It is unclear what works this history is based on, although we know it was compiled by one of the Tagtsang (stag tshang) incarnations,

¹² chos 'phel, 101.

¹³ Akester, 200-201.

¹⁴ bshes gnyen tshul khriims, 240.

¹⁵ gong sa skyabs mgon bcu bzhi pa chen po, 4.

¹⁶ la dwags stag tshang sprul sku, 2015(?).

whose name is simply given as "Ladakh Tagtsang Tulku" (la dwags stag tshang sprul sku, d.u.). The work was completed with the sponsorship of the Yuthogpa (g.yu thog pa) family, who were the traditional proprietors of the monastery (*dgon bdag*).

According to this work, the statue self-manifested during the lifetime of Buddha Śākyamuni from the materials used by the god Viśvakarmā to craft the statues of the two famous Jowo (jo bo) statues of Lhasa- the Jowo Rinpoche (jo bo rin po che) and Jowo Mikyo Dorje (jo bo mi bskyod rdo rje), which are housed, respectively, at the Tsuglagkhang (gtsug lag khang) and Ramoche (ra mo che) temples. Although initially venerated by gods and *nāgas*, the statue eventually became Nāropā's devotional object and after his passing, it manifested the current iconography associated with Vajrayoginī Nāro Khecarī, with one arm extended, holding a curved *kartrikā* knife, and the other holding up a skullcup.

The statue was brought to Tibet by a young Khampa named Gyaltzen Zang (rgyal mtshan bzang). He was urged to do so by *dākinīs*, despite his parents' concerns of him travelling to India for the statue. Having acquired the statue with the aid of Vajrayoginī, Gyaltzen Zang returned to Tibet, with the statue acting as a guide, giving specific instructions on where she wanted to go and a geomantic description of what the place she was heading for was like. The descriptions given in the history are still recounted to pilgrims at the site today in both pilgrimage guides and by locals. According to this history, the four mountains which encircle the monastery all carry an auspicious or geomantic significance. The mountain in front is described as being "a curtain of white silk" (*dar dkar gyi yol ba*), as it shields the monastery from the view of anyone approaching from Tolung. The mountain behind the monastery is described as "a pile of precious stones" (*rin chen spungs pa*). The mountain on the right of the monastery is believed to depict self-manifesting representations of the consonants of the Sanskrit alphabet, while the mountain on the left depicts the vowels.

The mountain on whose slopes the monastery is built is also commonly believed to be sacred to Vajrayoginī's consort, Cakrasaṃvara. Indeed the history of the statue states more specifically that the mountain is known as the Palace of Cakrasaṃvara (dpal 'khor lo sdom pa'i pho brang). According to the biography of Ling Rinpoche Thubten Lungtok Namgyal Trinle (gling rin po che thub bstan lung rtogs rnam rgyal 'phrin las, 1903-1983), who was born in the area, the palace specifically refers to a rocky outcrop at the top of the mountain that today is still regularly coloured with whitewash and ochre stripes, and bedecked with prayer flags (Image 4). Ling Rinpoche's biography notes that it is

because of the location being associated with Cakrasaṃvara that the area is known by the name of "Yab," i.e. "father" in Tibetan, referring to this male deity.¹⁷

Upon their arrival at Yab, Gyaltsen Zang and the statue were met by a welcome party of divine beings. After the establishment of the statue at Yab, Gyaltsen Zang also remained behind and helped to develop the site. We are also told of later figures who venerated this famous Vajrayoginī statue. The first of these was Tsongkhapa, who offered several ornaments to the statue.¹⁸ The other famous devotee was the Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lozang Gyatso (ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, 1617-1682), who invited the statue to Drepung, although it was soon returned as it demanded to go back to Ratsag.¹⁹ He also made offerings to the statue, and composed a prayer for it. The prayer, entitled *The Chariot for Attaining Khecara* (*mkha' spyod sgrub pa'i shing rta*), can be found in his collected works.²⁰

Later the statue was invited to the Potala for a week. During this journey the statue was apparently defiled and thus purificatory bathing rituals (*khros gsol*) had to be performed. It was decided by the caretaker of the statue that in order to prevent further defilement the statue should not be invited or touched by women, by those with damaged tantric commitments (*samaya*), or butchers.²¹ He also decreed that the statue should not be embellished with further ornaments as it had already been ornamented with the blessed offerings made by Tsongkhapa and the Fifth Dalai Lama. Finally, the history ends with a note stating that the statue has the power to protect crops from frost and hail and bring timely rain.

Apart from this brief record, summaries of the history of the site can be found in pilgrimage guidebooks, which in general appear to have used *The History of the Statue of Venerable Nāro Khecarī at Ratsag*

¹⁷ gong sa skyabs mgon bcu bzhi pa chen po, 4. Vajrayoginī, on the other hand, is the mother (*yum*).

¹⁸ Tsongkhapa is known for having made elaborate offerings to several important statues during his life, including the renovation of the Dzingji ('dzing ji) Maitreya statue in 1395 and the ornamentation of the Lhasa Jowo and other statues of the Jokhang in 1409.

¹⁹ It appears that the statue was invited to Drepung in 1648 (Akester, 202).

²⁰ See ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, "phyogs bcu'i bde gshegs byang sems slob mi slob kyi dge 'dun dang bcas pa'i bstod tshogs dngos grub rgya mtsho'i gter mdzod," 13-15.

²¹ Popular Tibetan culture even today often precludes women from touching certain sacred objects or visiting particular shrines, especially the chapels of protector deities (*mgon khang*). The touch of people who break their tantric commitments and vows is considered especially defiling. Tibetans also generally believed that butchers, along with blacksmiths and workers from several other trades, were impure and thus were treated as outcasts.

as a source for much of their information. The famed Ratsag Vajrayoginī statue is mentioned in the biographies, autobiographies and histories of a number of authors, such as the history of the Shangpa Kagyu (shangs pa bka' brgyud) tradition, compiled by Tāranātha (tA ra nA tha, 1575-1634), who notes that it had been Nāropa's personal devotional object.²² The statue is also briefly mentioned in the autobiography of the Fifth Dalai Lama, in relation to his invitation to the Potala of the statue at the age of 32. Not much information is given, however he writes that:

"... I invited the statue of the Vajra Queen, which was the commitment support of the Venerable Nāropa, from Ratsag. I made one hundred offerings (*brgya mchod*), engaged in the recitation of the profound yogas of the generation and completion stages, recited the *Prayer to See the Beautiful Face of Khecara* (*mkha' spyod zhal bzang lta ba'i smon lam*), and composed a praise and prayer."²³

By the 17th century the monastery was subsumed under Kyormolung Monastery's (skyor mo lung dgon) Punkhang (phun khang) college, and in 1694 had a community of 30 monks.²⁴ Not much appears to be recorded regarding the history of the monastery or its sacred objects in the 18th and 19th centuries. Estimates of the population of the monastery in the early half of the twentieth century range from 40 to 80 monks.²⁵ The monastery was converted to the Gelug tradition at some point in the 15th century, and continues to belong to the sect today.²⁶ Ratsag is associated with the Gomang College (sgo mang grwa tshang) of Drepung ('bras spungs) and in general follows the Gyuto (rgyud stod) tantric tradition.

Important Gelug scholars and teachers continued to make pilgrimages to the site, well into the 20th century. Trijang Rinpoche Lozang Yeshe Tenzin Gyatso (khri byang rin po che blo bzang ye shes bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho, 1901-1981) notes in his autobiography that he visited the monastery in 1943. While there he spent three days performing the self-entry (*bdag 'jug*) rituals, offerings and *gaṇacakra* related to the mandala accomplishment (*dkyil 'khor sgrub*) in front of

²² tA ra nA tha, 2008, 283.

²³ ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho. "za hor gyi ban+de ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho'i 'di snang 'khrul pa'i rol rtsed rtogs brjod kyi tshul du bkod pa du kU la'i gos bzang las glegs bam dang po," 216.

²⁴ Akester, 202-203.

²⁵ bshes gnyen tshul khriims, 240. According to a current resident, there used to be 80 monks at the monastery.

²⁶ Akester, 200.

the famous statue of Vajrayoginī, which he notes "blazed with the splendid light of blessings."²⁷ He further made offerings to the monastic community and granted the four empowerments into Vajrayoginī's *sindhura maṇḍala* to about one hundred monks, nuns, and lay followers during which he experienced a number of auspicious dreams.²⁸

Today the monastery still uses ritual texts composed by Trijang Rinpoche's own teacher, Phabongkha Dechen Nyingpo (pha bong kha bde chen snying po, 1878-1941), undoubtedly the most influential Gelug lineage holder of the Vajrayoginī cycle in the 20th century. Phabongkha had also visited Ratsag Monastery with a following of thirteen incarnate lamas and performed self-entry and *gaṇacakra* tenth-day (*tshe bcu*) offerings in front of the statue.²⁹ Phabongkha placed particular emphasis on the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra* as a whole, as well as Vajrayoginī, whose practice is drawn from this cycle. Although not one of the main deities prescribed by Tsongkhapa, the originator of the Gelug tradition, the Vajrayoginī lineage within the Gelug tradition certainly pre-dates Phabongkha, as is attested by works on the deity by authors such as Tagphu Lozang Tenpai Gyaltzen (stag phu blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, 1714-1762), Tuken Lozang Chokyi Nyima (thu'u bkwan blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, 1737-1802) and Ngulchu Dharmabhadra (dngul chu d+harma b+ha dra, 1772-1851).³⁰ Although a number of important monasteries in Amdo had arguably been the principal centers of Gelug Vajrayoginī practice in the 18th and 19th centuries, Phabongkha's lineage grew to become particularly popular in pockets of Central Tibet, especially in the Lhasa region, and eventually in Kham. Today, Phabongkha's lineage of Vajrayoginī is firmly established as the most widespread in the tradition as a whole. Due to the popularity of Phabongkha and his lineage, the ritual works that he composed on Vajrayoginī are still in use in many of the monastic sites practicing the deity in the wider Lhasa region as well.

The monthly tenth-day Vajrayoginī offering at Ratsag is today performed using Phabongkha's work *Festival of Great Bliss (bde chen dga' ston)*.³¹ Currently the monastery is home to a small community

²⁷ khri byang rin po che blo bzang ye shes bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho, 226.

²⁸ Ibid., 226-227.

²⁹ ldan ma blo bzang rdo rje, 903.

³⁰ Repo, 27-28.

³¹ pha bong kha, "bde chen dga' ston," 61-131. Phabongkha's works on other deities are equally popular. For a full list of the contents of his collected works, including his works on Vajrabhairava and Kālarūpa, who are also central deities at Ratsag, see Repo, 43-62. The Kālarūpa ritual, *Accomplishment of the Four Activities (las bzhi'i 'phrin las myur 'grub)*, noted as not having been included in Phabongkha's

of less than ten monks, of whom only one has the proper qualifications and necessary empowerments required to execute the full ritual schedule of the monastery, and thus performs many of these alone. Which texts were used at the monastery prior to Phabongkha is unknown, although these may have included the Vajrayoginī works of the other Gelug authors mentioned above.

The entire monastery was badly damaged during the Cultural Revolution. The stone pillar, which had been pulled down, remained intact and was re-erected on the left-hand side of the main entrance. Rebuilding of the monastery, its chapels and *stūpa* began in 1984, with the help of the local lay community. Although both of the main statues of Vajrabhairava and Vajrayoginī are replicas, the resident monks at the monastery believe that the original Vajrayoginī statue brought from India may not have been destroyed. The statue had been collected and saved by the Tenth Panchen Lama, Chokyi Gyaltzen (paN chen chos kyi rgyal mtshan, 1938-1989) at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), along with several other important sacred objects, such as the Guhyasamāja Mañjuvajra of Reting (rwa sgreng).³² Unfortunately the Vajrayoginī, the history of which is presented directly below, was never recovered.³³

The History of the Statue of Venerable Nāro Khecarī at Ratsag

Namo Guru

Dharmakāya, Vajradhara, The Pervading Lord of all Families,
Sambhogakāya, Yoginī, Mother of the Victors,
Nirmāṇakāya, Nāropa, Son of the Victors,
 May those worthy of homage always be victorious!

Here, I will explain a little of the history of the thoroughly renowned statue of the one known as the Supreme Mother of all Victors, the

collected works (Repo, 22-23), is in fact included in the compilations in both the Delhi and Lhasa editions (pha bong kha, "las bzhi'i 'phrin las myur 'grub," 274). It is unclear if the text was included in the original edition, a set of which appears to be held in the Potala's collection. The fact that the colophons of a stand-alone edition of this work note that it was extracted from the collected works and printed as a separate text do not preclude it from having been included within the set.

³² This story was recounted by a monk from Ratsag. The Guhyasamāja, however, survived and continues to be the main object of devotion at Reting (gzim sprul bstan 'dzin ye shes, 56).

³³ A synopsis of the history of the Ratsag Yoginī can be found in Akester, 200-202.

Venerable Vajrayoginī, the source of all excellent roots and branches of benefit and happiness.

Our teacher, the incomparable ornament of the Śākyas, first gave birth to the mind of supreme enlightenment, and following that, for three countless aeons he accumulated the [two] collections. Finally in Magadha he attained the state of *nirvāṇa*, completely perfected buddhahood.

Because of a supplication made by Ānanda, the *ūrṇā* between the eyebrows of the Bhagavān radiated light rays inviting the three gods Brahmā, Rāhula, Śakra and others. Brahmā and Rāhula crafted the supports of the *dharmakāya* and *sambhogakāya*. Then, for the *nirmāṇakāya*, Śakra piled up the precious jewels of gods, men and *nāgas* before the artist Viśvakarmā and after making requests, [Viśvakarmā] crafted the two twin Jowo [statues], inseparable from the actual *nirmāṇakāya*. From the first portion of the construction materials, the statue of the Venerable Vajrayoginī self-manifestly emerged in a dancing posture, brandishing a *kartrikā* toward the sky, holding a skull cup of blood at her heart.

The lord of the gods, Śakra, washed the body with nectar, while heroes and *ḍākinīs* played *ḍāmarus*, bells and jingle bells. Flowers rained down [from the sky] and the buddhas and male and female tathāgatas said "Wonderful! Wonderful!" and bestowed initiation. The bodhisattvas spoke auspicious verses, the earth shook, a tent of rainbow light appeared, together with a variety of other amazing omens. [The statue then] became a support for the offerings of the *nāgas*.

Then [later] after being invited by the *ḍākinīs*, it became the commitment-support (*thugs dam rten* [i.e. devotional object]) of Nāropa. When Nāropa passed away to Khecara, [the Vajrayoginī] proclaimed that, "If the guru goes to Khecara, then she should go to Tibet." Furthermore [the statue] conversed with Mahāpaṇḍita Nāropa directly, yet without [actually] speaking.

When Nāropa travelled to Khecara, [the Vajrayoginī statue] lowered her *kartrikā* to her lower garment in sorrow, [in the gesture of] cutting away all afflictions of conceptualization, and raised her skull of blood to the sky [as a gesture of] offering and of being satisfied by the taste of uncontaminated nectar. Her three eyes looked up toward the guru in pure Khecara, and thus she became known as "Nāro Khecarī."

As for the history of how the statue was invited to Tibet:

This mountain of Yab, which is described as being in reality a manifestation of the maṇḍala of Cakrasaṃvara, gave birth to three *ḍākinī nirmāṇakāyas*. They searched the three regions of Tö Ngari (stod mnga' ris skor gsum), and the four districts of U-Tsang (bar dbus

gtsang ru bzhi), for someone who could [bring the statue to Tibet], but could not find anyone. In Dokham Me (mdo khams smad) the karmically destined being, the ten-year-old Gyaltsen Zangchawa (rgyal mtshan bzang bya ba) was born.

To him the three *ḍākinīs* said "Do not stay here, go to India, you must go to accomplish something of great meaning."

He replied: "How shall I accomplish this?"

[The *ḍākinīs* said,] "It is time for the Mahāpaṇḍita Nāropa's commitment-support, the Venerable Vajrayoginī, to travel to the Land of Snows for the benefit of sentient beings, and you must go invite her. We will assist you." They then disappeared.

Not being sure of what happened, he went back home and told his mother and father the story of his experience. They said to him, "You must have had a mistaken vision."

When he reached the age of fifteen, the Venerable [Vajrayoginī]'s compassion aroused him to ask the father and mother, "Can I go to India?"

The father and mother said, "Do not go to India. It is a long journey, the road has great dangers, it is treacherous, it has rivers and so forth. The journey is difficult. Moreover, you should stay and care for your parents. [But] if you will not listen, then go to India. If you don't listen to us and decide to go in any case, then take this with you." After saying that they gave him one *dre* (*bre*) of gold dust, which he took with him and journeyed to Lhasa.³⁴ He prostrated in front of the two twin Jowo statues, made offerings, made prayers to avert obstacles, and then went on to India.

The Indians came to know through dreams that someone was coming to invite the Venerable [Vajrayoginī] to Tibet. They said [to themselves] that they do indeed have an unequalled holy object, and so some yogis guarded the waters, others guarded the footpaths, and others the vicinity of the temple.

The Venerable [Vajrayoginī], however, manifested as three *ācāryas* who asked [the Indians], "What are you doing? We are here to take the Venerable [Vajrayoginī], the commitment-support of Jowo Nāropa, to Tibet."

The other *ācāryas* replied, "You, do not talk like that! Due to a bad dream, us Indians have been guarding the temple for three years. [If you wish to take the statue], what could you offer in return?" The three *ācāryas* offered and distributed all of the gold dust and then left, almost as if they had stolen the [statue of the] Venerable [Vajrayoginī].

³⁴ The *dre* is a traditional Tibetan measurement of volume.

[On the journey back], when the boy [Gyaltsen Zang] got tired [from carrying the statue] on the dangerous roads, it is said that she flew in the sky. When he came from India, between there and their destination of Yab, the statue spoke seven times and left seven footprints, the first footprint being at Palmo Thang (dpal mo thang). Up to this point in the journey [the statue] danced three times during the day and three times during the night, without touching the ground.

At La Tö Tingri Langkor (la stod ding ri glang skor), while offering a vast *gaṇacakra*, the gathering asked about the location where [the statue] would benefit sentient beings.

She replied, "There is a place near to the Rasa Trulnang (rasa 'phrul snang) where the Śākyamuni [statue] dwells. This is the land of Yab where the sky is in reality two intersecting *dharmodayas*, and the earth, an eight-petalled lotus. The mountain behind is a pile of precious stones and the mountain in front, a covering curtain of white silk. All aspects of the vegetation and forests are manifestations of male and female bodhisattvas. From east to west, a slowly moving stream possessing the eight qualities flows unobstructedly. On the right mountain are the consonants and on the left mountain, self-manifested vowels appear. All males are heroes, and all females are heroines. There, to the lap of the residing Śrī Cakrasaṃvara, is where I, the Vajra Queen, am going."

They then went to Shu Kunga Rawa (gzhu kun dga' ra ba). [Gyaltsen Zang] asked if this was the correct place, but was told it was not.

They then went to Tölung Zhorang (stod lung zho rang) and again [Gyaltsen Zang] asked if this was the correct place, but was [again] told it was not.

They then went to Tölung Deng (stod lung denges) and once again [Gyaltsen Zang] asked if this was the correct place, but was again told it was not, and that it was a place called Yab Chawa (yab bya ba).

Having exhausted their search, they finally arrived, so the place became known as Thelchin Nyak (thal phyin nyag, i.e. "The Low Pass [to which they] Arrived"). Then he asked to where should they now go, and [she] said they have to go upward into the valley. Thus this place became known as Yena (yas sna, i.e. "Upper Tip").

Then after having travelled upward [into the valley], many sons and daughters of the gods and manifestations of Cakrasaṃvara descended from Tuṣita and met them with umbrellas, victory banners, pennants, incense, garlands and so forth, together with music and inconceivable offerings. The place became known as Jelsaga (mjal sa kha, i.e. "Meeting Place"). [Vajrayoginī] appointed the

daughter of a god as the goddess of place, and she became known as Ama Yul Lhama (a ma yul lha ma). The mandala of Śrī Cakrasaṃvara, was clearly beheld and so the place became known as Selpoi Dengkha (gsal po'i gdengs kha, i.e. "Clearly Appearing Face").

The [Vajrayoginī] flew up like a lion, jumping up into the sky and onto the rock face saying, "With the mother, the Vajra Queen, resting in the lap of the father Cakrasaṃvara, method and wisdom are inseparable, there is no greater benefit for sentient beings. Henceforth I shall remain here no matter what." A vast *gaṇacakra* was offered. She spoke further and left a footprint.

Then Gyaltzen Zang, acting as the principal attendant, gradually developed the site and expanded the Sangha.

At the time when Tsongkhapa travelled from Kyormolung to Gawadong (dga' ba gdong), he invited the Venerable Khecarī, possessing all good qualities, to Yabda Lhundrub Rabten (yab mda' lhun grub rab brtan), and offered her a crown and earrings, together with aspirational prayers.³⁵

After this the Lord of Victors, the Omniscient Great Fifth [Dalai Lama] was thinking about what to designate as the main devotional object (*rten gtso*) of Drepung Kungarawa ('bras spungs kun dga' ra ba) and invited this Venerable Khecarī. After 21 days [at Drepung] the statue said that she would go to Ratsag, to the palace of Cakrasaṃvara. The Lord of Victors, the Omniscient Great Fifth, then affixed a garland of 100 pearls and corals, a nine-layered garment, and canopies made of fine cloth. Immediately that evening the statue was dispatched with its attendant and two additional caretakers acting as escorts, and arrived at Ratsag before daybreak.

After this the [statue] was invited to the great Potala Palace and it stayed for a week. At that time, on the way back, when the statue's attendant passed through Shangkhar Dzong (zhang mkhar rdzong) he gave advice saying that the statue had been defiled and that a proper bathing ritual (*khrus gsol*) had to be immediately performed for the statue. He also said that, "Henceforth women, those with damaged samaya, widows, butchers and so forth should not touch or invite the statue. Because the golden face is the gold of the Jambū River, it is inappropriate to cover it with something else. Although the crown and earrings were affixed by the Great Je Tsongkhapa and have great blessings, as the Khecarī is in the manner of displaying sorrow at Nāropa's passing to Khecara, [further] random offerings should not be affixed to the statue, and should be re-distributed. Furthermore, it was adorned with a garment of nine layers, and offered praises, supplications and prayers, the composition of *The*

³⁵ This site is located at the lower end (*mda'*) of the valley.

Chariot for Attaining Khecara, and a great fine offering scarf. At best the caretaker of this [statue] will be a *bhikṣu*, if not then a *śrāmaṇera*, and if not then it must be one holding the discipline of a renunciate (*rab byung tshul khrim can*). The statue will protect the whole of the noble [region of] Shun Lhojang (shun lho byang) from frost and hail and cause timely rain to fall."

Here ends this brief history of this indispensable support of offerings.

Thus the Venerable Vajrayoginī, the commitment support of Nārotāpa, was invited from India and established at the monastery called Ratsag in the excellent land of Yab, with wondrous geomancy; a supreme field of merit for all living beings. As drafts of manuscripts [of this history] written by previous authors had become tattered due to wear and tear over many years, and the texts were in danger of disappearing, out of a wish arising from supreme faith, in order for limitless living beings to find truly meaningful leisure and endowment, our mother-like proprietors, the Yuthogpa family, on a virtuous day of the month of the Wood-Pig year requested a newly edited edition [of this history], which was then made by the one with the name of Ladakh Tagtsang Tulku, one who is known for having previously stayed at Ratsag Hermitage.

The supreme mother of the victors, Prajñāpāramitā,
 Appearing in the form of a beautiful charming lady,
 The one renowned as Queen of Khecara,
 The commitment support of the non-dual Mahāpañḍita Nāropa.

Through the staircase of merit created from these carved wood-
 blocks,
 Containing the pure seeds of the volumes of the history of
 This actual, wondrous and brilliantly splendid Yoginī,
 May all beings climb and arrive in the realm of Khecara.

These words of prayer were composed by the one with the name of Mogchog Tulku Yeshe Gyaltsen (smog lcogs sprul sku ye shes rgyal mtshan) at the request of Ratsag Kunyer Drepung Gomangpa Rinchen Chogyal (rwa tshag 'bras sgo mang pa rin chen chos rgyal).



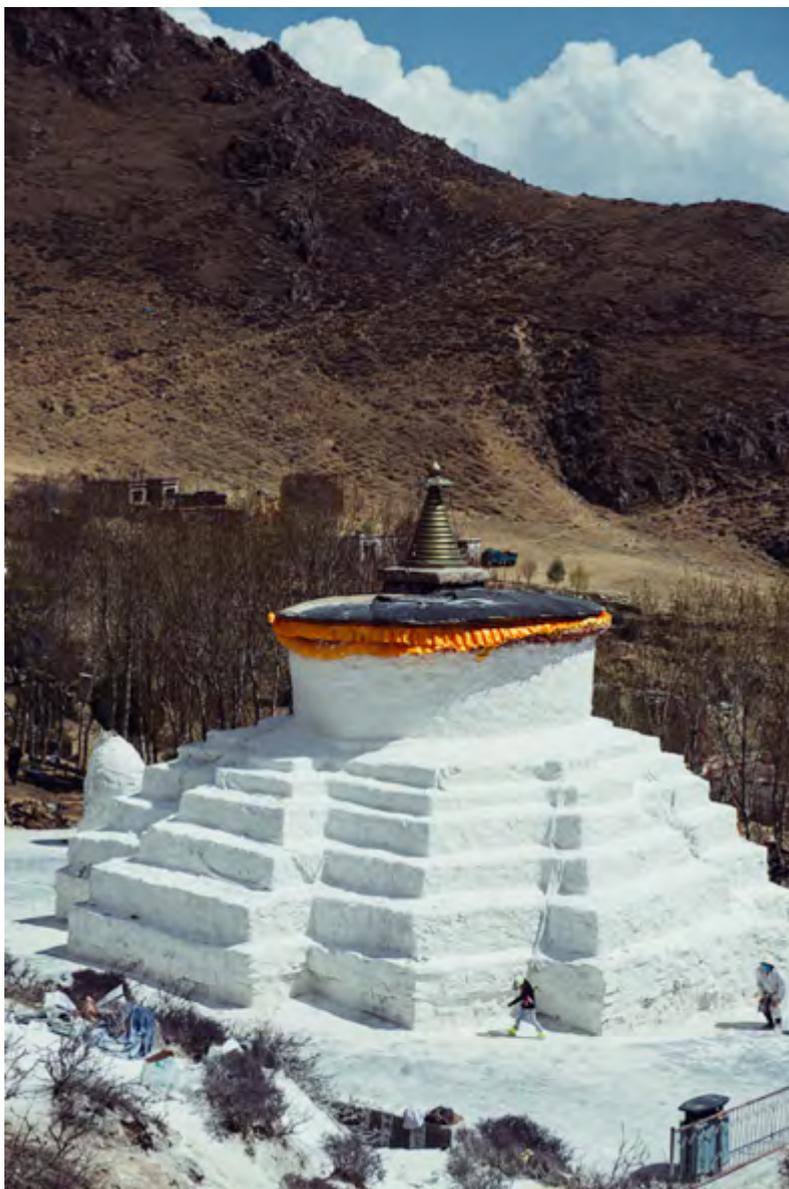
Appendix - Images

Image 1. The Stūpa of Karmic Illness, Ratsag (Photograph by Matt Linden, 2015).



Image 2. The entrance to Ratsag Monastery's assembly hall (Photograph by Matt Linden, 2015).



Image 3. A replica of the famous Vajrayoginī statue at Ratsag Monastery (Photograph by Matt Linden, 2015).

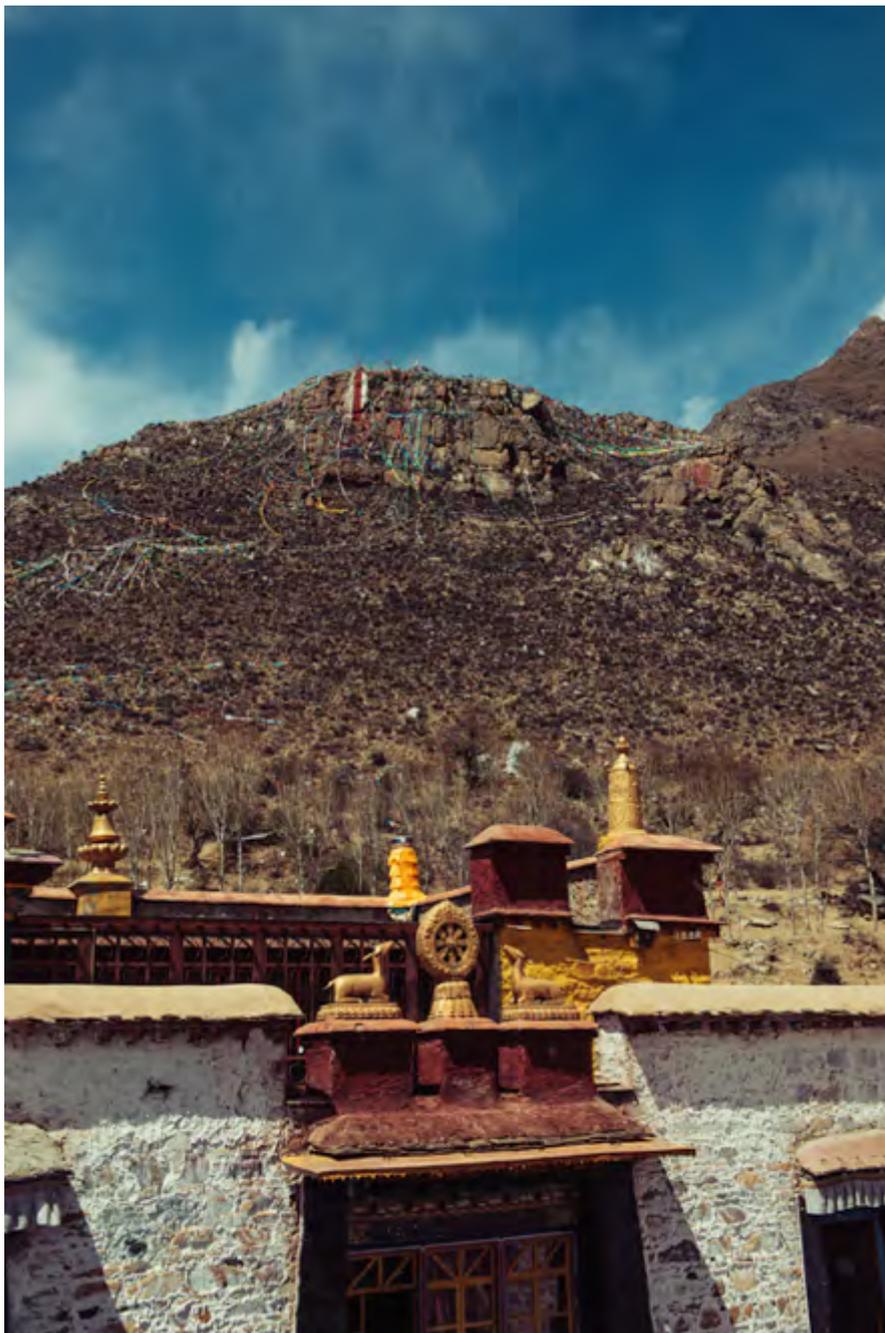


Image 4. Ratsag Monastery, with the Palace of Cakrasaṃvara in the background (Photograph by Matt Linden, 2015).

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A study of written and oral narratives of Lhagang in Eastern Tibet

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In her article “Discourse Analysis and Narrative”, Barbara Johnstone states that, “the essence of humanness, long characterized as the tendency to make sense of the world through rationality, has come increasingly to be described as the tendency to tell stories, to make sense of the world through narrative”.¹ In other words, examining narrative is a crucial way to understand beliefs and variations of social practices. Richard Bauman has argued that the investigation of narrative is the study of social and cultural life, and emphasizes the role narratives play in creating and fashioning a particular community.² Adopting these views, I shall maintain that studying narratives may provide significant tools for understanding a local community’s perceptions and thoughts, focusing especially on how these narratives have been appropriated, elaborated and used as social strategies to underpin claims to status and privilege.

In order to explore that assumption, this article examines narratives of the village of Lhagang (lHa sgang) and its surroundings that describe it as a distinctive place, and the significance of these narratives for different communities there. In order to do this, I will present and analyze two written texts and three oral narratives – two from Lhagang and one from the neighboring town of Rangakha (Rwa rnga kha) – with a particular focus on the motif of the Chinese Princess Wengcheng³ and the Lhagang Jowo statue. On her way to Lhasa to marry the Tibetan king, Songtsen Gampo (Srong btsan sgam po) in the seventh century CE, the Chinese princess is said to have stopped at Lhagang. As part of her dowry she brought a statue of Buddha Shakyamuni, later known as the Jowo (Tib. Jo bo), ‘the Lord’, of which the Lhagang Jowo is widely believed to be a replica, made while the princess was staying at Lhagang.⁴ I will compare the written and oral narratives, and then attempt to define their function in

¹ Johnstone 2001:635.

² Bauman 1986; Johnstone 1991.

³ In Tibetan sources she is called Gyaza Kongjo (rGya bza’ Kong jo). These sources generally say that she was the daughter of the Chinese Emperor Tang Taizong.

⁴ I refer to the statue of Buddha Shakyamuni preserved in the Lhasa Jokhang (lHa sa jo khang) as the ‘Lhasa Jowo’, and the one in Lhagang as the Lhagang Jowo.

promoting different agendas in a context of a rapidly changing society. The article will demonstrate that although different communities use the narrative for different purposes, they all try to connect the local narratives of topography to the sacred geography and the religious center represented by the dominant Tibetan culture of U-Tsang (dBus gtsang) in order to validate their claims. In this way the local communities attempt to show their importance and sense of belonging in the context of the greater Tibetan history.

Lhagang is situated in Kham (Khams), one of Tibet's three cultural regions. The inhabitants of Lhagang believe the site of their village is a crescent created by the main river running through the village and the four holy hills adjacent to it.⁵ They consider this topography to be very auspicious, as it constitutes what traditionally is regarded as a perfect geomantic combination. Of special significance is the belief that Lhagang monastery preserves a Jowo statue. Nicola Schneider and Gillian Tan have pointed out the high reputation and importance of the Lhagang Jowo statue throughout Kham,⁶ regarded as having the same historical origin as the Jowo statue in the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa, and locally believed to equal it in importance.⁷ Therefore, local people sometimes call the Lhagang Jokhang the "Little Jokhang Temple (Jo khang chung chung)".

However, the actual route of Princess Wencheng's journey to Lhasa is still a controversial issue among scholars.⁸ Alexander Gardner noted that, "Neither Tucci (1962) nor Richardson (1998[1997]) discuss Wencheng's passage through Khams".⁹ He also pointed out, "Shakabpa (1967) mentions that the Chinese escorted Wencheng to "the Tibetan border," without indicating where that border is."¹⁰ Yet, a number of local legends are told regarding Wencheng's route and her activities in Kham. For example, there is a temple called "Princess Wencheng Temple" in Jyekundo (sKye rgu mdo),¹¹ supposedly built to mark the spot where the princess stopped for a month on her jour-

⁵ In Lhagang it is believed that the hills are the residences of four major divine figures in Tibetan Buddhism: Jampayang (Manjushri), Chenrezig (Avalokiteshvara), Chakna Dorje (Vajrapani), and Drolma (Tara).

⁶ Schneider 2016:3; Tan 2013:197 and 2017:4.

⁷ For the history and description of the Lhasa Jokhang, see Gyurme *et al.* 2010.

⁸ Sanggye Rinchen 1988; Chabgak Dorje Tsering 1991; Bai Yu and Zheng Yufeng 1994; Benard 2000; Cameron 2011.

⁹ Gardner 2003:62.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*:84. See n. 6.

¹¹ This is a translation of the Chinese 'Wencheng Gongzhu Miao'. The temple, which has been promoted by the Yushu (Yul shul) local authorities in recent years, is known locally as "Bis rnam par snang mdzad", as the statue of the Buddha Vairocana found there is considered to have been brought by Princess Wencheng.

ney from the Chinese capital to U-Tsang.¹² Other examples are the “Bridge of Princess Wencheng” in Dartsendo, and the legend of the princess told in Zungchu (Zung chu) County, Ngawa (rNga ba) Prefecture, as well as Palyul (dPal yul) monastery in Palyul County, Ganze (dKar mdzes) Prefecture.¹³ All these narratives suggest that there is a widespread tradition claiming that the princess went to Lhasa through Kham. Alexander Gardner notes that, “Wencheng of course is cast in both a political and religious role, her passage through Khams, real or imaginary, symbolizes the presence there of both Buddhism and of the Tibetan Empire.”¹⁴ In the same way, people in Lhagang attempt to trace their early history through connecting with historical famous figures, as they believe that the narratives of Wencheng and the Lhagang Jowo not only signify the coming of the dominant culture to their land but also show the importance of their Jowo statue in the history of Tibet.

The narrative of Princess Wencheng’s journey is described in two texts,¹⁵ the *Yang gsang dkar chag* and the *gNas bstod* (both of which may be assumed to have been composed in Lhagang), as well as in oral legends. Both the texts and oral legends give an account of the origin of Lhagang and explain why this auspicious place is considered by people in Kham to be equivalent to sacred sites in India and Lhasa (such as Bodhgaya and the Lhasa Jokhang). In the course of my fieldwork, I made numerous interviews in Lhagang, and all my informants, whether old or young, expressed their firm belief that Princess Wencheng had been to Lhagang and built a temple for the Jowo that later became Lhagang monastery, while in Rangakha people believe that the princess also went through their land and the Jowo statue stayed in Lhagang for the benefit of the whole area, not for that of only Lhagang. Somewhat different versions of the narrative are accordingly circulated in Lhagang and Rangakha, but the differences are subtle, of degree rather than kind. I shall present and compare both versions below.

¹² Bian *et al.*:6851-6856.

¹³ Nyíri 2008:140-156.

¹⁴ Gardner 2003:62.

¹⁵ Both texts were published along with numerous texts of all monasteries in Ganze Prefecture by Karma Gyantsen (Karma Gyantsen 2005:288-314). I had already found the same two texts during my fieldwork, and only later discovered that Karma Gyantsen had published them.

The sacred Lhagang according to the written narratives.

Both *Yang gsang dkar chag* and *gNas bstod* were printed in Lhagang monastery. Neither the date nor the author of the first text is known, while the second text was composed by Thupten Zhenpen Nyima (Thub bstan gZhan phan Nyi ma) on the 25th of the middle month of autumn in the Fire Bird Year (1957).¹⁶ Gillian Tan also refers to a version of the history of Lhagang: "The particular version presented in this article was written in the 1970s by a monk named Pema Tsewang and it is currently the version that is used by the Town's main monastery."¹⁷ However, without giving any further information about this text and where she obtained it, it is unclear whether in fact she refers to *Yang gsang dkar chag* or *gNas bstod*, or perhaps another text.

During my fieldwork in Lhagang in 2012, only two monks had the texts and some young monks did not even know of their existence. I was told that although the texts were authoritative in the monastery, copies having been printed and given to every monk in the 1990s, they received little attention as the monks concentrated on reciting ritual texts.¹⁸ However, when I visited Lhagang again in 2015/2016, I found to my surprise that most of the monks were familiar with the texts, and I even met two college students from the village who were using them for their studies. It thus seems that the texts are gradually receiving attention in the community. In fact, monks as well as lay-people are now, as will be argued below, using these narratives to further their respective agendas. Thus, in order to explore how and why narratives are used by different groups, it is necessary first to look at how Lhagang and Princess Wencheng's arrival there are portrayed both in written texts and oral accounts.

Yang gsang dkar chag

The full title of this text is *Yang gsang mkha' 'gro'i thugs kyi ti ka las / lHa dga' ring mos gnas kyi dkar chag*. As stated above, there is no information about who wrote the text and when, but it is stated in the colophon that it was compiled from two *gnas yig*¹⁹ and a three-page appendix derived from Tibetan historiographical texts, and that the scribe copied the present form of the text from Lama Sangye's archives (Sangs rgyas, the abbot of the monastery between 1976 and

¹⁶ *gNas bstod*, fol. 16b: ...*thub bstan gZhan phan nyi ma dpal bzang po[s] me bya'i ston zla 'bring po'i nyer lnga'i thun la legs par phab pa...*

¹⁷ Tan 2013:194.

¹⁸ Interview with the abbot, 15 August 2012.

¹⁹ For more on *gnas yig*, see Huber 2008:116.

1987) in 1990.²⁰ The text has 15 folios and contains descriptions of the origin of Lhagang and its monastery as well as the Lhagang Jowo statue, together with some historical information in the form of short narratives.

The first part of the text (fol.1a-8a) tells the story of the origin of the land and of its name Lhaga (lHa dga'), and how the name changed over time. In addition, the text describes the attributes of the site. According to this account, Shakyamuni consecrated Lhagang at the same time as Vajrasana in India.²¹ The site used to be a lake, in the middle of which there was a magical square-shaped stone. Thus, the valley was given the name Tsolung (mTsho lung, 'Valley of the Lake'). To make the Buddha's teaching available to more living beings, Avalokiteshvara chose an auspicious place to disseminate the Dharma. He even predicted that after scattering 'seven grains of rice (*sa lu 'bru bdun*)', the Buddhist teaching would be promoted in Lhagang in the future. Hence, when the seven grains of rice fell into the lake, it gradually receded, exposing the land, but the magical stone remained. At that time the Naga king, who lived under the lake, rode a 'water ox' (*mtsho glang*)²² and came to meet Avalokiteshvara. The Naga king complained that if the lake disappeared, he would be forced to live underground without ever seeing the light of day. He therefore knelt in front of Avalokiteshvara and begged him to give him a window through which he could look at the world. The Bodhisattva agreed to his request and uttered a prophecy that if the Naga king promised to protect this sacred land, it would welcome many saints who would come to worship the place and promote Buddhism. Later, when Princess Wencheng came to Lhagang on her way to Lhasa, the Jowo statue, which she brought with her as her dowry, wanted to stay in Lhagang. So the princess had to make a replica of the original statue, and it was also described that one half of the statue miraculously appeared without any labor work. The text also states that the Tibetan minister, Gar Tongtsen (mGar sTong btsan) built a statue of Avalokiteshvara next to the Lhagang Jowo with holy water and soil. Then all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas appeared in the sky and praised Lhagang, being happy to acquire a sacred place, so it was also given the name Lhalung (lHa lung, 'Valley of the Gods').²³

The middle part of the text (fol. 8b-11a) mainly deals with various religious masters' visits to Lhagang, and how they hid 'treasures' or

²⁰ *Yang gsang dkar chag*, fol. 15b.

²¹ *Yang gsang dkar chag*, fol. 2a-b.

²² It is believed that in their own world the nagas have domestic animals.

²³ *Yang gsang dkar chag*, fol. 7a.

terma (*gter ma*)²⁴ there and built stupas. The text maintains that demons were occupying Lhagang and all beings were suffering from war and disease. Among these masters was the Indian Manjushrimitra who came to Lhagang and subdued the demons.²⁵ He also hid *terma* and consecrated hills in Lhagang. Numerous auspicious signs appeared; all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas gathered in the sky and were pleased to obtain the sacred land of Lhagang. So the place was also named Lhaga (lHa dga'), 'Deities are Happy'. The text also mentions another Indian master, Humkara, who magically built a stupa and consecrated it in the presence of all the guardian deities. All the Buddhas praised the stupa and named it the 'Hungchen Kara Siddha Stupa' (Grub thob Hung chen kara mchod rten, today's Drupthop Chöten (Grub thob mchod rten) shrine in the monastery). The text also states that later many Indian masters built stupas in the four directions behind Lhagang monastery in order to protect it. The text also mentions other famous religious masters that came to Lhagang, such as Vairocana (Bai ro tsa na), Padmasambhava and Yudra (g.Yu sgra), all of whom hid *terma* and consecrated the site,²⁶ but no further information concerning them is provided.

The last part of the text (fol. 11b-15b) focuses on the benefit of worshipping the Lhagang Jowo. It indicates the most promising time for worship, when many auspicious signs appear and serious diseases can be cured. The dates specified are the 28th of the first month, the 8th of the fourth month, the 10th of the seventh month and the 25th of the eleventh month.²⁷ The text also describes the three circumambulation paths around the monastery and explains that prostrating along them will yield immeasurable merit, the three paths being the outer, the middle and the inner route. The first takes two and half days to complete; by making this circumambulation, one can completely purify the sins of thirteen rebirths. The middle route takes half a day to finish, and purifies the sins of seven rebirths, being the equivalent of reciting the mantra *guru siddhi* 700 million times. The inner route will purify the sins of five rebirths, especially if performed on the 8th or the 10th day of the month, the best days for worshipping.²⁸ It is worth noting that the last two folios state that the text was written down by Khandro Yeshe Tsogyal (mKha' 'gro Ye shes

²⁴ *Terma* are various forms of hidden texts that are crucial to Tantric traditions in Tibet. See Gyatso 1993; Wheeler 2015:1-18.

²⁵ *Yang gsang dkar chag*, fol. 7b.

²⁶ *Yang gsang dkar chag*, fol. 11a.

²⁷ The text does not explain why these particular dates are auspicious. *Yang gsang dkar chag*, fol. 11b-12b.

²⁸ *Ibid.*: fol. 14a-15a.

mtsho rgyal)²⁹ on the order of Guru Padmasambhava.³⁰ The monks at Lhagang, however, maintain that the text is a rediscovered text, a *terma*, concealed, not written, by Khandro Yeshe Tsogyal.

From the above summary, it is clear that elements of myth and the supernatural can be frequently found in the text. For example, the story of how Avalokiteshvara transformed Lhagang into a holy place in order to disseminate the Dharma and then appointed the Naga king to protect Lhagang is similar to Avalokiteshvara transforming Tibet into a civilized Buddhist sacred land, as well as how Padmasambhava subdued local spirits in order to establish Buddhism in Tibet. In addition, stories such as Lhagang being a lake that later became dry land is similar to the stories of how the Lhasa Jokhang was built.³¹ This links the popular stories with narratives that are traditionally associated with the culturally dominant region of Central Tibet.

The second part of the text further reflects the blessedness of Lhagang through depicting visits of Tibetan and Indian religious masters. As Ernest Gellner has shown, history includes its own storehouse of creative stories when it is deployed to legitimate identity.³² Although the text does not say how and when these masters came, it is obvious that it primarily portrays masters of the Nyingma tradition such as Manjushrimitra, Humkara and Padmasambhava and their activities in Lhagang, possibly in order to represent an unbroken lineage transmitting teachings that were introduced in Lhagang, thus validating the long history of the monastery. Therefore, analyzing such narratives along the lines proposed by Carol Fleisher Feldman as “narratives of national identity as group narratives”,³³ they become comprehensible as ways of creating and strengthening distinctiveness. The text highlights how people in Lhagang selected several well-known religious masters or ‘heroes’ in Tibetan history and incorporated them in “patterns of interpretive cognition”³⁴ to define themselves. The members of the community were able to give meaning to their own locality and their monastery, at the same time bolstering their sense of pride, and thereby communicating their narrative to others in an effective way.

²⁹ For more on Khandro Yeshe Tsogyal, see Gyatso 2006:1-27.

³⁰ Ibid.: fol. 15a-b.

³¹ Sakya Sonam Gyaltzen 1995:147.

³² Gellner 1983.

³³ Feldman 2001:129-143.

³⁴ Ibid.:129.

dPal lha sgang gi gnas bstod

Compared with the *Yang gsang dkar chag*, this text is written in a somewhat colloquial style. It has 16 folios, containing detailed information concerning King Songtsen Gampo's reign and how Princess Wencheng built a temple for the Lhagang Jowo. Especially the text mentions the princess selected the site for the 108 stupas that are to be seen behind the monastery today. This description is not appeared in the first text, and it will help one to understand and appreciate how the inhabitants of Lhagang perceive and present the general Tibetan narrative as their own history.

The first part of the text (fol. 1a-3b) is similar to the descriptions appearing in the first text; thus, it also mainly deals with the sacredness of Lhagang and the origin of the monastery, including how numerous favorable signs appeared in Lhagang and all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas blessed the place. However, it gives a considerably longer description of King Songtsen Gampo's marriage to the Nepalese and Chinese princesses, especially the arrival in Lhagang of Princess Wencheng and her dowry, here said to be three precious Jowo statues. Although the text does not specify the other two statues, it does state that one of them, the Jowo Mindro Sungjon (Jo bo mi 'gro gsung 'byon, 'The Jowo Who Said 'I won't go') miraculously spoke, expressing its wish to stay in Lhagang.

Like the *Yang gsnag dkar chag*, the following pages (fol. 4a-9a) provide information about famous religious masters and their activities in Lhagang. For instance, Vairocana, Dramze Gonpo (Bram ze mgon po) and Mipham Nyima Gyaltzen (Mi pham nyi ma rgyal mtshan) consecrated Lhagang by staying in retreat there. The text also mentions Padmasambhava subdued all evil spirits that caused great suffering to the population in Lhagang as well as in Tibet, so that all sentient beings could be happy once again. Apart from that, the text also notes in passing that Princess Wencheng chose the location for the 108 stupas, including the four main stupas behind the monastery.³⁵

The last pages (fol. 9b-12b) of the text describe the merit to be obtained from worshipping and making offerings at Lhagang monastery as well as to the Lhagang Jowo. For example, the text states that if one offers a flower to the Lhagang Jowo, one will gain an attractive "divine body"; if one offers incense, one will get stainless moral dis-

³⁵ These stupas, facing the four cardinal directions, are painted in different colors: the yellow stupa in the southern direction symbolizes enrichment (*rgyas*); the red stupa in the western direction symbolizes subjugation (*dbang*); the green stupa in the northern direction symbolizes wrath (*drag*); and the white stupa in the eastern direction symbolizes pacification (*zhi*).

cipline; if one offers a butter lamp, the imperfections of the senses will be removed and become like a lamp, and so on.³⁶ In short, by worshipping and performing offering rituals at Lhagang, one earns great merit. Finally, the text deals with the author's intention in writing the text; he says that he did so at the request of the senior monks,³⁷ and that it will be like a teacher who guides one to learn the history of Lhagang, and especially to guide one on the way to liberation from the round of birth and death.

In this text, however, one finds an important shift in focus with regard to the topography of Lhagang which is presented as equal in terms of sacredness to Lhasa. For example, the text connects hills and mountains in Lhagang with the visits of various prominent historical and religious masters, so that each spot in Lhagang becomes consecrated and regarded as equivalent to religious sites in U-Tsang. The narratives about the landscape of Lhagang are also highlighted by Gillian Tan: "The mountains that ring Lhagang are physically striking topographical features in the landscape of the area. Perhaps for this reason, they are consistently and easily referred to in the circulation of narratives about place."³⁸ Therefore, the text also states that the famous scholar Vairocana³⁹ came to meditate at the foot of Mount Zhadra (bZhadra brag)⁴⁰, and that one can see his meditation cave (*sgrub phug*) from far away. As for the Indian master Dramze Gonpo, monks told me that this Indian master came to Lhagang and left two footprints, one on the Chakna Dorje hill to the east of the monastery, the other on the Jamyang hill to the west of the monastery. The cave on the Jamyang hill is stated to have been the location where the earth was excavated that was used for building the Lhasa Jokhang.⁴¹

On closer examination, both texts seem to answer Mark Freeman's questions concerning the rhetorical dimension of the narrative and identity relationship, "...what is being *done* through narratives, what its function or functions might be...".⁴² The relationship between nar-

³⁶ *gNas bstod*, fol. 9b.

³⁷ The author acknowledges his teacher Khen Khyenrab Ozer (mKhan mKhyen rab 'od zer); the Sakyapa shrine-keeper Namkha Tenzin (Sa kya pa sku gnyer Nam mkha' bstan 'dzin); Chokhrim Rinchen (Chos khriims rin chen); finally he refers to a person simply by using the title Nyerpa (gNyer pa) (*gNas bstod*, fol. 16a-b).

³⁸ Tan 2013:200-201.

³⁹ Schaeffer 2000:361-384.

⁴⁰ Zhara is believed to be the third son of the sacred mountain Amnye Machen in Amdo, and is regarded as one of the most important pilgrimage destinations in Lhagang. Many religious masters and lamas from other Tibetan areas have stayed in retreat on the mountain for long periods of time (Tan 2017:19).

⁴¹ Interview with the abbot, 15 August 2012.

⁴² Freeman 2001:290.

rative and identity is well reflected in both texts, and both endeavor to identify Lhagang as a distinctive religious site and an important place in Tibetan history through locating Lhagang in relation to distinctly Buddhist sites and historical narratives. Another function, shared by both texts, is to articulate local history in such a way that it comes to play an essential role in how community members tell their oral narratives; thereby the narratives have the function of providing a solid basis for their identity as Lhagang Tibetans. Besides, both texts employ motifs from traditional Tibetan historiography to emphasize that Lhagang also has a long history. For example, the Tibetan minister Gar Tongtsen and the Chinese Princess Wencheng are described as emanations of Vajrapani and Tara respectively – embedding historical figures into mythical narratives makes the latter reasonable and acceptable. Through such narrative elements, Lhagang becomes not simply a place among many others in the surrounding area, but a blessed land chosen by the Buddha, i.e. the Jowo, and religious masters as their special field of activity.

Princess Wencheng and the Lhagang Jowo in oral narratives

Narratives are a dynamic form of transmission and thus they have a high level of immediacy, especially oral narratives that can be easily disseminated and that reveal subtle changes in plot or structure in order to conform to local aspirations. Thus, compared to written texts, oral narratives easily appear in several different versions. The narrative of Lhagang is a good example of this process; as it spread, it was modified to serve different intentions. Before investigating in greater depth the concerns and agendas behind different versions of the oral narrative, I will first present the oral narrative of Princess Wencheng's journey and Lhagang Jowo according to its articulation in different groups.

Through interviews and conversations with people in Lhagang, I have collected several short oral narratives about Lhagang, most of them focusing on nearby hills, mountains and retreat caves. These narratives are not widely known locally; on the other hand, I found that most people enjoyed telling narratives regarding Princess Wencheng's stay in Lhagang, how the Jowo statue refused to leave, and how the princess built a temple to house the Jowo statue. This story is popular not only in the village of Lhagang, but in neighboring areas as well. Thus, in this section I will focus on presenting two oral versions circulating in Lhagang and Rangakha respectively. I will also add another version told by monks in Lhagang monastery that seems to focus more on the historical side of the narrative, probably because monks have access to the written texts. Finally, I will

compare all three versions.

Oral narratives in Lhagang

When I was gathering oral narratives of the origin and the Jowo statue of Lhagang in the village, I did not specifically ask people to tell me the history of Lhagang and its people, preferring to leave my questions quite open. To my surprise, I found that monks actually tell these narratives as the history of Lhagang, while laypeople never say that the narratives they tell are history,⁴³ even though the content is similar to that of the version told by the monks. Thus, although the narrative of the princess and the Lhagang Jowo is known by almost everyone in Lhagang, details differ depending on whether the story is told by monks or laypeople.

A layman told the following story:

A long, long time ago, when the Chinese Princess Wencheng was invited up to Tibet, the (Chinese) Tang Emperor gave her a Jowo statue. So the Chinese Princess wanted to bring the Jowo statue with her to Lhasa. When they arrived in Lhagang, the Jowo statue spoke, "This place is so beautiful, I don't want to go up to Lhasa." Then the Chinese Princess said, "You have to go and I need to bring you to Lhasa." The Jowo replied, "Make an exact copy of me and leave it in Lhagang, and then I will go to Lhasa with you." So the princess made an exact copy of the Jowo and built the Lhagang temple to house the statue, locals call it Lhagang Jowo. Because of what the Jowo statue spoke when it arrived in Lhagang, the place is named Lha dga', "The deity's favorite place". Therefore the original name of Lhagang is Lha dga'. After many years had passed, the name was transformed to Lhagang, but the actual name is Lha dga'.

Monks in the monastery tell a more elaborate version:

At that time, the Tibetan kingdom was becoming stronger and its economy prospered. Songtsen Gampo sent his minister Gar Tongtsen to propose a marriage alliance with the Tang dynasty. In order to live peacefully with the Tibetan kingdom, the Chinese Emperor decided to marry his daughter to Songtsen Gampo. It is said that when Princess Wencheng arrived in Lhagang on her way from the Chinese capital Chang'an to Lhasa, her dowry, a statue of Shakyamuni as a twelve-year old boy, could not be moved due to a sudden increase of its weight. The princess wished to travel

⁴³ Monks call the local narrative *logyu* (*lo rgyus*, 'history'), while laypeople call it *narap* (*gna' rabs*, 'account of ancient times').

on to Central Tibet and take the statue with her, but the Jowo statue refused to be moved, and hence became locally known as the Jowo who once said, "This place is so beautiful, I want to stay here." The princess ordered artisans to make an exact copy of the statue and build a temple for the replica, which is believed to be the origin of Lhagang Monastery.

From the above oral narratives, it is clear that both accounts underline two important points. Both refer to historical figures, such as Songtsen Gampo, the Tang Emperor and Princess Wencheng, who are all widely known by other Tibetans. The other point is that both narratives stress the Jowo statue's preference for Lhagang. Both monks and laypeople even claim that the original name of the place, Lhaga (lHa dga'), derives from the story of the Jowo [*lha*] being so happy [*dga'*] that he wanted to stay there. Thus, these oral narratives not only function as a certification for emphasizing the connection with Tibetan history, but also serve to emphasize the importance and attractiveness of their own village, irrespective of whether the narratives are disseminated as 'history' by monks or circulated by local lay people as 'accounts of ancient times'.

Oral narrative in Rangakha

The narrative of Princess Wencheng's journey is also widely known in Rangakha Town, but with a different content. However, it is worth mentioning that people in Rangakha do not know of the existence of the two texts referred to above, nor do they have other written narratives referring to Princess Wencheng and the Lhagang Jowo.

When the Chinese Princess Wencheng, bringing her enormous dowry, arrived in Lhagang on her way to Tibet, she found that plague was rampant in the area, and many children suffered from this terrible disease. Under these circumstances, one of the Jowo statues that she carried with her spoke, "I can't leave this place anymore; I have to stay here to cure those who suffered from the plague." Therefore, Princess Wencheng decided to leave this speaking Jowo statue in this place. The Jowo statue, which was left by the princess, is the Jowo statue that is housed in the Lhagang monastery today.

Apparently, this version emphasizes that although the Jowo statue stayed in Lhagang, it was in order to help all those who suffered from illness in that area. This version allows us to see how a narrative can be changed and circulated in different places. In the next section I will therefore compare each oral version with the written narratives.

Differences among written and oral versions

When comparing the written and oral narratives of Princess Wencheng and the Lhagang Jowo statue, significant differences with regard to details can be found. These differences often regard the climax or main point of the narrative, at the same time providing information about the narrator's intention.

First, the written narratives are longer than two of the oral narratives, but they only briefly describe Princess Wencheng's journey, focusing instead on the sacredness of Lhagang and on the visits of religious masters. The oral narratives, on the other hand, are shorter but place more emphasis on the princess coming to Lhagang and on what happened once she had arrived there. For example, according to one of the oral narratives told by laypeople in Lhagang, when the princess arrived, the Jowo statue suddenly became very heavy and no one could move it. The Rangakha version even claims that the Jowo wanted to stay in order to cure people who were ill. The version told by monks in Lhagang is longer than the other oral narratives, and contains more detailed descriptions, for instance describing the situation of the Tibetan kingdom in the 7th century when King Songtsen Gampo sent his minister Gar Tongtsen to conclude a marriage alliance with the Tang dynasty.

Second, the role of the Jowo statue is different in all narratives, particularly in the case of the two narratives told by laypeople in Lhagang and Rangakha respectively. For example, the number of Jowo statues carried by the princess is different. The Lhagang oral narratives relate that she only carried the single statue that had been given to her as dowry, while the story in Rangakha focuses on one of several Jowo statues brought by the princess. The latter story does not mention how many Jowo statues were with the princess, but the narrative says that one of the statues spoke, so clearly it was more than one. This account also agrees with the *gNas bstod*, according to which the princess had three statues, of which the Jowo Mindro Sungjon stayed in Lhagang,⁴⁴ whereas the *Yang gsang dkar chag* simply states that the Jowo statue suddenly became too heavy to move, without giving further information.⁴⁵

The third difference is whether the princess and the Jowo statue had a conversation or not. The oral narrative told by laypeople in Lhagang describes the conversation; thus, when the Jowo statue said, "This place is so beautiful, I want to stay here", the princess replied, "You have to go to 'the upper place' and [I] need to bring you to Lha-

⁴⁴ *gNas bstod*, fol. 2b-3b.

⁴⁵ *Yang gsang dkar chag*, fol. 5a.

sa." Then the Jowo said, "Make an exact copy of me and leave it in Lhagang, and then I will go." On the other hand, the two written narratives and the oral narratives told by monks in Lhagang and laypeople in Rangakha only refer to the Jowo's speech without referring to any conversation with the princess.

Yet another difference is whether the Jowo statue is the original one or a replica. The *Yang gsang dkar chag* and oral narratives told in Lhagang maintain that the Jowo statue in Lhagang monastery is a replica of the original statue which is in the Lhasa Jokhang. According to the oral narrative told by laypeople in Lhagang, it was the Jowo himself who asked for a copy to be made and to be left in Lhagang. The *gNas bstod* and the oral narrative from Rangakha, however, claim that the speaking Jowo is the one now housed in Lhagang monastery. There is no reference to Princess Wencheng making a copy of it. Cameron Warner also noted that the most important item in Princess Wencheng's dowry, the real Jowo statue, is believed to have remained in the Lhagang temple, while the replica was sent to Lhasa.⁴⁶ These differences may reflect different sources that have circulated in different places, thus illustrating the changing nature of oral narratives.

Finally, the reason for the Jowo remaining in Lhagang is also variously explained. In Lhagang both written and oral narratives state that the reason was that it is a special and beautiful place. The Jowo statue said that he wanted to stay there because Lhagang was so beautiful. Lawrence Epstein and Peng Wenbin refer to this story, saying that the Lhasa Jowo was attracted by this auspicious place (Lhagang), so he refused to go to Lhasa.⁴⁷ However, in the Rangakha oral narrative, the reason is said to be that the whole area, Lhagang as well as Rangakha, suffered from plague, so the Jowo wanted to stay and cure the people. It seems that the Lhagang oral narratives stress the uniqueness of Lhagang, while the Rangakha oral narrative endeavors to establish a connection with the Lhagang Jowo in such a way that it is understood that actually the Jowo stayed for the benefit of the people of the entire area, not only for the people in Lhagang. Thus, everybody can get the same blessing and grace from the precious Lhagang Jowo as the Lhagang people claim for themselves. Despite the narratives having a common basic theme – Princess Wencheng's trip and the Jowo's preference for Lhagang – I argue that the variable elements indicate different agendas. Narratives are functional and purposeful; according to Catherine Kohler Riessman, a narrative is when "...a speaker connects events into a sequence that is

⁴⁶ Cameron 2011:252.

⁴⁷ Epstein and Peng 1994:34.

consequential for later action and for the meanings that the speaker wants listeners to take away from the story. Events perceived by the speaker as important are selected, organized, connected, and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience."⁴⁸ In other words, narratives, in their multiple formulas and in various communities, play an important role in conveying the claims of different actors for specific listeners. In Lhagang, the narrative is particularly aimed at the people from nearby areas, who came to settle there in a context of social change, starting around the turn of the millennium.

The sociopolitical context of Lhagang

It is essential to recognize the circumstances in which the narrative in question has arisen, namely the implementation, starting in 2000, of the state policy of 'Development of Western Regions (Xi bu da kai fa)',⁴⁹ which aims to encourage the growth of the local economy and create jobs and income for the inhabitants in the western regions of China. This policy has gradually opened the door to the development of tourism as well as a significant increase of the population in Lhagang. Especially when the 50th anniversary of establishing Ganze Prefecture was celebrated in Lhagang in 2000, people from surrounding areas gathered in the village, and for the first time people in Lhagang engaged in various kinds of activities related to tourism. This occasion not only raised the reputation of Lhagang as a 'must visit' tourist site in China, but also marked the transition to a new economic reality for the local population. Because of these new opportunities, people from neighboring villages and Chinese traders moved to Lhagang in order to benefit from the new economic opportunities.

This process was accelerated by the state's policy of 'Construction of the Socialist New Villages (She hui zhu yi xin nong cun jian she)', introduced in 2005, focusing on infrastructural development in road and house construction. This massive social project had a negative impact on the local population, on a vast scale and within a very short space of time. In the case of Lhagang, many pastoralists from neighboring areas were forced to settle down in the village/Town and they had difficulties in adapting to the new lifestyle. Therefore many pastoralists later came to work in Lhagang. Families finally chose to settle permanently and build houses in Lhagang. Within a short period of time the population increased dramatically, which was perceived by people in Lhagang as a threat to their village and

⁴⁸ Riessman 2008:3.

⁴⁹ See Saich 2000, Goodman 2004.

sources of income. Thus, they quickly realized the urgent need to defend their territory and economic interests by defining themselves as the 'natives' of Lhagang. It is under such circumstances that people in Lhagang have created a local identity through using local narratives.

The function of written and oral narratives

Narrative is like a "tool kit for do-it-yourself definitions",⁵⁰ in which people can choose to accentuate certain aspects of narratives. Accordingly, narratives not only present different communities' views, but also convey what is important in the way they see themselves. This means that narratives are never identical, as they serve the purpose of expressing different priorities. However, since one can only speculate concerning the motivation for articulating narratives in a local community, it is best to adopt a functional approach when studying them.

In Lhagang, the two written narratives serve as history; as I mentioned above, they are referred to by the monks as 'the history of Lhagang'. Both authors seem to present the "history" of the village on the basis of organizing, processing and refining the events they consider relevant, turning them into a complete narrative with an inherent logic. There is no denying the fact that narrations are constructions, but they are constructions which articulate the aspects and elements that are perceived as essential. For example, both texts use the history of the construction of Lhasa Jokhang as a model for the establishment of the Lhagang temple, thus giving credibility to the history of Lhagang but also enhancing the reputation of the monastery. Mark Freeman argues that one of the functions of narrative is reflecting on and making sense of the past, and that "it is making-present of the world in its absence; it is thus seen to provide a kind of 'supplement' to ordinary experience, serving to draw out features of the world that would otherwise go unnoticed."⁵¹ For monks in Lhagang monastery, the written narratives make it possible to generate new and meaningful understandings of the past. Therefore the *Yang gsangs dkar chag* and the *gNas bstod* are quite authoritative among them.

Oral narratives, on the other hand, contain elements that reveal how people improve the material they are telling and to further their agenda. People in Lhagang and Rangakha have vested interests in making their places famous so that they will attract pilgrims and

⁵⁰ Ryan 2007:30.

⁵¹ Freeman 2010:54.

tourists. Particularly with the development of tourism in recent years, they have learned that Princess Wencheng's journey is partly well known in China, which can potentially attract more tourists to the village and the monastery. The inhabitants of Lhagang use the popularity of the oral narrative to promote tourism and thus support economic development in the area, bringing substantial income to the village. For instance, oral narratives told by laypersons in Lhagang match stories of the Princess Wencheng. In this way, they believe that these oral narratives can help outsiders experience the importance and attractiveness of Lhagang, so that the number of visitors to Lhagang will increase. People in the neighboring town of Rangakha have also seen this economic opportunity, and want to promote the story of the princess. They have therefore added new elements to the story to alter it to their own advantage. However, to explore to what extent local economy has affected the popularity of this oral narrative is beyond the scope of this article. Another important motivation for circulating the narrative is that rapid urbanization and tourism development has resulted social fluctuation and the fluidity of migrants. These dramatic changes have aroused people's need to find a sense of belonging and to be included as an important part of Tibetan history.

Conclusion

This article explores how different groups try to find a way to create their identity and preserve their own interests in the context of the state's various development policies. People in Lhagang and Rangakha use the narrative of Princess Wencheng and the Lhagang Jowo not only for legitimizing their past and creating a sense of identity by connecting with well-known events and figures in Tibetan historiographies but also for promoting their own agendas. This study attempts to go beyond the 'historical reality' of Lhagang narratives, trying instead to understand what people themselves believe is true and how these narratives have been reinterpreted for different purposes and audiences, allowing us to take an inside path to understanding how different communities connect themselves to their social world.

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The Red Buddha Hall Road Revisited: New Information about the Tibetan and Tang Empires in Afghanistan Wakhan

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gog. yul. du. rgya'i. byim. po. byungste/bru. sha. dang. gog. stord/
"The Chinese *byim-po* arrived at Wakhan (Kog-yul). Bru-sha and Wakhan (Gog) were lost."¹

his brief entry in the Old Tibetan Annals for the year 747-748 CE records the Tang Empire's campaign against the Tibetan Empire in Wakhan, in which General Kao Hsien-chih's 10,000 troops defeated a similarly-sized Tibetan force near present-day Sarhad-e Broghil in the Wakhan District of Afghanistan's Badakhshan Province, an event more fully recorded in the Tang Annals².

Departing from Kucha, General Kao led his army via Kashgar and Tashkurgan to the Pamir. At a valley called *Te-le-man*³, he divided his army into three. His strategic aim was to attack the Tibetan-occupied fort Lien-yün⁴ at the northern base of the Broghil Pass in Wakhan. Three thousand horsemen went via the "northern gorge"⁵; a second group went via the "Red Buddha Hall Road"⁶; and the general himself and the Imperial Commissioner went via the "kingdom of Hou-mi", which Chavannes (2006, p. 184) identified as the kingdom of Wakhan.

¹ Dotson 2009, p. 127-8. Original text available online at otdo.aa-ken.jp/

² Found in the biography of Kao Hsien-chih in the Chiu T'ang shu chapter 104 and translated by É. Chavannes (Chavannes 1903/2006, p. 183-187. Page numbers refer to the internet edition.). M. A. Stein (1922) interprets the narrative in conjunction with his (Stein's) 1906 visit to Wakhan. C. Beckwith (1987, p. 130-133) offers a revised reading of the original biographic narrative. Transcription of Chinese names follows that used by Chavannes, Stein and Beckwith.

³ For an alternate reading and possible identification of this toponym see Mock 2016, p. 124.

⁴ For more on Lien-yün, see Mock 2017.

⁵ For more on the northern gorge route, see Mock 2016.

⁶ Chavannes' phrase is "la salle du Bouddha rouge" (Chavannes 2006, p. 184). The Chinese phrase is transcribed as *Ch'ih-fo-t'ang*. Stein (1922, p. 118) notes that Giles' Chinese-English Dictionary, p. 1330, translates *fo-t'ang* as "a family shrine or oratory for worship of the Buddha".

The questions of the route of the “Red Buddha Hall Road” and of the location of a “Hall of the Red Buddha” have never been resolved. Stein assumed the route followed the Wakhan River between the Little Pamir and Sarhad-e Broghil and that the Red Buddha Hall was located along this route. This route is the standard route used today by Wakhi and Kirghiz herders (Mock et al. 2007). It is the route Stein followed in 1906 on his way to Dunhuang and is the only feasible route for a large force to move from the Little Pamir to Sarhad-e Broghil. I have traveled it on foot seven times. New material I discovered along this route (discussed below) indicates it was strategically important, that it was used and occupied by Tibetan forces and provides information on a location for the Red Buddha Hall.



Figure 1, map of Wakhan and surrounding regions

After defeating the Tibetan forces at Lien-yün, General Kao and most of his army crossed the Broghil and Darkot⁷ passes into Little Balur⁸, leaving 3,000 troops who were unfit in Lien-yün. The King of Little

⁷ For more on the Darkot Pass see Mock 2013a.

⁸ Also known as Palola, this kingdom was divided into Little Balur and Great Balur sometime in the late 7th century (Beckwith 1987, p. 96, fn. 62). The Old Tibetan Annals refer to it as Bru-zha (Dotson 2009, p. 120). For detailed discussions on this kingdom see Denwood 2008, p. 13-15; Zeisler 2009, p. 381-388; Schuh 2011, p. 198-223.

Balur was married to a Tibetan princess⁹ and allied with Tibet. The general and his troops pacified Little Balur and took the king and queen prisoner (Chavannes 2006, p. 188-9), after which they returned to their comrades at Lien-yün via the Red Buddha Hall Road. However, it is geographically difficult for General Kao's return route to Lien-yün to be along the Wakhan River in Wakhan. The issues have been discussed in detail by Denwood (2008, p. 13-15) and space does not allow me to go into them here. Suffice it to say that the problem is the rope bridge over the Ghizar River near present-day Gupis (which is 25 km by road from the town of Yasin, matching the Chinese account). If, as described in the Tang Annals, Kao Hsien-chih's troops destroyed the bridge, thereby preventing Tibetan troops from attacking the Chinese army, then how could Kao Hsien-chih subsequently continue down the Ghizar River towards Gilgit to follow either the Ishkoman River or the Hunza River north to the Little Pamir and the Wakhan River to return to Lien-yün?¹⁰ Denwood (2008) suggests the army might have crossed one of the passes connecting the Yasin Valley with the Ishkoman Valley¹¹ and continued up the Ishkoman Valley to the Khora Bhort Pass¹², thereby reaching the route along the Wakhan River in the Pamir – Stein's "Red Buddha Hall Road". This is a roundabout way to return to Sarhad-e Broghil. The more direct route is to continue up the Ishkoman Valley to the grassy Karambar Pass¹³ and descend easily to Lashkar Goz, Wakhi for "the grassy field of the army", located near the southern side of the Broghil Pass. Despite exploring these routes and passes on foot (Mock and O'Neil 1996/2002), the contradictions seem irreconcilable and I will leave the matter here. Of more interest is the route Stein suggested, even though his identification presents difficulties.

⁹ The king was called the *Bruzha-rje* (Bruzha Lord) in the Old Tibetan Annals and named *Su-shi-li-chih* in the Tang Annals; his Tibetan wife was *Khri-ma-lod* (Dotson 2009, p. 121-122).

¹⁰ Stein grasped the problem and recognized that it was impossible for General Kao to proceed to Gilgit if he had destroyed the bridge (Stein 1928, p. 42, fn. 3).

¹¹ The gentle grassy Asumbar Pass (4560 m) is an easier and more likely route than the glaciated Punji Pass (4680m) suggested by Denwood. See Mock and O'Neil 1996/2002 for detailed route descriptions.

¹² Haruko Tsuchiya (1998, p. 124-127) also provides arguments for the Khora Bhort Pass, although anyone crossing the Asumbar Pass from the Yasin Valley would have to cross the Ishkoman River, which is not fordable in summer, to reach the Khora Bhort Pass. *Khora Bhort* is the Khowar language name, meaning "mill stone". The Wakhi language name is *Khodarg Wurth*, which also means mill stone. I have used the Khowar name as it appears more frequently on maps.

¹³ Stein crossed the Karambar Pass in 1913, but rejected the Ishkoman Valley route due to "rock walls on either side ... impassable for any but cragsmen unencumbered by loads" (Stein 1928, p. 48). One assumes that the Wakhi porters, who came to meet him in the upper valley, were such cragsmen.

Stein assumed that the Chinese army went to Gilgit and returned to Lien-yün via the Hunza and Chapursan valleys, crossing the Irshad Pass to the Little Pamir. He also considered the Ishkoman Valley route to the Khora Bhort Pass possible, and noted that “both routes would have brought Kao Hsien-chih to the same place on the uppermost Ab-i Panja [Wakhan River], near Karwan-balasi. ... This leads me to believe that the ‘shrine of the red Buddha,’ ... must be looked for in this vicinity” (Stein 1922, p. 129). He proposed that Karwan-balasi, a small tomb along the true right bank of the upper Wakhan River below Bozoi Gumbaz in the Little Pamir, should be identified as the location of the “chapel of the red Buddha” (Stein 1921, p. 72). Wakhi herders told me that Karwan-balasi, evidently intact when Stein visited, was subsequently dug by “illegal excavators”, although the exterior structure remains standing. The herders said that it is the tomb of the young son of an Afghani who traded with China¹⁴ and that it dates from the late 19th century.

Karwan-balasi seemed to me an unlikely place for a Buddhist shrine, located in a rather obscure and recessed spot. Stein never visited the Wakhan River’s true left bank and did not explore the route leading to the Irshad and Khora Bhort passes. If those passes were used by Tibetans, whether as part of the “Red Buddha Hall Road” or as routes to Brusha/Balur/Palola, then, I thought, there might be some rock carvings or perhaps a watch tower along the route¹⁵.

¹⁴ The Japanese physician Go Hirai heard a similar story (Hirai 2015, p. 46). The caravan trade route linking Afghanistan with Kashgar and Khotan via the Wakhjir Pass closed in 1949 after the Chinese Revolution.

¹⁵ Stein visited the Chapursan Valley in 1913, reaching it via the difficult Chilinji Pass (5160 m) from the upper Ishkoman Valley. He noted the rock markings “resembling *padukas*” (Buddha’s footprints), which are found at several shrines in Chapursan and concluded that the Chapursan Valley-Irshad Pass route was the route Kao Hsien-chih must have taken (Stein 1928, p. 52). He did not visit the Irshad Pass. For more on Chapursan shrines, see Mock 1998, p. 304-309.



Figure 2, *chorten* with “easier to go” inscription.

As one walks along the trail above the true left side of the Wakhan River, there is a large, patinated rock outcrop with numerous ibex and yak figures carved on it¹⁶. On one rock is a simple *chorten* (Tibetan *mchod-rten*) with a 16.5 cm tall mast but no finial (see figure 2). The *chorten* has five complete rectangular stages totaling 53 cm in height. The top stage is 7.6 cm wide, and the bottom stage is 28 cm wide. Beneath them is a sixth stage, 36.8 cm wide and open at the bottom. This stage frames an inscription written beneath. The inscription reads *'gro sla ba*. The occurrence of a double *tsheg* between *'gro* and *sla* is notable. According to Sam van Schaik (n.d.), the double *tsheg* was not used with any regularity at Dunhuang after 812 CE, making it useful for dating. The short phrase translates into English as “easier to go”, possibly an indication that as a traveler moves onward, the traveling gets easier. Standing at this spot, one looks out over the entire Little

¹⁶ This rock art site is discussed in Mock 2013b.

Pamir, a vast upland plain that stretches for many days' foot or horse travel (see figure 3). That way is indeed easier to go. However, in the other direction are the Lupsuk River and the Irshad and Khora Bhort passes¹⁷. That way is considerably more difficult to go and the Tibetan phrase incised on the rock suggests the Tibetans had a similar impression of the route.

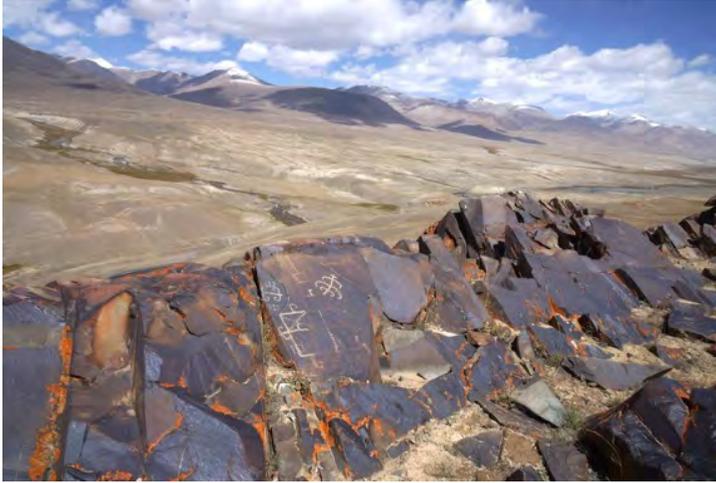


Figure 3, the Little Pamir viewed from rock with "easier to go" inscription.

As one approaches the Lupsuk River, at a high point, elevation 4125 m, and away from the Wakhan River, is another rock art site¹⁸. The site has a commanding view of the entire western half of the Little Pamir, the lower Wakhjir Valley, and the upper part of the route along the Wakhan River to Sarhad-e Broghil. It would be an excellent place for hunters to stop and watch for game. It would also be an excellent place for soldiers to see any movement along the routes through the Little Pamir and to guard the approach to the Irshad and Khora Bhort passes. The rock panels at the site are extensively incised with several *chorten*, Tibetan inscriptions and Buddhist imagery. Underlying them are some

¹⁷ From my own experience, I know that the Lupsuk River is very deep and swift in summer and impossible to cross on foot. Wakhi and Kirghiz who use the Irshad Pass route cross the Lupsuk River only on yak or on horse and never at the height of the summer flood. The Irshad Pass, which I crossed in 2005, is subject to avalanche in spring and late autumn after snowfall, making the route treacherous in early and late season when water level in the Lupsuk River is lower.

¹⁸ This site has never been photographed or documented previously and, to the best of my knowledge, never visited by any non-Afghan person. Wakhi and Kirghiz people in Wakhan are either unaware of it or uninterested in it. I found the same local perspective expressed at the Chap Dara site in Wakhan (Mock 2016, p. 129).

older figures of ibex and hunters, indicating the site was significant to people using the Little Pamir before the Tibetans arrived¹⁹.



Figure 4, rock art panels 1 & 2.

A large rock panel (panel 1) at the site is inscribed with three *chorten*, two adjacent inscriptions, a separate finial-like structure with Buddhist symbols, and a large multi-petalled flower. A separate rock (panel 2) has a *chorten* with an inscription and two multi-petalled flowers. (See figure 4).

On the large rock, the lower left *chorten* has a three-stage base, a central pillar, and two upper projecting stages or tiers. An oval dome extends from the top stage and a mast with an orb and a three-pronged finial crown the *chorten* (see figure 5). The upper stages that project outward beyond the pillar are characteristic of a design termed “cross like” (Francke 1928, p. 1051). This design is found on many *chorten* elsewhere in Wakhan and also along the upper Indus River and its tributaries extending as far east as Baltistan²⁰. Denwood (2007, p. 45)

¹⁹ Rock art sites are often palimpsests in places with extensive views, suggesting they served as loci of ceremonial or ritual activity for a sequence of cultures, each of whom left their own distinctive art. For more on similar such sites in Wakhan, see Mock 2016, p. 126-128.

²⁰ For the several Wakhan *chorten*, see Mock 2016, figures 8 & 9. For the Darkot *chorten*, see Mock 2013a, p. 12. For the *chorten* at Gakuch along the Ghizar River near Gilgit, see Jettmar and Sagaster 1993, figure 8, republished in Denwood 2007, figure 5. *Chorten* of similar design, some with Tibetan inscriptions, have been identified in Baltistan, notably at the villages of Nor, Parkutta and Gol. For more on the rock art of Baltistan, see Schuh 2011. For the several *chorten* near Alchi in Ladakh, see Denwood 2007, figure 3 and Orofino 1990, figures 17, 18, 30, 39, 40.

noted that this design is typical of the western Himalaya and Karakoram. Jettmar (1990, p. 809) considered the design to be an innovation made during the time of imperial Tibetan rule in the region. Laurianne Bruneau (personal communication) commented that the design is actually quite rare in the rock art of both Gilgit and Ladakh, which makes the frequency of this design in Wakhan and its association with Old Tibetan inscriptions significant.

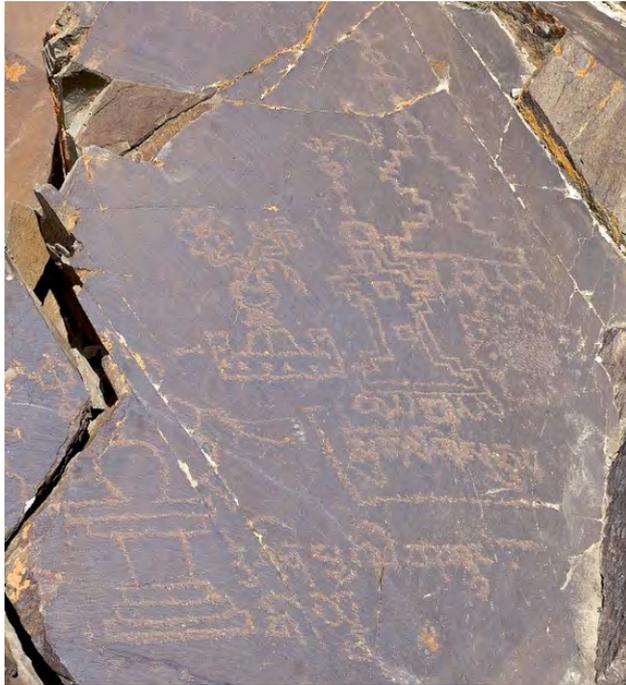


Figure 5, Panel 1.

The lower left *chorten* is deeply pecked into the rock surface and executed in a proportional, balanced manner, indicative of skillful artistic production. The rock on which the chorten is inscribed has cracked after composition, and so the finial is now separated from the chorten. Figure 6 presents an artistic rendition of the chorten as it would have originally appeared. The *chorten* measures 48 cm from base to top of dome, with the mast and finial adding 20 cm more. The base is 30.5 cm wide and the widest upper stage tier is 31.75 cm wide. The bottom base line is 2.5 cm thick, and other lines are about 1.25 cm thick.



Figure 6, rendering of “cross-like” chorten.

The Tibetan inscription on the right side of the *chorten* is also carefully executed, with proportional and neatly curved strokes (see figure 7). It reads *rye shin pya ligsteng gi yon*, adhering to a standard offering formula. *Rye shin pya ligsteng*²¹ appears to be the name of the donor. The name *rye shIn* is found in the Old Tibetan Annals version 1, OTJ 0750, line 69, in the Ox year 677-678 CE (Dotson 2009, p. 92) and also on a rock inscription at Alchi (Denwood 1980b, p. 158-169, figure 84E). Dotson notes that the name is connected with the revolt of Zhang Zhung and Denwood observes that it is a non-Tibetan Central Asian name.

²¹ Although *lig* is written, constraints of spacing and compactness evidently result in the elision of final *sa* before the initial *sa* of *steng*. I am grateful to Karma T. Ngodup for discussing abbreviation, contraction and elision with me.



Figure 7, *rye shin pya ligs steng* offering inscription.

To the right and above the inscription is a second *chorten* with a Tibetan inscription below it. There is a third *chorten* partially above and to the right of this *chorten*, but it has no adjacent inscription. The two *chorten* are congruously composed so that the upper tiers of the lower *chorten* fit the lotus petals and base of the upper *chorten* (see figure 8). Given their arrangement, the same inscription seems associated with both *chorten*.

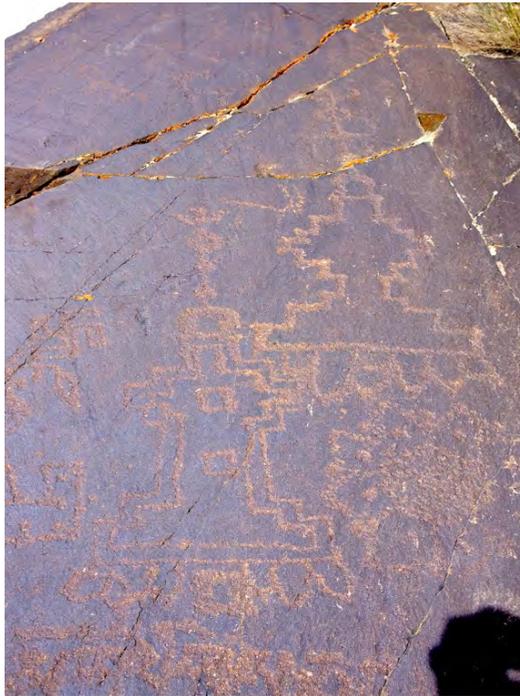


Figure 8, two adjacent *chorten*.

The inscription consists of a name with an offering formula. The name appears to be *mug ligs cung* (see figure 9) and was inscribed over an earlier carving of an ibex. The curve of the ibex horn is discernable where it arcs across the lower left petals of the lotus base of the *chorten* above and the body of the ibex appears as a horizontal line above *mug*²² (see figure 10).



Figure 9, *mug ligs cung yon* inscription.



Figure 10, DStretch® enhancement of *mug ligs cung yon* inscription using the YRE matrix. The underlying ibex figure is visible above *mug*, with the ibex horns curving into the petals of the *chorten* above.

²² The software algorithm DStretch® was employed to enable visual separation of the underlying ibex figure. See Harman 2005 and Le Quellec et al. 2015 for more on the use of DStretch® in rock art.

The name is followed by the more faintly inscribed syllable *yon*, as would be expected for an offering, with the genitive elided in a contracted form. The name *mug lig*s has a Turkic quality to it²³. A Uighur identity for the donor named in the inscription is not implausible.

The two *chorten* (see figure 8) above the *mug lig*s *cung* inscription have the general cross-shaped design, but are strikingly different from other Wakhan *chorten* in that they both have a lotus-petal base and a more massive and angular architecture to them. The *chorten* with the inscription beneath has a two-stage base on a lotus flower, a tall central pillar, and three upper projecting stages, with the middle stage projecting farther. The base is 24.3 cm wide and the *chorten* measures 50.8 cm from base to top of dome. The widest upper stage tier is 29.2 cm. It has a small hemispherical dome and a mast with three orbs arraigned along its 28 cm length and topped with a trident-like (crescent moon and sword) finial. The remarkable features of this *chorten* are the two vertically aligned windows in the center of the column and the parallel outline around the base, pillar and upper stages.

The third *chorten* on the same rock panel, while not outlined, has a massive quality to it, with a 38 cm wide triple-tier base resting on a lotus flower, a very short and narrow 9 cm wide pillar and a massive five stage upper section, with the middle protrusion extending 26.6 cm. The small hemispherical dome has a mast with three successive orbs and a trident-like finial totaling 30.5 cm in length. An earlier ibex figure underlies the middle orb. Beneath the *chorten* is a large eight-petalled flower. Each petal has a central dot. The center of the flower is stippled and was pecked, rather than incised.

These two *chorten* draw from a different architectural vocabulary than the other *chorten* depicted on the lower left of this rock panel. Denwood notes that “the Bonpo stupa [has] something of the form of a building ... a hollow construction with a means of entry”, with expanded upper tiers below the dome, which is reduced in size or even absent (Denwood 1980a, p. 176-179), a description that matches the architecture depicted on this rock panel. It is also worth noting that Fussman has examined the architectural style and construction of the stupa in which the Gilgit manuscripts were found. He concluded that it was “a stone tower with a wooden framework built according to the well-known building tradition of the Hindukush and Karakoram

²³ The name *Mug lig* occurs in Pelliot tibétain 1283, Content Report of the mission consisting of five Uighur envoys sent to the North Asia (ll. 533-642). Federica Venturi (2008, p. 22, fn. 53) comments on “The name *Mug lig*, corresponding to the Turkic *Bükli* of the Orkhon inscriptions...”.

higher valleys. This tower might have been both the chapel and lodgings of an *acarya*..." (Fussman 2004, p.144). The two chorten depicted on the Wakhan rock panel may be representations of buildings not far from Wakhan in which monks studied, resided and practiced.

To the left of the two *chorten* is the remarkable offering of a vase from which streams forth an eight-petalled flower and a double-line swastika held by a stem of the flower which ends in a leaf (see figure 11). The vase is held within the horns of a crescent moon, which sits on a fully-incised finial with protruding lower outer edges. This finial tops a rhomboid dome. The dome rests on a broad 30 cm wide base with two upturned rectangular outer walls rising 13 cm above the bottom of the base. A series of six dots line the base and each outer upright has a dot, for a total of eight dots.



Figure 11, vase with flower and swastika.

This composition is executed with a remarkable fluidity for a rock medium and is an artistic representation of auspicious Buddhist symbols, suggesting that the rock served as a locus of religious significance for the Tibetan Empire's soldiers stationed at this location or passing through the Pamir. Although it is not possible currently to say where the Red Buddha Hall²⁴ was located, or if it even existed, this site seems closer to that tradition than any other site in the Little Pamir of Afghanistan. Further archaeological investigation could yield evidence of the extent of usage of this site.

The second rock panel at this site has a *chorten* with a donation inscription and two multi-petalled flowers (see figure 12).



Figure 12, panel 2 *chorten* and inscription.

²⁴ The red Buddha of the west, Amitabha, 'Boundless Light', is connected to Ahura Mazda, and the Amitabha cult "seems to have started in North-West India" (Snellgrove 1978, p. 134). The paradise of Amitabha was popular in Dunhuang, where "the earliest example is found in Cave 220, dating from 642 A.D." (Gaulier et al. 1976, p. 10).

The *chorten*, like the upper *chorten* on the first panel, has a lotus-petal base. Its general shape, however, is that of a cross-shaped *chorten*, with an oval dome, a single protruding upper tier, a short central pillar and a two-tier base. It measures 38 cm from base to top of dome. The base is 23 cm wide. What is unusual is that it shares with the middle *chorten* on the first panel a parallel outline around the base, upper tier and dome, which appears like some sort of nimbus. The *chorten* is not architecturally massive, rather, it exhibits an almost delicate structure, even though it appears to have been pecked out, and is proportionally suggestive of a human form seated in a meditative posture. The dome has a mast with a central orb and above it is a trident whose outer arms seem to converge at the top and hold another small orb. The mast and finial measure 24 cm. To the left of the *chorten* is a large, eight-petalled flower, with considerable stippling beneath it. Above it is a smaller, ten-petalled flower. The centers of these flowers are not stippled like the flower on the first panel.

Below the *chorten* is a four-line offering inscription. The size of the space on the rock below the *chorten* evidently constrained the composition and length of the lines. In the first line, the initial *na* has a superscript circle, which is the Tibetan character used for Sanskrit *anusvara*, although here it seems employed for saving space rather than indicating a Sanskrit term. The next character is clearly *po*, followed by *shud*, giving the name *naM-po shud*²⁵. In light of this reading, I would revise the reading of the Chap Dara inscription shown in figure 7 of Mock 2016, which on closer examination has the same name, although it is spelled with *ma* and not with the *anusvara* circle. Hence, we have two instances of *nam-po shud* in Wakhan²⁶. Philip Denwood (personal communication) kindly informed me of a Pu shud noble family who held an estate in Yarlung in medieval times, and a Shud pu family who provided a Tibetan minister in the 8th century and is also known from later times, pointing to a Tibetan identity for this individual. The second line reads *'phan zi*, and continues onto the third line with *gs*, giving us the full name of *nam-po shud 'phan zigs*. The final line is shifted to the left due to space constraints and is the expected dedicatory ending of *gyi yon*. The syllables of this final line, in particular *na*, are near the bottom of the rock and appear to have weathered more than the syllables in the upper three lines.

²⁵ Following Imaeda 2011, p. 42, using *M* to transliterate the *anusvara* circle. Transliterations in this article follow the system outlined at Old Tibetan Documents Online, otdo.aa-ken.jp/

²⁶ Stone 6 at Gakuch (Jettmar and Sagaster 1993, p. 130 and fig. 9) appears to have the same name in line 1, *nam pu shud*, suggesting individuals with this family name were involved in Tibetan occupation of both Wakhan and Balur.

The extensive Buddhist rock art with accompanying Tibetan inscriptions at this site on the high point above the route to the Irshad and Khora Bhort passes obviously required more than a few days to compose and inscribe. Three names are recorded in the inscriptions. What were these men doing at this high-elevation remote location? About 100 m below the site is a small ruined rock wall enclosure (see figure 13).



Figure 13, small rock-wall structure.

The walls are composed of stacked flat stones, 1 m high where still standing, and form a 1.8 m by 3.8 m rectangular enclosure. There is an opening in one long wall. One corner has a dilapidated projecting rock enclosure. One possibility is that this could be a ruined herders' shelter, but there are larger herder settlements located within a few hours' walk, and such a high, exposed location is not a typical herders' camping place. The other possibility is that it is connected to the nearby rock art. If so, it may have been a temporary post for individuals manning a hill-station watch post or *ri-zug* in Tibetan. I have elsewhere proposed that a network of such hill stations and watchtowers extended through Wakhan and continued into Chitral (Mock 2017). Takeuchi, who studied hill stations near Miran and Mazar-tagh along the southern side of the Tarim Basin, noted that a unit of watchmen, called a *tshugs*, usually consisted of four men, with a Tibetan (or Zhang Zhung) commander and sub-commander and a cook and assistant cook who were local conscripts. Sometimes there were only three men (Takeuchi 2004, p. 51-55). The onomastics of the

three names at this Wakhan site, one probably Tibetan, one probably Zhang Zhung and one probably Uighur fit with the personnel composition described by Takeuchi. Evidently the route was important enough to warrant the substantial effort put into producing the rock art and inscriptions and was used enough to warrant the Tibetan “road sign” telling travelers that the difficult part was over and an easier road lay ahead (see figure 14).



Figure 14, the Irshad Pass on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border with its distinctive red mountain.

Conclusion

A precise identification of the actual “Red Buddha Hall Road” remains elusive, due to divergence between the Tang Annals narrative and on-the-ground realities. However, it is clear that the route along the Wakhan River from the Little Pamir to Sarhad-e Broghil and Lien-yün is the only route that Tang troops could have taken, and hence must form a significant part of what was termed the “Red Buddha Hall Road”. It is also clear that Tibetans were using valleys other than the Yasin Valley to and from Wakhan. An important site with several large *chorten*, Buddhist iconography and Tibetan inscriptions all depicted on smooth rock surfaces demonstrates that Tibetans were moving between Palola/Balur/Bru-zha and the Pamir via the Irshad Pass, the Khora Bhort Pass, or both. Paleography of an inscription along that route provides a basis for dating Tibetan movement to the late 8th century or the early 9th century CE. Onomastic elements in inscriptions and the presence of a nearby walled structure suggest the site may have been a Tibetan hill station along the route. Stylistic elements of the rock art show linkages with the upper Indus area and suggest that Wakhan - *Gog-yul* - may have been a locus for a distinctive rock-art

chorten design. The totality of the rock art and inscriptions at one site along that route suggests it may have played a ceremonial role akin to that of a shrine.

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The Transformation of the Qing's Geopolitics: Power Transitions between Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries in Amdo, 1644–1795

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Introduction

mdo lies on the border between northwestern China and central Tibet. The geographical location of Amdo made it a flourishing junction of diverse cultures and a critical point of military strategy. As a pivot of East and Inner Asian cultures, Amdo has been included in Gansu and Qinghai provinces cohabited by various ethnic groups, such as the Tibetan, Mongol, Monguor, Chinese and Turkic Muslims etc. Precisely, the Tibetan Amdo region has been included within southwestern Gansu province and the east of Kokonor (Qinghai) in modern China. Although Gansu and Kokonor have both been regarded as parts of the Tibetan Amdo region traditionally, there was a significant distinction between them after the 1660s.¹ The fact is that the Tibetan monasteries in Gansu and Kokonor developed inversely during the 17th to 18th centuries. According to documents regarding Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in Amdo

* A part of this paper is based on my preliminary research of Amdo history published in Chinese in 2015. See: Ling-Wei Kung, "Taomin zang chuan fo si ru qing zhi xing shuai ji qi bei hou de menggu yin su," *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology Academia Sinica* 86.4 (2015), 855-910. I am grateful to Professors Gray Tuttle and Madeleine Zelin, as well as my colleagues Riga Shakya and Tezin Dongchung at Columbia University, for their comments on the draft of this paper, but of course any errors remain my own. This research was supported by a thesis award from the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission of Taiwan.

¹ In this paper, I would like to use the geopolitical concepts of "Gansu" to designate the Luchu region (Tib. Tib. Klu chu; Ch. Taohe) and "Kokonor" (Qinghai) to refer to the Sungchu (Tib. Bsung chu; Ch. Daxiahe), the Tsongchu (Tib. Tsong chu; Ch. Huangshuihe), and the Julakchu (Tib. 'ju lag; Ch. Datonghe) regions. As this article investigates as follows, the geopolitical division of "Gansu/ Kokonor" gradually established by the Qing dynasty after the late seventeenth century provided different incentives to the development of local monasteries in Amdo.

from the 17th to 18th centuries, it is clear that the most influential monasteries were mainly located in eastern Amdo, namely modern Gansu,² and that they declined gradually from the late 17th century onwards. For instance, Chödé (Tib. Chos sde dgon; Ch. Chongjiao si)³ and Choné Monasteries (Tib. Co ne dgon chen; Zhuoni si), which were the most powerful monasteries in eastern Amdo, gradually lost their political status after the 1660s. In contrast, the political and economic centers of Amdo started to move westward from monasteries in the Luchu region (Tib. Klu chu; Ch. Taohe) to their counterparts in the Sungchu (Tib. Bsung chu; Ch. Daxiahe) and the Tsongchu (Tib. Tsong chu; Ch. Huangshuihe) regions. Kumbum and Labrang Monasteries are typical examples.⁴ This phenomenon is testament to the significant change in ethnic and frontier policies between the Ming and Qing dynasties.

What caused the difference between Gansu and Kokonor? Why did the shift happen after 1660s? What is the legacy of the transition of the 1660s? By combing through various materials concerning the political geography of the Amdo region, in Chinese, Manchu, Mongolian and Tibetan, this paper shows that the regional differences in the development of the Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in Gansu and Kokonor reflected the Mongolian and Muslim influences behind the frontier administration of the Qing court. Moreover, the Qing's frontier administration, which focused on Mongolians in Kokonor, was highly involved with Tibetan Buddhism as promoted by the Manchu emperors. For example, lots of Mongolian monks from western Amdo, such as the reincarnations of Sertri (Gser khri) and Zamtsa (Zam tsha), were invited to Beijing by the imperial family, and appointed to translate Buddhist scriptures from Tibetan and Mongolian into Manchu language.⁵ Therefore, the Mongols' religious influences

² The west part of Shaanxi Province was divided from and renamed as Gansu Province in 1663. In this paper, Shaanxi and Gansu are both referred to the eastern Amdo.

³ This article adopts the THL simplified phonemic system for transliterating Tibetan proper names in the body. Tibetan and Chinese forms are also given in the Wylie and Pinyin systems in the following parenthesis if they are less common.

⁴ The locations and the list of Amdo monasteries, see: Appendix. Although there were few monasteries built in Gansu province during the Qing period, most of them were on the borderlands between Qinghai and Gansu, and sponsored by Mongolian nobles from Kokonor.

⁵ The translation of Manchu Buddhist texts was an official cultural project that attempted to build up the common Buddhist identity of Manchus, Mongolians and Tibetans. Kung Ling-wei, "Comparative Research on Manchurian Translation of Diamond Sūtra: Manchu-Ethnocentrism and Official Translation of Buddhist Texts in Qing Dynasty," in Shen Weirong ed., *History through Textual Criticism: Tibetan Buddhism in Central Eurasia and China Proper* (Beijing: Chinese Tibetology Press, 2012), 455-496. Ibid., "The Convergence of Sūraṅgama Mantra and

not only shaped the frontiers in Amdo but also the imperial culture of the Qing court.⁶ Additionally, the ethnic and frontier policies of the Qing dynasty profoundly remodeled the local politics of Amdo included in Gansu and Qinghai after the mid-17th century.

In this article I will describe the development of the Tibetan monasteries in Amdo under the rule of the Qing dynasty and the transition between the Ming and Qing periods. By delving into Chinese, Manchu, Mongolian and Tibetan archival materials, such as *The Archives of the Grand Secretariat (Neigedaku dang)*⁷ and *The Manchu-Mongolian Routine Memorials of the Lifanyuan in the Early Qing*,⁸ I will examine the interaction between the Qing court and monasteries in Amdo.

Amdo Monks in Manchu and Chinese Archives

Since the 17th century, Amdo monasteries started building relations with the Qing dynasty. After that many Qing documents were made in the process of “tributary missions.” In *the Archives of the Grand Secretariat*, there are bilingual edicts in Tibetan and Chinese. These edicts were issued by the Ming Xuande (r. 1425-1435) and Zhengtong (r. 1436-1449) Emperors in the early fifteenth century and can be considered as the official certificates delivered by the Ming court to the monasteries at that time. The Chinese parts of these edicts were seriously damaged, but Tibetan parts are still legible. I have discovered that three temples in Minzhou of Gansu were called Chaoding (Tib. Cha’u ting),⁹ Guande (Tib. Kwang de’),¹⁰ and Zhaoci Monasteries

Sitātapatrā Dhāraṇī in Da-Zang-Quan-Zhou: Study on Manchurian Transliteration of Tibetan Mantra and the Influence on Philology in Qing Dynasty,” in Shen Weirong ed., *Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Studies: Texts, People, Images and History* (Beijing: Chinese Tibetology Press, 2013), 640-650.

⁶ Because many Mongolian women were married to the Manchu emperors, the imperial family was familiar with Mongolian language and culture. In addition to the political intention, this might be another reason the Qing emperors closely studied with lamas who were fluent in Mongolian.

⁷ *The Archives of the Grand Secretariat* are collected by the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, Taiwan. The catalogue can be accessed on the website of IHP: <http://archive.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/mctkm2/index.html> (04/20/2015).

⁸ Wuyunbilige 乌云毕力格 (Oyunbilig) and Wu Yuanfeng 吴元丰 ed., *Qingchao qianqi lifanyuan manmengwen tiben* 清朝前期理藩院满蒙文题本 (Mg. *Dayicing gürün-ü ekin üy-e-yin γada γatu mong γol-un toru-yi jasaqu yabudal-un yamun-u manju mong γol ayiladqal-un debter-üid*) (Hohhot: Neimenggu renmin Press, 2010). These documents have been published in their original forms.

⁹ Dated in the 2nd year of the Xuande (1427). *The Archives of the Grand Secretariat*, Catalogue number: 038107-001.

(Tib. Ja'u tshi gzi)¹¹ together with Chongjiao mentioned later in the paper. They were recorded under a list of eighteen monasteries.

These edicts from the Ming dynasty in the archives of the Grand Secretariat of Qing provoke the question: Why these imperial edicts, which were granted to the temples in Minzhou by the Ming emperors in the 15th century, appear in the archives of the Grand Secretariat of the Qing dynasty after the 17th century? An entry of *Collected Supplementary Regulations and Sub-statutes of the Great Qing (Daqing huidian shili)*¹² may have the answers. In *Daqing huidian shili*, there is a list of Amdo monasteries that handed over their former edicts received from the Ming court, and received new ones from the Qing dynasty when they were asked to pay tribute to the Qing in 1663. The names of Chaoding, Guande and Zhaoci Monasteries were recorded on the list.¹³

After the 1650s, the monastic leaders in Amdo started to try to build relations with the Qing court by requesting official certificates to recognize their hereditary titles and the legal status of their monasteries. However, since the mid-seventeenth century the Qing court treated each monastic leader and monastery differently based on its geopolitical concerns. The Qing's geopolitical strategy significantly influenced the development of the monasteries by remodeling the hierarchical power structure in Amdo. That is to say, not every monastic leader could maintain his hereditary title, which would fundamentally decide his monastery's official status in the Qing's tribute system. For instance, Chongjiao Monastery was one of the most powerful monasteries in the Luchu region of eastern Amdo. Similarly, the edict to Chongjiao Monastery issued by the Ming court was also collected in *The Archives of Grand Secretariat*.¹⁴ However, instead of mere-

¹⁰ Dated in the 13th year of the Zhengtong (1448). *The Archives of the Grand Secretariat*, Catalogue number: 038109-001.

¹¹ Dated in the 13th year of the Zhengtong (1448). *The Archives of the Grand Secretariat*, Catalogue number: 038110-001. The Tibetan names of three monasteries given in the original Ming documents are obviously transliterations of Chinese. The other forms of their Tibetan names have not been discovered yet.

¹² *Huidian* (collected statutes) is one of the most essential sources to study the Qing law on state level. In addition to the part of collected statutes, it also includes many cases related to the statutes. The Qing court first edited *Huidian* in 1690 and expanded it for four times in 1732, 1764, 1818, and 1899. Since 1801, the editors separated the cases from the statutes and established an independent part named *Shili* to contain the cases related to the statutes. *Shili* (supplementary regulations and sub-statutes) includes many precious records related Tibetan monasteries and monks in Amdo and can be compared with other archival sources.

¹³ [Qing] Kun Gang et al., *Daqing huidian shili* (originally published in 1899) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), vol. 10, 1093.

¹⁴ The edict to Chongjiaosi is now preserved in the National Museum of China in Beijing.

ly re-confirming the political status of the monasteries in Minzhou, the Qing dynasty did not recognize the existing title of state preceptor (Ch. Guo shi) formerly conferred to the abbot of the Chongjiao Monastery by the Ming government. The change of the titles significantly affected the influences of the monasteries in Amdo, because if the local religious leaders receive the official titles, they could maintain economic connections with China in the name of “paying tribute” (Ch. Chao gong). The rejection of previous Chinese titles actually reflected a fundamental change in the Qing government’s frontier policy that has rearranged the power structure in Amdo by re-ranking the titles of the religious leaders in the tributary system left by the Ming dynasty. Therefore, the Ming certificates submitted by the monasteries to the Qing court not only reflect the continuity of the tributary system but also power transition in late-seventeenth-century Amdo geopolitics.

In addition to the monasteries in Minzhou, primary monasteries in eastern Amdo including Taozhou and Hezhou, also began to build connections with the Qing court in 1650s.¹⁵ Beside the Ming edicts, there are several Manchu and Chinese documents related to Amdo monasteries in *The Archives of the Grand Secretariat*. Through these documents and *Collected Supplementary Regulations and Sub-statutes of the Great Qing*, it can be seen that monasteries in Kokonor, such as Drotsang (Tib. Gro tshang rdo rje 'chang; Ch. Qutan) and Zina (Tib. Zi na bsam 'grub gling; Ch. Xina) Monasteries,¹⁶ also started paying tribute to the Qing dynasty from 1653. And the Ministry of Rites (Libu) regularly took charge of tributary affairs regarding Amdo monks.

However, a century later, the Lifanyuan (Man. tulergi golo be dasara jurgan,¹⁷ the Board of Frontier Affairs) overtook the tributary affairs regarding Amdo monks in 1743. That is the reason the latest documents about the tribute of Amdo monks in *The Archives of the Grand Secretariat* was formed in 1741 and the earliest one in the routine memorial of the Lifanyuan was in 1744. That is to say, the related documents, which were formed after 1743 could only be found in *The Manchu-Mongolian Routine Memorials of the Lifanyuan*.¹⁸ Since the rou-

¹⁵ *The Archives of the Grand Secretariat*, Catalogue number: 035990-001.

¹⁶ The edict of Zina Monastery is now preserved in the National Museum of China in Beijing.

¹⁷ “Tulergi golo be dasara jurgan,” the name of the Lifanyuan in Manchu, literally means “the Board for the Administration of Outlying Provinces.” “Tulergi golo” can be translated as “frontier.”

¹⁸ Routine memorial, or “Ti ben” in Chinese, is a genre of Qing documents that was used to communicate ordinary affairs, such as tax collection, criminal punishment, and routine personnel matters, between the emperors, the Grand Secretariat and the Six Boards as well as the Lifanyuan. Routine memorials of the Li-

tine memorials of the Lifanyuan were all written in Manchu and Mongolian, it is needless to say that the Manchu and Mongolian materials are very important to study on the relations between Amdo monks and the Qing court, especially during the Qianlong reign.

Why did the Lifanyuan finally take over the tributary affairs, which were previously handled by the Ministry of Rites from 1743? According to the statement in *Daqing huidian shili*, since the Qing government considered that Mongolian monks were all administered by the Lifanyuan, the affairs of Amdo monks should also be managed by the Lifanyuan.¹⁹ This statement might reflect a Mongolian factor²⁰ in the frontier policy of the Qing dynasty, which intended to communicate with Khoshut Mongols through the monasteries in the Luchu, Sungchu, and Tsongchu regions.

Moreover, the tributary affairs, which were transferred from the Ministry of Rites to the Lifanyuan in 1743, also show that the legal status of Gansu's monasteries was totally changed. Before 1743, the Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in Gansu province were treated as a part of "foreign countries" (*Wai guo*), which included the Kingdoms of Chosŏn, Ryukyu, and Vietnam in the tribute system of the Qing dynasty. Therefore, when the Tibetan Buddhist monks from Gansu visited the Qing court in Beijing, they were received by the officials of the Ministry of Rites, the diplomatic institute for the tributary affairs of foreign countries. In 1743, after the Lifanyuan took over the tributary affairs related to the Tibetan Buddhists from Gansu, eastern Amdo was formally recognized as the direct-ruled territory of the Qing dynasty. This change was directly caused by the policy of "transforming chieftainships into district administration" (*Ch. Gai tu gui liu*)²² applied in eastern Amdo since 1726.

fanyuan contain many records of interactions between the Qing dynasty and the monasteries in Amdo.

¹⁹ *Daqing huidian shili*, vol. 10, 1192.

²⁰ Mongolian factors in Qing frontier policy are embodied in various aspects, such as noble ranks and religious culture. Some examples, see Dittmar Schorkowitz and Chia Ning eds., *Managing Frontiers in Qing China: The Lifanyuan and Libu Revisited* (Leiden: Brill, 2016). The Mongolian factor discussed here is specifically a strong inclination of the Qing court intending to win the military support of Khoshut Mongols in Kokonor through Buddhist leaders in the Luchu, Sungchu, and Tsongchu regions.

²² The policy of replacing native chieftains with state-appointed bureaucrats was initiated by the Ming dynasty in China's southwestern borderland. The main purpose of the policy was to substitute rotating-shift bureaucrats (*Ch. Liu guan*) for native chieftains (*Ch. Tu guan*) in order to promote the dynasty's control over borderland society. This policy was taken over by the Qing dynasty during the reign of the Yongzheng and was applied in eastern Amdo in 1726.

Material Culture in Manchu and Mongolian Archives

Besides the function of the institutions, the Manchu and Mongolian archives also provide critical details that explicate the interaction between material culture and political function. After Amdo monasteries paid their tribute to the Qing court from 1743, they received several kinds of gifts as rewards. In other words, the political relations between Amdo monasteries and the Qing government were based on the exchange of tribute and gifts. The gifts from the Qing court were imbued with specific symbolic meanings. However, it is hard to discover these special meanings in official Chinese historiography, as the compilers often abridged many key details in archival sources during the process of compiling.

For instance, according to *Daqing huidian shili*, the leader of Amdo monks who came to pay tribute to the Qing court would receive a pair of boots as the rewards. This record seems meaningless in *Daqing huidian shili*; however, the archives of the Grand Secretariat and the Lifanyuan may give more interesting details.

In Chinese archives of the Grand Secretariat, the name of the boots presented to Amdo monks was called "Lüxiepi yafeng caliang xue,"²³ which is very difficult to be understood in the Chinese context. However, according to the archives of the Lifanyuan in Manchu and Mongolian, these boots had a specific cultural meaning in Manchu. In fact, the name of the boots spell as "Šempilehe sarin i gūlha" in Manchu²⁴ and "köke sarisu qabiči γ san sarin γ utul" in Mongolian.²⁵ The Manchu word "Sarin" is a special term that means a kind of leather made from the skin of horse's button (Guzi pi).²⁶ Therefore, the Chinese word "Calian" cannot be literally understood as "wiping face."

But what does "Lüxiepi yafeng" mean? In Manchu and Mongolian languages, these words mean: "being sewed on grey marten." "Šempi" in Manchu refers to "grey marten" (Qingshu pi).²⁷ It was a kind of precious fur, which could be used only by emperors.²⁸ Since 1816, the

²³ *The Archives of the Grand Secretariat*, Catalogue number: 091400-001.

²⁴ *Qingchao qianqi lifanyuan manmengwen tiben*, vol.3, no.39, 365.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, no. 72, 557.

²⁶ In terms of lingual origin, the Manchu word "Sarin" derived from "Sagari" in Mongolian (Tib. Sag ri < Persian. Sagrī) The English word "shagreen" was also from Sagrī in Persian. Berthold Laufer, *Sino-Iranica: Chinese Contributions to the History of Civilization in Ancient Iran* (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1919), 575.

²⁷ In the bilingual archive in Chinese and Machu, "Šempi" corresponded with "grey marten." *The Archives of the Grand Secretariat*, Catalogue number: 058796.

²⁸ [Qing] Wang Wenshao, *Wang wenshao riji* (The diary of Wang Wenshao)(Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), 465.

Grand Ministers of State in Qing dynasty wore boots with green marten as the symbol of their distinguished political status.²⁹ However, Amdo monks had worn these special boots since 17th century.³⁰ Interestingly, in addition to the imperial boots made of grey marten, prominent Tibetan Buddhists also received special gifts like yellow dragon robes from the Qing emperors,³¹ and were allowed to use imperial yellow tiles to renovate the Tibetan Buddhist temples in Wutai Mountain.³² The valuable presents, such as the boots with green marten and the yellow dragon robes, have been endowed certain meanings of power discourse and social structure. As French anthropologist Marcel Mauss (1872-1950) argues, a gift-exchange system actually reflects the building of power relationships and each present possesses “productive power” on its own. Namely, a gift is not a simple medium of economic exchange but also a symbol of power structure.³³ As a specific symbol in the context of Manchu political culture, the boots of green marten offered to the religious leaders in Amdo subtly reveal the Qing’s geopolitical concerns. Moreover, the cases of gift-exchange between the Qing court and Amdo monks shows that the Manchu and Mongolian archives can provide scholars a diverse optic through which we can reconsider the power relationships and geopolitical ties between the monasteries in Amdo and the Qing court. Before discussing the study on Manchu archives and Mongolian factor related to the transition of Amdo monasteries during the 17th -18th centuries, I would like to summarize previous studies, and then point out the possibility of improving existing studies, especially taking New Qing History as inspiration.

²⁹ [Qing] Liang Zhangju, *Shuyuan jilüe* (The narrative of the Grand Council)(Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1997), 97.

³⁰ Wang Wenshao (1830-1908), who served as the grand counselor in 1879, wrote a record about the boots with green marten: “in the inner court, only the ministers of the imperial presence, the grand counselors, and the ministers of the imperial household are allowed to wear the boots decorated by green marten. Other people are not allowed to wear [the boots] unless they have received special permissions. Because [the boots with green marten] are normally used by the emperors.” Wang’s observation shows that the boots with green marten were only used by the Manchu emperors and high-ranking officials in the inner court during the Qing period. Wang Wenshao, *Wang wenshao riji*, 465.

³¹ For instance, Rje bstun dam pa was presented a yellow dragon robe. [Qing] *Qianlongchao neifu chaoben lifanyuanzeli*, compiled in the 18th century, (Beijing, China Tibetology Press, 2006), 148, 191.

³² *Qingliangshan Zhi* (The gazetteer of Wutai Shan), vol. 7, 46-49. Gray Tuttle, “Tibetan Buddhism at Wutaishan in the Qing: the Chinese-language Register,” *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies*, 6 (2011): 163-214.

³³ Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. by W. D. Halls (New York: Routledge Classics, 2002), 56-59.

Literature Review: Inspiration of New Qing History

There are many studies on the monasteries in Amdo. However, most of them only specialized in the Ming or Qing periods instead of comparing the transition in Amdo between Ming and Qing. For instance, Chinese scholars mainly paid their attention to the development of Amdo monasteries in the Ming dynasty.³⁴ Although some Chinese scholars researched on Amdo monasteries in the Qing period,³⁵ these studies have much room for improvement, since the materials and methods were limited before the publishing of the related archives.

The textual materials in the Qing period can be divided as two categories by its forming procedures and intentions.³⁶ The materials of the first one, such as archives and documents, were formed as by-products of historical events. In contrast, official historiographical writings by Qing imperial historians are essentially different. They carried political purposes and intended to promote specific ideologies. The records of the second category, such as *The Veritable Records* (*Shi lu*) and *The Campaign History* (*Fang lue*) compiled by Qing imperial historians for specific political reasons, have been proved less reliable than their counterparts of the first category. By comparing original archival sources with the Qing historiography, scholars have pointed out that the Qing historiography intentionally censored and distorted the original records in the archives for political propaganda.³⁷ Therefore, it is essential to examine records in the Qing historiography critically by comparing their counterparts in the original archives, which were formed earlier than the historiography.

In *The Manchu-Mongolian Routine Memorials of the Lifanyuan* and

³⁴ Pu Wencheng, *Qinghai fojiaoshi* (Xining, Qinghai renmin Press, 2001). Xie chongguan, Baiwengu, *Zhongguo sengguan zhidu shi* (The Institutional History of Chinese Monastic Officers)(Xining: Qinhai Renmin Press, 1990), 266-271. Baiwengu, "Mingqing de fansenggangsi shulüe" (A Brief Narration of Tibetan Monastic Officers in Ming and Qing), *Journal of Chinese Tibetology* 1 (1992): 131-141.

³⁵ Yangjian, *Qingwangchao fojiaoshiwu guanli* (The Management of Buddhist Affairs in Qing Dynasty)(Beijing: Shehui Kexue Xinxian,2008), 437-473.

³⁶ Wuyunbilige (Oyunbilig), "Shiliao de erfanfajiqi yiyi—yisuoeweide zhaocheng-zhizhan de xiangguan shiliao weili" (The Dichotomy of Historical Materials and its Meaning: the Materials about the War of Joo), *Studies in Qing History* 1 (2002): 79-85.

³⁷ For instance, after comparing original documents in Manchu and the Qing historiography in Chinese, Zhuang Jifa points out that *The Veritable Records* seriously distorted the original records in the archival sources about the death of Galdan Boshugtu Khan (1644-1697) in order to signify the Qing's victory over Zunghar. Zhuang Jifa, *Gugong dang'an shuyao* (A synoptic description of the Qing archives in National Palace Museum)(Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1983), 68-69.

The Archives of Grand Secretariat, there are several Manchu and Mongolian documents related to monks and monasteries in Amdo. Unfortunately, limited by language, many scholars cannot access to Manchu and Mongolian materials, which are indispensable to this topic. As the archival materials, these detailed archives provide contain far more reliable and detailed information than *Daqing huidian shili*.

Moreover, some scholars often overemphasized the Chinese effects on Tibetan culture, and then overlooked the diverse factors, which actually related to the development of Amdo monasteries during the Qing period.³⁸ In fact, Mongolians and Muslims in Kokonor and Gansu deeply affected Amdo monasteries during the Qing period.

On the other hand, western researchers, who have been influenced by the pioneering scholarship of New Qing History, paid their attentions to the importance of multilingual materials, and highlighted the inspiration of non-Han factors. Scholars of New Qing History, who have challenged the Han centrism and brought the Qing history into the cross-cultural contexts, have changed the paradigm of the studies of the Qing history profoundly.

Although western scholars have done precursory surveys about Tibetan Buddhism in Amdo from diverse angles,³⁹ the historical images of the Tibetan monasteries in Amdo, the crossroad of four different cultures, Chinese, Tibetan, Mongolian and Muslim, contains numerous blanks as yet.

Through the outlook of New Qing History, western scholars have profoundly studied Chengde, a burgeoning Buddhist center, which was developed by the Qing dynasty.⁴⁰ Their works have successfully demonstrated the influences of non-Han factors, which also played key roles in Amdo in the Qing period, and finally made fundamental differences between the monasteries in Gansu and Kokonor.

³⁸ Zhangshuangzhi, "Qingdai gansu minzhou zhuang lang lama chaojin nianban" (The Tributary Rotation of Lamas from Minzhou and Zhuanglang of Gansu during Qing Period), *Journal of College of Tibetan Ethnology* 33-2(2012): 16-20.

³⁹ Paul K. Nietupski, *Labrang: A Tibetan Buddhist Community on the Inner Asian Borderlands, 1709-1958* (Lanham: Lexington books, 2010). Gray Tuttle, "Building up the Dge lugs pa Base in Amdo: The Role of Lhasa, Beijing and Local Agency," *Journal of Tibetology* 7 (2012): 126-140. Max Oidtmann, "A 'Dog-eat-dog' World: Qing Jurispractices and the Legal Inscription of Piety in Amdo," *Extrême-Orient, Extrême-Occident* 40 (2016): 151-182. Max Oidtmann, "Religion, Politics, and Ethnicity in Nineteenth-Century Qinghai," *Late Imperial China* 37-2 (2016): 41-91.

⁴⁰ James A. Millward and Mark C. Elliott et al., *New Qing Imperial History: The Making of Inner Asian Empire at Qing Chengde* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004); Philippe Forêt, *Mapping Chengde: The Qing Landscape Enterprise* (Honolulu : University of Hawai'i Press, 2000); Anne Chayet, *Les temples de Jehol et leurs modèles tibétains* (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1985).

According to the summary above, I would like to stress the importance of Manchu-language archives and Mongolian factor on this topic by introducing Manchu, Mongolian and Tibetan archives. And then points out the influences of the Mongolian factor, which caused a profound change in the monasteries in Amdo during the Qing period.

Briefly, the decline of the Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries in Gansu and the rise of their counterparts in Kokonor between the 17th and 18th centuries are the meaningful issues that are worthy of further discussion. In order to realize the transition of the Tibetan monasteries in Gansu and Kokonor during the Qing period, it is necessary to make a preliminary outline of the background of Tibetan Buddhism in Gansu before the 17th century.

Tibetan Clans and Monasteries in Eastern Amdo before the 17th Century

Since the Mongolian Yuan ruled Tibet and authorized Tibetan clans to manage their people in the 13th century, some powerful Tibetan families became the dominant forces in Tibet. After the Ming army overthrew the Yuan dynasty and expelled Mongolians from China in 1368, the Chinese emperors continued to commission the Tibetan clans leaders to administer local affairs, and asked Tibetan monks to preside over religious celebrations. In the local societies of eastern Amdo, the Ming court recognized the privileges of powerful Tibetan clans previously supported by the Mongol Khans. Meanwhile, the Ming dynasty started giving Chinese surnames to Tibetan local leaders as the symbol of imperial authorities.⁴¹ These powerful Tibetan clans were therefore known as the Hou family in Minzhou (Minzhou houshi)⁴², the Yang family in Taozhou (Taozhou yangshi),⁴³ and the

⁴¹ Hongwu and Yongle emperors also gave Chinese surnames to Mongolians who submitted to the Ming dynasty. Here the Ming court applied the similar policy to Tibetans in Amdo. *Ming Taizong shilu* (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1966), vol. 23, 427.

⁴² Although "Hou" is not a common Chinese surname, the author of *Minzhouzhi* (The gazetteer of Minzhou) compiled in 1702 said that the Hongwu emperor granted the surname of "Hou" to Rdo rje dpal, the Tibetan local leader in Minzhou, in 1369. Zhang Runping ed., *Xitian fozi yuanliu lu* (Beijing: Chinese Social Science Press, 2012), 205.

⁴³ The Chone king named Dbang phyug (Ch. Wangxiu) was granted the surname of "Yang" during the reign of Zhengde (1506-1521). According to the *Qing shi gao*, the great-great-grandfather of Dbang phyug submitted to Yongle emperor also in 1369, and his name was transliterated as "Xiedi" in Chinese. I found this man in *Ming shilu* and *Mdo smad chos 'byung*. His Tibetan name was actually "Spyang

Han family in Hezhou (Hezhou hanshi). In addition to local politics, these families also managed religious affairs in eastern Amdo. For instance, Penden Trashi (Tib. Dpal ldan bkra shis; Ch. Bandan zhashi, 1377-1452), the best-known Tibetan monk in Minzhou, was a descendant of the Hou family. According to the new-found *The Biography of Penden Trashi (Xitian fozi yuanliu lu*, literally “the history of the origins of the Buddha’s son from the West Heaven”),⁴⁴ Penden Trashi’s grandfather, father and elder uncles were all officers of Mongol Yuan, and his three younger uncles were all famous monks.

Similarly, the other primary monasteries in the eastern Amdo, such as Zhuoni Monastery (Tib. Co ne dgon) in Taozhou and Hanjia Monastery (Tib. Han kya zi) in Hezhou, were managed by the families of Yang and Han separately. All of the Tibetan clans had a special tradition that made their elder sons serve as secular rulers, while they sent younger sons to be monks. This tradition was the legacy of the Sakya lineage and the Yuan dynasty. Since Mongolian Prince Köden (1206-1251) met with Tibetan Sakya Pandita (Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan, 1182-1251) in 1247, Sakya monasteries had dominated eastern Amdo until the uprising of the Géluk sect in the 15th century. For example, Donyo Gyaltsen (Tib. Don yod rgyal mtshan; Ch. Duanyue jianzang),⁴⁵ the founder of Pugang Monastery and the Han family in Hezhou, was the nephew of Phagpa (Phag pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan, 1235-1280), the most influential leader of the Sakya lineage at the Court of Khubilai. According to *The Religious History of Amdo (Mdo smad chos ’byung)*, it is clear that the Tibetan Buddhists from these Tibetan clans were adherents of the Sakya tradition, and arranged

thi.” Moreover, *Mdo smad chos ’byung* called him the king of Chone (Cho ne’i gong ma). Usually, “gong ma” referred to the Manchu emperors or predominant lamas during the Qing dynasty. Brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos ’byung* (Lanzhou: Gansu Remin Press, 1989), 630. Also: *Qing shi gao*, “Liezhuang,” vol. 517, 14307; *Ming Xuanzongs shilu*, vol 15, 394.

⁴⁴ Shakya Sri, *Xitian Fozi Yuanliu Lu* (1448), transcript in 1829. Modern reprint: Zhang Runping ed., *Xitian Fozi Yuanliu Lu*, 160. According to the preface of the Chinese version, the biography was originally written in Tibetan, but is still not found. Some parts of the Tibetan text were cited in *Mdo smad chos ’byung*. *Mdo smad chos ’byung* (Lanzhou: Gansu Remin Press, 1989), 640-645.

⁴⁵ In addition to *Mdo smad chos ’byung*, Chinese materials like *Mingshilu* and *Xunhuatingzhi* (The gazetteer of Xunhua ting) also mentioned him. Don yod rgyal mtshan closely interacted with the royal family of Ming. In 1396, Don yod rgyal mtshan presided the publication of Tibetan Tantric texts in the Shanxi Province. His work was supported by the Prince Jin Zhu Gang (1358-1398), the third son of the Hongwu emperor. According to the preface of these Tibetan texts, Zhu Gang was a pious Tibetan Buddhist. These texts are preserved in Museum of Chinese Art and Ethnography of Parma, Italy. See: Saerji, “The block edition of the Buddhist scriptures preserved in Chinese Art Museum of Parma, Italy,” *Chinese Tibetology*, 84(2008): 69-74.

their younger nephews to take over their religious careers, just as the Sakya 'khon family had done before.⁴⁶

Unlike other non-Han people, who were regarded as despicable foreign barbarians, eminent Tibetan Buddhists from eastern Amdo were respected as mentors of the imperial family by several Chinese Ming emperors, who patronized them with priceless treasures and assets. For instance, as one of the most famous Dharma Lords in the Ming court, Penden Trashi, who received the venerable title of "the Dharma Lord of Great Wisdom" (Ch. Dazhi fawang; Tib. 'jam dbyangs chos rje)⁴⁷ from the Ming emperor, had built Chödé Monastery, one of the most honorable monasteries in Minzhou of Gansu, under the order of the Yongle emperor in 1416. According to the Chinese version of *The Biography of Penden Trashi*,⁴⁸ The Ming emperors not only conferred high honors and good treatment to Penden Trashi, but also entrusted him to manage the religious affairs of the royal temples in Beijing and to preside over the translation of Tibetan scriptures.

Additionally, there were other celebrated Tibetan monks connected with the Amdo region during the reign of the Ming. For instance, Byams chen chos rje Shakya Yéshé (Ch. Daci fawang Shijia yeshi, 1352-1438) had close contact with the Ming emperors and senior eunuchs. According to *The Biography of Shakya Yéshé (Byams chen chos rje'i rnam thar)*,⁴⁹ Shakya Yéshé built several monasteries and spread Buddhist teachings in Amdo while he stayed there during his travels from Tibet to Beijing. After his death, under the order of the Ming emperor, his disciples constructed a monastery near Hezhou of Shaanxi province named Dzomokhar Monastery (Tib. Mdzo mo khar; Ch. Honghua si), in which his relics were interred and worshiped. Through the patronage of the Ming emperors, the successors of Penden Trashi and Shakya Yéshé formed powerful clans in Minzhou and Hezhou of Gansu.

An examination of the Chinese historiography and Tibetan biographies, I found that primary Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in eastern Amdo interacted closely with the imperial court during the Ming period. Moreover, the Ming emperors not only respected

⁴⁶ *Mdo smad chos 'byung*, 550.

⁴⁷ The Chinese title of "Great Wisdom" (Dazhi) is actually a Chinese alias of Mañjuśrī (Tib. 'jam dbyangs), because Mañjuśrī is regarded as a symbol of wisdom in Buddhism.

⁴⁸ Zhang Runping ed., *Xitian Fozi Yuanliu Lu* (Beijing: Chinese Social Science Press, 2012).

⁴⁹ *Byams chen chos rje'i rnam thar*, scanned by TBRC, Work number: W25577. Modern reprint: Labapingcuo (Lhagpa Phuntsog), *Daci fawang shijia yeshi* (Beijing: Chinese Tibetology Press, 2012)

Amdo monks as their spiritual mentors, but also authorized their relatives to govern secular affairs. As discussed above, influenced by the Sakya tradition of inheritance, the elder sons of the local Tibetan leaders in eastern Amdo would be selected as secular rulers, and their younger brothers would become the disciple of their younger uncles, who were the abbots of Buddhist monasteries. Interestingly, because Chinese names were the symbols of imperial power, the Tibetan lay leaders would be renamed in Chinese, whereas brothers taking over religious positions would still keep their names in Tibetan. For instance, according to *The Veritable Records of Ming* and *The Genealogy of the Hou Family*,⁵⁰ the uncle of Penden Trashi, named Hou Neng, was appointed as a local commander by the Ming court. Sometimes, elder sons became monks, and made their younger brothers take charge of secular affairs. For instance, Donyo Gyaltzen, the founder of the Han family in Hezhou, travelled to Nanjing and Shanxi in 1373, and served as the Buddhist mentor of royal family members. Meanwhile, his younger brother Han Karma (Ch. Han Jialima) was commissioned as the local governor of Hezhou. The Ming court even asked Han Karma to go to Central Tibet as the pacification envoy of the Ming.⁵¹ Considering the strategic importance and diverse cultures of the Amdo region, the Ming government employed a specific way to extend their rule in Amdo.

Different from the centralization of the imperial bureaucracy in Chinese regions, the Ming government commissioned the religious and military leaders of Tibetan clans as monastic officers (Ch. Seng gang) and local commanders (Ch. Duzhihui shi).⁵² Rather than administering the region directly, the Ming government delegated monastic officers and local commanders, who inherited their titles from their fathers or uncles, to ensure frontier security and to defend against Mongolians in Kokonor.⁵³

Considering the importance of the dominant clans, Ming emperors even gave them venerable titles, such as Dharma Lord (Ch. Fa wang) and State Preceptor (Ch. Guo shi), in order to enhance their official status and political influence. In this way, the development of the monasteries in Gansu during the Ming dynasty was not only due

⁵⁰ Hou Neng was very active in Minzhou during 1428-1458, and *Mingshilu* mentioned him more than ten times. *Ming Xuanzong shilu*, vol. 42, 1035. [Qing] *Houshi jiapu* (The Genealogy of the Hou Family), compiled in 1779, reprinted in *Xitian Fozi Yuanliu Lu*, 199-208.

⁵¹ See: Sa'erji, "The block edition of the Buddhist scriptures preserved in Chinese Art Museum of Parma, Italy," *Chinese Tibetology*, 84(2008): 72.

⁵² *Ming Taizu shilu*, vol. 60, 1173.

⁵³ *Ming shi* (History of the Ming Dynasty) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), vol. 330, 8539-8545.

to religious interaction, but also political considerations.

The Decline of the Tibetan Monasteries in Eastern Amdo after 1660s

According to the Chinese and Tibetan records cited above, the Tibetan monasteries located in eastern Amdo interacted closely with the Ming court. Since the monasteries in Shaanxi were on the boundaries of China, Tibet and Mongolia, the Ming government honored the religious leaders of Tibetan clans in Shaanxi as Dharma Lords or State Preceptors so as to acquire their support in maintaining security of the frontier against the Mongolians in Kokonor.⁵⁴

As soon as the Manchus began their conquest of China and its constituencies, they made contact with the Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in eastern Amdo. The new Qing government asked the monks of eastern Amdo to hand in their former edicts, cancelled them or issued new ones. In this process, the Qing court therefore had the chance to decide whether to maintain the former titles given by the Ming dynasty for political purposes. At first, the Qing government had generous attitude toward the monks of eastern Amdo in 1650s. The State Preceptors were all permitted to keep their official status when they recognized the reign of the Qing dynasty, and committed to paying them tribute.

However, the situation fundamentally changed after the 1660s. The Qing court began to deny the requests of monks from eastern Amdo to maintain their standing, which they had inherited from their ancestors since the 14th century.⁵⁵ At that time, the Qing government noticed that these eastern Amdo monks were less critical than their counterparts in Kokonor and changed its frontier policy accordingly.

In *Daqing huidian shili*, there are several fragmental records about the titles of Tibetan monks. Since *Daqing huidian shili* were compiled and abridged on the basis of Chinese archives, it is possible to find the original sources of these fragments. By sorting through these piecemeal fragments and further comparing them with archives, historians can reconstruct the development of the frontier policy of the Qing dynasty.

For example, *Daqing huidian shili* mentions that the first existing

⁵⁴ Ootosaka Tomoko, "A Study of Hong-hua-si Temple Regarding the Relationship between the dGe-Lugs-pa and the Ming Dynasty," *The Memoirs of the Toyo Bunko* 52(1994), p. 69-101.

⁵⁵ *Daqing huidian shili*, vol. 10, 1093.

record about the relations between monasteries in eastern Amdo and the Qing government was dated 1650. According to this entry, after the Qing troops contacted Tibetan Buddhists in Hezhou, the abbot of Dzomokhar Monastery named Han Jampal (Tib. Han 'jam dpal; Ch. Han Chanba), who was respected as a State Preceptor by the former Ming dynasty, handed in his edict and certificate issued by the Ming. In order to win his support to maintain local social order, the Qing government allowed Han Jampal to keep his title. Another example is that of the Great State Preceptor of Empowerment (Ch. Guanding da guo shi) from Xianqing Monastery named Dampa Gyatso (Tib. Dam pa rgya mtsho; Ch. Danpa jiancuo) who also asked to pay tribute to the Qing government in order to be authorized to keep his title.⁵⁶

This fragment in *Daqing huidian shili* only recorded the seals and edicts handed over from these Tibetan monks. Without further knowledge or background, it is impossible to make any conclusive statement from this informative record. Nevertheless, there are two critical clues. First, Honghua and Xianqing Monasteries were both near Hezhou, and presided over by the Tibetan families Han and Zhang, who were the inheritors of Donyo Gyaltsen and Shakya Yéshé respectively. Second, the Great State Preceptor of Empowerment was a relatively high title, which Shakya Yéshé once held. This evidence indicates Dampa Gyatso might have been the successor of Shakya Yéshé in the eyes of the Qing Emperor.

Fortunately, there is a noteworthy original document conserved in the archives of the grand secretariat. It is a memoir sent to the Grand Secretariat written by Meng Qiaofang (1595-1654), the Governor-general of Shaanxi (Ch. Shaanxi zongdu) from 1645 to 1654.⁵⁷ In his memoir, Meng disclosed that Dampa Gyatso, who presided over Honghua and Xianqing Monasteries in Hezhou, expressed his submission and requested the Qing government to recognize his title from the former dynasty. His memoir recorded the statement of Dampa Gyatso, who claimed he was the successor of Shakya Yéshé and in order to justify his religious lineage, he described the origin of his monasteries in detail.

This document is very valuable for solving disputes about the mysteries of Shakya Yéshé's life. For example, the Tibetan biography of Shakya Yéshé supposed that he passed away in Amdo while he returned Tibet from Beijing in 1435.⁵⁸ However, *The Gazetteer of Xunhua* (Ch. *Xunhua ting zhi*) indicates he passed away in Beijing in

⁵⁶ *Daqing huidian shili*, vol. 10, 1092-1093.

⁵⁷ *The Archives of the Grand Secretariat*, Catalogue number: 035990-001.

⁵⁸ *Byams chen chos rje'i rnam thar*, 15-a. Labapingcuo, *Daci fawang shijia yeshi*, 44.

1439.⁵⁹ According to the statement of Dampa Gyatso, Shakya Yéshé passed away in Beijing in 1438. Since the Tibetan biography apparently intended to accentuate the miracle of his death, the record in this memoir is comparatively more reliable.

Moreover, it is worth noting that Meng's memoir is the original source of the fragmented record in *Daqing huidian shili*. That is to say, the fragment in *Daqing huidian shili* was an abridgement of the memoir. As a result, this memoir provides many informative clues, which do not exist in *Daqing huidian shili*. For instance, the fact that Meng Qiaofang, the Governor-general of Shaanxi, wrote the memoir is an indicator that implies the connection between the titles of Tibetan monks and the frontier policy of Qing government.

The Qing court approved the request of monks from the Sungchu and Tsongchu regions, who requested to inherit their established titles in 1650. In contrast, the Qing government denied the petition of Hou Chokyi Tendzin (Tib. Hou Chos kyi bstan 'dzin; Ch. Hou zhiji danzi), the abbot of Chödé Monastery (Ch. Chongjiao si) in the Luchu region and the successor of Penden Trashi, when he asked for the recognition of his title in 1660.⁶⁰ In 1675, because he and his people fought against the army of Wu Sangui, Hou Chokyi Tendzin eventually received the title of state preceptor as a reward for his "contributions to pacify the revolt" (Ch. gong ze you gong) to the Qing court.⁶¹ It should be noticed that the idea of "contribution" defined by the Qing court here is actually the military service of the Hou family, who maintained not only social order but also Qing authority in eastern Amdo. Therefore, religious leaders in the Luchu region without extraordinary military contributions to the Qing dynasty could not receive the honorific title of state preceptor as their ancestors in the Ming period. Consequently, when Hou Chokyi Tendzin's grandson Hou Gyaltsen Nyingpo (Tib. Hou Rgyal mtshan snying po; Ch. Hou jiancai ningbu)⁶² requested to inherit his grandfather's honorific title, the Kangxi Emperor directly refused his request directly in 1710. As the Kangxi Emperor said, "the honor of state preceptor is consid-

⁵⁹ *Xunhua ting zhi* quoted by Chen Nan, who tries to use the Chinese gazetteer to investigate when Shakya Yéshé died, is actually a relatively late source dated in 1792. Chen Nan, *Mingdai daci fawang yanjiu* (Research on the Dharma Lord of Great Mercy in Ming Period) (Beijing: Zhongyang minzhi daxue, 2005), 190-195.

⁶⁰ *Daqing huidian shili*, vol. 10, 1092-1093.

⁶¹ *Daqing huidian shili*, vol. 10, 1093.

⁶² The edict to Rgyal mtshan snying po was collected in the archives of the grand secretariat. This edict recorded his lineage. *The Archives of the Grand Secretariat*, Catalogue number: 104527-001; *The Genealogy of Hou's Family* also provided precious information about the lineage of Hou's family "The Genealogy of Hou's Family," in *Xitian Fozi Yuanliu Lu*, 190, 201.

erably great. No one should receive this honorific title without having made any contributions to the court."⁶³ By this time, the title of state preceptor conferred by the Qing government to the religious leader in the Luchu region was actually political instead of religious in nature.

Why did the Qing government modify its attitude toward the monks of eastern Amdo between 1650 and 1660? What happened between 1650 and 1660, and who and what made the Qing court change its policy? These interesting issues are keys that can allow us to further probe into the Mongolian and Muslim factors behind the shift of imperial frontier policy in the early Qing period.

Mongolian and Muslim Factors in the Frontier Policy of the Qing

As discussed above, Meng Qiaofang, the Governor-general of Shaanxi, was a critical figure. As a mediator between the Qing court and the monks in western Shaanxi (later separated as a part of Gansu in 1663), the tasks of Meng Qiaofang can be an important hint for us to connect the honorific titles of Amdo monks and the frontier policy of the Qing Empire.

Since Meng Qiaofang played an essential role, it is necessary to investigate his major task commissioned by the Qing court in 1650. According to the record in *The Veritable Records*, Meng Qiaofang was promoted as the Minister of War in 1650, as reward for suppressing Muslim rebels (Ch. Hui zei).⁶⁴ This record clearly indicates that one major mission of Meng Qiaofang was to subdue the rebellion of Muslims on the northwestern boundary of the Qing Empire.

In 1648, Chinese Muslims headed by Milayin and Ding Guodong, two local Muslim military officers in Ganzhou, rebelled against the Qing government and killed the provincial governor in Shaanxi. They supported the Yanchang King (Ch. Yanchang wang) named Zhu Shichuan as the symbol of the former Ming dynasty in order to call people to fight against the Qing government. Moreover, they even allied with Turkish Muslims in Kumul (Ch. Hami) and Turpan (Ch. Tulufan) to reinforce their power. The ethnic components of the Muslim power led by Milayin and Ding Guodong were very complicated. In fact, the Muslim group, which was composed of Uygur, Mongolian, Salar and Chinese people, seriously threatened the Qing

⁶³ *Daqing huidian shili*, vol. 10, 1094.

⁶⁴ *The Veritable Records of Shunzhi* (Beijing, Zhonghua shuju, 1986), vol.48, 382.

sovereignty in northwestern China.⁶⁵

Joseph Fletcher and Frederic Wakeman argue the causes of the Muslim revolt of 1648 were not only the commercial restrictions regulated by the Qing dynasty but also the religious conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims.⁶⁶ Through this perspective, the policy chosen by the Qing government can be further understood.

Considering the religious factor and the clash of civilizations behind the revolt, the Qing government finally decided to cooperate with the Khoshut Mongolians, who were the most powerful Mongolian tribe in Kokonor. It is noteworthy that most Khoshut people were faithful Tibetan Buddhists, who were considered infidels by Muslims. In 1638, Gūshi Khan (1582-1655), the leader of the Khoshut tribes, met the 5th Dalai Lama Lobsang Gyatso (Tib. Blo bzang rgya mtsho, 1617-1682) in Lhasa. This event led to Tibetan Buddhism, especially the Géluk lineage, becoming dominant in the spiritual world of Khoshut and Oirat Mongolians.⁶⁷ With the support of Khoshut Mongolians, the Qing army eventually pacified the Muslim revolt in 1650.⁶⁸

In addition to the alliance with the Khoshut Mongolians, the Qing government also attempted to win the support of the Tibetan clans in Gansu in order to repress the Muslims. For instance, there is an inscription on the stone tablet in memory of the rebuilding of Xianqing Monastery in 1650.⁶⁹ The writer of the inscription was a general of the Qing military, but his name is unclear because the tablet has been damaged. According to the inscription, this general donated a huge amount of money for reconstructing Xianqing Monastery, which was utterly destroyed by the Muslims revolt in 1648. On behalf of Buddhists, he blamed the rebellion of Muslims and praised the merits of Buddhism.

This inscription and the letter written by Meng Qiaofang in 1650 show that Meng Qiaofang or his subordinate Zhang Yong, the Commander of Gansu (Ch. Gansu zongbing), supported the rebuilding of

⁶⁵ [Qing] Qiyunshi, *Huangchao fanbuyaoliüe* (The Synopsis of the Qing's Outlying Prefectures), published in 1846, (Beijing: Xueyuan, 2009), vol. 15, 173.

⁶⁶ Joseph F. Fletcher, "The Naqshbandiyya in Northwest China," in *Studies on Chinese and Islamic East Asia* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1995), XI, 1-46. Frederic E. Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise: The Manchu Reconstruction of Imperial Order in Seventeenth-Century China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 795-805.

⁶⁷ Peter C. Perdue, *China March the West: the Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2005), 197.

⁶⁸ [Qing] "The Biography of Namjar and Tsering Dhondup," printed in 1795, in *Menggu wang gong biao zhuan* (The Biographies of Mongolian Dukes and Princes) (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2006), vol. 84 & 85.

⁶⁹ [Qing] Gong Jinghan, *Xunhuating zhi* (The Gazetteer of Xunhua ting), compiled in 1792, (Nanjing: fenghuang, 2008), 551-552.

Xianqing Monastery in Hezhou, and then helped the Tibetan monks of Xianqing Monastery, the inheritors of Shakya Yéshé, to be protected by the Qing court.

We know the context in which the Qing court took a positive attitude towards the monasteries in eastern Amdo, and allowed them to maintain their honorific titles in 1650. Since the Muslim revolt had just been pacified, the Qing government needed the support of the Tibetan monasteries to control the local society. These Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in Hezhou, such as Xianqing Monastery, were managed by religious leaders from influential Tibetan families with Chinese surnames, who also controlled local politics, and had retained their independent privileges of judicial power and tax collection since the 14th century.⁷⁰ In order to win the support of these Tibetan clans for pacifying the remnants of the Muslim revolt, Meng Qiaofang donated and renovated the Tibetan Buddhist monasteries ruined by the Muslim rebellion in 1648. As a result, the stele of Xianqing Monastery was erected. Meanwhile, Meng Qiaofang also tried to build up the regular connections between the Tibetan clans and the Qing court. Therefore, he asked Tibetan religious leaders, such as Han Jampal and Dampa Gyatso, to hand in the edicts previously issued by the Ming court, and pay tribute to the Qing dynasty. This is the reason the memoir was written in 1650, the same year of the renovation of Xianqing Monastery.

However, the threat to the rule of the Qing dynasty in eastern Amdo did not disappear. The remnants of the Muslim rebellion escaped to Kokonor and submitted to the leaders of a Khoshut tribe, who desired to utilize the Muslims' knowledge of firearms.⁷¹ To the Qing government, Khoshut cavalymen equipped with Muslim firearms could be very dangerous. Consequently, Khoshut Mongolians eventually became a potential threat to the Qing Empire, because they attempted to occupy the pastures on the boundary between Kokonor and Gansu.

After the disintegration of the Ming dynasty in 1644, a Khoshut prince called Gonbo Tayiji (<Tib. Mgon po tha'i ji) started to attack and destroy Chinese fortresses on the borderlands between Kokonor and Shaanxi. Later Gonbo Tayiji started to collect the remnants of the Muslim army defeated by the Qing in 1648, who were known for their musket skills. Gonbo and his cousins Qorolai and Dorjijab (<Tib. Rdo rje skyab) promptly dominated two important places, Sira

⁷⁰ Ootosaka Tomoko, "A Study of Hong-hua-si Temple Regarding the Relationship between the dGe-Lugs-pa and the Ming Dynasty," *The Memoirs of the Toyo Bunko* 52 (1994), p. 69-101.

⁷¹ [Qing] Liangfen, *Qinbian jiliu* (An account of the Frontier of Shaanxi), written in the early 18th century, (Beijing: Xueyuan, 2003), 121.

Tala and the Hongshui Town.⁷² Hongshui Town, which was previously controlled by the Ming government, was a very important Sino-Tibetan marketplace during the 14th to 17th centuries. After the Qing government restarted Sino-Tibetan trade in Hongshui Town in the 1650s, Khoshut princes monopolized Sino-Tibetan commerce and accumulated much wealth. Additionally, they occupied Siratala (literally “yellow prairie” in Mongolian), which was not only a great pasture in the north of Qilian Mountains but also the northern entrance to Central Tibet. When Ligdan Khan was defeated by the Manchu army in 1634, he attempted to escape to Central Tibet through Siratala, where he died of illness.

Meanwhile, the Qing troops allied with the Tibetan clans in eastern Amdo, and were able to control Shaanxi province after pacifying the Muslim revolt in 1650. The Qing government gradually realized the strategic importance of Siratala, and sought to expel Khoshut Mongolians from there. Therefore, the Qing troops marched to the borderlands between Kokonor and Shaanxi. However, Khoshut Mongolians were reluctant to leave, and declared they also had rights to divide the territory of the Ming dynasty. In order to solve the problem, Khoshut people and the Qing court requested that the 5th Dalai Lama mediate the territorial conflict. Why did Khoshut princes and the Qing court request the 5th Dalai Lama to serve as a mediator? It seems that both Khoshut and Manchu people recognized the authority of the Dalai Lama. Furthermore, Khoshut princes like Gombo Tayiji (literally the prince of [Dharma] protector) and Dorjijab (the refuge of Vajra) possessed Tibetan names with Buddhist meanings. Actually, they were all Tibetan Buddhists. According to *The Biographies of Mongolian Dukes and Princes*,⁷³ Qorolai, Gonbo Tayiji and Dorjijab were all grandsons of Gūshi Khan, who built the Tibetan Buddhist alliance with the 5th Dalai Lama after 1638. After Khoshuts collaborated with the Géluk lineage in 1638, the prominent monks of the Yellow Hat, such as the 5th Dalai Lama, had served as the messengers of peace for Mongolians. According to *Mdo smad chos 'byung*, the 5th Dalai Lama made an interesting declaration: “Kokonor is the borderland among the Chinese, Tibetans and Mongols. Today's situation is different from the eras of Pakmo Drupa (Phag mo gru pa) and Tsangpa (Gtsang pa). The reason our yellow hats can build a close relationship with the northern patrons (Khoshuts) is the peace of Kokonor.”⁷⁴ Since Khoshuts had close relations with the Fifth Dalai Lama, the Qing court decided to ask the Géluk monks to serve as in-

⁷² See the map of Appendix 1.

⁷³ *Menggu wang gong biao zhuan*, vol. 79, 231.

⁷⁴ *Mdo smad chos 'byung*, 48.

termediaries.

Instead of suppressing the Khoshut people by military force, the Qing government designed a special religious policy, which kept friendly relations between Manchus and Mongolians in the 1650s. The Qing court decided to support the Tibetan monasteries in Kokonor instead of their counterparts in eastern Amdo. Then the Qing government forbade the monks from the monasteries in eastern Amdo to travel in the Mongol region, and then cut their connection with the tribes of Jasagh Mongol (Ch. Waifan menggu). For instance, both the Kangxi and Yongzheng emperors deprecated Tibetan monks from Gansu, and said these bad Amdo monks usually deceived Mongolian people by sorcery. Therefore, in 1712, the Kangxi emperor ordered two imperial envoys to arrest monks from eastern Amdo travelling in Mongolia, and sent them to Hangzhou to be the slaves of Manchu soldiers. If poor Mongolian people arrested monks from eastern Amdo and sent them to the envoys, they could appropriate the fortunes of the arrested monks. If these lamas attempted to escape back to eastern Amdo through official passes, officers should arrest them immediately and send them to the government.⁷⁵ In 1725, the Yongzheng emperor also ordered the arrest and expulsion of lamas in Mongolia, since they usually deceived Mongolians.⁷⁶ Moreover, in 1743, the Board of Frontier Affairs restated that Amdo monks could not travel in Mongolia; no matter whether they were Chinese or Tibetans.⁷⁷

In addition to segregating Gansu's monks from Mongolians, it is clear that the intention of the Qing government was to ingratiate Khoshut Mongolians, who were pious Tibetan Buddhists and strong protectors of the Géluk lineage in Kokonor, by promoting the monasteries in Kokonor to replace the status of the monasteries in Gansu. As a result, the Mongolian monks of the monasteries in Kokonor became more and more influential.

The Rise of Mongolian Monks in Kokonor after 1650

In order to build the connections with Khoshut Mongols, the Qing court paid great respect for the Tibetan Buddhists of the Géluk lineage in Kokonor and even invited them to Beijing. Some of them were known as "the Eight Prominent Reincarnations in Beijing." Actually, all of the prominent reincarnations (Mg. Qutu γ tu) had close rela-

⁷⁵ *Qianlong chao neifu chaoben lifanyuan zeli*, 328.

⁷⁶ *Qianlong chao neifu chaoben lifanyuan zeli*, 332.

⁷⁷ *The Archives of the Grand Secretariat*, Catalogue number: 071705.

tions with Mongols, and five of them were from Kokonor.

<i>The Eight Prominent Reincarnations in Beijing</i>		
Incarnation	Monastery	Region
Lcang skya ho thog thu	Dgon lung byams pa gling	Kokonor
Gser khri rin po che	Sku 'bum byams pa gling	Kokonor
Smin grol ho thog thu	Btsan po dgon dga' ldan dam chos gling	Kokonor
Rta tshag rje drung rin po che	Kun bde gling	Central Tibet
Zam tsha gser khri	Bla brang bkra shis 'khyil	Gansu ⁷⁸
A gya ho thog thu	Sku 'bum byams pa gling	Kokonor
La kho rin po che	Sku 'bum byams pa gling	Kokonor
Ca γ an Darqan Qutu γ tu	Beijing Cidu Si	Inner Mongolia & Beijing

These Tibetan Buddhist incarnations had various Mongolian names and honorific titles, which implied the ethnicity of their main audience. Moreover, they were proficient in Mongolian language, and some of them were even born into Mongolian families. For instance, Sertri Rinpoché (Tib. Gser khri rin po che; Mg. Galdan siregetü qutu γ tu), Mindröl Hotoktu (Tib. Smin grol ho thog thu; Alias. Btsan po no mon han), Tatsak Jédrung Hotoktu (Tib. Rta tshag rje drung ho thog thu) and Zamtza Sertri (Tib. Zam tsha gser khri) all had several Mongolian reincarnations. Although the other incarnations like Changkya Hotoktu (Tib. Lcang skya ho thog thu) were not Mongols, they could teach Buddhism in Mongolian and communicate with Mongolian leaders proficiently. Therefore, the Manchu emperors asked these monks of the Géluk lineage in Kokonor to serve as the intermediaries between Khoshut people and the Qing court.

In contrast to the decline of their peers in Gansu, the influence of the monks in Kokonor rose significantly after 1650. After pacifying the Muslim rebellion, the Qing court began contacting the monasteries in Xining of Kokonor. It should be noticed that the attitude of the

⁷⁸ Labrang Monastery was built on the borderland between Gansu and Kokonor in 1709 with the support of Mongolian nobles from Kokonor.

Qing government toward the monasteries in Kokonor was relatively generous. The Qing court not only recognized their honorific titles conferred by the Ming dynasty previously, but also promoted the ranks of their titles. In 1653, many senior monks from Kokonor were promoted by the Shunzhi emperor. For instance, Kunga Tendzin (Tib. Kun dga' bstan 'dzin; Ch. Gongge danjing),⁷⁹ who had been the state preceptor of Qutan Monastery in Xining, was promoted to the great state preceptor. Moreover, Sherab Puntsok (Tib. Shes rab phun tshogs; Ch. Shela pengcuo) and Peljor Puntsok (Tib. Dpal 'byor phun tshogs; Ch. Banzhuer pencuo), two monks who came from the monasteries in Xining, were both raised to the position of State Preceptor.⁸⁰

When it came to the reign of Kangxi, the difference in official status between the monks of Gansu and Kokonor became more and more obvious. While Hou Gyaltzen Nyingpo, the monk in Gansu who asked the Qing emperor to return his title of state preceptor in 1710, was rejected by the Kangxi emperor, the monks of Kokonor received completely different treatment. In 1718, two monks of Kumbum Monastery (Ch. Ta'er si) were conferred the titles of Nom-un Qan (Ch. Nuomen han), which means Dharma lord in Mongolian. One of them was exactly Lobsang Tanpe Nyima (Tib. Blo bzang bstan pa'i nyi ma, 1689-1762), who was the Mongolian reincarnation of the 2nd Galdan siregetü qutu γ tu (Tib. Gser khri rin po che).

It should be noticed that the incarnations of Galdan siregetü were specifically related to the nobles of Khoshut and Khalkha Mongolians. During the Qing period, the incarnations of Galdan siregetü served as important mediators and conciliators between Mongolians and Manchus, and they were even born of the families of Mongolian nobles.⁸¹

Considering the relations between the Tibetan masters in Kokonor and Mongolians, such as Galdan Siregetü and Khoshut Mongolians, it is clear that the rise of the monasteries in Kokonor actually reflected the Mongolian factor in the frontier policy of the Qing dynasty. That is to say, the rise of Mongolian monks in Kokonor reflected concerns about the nomadic power of Khoshut people. Moreover, after the revolt of Muslims was suppressed by the Qing military and

⁷⁹ The edict conferred by Emperor Shunzhi to him was collected in the archives of the grand secretariat. The edict was written in Manchu, Tibetan and Chinese. *The Archives of the Grand Secretariat*, Catalogue number: 038183-001.

⁸⁰ *Daqing huidian shili*, vol. 10, 1092.

⁸¹ Wakamatsu Hiroshi, "Garudan Shiretoû Futokutou Kô: Sindai no Chû Kyô Futokutou Kenkyû (A Study on the Galdan siregetü qutu γ tu)," *Tôyôshi Kenkyû* 33, no.2 (1974): 171-203.

Khoshut Mongolians, the monasteries in Gansu gradually lost their strategic importance to the Qing Empire. Since the Tibetan monks in Gansu became useless to the Qing court, as the Kangxi emperor changed the frontier policy in 1710, they not only lost their honorific titles but also the patronage from the Qing Empire. It is clear that the rise of Khoshut Mongolians in Kokonor profoundly influenced the frontier policy of the Qing dynasty during the 17th century, which caused the decline and elevation of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in eastern and western Amdo. However, why did Khoshut Mongolians become so important to the Qing dynasty? What was the role of the Khoshut tribe in Qing's frontier policy? Furthermore, is it possible to realize this subtle shift in the local society of Amdo from a macroscopic perspective? In order to answer these questions, particularly those pertaining to the relations between the Qing Empire, Khoshut, and Tibet it is essential to discuss the rise of Khoshut Mongolians in Inner Asia.

Khoshut Mongolians between China and Central Eurasia

It is widely known that Khoshut were the strongest Mongolian tribe in Kokonor since 1642, but actually Khoshut Mongolians had not appeared in Kokonor until 1730s. This raises several questions: where were they from originally? How did they come to dominate immense steppe in Kokonor within twenty years?

In fact, the ancestors of Khoshut Mongolians dwelled in east Mongolia including parts of Manchuria and the Amur region. After the Yuan dynasty collapsed in the late 14th century, the Khoshut tribe was nominally incorporated into Ming's tributary system, and started to appear in Chinese documents frequently. At that time, the name of Khoshut was transliterated as "Wozhe" in Chinese, and the Khoshut tribe was treated as a part of Uriyanqa people in East Mongolia and Manchuria.⁸² In Mongolian historiography in the 17th century, such as *The Golden Summary* (Mg. *Altan Tobči*), the ancestors of Khoshut was named "Üjiyed."⁸³ Clearly, the word of "Wozhe" is the Chinese transliteration of "Üjiyen" (the singular form of Üjiyed) in Mongolian.

In the early 15th century, the power of Oirat people in west Mongolia suddenly grew up. The ambitious leaders of Oirat Mongolians,

⁸² Hidehiro Okada, "Origins of the Dörben Oyirad," *Ural-Altische Jahrbücher* 7(1987): 181-211.

⁸³ Wulan (Ulaan), *Menggu yuanliu yanjiu* (Studies on Erdeniin Tobchi) (Shenyang: Liaoning minzu chubanshe, 2000), 312.

such as Toγan (?-1439) and Esen Tayiř (?-1454), invaded east Mongolia several times. A part of Üjiyen people surrendered to Oirat and migrated to West Mongolia, and the origin of the name of “Khoshut” was occurred under this historical background. According to historiography in Mongolian Todo script, a young leader of Üjiyed disputed with his elder brother when they divided their property. The young man thought his brother was greedy and selfish, and he therefore selected a pair of people in each ten in order to organize his own tribe. Since his tribe was based on the unit of “a pair” of people, it was named “qošiyad” (a pair, each two) in Mongolian.⁸⁴ According to *The Biography of Zaya Pandita*, during the 15th to the early 17th centuries, Khoshut people were active between north Xinjiang and east Kasakstan.⁸⁵ After the process of longstanding expanding, the Khoshut tribe eventually became one of the most formidable political entities in Central Asia during the 16th to late 17th centuries.

However, in 1630s, because of environmental factors and conflicts between Khoshut and other Mongolian tribes, such as Zunghar and Khalkha, Khoshut people began to search for new pastureland outside Xinjiang. Some Khoshut people moved south and finally arrived Kokonor. Meanwhile, they gradually made contact with Tibetan Buddhism, especially the Géluk lineage, which was eager to find a strong military protector. At that time, there was a serious religious struggle in Tibet. The Kagyü sect was officially supported by the Tsangpa dynasty (1565-1642), which had violently oppressed the Géluk sect since 1618. In 1634, since the political situation became very harsh to the Géluk sect, the Fifth Dalai (1617-1682) and the Fourth Panchen Lamas (1570-1662) secretly invited Gūshi Khan (1582-1654), the prominent Khoshut leader, to provide military supports. The invitation from the Géluk sect gave Khoshut people an excuse to enter Kokonor and Tibet. In 1636, Gūshi Khan slipped into Lhasa, where he met the Dalai and Panchen Lamas. After making an agreement with the leaders of Géluk, Gūshi Khan initiated a series of military actions in Kokonor and Tibet. He consequently eliminated the Kagyü alliance composed of Čoγtu Tayiji (1581-1637) in Kokonor, Béri Dönyö Dorjé (Tib. Be ri Don yod rdo rje, ?-1641) in Kham and Karma Tenkyong Wangpo (Tib. Karma Bstan skyong dbang po, 1606-1642), who were all the great patrons of the Kagyü lineage.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Wuyunbilige (Oyunbilig), “Heshuote de mingcheng yu qiuyan,” *Qinghai shehui kexue yuekan* 5(1988): 103-107.

⁸⁵ Wuyunbilige (Oyunbilig), “17 shiji weilate ge bu youmudi yanjiu,” *Xiyu yan jiu* 1 & 2 (2010): 35-51, 63-68.

⁸⁶ Peter Schwieger, “Towards a Biography of Don-yod-rdo-rje, King of Be-ri,” *Studia Tibetica et Mongolica: Festschrift Manfred Taube* (Swisttal-Oden: Indica et Ti-

Finally, in 1642, Güshi Khan and the Géluk leaders overthrow the Tsangpa dynasty and established the Khoshut Khanate in Kokonor and Tibet. In order to justify the new regime, the Géluk leaders conducted a series of cultural projects. For instance, in 1643, the Fifth Dalai Lama wrote a comprehensive chronicle entitled *Tibetan History: the Song of Cuckoo Birds* (Tib. *Bod kyi deb ther dpyid kyi rgyal mo'i glu dbyangs*) in order to legitimize the reign of Güshi Khan. In the end of his work, the Fifth Dalai Lama depicted Güshi Khan as the reincarnations of Songtsen Gampo (Tib. Srong btsan Sgam po, 605-649), the greatest Tibetan emperor that had sponsored Buddhism.⁸⁷ Herein the Buddhist alliance of Khoshut Mongolians and Tibetans was formally built.

Meanwhile, the Manchu leaders had also noticed the dramatic change of political situation in Kokonor and Tibet, especially the rise of Khoshut/Géluk and the failure of Tsangpa/Kagyü, before they breached the Great Wall and replaced the Ming dynasty in 1644. In 1637, Hong Taiji intended to send envoys to invite the Fifth Dalai Lama.⁸⁸ In 1639 and 1642, the Fifth Dalai Lama dispatched Mongolian monks, such as the Second Caγan Nomun Khan (Blo gros rgya mtsho, 1610-1659) and Ilaγuγsan qutuγtu (? -1646) to Manchuria respectively.⁸⁹ After the exchanges of envoys, the Manchu leaders gradually realized the political struggle between Khoshut and Tsangpa in Tibet. In 1643, Hong Taiji heard that Güshi Khan had defeated Karma Tenkyong Wangpo, the last Tsangpa Khan, and therefore sent envoys to them separately for strategic considerations.⁹⁰ However, Tsangpa Khan had already been killed. Therefore, the Qing government eventually recognized that the Khoshut Khanate and the Géluk sect had already replaced the Tsangpa dynasty and the Kagyü sect as the real rulers in Tibet. When Khoshut Mongolians and the Géluk sect became the dominant power in Tibet in 1642, the Qing army entered North China in 1644. After gradually controlled the Chinese territory and eliminated the remnants of the Ming dynasty, the Qing emperor decided to formally invite the Fifth Dalai Lama to the court. In 1653, young Shunzhi Emperor finally fulfilled his father's plan and met the Fifth Dalai Lama in a suburb near Beijing.⁹¹ In

betica, 1999), 247-260.

⁸⁷ Blo bzang rgya mtsho, Liu Liqian trans., *Xizang wang chen ji* (Lhasa: Xizang ren min chu ban she, 1997), 122-123.

⁸⁸ *The Veritable Records of Taizong*, vol. 38, 497-498.

⁸⁹ Zahiruddin Ahmad, *Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per lo Studio e la Ricerca del Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1970), 157-158.

⁹⁰ *The Veritable Records of Taizong*, vol. 64, 888-889.

⁹¹ Gray Tuttle, "A Tibetan Buddhist Mission to the East: The Fifth Dalai Lama's Journey to Beijing, 1652-1653," *Tibetan Society and Religion: The Seventeenth and*

the climax of the meeting, the Shunzhi Emperor presented honorific titles to the Fifth Dalai Lama and Gūshi Khan, and proclaimed himself as a Buddhist protector.⁹²

According to the discussion above, the Qing dynasty had chosen to collaborate with the Buddhist alliance of Khoshut and Kagyü since 1640s. In addition to the military power of Gūshi Khan, there was another reason the Qing dynasty decided to make connections with Géluk instead of Kagyü. In fact, Ligdan Khan, the last successor of Genghis Khan and the most threatening enemy of Hong Taiji, was the patron of the Kagyü lineage. Moreover, Ligdan Khan also had political connections with the Kagyü alliance, which was the sworn foe of Khoshut and Géluk. As a result, in *The History of Kokonor* (Tib. *Mtsho sngon gyi lo rgyus*) by Sumpa Yéshé Penjor (Tib. Sum pa ye shes dpal 'byor, 1704-1788), Ligdan Khan was listed as the enemy of the Géluk sect together with Čo γ tu Tayiji, Dönyö Dorjé and Tsangpa Khan.⁹³ Also, there is direct evidence can prove that Ligdan Khan and Čo γ tu Tayiji were close allies. For instance, *The Religious History of Mongolia* (Tib. *Hor chos 'byung*) by Lozang Tsépel (Tib. Blo bzang tshe 'phel) in 1819 contains a related quote. According to *The Religious History of Mongolia*, Čo γ tu Tayiji once invited Ligdan Khan to oppress the Géluk sect in Kokonor. In his letter to Ligdan Khan, Čo γ tu Tayiji said, “we should destroy the Géluk sect.”⁹⁴ After that, Ligdan Khan's army marched to Central Tibet in order to join the force of Tsangpa Khan Püntsok Namgyel (Tib. Phun tshogs rnam rgyal, 1586-1621); however, Ligdan Khan fell sick and died in Siratala in Kokonor on his way to Tibet in 1634. Although *The Religious History of Mongolia* did not mention, Ligdan Khan attempted to meet the Kagyü alliance in Tibet because he had been defeated and chased by the Manchu troop.

Herein we can clearly see that Ligdan Khan and Čo γ tu Tayiji were actually the common enemies of the Qing dynasty and Khoshut tribe. And this is also the reason Khoshut Mongolians played a huge role in Qing's policy in the early 17th century. Moreover, because the Khoshut Khanate, which was jointly established by the Khoshut tribe and the Géluk sect, had become the dominant political entity in Tibet and Kokonor since 1642, the Qing court was eager to seek any possibilities to ally with the Khoshut Khanate. Consequently, Mongolian

Eighteenth Centuries (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 65-87.

⁹² *The Veritable Records of Taizong*, vol. 74, 586-587.

⁹³ Sum pa mkhan po, Ho-Chin Yang trans., *The Annals of Kokonor*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), 30.

⁹⁴ Blo bzang tshe 'phel, Chen Qingying & Wuliji trans., *Hor chos 'byung* (Tianjin: Tianjin gu ji chu ban she, 1991), 20.

monks of the Géluk lineage in Kokonor, who built a political and religious network between the Qing dynasty and the Khoshut Khanate, were largely promoted and patronized by Manchu and Mongolian leaders.

Conclusion

From the 1660s, the Qing government gradually eliminated the honorific titles of the monks in Gansu, whose ancestors had received them in the Ming period.

In 1650, the monks in Gansu still possessed their existing titles because the revolt of Muslims had just been pacified. However, the strategic importance of the Gansu monks to the frontier policy of the Qing Empire finally decreased. As a result, the Qing emperors dismissed their requests for retrieving honorific titles, and blamed them for making no contribution to the empire.

On the other hand, with the rise of Khoshut Mongolians in Kokonor, the Qing government switched their attention swiftly. In order to earn the support of Khoshut people, the faithful Tibetan Buddhists and powerful protectors of the Géluk sect, the Qing government took a generous attitude toward the monasteries in Kokonor. The Tibetan Buddhists in Kokonor acted as mediators between Manchus and Mongolians; hence they were valued by the Qing government. As a result, they were conferred honorific titles and even promoted by the Qing court. With the close interactions with the Khoshut people, the incarnations of the senior monks in Kokonor were even born in the families of Mongolian nobles. Under the support of the Qing dynasty, these Mongolian monks in western Amdo finally replaced Tibetan monks in eastern Amdo, and played critical roles in the Qing court.

Glossary

Bandan zhashi 班丹扎釋 [Tib. Dpal ldan bkra shis]

Banzhuer pencuo 班珠兒盆錯 [Tib. Dpal 'byor phun tshogs]

Chaodingsi 朝定寺 [Tib. Cha'u ting gzi]

Chongjiaosi 崇教寺 [Tib. Chos sde dgon]

Daci fawang Shijia yeshi 大慈法王釋迦也失 [Tib. Byams chen chos rje Shakya Ye shes]

Danpa jiancuo 丹巴堅錯 [Tib. Dam pa rgya mtsho]

Da Qing huidian shili 大清會典事例

Datonghe 大通河 [Tib. 'Ju lag]

- Daxiahe 大夏河 [Tib. Bsung chu]
 Dazhi fawang 大智法王 [Tib. 'jam dbyangs chos rje]
 Ding Guodong 丁國棟
 Duanyue jianzang 端月監藏 [Tib. Don yod rgyal mtshan]
 Duzhihui shi 都指揮使
 Fa wang 法王
 Gaitu guiliu 改土歸流
 Gongge danjing 公葛丹淨 [Tib. Kun dga' bstan 'dzin]
 Guangdesi 廣德寺 [Tib. Kwang de' gzi]
 Guanding daguoshi 灌頂大國師
 Guo shi 國師
 Guzi pi 股子皮
 Hami 哈密 [Ug. Qumul]
 Han Chanba 韓禪巴 [Tib. Han 'jam dpal]
 Hanjialima 韓加里麻 [Tib. Han Karma]
 Hanjiasi 韓家寺 [Tib. Han kya zi]
 Hezhou hanshi 河州韓氏
 Hezhou 河州
 Honghuasi 弘化寺 [Tib. Mdzo mo khar]
 Hou jiancai ningbu 后尖菜寧布 [Tib. Hou Rgyal mtshan snying po]
 Hou zhiji danzi 后只即丹子 [Tib. Hou Chos kyi bstan 'dzin]
 Houneng 后能
 Huangshuihe 湟水河 [Tib. Tsong chu]
 Hui zei 獮賊
 Jinwang Zhu Gang 晉王朱橐
 Libu 禮部
 Lifanyuan 理藩院 [Man. tulergi golo be dasara jurgan]
 Lüxiepi yafeng calian xue 綠斜皮牙縫擦臉靴 [Man. Šempilehe sarin i
 gūlha; Mg. köke sarisu qabiči γ san sarin γ utul]
 Meng Qiaofang 孟喬芳
 Milayin 米喇印
 Minzhou houshi 岷州后氏
 Minzhou 岷州
 Neigedaku dang 內閣大庫檔
 Nuomen han 諾們汗 [Mg. Nom-un Qan]
 Qingchao qianqi lifanyuan Man Mengwen tiben 清朝前期理藩院滿蒙文題
 本 [Mg. Dayicing gürün-ü ekin üy-e-yin γ ada γ atu mong γ ol-un

toru-yi jasaqu yabudal-un yamun-u manju mong γ ol ayiladqal-un debter-üd]

Qingshu pi 青黍皮

Qutansi 瞿曇寺 [Tib. Gro tshang rdo rje 'chang]

Seng gang 僧綱

Shaanxi sanbian zongdu 陝西三邊總督

Shela pengcuo 舍拉朋錯 [Tib. Shes rab phun tshogs]

Shilu 實錄

Ta'ersi 塔爾寺 [Tib. Sku 'bum byams pa gling]

Taohe 洮河 [Tib. Klu chu]

Taozhou yangshi 洮州楊氏

Taozhou 洮州

Tulufan 吐魯番 [Ug. Turpan]

Waifan Menggu 外藩蒙古

Wai guo 外國

Wozhe / Wujiyete 我者 / 烏濟葉特 [Mg. Üjiyen/ Üjiyed]

Xianqingsi 顯慶寺

Xiedi 些的 [Tib. Spyang thi]

Xinasi 西納寺 [Tib. Zi na bsam 'grub gling]

Xining 西寧

Xitian fozi yuanliu lu 西天佛子源流錄

Yanchangwang Zhu Shichuan 延長王朱識鏞

Yang Wangxiu 楊旺秀 [Tib. Dbang phyug]

Zhang Yong 張勇

Zhaoci si 照慈寺 [Tib. Ja'u tshi gzi]

Zhuoni si 卓尼寺 [Tib. Co ne dgon chen]

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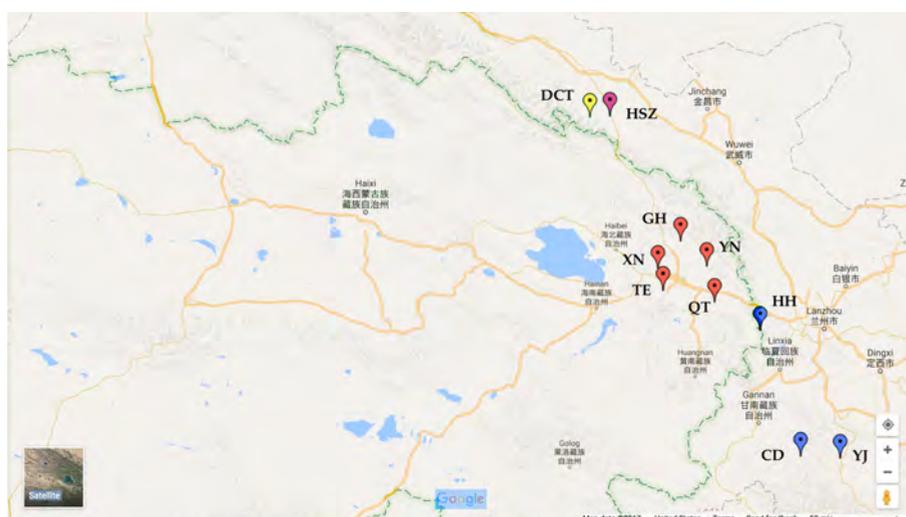
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Appendix: Locations of Amdo Monasteries



Abbreviation	Chinese pinyin	Chinese character	Location	Tibetan
YJ	Yuanjue/ Chongjiao	圓覺/崇 教	East (Gansu)	Chos sde dgon/ Lhun grub bde chen gling
CD	Chanding/ Zhuoni	闡定/卓 尼	East	Co ne dgon chen/ Ting 'dzin dar rgyas gling

HH	Honghua	弘化/紅花	East	Mdzo mo mkhar
QT	Qutan	瞿曇	West (Kokonor)	Gro tshang rdo rje 'chang
TE	Ta'er/Gunbu	塔爾/袞布	West	Sku 'bum by-ams pa gling
YN	Youning/Guoluo	佑寧/郭隆	West	Dgon lung by-ams pa gling
XN	Xina	西納	West	Zi na bsam 'grub gling
GH	Guanghui	廣惠	West	Gser khog dga' ldan dam chos gling
DCT	Dacaotan	大草灘	The north entrance to Central Tibet	
HSZ	Hongshui zhen	洪水鎮	An important Sino-Tibetan marketplace	



Direct Introductions into the Three Embodiments, Supreme Key-Instructions of the Dwags po Bka' brgyud Tradition¹

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Introduction

*Who is the teacher making for the excellent qualities and
Uprooting all sentient beings' entire host of flaws?
... It is the all-good buddha nature or Vajradhara, the sixth buddha in union
Which is continuous throughout all, the ground, the path, and the fruition.
This teacher as such is perfect buddhahood,
Primordially uncontaminated by all obscurations.
As a synonym for this teacher,
the victor Zhwa dmar pa Mkha' spyod dbang po²
Used the term 'the primordial buddha's great utter clarity'.
... In the unsurpassable secret tantras it is called
'Causeless primordial buddha'.³*

¹ This research was possible due to generous funding from the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) for the project entitled "Buddha nature reconsidered: Mi bskyod rdo rje and the post-classical Tibetan *tathāgata*garbha debates" (FWF Project number P28003-G24) supervised by Prof. Klaus-Dieter Mathes and hosted by the Department of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies at the University of Vienna.

² Second Zhwa dmar pa (1350–1405), an important master in the Karma Bka' brgyud tradition. Having been the student and main lineage holder of the Fourth Karma pa Rol pa'i rdo rje (1340–1383), he passed on the esoteric instructions of the Karma Bka' brgyud tradition to the Fifth Karma pa De bzhin gshegs pa (1384–1415). His *Collected Works* comprise seven volumes in which he covers a broad range of subjects of the philosophical and meditative training as transmitted in the Bka' brgyud pa tradition. Unfortunately, just half of these works are extant today. At least we know about the large amount of his writings by virtue of a list of them provided by the Fourth Zhwa dmar pa Chos grags ye shes (1453–1524). This list is contained in the latter's *Collected Works* (CY_{ss}) which were republished in 2009 in six volumes. The title of this list is *The Precious Necklace of the Complete Words of the Glorious Mkha' Spyod Dbang Po* (Tib. *Dpal ldan mkha' spyod dbang po'i bka' 'bum yongs su rdzogs pa'i dkar chag rin po che'i phreng ba*).

³ *Sku gsum ngo sprod rnam bshad*, KN_w vol. 1, 1_s-2_s: 'gro ba thams cad la legs pa'i yon tan la 'god cing nyes pa'i tshogs ma lus pa drungs 'byin par byed pa'i ston pa gang zhe na | ... thams cad kyang gzhi lam 'bras bur rgyud chags pa'i sangs rgyas kyi snying po kun tu bzang po'am | rigs drug pa rdo rje 'chang yab yum nyid gsal bar byed pa'i phyir te | ston pa 'di nyid sgrib pa thams cad kyis gdod nas ma gos par mgon par rdzogs par sangs rgyas pa yin | ston pa 'di'i mtshan gyi rnam grangs su | rgyal ba zhwa dmar pa

hese introductory verses in Karma pa Mi bskyod rdo rje's *Explanation of the Direct Introduction into the Three Embodiments*⁴ indicate the essential teaching of the Dwags po Bka' brgyud tradition⁵ of Tibetan Buddhism. Embedded in the view of the inseparability of emptiness and compassion, mind as such is viewed (1) not as mere emptiness but as coemergent wisdom or unchanging buddha nature endowed with qualities, yet (2) not in the sense of an eternal metaphysical essence. By making these two points Mi bskyod rdo rje steers clear from views such as maintained respectively in the Dge lugs and Jo nang systems.

Mi bskyod rdo rje (1507–1554) was the eighth Karma pa hierarch and one of the most brilliant scholars of Tibetan Buddhism. To him, the supreme key-instructions of the Dwags po Bka' brgyud tradition are summoned in the so-called “introduction into the three or four *kāyas* or embodiments”, allowing for the integration of all of the Buddha's teachings. Thus, having in mind the importance of this template, Mi bskyod rdo rje composed his *Explanation of the Direct Introduction into the Three Embodiments*. This text, abbreviated with the Tibetan title *Sku gsum ngo sprod rnam bshad* was the last elaborate treatise he authored toward the end of his life. He started writing this exposition in 1548 at the age of 42 when he was in Mtshur pu, the main monastic seat of the Karma pas in Central Tibet. He completed the text in the following year 1549 in Thob Rgyal dgra 'dul gling in Gtsang Zab phu lung,⁶ finalizing it just five years before he passed away in 1554. It covers two complete volumes (vol. 21 and 22) in the *Collected Works* of Karma pa Mi bskyod rdo rje as they were newly compiled in 2004.⁷ A recent publication from 2013 consists of a three-volume book edition.⁸

At the end of this extensive work, when dedicating the merit of having composed this treatise, Mi bskyod rdo rje explicitly states that

mkha' spyod dbang pos | gdod ma'i sangs rgyas rab gsal chen po zhes ming 'dogs par mdzad pa'i phyir te | ... gsang ba bla na med pa'i rgyud las | | dang po'i sangs rgyas rgyu med pa | | zhes sogs 'byung ba |.

⁴ *Sku gsum ngo sprod rnam bshad*. The full title is *Sku gsum sku bzhi ngo sprod kyi rnam par bshad pa mdo rgyud bstan pa mtha' dag gi e vam phyag rgya*, here abbreviated as KN. KN_v specifies the 3 vol. edition published by the Vajra Vidya Institute Library in Varanasi, India, in 2013.

⁵ The Dwags po Bka' brgyud tradition goes back to Sgam po pa bsod nams rin chen (1079–1153), also called the physician from Dwags po (*dwags po lha rje*). By virtue of his students' broad teaching activities, this tradition branched off into a large number of sub-schools. One of them is the Karma Bka' brgyud school headed by the Karma pas.

⁶ This place is considered an important pilgrimage site of Padmasambhava and is known for its hot springs. Dorje 1999, 251; see also Rheingans 2008, 145.

⁷ *Dpal rgyal ba karma pa sku 'phreng brgyad pa mi bskyod rdo rje gsung 'bum* 26 vols. Published by Lho nub mi rigs par khang chen mo, Khren tu'u, Lhasa, 2004.

⁸ See note 4.

he considers it to be a comprehensive presentation of the intent of the Buddha Dharma encompassing the entire meaning of the sūtra- and tantra teachings as they were transmitted in the Dwags po Bka' brgyud tradition. He even remarks that future generations of practitioners should not have any regrets, thinking that they did not have the good fortune of having met him in person—studying this explanation, he says, equals with actually meeting him.⁹ Taking into account these statements by the author himself—and given that at the time he was one of the main lineage holders of the Karma Bka' brgyud school and in his function as the Karma pa hierarch responsible for transmitting its spiritual heritage to future generations—one can justifiably assume that it contains Mi bskyod rdo rje's preferred opinions regarding the view and practice as cultivated in the Dwags po Bka' brgyud tradition.

However, before going into some points of this treatise, it might be helpful to look at another much earlier text in the Karma Bka' brgyud lineage which appears to be *the* referent for Mi bskyod rdo rje's comprehensive work and deals with the introduction into the three embodiments.

Rang byung rdo rje's short *Direct Introduction into the Three Embodiments*

This text is Rang byung rdo rje's short *Sku gsum ngo sprod, The Direct Introduction into the Three Embodiments*, which consists of but 14 to 19 pages depending on the respective edition. One of these editions is contained in Kong sprul's *Gdams ngag mdzod, The Treasury of Key-Instructions*.¹⁰ In the colophon, Rang byung rdo rje is stated as its author and thus it is usually attributed to the Third Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje (1284–1339), which is also confirmed by current well-

⁹ *Sku gsum ngo sprod rnam bshad*, KN_v vol. 3, 377_a–378: “Having [the welfare of] the Buddha's teachings and of sentient beings deeply in my mind, I searched for all of the sūtra- and tantra teachings which were well transmitted in the Karma Bka' brgyud, the supreme key-instructions of the Dwags po Bka' brgyud, gathered in the “explanation of the three kāyas and the four kāyas”. In this illusory treatise [i.e., the *Sku gsum ngo sprod rnam bshad*] I arranged a complex meaning in a few words. In the future, fortunate faithful beings who might think that they have not met me should absorb these *dharma* explanations. Then they should not think that they have not been in touch with me....” *dag gis sangs rgyas kyi || bstan dang 'gro la cher bsams nas || dwags po bka' brgyud man ngag mchog || karma bka' brgyud legs 'ongs pa'i || mdo dang sngags kyi gsung rab ni || yod do 'tshal ba ji snyed pa || sku gsum sku bzhi ngo sprod du || bsdus te sprul pa'i glegs bam 'dir || tshig nyung don mang ldan par bkod || phyin chad bdag dang ma phrad pa || snyam byed dad pa'i skal can rnams || chos tshul 'di la zhugs shig dang || bdag dang ma phrad ma bsam par || ...*

¹⁰ *Gdams ngag mdzod* vol. 9, 231–246.

known Khenpos of the Karma Bka' brgyud tradition.¹¹ The text was therefore also included in the *Collected Works* of the Third Karma pa newly compiled in 2006.¹²

One should, however, keep in mind that "Rang byung rdo rje" does not only name the Third Karma pa, but is also one of the common names of the Second Karma pa, Karma Pakshi (1204–1283). Moreover, as for its contents the text is certainly closely associated with the Second Karma pa. Now, either, as commonly assumed, the text was actually written by the Third Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje who then recorded therein the teachings given by the Second Karma pa or it was authored by the Second Karma pa and signed with his name Rang byung rdo rje.¹³ The reasons for these considerations are as follows:

[1] First of all, when Mi bskyod rdo rje's *Explanation of the Direct Introduction into the Three Embodiments*, the *Sku gsum ngo sprod rnam bshad*, was re-published in 1978,¹⁴ the subtitle says that it is "a detailed exegesis of the *Sku gsum ngo sprod* instructions of Karma Pakshi". Moreover, in the introduction of this 1978 publication it is specified that the *Sku gsum ngo sprod* was "an instruction received in a vi-

¹¹ Personal communication between Prof. Klaus-Dieter Mathes and Thrangu Rinpoche in Nepal, April 9th, 2017 (I thank K.D. Mathes for sharing this information). Khenpo Chodrag Tenphel gave this information as well on Dec. 12th 2016 in a lecture on the history of the Karma Bka' brgyud tradition during the "Second International Karma Kagyu Meeting" in Bodhgaya, Dec. 12-13, 2016.

¹² Published in Ziling and compiled by Mtshur phu mkhan po Lo yag bkra shis in Zi ling; it consists of 16 vols.

¹³ See for example Kapstein 1985, "Religious Syncretism in 13th century Tibet, *The Limitless Ocean Cycle*". In this article, Kapstein proves that the *Rgya mtsho mtha' yas kyi skor* which was also written by a Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje was indeed authored by the Second Karma pa. Even so, it was taken up into the *Collected Works* of the Third Karmapa Rang byung rdo rje published in Tibet in 2006. In this article (p. 361), Kapstein quotes excerpts from the *Autobiographical Writings of the Second Karma pa Karma Pakshi*, where it is evident that Karma Pakshi is also called Rang byung rdo rje: "This is the unborn, primordially pure Lion's roar proclaimed by one who is in the future to be emanated by Simhanāda, in the past Dus gsum mkhyen pa himself, at present Rang byung rdo rje." And "I am Rang byung rdo rje, the *vajra*-king, one of great might ...". These are just two examples from the autobiography of Karma Pakshi where he frequently uses the name Rang byung rdo rje for himself. Moreover, (in *ibid.* p. 362), Kapstein quotes Dpa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba who describes O rgyan pa, the student of the Second and teacher of the Third Karma pa. When identifying the Third Karma pa, O rgyan pa is reported to have said: "As my guru's esoteric name (*gsang mtshan*) was Rang byung rdo rje, I will name you just that." Moreover, Kapstein writes (*ibid.*, 362, n. 12): "Significant in this regard is the remark made to me by the Ven. Dpa' bo Rin po che in July 1981: 'Rang byung rdo rje is the name of *all* the Karma pas'."

¹⁴ This re-print published by Gonpo Tseten was based on a set of manuscripts in *dbu med* from Zas Chos 'khor yang rtse in Central Tibet, later on preserved at Rumtek Monastery.

sion by the Second Zhwa nag Karma Pakshi (1206–1282)".¹⁵ That Karma Pakshi was the one who—in whichever way—received the *Sku gsum ngo sprod* instructions is also confirmed due to a list of writings of the Second Zhwa dmar pa mkha' spyod dbang po (1350–1405) where it is remarked that Karma Pakshi received the *Sku gsum ngo sprod* instructions from Saraha, Nāropā, and Maitrīpa.¹⁶

[2] Secondly, the main teachings of the *Sku gsum ngo sprod*, i.e., the “wheel of reality of the four core-points” (*gnad bzhi chos nyid kyi 'khor lo*) and the “introduction into the three *kāyas*” (*sku gsum ngo sprod*), do not occur in the extant writings of the Third Karma pa as teachings given by himself but clearly as instructions of the Second Karma pa.¹⁷

¹⁵ *Sku gsum ngo sprod kyi rnam par bshad pa mdo rgyud bstan pa mtha dag gi e vam phyag rgya, dbu med* edition, 4 vols. (KN_{RM}). See the introduction pages of this publication from 1978.

¹⁶ On the Second Zhwa dmar pa see note 2. This remark is contained in *The Precious Necklace of the Complete Words of the Glorious Mkha' Spyod Dbang Po* (*Dpal ldan mkha' spyod dbang po'i bka' 'bum yongs su rdzogs pa'i dkar chag rin po che'i phreng ba*), in CY_{SM} vol. 6, 926.: “As for the series of instructions which derive from the respective lineages there is [1] the path [comprising] the bliss of [the sexual] faculty, that was given to the dharma master Dus gsum mkhyen pa by the King Indrabodhi. [It is] the practice of fourfold principles, a sequence of meditation of key-instructions that liberate the mind-stream in four aspects. [2] There is the instruction of the introduction into the three *kāyas* that was given to the dharma master Karma Pakshi by Saraha, Nāropā, and Maitrīpa. It comprises the instruction manual of the introduction into the three *kāyas* which is connected with the introduction into the dharma that is to be practiced. Along with it [there are] miscellaneous writings [regarding] the introduction into the three *kāyas* ...” *brgyud pa so so las 'byung ba'i khrid kyi rim pa la | chos rje dus gsum mkhyen pa la | rgyal po indra budhis gñang ba rnam bzhi rgyud grol gyi man ngag gi sgom rim de nyid bzhi sbyor dbang po'i bde lam chos rje karma pag shi la sa ra ha dang nā ro mai tris gñang ba'i sku gsum ngo sprod kyi khrid la | nyams su blang bar bya ba'i chos kyi ngo sprod dang 'brel ba'i sku gsum ngo sprod kyi khrid yig dang | sku gsum ngo sprod gsung thor bu ba dang bcas pa | ...*

¹⁷ In the *Collected Works* of the Third Karma pa, the term “the wheel of reality of the four core-points” occurs, outside of the text *Sku gsum ngo sprod*, just twice. One occurrence is in the text *Rlung sems gnad kyi lde mig*, authored by Chos rje rin po che karma pa (RD_{SM} vol. 7, 264–268) who again is no other than Karma Pakshi. 268₁₋₂: “All happiness and suffering of the world of appearances, *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, is [a matter of] the dependent arising of *prāṇa*/mind. In that regard and so forth one should know [how] to practice the inconceivable dependent arising of *prāṇa*/mind. Supreme *gtum mo* is to be free from all mental engagements and to be connected with *prāṇa*/mind-Mahāmudrā. Therefore, meditate continuously the wheel of reality of the four core-points. In short, one expels all negative *prāṇa*/mind outwardly and summons inwardly all good ones. One abides in equanimity, in the one flavor of everything without separation.” *snang srid 'khor 'das kyi bde sduṅ thams cad rlung sems kyi rten 'brel yin | de la sogs pa rlung sems kyi rten 'brel bsam gyis mi khyab pa rnam nyams su len shes par bya'o | | yid la byed pa thams cad dang bral ba dang | rlung sems phyag rgya chen po dang 'brel pa mchog gi gtum mo yin pas | gnad bzhi chos nyid kyi 'khor lo rgyun chad med par bsgom mo | | mdor na rlung sems ngan pa thams cad phyir bus | bzang po thams cad nang du bsd'u'o | | thams cad dbyer med ro gcig du mnyam par bzhaḡ go |*. The second occurrence is

[3] Thirdly, in the part of homage in the beginning of this short *Sku gsum ngo sprod*, there is first a general homage to the Bka' brgyud masters, followed by a particular praise directed to the First Karma pa Dus gsum mkhyen pa (1110–1193), and his disciple 'Gro mgon ras chen (1148–1218), i.e., the direct teacher of Karma Pakshi.¹⁸ If the author were indeed the Third Karma pa, wouldn't one expect that these special praises would also be directed to Karma Pakshi and his disciple Grub thob O rgyan pa rin chen dpal (1230–1309) who was one of the main teachers of the Third Karma pa?¹⁹

in the text *Bka' bzhi brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs*, RD₃ vol. 5, 1-358, where the Third Karma pa speaks about the bodhisattva Rang byung rdo rje's, i.e., Karma Pakshi's advice to his students, p. 119.: "The bodhisattva Rang byung rdo rje gave [the following] advice to the great meditators who are endowed with the two types of knowledge [and were] his students: When one meditates continuously on the wheel of reality of the four core-points which are [transmitted] uninterruptedly in the tradition of the four transmissions [from] Vajradhara, Ti lo and Na ro, the power of *prāṇa* / mind is perfected and Mahāmudrā is realized. It does not even require a moment and one will become the glory of guides of all sentient beings. I [the III Karma pa] too, have meditated continuously on the wheel of reality of the four core-points and have thereby perfected my *prāṇa* / mind. Through this I became able to act for the benefit of sentient beings without weariness." *sems dpa' rang byung rdo rje | gdul byar gyur pa'i mkhyen pa gnyis dang ldan pa'i bsgom chen rnams la gdams pa | rdo rje 'chang te lo na ro bka' bzhi'i rgyud pa bar ma chad pa'i gnad bzhi chos kyi 'khor lo rgyun ma chad par bsgoms na rlung sems kyi rtsal rdzogs shing phyag rgya chen po rtogs pa la skad cig tsam yang mi 'gor zhing sems can thams cad kyi 'dren pa'i dpal du 'gyur ro | kho bo yang gnad gzhi'i chos kyi 'khor lo rgyun par bsgoms pas rlung sems la rtsal rdzogs shing skyo dub med pas sems can gyi don nus pa byung ba yin |*. The last words "became able to act for the benefit of sentient beings" appears to be a quote of a line in the short *Direct Introduction into the Three Kāyas: sems can gyi don nus pa byung ba*. See *Gdams ngag mdzod* vol. 9, 243.

¹⁸ *Sku gsum ngo sprod*, in: *Gdams ngag mdzod* vol. 9, 232: "I bow down to Dus gsum mkhyen pa and 'Gro ba'i mgon po who matured sentient beings through the actuality of the three *kāyas* and are thus masters who are fully abiding in the actuality of the four core-points of the *nirmāṇakāya*." *sku gsum don gyis 'gro bas smin mdzad de || sprul sku gnad bzhi'i don la rab gnas pa'i || dus gsum mkhyen dang 'gro ba'i mgon la bdud ||*.

¹⁹ In addition, in the beginning of his *Explanation of the Direct Introduction to the Three Kāyas* Mi bskyod rdo rje describes the line of transmission for these teachings, saying that they were transmitted in the Western part of India by the Paṇḍita Vajrakumāra who was no one else but Padmasambhāva, to Tipupa and Re chung pa—all of whom were, according to Mi bskyod rdo rje, but manifestations of Karma Pakshi—and eventually to Karma Pakshi. After having put so much emphasis on Karma Pakshi Mi bskyod rdo rje continues to describe that from Karma Pakshi the transmission went to Grub thob mnyan ras pa and O rgyan pa and from them to Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje. From him to the Rtogs ldan mgon rgyal ba and Rgyal ba g.yung stong, from him to Karma pa Rol pa'i rdo rje, then to Zhwa dmar mkha' spyod dbang po, Karma pa De bzhin gshegs pa and Rin chen bzang po. From him to Karma pa Mthong ba don ldan, then to 'Jam dpal bzang po and Dpal 'byor don grub. From him to Karma pa Chos grags rgya mtsho. From his many disciples to Sangs rgyas mnyan pa grub mchog and from him to Karma pa Mi bskyod rdo rje himself. See *Sku gsum ngo sprod rnam bshad*, KN_{iv} vol.1, 8₂₂.

[4] Fourthly, the Eighth Karma pa Mi bskyod rdo rje, in the very end of his extensive *Explanation of the Direct Introduction into the Three Embodiments*, ascertains the unity of appearance and emptiness, substantiating this with a quote from the *Heart Sūtra* and saying that this is what all buddhas and bodhisattvas such as the masters 'Jig rten gsum mgon, the First Karma pa Du gsum mkhyen pa, 'Gro mgon ras chen, Karma Pakshi etc. teach.²⁰ He does not specifically refer to the Third Karma pa either, but names explicitly masters up to and including the Second Karma pa, Karma Pakshi, and names the third Karma pa just as one of those eminent masters who continued to uphold this transmission. And finally, in his concluding verses, when praising the Tibetan forefathers of the Bka' brgyud lineage, Mi bskyod rdo rje directs his prayers to the First Karma pa Dus gsum mkhyen pa, 'Gro mgon ras pa, Rgyal ba bsod nams rdo rje, and the siddha Karma Pakshi. He does at that point again not mention the

²⁰ *Sku gsum ngo sprod rnam bshad*, KN_w vol. 3, 375₁-376₁: "Through the equality of existence and nonexistence that is free from all real existence and nonexistence, the mind which is the inseparability of emptiness and compassion free from obscurations and its appearances which do not have a different substance from that, these two—even though they are in no way established as *the* phenomena of *samsāra* and *nirvāna*, as entities and nonentities which [respectively] have obscurations and no [obscurations]—are to be understood as the sameness of the unity of male and female (*yab yum*), as the two aspects of the appearance of existence and the emptiness of nonexistence respectively with form and without form. This meaning is also [contained] in the mother of victors: 'Form is empty. Emptiness is form. Emptiness is not something different from form. Form is not something different from emptiness.' Thus, the ever increasing, inexhaustible great ocean of the mysterious inconceivable speech of all buddhas, bodhisattvas, viras, dakinīs and dharma protectors of all the worlds of the ten directions such as the *dharmacakra* of the ultimate single intent of sūtras and tantras that was perfectly turned by the glorious 'Jig rten gsum gyi mgon po, i.e., the glorious 'Bri khung pa skyob pa rin po che, as well as [the teachings] of Dus gsum mkhyen pa, the essence of the Bhagavān Simhanāda, of 'Gro mgon ras pa, father and son, and of the supreme siddha Karma Pakshi etc., I [hereby] established to be of one flavor reaching to the end of the *dharmadhātu* and the element of space." *yod med bden pa thams cad dang bral ba'i yod med mnyam pa nyid kyis sgrub bral stong pa nyid dang snying rje dbyer med kyi sems dang de'i snang ba rdzas tha dad med pa de gnyis sgrub bcas yod med kyi dngos po dang dngos po med pa'i 'khor 'das kyi chos gang du'ang ma grub kyang yod pa dang med pa'i snang ba dang stong pa'i cha gnyis so sor rnam pa dang bcas pa dang rnam pa med par yab yum zung 'jug mnyam pa nyid du gcig go bya ba'i don te | don 'di rgyal ba'i yul las kyang | gzugs stong pa'o || stong pa nyid gzugs so || gzugs las kyang stong pa nyid gzhan ma yin no || stong pa nyid kyang gzugs gzhan ma yin no || zhes mdo sngags mthar thug dgongs pa gcig pa'i chos 'khor rgyal ba 'jig rten gsum gyi mgon po 'bri khung pa skyob pa ring po che dpal gyi legs par bskor pa dang | bjom ldan 'das seng ge sgra'i ngo bo dpal ldan dus gsum mkhyen pa dang || 'gro mgon ras pa yab sras grub mchog karma pakshi la sogs te phyogs bcu'i zhing rab 'byams kyi sangs rgyas dang byang chub sems dpa' dpa' bo mkha' 'gro chos skyong srung ma thams cad kyi gsung gig sang ba bsam gyis mi khyab pa'i ngang tshul gyi rgya mtsho chen po 'dzad du med par 'phel ba dang bcas ten am mkha'i khams dang chos kyi dbyings kyi mtha tugs par rog cig pa nyid du grub pa yin no |.*

Third Karma pa explicitly.²¹ Thus it appears, that to the Eighth Karma pa Mi bskyod rdo rje, the Second Karma pa Karma Pakshi was the source for the short *Direct Introduction into the Three Embodiments*.

As for the teachings contained in this short *Sku gsum ngo sprod*, Kong sprul (1813–1899) says in his description of the “Eight Great Conveyances of Practice Traditions” (*sgrub brgyud shing rta chen po brgyad*):

The glorious Karma pa matured and liberated beings by means of the “wheel of reality of the four points” and the “introduction into the three *kāyas*”.²²

He does not specify which Karma pa he means, but when we look in the *Collected Works* of the Third Karma pa, his biography of Karma Pakshi has the title *Bla ma rin po che'i rnam thar | karma pa'i rnam thar*, which might indicate that he used the name Karma pa in particular to refer to the Second Karma pa, Karma Pakshi.

In his *Treasury of Knowledge*, Kong sprul also explains in the context of describing the path of liberation of Mahāmudrā that “the Karma pa emphasized the introduction into the three embodiments”²³ and he relates this to a *vajra*-song by Mar pa Chos kyi blo gros (1012–1097) where the latter gives a very concise introduction into the three embodiments through three analogies. Kong sprul says:

The glorious Karma pa Rang byung rol pa'i rdo rje, the future sixth Buddha Lion's Roar in person, the one who abides in a bodhisattva's conduct, has impartially turned the wheel of reality of the four core-points [and] of the enlightened body, speech, and mind and has taught uninterruptedly in the three times the magical display of practice pervading all pure realms. The root of all the gateways to dharma practice [taught thereby] is:

[1] For people of lesser aptitude the four preliminary practices by virtue of which the mind-stream is trained.

[2] For people with moderate capacity it is four[fold], (a) the core-point of the body, (b) the core-point of winds, i.e., *prāṇāyāma*, (c) the core-point of the mind through focusing, and (d) the core-point of physical training, i.e., yogic pos-

²¹ *Sku gsum ngo sprod rnam bshad*, KN_w vol. 3, 377.: *dpal ldan dus gsum mkhyen pa dang | | 'gro mgon sangs rgyas grags pa che | rgyal ba bsod nams rdo rje dang | | grub thob karma pakshi sogs | | bka' brgyud byin rlabs nus pa yi | | rtogs ldan bla ma'i mdzad phrin yin | |*.

²² *Gdams ngag mdzod* vol. 18, 431–432.: *dpal karma pas gnad bzhi chos nyid kyi 'khor lo dang sku gsum ngo sprod kyi gdams pas smin grol mdzad |*. See also Kapstein 2007, 117.

²³ *Shes bya kun khyab* vol. 3, 391.: *karma pa yis sku gsum ngo sprod ... rtsal du bton |*.

tures. The root for all four is taught to be the yoga of *gtum mo*, i.e., bliss and warmth.

[3] People with best acumen are fully guided on the instantaneous path through Mahāmudrā, the introduction into the three embodiments.

Moreover, [Mar pa,] with the analogy—“in the ground floor of Pullahari, the continuous rain of the *nirmāṇakāya* falls”—gave the introduction into the *nirmāṇakāya* connected with conventional bodhicitta. With the analogy—“in the middle story of Pullahari, the *sambhogakāya* is indicated by a symbol”—he gave the introduction into the *sambhogakāya* connected with *prāṇāyāma*. [And he] gave the introduction into Mahāmudrā, the *dharmakāya*, infinite realization, the practice of self-arisen wisdom, connected with the core-point of abiding in the innate, that which cannot be indicated with symbols and is beyond words. It is said that if this series is practiced even for just seven days prior to one’s death, it is without doubt that the level of Vajradhara will be achieved.²⁴

Let us have a short look at the structure and content of Rang byung rdo rje’s short text *The Direct Introduction into the Three Embodiments* which deals with exactly these points that, as pointed out above, Mar pa is said to have taught to his students. It consists of three parts, [1] the preliminaries, [2] the “wheel of reality of the four core-points”, and [3] the “introduction into the three embodiments”.²⁵

²⁴ *Shes bya kun khyab* vol. 3, 391.-392.: *ma byon sangs rgyas drug pa seng ge’i sgra nyid byang chub sems dpa’i spyod pa la gnas pa dpal ldan karma pa rang byung rol pa’i rdo rjes sku gsum thugs gnad bzhi chos nyid kyi ’khor lo phyogs med du bskor nas grub pa’i cho ’phrul zhing khams kun tu khyab pa dus gsum rgyun chad med par ston pa’i chos sgo thams cad kyi rtsa ba ni | gang zag blo dman pa rnams sngon du ’gro ba’i chos bzhis rgyud sbyong ba dang | dbang po ’bring rnams la bca’ ba lus kyi gnad | srog rtsol rlung gi gnad | dmigs pas sems kyi gnad | lus sbyong ’khrul ’khor gnad bzhi dang | bzhi ka’i rtsa ba bde drod gtum mo’i rnal ’byor bcas ston cing | dbang po rab tu gyur pa rnams la sku gsum ngo sprod phyag rgya chen po cig car ba’i lam la yang dag par ’khrid par mdzad do | de’ang | pulla ha ri’i ’og khang du || sprul sku thogs med char rgyun ’bebs || zhes pa’i brdas mtshon pa kun rdzob byang sems dang ’brel ba skrul sku’i ngo sprod || pulla ha ri’i bar khang du || longs spyod rdzogs sku brda yis mtshon || ces pa’i brdas mtshon pa srog rtsol dang ’brel ba longs sku’i ngo sprod | brda yis mi mtshon cing tha snyad las ’das pa gnyug ma rang bzhag gi gnad dang ’brel ba chos sku’i ngo sprod pa’i phyag rgya chen po rtoqs pa rab ’byams rang byung ye shes nyams su blangs pa’i rim pa ’di nyid ’chi kar zhag bdun tsam bsgoms pas kyang gdon mi za bar rdo rje ’chang gi sa brnyes par gsungs so |. The above-mentioned Khenpo Chodrag Tenphel also mentioned during his lecture on the history of the Karma Bka’ brgyud tradition during the “Second International Karma Kagyu Meeting” in Bodhgaya on Dec. 12th 2016 that the *Sku gsum ngo sprod* is a short commentary on this *vajra*-song by Mar pa and that Mi bskyod rdo rje’s *Sku gsum ngo sprod rnam bshad* is a long commentary on it.*

²⁵ *Sku gsum ngo sprod*, in: *Gdams ngag mdzod* vol. 9, 232.-233.: “Here, the [enlightened] body, speech, and mind of all Bka’ brgyud teachers, the instruction “intro-

[Ad 1] The preliminaries for adepts with lesser capacities comprising four practices, all closely connected with *guru yoga*, are:

- (1) Turning toward the attainment of awakening and developing *bodhicitta*.
- (2) Meditating on Vajrasattva for purification.
- (3) Practicing the *maṇḍala*-offerings for generating merit.
- (4) Practicing *guru yoga* for quickly receiving spiritual support.

[Ad 2] The “wheel of reality of the four core-points” for people of moderate capacity consists of:

- (1) The core-point of the body, i.e., establishing oneself in the vajra-position, leaving the speech natural without talking, and abiding naturally in mind's nature, the sphere of phenomena (*dharmadhātu*), neither rejecting nor involving oneself in the appearances of the six senses.
- (2) The core-point of devotion in the context of *guru yoga*. One imagines Vajradhara encircled by all Bka' brgyud bla mas, embodying all buddhas of the three times and requests the highest siddhis of *mahāmudrā*. Then the adept imagines that all Bka' brgyud bla mas dissolve into Vajradhara who dissolves into the meditator. It is emphasized that one should not meditate on the *bla ma* as a human person, but as Vajradhara.
- (3) The core-point of the winds associated with *prāṇāyāma*. These methods are also combined with *guru yoga* practice.
- (4) The “root” practice of the “four wheels”, i.e., the instruction on *gtum mo* based in Vajrayoginī practice.

[Ad 3] The direct “introduction into the three *kāyas*”, *nirmāṇakāya*, the *sambhogakāya*, and the *dharmakāya*.

- (1) First the text gives a meditation instruction associated with Buddha Śākyamuni meant to introduce the adept into the

duction into the three *kāyas*”, which is fully complete with all [exercises] such as the “wheel of reality of the four core-points”, consists of three [parts]: For people of lesser aptitude the “four preparatory *dharmas*”, for people with moderate capacity the “wheel of reality of the four core-points”, and for people with highest acumen the “introduction into the three *kāyas*”, i.e., the key-instructions for those who [practice] *mahāmudrā* instantaneously. Thereby this instruction, the “introduction into the three *kāyas*” is the root of all *dharma*, the actual point of all key-instructions, the genuine teaching for individuals of highest capacity who [progress] instantaneously.” *'dir bka' brgyud bla ma thams cad kyi sku gsung thugs gnad bzhi chos nyid kyi 'khor lo la sogs pa thams cad yongs pa'i sku gsum ngo sprod kyi gdams ngag 'di la | gang zag blo dman pa rnams la sngon du 'gro ba'i chos bzhi dang | gang zag dbang po 'bring po la gnad bzhi chos nyid kyi 'khor lo dang | gang zag dbang po rab tu gyur pa rnams la sku gsum ngo sprod phyag rgya chen po cig char ba'i man ngag dang gsum mo | de yang sku gsum ngo sprod kyi gdams ngag 'di ni | chos thams cad kyi rtsa ba | man ngag thams cad kyi dngos gzhi | dbang po yang rab cig char ba'i dam chos yin |.*

nirmāṇakāya. The text relates this to Mar pa's "in the ground floor of Pullahari, the continuous rain of the *nirmāṇakāya* falls".²⁶

- (2) The following instruction concerns a meditation associated with Avalokiteśvara, meant to introduce the adept into the *sambhogakāya*. The text relates this to "in the middle story of Pullahari, the *sambhogakāya* is indicated by a symbol".²⁷
- (3) The last instruction regarding the *dharmakāya* is said to be for those of highest capacities; it is "the actual introduction of the core points of integrating the practice, the essence of all".²⁸ Here Mar pa's song is not explicitly referred to, meaning wise, however, they are similar.²⁹

This overview of the short *Direct Introduction into the Three Embodiments* shows that the instructions are entirely practice oriented. They are presented in a gradual series, recommending preliminary practices and in particular the meditation of *guru yoga* on Vajradhara as the basis for the more advanced stages. The practice of the Buddhist tantras, in particular of *gtum mo* in connection with Vajrayoginī practice is recommended for practitioners of moderate capacity while the direct introduction into mind's nature as the *dharmakāya* is meant for those of highest acumen thus reflecting the type of Mahāmudrā instructions as taught by Sgam po pa, one of the founding fathers of this transmission. Kong sprul later referred to this as "essence-Mahāmudrā".³⁰

²⁶ *Sku gsum ngo sprod*, in: *Gdams ngag mdzod* vol. 9, 241.-242.: "This kind of meditation [corresponds to] the meaning of 'in the ground floor of Pullahari the continuous rain of the *nirmāṇakāya* falls'" *de ltar du bsgom pa ni | pu- la ha ri'i og khang du sprul sku thogs med char rgyun 'bebs bya ba'i don do |* - text: su.

²⁷ *Sku gsum ngo sprod*, in: *Gdams ngag mdzod* vol. 9, 242.-243.: "This [corresponds to] the meaning of 'in the middle story of Pullahari the *sambhogakāya* is indicated by a symbol'" *pu- la ha ri'i bar khang longs spyod rdzogs sku brda yis mtshon |* - text: su.

²⁸ *Sku gsum ngo sprod*, in: *Gdams ngag mdzod* vol. 9, 243.: *thams cad kyi ngo bo nyams su len pa'i gnad gdams ngag thams cad kyi dngos gzhi*.

²⁹ *Sku gsum ngo sprod*, in: *Gdams ngag mdzod* vol. 9, 243.-245..

³⁰ *Shes bya kun khyab* vol. 3, 381.-389.. "In general, there are three, the system of the sūtras, of the tantras and of the essence. ... As for the third, the system of the essence: When the essential *vajra*-wisdom descends, the maturation and liberation of those of highest acumen occurs in one moment. *spyir ni mdo sngags snying po'i lugs gsum ... gsum pa snying po'i lugs ni | snying po rdo rje ye shes 'bebs pa yis | | dbang rab smin grol dus gcig 'byung ba'o | |*.

**Theg mchog rdo rje's concise *Instructions on
the Direct Introduction into the Three Embodiments***

It should also be mentioned that there is yet another extant Karma Bka' brgyud work on this topic with the title *Instructions on the Direct Introduction into the Three Embodiments, the Profound Teaching of the Glorious Karma pa, the Perfect Buddha*. (Tib. *Rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas dpal karma pa'i zab chos sku gsum ngo sprod kyi gdams pa*). It was authored by the Fourteenth Karma pa Theg mchog rdo rje (1798–1868). Just as the short *Sku gsum ngo sprod*, it is also contained in vol. 9 of Kong sprul's *Gdams ngag mdzod*³¹ and comprises but six folios. Very succinctly, the author explains the “wheel of reality of the four core-points” and the “introduction into the three embodiments” which are the central teachings of Rang byung rdo rje's short *Sku gsum ngo sprod*. He concludes by saying that all phenomena are but mind and that everything is the inseparability of appearance and emptiness. He says that detailed instructions on this should be obtained from the various medium, lengthy and extensive writings on this topic composed by previous Bka' brgyud masters and that he wrote this text according to a manuscript of Karma chags med rin po che (17th c.) which the latter in turn wrote based on the root text of the master Rang byung rdo rje.³² With this remark it is clear, that for the Fourteenth Karma pa, the direct reference for this teaching on the three *kāyas* is Rang byung rdo rje's short *Sku gsum ngo sprod* rather than Mar pa's *vajra*-song. Moreover, it points to the existence of more commentaries on this topic within the Bka' brgyud school, which today no longer seem to be extant. At this point it should also be mentioned that the extensive *Sku gsum ngo sprod rnam bshad* by the Eighth Karma pa also does not contain any direct reference to Mar pa's *vajra*-song. Let us now turn to this comprehensive treatise by Mi bskyod rdo rje.

³¹ *Gdams ngag mdzod* vol. 9, 247-253.

³² *Rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas dpal karma pa'i zab chos sku gsum ngo sprod kyi gdams pa*, in: *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. 9, (247-253), 253.: “In short all phenomena are but mind as such ... everything is the inseparability of appearance and emptiness ... details should be understood from the various medium lengthy and extensive writings of the previous Bka' brgyud pas. This was written according to the manuscript of Karma chags med rin po che on the teaching of the master Rang byung rdo rje which is the root.” *mdor na chos kun sems nyid kho na'i phyir ... thams cad snang stong dbyer med kho nar ... zhib ba ni bka' brgyud gong ma dag gi khrid yig rgyas 'bring du ma bzhugs pa rnam las rtogs par bya'o | 'di ni rtsa ba rje rang byung rdo rje'i gsung nyid la karma chags med rin po che'i zin bris bzhiin bris pa ste |*.

**Mi bskyod rdo rje's extensive *Explanation of
the Direct Introduction into the Three Embodiments***

In his *Explanation of the Direct Introduction into the Three Embodiments*, Mi bskyod rdo rje takes up these instructions and puts them into the context of the theory and practice of the entire Buddhist path. First, he presents the transmission lineage for these teachings, emphasizing that they were transmitted in the Western part of India by the Paṇḍita Vajrakumāra, who was no one else but Padmasambhāva, to Tipupa and Re chung pa—all of whom were, according to Mi bskyod rdo rje, but manifestations of Karma Pakshi—and eventually to Karma Pakshi himself. From Karma Pakshi the transmission went to Grub thob mnyan ras pa and O rgyan pa and from them to the Third Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje. It continued through the Karma Bka' brgyud tradition up to Sangs rgyas mnyan pa his root-guru from whom Karma pa Mi bskyod rdo rje received these teachings.³³

After this, Mi bskyod rdo rje proceeds to briefly discuss the so-called lower vehicle on just a few pages, followed by a more detailed presentation of the causal Pāramitāyāna and a very elaborate explanation of the resultant Tantrayāna. Thus, the emphasis clearly lies on the latter. In the three volume edition of 2013, about six pages deal with the so-called lower vehicle, 180 pages are dedicated to the explanation of the Pāramitāyāna, and about 1.250 pages describe the Tantrayāna.

In the *sūtric* section, he presents the Pāramitāyāna from the perspective of conventional and ultimate bodhicitta. While the first is discussed succinctly, ultimate bodhicitta is explained in more detail by ascertaining bondage and liberation from the perspective of the two truths presented mainly according to the teaching systems of Atiśa (982-1054) and Śavaripa. Mi bskyod rdo rje fully endorses their views and emphasizes the importance of understanding the unity of the two truths. In this regards, he explains for example:

Even though *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, thoughts and the *dharma-kāya*, kernel and the husk, are [respectively] two, they are sameness. As is said: “*saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* do not exist as two [entities]. Thus, when one perfectly knows *saṃsāra*, it is said that one knows *nirvāṇa*.”³⁴ ... From the perspective that they [i.e., the two truths / *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*] are not established, earlier masters spoke in different ways about “the sameness of the two truths”, “the inseparability of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*”, “the unity of phenomena and the nature of

³³ See *Sku gsum ngo sprod rnam bshad*, KN_{vv} vol.1, 8_{2b}.

³⁴ Mahākauśalya Lakṣmī's **Pañcakramaṭīkā-kramārtha-prakāśikā-nāma*. D 1842, vol. 37, 269b.

phenomena", "thoughts are *dharmakāya*", "the vivid conventional integrated as the true nature of phenomena" etc. Those [merely] famed as good Tibetan meditators did not understand this key-point. The two truths do not exist as two distinct truths in their own right. When one is not aware of one's own [nature] this is the time of delusion, i.e., the conventional [truth]. When one is aware of one's own [nature] this is the time of non-delusion, i.e., the ultimate [truth]. Because there is but this difference, these two are of one essence which is the unity of the two truths. The expression saying that the two truths are like the front and back of a hand [comes from] a mind affected by a huge mistaken perception and is therefore more remote from [Buddhism] than [views maintained] by non-Buddhists.³⁵

On the question "Is the absolute mind of full awakening which realizes all phenomena to be pure, that domain of the personally realized awareness of Noble Ones, not established as ultimate truth?"³⁶ Mi bskyod rdo rje answers:

[No], because such awakening is just a convention of mere words and mere signs. [And], because when it does not even exist as conventional truth, how should it be established as ultimate truth?³⁷

Concerning the realization of the three embodiments, Mi bskyod rdo rje points out that generally, generating conventional bodhicitta contributes to the realization of the *nirmāṇakāya* and the *sambhogakāya*, while accomplishing ultimate bodhicitta allows for the realization of the *dharmakāya*. In a later section of the text, however—stressing the

³⁵ *Sku gsum ngo sprod rnam bshad*, KN_v vol. 1, 98₂-99₂ and 100₂: 'khor ba dang myang 'das rnam rtog dang chos sku'i snying po dang shun pa gnyis kyang mnyam pa nyi do | | 'khor ba dang ni mya ngan 'das | | gnyis su yod pa ma yin te | | 'khor ba yongs su shes pa na | | mya ngan 'das shes brjod pa yin | | zhes dang | ... bden gnyis mnyam nyid dang 'khor 'das dbyer med dang | chos can chos nyid zung 'jug dang | rnam rtog chos sku dang | kun rdzob lam me ba 'di dag chos nyid du bkrong nge ba sogs du mar sngon gyi slob dpon chen po rnam kyis gsungs pa la | bod kyi sgom bzang por grags pa rnam kyis gnad 'di blo bar ma khums nas bden gnyis rang bden pa zhiq so sor gnyis su med par rang gis rang ma rig nas 'khrul dus kun rdzob | rang gis rang rig nas ma 'khrul ba'i dus don dam ste khyad par de tsam las med pa'i phyir | de gnyis ngo bo gcig pa bden gnyis zung 'jug yin te | bden gnyis lag pa'i lto rgyab bzhin zhes smra ba de ni log pa'i shes pa chen pos rgyud bsad pa'i phyi rol pa las kyang phyi rol pa'o | | .

³⁶ *Sku gsum ngo sprod rnam bshad*, KN_v vol. 1, 104₃: chos thams cad rnam dag tu rtogs pa'i mngon par byang chub pa'i blo don dam 'phags pa rnam kyi so so rang rig pa'i spyod yul can de nyid de ltaq don dam pa'i bden par grub bam zhe na | .

³⁷ *Sku gsum ngo sprod rnam bshad*, KN_v vol. 1, 104₃: de lta bu'i byang chub de ni ming tsam brda' tsam gyi kun rdzob nyid kyi phyir | kun rdzob bden par yang ma grub na don dam bden par lta ga la yang grub pa'i phyir | .

inseparability of the accumulations and the buddha embodiments—he specifies, how this should be understood:

The embodiment of reality (*dharmakāya*) is *primarily* attained through the accumulated virtue of the store of wisdom regarding ultimate truth, objects of knowledge as they really are. On the other hand, the form embodiments (*rūpakāya*) are attained *mainly* through the accumulation of the store of merit regarding conventional truth, objects of knowledge in all their complexity. Nevertheless, it is not the case that the *dharmakāya* is attained *only* through the store of wisdom and the form *kāyas* *only* through the store of merit. Rather, by gathering the inseparability of the two accumulations [of merit and wisdom], the inseparability of the two *kāyas* is attained.³⁸

Along with these various view-oriented presentations, Mi bskyod rdo rje elucidates the spiritual practice that enables an adept to eventually actualize the buddha embodiments by realizing the two truths. This process requires the practice of calm abiding and deep insight. He explains both of these, *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā*, first in a general way and then in terms of their specific applications in the Bka' brgyud tradition. Mi bskyod rdo rje states that he presents this topic in the words of his teacher.³⁹ As this section appears to be a very important part in the sūtric instructions of this text, the following excerpts are quoted to provide some glimpses of the points Mi bskyod rdo rje makes regarding these common and uncommon ways of practicing *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā*:

My [spiritual] father, the great Ras pa,⁴⁰ says: “with respect to the natural condition or the ground or the cause or the knowables, there is (1) the ground for perfect insight upon which superimpositions and deprecations are eliminated

³⁸ *Sku gsum ngo sprod rnam bshad*, KN_v vol. 3, 347_v: *chos sku ni shes bya ji lta ba don dam bden pa la ye shes kyi tshogs sog gi dge ba bsags pas gtso cher chos sku thob la | shes bya ji snyed pa kun rdzob bden pa la bsod tshogs kyi bsags pas gtso cher gzugs sku thob la | de lta na'ang ye shes kyi tshogs kho nas chos sku dang bsod tshogs kho nas*³⁸ *gzugs sku thob pa ma yin te | tshogs gnyis ka zung 'brel du bsags pas sku gnyis po'ang zung 'brel du thob par 'gyur ba'i phyir |*.

³⁹ *Sku gsum ngo sprod rnam bshad*, KN_v vol. 1, 187_v-188: “[I’m going] to explain the key-point brought to the open by my master, my teacher, of how the yoga of *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā* regarding the meaning of the mode of abiding is to be done.” *bdag gi rje bla mas gnas lugs kyi don la zhi lhag rnal 'byor ji ltar bya ba'i gnad mtshang brtol bar 'dir brjod pa |*.

⁴⁰ *Ras pa* (lit. cotton-clad) here refers to the First Sangs rgyas mnyan pa, Grub chen bkra shis dpal 'byor (1457–1525).

and (2) the ground of natural spontaneity, the innate nature (*gshis*) of which does not abide in anything.

[Ad 1, the common practice:] The first [ground] are the outer and inner phenomena which are subsumed under the endless *skandhas*, *dhātus*, and *āyatanas* (*dharmin*) as well as the [boundless] nature of phenomena (*dharmatā*). Following the profound scriptures, one thinks with reasonings about whether these endless [things] which appear as phenomena are real or false. When [doing so, it becomes obvious that]—without there being any reality or falsity—the nature of reality and falsity is not established as anything whatsoever: Due to the confusion of the tendencies of the manner of primordial mental clinging, there are now various appearances of reality and falsity. Whatever is there is equally false and therefore not appropriate to be true. By virtue of [properly understanding what is there,] one clears away the extreme of nihilism. [One understands that] within this mere falsity, all phenomena arise dependently. Thus one clears away the extreme of permanence. Being just false, these phenomena are not concretely established. Therefore, they are empty and this emptiness is referred to as ultimate truth. When the ultimate truth is realized by noble beings, the pollution of the two obscurations of the characters of elaborations is progressively purified and enlightenment occurs. Thereby, deep insight is the discernment of this mode of abiding, and calm abiding is to one-pointedly abide in the actuality of the unity of the two truths. Thus by way of *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā* one does not abide in the two huge extremes of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. This description concerns the common way of the supreme vehicle. However, it is not the manner in which those of highest acumen practice meditation. Those of highest acumen rely on the second ground instead of the first ground.

[Ad 2, the uncommon practice:] The second ground as well does not deal with something other than the former, i.e., phenomena such as the *skandhas* etc. However, while the former is a ground of conceptualization whether [phenomena] are established in any way as reality and falsity, in the [second approach] one does not conceptualize in this way at all. Therefore, the ground upon which superimposition and deprecation are engaged in, collapses on its own accord. Thus they rely on the same ground, i.e., that earlier ground which [in this second approach, however,] turns into self-liberation, genuineness, the natural condition. At that point one does not ascertain all the knowable phenomena by way of examination and analysis. Instead, [one generates] extraordinary devotion to a genuine teacher endowed with realization and thereby accrues merit through the accumulation of this merit. The effect of this is great power. Through this one settles [in meditation] without in any way

artificially spreading and summoning [one's attention] in terms of externally oriented awareness of objects, that involves mind and mental events in one's mind along with objects, and internally oriented self-awareness. Thereby, as if the commotion of everything in one's mind along with objects is entirely exhausted, elaborations cease on their own.

Query: What is this ceasing of elaborations like? Reply: All elaborations are included in two, in the elaborations of *saṃsāra* and of *nirvāṇa*; there are no other ones. ... Due to unawareness of one's mind as to its own true mode of abiding—because of this unawareness—the images of *saṃsāra* appear. In contrast to that, due to the luminous wisdom of one's own mind as to its true mode of abiding of itself—when [there is this] awareness—it appears as *nirvāṇa*. In this way, whatever appears as *saṃsāra* or as *nirvāṇa* is just the mode of conduct of unawareness and awareness in one's own mind. The *dharmadhātu's* purity of one's own mind does not change in terms of being lower [in case of] *saṃsāra* and higher [in case of] *nirvāṇa*, because there isn't any diminishing and increasing such as loosing and thriving etc. ... One abides in the fresh nature of the luminous mind, abiding vividly, wide awake and relaxed without wavering away from there. This is called *śamatha*. When one abides in this state, to simultaneously understand and precisely see the essence of one's own mind along with its object as utterly beyond abiding and arising as mental objects that are experienced, this is called *vipaśyanā*. ... These two as a union, as luminosity, this is called the yoga of the unity of *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā*. It is said that when the experiences of the debilitating malaise⁴¹ of mental engagement, which is an as-

⁴¹ See Higgins and Draszcyk 2016, vol. 1, 332 and n. 960: "Debilitating malaise" renders *gnas ngan len* (*dauṣṭhulya*, *dauṣṭhulya*). See also Seyfort Ruegg 1969, 439, who translates this term as 'la Turbulence', Davidson 1988, 177, as 'hindrances' (and elsewhere 'baseness'), and Schmithausen 1987 vol. 1, 66, as 'badness'. Schmithausen discusses many connotations of the term which include badness or wickedness (*kleśa-pakṣyam*), unwieldiness (*karmanṣyatā*), heaviness (**gurutva: lci ba nyid*), stiffness (*middha-kṛtam āśrayajādyam*), incapacitation or lack of controllability (*akṣamata*), and unease or misery (*dauṣṭhulya-duḥkha*). Other possible translations are "negative hindrances" or "malaise". The idea here is that unsatisfactoriness permeates human existence to such an extent that it is perceived, felt and internalized most fundamentally as a situation of affliction, suffering, degradation, malaise and powerlessness. It has the effect of hindering, physically and mentally, a yogin's ability to attain his goal. See Davidson 1988, 177. Connotations of existential unease, badness and self-recrimination are combined with moral notions of fault, failing, recrimination and hindrance in the Tibetan rendering *gnas ngan len* (lit. "identifying with (*len*) a situation (*gnas*) of baseness/badness (*ngan*)"), as explicated in the *Sgra sbyor bam po gnyis*. See Mvy Gb s.v. *dauṣṭhulya: dauṣṭhulya zhes bya ba du ni smad pa'am ngan pa | ṣṭhā gatinivṛttau zhes bya ste gnas pa la bya | la ni ādana ste len ba'am 'dzin pa'o | | gcig tu na duṣṭu ni nyes pa'am skyon gyi ming*

pect of the experience while the mind is abiding, are cleared away, this, in the glorious Dwags po Bka' brgyud, is called "the fruition has arrived on the ground". ... My [spiritual] father, the great noble master⁴² said, that this training of the yoga of *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā* which was explained in this way is the uncontaminated discourse of the unsurpassable key-instructions of the Bhagavan. The Bhagavan said: "When the mind is established, this is wisdom. Thus, familiarize yourself with the notion that buddha is not to be searched for somewhere else"⁴³.⁴⁴

la ni gong du bshad pa dang 'dra ste | spyir na ltung ba dang sgrib pa'i ming ste gnas ngan len du btags |.

⁴² Mi bskyod rdo rje regarded Sangs rgyas mnyan pa I Bkra shis dpal 'byor (1457–1525) as his root Guru (*rtsa ba'i bla ma*) and received from him various Mahāmudrā instruction, most notably the direct introduction to the nature of mind. See also Higgins and Draszczyk 2016, 247.

⁴³ *Ātyayañāna-nāma-Mahāyana-Sūtra*, AJS, H 124, vol. 54, 226a.

⁴⁴ *Sku gsum ngo sprod rnam bshad*, KN_v vol.1, 188.-192.: *chos thams cad kyi babs sam gzhi'am rgyu'am shes par bya ba 'di la | yang dag pa'i shes rab kyis sgro bskur ba cad pa'i gzhi dang gshis gang du'ang gnas pa med pa rang bzhin lhun gyis grub pa'i gzhi gnyis las dang po ni | phyi nang phung khams skye mched kyis bsdu pa'i chos can dang chos nyid mtha' yas pa de yin la | zab mo'i lung gi rjes su 'brangs nas rig pas 'di ltar chos su snang ba 'di mtha' dag 'di ltar bden pa zhig gam | brdzun pa zhig ces mmo ba na bden rdzun gang yang ma yin par bden brdzun gyi rang bzhin cir yang ma grub pa la thog med kyi blo'i 'dzin stangs kyi bag chags 'khrul nas da lta'i bden rdzun du mar snang ba las ci thams cad rdzun par chabs gcig pas bden pa'i gnas med pas chad mtha' sel | de ltar rdzun tsam la chos thams cad stos nas byung bas rtog mtha' sel | rdzun pa nyid kyis chos de tshugs thub tu ma grub pas stong pa'i stong nyid la don dam pa'i bden pa zer bas | don dam bden pa 'phags pa dag gi mngon du byas pa na spros mtshan gyi sgrib gnyis kyi bslad pa rim gyis sangs nas 'tshang rgya bar 'gyur la | de lta'i gnas lugs 'byed pa shes rab | bden gnyis zung 'brel gyi don la rtse gcig tu gnas pa zhi gnas te | de lta'i zhi lhag gis 'khor 'das gnyis kyi mtha' chen po gnyis la mi gnas par byed do zhes pa ni theg pa mchog gi spyi lugs yin kyang ha cang dbang po rnon po dag gi rnal 'byor du bya ba'i tshul min la | dang po rnon po dag gis ni gzhi dang po de nyid las gzhi gnyis pa nyid la rten pa yin te | gzhi gnyis pa'ang snga ma'i phung sogs kyi chos las gzhan pa'i gzhi ni ma yin kyang snga ma bden rdzun gang du grub rtog pa'i gzhi yin la | phyi ma 'dir de ltar gang du'ang mi rtog pas sgro bskur 'jug pa'i gzhi rang dag du songs bas gzhi snga ma de nyid rang grol gnyug ma rang babs su song ba'i gzhi nyid la brten par byas pa'i phyir te | de'ang skabs 'dir shes ba mtha' dag rtog dpyod kyis gtan la mi dbab par | bla ma dam pa rtogs pa dang ldan pa gcig la mos gus khyad par can byas pa'i bsod tshogs kyi bsod nams kyi 'bras bu mthu che ba nyid kyis rang sems su yul bcas la sems dang sems byung gi phyi lta don rig nang lta rang rig pa'i spro bsdu gang gi'ang ma bcos par bzhags pas / rang sems yul bcas thams cad rgyug pa ga chad pa ltar spros pa rang chod du 'gro la | spros pa chos tshul de ji ltar zhe na | spros pa thams cad 'khor 'das kyi spros pa gnyis su mi 'du ba med ... rang sems kyi ma rig pas ma rig pa nyid kyis 'khor ba'i rnam par snang la | rang nyid kyi gnas tshul rang sems 'od gsal ba'i ye shes kyi rig pa na de nyid kyi myang 'das su snang la | de ltar 'khor 'das gang du snang na'ang rang sems kyi rig ma rig gnyis kyi tshul khirms tsam las ma gtogs rang sems chos kyi dbyings rnam dag de ni mar 'khor ba dang yar myang 'das gang du'ang 'pho 'gyur 'phar 'bub sogs kyi 'bri gang gang du'ang 'gyur ba med pa'i phyir | ... sems 'od gsal ba'i rang bzhin rjen pa la gnas pa de las gzhan du g.yo ba med par sal le srig ge me re gnas pa de la zhi gnas zer ba yin | de'i ngang la gnas pa na rang sems yul bcas de nyid kyi ngo bo*

The background that allows for such definitive certainty in the view that buddhahood is not to be searched for anywhere else but in one's own mind, is discussed by Mi bskyod rdo rje in another section of his text. Taking the *Ratnagotravibhāga* [RGV I.27-28] as his basis of discussion, Mi bskyod rdo rje gives an in-depth commentary on the three reasons provided therein why sentient beings are said to have buddha nature. He highlights that it is certainly right to view buddha nature as an ultimate phenomenon. However, as it also has the character of wisdom in regard to conventional transactions (*tha snyad kun rdzob*) it partakes of conventional truth as well and thus, buddha nature is precisely the inseparability of the two truths. It is in this sense that according to him, buddha nature has traditionally been identified with the substratum (*ālaya*), which, as Mi bskyod rdo rje clarifies again and again, comprises both the impure substratum of *saṃsāric* phenomena and the pure substratum of *nirvāṇic* phenomena. When obscured by adventitious defilements, buddha nature is the condition of possibility of *saṃsāra* and when free from these, it is the condition of possibility of *nirvāṇa* or, as formulated above, "whatever appears as *saṃsāra* or as *nirvāṇa*, is just the mode of conduct of unawareness and awareness in one's own mind".

In epistemological terms, the Karma pa argues that buddha nature is considered conventional from the perspective of not yet being free from efforts involving conceptual signs (*mtshan rtsol*) bound up with act, object and agent, but is considered ultimate from the perspective of the unfindability of such objectifying deliberations:

Such a quintessence [buddha nature] is designated as conventional from the perspective of there still being efforts involving conceptual signs (*mtshan rtsol*) based on the triad of object, agent and act. But, it is designated as ultimate from the perspective of not being established in terms of efforts involving conceptual signs. Although those who desire liberation on the basis of the two truths [as understood] in this way engage in acceptance and rejection, there is no reason to do anything at all in terms of accepting or rejecting the two truths as inherently existent [phenomena]. Consequently, it is said that the entire range of view, meditation, conduct, and fruition, are spontaneously present, being devoid of acceptance and rejection, uncontrived, and effortless.

grub myong blo'i yul du gtan pa dang 'char ba las 'das par khong du chub par lhad mthong ba de la lhad mthong zer te | ... gnyis zung du 'jug par 'od gsal bar zhi lhad zung 'jug gi rnal 'byor bya ste | gnas bzhi pa'i myong cha'i yid byed kyi gnas ngan len gyi nyams dag pa na 'bras bu gzhi thog na phebs pa zhes dpal dwags po bka' brgyud pa dag tha snyad mdzad pa yin zhes gsungs so | ... yab rje rje btsun chen po des ji ltar bka' sital ba'i zhi lhad gi rnal 'byor skyong tshul de nyid bcom ldan 'das kyi man ngag bla ma brgyud pa'i zhal mchid dri ma dang bral ba yin te | bcoms ldan 'das kyi | sems rtogs na ye shes yin pas sangs rgyas gzhan du mi 'tshol ba'i 'du shes sgom par bya |.

[Thus,] all mental engagements are perfectly ascertained as being [already] abandoned.⁴⁵

This latter standpoint supports Mi bskyod rdo rje's contention that buddha nature is in no sense an established basis (*gzhi grub*), even if it serves as the basis of all human experience from bondage to liberation. Moreover, he explains:

This [buddha nature] is steadily continuous (*rgyun brtan pa*). Since it neither waxes nor wanes from sentient being up to buddha, it was posited as the ground of all phenomena comprising bondage and freedom, *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, the innate and adventitious, and the two truths. It was said to be non-momentary by virtue of its not being newly produced by causes from beginningless time to the future, but this does not mean that *conventionally* there is no momentariness [in the sense of phenomena being] produced by causes and conditions.

The ground of all phenomena prevails all-pervasively and impartially in buddhas and sentient beings. Yet, there is no need to [make it] an established basis because if there were something established in this way, the fallacy would absurdly follow that this factor and all persons individually endowed with it are selves and truly established.⁴⁶

After the explanations in the sūtric context, Mi bskyod rdo rje proceeds with his very extensive explanations on the Tantrayāna which makes the fruition the path. He does so from two perspectives. First he ascertains the three continua, i.e., the causal continuum, the path continuum and the resultant continuum:

⁴⁵ *Sku gsum ngo sprod rnam bshad*, KN_v vol 1, 121.₁₃: *de lta'i snying po de nyid la ji srid bya byed las gsum gyi mtshan rtsol yod pa de srid kyi cha nas kun rdzob bden pa dang mtshan rtsol ji tsam du yod kyang mtshan rtsol du ma grub pa'i cha nas don dam bden pa zhes btags te | de lta'i bden gnyis tsam la rten nas thar 'dod dag blang dor byed kyang | bden pa gnyis la rang bzhin gyis grub pa'i blang dor ni 'gar yang bya rgyu med pas lta sgom spyod 'bras thams cad la blang dor med pa ma bcos rtsol bral lhun grub chen por yid byed thams cad la dor du gtan la 'bebs par bya ba yin no zhes legs par bshad do |.*

⁴⁶ *Sku gsum ngo sprod rnam bshad*, KN_v vol. 1, 118.₁₃: *sems can nas sangs rgyas kyi bar bri gang med pas rgyun brtan med⁴⁶ pa'i phyir 'ching grol 'khor 'das gnyugs ma glo bur bden gnyis kyi chos thams cad kyi gzhir yang 'di nyid 'jog la 'di thog ma med pa nas ma 'ongs pa las gsar du rgyus ma bskyed pas skad gcig ma yin par gsungs kyang tha snyad du rgyu rkyen gyis skyes pa'i skad gcig ma yin pa'i don ni ma yin la | 'o na chos thams cad kyi gzhi sangs rgyas dang sems can ris med pa'i kun khyab tu bzhugs na'ang gzhi grub dgos pa ni ma yin te | | de ltar grub pa'i chos shig yod na chos de dang de gang la ldan pa'i gang zag thams cad bdag dang bden grub par thal ba'i skyon du gyur ro | | . yin, according to the correction of the text in the edition of the *Collected Works of Mi bskyod rdo rje* (KN_{mk}). KN_v and KN_{mk} both have *min* which, however, seems to be a mistake.*

The causal continuum is the continuum of the nature. The path continuum is the continuum of the ground or the means. The fruition continuum is inalienableness. Therefore, it is the continuum of nonregression, of no-more-learning. The first continuum is the substantial cause. The second is the co-operating cause. When these two causes unequivocally combine, the third continuum infallibly occurs as the result of this combination.⁴⁷

Then he goes into the tantric practice in the context of these three continua. The causal continuum—in other words, buddha nature—is distinguished into the causal continuum of the mind and of the body. Here, the focus of his explanations lies on the first. He explains the causal continuum of the mind, i.e., buddha nature, mainly according to the teaching system of the Kālacakra tantra called the “king of tantras”. He also discusses some other tantras, yet emphasizes that the Kālacakra tantra conveys the final intent of all other tantras and shows how based on this tantra the entire manifestations of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* can be understood.

Mi bskyod rdo rje emphasizes that while the sūtric accounts do not fully reveal the defining conditions (*mtshan nyid*) or specify the illustrative instances (*mtshan gzhi*) of buddha nature as it operates in the life of an individual, the tantric accounts of the causal continuum treat buddha nature directly. They do so not as a hidden potential that is only vaguely alluded to by using metaphoric language but as an actual phenomenon to be concretely realized by way of tantric methods of “taking the goal as the path”. In the context of the causal continuum he goes in great detail into the causal continuum of the body, i.e., the channels, currents, and potencies. First he provides a general outline of these three and how the currents and potencies move within the structure of the channels. Then he describes the difference between karmic currents and wisdom-currents as well as between karmic potencies and wisdom potencies.

On the basis of Tibetan Kālacakra hermeneutics, Mi bskyod rdo rje also challenges different views regarding the three continua held by influential Tibetan scholars of the classical period, such as Tsong kha pa (1357–1419), Rgyal tshab dar ma (1364–1432), Red mda’ ba (1349–1412), and ‘Gos Lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal (1392–1481). His concern is to show that any one-sided speculative account of the causal

⁴⁷ *Sku gsum ngo sprod rnam bshad*, KN_{sv}, vol. 1, 212_{...v}: *de'i rgyu rgyud la rang bzhin gyi rgyud dang | lam rgyud la gzhi 'am thabs kyi rgyud dang | 'bras rgyud la mi 'phrog pa'i phyir mi ldog pa mi slob pa'i rgyud de | rgyud dang po ni nyer len gyi rgyu dang | rgyud gnyis pa ni lhan cig byed pa'i rgyu ste | rgyu de gnyis gdon mi za bar tshogs pa'i tshogs 'bras las rgyud gsum pa mi bslu bar 'byung ba yin no |*. Here, Mi bskyod rdo rje comments on a quote from the supplemental tantra of the *Guhyasamāja* (the eighteenth chapter appended to the root text). See Higgins 2013, 166, n. 413.

continuum or buddha nature—equating it with sheer emptiness, attributing some kind of self-identity to it, or discussing it in the framework of a clear-cut dichotomy between *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*—misses the point completely. For Mi bskyod rdo rje, it is essential to point out that buddha nature is beyond the discursive elaborations of existence and non-existence, being and non-being which are grounded in eternalistic and nihilistic viewpoints. To him, buddha nature is ever-present as great primordial perfect buddhahood which merely needs to be liberated from adventitious defilements to be recognized as it is. The discussion of the causal continuum makes up approx. fifteen percent of the explanation on the tantras.

The path continuum is introduced by pointing to the tantric path as being superior to the sūtric one. Based on that, Mi bskyod rdo rje guides the reader through different levels of tantra. He shortly mentions the *kriyatantra* and *yogatantra* and goes into great detail in the *yoganiruttaratantra* (*rnal 'byor bla na med pa'i rgyud*). He presents this with explanations regarding the gate of accessing tantric practice, i.e., the empowerment, along with discussing the associated *samayās* and commitments. He also goes into the qualifications of and requirements from both, teacher and disciple, and continues with elucidating the Creation and Completion Stages and the various ways of conduct. Mi bskyod rdo rje explains this topic in terms of the systems of the three *yoganiruttaratantras*, the *mahāyogatantra* Guhyasamāja, the *yoginītantra* Hevajra, and finally Kālacakra. In Tibetan these were called respectively “father-tantra” (*pha rgyud*)⁴⁸, “mother-tantra” (*ma rgyud*)⁴⁹, and “advaya-tantra” (*gnyis med rgyud*).⁵⁰ In the course of these explanations, he provides a detailed introduction into the realization of the three or rather four embodiments, i.e., the *nirmāṇakāya*, the *sambhogakāya*, the *dharmakāya*, and the *svābhāvikakāya* which he refers to respectively as “Mahāmudrā, the practice of coemergence” (*phyag chen lhan cig skyes sbyor*) in terms of the body, the speech, the mind,

⁴⁸ “The Tibetan *pha'i rgyud* or *pha rgyud* is an abbreviated or elliptical expression for *rnal 'byor pha'i rgyud* and is actually a rendering of *yogatantra*.” See Blog, posted 18th May 2013 by Dorji Wangchuk.

⁴⁹ Ibid: “The Tibetan *ma'i rgyud* or *ma rgyud* is an abbreviated or elliptical expression for *rnal 'byor ma'i rgyud* and is actually a rendering of *yoginītantra*.”

⁵⁰ While the short *Introduction into the Three Embodiments* focusses on meditation instructions in the context of Vajrayoginī, Mi bskyod rdo rje, in his long *Explanation of the Direct Introduction into the Three Embodiments* emphasizes Kālacakra as the most sublime practice. It is good to remember that Mar pa received this transmission also from Maitrīpa. In one of his famous songs contained in his biography, a passage that Mi bskyod rdo rje explicitly puts into the context of a Kālacakra empowerment, he says, *Rain of Wisdom*, 151-153, *Bka' brgyud mgur mdzod*, 64a.: Even if you summoned forth the minds of the buddhas of the three times ... There is nothing more ultimate than this.” *theg pa'i mthar thug snying po'i don* || *chos phyag rgya che la ngo sprod bgyis* || ... 64b.: *dus gsum sangs rgyas thugs phyung yang* || *mthar thug de las med do gsungs* ||. See also Sherpa 2004, 166-167.

and wisdom (*ye shes*). In this section the correlation with Rang byung rdo rje's short *Direct Introduction into the Three Embodiments* is very obvious. Mi bskyod rdo rje, when presenting the empowerment which matures and the path that liberates uses the latter template to first present the four preliminaries of (1) refuge and bodhicitta, (2) purification through the practice of Vajrasattva, (3) generating merit through the practice of *maṇḍala* offerings and (4) *guru yoga*. He then proceeds with very detailed instructions regarding the direct introduction into the four embodiments, the *nirmāṇakāya*, the *sambhogakāya*, the *dharmakāya*, and the *svabhāvikakāya*.

As for the *nirmāṇakāya* or the embodiment of manifestation, the Creation and Completion Stages as well as the enlightened activities of the respective deity are presented, respectively the enlightened activity of the ornamental wheel of the inexhaustible body, speech, and mind. This is followed by a detailed introduction into the *sambhogakāya* or the embodiment of enjoyment. In this context, the various yogic practices included in the "four wheels" are presented, in particular the practice of *gtum mo*. This is then followed by two shorter sections regarding the introduction into the *dharmakāya* or the embodiment of reality, and the *svabhāvikakāya* or the embodiment of the nature as such. The presentation of the path continuum covers the bulk portion of the explanation on the tantras, approx. eighty percent of it.

Mi bskyod rdo rje's concern is to highlight that once the tantric Creation Stages (*utpattikrama* : *bskyed rim*) and Completion Stages (*niṣpānakrama* : *rdzogs rim*) have cleared away adventitious defilements, buddhahood replete with all qualities of a buddha's body, speech and mind—the perfect deity, which is ever-present also during the phase of the causal continuum—is fully revealed, thus again pointing out that these qualities are in no way newly produced. This process of "making the goal the path" is tantamount to "the emergence of Mahāmudrā realization". In regard to this principle view of the Dwags po traditions he explains:

The deity of the causal continuum and buddhahood itself are present in the primordially present great Completion Stage. In this regard, when a fortunate disciple of highest capacity and a qualified teacher come together in auspicious circumstances, then by the teacher simply making a connection (*mtshams sbyar ba*) using mere symbolic indications or words, the wisdom of self-arisen Mahāmudrā or the face of the primordially present buddha is encountered directly. Among the Bka' bryud pas this is known as "the emergence of Mahāmudrā realization". Therefore, the buddha of the causal continuum or the perfect deity itself are present

as primordial buddha[hood] even during the obscured phase of impure sentient beings.⁵¹...

Though the buddha or the deity of the primordial Completion Stage are present without defilements even in the causal continuum, [when] connected with adventitious defilements, it is labelled as sentient being, when [partly] cleansed from defilements, it is labelled as bodhisattva, and when purified from defilements it is labelled as buddha.⁵² But [such] labels are mere postulates for relational factors (*ltos chos*). By contrast, when [buddha nature] was imputed as “ever-present” (*ye bzhugs*), [this means] the buddha and the deity of the thoroughly pure Completion Stage, which are free from conceptualization and non-conceptualization, are not newly arisen and are not newly attained.⁵³

The last approx. five percent of the text is dedicated to explaining the resultant continuum. Here, Mi bskyod rdo rje presents buddhahood first by going into the explanations common to the sūtras and the tantras and then specifies the tantric perspective on the fruition. Mi bskyod rdo rje also considers the tantric fruition continuum (*'bras rgyud*) in light of rival Tibetan views of ultimate reality. Specifically, he contrasts the two diametrically opposed views of the ultimate that had come to prominence during the classical period: the Jo nang conception of the ultimate as a permanent metaphysical essence (immutable buddhahood) that is beyond dependent arising and the Dge lugs pa conception of the ultimate as sheer emptiness in the sense of a nonaffirming negation.

In this context, he criticizes views which either collapse conventional reality into the ultimate or impose a separation between them, and instead opts for a view of the inseparability of the two truths which holds them to be neither the same (monism) nor fundamentally different (dualism). Mi bskyod rdo rje's careful consideration of

⁵¹ *Sku gsum ngo sprod rnam bshad*, KN_w vol. 2, 335_{nis}: *rgyu rgyud kyi lha dang | sangs rgyas de nyid ye bzhugs kyi rdzogs rim chen por bzhugs pa yin la | 'di nyid dbang po yang rab skal ldan gyi slob ma dang mtshan ldan gyi bla ma'i rten 'brel 'dzoms nas bla mas brda tsam dang tshig gis mtshams sbyar ba tsam gyis rang byung phyag rgya chen po'i ye shes sam | sangs rgyas ye bzhugs kyi zhal mngon sum du 'jal ba la phyag rgya chen po'i rtogs pa skyes pa zhes bka' brgyud 'di'i phyogs la grags shing | des na rgyu rgyud kyi sangs rgyas sam yang dag pa'i lha de nyid ma dag sems can gyi gnas skabs sgrib bcas kyi dus nas kyang ye sangs rgyas su bzhugs pa yin te |*

⁵² See RGV I.47 (ed. by Johnston 1950, 40): *aśuddho 'śuddhaśuddho 'tha suviśuddho yathākramam | sattvadhātūrīti prokto bodhisattvastathagataḥ | |*

⁵³ *Sku gsum ngo sprod rnam bshad*, KN_w vol. 2, 338_{is}: *gdod ma'i rdzogs rim gyi lha'am sangs rgyas rgyu rgyud du'ang dri med du gnas kyang | glo bur gyi dri ma dang 'brel ba'i sems can du gdags shing | dri ma sbyang ba'i tshes byang sems su gdags la | dri mas dag pa'i tshes sangs rgyas su gdags kyang gdags pa ni ltos chos kyi btags pa tsam las ye bzhugs su btags nas rtog mi rtog las grol ba'i shin tu rnam par dag pa'i rdzogs rim gyi lha dang sangs rgyas ni gsar skyes dang gsar thob ma yin te |*

such rival perspectives allows him to highlight the problems of opposing eternalistic and nihilistic, monistic and dualistic, interpretations of the ultimate, while emphasizing the virtues of viewing the two truths as conventionally discernable but ultimately indistinguishable cognitive domains. Rejecting both the typical Jo nang view of an immutable buddhahood *qua* buddha nature as a metaphysical permanent phenomenon and the mere negation theory often found in the works of Dge lugs authors, Mi bskyod rdo rje concludes that the ultimate truth, the fruition continuum in the tantric system, consists in the inseparability of the two truths and two embodiments (*dharmakāya* : *chos sku*; *rūpakāya* : *gzugs sku*), of emptiness and appearance. In this context, the following excerpt points to his main position regarding the buddha embodiments:

Most of those who purport to be scholars and *siddhas* in India and Tibet as well as many exceedingly foolish people propound [the following:] Among the two [aspects of] a buddha's embodiments (*kāya*) and wisdoms—[1] the self-beneficial ultimate embodiment and wisdom and [2] the other-beneficial conventional embodiments and wisdoms—the former is emptiness, the *dharmakāya*, the naturally pure *dharmadhātu* which is empty of all limitations of discursive elaborations, whereas the latter is the form *kāyas* which manifest as the variety of the conventional endowed with discursive elaborations. This is proclaimed on the basis of the statement [from RGV III.1]:

Self-benefit and other-benefit are the ultimate embodiment
 And the state of conventional embodiments depending on it.
 Because of its state of emancipation and maturation
 The fruit is divided into sixty-four qualities.⁵⁴

But this [above mentioned interpretation] is not at all acceptable, because, to posit self-benefit as the ultimate and other-benefit as the conventional and to thereby explain the two embodiments, the two truths and two benefits as separate from each other (*ya bral ba*) turns out to be a wrong explanation. The reason is that it [implicitly] asserts that the self-beneficial, ultimate truth, the *dharmakāya*, would not function for the benefit of others but [only be] one's own benefit and that such an ultimate truth would be different from the conventional. Also, such a *dharmakāya* [would

⁵⁴ RGV III.1 (ed. by Johnston 1950, 91): *svārthaḥ parārthaḥ paramārthakāyas tadāśrita samvrttikāyatā ca | phalaṃ viśamyogavipākabhāvād etac catuḥṣaṣṭigunaprabhedam | |*. Tib. D 4024, vol. 123, 65b..

thus] be postulated to be truly established in its own right as a substance different from the form embodiments. [Conversely,] the other-beneficial, conventional truth and the form embodiments would not function for one's own benefit and the like, being the opposite of the above. If one wonders what's wrong with this claim, [the answer is] what could be a greater blunder than that?

The reason [for this allegation is that] when it comes to the two truths, whereby all phenomena are described in terms of two truths, if they are not [even] *conventionally* established as being the same or different, let alone *ultimately*, then what could be more mistaken than to proclaim that we must posit the two truths as different on the level of buddhahood? That is not all. [In terms of] your pet idea of emptiness—namely, something like a nonaffirming negation which negates [all] conceptually-constructed extremes—it is not possible that such an emptiness could function for one's own benefit and exist as the *dharmakāya* because functioning for one's own benefit requires the existence of a beneficiary and a benefactor, and existing as *dharmakāya* requires that it exists as an ensemble which is of the nature of embodiment (*lus kyi bdag nyid can*). But such is not possible for your nonaffirming emptiness which is the mere purity [i.e., the sheer absence] aspect of natural purity.

Further, some unwise people maintain that the aspect of emptiness consisting in the natural purity of all phenomena at the time of the ground when it is free from all obscurations at the time of fruition, is posited as the *svabhāvikakāya*. Likewise, natural emptiness, which is the true nature of phenomena (*dharmatā*) at the time of the ground, is, from the perspective of the aspect of freedom from all obscurations, posited as the *dharmakāya*. Therefore, ultimate truth alone is posited as the *dharmakāya*. If one wonders what is wrong with [this view, the answer is] what could be more noxious than saying this! The *svabhāvikakāya* is explained as the support for the entire range of uncontaminated qualities of buddhahood and as the embodiment that makes the attainment of all uncontaminated qualities possible. But, conversely, the single sheer emptiness as a nonaffirming negation was not claimed to be *svabhāvikakāya* by the victor and his sons. Therefore, what would be more inappropriate than to make up theories of the embodiments and wisdoms that were never accepted by the victor and his sons?

In fact, the *svabhāvikakāya* was not posited based on emptiness as sheer negation. It was rather posited from the perspective that the expanse and wisdom are an assembly that cannot be split apart. As it is taught by the victor Ajita [AA VIII.1]:

The *svābhāvikakāya* of the sage
Has as its defining characteristic
the nature of the undefiled dharmas
That are obtained in utter purity.⁵⁵

Thus, in the classification of four *kāyas*, where the *svābhāvikakāya* is differentiated from the *dharmakāya*, the *svābhāvikakāya* is posited from the perspective of luminosity which is free from the host of obscurations in which the expanse and wisdom are not separate things. However, according to the classification of three *kāyas*, the *dharmakāya* and the *svābhāvikakāya* are posited as the *dharmakāya* where phenomena (*dharmīn*) and the nature of phenomena (*dharmatā*) are not split apart. As the victor Ajita says [RGV II.30]:

The *vimuktikāya* and the *dharmakāya*
Are explained to be of benefit to oneself and others.
These [*kāyas*] being the support of self-benefit and other-benefit
Are endowed with qualities such as being inconceivable.^{56, 57}

⁵⁵ *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, AA VIII.1, *sarvākārāṇi viśuddhiṃ ye dharmāḥ prāptā nirāsravāḥ* | *svābhāviko muneh kāyas teṣāṃ prakṛtilakṣaṇāḥ* | | Tib. D 3786, vol. 80, 11a–11b.

⁵⁶ RGV II.30 (ed. by Johnston 1950, 84): *vimuktidharmakāyābhyāṃ svaparārtho nīdarśitah* | *svaparārthāśraye tasmīn yogo 'cintyādibhirguṇaiḥ* | | Tib. D 4024, vol. 123, 63b.

⁵⁷ *Sku gsum ngo sprod rnam bshad*, KN_w vol. 3, 344–346.: *yang rgya bod kyi mkhas grub du khas 'che ba phal cher dang* | *blun po ches mang bas kyang* | *sangs rgyas kyi sku dang ye shes la rang don don dam pa'i sku dang ye shes dang* | *gzhan don kun rdzob pa'i sku dang ye shes gnyis las snga ma stong pa nyid spros mtha' thams cad kyis stong pa'i rang bzhin rnam dag gi chos dbyings chos sku yin la* | *phyi ma ni spros bcas kun rdzob sna tshogs su snang ba gzugs sku yin te* | *ji skad du* | *rang don gzhan don don dam sku dang ni* | | *de la brten pa'i kun rdzob sku nyid de* | | *bral dang rnam par smin pa'i 'bras bu ni* | | *yon tan bye ba drug cu 'di dag go* | | *ces 'byung ba'i phyir* | *zhes smra bar byed do* | | *de yang ches mi 'thad de* | *rang don la don dam dang gzhan don la kun rdzob tu bzhag pa ni sku gnyis dang bden gnyis dang don gnyis ya bral ba de 'drar 'chad nas log pa'i bshad par 'gyur ba'i phyir te* | *rang don dang don dam bden pa dang chos skus rang don las gzhan don mi byed pa dang* | *de lta'i don dam bden pa de kun rdzob las gzhan yin pa dang* | *de lta'i chos sku de gzugs sku las gzhan gyi rdzas rang bden par grub par 'dod pa dang gzhan don dang kun rdzob bden pa dang gzugs skus kyang rang don mi byed pa sogs snga ma las bzlog ste smras ba'i phyir te* | *de ltar 'dod pa la skyon ci yod na* | *de las skyon che ba ci zhis yo de* | *chos thams cad la bden pa gnyis su brjod pa'i bden pa gnyis ni don dam par ma zad tha snyad du gcig pa dang tha dad du ma grub na* | *sangs rgyas kyi sar bden gnyis tha dad du 'jog dgos zhes smra ba las phyin ci log ci zhis yod pa'i phyir* | *der ma zad khyed kyi zhen don stong pa nyid spros mtha' bkag pa'i med par dgag pa'i stong pa nyid de 'dra ni rang gi don byed pa dang chos kyi skur yang mi rung ste* | *rang don byed pa la phan gdags bya 'dogs byed du yod dgos pa dang* | *chos skur yod pa la lus kyi bdag nyid can gyi tshogs par yod dgos pa la* | *khyed cag gi stong nyid med dgag rang bzhin rnam dag gi dag rkyang gi cha la de ltar mi rung ba'i phyir* | *yang mi mkhas pa kha cig* | *gzhi dus kyi chos thams cad rang bzhin rnam par dag pa'i stong nyid kyi cha de 'bras bu'i dus sgrib pa thams cad dang bral ba na ngo bo nyid skur*

Conclusion

When looking at Mi bskyod rdo rje's *Explanation of the Direct Introduction into the Three Embodiments*, it is evident that the main view which thus runs like a thread throughout the entire treatise—whether it is in the context of the sūtric or tantric aspects of view and meditation—is the unity of the two truths, the inseparability of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. To him, this is precisely the intent of the sūtras of the Perfection of Wisdom famously pointed to in the so-called *Heart Sūtra* through the words 'form is empty, emptiness is form':

Through the equality of existence and nonexistence that is free from all real existence and nonexistence, the mind, which is the inseparability of emptiness and compassion free from obscurations, and its appearances, which do not have a different substance from that, these two—even though they are in no way established as *the* phenomena of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, as entities and nonentities which [respectively] have obscurations and no [obscurations]—are to be understood as the sameness of the unity of male and female (*yab yum*), as the two aspects of the appearance of existence and the emptiness of nonexistence respectively with form and without form. This meaning is also [contained] in the mother of victors: 'Form is empty. Emptiness is form. Emptiness is not something different from form. Form is not something different from emptiness.'

Thus, the ever increasing, inexhaustible great ocean of the mysterious inconceivable speech of all buddhas, bodhisattvas, viras, dakinīs and dharmaprotectors of all the worlds of the ten directions such as the *dharmacakra* of the ultimate single intent of sūtras and tantras that was perfect-

'jog pa bzhin | gzhi dus kyi chos kyi chos nyid rang bzhin gyi stong nyid de sgrib pa thams cad dang bral cha nas chos kyi skur 'jog pas don dam bden pa kho na la chos skur 'jog pa ci nyes snyam na | de skad zer ba de las nyes pa che ba ci zhig yod de | ngo bo nyid sku ni sangs rgyas kyi zag pa med pa'i chos mtha' dag gi rten dang zag med kyi chos thams cad sku de nyid la thob par byar rung ba'i sku zhig la bshad pa yin la | de las gzhan stong rkyang med dgag gcig la ngo bo nyid skur rgyal ba sras bcas mi bzhed la | rgyal ba sras bcas kyi mi bzhed pa'i sku dang ye shes kyi rnam gzhang byas na de las mi rung ba ci zhig yod pa'i phyir | des na ngo bo nyid sku stong nyid dgag rkyang gi steng nas bzhang pa ma yin te | dbyings dang ye shes so sor bcad du med pa'i tshogs cha nas der bzhang pa'i phyir | rgyal ba ma pham pas | thub pa'i ngo bo nyid sku ni || zag pa med pa'i chos gang dag || thob gyur rnam kun rnam dag pas || de dag rang bzhin mtshan nyid can || zhes 'byung ngo || des na sku bzhir dbye ba dag gi chos sku las ngo bo nyid sku zur du dbye bar byed pa'i ngo bo nyid sku ni dbyings dang ye shes ya bral ba ma yin pa'i sgrib tshogs dang bral ba'i 'od gsal ba'i cha nas bzhang la sku gsum du dbye ba ltar na ngo bo nyid kyi sku dang chos sku dag chos can dang chos nyid so sor bcad du med pa'i chos kyi skur 'jog pa yin te | rgyal ba ma pham pas | rnam grol chos kyi sku dag gis || rang dang gzhan kyi don bstan te || rang gzhan don bstan de la ni || bsam mi khyab sogs yon tan ldan ||.

ly turned by the glorious 'Jig rten gsum gyi mgon po, i.e., the glorious 'Bri khung pa skyob pa rin po che, as well as [the teachings] of Dus gsum mkhyen pa, the essence of the Bhagavān Simhanāda, of 'Gro mgon ras pa, father and son, and of the supreme siddha Karma Pakshi etc., I [hereby] established to be of one flavor reaching to the end of the *dhar-madhātu* and the element of space."⁵⁸

In voicing his favored views, Mi bskyod rdo rje remains fully in line with Sgam po pa Bsod nams rin chen (1079–1153), the founding father of the Dwags po Bka' brgyud traditions as well as with the Third Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje (1284–1339) who decisively shaped the view and meditation tradition of the Karma Bka' brgyud school. This is obvious from the many references found in the text regarding these two masters. The challenge for Mi bskyod rdo rje was certainly to defend this system against currents of views that, starting in the 14th century, continued to dominate the philosophical landscape of Tibetan Buddhism, foremost among them the views of Tsong kha pa (1357–1419) and his students. Moreover, he clearly and repeatedly demarcates himself from the view of Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1292–1361) and the Jo nang tradition which—as far as explanations of the conventional and the ultimate truth are concerned—forms the extreme counterpart to the Dge lugs pa's system.

Considering the length of Mi bskyod rdo rje's *Explanation of the Direct Introduction into the Three Embodiments* and the complexity of its topics, it is, in fact, impossible to summarize its meaning and to provide a digest which is truthful to the various subtleties pointed out by the author. Thus it is hoped that this short outline—of what doubtlessly can be counted as one of the most fascinating accounts of Tibetan Buddhist view and meditation practice—inspires more in-

⁵⁸ *Sku gsum ngo sprod rnam bshad*, KN_v vol. 3, 375_v–376_v: *yod med bden pa thams cad dang bral ba'i yod med mnyam pa nyid kyis sgrub bral stong pa nyid dang snying rje dbyer med kyi sems dang de'i snang ba rdzas tha dad med pa de gnyis sgrub bcas yod med kyi dngos po dang dngos po med pa'i 'khor 'das kyi chos gang du'ang ma grub kyang yod pa dang med pa'i snang ba dang stong pa'i cha gnyis so sor rnam pa dang bcas pa dang rnam pa med par yab yum zung 'jug mnyam pa nyid du gcig go bya ba'i don te | don 'di rgyal ba'i yul las kyang | gzugs stong pa'o || stong pa nyid gzugs so || gzugs las kyang stong pa nyid gzhan ma yin no || stong pa nyid kyang gzugs gzhan ma yin no || zhes mdo sngags mthar thug dgongs pa gcig pa'i chos 'khor rgyal ba 'jig rten gsum gyi mgon po 'bri khung pa skyob pa ring po che dpal gyi legs par bskor pa dang | bjom ldan 'das seng ge sgra'i ngo bo dpal ldan dus gsum mkhyen pa dang || 'gro mgon ras pa yab sras grub mchog karma pakshi la sogs te phyogs bcu'i zhing rab 'byams kyi sangs rgyas dang byang chub sems dpa' dpa' bo mkha' 'gro chos skyong srung ma thams cad kyi gsung gig sang ba bsam gyis mi khyab pa'i ngang tshul gyi rgya mtsho chen po 'dzad du med par 'phel ba dang bcas ten am mkha'i khams dang chos kyi dbyings kyi mtha gtugs par rog cig pa nyid du grub pa yin no |.*

depth research of this text which has, at least to my knowledge, so far not received much attention in academic Buddhist studies.

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1. Abbreviations

- AA *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*. Maitreya (ascribed). Ed. Ramshankar Tripathi (together with the *Abhisamayālaṅkāravṛttiḥ Sphuṭārthā*) Bibliotheca Indo-Tibetica Series 2. Sarnath: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1993.
- AJS *Ātyayajñāna-nāma-Mahāyāna-Sūtra*, H 124, vol. 54, 225b-226b
- CY_{sb} *Chos grags ye shes gsung 'bum*. Full title: *Thams cad mkhyen pa zhwa dmar bzhi pa spyan snga chos kyi grags pa'i gsung 'bum*, 6 vols. Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2009.
- D Derge edition of Bka' 'gyur and Bstan 'gyur. *The Tibetan Tripitaka*, Taipei Edition. Taipei, Taiwan: SMC Publishing, 1991.
- H Lhasa edition of the Bstan 'gyur. Lhasa: Zhol par khang, 1934.
- MD_{sb} *Mi bskyod rdo rje gsung 'bum*. Full title: *Dpal rgyal ba karma pa sku 'phreng brgyad pa mi bskyod rdo rje gsung 'bum*, 26 vols. Lhasa, 2004.
- RD_{sb} *Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje gsung 'bum*. 16 vols. Ziling: mTshur phu mkhan po lo yag bkra shis, 2006.
- RGV: *Ratnagotravibhāga Mahāyānottaratantraśāstra*. Maitreya (ascribed). Ed. Edward H. Johnston. Patna: Bihar Research Society, 1950. (Includes the *Ratnagotra-vibhāgavyākhyā*)
- RGVV *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā*. Asaṅga. See RGV [The manuscripts A and B on which Johnston's edition is based are described in Johnston 1950, vi–vii. See also Bandurski et al. 1994, 12–13].

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_____ *The Precious Necklace of the Complete Words of the Glorious Mkha' Spyod Dbang po (Dpal ldan mkha' spyod dbang po'i bka' 'bum yongs su rdzogs pa'i dkar chag rin po che'i phreng ba)*. In: CY_{sb} vol. 6 (*pa*), 921-930.

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Mi bskyod rdo rje, Karma pa VIII

_____ *Dwags brgyud grub pa'i shing rta*. Full title: *Dbu ma la 'jug pa'i rnam bshad dpal ldan dus gsum mkhyen pa'i zhal lung Dwags brgyud grub pa'i shing rta*. Reprod. From a Dpal spungs edition of Zhwa dmar Chos kyi blo gros. Gangtok: Rumtek Monastery 1974.

Also, short title: *Dbu ma la 'jug pa'i kar tī ka*. Full title: *dwags brgyud grub pa'i shing rta*. Seattle: Nitartha International Publications, 1996.

_____ MK_{sb}: *Mi bskyod rdo rje gsung 'bum*. Full title: *Dpal rgyal ba karma pa sku 'phreng brgyad pa mi bskyod rdo rje gsung 'bum*, 26 vols. Lhasa, 2004.

_____ *Rnal 'byor rgyud kyi rnam bshad sogs*. (MK_{nc}) Full title: *Rgyal dbang karma pa sku 'phreng brgyad pa mi bskyod rdo rje'i Rnal 'byor rgyud kyi rnam bshad sogs*. 4 vols. A treatise on yogatantra and related texts by the 8th Karmapa Mi bskyod rdo rje. Scanned from block prints. Thimpu: Kunsang topgyel, 1979. Thimphu: Kunsang Topgyel: 1979.

_____ *Sku gsum ngo sprod rnam bshad*. Full title: *Sku gsum ngo sprod kyi rnam par bshad pa mdo rgyud bstan pa mtha' dag gi e vam phyag rgya*, 3 vols, (KN_v). Vajra Vidya Institute Library, Varanasi, India, 2013. Also in: MK_{sb} vols. 21–22 (KN_{mk}). Also: *dbu med* edition, 4 vols. (KN_{sm}) Gangtok: Rumtek Monastery, 1978.

Rang byung rdo rje, Karma pa III

_____ RD_{sb}: *Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje gsung 'bum*. 16 vols. Ziling: mTshur phu mkhan po lo yag bkra shis, 2006.

_____ *Bka' bzhi brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs*, RD_{sb} vol. 5, 1-358.

Karma Pakshi

_____ *Rlung sems gnad kyi lde mig*, by Chos rje rin po che karma pa. In: RD_{sb} vol. 7, 264-268.

_____ *Sku gsum ngo sprod*. In: *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. 9, 231-246. Shechen Publications, Delhi 1999. Also in: RD_{sb} vol. 11, 1-19. Also in: *Nges don phyag rgya chen po'i khrid mdzod*, compiled by Zhwa dmar Mi pham chos kyi blo gros, New Delhi, 1997, 13 vols., vol. 7, 17-31.

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_____ *Gdams ngag mdzod. The treasury of precious instructions. A collection of essential contemplative teachings of the eight main lineages of tibetan buddhism* 18 vols., Shechen Publications, Delhi 1999.

_____ *Shes bya kun khyab*, 3 vols., full title: *Theg pa'i sgo kun las bdus pa gsung rab rin po che'i mdzod bslab pa gsum leg par ston pa'i bstan bcos shes bya kun khyab*, Beijing: Mi rigs spe skrun khang, 1982.

Theg mchog rdo rje, Karma pa XIV

_____ *Rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas dpal karma pa'i zab chos sku gsum ngo sprod kyi gdams pa*. In: *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. 9, 231-246. Shechen Publications, Delhi 1999.

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The Signature of Recipes: Authorship, Intertextuality, and the Epistemic Genre of Tibetan Formulas

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This article raises critical questions on how recipes as a special “epistemic genre” (Pomata 2013) not only list ingredients but also encode historical data of knowledge transmission. Combining ethnographic fieldwork with Tibetan physicians and textual analysis of Tibetan formula books dating back to the seventeenth century that are still in use, I raise questions on how formulas as a genre are a meeting point between continuity and change and directly influence the transmission of medical knowledge and affect contemporary medical practice. Taking the example of the Tibetan “precious pill” Precious Old Turquoise 25, I ask how specific recipes have been composed and passed on by Tibetan authors and contemporary Tibetan physicians over time. I argue that in the context of Sowa Rigpa (*gso ba rig pa*, “Science of Healing”), even today, the design of formulas necessitates continuity, authenticity, continual interpretation, reformulation, and personal “signatures” in the making of remedies, now largely within the context of institutionalized knowledge transmission. In India, this poses a challenge for the present codification of formulas into a standardized pharmacopeia as currently required for four medical traditions (Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy) registered under AYUSH (the Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa Rigpa, and Homoeopathy, Government of India), under which Sowa Rigpa was officially recognized as a medical system in 2010.¹ The Tibetan examples offer original data for re-thinking the Ayurvedic model, which classifies medicines either as “classical formulas” or “proprietary medicines.” This model raises questions on genre, authorship, and intertextuality both historically and in the context of current pharmaceutical standardization and codification of formulas across Asia.

¹ See Craig and Gerke 2016 on a critical discussion on the naming of Sowa Rigpa, Blaikie 2016 and Kloos 2016 on the recognition process in India, and Kloos 2013 on how Tibetan medicine became a “medical system” in India.

1. *Introduction: Formulas and recipes as an “epistemic genre”*

Since Tibetan medicine in India was officially recognized as Sowa Rigpa under AYUSH in 2010, it is now entering a period of increased governmental regulation. Currently, the focus is on the standardization of medical education and the registration of Sowa Rigpa schools and practitioners.² Questions regarding the preparation of a National Sowa Rigpa Pharmacopeia will be raised at some point in the future.³ It is thus timely to think about the nature of Tibetan formulas.

In this article, I analyze the naming, authorship, and genre of Tibetan formulas. The concept of “genre” has been extensively debated by linguistic anthropologists (e.g. Briggs and Bauman 1992). Thus, genres are no longer treated “as timeless, fixed, unitary structures,” but are being approached by scholars in terms of their intertextuality, specifically addressing their elements of disjunction, and ambiguity (Briggs and Bauman 1992: 143, 145). Furthermore, in Tibetan Studies scholars have proposed various ways of classifying the vast amount of Tibetan literature into genre and text types beyond the traditional “ten sciences” (*rig pa'i gnas bcu*).⁴

In this article, I approach the genre of Tibetan written formulas, their intertextuality (which refers to their interrelationship with other types of texts), and particularly their relationship with the making and transmission of knowledge. In brief, I explore the “epistemic genre” of formulas as a potential analytical platform for comparing “medical ways of knowing.”

I have two analytic concerns here: first, how we can explore the various forms of a formula in its written manifestations as an “epistemic genre” (further defined below) and, second, what do the inherent morphologies and intertextualities of formulas tell us about the culture-specific medical knowledge transmission of Tibetan recipes and their authorship. Scholars of Tibetan and Buddhist Studies have extensively shown that intertextuality is ubiquitously present in Buddhist texts, and phrases are frequently repeated and re-used across texts, stretching conventional concepts of individual author-

² Personal communication, Dr. Padma Gurmet, December 2017.

³ In the People’s Republic of China and also across Europe standardization and reformulation regimes of Sowa Rigpa formulas are more advanced (see Schrempf 2015).

⁴ See Rheingans 2015 for a recent good summary. See also Cabezón and Jackson 1996. To date, there has been no detailed analysis of genre and text types in Sowa Rigpa literature.

ship.⁵ Similarly, my analysis of Tibetan formulas also reveals forms of intertextuality in terms of citations and silent borrowings, which aid knowledge transmission and authentication. Comparing the Tibetan material with already existing Ayurvedic reformulation regimes offers insights into possible trajectories that could be taken with the upcoming codification of Tibetan formulas in India, at the same time highlighting what is at stake in such a process.

I think it is important to consider Sowa Rigpa formulas as a distinctive genre when thinking about medical standardization since their style is fluid and provides an underlying script for continuous change and reformulation, which inherently defies standardization. As we shall see through my analysis of particular formulas, Tibetan *menjor* or “medicine compounding” (*smān sbyor*)⁶ is a dynamic practice, and its “multiplicity” (Blaikie 2015) is at stake should Sowa Rigpa follow the Ayurvedic model of codifying and standardizing formulas, outlined below.

In the wake of increasing standardization of Sowa Rigpa in India, I fundamentally question the common definition of “classical formulas” as currently used in India, where the more authoritative, long-standing, stable formulas of classical Sanskrit texts are generally contrasted with the recently developed “proprietary medicines” (e.g. Banerjee 2009, Blaikie 2015, Bode 2008, 2015, Zimmermann 2014). In a long process of standardization and legal codification of formulas, which Ayurveda completed by the 1970s, the Indian government recognized fifty-seven canonical Sanskrit texts, which impacted the definition of a “classical formula” and the pharmaceuticalization⁷ of medical practice (Naraindas 2014, Zimmermann 2014). By definition, “classical formulas” are those whose names and ingredients are listed in at least one of the fifty-seven canonical works. “Proprietary medi-

⁵ See Freschi and Cantwell 2016, and other contributions to their special issue on “Reuse and Intertextuality in the Context of Buddhist Texts” (Freschi and Cantwell eds. 2016).

⁶ This article follows the transcription developed by The Tibetan and Himalayan Library (THL) to provide the phonetic version of Tibetan terms, followed by their Wylie (1959) transliteration at first use. On the THL transcription system, see Germano and Tournadre (2003). Phonetic terms are the same in singular and plural: no -s is added. Transcriptions of proper Tibetan names do not always comply with THL version, especially when they have appeared previously in print with different spelling.

⁷ Pharmaceuticalization here is different from commercialization in that it refers to a process that often includes the commodification of knowledge and is thus political in nature. Banerjee defines it as “a development of the pharmacological products from any medical system, irrespective of the autonomous world-view on health, illness, and disease, such that the drugs prescribed by the system acquire a salience detached from the fundamental tenets of the system itself” (Banerjee 2009, 13). Thanks to Harilal Madhavan for pointing this out.

cines” are derived from but not identical with “classical formulas.” This allows a registered manufacturer to own and trademark a proprietary medicine. Ayurvedic pharmaceutical companies may just change one ingredient or add one to a “classical formula” and then call it a “proprietary medicine” (Banerjee 2009; Bode 2008, 2015).⁸

Ayurvedic companies have developed different strategies to adhere to and adjust the Sanskrit versions of formulas, some of which date back to the seventh century (Zimmermann 2014). We find various reformulation regimes with Ayurvedic polyherbal compounds (Pordié and Gaudillière 2014), but also cases where reformulation is absent (e.g. Zimmermann 2014, 90). My focus here will not be on the reformulation regimes in the already-established Ayurvedic pharmaceutical industry as described by Pordié and Gaudillière, but on the nature of Sowa Rigpa formulas that are about to enter a phase of increased pharmaceuticalization, which Kloos is currently approaching from the perspective of “pharmaceutical assemblage” (Kloos 2017). I want to make a specific case in point within the emerging transnational Sowa Rigpa industry studied by Kloos: If we want to understand the complexity of Sowa Rigpa formulas and not lose sight of their variations, especially in the likely up-coming process of standardization and legal codification by the AYUSH ministry in India, we need to approach each specific formula in a much broader sense and not reduce it to *one* standard “classical formula.”

When looking at Tibetan formulas in texts from the twelfth century onwards, one is typically left with the impression that they are “incomplete.” One always hopes for more information, either about the ingredients and the amounts used, details on how to compound the formula, or how to administer it for specific diseases. While a lack of detail is characteristic for most written medical descriptions, in the case of formulas it seems as if the formula as a literary genre, in which physicians shared their pharmacological knowledge in writing, is woefully lacking in what it would take to actually make the medicine in question. This brevity stems from a medical culture of strong oral traditions, where *menjor* or “medicine compounding” was taught through hands-on experience or *laglen* (*lag len*) and secret oral instructions called *men ngak* (*man ngag*) passed on from teacher to disciple. Medical works, including formulas, were frequently memorized, though adjusted in individualized recipes for particular patients or disease patterns. Some works even present formulas in verse form to aid memorization. How were formulas written in pre-

⁸ On the formulary logic and “synergistic” nature of Ayurvedic formulas see Naraindas 2014.

modern Tibet, and does it make sense to consider them as “classical formulas”?

The English terms “recipe,” “formula,” and “prescription” are often used interchangeably but defined varyingly by medical historians (Lev and Chipman 2012, 16 and Pomata 2013, 139). As such, it is important to clarify their meanings in their varying clinical or pharmacological contexts. Most medical historians use formula and recipe interchangeably, while prescription refers to the individualized list of remedies prescribed to a patient. In Tibetan any kind of recipe is simply called *zorwa* (*sbyor ba*), while prescriptions are known as “medicine letter” or *menyik* (*sman yig*). Dr. Namgyal Qusar made the distinction between *zorwa* as recipe and *jortsé* (*sbyor tshad*) as formula, the latter also including the measurements, or *tsé*, of ingredients. He emphasized that most formularies do not include the measurements and thought that eighty percent of canonical recipes are *zorwa*, allowing the physician flexibility in measuring the ingredients.⁹ Acknowledging his definitions, in this paper and for the sake of the argument, I use the English terms formulas and recipes interchangeably for *zorwa* and look at them as “forms of action” and thus a continued practice, following Blaikie (2015) and Scheid (2007). As Blaikie argued: “classical formulations emerge as medicines within fields of practice and dynamic currents of tradition in Volker Scheid’s (2007) sense, and are thus always contemporary and valid at the moment of their production” (Blaikie 2015, 18).

Blaikie questions the definition of “classical formula” as a “distinct, stable and bounded category” in Tibetan contexts through his social analysis of the Tibetan pill Samphel Norbu (Blaikie 2015, 9). He argues that this formula in its existing multiple versions (under the same name) does not “represent the corruption of classical purity” but a multiplicity of practice (Blaikie 2015, 18). My analysis of the naming, authorship, and genre of Tibetan formulas confirms his critical approach to the “classical” definition of formulas and encourages studies that question their stable character and look at the “multiplicity” (Blaikie 2015) of their ingredients and modes of knowledge transmission.

Pomata’s work (2011, 2013, 2014) concerns early modern European history in a Christian and Jewish context, as well as Chinese formulas. She classifies both formulas and recipes as “epistemic genres” and defines genre as “a meeting point of history and morphology, change and stability, variation and repetition, ... the way we deal with our cultural heritage—in other words, the way we interact with tradition” (Pomata 2013, 131). Pomata views creating a genre as a

⁹ Interview, Sidhbari, May 24, 2017.

culture-specific activity. Specifically, Pomata defines “epistemic genres” as those textual forms that include narratives, recipes, formulas, treatises, and textbooks in a given medical tradition. What all these texts have in common is that they are “directly related with the making and the transmission of knowledge,” emphasizing their cognitive character (Pomata 2013, 132, 134).

Medical historians, among them Pomata, further distinguish between literary and epistemic genres.¹⁰ With “epistemic genres” Pomata specifically refers to “those kinds of texts that are linked, in the eyes of their authors, to the practice of knowledge-making (however culturally defined),” while “literary genres” refer to a variety of texts covering a wide range of purposes and activities (Pomata 2014, 2-3). The borders between the literary and the epistemic are often blurred, as we shall see in those Tibetan formulas written in poetic form, but a focus on the epistemic helps to analyze how scientific knowledge is produced and transmitted through texts in specific cultures (Pomata 2014, 3). Pomata uses this distinction to create an analytical platform on which comparative approaches of “medical ways of knowing” become possible. She argues that “a focus on recipes as epistemic genre would help us to unify ... fragmented perspectives” of recipes that have been studied from separate angles of, for example, “food cultures, the history of medicine, the history of technology, the history of arts and crafts, and so forth” (Pomata 2013, 144, note 48). As a contribution to this analytical platform, combining textual and ethnographic analysis, I will look at Tibetan *jorwa* as an epistemic genre that conveys medical knowledge in culture-specific ways and does not lend itself easily to forms of standardization.

The Tibetan term *jorwa* is polysemous and means “to prepare,” “to connect,” “to combine together.” It is the standard technical term used for all kinds of recipes whether they are part of a personal collection or a prominent textual canon. In medical contexts the term *jorwa* is combined with the word *men* (*sman*)—referring to that which is beneficial, i.e. “medicine”—and as *menjor* (*sman sbyor*) becomes a technical term for “medicine compounding.” In fact, *jorwa* appear across the vast corpus of Tibetan medical compendia, within sections on how to treat certain diseases as well as in specialized formularies and *menjor* textbooks. *Jorwa* not only record and transmit medical knowledge but reveal in-built mechanisms that preserve heterogeneous practices, for example, allowing the use of substitutes, called *tsap* (*tshab*), when substances are unavailable (Czaja, in press; Sabernig

¹⁰ See the special conference on “epistemic genres” organised by the Max-Planck-Institute for the History of Science in Berlin in June 2015: <http://www.hsozkult.de/event/id/termine-28140>. Last accessed December 18, 2017.

2011). Discussions with contemporary Tibetan physicians demonstrate that Tibetan *gorwa* texts are meant not only for the transmission of knowledge of how to make remedies, but also to establish and attribute a certain authority and lineage to a formula. Occasionally they include knowledge based on practical experience that is then passed on in tandem with texts; but in most cases practical *menjor* experience is knowledge that has been and still is transmitted orally and remains largely secret and unpublished.

Exploring *gorwa* as an epistemic genre involves looking at how their textual representations parallel, appropriate, and are geared towards practices of knowledge-making and knowledge transmission. Their outer textual appearance in Tibetan medical works seems relatively stable, but when comparing formulas under the same name over time, variations become apparent. Some substances seem more important than others, some are dropped, disappear, or change names. The number and type of ingredients might differ even as the name of a particular formula remains constant. This raises questions of how such practices will affect Tibetan responses to governmental requests for standardization in the future.

As I will show, the name is meant to present a stable literary tradition, preferably linked to a long lineage. But when it comes to practice there is constant change, flexibility, appropriation, and interpretation. Thus, I argue that *gorwa* are morphologies of flux—interactive in their expression and transmission of lineage and authority. They represent more a “form of action” than “a type of text,” which parallels a more recent understanding of what a genre is all about (Pomata 2013, 131). As will become clear, to understand *gorwa* as an epistemic genre one has to examine a large variety of Tibetan medical texts.

Tibetan medical texts abound with formulas. Single substances are rarely used, and most formulas are herbal, mineral, and animal based compounds of three or more ingredients. Among the most complex of them are Tibetan “precious pill” formulas (*rin chen ril bu*), which contain from around twenty to up to over one hundred ingredients. They typically contain not only a refined mercury-sulfide powder called *tsotel* (*btso thal*) (see Gerke 2013), but also “precious” substances (thus the name *rinchen*),¹¹ such as gold, silver, rubies, diamonds, coral, turquoise, pearls, and so forth. To date, the origin of precious pill formulas are poorly understood.

This paper explores the trajectories of *gorwa* as an epistemic genre through the example of one Precious Pill, the “Precious Old Turquoise 25” (*Rin chen g.yu rnying nyer lnga*), which continues to be a popular remedy today and is therapeutically used for various liver

¹¹ See Gerke 2018 for a discussion of what makes a medicine a *rinchen*.

complaints. I analyze its earliest formulas in early seventeenth and early eighteenth century texts and compare those with contemporary formulas published by Tibetan physicians in India (e.g. Dawa Ridak 2003) as well as formula-related textbooks memorized by medical students in India today. In this comparison I address the following questions: How have formulas and their presentation in texts changed over time and how does the structure of a formula affect the transmission of medical knowledge? What is revealed in a formula and what is not? In analyzing several versions of this particular formula and in discussion with contemporary physicians, I ask what the developments and changes occurring in the published formulas can contribute to our understanding of formulas as an “epistemic genre.” Locating the topic of *yorwa* within historically-informed anthropology, I explore how Pomata’s approach can be supported by both ethnographic methods and textual analysis.

My ethnographic research employed conversations and semi-structured interviews with Tibetan physicians in India and during the 14th IATS Seminar in Norway (June 2016), focused on how they use, pass on, and relate to formulas mentioned in their classical texts and appropriate them in practice, adding their personal “signature,” even in larger institutionalized, pharmaceutical settings. For the most part such signatures remain unwritten in printed formulas. They are often attributed to a senior master physician, authenticating potency through a respected lineage, but their details are largely kept a secret. I explore several avenues of such “signatures,” considering them as an integral part of the epistemic genre of *yorwa* as a practice.

I also show one example of an institutionalized approach to teaching formulas from the largest medical institution in India, the Men-Tsee-Khang in Dharamsala,¹² and explore how changes in related textbooks affect medical knowledge transmission of *yorwa* today. In the discussion, I draw comparisons with the codification of formulas and their reformulations in Ayurveda to outline what is at stake when commodifying Tibetan formulas.

My first points of analysis concern the “writing” and “naming” of formulas, that is the ways formulas are written and how the name of a formula upholds authority and continuity of *menjor* knowledge. I then analyze the role of the authorship of formulas in knowledge transmission.

¹² See Kloos 2008 on the history of this medical institution.

2. The "signature" of recipes: Writing jorwa

There has been a strong literary culture throughout the development of Sowa Rigpa and its intellectual history (Gyatso 2015). To date, Tibetan medical literature remains an understudied field and most works have never been translated. In his brief chapter on the history of Tibetan pharmacology¹³ (*Bod lugs sman sbyor rig pa'i lo rgyus mdor bsdus*), published in 2009, Gawa Dorjé counted the formulas in about twenty medical works containing recipes. While not exhaustive, his calculations add up to almost 10,000 formulas, the highest number (3,394 formulas) being found in the fundamental work *Four Treatises* dating back to the twelfth century (Gawa Dorjé 2009, 1-5). Formulas published in five works dating before the *Four Treatises* also add up to more than one thousand (Gawa Dorjé 2009, 1-2). Gawa Dorjé did not count how many of the formulas re-appear. He also excluded formulas in manuals handed down through family lineages or orally. His figures remain rough estimates and do not reflect actual practice, but nevertheless point to a large number of existing textual Sowa Rigpa formulas.

The largest Tibetan pharmacy department in India, at the Men-Tsee-Khang in Dharamsala, currently produces 172 remedies, out of which thirty are derived from the *Four Treatises*, 107 from practical instructions of various scholars, and thirty-five from a combination of both fundamental texts and personal instructions.¹⁴ These numbers reveal a strong reliance on oral transmission. Privately working physicians I met in India typically produce around seventy formulas. To date hardly any of these formulas have been studied in detail by scholars.¹⁵ We know very little about the ways medical authors arranged and classified their formulas, how they were passed down, whether there are geographical differences, continuities or drastic changes within formulas published under the same name across the Tibetan world.

¹³ What I translate here as "pharmacology" refers to *menjor rikpa* (*sman sbyor rig pa*), a large field of knowledge comprising the study of *materia medica* (pharmacognosy) or *trungpe* (*khrungs dpe*), as well as the compounding of medicine or *menjor* (*sman sbyor*). A trained Sowa Rigpa physician typically compounds *and* prescribes medicines. Only recent institutionalization has led to a separation of medicine making and clinical practice (Pordié and Blaikie 2014). Thanks to Jan van der Valk for sharing his views on these categories with me.

¹⁴ <http://www.men-tsee-khang.org/dept/pharmacy/pharm-history.htm>. Last accessed December 3, 2017.

¹⁵ We have ethnographic studies on Zhije 11 by Craig (2012), on Langchenata by Saxer (2013), on Samphel Norbu by Blaikie (2015), and on Garuda 5 (PADMA Grippe Formel) and Gabur 25 (PADMA 28) by Van der Valk (2016).

In many Tibetan medical works, formulas are typically listed under headings of the diseases they treat. This can relate to specific *nyépa* (*nyes pa*)¹⁶ imbalances, to a list of symptoms, or to specific diseases. This way of placing formulas in texts reveals a practice-centered approach, which is also found in the *Aṣṭāṅgahrdayasamhitā*, the seventh century Sanskrit compendium that in its Tibetan translation influenced the writing of the *Four Treatises* (Yang Ga 2010). There are also similarities to what we know of early modern medical texts written in Chinese, where “medical recipes did not exist in a clean, one prescription-one illness set of rules, and plurality was a critical feature of early modern medical theory and practice” (Nappi 2009a, 759).¹⁷ In the Tibetan context, such plurality might manifest as several recipes listed under the same name in different disease sections. This practice-centered approach makes it difficult to locate formulas across texts.

While sitting together with Tibetan physicians over formula texts during my fieldwork in India, I often noticed that even they were confused and had to think about where to look for the formula. Generally, one has to know the main disease category the formula treats in order to find it. The contemporary Tibetan physician and author Dawa Ridak, who worked for many years at the Men-Tsee-Khang’s pharmacy department in Dharamsala, compiled formulas from older sources into his self-published work, briefly called *Practical Application of Manufacturing Medicines* (*Sman rdzas sbyor bzo’i lag len*, Dawa Ridak 2003). The book’s 28-page-long table of contents lists formula names under various headings of disease categories. The formula Manu Zhitang (Ma nu bzhi thang), for example, appears around twenty times under various disease headings (discussed further below). Fortunately, this book has an index; many older publications have neither an index nor a detailed table of contents, which makes it difficult to locate the same formula in many texts. Frequently the sequence of formulas follows the way found in the *Four Treatises*, and one is expected to know this foundational text to a large extent by heart.

Written formulas across Tibetan medical texts reveal a variety of particular patterns of structure, nosology, classificatory labels, and so

¹⁶ The three *nyépa*—the term has often erroneously been translated as “humor”—are the basic principles of Tibetan medical physiology that are imbedded into the larger cosmology of the five elements, i.e. water, fire, earth, wind, and space. The three principles are *lung* (*rlung*, predominated by the element wind), *tripa* (*mkhris pa*, predominated by element fire), and *béken* (*bad kan*, predominated by the elements earth and water).

¹⁷ To my knowledge no comparative studies have been done on Chinese and Tibetan formula works exploring potential similar characteristics.

forth. While making medicines, *menjor* practitioners frequently add their individual experiences to existing formulas, which I call adding a “signature.”¹⁸ My choice of the term “signature” is based on the Latin *signare*, which means “to mark with a sign,” which, in Europe, from the seventeenth century onwards came to mean “a distinguishing mark of any kind.”¹⁹ With the term “signature” I refer to the reformulations made by medical authors and contemporary *menjor* practitioners to their textual formulas, be they written or orally transmitted. In the following, I explore several avenues of such “signatures” and argue that they are part and parcel of recipes as a “form of action” and thus integral to the epistemic genre of *gorwa*. “Signatures” here imply more than just a reformulation of ingredients and include issues of a “true” adherence to an authentic lineage, carrying authority, and involve metaphors, such as who is the “composer” of a formula (see section five). Taken together, a formula embodies what I would call a “script”: it is open to improvisation and adjustment in day-to-day *menjor* practice. In the words of Dr. Penpa Tsering, who was trained at the Men-Tsee-Khang and is now an independent manufacturer of Tibetan medicines near Dharamsala:

I looked at many formula books from India, Lhasa, and Amdo. The same formula under the same name is mentioned many times, even with the same ingredient names, but each time with different amounts. I make our formulas according to Men-Tsee-Khang’s formulas and what I learnt from my teacher. If you look up Agar 15, it is mentioned in many formula texts. Many pharmacies make it, but their quantities are different, depending on climate, availability, and teachers’ experiences... Standardizing the formula would mean it should all be the same. That is very difficult, and we would have to do a lot of research to find out which formula has the best efficacy.²⁰

When approaching Tibetan recipes we can take some inspiration from colleagues working on Sanskrit and Chinese medical formula

¹⁸ The choice of the word “signature” is linked neither to the Galenic herbalist definition of “doctrines of signatures,” nor “pleiotropic signatures” of multi-component phytotherapeutics, which refer to the multi-target character of compounded ingredients in Tibetan formulas (Schwabl et al. 2013). Herbert Schwabl explains “pleiotropic signatures” as follows: “The possibility to use a variety of species in a formula leads to a different notion of the principle of ‘active substance,’ which cannot be traced back to a certain chemical molecule. The physiological principle of action is then connected to a functional pattern of action, which we labeled ‘pleiotropic signature.’” Conference presentation, 9th ICTAM, Kiel, August 9, 2017.

¹⁹ http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=rescript. Last accessed January 20, 2017.

²⁰ Interview, Sidhbari, May 24, 2017.

texts. Francis Zimmermann (2014) studied more than five hundred herbal substances used in Ayurvedic formulas that are still manufactured today in India and derive from classical Sanskrit formulas. His focus is on detecting the “shifters” within a formula, substances that are inconspicuous within the hierarchy of a formula but are used across many formulas and “eventually account for the overall consistency of the pharmacopoeia” (Zimmermann 2014, 77). His study offers one example of the intertextuality of formulas on the level of substances and how one could methodologically approach formulary texts as an “epistemic genre,” since his methodology allows for the detection of those parameters that link formulas across texts and play a significant role in “fixing the identity of a drug in the ayurvedic *materia medica* at large” (Zimmermann 2014, 78).

Carla Nappi (2009b) studied approximately 1,500 drug descriptions found in the pre-modern Chinese *Bencao Gangmu* (Systematic *materia medica*) of Li Shizhen (1518–1593) and analyzed how Li explored and verified substances. *Bencao* texts include “significant background information on medicinal drugs, including the categorization of substances according to qualities such as flavor (*wei*), efficacy or toxicity (*du*), presence of heat, appearance, seasonality, and growth habits” (Nappi 2009b, 28), all of which strongly influenced the composition of formulas.

Both Sanskrit and Tibetan medical literature have a similar genre to describe the characteristics and habitats of single substances of plant, animal, mineral or metal origin. In Sanskrit they are simply called “glossary” or *nighantu*.²¹ They list raw ingredients and their potencies but also types of metals, salts, oils or sets of “sour” and other substances, and so forth.²² In Tibetan the most prominent genre among *materia medica* texts are the *trungpe* (*'khrungs dpe*), meaning “grown specimen.” *Trungpe* traditionally list only herbal substances²³ and differ widely within the various schools of Tibetan medicine, partly because of the great regional variations of flora and fauna. Their botanical descriptions were sometimes followed by a recipe, but Tibetan authors largely used *trungpe* for the purpose of plant identification (Czaja 2013, 90, note 5). Before the twentieth century, only some of them included illustrations (Hofer 2014), which made substance identification difficult and dependent on oral transmission. Beginning in the early twentieth century with Khyenrap Norbu (Mkhyen rab nor bu, 1883-1962), the first director of the Men-Tsee-Khang, founded in 1916 in Lhasa, *trungpe* began to include sections

²¹ See Naraindas 2014, 13 for examples of the *nighantu* genre.

²² Personal communication Dagmar Wujastyk, Vienna, February 2017.

²³ E-mail communication Olaf Czaja and Dr. Tsering Wangdue, January 2017.

on mineral and animal substances.²⁴ This is also the case in the two contemporary *trungpe* works, the *Trungpe Stainless Crystal Mirror* (*'Khrungs dpe dri med shel gyi me long*) by Gawa Dorjé (1995) and the *Trungpe of Medicinal Essences* (*Bdud rtsi sman gyi 'khrungs dpe*) by Karma Chöphel (1993).

The most famous early eighteenth century work on *materia medica* (which some physicians I spoke with considered a *trungpe*, but others did not) that continues to have great relevance today is by the Tibetan scholar physician Deumar Tendzin Püntsock (De'u dmar Bstan 'dzin phun tshogs, born 1672), titled *A Lump of Crystal* and its commentary *A Rosary of Crystal*; in Tibetan both are briefly known as the *Shelgong Sheltreng* (*Shel gong shel phreng*) (2009).²⁵ Although lacking illustrations, the work describes more than one thousand substances from across the Himalaya, India, the Tibetan plateau and mainland China and has since been quoted widely across Tibetan *trungpe* and *menjor* works.

The practical application of *trungpe* and *menjor* texts indeed seems quite different. The *menjor* texts alone do not provide enough information for a full understanding of Tibetan formulas. Tibetan medical practitioners consult *menjor* texts for the basic ingredients, perhaps their measurements, and brief descriptions of the benefits, cooling or warming properties, and the taste of the formula. Notably, I have not seen monographs of formulas that at the same time explain the nature of their ingredients. In *menjor* texts, ingredients are simply listed but not explained. To identify the ingredients of a formula, one must consult the *trungpe* literature, and to comprehend how the synergy of ingredients can be therapeutically used, one has to look up the sections on therapeutic usage in clinical works, specifically in the *Four Treatises*. The necessity of combining these texts in approaching formulas was recently addressed by Czaja (2013), who argues that in order to understand a Tibetan formula three text genres have to be consulted and compared: botanical works (by which he refers to *materia medica* works on herbs, i.e. *trungpe* in the pre-twentieth century understanding), medical treatises that describe illnesses and list respective formulas, and *menjor* texts.

Czaja points out that clinically oriented texts often offer different perspectives on the therapeutic potency of plants than *materia medica* works, which alone are insufficient to understand the healing potential of substances in formulas. He discusses several examples where mistakes in textual transmission led to misrepresentations of certain substances' potency in subsequent texts and argues "that all three

²⁴ E-mail communication Dr. Tsering Wangdue, February 2017.

²⁵ See Hofer 2014 for a more detailed description of this work.

textual forms of knowledge, namely botanical, medical and on preparation, represent three distinctive and only partially interrelated traditions” (Czaja 2013, 111). It is important to acknowledge that these three types of texts present a form of Tibetan intertextuality that is crucial for the transmission of formula knowledge. I thus suggest that all three types of formula-related works—*materia medica*, *menjor* and clinical works—should be included when talking about the “epistemic genre” of Tibetan formulas, since it is only in combination that we can gain a more complete knowledge of *gorwa*. As we shall see, this disjointedness of *menjor* knowledge spread across these various types of medical works, and the challenges this poses to pharmacological study, have also contributed to the fragmented understanding among contemporary *menjor* practitioners of how a formula works.

In the following, I specifically show the plurality and complexity involved in the naming of *gorwa*.

3. The naming of formulas

Anthropologists have looked at social processes of naming, and in a medical context specifically at the naming of medical systems and practices (Craig and Gerke 2016, Hsu 2013). Together with Craig, I showed how in the context of choosing a label for a Tibetan medical tradition, “naming practice is indicative of claims to lineage-based authority” (Craig and Gerke 2016, 99). Similarly, in Tibetan formulas the name is very important and indicative of the text-based authority linked to the formula, which can be a particular medical school or a revered physician of the past. Moreover, naming practices of formulas also relate to the hierarchies of substances within a given formula. In Tibetan medical literature, formulas are frequently named according to one of their key ingredients and often have a figure attached, which indicates the number of the ingredients. For example: Agar 35 (A gar 35) has thirty-five ingredients with the key ingredient eaglewood or *agar* (*a gar*); Old Turquoise 25 has twenty-five ingredients with pre-processed turquoise stone first in line among the listed ingredients.

While the names of formulas have stayed the same for the most part, the number of ingredients in many cases has not. For example, the remedy Jangchö 37 (Byang chos 37) manufactured at the Men-Tsee-Khang in Dharamsala has more than forty ingredients, but the recent literature, both in India and the People’s Republic of China, lists thirty-seven ingredients in accordance with the number in its name (Gawa Dorjé 2009, 160; Dawa Ridak 2003, 281). In response to my question of why the *gorwa* texts are not updated accordingly, Dr.

Jamyang Tashi, head of the pharmacy department at the Men-Tsee-Khang in Dharamsala, explained during an interview: "If we would change the name, the new generation of doctors would not be able to find the formula in the classical literature and would lose touch with the lineage."²⁶ This is very significant and shows that the naming practice ensures a stable link to the medical lineage as codified in the texts. The name also functions as a label to be able to locate the formula in the large corpus of *yorwa* works. Jangchö 37 has to stay Jangchö 37 so that its special lineage—linked to the eastern Tibetan polymath and physician Mipham Gyatso (Mi pham rgya mtsho, 1846-1912)—can be passed on under *one* name, even if in contemporary *menjor* practice more than forty ingredients are used. The reformulations are part of the oral transmission passed on from teacher to student, which I refer to as the "signature" of a recipe. This includes an inherent aspect of veracity; in other words the "signature" is truthful to the lineage.

Unlike in Ayurveda, where proprietary medicines cannot be sold under the canonical formula name, in contemporary (not yet standardized) Sowa Rigpa formula names are kept when ingredients are skipped and remedies are reformulated, simplified, or "reinvented" for the global market. Here is an example: The North American-based online shop for "Traditional Tibetan Medicines" made in Tibet called "Himalayan Remedies" offers Bimala 20 (Bi ma la 20) with nineteen ingredients, Agar 35 (A gar 35) with thirty-three, Olse 25 ('Ol se 25) with nineteen, Amla 25 (Amla 25) with twenty-three, Gurgum 13 (Gur gum 13) with nine, and Agar 20 (A gar 20) with sixteen ingredients.²⁷ While none of these remedies have kept to their "traditional" number of ingredients, they are sold as "traditional" Tibetan remedies under their "traditional" name, and no reasons are given for these modifications. There could be many reasons for skipping ingredients, for example issues of endangered plant species, unavailability of substances, avoidance of controversial non-herbal ingredients, or rising prices of ingredients. Blaikie (in press) offers recent ethnographic examples from Ladakh to show how "classical" Tibetan formulas are seen by physicians as what I called above a script, based on which they improvise and to which they make practical adjustments depending on availability and in order to accommodate climatic differences in the various geographical regions in which the medicines are produced. Dr. Penpa Tsering explained:

²⁶ Interview Dharamsala, May 2016.

²⁷ <http://www.himalayanremedies.com/shop-new-products/>. Last accessed November 23, 2016.

Actually, when we make medicine in Dharamsala, which is a colder place, we add more of the warming ingredients, like pomegranate seeds, *sédru* (*se 'bru*), to the formula. The same formula produced in South India should have less *sédru* to balance the hot climate. This is important. Now that formulas are produced for people all over the world, individualized formulas as we did in the past cannot be made and we have to make the formula more balanced to avoid complications.²⁸

Dr. Penpa's adjusting the formula based on climatic changes points to a crucial trait: reformulations actually take place all the time in Tibetan *menjor* practices because they are an integral feature of *jorwa*. He also hints at a new reformulation strategy of "balance" to avoid complications of place and climate in globalized production practices.

4. The hierarchy of substances

The naming of formulas is a culture-specific practice. In Tibetan contexts it essentially depends on the hierarchy of substances within a formula, which in turn tells us something about the shift of importance of substances, their availability and popularity at certain times in history. There are specific scripts that Tibetan physicians follow with regard to what can be changed in a textual formula and how. In the past such scripts allowed for the making of formulas for individual patients. As Dr. Penpa Tsering, who makes his own medicine, explained:

If you make, for example, Ruta 6, in the past you looked at the patient and depending on his body size, constitution and the climate of his place you compounded the ingredients. Now we cannot do this. We just make pills.²⁹

According to Tibetan medical practitioners I spoke with, certain ingredients hold a specific status among the group of ingredients within a formula. Substances are positioned in a formula in three ways, known as (1) *kadzin* (*kha 'dzin*), (2) *kagyur* (*kha 'gyur*), and (3) *katsar* (*kha tshar*). These are mentioned across the literature and were also communicated to me by practicing Tibetan physicians. All three of them affect the composition of a formula and would, when compared to today's Ayurvedic reformulation regimes, affect the ways the formula would be judged as a "proprietary medicine." In the process of

²⁸ Interview, Sidhbari, June 2016.

²⁹ Interview, Sidhbari, June 2016.

standardization, would it be possible to translate Tibetan ways of thinking about formulas into ways of codifying them?

Mingji Cuomo, a Lhasa-trained Tibetan physician and medical anthropologist summarized the meaning of the positioning of ingredients in a formula as follows:

Mingji Cuomo: In a formula, the way substances are listed matters. *Kadzin* is the foundation of the medicine. The first ingredient is the main one, that is for sure. If you change the *kadzin*, the name of the formula has to be changed. The sequence matters. It makes a big difference if *chongzhi* [*chong zhi*, a form of calcite] is the first or second ingredient. *Kagyur* means changing the direction of the medicine, targeting a particular illness through a specific ingredient. And *katsar* can be added to strengthen the treatment. If you miss a few ingredients at the end of the formula that is not a problem.

Myself: Musk is often mentioned at the end of the formula.

Mingji Cuomo: That is only for the good smell; no problem, and only a little is used. That always happens. This does not affect the main potency or *niipa* (*nus pa*). But if changes happen at the beginning of a formula, then this medicine is no longer the medicine known under its name, and the name should be changed.³⁰

Mingji's introductory remarks made me look at these three parameters in more detail, exploring how the position of an ingredient within a formula affects the naming of *yorwa* and *menjor* practice.

Kadzin, referring to those ingredients that make up the foundation of a remedy, is the principal name giver of a formula. *Kadzin* are sometimes personified as the "king" and "queen" of a formula. It is similar to the Ayurvedic setting, where Sanskrit names are used for formulas that have an "iconic value" through the cultural connotations they trigger in consumers (Zimmermann 2014, 82). In our precious pill example, old turquoise is the main ingredient (i.e. the *kadzin*, along with pearl and coral) and also the key word in the name of the formula. Tibetans attach great cultural value to the turquoise stones, especially when they are old and worn (Walker-Watson 1983). Tibetan physicians in India referred to *kadzin* also as *tsobo*, the "chief" (*tso bo*) ingredient of a formula.³¹

The practice of paralleling social status and natural laws to ingredients and parts of the body was a widespread practice in China (Unschuld 2003). In Tibetan texts entire formulas as well as ingredients can be found structured according to social hierarchies. In the *Four Treatises* formulas can be hierarchically ordered and given the status of king, minister, chieftain, or subjects (e.g. chapter 4 in the last of the

³⁰ Interview, 14th IATS Seminar, Bergen, Norway, July 2016.

³¹ Personal communication, Dr. Namgyal Qusar, Sidhbari, May 24, 2017.

Four Treatises, Men-Tsee-Khang 2015, 63, 78). The contemporary Tibetan physician Tsering Norbu (2013) employs the social positions of king, queen, prince, minister, and commoner to explain the potency of a formula. He specifically refers to the ingredients in the position of ministers and commoners as the *kagyur*, which means these direct the potency of the entire compound towards a certain disease or *nyépa* imbalance (Tsering Norbu 2013, 16/11-18). Dr. Dawa additionally uses horses and soldiers to categorize the possible combinations of ingredients “to subdue the strength of the hot disorders likened to a battle field” (Dawa 2002, 354). He is referring here to common metaphors appearing in the *Four Treatises*. Dawa also describes twenty-seven possible combinations for herbal remedies that are based on four principal substances, which are called “king.” In other words, these would be the *kadzin*. Dawa then gives the option of adding three other herbs as “ministers and relatives ... to direct their synergetic effect to the particular affected site” (Dawa 2002, 357). These would be called *kagyur*, referring to changing the direction of the medicine towards targeting a particular illness.

This is the classical example of how a Tibetan formula can be changed to affect a particular disease without changing the name of the formula. *Kagyur* are often included in written formulas. This is initially confusing because one can find many formulas under the same name, with the same *kadzin*, but different *kagyur* ingredients.

To give an example: Manu Zhitang—which translates as “Manu: Decoction of Four”—is a formula with four ingredients, the chief ingredient being Manu (*Inula racemosa* Hook.f.). Dawa Ridak (2003) lists around twenty formulas under the name Manu Zhitang in various chapters of his *Practical Application of Manufacturing Medicines*, similar to what we find in the *Four Treatises*. In Dawa Ridak’s book these formulas share the same three out of four ingredients, albeit their measurements change. The fourth ingredient changes with each formula, which consequently alters the overall nature of the remedy from “cold,” *zil* (*bzil*), to “balanced,” *nyom* (*nyoms*), sometimes just to “slightly cold,” *chung zil* (*cung bzil*). The “benefit,” *penyön* (*phan yon*), also changes with each variant. Consequently, the various decoctions known as Manu Zhitang are used to treat not only a variety of *nyépa* imbalances, but also very specific diseases. What makes all of these formulas retain their name Manu Zhitang? How would such naming practices be accounted for during the standardization of formulas?

There is simply not a single standard Manu Zhitang formula. Which of the approximately twenty variations under the same name is actually produced and sold as Manu Zhitang by a particular pharmacy is also an open question. The point here is that variations of one and the same formula under the same name, classified under differ-

ent disease categories, are a key characteristic of *yorwa* as an epistemic genre. They have a specific meaning and are important to the transmission of medical knowledge. The *kagyur* practices offer a flexibility for reformulations that directly defies contemporary scientific notions of standardizing a drug under *one* name.

The third parameter is known as *katsar*, which literally means "to add something." *Katsar* are small additions to existing formulas and are like the personal signature by an experienced physician or a lineage holder (Blaikie, in press). We have some examples of *katsar* appearing in written *yorwa* works. Gawa Dorjé writes about the nineteenth century polymath Mipham Gyatso, who on the basis of approximately one hundred and eight formulas created three hundred "new" herbal formulas by adding *katsar* (Gawa Dorjé 2009, 4/14-16).

Mipham, being a prolific writer, took the trouble to actually write down formulas incorporating his medical experiences, thereby creating a new generation of *yorwa*. Since individual medical knowledge is transmitted orally from teacher to student or kept as internal notes within pharmacies, in most cases *katsar* remain unwritten. For example, when the senior Tibetan physician Tenzin Chödrak (1924-2001) took over as head of the Men-Tsee-Khang pharmacy department in Dharamsala in the 1980s after his arrival from Tibet, he developed new recipes with new names. He also introduced many *katsar* to existing formulas, based on his experience and oral instructions from his teacher Khyenrap Norbu, director of the Men-Tsee-Khang in Lhasa. These *katsar* exist in internal documents at the Dharamsala Men-Tsee-Khang pharmacy and are marked as "Tenzin Chödrak's *katsar*" or "Khyenrap Norbu's *katsar*."³² They are the particular "signature" of Men-Tsee-Khang *yorwa*, but do not appear in their published *yorwa* texts.

Newly appointed heads of pharmacy cannot simply change the *katsar* if their predecessors are well-known senior physicians such as Tenzin Chödrak.³³ Their high position and medical experience is greatly respected, and in this case affirms lineage and authority to Men-Tsee-Khang recipes made in the diaspora and links them back to Lhasa, considered by many the original center of Tibetan medicine and the Dalai Lama's traditional seat of government. Most likely, a formula carrying the same name has different ingredients when produced in Lhasa or Dharamsala, or any other Tibetan medical factory for that matter; its *katsar* underlines the authority and authenticity of the formula.

³² Personal communication, Dr. Choelothar, Chontra, May 2016.

³³ Personal communication, Dr. Choelothar, Chontra, May 2016.

Katsar can be an unprocessed substance but also a blessed ingredient like a relic or an already processed compound such as the compounded mercury-sulfide powder *tsotel*, which can be added to other formulas as a *katsar* to enhance the potency, or *nüpa*, of the existing formula. In Dharamsala, Tenzin Chödrak created a merged formula called Sangdak Daryaken (Gsang dag dar ya kan), to treat cancer. He added *tsotel* as a *katsar* to increase its potency. Usually *tsotel* is added only to precious pills, or *rinchen rilbu*. Here it adds a specific signature to a recipe compiled by a respected senior physician without turning it into a *rinchen rilbu*. *Katsar* are also added for individual patients to increase the power of the medicine to tackle serious illness.³⁴ Dr. Choelothar, a senior physician at the Men-Tsee-Khang in Dharamsala, aptly sums up the way in which *katsar* are personal “signatures”:

Making medicine is like cooking. You make a nice curry and add your specific *masala*, a little different than written in the texts. It makes the food more flavorful or the medicine more potent.³⁵

How does one codify and standardize such uniqueness in medicine making? When uniqueness implies ownership, as is the case in the contemporary codification and pharmaceuticalization of traditional medicine in India, adding *katsar* would have to be standardized as a certain reformulation practice. This might look similar to Ayurvedic pharmaceutical firms adding substances to “classical formulas” to turn them into “proprietary medicines,” over which they then hold exclusive marketing rights (e.g. Madhavan 2014). While within Sowa Rigpa it has been an integral part of *menjor* practice for a very long time, in future, adding *katsar* to a textual formula might require a special licensing in India as a “proprietary medicine.” How would the authority of a *katsar* lineage be codified in a “proprietary medicine”?

5. The authorship of formulas

Traditionally, authorship in Tibet and across Buddhist Asia was usually a collective endeavor, with authors freely copying and inserting sections from previous authors into their writing without necessarily citing their sources (Freschi and Cantwell, eds. 2016). While Western scholarship would now identify such practices as “plagiarism,” in

³⁴ Interview Dr. Ngawang Soepa, Dharamsala, December 6, 2012.

³⁵ Interview Chontra, India, June 1, 2016.

Tibetan premodern writing culture this is common practice,³⁶ and a student, if at all, comes to know the sources of non-referenced quotes through personal study and oral instruction. The author of a *gorwa* text where a “classical” formula is listed is not necessarily the composer, but rather the tradent of this particular version of the formula. To understand this kind of knowledge transmission, Rob Mayer’s (2010) blog “Authors, plagiarist, or tradents?” is useful. Mayer argues that “the person producing a text sees himself as *passing on* existing knowledge, rather than creating new knowledge from nothing.” Similarly, authors of *gorwa* texts are foremost the tradents of earlier formula knowledge.

For many formulas no composers are mentioned, and many of them have their roots in the *Four Treatises*. However, some formulas are still known as being composed by a specific physician or as being linked to a particular medical school or lineage. For example, there are two versions of the Old Turquoise 25 formula; the first follows “the tradition of Lhalung” (*lha lung gi lugs*), the second the so-called “tradition of 100,000 lives” (*tshe 'bum lugs*) (Dawa Ridak 2003, 202/28 and 203/5), which in most other works corresponds to the Old Turquoise 25 formula attributed to the eastern Tibetan physician Pöntsang Yeshe (Dpon tshang ye shes, b. 1627/28 or 1641?). While the name remains stable, the two formulas’ ingredients and measurements differ; moreover, ingredients change through reformulations, copying, and (re)printing over time.

To understand Tibetan *menjor* knowledge transmission presented in the examples below it is important to consider that “the final product has the input of more persons than the nominal ‘author,’ often extending backwards (and even forwards) over considerable stretches of time” (Mayer 2010). I present my translation of one formula below to show the workings of such “collective authorship” as an intertextual feature of *gorwa* genre. In Buddhist literature this kind of intertextuality is so wide-spread that Freschi and Cantwell argue that “scholars need at least to consider whether or not previous material has been incorporated into each new work, rather than accepting authorial statements as representing what is meant by authorship in a modern context” (Freschi and Cantwell 2016, 2). This issue should be considered when including “origins” of formulas in a pharmacopeia.

Collective authorship is of course not unique to the Tibetan case, but standardization practices have shown that to prioritize a single “source,” or *jung khung* (*byung khung*), for a formula bears the risk of losing out on the intertextualities of formula writing. It is beyond the

³⁶ See Salguero (2014, 15) for similar practices in premodern China.

scope of this paper to analyze all existing Sowa Rigpa pharmacopeias and formularies from the People's Republic of China, where Tibetan medicines have been standardized since the 1990s (Saxer 2013, 42). To give just three examples: (1) The *Catalogue of Everyday Tibetan Medicines* (*Rgyun spod bod sman dkar chag*; Lhakpa Tséring and Wangtop 2008), published in Lhasa, lists (with exceptions) the medical text from which each formula was copied in a supplemental table of contents (2008, 52-102). (2) The 900-page formulary *The Great Collection of Tibetan Medical Formulas* (*Bod sman sbyor sde chen mo*), published by the Men-Tsee-Khang of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (Sonam Dhondup and BMTK 2006), also lists only one text from which the formula was copied as its "source." Other texts listing modifications, earlier versions, and intertextualities of the formula are not mentioned. (3) The earlier *Standard Tibetan Pharmacopeia* (*Sman rigs thsad gzhi*; Ministry of Health (PRC) 1998) avoids the issue altogether by neither providing the source text nor the name of the tradent of the formulas listed.

Below I present the rich intertextuality of a Tibetan formula, which although in some sources is attributed to a composer or lineage is in itself a collective piece of writing, including (unacknowledged) quotes or paraphrases from other medical works dating from various centuries. To analyze these intertextualities of *jurwa* as an epistemic genre let us explore Dawa Ridak's presentation of the first of the two versions of the Old Turquoise 25 formula (see Fig. 1), which will suffice to make my point. Note that this is not the formula currently used by the Men-Tsee-Khang in Dharamsala.

The formula is clearly structured and non-poetic, except the section on therapeutic benefits, which follows the traditional nine-syllabic verse form³⁷ and was copied (with spelling errors) from earlier texts, explained further below. Each of Dawa Ridak's formulas has three subheadings: 1) "compounds [and] measurement" or *jortsé* (*sbyor tshad*), which lists the names of ingredients and their measurements; 2) "nature" or *rangzhin* (*rang bzhin*), which indicates the cooling, warming, or balanced characteristic of the entire formula, and 3) "benefit" or *penyön*, which describes the therapeutic applications. While Dawa Ridak's book is popular among contemporary Sowa Rigpa medical practitioners who make medicines on a small scale across the Himalaya, the recipes alone do not include sufficient in-

³⁷ The Tibetan language is mono-syllabic in nature, and meaning is basically syllabic. Often two syllables with independent meaning form a compound word that has its own meaning. In order to keep with the poetic meter of lines of nine mono-syllables each, medical terms are at times represented by only one syllable. While it aids the memorization of the text, it also makes it more obscure and often impossible to understand without oral instructions from a qualified teacher.

formation to actually make the formula. They give indications that certain substances, such as precious and semi-precious stones and cinnabar, have to be pre-processed, but the specifics of how to do so are typically not detailed in formulary works.

Brevity curtails or covers some of the detailed knowledge behind making the formula. Some plants, for example, *taksha* (*stag sha*), are known to have various types, and the type used is not mentioned. Oral tradition and practical experience would be essential additions to use the book in daily *menjor* practice. Moreover, animal substances mentioned in some recipes, such as rhino-horn, or *séru* (*bse ru*), are nowadays endangered and illegal and are thus skipped or substituted. Availability of raw materials and sustainability are now major concerns for the Sowa Rigpa industry (Blaikie in press) and influence how written formulas are actually put into practice.

The measurements in the formula below do not follow traditional Tibetan weights but give proportions in grams, which allows for flexibility and easy calculations. Dr. Choelothar explained this as follows: “0/050 means that if you prepare one kilogram of the entire formula, fifty grams should be from this ingredient, or if you make more in one batch, use proportionately a fiftieth from a thousand.”³⁸

གཡུ་རྩིང་ཉེར་རྩེ།
 ལྷོ་རྩིང་། གཡུ་རྩིང་ལམ་རྩིན་བྱས་པ་ ༠།༠༥༠ རྩིག་ལམ་རྩིན་བྱས་པ་ ༠།༠༡༠ རྩི་རུ་ལམ་
 རྩིན་བྱས་པ་ ༠།༠༤༠ མཚལ་བདུལ་མ་ ༠།༠༢༠ ཨ་རུ་ ༠།༠༥༠ རྩིགས་སྤེ་ ༠།༡༠༠
 རྩི་རུ་ ༠།༠༡༠ བྲག་ལྷན་ ༠།༠༤༠ ཅན་དཀར་ ༠།༠༤༠ ཅན་དམར་ ༠།༠༥༠ བ་
 སྟག་ ༠།༠༥༠ རྩིག་གི་ ༠།༠༥༠ རུ་རྩི་ ༠།༠༦༠ བོང་དཀར་ ༠།༠༤༠ གེ་སར་
 ༠།༠༥༠ རྩི་རྩིགས་ ༠།༠༡༠ བསེ་རུ་ ༠།༠༡༠ ཨ་གར་ ༠།༠༡༠ རྩི་བྱི་ལ་ ༠།༠༡༠
 རྩི་མེ་ ༠།༠༡༠ རྩི་རྩི་ ༠།༠༡༠ མི་མི་ ༠།༠༡༥ ཅུ་གང་ལེགས་པ་ ༠།༠༡༥ ལུ་ར་
 ལུ་མ་ ༠།༠༡༥ རྩི་ཅི་ ༠།༠༡༠ ལུ་ག་ལྷོ་ལ་ ༠།༠༡༠ ཚོས་སྤྲུན་ ༠།༠༡༠
 བསེ་ལ།
 སན་ཡོན། ཞིབ་བདགས་སྤྱི་ཞུར་ཁུ་བས་འདམ་འཐག་བྱ། །རིལ་བུར་རིལ་བ་བསྐོ་བ་གངས་ལུལ་པ་
 ཡིས། །ལེབ་ནན་ལྷོས་དང་རྩིན་འདུས་དུག་ཐབ་དང་། །རྩི་གོར་རྩིན་བྱ་འོར་རྩི་ལ་ལྷོ་ད་
 དང་། །གཞུང་འོར་ས་མཚན་འབྲུམ་ནག་པོ་དལ་སྐོམ་དང་། །མཚན་བྱི་དཀར་ནག་མཚན་
 གནད་ཅོ་བྱར་འཛོམས། །(རྩི་ལུང་གི་ལུགས་)

Fig. 1 — A formula of Old Turquoise 25 from a contemporary menjor book (Dawa Ridak 2003, 202/16-28).

³⁸ Personal communication, Chontra, India, May 2016.

Translation:³⁹

Compounds [and] measurement: pre-processed old turquoise (*g.yu rnying las snon byas pa*) 0/050; pre-processed pearl (*mu tig las snon byas pa*) 0/010; pre-processed coral (*byu ru las snon byas pa*) 0/040; tamed⁴⁰ cinnabar (*mtshal btul ma*) 0/020; chebulic myrobalan (*a ru*) 0/050, iron fillings (*lcags phye*) 0/200; beleric myrobalan (*skyu ru*) 0/080; a type of mineral exudate (*brag zhun*) 0/040; white sandalwood (*tsan dkar*) 0/040; red sandalwood (*tsan dmar*) 0/050; [the herbs] *ba le ka* 0/050, *stag sha* 0/050, *ru rta* 0/060, *bong dkar* 0/040, *ge sar* 0/050, [and] *rdo dregs* 0/020; rhino-horn (*bse ru*) 0/010; eaglewood (*a gar*) 0/030; [the herb] *ko byi la* 0/020; solidified bile (*ghi wam*)⁴¹ 0/010; nutmeg (*dza ti*) 0/020, cloves (*li shi*) 0/025; good quality *cu gang* [processed from types of bamboo] (*cu gang legs pa*) 0/035; a type of saffron (*gur gum*) 0/025; musk (*gla rtsi*) 0/010; a type of cardamom (*sug smel*) 0/030; dharma medicine (*chos sman*) 0/020.

Nature: cooling (*bzil*)

Benefit: Generally, grind [the substances] into a fine powder and smoothen it with the liquid of [the plant] *spyi shur*; roll [the paste into] pills and administer them with cold boiled [water]. [The liver diseases treated with this remedy are:] “red enlarged [liver]” (*leb rgan rgyas*) and “elastic [liver]” (*[ldan 'dus] ldem bu*) and “poison-like” (*dug thab*), “dropping water” (*chu shor*), “little thief” (*rkun bu*), [and] “dropping down” (*'or lhung*) and “overflowing” (*kha lud*); “central paralysis/stiffness” (*gzhung rengs*), “black liver rheumatism” (*mchin grum nag po*), and “emaciated exhaustion” (*hal skem*). It overcomes “dispersing vital channels” (*rtsa byer*), and “black and white diaphragm” (*mchin dri dkar nag*).⁴² [This formula follows the] tradition of Lhalung.⁴³

³⁹ The identification of the ingredients is a difficult topic, and my English translations of commonly known ingredients are only a rough approximation and ignore possible (sub)types and spatio-temporal variations. This does not solve the problem of botanical identifications (which I try to avoid), but should give an idea of the substances found in the formula. See van der Valk 2016, 63ff on the problems of idealized identification, naming and classification practices in Sowa Rigpa.

⁴⁰ “Tamed” here refers to pre-processed cinnabar.

⁴¹ Also spelled *gi wam* or *gi wang*. There are variations in its identification: elephant’s bezoar, enterolith, intestinal calculi, gallstone or bile, with several possible substitutions in circulation (Sabernig 2011, 89).

⁴² For alternative English translations of these disease names see also Yang Ga (2010, 205). These disease names are still used in Tibetan clinical practice today, but often with modified medical interpretations, for example, “elastic liver” is described most often in contemporary Tibetan clinical settings in Xining and north India as Hepatitis B with other hepatitis viral variants often linked to similar de-

When analyzing the collective authorship and intertextualities of this formula one is taken back through several key medical works, not only on *menjor* but also general clinical texts as well as the *Four Treatises*. The formula emerges as a collective composition dating back to the seventeenth century with its attributed therapeutic usages copied from the *Four Treatises* dating back to the twelfth century. Table 1 summarizes the reuse, intertextuality, and “authorship” of the formula. This is not an exhaustive survey of all written instances of the Old Turquoise 25 formula, but enough to show the extensive intertextual practices involved in writing a formula.

Based on my preliminary analysis, the following picture emerges: one recent version of the formula was included by the nineteenth century accomplished physician Orgyen Tekchok (O rgyan Theg mchog) from eastern Tibet in his work *A Beautiful Ornament for the Compendium: A Treasury of Medicinal Elixirs* (Zin tig mdzes rgyan bdud rtsi'i sman mdzod, Orgyen Tekchok 2005, 215/20), which is now published as part of a collection known under its short title *Sorig Notes* or *Sorig Zintig* (Kongtrul et al. 2005).

Prior to this, the key tradent of the formula was Deumar Tendzin Püntsock (b. 1672), who lists the formula in his *Nectar of Immortality: White Crystal Rosary* ('Chi med bdud rtsi shel dkar phreng ba), which is a text within a larger compilation titled *Precious Garland: Selected Extracts on the Science of Healing* (*Gso rig gces btus rin chen phreng ba*) (Deumar Tendzin Püntsock 1993).⁴⁴ The *Nectar of Immortality* depicts formulas in poetic verse form; each verse typically lists four ingredients. Deumar's recipes follow the rhythm of a nine-syllable verse, a style which was also popular in Buddhist poetic writing. It is thus a good example of a medical text in which the literary and the epistemic merge (see Pomata 2014).

Going back a hundred years prior to Deumar, the complete formula of Old Turquoise 25 appears in the section on treating liver diseases in a compilation, now published as the *Drigung Collection on Medicine and Astrology* ('Bri gung sman rtsis phyogs bsgrigs) (Drigung

scriptions of the disorder (personal communication Tawni Tidwell, February 2018).

⁴³ Dr. Tsering Norbu, *Materia Medica* Department, Men-Tsee-Khang, Dharamsala, told me (personal communication, June 2017) that the Lhalung tradition is linked to the Tibetan physician Zurkhar Nyamnyi Dorjé (1439-1475) of La thog in Dwag po. I could not confirm this and did not find the formula in his main work *Bye ba ring bsrel* (Zurkhar Nyamnyi Dorjé 1993). Lhalung might refer to the monastery of Lha lung in the region of Lho Brag in southern Tibet, bordering Bhutan, founded in 1154 (Buswell and Lopez 2013, 472).

⁴⁴ We currently do not know if these texts were compiled by Deumar himself or after his death.

Chödrak et al. 2008, 343/22-24—344/1). It was written by various authors including the lineage holder Drigung Künkhyen Rigzin Chödrak ('Bri gung Kun mkhyen rig 'dzin chos grags, 1595-1659) and his students, which included Könchok Dropen Wangmo (Dkon mchog 'gro phan dbang po), who was the teacher of Pöntsang Yeshe, the official composer of one of the versions of the formula. This is the earliest version of the formula I found, although one has to keep in mind that these texts are contemporary compilations of older texts by various authors of various centuries and could have been edited.

The thirteen liver diseases mentioned in the “Benefit” or *penyön* section correspond to the first thirteen of the eighteen types of liver diseases listed in chapter thirty-six of the Instructional Tantra, the third part of the *Four Treatises*.⁴⁵ The short descriptions of how to roll and administer the pills appear in all three works with spelling variations (Drigung Chödrak et al. 2008, 343/20-21; Deumar Tendzin Püntsook 1993, 453/16-454/1; Orgyen Tekchok 2005, 216/1-2). A variation of the recipe, under the name “Old Turquoise 27,” is also mentioned in all three texts.

The reformulation into Old Turquoise 27 is made by adding two extra ingredients—which could be understood as a *katsar*: the common spice green cardamom (*sug smel*) and a so-called “dharma medicine” or *chömen* (*chos sman*).⁴⁶ The latter refers to consecrated compounds made by Buddhist dignitaries in monasteries. *Chömen* are typically compounded from dozens of ingredients, including sacred relics, and are consecrated through mantras and “accomplishing medicine” or *mendrup* (*sman grub*) rituals (Cantwell 2015; Garrett 2009). Thus the total amount of actual substances in this extended formula is unknown; it would far exceed twenty-seven. This demonstrates how the formula’s actual ingredients do not always add up to the number given in its name, especially when compounds are added as *katsar*. Moreover, substances used during pill making, such as the plant *spyi shur*, neither count as an ingredient nor as a *katsar*, even though they add smoothness to the final medicine.⁴⁷

Dr. Dawa Ridak can be called the modern tradent, who combined the above mentioned sources into his contemporary version of the

⁴⁵ Yönten Gönpo lists the thirteen diseases as (Yutok Yönten Gönpo 1982: 299/4-6, my numbering): 1) *leb rgan rgyas dang*, 2) *ldem bu dang*, 3) *dug thabs*, 4) *chu shor*, 5) *rkun bu*, 6) *'or lhungs dang*, 7) *kha lud*, 8) *gzhung rengs*, 9) *mchin grum nag po dang*, 10) *mchin nad hal skem*, 11 and 12) *mchin dri dkar nag dang*, 13) *gnad mchin rtsa byer*. The remaining five liver diseases (14) *mchin rlung*, 15) *mchin rgud*, 16) *rnlan grangs*, 17) *glang dgur*, 18) *grang sbos*) were probably skipped by later authors during a copying error. Thanks to Olaf Czaja for pointing this out.

⁴⁶ Notably, in a modern formula text published in the People’s Republic of China the *chömen* is replaced by *tsotel* (Tuppa Tséring and Könchok Trinlé 1994, 225/9).

⁴⁷ Interview, Dr. Namgyal Qusar, Sidhbari, 24 May, 2017.

formula. He himself is very much aware of his tradent position and said during an interview on how and why he wrote the book:

What I wrote is not something new. I collected it from other sources. However, one mistake I made in this book is that I did not give my sources in detail. But since I published this it has become available to some interested doctors and it is helpful, especially for the doctors who practice in the Himalayan belt.⁴⁸

Dawa Ridak himself made two contributions to the formula, the first regarding structure and the second regarding measurements. First, he chose the three headings “compounds [and] measurement,” “nature,” and “benefit” to structure the formula. Tibetan physicians explained to me that the “nature” (e.g. heating, cooling, or balanced) of the formula is often not mentioned in the older works, but is very important for physicians’ clinical practice; this also adds to the popularity of Dawa Ridak’s book among practicing physicians. Second, he added measurements, which are based on his *menjor* experience at the Men-Tee-Khang in Dharamsala as well as other sources, which he does not mention. The measurements are valued greatly by small-scale practitioners across the Himalaya, who still compound their own medicines but often do not have access to institutional *menjor* training and textbooks. Both contributions have given a practical value to the book.

6. *The modern tradents: Re-writing menjor texts*

The new generation of Tibetan physicians in India look critically at their *menjor* texts. Some find them too confusing and incomplete, and in practice hand-written notes by the chief pharmacist are considered all that is needed to compound a medicine, especially if the pharmacist had a well-known teacher with an authoritative lineage. Several of the pharmacists working privately in the Dharamsala area rely in their day-to-day practice on their hand-written notes taken while studying with their teachers, without necessarily consulting published *menjor* texts.⁴⁹ Only a few attempt to actually revise or re-write *menjor* texts. Here, I analyze recent *menjor* texts published in India and discuss them in the context of authorship, intertextuality, and *menjor* knowledge transmission and what they contribute to our understanding of *yorwa* as an epistemic genre.

⁴⁸ Interview, New York, July 2011.

⁴⁹ Personal communication Dr. Penpa Tsering, Sidhbari, India, June 2016.

Dr. Tsering Norbu was trained in the 1980s at Lhasa Men-Tsee-Khang. He then came to India and is currently the head of the Materia Medica Department at the Men-Tsee-Khang in Dharamsala, where he composed a new *menjor* book to address some of the difficulties he found with earlier *menjor* texts (Tsering Norbu 2005). His viewpoint is not shared by all of his colleagues and challenges sensitive issues of secrecy of oral transmissions, or *laglen*, which is generally not shared with those outside one's lineage (Pordié and Blaikie 2014, 348). Tsering Norbu explains his viewpoint:

I collected a lot of different *menjor* works and compared formulas. For example, I found three formulas called Thanchen 25, but their ingredients differed. Young doctors won't know which of these is good, which one to use. I also added the measurements of each ingredient as I knew them from personal practice. I know a lot of small-scale amchi⁵⁰ in the Himalayas make medicines based on *menjor* books, but don't know how much [of each ingredient] to use. For them measurements are important. Some doctors did not like this, because they thought the amounts should be kept secret, but for amchi making medicines in remote areas this is helpful. So I included them.⁵¹

Both Dawa Ridak, who was introduced earlier, and Tsering Norbu are progressive young physicians who prefer to give up some of the secrecy for the benefit of training young amchi, especially in rural areas. Their publications stand in sharp contrast to the official *menjor* textbooks that form part of the Men-Tsee-Khang teaching curriculum. A particular set of short formula books that medical students memorize today are collectively known as *Potency Summaries* or *Nüpa Chokdü* (*Nus pa phyogs bsodus*). "Potency" here refers to the "nature" or *rangzhin* of the medicine (hot, cold, or balanced), whether it is intoxicating or not (*bzi yod med*), and the therapeutic benefits or *penyön*. Several versions of these texts have been published, some in several editions, under different titles since the 1990s by the Men-Tsee-Khang in Dharamsala (Khyenrap Norbu and MTK 1995, Penpa Tsering 1997, Ngawang Soepa 2015). The *Potency Summaries* follow the tradition of Khyenrap Norbu, who first composed such a text early in the twentieth century listing the remedies made at Chakpori and Men-Tsee-Khang in Lhasa, the two main medical establishments founded in 1696 and 1916 respectively.

During medical training it is compulsory to memorize a *Potency Summaries*. Following our example of Old Turquoise 25 from the Lhalung tradition in the most recent *Potency Summaries* (Ngawang

⁵⁰ Amchi is a Mongolian-derived term referring to a Tibetan physician.

⁵¹ Interview, Dharamsala, May 2015.

Soepa 2015, 63), students memorize only the benefit section with the list of liver diseases (based on the *Four Treatises*); the ingredients and instructions on how to make the formula are not mentioned. Only the 1995 edition mentions the Pöntsang Yeshe tradition of the formula (Khyenrap Norbu and MTK 1995, 60/2). The entry on Old Turquoise 25 in Soepa's *Potency Summaries* (Ngawang Soepa 2015) adds an extra line of instruction in parenthesis at the end, which reads: "[This compound] clears all liver disorders similar to a genuine elixir.⁵² This compound [is] slightly cooling in nature, and not intoxicating. The dosage [is] one pill."⁵³

An exception among the recent *menjor* textbooks is a small textbook self-published by a medical student (Püntsock Tendar 2006). The Men-Tsee-Khang college teachers I spoke with appreciate Püntsock Tendar's work for the extra details he adds to the general *Potency Summaries*, specifically the list of ingredients and textual sources of formulas (the sources are also listed in Khyenrap Norbu's *Potency Summaries* but not in the one memorized by students today). One aspect stands out in Püntsock Tendar's *Potency Summaries*. He is the only author/tradent passing on the formula of Old Turquoise 25 listing all eighteen liver diseases from the *Four Treatises*, not just the first thirteen as all his above-mentioned predecessors did. Here, he differs from his source, Deumar's *Nectar of Immortality* (Deumar Tendzin Püntsock 1993; Püntsock Tendar 2006, 89), which only lists thirteen liver diseases from the *Four Treatises*.

Penpa Tsering's *Potency Summaries* (1997) was especially written for the public, i.e. Tibetans taking Tibetan medicine. It became very popular and describes the benefits of Old Turquoise 25 in simple colloquial Tibetan, such as loss of appetite, tiredness, headaches, nose bleeding, dry mouth, reddish eyes, and so forth (1997, 73-74). Medical students read it for an easier understanding of the more technical *Potency Summaries* that they have to memorize (e.g. Ngawang Soepa 2015).

In answer to my question of whether students still learn the ingredients of formulas, one college teacher of the Men-Tsee-Khang told me that those will be covered in the classroom at some point but are not subject to memorization, unless formulas appear in the *Four Treatises*, of which large parts are still memorized. The teaching emphasis nowadays is not on how to *make*, but how to *prescribe* the medicine in

⁵² The phrase "similar to a genuine elixir" also appears in Khyenrap Norbu's entry on Old Turquoise 25 (1995, 60/2) and in other contexts across older medical texts where it indicates a wide therapeutic range and the superiority of a formula (e.g. Jampel Trinlé 1997, 5/16), but not necessarily a tonic.

⁵³ *mchin nad kun 'joms bdud rtsi dngos dang mtshung/ sman sbyor 'di rang bzhin cung bsil la bzi med / ril bu gcig thun* (Ngawang Soepa 2015, 63).

clinical practice. This reflects the Men-Tsee-Khang's policy of educating young generations of physicians as clinicians, who are supplied with pills from the Men-Tsee-Khang pharmacy and do not have to know the ingredients of formulas and how they are made.

Pordié and Blaikie observed in their analysis of medical education in Ladakh that, "The institutional separation of the many fields of competence and the specialization of medical knowledge suits the preparation of professional physicians, but is inadequate for the training of competent practitioners in terms of pharmacy ..." (Pordié and Blaikie 2014, 364). In India, to date there is no specific *menjor* curriculum or degree course to become a Sowa Rigpa pharmacist. Various attempts to even discuss *menjor*-related issues among Tibetan physicians have largely failed because each pharmacy follows its own oral tradition and special *men ngak*, which is not shared with others.⁵⁴

Because of the institutional separation of fields of medical knowledge, there can be quite a difference between the *penyön* of a formula made at the pharmacy and the *penyön* of that formula memorized under the same name by a student at the college. For example, in the 1980s at the Men-Tsee-Khang some *penyön* had to be corrected in the *Potency Summaries*, because they followed a different lineage of the formula than what the head pharmacists was compounding at the pharmacy. Both formulas had the same name but the medicine distributed to the clinic dispensaries had a different therapeutic effect from its description in the textbook that the practicing physicians had memorized. This was later corrected.⁵⁵ It happened because formulas with different ingredients and benefits have been passed on under the same name but were reformulated while passed down through different medical lineages.

Menjor practice based on the unpublished notes of a pharmacist, with batches of medicines reformulated with different *katsar*, or *tsap* (if some ingredients are not available), works if the person making the medicine is also prescribing it, which is characteristic of small-scale Sowa Rigpa practice (Blaikie 2014). It could thus be argued that if the increased institutionalization of Sowa Rigpa practice leads to such a disconnect between clinic and pharmacy, practitioners and their patients might in fact benefit from a certain standardization of formulas and text books.

⁵⁴ Dr. Penpa Tsering, personal communication, May 24, 2017.

⁵⁵ Dr. Penpa Tsering, personal communication, May 24, 2017.

Century	Name of Tradent/ Reformulator/ Author/ Editor	Title of Work	Sections in the Written Formula				
			Measurements	Pill making	Nature of remedy	Benefiting 13 liver diseases	List of ingredients
CONTEMPORARY POTENCY SUMMARIES							
(2015)	Ngawang Soepa	<i>Potency Summaries</i>	no	no	yes	yes	no ingredients mentioned
(2006)	Püntsok Tendar	<i>Potency Summaries</i>	no	no	yes	yes (18 liver diseases)	yes
(1997)	Penpa Tsering	<i>Potency Summaries</i>	no	no	yes	no, but describes "modern" liver symptoms	no ingredients mentioned
(1995)	Khyenrap Norbu (1883-1962) and MTK	<i>Potency Summaries</i>	no	no	no	no	no ingredients mentioned
INTERTEXTUALITIES							
(2003)	Dawa Ridak	<i>Practical Application of Manufacturing Medicines</i>	yes	yes	yes	yes	27
19th century (2005)	Orgyen Tekchok (b. 19th century)	<i>A Treasury of Medicinal Elixirs</i>	no	yes	no	yes	25+2
18th century (1993)	Deumar Tendzin Püntsok (b. 1672)	<i>Nectar of Immortality</i>	no	yes	no	yes	25+2
17th century (2008)	Drigung Rigzin Chödrak et al. (1595-1659)	<i>Collection on Medicine and Astrology</i>	no	yes	no	yes	25+2
12th century (1982)	Yutok Yönten Gönpö (fl.12th century)	<i>Four Treatises</i>	formula not mentioned	formula not mentioned	formula not mentioned	18 liver diseases are listed	formula not mentioned

Table 1 — Key Tradents and Intertextualities of the Old Turquoise 25 formula (Lhalung tradition, except Khyenrap Norbu⁵⁶).

⁵⁶ Khyenrap Norbu's formula refers to the second tradition going back to Pöntsang Yeshe (Khyenrap Norbu and MTK 1995, 60/1-3).

7. Discussion: Considerations for the codification
of Sowa Rigpa formulas

In the wake of the pharmaceuticalization of so-called traditional medical systems and the codification and reformulations of their drugs, formulas in India are nowadays approached as “classical formulas” in contrast to “proprietary medicines” (e.g. Banerjee 2009, Pordié and Gaudillière 2014). Both were defined in the introduction of this article. The related assumptions that underpin such divisions have been critiqued for the Tibetan medical contexts by Blaikie, who questions the distinct and stable entities of so-called “classical formulas” and highlights their continuous emergence “within fields of practice” (Blaikie 2015, 18).

The present paper explored the nature of Tibetan formulas in terms of their authorship, intertextuality, and naming practices, as well as their purposeful design, which inherently includes a certain flexibility to reformulate recipes, which I called the “signature” of a formula. I took the example of one of two existing versions of the formula of the precious pill Old Turquoise 25 to analyze such “signatures.” They encompass more than reformulating a recipe by adjusting, substituting, or adding ingredients, but take account of the relationship a practitioner has with a formula, its ingredients, the patient, and the place of manufacture. The signature of a formula also refers to its inert script that might entail a certain adherence and respect for a particular lineage. This is done, for example, through intertextual practices, by including sections from earlier authentic medical texts such as the *Four Treatises* into a written formula, as well as on the substance level by including *katsar*, which might contain consecrated substances related to a particular Buddhist or medical lineage.

I showed that Sowa Rigpa formulas are not stable entities in time but are recipes in flux inherently designed to be reformulated and adapted. This inherent design is such that practices of standardization, such as codifying a formula as “classical” or “proprietary,” will most likely affect the medical knowledge and pharmaceutical practices formulas are designed to transmit. I therefore chose to approach formulas as an epistemic genre (Pomata 2011) that are not limited to specific types of texts but also include practices in flux that are impacted by their collective authorship through intertextual practices as well as through practices of naming. It is the multiplicity of formulas in their textual representations and practice that provide the context and background to understand the development of formulas over time as they interface with practical experience, lineage, authority, and other texts.

An extensive textual comparative and philological analysis of formulas across centuries and texts would offer a deeper understanding of *zorwa* as a genre. The analysis of Old Turquoise 25 is but a first preliminary example. With the likely forthcoming standardization of Sowa Rigpa practices in India our understanding of formulas will depend on our ability to bring together our fragmented perspectives on formulas, which as Pomata suggests can be achieved by looking at formulas as an epistemic genre (Pomata 2013). I argued that *zorwa* as an epistemic genre goes far beyond current definitions of “classical formulas,” also because it takes into consideration a large variety of Tibetan texts and their intertextualities. *Zorwa* as an epistemic genre should include the *materia medica* literature that describes raw ingredients, sections in general compendia that include formulas under headings of specific disease, the *menjor* medical compounding literature, as well as the modern *Potency Summaries*, which present the potency and therapeutic effects of formulas with or without listing ingredients. The disjointedness of *menjor* knowledge spread across these various types of medical works poses a challenge to finding and justifying a “standard” formula. The ways formulas are written reflects a varied understanding among Sowa Rigpa practitioners of how substances work and formulas are made, thus making evident that *zorwa* as a genre is also a type of practice.

In terms of authorship, I demonstrated that modern authors of *menjor* texts are not “individual authors” but more often tradents of collective medical knowledge, sometimes going back to one specific composer, such as Pöntsang Yeshe, or a specific medical lineage, for example, the Lhalung tradition. Some authors include their individual medical experience in their written versions of formulas, but individual *menjor* experience remains largely oral and often secret. This unwritten medical knowledge is also a part of the *zorwa* genre. With the extensive reuse of formula sections and reformulation and substitution practices across texts, it is often difficult and sometimes impossible to establish their “origin,” which might explain why Sowa Rigpa pharmacopeias published in the People’s Republic of China only mention one source text for their “standard” formula, if at all. It would require extensive research to trace the intertextualities of each formula across different texts to its earliest versions.

While formulas are appropriated and changed continuously, they are not always updated in writing. Therefore, even if in the course of standardizing a Tibetan pharmacopoeia a textual formula would be chosen as the representative “classical version” of that formula, it should be clear from the beginning that the currently manufactured drug based on this formula is in most cases already a reformulation.

Strictly speaking, there is rarely a “classical” unchanged version of a formula.

The inclusion of quotes from the *Four Treatises* into the therapeutic application of formulas that were developed much later raises broader questions concerning the intertextuality in Tibetan genres, exemplified here by the continued influence and importance of canonical works such as the *Four Treatises* in the writing of formulas. The liver diseases in the *Four Treatises* are still used in contemporary clinical practice, having persisted through oral transmissions and constant adaptations. Can we understand the attribution of a list of liver disease categories from the *Four Treatises* found in a formula composed some six hundred years later as a move to classify or authenticate the new remedy as a key liver formula? Did physicians writing formulas simply rely on the older disease terminology they were familiar with for centuries through the continuous memorization of this root text? The factor of sacredness also plays a role. As Dr. Penpa Tsering explained:

It is like this. For formulas we take the *penyön* from old texts, like the *Four Treatises* or a text by Khyenrap Norbu. We consider it sacred. We do not make any changes to them.⁵⁷

We can thus understand this way of formula writing as the accumulation of *menjor* knowledge, passed on by various tradents, and expressed in the sacred words of the root text or respected teachers of the past. In the *gorwa* genre the purpose of such intertextual practices lie in linking formulas to an authentic, and thus potent, lineage.

How the formula is eventually used in clinical practice is a matter of individual training, reflective of how clinical experience is passed on from teacher to student. Further ethnographic fieldwork in this direction would be fruitful.

The standardization of formulas will be a defining aspect of the future of the Sowa Rigpa industry. Their detailed study should be considered an important part of the “pharmaceutical assemblage” and necessary to arrive at a “bigger picture” of the industry (Kloos 2017). There are several possible scenarios Sowa Rigpa formula standardization might take in India. In the People’s Republic of China, for example, Tibetan formulas have already undergone standardization strongly influenced by biomedicine and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) formulas and have led to individual pharmacies patenting formulas (Saxer 2013). Once patented, Tibetan formulas can no longer be produced commercially by other Tibetan pharma-

⁵⁷ Interview, Sidhbari, May 24, 2017.

cies for the stipulated time. This is especially detrimental for rural Sowa Rigpa medical practitioners still making their own medicines (Blaikie et al. 2015; Czaja and Schrempf, forthcoming; Hofer 2012; Schrempf 2015). Problematically, long-standing formulas that do not appear in the Tibetan Drug Standards of 1995⁵⁸ or Chinese pharmacopeia are considered “new” and have to undergo expensive scientific studies to prove their efficacy and safety, which Saxer demonstrates ethnographically for the secret lineage formula Langchenata (Saxer 2013, 153ff). That Langchenata could not be registered as a “traditional” drug shows how in the People’s Republic of China “in reality a distinction is not made between ‘traditional’ and ‘new’ knowledge, but between already documented, filtered, and approved knowledge and knowledge yet to undergo this process” (Saxer 2013, 155). Notably, in the course of preparing the drug for the clinical trials the formula had to be reduced from twenty-one to fifteen ingredients to conform with regulations (Saxer 2013, 158).

It is unlikely that Sowa Rigpa in India will follow the Chinese model of largely patenting standardized Tibetan formulas. It is much more likely that in India, Sowa Rigpa will follow the “proprietary medicine” model similar to the ways Ayurveda codified its formulas, which allows small-scale pharmacies to receive licenses for their reformulations relatively easily as compared to applying for costly and complicated patents (Madhavan 2014, 147-18).

There is a lot to learn from the Ayurvedic model. Looking back, we know that the codification of Ayurvedic formulas in the 1970s led to a reductionism of Ayurvedic practice and the displacement of individual practitioners, whose therapeutic choices became limited to the Ayurvedic pharmaceuticals available on the market (Zimmermann 2014, 80-81). Zimmermann’s assessment of this limitation is clear. He argues:

When the lay practitioner is no longer allowed to make changes according to the local and idiosyncrasic context of medical practice in the composition of an ancient formula, which has been standardized and codified, the traditional approach to disease and drugs in terms of a humoral constitution comes to compromise with modern ideas of differential diagnosis and specific clinical indications. Doctors, who formerly were addressing the whole personality of the patient, are limited to the role of mere prescribers of medicines, and medical practitioners are displaced to the benefit of pharmaceuticals (Zimmermann 2014, 80).

⁵⁸ This seems to be an earlier version of the one I cited above (Ministry of Health 1998). On the development and challenges of the Tibetan Drug Standards see Saxer 2013, 41-43.

Some form of such standardization in Sowa Rigpa is already taking place with medial students memorizing formulas in *Potency Summaries* which do not include the ingredients of formulas. To avoid a reductionism similar to that described by Zimmermann for Ayurveda, it is crucial to raise certain questions now. Some Tibetan physicians I spoke with are very aware that Sowa Rigpa would lose a lot following the Ayurvedic model. As Dr. Namgyal Qusar emphasized:

We must not copy the Ayurvedic model. The Ayurvedic model is not fitting for our Tibetan medicine. Standardization is a reductionist approach. We should change in a way so we can preserve our tradition and practice. ... *gorwa* are written in a way more open for the doctors themselves to prepare medicines in the way they want.⁵⁹

Without an understanding of the characteristics and variations of Tibetan formulas, the making of a Sowa Rigpa pharmacopeia could well lead to a loss of the medical flexibility that is historically and currently at the core of Sowa Rigpa *menjor* practice. The multiplicity of formulas might be reduced to one “classical” or “canonical” version without paying attention to the individual condition of the patient, the importance of lineage, authorship, intertextualities, the naming of a formula, and integral variations of *kadzin*, *kagyur*, and *katsar*, all three of which offer an inbuilt flexibility for reformulations that directly defies contemporary scientific notions of standardizing a drug under *one* name. Should Sowa Rigpa in India follow the Ayurvedic model, the relationship a physician has with a formula into which he engraves his signature through adding a *katsar* would change drastically. A claimed ownership of a “proprietary medicine” would require a new name and a published list of ingredients. Thus, adding a *katsar* would possibly require a so-called “classical formula” to be registered as a “proprietary medicine”; from a Sowa Rigpa viewpoint, however, adding *katsar* is a type of “signature” that does not change the formula’s name or status as a genuine, long-standing formula but remains the secret oral knowledge of a particular pharmacy that should not have to appear on any label.

Most Sowa Rigpa formulas currently made in India will by definition qualify as “proprietary medicines,” opening up an economic avenue in which pharmaceutical companies can claim exclusive manufacturing and marketing rights through renaming and thereby branding new products. An Ayurvedic example here is Dabur Chyawanprash or Himalaya Chyawanprash, the first name being the company’s name and the second the name of the “classical” formula

⁵⁹ Interview, Sidhbari, May 24, 2017.

(Madhavan 2014, 170). On its way to becoming a proprietary medicine, Old Turquoise 25 would require at minimum a prefix or suffix in its name to abide by the rule of not branding a classical medicine with its original name.

The insights gained from this Tibetan case are significant to other medical systems facing standardization, since it raises questions pertinent to traditional medical systems facing official government recognition. Such recognition inevitably leads to the making of a standard pharmacopeia. I have shown that what is at stake in the move to standardize the inherent nature of Sowa Rigpa recipes is their multiplicity. In the process of standardization, the respective institutes, commissions, and professionals deciding what will become the standard "classical formula" hold power and responsibility, especially if several formulas exist under the same name across different medical lineage texts or with different amounts of ingredients. There is a danger that politics and favoritism will influence decisions about which names will be chosen and which variations and substitutions will be dropped. How will authorship and intertextualities be dealt with? What is the future of unwritten "signatures" in long-standing formulas? Approaching traditional formulas as an "epistemic genre" might prove useful for our understanding of the multiple signatures they often contain.

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Compte-rendu

Matthew Akester: *Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo's Guide to Central Tibet*, Serindia Publications, Chicago, 2016; 1-824 pp., incl. 15 maps, ca. 250 historical (black-and-white) photos, ca. 500 colour photographs and numerous illustrations of Tibetan images.

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The short text that forms the basis of the book under review, Khyentse Wangpo's list of holy sites in Central Tibet,¹ has been well known to generations of Tibet students since Alfonso Ferrari's critical edition and translation of it nearly sixty years ago. It was especially the supplementary annotations by L. Petech and H. Richardson, dedicated to identifying the individual sites, which for many years made Ferrari's volume one of the most cited works in Tibetan history studies.² In addition, in the last twenty-five years, a number of micro-historical or pilgrimage site-specific studies have appeared, both in the West and at Tibetan institutes in China, and these have greatly expanded our knowledge of the historical geography of pre-modern Central Tibet. As a result, today many of the original annotations regarding the sites in Khyentse's Guide seem out of date. So what might be the reason for presenting this text again, a text whose basic contents – a list of certain (exclusively religious) places and information on how to get there – are today widely known? A first leafing through Matthew Akester's book reveals the answer, one already portended on the cover: it is a book designed "to appeal

¹ 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po Kung dga' bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po (1820–92). *Dbus gtsang gi gnas rten rags rim gyi mtshan byang mdor bsdus dad pa'i sa bon*, Rdzong gсар edition (fol. 1-18), trans. and facsimile ed. in the appendix of the present book (p. 692-710), hereafter referred to as "Khyentse's Guide".

² Ferrari, Alfonso, 1958, *mK'yen brtse's Guide to the Holy Places of Central Tibet* (completed and edited by Luciano Petech, with the collaboration of Hugh Richardson), Rome: Is.M.E.O.

to the lay reader while presenting in-depth research." Indeed, what we find in the more than 800-page volume is a wealth of new information. When combined with the attractive presentation of the accompanying pictorial and map material, this makes this new edition of Khyentse's Guide a particular highlight for current studies on Tibetan places.

Akester is well versed in the work of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo (1820–92), one of the most influential religious figures of 19th-century Tibet, who from his eastern Tibetan homeland, Derge in Kham, set off on several extended trips to Central Tibet.³ In the fine introduction, the author points to specific connections that can be seen between Khyentse's selection of the sites he visited and his religious career (which started with the *Sa skya pa*), his experiences and visions as *Rnying ma gter ston*, and finally as the genius of the eclectic Non-sectarianism (*ris med*), which came to flourish in Kham.⁴ The author sees the geography of Khyentse's Guide, with its description of sites of different religious provenience, to be a "typical product of the non-sectarian approach" of the *ris med*, a characteristic concern of this religious movement having been the revival of old transmission lineages (p. 17). Indeed, this interest in long-forgotten lineages explains the notes on a number of rather obscure peripheral sites in Khyentse's Guide. The author points to an unusual aspect in Khyentse's development: he turned down an institutional career offered to him in Central Tibet and instead chose a life of peregrination, on foot, the modesty of a simple pilgrim driven by the "enthusiasm for hard travel" (p. 15). This is an important detail for understanding the present volume. It was just this form of travel that Akester adopted when he set off in the early 1990s to gradually visit, over a decade, all of the approximately two hundred sites in Khyentse's Guide. The information he collected on this trek plus extensive additions from various Tibetan history books has resulted in the creation of a new pilgrimage guidebook, one steered less by academic questions than by the personal motive of experiencing the spirituality of Khyentse Rinpoche's original journey. The text-based additions to the individual sites primarily contain details of the religious topography and the activities of different masters at these places. Any additional historical information represents a by-product, albeit a quite valuable one. Together with this, the volume aims at displaying what has become of the individual sites. The approximately

³ Cf. Matthew Akester (trans.), 2012, *The Life of Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo*, Delhi: Sherchen Publications.

⁴ For parallel and even earlier non-sectarian activities in Tibet, see Rachel H. Pang, 2014, The Rimé activities of Shabkar Tsokdruk Rangdrol (1781-1851), *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 29: 5-30.

250 historical images (including photographs from the precious Sikkim Lha yum [Queen Mother] Collection, 1930–35), as well as some 500 more recent photographs accompanying the descriptions of individual locations provide a historical document of these places' fortunes since they were visited by Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo.

The main part of the book (geographically subdivided into middle, southern and western provinces, i.e. Ü, Lho and Tsang) follows the structure of the original text, and has been divided into several sections forming additional geographic subchapters. In a few cases the original order of the sites has been changed. For example, the district of Stod lung (near Lhasa), which ends the original text, has been moved to a chapter where it makes more sense geographically. The original sequence of the sites can be found in the facsimile of the Tibetan text or the separate translation, which are both included in the appendix.

The book seeks to meet two requirements – to be an easily accessible pilgrimage reader and at the same time, to be a source book that is useful for scholarly research. The latter is the case, despite only occasional references to secondary literature. Due to these two aims, the rendering of Tibetan names and terms has been divided in a rather unusual way: phonetic transcriptions in the main text (including citations from historical texts that have been added to the descriptions of certain places) but technical transliteration in the footnotes. This adjustment seems to have been done for the supposed different types of user, namely general or specialist readers, but there are inconsistencies. The translations in the appendix follow the scholarly transliteration style, seemingly indicating that these translations will not be interesting for lay readers. But while the maps also use this transliteration style, they seem also aimed at potential pilgrims: they are printed in the neo-traditional Tibetan style, whereby the course of the main river forms the axis for topographical and historical entries. For some readers this might be tedious, since to read the lower half of each map, the (heavy) book has to be turned 180 degrees. If this form of cartographic labelling was intended to ease the reading of the maps for Tibetan users (and not merely based on optical criteria), it would have been more useful if the names on the maps were not transliterated but consistently in Tibetan script.

Otherwise the (in total 15) maps illustrate the topographical positions of the individual sites very well, with all of these sites described in great detail in the main text. These descriptions also make it clear that during his travels, the author visited many more sites than mentioned by Khyentse (among others, so it appears, those listed in the much-quoted Dbus Gtsang Guide of Ka thog Si tu Chos kyi rgya mtsho [1880–1925], but also apparently most of the sites mentioned in the similarly data-rich *Myang chos 'byung*). It is a pity that these other

places have not been included on the maps. Also regrettable is the lack of maps of eastern Lho kha ('Ol kha and Dvags po) and La stod Byang. The author's argument for not including them – the fact that Khyentse did not visit these places personally (p. 9) – is not really understandable, since Akester describes these sites at length. It seems to me that would be reason enough to illustrate them cartographically as well.

Maps of smaller areas are the exception (Sa skya [p. 565], Mang mkhar [p. 597] or Yar lung [p. 440]). It would have, however, been particularly desirable to have maps of little known areas, for example the Upper Shangs (in the old G.yas ru district), including the major Rnying ma pa sites of Zab bu lung and Sog po 'Dzul khung (p. 555). Although I said at the beginning of this review that the places mentioned by Khyentse are today largely known to scholars, in many cases this means only minimal knowledge, often based on a few references in primary sources. The sites in the Upper Shangs, for instance, are described here in detail for the first time. Among other places described for the first time are the upper Yol valley (p. 240), the area around Jo mo Nags rgyal (i.e. Brag ram, Snying ri and other places; p. 628ff.), Upper Rta nag (p. 556f.), and several areas in Myang (487f.) and in Dvags po (the Dvags lha Sgam po complex, including the actual site where the ancient Dvags rje Mang po rje rulers resided [p. 394, fn. 39], and the Sa nag po area in southern Dvags po, p. 401). The merit of having the location of such places documented (also cartographically) should not be underestimated. This provides information beyond the specific religious history of such sites. Their locations augment the virtual map of ancient settlement history, which in Central Tibet, as elsewhere on the Tibetan plateau, is a history involving constant re-settlement since the Neolithic period if not even earlier. Indeed, the countless cave complexes that we encounter in religious histories as (first) "openings" were probably used in some way since the beginning of human occupation of the respective area, hence representing crucial references to a thick cross-linked settlement-pattern geography that continues to this day, as seen, for example, in the many recent re-openings of ancient mining sites.

There are several sites which are noted in Ferrari 1958 as "cannot be located" and which to the best of my knowledge remained in this state until Akester visited them. One example is the village of Sgrags Grong mo che. It is noted by Khyentse as being the birthplace of Gnubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes – the 9th-century Phur ba master whose biographical data in Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las' *Rnam thar* (indicating the birth-date of 844 CE) helped Roberto Vitali provide a more accurate date for the rebellions (*kheng log*) following the collapse of the empire in Central Tibet (p. 345, fn. 13). The Sgrags district itself is well

known as Gnubs chen's birthplace, but Akester has been able to identify Grong mo che with the place known today simply as Sgrags mda' (Lower Sgrags) at the eastern entrance to the valley (p. 343). While this information may at first seem rather marginal, this in situ identification now permits a more precise idea of the "Gnubs land" (*gnubs yul*) of Sgrags referred to in a 17th-century text as being the area around this birthplace. This suggests the presence of an early branch of the imperial Gnubs family (assuming the Gnubs yul of Gtsang as its original seat), which in the 8th and 9th century apparently shared the estates of the Sgrags district with the noble family of Mkhar chen higher up the valley, near the "soul lake" of Ye shes Mtsho rgyal, the Mkhar chen bza' or "Lady of Mkhar chen" of the Padmasambhava vita story.

Sgrags provides a good example of how fruitful Akester's surveys are: In Khyentse's original text, the entry for the five sites in this area, which were probably not all visited by Khyentse personally, is only two-and-a-half lines long (fol. 5b, l. 3-5). Akester, in contrast, provides eleven large-format pages with dense descriptions, giving a rich insight into the religious topography of this small side valley. He includes a unique presentation of the highly significant Rnying ma pa retreat complex of Sgrags Yang rdzong, as well as a first description of Ngar phug, the *sgrub gnas* even further up the valley that is known from the biographies of the early Bka' brgyud pa. The author went to all of these places on foot; when compared to Khyentse's descriptions, Akester's are much more accurate in terms of how to get there and how long the journey takes. The caves of Ngar phug, for example, are reachable from the valley floor only after a difficult climb of several hours. If one calculates the walking distances in Sgrags according to Khyentse's Guide and then considers that the author visited more sites than Khyentse's two hundred, each combined with his conducting intensive in situ surveys and finding corresponding textual sources, the enormous effort behind this volume becomes clear.

The example of Sgrags, however, also makes it clear that this work was never intended to be a historical study of these areas in a broader sense, taking into account open questions about places not in Khyentse's Guide. For example, it is briefly noted that Ngar phug was one of the chief sites for spiritual realisation of Gung thang Bla ma Zhang (1123-93), certainly the most important politico-religious founding figure in the Lhasa valley of the post-imperial pre-Phag mo gru pa period. And yet we know of several other *sgrub gnas* of Zhang in the same area that are just as important, such as G.yu brag (after which he was also named, i.e. Zhang G.yu brag pa Brtson 'grus grags) or Bzangs yul Mon gdong, whose location and arrangement are only vaguely known. Although relevant primary and secondary sources are

known to Akester (with some listed in the bibliography), these places are not mentioned in the main text. Here as elsewhere, the chapter focusses almost exclusively on Khyentse's list of places and refrains from any further explanations. On one hand, this is understandable, since doing this would have gone far beyond the scope of an already extensive work. Nevertheless, it is often a pity when the author withholds information about important places whose geographical position and other details he apparently knows. This leaves us hoping that someday he will follow up with a postscript to this volume, one that informs us about sites that Khyentse himself had no idea about, but about which the later-day traveller following him is well informed. This would teach us not only about these Bla ma Zhang sites, but probably also where exactly the Sgrags places mentioned in the *Old Tibetan Annals* are located and what they look like, namely, Bya ts(h)al of Sgregs and Lha lung of Sgregs (= Sgrags), the latter known as the birthplace of Emperor Khri 'Dus srong (676–704).

Very important are the author's corrections of certain statements in Khyentse's Guide (and in secondary literature referring to it) that have proven incorrect. One such case concerns the Bkra shis 'od 'bar stupa of Lo gdong steng (due east of Bsam yas). Based on information from Khyentse (or his source, 'Jig med gling pa's *Gtam tshogs*), the author of this review and others have in the past referred to it as the foundation of the Bka' gdams pa Spyan snga ba Tshul khri ms 'bar (1038–1103). In fact, it dates to (the Sne'u zur pa disciple) Don steng pa Chos skyab bzang po (with ca. 1120 as its foundation date; p. 336f.). Other corrections relate to sites that were incorrectly identified in Ferrari, such as Mtshur Lha lung; Akester notes that this site "has been confused with La yag lHa lung in lHo brag in some of the secondary literature, notably Ferrari (1958) p. 139" (p. 206, fn. 41). This is one of the few references to secondary literature we find in the book. In general, the fact that secondary literature has been largely ignored, although not entirely, has led to problems of consistency. For example, in the presentation of the *Byang gter*-specific site of Ri bo Bkra bzang (p. 660), the author refers to Bellezza 2005 (rightly, since Bellezza was the first to investigate the older context of this area known as Tho yor nag po). Then why in the description of Bo dong E doesn't he mention the first (in situ) investigation of this site by P. Wangdu and H. Diemberger (1996, 1997)? And there are many other places for which detailed text- and ethnography-based studies have been available for some time. At least a brief reference to these would have been helpful for drawing general users' attention to further reading material, or, more importantly, to show how this new visit has resulted in additional or improved information.

A few formal oversights might be noted:

– Sometimes statements are made without specific references. For example, on p. 455, fn. 25 states that the mountain god Zur ra ra skyes (known as protector of the Hidden Land of Mkhan pa lung) is also the guardian of the hidden treasures of Seng ge rdzong (the important retreat in southern Lho brag). It is however unclear which of the four texts referred to in this long footnote served as the actual source for this statement. There are also statements that lack any references or otherwise supporting explanations at all, as for example when the author writes that the inscription pillar at the SW corner of Ra tshag dgon (in Stod lung) is “clearly not its original position” (p. 203). This sounds quite interesting but is of little use to the reader (regardless of whether a “specialist” or a “general reader”) if no arguments for this assessment are given. Then again, in a similar case, that of the Tshur phu inscription stele, the author accordingly offers such an explanation when questioning the stele’s present place at this monastery (p. 210, fn. 50).

– References to primary sources are often without page or folio number.

– Biographical data about people are often too general (“12th-century master”) or even missing completely, even when a name is being mentioned for the first time (as for example, Bla ma Zhang, p. 53).

– The translations do not indicate folio numbers.

– There are no page headers. This is something that one misses in a book of this size, particularly when using the (very good) place and personal name index.

– The bibliography is incomplete (e.g. Akester 2004 is missing)

– There are a few minor typos, although that is something inevitable in a book of this length.

– Some of the colour photographs are heavily magenta-tinged. I would blame this flaw on the publisher. The manuscript was kept for five years or so at the publishing house, which postponed the publication (first announced for 2012) for unknown reasons until the end of 2016. This would have been enough time for test prints and corresponding improvements to the photos.

In no way of course do these points lessen the value of this great work. Akester’s surveys fall into the “golden age” of travel conditions in the Tibet Autonomous Region. That such an age will not return very quickly (or will perhaps never return) is an untoward side effect of Realpolitik. It is also sad to see in retrospect that the period of the 1990s and early 2000s saw far too few Western researchers tracking their texts with similar meticulous, on-site visits. Akester’s work is a unique testimony to the simple fact that one really understands a place only if one has visited it. In sum, with *Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo’s Guide to*

Central Tibet, not only has a wonderful pilgrimage guide been presented, but also a vast source book which will be indispensable for all future Tibetan historical studies, especially those mapping the religious history of Central Tibet.



Book review of: Daniel A. Hirshberg, *Remembering the Lotus-Born. Padmasambhava in the History of Tibet's Golden Age*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2016. Paperback. Wisdom Publications (October 25, 2016) 470 pages, 6 x 9 inches. ISBN 9781614292319.

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The legend of Padmasambhava, the 8th century tantric teacher from *Uddiyāna* (in present day Pakistan), has played a central role in the Tibetan understanding of the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet during the Empire period (618-842). The stories of his invitation by Emperor Tri Songdetsen to teach and spread the Dharma in the Tibetan plateau, his role in the founding of Samyé, the first Buddhist monastery in Tibet, and the extraordinary tales of subjugation of local deities that fought against the success of this new and foreign religion were popularized by the *Copper Island* (*Padma 'byung gnas kyi rnam thar zang gling ma*), a treasure text traditionally considered to have been discovered by the 12th century Tibetan scholar Nyangrel Nyima Öser (1124-92, *Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer*).

Daniel Hirshberg's *Remembering the Lotus-Born*, as its title indicates, is not an attempt at uncovering the historical reality behind the legend of Padmasambhava (for whom we have very little evidence), but a compelling and insightful study of the role that Nyangrel played in the construction of the legend and the cult of Padmasambhava, and its larger implications for Tibetan Buddhism. Hirshberg's book offers a detailed textual analysis of the various recensions of the *Copper Island*, and argues that its traditional label as a treasure (*gter ma*), has ignored Nyangrel's role in its production and dissemination, while also obscuring the complex process "of indigenous innovations that produced the first complete revision of the story of Tibet's conversion to Buddhism at the apogee of the Tibetan empire, with Padmasambhava as its heroic protagonist" (94). Hirshberg convincingly argues that the *Copper Island* should be, instead, considered as "the product of the Tibetan assimilation and transformation of core Indian Buddhist literary traditions and

religious concepts that coalesced in Nyangrel" (95). Hirshberg's work offers much more though since, in the process of examining Nyangrel's role in the construction of Padmasambhava's legend, he also argues for Nyangrel's contributions to the Tibetan understanding of reincarnation, as well as to its role in creating the foundations for the Treasure tradition.

The first chapter ("Karmic Foreshadowing on the Path of Fruition") explores the life of Nyangrel through the lens of the two earliest biographies written about him and also the earliest significant accounts of a Tibetan Treasure revealer, the *Clear Mirror* (*gSal ba'i me long*) and the *Stainless Proclamation* (*Dri ma med pa*), which allows Hirshberg to establish three key defining points of Nyangrel's life: 1) his claim as a reincarnation of the Tibetan Emperor Tri Songdetsen, 2) his self-identification as a treasure revealer, and 3) his role as a central figure in the establishment of the cult and mythology of Padmasambhava, redefining the narrative of the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet. One of the central tensions of the chapter is Hirshberg's attempts at balancing his methodological understanding of the irretrievable nature of Nyangrel's life, which he accepts is "lost to time" (36) and only preserved in later, secondary accounts while, at the same time, reading these two biographies as providing "insights into who Nyangrel was, his context, and his products." This is not an easy tension to resolve, but Hirshberg's close textual analysis and interpretation of these texts do offer new and important insights about how contemporary scholars should reassess our understanding of such a key figure in the construction of Tibetan Buddhism in the early post-imperial period.

In chapter two ("Reincarnation and the Return of the Sovereign"), Hirshberg explores the central role played by Nyangrel in the unique Tibetan creation of the process of catenate incarnation and, in particular, the Tulku system, since he was among the first Tibetans to claim a continuous and unbroken sequence of prominent Tibetan figures as his predecessors (57) all the way back to the 8th century Emperor Tri Songdetsen. What makes this chapter particularly significant to our modern understanding of reincarnation within the Tibetan Buddhist context is the fact that, as Hirshberg points out, while "reincarnation has become one of the most renowned and definitive aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, yet relatively little has been clarified concerning the Tibetan assimilation and transformation of this prominent Indian concept" (55). Nyangrel made claims only regarding his pre-incarnations, and made no statements or predictions about future incarnations, which situates him as an important historical link between a vague notion of reincarnation in

the Indian Buddhist context that preceded him, and the very concrete, institutionalized and ritualized process of the tulku system that came after him, most famously represented by the Karmapa and Dalai Lama lineages. For Nyangrel, the idea of catenate reincarnation became a central tool in his efforts to legitimize his standing among competing teachers, and Buddhist systems existing in Tibet during his time, by skillfully claiming a direct connection to the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet, since Tri Songdetsen was Nyangrel's earliest reincarnation and a direct disciple of Padmasambhava. In the process, he helped redefine the past by introducing a new compelling narrative of the introduction of Buddhism into the Land of Snows around the figure of Padmasambhava.

Chapter three ("Treasure Before Tradition") focuses on Nyangrel's early contributions to the construction of the Tibetan Treasure tradition. Hirshberg here follows Janet Gyatso's understanding of treasures, focusing on how Nyangrel and others presented them as authentic rather than whether or not they are (87). His analysis of the *Copper Island* and the *Essence of Flowers: A History of Buddhism* (*Chos 'byung me tog snying po sbrang rtsi'i bcud*) illuminates Nyangrel's central role in the early development of the Treasure tradition, and argues that Nyangrel not only used the notion of Treasure as a way to legitimize himself ("to reconstruct the shattered relics of his patriarchal and reincarnate inheritance," (139) in the words of Hirshberg), but also as a "method for slipping the yoke of the Tibetan obsession with Indian pedigree and orthodoxy such that a genuinely Tibetan Buddhism, one adapted to the cultural constructs and needs of the Tibetan people, could evolve" (139).

Chapter four ("Drawing Honey From Historiography"), offers a very technical textual analysis of the *Essence of Flowers*, which Hirshberg convincingly argues that may not have been completely written by Nyangrel himself but includes parts that were composed by some of his disciples (174).

Finally, chapter five ("Delivering the Lotus-Born") examines the authorship of the *Copper Island*, and reminds us of its importance for our understanding of Tibetan Buddhism after Nyangrel. The *Copper Island* was the first complete biography of Padmasambhava, it successfully introduced an alternative narrative to the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet while glorifying the Tibetan Imperial era (a very different narrative to that offered, for example, in the earlier *sBa bzhed*), and it also introduced the idea of the Tibetan Emperor Sontsen Gampo as an emanation of Avalokiteśvara, which will become central later on to the portrayal of the Dalai Lamas as divine protectors of Tibet. The chapter also compares the dual roles and fortunes of the *Copper Island*, traditionally considered a treasure, and

the *Essence of Flowers*, a more conventional historical account (*Chos 'byung*) of the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet. As the treasure tradition became more important in the centuries after Nyangrel's death, the *Copper Island* became a very powerful tool that, as Hirshberg concludes transformed Nyangrel's text into "a truly unique treasure that not only defined his life and legacy but also articulated for the first time an emic history of Tibet's golden age that continues to resonate at the core of Tibetan collective identity to the present" (201).

Although the book can be quite technical in parts, which may reduce his audience to the Tibetan Studies scholarly community, Hirshberg is a compelling writer that seems to have absorbed some of the poetic language so pervasive in the literature he studies ("rather than a march of perfectly distinct ripples, life is more analogous to a vast rainstorm spattering the surface of an endless ocean of awareness," 33). In conclusion, Daniel Hirshberg's *Remembering the Lotus-Born* offers an important contribution to our understanding of one of the most important intellectual figures in the history of Tibet, Nyangrel Nyima Öser, and his critical role in the process of assimilation and transformation of Buddhism in the Tibetan plateau.



Compte-rendu

Anne Burchardi. *Catalogue of Tibetan Mandalas and Other Images. Texts, Initiation Cards and Prayer Flags in the Royal Library and the National Museum, Copenhagen.* The Royal Library, Copenhagen Denmark. Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Press, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen, 2016. xv + 304 pp. ISBN 978-87-7694-172-7 (NIAS website price: 200\$).

Amy Heller

The present volume is a welcome addition to the series *Catalogue of Oriental Manuscripts, Xylographs, etc. in Danish Collections (COMDC)* published by the Royal Library. It is intended as a supplement to the two catalogues produced by Hartmut Buescher and Tarab Tulku published close to 20 years ago.¹ Anne Burchardi, the author, studied with Tarab Tulku and subsequently is a long-standing collaborator of the Royal Library of Denmark. The COMDC series was founded to provide a complete set of catalogues of the Oriental collections providing brief description of the contents, physical appearance and provenance of each item, augmented by additional information relevant to the manuscripts and block prints so that the catalogues serve as reference works. This protocol has proven successful for the two previous Tibetan volumes as well as Buescher's catalogue of Sanskrit manuscripts and the Nepal collection.² Burchardi's organization of the present volume is exemplary. The detailed introduction first provides the background of the Tibetan collection in terms of previous print publications as well as the online Royal Library catalogue, the Mongolian collection and the holdings of the National Museum.³ The provenance of the collection is discussed by brief biographical data of all the collectors and explorers who acquired texts and artefacts in Tibet and China, as well as the Danish ethnographer Haslund-Christensen who travelled with Sven Hedin to Inner Mongolia and then led expeditions himself to Central Asia.

¹ *Catalogue of Tibetan manuscripts and xylographs* by Hartmut Buescher and Tarab Tulku. Copenhagen: Curzon - Det Kongelige Bibliotek, 2000. Vols. 1-2.

² *Catalogue of Sanskrit manuscripts (early acquisitions and the Nepal collection)* by Hartmut Buescher, COMDC, vol. 7. NIAS, 2011.

³ The online selection of manuscripts is very well presented in an easily navigable website allowing excellent magnification of the text and the imagery. See for example the <http://www.kb.dk/manus/ortsam/2009/okt/orientalia/object80763/da/#kbOSD-0=page:1>.

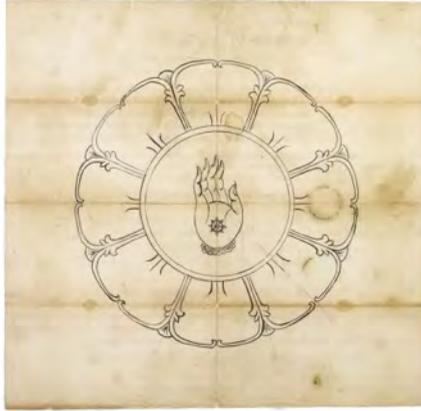
His untimely death in 1948 led to the involvement of Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark, as leader of an expedition then as collector of Tibetan texts and artefacts during his years of residence in Kalimpong until 1957.⁴ Unique materials were acquired by Dr Jesper Trier during the research for his thesis (1972) " Ancient paper of Nepal. Results of ethno-technological field work on its manufacture, uses and history - with technical analyses of bast, paper and manuscripts".⁵ Rolf Gilberg, then curator of the Ethnographical department of the National Museum contributed texts and artefacts acquired during his visit to Tibet ca. 1980. Subsequent acquisitions were both donations and purchases. The reader will find a helpful list of accessions of The Royal Library and those of The National Museum at the end of the volume.

The catalogue comprises 381 selected objects in 174 catalogue entries. The volume is written in English, with abundant transliteration of Tibetan and the use of Tibetan typeface as well for many mantra which are not translated. The first section describes 21 texts and two book covers, covering canonical texts, rituals, prayers and spiritual practices, history science and arts, as well as one Christian text written in Tibetan language. The remainder of the catalogue consists of iconographical materials, focusing particularly here on maṅḍalas, divination diagrams, *tsakli* empowerment or initiation cards, prayer flags, meditation manuals. The collection also includes pages described as elemental divination (item 148), on paper, which has drawings very similar to the figures and trigrams carved and colored on on *zan par* wooden tablets (cf. Fleming, Zara " The ritual significance of Zan par" Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the IATS, 2003. Volume 13: *Art in Tibet*, pp 173-182). Noteworthy also are the rolls of paper from prayer wheels which are illustrated with Buddhist deities and letter diagrams as well as inscribed with prayers and mantra syllables (item 150, 9 x 605 cm). The majority of the iconographic material is hand-colored blockprints, which may tentatively be attributed to 18th-20th century, as well as *tsakli* painted on cardboard. There are many Mongolian ritual diagrams of the 19th -20th century. Curiously, for item 168, a set of *tsakli* of the Five Wisdom Buddhas (19 x 13. 5 cm), rather than ritual invocations on the reverse of the *tsakli*, these are recto-verso paintings, a very unusual, if not unique, phenomenon in Tibetan and Mongolian ritual

⁴ Brox, Trine and Miriam Koktvedgaard Zeitzen 2017 "When Tibet came to Prince Peter: Tibetan-Danish Relations through a Stationary Expedition in the 1950ies", *The Tibet Journal* Vol. XLII (1, spring-summer), pp. 13-35.

⁵ Corneille Jest first drew my attention to this important early publication, recently complemented by Helman-Wazny, Agnieszka. *The Archaeology of Tibetan Paper*, Brill's Tibetan Studies Series, Leiden, 2014.

paraphernalia. The provenance of this set is uncertain, it was acquired in 1982. There is a particularly elegant drawing of a hand performing the abhaya mudrā with a dharmacakra on the palm (item 139, 34 x 35.5 cm), which Burchardi has convincingly analysed as a Mongolian drawing due to the use of Russian paper with an identifiable imprint. (see Fig. 1.)



Particularly noteworthy is Burchardi's analysis and discussion of the canonical text no. 6, which she translated as "Illustrated Retribution", a bi-lingual Tibetan and Mongolian blockprint on Russian paper, replete with numerous hand-colored illustrations giving vivid depictions of the hells, (see pp. 15-56 for analysis of the text and the illustrated folia), The *Āryasaddharmasmṛtyupasthāna* (*'Phags pa dam pa'i chos dran pa nye bar gzhags pa*) found in the *bKa' 'gyur* (TBRC WP96682). As Kollmar-Paulenz remarked in her study on the hell descriptions in the Ernst collection of Mongolian manuscripts, there is a definite Mongolian obsession with hell.⁶ Burchardi's emphasis on this text is highly appreciated for the very numerous and idiosyncratic drawings of the fires of hell and the fantastic creatures which populate them.

The book is produced on a glossy paper with fine color reproductions. The layout is practical and well conceived; the large-scale design allows for full-page color or black and white illustrations of many individual items. There are very few very minor printing errors, in the bibliography (Schaeffer, Curtis (sic) Kurtis), and p. 201

⁶ Kollmar-Paulenz, Karenina. "Teaching the Dharma in Pictures: Illustrated Mongolian Books of the Ernst Collection in Switzerland" in Heller, A. (ed). *The Arts of Tibetan Painting, Recent Research on Manuscripts, Murals and Thangkas of Tibet, the Himalayas and Mongolia (11th -19th century)*.
<http://www.asianart.com/articles/paulenz/index.html>

Gyurme Dorje 2001 (sic> 2008) for the discussion of the Divination chart in relation to his study: *Tibetan Elemental Divination Paintings: Illuminated Manuscript from the White Beryl of Sangs-rgyas rGya-mtsho with the Moonbeams treatise of Lo-chen Dharmasri*, London 2008. In view of the excellent online resources produced for the selection of the Tibetan manuscripts and xylographs, it may be hoped that in the future, the Danish Royal Library will also make a selection of the maṇḍalas and other illustrations from the present catalogue. The magnification feature of online consultation would be welcome for many of the images and illustrations published in the present catalogue.

This handsome volume is destined to become a major reference book to be acquired by university libraries and scholars. This book stems from long Danish participation and involvement in Tibetan studies, and the collections were acquired in the context of the excellent reputation of Danish scholars, such as Erik Haarh. Thus in the present review, it is important to note that university studies of Tibetan in Denmark have been dismantled in recent years and one may hope that this publication will spur Danish Royal and national institutitons to renew their sponsorship and encouragement of Tibetan studies, which has long been a mainstay in the academic heritage of Denmark.

