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“Giving a Meaning to an Illusory Wealth.” A Trader’s Pilgrimage

Lucia Galli

s most human ritual activities, pilgrimage is riddled with complexity – no journey is holier and worthier than the one paid to that which is sacred. Distance is measured not in days and nights, but in movements of the soul: pilgrimage is first and foremost a spiritual experience,¹ punctuated by bodily exertions – fatigue, physical and emotional, is part and parcel of the purifying process embarked by pilgrims. This is particularly evident in the case of Tibetan pilgrimage, or *skor ba* (“circumambulation”), wherein the believers pace their progressions through full body prostrations, in a humbling display of stamina and devotion.

A specific ritual culture of pilgrimage begins to develop in Tibet between the late 10th and late 13th centuries, a period often referred to as the “later propagation of Buddhist teachings” (*bstan pa phyi dar*). According to Toni Huber,² all the basic characteristics of pilgrimage as it emerged in Tibetan societies are derived from earlier Indian models, gradually elaborated and adapted to the indigenous ritual practices.³

The pre-Buddhist cultural representation of the physical environment – what Furst defines an “ecological belief system”⁴ – imagined it to be populated by a host of deities and spiritual forces, such as the *yul lha*, the *gnyan*, and the *btsan* spirits, the latter a fact reflected in the later historians’ accounts of the early period, wherein the need to tame the land (i.e. its supernatural inhabitants) features as a literary *topos*. Even though the origin of land taming rituals is

¹ The “inward movement of the heart”, to borrow from Turner and Turner ([1978] 2011, 8).

² Huber (2008, 60).

³ Despite the lack of textual evidence about the existence of any ritual systems akin to pilgrimage prior to the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet, indigenous religious life was characterised by a belief in the sacred nature of mountains, lakes, and caves, and it seems safe to assume that Indian models of pilgrimage were superimposed on non-institutionalised indigenous beliefs, in what is a still ongoing synthetic process (Buffetrille 1998, 19).

⁴ Furst (1994, 3).

undoubtedly Indian, the emphasis in later Tibetan tradition seems to have shifted from what was envisioned as a military and pragmatic operation to a more spiritual and soteriological understanding.⁵

The superimposition of Buddhism on the framework of indigenous belief systems reveals “worlds within worlds, where the inner realm of the soul appears in the guise of the external world and viceversa”,⁶ since “mountains, lakes, rivers, caves, and passes constitute the geographicity of the Tibetan pilgrim world”.⁷ A great deal of architectural terminology recurs in the description of these landscape “dwellings”, often presented as the “palaces” (*pho brang*) of the Tantric deities abiding in them.⁸ The same concepts apply to certain human-made objects, such as buildings (e.g. *stūpa*, religious icons) or even particular persons (e.g. the Dalai Lama), considered to be temporary or permanent bodily “residences” of deities.

Although indigenous Tibetan spirits of the land, such as the *yul lha*, are typically worshipped by offerings and prayers for protection rather than pilgrimage and circumambulation, the performance of the latter forms of worship is central to the Buddhist sacred places (*gnas*) of Tibet. The Tibetan compound expressions *gnas skor* and *gnas mjal*, respectively “going around a *gnas*” and “meeting/encountering a *gnas*”, clearly convey the kinetic character of pilgrimage,⁹ in its sense of a movement around or toward a sacred object.¹⁰ Loosely translated as “abode”, a *gnas* is specifically used in a religious context to indicate the location or residence of a superior being belonging to the Buddhist pantheon: as an “empty” three-dimensional embodiment of the deity or spirit, the *gnas* physically “signals” the supernatural entity and facilitates the interaction with it.¹¹

The concepts of both circumambulation of and direct encounter with an “abode” is directly derived from the Indian ritual models of *pradakṣiṇā*¹² and *darśana*,¹³ since *gnas* receive a status and a treatment comparable to those accorded to sites associated with the Buddha in Indian Buddhism.¹⁴ The orthodox representation of pilgrimage heavily relies on classical concepts of *karma* and merit (*bsod nam*s; Skt. *punya*). In this view, a ritual journey results in the accumulation of

⁵ Samuel (2005, 108-109).

⁶ Sumegi (2008, 18).

⁷ van Spengen (1998, 39).

⁸ Huber (1999a, 81).

⁹ Turner and Turner ([1978] 2011, xiii).

¹⁰ Huber (1999a, 83), van Spengen (1998, 37).

¹¹ Huber (1999b, 14).

¹² Ritual circumambulation from left to right of a person or object.

¹³ It refers to the visual perception of the sacred, the act of seeing and being seen by the deity.

¹⁴ Huber (2008, 60-61).

merit – necessary for a future rebirth on a higher level of cyclic existence (Skt. *saṃsāra*) – and prepares the individual for the ultimate liberation (Skt. *nirvāṇa*).¹⁵

At a pilgrimage site, the sacred object and its actual physical surroundings relate synecdochically with the moral and supernatural virtues of the enlightened being associated with them. A *gnas* is considered to be a source of “sacred energy” or “empowerment” (*byin rlabs*), a concept popularly understood as a “field of power” created by the emanations, in space and time, of the deity’s energy.¹⁶ Power in various forms is exchanged, not only symbolically but substantially. *Byin rlabs* is transferred continuously through contact;¹⁷ spots in the physical environment, the ontological essence of which has been modified by *byin rlabs*, become in turn sources of empowerment. The desire to be blessed leads pilgrims to collect and carry away the substances found at the holy place, such as stones, water, earth or talismans, thus fostering an exchange economy where individual lamas and representatives of monastic communities supply empowered items to pilgrims in return for donations.¹⁸

In the analysis of pilgrimage activities, the economic dimension represents a methodological key issue; to borrow Preston’s words,

virtually every pilgrimage is associated with a field of economic exchange, as in fairs, carnivals, and permanent or temporary marketplaces. Materials are redistributed as pilgrims enter sacred centers, then disperse.¹⁹

Since economic and socio-economic transactions are an essential feature of the complex system of pilgrimage, no study of the ritual and cosmological aspects of this ritual activity can disregard the economic side of it:²⁰ money, tea, and scarves were donated to monks in exchange for blessing, initiations, medical pills, food, and lodging. Ritual “souvenirs” were actively sought and collected in order to be shown and possibly shared with those who did not or could not make the journey, thus extending the impact of the pilgrimage to others.²¹ As a matter of fact, pilgrimage may arguably be understood as a complex circulative system “strongly vectored toward specific places ranging from local to national and even supranational”,²² a

¹⁵ Huber (1999b, 12).

¹⁶ Huber (1999b, 15).

¹⁷ Huber (1999b, 61).

¹⁸ Huber (1999b, 15; 2008, 61).

¹⁹ Preston (1992, 43).

²⁰ McCorriston (2011, 28), Mack (2010), Buffetrille (2003, 327).

²¹ Mack (2010).

²² Bhardwaj (2009, 49).

dynamic and self-organised structure depending on the existence of centres that possess a strong attractive power – a “spiritual magnetism”.²³

Lhasa was – and still is – a supreme focus of *skor ba*, the hub of a pilgrimage network whose routes extended throughout Tibet and well beyond its geographical and cultural boundaries. Although Tibetans had for centuries ventured into the Kathmandu valley for trading and pilgrimage, especially during wintertime, it was in the early 20th century that journeys to places outside the Tibetan cultural sphere of influence, in particular India, became more and more frequent.²⁴ The development of pilgrimage circuits and networks, trodden year after year by generations of devotees, led to a robust literary tradition that played a fundamental role in the process of negotiation, interpretation, and appreciation of the holy places visited by pilgrims during their ritual journey, in many ways providing them with a textual “map” of their surroundings as well as their place in it.

The dual nature of the pilgrimage – sacred and profane, shared and private – is particularly evident in the accounts kept by Kha stag 'Dzam yag, a Khams pa trader-cum-pilgrim who recorded thirteen years of his life (from 1944 to 1956) on paper-scrolls, carefully annotating impressions, encounters, and events as he lived through them. The peculiarities of his *nyin deb* and, in particular, its debatable inclusion in the diaristic genre have been examined elsewhere;²⁵ here, my aim is to address the core of 'Dzam yag's narrative – that is, pilgrimage and ritual activities – by engaging in a literary analysis of the *nyin deb* itself, for any textual utterance is not crated in vacuum, rather is inscribed in webs of cultural, social, political, and literary significance – to understand a text means therefore to be aware of the social conception and cultural codes inherent to the context in which it is produced. Whereas the socio-economic approach allows discussing religion as an independent variable vis-à-vis economy, the understanding of the journal as a narrative text connected to others sheds light on the sense-making and sense-giving processes at work during a pilgrimage to sacred places.

Although filled with notes of religious visits and offerings, the narrative presents an inner dichotomy that extended beyond the apparent geographical rationale to a more subtle and intimate reason. The two *loci* emerging in 'Dzam yag's account – Tibet proper on one hand and the “holy lands” of India and Nepal on the other – cannot but reflect the inner changes of the author, who gradually morphs

²³ Preston (1992, 33).

²⁴ van Spengen (1998, 43).

²⁵ Galli (2019a).

from “beggar” (*sprang*), ousted from his ancestral land, to financially assured “trading agent” (*tshong dpon*). As such, attention will be brought exclusively to the ritual activities performed in Tibet, interpreting them in light of their socio-economic importance; the aim is to identify the power that religious communities wielded by taking into consideration the amount of money generated by pilgrimages and the diverse intentions and expectations driving the devotees. The present discourse is conceived as complementary to the analysis of pilgrims as spiritual tourists presented elsewhere.²⁶

Ritual Activities and Pilgrimage in Tibet

The richness of ritual practices associated with pilgrimage to sacred spaces and powerful places in Tibet is such as to constitute a field of research in its own right. The complexities of the historical and social interactions, as well as the high degree of syncretism and assimilation, contributed to the development of an extraordinarily broad range of rituals and rites, the origin and meaning of which never fail to enthrall the scholars. Whereas earlier studies tended to engage with pilgrimage practices through the literary medium,²⁷ by the late 1990s the trend shifted towards a more anthropological approach; moving from the texts to the field, scholars started investigating the way the Tibetan practitioners themselves relate to a certain cult apparatus or system of values.²⁸ When dealing with textual sources, it is in fact important to remember their *prescriptive* nature and therefore refrain from treating them too casually “as though they were actually *descriptive* of local thought and action”.²⁹

Whereas it is indisputable that native practitioners actively draw from a shared pool of symbols, categories, and metaphors, they do so in accordance with the context in which they operate. Pilgrimage literature is therefore important in providing guidance to sacred places, but, at the same time a “different, apparently conflicting, geographical conception”³⁰ could be held simultaneously by those who visit holy sites. In his journal ‘Dzam yag admittedly relies on oral sources – in the form of caretakers and villagers – but also on various forms of pilgrimage texts, in particular “catalogues” (*dkar chag*) and “guidebooks” (*gnas yig*); several of the descriptions of

²⁶ Galli (2020).

²⁷ Pilgrimage literature, as textual expression of sacred geography, records information about the holy environment, its spatial orientation, and its modifications through time.

²⁸ McKay (1998, 4-5), Huber (1999b, 10).

²⁹ Huber (2008, 35, my emphasis).

³⁰ Ramble (1999, 4).

places jotted down by the author were in fact based on *gnas yig* and local narratives.³¹

*Pilgrimage Activities: The Mundane Aspect of
'Dzam yag's Spiritual Quest, 1944-1952*

Whereas from 1952 up to 1959, 'Dzam yag's religious life mostly revolved around esoteric rituals and monetary offerings, the situation prior to his appointment as *tshong dpon* of the Khang gсар bla brang at Ngor E wam chos ldan was rather different. From 1944 to 1951, the author embarked on a series of pilgrimages to sacred places and powerful "spaces" on the Tibetan plateau, with the intent of cleansing his *karma* and consequently improving his social and financial conditions, the latter a fact inherent to the indigenous understanding of the practice:

[...] pilgrimage is generally defined as a journey to a sanctified place, undertaken in the expectation of *future spiritual and/or worldly benefit*.³²

While the last years covered by the *nyin deb* show a man mostly concerned with the accumulation of merit for his next life, the period immediately following 1944 portrays quite a different person. At that time, the loss of his financial means and the increasing difficulties in making a living in his native land prompted 'Dzam yag to a drastic change of life,³³ that the trader's own narrative largely ascribes to bsTan pa'i snying po, a visiting master from sKyo brags.³⁴

³¹ For instance, while passing through 'Dam gzhung rdzong on his way from Nag chu to Lhasa, 'Dzam yag paid a local boy, no more than 15 years old, to guide him to the *stūpa* of Sha ra ba (an important 12th-century bKa' gdams pa lama) and show him what remained of a great monastery established there by the master. The notes include an extract from the *dkar chag* of the holy place (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 82-83; see Roesler and Roesler 2004, 55-73 for a reproduction of the *dkar chag* in full). In the 12th month of the Fire Pig Year (January 1948), during his visit to sMra bo lcog, a rNying ma monastery belonging to the mNga' bdag lineage in Lho brag, 'Dzam yag records having borrowed a *gnas yig* of the place from one of local lamas (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 110). In the late part of the Earth Mouse Year (1948), while in Kathmandu, the author laments the impossibility of visiting all the sacred objects and sites mentioned in the various *gnas yig* he had access to, thus demonstrating the importance that such texts had in shaping Tibetan pilgrims' activities and expectations (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 156).

³² McKay (1998, 1, my emphasis).

³³ On the events that led to the author's exile from his ancestral land (*pha yul*) in the sGa pa area of Khams, see Galli (2019b).

³⁴ sKyo brags bsTan pa'i snying po apparently had a vision concerning 'Dzam yag's near future and instructed the trader accordingly: "Not long from now, beyond the 10th day of the 10th month of the Monkey Year (November 25, 1944), without

In a short poem written after his first pilgrimage to India,³⁵ the trader ponders on past events, comparing his situation to that of the great Tibetan saint Mi la ras pa (c. 1052-c. 1135):³⁶

Because the lord of Rab shis (i.e. 'Dzam yag's *pha yul*) expropriated all of Kha stag 'Dzam yag's wealth – just like in the past Mi la ras pa was robbed of his heritage by his paternal uncle and aunt – I (i.e. Kha stag 'Dzam yag) could not stay in my homeland and wandered to the borders. Having wandered to the borders, I reached the central province of dBus, and even though I had to be under cover [by keeping a low profile], my eyes could see far and wide. Having abandoned [the hope to return to] my fatherland, I obtained peace of mind;³⁷ having circumambulated the supports and sacred places of the four regions of Central Tibet and paid homage to the [two] forms of Buddha Śākyamuni [in Lhasa], I dedicate a prayer, out of equanimity and compassion, to all sentient beings – whether enemies, friends, or people [having] neutral disposition

delay, go on a pilgrimage without a [specific] direction – [whether it is] Central Tibet or Gangs Ti se (i.e. Kailash), it will be good for both your present and future life" (*da ni yun ma ring bar spral zla 10 tshes 10 phan ma 'gyangs pa | dbus gtsang dang gangs ti se'am phyogs med kyi gnas bskor du song dang | 'di phyi gnyis nas bzang ngo*) (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 12).

³⁵ Already in Kalimpong for business, 'Dzam yag joined a group of pilgrims from Tre hor and set off to the holy places of northern India on the 28th day of the 12th month of Wood Bird Year (January 30, 1946) (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 53-55); see Galli (2020).

³⁶ The dates of the birth and death of the saint adopted here are the ones provided by the *yogin's* most famous biographer, gTsang smyon Heruka (1452-1507). Early literary sources largely disagree on the year of Mi la ras pa's birth – usually listing the animal but not the element of the sexagenary cycle – and on his lifespan. The problematic identification of Mi la ras pa's dates has bedeviled European and North American scholarship. Alexander Csoma de Kőrös, the first Western academic to address the saint's chronology, miscalculated the date of Mi la ras pa's birth provided in the chronological tables of *sde srid* Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's *Vaidūrya dkar po*, converting the Iron Dragon Year to the Gregorian year 1038 instead of 1040, an error that lingered in scholarship up to the early 20th century. The tradition of dating Mi la ras pa's birth to an Iron Dragon Year was overshadowed in Tibet, and consequently in the West, by the appearance of a new chronology provided by gTsang smyon Heruka's version. According to the latter, the saint was born on a Water Dragon Year, corresponding to 1052. For a detailed study on the vagaries of Mi la ras pa's dates, see Quintman (2013); on 'Dzam yag's self-identification with the hermit-saint Mi la ras pa, see Galli (2019a).

³⁷ The same concept recurs again in a note dated on the Iron Tiger Year (1950); in this case the author supports his reflections on the presence of a silver lining hidden in apparently negative events by making reference to the *Nītiśāstra* (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 193).

[towards me].³⁸

The association with *Mi la ras pa* is telling of 'Dzam yag's attitude at the time. Betrayed, lost, and struggling to come to terms with slander and community estrangement, he turned, as many others before and after him, to the traditional answer to the sudden emergence of obstacles and difficulties: pilgrimage. By prostrating and circumambulating, pilgrims in fact surrender themselves to the kindness of the deities, bodily engaging in the psychophysical cleansing of defilements and sins and absorbing of the blessings of the sacred places.³⁹ By defining himself as a *gsar sprang*, a "new beggar",⁴⁰ 'Dzam yag placed himself within the tradition of the itinerant pilgrims, wandering lay practitioners – "professional pilgrims"⁴¹ – who were accustomed to travel throughout the Tibetan cultural world.⁴²

Between 1945 and 1951, 'Dzam yag visited Lhasa and the surrounding areas at least three times, went to Lake Manasarovar and Mount Kailash once, and had innumerable occasions to pay homage to the most sacred monastic establishments of the central provinces of dBus and gTsang. Despite metaphorically donning the humble robe of a pilgrim, his status as trader differed from that of the average *gnas skor ba*. His socio-economic conditions and his familiarity with influential Eastern Tibetan merchants gave him the unique chance to directly interact with masters and reincarnates, requesting divinations, private meetings, and blessings from them.

Phyogs med and Ris med: The "Unbiased" Wanderings of a New Beggar

It would be impossible in the present article to provide a complete list of all the places – monasteries, hermitages, mountains, lakes, springs, and other sacred spaces – mentioned in the *nyin deb*. Throughout his pilgrimages – be they regional, superregional, or international – the trader shows a remarkably non-sectarian and

³⁸ *sngar zhig mi la'i pha nor rnams | a khu a nes 'phrog pa bzhin | kha stag 'dzam yag rgyu nor kun | rab shis dpon pos 'phrog rkyen gyis | rang yul ma chags sa mtha' 'khyams | mtha' ru 'khyams pas dbus su slebs | mgo bo btums pas rgyang mig mthong | pha yul spangs pas zhe sdang zhi | dbus gtsang ru bzhi gnas rten skor | jo shaka [sic] rnam par zhal mjal nas | dgra gnyen bar ma thams cad la | btang snyoms byams pas bsngo smon brjod ||* (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 55).

³⁹ Huber (1999b, 16).

⁴⁰ Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 4).

⁴¹ van Spengen (1998, 46).

⁴² There are many examples of wandering pilgrims within the Tibetan tradition. For a study of some of these figures, see for instance, Ricard (1994), Ramble (1995), Kværne (1998), Havnevik (1998), Quintman (2013, 2015).

unbiased approach, in perfect accordance with the tenets promulgated by the *ris med* "movement".⁴³

Born and raised in an environment imbued with non-sectarian values,⁴⁴ 'Dzam yag's receptivity towards an impartial appreciation of all religious traditions is hardly surprising. Albeit educated in a dGe lugs establishment – the largest in the area of sKye dgu mdo – he received empowerments and teachings from masters of different schools, showing a deep understanding of the *Lam 'bras* ("Path and Result")⁴⁵ system and literature as taught by the Sa skya. 'Dzam yag's non-sectarianism transpires clearly from his notes, yet it is in the foreword of the edited version of the *nyin deb* that his support to religious non-sectarianism is first expressed and clearly verbalized.⁴⁶

⁴³ On the problematic identification of *ris med* as "movement", see, for instance, Samuel (1993), Gardner (2006), Powers (1995), Oldmeadow (2012), Turek (2013), Deroche (2018).

⁴⁴ By the mid-19th century, the territories of sGa pa and sDe dge saw the spread of non-sectarianism and inclusiveness, ideas already present in Tibetan Buddhism, but fostered by the activities of teachers and *sprul sku* belonging to different traditions. Scholars such as dPal sprul O rgyan 'jigs med chos kyi dbang po (1808-1887), 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse dbang po (1820-1892), 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (1813-1899), and 'Jam mgon Mi pham rgya mtsho (1846-1912) took the lead of the *ris med* revival, the main aim of which was "to counteract the sectarian disputes and violence that frequently marred Tibetan Buddhism" (Karma Phuntsho 2005, 50). The interregional conflicts that in past centuries had placed different schools in opposition to each other had assumed a more local aspect in the 18th century, focused in particular in the area of sDe dge (Powers and Templeman 2012, 336; Yudru Tsomu 2015, 59-61). The dGe lugs missionary efforts and the forced proselytising that followed the defeat of mGon po nam rgyal by the Lhasa army (1865) deeply concerned the *ris med* masters, who perceived the dGe lugs scholasticism based on the *bsdus grwa* literature as excessively rigid, verbose, and arid. In an attempt to counteract a homogenisation of the Buddhist traditions through the adoption of the dGe lugs curriculum, the *ris med* teachers promoted a "reorientation of religious study to the Indian originals and an eclectic approach of professing the essential teachings of all Tibetan traditions in spite of one's own religious affiliation" (Karma Phuntsho 2005, 51).

⁴⁵ The tantric tradition of the *Lam 'bras* ("Path and Result") was initially received by 'Brog mi Lo tsā ba Shākya ye shes (993-1077?) from the Indian master Gayadhara (d. 1103). 'Brog mi translated a number of Tantric scriptures and commentaries, including the *Hevajra Tantra* and Virūpa's *rDo rje tshig rkang* ("The Vajra Verse"), the basic text of the *Lam 'bras*. Contrary to other esoteric systems passed down through a series of Indian teachers, the *rDo rje tshig rkang* did not rely on written texts: 'Brog mi's translation continued to be orally transmitted and memorized for hundreds of years, before being eventually written down. Over the centuries, the different lineages of the *Lam 'bras* were slowly absorbed into the Sa skya school, currently the only holders of the tradition of the "Path and Result" in Tibetan Buddhism (Stearns 2001, 6-8).

⁴⁶ Considerable information concerning the persona of Kha stag 'Dzam yag is provided in the foreword of the *nyin deb*. I am here referring to the description of the funerary rites following his death and the commemorative discourse offered

It is plausible that the trader did not perceive his eclectic and inclusive approach as an element worth of mentioning, as it was part and parcel of the cultural and spiritual environment that surrounded him.

In his pilgrimages inside and outside Tibet, 'Dzam yag appears to adhere to the well-known tradition of roaming without a fixed destination (*phyogs med*), an attitude he shared with many other wandering pilgrims. In reality, far from being the outcome of impromptu decisions, his religious visits followed precise agendas and were strongly dependent on his business activities.

Even though the search for mundane results – be they good health, financial security or social stability – appears to have fueled the majority of the religious activities carried out by 'Dzam yag between 1944 and 1952, the visits paid to Lhasa and the travels through the southeastern region of Lho kha, the pilgrimage to Lake Manasarovar and Mount Kailash, as well as the numerous meetings he had with the retired head (*mkhan zur*) of the Thar rtse bla brang of Ngor represent, for different reasons, some of the most significant events experienced by the trader in the 1944-1952 period. In the following paragraphs, passages from the *nyin deb* regarding those activities will be presented and discussed through economic and literary lenses. The application of two different but equally valid heuristic devices provides a better understanding of the value of 'Dzam yag's experiences, placing them within their social and cultural context.

Lhasa

'Dzam yag's *nyin deb* accounts for three distinct visits to Lhasa. Even though business was the main reason behind these visits – occurring a few months apart from each other – the trader does not offer any details about either the trade in which he was involved or the networking in which he engaged. The journal omits the mundane aspects of his stay in Lhasa: as creator of his own narrative, 'Dzam yag does not diverge from the image of the pious and humble man he chose for himself. The few references he makes to financial transactions and trips to the market are almost lost among the countless visits he paid to the sacred sites of the town. His sojourns in Lhasa were organised around a routine of circumambulations, prostrations, and offerings to the major religious “supports” (*rten*).

The first of 'Dzam yag's recorded visits dates to the 20th day of the

by Kha stag O rgyan chos 'phel, head of the meditation centre of the Karma bKa' brgyud monastery of Kha 'gu dgon in sGa pa (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 6-7).

9th month of the Wood Bird Year (October 25, 1945). As soon as he reached the town, the trader headed to the Ra mo che to pay homage to the images of Avalokiteśvara (Thugs rje chen po) and Jo bo yid bzhin nor bu,⁴⁷ to each of which he offered Chinese silk: the fabric, being of one arm's-length, was beautifully decorated with drawings of the three longevity deities (*tshē lha rnam gsum*). The next day he set off at dawn to complete the external circumambulation (*phyi'i gling skor*) of Lhasa, and reaching the Ra mo che from the north, he offered an arm-span long scarf embroidered with an image of Amitāyus to the Jo bo Mi bskyod rdo je,⁴⁸ prostrating in front of the image and concluding his visit with several circumambulations of the shrine of Amitāyus. The predominant role played by the longevity deities – in particular Amitāyus – in this phase of 'Dzam yag's life is indicative of the uncertainties he was facing at the time. His main concerns regarded his poor health⁴⁹ and the strain placed on it by his financial difficulties; by entrusting himself to the deity of infinite life, the trader clearly hoped to cleanse the defilements and bodily imbalances at the root of his sicknesses.

On the 22nd of the 9th month (October 27, 1945), the auspicious day of the descent of the Buddha from Tuṣita,⁵⁰ he offered clarified butter for the replenishment of the golden lamps in front of the statues of the eleven-faced Avalokiteśvara (Thugs rje chen po bcu gcig zhal) and, while a rich sponsor donated to the Jo bo yid bzhin nor bu a large golden lamp filled with butter, he made an offering for the gilding of the image (*gser gsol*). He then paid a visit to Jo bo Mi bskyod rdo je at the Ra mo che, refilling the lamps in front of the image twice and burning some *gser yig*.⁵¹ Leaving the shrine, 'Dzam

⁴⁷ "Lord [who is] the wish-fulfilling jewel". Statue portraying Buddha Śākyamuni at the age of twelve. It was brought as dowry by Wen Cheng Kong jo, the Chinese wife of the Tibetan king Srong btsan sgam po (ca. 604-650); see Sørensen (1994).

⁴⁸ "Lord [who is] the unmovable *vajra*". Statue portraying Buddha Śākyamuni at the age of eight. It was brought as dowry by Bhṛkutī (Lha cig khri btsun), the Nepalese wife of the Tibetan king Srong btsan sgam po; see Sørensen (1994).

⁴⁹ 'Dzam yag suffered from a chronic rheumatic disorder that made him prone to recurrent bouts of fever; see Kha tag 'Dzam yag (1997, 17-18) for the first mention of his condition.

⁵⁰ In Buddhist cosmology, Tuṣita is the fourth highest of the six heavens within the sensuous realm (Skr. *kāmadhātu*) and abode of bodhisattvas. It is from Tuṣita that the deity Śvetaketu departed to incarnate as Śākyamuni in Māyā's womb. The festival mentioned by 'Dzam yag celebrates the auspicious event; see Buswell and Lopez (2014, 930).

⁵¹ Pieces of paper on which the name of a dead person is written with gold ink. Their burning is perceived as a commemorative offering. Since 'Dzam yag does not provide any explanation why he made those offerings, only speculations can

yag returned to the gTsug lag khang, where he donated “drop-offerings” (*mchod thigs*)⁵² to all the images of the three-story building, fervently praying for the welfare of all beings. At the end of his visit, he reached the market, where he purchased several books (*dpe cha*), among which was a *dkar chag* of Lhasa.⁵³ In a note dated to the 3rd day of the 10th month of the Wood Bird Year (November 7, 1945), 'Dzam yag recalls having caught a glimpse of the 14th Dalai Lama, who was at the time travelling in a palanquin from his summer residence at the Nor bu gling ka to the Po ta la: the event was received by the traveller with great joy and perceived as an extremely auspicious sign.⁵⁴

During his nine-day stay, the trader covered the entire length of the *gling skor*⁵⁵ daily and paid homage to the main holy objects of the principal temples and shrines, exerting himself for the accumulation of merit. The lack of substantial means was clearly a major concern for 'Dzam yag: being used to having at his disposal considerable wealth, the trader-turned-pilgrim struggled to adjust to his new conditions. A pilgrimage to Lhasa was for many Tibetans the accomplishment of a lifetime, and even though it is evident from the journal that the trader had been to the holy places of dBus before, the limitations imposed by his predicaments pushed him to exert himself through an active engagement in ritual activities such as prostrations and circumambulations, the physical strain of the body compensating for the dearth of financial offerings. Refilling of butter lamps, donations of ceremonial scarves (*kha btags*), and the occasional gift of 2 or 3 *srang* were the only material offerings 'Dzam yag could afford at the time – what was lacking in monetary terms was nevertheless amply compensated by prostrations, circumambulations, and prayers. In his daily visits to the sacred sites of Lhasa, the trader joined the constant flow of devotees and pilgrims who engaged in similar acts of worship and faith, thus creating and preserving a devotional pattern claimed to provide mental clarity

be advanced. It is possible that the trader was acting as a proxy and that the burning of the *gser yig* was made on behalf of an acquaintance of his.

⁵² Offering consisting in drops of clarified butter or oil used to refill lamps previously offered by other devotees.

⁵³ 'Dzam yag does not elaborate on the nature of the *dkar chag*; it seems plausible that it may have been the famous catalogue of the main temple of Lhasa known as *Lha ldan sprul ba'i gtsug lag khang gi dkar chag shel dkar me long*. Composed by the 5th Dalai Lama Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho in 1644, it consists of a detailed description in verse of the *rten* contained in the gTsug lag khang. Each stanza is followed by a prose paraphrase. For a brief overlook of the text, see Vostrikov ([1962] 1970, 222-223).

⁵⁴ Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 43-44).

⁵⁵ Lit. “outer circumambulation path”; it enclosed the centre of Lhasa, the Po ta la, and lCags po ri for a total length of 8 km.

and emotional happiness.⁵⁶

On one of his last days in Lhasa, the trader ventured to the top of dMar po ri to visit the Po ta la palace; at the foot of the hill, he met a monk official (*rtse drung*) on his way to the *drung ja*, the compulsory daily tea meeting all monk officials were expected to attend. Hearing about 'Dzam yag's intentions, the official suggested an alternative route to him,

“Since it is very important for your obtaining an auspicious outcome, you should go up to pay homage to the rTse Po ta la from the ‘Path of Liberation’ through the northern passage; on the way down, you should descend through a different gate.”⁵⁷

Following the official's advice, the trader climbed up the “Path of Liberation”, and once inside the palace he visited some of its major sacred objects, such as the statue of Ārya Lokeśvara, self-originated from a white sandalwood tree;⁵⁸ the footprints of Padmasambhava and Tsong kha pa; and many self-arisen *ma ni* stones. Three times he circumambulated the golden reliquary (*gser sdong 'dzam gling rgyan gcig*) built by the *sde srid* Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho to host the remains of the 5th Dalai Lama, and the relief *maṇḍala* models (*bkod pa*) in gilded copper of the celestial palaces of the tantric deities Kālacakra, Guhyasamāja, Cakrasaṃvara, and Vajrabhairava.

The journal accounts for a total of three visits to Lhasa, all occurring within a few months from each other; after his sojourn there in the Wood Bird Year (1945), 'Dzam yag returned to the holy city two more times in the Fire Dog Year (June-July 1946 and January 1947). From the Fire Pig Year (1947) onwards, the trader enjoyed a greater stability – culminating in his taking residence in gZhis ka rtse.

⁵⁶ “At that time [9th month of the Wood Bird Year (October 1945)], during my nine-day stay in Lhasa, almost each day I did an outer circumambulation and visited the holy sites without interruption [...] I was happy” (*de'i skabs nga rang lha sar zhag dgu tsam 'dug ring phal cher gling bskor re dang lha mjal re ma chag pa byas [...]* *blo sems bde ba'i ngang la gnas* (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 43).

⁵⁷ *khyed rang rten 'brel gyis gnad 'gag che bas | rtser mchod mjal 'gro ba la yar lam byang brgyud thar lam nas 'gro dgos | mar shog sgo gzhan zhig nas 'bab rgyu kha yong* (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 43).

⁵⁸ According to the *Ma ni bka' 'bum* (lit. “The One-Hundred Thousand Pronouncements [Regarding] [the Prayer] Maṇi”), the statue was one of a set of four, known as “The Four Brothers Ārya [Avalokiteśvara],” self-originated from the trunk of a white sandalwood tree. The images appeared at the time of Srong btsan sgam po, who, informed by a vision of the existence of the statues in a grove in Nepal, entrusted the task of “inviting” the deities to Tibet to a monk. The latter, emanated from a hair placed between Srong bstan sgam po's eyebrows, is often referred to as *sprul ba'i dge slong* (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 526); see Sørensen (1994).

Increasingly engrossed in his trading and sponsoring activities in gTsang, 'Dzam yag's "obsession" for Lhasa waned, replaced by a more consistent participation in the ritual life of the monastic establishments of bKra shis lhun po and Ngor E wam chos ldan, closer to his main base in gTsang.

The first of these subsequent visits to the holy city dates to the 13th day of the 5th month of the Fire Dog Year (June 12, 1946), two days before the "universal incense offering" (*'dzam gling spyi bsangs*). On that occasion, the trader joined the celebrations at Se ra monastery, paying homage to the Karma shar lha⁵⁹ and burning incense in honour of the goddess rDo rje sgrol ma. During his brief sojourn, he visited the main sacred objects of the gTsug lag khang, Ra mo che, and rTse Po ta la, stopping by the Zhol printing house (*par khang*) to pay homage to the "speech supports" (*gsung rten*) that were created there. During his stay, the trader actively engaged in circumambulations, counting 265 *skor ra* of the Jo khang and 265 *skor ra* of the Jo bo Mi bskyod rdo rje. On the 4th day of the 6th month (July 2, 1946) he attended the restoration ceremony of the holy objects and images of the gTsug lag khang led by the 14th Dalai Lama; 'Dzam yag was able to catch a glimpse of this incarnation of Avalokiteśvara, which prompted him to make an aspirational prayer. On the 30th day of the 6th month (July 28, 1946), on the auspicious day celebrating the murder of Glang dar ma, people from the four districts of Lhasa, the various monastic centres, and the nearby villages came to celebrate, and the Tibetan opera (A lce lha mo) was performed at Nor bu gling ka.⁶⁰

The last of the recorded visits of 'Dzam yag to Lhasa began on the 7th day of the 12th month of the Fire Dog Year (January 29, 1947) and is presented in the journal as a mere list of offerings made to the different religious "supports" of the main temples and shrines; despite the brief stay – only five days – the trader donated a considerable amount of gold and tea, showing the desire to "compensate" the deities for having shown him their favour.⁶¹

Between the first and the third visit, 'Dzam yag embarked on a series of long-distance business ventures that significantly increased his financial means. In the months prior to his second visit (5th month of the Fire Dog Year, July 1946), he contributed a considerable amount of money (100 *srang*) to the realisation of copies of the

⁵⁹ Oracle connected to Se ra monastery and celebrated during the *'dzam gling spyi bsangs* festival.

⁶⁰ Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 67-70).

⁶¹ Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 77-78).

thirteen volumes of the *gZhung chen bcu gsum*⁶² to be donated to the scriptural college (*bshad grwa*) of Ngor.⁶³ His last visit to Lhasa, dated to the 12th month of the Fire Dog Year (January 1947), was preceded by a thirty-two day stay in Nag chu, a period spent by the trader dealing in wool; it is plausible therefore that the increase in monetary liquidity was mainly due to the successful trade business carried out prior to his final journey to the town.

Between 1944 and 1952, 'Dzam yag travelled extensively inside and outside the plateau,⁶⁴ sometimes dealing on his own behalf and sometimes as a proxy for others, either religious or lay. The trader's visits to Lhasa and, especially, the way he chose to narrate them in his *nyin deb* are exemplary of the ontological predicament to which he recurrently falls prey, namely his incapacity to reconcile material and mundane needs with religious and soteriological desires. Whereas in the journal 'Dzam yag is free to reconstruct the events in a different light, presenting his trips to Lhasa as pilgrimages, in reality they were incidental visits made possible by his business. Despite his efforts to hide such concerns within the lines, the market, the sales and purchases, the business meetings, and the travel arrangements loom in the background, always threatening to disrupt his religious practices and spiritual concentration.

*Travelling through Lho kha: Yar lung and the Sacred Places Connected to
Padmasambhava, Mar pa, and Mi la ras pa*

It has been repeatedly stated that the experience of a pilgrimage does not take place in a cultural or, even more importantly for our discussion, a literary vacuum. A wealth of literature has been produced on sacred sites in Tibet,⁶⁵ and 'Dzam yag's experiences and ritual activities place themselves within a long tradition. Textual sources – whether oral or written – not only acknowledge and validate the sacrality of a place but also provide a frame of reference without which the pilgrimage itself would be meaningless. The descriptive and prescriptive nature of pilgrimage literature acts as an

⁶² Thirteen classical treatises on Buddhist philosophy translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan. Since the 20th century, the thirteen texts, the topics of which range from *Vinaya* to *Abhidharma* to *Madhyamaka*, are at the core of the *sūtra* curriculum in the rNying ma and Sa skya institutions, due to the efforts of mKhan po gZhan dga' (1871-1927), who composed commentaries on these scriptures, availing himself of Sanskrit materials; see Pearcey (2015).

⁶³ Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 62).

⁶⁴ Between the end of 1945 and the beginning of 1950, 'Dzam yag visited the holy sites of Buddhism in northern India and Nepal (Galli 2020).

⁶⁵ For a bibliography of Tibetan-language guidebooks to sacred places inside and outside the plateau, see, among others, Bründer (2008, 15-108).

authoritative force molding and influencing the perception of the pilgrims and represents a meaning-making framework from which 'Dzam yag's narrative does not depart.

As previously hinted, references to *dkar chag*, *gnas yig*, and local accounts are scattered throughout the journal, and often represent the backbone of many of the author's descriptions. A well-read individual, 'Dzam yag had been exposed to a wide array of different textual sources which he seems to have interiorised as a subconscious structure of understanding and motivation, providing the moving force to his ritual journeys. The *nyin deb* develops over a constant, albeit often silent, dialogue with and between such textual utterances, in a game of cross-references and intertextuality that gives meaning and value to the trader's personal undertaking.

From an academic point of view, the peregrinations undertaken by the trader throughout the 1944-1952 period do not differ from the extended pilgrimages made by both the 1st rDzong gsar 'Jam dbyangs mKhyen brtse'i dbang po Kun dga' bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1820-1892) during the second half of the 19th century⁶⁶ and the 3rd Kaḥ thog Si tu Chos kyi rgya mtsho (1880-1925) in 1920.⁶⁷ Even though no mention is made by the trader of either rDzong gsar Rin po che's or Kaḥ thog Si tu Rin po che's narration, it is safe to say that 'Dzam yag's wanderings, although ostensibly spontaneous in their nature, situated themselves within a precise mental and literary framework. The superimposition of narratives on the landscape is after all a part of the constant process of Buddhisation as well as an expression of the way through which Tibetans come to understand the world around them.

A pilgrimage is a journey on a physical as well as a supermundane plane, the understanding of which requires the employment of specific lenses and tools, literature on sacred geography being one of them. An analysis of the trader's journey to Lho kha, a southeastern region of the Tibetan plateau strongly associated with the Yar lung dynasty and the figure of

⁶⁶ I am here referring to the famous *dBus gtsang gi gnas rten rags rim gyi mtshan byang mdor bsodus dad pa'i sa bon*, as recorded in the master's collected writings (*gsung 'bum*) by the disciple *dge bshes* Karma bKra shis chos 'phel. An English translation of this work – based on preliminary drafts by Alfonsa Ferrari that had been later completed and edited by Luciano Petech with the collaboration of Hugh Richardson – was published in 1958. For an updated analysis of mKhyen brtse'i dbang po's work, see Akester (2016).

⁶⁷ The 3rd Kaḥ thog Si tu was a student of 'Jam dbyangs mKhyen brtse'i dbang po. In his pilgrimage through Central Tibet, he demonstrated that he shared his master's predilection for the rNying ma, bKa' brgyud, and Sa skya establishments. The Kaḥ thog Si tu's pilgrimage is recorded in his work titled *dBus gtsang gi gnas yig*; see Chos kyi rgya mtsho (1972) and Everding (2017).

Padmasambhava, ought to take into consideration the intertextual nexus hidden behind the mere listing of toponyms. The choice of places to visit is in fact far from being casual, but rather corresponds to a precise social, religious, historical, and cultural interpretation of the sacredness of the Tibetan plateau.

Having set off from bSam yas, 'Dzam yag and his nephew and business assistant Blo 'jam entered Lho kha, and after having visited the complex of Kun bzang nag khrod,⁶⁸ founded in 1158 by Phag mo gru pa rDo rje rgyal po (1110-1170),⁶⁹ they reached Zangs ri mkhar dmar, a Phag mo gru monastery and an important site in the transmission of *gcod* teachings,⁷⁰ on the 12th month of the Earth Mouse Year (January 1949). The complex is mainly renowned in connection to the activities of Ma gcig lab sgron ma (1055-1149),⁷¹ a Tibetan *yogini* from whom several lineages of the *gcod* practice originated. Her meditation cave, located on the western side of Zangs ri mkhar dmar, was particularly renowned for the presence of many "self-originated" *rten*, to which the trader offered 25 *srang*. In the late afternoon 'Dzam yag and Blo 'jam crossed the gTsang po river and moved southeastwards to rTsed thang dgon.⁷² The bKa' brgyud monastery was established in 1350 by Si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan (1302-1364), the founder of the Phag mo gru dynasty and ruler of Tibet from 1354 until his death.⁷³ The monastery was later converted into a dGe lugs establishment and became known as rTsed thang lnga mchod grwa tshang, since its monastic community used to pay

⁶⁸ Most of 'Dzam yag's information on the establishment is drawn from a *gnas yig* and an abridged version of the *rnam thar* of Phag mo gru pa rDo rje rgyal po. According to the tradition, the latter founded the monastery of Kung bzang po'i gnas khrod with the intent of taming the whole world, the fame of the establishment shining bright like the full moon in the sky (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 93-94). For a short biography of Phag mo gru pa rDo rje rgyal po, see Mi nyag mgon po et al. (1996-2000, 63-69).

⁶⁹ On the history of the ruling house of the Phag mo gru pa and the role played by Phag mo gru pa rDo rje rgyal po in its political and religious affirmation, see Czaja (2013, 71-77).

⁷⁰ Lit. "cutting-off", the *gcod* tradition, attributed to Ma gcig lab sgron, was a system that combined teachings and precepts from the Indian *sūtra* with the *yoginī*'s personal meditation experiences derived from the *Prajñāpāramitā* and Vajrayāna instructions. Her technique, unique and often referred to as "The Cutting-Off [Ritual] of the *Mahāmudrā*" (*dam chos phyag rgya chen po'i gcod yul*), was adapted to the different needs of her disciples, thus creating diverse meditation methods that eventually generated separate lineages (Edou 1996, 6). For a description of the practice, see Edou (1996, especially 39-56) and Harding (2003).

⁷¹ On the figure of Ma gcig lab sgron ma, see, among others, Allione (1984), Gyatso (1985), Edou (1996), Kollmar-Paulenz (1998), Orofino (2000), Harding (2003).

⁷² Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 96-97).

⁷³ On the rise of the Phag mo gru pa under Byang chub rgyal mtshan, see Czaja (2013, 111-141).

*Inga mchod*⁷⁴ to dGa' ldan chos 'khor.⁷⁵

From rTsed thang dgon, the two pilgrims moved to Yar lung Shel brag, a meditation cave where Padmasambhava is said to have dwelled for three years, during which he received visions of peaceful and wrathful deities. The place contained many blessed objects, such as a speaking statue of Guru Rin po che, twenty-one self-originated Tārā, footprints of the tantric master, and symbolic letters (*brda yig*) written by the *ḍakini*.⁷⁶ 'Dzam yag and Blo 'jam's pilgrimage through Yar lung mirrors the itinerary described in mKhyen brtse's and Kaḥ thog Sit tu's guides; from Shel brag, the two headed down to the plain of rTsed thang, visiting the shrine of rTsed thang g.yu, founded by the mother of king Khri srong lde brtsan, and believed to be the place where gNya' khri btsan po⁷⁷ descended from heaven (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 102). Moving southwards from the plain, they reached Ras chung phug, a monastery erected near the meditation cave of the bKa' brgyud master Ras chung pa (1084-1161); the complex presented many elements related not only to the latter but to other representatives of his aural lineage (*snyan brgyud*) as well.⁷⁸

In recording mKhyen brtse's pilgrimage in Yar lung, his guidebook presents a circular path including six chief destinations: three sanctuaries (*gnas gsum*) – Shel brag, Khra 'brug,⁷⁹ and either Ras

⁷⁴ Religious fee paid in support of the celebration for the anniversary of Tsong kha pa's death on the 25th day of the 10th month.

⁷⁵ 'di ni thog mar tā yi si tu byang chub rgyal mtshan gyis phyag btap pa'i bka' brgyud pa'i dgon pa grags can rtsed thang dgon zhes pa de yin 'dug pa la | phyis su rje tsong kha pa'i mdzad 'phrin rten 'brel las grub mtha' dge lugs pa chags shing | 'jam dbyangs gyang thims ma zhes pa'i gyang dang | jo bo rje'i thugs dam gyi rten thub pa gser gling ma sogs dus 'gyur ma byung bar du mjal rgyu yod la | dge 'dun zhal grangs kyang brgya lhag yod | Inga mchod ces pa ni chu lho rgyud du dga' ldan Inga mchod thog mar gtong mkhan dgon de yin stabs mtshan de ltar thogs par 'khod (Chos 'phel 2002, 42).

⁷⁶ Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 100-101).

⁷⁷ According to a pre-Buddhist version of the myth of the sacred sovereignty of Tibet preserved in a Dunhuang manuscript, gNya' khri btsan po was the first of the divine kings to descend from heaven to rule the country. For a detailed bibliography on the topic, see Kværne (1981).

⁷⁸ A system of liturgies, ritual manuals, and tantric commentaries, together with their aural instructions, based primarily on the *Cakrasaṃvaratantra*. Promulgated by the Indian *siddha* Tilopa and Nāropa and transmitted in Tibet by Mar pa and Mi la ras pa, they were received by Ras chung pa and consequently became known as *ras chung snyan brgyud*. The teachings of the most prominent disciples of Mi la ras pa – Ras chung pa (1084-1161), sGam po pa bSod nam rin chen (1079-1153), and Ngan rdzongs ras pa (b. late 11th century) – were later codified as the "Three cycles of aural lineage instructions" (*sNyan brgyud skor gsum*) by the 15th-century *yogin* gTsang smyon Heruka, also known as the author of Mi la ras pa's *rnam thar* (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 699).

⁷⁹ For a detailed historical-philological and anthropological study dedicated to the history and cult of the temple of Khra 'brug, see Sørensen et al. (2005).

chung phug or 'Om bu lha khang⁸⁰ – and three *mchod rten* or *rten gsum* – rTag spyan 'bum pa, dGon thang 'bum pa, and Tshe chu 'bum pa.⁸¹ The presence of the same locations in 'Dzam yag's *nyin deb* proves the existence of a recognised and accepted pilgrimage route through Lho kha, and further confirms the prescriptive power of textual utterances in the sense-giving and sense-making processes at the core of sacred geography: the recorded experiences of previous Buddhist masters provide frames of meaning and interpretative schemas that the devotees employ in their relation with the surrounding environment.

'Dzam yag and Blo 'jam's pilgrimage through the southeastern region of Lho kha echoes almost in every detail the route travelled a century earlier by mKhyen brtse. From rTsed thang they moved towards the south of the gTsang po; following the river upstream, they passed through the Yar lung region, reaching Lho brag, the birthplace of Mar pa (1000?-1081?) and a bKa' brgyud stronghold. Before leaving Lho brag and heading towards gTsang and rGyal rtse, our pilgrims visited two other important places connected to the popular narrative of Mi la ras pa, namely Sras mkhar dgu thog⁸² and Lho Gro bo lung. Both complexes, the first a towered fortress⁸³ and the second a hermitage, hosted the saint's master Mar pa, and became important superregional pilgrimage sites.

It has been stated that the value of a pilgrimage depends on the efforts made by the pilgrim. Between 1944 and 1952, whereas the lack of economic means was a main concern and the reason behind many of the exertions to which 'Dzam yag submitted himself, it also forced him to actively commit to the most physical aspects of the pilgrimage, often at the cost of his own health. In the passage below, the trader reflects on the limitations of his own body and the illusory control man has over time, closing with a typical Buddhist reflection on the necessity to engage in pious activities while one can. This latter passage – a quote from Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas, the famous but elusive 12th-century *Zhi byed* ("Pacification") master⁸⁴ – is also a

⁸⁰ The compiler of the guide admits the existence of a controversy over the identification of the third *gnas*; see Ferrari (1958, 49) and Dowman (1988, 173).

⁸¹ Ferrari (1958, 49-50), Dowman (1981, 173).

⁸² Sras mkhar dgu thog (lit. "Nine-story tower [of] the son") was built by the saint as a form of ascetic penance and initiation price. The compound *sras mkhar* may be a hypercorrection of *gsas mkhar*, a Bon term meaning "temple"; the term *gsas* (lit. "god") is an authentic non-Tibetan word. I am grateful to Per Kværne for sharing his knowledge on the topic (private conversation, March 2017).

⁸³ On Mi la ras pa's trial of the towers and the political and religious meaning behind it, see Gianotti (1991).

⁸⁴ On the Indian Tantric master Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas and his teachings, see, among others, Aziz (ed., 1978/79).

display of his knowledge of the Buddhist traditions:

On different occasions in the past, I did not go to the top [of the Sras mkhar tower] because I had heavy loads [with me] and I could only circumambulate it from the outside. The following day, at sunrise, I armed myself with courage, and even though I only did a single circumambulation, it was a rather strong sensation for my body. As for the youngsters, they do not think much of doing many circumambulations [...] As Pha dam pa said, "If one cannot engage in ascetism at the time of his or her blooming youth, then, when one reaches old age, there is no hope he or she can do that." One should engage in religious hardships when young [because] when one gets old everything is difficult.⁸⁵

Trade, although hinted at by the fact that he is carrying heavy loads with him, is not addressed explicitly and is entirely overshadowed by the religious activity.

Pilgrimage to mNga' ris

Gangs Ti se and mTsho Ma pham

On the 1st day of the 5th month of the Earth Ox Year (June 27, 1949), 'Dzam yag joined a group of pilgrims on their way to Mount Kailash via southwest Tibet, thus fulfilling a long-awaited wish of his. Before setting off, the trader commissioned the performance of a day-long ritual at bKra shis lhun po by four monks⁸⁶ in order to dispel whatever obstacles might arise on his way. On their way from gTsang to mNga' ris, 'Dzam yag and his companions stopped by renowned monastic establishments, such as sNar thang dgon, Sa skya dgon, and Ding ri glang 'khor dgon. At the latter, the trader paid homage to the meditation cave of Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas, the founder of the complex; the caretaker, a certain dPa' bo dbang 'dus,

⁸⁵ *sngar dus dang mi 'dra ba bgrang bya yis khur lci bas mtha' bskor las rtse bskor 'gro ma phod | phyi nyin nyi ma 'char ba dang mnyam du sems la dpa' bskangs nas gos rkyang du skor ba gcig thon tsam byung yang | lus la tshor ba che tsam 'dug | gzhon pa rnams ni grangs mang skor ba la ngal ba cher med pa 'dra [...]* pha dam pas kyang gzhon sha rgyas kyi dus su dka' thub ma byas na | rgas dus 'byung bas mi len {ding ri ba} | zhes gsungs pa'i gzhon pa so dkar gyi dus su chos la dka' thub dgos shing rgas tshar na yong ba dka' mo 'dug (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 116). The presence of the term *ding ri ba* (lit. "native of Ding ri") seems to suggest a quote from Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas' *Ding ri brgya rtsa ma*, a famous series of aphorisms addressed by the master to the people of Ding ri.

⁸⁶ For their ritual performance, the monks received a statue of the value of 60 *srang* (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 158).

collected water from a nearby spring and allowed 'Dzam yag to drink it and use it for ablutions.⁸⁷ The sacred mountain of Jo mo glang ma (Mount Everest), visible to the south of Ding ri, was honoured with offerings to the bsTan ma bcu gnyis.⁸⁸ Although aware that the area brimmed with many holy places – sacred to Bon po and Buddhists alike – 'Dzam yag refrains from leaving the relative safety of the group to venture out on the trail on his own, a decision he ascribes to the train of mules entrusted to him by the *tshong dpon* Nyi ma phun tshogs.⁸⁹ As pointed out by Alex McKay, numerous were the lay travellers whose economic existence revolved around trading at pilgrimage sites, and that raises the wider question of when pilgrimage ended and secular lifestyle started;⁹⁰ in 'Dzam yag's case, the two activities were inextricably intertwined.

During the two months spent in the western province of mNga' ris,⁹¹ 'Dzam yag and his companions visited the most important sites connected with the figures of Padmasambhava and Mi la ras pa, for Buddhist visitors the main characters in the narrative fueling the sacredness of the Kailash-Manasarovar complex. Even though Mount Kailash – or Gangs Ti se, as the Tibetans refer to it – has come to embody a universal sacred site for Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike, the history of the place has gone largely unexplored, its status accepted without any attempt at critical analysis. Despite being supported by the claims of modern commentators,⁹² textual proof of an early established sacrality of Mount Kailash and Lake Manasarovar has yet to be found. The mountain described in ancient

⁸⁷ Even though Tibetan pilgrims rarely bathe in sacred waters (Huber 1999b, 17), in his journal 'Dzam yag makes several references to the use of water collected from holy springs for the purpose of ablution (*khru*s).

⁸⁸ Twelve female local spirits who were converted by Padmasambhava and bound to protect Jo mo glang ma, which is considered to be one of the five most sacred mountains of Tibet; see Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956, 181-198).

⁸⁹ The reference to pack animals strengthens the assumption that in the years between 1944 and 1952 'Dzam yag's religious visits and pilgrimage activities were highly dependent on business arrangements and logistics. It should be also recalled that sPu hreng was an ancient trading post attracting, as late as the 1950s, numerous traders, peddlers, and pilgrims from all over Tibet and beyond. I am grateful to Franz Xaver Erhard for the information (private conversation, June 2017).

⁹⁰ McKay (1998, 8-9).

⁹¹ 'Dzam yag adheres to the traditional tripartite division of mNga' ris (sTod mnga' ris skor gsum) in the Snow Land of sPu hreng (sPu hreng gangs kyi skor), the Slate Land of Gu ge (Gu ge g.ya' yis skor), and the Water Land of Ru thog (Ru thog mtsho yis skor) (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 168-169).

⁹² In his *Ti se gnas bshad*, the 34th 'Bri gung bKa' brgyud dKon mchog bstan 'dzin Chos kyi blo 'gros (1801-1859) provides four different descriptions of Mount Ti se, according to the views of non-Buddhists, Hindus, Hinayāna followers, and Vajrayāna practitioners respectively; see Huber and Rigzin (1995, 14-15).

Indic texts is in fact a heavenly landscape bearing little, if any, resemblance to the earthly complex.

As for Tibetan historical sources on Kailash-Manasarovar, any reference to a holy mountain retains the features of a literary trope, a metaphor rather than a specific place with unique geographic features. Elevated to being a sacred centre in the 11th century, Mount Kailash soon became a topic of controversy among representatives of different schools of Tibetan Buddhism, due to the instrumentalisation of Indic cosmology and prophetic schemata by the bKa' brgyud subsects.⁹³ Additionally, at the time of the first textual compositions, the focus of sacredness was not the mountain itself but the lake later identified with Manasarovar,⁹⁴ called in Tibetan Ma pham and considered to be the abode of serpent spirits (*klu*; Skt. *nāga*).⁹⁵ The Buddhisation⁹⁶ of Kailash-Manasarovar was part of a multi-dimensional and wider process of transference of Indic Buddhist sacred geography to the Tibetan plateau by hierarchs of the various branches of the bKa' brgyud school, a transformation that occurred mainly on a mythological level, through the superimposition of the *maṅḍala*⁹⁷ of the Tantric deity Cakrasaṃvara ('*Khor lo bde mchog*)⁹⁸ onto the landscape and its concurrent association with the activities of Padmasambhava and Mi la ras pa.⁹⁹

The assimilation of territorial deities (*yul lha*) into the Buddhist

⁹³ On the sacred geography controversy and the development of Tantric Buddhist pilgrimage sites in Tibet, see Huber ([1990] 2003).

⁹⁴ Early Tibetan sources conformed to wider Indic beliefs attributing a major spiritual reverence to bodies of water rather than mountains (McKay 2015, 2-3). Bodies of water – whether lakes or springs – appeared to have been often perceived as sacred; at the beginning of the Earth Mouse Year (1948), 'Dzam yag records the performance of seven circumambulations around Phu ma g.yu mtsho, a saltwater lake in Upper Lho brag, considered to be an important pilgrimage site (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 131; Richardson 1998, 324).

⁹⁵ With the "opening" of the pilgrimage route by the 'Brug pa master rGod tshang pa mGon po rdo rje (1189-1258), the central ritual observance of Buddhist pilgrimage to the site shifted from the circumambulation of Lake Manasarovar to the circumambulation of the mountain (McKay 2015, 302).

⁹⁶ The Buddhist "conquest" of Tibet was a multi-levelled process, in which fundamental aspects were the subjugation ('*dul ba*) of the landscape and its autochthonous deities. For a discussion on the process of Buddhisation, see Huber (1997, 246), Buffetrille (1998, 18-34), McKay (2015, 275).

⁹⁷ On the origin and importance of the *maṅḍala* model in sacred geography, see Macdonald (1997), Huber (1999b, 26), McKay (2015, 308-312).

⁹⁸ Crucial in the establishment of Kailash as *gnas ri* was not a single ritual event – whether Mi la ras pa's claim or rGod tshang pa mGon po rdo rje's "opening" of the circumambulation route – but rather the myth of the subjugation of the Śaivite deity Maheśvara by Cakrasaṃvara, an event understood to have occurred in mythological times (McKay 2015, 313).

⁹⁹ McKay (2015, 6-7).

pantheon and their transformation into sacred mountains (*gnas ri*)¹⁰⁰ has been the topic of several studies¹⁰¹ and does not need to be reexamined at present. Nevertheless, in the case of Kailash-Manasarovar, the absence of traces solely ascribable to a *yul lha* cult, and the prominence of elements typical of a Buddhist sacred mountain, such as circumambulations, the “opening” of the site by a historical figure, and the “ritual appropriation of space, in which written sources serve an important function”,¹⁰² seem to strongly indicate that Ti se was rather detached from the local context and its sacrality came almost completely from the overlaying of Buddhist concepts.¹⁰³

The modern perception of Kailash as “the most sacred place in Tibet”¹⁰⁴ for Hindus, Buddhists, and Bon po actually dates to the 20th century and is largely due to the convergent efforts of outsiders – be they Europeans, Indians, or Central or Eastern Tibetans, all of whom were nurturing and promoting their own images of the mountain realms.¹⁰⁵ 'Dzam yag, too, contributed to the establishment of the Kailash myth, joining the thousands of pilgrims who constantly journeyed to the province of mNga' ris. In his journal, the trader completely endorses the narrative of Kailash as *axis mundi*,¹⁰⁶ adhering to the popular tale of Mi la ras pa's conquest of the mountain and the conversion of the Bon po master Na ro Bon chung. While ascending the massif, 'Dzam yag and his companions halted in front of the cave where the Bon po was supposed to have meditated, giving the trader an occasion to jot down an abridged version of the famous episode of Mi la ras pa's life story, thus unconsciously engaging in an intertextual dialogue that is at the core of an ongoing

¹⁰⁰ Whereas the origin of the *yul lha* is intimately connected with the process of identity construction of the local tribes – for whom the mountain served as an identity marker – *gnas ris* were usually the outcome of a programme of superimposition of external cosmogonies, be they Buddhist or Bon (McKay 2015, 273-274).

¹⁰¹ See in particular Huber (1999b).

¹⁰² Karmay (1994, 115).

¹⁰³ McKay (2015, 274-275).

¹⁰⁴ McKay (2015, 8).

¹⁰⁵ McKay (2015, 9).

¹⁰⁶ As pointed out by McKay, “the modern understanding of Kailas-Manasarovar as a ‘World mountain’ is largely shaped by Indic perspectives and owes little to Tibetan understandings of the sites” (2015, 273). In canonical Indic Buddhism there are various references to a heavenly mountain named Kelasa, but the late Mahāyāna-Tantric forms of Buddhism that spread in Tibet after the 11th century interpreted the sacred geography of the territory in a very different way. The concept of “World mountain”, passed down in Tibet during the first dissemination of Buddhism (*snga dar*; 7th-9th centuries), was not related to or identified with Ti se or any other earthly complex, since mountains were used as metaphors (McKay 2015, 278). See also Huber ([1990] 2003).

meaning-making process of sacred geography.

As 'Dzam yag renders the legend, the great Buddhist saint visited the sacred place at the end of the 11th century; at the time of crossing one of the mountain passes, he was welcomed by a party of *dakini* and local deities by whom he was offered the mountain as a place of meditation for him and his disciples. The place came to be known as mGur la, the "Song's Pass", in celebration of Mi la ras pa's performance of a song (*mgur*) as a gesture of gratitude to the deities; in his notes, the trader records the presence of footprints on the surrounding rocks, just one of the several wondrous signs left by spiritual masters who on different occasions visited the holy mountain.¹⁰⁷

The region of sPu hrengs in mNga' ris rose to fame mainly due to the activities of the 'Bri gung and Karma subsects,¹⁰⁸ who engaged in an active conversion of landscape and local deities, thus more sharply defining the doctrinal identity of Buddhism and sectarian orders.¹⁰⁹ The local narrative embraced the process of Buddhisation, presenting the area as a *locus* of interest, mentioned by the Buddha himself, and filled with auspicious geomantic signs. In his journal, 'Dzam yag lists some of the holiest spots,¹¹⁰ recalling the importance held by sPu hrengs in many traditions, and the necessity for the pilgrim to rely on the experiences of supreme beings as narrated in their accounts, since personal defilements may prevent the devotee from fully perceiving the sacredness of the place, its blessed essence hidden beneath its mundane and earthly aspect. The *nyin deb* reiterates the myth of an early sacrality of Kailash-Manasarovar: drawing from the biographies (*rtogs brjod*) of Mar pa and Mi la ras pa,

¹⁰⁷ Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 167).

¹⁰⁸ Gangs Ti se and Ma pham soon became a field of dispute between the two bKa' brgyud subsects. By the late 12th century, the favourable socio-political condition of mNga' ris had attracted so many renunciates that the rights to practice at the sacred sites became a matter of contestation by the various bKa' brgyud followers. The dispute was finally settled around 1215 with the predominance of the 'Bri gung and the consequent institutionalisation of a stable and organised form of pilgrimage; see Vitali (1996, 407) and McKay (2015, 300-301). For a study and partial translation of 'Bri gung chung tshang's *Ti se gnas bshad* ("Guidebook to Ti se"), see Huber and Rinzin (1995, 10-47).

¹⁰⁹ McKay (2015, 290-291).

¹¹⁰ The trader listed Lang ka sPu reng ("Lang ka [the demon that chose] sPu hrengs [as its abode]"), rGyal bu Nor bzang gi brang ("Palace of the Prince Nor bu bzang po"), b'Tsun mo nyis stong gi phug pa ("Cave of the 2,000 Queens"), Yid 'phrog lha mo nam mkhar 'phur ba'i bya skyibs a sur nam phug ("Asura Sky Cave, a rock-shelter or cave from where Beautiful Goddess flew in the sky"), Chu mig mthong ba rang grol ("Holy Spring the mere sight of which liberates from *Samsāra*"), and Klu chen bzhi yi pho brang ("Palace of the Four Great *Nāgas*") (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 169).

'Dzam yag presents a place the holy nature of which had been recognised by the Buddha himself, an acknowledgement further confirmed by Mi la ras pa's claim to the lake and mountain.¹¹¹ According to the Buddhist narrative,¹¹² the dispute between the saint and Na ro Bon chung mirrors the opposition, already existing as early as the 11th century,¹¹³ between Buddhism and the indigenous tradition in the form of Bon: "the two belief systems used their own formulations of indigenous categories of deities and ways of seeing the landscape as part of that contestation".¹¹⁴ The competition between the magical powers of two renunciates, the Buddhist Mi la ras pa and the Bon po Na ro, is traditionally presented as the moment in which Gangs Ti se (Mount Kailash) became established as *gnas ri*, a sacred Buddhist mountain. There are many accounts of Mi la ras pa's reasons to travel to Ti se:¹¹⁵ whether it was for the benefit of the nomads¹¹⁶ or at the advice of his master Mar pa, the saint is accredited to have visited the site in 1093, and his presence began to be framed in terms of a Buddhist versus Bon competition that ended with the superimposition onto the place of the *maṇḍala* of Cakrasamvara, Mi la ras pa's tutelary deity. As correctly stated by McKay,

The predictions attributed to Marpa or Naropa concerning Milarepa's achievements were [...] retrospective validations rather than historical explanations, for the truths they contain exist in the world of myth.¹¹⁷

The first claims to an early sacrality of Ti se were advanced by 'Jig rten mgon po (1143-1217), the founder of the 'Bri gung pa, a century after Mi la ras pa's visit to mNga' ris. The first practitioners, sent to Kailash, Tsa ri, and La phyi by the 'Bri gung masters Gling ras pa (1128-1188) and 'Jig rten mgon po, attracted others, thus contributing to the progressive institutionalisation of a pilgrimage practice to these sites sacred to the bKa' brgyud.

¹¹¹ Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 169).

¹¹² The existence of Na ro Bon chung was unknown in the Bon religion and appears to be a creation of later Buddhist narrative (Martin 2001, 118-119).

¹¹³ Rin chen bzang po (958-1055) "selected only those places for establishing (temples) [...] which were either the centres of Bon-po faith or the local gods" (Thakur 2001, 35). See also Thakur (2011).

¹¹⁴ McKay (2015, 291).

¹¹⁵ Different reasons for Mi la ras pa's presence at Ti se are for instance given in *The Blue Annals* (1476) and Mi la ras pa's biography (1488) (McKay 2015, 292). For a detailed study of Mi la ras pa's biographies, see Quintman (2015).

¹¹⁶ Roerich (1949, 433).

¹¹⁷ McKay (2015, 295).

'Dzam yag adheres to the 'Bri gung subsect's narrative of the mountain as a place praised by the Buddha and Padmasambhava and blessed by Atiśa and the five hundred *arhat*.¹¹⁸ As the trader explains in his journal, many arguments were advanced by 'Bri gung representatives supporting the holiness of Gangs Ti se, and their praises found resonance in the words of the 4th Panchen Lama Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan (1570-1662). Nonetheless, confusion was caused by a few disciples of Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182-1251), commonly known as Sa skya Paṇḍita, who passed judgment on the validity of Ti se as a pilgrimage site, with no other reason than mistaken loyalty to their master's position.¹¹⁹ Whilst at the time of 'Dzam yag's pilgrimage the circumambulation of Mount Kailash was a well-established superregional ritual activity, the bKa' brgyud projection of the *maṇḍala* of their tutelary deity onto the mountain had not gone uncontested at the time of its formulation. Some of the claims that were integral to the process of Buddhisation soon became the subject of criticism, most notably by Sa skya Paṇ chen,¹²⁰ who openly condemned some of the new tendencies in Tibetan sacred geography and pilgrimage. In his 1232 *sDom gsum rab dbye* ("Discrimination of the Three Vows"), the scholar engaged with the current themes of the time, overtly refusing the identification of the Snow Mountain and the Anavatapta Ocean mentioned in the *Abhidharmakośa* and in the *Śrīkālacakratantra* with Ti se and Ma pham respectively, justifying his positions with a strict adherence to the original Indian texts.¹²¹ Nevertheless, the same textual sources backing Sa skya Paṇ chen's refutation of Ti se as *axis mundi* recur in 'Dzam yag's diary more than 700 years later, in a section describing the geomantic features of the massif.¹²²

As for the four rivers that look like they were pouring down
from the mouths of mountains [resembling] four living beings:

¹¹⁸ According to the tradition, there were five hundred disciples who attended the First Council held at Rājagṛha after the passing away of the Buddha.

¹¹⁹ Sa skya Paṇḍita's criticism of the identification of Tibetan sacred mountains with the Indian cosmology was upheld by the Sa skya. The bKa' brgyud pa, who had many hermitages in the Kailash region, argued against Sa skya Paṇḍita's stance, see for example the 6th Chung tshang Rin po che's "Guide to Mt. Ti se" (*Gangs ri chen po ti se dang mtsho chen ma dros pa bcas kyi sngon byung gi lo rgyus mdor bsdus su brjod pa'i rab byed shed dkar me long*). See Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 170).

¹²⁰ Huber (1997, 274; [1990] 2003, 397-403), McKay (2015, 317).

¹²¹ Huber ([1990] 2003, 398).

¹²² A very similar description of the four rivers hailing from animal-shaped mountains appears in Sa skya Paṇ chen's *sDom gsum rab dbye* (in Huber [1990] 2003, 399). The two passages differ only on the nature of one the animals; whereas the *sūtra* presents an ox, 'Dzam yag's journal reports a peacock.

[starting] from the east, [the rivers] fall [from] the mouth of the excellent horse to Grog shog, [from the beak of] the peacock to sPu hrengs, [from the mouth of] the lion to La dwags, [from the mouth of] the elephant to Gu ge, and these are [signs] for everyone to see.¹²³

The main points in Sa skya Paṅ chen's criticism of the shifting of sacred places from India to the Tibetan plateau lay in his concern for the way the Buddhist *tantra* were interpreted and practised, and his desire to demonstrate the falsehood of the specific sacred geography formulated for their own political and religious advantage by certain sects of Tibetan Buddhism. To use Huber's words, "not only do Ti-se and Tsa-ri fail to qualify as such sites [i.e. holy places], but there is nothing whatever to be gained by Buddhists performing pilgrimage to them".¹²⁴ Sa skya Paṅ chen's position was upheld by his disciples, and, according to 'Dzam yag, contributed to "generating uncertainty among all beings".¹²⁵ Despite the general opposition of the Sa skya pa though, Ti se – as well as the other two main bKa' brgyud holy mountains, La phyi and Tsa ri¹²⁶ – kept gaining credibility as holy sites, and pilgrimage activities grew exponentially since the "opening" of the route in the mid-13th century.

Another point of discussion among pilgrims was the number of circumambulations (*skor ra*) to be performed in order to cleanse one's own *karma*. According to the 'Brug pa master gTsang pa rgya ras (1191-1211), quoted by 'Dzam yag, one *skor ra* purified the obscurations of a lifetime, ten *skor ra* atoned for the defilements of an aeon (*skal pa*; Skt. *kalpa*), while the completion of one hundred *skor ra* ensured the obtainment in a single lifetime of the eight good qualities and the ten signs of successful practice. For the locals however, thirteen was the number of circumambulations sufficient for the purification of one's own sins; as 'Dzam yag records in his *nyin deb*, thirteen was in fact the number of *skor ra* performed by a Khams pa woman who accidentally killed her child while crossing the sGrol ma pass. With her mind clouded by thirst and fatigue, the woman forgetfully immersed herself into the water of a 'khrus mtsho (lit. "ablution lake"), causing the death of the baby she was carrying on

¹²³ *ri srog chags 'dra ba bzhi yi kha nas 'bab pa'i kha 'bab kyi chu bo chen po bzhi ni | shar nas rta mchog kha 'babs grog shog yul la 'bab | rma bya kha 'bab spu hrengs yul la 'bab | seng ge kha 'bab la dwags yul la 'bab | glang chen kha 'bab gu ge gi yul la 'bab pa sogs kun gyis mthong ba yod cing 'dug* (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 170).

¹²⁴ Huber ([1990] 2003, 400).

¹²⁵ *skye bo kun 'phyang mo nyug tu gyur* (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 170).

¹²⁶ Ti se, La phyi, and Tsa ri were understood as representing respectively the Body, Speech, and Mind of Cakrasaṃvara, the tutelary deity of the bKa' brgyud (McKay 2015, 313).

her back. Grieving and moaning, she started prostrating, completing thirteen circumambulations of the mountain, at the end of which a footprint appeared on the rock, symbolising the cleansing of her defilements.¹²⁷ The *'khrus mtsho* was later sealed with a lid, and the access to its water was limited to a few days a year; 'Dzam yag and his companions were fortunate enough to visit the place on one of those rare occasions, thus having the chance to bathe and make offerings there.¹²⁸

Once on the other side of the mGur pass, the pilgrims resumed their journey through sPu hrengs, camping for the night at a village near rTsa bu lha khang, formerly a branch monastery (*dgon lag*) of the Sa skya establishment of gTsang Byang chub gling. The next day the group visited the Sa skya complex of 'Khor chags dgon, paying homage to the 'Khor chags Jo bo rigs gsum mgon po.¹²⁹ Even though the three images enjoyed similar fame and devotion in the region, the legend behind the creation of the Mañjuśrī statue caught 'Dzam yag's fascination, prompting him to record an abridged version of it in his journal. According to local tradition, in the 10th century the place was visited by seven Indian *ācārya*, each of whom carrying a load of silver. Tired and eager to move on, they entrusted the precious metal to the local *dharma* king and bodhisattva (*chos rgyal byang chub sems dpa'*),¹³⁰ on the understanding that, if none of them came to reclaim the loads in the next three years, the silver would be his. The ruler did as requested, and, when the third year came and went, he sought the advice of a pious lama; assured that the silver was a sign of spiritual accomplishment, the king summoned the best Tibetan craftsmen with the intention of commissioning the creation of a supreme statue. Before the artists could touch the metal though, an image of Mañjuśrī self-originated from it. The king ordered for the blessed statue to be transported from the plain of Bye ma'i thang to the dKar dung castle, but at the moment of crossing the flat river banks of the rMa bya kha 'bab, Mañjuśrī spoke, affirming his desire to stay in the place where he was formed.¹³¹ A monastery was built

¹²⁷ Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 171).

¹²⁸ Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 172).

¹²⁹ Statues portraying the Lords of the Three Families, e.g. the bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī, and Vajrapāṇi.

¹³⁰ Vitali (1996, 258-265) suggests the name king Lha ldan as possible founder of the Rin chen brtsegs pa'i gtsug lag khang and sponsor of the silver statue of Mañjuśrī. See also Orofino (2007, 87-88).

¹³¹ "In this place I was formed, in this place I want to stay" (*nga yang 'di na 'khor | chags yang 'di na chags*). The complex of 'Khor chags dgon lies on the riverbanks of rMa bya kha 'bab; despite differing on the identity of the founder, historical sources agree on dating its erection to 996. According to the *'Khor chags dkar chag*, written in 1880 by Ngor Khang gsar mkhan po Ngag dbang bsod nams rgyal

by the king to host the *rten*, and the other two Jo bo statues – Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi – were added by the king rNam lde mgon in the 13th century.¹³²

The end of the circumambulation route of Kailash, accomplished by the pilgrims on the 19th day of the 7th month of the Earth Ox Year (September 11, 1949), was marked by the presentation of a universal incense-offering (*'dzam gling spyi bsangs*) to Gangs Ti se.

By the end of the 1940s, the sacred geography controversy over Gangs Ti se/Mount Kailash had reached an impasse: while most of the pilgrims, including 'Dzam yag, accepted the bKa' brgyud identification of the complex with a proper Tantric pilgrimage site, only a few Sa skya pa – mainly lineage holders and scholars – still refused to include the mountain among their pilgrimage destinations. Although adhering to the bKa' brgyud interpretation of Ti se as a site connected to the *Cakrasaṃvaratantra*, 'Dzam yag remained strictly *ris med* in his approach. His critical remark regarding the followers of Sa skya Paṇḍita, blamed for the confusion regarding the value of the complex as pilgrimage destination, did not affect his decision to visit most of the Sa skya establishments in sPu hrengs. It is also worth recalling at this point the personal connection the trader entertained with the Sa skya centre of Ngor in general and with the head of the Khang gsar bla brang and former 65th Ngor mkhan chen Ngag dbang blo gros gzhan phan snying po (alias Dam pa Rin po che, 1876–1953) in particular – in light of that, the non-sectarian acceptance of Ti se as a Tantric site by 'Dzam yag can be fully appreciated.

From mNga' ris to gZhis ka rtse

After the offering, the group started to head back to gTsang, leaving behind the western province of mNga' ris and reaching Ri bo bkra bzung, a location mentioned in legendary narratives of Padmasambhava. 'Dzam yag calls it a “supreme sacred place prophesised by Śākyamuni Buddha,”¹³³ and briefly recalls its connection to the Indian tantric master. It was said that, on his way to U rgyan from Central Tibet, Padmasambhava spent seven days at Ri bo bkra bzung; the place, blessed by his presence, was filled with wondrous signs, such as the appearance of an eight-year-old

mtshan, the 'Khor chags *gtsug lag khang* was originally built to house the silver Jo bo; in his journal, 'Dzam yag refers to the *dkar chag* as the main textual source he consulted on the local history of the place (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 167-168). For more information on the monastery of 'Khor chags dgon, see Orofino (2007).

¹³² Orofino (2007, 88).

¹³³ *shākya thub pas lung bstan pa'i gnas chen* (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 185).

Vajrakumāra (rDo rje gzhon nu), a blue *hūm* symbol of speech, and a self-arisen five-pointed *vajra*. The master left his footprint in the cave where he meditated, and a shrine was built at the retreat place to host images, the most important of which was a speaking statue of Padmasambhava, handmade by the *gter ston* Rig 'dzin rGod kyī ldem 'phru can (1337-1409).¹³⁴

The next stop in the pilgrim's journey back to gZhis ka rtse was Ngam ring chos sde, an ancient monastery and seat of the La stod byang rulers. As 'Dzam yag records, at the time of the kings of gTsang, the throne holder enjoyed power and wealth, but the rise of Gūshri khan and the defeat of the gTsang dynasty led to a loss of prestige for the monastic complex,

[Ngam ring chos sde] deteriorated, and insects were making nests inside the ear of the Maitreya statue.¹³⁵

Things changed with the conversion of the monastery from Sa skyā to dGe lugs in 1650; at the time of his visit, 'Dzam yag records the presence of three hundred monks and praises the pristine condition of the monastic "supports". In his journey through the western areas of gTsang, the trader passed by many monasteries that, just as Ngam ring chos sde, had been converted to dGe lugs pa in the 17th century, following the orders of the 5th Dalai Lama. That was, for instance, the case of Lha rtse chos gling: founded in 1250 as a Sa skyā establishment, the complex became of paramount importance for the dGe lugs after its reformation in 1649. As 'Dzam yag rightly points out, Lha rtse chos gling was the fourth of the thirteen monastic seats that were converted in the region during that period.¹³⁶ At the time of

¹³⁴ Treasure discoverer who initiated the Northern Treasures (*byang gter*) tradition, Rig 'dzin rGod kyī ldem 'phru can was born in gNyan yul, on the eastern side of Ri bo bkra bzang. According to legend, at the age of twelve, three feathery growths appeared on his head, thus gaining him the appellation of *rgod kyī ldem 'phru can* (lit. "having the crest of a vulture"); by the time he was twenty-four, the number of feathers had grown to five. See Powers and Templeman (2012, 584).

¹³⁵ *dgon de nyams chag gyur nas | dgon de'i byams chen khyad 'phags de'i snyan du 'bum yis tshang bcas* (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 177).

¹³⁶ The rise to power of the dGe lugs in 1642 was followed by a series of forced conversions, especially in the 1680s and 1690s, when the regent Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho set aside the more tolerant religious views of the 5th Dalai Lama, increasing the number of establishments – especially bKa' brgyud and Bon – converted to dGe lugs. In case of conversion, the original name of the monastery was preceded by the word *dga' ldan*, following the example of the establishments newly founded by the 5th Dalai Lama. On the conversion of Lha rtse chos gling, see Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (2009, vol. 5, 205-210). A description of the complex is provided by the 3rd Kaḥ thog Si tu Chos kyī rgya mtsho (1880-1923/1925) in his *dBus gtsang gnas yig* (1972, 330-333).

the trader's visit, the monastery hosted more than four hundred monks, to each of whom he donated as individual offering 1 *zho*, adding to that 500 *srang* for the *bla brang*. Before setting off from Lha rtse chos gling, 'Dzam yag completed a circumambulation of the monastic complex, the fortress (*rdzong*), and the village.¹³⁷

On the 24th day of the 9th month of the Earth Ox Year (November 14, 1949), the group of pilgrims stopped by Padma sgrub phug, the meditation cave of gNubs Nam mkha'i snying po (8th-9th century)¹³⁸ in the rGyang yon mo valley, where the *gter ston* Rig 'dzin rGod kyidem 'phru can had accepted the *gSol 'debs le'u bdun ma*¹³⁹ as *gter ma*.

Leaving rGyang behind on the 28th day of the 9th month of the Earth Ox Year (November 18, 1949), the group reached the hermitage of mDzad pa, residence of the sKyabs mgon mDzad chen Rin po che, who bestowed on them the profound empowerment of Nā ro mkha' spyod,¹⁴⁰ for which 'Dzam yag offered an initiation fee of 18 *srang*, to which he added 16 *srang* to be divided among the thirteen monks present.¹⁴¹ After that, they passed through Grwa dar mo che, the seat of the Sa skya *gter ston* Tshar chen Blo gsal rgya mtsho (1502-1566)¹⁴² and approached the peak of Lha rtse rdzong, a place blessed by 'Phags pa. According to the local tradition,¹⁴³ those who died there would be saved from the lowest rebirths regardless of the amount of sins accumulated in their life. Having completed a series of prostrations and circumambulations, the pilgrims proceeded towards

¹³⁷ Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 177).

¹³⁸ One of the first seven Tibetans to be ordained by Śāntarakṣita and counted as one of the twenty-five main disciples (*rje 'bangs nyer lnga*) of Padmasambhava.

¹³⁹ "The Seven-Chapter Reverential Petition (to Padmasambhava)", a hidden treasure said have been concealed by Mu khri btsan po, son of king Khri srong lde'u btsan, discovered by the latter's reincarnation bZang po grags pa, and entrusted, together with other *gter ma*, to sTon pa bSod nams dbang phyug in 1365, who handed them on to Rig 'dzin rGod kyidem 'phru can; see Boord (2013).

¹⁴⁰ Lineage of instructions on Vajrayoginī as transmitted from the deity to Naropa.

¹⁴¹ Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 180).

¹⁴² The 13th Zhwa lu abbot and one of the most important *Lam 'bras* masters, together with Sa chen Kun dga' snying po (1092-1158) and Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po (1382-1456). He received from his master Kun spangs rDo ring pa the *slob bshad* ("Explanations for the Disciple"), a special transmission of oral esoteric instructions on the *Lam 'bras*. While Tshar chen began to write down some of these instructions, the responsibility of recording his definitive explication of the Hevajra practice according to the *slob bshad* tradition fell to his main students 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang phyug and Mang thos klu sgrub rgya mtsho (Stearns 2001, 41-42). For a biography of Tshar chen Blo gsal rgya mtsho, see Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (2009, vol. 12, 266-434).

¹⁴³ 'Dzam yag ascribes the origin of the toponym, a corruption of the original Lhags rtse, to 'Phags pa, who moved by the beauty of the place at dawn, named it "The Peak (*rtse*) Reached (*lhags*) [by the Sun]" (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 181).

gZhis ka rtse, visiting in succession the meditation cave of the *mahāsiddha* Gayādhara (994-1043), located northeast of the fortress of Lha rtse, the Sa skya establishment of Mu gu lung dgon, seat of 'Brog mi lo tsā ba (ca. 992-1043), and the small Jo nang monastery of Char lung rdo rje brag rdzong. Despite being at a walking distance from the latter, 'Dzam yag could not persuade his companions to visit the place in the Mu gu valley where Gayādhara was said to have taught the *Lam 'bras* and where his disciples' meditation caves lay in ruins.¹⁴⁴

From Lha rtse rdzong the pilgrims turned towards the heartland of the Jo nang school, reaching what used to be its most famous establishment, Phun tshogs gling, before its forced conversion to the dGe lugs school in 1635.¹⁴⁵ 'Dzam yag provides a detailed description of the complex and the stories connected to it; in particular, he records the presence of a set of footprints left by 'Jam dbyangs chos rje bKra shis dpal ldan (1379-1449), the founder of 'Bras spungs monastery, who used to travel back and forth between the foot of the mountain and its peak.¹⁴⁶

The outbreak of an epidemic in the area of gYu thog dgon discouraged the group from attending the ritual dances (*'cham*) performed at the monastic complex, redirecting them to the plain of Shab dkar po,¹⁴⁷ a place renowned for the activities of Rwa lo tsā ba rDo rje grags (1016-1128/1198). According to the popular narrative, the master ploughed and spread seeds on the dry and hard soil of the plain, obtaining overnight a harvest sufficient to feed the famished locals, whose fields had been drought-stricken. In his notes, the trader cannot help but remark on the average-looking condition of the place, reclaimed centuries before by the lords of gTsang and used since for agricultural purposes, regardless of any blessings bestowed by Rwa lo tsā ba on the field; taking a cue from that, 'Dzam yag quotes a passage from the "Golden Light Sūtra" (*gSer 'od dam pa'i mdo*), pondering on the ways the actions of rulers and ministers may negatively affect their subjects.¹⁴⁸ From Shab dkar po, the pilgrims passed by Bo dong gYu thog dgon¹⁴⁹ and Rog gtso dgon.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁴ Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 181-182).

¹⁴⁵ The conversion was marked by the change of name from rTag brtan Phun tshogs gling to dGa' ldan Phun tshogs gling. The monastery, founded in 1615, was the seat of Kun dga' snying po, better known as Tāranātha. As correctly recorded by 'Dzam yag (1997, 182), Tāranātha had been recognised as the reincarnation of Kṛṣṇācārya (Nag po spyod pa), one of the eighty-four *mahāsiddhas*, by mKhan chen Lung rigs rgya mtsho, a 16th-century Jo nang master.

¹⁴⁶ Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 182).

¹⁴⁷ Also known as Shab rjed gling.

¹⁴⁸ Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 185).

¹⁴⁹ The monastic seat of Khro phu lo tsā ba Byams pa dpal bzang (1173-1225).

The five-month journey to Gangs Ti se via gTsang ended on the 13th day of the 10th month of the Earth Ox Year (December 3, 1949) with the arrival of 'Dzam yag and his companions to gZhis ka rtse; although presented by the trader as a pilgrimage, it is clear from the details provided in the account that the religious visits were once again collateral to more pressing financial matters.¹⁵¹

Visits to mKhan zur Thar rtse Rin po che

I will conclude the section on the pilgrimage route and ritual activities carried out by 'Dzam yag in Tibet with an analysis of the visits he paid to the retired head (*mkhan zur*) of Thar rtse bla brang. Meetings such as these were generally motivated by mundane rather than spiritual purposes: the distress caused by an ambiguous socio-economic status and the fear of being involved in risky business ventures, as well as the choice of a suitable pilgrimage venue were legitimate causes of concern to which the trader struggled to find an answer. Resorting to divination – whether dice, dough-balls, rosaries, or interpretation of accidental signs¹⁵² – is a practice integral to Tibetan cultural life and seamlessly integrated into the Buddhist sphere. By consulting a diviner or medium, virtually any challenging situation can be assessed and dealt with: the application of appropriate remedial actions (i.e. rituals), to be performed by either the petitioners themselves or a spiritual professional, allows for the removal of obstructions and the purification of defilements.

Mundane events concerning health, business, and everyday uncertainties fueled the layman's desire for divination, and 'Dzam yag was certainly not alone in his quest for answers. The more renowned the master, the more sought-after his services: private meetings were therefore rare and often the outcome of consistent patronage. The relationship between 'Dzam yag and Thar rtse Rin po che – as it emerges from the pages of the *nyin deb* – appears to predate the audience granted on the 4th month of the Fire Dog Year (May 1946), the first of the ten encounters recorded in the journal. It is worth quoting the section extensively, as it features elements that are characteristic of the interaction between the two of them:

¹⁵⁰ According to the local story, a *dge bshes* of the monastery, envious of Rwa lo tsā ba's accomplishments, started to harass the master, who, in a magical display of his *siddhi*, turned the *dge bshes* into a donkey (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 186).

¹⁵¹ Suffice to recall 'Dzam yag's grudging decision to refrain from visiting the sacred sites surrounding Ti se in consideration of the caravan of pack animals entrusted to him by the *tshong dpon* Nyi ma phun tshogs.

¹⁵² On Tibetan divination, see Tseten (1995).

After having given it some thought, and still doubting whether I should go towards the central province of dBus or on a pilgrimage to the Snow Mountain of Upper Tibet (i.e. Mount Kailash), as the proverb goes – “if you don’t know it yourself, ask a lama” – I requested the old Thar rtse abbot for a divination, and [it] turned out very auspicious [for my] going that year to either Lhasa, Nag chu, or Rong po.¹⁵³

Faithful to his pragmatic nature, 'Dzam yag opted for the dBus province; at the time, with neither wealth nor trading goods, he accepted to deliver 100 loads (*do po*) of butter to Lhasa on behalf of bKra shis nor bu, the treasurer of the Gra'u household in gZhis ka rtse. The task allowed him to earn money and, at the same time, to go on a pilgrimage to the holy city.¹⁵⁴

Many were the meetings requested and granted in the following years: 'Dzam yag met the Rin po che twice¹⁵⁵ when the latter was still acting as abbot, and seven times after the Iron Tiger Year (1950), when the master renounced his role of monastic head (*mkhan po*)¹⁵⁶ and retired to lead a spiritual life at the Chu bzang ri khrod,¹⁵⁷ where the trader visited him regularly until his passing away in 1952. The first of these encounters in the new abode occurred on the 3rd month of the Iron Tiger Year (April-May 1950), when the trader was on his way to 'Dzam thag; on that occasion, he offered him a *bka' btags* of the value of 40 *srang*, some medicine made from the fruits of Myrobalan,¹⁵⁸ a self-arisen stone glittering in gold, and a divination dice (*zho mo*) painted with Indian enamel. Before leaving, 'Dzam yag, uncertain on the direction to take for cutting the best deals with the nomads, requested the Rin po che to perform a divination on the matter. The spiritual connection between 'Dzam yag and the master, who was at the time living in seclusion, is a recurrent theme in the journal, and it is rather telling that all the meetings occurring between the two of them concern mundane affairs.

On the 5th month of the Iron Tiger Year (June-July 1950), while on

¹⁵³ *nyam blo 'ga' btang nas da ni dbus phyogs la 'gro'am | stod gangs ri gnas skor 'gro'am snyan pa'i the tshom skye ba'i ngang zhig tu rang gi mi shes bla mar dris zer ba'i dpe bzhin du | bdag gis thar rtse mkhan rgan la brtag pa zhus nas | da lo lha ldan nam | nag chu'am rong po phyogs la bskyod shin tu bzang babs* (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 65-66).

¹⁵⁴ Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 66).

¹⁵⁵ On the 10th month of the Earth Mouse Year (November 1948) and on the 2nd month of the Earth Ox Year (March 1949).

¹⁵⁶ Thus becoming an “ex-abbot” (*mkhan zur*).

¹⁵⁷ Hermitage on the west side of U 'yug mda' mdo.

¹⁵⁸ The fruits of *Terminalia chebula*, commonly known as Chebulic Myrobalan, are considered to be a panacea in both Ayurvedic and Tibetan medicine; see Dash (1976).

his way back from 'Dzam thag, the trader paid another visit to mKhan zur Thar rtse Rin po che, seeking and receiving the empowerment and the protection circle (*srung 'khor*) of mGon dkar yid bzhin nor bu,¹⁵⁹ paying 8 *srang* as initiation fee.¹⁶⁰ Five months later, he returned to Chu bzang, looking for direction on matters related to business: the divination performed by the ex-abbot suggested the sale of the wool the trader had purchased. Following the master's instructions, 'Dzam yag maximised his gain and happily used the profit to support his offerings.¹⁶¹

The trader met the mKhan zur, who was at the time rather old, two more times before the latter's death; the last meeting took place during the 1st month of the Water Dragon Year (February-March 1952) in gZhis ka rtse. The master, who was on his way to Khams, bestowed on 'Dzam yag and a few other fortunate disciples an Amitāyus-Hayagrīva initiation. On that occasion, knowing that the Rin po che was heading to sGa pa, the trader invited him to his house for dinner, and after asking him for a divination about present and future events, he produced a blessed statue of Mañjuśrī, which he had been entrusted with by a relative of his root-guru (*rtsa ba'i bla ma*) rDo rje 'chang Ra nyag sKal bzang rnam rgyal dpal bzang po. mKhan zur Thar rtse Rin po che, moved by the gift, accepted the statue as *rten* and reciprocated with a statue of rDo rje 'chang, to be given to the relative of the trader's root-guru. The acting as a middleman between two religious figures is indicative of the kinds of social interactions 'Dzam yag was involved in just a few months shy of his appointment as *tshong dpon* of the Khang gсар bla brang, one of Ngor's four main lama palaces.¹⁶² The Water Dragon Year (1952) marks a change in the trader's approach to life: no more divinations were to be sought by 'Dzam yag, whose main concerns shifted from a mundane to a soteriological plane – or, to use Geoffrey Samuel's terms, from a "pragmatic" orientation, inspired by his difficult social and financial situation, to a more "bodhi-oriented" approach as soon as his circumstances allowed this.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ "The White Protector Wish-fulfilling Jewel", the main variant form of the black or blue-black six-armed Mahākāla. The deity is usually evoked to eliminate spiritual and material poverty and to bring abundance.

¹⁶⁰ Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 191).

¹⁶¹ Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 206).

¹⁶² On Ngor's lama palaces, see Heimbel (2017, 267-268 and esp. n. 237), Jackson (1989, 49-50, n. 2), and Jackson (2001: 90). I am grateful to Jörg Heimbel for referring me to these sources (private conversation, January 2021).

¹⁶³ Samuel (1993, 31).

*Ritual Activities: The Soteriological Aspect of
'Dzam yag's Spiritual Quest, 1952-1956*

Whereas in the period between 1944 and 1952 the extemporaneous nature of 'Dzam yag's visits to religious places on the plateau was largely influenced by the precariousness of his situation, his appointment as *tshong dpon* of the Khang gsar bla brang at the end of 1952 marked the emergence of a recognisable pattern in his movements. Before delving deeper into the activities carried out by 'Dzam yag in the last years of his life, the events that led to such a significant change in the trader's situation deserve to be brought to attention and analysed.

On the 23rd day of the 6th month of the Water Dragon Year (August 13, 1952), 'Dzam yag attended the oral transmission (*lung*) of the *Lam 'bras* teachings bestowed at Ngor by the head of the Khang gsar bla brang Ngag dbang blo gros gzhan phan snying po.¹⁶⁴ Among the practitioners, there were the eight-year-old head of the Sa skya sGrol ma pho brang Ngag dbang kun dga' theg chen dpal 'bar 'phrin las dbang gyi rgyal po,¹⁶⁵ his mother sPel chung, the former 70th abbot of Ngor and head of the 'Phan khang bla brang Ngag dbang mkhas grub rgya mtsho (1917–1969), and bDag chen Rin po che 'Jigs bral bdag chen sa skya (1929-2016),¹⁶⁶ who opened the ceremonies with a longevity prayer dedicated to Ngag dbang blo gros gzhan phan snying po. During his five-month stay at Ngor, 'Dzam yag had the opportunity, to use his own words, to “outshine [his] friends and *dharma* brothers”,¹⁶⁷ he offered to the Sa skya Khri 'dzin a rosary of prayer beads (Skt. *mālā*) made of amber and adorned with three

¹⁶⁴ The *Lam 'bras* was usually bestowed on an annual basis by the incumbent abbot of Ngor. If the latter was prevented from giving the teaching cycle, due to ailments, absence or death, a senior master would provisionally replace him as acting abbot. I thank Jörg Heimbrel for this information.

It is worth noticing that in 1952 the Dam pa Rin po che was not the incumbent abbot; at the present only speculations may be offered as to why the task of bestowing the *Lam 'bras* teaching fell on him. For an in-depth study of the Ngor tradition, with particular reference to the figure of his founder Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po (1382-1456), see Heimbrel (2017). For a brief abbatial history in English recording the dates, tenures, and bla brang affiliation etc. of the successive abbots, see Heimbrel (2017, 513-546).

¹⁶⁵ Representative of the sGrol ma pho brang, one of the two extant branches of the 'Khon family lineage, the ancient hierarchs of Sa skya, he was recognised as the 41st Sa skya Khri 'dzin by the 14th Dalai Lama in 1951 and officially enthroned in 1959.

¹⁶⁶ The bDag chen Rin po che was the representative of the other surviving branch of the 'Khon family, the Phun tshogs pho brang.

¹⁶⁷ *da res grogs rdo rje spun rnam las mchog du gyur pa* (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 218).

pieces of coral, pleading him to be accepted as his disciple.¹⁶⁸

On the 17th of the 8th month of the Water Dragon Year (October 5, 1952), the trader joined his *dharma* brothers in the offering of common tea¹⁶⁹ and individual distributions (*sku 'gyed*) of money, food, butter lamps, ceremonial scarves, and other “excellent things”¹⁷⁰ for a total of 850 *srang*. Less than a month later, on the 14th of the 9th month (October 31, 1952), on the death anniversary of Sa chen Kun dga' snying po (1092-1158),¹⁷¹ Dam pa Rin po che, who was at the time 77, bestowed the profound empowerment (*zab dbang*) of Amitāyus, followed the next day by the Amitāyus-Hayagrīva initiation granted by the 41st Sa skya Khri 'dzin. Longevity rituals – believed to increase the merit and the lifespan of those fortunate enough to receive them – were undoubtedly some of the most requested and frequently performed esoteric ceremonies. As recorded in the *nyin deb*, the bestowal of the Amitāyus empowerment by Dam pa Rin po che attracted thousands of monks and lay people – regardless of age, status, and gender – and an impromptu encampment sprang up outside Ngor to host them. During the period spent by the trader at the Ngor establishment, a third longevity ritual was sponsored by Zhwa lu Rin po che: the ceremony, led by Dam pa Rin po che, was performed in the presence of the Thar rtse reincarnate and incumbent abbot of Ngor, the 74th Ngor mKhan chen 'Jam dbyangs Kun dga' bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1933–1987),¹⁷² bDag chen Rin po che, the latter's consort, and the general assembly of lamas and monks.

The active participation in the *Lam 'bras* teaching sessions and esoteric rituals, as well as the close friendship which tied him to the wealthy and well-connected *tshong dpon* Rin chen rdo rje, appear to have been the main factors at play in determining 'Dzam yag's change of fortune. As recorded in a note dated to the 22nd day of the 9th month of the Water Dragon Year (November 8, 1952), Rin chen

¹⁶⁸ Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 218).

¹⁶⁹ The *dgon pa* were financially supported by a combination of instituted income (coming from the accumulation of non-monetary assets and lucrative activities such as the buying, selling, and lending at interest of both land and seed resources) and ritual sponsorship. For rituals performed in the main prayer hall of the monastery, the sponsors were requested to provide the so-called “common tea” (*mang ja*) – several cups of butter tea accompanied by roasted barley flour (*rtsam pa*) – to be served to the whole gathering (Mills 2003, 62-63). On Ngor's practice of collecting offerings (*'bul sdud*), see Heimbel (2020).

¹⁷⁰ *gya nom pa* (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 220).

¹⁷¹ The first of the five Sa skya patriarchs (*sa skya gong ma rnam lnga*).

¹⁷² 'Jam dbyangs Kun dga' bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan was recognised as an incarnation of 'Jam dbyangs Kun bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, the 63rd abbot. His tenure was c. 1951–1954. I am grateful to Jörg Heimbel for this clarification (private conversation, January 2021). See also Heimbel (2017, 544).

rdo rje contributed to the installment of a gilded copper statue of Avalokiteśvara in the new shrine, the construction of which had been sponsored by Thar rtse Rin po che.¹⁷³ 'Dzam yag was among those who offered common tea, rice soup, and individual distribution of money to the assembly led by Dam pa Rin po che, and including the 41st Sa skya Khri 'dzin, Thar rtse Rin po che, and the ex-abbot (*khri zur*) 'Phan khang Rin po che. On that occasion, the trader donated 245 *srang*, quite a fortune considering his financial means at the time.

On the 2nd day of the 11th month of the Water Dragon Year (December 18, 1952), the day before the end of the *Lam 'bras* teachings,¹⁷⁴ 'Dzam yag brought to completion 1,300 circumambulations of the fifteen *mchod rten* of Ngor,¹⁷⁵ dedicating the accomplishment to the merit of all beings. The increasing relevance placed by the trader on circumambulation practices is indicative of a shift in priorities: while in the years preceding 1952, the performance of activities such as prostrations, circumambulations of "supports", and sponsorship of rituals mainly aimed at the achievement of mundane results, from the end of the Water Dragon Year (1952) onwards, 'Dzam yag became more and more concerned with the afterlife and consequently with the accumulation of merit.

From 1953 up to 1959, the trader travelled regularly throughout the provinces of dBus and gTsang, going from the nomadic areas of Nag chu and Byang thang to the trade hubs of northern India and Sikkim. The increase in 'Dzam yag's financial means was concurrent with an intensification of both his devotional practices in bKra shis lhun po and his active participation in empowerment sessions. In the years immediately preceding the Chinese invasion, the focus of 'Dzam yag's spiritual activities shifted from spontaneous pilgrimages to sacred places to what can be considered a programme of systematic donations to different monastic communities. In its last pages, the *nyin deb* ceases to be a journal and turns into a ledger: empowerments and teachings are listed one after the other, together with the amount of money and goods given in exchange for the blessings received, in a constant flow of offerings – a glimpse of what

¹⁷³ Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 222).

¹⁷⁴ The *Lam 'bras* was traditionally given during the monastic winter term. According to that schedule, the annual teaching commenced on the 25th day of the 10th month and was completed about the 18th day of the 1st month of the following year; see Heimbel (2017, 399). It must be noted that the bestowal reported in the *nyin deb* fell outside these dates. I thank Jörg Heimbel for drawing my attention to this detail (private conversation, January 2021).

¹⁷⁵ The author mentions in particular the reliquary of Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po (1382-1456) and the eight Sugata *stūpa* built by the latter's disciple and successor to the throne of Ngor, Mus chen Sems dpa' chen po dKon mchog rgyal mtshan (1388-1469). On these *stūpas*, see Heimbel (2017, 389 and esp. n. 798).

the wealthy sponsors were willing to bestow in their quest for "accumulation of merit" (*bsod nams kyi tshogs*). Despite being quantifiable, the merit (*bsod nams*; Skr. *punya*) accumulated from the sponsorship of a ritual was, at least theoretically, independent from the extent of the offering made, since the purity of the faith and the sense of sacrifice with which the alms were given are considered the only relevant aspects.¹⁷⁶

While the impact of a substantial donation may have been tangential in spiritual terms, the same could not be said about its social impact: the display of pious generosity was unquestionably expected from the richest strata of society. Constant meaning-making processes were at play to accommodate the mundane business activities with the spiritual detachment encouraged by the Buddhist teachings; donations to monastic communities contributed to redeeming the donor's *karma* by neutralising the sinful and contaminating nature of money dealing.¹⁷⁷ As early as the 1st month of the Iron Rabbit Year (February 1951), on the occasion of the sMon lam ceremony in Lhasa, 'Dzam yag offered scarves, common tea, and individual donations to the regional dormitories (*khang tshan*) gathered in prayer,¹⁷⁸ for a total of 5,550 silver *srang*, thus "giving a meaning to an illusory wealth".¹⁷⁹

The author often describes his business affairs as temporary distractions¹⁸⁰ or "heedless actions",¹⁸¹ the value of which rests in their being a support to the ritual activities of the *samgha*.

The improvement of 'Dzam yag's financial means and his consequent success in business brought about changes in his approach to spirituality. At the time of his departure from Rab shis, 'Dzam yag was still very uncertain about his future; despite realising

¹⁷⁶ Mills (2003, 61).

¹⁷⁷ In his memoir, A 'brug mGon po bkra shis candidly admits that he "felt that in making these offerings [he] was making the right use of [his] wealth" (Andrugtsang 1973, 10).

¹⁷⁸ The author also mentions the presentation of letters requesting refuge (*skyabs iho*) and prayers to be dedicated to someone's merit (*bsngo yig*), thus showing the rather common practice of acting as a proxy for those who could not physically attend certain ceremonies or religious feasts (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 199).

¹⁷⁹ *sgyu ma'i nor la snying po blangs so* (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 199).

¹⁸⁰ "Having finished to clear my debts and collect my loans from close friends and regular customers of sKye dgu mdo, I spent some time thinking and focusing on worldly affairs" (*skye mdo'i dga' grogs dang | tshong shag rnam la phar sprad tshur bsdus kyis bya ba rnam zin par byas nas | 'jig rten gyi chos nyid la yid gtad pa dang dran tsam re byas [...]*) (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 13).

"I rested [in Nag chu] and got myself engrossed in worldly affairs by giving with the one hand and collecting with the other" (*phar sprod dang tshur bsdus kyis 'jig rten gyi bya ba la g.yengs shing ngal gsos*) (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 82).

¹⁸¹ *bag med kyi bya ba* (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 211).

quite early that the chances of ever returning to his home region were rather slim,¹⁸² he felt reluctant to commit himself to any particular course of action. sKyo brags bsTan pa'i snying po's injunction was not a providential catalyst of future events, but rather an expression of the general understanding of pilgrimage as a redemptive and purifying activity; by paying homage to the sacred places of Tibet, pilgrims actively sought to cleanse their sins and embodied defilements, perceived as the root of one's own bad *karma*.¹⁸³

Prescriptive narratives, such as pilgrimage literature and *rnam thar*, have often explained and justified pilgrimages – as well as other religious rituals – through a common set of themes, including specific “models” (*dpe*) related to

[...] defilement and purification; illness and healing; influencing the course and processes of physical life, death, and future life (e.g., rebirth and final liberation from it); gaining efficacy in the phenomenal world or powers to influence its operation; the extension of perception beyond the mundane limits of space and time; the coercion and conversion or destruction of that which is perceived as an obstruction or a threat; and maintaining advantageous contacts and identifications with nonhuman forces in both the local and universal cosmos.¹⁸⁴

In the same vein, between 1944 and 1952, 'Dzam yag actively sought, through the bodily engaging activity of pilgrimage, to cleanse and purify what he considered to be the outcome of previous misdeeds. The main concern behind these activities seems to have been his fortune in the present life, a concern presumably triggered by the

¹⁸² “On the 6th day of the 5th month of the Wood Bird Year (June 16, 1945), feeling sad because there was no turning back home for me and deeply missing the kindness and blessings of my root-lama, since I had nothing I could rely on for protection anymore apart from the Three Jewels, after setting my mind on all the holy places of dBu [that I would visit] one after the other, I took off like a bird.” (*bya lo'i zla 5 tshes nyin bdag la pha yul du 'khor sa med pas yid skyo ba'i ngang | dus rgyun du skyabs dkon mchog gsum las med pas | rje bla ma'i bka' drin dang byin rlabs dran lhang nge ba'i ngang | rim gyis dbus kyi lha rten rnams snying gi dkyil du bzhas nas bya nam 'phang la spyod pa bzhin song ngo*) (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 24).

¹⁸³ Defilement (*sgrib pa*) and sin (*sdig pa*) are considered to be “negative, obstructive, unlucky, and even threatening (to health, longevity, fertility, prosperity, etc.) aspects of ordinary human social and material existence” (Huber 1999b, 16). Pilgrimage is conceived as an effective way of removing and purifying embodied *sgrib pa* and *sdig pa*, by cleansing the psychophysical person, through either the actions of the pilgrim's body (e.g. prostrations, circumambulations) or the transformative effect of contact with the sacred place (*gnas*) (Huber 1999b, 16-17 and 150).

¹⁸⁴ Huber (1999b, 11).

dramatic events he had gone through. Therefore, the consistent and frequent requests for divinations could be similarly interpreted as a means to gain some insights in how to improve his social and financial situation.

It seems that the relative stability brought by the appointment as *tshong dpon* caused the author's apprehensions to shift from the present to the future; the mundane success and a considerable flow of income waned in favour of a more detached approach to life. His energies focused on obtaining mental clarity and spiritual purity; the money gained through business transactions was valued only in relation to the kind of offerings that it allowed him to make.

Conclusive Remarks

I will conclude my contribution with an analysis of the last five years covered by the *nyin deb*, thus briefly engaging with the issue represented by the intertwining of economy, religion, and politics in 20th-century Tibet. While the economic power wielded by Eastern Tibetan traders in the decades preceding 1959 deeply influenced the socio-political environment of the dGa' ldan pho brang government,¹⁸⁵ it also played a vital role in the life and existence of religious communities. In time of dire needs, spiritual support is much sought after, and it is therefore not surprising that between 1949 and 1959 a great number of esoteric rituals and rites were held with the intent of exorcising obstructions and stimulating the emergence of favourable conditions. An example of the kind of ceremonies performed at that time is provided in a note dated to the 4th day of the 3rd month of the Wood Horse Year (April 7, 1954), when the 10th Panchen Lama bestowed a Kālacakra empowerment at bKra shis lhun po, under the sponsorship of Tre hor gZigs rgyab Rin po che.

'Dzam yag records the various stages of the ritual, spanning over almost two weeks, and attended by "hundreds of thousands of disciples",¹⁸⁶

[o]n the 4th day, the Panchen Lama started the initiatory rites¹⁸⁷ for the Kālacakra. On the 9th day, the preparatory rituals¹⁸⁸ of

¹⁸⁵ Several studies have been dedicated to the topic; see, among others, Goldstein (1989), McGranahan (2002), Harris (2013), Travers (2013, 2018).

¹⁸⁶ *slob bu 'bum phrag las brgyal ba* (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 232).

¹⁸⁷ Through the initiatory rites (*dbang*; Skt. *abhiṣeka*) the practitioner is *empowered* and as such he is deemed ready to receive the instructions and hear the *tantra*.

¹⁸⁸ Any ritual consists of three parts: the preparatory part (*sta gon*), the main part (*dnegos gzhi*), and the concluding part (*mjug chog*); see Bentor (1996, 96).

the great empowerment [were carried out according to] the dPal mo transmission of Thugs rje chen po ("Great Compassionate One", i.e. Avalokiteśvara). On the 10th day, the main body [of the empowerment was given]. On the 14th day, preparations were made for the Kālacakra empowerment. On the 15th day, the main body [of the practice was performed]. On the 16th the high initiations [were bestowed]. On the 18th there was the reading transmission of the fulfilled supreme higher initiations,¹⁸⁹ *The Hundred Deities of Tuṣita*,¹⁹⁰ *The Aiming at Loving-Kindness*,¹⁹¹ and so on, and circumambulations of the Gaṇacakra offerings [were made] in three stages. As a sign of gratitude, Tre hor gZigs rgyab Rin po che offered the payment of the initiation price twice, once before [the beginning of the ritual] and once after [its conclusion].¹⁹²

The passage continues by listing other items donated by Tre hor Rin po che as part of the thanksgiving for the teachings (*gtang rag*) – sacred objects, jewels, substantial amounts of gold and silver in different forms of currency,¹⁹³ and non-monetary articles.¹⁹⁴ As a gift for the profound empowerments obtained, the trader and his nephew

¹⁸⁹ The four high initiations (*dbang gong ma*) and the four supreme higher initiations (*dbang gong chen yongs su rdzogs pa*) can be understood as comprising two vase initiations (*bum pa'i dbang*; Skt. *kalaśābhīṣeka*), two secret initiations (*gsang ba'i dbang*; Skt. *guhyaābhīṣeka*), two knowledge-wisdom initiations (*shes rab ye shes kyi dbang*; Skt. *prajñājñānābhīṣeka*), and the provisional word initiation followed by the definitive word initiation (*tshig dbang rin po che*); see Bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho and Hopkins (1985, 68).

¹⁹⁰ *The Hundred Deities of Tuṣita* (*dGa' ldan lha brgya ma*) is a prayer dedicated to Tsong kha pa, and expression of the devotion to one's own *guru*.

¹⁹¹ *The Aiming at Loving-Kindness* (*dMigs brtse ma*) is a famous prayer to Tsong kha pa.

¹⁹² *shing pho rta lo zla 3 tshes 4 la paN chen snang ba mtha' yas kyis dpal dus kyi 'khor lo'i bka' dbang rin po che slob bu 'bum phrag las brgal bar gnang ba'i yon bdag tre hor gzigs rgyab rin po ches zhus | tshes 4 nyin dus 'khor slob ma rjes 'dzin | tshes 9 nyin ihugs rje chen mo [*po] lugs kyi dbang chen sta gon | tshes 10 nyin dngos gzhi | tshes 14 la dus 'khor dbang gi sta gon | tshes 15 la dbang chen dngos gzhi | tshes 17 nyin dbang gong ma | tshes 18 nyin dbang gong chen yongs su rdzogs pa dang | dga' ldan lha brgya dang | dmigs brtse ma bcas kyi ljags lung | tshogs kyi 'khor lo rim pa gsum du bskor te | gzigs rgyab rin po che nas 'bul chen thengs gcig sngon du phul zin pa dang | thengs gnyis pa dbang yon bka' drin gtang rag gi 'bul pa* (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 232-233).

¹⁹³ 106 *tolā* (Indian weight measure equal to 11.34 gr) of gold, 180 *rdo tshad* (Tibetan weight measure equal to 1.81 kg) of silver Chinese *rta rmig* (coin shaped as a horse's hoof), and many Chinese silver coins (*dā yang*) in sealed bags (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 233).

¹⁹⁴ Among the items listed there are many rolls of brocade made of five types of silk, 500 woolen pouches each containing 5 *rdo tshad* (1.81 kg) in silver *zho*, sweets, brown sugar, fruits, butter, several bags of barley, 200 bags of rice, 50 boxes of fine tea, and 50 bags of tea balls (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 233).

Blo 'jam offered a pair of high-quality ceremonial scarves (*nyin mo bde legs*) of the length of an arm-span and several silk scarves (*zub she*) having a value of 240 *srang*. To that they added 670 *srang* worth of margarine (*shing mar*) to be used for the golden lamps of bKra shis lhun po's shrines.

Though the accumulation of wealth is not much of an issue in Buddhist societies as far as the laity is concerned – on the contrary, material success is considered a sign of virtue, a result of good *karma* – the *attitude* the individual holds towards it does raise ethical questions since greed or desire would be considered expressions of attachment. The question of how to deal with wealth is addressed already in early Buddhism, and in many passages of the *Āṅguttara Nikāya* the Buddha indicates the support of spiritual teachers and monks to be a proper use of wealth.¹⁹⁵ Such sponsorship of the *saṃgha* by the wealthy laity lay at the heart of the Buddhist communities and was thought to increase the merit of the donors and thus improve their *karma*. Similarly, in Tibetan Buddhism the sponsorship of rituals for improvement of one's own physical and social conditions is common practice, and the *nyin deb* contains several examples of rites paid for by either the author or an acquaintance of his. In the aftermath of the great flood that hit gZhis ka rtse and rGyal rtse in 1954, for instance, Rin chen rdo rje, 'Dzam yag's friend and business partner, sponsored a five-day recitation of the bKa' 'gyur "with the intent of exorcising any obstacles to favourable conditions".¹⁹⁶ The ritual was performed by one hundred and twenty-three monks, each of whom received 6 *srang* a day as individual donation. Inspired by his friend, the author added one *srang* a day per monk, totalling 615 *srang*.¹⁹⁷

In the following months, other empowerments took place at bKra shis lhun po; several of them were led by Chu dbar Rin po che, a reincarnate lama from sNye thang Rwa stod, residing in the Tantric (*gsang sngags*) *bla brang* in gZhis ka rtse. During his stay, the master visited bKra shis lhun po and bestowed the initiation (*rjes dbang*) of rTa Phyag Khyung gsum,¹⁹⁸ and a Tārā empowerment transmitted by the bKa' gdams pa lineage of Lho brag grub chen Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan (1326-1401), marking the end of the session with the donation of a statue of Tārā. 'Dzam yag offered 34 *srang* as a sign of

¹⁹⁵ Essen (2011, 64).

¹⁹⁶ *rkyen bgegs bar chad bzlog phyir* (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 235).

¹⁹⁷ Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 235).

¹⁹⁸ The three tutelary deities Hayagrīva (rTa mgrin), Vajrapāṇi (Phyag na rdo rje), and Garuḍa (Bya khyung).

appreciation; the trader was so impressed by Chu dbar Rin po che¹⁹⁹ that he openly professed his devotion and his intention to become one of the lama's devotees. At that time, 'Dzam yag commissioned 23,500 *tsa tsa*²⁰⁰ of the Tshe lha rnam gsum²⁰¹ to be dedicated to his parents' merit, making an offering to the craftsman of a bronze vase of very good quality, clothes and shoes, and a few silver coins.²⁰²

Khams pa traders were among the most generous supporters of Central Tibetan monastic communities, often competing with each other in an amicable way.²⁰³ The Wood Horse Year (1954) was a period of great financial expenditure for 'Dzam yag and some of his closest companions: on the 4th day of the 6th month (July 4, 1954), the trader joined the already mentioned Rin chen rdo rje in a common donation for the performance of a *One-Thousand Offering* (*stong mchod*)²⁰⁴ held at Sa skya dgon. While Rin chen offered to the Sa skya *sprul sku* two statues – a gilded copper Avalokiteśvara with a thousand hands and a human-sized Buddha – 'Dzam yag contributed with a little more than a *rdo po*²⁰⁵ of silver, to which he added 8 *nyag*²⁰⁶ of butter.²⁰⁷

The *nyin deb* reveals that donations were not limited to specific religious occasions or institutions but were distributed to various monasteries of different denominations and lineages along 'Dzam yag's travel routes. On the 28th day of the 11th month of the Wood

¹⁹⁹ Apparently, Chu dbar Rin po che recited by heart the entire oral tantric instructions, without ever looking at the scriptures (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 236).

²⁰⁰ Small relief images traditionally made of clay and usually presented for extensive offerings.

²⁰¹ The three deities of longevity, Amitāyus (Tshe dpag med), White Tārā (sGrol dkar), and [Uṣṇīsa-]Vijayā (rNam rgyal ma).

²⁰² Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 236).

²⁰³ As early as the 30th day of the 8th month of the Earth Mouse Year (October 2, 1948), 'Dzam yag followed the virtuous example of his *dharmā* friend and business companion Rin chen rdo rje: while the latter offered a distribution of 3 *zho* to each monk and lama attending the general assembly at bKra shis lhun po, followed by a *mang ja* and 8 *zho* distribution to each member of the Tre hor monastic college, the author distributed one *srang* to each monk and lama sitting at the general assembly, and one *zho* to each member of the Tre hor monastic college, plus a couple of *srang* to the chant leader for the recitation of particular prayers. He also bought 9 *zho* worth of incense, for a total amount of 532 *srang*, a substantial sum considering his finances at the time (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 140).

²⁰⁴ The name of the festival, celebrated by the Sa skya pa every year on the 4th day of the 6th lunar month, refers to the lighting of a thousand butter lamps to commemorate the sixteen *arhat* (Powers 1995, 229).

²⁰⁵ Weight measure equal to 1.81 kg.

²⁰⁶ Weight measure equal to 120 gr.

²⁰⁷ Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 236).

Horse Year (January 21, 1955), he offered a *tamka* to each monk and lama sitting at the great assembly of bKra shis lhun po, donating silk scarves, butter and 8 balls of tea for the *mang ja*, and 3 *zho* as individual distribution to the members of the rGya khang tshang,²⁰⁸ for a total sum of 1,144 silver *srang*. In the following weeks, the trader moved to Kalimpong for business; on the road he stopped by: the bKa' gdams seat of sNar thang dgon; a small 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud monastery at Jo mo kha rag, a sacred mountain in gTsang province; and the seat of the Karma pa, mTshur phu, in sTod lung. There he offered a *tamka* to each monk and lama, and butter and tea for the *mang ja* for a total of 400 silver *srang*, to which he added 40 *srang* for the performance of a Tārā ritual (*sgrol chog*). While crossing the village at the foot of the monastery, he recognised in a *tsa tsa* maker an old friend of his from whom he commissioned 10,000 images of the Three Longevity Deities (Tshe lha nam gsum). He paid homage to other small monastic and tantric communities on his way to Sikkim, offering money and ceremonial scarves for a total amount of 180 *srang*.²⁰⁹

The routine of donations, offerings, and circumambulations continued almost without interruptions up to second half of the 3rd month of the Wood Horse Year (April 1954), until 'Brug pa Chos mgon rtse sprul Rin po che,²¹⁰ who had lived most of his life in a meditation centre that he himself had established at the sacred mountain of Jo mo kha rag, set off on a journey to pay homage to the most important religious sites of gTsang, e.g. bKra shis lhun po, rGyal rtse, sNar thang, etc., before secluding himself in retreat. Interestingly, 'Dzam yag offered the master various kinds of medicines (*smān*)²¹¹ and soil and water that he had gathered from the

²⁰⁸ The area of recruitment (*thob khongs*) of the dormitory was the region wherefrom 'Dzam yag hailed (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 237).

²⁰⁹ Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 238).

²¹⁰ The 8th 'Brug pa Chos mgon sprul sku, also known as bShad sgrub chos kyi nyin dge. See TBRC P8LS12750.

²¹¹ Herbal medicines were considered items of luxury trade, frequently collected by pilgrims during their visits to sacred places. Pilgrimage sites and monasteries often hosted centres of production and sale of medicinal herbs, used to cure many temporary and chronic illnesses (van Spengen 1998, 41-42). As many other Tibetans, 'Dzam yag made extensive use of *smān* and *smān grub*, the latter being a medicine that had undergone a process through which it was "perfected, consummated, activated and made ready to heal" (Craig 2011, 218). Far more powerful than the average herbal pill, *smān grub* are deemed able to cure any acute and/or chronic illnesses, the causes of which are considered to be karmic rather than the outcome of natural imbalances; on *smān grub* rituals, both in Buddhist and Bon settings, see, among others, Cantwell (2015) and Sehnalova (2017).

holy sites he had visited.²¹² The collection of items from places considered to be “blessed” (*byin gyis brlabs*) is a common practice in Tibetan Buddhism, and it is part of the experience of pilgrimage as a communal activity: the harvesting of the “blessings” (*byin*) of the sites through portable items, such as stones, pinches of soil or dust, water, etc., allows for either a direct consumption of the power of the place or its transportation and further distribution, as in this case.²¹³ The gifts were presumably meant to protect or invigorate the master during his journey and following retreat.

On the occasion of the Wood Horse Year (1954) Sa ga zla ba,²¹⁴ 'Dzam yag and his nephew Blo 'jam offered alms to beggars and gave individual distributions to the monks and lamas seated in the great assembly of bKra shis lhun po, for a total amount of 900 *srang*.²¹⁵ Around the same time, a request sent by the incarnation of Tre hor gdong thog²¹⁶ reached gZhis ka rtse. The *sprul sku*'s monastic complex, hosting a community of one hundred monks, was in urgent need of restoration. The plea for financial support had been entrusted to a few messengers and addressed to “people of good will.” 'Dzam yag answered by providing 10 bundles (*bag cha*) of red dye for the painting of the shrine of the protector deities (*srung ma khang*) and 25 Chinese silver coins to be used as capital endowment and source of income for the monastic community.²¹⁷

I will close this section with a note dated to the 15th of the 8th

In a note dated to the 1st month of the Mouse Year (February 1948), while visiting Lha yag gu ru lha khang, the seat of the *gter ston* Gu ru chos kyi dbang phyug (1212-1270) in Lho brag, 'Dzam yag reports that he was called to assist a local woman who had fallen ill during the night. Not knowing what the cause of her sickness was, since her family swore that she had no shortcomings, 'Dzam yag prayed to the Three Jewels and by dawn her condition seemed to have improved. Suddenly, though, her bodily functions failed; concerned for the woman's life, the trader decided to part with his precious *smam grub* and gave her two of the pills he had obtained from the Karma pa, together with some salt used to dry the corpse of rDo rje 'chang sKal bzang rnam rgyal. By his own admission, at the time of his departure he did not know if the remedies had been of any benefit, but the family of the woman appeared to be happy since they thanked him with beans and lentils for his mule and one *rdo* of meat and a plate full of rice and porridge (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 129-130).

²¹² Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 239-240).

²¹³ Huber (1999b, 15).

²¹⁴ One of four major Buddhist celebrations, it occurs on the full moon (15th day) of the 4th lunar month of the Tibetan calendar. It celebrates Buddha Śākyamuni's birth, enlightenment and *parinirvāṇa*.

²¹⁵ Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 240).

²¹⁶ Tre hor gdong thog Ngag dbang theg mchog bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (b. 1933). The *sprul sku* is mentioned in Martin and Bentor (1997, 187) as the author of a chronology of the most important events in Tibetan history.

²¹⁷ Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 241).

month of the Wood Sheep Year (October 1, 1955), concerning the consecration and offering of a gilded copper *mchod rten* having the height of an arrow. The *mchod rten*, commissioned in the Water Dragon Year (1952), required three years to be brought to completion; the meticulous nature of the trader appears evident in his careful listing of both the items gathered in the assemblage of the *mchod rten* and their respective costs. The consecration of the *mchod rten*, for the realisation of which 'Dzam yag paid 6,874 silver *srang* and 5 *zho*, started on the 1st day of the 6th month of the Wood Sheep Year (July 20, 1955); the ritual continued on the 4th day (July 23) with a Gaṇacakra celebration. The *mchod rten* was eventually sent to Lhasa and donated to the Rwa sa 'phrul snang Jo khang.²¹⁸

The way in which the realisation and completion of the *mchod rten* is presented is emblematic of 'Dzam yag's attitude as it emerges through the pages of his journal. The difficulties inherent in a categorisation of the *nyin deb* have been discussed elsewhere;²¹⁹ it will therefore suffice to mention just a few key elements in the present context. The *nyin deb* is a personal narrative in which different literary genres converge – it is concurrently a diary, a ledger, a guidebook, and a travelogue; its contents have passed through a cultural and literary filter to accommodate the mind-frame of 'Dzam yag who embodies simultaneously the author and the intended reader. The journal was in fact a *private* document used by the trader to keep track of his transactions, encounters, travels, and offerings – in that being a remarkable attestation to the economics of merit at the core of Tibetan Buddhism.

The last years covered by the *nyin deb* include a succession of circumambulations of the outer and inner circuit of bKra shis lhun po,²²⁰ and various offerings to the different monastic communities visited in the course of his business trips. As mentioned earlier, at the end of his life the author's concerns are directed towards the next life; the accumulation of fortune is no longer an aim but a tool, and time and money are dedicated to increasing the merit of all beings. The economic pull of the Khams pa traders eventually yields to the eschatological power of spirituality, and religion becomes, in the

²¹⁸ Kha stag 'Dzam yag (1997, 241-243).

²¹⁹ Galli (2019a).

²²⁰ The meticulous nature of 'Dzam yag is evident in his accurate recording of the numbers of circumambulations made within a specific amount of time. For instance, on the 16th day of the 9th month of the Wood Sheep Year (November 1, 1955), he calculated that between the 5th day of the 3rd month of the Wood Sheep Year (April 27, 1955) up to that day, he had completed 196 outer circumambulations and 2,240 inner circumambulations, the merit of which he dedicated to all beings (Kha stag 'Dzam yag 1997, 243).

equation of life, the independent variable around which everything else revolves.

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Misdiagnosis or Political Assassination? Re-examining the Death of Panchen Lama Lobsang Palden Yeshe from Smallpox in 1780¹

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Introduction

In the mid 18th century the Qing dynasty was considered one of the greatest empires in the world. The population was increasing, people were prosperous and imperial power was growing. Its military had conquered many parts of Inner Asia, and European powers like the British wanted to establish trade relations with China. The ruling class were Manchus and they paid great attention to their Manchu roots, customs and rituals and considered themselves natural allies of the Mongols. Since the Mongols were followers of the Tibetan Gelugpa tradition, the Manchu also built Tibetan monasteries and translated a great number of Tibetan books from Tibetan into Mongolian and Manchu. Qianlong (1711–1799), the sixth emperor of the Qing dynasty, paid close attention to Tibetan Buddhists and surrounded himself with many learned monks and scholars. The special relationship was conducted through Buddhist religious rituals, practices and ceremonies. When Tibetan Buddhist lamas gave religious teachings and initiations, and performed Buddhist rituals for Emperors and officials, the Emperors gave monetary compensation, titles and sometimes even military protection to these lamas or Buddhist priests. Because of this religious relationship, after the founding of the Qing dynasty, successive emperors invited many Tibetan lamas to Beijing, Dolon Nor and Chengde to give religious teachings and instructions to them and their Mongol and Manchu subjects. As exemplified by the fifth Dalai Lama's visit to Beijing in 1652, inviting lamas to Beijing and China was one of the most important parts of Qing imperial ritual activity.

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The Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama were the highest and most important lamas in the Tibetan Buddhist world. While it was the third Dalai Lama who spread the Gelugpa traditions to Mongolia, the successive Panchen Lamas took a great interest in promoting Tibetan Buddhism in Mongolia. Many important Lamas both from Tibet and Mongolia were trained under the Panchen Lamas. In the mid-eighteenth century, the sixth Panchen Lama was the most important lama, not only by virtue of his status a member of this incarnation line, but also a person who had many intellectual abilities and personal qualities. At the time, after the death of the seventh Dalai Lama (1708–1757), the eighth Dalai Lama was relatively young (1758–1804) and was not as active and influential as his predecessors, notably the fifth and seventh Dalai Lamas. Thus, the sixth Panchen Lama was respected by the Qing court and highly regarded by the officials in the East India Company.

During the course of his life, he was not only a religious figurehead, but also an important scholar who left several volumes of works on many different subjects in Tibetan. He was one of the earliest Tibetan scholars to engage with Europeans and their ideas. For example, after conversations with George Bogle, he wrote a series of notes on European geography. Thus, what better way to celebrate the seventieth birthday of the Qianlong Emperor than by inviting the Panchen Lama to Beijing? The invitation was important not only in political terms, but also had religious and ritual significance. The Panchen lama accepted the emperor's invitation to Beijing. During this visit, which took place in 1780, the Panchen Lama passed away. Tibetan and Qing officials gave the cause of death as smallpox, and Purangir, an Indian middleman mediating between Tibet and the British also claimed that the Panchen Lama died from smallpox (Purangir 1800: 469-70). At least, that is how the Qing imperial court portrayed the incident, and was the version that others believed. Most Tibetans also believed that this was the case,

However, immediately after his death, many people, including some Tibetans, raised doubts about this account, and there has been always been a rumour that the Qing officials were somehow responsible for the sixth Panchen Lama's death. In the late 18th century, this had political and military significance. Because of these rumours and the disputes about the wealth of the Panchen Lama, the 10th Shamarpa went to Nepal and assisted the invading Nepalese army. This resulted in the ban on the reincarnation of the 10th Shamarpa by the Kashag until the 20th century. However, scholars who have studied this subject have dismissed the rumour as nothing more than that – a groundless rumour (Cammann 1949: 16-17). This also suggests that the British officials showed their own ignorance and prejudice towards the Qing imperial court (Teltescher 2006: 250-51).

Then, the biography of the Panchen Lama presents a rather long and complicated story of his death. On the surface, it also suggests that the cause of the Panchen Lama's death was smallpox. However, after careful reading of the Panchen Lama's biography and other relevant documents in Tibetan, which were produced in the later 18th and the 19th centuries, it is clear that the Panchen Lama's death was not a medical inevitability. Rather, it was the result of a chain of mistakes, from medical misdiagnosis to doubtful political decisions. The Panchen Lama's one biographical account is entitled *rJe bla ma srid zhi'i gtsug rgyan paN chen thams cad mkhyen pa blo bzang dpal ldan ye shes dpal bzang po'i zhal snga nas kyi rnam par thar pa nyi ma'i 'od zer zhes bya ba* (The Guru Lama crown ornament of world, the omniscient one: Lozang Penden Yéshé's biographical account known as "Sunlight"), written by the second Jamyang Zhépa Künkhyen Jikmé Wangpo (1728-1791), also known more briefly as Jikmé Wangpo, from Labrang Monastery.

According to the biography, while one of the Panchen Lama's attendants and the Qing imperial court doctor believed that he had smallpox, some, including Changkya Rölpe Dorjé and the Panchen Lama's personal physician, did not believe that he had the disease. Importantly, no one thought he had the black smallpox (the most severe and deadly form). Although these Tibetans did not accuse anybody, including Qing officials, of murdering the Panchen Lama, they did suggest that something could have been done about it. If certain medical steps had been taken, his death could have been prevented.

Jikmé Wangpo was not an ordinary Lama. He was not only the author of the official biography but also one of the trusted students of the Sixth Panchen Lama. Importantly, he was involved directly with the planning, discussion and finally the implementation of a program of inoculation. He and his doctor inoculated several hundred of the Panchen Lama's attendants. In 1784, this fifty-seven old man decided to go back to Central Tibet to seek old Tibetan manuscripts and books. In November 1785, while he was in Tashilhunpo Monastery, he was asked by the Panchen Lama's elder brother, Yingsa Lozang Jinpa, commonly known as Chungpa Hutukhtu, and by Sopen Chumbo, also known Lozang Khéchok, to write the official biography. In 1786, over five months from early March, he wrote a long and detailed two-volume biography (1991: 345-251), after being given all official records about the Panchen Lama. Jikmé Wangpo not only provided all aspects of the Panchen Lama's life, from his childhood to his death in Beijing and the final bringing of his ashes to Tashilhunpo Monastery, but also included detailed discussions, debates and decisions about smallpox. Therefore, this work is not just an official biography but is also an eyewitness account of smallpox. On the surface, the biographical account

repeats the official narrative, but in subtle ways it also provides confusing and conflicting information.

His biography is well-known among Tibetans and Tibetologists. Sarat Chandra Das (1849–1917), an Indian scholar of Tibetan, studied this work and Nima Dorjee Ragnubs translated a section of it under the title “*The Third Panchen Lama’s Visit to Chengdu*” in 2004. Similarly, the Qing imperial court left a trail of court documents and papers on him; the British had Purangir at the Panchen Lama’s court; he provided information on what he witnessed and heard about the Panchen Lama to the British officials in India, so that the British also had some information on the Panchen Lama’s death.²

The question is, how did the Panchen Lama die? What was the cause of death? Was it smallpox or something else? The Panchen Lama was a well-known figure and many people have written about him and his death. As far as I know, no modern scholar has examined the death of the Panchen Lama in the light of his Tibetan biography. If this is the case, then this article is the first attempt to investigate the circumstances surrounding the sixth Panchen Lama’s untimely death.

Smallpox in Tibet

Smallpox is an infectious disease caused by either of two virus variants, known as *Variola major* and *Variola minor*. Before its eradication in 1979, smallpox was known as the greatest killer in the world. It caused more destruction and devastation than any other disease. In the course of human history, many civilisations all over the world developed various treatments and ritual prayers with a view to preventing it. Smallpox played an important role in shaping this relationship. The study of smallpox is a well-established field and many scholars have written its general history; such as Donald R. Hopkins’ work, *The Greatest Killer: Smallpox in History* (2002) and Gareth Williams’ work *Angel of Death: the Story of Smallpox* (2010). There are also many scholars who have worked on smallpox in China and India. For example, Joseph Needham claims that China was the earliest country to develop inoculation as a preventive measure with practices that go back at least to the eleventh century (1980: 28).

Although some scholars have speculated that neither the Chinese nor the Tibetans had an adequate knowledge of medical practices and procedures to inoculate the Panchen Lama (Teltscher 2013: 211, Liusen 2012), Tibet also had a long history of smallpox. Tibetans studied the

² According to Scuyler Cammann, this report first was published in Alexander Dalrymple’s Oriental repertory (London, in periodical form, April 1796, and as a book in 1808; pp. 145-64 of the latter) and republished by Turner (Cammann 1949: 5).

disease and developed a variety of methods and treatments for it, with a great number of medical works on the subject being produced. In the course of the history of Tibet a great number of medical works dealing with smallpox were produced and Tibetans practiced various preventative methods for centuries. In Tibetan medical texts, smallpox is known as *drumne* (*'brum nad*, “the disease of falling scabs”), inoculation (*brum 'debs* [literally the planting of smallpox]) and quarantine to minimise the spread of this disease, and was attributed to the female goddess, known as Mamo Khandro (Ma mo mkha' 'gro). The Tibetan medical work *The Four Tantras* (*Rgyud bzhi*) has one chapter on smallpox that gives a detailed account of the name, causes and treatments associated with it. When smallpox struck, as if often did, there were usually historical and biographical accounts that mentioned the events. In particular, during the 17th and 18th centuries, as many military incursions from Mongolia and China occurred and Tibetans' travel to Inner Asia increased, smallpox often struck in Tibet and devastated its communities and people. When the disease afflicted the Mongol army in 1633, for example, no one was able to go to the camp to make peace between the Tibetan and Mongol armies. It was the 4th Lozang Chökyi Gyeltsen (1570–1662), who was immunized from smallpox, who went to the Mongol army camp and made the peace between the Tibetans and Mongols. Smallpox not only had a devastating impact on the people in Tibet, but it also greatly influenced how Tibetans conducted their relations with outsiders. All people, especially those who came from China, were suspected as potential carriers of smallpox to Tibet. Lobsang Yeshe (1663–1737), the predecessor of the 6th Panchen Lama, did not go to China because of the fear of smallpox, in spite of the Kangxi Emperor's repeated invitations and insistence (Schwieger 2015: 85).

As destructive as it was, there were no effective treatments for this disease. Before the late 18th century, there was only one preventative measure known: inoculation or variolation. In using the dry scabs of smallpox from a former victim, a doctor would deliberately inject a preparation or put dry smallpox scabs onto a healthy person who had never had smallpox. As a result of this procedure, the subject would contract a minor and less dangerous form of smallpox and would then be immunized from this disease. Before Edward Jenner's vaccinations this was the most effective way to prevent or avoid dangerous smallpox. However, the practice was not without its own risks. The danger of contracting a virulent form of the disease as a result of inoculation could be high, which meant that many of the people who underwent this treatment might die as a result. Thus, there was some reluctance to take this medication.

Among the medical historians, there are extensive debates about the origins of inoculation. Among these civilizations, China and India usually feature at the top of the list. However, for a long time Tibetans had known that smallpox could be used against smallpox. I have found Tibetan sources that indicate that Tibetans may have been among the earliest people to leave records of inoculation, earlier even than the Chinese and Indians.³ In the mid-18th century, the practice of inoculation was widespread throughout the Tibetan Buddhist world. Some monasteries became centres of inoculation. Sumpa Khenpo Yeshe Paljor (1704–1788), an important Gelugpa master in the Amdo region, wrote in his autobiography, “In the Iron Dragon year (1760), the existing white smallpox in Kokonor became known and heard, so I sent people to collect smallpox scabs. Then I inoculated my master cook Zhidar. Then this lineage spread to Tibet, China and Mongolia and this practice has been continuously practised to the present day” (Sumpa Khenpo 2015: vol. 1, 737–38). He claimed to have inoculated thousands of people in Tibet, Mongolia and China.

In 1772, smallpox struck Tashilhunpo Monastery. In order to avoid smallpox, the Panchen Lama and his entourage took refuge at Shang Déchen Rapgyé Ling, a branch monastery of Tashilhunpo. They stayed there for three years. When George Bogle (1746–1781), a Scottish diplomat, came to see him, he and his party had to go to Shang Déchen Rapgyé Ling. In the course of many long and friendly conversations with the Panchen Lama, Bogle recounted how Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689–1762) had introduced a form of inoculation from Turkey to England; people were no longer afraid of contracting smallpox (MSS; Teltscher 2013: 137). Because of these backgrounds, the Panchen Lama was clearly aware of the dangers of smallpox and its effect on individuals and communities.

China: the cradle of smallpox

Without doubt, many Tibetans considered that the invitation to the Panchen Lama was important. Primarily, it was an honour and a privilege to be invited to the court by the Qing emperor, not only because the emperor was a patron but because he was also a Buddhist. It was seen as the responsibility of Buddhist teachers to go wherever devout disciples invited them to come to teach and spread the Buddhist Dharma. Thus, many lamas were willing to undertake the journey. Particularly, after the Manchus took over Beijing in 1644, many Tibetan lamas came to the capital with their attendants, bringing with them Buddhist texts or relics or medicine. When returning to Tibet, they

³ I shall explore this in the due course.

came back with camel loads of silver coin, precious stones, furs, silk, fabrics, and products that were only produced in China, but exported by Russians and Europeans. Thus, for Tibetans who were immunised from smallpox, going to China was considered as one of the avenues to riches and prestige.

However, while regarding China as the land of Manjushri, Tibetans also viewed it as the land of infectious diseases, including smallpox. People who were not immunized against smallpox were reluctant to go there. If someone had not had smallpox already, traveling to China was considered as a risk to life and the fear of contracting smallpox was one of the primary reasons for avoiding visiting China. The Qing's relationship with their Inner Asian subjects, mainly Mongols and Tibetans, was not only exercised through politics, military conquests and economics, but also through cultural and medical conduits. Thus, some background to Tibetan perceptions of smallpox in China is an important part of this article.

China had a long history of smallpox and had developed various treatments for this disease. In the course of Chinese medical history, the Chinese documented smallpox as early as the fifth century BC and the physicians in the country had adopted various terms and methods to treat it (Needham 1980). Following their establishment of the Qing Dynasty in 1644, the Manchus established several *bidousou* (isolated shelters) to quarantine smallpox victims (Chang 1996: 172). Kangxi ordered the inoculation of his children and imperial family members. When Mongol children flocked to Kangxi's military camp in the Ordos, he inoculated some of these children too (Perdue 2009: 48). In the mid-18th century, the Qianlong ordered to publish a medical text known as *The Golden Mirror of Medical Orthodoxy*, which included several methods of inoculation. In general, China considered smallpox as a disease of children. Even in the *The Golden Mirror*, it is part of pediatric medicine (Hanson 2003: 139).

For centuries, however, like many Europeans in the 19th century (Heinrich 2008), Tibetans also viewed China as the cradle of smallpox. If someone had not had smallpox already, traveling to China was considered as a gamble on one's life. Thus, if we read the biographical accounts of some Tibetan lamas, the fear of smallpox in China was one of the primary reasons to avoid going to China. Initially, for example, the second Jamyang Zhépa Künkhyen Jikmé Wangpo did not go China because of smallpox (Gungtang Konchok Tenpai Dronme 1990: 110). Similarly, after hearing the Panchen Lama was visiting China, Sumpa Khenpo Yéshé Penjor (1704–1788) told his friends, "if he has not had smallpox already, China has a lot of infectious disease. His body, which is like a white lotus without any impurity, should not go to the foulest of swamps" (Sumpa Khenpo 2015: vol. 1, 565). This reflected

how Tibetans felt when they had to undertake journeys to China; traveling to China was both blessed and cursed. Thus, the Panchen Lama's decision to travel to China was not an easy one to make, especially in view of the precedent of declining many such invitations that had been set by his predecessors. Unlike the Chinese, who had had a long history of exposure to smallpox, Tibetans believed that they were especially susceptible to this disease. One of the long-term residents in Beijing, the fourth Tsenpo Nomön Hen (1789-1839), an eminent Tibetan geographer and physician, who also introduced the techniques of Jennerian vaccine to Tibet (Yongdan 2016), wrote in his medical text, "in this time of degeneracy, all infectious diseases, and especially smallpox, are active. Particularly, as we Tibetans are easily susceptible to this disease, we should focus more on the methods of protection and prevention (Tsenpo 2007: 211). This great Tibetan physician is claiming here that Tibetans were especially susceptible to smallpox, and is advocating vaccination and inoculation.

Discussion on inoculation

When the 6th Panchen Lama made the decision that he would undertake the journey to China, smallpox was at the forefront of his mind. On the long journey from Tashilhunpo to Chengde, there were many discussions and debates about smallpox, mainly about whether or not one should agree to be inoculated, and who should receive this treatment. From these discussions we can see how divergent views were expressed, and how a possible misdiagnosis led to the demise of the Panchen Lama. In particular, these discussions also show how the Qing officials and the Tibetans had a different understanding and attitude towards smallpox and inoculation. Finally, the Panchen Lama made the decision that the rest of his entourage ought to be inoculated in spite of the Qing officials' objections.

According to the Panchen Lama's biography, the earliest discussion occurred while he was on his way to Kumbum monastery in Amdo. The Panchen Lama and his entourage left Tashilhunpo monastery on the 10th of April 1779 and were approaching the borderland of Amdo. After learning of his imminent arrival, Jikmé Wangpo, his future biographer, sent his chief attendant Tenpa Dargyé to greet the Panchen Lama's party. In the greeting letter, he gave a warning about smallpox and asked the Panchen Lama to consider what kinds of measures and preparations were needed for people who were not immunised against the disease (Gungtang Konchok Tenpai Dronme 1990: 279). On the 23rd of September, Jikmé Wangpo himself went to greet the Panchen Lama. He caught up with the party in front of Amnye Machen, one of the holiest mountains in Golok. At the camp, several people from the

Panchen Lama's entourage asked Jikmé Wangpo for inoculation against smallpox; he inoculated these people without any incidents, and they recovered quickly. After hearing this news, the Panchen Lama was pleased and asked Jikmé Wangpo to inoculate more people. Again, Jikmé Wangpo inoculated 150 people from the Panchen Lama's party and all recovered from it quickly (Gungtang Konchok Tenpai Dronme 1990: 282). This experiment suggests that Jikmé Wangpo and his doctor had clearly mastered the technique of inoculation.

On the way to Kumbum monastery, the discussion about smallpox and inoculations continued. On October 11th, they passed through the Tso Ngönpo territory⁴ and arrived at Tongkor monastery; symbolically, they had arrived in the borderland of China, the land of smallpox. The Panchen Lama gave an initiation known as Ritröma Loma Gyönma, which is based on the goddess Gyönma, known as one who eliminates all diseases (Jikmé Wangpo 2002: vol 2, 793). The entourage stayed for several months in Kumbum monastery, and discussions about smallpox and inoculations continued. In January in the Iron Mouse year (1780), as they were preparing to leave China, it was decision time. The Panchen Lama told his brother, who was working as his treasurer at that time, Sopön Chumbo, a cup bearer, "Like the two of you, many of us are still not immunised from smallpox, and so far we have not done anything about it. Now what do we need to do?" He reminded them that measures had to be taken. Privately he also told Jikmé Wangpo, "Since there is much smallpox in China, if we do not do something about it, all these people be at serious risk of catching this disease. When the time comes, you have to go there to help them" (Jikmé Wangpo 2002: vol 2, 820-821).

On March 10th, they arrived in the fortress town of Zhuang lang 庄浪, today's Zhuanglang County in Gansu province. Until now, even though they had held many discussions and debates about the implication of having inoculations, a decision had not been made. Finally, in this city, after consultation with his closest officials and attendants, the Panchen Lama decided that all officials and attendants who had not been immunised needed to be inoculated, including his brother and Sopön Chumbo. This medical task was given to Jikmé Wangpo, his attendant Kachu Lozang Könchok and the personal physician Trinlé Gyatso. He also chose Alasha as the location where all these people were to be inoculated. After the decision was made, the Panchen Lama summoned his brother and Sopön Chumbo and said:

⁴ A reference to Mongol and Tibetan territories that were created by the Qing authorities after the war of the Water Hare year (*chu yos dus 'khrug chen mo*).

“Tomorrow the two of you and others who are not immunised against smallpox are leaving for Tengyé Ling monastery in Alasha for inoculation, and should make preparation for this occasion. Although this is an unthinkable event, because of the bliss of [the Three] Jewels, there won’t be any problem; please put your trust in me” (Jikmé Wangpo 2002: vol. 2, 840).

Without any exceptions, the Panchen Lama simply told them that they needed to go Alasha for inoculation. However, this decision did not go down well with his brother and Sopön Chumbo. They said “we are certain that the Panchen Lama has had a minor form of smallpox, so we also can accept inoculation. However, we are coming with you to serve you. We have never thought of going anywhere without you. Please don’t ask us to go somewhere” (Jikmé Wangpo 2002: vol. 2, 840). Here they claimed that they were certain the Panchen Lama had had smallpox. They could not think of going anywhere without him. This was figurative speech rather than a rejection of the prospect of inoculation. Then the Panchen Lama insisted: “I have no problems. If the two of you don’t go, then the other people won’t either, so the two of you must go” (Jikmé Wangpo 2002: vol. 2, 840). They had no choice but to accept the Panchen Lama’s decision.

So far, the discussions and debates had occurred among the Panchen Lama’s officials and close students like Jikmé Wangpo. The Qing officials were excluded from these discussion and decisions. Now, since more than three hundred people, including the Panchen Lama’s brother and Sapon Chumbo, were moving away from the Panchen Lama’s camp, the Qing officials needed to be informed. Three days after the Panchen Lama made the decision, on March 13th, the Panchen Lama summoned two Qing officials to the camp and told them of his decision:

“I will send a group of people led by my elder brother and Sopön Chumbo to Alasha to be inoculated. You two ministers do not need to worry about it. They won’t take very long and the conditions of this disease are not serious. Please do not report this to the emperor” (Jikmé Wangpo 2002: vol 2, 844).

In the meantime, he asked two Qing officials for assistance regarding food, lodging and transportation for these people. After hearing the Panchen Lama’s decision, the two officials were shocked and told the Panchen Lama:

“It does not matter what decision you have made. Since we were sent here by the Emperor to assist you, we have to report all important matters to the Emperor. This is a serious decision” (Jikmé Wangpo 2002: vol 2, 844-845).

Then the two officials told the Panchen Lama about the imperial customs and traditions surrounding inoculation:

“At the Qing imperial court, we have internal customs and traditions for inoculating people. But it is only done to children under ten years old. There is no custom of inoculating people who are ten years old and above. The season of inoculation also must be when trees are about to blossom (summer). ... Drungpa Khu-tuktu (his brother) is almost fifty years old, the rest of the entourage are older than twenty years old, and most of them are in their thirties to sixties” (Jikmé Wangpo 2002: vol 2, 845).

In short, here what the Panchen Lama proposed and what the Tibetans were planning to do was completely different from what the Qing officials were accustomed to or familiar with. The Qing officials gave the reasons for their objection as follows:

“As you have suggested, even if we do not report this to the Emperor immediately. We have to tell you this. If Chungpa Hutukhtu and others have problems, we cannot say that we did not warn you and did not tell you our customs. If the Emperor found out, our necks would be on the line. So, please do not do this” (Jikmé Wangpo 2002: vol 2, 844-845).

The officials were citing imperial customs and traditions to warn the Panchen Lama that this inoculation should not proceed. Even if they did not report this news to the Emperor immediately, he would have found out soon enough if something happened to these people as a result of the medical procedure, and this would have resulted in their being beheaded. In the short, they did not want to take any responsibility for this.

While we have these Tibetan accounts, no official Qing reports about the discussions are available. From the Tibetan sources we can see how the Panchen Lama and the Qing officials differed on the issue. While the Panchen Lama agreed that inoculation was a risky medical procedure, they also differed on some medical procedures and political authority. For the Panchen Lama, as Jikmé Wangpo showed, the dates of inoculation and the ages of patients were not an issue. As long as there were good physicians to conduct this procedure, it could be performed anywhere, to anyone irrespective of age, and in any season. As the Qing officials point out, the Qing imperial court had established

rules and regulations on this practice. So, it was not surprising that the officials were alarmed at the Tibetans' intention to inoculate these people in the coming spring. Importantly, they had different views on authority. The Qing officials had been sent by the Qianlong Emperor to oversee the Panchen Lama's journey to Beijing; all important matters had to be referred to them, and they had to report back to the Emperor. However, after consulting his attendants, the Panchen Lama made his own decisions and simply informed the Qing officials. The Panchen Lama solved the impasse by taking personal responsibility. According to his biography, he said:

"I am aware of the imperial customs, the times of inoculation and the ages of people. In principle, it is an unthinkable decision. After serious prayers to the [three] precious jewels and investigations, there won't be any problems. The emperor won't do anything about it. Frankly, as the two officials stated, if my elder brother and others go to China without being inoculated, from this point on, we have to cross thousands of people and pass through many cities and towns. Many of these places are sources of smallpox. If someone is affected, we Tibetans have almost no chance of surviving. Many people will be affected. Without any doubt, this will be of great concern to us. Whatever we are doing here is a service to his majesty. So if you have reported it to him, I can guarantee that you won't receive any punishment from the emperor or incur his displeasure. Moreover, you will be rewarded: I take all responsibility for this" (Jikmé Wangpo 2002: vol 2, 840-846).

After the Panchen Lama took personal responsibility for his actions, the Qing officials seemed to withdraw their opposition and permitted the Panchen Lama's entourage to be inoculated as he had advised them.

On March 24th, the Panchen Lama sent three hundred of his entourage, led by his brother and the treasurer, Drungpa Khutukhtu Sapon Chumbo, to Tengyé Ling monastery in Alasha. This monastery was chosen because Alasha Wang and Dakpo Rinpoché (Dwags po rin po che) had gone there and were willing to help (2002: 846). For conducting this medical procedure, he sent Jikmé Wangpo and his doctor to perform this procedures. As mentioned above, the two of them had already inoculated some people in Golok and they must have mastered the procedure and techniques.

The biographical account does not say how three hundred people were inoculated in the same place at the same time; however, during the quarantine, the patients could not go out. The letters were exchanged between the Panchen Lama and Jikmé Wangpo. After leaving his three hundred attendants in Alasha, the Panchen Lama, along with

the Qing officials, slowly travelled toward to Chengde. On April 11th, they crossed the Yellow River and arrived in Ordos. On May 10th, when the Panchen Lama was in Ordos, the first of party who were to be inoculated arrived, led by Sapon Chumbo. The next day, they crossed the Yellow River again and arrived in the Tumed region of Inner Mongolia and slowly travelled toward Hohhot. In Hohhot, on May 21st, the Panchen Lama sent a letter to say that all the immunisations had been successful (Jikmé Wangpo 2002: vol 2, 880). On May 27th, Drungpa Khutukhtu and the rest of the people who had gone to Alasha for inoculation joined the entourage. This marked the end of the operation.

On the 1st of June, the Qianglong Emperor wrote back and said:

“I heard the report about the successful inoculation to Drungpa Khutukhtu, Sapon Chumbo and other hundred people arrived in the place called Umita. This is indeed a very important decree. I am very happy about it. On the way here, the weather was getting warm. The people, and in particular, the treasurer (Drungpa Khutukht) were immunised from smallpox. I was worrying about it. After your arrival in Alashan, hundreds of attendants were inoculated. Even though the treasurer was fifty years old, he was successfully inoculated. This must come from your bliss and it is an auspicious sign. I am happy about it. It is really admirable that you did not consult me about this issue. It spared me anxiety” (Jikmé Wangpo 2002: vol 2, 888-889).

This was how the official biography of the Panchen Lama and Tibetan sources portrayed the discussions and debates about inoculation and how the Panchen Lama made his decision. From these conversations and debates, we may note that several important issues emerge among different groups. First, as the Panchen Lama and his entourage departed from Tibet and approached the Chinese border, smallpox was the chief concern amongst all the members of the party, including the Panchen Lama himself. While people like Jikmé Wangpo openly advocated inoculation, others, including the Qing officials, were less enthusiastic. Secondly, these concerns and debates exposed a difference of opinion over smallpox and inoculation. For the Qing officials, smallpox was a children's disease, and inoculation was for children who were no more than ten years old. Tibetans did not see it that way. It was the disease of all ages and in particular, Tibetans were susceptible to it. Thirdly, it was the Panchen Lama who made the decision to inoculate the members of his party who were not immunised from smallpox, and it was also his decision not to inoculate himself. Did this decision cost him his life in Beijing?

The last days of the Panchen Lama

With festivals and official functions held for him by Mongols and the Qing officials in Mongolia and Jehol, on September 1 the Panchen Lama's party arrived in the Western Huangsi (Western Yellow Temple), which had been specifically built for him by Qianlong⁵. On October 24th, he told his brother and other attendants that he had a pain in his forehead. They asked whether he needed to see doctor or not. He replied that "it is not a major issue, and it is unnecessary to see the doctor". He did not have any special symptoms on October 25th; but his attendants were worried and brought his Tibetan doctor to see him. After checking his pulse, his physician said "all pulses seem normal. He may not need medicine. But in order to relieve his headache, he could take some pills" (Jikmé Wangpo 2002: vol. 2, 1067). On the 26th, he even went to Changkya Rölpe Dorjé's residence in Beijing and took part in a feast here. However, he did not eat much; he said it was nothing to worry about – he was simply not hungry. Sopon Chumbo said, "You have been complaining of some sort of headache since the 24th or 25th; however, all diagnosis appears to be normal, but let us ask Changkya Rölpe Dorjé to check your pulse" (Jikmé Wangpo 2002: vol 2, 1070). The pulse was checked and the doctor said that it was nothing serious, but it would be a good idea to take some pills. After returning to his residence, on the 26th, the Panchen Lama stayed in his room and cancelled all official functions. While he was resting, his attendants conducted many religious rituals, including prayers and donating a large sum of money to 7,500 beggars in Beijing. During the day, the emperor sent a minister to see him, and offered him a thangka by Qianlong himself. After seeing the Panchen Lama's condition, this minister asked whether it needed to be reported to the emperor or not. The Panchen Lama replied that it was not necessary. However, at the request of Sopon Chumbo and his brother, he did not see people for several days. Then again, his doctor checked and did not find any unusual signs. Still, Sopon Chumbo and brother were worried, and asked him to take some pills. He replied "for years and months, I have not had any heavy food in the afternoon, and it did not affect me. I still do not want to eat the noodles, but I will take some pills" (Jikmé Wangpo 2002: vol. 2, 1079).

In the evening, he took some pills and went to bed after taking off all his clothing, which an ordained monk was not supposed to do. On the morning of the 28th, when Sopon Chumbo inquired about his condition, he replied that it had not deteriorated but that he still had some

⁵ See, Qianlong's European time piece gifts to the Panchen lama, my incoming article, "Timepieces as Gifts: Exploring European Clocks and Watches in Tibet".

nausea and no appetite. The personal physician checked his pulse and said the condition was the same. However, after seeing some red lesions on his body, Sapon Chumbo suspected that the Panchen Lama might have contracted smallpox, as Sapon Chumbo had also experienced vomiting and nausea while he was in Alasha. They checked his body and noticed some enanthema or red rash on his hands and feet and in his mouth. At that time, Sapon Chumbo told the Panchen Lama that he might have smallpox. However, the Panchen lama was adamant and said that it could not be so, and that they did not need to worry about it. In order to check again, they invited Changkya to diagnose him. After checking the pulse again, Changkya reconfirmed his diagnosis and said the pulse was as normal as before. However, whether he was going to live or not depended on his will. "If it is, this must be reported to the emperor and I will do that" (Jikmé Wangpo 2002: vol. 2, 1082). Then Changkya reported the Panchen Lama's condition to the emperor. On the same day, the emperor sent a message to his brother and Sapon Chumbo, saying that he had heard about the Panchen Lama's illness and that he would visit him the following morning.

Early on the morning of the 29th, the emperor came to see him. Sitting on a wooden chair near the Panchen Lama's bed, the emperor expressed his sadness and then inquired about the conditions of his illness. After leaving the bedchamber, he instructed the sixth prince Yongrong (1744-1790), Changkya Rölpe Dorjé, and the other two ministers to take care of the Panchen Lama. The emperor also instructed the people who surrounded the Panchen Lama to make less noise. After returning to the Palace, the emperor sent one of his favourite ministers, Heshen (1750-1799), and two imperial doctors to check on the Panchen Lama. The doctors checked the pulse and said: "from this red rash, he appears to have a minor smallpox but his pulse suggests that the illness is not serious. His pulse is different from anybody else's" (Jikmé Wangpo 2002: vol. 2, 1082). Then they gave him two pills and left for the day to report to the emperor. On the same day, again, the Panchen Lama asked his attendants to perform a number of ritual practices for him, including distributing a donation of 2,300 silver coins to 5,727 beggars. In the evening and morning he took the medicines that had been prescribed by the imperial doctors.

On October 30th, two imperial physicians and the sixth prince came to see him. At mid-night, he told the emperor's messenger that he was feeling fine. On November 1st, the sixth prince, Changkya Rölpe Dorjé and two imperial physicians came to see him. After checking his pulse, the doctors informed him that his condition had not deteriorated. Changkya Rölpe Dorjé suggested that he should take more pills. However, during the day, his condition worsened. Once, he looked at the

sky as he saw something, and smiled. He said he felt extremely warm and asked his attendants to remove the animal skins that covered the bed, and asked to be dressed in thin clothing. He told his attendants to prepare some ritual practices. Finally, he asked the two Indians who were traveling with him to be brought to him. One was not at home, but the famous Purangir was there. He was brought into the bedchamber, where the Panchen Lama said something to him in Hindi, though the biography does not record what he said. The Panchen Lama passed away at sunset on the 1st of November in the Iron Mouse year (1780).

It is important to understand the final stage of the Panchen Lama's life: the diagnosis and symptoms of his illness, and what might have caused his death. Without forensic evidence, a detailed analysis of the body and medical records, it is difficult to determine whether the Panchen Lama died from smallpox. However, even on his deathbed, whether or not he had the disease, and if so what form of it he had, were intensely debated and discussed. In the midst of these discussions, Sopon Chumbo suspected that the Panchen Lama did have smallpox; the imperial doctor confirmed this. It was after taking pills prescribed by the imperial doctor that the Panchen Lama passed way in his bed in Beijing. Either through embarrassment or shame, the Qing official accounts record virtually nothing about the conditions and the illness of the Panchen Lama. However, his Tibetan biography provides not only daily updates on his condition, and what kind of diagnosis and medicine he received, but also shows how both the Tibetans and the Qing officials conducted rituals, recited prayers and made prayers donations, and that both Tibetan and imperial doctors had treated him (Jikmé Wangpo 2002: vol. 2, 1067-1093).

This concludes the official version of story. From this detailed record of the Panchen lama's final days, it is possible to detect a number of signs of concern. Firstly, there are clear indications of disagreement over the diagnosis. Sopon Chumbo believed that the Panchen Lama had smallpox, and two imperial doctor supported this diagnosis. By contrast, the Panchen Lama himself, his Tibetan doctor and Changkya Rölpé Dorjé believed that whatever he had was not smallpox (Jikmé Wangpo 2002: vol 2, 1079, 1082). Secondly, after his visit, the emperor sent two imperial doctors to treat him. Both doctors claimed that the illness was not serious but that it could be cured, and they gave him some pills. Two days after taking the pills administered by the imperial physicians his condition worsened. He then felt seriously ill and passed away in the evening.

What caused the Panchen Lama's death?

This question is not easy to answer. It involves a complex medical history, diagnosis and treatment. Immediately following the Panchen Lama's death, there was a rumour that the Qianlong Emperor was somehow responsible. Sir George Staunton (1781-1859), who travelled to China with the Macartney's mission in 1892, might be the first Englishman to express this hypothesis (Cammann 1949: 15). According to this version, Qianlong was jealous of the Panchen Lama's influence and prestige among the Mongols, and had him poisoned. However, the origin of this rumour is difficult to trace, but many people believed that it originated with the tenth Shamarpa, Mipam Chödrup Gyamtso (1742-1793), a step-brother of the Panchen Lama (Staunton 1797: 52). If that was the case, the rumour did not come from ordinary people in Tibet but originated with one of the Panchen Lama's relatives. As other Qing scholars have argued, it is unlikely that the Qing officials poisoned the Panchen Lama deliberately. However, we cannot completely rule out the possibility that both the Tibetan and Qing officials were responsible for the death of the Panchen Lama as a result of a misdiagnosis and inappropriate medical treatments.

The first question is whether the Panchen Lama really had had smallpox before going to Beijing. If he had already had the disease three times, as he persisted in saying to his doctor and others who believed that this was the case, then smallpox was not the likely cause of his death: it is a medical fact that once a person has had smallpox they would be most unlikely to contract the disease again, something the Tibetans had known for hundreds of years. The *Gyüzhi*, the fundamental text of Tibetan medicine, mentions that once a person has had smallpox and survived it, he or she will not get it again.

The second mistake that the Panchen Lama made was that he did not undergo inoculation like the rest of his entourage. As mentioned earlier, there was extensive discussion about this among the Panchen Lama's people; while people like Jikmé Wangpo, who insisted that the Panchen Lama should be inoculated, there were Qing officials who argued that the treatment should not even be performed on Sapon Chumbo and his brother, let alone on the Panchen Lama. This detailed information comes from the biographical account of Jikmé Wangpo, which was written by Gungtang Konchok Tenpai Dronme (1762-1823), a famous scholar of Labrang monastery. The account states that the Panchen Lama's announcement of his plan to inoculate his entourage became a contentious issue between the Qing officials and the Tibetans (1990: 287). Balmang Konchok Gyaltsen (1764-1853), also known as Balmang Pandita, provides more specific information. In his famous work *Bkra shis 'khyil gyi gdan rabs rang bzhin dbyangs su brjod pa'i lha'i*

rnga bo che (Chronicle of Labrang Tashi Khyil known as “the Sound of the Great Drum”),

“Jikmé Wangpo asked the sixth Panchen Lama whether he had smallpox. The Panchen Lama answered that he had had white smallpox after being exposed to an object from adjacent countries. Since it could not be guaranteed that he had smallpox, Jikmé Wangpo again asked the Panchen Lama to be inoculated. He asked twice. The Panchen Lama answered that he had smallpox. On the third occasion when he asked for inoculation, the Panchen Lama said in a playful way that he had had smallpox three times. The Panchen Lama insisted that he did not want to be inoculated” (Balmang Pandita 1987: 98).

Since Balmang Pandita has provided neither the details of the object that the Panchen Lama had been exposed to nor how he contracted smallpox from this substance, it is difficult to judge whether it was possible but it seems highly improbable. Balmang Pandita mentions several important things here. Firstly, it was Jikmé Wangpo who inquired whether the Panchen Lama had had smallpox or not. In medical terms, this was significant because if the Panchen Lama had indeed had the disease, he would have been immunised against it and there would have been no cause for concern. The Panchen Lama answered that he had already had smallpox after touching or being exposed to an object from a foreign country. This would have been a most unlikely cause of infection, since the disease was known to be spread through air or by contact with infected people. It was highly unlikely that an object brought from a foreign country would have infected the Panchen Lama. It may be that, with this medical impossibility in the mind, Jikmé Wangpo asked the Panchen Lama three times to be inoculated, but the request was refused. Of course, Balmang Pandita did not blame anybody but the low merit of sentient beings in this degenerate era. This is of course a Buddhist sentiment, implying that the reincarnations of lamas such as the Panchen Lama come to the world to save sentient beings from suffering, but that in this case the beneficiaries had insufficient merit to ensure that he remained in the world. What we have to remember here is that the Panchen Lama believed that he had had smallpox, and therefore did not need inoculation.

Finally, let us assume that the Panchen Lama had had smallpox before going to Beijing and that what he had at the time of his death was not smallpox. The question then is, what illness did he have in Beijing? What about the two imperial doctors who prescribed medicine? As mentioned earlier, there were no medicines that could have cured smallpox. Was it possible that the two imperial doctors had made a misdiagnosis and gave the wrong medicine to the Panchen Lama? If

that were the case, the rumour that his death was somehow connected to the Qing imperial court was not completely baseless. So, what kind of disease might the Panchen Lama have had? It is impossible to speculate; he could have had any one of a number of diseases with similar symptoms such as measles, for example. At the very least, he must at some point in his life have manifested the symptoms of a smallpox-like disease to justify the belief that he had had the disease before.

There is also a political dimension here which must be considered: the difference in the ways the Tibetans and the Qing officials saw smallpox. For the Qing officials, smallpox was a child's disease, and inoculation was only given to children under ten years old, and the two officials accompanying the Panchen Lama simply stated this position to him. For Tibetans, it was a risky medication; but neither the age of persons nor the season was significant, something that was unthinkable for the Qing; the Tibetan decision to inoculate adult men was shocking to the officials traveling with the Panchen Lama. Even if the Panchen Lama had wanted to have an inoculation, would the Qing officials have allowed it? While the Panchen Lama opposed it on the medical grounds, the Qing officials opposed it for political reasons and out of consideration for court rituals. As the Qing officials clearly expressed, they not only had strict imperial orders to take care of the Panchen Lama's travel, but also had a duty to monitor his activities. These officials did not have any power to prevent the Tibetans from being inoculated, but in the case of the Panchen Lama, it appears that they had strict imperial orders to inform the emperor of everything he did. Although the biographical sources do not explicitly mention how they discouraged the Panchen Lama from being inoculated, it is implied that the officials tried to stop all Tibetans from receiving the treatment. Whatever the case, the Sixth Panchen Lama's death in Beijing seems to be a more complicated matter than the official histories portray. It involved many critical decisions, both on political and medical grounds; however, medical misdiagnosis appears to be the main reason for his death, while a combination of events fostered a rumour that the Qing officials were somehow responsible.

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Birthplace of the Seventh Karma pa, Chos grags rgya mtsho (1454–1506): Description draws from Tibetan Geomancy and Pilgrimage Guidebooks

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1. Introduction¹

Reading the beginning part of the life story (*rnam thar*) of the Seventh Karma pa from the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, one comes across quite some interesting passages, such as an account of his intermediate state between his sixth and seventh incarnation (*bar do'i rnam thar*)², descriptions of visionary experiences of his parents and other people before his birth, miraculous events around and after his birth³, as well as a description of his birthplace. This description of the birthplace, at first sight, seems to be just a “nice poetical description”. However, when closely read, almost every detail appears to be imbued with meaning and belongs to an elaborate system, that of Tibetan geomancy (*sa dpyad*). Furthermore, this passage also exhibits similarities to descriptions found in pilgrimage guidebooks (*gnas yig*). In this paper, I would like to present these findings in more detail.

1-1. Tibetan Geomancy (*sa dpyad*)

The term *sa dpyad* literally means “examination of a place”. If one looks up the definition in *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, it is threefold:

1. Characteristics of the layout of a place;
2. how to discriminate the layout of a place into good and bad;
3. books about the analysis of the layout of a place.⁴

¹ I would like to thank Artur Przybyślawski, who encouraged me to write this paper and who kindly provided some feedback on an earlier version.

² For an annotated translation and analysis of this *bar do'i rnam thar* and an overview on other extant representatives of this genre, see Dell 2020.

³ For an annotated translation and analysis, see Dell forthcoming a and forthcoming b.

⁴ “1) *sa cha'i bkod pa'i mtshan rtags/ 2) sa cha'i bkod pa legs nyes brtag dpyad byed tshul/ 3) sa cha'i bkod pa brtag dpyad kyi dpe cha!*”. See Yísün 1985, *sa dpyad*.

Thus, *sa dpyad* describes the characteristics of the (mostly) natural arrangement of a place or territory comparing the shape of natural formations (such as mountains, earth, valleys, rivers, vegetation) to both living beings and inanimate objects. According to this system, the appearance of a place has certain effects on its inhabitants – positive or negative. It is mainly used to determine, if a certain place is appropriate for erecting a building, such as a living house, temple, monastery, stupa, or to find such appropriate places in a given landscape⁵. Moreover, *sa dpyad* covers certain rituals to be done before and during the construction work. The term is usually rendered into English as “Tibetan geomancy”⁶. However, literally it just means an examination/analysis of a land.

The main source on *sa dpyad* available to us is the 32nd chapter of the *Vaidūrya dkar po*⁷ (“White Berry”) by Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653–1705)⁸. Maurer provides an annotated translation of this difficult text⁹. The chapter can roughly be divided into three parts:

1. Avoidance of negative sites,
2. acceptance of positive sites,
3. rituals to be performed before and during construction work¹⁰.

The description of the Seventh Karma pa’s birthplace, which I will present in this paper, exhibits only the most positive geomantic characteristics of the landscape. Therefore, I only refer to the middle part of the geomantic work to identify the *sa dpyad* borrowings in the Karma pa’s birthplace description, which alone covers about 43 pages in translation¹¹.

⁵ For a brief definition, see also Maurer 2009b, p. 199, 2012, p. 67, for a more extensive definition and discussion see Maurer 2009a, pp. 9–12, Maurer 2019a, pp. 89–92, and Maurer 2019b, pp. 1–4.

⁶ This rendering is not unproblematic, as the Western term “geomancy” carries different meanings, which are not all covered by *sa dpyad* and vice versa. A discussion of this is found in all references mentioned in footnote 5.

⁷ Maurer (2009a, pp. 109–166) provides a text edition in her habilitation thesis based on three different block prints available.

⁸ The Fifth Dalai Lama appointed him as his regent in 1679. Some more biographical notes about him are found in Maurer 2012, p. 67, footnote 1 and more extensive in Maurer 2009a, pp. 80–83. See also BDRC, P421. (“BDRC” refers to the online database “Buddhist Digital Resource Center” at bdr.org. In the following, I will only use the acronym, when referring to it.)

⁹ According to Maurer, the text is especially difficult, as it is written in verse and contains lots of very specific vocabulary not found in any dictionary and Tibetan informants skilled in *sa dpyad* are difficult to find. The translation is into German. For the annotated translation, see Maurer 2009a, pp. 167–313.

¹⁰ See Maurer 2009a, p. 87.

¹¹ See Maurer 2009a, pp. 218–261.

Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho only lived in the second half of the 17th century. The Seventh Karma pa lived in the second half of the 15th century. His *rnam thar* is from the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, which has been written by dPa' bo gTsug lag 'phreng ba (1504–1566) in the mid-16th century. Thus, the *rnam thar* of the Seventh Karma pa, which exhibits *sa dpyad* borrowings, has been composed more than 100 years before the *Vaidūrya dkar po*, the *sa dpyad* work I use to identify those borrowings. This is interesting, insofar as it shows that there must have been earlier works with the same content and that scholars at the time of gTsug lag 'phreng ba have been well aware of *sa dpyad* principles. Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho also mentions in his colophon some earlier texts his work is based on¹². However, it seems, none of those texts have come down to us. There is only a number of later texts on *sa dpyad* available, but those are less comprehensive. Therefore, the history of Tibetan geomancy and its development is difficult to trace back and the 32nd chapter of the *Vaidūrya dkar po* is clearly the main work on *sa dpyad*¹³. Hence, this work is the necessary point of reference for my undertaking to identify *sa dpyad* elements in the description of the Seventh Karma pa's birthplace¹⁴.

1-2. Pilgrimage Guidebooks (*gnas yig*)

Pilgrimage guidebooks is a genre of Tibetan Literature widely researched¹⁵. They provide directions to and information about Buddhist sacred places and are usually written by Buddhist masters¹⁶. Very often these sacred places are holy mountains (*gnas ri*)¹⁷ or lakes. However, it is not only about single topographic objects such as mountains.

¹² See Maurer 2009a, pp. 76–77, 312–313.

¹³ For an overview on existing sources and an attempt to trace back some of the history, see Maurer 2009a, pp. 71–83 and for a brief mentioning of further sources Maurer 2019a, pp. 91–92. In general, it can be stated that Tibetan geomancy has its roots in both Chinese geomancy (*feng shui*) and Indian geomancy, but developed its own focus and system over time. See Maurer 2009a, pp. 15–40.

¹⁴ I would like to thank Petra Maurer, who shared some thoughts with me on *sa dpyad* in relation to the birthplace description, which helped me to get deeper into the subject (e-mail communication in June 2020).

¹⁵ One of the first systematic mentions was probably in Wylie 1965, pp. 17–18. He uses the term *gnas bshad*, but *gnas yig* also appears in his paper as a synonym. In the well-known volume on different Tibetan literary genres by Cabezon and Jackson 1996, the closely related genre *lam yig* is represented with a separate essay; see Newman 1996. Many scholars have studied pilgrimage guides to Tibetan Buddhist sacred sites, e.g. De Rossi Filibeck 1988, and some of the essays in the edited volume of Macdonald (ed.) 1997, such as Buffetrille 1997 and Huber 1997; see also Huber 1999 and e.g. as a more recent publication Drolma 2019.

¹⁶ See Drolma 2019, pp. 170.

¹⁷ *gnas ri* is short for *lha gnas pa'i ri* which could be translated as “mountain where the deities abide”; see also Huber 1999, p. 41.

Usually, the whole environment of a sacred place is perceived as a *mandala* with a high peak in the center and the surrounding passes, rivers and valleys are gates to it. There are routes for inner, outer and secret circumambulation of the central peak with various sites on the path, which are imbued with religious meaning and blessing¹⁸. The narrative of such sacred geography usually involves Buddhist saints, who opened up the place (*gnas sgo*) through tantric practices, subduing local gods and spirits (*yul lha gzhi bdag*), turning them into dharma protectors and transforming the landscape by bestowing their blessing on it and hiding treasures etc.¹⁹. Padmasambhava (8th cent.) is most famous in taking this role of the tantric superhero²⁰, but there are also other examples such as Milarepa²¹ or the Third Karma pa²². Pilgrimage guidebooks are inspirational literature. Their descriptions are based on the visionary experience of the tantric meditator²³.

1-3. Putting it into the Context of the Life Story (*rnam thar*)

The descriptions found in representatives of the *gnas yig* genre themselves often borrow patterns from *sa dpyad*²⁴. However, while *sa dpyad* is rather a field of knowledge dealing with the ideal place of a building in a given landscape, *gnas yig* texts set out to inspire the practitioner or pilgrim on their journey and often promote a certain Buddhist school²⁵. Both of them are based on the idea of an animate landscape – inhabited by various kinds of gods and spirits²⁶, which are identified with certain natural formations such as rocks imbuing the landscape with positive and negative energies. Tibetan geomancy provides the knowledge, which patterns in the landscape are auspicious and which are less so

¹⁸ For a characterization of such mandalic layouts in landscape and examples of descriptions, see e.g. Stutchbury 1994, pp. 62–64, Huber 1999, pp. 49–52, and Drolma 2019, p. 173. Roche 2014 distinguishes between mandalic and geomantic “models of spatialisation”, which are used to different extents in different areas. However, his usage of the term “geomantic” cannot be identified with the *sa dpyad* principles, as these themselves strongly involve mandalic patterns.

¹⁹ See Drolma 2019, pp. 172–173, Huber 1999, p. 40, and Stutchbury 1994, p. 73.

²⁰ See e.g. Drolma 2019, pp. 172 and 175–176.

²¹ See e.g. Quintman 2008, pp. 363–364.

²² See translation and analysis section of the paper at hand.

²³ See Huber 1999, p. 48, and Stutchbury 1994, p. 73.

²⁴ For a study investigating both, aspects of *gnas yig* and *sa dpyad*, see e.g. Stutchbury 1994.

²⁵ See Drolma 2019, p. 172.

²⁶ Interestingly, the well-known myth of Tibet as a supine demoness, which had to be subdued, seems to be a prototype or blueprint for the taming of other local gods and spirits in the tradition of holy places as described in *gnas yig*, but at the same time is closely related to the introduction of geomantic principles into Tibet. See e.g. Mills 2007, Stutchbury 1994, pp. 84–85, and Maurer 2009a, pp. 45–47.

and how the latter can be avoided or transformed. Pilgrimage guidebooks focus very much on the positive, at times visionary, description of a sacred geography, but also contain narratives of their transformation.

The passage, to be discussed in this paper, is a description of the birthplace of the Seventh Karma pa from his life story. Features of *sa dpyad* and *gnas yig* are embedded into this passage of a *rnam thar*. This suggests that those embedded elements support the purpose of the *rnam thar*, rather than their own one. Literally, *rnam thar* translates as “[story of a person’s] complete liberation”. What is meant here is the “complete liberation from the two obscurations” (*sgrib pa gnyis las rnam par grol ba’o*²⁷). The two obscurations are the “afflictional obscurations” (*nyon mongs pa’i sgrib pa*) and the “cognitional obscurations” (*shes bya’i sgrib pa*). The former are the afflictions experienced by sentient beings within the cyclic existence, the latter are the subtle obscurations that prevent the omniscience of a buddha and are experienced by all beings, that have not reached the level of a buddha, yet²⁸. Thus, the concept of *rnam thar* clearly transcends the Western concept of biography, and likewise the Western or Christian concept of hagiography (as the concept of “complete liberation” is foreign to Christianity).

Classically, the genre of *rnam thar* has been classified into three levels – outer, inner and secret²⁹. Secret life stories (*gsang ba’i rnam thar*) contain mystic events experienced by the protagonist, such as miraculous dreams, visionary experiences, and supernatural phenomena – all of them representing realization of the nature of mind. Thus, the very concept of *rnam thar*, the features, which make it distinct from biography or hagiography, are most closely related to the secret level.

The description of the birthplace in the *rnam thar* at hand is preceded by visionary experiences of the Karma pa’s parents and other people, and followed by miraculous events, which happened around and after his birth. Hence, those passages belong to the secret level. Likewise, the description of the birthplace clearly has visionary traits and therefore fits in perfectly. From the Tibetan point of view, the landscape might not be perceived in this pure way by everybody, but this kind of perception is considered a result of meditative practice and visionary experience arising based on this practice. At the same time,

²⁷ See Yísün 1985, “*rnam thar*” and “*rnam par grol ba*”.

²⁸ See Duff 2009, “*sgrib pa gnyis*”.

²⁹ See Vostrikov, 1994, pp. 186–187. This classification is ascribed to sDe srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653–1705), the same scholar, who also composed the *Vaiḍūrya dkar po*, the standard work on *sa dpyad*.

such descriptions are so commonly used, that they easily enter ordinary experience just by habituation³⁰.

In a nutshell, *rnam thar*, and especially its secret level, seeks to inspire the Buddhist practitioner by illustrating the protagonist's quest for complete liberation. To this end, the life of the tantric adept, and especially the circumstances he meets, are often pictured in the most positive and auspicious way. This also applies to the description of the birthplace. First, the most auspicious conditions according to Tibetan geomancy are described. Second, this is even exceeded by including visionary aspects into the description, similarly to how it is done in *gnas yig* literature.

2. Translation

2-1. Introduction to the Translation

The Seventh Karma pa's life story in the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* starts with his *bar do'i rnam thar* – his account of the intermediate state between his sixth and seventh incarnation³¹. It is followed by a section containing prophesies, visions, dreams and miraculous events that happened prior to the birth of the Seventh Karma pa³². Thereafter follows the description of the Seventh Karma pa's birthplace, of which an annotated translation is provided here. For easier reference, I inserted the page numbers of the three texts used for the critical edition into the translation – those of the original blockprint (A)³³, those of one of the book versions (B)³⁴ and those of Chandra's handwritten edition (C)³⁵. For an overview of all texts used, see the introduction to the edition in the appendix of this paper.

2-2. Annotated Translation³⁶

At that time, the great administrator of the 'Bri gung pa³⁷ dreamt that

³⁰ See Huber 1999, p. 48, and Stutchbury, 1994, p. 94.

³¹ See Dell 2020.

³² See Dell forthcoming a.

³³ See dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba (1504–1564/1566) 1980, vol. 2, pp. 188–189.

³⁴ See dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba (1504–1564/1566), 1986, vol. 2, pp. 1035–1036.

³⁵ See dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba (1504–1564/1566), 1959–1965, vol. 2, pp. 539–540.

³⁶ I would like to thank Āchārya Choying Tendar for explaining to me various terms and phrases in the Tibetan text, which at first sight had remained obscure to me.

³⁷ Tib. 'bri gung pa'i sgom chen. Here, 'bri gung refers to the 'Bri gung bka' bgyud school, one of the so-called "eight lesser schools" of the bKa' bgyud tradition and *sgom chen* (or *sgom pa*) is the title of the secular ruler at 'Bri gung monastery (see e.g.

somebody, who was there³⁸, said that the dharma master, Karma pa, would be born from a couple of renunciants³⁹, who [were] inside the sPyi mda' fortress⁴⁰.

For the most part, laypeople and monks of that area [had] limitless dream omens, such as the coming of the dharma master. Since the valley was pervaded by fine fragrances, and since rainbow light and rains of flowers occurred constantly in the sky, all knew that the precious dharma master would be coming and [they] did prostrations and circumambulations⁴¹.

[B, p. 1036] This place [is] also a place of accomplishment, a hidden land⁴² of the ḍākiṇīs. A local deity, called sPyi lha⁴³, had previously

Smith 2001, p. 34; Kollmar-Paulenz 2006, p. 89), here rendered as “great administrator”.

³⁸ Tib. *de'i tshe 'bri gung pa'i sgom chen der yod pa zhig gis*. Here, *der yod pa* can either be an apposition to *sgom chen* or it can be the noun, to which the indefinite article *zhig* refers. I went for the latter option.

³⁹ Tib. *bya bral pho mo gnyis*. Literally *bya bral* means “free of activity”, or more freely “free of [worldly] occupations”, here rendered as “renunciant”.

⁴⁰ Tib. *spyi mda' mkhar*. At the beginning of the *rnam thar* the Seventh Karma pa's birthplace is mentioned as “sPyi lha in the Northern region of Tibet” (see dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba (1504–1564/1566), 1986, p. 1032). Later, the parents have a prophecy to go to “sPyi mda' in the rNgod [area]” (see p. 1035). Then, shortly after, right before the section translated here, it is mentioned, that the parents stayed at the place from the dream, at “sPyi mda' mkhar”, which is mentioned again here in the *sgom chen's* dream. Hence, it seems to me that “sPyi lha” is the greater area, “sPyi mda'” is the town or village name and “sPyi mda' mkhar” refers to a “fortress” or another “large building” in this location.

⁴¹ The extraordinary dreams, fine fragrances and rains of flowers at his future place of birth, had already been mentioned before. See dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba (1504–1564/1566), 1986, vol. 2, p. 1034, beginning of page.

⁴² Tib. *sbas yul*, lit. “hidden land”, paradisiacal lands considered as safe havens where enemies of the dharma cannot enter. They are similar to pure lands (*dag zhing*) in their description, but unlike those, they are considered to be located on earth (often in the Himalayan region). Hidden lands are especially associated with Padmasambhava, who is said to have left treasure texts (*gter ma*) there, converted the local gods and sealed the lands for future discovery, usually to be opened by a lama. He also left guidebooks to find these hidden lands. See Buswell and Lopez 2014, p. 790. In this way, hidden lands share similar features with sacred sites to which pilgrimage guidebooks lead and sometimes hidden lands are the subject of these guidebooks.

⁴³ Tib. *gzhi bdag spyi lha*. Here, *gzhi bdag*, lit. “locality owner”, is the name of a class of spirits belonging to the worldly gods (*'jig rten pa'i lha*) and are often mentioned together with *yul lha*, “country gods” (see Yisün, 1985, *'jig rten pa'i lha*). Those two seem not to be distinguished too clearly in literature. It seems that *yul lha* is a rather vague term under which many ancient local deities are classified (see de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1996, p. 4), while *gzhi bdag* is a bit more concrete. They also belong to the class of *'khrungs lha*, “birth gods”, which “are the deities in whose area of influence one had been born” and which should be worshipped in order to avoid trouble in one's life (see de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1996, p. 305). The *gzhi bdag* are the “divine rulers of rivers, lakes or ridges, but most seem to be personifications of

asked the master Rang byung rDo rje⁴⁴ [the Third Karma pa] in mTshur pu for the lay practitioner's vows. [The local deity] asked [the third Karma pa] to come to that place and thus [he] visited [it]. [He⁴⁵] consecrated [it] as a place where [his] future emanation would arrive.

Furthermore, the valley resembled an opened treasury [full] of treasures. The mountain behind [looked like] a king who was dwelling on [his] throne and who wore a crest ornament of snow which was like a turban of white silk. The woody and grassy mountains of various shapes in [places] such as sPyi lha surrounded [this higher mountain] like subjects [under this king⁴⁶]. In those [mountains] there were many self-arisen [objects]⁴⁷ such as a self-arisen black crown. In front [of the birthplace], [there were] grasslands [which appeared] like a *maṇḍala* of turquoises. [They contained] a diversity of precious small mountains, 108 [of them] similar to the body of a hawk⁴⁸, between them 108 plains such as A rig thang⁴⁹, 108 lakes such as Sa mtsho khra ring⁵⁰, and fruit bearing woodlands. [A, p. 189] [It was] beautiful through various birds and herbivores [such as deer].

In the East [there was] Sha wa ra mgo⁵¹, in the South [there was]

mountains" (see de Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996, p. 226). The second part, *spyi lha*, is both the name of the place where the Seventh Karma pa was born and the name of this local deity, which makes sense insofar as *gzhi bdag* are identified with certain places. On a list of names of different *gzhi bdag* provided by de Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1996, p. 227) appears the name sPyi yi brag la mda' brug. It contains the syllables *spyi* and *mda'* which are also contained in the place name sPyi mda'. Hence, it might be identified with the *gzhi bdag* mentioned here.

⁴⁴ Name of the Third Karma pa (1284–1339), see BDRC, P66. For more information on the Third Karma pa's life, see Seegers 2009, Gamble 2013 and 2018.

⁴⁵ Considering the context this should rather be the Third Karma pa than the gZhi bdag sPyi lha who consecrates the place.

⁴⁶ The king in this context would be the "mountain behind" (*rgyab ri*) from the previous sentence.

⁴⁷ The "objects" here could either be two-dimensional objects such as "images" or three-dimensional objects, as this is not clearly stated in the Tibetan text (*rang byon mang du yod pa*).

⁴⁸ Tib. *ne lé'i rkyal pa*, lit. "leather bag of a hawk", however it does not quite fit the context. Here *rkyal pa* rather seems to be a poetical way of referring to the body.

⁴⁹ In the *lo rgyus* (historical work) *dGa' ldan chos 'byung baiDU r+ya ser po* the place name rNgod A rig thang is found (see Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho 1989, p. 335), which fits, since as previously stated the Karma pa's parents were following a prophecy to go to the rNgod area.

⁵⁰ There is an estate called Khra ring gzhis ka or Khra ring gzim shag (see BDRC, G3CN303) which is said to be contained in Myang stod. This could be related to the name of this lake.

⁵¹ In a text called *dBus gtsang gnas yig* which is a "guidebook to pilgrimage sites and Buddhist shrines in Central Tibet" this place is mentioned with slightly different spelling: Sha ba ra mgo (see Chos kyi rgya mtsho 2001, p. 36).

brKyang lha⁵², in the West [there was] So ba stag rtse⁵³, and in the North [there was] Dzam bu lug ru⁵⁴. Therefore, sPyi nang⁵⁵ [was] a sacred site⁵⁶, which resembled the dwelling place⁵⁷ of four deities that [acted as] gatekeepers⁵⁸. Since it was situated straight North of gSa' phu⁵⁹, the place where the former master⁶⁰ died, it seems that once [the sixth Karma pa] proclaimed the beginning [of his song] *Ka bzhi seng chen ma byang nas*⁶¹ [at this place]. Besides, in accordance with the prophecy of Bla ma dBang brgya ba⁶² [the future place of birth, sPyi nang,] is situated straight to the East of mTsur phu.

3. Analysis

Having presented an annotated translation in the previous section, I would like to add to it by further analyzing the text by explaining its

⁵² There is a Bon monastery called brKyang lung dgon or lCangs lung dgon (BDRC, G3832), which could possibly identified with this place. According to Karmay and Samten (2008, pp. 406–408), it is located in the very North of dPal yul county and is known as lCang lung dgon (for a picture, see p. 414).

⁵³ In BDRC there are 56 places, mainly monasteries that contain *stag rtse* (lit. “tiger peak”) in their name. It is possible, that this place is related to any of these.

⁵⁴ No reference to this place found.

⁵⁵ According to the BDRC entry for the Seventh Karma pa, Chos grags rGya mtsho (BDRC, P821), his place of birth is called (*kham s rngod mda'*) *spyi nang*. The source indicated there is *Bod kyi gal che'i lo rgyus*—“History of what is important with respect to Tibet” (see Chab spel tshe brtan phun tshogs, and Mi 'gyur rdo rje 1991).

⁵⁶ Tib. *gnas chen*.

⁵⁷ Tib. *gnas pa*.

⁵⁸ The four place names in the four cardinal directions given in the previous sentence are most likely the names of four mountains surrounding sPyi nang. The “four deities that [acted as] gatekeepers” (*sgo srung gi lha bzhi*) might be identified with these four mountains that protected this site from the four directions.

⁵⁹ Lit. “the upper reaches of the snow-leopard [valley]”, no reference to this place found.

⁶⁰ Tib. *drung gong ma*. This term most likely refers to the Sixth Karma pa. *drung* refers to somebody who is “close” to a high person such as a lama or king (see Jäschke 1881, *drung*). *gong ma* refers to a high or superior person, but can also mean “the former” (see Jäschke 1881, *gong ma*). According to Duff (2009, *gong ma*) it is used “specifically to mean the previous spiritual masters of a spiritual tradition”. Given the context and the meanings of the constituent, I am quite sure that *drung gong ma* refers to the Sixth Karma pa and rendered it in English as “the former master”.

⁶¹ *Ka bzhi seng chen ma byang nas* is the title of a song (*mgur*) composed by the Sixth Karma pa in the period before his death (see dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba 1986, 1031). One might think, that the song title is only *Ka bzhi seng chen ma* without *byang nas* added to it, but in several different sources always the full phrase *Ka bzhi seng chen ma byang nas* appears (BDRC full text search). Therefore, I understand the whole phrase as the title. However, one might also argue for the other option.

⁶² Full name and title: Bla ma dBang brgya pa zhes ban rgan 'Jam dpal bzang po (see Karma rgyal mtshan 1997, pp. 51–52).

content against the background of other research or tradition, and relate it to other existing sources. The paragraph translated seeks to convey the extraordinariness of the Seventh Karma pa's birthplace, which, of course, is supposed to underline the extraordinariness of the Karma pa himself. For this end, it particularly draws from *sa dpyad* and *gnas yig* literature.

Just before this paragraph, the Karma pa's parents arrive at sPyi mda' fortress⁶³, which they recognize from their dream prophecies. Next, the great administrator of the 'Bri gung pa, also has a prophetic dream about the Karma pa's future place of birth and his parents. Most laypeople and monks in the area, as well, had countless dream omens. Further, fine fragrances, rainbow light and rain of flowers in the sky are ascribed to the future place of birth. The latter are typical signs of special events connected to high masters, which are already found in the Buddha's life story⁶⁴. If one views secret life stories as tantric texts, this means that the descriptions in them are not necessarily to be taken literally, they are full of symbolism and often try to convey a picture of a reality, which ultimately cannot be described⁶⁵. What is described in the passage at hand, can be considered as visions in dreams and reality. According to tradition, there are three types of visions: visions in reality (*dgnos*), meditation (*nyams*) and dream (*rmi lam*)⁶⁶. The path to come to such experiences is several levels of preparation and meditation training⁶⁷. Hence, usually, visionary experiences are a claim on the realization of the one who experiences those. However, in this case at hand, it is rather ordinary people, who experience those visions, just because they are at the future birthplace. It is the closeness of a high master, which causes visions in them. Thus, these visions can be considered as a sign of the realization of the Karma pa⁶⁸.

The future birthplace is also called a "hidden land" (*sbas yul*) – a Buddhist paradise located on earth⁶⁹. This is probably the most positive and auspicious attribute, which can be assigned to a given geography in the context of Tibetan Buddhism. It is called a "hidden land of the *ḍākiṇīs*". All meditation masters are said to have a special relationship with the *ḍākiṇīs*. This is even more true for the Karma pa, as there is a special story about how he received his black crown from the

⁶³ It might be a fortress or another kind of large building (*mkhar*). For discussion, see footnote 40.

⁶⁴ See e.g. Kieschnik 2004, p. 542.

⁶⁵ See Willis 1995, p. 20.

⁶⁶ Verhufen 1992, p. 50, and Gyatso 1981, p. 72.

⁶⁷ Ray provides extensive explanations on the different levels of training and on how they relate to such experiences. See Ray, 1980, pp. 3–9.

⁶⁸ See also Verhufen, 1992, p. 50, who detects similar situations.

⁶⁹ See also footnote 42.

dākinīs. The First Karma pa, Dus gsum mkhyen pa (1110–1193), is said to have attained enlightenment through dream yoga, after having been visited by fifteen wisdom *dākinīs*. According to legend, “[at] the moment of his enlightenment an ornate black crown [...] appeared above the Karma pa’s head, woven from the hair of hundred thousand *dākinīs*, symbolizing his knowing of the past, present and future”⁷⁰. This crown is said to be an energy-field, while the physical black crown was given only to the Fifth Karma pa, bDe bzhin gshegs pa (1384–1415), by the emperor of China. According to Simmer-Brown, the “hair is an intimate, personal aspect of the *dākinī*’s body, signifying the close experiential contact between disciple and teacher” and the surrender of the hair is a sign of renunciation similar to the cutting of a lock of hair at the Buddhist refuge ceremony⁷¹. Within this *rnam thar* at hand, preceding the description of the birthplace, there is an account of the intermediate state (*bar do’i rnam thar*) between the sixth and the seventh incarnation of the Karma pa, where he meets with the *dākinīs*, who confirm this already existing relationship and promise to accomplish the enlightened activity⁷².

The birthplace description continues by mentioning the local deity (*gzhi bdag*) called sPyi lha⁷³. The Third Karma pa had given Buddhist refuge to this deity and had consecrated the place of sPyi lha for the arrival of this future incarnation, when visiting the place. This story matches the typical narrative how a sacred geography (as described in pilgrimage guidebooks) comes into being. Usually a Buddhist saint, opens up the place through tantric practices, subdues local gods and spirits (*yul lha gzhi bdag*), turns them into dharma protectors and transforms the landscape by bestowing their blessing on it and hiding treasures etc.⁷⁴. This is exactly what the Third Karma pa did in this case. Since in the preceding sentence the hidden land, also being a type of sacred geography, was mentioned, one could also understand this passage as describing how this hidden land came into being. Creating hidden lands also involves converting local gods by a Buddhist saint and the like. After creation, the hidden land is sealed for future discovery and to be opened later by a lama⁷⁵. Thus, here the Third Karma pa could be considered as the one, who created and sealed the hidden land and the Seventh Karma pa would be the one, who opens it. In either case, it shows the Karma pa, across his incarnations, as a highly

⁷⁰ See Simmer-Brown 2001, p. 251.

⁷¹ See Simmer-Brown 2001, p. 251.

⁷² See Dell 2020, pp. 50–51.

⁷³ See also footnote 43.

⁷⁴ Mentioned in the introduction of this paper. See also Drolma 2019, pp. 172–173, Huber 1999, p. 40, and Stutchbury 1994, p. 73.

⁷⁵ See also footnote 42.

accomplished being – equating him with Padmasambhava, who is most well-known for creating hidden lands and other sacred landscapes. Looking at Tibetan geomancy, there are also some remarks to be made here. When Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho mentions the characteristics of a place, which is appropriate for meditation, one of the possible characteristics is a place, which was consecrated by an extraordinary person⁷⁶. Hence, the place at hand is appropriate for meditation. Admittedly, in the given context, it is not so much about meditation, but rather about the birthplace of the reincarnation of a meditation master. However, though not mentioned explicitly, this purpose might satisfy similar characteristics. Furthermore, according to Tibetan geomancy, before erecting a building or the like, a number of rituals and ceremonies has to be conducted. The most important ritual is for pleasing the so-called *sa bdag* – the “owner of the earth” – and for asking him for permission⁷⁷. Together with some others, both *sa bdag* and *gzhi bdag*, belong to the class of *'khrungs lha*, “birth gods”, which “are the deities in whose area of influence one had been born” and which should be worshipped in order to avoid trouble in one’s life⁷⁸. While the *sa bdag* are said to dwell in the earth, the *gzhi bdag* are said to dwell on meadow-covered mountains⁷⁹. When building a house, the earth is dug. That is why it is made sure, that the *sa bdag* – living in the earth – is not disturbed. Here, the Karma pa seems to be born in an already existing house, as sPyi mda’ mkhar most likely refers to a building⁸⁰. Thus, there are some parallels to *sa dpyad*, but it clearly goes beyond. Instead of the *sa bdag*, the *gzhi bdag* is not only appeased, but even converted to Buddhism.

In the subsequent passage, the valley is pictured as “an opened treasury [full] of treasures”. I could not find this image in the *sa dpyad* literature, but it is self-evident, that this is a very positive description, which gets more specific in what follows. The mountain behind the birthplace or building is described as a king who is dwelling on his throne. This is not just a poetical description of the landscape, but it has a very specific meaning in Tibetan geomancy. First of all, the “mountain behind” (*rgyab ri*) plays an important role, as behind a building there should be a mountain or hill⁸¹. These *rgyab ri* are categorized and ranked according to their shape, where the “king who is dwelling on a throne” (*rgyal po gdan la bzhugs pa*) is the supreme

⁷⁶ See Maurer 2009a, p. 251.

⁷⁷ See Maurer 2009b, pp. 203–204.

⁷⁸ See footnote 43 and de Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996, p. 305.

⁷⁹ See de Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996, p. 299.

⁸⁰ See footnote 40.

⁸¹ See Maurer 2009a, p. 68, or 2009b, p. 202.

shape⁸². In the description of the birthplace, it is also said, that this mountain in the shape of a king wears “a crest ornament of snow, which [is] like a turban of white silk”. Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho does not use the same picture, but content-wise this also matches his description. One of the characteristics of the king of the mountains is that it is rich of snow⁸³. Also the comparison with silk is found here, as it is said that in the upper part the mountain is covered by white silk curtains⁸⁴. When describing auspicious signs (*rten 'brel*) of areas for erecting a monastery or retreat place, the ideal mountain is divided into seven sections, where the summit is covered by permanent snow⁸⁵.

In the continuation of the birthplace description, it is said that the *rgyab ri* is surrounded by woody and grassy mountains of various shapes like subjects. Indeed, in the *sa dpyad* system, mountains of all directions bow down in front of the king of mountains and it is also described as being surrounded by thousands of small mountains⁸⁶. At another place, a mountain is defined as good, if it looks like a king sitting on a throne surrounded by subjects⁸⁷. Grassy mountains (*spangs ri*) are mentioned as positive⁸⁸, as well as woody areas in general, as they are equated to wish-fulfilling trees⁸⁹. Woody mountains (*nags ri*) with birds on them, in particular, are listed as one of the inner auspicious signs of an area⁹⁰.

The birthplace description continues saying that there were many self-arisen images or objects in those mountains such as the black crown. The significance of the black crown as a sign of the Karma pa's enlightenment has already been discussed in this paper. Self-arisen images or objects are rather not an element drawn from *sa dpyad*, but are typical for descriptions of sacred sites as found in *gnas yig* literature⁹¹.

Next, the description mentions grasslands in front of the future birthplace and compares them to “a *maṇḍala* of turquoises”. The *maṇḍala* as a spatial organization principle is very popular all over Asia and originates from India. Penetrating into Tibet, this model has also been applied to describe large-scale geographical structures. Espe-

⁸² See Maurer 2009a, pp. 219–220, for a drawing see pp. 220 and 223.

⁸³ See Maurer 2009a, p. 223.

⁸⁴ See Maurer 2009a, pp. 223, 255.

⁸⁵ See Maurer 2009a, p. 256.

⁸⁶ See Maurer 2009a, p. 223.

⁸⁷ See Maurer 2009a, p. 225.

⁸⁸ See Maurer 2009a, p. 227.

⁸⁹ See Maurer 2009a, p. 256.

⁹⁰ See Maurer 2009a, p. 257.

⁹¹ See e.g. Huber 1999, pp. 52, 63, 82.

cially, the surroundings of sacred mountains (*gnas ri*) are usually represented as *maṅḍalas* in the *gnas yig* literature⁹². The comparison to turquoises again uses a precious object to picture the scenery, similar to before, when the valley was described as “an opened treasury [full] of treasures”. The yogin, who performs tantric practices, is considered as transforming “ordinary geographical features such as rivers, caves, rocks and mountains [...] into ‘sacred’ places which constitute a ‘sacred’ geography conceptualized as a *maṅḍala*”⁹³. If we look at *sa dpyad*, the concept of *maṅḍala* also plays an important role. In many occasions, it compares areas and other geographical structures to *maṅḍalas* and attributes particularly positive properties to those⁹⁴. Also grasslands (*spang ljongs*) at the end of a valley are mentioned as a positive characteristic of an area⁹⁵.

The description goes on about the details of what is in front of the birthplace (or in front of the *rgyab ri*), in this *maṅḍala* of turquoises: various precious small mountains, 108 of them similar to the body of a hawk (*ne le'i rkyal pa*), between them 108 plains, 108 lakes, fruit-bearing woodlands, various birds and deer or similar herbivores (*ri dwags*). As already mentioned above, according to Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, the king of mountains is surrounded by thousands of small mountains⁹⁶ (being the subjects). A mountain in the shape of a hawk is not mentioned there, but it is said, that if a rock looks like a hawk, which pounces on his food from above (*khra yas mar gzan 'bebs*), this means that the ruler is righteous⁹⁷. The surroundings of the king of mountains are described as containing a big lake with small rivers around it, fruit-bearing trees and singing birds. Furthermore, deer and kiangs are mentioned⁹⁸. Hence, this matches the description provided in the birthplace text quite well. However, the birthplace description surpasses *sa dpyad* elements. For instance, when talking about 108 small mountains, 108 lakes and 108 plains, the use of the auspicious number 108 rather reminds of the visionary descriptions found in *gnas yig*. This also applies to this passage as a whole, as its language is more poetical

⁹² For an introduction into the use of *maṅḍalas* as spatial organization model with respect to sacred mountains, see Huber 1999, pp. 26–29. For an example of a sacred landscape described as a *maṅḍala* and further elaborations on it, see Huber 1999, pp. 50–51, and Stutchbury 1994, pp. 63–64.

⁹³ See Stutchbury 1994, p. 73.

⁹⁴ See Maurer 2009a, pp. 225, 233, 235, 239, 242, 243, and 260.

⁹⁵ See Maurer 2009a, p. 222.

⁹⁶ See Maurer 2009a, p. 223.

⁹⁷ See Maurer 2009a, p. 230. Note, that the words used for hawk differ between the birthplace description and the *sa dpyad* text (*ne le* versus *khra*). Therefore, it is not certain, if those can be equated.

⁹⁸ See Maurer 2009a, p. 223.

than one would expect from just a *sa dpyad* description. The fact, that lakes and small mountains are mentioned here in equal number is interesting. “In the ancient Tibetan worldview and the folk tradition, lakes – along with mountain peaks – are the most significant type of landscape feature, and the two are often considered together as a gendered pair (commonly male mountain, female lake) forming an ideal unit of sacred geography. They are a dwelling place of both the collective and personal vitality or life force principle (*la*), and their waters produce and provide both visionary and physical access to other dimensions of space and time.”⁹⁹

In the final paragraph, the names of the four mountains in the four cardinal directions are mentioned and it is said, that the birthplace, sPyi nang, was a sacred site, which resembled the dwelling place of four deities that acted as gatekeepers (*sgo srung gi lha bzhi*). These four deities play an important role in the *sa dpyad* tradition for evaluation, if a place is good or bad. They are animal deities, which originate from Chinese *fengshui*. Among other things, in *sa dpyad* each of them represents a cardinal direction and they are often identified with mountains. They are also called the four protectors (*srung bzhi*). According to the Chinese concept those animals and their directions are dragon (East), tiger (West), red bird (North) and turtle (South). In Tibet the same assignment is also found, but in some sources the directions are changed and in some traditions some animals are replaced by others¹⁰⁰. If one seeks to translate the mountains’ names, one gets a hint on the animals: “deer’s antlers” (*sha wa ra mgo*)¹⁰¹ in the East, “stretched out deity” (*brkyang lha*) in the South, “watching tiger peak” (*so ba stag rtse*) in the West and “rose-apple tree sheep section” (*dzam bu lug ru*) in the North. Hence, it seems, that in the tradition at hand, the tiger and its cardinal direction still match the original Chinese system. However, the other animals seem to be either replaced or they just do not appear in the mountain names as such. The main message here is that the four deities are complete, which is a good sign according to *sa dpyad* and one of the characteristics of the surroundings of the king of mountains¹⁰².

Besides, the song *Ka bzhi seng chen ma byang nas* by the Sixth Karma pa is mentioned¹⁰³. The title means “the four pillars, the great lionesses from the North”. Given the description of the place sPyi nang and given the meaning of the title, the four pillars and the four great lionesses can be identified with the four mountains and the four deities that act as gatekeepers. Hence, it is suggested in the text, that this song

⁹⁹ See Huber 1999, p. 51.

¹⁰⁰ See Maurer 2019b, pp. 5–15.

¹⁰¹ For this reading the spelling may be modified into *sha ba rwa mgo*.

¹⁰² See Maurer 2009a, p. 223.

¹⁰³ See also footnote 61.

refers to this very place and the Sixth Karma pa composed it inspired from this place. Finally, the very last sentence of the birthplace description confirms that a prophecy, made about the birthplace before, matches the location (“straight to the East of mTsur phu”).

4. Conclusion

Summing up, the birthplace of the Seventh Karma pa and its surroundings are described as a perfect sacred site suitable for a Karma pa to be born. The description draws from the tradition of Tibetan geomancy, where every single item of the landscape has its significance. Additionally, in some passages it also resembles the more visionary descriptions found in pilgrimage guidebooks. These traits of *sa dpyad* and *gnas yig* are embedded into a passage of a secret life story and therefore are meant to serve its purpose, that of inspiring the Buddhist practitioner by illustrating the protagonist's quest for complete liberation. To this end, the life of the tantric adept, and especially the circumstances he meets, tend to be pictured in the most positive and auspicious way. This also applies to the description of the birthplace.

There is lots of room for further investigation of the interrelations between *sa dpyad*, *gnas yig* and *rnam thar*. First of all, Tibetan geomancy itself is a field, which needs further research with respect to so far untranslated sources. Second, it would be interesting to further investigate in what way pilgrimage guidebooks draw from Tibetan geomancy in their descriptions. Third, by way of analyzing more birthplace descriptions from other life stories and comparing them to each other, one might get an even clearer picture on how elements of Tibetan geomancy and pilgrimage guidebooks are fused into life stories.

5. Appendix: Edition

5-1. Introduction to the Edition

All editions of the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, which I could identify are based on the lHo brag printing blocks. According to Richardson¹⁰⁴, referring to the colophon of these blocks, they were originally stored in gNas bzhis, a bKa' brgyud monastery, in lHo brag, but later on were moved to lHa lung monastery, also in lHo brag, where he and Lokesh Chandra got some copies from¹⁰⁵. I could not find any evidence or hint for the existence of other printing blocks of the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*.

¹⁰⁴ See Richardson 1959, p. x.

¹⁰⁵ Richardson (1959) or Chandra (1959), respectively, do not mention when that was, but it must have been before Chandra issued his edition, that is, before 1959. I have no information as to whether these blocks still exist today.

I could identify several textual witnesses of the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, of which the most interesting and original one is a reproduction of prints from the IHo brag blocks from Rumtek Monastery in two volumes from 1980¹⁰⁶. This reproduction is also available via BDRC, and I took this as the starting point for the edition I provide here. There are several other prints or reproductions of prints from those printing blocks available. However, all being produced from the same printing blocks, I do not expect any added value considering them, and therefore, neglected them for the critical edition. All other textual witnesses are derived from these printing blocks' text more recently.

Lokesh Chandra already published the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* in four volumes from 1959 to 1965¹⁰⁷. This edition is based on a print from the IHo brag blocks he had made, and was copied in handwriting using *dbu can* script¹⁰⁸.

rDor je rgyal po made a modern edition in book format, which has been published by Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, first in 1986 in two volumes, then in 2006 in one volume, and again in 2015 in one volume¹⁰⁹. The first two are available via BDRC, while the third is subject to restricted access in BDRC¹¹⁰. Since all three editions are from the same publishing house and editor, I assume that the 2006 and 2015 editions do not add information to the 1986 edition. I found references to further modern book editions from other publishers, which seem rather difficult to take hold of. Therefore, apart from the reproduction of the original blockprint (A¹¹¹) and Chandra's handwritten version (C¹¹²), I only considered the 1986 edition (B¹¹³) for the critical edition provided here¹¹⁴. My impression is that Chandra's version is rather close to the blockprint reproduction, only showing a very few differences in spelling. However, it was also useful to consider rDo rje rgyal po's edition, since in many places the latter corrects spelling mistakes or non-standard spellings from the original. In some cases, text B corrects misspellings of text A, in other cases, it has new mis-spellings. If there are differences, I indicate in the apparatus, which variants there are in which text, and for which reading I decided. For instance "zhig B] cig A, C" means that I decided to read *zhig* according to text B, while texts A and C actually read *cig*. In one case I decided to emend the text to a variant that is found in neither of the texts, indicated by "em." for

¹⁰⁶ See dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba (1504–1564/1566) 1980.

¹⁰⁷ See dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba (1504–1564/1566), 1959–1965.

¹⁰⁸ See Chandra 1959, p. vii, and Richardson, 1959, p. x.

¹⁰⁹ See dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba (1504–1564/1566) 1986, 2006, and 2015.

¹¹⁰ Buddhist Digital Resource Center, www.tbrc.org, accessed on 22 Dec 2019.

¹¹¹ See dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba (1504–1564/1566) 1980, vol. 2, pp. 188–189.

¹¹² See dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba (1504–1564/1566) 1959–1965, vol. 2, pp. 539–540.

¹¹³ See dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba (1504–1564/1566) 1986, vol. 2, pp. 1035–1036.

¹¹⁴ These three editions are also mentioned in Martin and Bentor 1997, pp. 88–89.

emendatio, here “*'bri gung pa em.] 'bri khung pa A, C, 'bri khung ba B*”. Generally, there are no significant differences in the section I studied. The guiding theme of the critical edition is classical Tibetan grammar and orthography.

In the critical edition below, the page numbers of all three texts are indicated in brackets, if a new page starts.

5-2. Critical Edition

(A, vol. 2, p. 188, l. 3; B, vol. 2, p. 1035, l. 18; C, vol. 2, p. 539, l. 11)

*de'i tshe 'bri gung pa*¹¹⁵*'i sgom chen der yod pa zhi*¹¹⁶*gis spyi mda' mkhar nang gi bya bral pho mo gnyis las chos rje karma pa sku 'khrung bar yod zer ba rmis*¹¹⁷

*de skor gyi skya ser phal cher la chos rje phebs pa sogs rmi ltas mtha' yas/ lung pa dri bzang gis khyab cing mkhar de la 'ja' 'od dang me tog gi char rtag tu byung bas thams cad kyis chos rje rin po che der 'byon par shes shing*¹¹⁸*phyag dang bskor ba byed/*

*gnas 'di yang grub pa'i gnas mkha' 'gro'i sbas yul zhi*¹¹⁹*ste (B, p.1036) gzhi bdag spyi lha zhes bya ba sngon rje rang byung rdo rje la mtshur phur dge bsnyen zhus/*

yul der phebs par zhus te zhabs kyis bcags/ ma 'ongs pa sprul sku 'byon pa'i zhing du byin gyis brlabs/ de yang lung pa rin po che'i gter mdzod kha phye ba 'dra ba/ rgyab ri rgyal po gdan la bzhugs pa dang dar dkar gyi thod bcings pa lta bu'i gangs kyi rtse bran can/

spyi lha la sogs pa'i nags ri dang spang ri dbyibs sna tshogs pas 'bangs 'dug pa ltar bskor ba/

*de dag la zhwa nag rang byon sogs rang byon mang du yod pa/ mdun na spang ljongs g.yu'i maNDal lta bu la ri chung rin po che sna tshogs dang ne le'i rkyal pa lta bu brgya rtsa brgyad dang de'i bar bar du A rig thang la sogs thang brgya rtsa brgyad sa mtsho khra ring sogs (A, p.189) mtsho brgya rtsa brgyad dang nags tshal 'bras bu can gyis gang zhing bya dang ri dwags*¹¹⁹*sna tshogs pas mdzes pa/*

*shar du sha wa ra mgo lhor brkyang lha nub tu so ba*¹²⁰*stag rtse byang du dzam bu lug ru ste sgo srung gi lha bzhi gnas pa de lta bu'i gnas chen spyi nang 'di ni*¹²¹*drung gong ma zhi bar gshegs pa'i gnas gsa' phu'i byang drang*

¹¹⁵ *'bri gung pa em.] 'bri khung pa A, C, 'bri khung ba B.*

¹¹⁶ *zhig B] cig A, C.*

¹¹⁷ *rmis B] brmis A, C.*

¹¹⁸ *shing B] cing A, C.*

¹¹⁹ *ri dwags B, C] ri dags A.*

¹²⁰ *ba B] pa A, C.*

¹²¹ *ni A, C] na B.*

*por yod pas*¹²² *sngon ka bzhi seng chen ma byang nas dbu tshugs gsung bar snang zhing bla ma dbang brgya ba'i lung bstan ltar mtshur phu'i shar drang por* (C, p.540) *yod/*

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¹²² yod pas A, C] yod pa'i B.

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Human Engagement on Manuscript Margins: Glimpses into the Social Life of a Collection of Buddhist Sūtras from Mustang

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“Pema khyapa, remember that your death is coming!”

Preamble

The message above is found, scribbled in questionable orthography, on the margin of a folio within a larger collection of Buddhist sūtras that was produced tentatively at the beginning of the fourteenth century and is presently preserved at Namgyal Monastery (*rnam rgyal dgon pa*) in Upper Mustang. It is unlikely that this note presents a profound teaching on the Buddhist notion of the impermanence of all phenomena, as one might perhaps expect in the context of Buddhist canonical literature. Rather, it should be interpreted as a teasing remark aimed at a fellow monk, tantric expert, or lay practitioner, who would perhaps have seen the message when it was his turn to recite the volume in question, and who would then perhaps have responded with an equally sarcastic remark at the expense of the initial writer.

This note also serves as an adequate opening line to this paper, since it illustrates some of its central concerns and intricacies. Through an investigation of such marginal notes as well as other traces of human handling of Buddhist manuscripts, the following analysis will tap into a rich and largely unexplored resource for our understanding of people’s relationships to Buddhist scriptures and their use as social items. Some of these notes reflect a piety towards the Buddhist written word that is in line with established religious norms, while others are of a much more profane nature. Many are difficult to even decipher, and most come with considerable uncertainty with regard to their interpretation.

Introduction

In the development of Tibetan and Buddhist Studies as an academic discipline, a focus on working with textual sources has always been a dominant concern, and research advancements were often driven by new manuscript findings. Besides the doctrinal and soteriological concerns of Buddhist texts, also the manuscripts carrying these contents, in their very material form, gained considerable interest, as exemplified by the vast amount of research conducted in relation to the Dunhuang manuscripts, or, to a lesser extent, the manuscript findings at Tabo Monastery. Already the early cataloguers of manuscript collections not only identified their textual contents but also registered the various notes and material traces added by their human handling.¹ In recent years, the study of the material aspects of such manuscripts was highlighted as being part of a larger trend in the humanities, namely an emphasis on the material dimensions of cultural production sometimes referred to as “material turn.”² In Tibetan Studies, such efforts are reflected in several publications that address, amongst other things, aspects of the material production, materiality and function, or the documentation of material features of Tibetan manuscripts.³ Despite their diverse subject matters, these studies share the common outlook of foregrounding the material medium of texts rather than the statements contained in them. In this perspective, books and manuscripts are not regarded primarily as sources for investigating the domain of intellectual history in the form of doctrinal and soteriological developments, but as sources for social history and the study of the conditions of their production and subsequent usage. These different disciplinary approaches, however, are not necessarily mutually exclusive. When texts and their material manifestations are regarded as cultural products in a general sense, as called for in a recent publication by Kurtis Schaeffer, these can act as “a nexus of intellectual, religious, social, artistic, and economic aspects of life,”⁴ which involve issues of intellectual and social history alike.

The present investigation connects to these earlier studies in two principal ways. First, in exploring the various material traces of human

¹ Marcelle Lalou's three catalogue volumes of Tibetan Dunhuang manuscripts (Lalou 1939, 1950, and 1961) must be seen as exemplary and provide a meticulous record that includes descriptions of the material condition and marginal notes of the relevant material.

² See, for example, Meier et al. 2015, which lays out central concepts for engaging with the materiality of textual sources.

³ Exemplary studies in this regard are Helman-Ważny 2014, van Schaik et al. 2014, van Schaik 2016, and Dotson and Helman-Ważny 2016; the same authors and several others produced a number of publications that reflect a larger interest in the material aspects of Tibetan manuscripts.

⁴ Schaeffer 2009, VIII.

handling of Buddhist scriptures, it explicitly focusses on tangible manuscript material rather than abstract texts, even though the examined marginal notes and other traces are often of textual nature. Secondly, these manuscripts are taken as informative sources for questions that pertain to fundamental social issues that may be formulated in rather general, but no less crucial terms: how were texts produced and used by humans? Such practises, conducted by individuals or groups, are not isolated phenomena but part of socially sanctioned and learned patterns of behaviour. In this sense, they also contain an ideological dimension, since any engagement with and usage of manuscripts can be regarded as a reflection of human attitudes towards texts in more general terms.⁵

The following analysis, which is certainly experimental in nature, therefore combines different methodological approaches: in its consideration of the physical appearance of manuscripts, it is akin to what has become known as “the archaeology of the book;”⁶ its methodology of deciphering, interpreting, and contextualizing mostly textual sources has a strong philological component; its references of these traces to earlier usage, some of which pertain to ritual contexts, represents an attempt at historical anthropology; and its reflections on the general relationship between humans and manuscripts fall into the domain of intellectual history.

The manuscript collections at Namgyal Monastery

The material basis for exploring these issues is a collection of Buddhist canonical manuscripts from Namgyal Monastery in Upper Mustang. While these had been noted already during the early explorations of Michel Peissel,⁷ they were only recently documented and studied systematically.⁸ Among the numerous texts preserved at Namgyal Monastery, there are forty-three volumes with similar stylistic features, which are distinct and older than the rest of the collection. They contain intricate illuminations on the first and final folios of every volume as well as other features documenting the high quality

⁵ For some useful theoretical reflections in this regard, see van Schaik 2016, 222–23, who attempts to link manuscripts as material objects with social patterns of behaviour through borrowings from “practice theory.”

⁶ As outlined in Albert Gruijs’s programmatic essay, a crucial aspect of this approach is that books are regarded as cultural phenomena and sources for cultural history in very general terms, which calls for a multi-disciplinary investigation (Gruijs 1972, in particular, pp. 89–90). For an application of this term to Tibetan books, see Helman-Ważny 2014, 1–11.

⁷ Cf. Peissel 1967, 152.

⁸ For a preliminary account of the collection, see Luczanits 2016. A detailed documentation and study of the codicological, art-historical, and textual features is provided in Luczanits and Viehbeck (forthcoming).

of their production. Although these volumes share a similar style, they form two distinct sets. One is a Sūtra collection (*mdo sde*) organised in thirty volumes, two of which are missing (vols. ma and ha).⁹ Another Sūtra volume (*nya*) seems to have been added from a different collection. The remaining fourteen volumes constitute a Prajñāpāramitā set. They contain a single text, the *Śatasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* (ŚSPP), that is, the *Sūtra of the Perfection of Wisdom in One Hundred Thousand Lines*, commonly referred to by its short title “One Hundred Thousand” (*'bum*). Given the absence of any form of detailed paratextual information, the origin of these volumes is obscure. Codicological, orthographic, and palaeographic features as well as art-historical considerations point to between the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth century as a tentative period of production, with the Prajñāpāramitā volumes being dated earlier than the Sūtra volumes. Slight differences in codicological and stylistic details as well as historical evidence suggest that the two collections were produced in different settings and then brought together in Namgyal.

Despite these differences in the production and textual setup of these collections, there is reason to believe that they had similar functions in their actual usage. The mass production of Prajñāpāramitā sets as well as other volumes of important canonical literature has already been attested for the Dunhuang collections,¹⁰ and early hagiographical reports also suggest that larger collections of canonical literature, including Sūtra collections and Prajñāpāramitā sets, were regarded as a stock equipment for Tibetan temples and monasteries.¹¹ There they functioned as symbolic objects representing the speech of the Buddha, while stūpas represented his mind and statues his body. This symbolic and representational significance is also evident in ritual contexts. Large volumes of canonical literature are carried in ritual circumambulation around a village to purify the community, its land, crops, and livestock as well as for protection from negative influences and the accumulation of merit. Ritual recitations of such volumes have

⁹ The structural setup of this Sūtra collection, its connection to other Himalayan text collections, and its principle relations to later structured Kanjurs are discussed in Viehbeck 2020.

¹⁰ The production of thousands of copies of the *Aparimitāyurnāmamahāyānasūtra* as well as hundreds of copies of the ŚSPP and the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* was conceived at Dunhuang in the first half of the ninth century as a meritorious enterprise as well as a gesture towards the Tibetan emperor; see Dotson 2015, 5 and Iwao 2012.

¹¹ Biographies of the translator Rin chen bzang po (958–1055) document the existence of Sūtra collections (*mdo mangs*) and sets of the ŚSPP (*'bum*) at various places; see Steinkellner 1994, 130. The Tibetan text, however, is somewhat ambiguous, and it is not entirely clear whether Rin chen bzang po provided these text collections as equipment for the newly founded sites, or whether he had them recited there; see Tucci 1988, 115 and Ye shes dpal 1996, 24.

similar functions, and they are conducted in a seasonal rhythm or, also in private households, on specific occasions. While the general ritual significance of canonical texts is commonly known, their specific performance remains to be studied in detail.¹²

The Namgyal manuscripts have obviously also been exposed to such extensive usage, as testified by their timeworn appearance. But what exactly are the traces of human usage? And what can these tell us about how humans related to such manuscripts?

Methodological considerations

The idea for the present study developed during the documentation and digitisation of a substantial part of the Namgyal manuscripts. This bears with it a special way of relating to the volumes. While photographing text collections (and making use of the limited time available), researchers usually spend only a couple of seconds on every individual folio. While these glimpses are too brief to allow for a detailed engagement with the manuscripts' textual contents, naturally attention is drawn to anything that stands out from the standard layout: drawings, scribblings, doodles, notes, textual corrections, stains, torn pages, and attempts at patching them up. Thus, once attention shifts from the textual contents to the actual manuscript, numerous traces of its extensive history come into focus, which provide potential information on the ways in which people engaged with these volumes.

Subsequently, all marginalia and other signs of human usage were systematically recorded as part of the preparation of a comprehensive catalogue of the textual contents of both of the Sūtra collection and the Prajñāpāramitā set, when each folio could be investigated in greater detail. These efforts revealed several difficulties in working with this source material. The formal text of the volumes is written in clear "headed script" (*dbu can*). This pertains to the main textual contents as well as several short dedicatory notes found at the end of some volumes and further also most of the textual corrections, which, given their palaeographic specificities, were added at different points in time. In contrast, most other marginal notes use a variety of "headless scripts" (*dbu med*), including writings in "running script" (*'khyug yig*).

¹² Kim and Niels Gutschow describe an annual circumambulation of ŚPP (*'bum*) volumes for the village community of Rinam in Zanskar (Gutschow and Gutschow 2003, 135–36). A more detailed account of ritual circumambulation and recitation of a Kanjur (*bka' gyur*) as a community ritual in Nubri is given in Childs 2005, which also provides references to other accounts of similar ritual activities. Although dealing with South Asian Buddhist manuscripts, Jinah Kim's study on illustrated canonical manuscripts reveals many parallels in usage and hence is relevant also for the Tibetan context (Kim 2013).

Their occurrence is far less standardised than that of the headed writing and may exhibit rather idiosyncratic forms. The same is true for abbreviations (*skung yig*) and contractions (*bsdus yig*) of syllables, which are frequently employed in this context.¹³ Obviously notes were produced by a number of people with varying degrees of literacy, and there are common misspellings that often provide an approximate phonetic rendering of the respective word. The reading of these notes is further complicated by the use of local and at times archaic terminology. Among the major challenges in their interpretation, however, is their brevity and lack of contextual information, and some of them are simply too timeworn or faded to be deciphered at all.¹⁴ In those cases where these notes have remained legible, their contents differ greatly and reflect a considerable spectrum of human engagement: they range from sober textual criticism of the main text to clumsy attempts of beginners' hands at penning single characters; from explanatory glosses dedicated to unwrapping the contents of the main text to seemingly mindless reproduction of its individual words; from edifying and moralising religious poetry to slandering side blows.

Clearly only a very limited number of these marginalia fall into the conceptual domain of what is indicated by the Tibetan term "*mchan*" or "*mchan bu*" ("annotation"), a term used to refer to scholarly notes that in some way enable or improve the reading of the main text.¹⁵ In contrast, the benefits of the other notes, jottings, and scribbles are diverse and found in perhaps unexpected ways: in using the empty space of manuscript margins to express devotion, to crack jokes, or simply to counter boredom. This variety and wealth may be regarded as an important feature of such marginalia, since in this way they offer a window into the actual usage of Buddhist manuscripts not gained from reading the normative prescriptions evoked in other textual sources.

In view of the diverse and often ambiguous nature of this material, a reconstruction of any kind of concise social history of these

¹³ Central features of abbreviations and contractions in the context of canonical literature are discussed in Eimer 1992, 53ff, and, more generally, in Bacot 1912.

¹⁴ As a general convention, the notes below are reproduced as found in the manuscript. Resolutions of word contractions and suggestions for orthographic corrections are added in parentheses. The latter must be treated with caution, since it cannot be expected that the standards of later literary Tibetan should be readily applied to these early local sources. Uncertain readings of characters are underlined, and illegible or missing characters are indicated by the character "x."

¹⁵ The scope and variety of *mchan bu* is described in Solmsdorf 2018. One should note, however, that this discussion does not address notes that lack a function with regard to the main text. Hence, I think it is appropriate to translate *mchan bu* as "annotation," while the domain of marginalia is conceptually much larger.

manuscripts will not be attempted.¹⁶ The aim of this paper is more modest and explicitly impressionistic. In considering the material traces of human usage, it addresses human-manuscript relations in general terms and as illustrated by examples from the Namgyal manuscripts. While both the Sūtra collection and the Prajñāpāramitā set were analysed in this light, thus amounting to a rough total of 15.000 manuscript folios (each with recto and verso) of source material, the examples discussed below are drawn mostly from the Sūtra collection, simply for the pragmatic reason that these folios provided more interesting cases for our interest. The resulting picture is therefore intrinsically connected to the history of this very collection, although it may be assumed that its trajectory is not unlike that of other, similar text collections.

A sliding scale of human-manuscript relations

In reviewing the visible traces of human handling of manuscripts and in attempting a more systematised presentation of the relations they reflect, I suggest to organise these along a sliding scale of three principle modes of engagement: 1) production and maintenance; 2) various forms of usage; and 3) misuse, neglect, and abandonment.

The first of these is the mode of the creation, refinement, and sustained care of manuscripts. On the one hand, this refers to the moment when manuscripts are produced as objects of material craftsmanship, but also of textual scholarship. However, textual refinement, in particular, is not necessarily a singular event but can be performed continuously, and the same holds true for repair and maintenance activities. Such efforts are commonly instigated through contexts in which the manuscripts are actually used, mostly in rituals and for recitation. The use of the manuscripts in various forms can be regarded as the second major mode of interaction. Only few traces testify to the use of these canonical texts in the study and teaching of Buddhist contents, and the main context for their practical engagement appears to have been in ritual recitation. Their usage then also provides opportunities for employing manuscripts for other purposes, such as when they are used as writing paper, which reflects a variety of relations to Buddhist texts that will be discussed under a separate heading below. In the long term, sustained use also contributes to the eventual deterioration of the manuscripts and might lead to repair measures or further neglect and perhaps abandonment, or the

¹⁶ Noteworthy research in this regard was conducted by Brandon Dotson, who used marginalia to explore the social conditions of the reproduction of sūtras at Dunhuang (Dotson 2015) and its orthographic conventions (Dotson 2016).

recycling and reuse of their paper for new manuscripts, and thus pertain to the third mode.

Obviously, there is significant overlap between any of these three modes of engagement, and their distinction serves mostly as a heuristic tool for providing a basic orientation. Underlying is of course a temporal process in which the manuscripts are seen to deteriorate with usage and over time, but all three modes can also be activated and employed at the same time. For example, a ritual recitation could be used for revising textual contents or repairing material damages, but it could also provide the setting for misusing manuscript leaves for scribbblings to counter the possible boredom of recitation, and such ritual usage of manuscripts naturally also leads to their eventual deterioration.

Creating, refining, and maintaining manuscripts

The volumes of both the Sūtra collection and the Prajñāpāramitā set are products of exceptional craftsmanship. This is testified by high-quality paper, fine calligraphy, illuminations that adorn the first and final folio of each volume, and the carved wooden wooden plates (*glegs shing*) that enclose them.



Fig. 1: The first and the final folio of *Namgyal mdo*, vol. na, exemplifying the high standards of craftsmanship. The notes below the illuminations were subsequently added and identify their contents.

These features reflect the manuscripts' status as important symbolic objects as well as the artistic and financial efforts invested in their

production. However, only very little information is provided on the latter, and neither of the two collections comes with a longer preface or colophon that would detail its origins. Only a few of the individual volumes contain brief dedicatory notes at their end. These are written in clear *dbu can* script, like the main text but in smaller size, and their contents and palaeographic features suggest that these belong to the original context of production. These notes may mention the place where a volume was produced and the agents involved, most importantly the sponsors, and, albeit only in one case, the scribe. In general, historical information is rare.¹⁷ The main purpose and explicit focus of these notes seems to be the dedication of virtue. In fact, one of their most consistent elements is the dedication of such virtue accumulated through the production of canonical volumes towards progress on the Buddhist path, which documents the central rationale for the production of texts amongst Buddhist communities.

Efforts in producing high-quality volumes also extended to textual matters. Notably, many of the volumes of the *Sūtra* collection contain a final note that confirms the textual quality of the volume. Some of these are written in black ink and simply attest to the textual integrity of a volume—in the form “it is correct” (*dag go*)¹⁸—, while others are in red ink and point to additional steps of revision with the phrase “re-edited and correct” (*dang zhus te dag go*).¹⁹

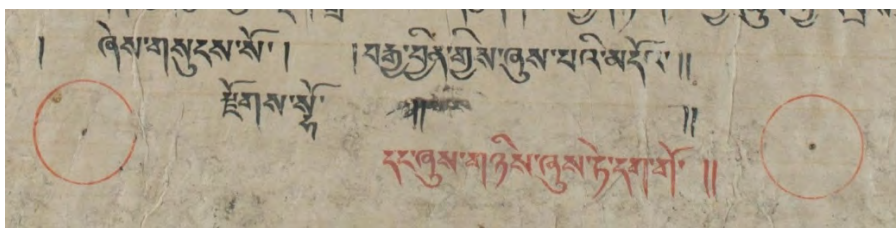


Fig. 2: Indication of additional revision at the end of the main text. This volume (*mdo*, vol. *da*) was even revised twice.

¹⁷ The historical details on the production of these volumes that can be drawn from these dedicatory notes are discussed in Luczanits and Viehbeck (forthcoming, Concluding remarks) and will hence not be repeated here. Most importantly, these notes suggest that the two text collections were produced at different places and then brought together in Namgyal.

¹⁸ See Namgyal *mdo*, vol. *nga*, fol. 335a or vol. *ca.*, fol. 299a.

¹⁹ See, e.g., Namgyal *mdo*, vol. *cha*, fol. 336a or vol. *da*, fol. 299a. On the editorial process of *sūtras* from Dunhuang and the meaning of the term *dang zhus*, see Dotson 2015, 18–19. Usually, this refers to an additional editorial step, which is distinguished from the first or “actual edit” (*ngos zhus*). See also a colophon from Tholing manuscripts referred to by De Rossi Filibeck 2007, 59, in which several additional steps of revision (“*ngos zhus / dang zhus / gnyis zhus // gsum zhus te dag go* //”) are indicated. Notably, red ink was also used by the editors in Dunhuang; see Dotson 2016, 136.

In terms of their size and palaeographic style, these notes are similar to the main text and seem to have been part of the volumes' initial production. While such is not found in the volumes of the Prajñāpāramitā set, both collections document numerous instances of textual correction, and a significant part of marginal and interlinear writing concerns textual matters. These measures take different forms according to the issues at stake. Longer passages of text to be erased are marked in colour or crossed out. The deletion of individual syllables or single characters is commonly indicated by three dots above the respective sign. Textual additions are achieved by filling in the respective passage on the folio margin and marking its exact location with dots or a cross mark. When longer passages are emended, the text is erased by scratching off the first layer of paper and fitting in the corrected passage into the gained space. All of these actions are apparently understood as standard measures without need for further explanations.²⁰ In fact, explanatory notes with regard to textual corrections are rare and applied only to seemingly special or noteworthy cases. In one instance, for example, only a single character was deleted; but since it was the negative particle (*ma*), hence changing the meaning of the entire sentence, a pithy memo was left to emphasise that the original writing contained an "incorrect word."²¹ In another case, the text of an entire page was crossed out, which also is commented on in a brief explanation: "This side of the folio is redundant."²² Yet another note points to two blank lines and provides a suggestion of how these should be filled: "In this context, an omission or addition occurred. Hence, one should get the original from Yara and record these two lines!"²³

The ultimate rationale for the textual refinement of canonical volumes, like for their production, is the accumulation of merit. The following note, which is unusual in its detailed information, explicates the dedication of such corrections for future benefit: "On the twenty-ninth day of the third Tibetan month, Nam mkha' corrected a vowel

²⁰ These means of textual correction are well-known and hence will not be discussed in more detail here. Visual examples for such cases are provided in Luczanits and Viehbeck (forthcoming, Chapter one).

²¹ Namgyal mdo, vol. tsa, fol. 248a5: *tshig log*.

²² Namgyal mdo, vol. nya_b (= Ng45), fol. 118b, left margin: *shog logs 'di lhago [lhag gol]*. This example is drawn from a secondary volume nya that was added to the original collection. In terms of style as well as signs of usage it is very similar to the other volumes.

²³ Namgyal mdo, vol. ja, fol. 251b.7: *'di'i 'tsham du chad lhag byung ba yin pas g.ya' ra nas ma phyi len nas phreng gnyis po 'di 'bris dgos /*. This is the only case in which a place named G.ya' ra is mentioned in the manuscripts, but we can assume that it refers to the village that is located in the valley of the Puyung Kholā above Dhi. While it remains to be explored whether a similar text collection exists there, it shows that such was produced there in the past.

and fixed a mistake (*chad lhag*) of the main text. Due to this virtuous action, may there be liberation from the intermediate state (*bar do*).²⁴

The stylistic variety of both notes and actual textual corrections testify to the fact that these were executed by multiple hands and at different times. Textual care was obviously an issue not only of the initial production of suitable volumes but also of sustained engagement. While there is no registry that details such interventions, incidental traces do suggest that the use of canonical volumes in ritual recitation also provided an opportunity for their correction and maintenance. In a longer marginal note, an individual by the name of Klu sgrub rgya mtsho elaborates on his engagement with the collection as follows:²⁵

The original of this precious Sūtra collection was incomplete at the beginning and end. Hence, when [I], the one who bears the name Nāga,²⁶ requested a complete recitation (*gtsang 'don*) of the volumes of the Sūtra collection, based upon my inquiry three pages were retrieved from two old monks and inserted at the beginning at page number four, etc. I furthermore donated volume labels (*gdong dar*) to those without volumes labels, and book strings to those without book strings. May the two obscurations of myself and all sentient beings who have been our mothers be purified, and based on this virtue may the two accumulations be quickly completed!

An investigation of the respective pages of this volume confirms the contents of this note. Three folios at the beginning of the volume (f. 2,

²⁴ Namgyal mdo, vol. tsha, fol. 233b, bottom margin: *hor zla bsum [gsum] pa'i tshes nyir gu'i [myer dgu'i] snyin [nyin] kyed byas nas namkhas [nam mkhas] tsa'i [rtsa'i] chad lhag bsos pa'i dge' bas bar rdo' [do] las sgröl bar byin gyis blobs [rlob] //*. I tend to read the phrase “*kyed byas nas*” as an indication that the mark for the vowel *o* has been corrected, which is also what we see in the manuscript. In the word *bcom* of the main text, the vowel *o* above the letter *ca* has been eliminated by scraping off a layer of paper. Then four syllables (*bcom ldan 'das ga*) were marked to be deleted by dots above them and a coloured strike through. It could also be possible that the reading of *tsa*, which I corrected to *rtsa* (“main text”), refers to the letter *ca*. In this case, the note would emphasise that the issue is with this character specifically, but the general content remains similar.

²⁵ Namgyal mdo, vol. tsa, fol. 323b, bottom margin: *mdo sde rin po che rtsa ba 'di yi mgo 'jug gnyis nas ma tsang 'dug pas nA gas ming can gyi mdo de [sde]i glegs baM rnaMs gtsang mdon ['don] zhu skabs rtsad chod byas pas grwa rgan gnyis nas shog bu gsum thon byung ba der dbu yi grangs yig bzhi pa sogs la bcug yod gzhan yang gdong dar med pa rnaMs la gdong dar dang spo [po] thag med pa rnaMs la spo [po] thag phul ba sogs kyi dge rtsas bdag sogs ma gyur 'gro ba'i sems can rnaMs sgrib gnyis dag nas tshogs gnyis myur du rdzogs par gyur gcig [cig]*.

²⁶ This of course refers to his Tibetan name Klu sgrub rgya mtsho. The use of playful epithets, including allusions to Sanskrit and exaggerating adjectival descriptions, are common features in this context.

4, and 5) as well as its final sheet (f. 324) were indeed replaced by newer pages.

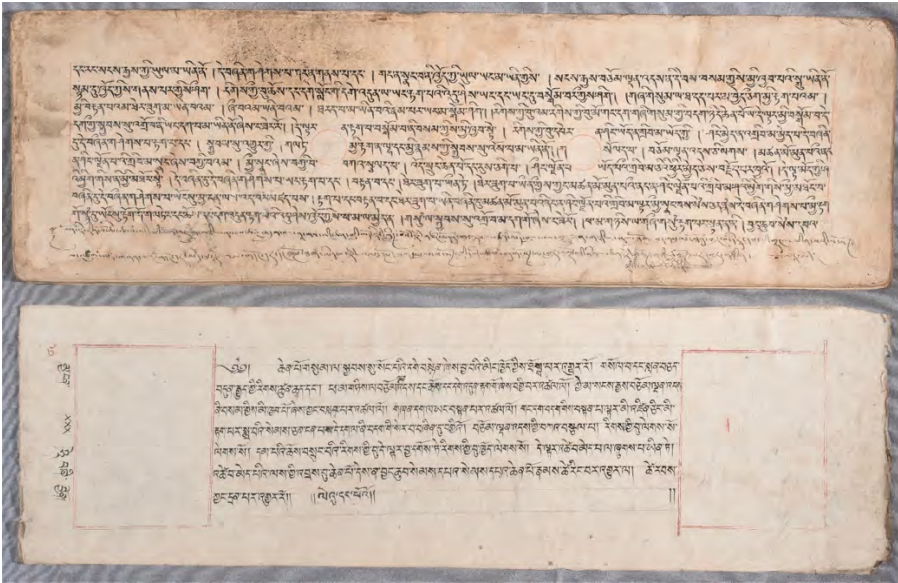
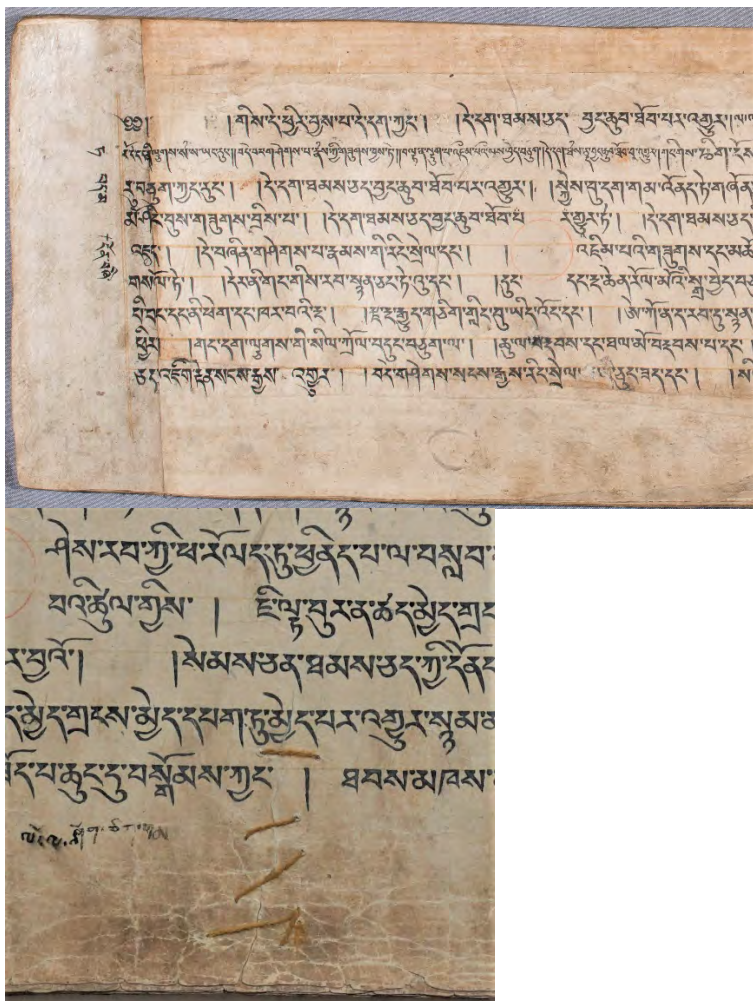


Fig. 3: Replacement of missing pages at the end of mdo, vol. tsa, including the corresponding note on the previous folio.

The replacement of missing folios is among the most common means of manuscript maintenance and is observed for the majority of the volumes of the Sūtra collection and the Prajñāpāramitā set. Usually, however, it is performed without any further written explanation. Other such interventions concern the reparation of damaged manuscript folios. For example, tears are often patched up with needle and thread, and gaps are filled up with pieces of paper.



Figs. 4ab: Patching and rewriting of a torn folio margin of *mdo*, vol. *ta*, fol. 174a (a); stitching of a timeworn middle part of a folio of 'bum, vol. *ka*, fol. 48a (b).

Maintenance activities might also pertain to the outer cover of the volumes, as indicated by the note above. Apart from this one instance, the offering of new volume labels is also documented on small paper slips that were added to three volumes of the *Sūtra* collection (vols. *nga*, *da*, and *ya*), obviously in an effort to document and honour this intervention. Like the previous note, these also highlight the merit gained by such actions:²⁷

²⁷ Namgyal *mdo*, vol. *nga*, added slip of paper: *kun mkhyen e+waM [e wam] sa chen po'i slob ma'i tha shal pa sprang btsun nA ga sid+d+ha sa mu drA [dra] pas mdo sde rin po che gtsang 'don zhu skabs ras khra gdong dar 'di phul bas dngos po sman [dman] rung*

[I], the humble monk Nāgasiddhasamudra, an unworthy disciple of the Omniscient One from E waM [chos ldan], the Great One of the Sa [skya] tradition,²⁸ requested a complete recitation of the precious Sūtra collection. At that occasion (*skabs*), I donated volume labels of coloured fabric. Even though these were of inferior quality, my motivation was utterly pure. Based on this cause, may the two accumulations be completed by that virtue and the two obscurations be purified. May this turn into the cause for myself and all sentient beings who have been our mothers to swiftly attain complete awakening!

The ritualised context of recitation therefore provides a setting and opportunity not only to engage with the text of the sūtras, but, perhaps even more so, to engage with their material manifestation, the maintenance and protection of which is equally important in terms of its meritorious potential.

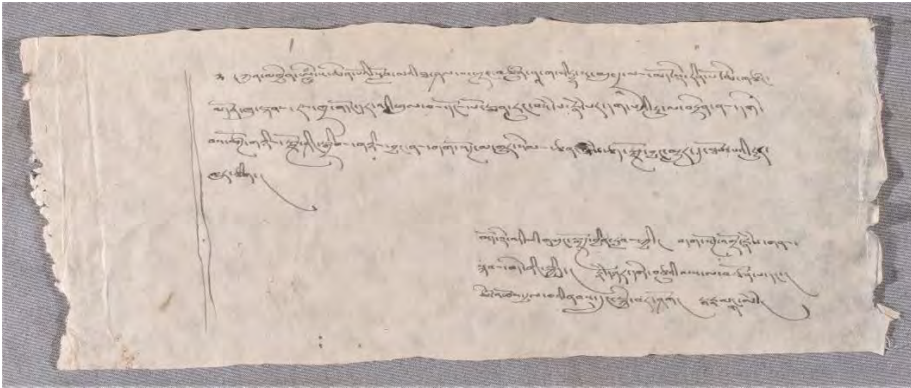


Fig. 5: Small paper slip added to *mdo*, vol. *nga*, reporting maintenance activities.

Practises of using manuscripts: teaching, study, and recitation

While texts are readily associated with the acquisition and transfer of new knowledge, it is commonly known that the study and teaching of Buddhist contents were not the primary purposes of the larger, representational volumes of Tibetan canonical literature. This is true

bsaM pa rnaM par dag pa'i rgyu la brten nas dge bas tshogs gnyis rdzogs shing sgribs gnyis byang nas bdag sogs ma gyur sems can thaMs cad rdzogs byang myur du thob pa'i rgyur gyur cig /.

²⁸ This refers to Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po (1382–1456), who with the foundation of Ngor e waM chos ldan Monastery laid the basis for the Ngor sub-school of the Sa skya tradition. Ngor chen was very active in Mustang and his tradition remains influential until the present day. For details on his activities in Mustang, see Heimbel 2017.

also for the Namgyal manuscripts. Among all volumes, there is only one instance, at the beginning folios of the first volume of the *Prajñāpāramitā* set, which documents a more detailed and systematic engagement with the textual contents. These few folios are annotated with interlinear glosses (*mchan bu*) explicating the meaning of individual phrases, as applied when texts are used in a teaching setting.

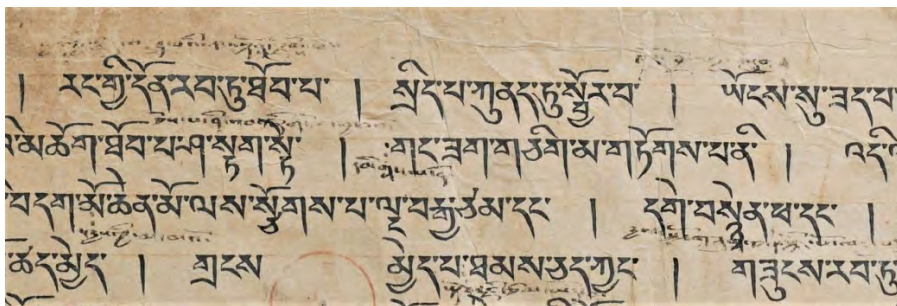


Fig. 6: Traces of interlinear glosses in 'bum, vol. ka, fol. 2a.

No comparable interpretative notes on textual contents are found in the other volumes. However, most of these other volumes do contain small written identifications or explanations below the respective images adorning their beginning and end. Like other notes, these also must have been added at later times, and by people with varying degrees of knowledge, since they also feature several faulty identifications.²⁹ All of these interpretative attempts, be they faulty or not, reflect efforts to understand the contents of the manuscripts people were dealing with.

The fact that people actually related to the contents of individual volumes is also observed in several marginal notes. An individual by the name of Vija (*bl dza*; see also below), for example, penned the following statement in verse on the volume containing the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*: “This is the excellent *sūtra* of Gaṇḍavyūha, which provides a clear exposition of the *ālaya* [consciousness], the basis of everything.”³⁰ Yet another, anonymous writer emphasised to his fellow religious experts the doctrinal contents of another volume, in particular the doctrine of karmic retribution: “This here is the *Sūtra* collection *Lokaprajñapti*. As karmic retribution is [explained] in here,

²⁹ For a detailed discussion of these identificatory notes below the manuscript illuminations, see Luczanits and Viehbeck (forthcoming, Chapter two).

³⁰ Namgyal mdo, vol. na, fol. 25b, bottom margin: *kun gyi gzhir gyur kun gzhi yi// rnaMr [rnam par] bzhag pa gsal ston pa'i// stug po bkod pa'i mdo mchog yin// bar skabs tshigs bcad bl dzas bris//*.

please look at this, venerable monks.”³¹ Notes of such nature are rare, and none of them provide further information on their production. It seems likely that these also were composed in contexts where individuals were handling the volumes during ritual recitation. While this does not allow for a detailed reading or study of texts, the above examples, although few in number, demonstrate that textual contents were not utterly irrelevant either.

The usage of both text collections in recitation is clearly evident, since all of their folios exhibit the typical traces of human contact concentrating on the margins at the centre of the manuscript, the part that is touched when pages are turned. The ritual recitation of canonical texts in public contexts, often according to a seasonal rhythm, and for individual reasons in private settings is common usage, and thus it is safe to assume that the volumes of both collections were used for such purposes as well. While this is usually not separately documented, a number of notes on the manuscripts do testify to such individual performances of recitation. With regard to the Sūtra collection, for example, there are several instances that record a “complete recitation” (*gtsang 'don*) of the collection.³² Almost all of these are connected to a single person, a certain Klu sgrub rgya mtsho, encountered already in the notes above. His efforts reflect a personal engagement that provides crucial details on the practise of recitation:³³

[I], an irreligious (*chos med*) beggar (*sprang po*) called Klu sgrub rgya mtsho, used my own tongue to properly conduct a complete recitation of the twenty-eight volumes of the Sūtra collection. May the roots of this virtue bring about the pacification of unfavourable conditions and obstacles for all sentient beings, beginning with my father and mother, in this life, as well as their birth in Sukhāvātī in their next life. Having commenced on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month of the Iron-Mouse year, in the meantime I was influenced by laziness and distraction, and hence finished up (*'jug dril ba*) on the auspicious eighth day of the second month of the Iron-Bull year.

³¹ Namgyal mdo, vol. wa, fol. 39a, bottom margin: *'dir ni mdo sde 'jig rten stan gzhang [= 'jig rten bzhang pa] yin las rgyus [rgyu] 'bras 'di na yod pas rab chung [byung] rtsun [btsun] pa rnams 'di la gzigs zhu.*

³² Cf. Namgyal mdo, vol. nga, added paper slip; vol. tha, fol. 100b, bottom margin; vol. da, added paper slip; vol. tsa, fol. 323b, bottom margin; vol. tsha, 293b, bottom margin; vol. a, fol. 287b, bottom margin.

³³ Namgyal mdo, vol. a, fol. 287b, bottom margin: *chos med kyi sprang po klu sgrubs [sgrub] rgya mtsho zhes bya bas mdo sde glegs baM nyi shu rtsa brgyad rang gi lce thog nas gtsang mdon ['don] tshad mar byas pas dge ba'i rtsa bas pha mas gtso byas sems can thaMds [thams cad] kyi tshes 'dir 'gal rkyen bar chad zhi nas phyi ma bde ba can du skye bar 'gyur cig / lcags byi zla 9 bas [ba'i] tshes 25 la dbu brtsaMs zhing bar skabs le lo dang rnaM g.yeng gi dbang du gsong [song] shis [gshis] lcags glang zla ba 2 tshes bgyad [brgyad] bzang por 'jug dril bas bskal ba mchog tu bzang bkris [bkra shis] dpal 'bar 'dzaM gling gyan [rgyan] du byon /.*

Due to that, may the most fortunate of times, the blazing glory
of goodness, appear as an ornament to the world!

While public recitations of larger canonical collections are usually completed within a few days, this instance shows that in private settings individuals could engage with a text collection for an extended time. With admitted interruptions, Klu sgrub rgya mtsho spend more than four months on his recitation of the collection. A similar period of three months and ten days is indicated on three other occasions, when a recitation was conducted by someone named Dkon tshul.³⁴ Given the limited amount of information, it is difficult to determine the exact reasons and conditions under which such longer, individual engagements with the collections were conducted. However, all cases explicitly mentioned the accumulation of merit and its dedication for present and future benefit as the desired outcome of the recitation, as further explicated in the following verse:³⁵

By the power of the proper resounding of these excellent sūtras,
May all difficulties of the sponsors vanish,
And all sentient beings, limitless like the sky,
Ultimately attain the state of a Conqueror.

It is important to note that—as expressed here and in Klu sgrub rgya mtsho's note—the general accumulation of merit, fortune, and goodness is not only a personal issue. It also includes other people directly involved in the respective actions, such as the sponsors and monastic or lay officiants, as well as kinship and companions, with relatives and parents being often explicitly mentioned, the larger village community, and, ultimately, all sentient beings. In other words: the merit accumulated through recitation concerns communal welfare.

The earlier note of Klu sgrub rgya mtsho reveals also another interesting historical detail. The Sūtra collection as it is preserved at Namgyal presently lacks two of altogether thirty volumes (vols. ma and ha). Apparently, these were already missing when Klu sgrub rgya mtsho was handling the collection—whenever that was—, since he also referred to only twenty-eight volumes. In yet another note, he explains that he engaged with the manuscripts at the age of twenty-

³⁴ Cf. Namgyal mdo, vol. tsha, fol. 301a, bottom margin; vol. za, fol. 327a6; and vol. 'a, fol. 21a, bottom margin. In the notes, his name is given as *dkon mtshul*. In the last instance (vol. 'a), he mentions that he was joined by two spiritual friends (*dge bshes*). His name is also mentioned on vol. tha, fol. 369b.

³⁵ Namgyal mdo, vol. a, fol. 287b8: *mdo mchog 'di rnaMs tshul bzhin sgrags pa'i mthus// sbyin bdag rnaMs kyi bar chad kun zhi zhing// mkha' dang mnyaM pa'i seMn [sems can] thaMd [thams cad] kyis// mthar thug rgyal ba'i go 'phangs thob par shog//*.

six. However, the many traces he left on the folios do not provide sufficient information to date him in absolute terms.³⁶

Another individual who regularly occurs among the many marginal notes and who was already mentioned above is a certain Rnam rgyal or Vijaya. While he also engaged in the recitation of the collection, he figures more prominently as a poet who filled the blank space of the manuscript margins with his compositions.

The use of manuscript margins as writing material

In Himalayan communities, the knowledge and custom of producing paper was rather widespread.³⁷ However, since paper making required considerable means in terms of raw material, labour, knowledge, and finances, paper remained a scarce commodity and its usage was limited mostly to religious and administrative purposes. At the same time, larger manuscript collections were available in many monasteries and local temples, and these were handled by different people, who could use these opportunities to engage with the manuscripts and their paper in various ways.

The case of Rnam rgyal is certainly special. His name appears no less than nineteen times in different variants on the leaves of the Sūtra collection. In all but one of these cases, he used the manuscript margins to note down one of his poems. These are spread over the entire collection and range from short four-line verses to longer and more complex compositions.³⁸ The following acrostic (*ka rtsom*), the only one in the collection, gives an impression of his poetic skill:³⁹

³⁶ Cf. Namgyal mdo, vol. a, 34b, bottom margin: *snubs [nub?] kyi ri skyes chos med sprang po nga / mdo 'di klog mdon ['don] byed pas bskal ba bzang / klu sgrubs [sgrub] rgya mtshos rang lo nyer drug gi / lcags glang zla 2 tshes 6 bris*. In another note his age is given as twenty-five, see Namgyal mdo, vol. ya, fol. 125a, bottom margin.

³⁷ A detailed history of Himalayan paper production remains to be written; for a first orientation, see Helman-Ważny 2016.

³⁸ Poetic compositions under his name are found here: Namgyal mdo, vol. ca, fol. 72b, bottom margin; vol. cha, fol. 91b, bottom margin; vol. nya, fol. 34b, bottom margin; vol. na, fol. 25b, bottom margin; vol. pa, fol. 162a, bottom margin; vol. wa, fol. 111a, bottom margin; vol. wa, fol. 271a, bottom margin; vol. zha, fol. 109b, bottom margin; vol. zha, fol. 126b, bottom margin; vol. zha, fol. 143b1–2; vol. zha, fol. 241a2; vol. zha, fol. 370a, bottom margin; vol. 'a, fol. 252b, bottom margin; vol. ya, fol. 219a, bottom margin; vol. ya, 267a, right margin; vol. ya, fol. 360a5–6; vol. ra, fol. 183b, bottom margin; vol. sa; fol. 15b, bottom margin. Considering their stylistic similarities, several other anonymous poems might also have been authored by him. Apart from his poetic compositions, his name appears only once, in a short note, see mdo, vol. za, fol. 140a, upper margin.

³⁹ Namgyal mdo, vol. cha, fol. 91b, bottom margin: *ka skal bar ldan pa'i bI dza ya// kha kha bton mdo sde dag la byas// ga gong nas gong du 'gro 'dod pas// nga ngoMs pa med pa'i thos pa brtsal// ca cal po 'khor ba'i chos la byas// cha chos mthun gyi spyod pa srang la gzhal// ja ji 4n [bzhin] gyi gnas lugs rtogs 'dod pas// nya nyaMs myong gi gdam ngag mkhas la nyan// ta btan [brtan] gyi sgo gtan 'dzud 'dod pas// tha mtha' med srid pa'i sprul*

Ka: Vijaya, endowed with good fortune,
 Kha: Conducted a recitation of the Sūtra collections.
 Ga: Those who wish to proceed further and further
 Nga: Should exert themselves to study, without contentment.
 Ca: Idle talk (*cal po*) is regarded as a samsaric phenomenon,
 Cha: Acts according to the Dharma are counted as precious.
 Ja: Those who want to realise the nature of reality (*gnas lugs*) as it is
 Nya: Should listen to those who know how to advise on personal experience.
 Ta: Those who wish to enter a reliable doorway
 Tha: Should contemplate the limitless manifestations of worldly existence.
 Da: Those who wish to use these freedoms and endowments⁴⁰ meaningfully
 Na: Should strive exceedingly and accomplish the highest Dharma.
 Pa: Even though there are many volumes of scripture,
 Pha: [These] are not seen here and there.
 Ba: This treasury, the wish-fulfilling gem of oral teachings,
 Ma: Should be requested, with diligence, again and again,⁴¹
 Tsa: From the lama, the faultless teacher.
 Tsha: [His] oral advice radiates in all directions.
 Dza: Endowed with the four oral lineages, it is like a beautiful woman,
 Wa: Which manifests clearly (*wa le*) and without delay (*khyug ge*).
 Zha: By that, calm abiding (*zhi gnas*) and higher insight (*lhag mthong*) arise in union;
 Za: This is the most excellent of the vehicle of the profound sūtras.

The contents of these poems are clearly not incidental but make explicit connections to the manuscript collection: they praise their general qualities and refer to their textual contents; they provide advice on how to relate to these writings and what benefit is gained from their veneration; and they demonstrate not only interest and poetic skill but also familiarity with the elements of Buddhist doctrine

bsaMs [ba bsams]// da dal 'byor 'di don yod byed 'dod pas// na nan btan [tan] bskyed na dam chos bsgrubs// pa spo [po] ti glegs baM mang mod kyang // pha pha+rol [pha rol] tshu rol mthong ba med// ba bang mdzod gsung ngag yid 4n [bzhin] nor// ma ma nor ston pa'i bla ma la// tsa brtso+rus [brtson 'grus] skyed nas yang yang zhus// tsha tshad du 'khyol ba'i zhal gdaMs snang // dza mdzes ma snyan brgyud 4 ldan des// wa wa le khyug ge byonsu [byon nas su]// zha zhi lhag zung 'brel skyesu [skyes su] gnam // za zab mo sdoe [mdo sde] theg pa'i mchog//.

⁴⁰ This refers to the eight freedoms (*dal ba*) and ten endowments (*'byor ba*), which provide a human life with favourable conditions for spiritual development.

⁴¹ At this point, the order of the lines in the English translation differs from the arrangement in Tibetan in order to enable syntactical fluency.

and a calling to convey this to others. Obviously, these poems are meant to be read by others who engage with the manuscripts, and they were written with the intention of guiding their interactions.

Despite the prominent presence of the author of these poems, little is known about this person and even his name is difficult to determine. Instead of his Tibetan name, he uses Sanskrit renderings in longer (*rad+Ne bl dza ya*) or shorter (*bl dza* or *rad+Ne*) forms. However, these are often problematic, which is also mentioned in an anonymous note below one of his poems: “Ha, there are many mistakes in the name that you applied to yourself!”⁴² Apparently, also others reflected upon the Tibetan rendering of his name, since below yet another one of his poems his Tibetan name is suggested scribbled in vanishing letters:⁴³

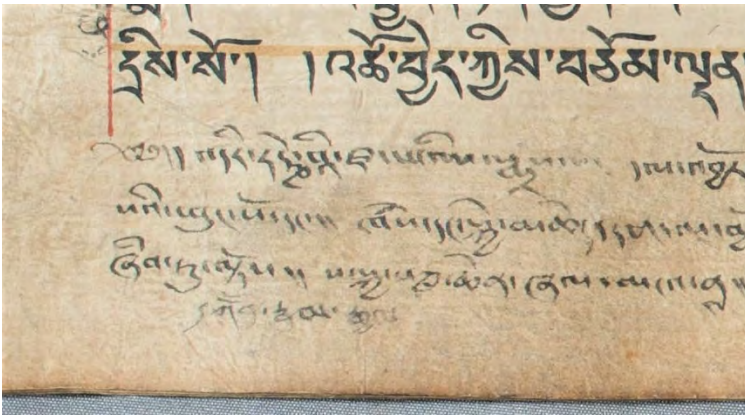


Fig. 7: An idiosyncratic rendering of Ratnavijaya's name (*rad+Ne bl dza ya*) in the first line of the notes and a suggestion for its Tibetan equivalent (*dkon mchog rnam rgyal*) at the bottom (*mdo*, vol. ra, fol. 183b).

The fact that his true name is indeed *Dkon mchog rnam rgyal* is also confirmed in one of his compositions that features this appellation, albeit slightly hidden in the midst of ornate poetry:⁴⁴

These are the words of the Conqueror, victorious in the present
and the future.

⁴² Namgyal mdo, vol. nya, fol. 34b, bottom margin: *khyed kyis tab [btāb] pa'i tshan [mtshan] la nor so mang ha*. That this note refers to the writing of his name is not only indicated by its content but also made explicit by dots linking the note to the name.

⁴³ Cf. Namgyal mdo, vol. ra, fol. 183b, bottom margin. The Tibetan contraction (*dkoog rnam rgyal*) can be unpacked to *dkon mchog rnam rgyal*.

⁴⁴ Namgyal mdo, vol. ya, fol. 219a, bottom margin: *'di phyi rgyal ba rgyal ba'i gsung/ lo res 4n [bzhin] du ma chag [chags] par/ gsung sgrogs byed pa'i rgyal ma rgyal/ ma g.yengs klog pa'i mchod gnas rgyal/ khyad par dkoog [dkon mchog] rnaM rgyal rgyal/ nyoongs [nyon mongs] g.yul las gnyen po rgyal/ yon gyi bdag mo ngo 'tshar [mtshar] che/ dge tshogs byang chub chenor [chen por] bsngo/*. His name is spelled out in the fifth line.

May Rgyal ma,⁴⁵ who organises a recitation of these words
 Every year, without interruption, prevail!
 May the officiating lamas (*mchod gnas*), who read out without
 distraction, prevail!
 In particular, may Dkon mchog rnam rgyal prevail!
 May the antidote against the army of afflictions prevail!
 The female sponsor is truly wonderful!
 I dedicate the accumulation of virtue towards great awakening.

As a side remark, this poem also testifies that women engaged with the manuscript collections. In particular, their role as sponsors (*yon bdag mo/sbyin bdag mo*) for the production or the recitation of Buddhist texts seems to be the only context in which female agency is explicitly acknowledged. This is also documented in other instances of the Sūtra collection,⁴⁶ and it was also previously noted as a larger phenomenon in Tibetan book production.⁴⁷

Historical details about Dkon mchog rnam rgyal—or Ratnavijaya in Sanskrit—are lacking. In the poem above, he considers himself among the officiating lamas (*mchod gnas*) who carry out the recitation. On another occasion he refers to himself as “a young monk” (*btsun chung*),⁴⁸ and his compositions evidently have an overtly religious tone. At times, they also convey a moralizing attitude, perhaps directed at fellow reciters with less devotion to morally sanctioned behaviour. The dangers of consuming alcohol are particularly addressed.⁴⁹

While you see the faults of drinking,
 Why do you drink, you sinner?
 Due to alcohol, one will proceed to the three lower
 existences.
 To be specific, one will end up in the hell realm.
 This again is only a reason for crying and weeping.
 There is no other enemy like intoxication.
 It is said that those who drink alcohol

⁴⁵ I tend to read this as a personal name, but it could also be an ornate epithet, or, if it should be corrected to *rgyal mo*, refer to a queen.

⁴⁶ See, e.g., Namgyal mdo, vol. da, fol. 92a, right margin (*yon dag [bdag] mo*); vol. tsa, fol. 81a, bottom margin (*yon dag [bdag] pho mo*); vol. zha, fol. 77b, bottom margin (*yon dag [bdag] mo*); vol. ya, fol. 267a, right margin (*sbyin pa'i bdag mo*).

⁴⁷ See Diemberger 2016.

⁴⁸ See Namgyal mdo, vol. zha, fol. 143b1–2.

⁴⁹ Namgyal mdo, vol. wa, 271a, bottom to right margin: *chang gi nyes pa mthong bzhin du// blo ngan khyod ni 'thung ngaM ci// chang gis ngan song 3 [gsum] du 'gro// khyad par myal ba'i gling du 'gro// de yang ngu 'bod kho na'i rgyul// myos 'gyur lta bu'i dgra gzhan med// chang 'thung ba'i mi dag ni // nam yang bde ba mi thob gsungs// sprang po bl dza'i bris//*. Similar contents are also discussed in another poem, see Namgyal mdo, vol. za, fol. 14b, bottom margin.

Will never obtain happiness.

This is a drastic warning, and it is easy to imagine that Himalayan communities perceived alcohol as problematic. That intoxication may have been an issue even during the handling of Buddhist texts is suggested by another marginal memo. In one instance, apparently meaningless letters are scribbled on the margin of one of the folios of the *Prajñāpāramitā* set, perhaps written to test a new pen. A note below the scribbling, carved by what appears to be the same hand and squeezed in between an empty space of the main text, shows a revealing attempt at explaining these letters: “Based on this scribble, I was writing being drunk on alcohol.”⁵⁰

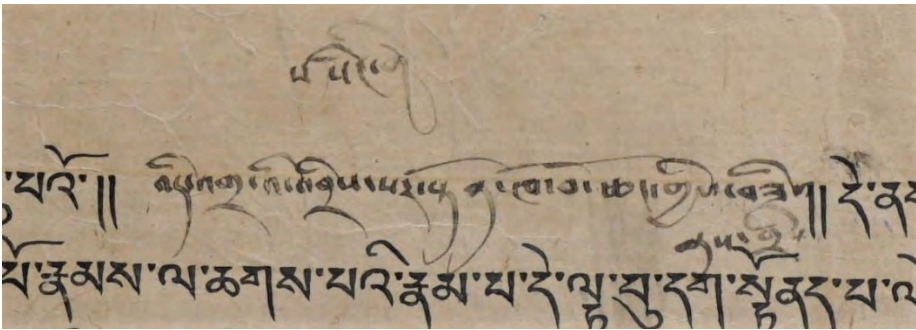


Fig. 8: Drunken scribble on the margin of the *Prajñāpāramitā* set ('bum, vol. ta, fol. 305a)?

Was the author of the note really under the influence of alcohol, or—perhaps more likely—was this intended as a joke? Notes such as this one come with considerable difficulties in interpretation and leave one guessing about the exact conditions that lead to its production.

The same is true for several other notes that on the one hand carry a critical message and call for proper behaviour in engaging with the manuscript collections but on the other appear exaggerated in their tone and hence are more likely intended as teasers rather than serious advice. Some of these notes explicitly address those individuals handling the manuscripts during recitation, which further strengthens the assumption that ritual recitation provided an opportunity for the use of manuscript margins as sources for writing. One of the recurring issues here is the proper performance of the actual recitation, including the development of an appropriate mental attitude: “Officiating lamas

⁵⁰ Namgyal 'bum, vol. ta, fol. 305a, upper margin: 'di 'gra ['dra] 'i 'bris par sten kho bo chang gyis [gis] bzi nas bri. Note that *kho bo* could also indicate a third person pronoun, that is, “he” instead of “I.” That the writer is indeed referring to himself, in a very much self-ironic gesture, is supported by the observation that the handwriting of the two notes appears to be identical.

reading out the Sūtra collection, you must distinguish provisional and ultimate meaning. Do not engage in idle chitchat! Do not deceive male and female patrons!"⁵¹ In this context, too, the idea of karmic retribution is stressed: "Officiating lamas, reading out the Sūtra collection, do not disregard karma, the law of cause and effect!"⁵² Just as the veneration and correct recitation of volumes of canonical Buddhist texts obtains tremendous merit, inadequate handling of the volumes can have corresponding negative effects. Warnings against such negative karmic consequences are frequent, however usually not as graphic as the following: "Officiating lamas, if you do not recite clearly, your tongues will be ploughed like a field!"⁵³ At least some of these notes also transport a good sense of humour next to their cautionary contents. This can be inferred from their general stylistic features, but it is sometimes also made explicit by the onomatopoeic addition of the sound of laughter. The following example illustrates both aspects well: "Renunciate monks, it will be beneficial if you refrain from all these many causes and consequences of your actions—Ha, ha, brother (*a po*), take good care!"⁵⁴ Also the note quoted at the very beginning of this article, which is in fact found twice on the margins of the Prajñāpāramitā set,⁵⁵ falls into this category. All of these notes testify that manuscript margins were also used as a means for different forms of communication, not all of which were concerned with lofty religious ideals.

Another type of manuscript usage is reflected in the numerous stock phrases, reproductions of words from the main text, writing exercises, and even meaningless scribbles that occupy a significant portion of the margins. The interpretation of these is somewhat ambiguous too. All of the examples discussed so far, despite their different natures, aimed at communicating a certain message to a particular audience—be it the correction of a textual mistake, the report of manuscript maintenance, the exploration of its textual contents, the display of poetry, or the use of manuscript space for the

⁵¹ Namgyal mdo, vol. tsa, fol. 81a, bottom margin: 'do [mdo] sde rlog [klog] pa'i bla mchod tsho brang [drang] don dang nye [nges] don gnyis shan phyed dgos pa lagso [lags so]// kha lta gog po ma 'dzod [mdzod] cig/ yon dag [bdag] pho mo ma slu cig.

⁵² Namgyal mdo, vol. tsa, fol. 33b, left margin: 'do [mdo] sde rlog [klog] pa'i bla mchod tsho las rgyu 'bras khyad du ma gsod 'dzod [mdzod].

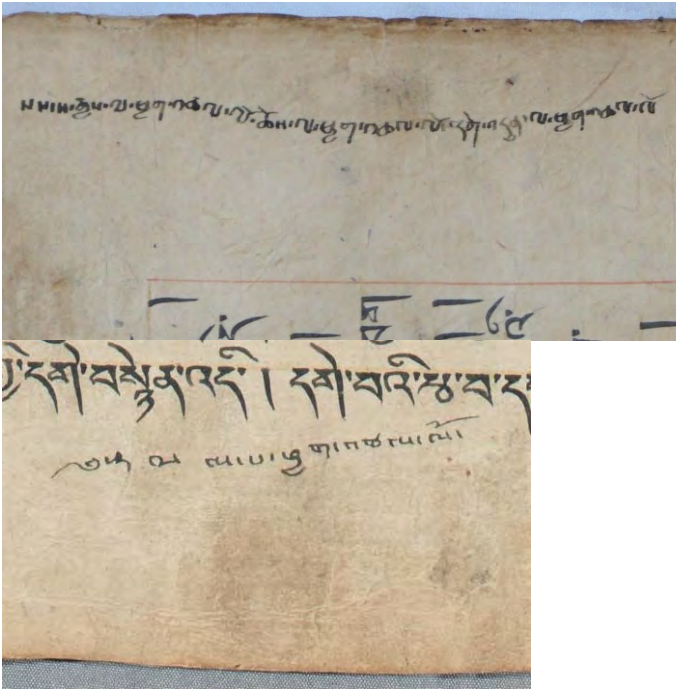
⁵³ Namgyal mdo, vol. tsa, fol. 112a9: bla ma mchod tsho blog [klog] dag par ma ton na lce la zhing rmo bar rda [bda'] 'o//.

⁵⁴ Namgyal mdo, vol. la, fol. 322a, bottom margin: rab dbyung [byung] btsun pa tsho las rgyu 'bras mang po da [de] yo de dum la 'dzems na phan par rda' [gda'] sde// a po legs por gnyer 'dzod he he//. It seems like the syllable *dum* has been replaced by *la*, written on top of the former.

⁵⁵ Cf. Namgyal 'bum, vol. ca, fol. 103a, bottom margin: dpad [pad] ma kyab [skyab] pa khyod 'chi ba yong dran pa sten. Further in the same volume, fol. 155a, bottom margin: pad ma skyab pa khyod mchi ['chi] ba yong dran pa sten.

exchange of notes. This communicational element, however, seems to be lacking or at least incidental in the following examples.

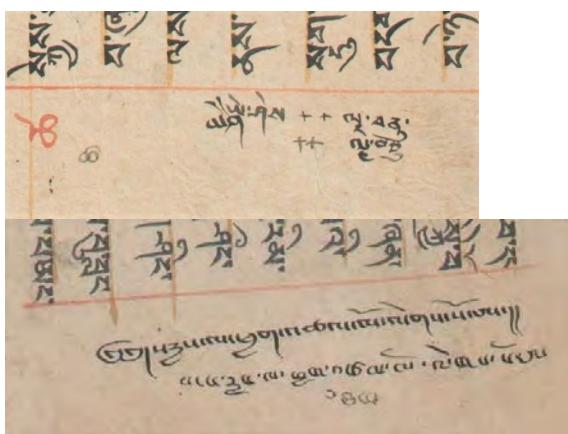
This claim may appear, at first sight, somewhat contradictory to the textual contents of what can be meaningfully identified as “stock phrases.” Many of the manuscript folios show traces of praises to the common pantheon of Buddhist veneration: the Buddha (*sangs rgyas*), the Dharma (*chos*), and the Sangha (*dge 'dun*), the Three Jewels together (*dkon mchog gsum*), the Conquerors of the three times (*dus gsum rgyal ba*), all Tathāgathas (*de bzhin gshegs pa*), Bodhisattvas (*byang chub sems dpa'*), and all glorious, highest lamas (*bla ma dam pa rnam*), etc. While these certainly reflect a culturally deeply ingrained devotion towards Buddhism, it is questionable whether this really is the driving force behind their production. Given their mostly clumsy handwriting and generally careless application, it seems likely that many reflect first attempts at writing by a beginner's hand, considering that these phrases were part of the basic and well-known vocabulary. It is also possible that some of such notes were carried out not as writing exercises, but even more casually as random scribbles to pass the time, perhaps during long sessions of recitation.⁵⁶



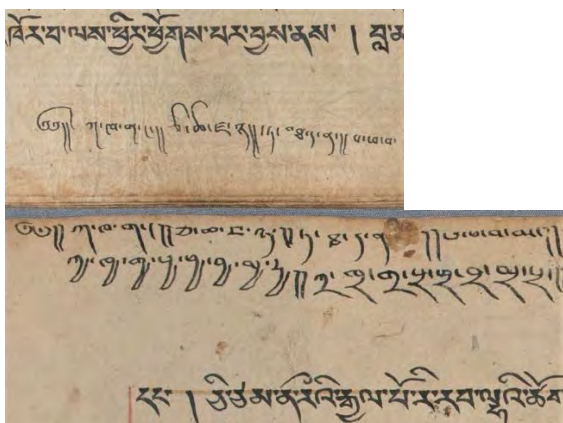
Figs. 9ab: Scribbled praises on the margins of 'bum, vol. ka, fol. 46b (a) and mdo, vol. ya, fol. 154a (b).

⁵⁶ Curious in this regard are the numerous instances of praises to Dpal sras 'bum found on folios of the Prajñāpāramitā set.

A similar case of such usage is the copying of text, which is observed on many leaves of both collections. This may involve copying individual words and phrases from the main text—in some instances even replication of page numbers, as shown in the examples below—but also the reproduction and repetition of earlier notes. These cases may also be realistically interpreted as writing exercises or mere acts of boredom. The same holds true for the numerous instances that feature the jotting down of characters of the Tibetan alphabet, a well-known phenomenon in Tibetan manuscripts. These often consist of linear lists of a smaller or larger amount of basic characters of the Tibetan alphabet, at times also letter combinations. Since some of these writings were carried out by very clumsy hands, it seems reasonable to assume that children or illiterates were involved in their production.



Figs. 10ab: Replication of page numbers on the margins of *mdo*, vol. *tsha*, fol. 250a (a); repetition of a praise to the Buddha on *mdo*, vol. *wa*, fol. 244b (b).



Figs. 11ab: Jottings of characters of the Tibetan alphabet on *mdo*, vol. *ca*, fol. 137b (a) and *mdo*, vol. *pa*, fol. 259b (b).

A broader range of engagement can also be observed with regard to the drawings found on a few of the manuscripts folios. Some of these include depictions of figures from the Buddhist pantheon that are artistically ambitious and appear to be inspired by the original illuminations of the manuscripts or other standard depictions of Buddhist art. Others are merely quick scribbles, at times stylistically akin to comics and with a great visual variety. Further, as in the textual notes, there are also cases of apparently thoughtless reproduction from the original illuminations. The following pictorial examples give an impression of the spectrum.



Figs. 12abc: Skilled drawing on 'bum, vol. ka, fol. 133b (a); comic-style sketching on 'bum, vol. ta, fol. 23a (b); copy of a tree from official illuminations on mdo, vol. pha, fol. 300a (c).

Despite their differences in style and ambition, all of them are later additions and not part of the original design of the manuscripts. Like the various types of textual notes, they also make use of the blank space of manuscripts margins for their respective purposes.

These visual and textual examples demonstrate that the manuscript collections were handled by a large variety of people with different concerns and motivations, which included concerned scholar-monks, ambitious poets, bored reciters, and careless children alike. Beside

those rare instances in which traces allow for a connection between the notes and their authors, such as the cases of Klu sgrub rgya mtsho, Dkon mchog rnam rgyal, and a few others, most of the agents will remain anonymous. Their interactions with the manuscripts, however, are manifested on the material itself, and in the long run their engagement ensured not only textual refinement and maintenance but also contributed to their deterioration.

Misuse, neglect, and abandonment of manuscripts

Given their relative old age, the manuscripts of the Sūtra collection and the Prajñāpāramitā set are in a considerably good condition. This conservation was certainly achieved through the favourable climatic conditions in Upper Mustang but also through the social care that was extended towards Buddhist manuscript collections.

At the same time, social usage, mostly in the context of ritual recitations, provided the circumstances for alterations of the manuscripts and for using their paper for purposes different from their original intention. A clear line between use and misuse, however, is difficult to draw. While even concerned monks such as Klu sgrub rgya mtsho and poets like Dkon mchog rnam rgyal in fact performed alterations to the manuscripts, the general tone of their notes suggests that in their self-perception, and quite likely in the perception of others as well, their writing intended to ensure the proper treatment of the manuscripts and hence added to their renown and long-term preservation. A child's alphabetical scribble, in contrast, was perhaps carried out with no special intention at all, but it was certainly perceived by the adult others as damaging the manuscripts. This is also illustrated by several attempts at the erasure of inappropriate scribbling on the margins.

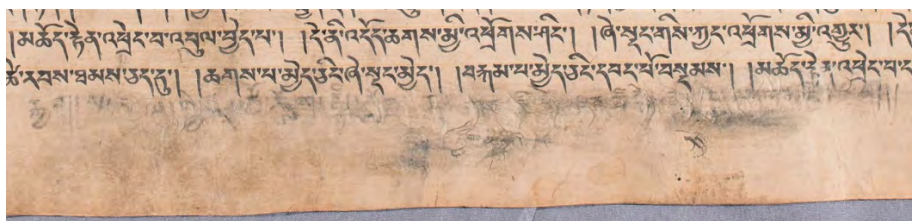


Fig. 13: Removal of inappropriate jottings (*mdo*, vol. *ta*, fol. 45a).

Despite the enormous importance attributed to Buddhist canonical manuscripts, the timeworn traces of human interaction testify that access to the manuscripts was not strictly limited to a considerate religious elite but also included a broader range of social agents. Communal ritual recitations of canonical manuscript collections often

included a large gathering of diverse people,⁵⁷ and it is conceivable that such events provided the opportunity for a less well-protected engagement with the manuscripts. Oral accounts of Himalayan communities also report cases in which Buddhist manuscripts were handed over to children as a means for the study and practise of reading and recitation, but were then handled with limited care.⁵⁸ Further, also unfavourable storage conditions and a lack of attention can generally lead to water damage and subsequent moulding, thus adding to the long-term deterioration of manuscripts.

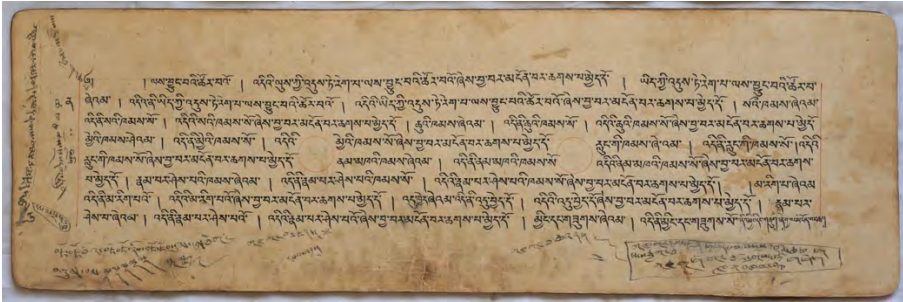


Fig. 14: Signs of long-term usage: stains of liquid spills and human touch; jotting and scribbling ('bum, vol. na, fol. 271a).

As noted above, minor damages are rectified through appropriate repair measures: the replacement of lacking pages, the stitching together of tears, and the patching up of holes are common procedures. When a specific body of canonical manuscripts is regarded as overtly timeworn and charitable sponsors allow for the production of a new set, the older one often remains with the other texts of the temple or monastery but is no longer used in recitation or ritual. Cases of the outright disposal of manuscripts are rare but do occur. Especially in the case of smaller institutions, entire temples or monasteries are occasionally abandoned and their respective possessions, including their manuscripts, are left to decay. Individual pages of manuscripts are also used in the repair of others,⁵⁹ but if a particular manuscript or a larger collection is indeed seen as unfit for further use, it may be discarded in appropriate ways. Such older manuscripts are sometimes placed in stūpas, where they retain their

⁵⁷ As described by Childs 2005, public recitations were headed and directed by religious specialists, but their performance allowed a significant part of the lay population of a village to directly engage with canonical manuscripts.

⁵⁸ Such stories are fairly common, and while I have heard of them in different settings and locations, I never actually witnessed a case where canonical manuscripts were given to children.

⁵⁹ See Iwao 2017 for some details on the reuse of sheets in the context of canonical manuscripts from Dunhuang.

function as an object of blessing and veneration,⁶⁰ but there are also reports that texts are ritually disposed by burning or throwing them into a river. However, these are rather extreme measures, and fortunately the Namgyal manuscripts were not exposed to such actions.

Concluding suggestions: Buddhist canonical manuscripts as communal objects

As explicated in the present investigation, the Namgyal manuscripts reflect a wide spectrum of human engagement that ranges from their laborious production and careful refinement and maintenance to their crucial role in communal or individual recitation rituals and their usage as a material basis for scribbling and sketching. One guiding principle in these interactions is the idea of karmic retribution. As explicitly stated in various notes, all aspects related to the production and proper usage of canonical volumes yield considerable meritorious potential, but there are also warnings about the dangers and karmic consequences of improper usage. Especially in light of the latter, it may be asked how the very same manuscripts regarded as highest objects of Buddhist veneration and sources for the ultimate wellbeing of the community can be employed as paper for exchanging sarcastic notes and sketches?

There are certainly various ways to account for this. As part of their long history, both the Sūtra collection and the Prajñāpāramitā set have moved to different locations,⁶¹ and it is to be assumed that engagement with the manuscripts differed depending on the place and the people handling them. It may further be assumed that the manuscripts' main practical purpose, namely their usage in recitation, provided a setting in which interactions with them were less well-protected and depended largely on the particular conditions in which the respective rituals were conducted.

Yet another, more general, and probably more significant answer arrives if this consideration includes not only those phenomena that are readily associated with the mishandling of manuscripts, such as

⁶⁰ One example of such a case are the manuscripts fragments that came to light recently during the deconstruction of stūpas at Matho, Ladakh. For a survey of the manuscripts and their historical background, see Tauscher 2019. Aurel Stein had also suggested that the textual collections of the Dunhuang manuscripts could be regarded as "sacred waste," but this idea was more recently disputed, see, e.g., Rong 1999. The ritual burying of Gandhāran manuscripts is described by Salomon 2009. For a more general overview of the "death" and disposal of religious texts, see Myrvold 2010.

⁶¹ Indications regarding their mobile history are discussed in Luczanits & Viehbeck (forthcoming, Concluding remarks).

children's scribblings, but also the other notes of more considerate content. How, for example, is it justified that Nam mkha' (see above), after deleting a mere four syllables of the original text, reports about this engagement in a note that extends to over half of the bottom margin of the respective folio? Why is it possible that Dkon mchog rnam rgyal, no doubt an ambitious poet, adorns the Sūtra collection with eighteen poems in his name, and quite likely several more? How can Klu sgrub rgya mtsho, who has done much for the reparation and maintenance of the Sūtra collection, document his interventions not only on separate paper slips, added to the collection for future reference, but also and in the same way on the margins of the manuscript folios that he intends to preserve?

These activities make more sense when such volumes of canonical literature are viewed as what might be meaningfully called "communal objects,"⁶² pertaining to their production as well as their usage. As indicated, historical details on the conditions of production are scarce. However, according to the fragmentary historical information available from both the dedicatory notes found on some of the volumes and a few of the later marginal notes,⁶³ certain features pertaining to their communal character become obvious. The production of these volumes involved, and could in fact only be achieved by, the joint efforts of a number of individuals: different sponsors who provided the means for their production,⁶⁴ scribes and other craftsmen who had the skills to execute the production, a monastic body that ensured the proper consecration of the volumes, and many others. While the volumes were thus produced by certain people in a certain context, they emerged as a communal enterprise. This character is captured well in the following marginal note:⁶⁵

⁶² It is striking that this conception as communal objects also has been argued for in the context of Buddhist manuscripts from Cambodia that contain chants for end-of-life rituals and hence show many similarities with regard to practical performance and they ways manuscripts connect different people or groups within Buddhist societies; see Walker 2018, 48–99.

⁶³ Since these are discussed in Luczanits and Viehbeck (forthcoming: Concluding remarks), they will not be repeated here.

⁶⁴ Information on sponsors is scarce for the present volumes, but it seems likely that individual volumes were in fact sponsored by different people. Such is obvious, for example, for a similar Sūtra collection from Lang Monastery (*glang gdon pa*) in Bicher, Upper Dolpo, in the case of which the existing poetic prefaces provide more information on their production. For observations with regard to some of these prefaces, see Heller 2007 and Heller 2009. A more detailed study of these prefaces is envisioned by the current author.

⁶⁵ Namgyal mdo, vol. tsa, fol. 121a: *dam chos ngo mtshar can/ yon dag [bdaq] ngo mtshar can/ 'chod nas [mchod gnas] ngo mtshar can/ 'gris 'khan [bris mkhan] ngo mtshar can/ shu gu ngo mtshar can/ gnas khang ngo mtshar can/ gnas pa'i mi rnam la snying rje che bal jams [byams] pa'i gnyen dang 'grog/*.

Wonderful highest Dharma!
 Wonderful sponsors!
 Wonderful officiating lamas (*mchod gnas*)!
 Wonderful scribes!
 Wonderful paper!
 Wonderful dwelling!
 May the people who live there be associated
 With kind and loving companions!

It might be also reasonable to assume that this communal vision of the volumes facilitated their movement to different locations, depending on local conditions and communal needs. This vision is definitely intrinsically connected to their ritual usage, which analogous to their production enabled the convention of various agents. Both of these aspects, namely a vision regarding such canonical volumes as communal objects as well as the factual use supporting this vision in a long-term perspective and providing the context for actual communal interaction with them, are central features in the explanation of the forms of human engagement reflected on the manuscript margins. They encouraged caretakers like Klu sgrub rgya mtsho to repair damages and fix other problems of the collection and to document this on the margins for his contemporaries and future generations. They inspired Dkon mchog rnam rgyal to share his poetic vision of the volumes and to admonish other users about their proper treatment. They allowed others to exchange sarcastic notes, and they also permitted the manuscripts to fall into the hands of children who scribbled their first letters. In other words: they provide access to the manuscripts as communal objects.

The communal character of these and similar Tibetan canonical volumes is perhaps underlined when compared with manuscript traditions from other cultural contexts. A sizable amount of research has been performed with regard to the marginalia on European medieval manuscripts.⁶⁶ While these also reflect a considerable range of human engagement—offensive remarks, including one of the first recorded usages of the F word in the English language that is found in a marginal note of a fifteenth-century manuscript,⁶⁷ depictions of weird creatures, and sexual obscenities are amongst the most well-

⁶⁶ Particularly well-known is Erik Kwakkel's academic work and his popular blog about various aspects and interesting marginalia of medieval manuscripts: <https://erikkwakkel.tumblr.com/>; accessed on July 16, 2020.

⁶⁷ The marginal note was added apparently in 1528; see Wilson 1993 for an early account. More recently, this has been popularised and discussed on different social media channels. I thank Helmut Tauscher for pointing this detail out to me.

known and recently well-marketed features⁶⁸—they also point to a fundamental difference. Those marginalia studied in the European context typically reflect either the activities of the producers, that is, the scribes or illuminators of the original manuscripts, or, to a lesser extent, of the people who were able to receive their textual contents, that is, the readers who at times also were the private owners of the manuscripts. In both cases, the agents are limited to a rather narrow, highly specialised, and certainly elitist social group. The margins of Tibetan canonical manuscripts, in contrast, exhibit the engagement of a much more diverse body of agents in the context of a range of practises in which reading plays only a secondary role as well as in the long-term development of the manuscripts in different local and temporal settings. Despite these discrepancies and with all caveats regarding the respective cultural specificities, the diverse research that has been produced on marginalia in other cultural contexts may act a fruitful perspective to advance our understanding of Tibetan manuscripts, an avenue, however, that is too vast to be taken within the limits of the present preliminary orientation.

Acknowledgements

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Tibetan primary sources

Namgyal manuscripts: all images of both the Sūtra collection and the Prajñāpāramitā set are currently prepared to be made accessible in the “Archives” of *Resources of Kanjur & Tanjur Studies* (rKTs):

⁶⁸ For the monetisation of medieval marginalia on social media, see the online article by Kate Wiles in *History Today*: <https://www.historytoday.com/monetising-past-medieval-marginalia-and-social-media>; accessed on July 16, 2020.

<https://www.istb.univie.ac.at/kanjur/rktsneu/sub/archives.php> (accessed September 28, 2020). A handlist of the textual contents of the manuscripts is already available under “Resources”: <https://www.istb.univie.ac.at/kanjur/rktsneu/handlist/index.php?coll=Ng> (accessed September 28, 2020).

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Entangled Objects: Gift, Reciprocity and the Making of the Imperial Subject in 18th Century Tibet¹

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“The power of things inheres in the memories they gather up inside them, and also in the vicissitudes of our imagination, and our memory--of this there is no doubt.”
– *Orhan Pamuk, The Museum of Innocence*

A Lord’s gift is more valuable than a horse!
(dpon po’i gsol ras rta las dga’)
– *Tibetan proverb*

Introduction

This paper takes up three examples of material encounter in 18th century Tibet to explore the relationship between empire, objects and people. During the Ganden Podrang period the exchange of gifts between the Qing Emperor and Tibetan lay and religious elites became routine and highly formalized, while also increasingly enmeshed in the global circulation of commodities.² Edicts presented to the Dalai Lama other Tibetan lay and religious elites were

¹ This paper was originally presented as part of the panel Systems of Power and Control of Knowledge at the Tibetan Buddhism and Political Power in the Courts of Asia Conference organized by the Rubin Museum in April 2019. A slightly revised paper was later presented as part of the Elliot Sperling Memorial Panel, at 15th International Association of Tibetan Studies Seminar at the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, Paris in July 2019. I am grateful for comments and feedback from fellow panel members and guidance from my advisor Gray Tuttle, and Sudipta Kaviraj.

² See examples of regulations for feasting, and gift-giving protocol in the chapters on Banquets (yanhui) Customs (liyi) in Song Yun, ed., *Weizang tongzhi*, (Lhasa: Xizang renmin chubanshe 1982). And more recently in archival documents from the TAR Historical Archives published recently in China such as the: *Gzhung dga’ ldan pho brang pa’i las tshan phyi nang tog gnas kyi go rim deb ther rin chen phreng ba*, (Lhasa: Bod rang skyong ljongs yig tshags khang, 2016). *Qing dai Xizang di fang dang an wen xian xuan bian*, vol. 1-8, (Beijing: Zhongguo Zang xue chu ban she, 2017).

often accompanied with ceremonial gifts. Lama's who travelled to Beijing often returned home in caravans laden with luxurious presents.³ While the products of the imperial ateliers in Beijing such as intricate brocade thangkhas; luxurious gilt statues; and fine porcelain came to furnish the home monasteries and aristocratic manors of these Tibetan elites, these objects were doubly enshrined in text. Multilingual Qing archives, such as the records of the Imperial Household Division (Chinese: *neiwufu*) contains detailed registers of gifts given and received, authors of Tibetan literary sources such as autobiographies (*rnam thar*) and monastic histories (*chos byung*) devote pages to elaborate descriptions of these objects.⁴

If relations between the Qing court and the Ganden Podrang can be seen as a constant negotiation between the centre and periphery, the role of gift giving in the Qing imperial project has lacked significant attention in scholarly treatments of the period. Employing Johan Elverskog's notion of 'Qing Ornamentalism' - the idea that Qing rule of Inner Asia was founded on a discourse of class whereby imperial patronage of existing social hierarchies disguised the reorientation of local political traditions on the terms of the imperial court - in this paper I will demonstrate that gift giving was central to configuring the relationship between the imperial centre and the Tibetan elites who served as the brokers of empire in the periphery.⁵ Close attention to the materiality and literary representation of Qing-Ganden Podrang gift giving reveals how objects became discursive nodal points where individual imaginations congealed into an imperial imaginaire and social structures were maintained, albeit superscribed with the logic of empire. Admittedly I am unable to present a comprehensive survey of Qing-Ganden Podrang gift giving practices from the 17th to the 20th centuries, this paper is a close reading of three imperial gifts presented by the Qianlong Emperor (1711-1799) to three important Tibetan historical actors over the period the period 1780-1793. To do so, I comb the fraught and at times incomplete archival landscape of court records, Tibetan historical sources, and a range of visual materials, and bring

³ Peter Schwieger, "Some Remarks on the Nature and Terminology of Gift Exchange between Tibetan Hierarchs and the Qing Emperor" in Jeannine Bischoff and Alice Travers eds., *Commerce and Communities: Social and Political Status and the Exchange of Goods in Tibetan Societies*, Bonn: Bonner Asienstudien, Vol 16, 25-42, 2018.

⁴ See recently published multilingual (primary Manchu and Mongolian) archival sources from the TAR Archives in: Bod rang skyong ljongs yig tshags khang du nyar ba'i bod sog man ju yig rigs sogs kyi lo rgyus yig tshags phyogs sgrig, vol. 1-12, Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2018.

⁵ Johan Elverskog, *Our Great Qing: The Mongols, Buddhism, and the State in Late Imperial China*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press), 65.

them into conversation with anthropological literature on gift exchange and the social lives of objects.⁶

1. A Qing Imperial workshop produced cuckoo clock, one of the Qianlong Emperor's gifts to the 6th Panchen Lama, Lobsang Palden Yeshe (*bLo bzang dpal ldan ye shes*), during his stay in Beijing from August 1780 to his untimely death in November of the same year.
2. An inscribed jade pebble 'Kabala box', the Qianlong Emperor's 25th birthday present to the 8th Dalai Lama, Jamphel Gyatso (*'Jam dpal rgya mtsho'*), in 1783.
3. An edict that restored Doring Tenzin Paljor's (*Rdo ring Bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor*) hereditary title of taiji, bestowed by the Qianlong Emperor in 1795, two years after his visit to Beijing in 1793.

To borrow from Bernard Cohn's notion of the historiographic modality as a fundamental aspect of the British Raj, Qing rule in Tibet, like other imperial projects, was a cultural and intellectual enterprise that provided for Qing rule a "place and significance in the ontological process of history, while producing an ideological construction" of the Tibetan past.⁷ This essay attempts to make a twofold intervention in broader discussions in the study of early modern empires: the politics of multi-ethnic governance and the role of the gift exchange in diplomatic and courtly gift giving. In addition to developments in anthropological literature on materialization and meaning, my approach to these material encounters between the Qianlong emperor and his Tibetan interlocutors has been informed by the affective turn in cultural theory and the notion of sentimental imperialism,⁸ I contend that the associative power of Qing "baubles" stemmed from their entanglement within webs of other objects, people and texts, and that they came to serve as productive sites of meaning making that shaped notions of subjectivity and empire for both the Qianlong Emperor and elites.

⁶ Scholarship that has emerged out of Marcel Mauss' classic study and Arjun Appadurai's later gesture for a revaluation of value with his ground breaking work in the 1980's. See Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, (New York: Norton, 1990).

⁷ Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 1996, 5-6.

⁸ Appadurai treats objects biographically and the symbolic value of their exchange politically and socially. Appadurai, Arjun, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

Gifting Empire

Dissatisfied with previous models like John King Fairbank's tribute system, as well as more recent attempts by New Qing Historians to explain the role of Tibetan Buddhism in multiethnic rule, this section lays out the framework of gift exchange as a fundamental part of Qing empire building in Tibet and Inner Asia by bringing reading the Qing literature against developments in gift theory. To borrow from John Darwin, I see the reciprocal nature of the gift as central to "settling the terms on which the indigenous peoples and their leaders would become the allies, the clients or the subjects of empire"⁹ as well the fraught self-fashioning of the Emperor and the Tibetan historical actors that he engaged with. In doing so I also want to establish a sharper notion of 'legitimation', or rather 'self-legitimation' that draws on contemporary scholarship in political theory, and on studies of the role of Sanskrit at the Mughal Court; a productive parallel imperial formation that has been seldom brought into conversation with its Inner Asian neighbor.

That Qing administration in the frontier regions was marked by a high degree of flexibility has been stressed by a number of scholars. By adapting to local conditions, the Qing allowed a variety of administrative systems to coexist in Mongolia, Xinjiang and Tibet (Elliot 2011, Di Cosmo 2006, Perdue 2005). However, the New Qing historian's take on Qing borderland relations inadvertently reproduces state-centric demarcations of difference and cultural homogeneity. The relationship between the Qing court and their multi-ethnic borderland territories during the 18th century cannot be understood as we do the relationship between a modern day politician and their constituency. Scholars such as James Hevia and Johan Elverskog have remarked that Qing rule was an ongoing project that hinged not only on the careful management of relations between indigenous elites and Qing agents but also the subsequent historiographical representations of these encounters.¹⁰ In recent years, scholars working with multilingual sources have sought to restore agency to local actors in order to illustrate this mutual exchange between empire and its frontiers. Drawing on Richard White's call for historians to interrogate the shifting power dynamics that characterised spaces between states which functioned as a "middle ground" for different cultures, these scholars have emphasized the processes of

⁹ John Darwin, *Unfinished Empire: The Global Expansion of Britain*, (London: Allen Lane, 2012), xii.

¹⁰ James Hevia, *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), 2003. Elverskog, *Our Great Qing*, 2006.

accommodation to challenge Sinocentric views of strong centres and passive borders.¹¹

Partha Chatterjee writes ‘the imperial prerogative lies in the claim to declare the colonial exception’.¹² By this he means that the power of European imperial formations lay in their capacity to name other political entities as in need of intervention. While some scholars have argued Qing rule in Tibet was colonial in nature, court patronage of Tibetan Buddhism complicates the conventional notion of empire as civilising mission. Rather than imposing a foreign ideology upon their subject populations, Qing rule in Tibet was facilitated by working within Buddhist cultural paradigms and with Tibetan lay and religious elites. While previous scholarship has acknowledged Qing support of Tibetan Buddhism was a source legitimation for its Inner Asian expansion, most scholarship on the Qing court patronage of Tibet Buddhism has been grounded in a Weberian model of legitimation whereby culture establishes and reinforces power.¹³ Only in the field of visual culture have scholars begun to explore Qing modes of representation for their wider historical implications.¹⁴ In dealing with the relationship between the Qing Emperor’s we reach an impasse when it comes to the question of legitimation; were Emperors true believers or was patronage of Tibetan Buddhism solely instrumental?

Scholarship on the gift has also been stymied by structuralist readings of power as purely sovereign and coercive. In his classic study, the French socio-anthropologist Marcel Mauss argues that all human societies are governed by the logic of gift-exchange. For Mauss, gifts

¹¹ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*, (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Patterson Giersch, *Asian Borderlands: The Transformation of Qing China’s Yunnan Frontier*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006). Jack Patrick Hayes, *A Change in Worlds on the Sino-Tibetan Borderlands: Politics, Economics, and Environments in Northern Sichuan*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014). Yudru Tsomu, *The Rise of Gönpo Nangyel in Kham: The Blind Warrior of Nyarong*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015).

¹² Partha Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire: History of a Global Practice of Power*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

¹³ David M. Farquhar, “The Emperor as Bodhisattva in the Governance of the Ch’ing Empire”, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 38.1 (June, 1978): 5-34. Samuel M. Grupper, “Manchu Patronage and Tibetan Buddhism During the First Half of the Ch’ing Dynasty”, *The Journal of the Tibet Society* 4 (1984): 47-75.

¹⁴ Patricia Berger, *Empire of Emptiness: Buddhist Art and Political Authority in Qing China*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2003). Wen-shing, Chou, *Mount Wutai: Visions of a Sacred Buddhist Mountain*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).

are never actually free, but objects of reciprocal exchange “never completely separated from the men who exchange them”.¹⁵ In a gift economy then, objects cannot be fully transferred from one owner to another as they can in a commodity economy. Gift giving necessarily obliges participants to give, receive, and reciprocate. Mauss’s account of the triple obligations involved in gift-giving is clearest in his statement of the following two seminal questions: “What rule of legality and self-interest, in societies of a backward or archaic type, compels the gift that has been received to be obligatorily reciprocated? What power resides in the object given that it causes its recipient to pay it back?”¹⁶ Based on a suggestion in a Maori text, appealing to the indigenous concept of Hau, Mauss states that there is a spiritual force inherent in the things given that pushes for reciprocation. More recently scholars like Bourdieu have used the social and ethical complexities of gift-giving to challenge the market rhetoric and exchange theory that dominate the social sciences. Bourdieu introduces the concept of domination to conceptualize the production of power relations. He accounts for the tacit modes of domination in everyday social relations by identifying the interval of time between gifting and reciprocation as establishing indemnity. Gifts are then simultaneously an act of generosity and of violence.¹⁷ The asymmetry of power relations involved in gift giving leads to Jacques Derrida to remark that a true gift is ‘an impossibility’.¹⁸

In order to the break free of dichotomized framework of genuine gift/genuine belief, I borrow from Audrey Truschke’s approach in contextualizing the patronage of Sanskrit literary production at the Mughal court (1526-1857). In *Culture of Encounters*, Truschke draws on the Rodney Barker’s notion of self-legitimation to argue that Mughal patronage of Sanskrit literati was a mode of royal self-fashioning motivated by their self-identification as kings in an indigenous Indian tradition that preceded them. Therefore, I understand Qing engagement with Tibetan Buddhism to be a discursive form of self-representation rather than a quest for an external source of legitimation.¹⁹

¹⁵ Mauss, *The Gift*, 31.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 3.

¹⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. by Richard Nice, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

¹⁸ Jacques Derrida. *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

¹⁹ Audrey, Truschke, *Culture of Encounters: Sanskrit at the Mughal Court*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

The Gift of Time

In *Empire of Emptiness*, Patricia Berger's analysis of the gift exchange between the Emperor and the 6th Panchen Lama, draws on the anthropological work of Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff, who have both argued that the lives of objects should be understood biographically and the symbolic value of their exchange politically and socially.²⁰ Berger is attentive to both the vocabulary of gift giving arguing their gifts "project a complex bilingual meaning that simultaneously suggests correct obsequiousness toward the emperor while appropriating for the giver a special ability to confer the blessings of long life", and as their multi-vocal historiographic symbolism.²¹ According to Berger, the power of the gift of a white conch shell made by the Panchen Lama, at the time the single most influential religious personage in Inner Asia, to the Qianlong emperor, lay in that it was an item that "simultaneously assume(d) several different registers of meaning, signifying different things to different viewers, all of them redolent with historic significance, requiring historical awareness on the part of giver and receiver to be perceived in the same key."²²

The following section follows Berger's framework, and the approach of Emma Martin who foregrounds the intersection of material culture and knowledge production in her treatment of the shifting meanings of the ceremonial greeting scarf (*kha btags*) in early 20th century Anglo-Tibetan relations,²³ to read the Qianlong's gift of a cuckoo-

²⁰ Appadurai argues that intercultural exchanges, even those where a vast universe of shared understandings exist (in this case, the premises of Tibetan Buddhism as practiced by the Gelukpa), can be based on deeply divergent perceptions of value or meaning. In his article in the same volume, "*The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as a Process*", Igor Kopytoff argues that, while commodities are often thought of in Marxian terms as things which are produced and then exist, in fact, "commoditization is best looked upon as a process of becoming rather than as an all-or-none state of being". He conceptualizes commoditization as a process which is both cultural and cognitive: "...commodities must be not only produced materially as things, but also culturally marked as being a certain kind of thing. Out of the total range of things available in a society, only some of them are considered appropriate for marking as commodities. Moreover, the same thing may be treated as a commodity at one time and not at another. And finally, the same thing may, at the same time, be seen as a commodity by one person and something else by another. Such shifts and differences in whether and when a thing is a commodity reveal a moral economy that stands behind the objective economy of visible transactions. Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things*, 1986.

²¹ Patricia Berger, *Empire of Emptiness: Buddhist Art and Political Authority in Qing China*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), 183.

²² *Ibid*, 184.

²³ Emma Martin, "Gift, Greeting or Gesture: The Khatak and the Negotiating of its Meaning on the Anglo-Tibetan Borderlands", *Himalaya: the Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies*. Vol. 35: No 2, Article 10, 56-72, 2016.

clock (Chinese: *ziming zhong*, Tibetan: *chu tshod khor lo*) as a break in the conceptual grammar of the exchange between Emperors and Buddhist hierarchs. I argue the clock, a cosmopolitan object that inspired wonderment from the Panchen Lama, can be seen as a rupture both semantically – as a new mechanical device that escaped easy articulation in the Tibetan language; and temporally – as a modern technology that had no precedent in the long history of material encounter between the court and Tibetan Lama's. This double rupture reinforces the expansive temporality of Qianlong as a universal, wheel-turning Bodhisattva ruler (*cakravartin*, *'khor lo 'gyur ba'i rgyal po*) whose gifts were as much the material instrumentalization of imperial power, as they were commodified visions of universal rulership and empire.

While the 6th Panchen Lama's time in Beijing from August to October, 1780, has been well studied, the peculiar gift of a cuckoo clock produced by the Qing imperial workshops has escaped the attentions of historians.²⁴ From their first meeting in the Hall of Rectitude and Sincerity, Qianlong showered the Gelugpa master with numerous gifts. The Panchen Lama himself made return gifts of rosaries and Buddhist statues to Qianlong and members of the imperial family. A day after being treated to a sumptuous viewing of Peking Opera at the Imperial Palace, the Panchen Lama and monks from many of Beijing's Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and temples performed elaborate prayers (*zhabs rtan*) for the longevity of the Qianlong Emperor, protector of the Dharma and in return received a strange and worldly gift.

On the 4th day, at the invitation of the Great Emperor, the most excellent rJe Lama (the Panchen Rinpoche) accompanied by the First Prince, the rJe lCang skya rin po che and an Amban serving as liaison and their respective attendants (gsol gzims refers to gsol dpon, gzims dpon and mchod dpon) and retainers attended Chinese opera performance at the Imperial Palace. Expressions of respect were exchanged just as the day before.

On the 5th day, monks from Zhe hor T'a phu zi, the Potala²⁵, The Temple of Eternal Virtue, Shar su mi, Khu khu su mi²⁶, Yi li su mi, Shu shan zi, dGon gsar, rJen thas, Lu wang thas (Lu Wang Tai) were invited to Tashilhunpo²⁷ to construct a Five Treasured

²⁴ A summary Tibetan-English translation by Elizabeth Bernard of his residence in the capital can be found in 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). However, the sections that detail the gifting of the clock, along with some other accounts are omitted.

²⁵ This does not refer to the Potala Palace, but rather the Putuozechongmiao at Chengde.

²⁶ Su me refers to monastery to the Tibetan dgon pa or monastery. I am grateful to Gray Tuttle for pointing this out.

²⁷ Tashilhunpo here refers to the Xumifushoumiao also at Chengde.

Mandala, the three supports, the necessary bronze, silver and brocade necessary for the statues were raised and expansive supplications made for the flourishing of the Dharma and the longevity of the Manjusri Emperor.

That same day, the Manjusri Emperor sent the Amban Bachung to greet the Panchen Lama and present him with a khatag and gifts. *Among them, a large mechanical cuckoo clock that was most wondrous in its shape and sound. As each hour came to a close, the clock would produce the sweet melody of a bird and a wooden figure would spring out* (emphasis my own). Great quantities of gold, turquoise, a victory banner made of jade, a *spyad pa* carved in the shape of a fish, were further presented.²⁸

On the fifth day of an elaborate series of material exchange, the Panchen Lama is struck by the novelty of a wondrous “wheel of time”, that chimed with melodious birdsong as it struck each hour. In the long list of gifts provided in the accounts of each of the Panchen Lama’s days spent in the Imperial capital, the clock is only item to draw any personal comment that interrupts the monotonous structure of the gift register. Lacking the terminology to describe a mechanical time keeping device, the cuckoo clock is described as a wheel or ‘khor lo, and is further qualified by the mechanics of its function, the emission of birdsong each hour and the sudden popping out of what I assume is a wooden or carved figure from a chamber above the clockface. Could it be argued that Qianlong was a wheel turning king in the sense that he was literally the master of the wheel of time (rather than wheel of samsaric existence)? Or that his universal rule encapsulated time as well as space?

The Tibetan term *chu tshod* originally referred to the measurement of time by a water clock. While there have been no studies into practical conceptions of Tibetan time, we know of at least one other indigenous form of time-keeping device, a time stick, or upright sundial. The Tibetan time stick was a column sundial with eight sides, each of which shows a time scale which has been calculated according to the amount of daylight during the different months of the year. To find the time a metal style, or gnomon, is inserted into a hole at the top of the stick in line with the correct month. The stick is then turned to face the sun until the shadow of the gnomon falls straight down on the scale. The time is indicated by the bottom edge of the shadow on the scale. Tibetan time was then far from an abstract universal concept, it was heavily dependent on astronomical calculation and depended

²⁸ See line 1-3, folio 374 in the block print version of *blo bzang dpal ldan ye shes dpal bzang po'i zhal snga nas kyi rnam par thar pa nyi ma'i 'od zer zhes bya ba'i smad cha*.

heavily on the notion of seasonal hours.²⁹ As the Panchen Rinpoche notes, the birdsong sounds as each hour passes, was he aware of the epistemic challenge that cuckoo clock presented to Tibetan conceptions of temporality?

The cuckoo clock, was a technological break in that it measured time in an absolute, mechanical way rather than a time rooted in the changing of the seasons. Mechanical time is often associated with industrial development, with time consciousness and punctuality inextricably linked with the history of capitalist wage labour. Yulia Frumer, in her provocative book *Making Time: Astronomical Time Measurement in Tokugawa Japan*, examines the complex history of the transition between a similar seasonal hour system to a Western equal hour system in the context of Meiji Japan.³⁰ Due to the lack of materials on Tibetan timekeeping and the fact that the Panchen's cuckoo clock did not herald a technological revolution in Tibet, instead remaining buried (literally) in history, I am unable to pursue broader questions of a temporal shift in the context of this paper. The clock will instead be read in the context of the history of gift Jesuit origins of clockmaking at the Qing court.

Mechanical clocks were first introduced to China by Matteo Ricci when he met the Wanli Emperor and presented him a European design in 1600. The Kangxi Emperor was notably interested in the design of European clocks, and established a division especially devoted to the production of European style mechanical clocks under the Palace Board of Works (*Zaobanchu*) called the *Zimingzhong* workshop.³¹ By the

²⁹ This is why for instance Sarat Chandra Das' entry for *dus tshod* (time, hour) reads "1. a division of time equal to two English hours: *nyin re la dus tshod bcu gnyis* / in each day are twelve *dus tshod*". In Tibetan folk tradition, the twelve hours of the day take the animals names of the *rab byung*, or sexagenary cycles of Tibetan astronomical calculation. They are the rabbit (*yos*) which corresponds to daybreak (*nam lang*s), the dragon ('*drug*) equivalent to the sunrise (*nyi shar*), the snake (*sbrul*) referring to the morning (*nyi dos*), the horse (*rta*) referring to noon (*nyi phyed*), the sheep (*lug*) corresponding to the (*zhed yol*), the monkey (*sprel*) corresponding to the evening, the bird (*bya*) equivalent to sunset (*nyi nub*), the dog (*khyi*) referring to dusk (*sa srom*), the pig (*phag*) referring to the forenoon (*srod 'khor*), the mouse (*byi ba*) corresponding to midnight (*nam phyed*), the ox (*glang*) referring to the afternight (*phyed yol*) and the tiger (*rtag*) referring to dawn (*tho rang*s). See Sarat Chandra Das, *A Tibetan-English Dictionary with Sanskrit Synonyms*, (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1902).

³⁰ Yulia Frumer, *Making Time: Astronomical Time Measurement in Tokugawa Japan*, (New York: Columbia University Press), 2018.

³¹ The other departments were the *falangchu* (enamels department), the *huazuo* (the painting workshop), the *biaozuo* (the mounting/framing shop), the *jishilu* (the archival office), *kuzhu* (storehouse). For more on the *neiwufu* see Marco Musillo, *The Shining Inheritance: Italian Painters at the Qing Court 1699–1812*, (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute Publications, 2016).

reign of the Qianlong Emperor, opulently decorative clocks were routinely presented as part of the culture of ceremonial gift exchange at the Qing court. Lots recently sold at auction, and an instruction manual on the production of Qing clocks written by a technician in Shanghai in 1805, reveal that several variations of large mechanical cuckoo clock, grand wooden chiming clocks, and smaller decorative clocks made of gold and silver, were made to the specification of the Emperor.³² As with his management of court painters, Qianlong gave very precise commissions and was the initiator and arbiter of the entire production process.³³

The Panchen Lama was greatly impressed by the abundant gifts he received in Beijing, remarking that it was due to the ‘great compassion of the Great Manjusri Emperor that all the kingdoms of the world had been brought into a peaceful state, and the teachings of the Buddha, especially those of Tsongkhapa have prospered... That in your 70th year, I but a lowly Lama, have the opportunity to gaze upon your golden countenance and meet noble officials, see distant lands and meet the local populace is surely down to your incomparable benevolence’.³⁴ While we have no further description of the cuckoo clock, we can only assume that the item -very much an outlier in the context of the register of Buddhist gifts that included brocade, precious jewels, embroidered thangkas and conch horns- was specifically chosen and designed to elicit awe, delight and wonderment from the recipient, while at the same time reminding them of the imbalance between the largesse of gifts given and received.

As Lobsang Yongdan has showed Tsanpo Nominhan, a contemporary figure to the Panchen Lama, had interacted with Jesuits at the court, contributing to challenging new astronomic and geographic knowledge. Scholars, like Matthew Kaptsein and Johan Elverskog have invoked the term Qing cosmopolitanism, to capture how Tibetan Buddhist figures at the court, through their liminal positions, began to see the larger world stereoscopically inside the small.³⁵ As a slight ca-

³² Kaijian Tang, *Setting Off from Macau: Essays on Jesuit History during the Ming and Qing*, (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 278.

³³ Catherine Pagani, *Eastern Magnificence & European Ingenuity: Clocks of Late Imperial China*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

³⁴ *Paṅ chen sku phreng drug pa dpal ldan ye shes kyi rnam thar, Pe cin: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang*, 2014), 959.

³⁵ Sheldon Pollock and Homi K. Bhabha et al., “Cosmopolitanisms”, in *Cosmopolitanism*, edited by Carol A. Breckenridge, Sheldon Pollock, Homi Bhabha and Dipesh Chakrabarty. Matthew Kapstein, “Just where on Jambudvīpa are we? New Geographical Knowledge and Old Cosmological Schemes in Eighteenth-century Tibet”, in Sheldon Pollock ed., *Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern Asia: Explorations*

veat, it is possible that the Panchen Lama could have potentially already been aware of European clockmaking, having met with George Bogle, representative of Warren Hastings, in 1775, half a decade before his trip to the Qing capital.³⁶ The flow of commodities from Tibet's southern border with India, most notable in Jigme Lingpa's description of a Kaleidoscope he obtained from a Nepalese informant in his employ,³⁷ suggests that the Beijing was not necessarily the cosmopolis, and that Tibetan and Qing historical actors were imbricated in the global circulation of commodities.

Nonetheless, I argue that the clock here represents an embodied Qing cosmopolitanism, that here speaks more to Qianlong's self-fashioning as a universal ruler with the ability to seamlessly work between and transcend the registers of meaning in a given exchange, than it does the liminality of the Tibetan Buddhist figure. That is to say that Qianlong's selection of the cuckoo clock, a technology that he must have been expected the Panchen Lama to be unfamiliar with, broke the conceptual grammar of the previous four days of gift giving, that was punctuated with the presentation of objects that as Berger has noted were meaningful because of their familiarity or resemblance to gifts that had previously been exchanged between Chinese Emperors and Tibetan Lamas. The Panchen Lama's cuckoo also speaks to how imperial gift-giving practices were imbricated in overlapping concentric circles of global capital flow, with Indian to the south, as well as the flow of Jesuit informed technologies that permeated the Qing court.

What is most interesting then, is that Panchen Lama's cuckoo clock was in many ways an important precedent to horological diplomacy practiced in the future. Matteo Ricci's gift to the Wanli Emperor was an example of successful clock diplomacy and emblematic of the Jesuit rise to the position of court technocrats in late imperial China. However, almost two centuries later, and only 13 years after his cuckoo clock left such an impression on the Panchen Lama, George McCartney would present an opulent François-Justin Vulliamy clock to the Qianlong Emperor. For the British, François-Justin Vulliamy's (1712–98) clocks represented the apex of eighteenth-century technology, yet Qianlong, as consummate connoisseur and ruler of all under heaven, remained defiantly nonplussed. The clock then was a gift that implied Qianlong's mastery of a new technological vernacular, it was the court

in the Intellectual History of India and Tibet, 1500-1800, (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 336-364. Johan Elverskog, "Wutai Shan, Qing Cosmopolitanism, and the Mongols." *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies*, no. 6 (December 2011): 243- 274.

³⁶ I could not find a timepiece among the gifts exchanged.

³⁷ See Jigme Lingpa's pilgrimage guide to India *lho phyogs rgya gar gyi gtam brtag pa brgyad kyi me long* written in 1789.

reproduction of a European gift that had been repurposed to impress the relationship of the center and periphery on his most important Tibetan Buddhist interlocutor of the time. The records of the Imperial Household Division (*neiwufu*), show that after 1780, the Qianlong Emperor would continue to gift clocks to borderland elites, and to another Tibetan Buddhist Lama on at least one other occasions.³⁸ During the 13th Dalai Lama's stay in Mongolia (1904-1906), the Jestundamba Hutuktu attempted to impress his more popular counterpart with the extent of his collections of European clocks. The 14th Dalai Lama is himself well known for his collection of luxury watches, gifts from the world leaders he has met with over the years.³⁹

By February of 1781, Qianlong was writing to the 8th Dalai Lama, informing him of his former teacher's death. What became of the Panchen Rinpoche's cuckoo clock? The clock, along with the rest of the Qianlong Emperor's luxurious gifts, travelled with a golden reliquary escorted by a military convoy that left Beijing in March of that year. While the Panchen Lama had scant time to enjoy the novelty of his gift, close reading of the table of contents (*dkar chag*) of the Panchen Lama's reliquary stupa (*sku gdung*) written by the 8th Dalai Lama himself, reveals that the cuckoo clock along with the Emperor's other gifts: various statues, precious jewels, an ivory rosary and rolls of brocade, were interred inside the as relics at Tashilunpo monastery inside a great stupa called the Essence of the Precious Wish Fulfilling Jewel (*sku gdung rin po che yid bzhin nor bu snying por bzhugs pa'i mchod sdong chen po*).⁴⁰ The clock must have had caused some confusion for the Panchen Lama's attendants, for it had been equalized with the other supports

³⁸ Neiwufu records show that a mechanical clock (*zimingzhong*) was given to a Lama in the 50th reign year of the Qianlong Emperor, on the 21st of February 1785. At current, I am unable to accurately identify who this figure was. There had been at least one precedent to gifting Lama's clocks during the rule of the Yongzheng Emperor, on the 4th of April 1732 who he gifted a *zimingzhong* to one Ji'er Lama, possibly a Kyrgyz Lama. *Qing gong nei wu fu huoji dang an*, Qianlong 50 nian, 2 yue, 1 ri, Qianlong 60 nian, 02 yue, 06 ri, see the earlier precedent at Yongzheng 10 nian, 4 yue, 4 ri.

³⁹ Most notably a gold Patek Phillipe pocket watch, a gift from Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1943 presented by two Office of Strategic Services agents, Ilya Tolstoy and Brooke Dolan, when he was only 7 years old. Current value estimated to be over \$253,605. The return gift: two silk scarves (*kha btags'*)! Thomas Laird. *The Story of Tibet: Conversations with the Dalai Lama*, (Grove Press, 2016).

⁴⁰ *Pan chen thams cad mkhyen gzigs blo bzang dpal ldan ye shes kyi sku gdung yid bzhin nor bu snying por bzhugs pa'i mchod sdong chen po rten dang brten par bcas pa'i dkar chag ngo mtshar 'dab stong 'byed pa'i nyin byed* (ja) in reproduction of the Zhol par khang blockprints of the Collected Works of the 8th Dalai Lama (*rgyal ba sku 'phreng brgyad pa 'jam dpal rgya mtsho'i gsung 'bum*) produced by the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamshala.

(*rten*) bestowed by the Qianlong Emperor as markers of grace and favour (*gong ma'i bk'a drin*).

The Gift of Future's Past

As President Xi Jinping evinces his own vision of Chinese empire in the 21st century, relics of the Qing empire have acquired great currency in the contemporary antique market with paintings, porcelain and especially Tibetan Buddhist artefacts becoming hotly sought after by institutions and private collectors. In 2017, a jade pebble kabala box, was sold at auction at Sotheby's Hong Kong for over a quarter of a million dollars.⁴¹ This object was one of Qianlong's many birthday gifts to Jamphel Gyatso, the 8th Dalai Lama in 1753, not long after the 6th Panchen Lama succumbed to smallpox in Beijing. This gilt jade river pebble has been skilfully hollowed into an ornate box with a caved soapstone base. The interior of the pebble bears an extensive Tibetan inscription that records the bestowal of the Edict of Jade (*gyang ti'i 'ja' sa*) to the 8th Dalai Lama. The text of the inscription is an almost word for word transcription of the Edict of Jade that the Qianlong Emperor bestowed to the Dalai Lama, along with a jade seal of office (*tham ka*), on the same occasion. This section examines how the jade pebble, edict and seal, much like the clock given to Panchen Lama, is enmeshed in a web of object, individual and text.

The birthday celebrations of the Dalai Lama's were lavish affairs that brought together the lay and religious officials of the Ganden Podrang, the monastic communities of the three great seats and the increasingly cosmopolitan urban population of Lhasa. The festivities of the 8th Dalai Lama's birthdays are attested to by numerous biographies but I draw on the 8th Demo Hutuktu's biography of the 8th Dalai Lama himself to show how Qianlong's jade pebble was recorded in a register of gifts bestowed by a representative of the Qing court.

In the 8th month [of the Water-Tiger Year], the lamas and officials of Sera Monastery prepared incense offerings along the main streets to pay their respect. All the monks and lay functionaries of the government, the [monks from] Namgyal Monastic College, myself the [8th] Demo from Tengye Ling, the Surkhang Chamberlain, and the religious dignitaries of Drepung monastery were in charge of the fivefold offering celebration. The Muslim community of Lhasa presented a great variety of food and

⁴¹ See Appendix B, Water, Pine and Stone Collection – Treasure, catalogue prepared Sotheby's Hong Kong, 2017. See: www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/2017/water-pine-and-stone-retreat-collection-treasures.

fruits towards the summer audience. Thereupon, an innumerable amount of lay and monastic onlookers spread along the road to reap the benefits of liberation by sight, while travelling to the Potala Palace. The ritual ceremonies for His Holiness were bestowed as usual. About five thousand two hundred lamas, officials, and members of the monastic congregation of Palden Drepung, and four thousand eight hundred lamas, officials, and monks from Sera Thekchen Ling carried out the rituals and prayers. The Great Emperor Mañjuśrī bestowed a golden edict and a seal which auspiciously presented through his attendant Bayer Khenpo. A pleasant proclamation and a golden decree having the outward appearance of a precious gem, silk garments, and other extensive gifts were received.⁴²

Contextualizing the imperial-artistic practice behind the production of the “Ten Thousand Dharmas Return as One”, a painting commissioned by the Qianlong Emperor to mark the joint birthdays of Qianlong and his Empress Dowager Xiaosheng, Patricia Berger writes that the collage style of the European style imperial portraits against a Tibetan-style background demonstrates the confluence and resonance of past and present events and his ability to propel this understanding of them into the future.⁴³ Through the Qianlong period court artistic practices, we see the persistence of doubling or replication, be it in the establishment of parallel architectural structures like the Potala and Tashilunpo lites or reproductions of gifts previously exchanged between the Yuan and Ming Emperor’s and the Buddhist interlocutors of their times. In *Replications: Archaeology, Art History, Psychoanalysis*, Whitney Davis advances the idea that the meaning of an object “is constructed cumulatively and recursively—a pro- and retrospective ‘activation’—in and through the structure and history of its replication”.⁴⁴ Close attention to the inscription shows that the jade edict serves to evoke the past encounter between the Shunzhi Emperor and the 5th Dalai Lama. Jade seals had been also exchanged between previous Ming and Yuan Emperors and their contemporary Tibetan Buddhist hierarchs.

In the past, when the ancestral sovereign a *baraja sag che*, the Fifth Dalai Lama met the Emperor in the distant capital he was bestowed great awards. From then on, during four successive existences, *all the gifts of state* (chab srid kyi gsol ras) were obtained.

⁴² *Rgyal dbang sku phreng bryad pa'i rnam thar 'dzam gling tha gru yangs pa'i rgyan*, (Pecin: Krung go'i bod rig pa'i dpe skrun khang, 2010), 202.

⁴³ Berger, 10.

⁴⁴ Whitney Davis, *Replications: Archaeology, Art History, Psychoanalysis*, (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 4.

Where can I find peace of mind? By pursuing great compassion and affection, the teaching of the yellow hats expanded and spread. You, the Dalai Lama, are the great holder of the yellow hat tradition. Over many lives, you have committed to aiding all creatures of the earth attain higher rebirths and ultimate liberation, acting in a perfect manner on many amazing occasions and receiving the numerous merits of the state and spiritual deeds. Lama, your virtuous achievements have been brought to perfection, spreading and accomplishing the supreme and precious doctrine of the Buddha. I rejoice greatly and thus present you this most excellent Edict of Jade and a seal. Honour them in the Potala at all times. I would be delighted when there is practical cause for you to use this seal in your official statements (*zhu yig*). Otherwise, use the old seal for less important matters and correspondence (*bskur yig*). Having earnestly accepted the gifts, there is favourable ground for governance. You have laboured for the dissemination of the teaching of the yellow hats and for the glory of all beings' felicity, and so forth, in accordance with the tradition of the Dalai Lama's previous incarnations.⁴⁵

Here the Qianlong Emperor directly addresses the 8th Dalai Lama, recalling the great authority of his predecessor the 5th Dalai Lama, who established the centralized rule of the Ganden Podrang. This was an authority that in Qianlong's mind at least stemmed from the patronage of the Qing court (see *chab srid kyi gsol ras*, which I have rendered the gifts of state) and the close relationship he built with Shunzhi, the first Qing emperor to rule over China. The 8th Dalai Lama, who was enthroned in an era when Ganden Podrang governance was mainly presided over by a cabinet ministry under the supervision of a series of regents appointed by Beijing, was to invoke the authority of his prestigious predecessor when he needed to issue important declarations or edicts.

Chinese historians of the period have typically read the text of the Edict of Jade as affirmation of Qing authority over the government of the Dalai Lamas, and more specifically the conferral of the jade pebble on the 8th Dalai Lama as Qianlong's confirmation of a subject Buddhist ruler.⁴⁶ Historical readings of the jade pebble, and the respective roles of Qianlong as giver and the 8th Dalai Lama as recipient have therefore

⁴⁵ I am grateful to Wang Ying, Sotheby's Beijing who brought this item to my attention, and also to Yannick Laurent who provided both the Tibetan transcription of the jade pebble and a working translation in a brief introduction to the object for the Sotheby's Hong Kong catalogue. Here, I work with his transcription and my amended translation.

⁴⁶ Most notably Wang Furen and Suo Wenqing. *Highlights of Tibetan History*, (Beijing: New World Press, 1984). Wang Jiawei, and Nyima Gyaincain, *The Historical Status of China's Tibet*, (Beijing: China Intercontinental Press, 2003).

coalesced into a modern Chinese nationalist historiography where Tibet has been an inseparable part of a multi-dynastic but continuous Chinese political formation. However, in his reading of the 5th Dalai Lama's famous visit to the imperial court in 1652, Gray Tuttle decentres Beijing by framing the Dalai Lama's motivations as resting in the broader "missionary nature of the expansion of Tibetan Buddhist into Inner and East Asia". For the 5th Dalai Lama, the end destination, Beijing, was not the sole measure of the motivations behind his 1642-43 excursion.⁴⁷ The proselytization of Gelug teachings and the donations he received from Mongolian, Tibetan and Chinese Buddhist suggest that read holistically, the trip served to galvanise support from among politically marginal communities in Amdo and modern day Inner Mongolia, multi-ethnic regions, that would rise in political significance and produce Tibetan Buddhist mediator figures as the Qing expanded their empire into Inner Asia.

While I have not been able to consult any examples of the 8th Dalai's proclamations made after 1783, there is a historical precedent to 'anxious' Dalai Lamas invoking the authority of the 5th Dalai Lama. One such example can be found in the holdings of Starr Library,⁴⁸ where the 7th Dalai Lama, settling a high-profile land dispute between two noble families, declines to use his own seal of office, and instead opts for the recognisable seal of the 5th Dalai Lama. Given that we have no autobiographical writing by the 8th Dalai Lama himself, and that his life narrative was authored by the court appointed Demo Hutuktu, it is difficult to surmise the extent to which the jade edict, pebble and seal played into his own self-conception of his spiritual and temporal authority. Further exploration of the 8th Dalai Lama's edicts, specifically instances where he used the jade seal over his personal seal may tell us more about the role of imperial objects in the articulation of the Dalai Lama's authority. For the time being, I would argue that this example of gift exchange tells us more about the Qianlong Emperor's self-fashioning process as a universal Buddhist ruler, and the way in which he drew on an historical imagination to shape his own notions of Buddhist governance. For Qianlong the past was a malleable resource for shaping the future; objects like the jade pebble were subtly potent for

⁴⁷ Gray Tuttle, "A Tibetan Buddhist Mission to the East: The Fifth Dalai Lama's Journey to Beijing, 1652-1653", in Bryan J. Cuevas and Kurtis R. Schaeffer, eds, *Power, Politics, and the Reinvention of Tradition*, (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 65-87.

⁴⁸ Official decree by the Seventh Dalai Lama written in 1723, ordering respective parties to observe the boundaries of the Upper and Lower Gangpoche (Gang po che) canyons. The decree is encased in saffron silk, and bears the imprint of the 5th Dalai Lama's seal. Bskal bzang rgya mtsho, *Dalai Lama VII. Decree [1723]*, C.V. Starr East Asian Library, Columbia University in the City of New York.

they evoked historical memory while reaffirming the relationship between giver and receiver.

I would at this point, like to draw attention to the Qianlong emperor's dual characterisation of Qing patronage, and material culture as gifts (*gsol ras*). Peter Schwieger, in his article on gift exchange as being both an obligation and privilege for Tibetan Buddhist elites, is particularly attentive to the terminology and phrasing of archival documents that record Qing-Ganden Podrang gift exchange as *legs 'bul* (a good natured gift), *'bul rten* (an offering of support) and *sba gyer* (Chinese: *Baiye*, a respectful gift). Schwieger is adamant that this form of gift exchange cannot be readily described as constitutive of tribute (Chinese: *Chaogong* or *gong*), in the sense of being a tributary framework for understanding the Qing court relationship with the Ganden Podrang.⁴⁹ I note that in life writing, gifts exchanged between the Qianlong Emperor and Buddhist hierarchs like the 6th Panchen Lama and the 8th Dalai Lama are frequently termed as *gsol ral*. The Tibetan word *Gsol ras* is an honorific noun for gift, the meaning of which is difficult to convey in English. *Gsol* means to offer, supplicate or to beg, and *ras* literally a piece of cotton or cloth that corresponds to the Sanskrit *vas-tra*, which means cloth or a garment. The term may have been originally used to describe the granting of the scrap of a Buddhist master's robe to a follower. This ambiguity, aside it describes the bestowal of a gift, from a superior to a subordinate, hence forming part of the Tibetan honorific register (*zhe sa*). The implication is therefore that exchange takes place between two individuals in an asymmetrical power relationship between each other, and that such an exchange emerges from the benevolence or grace (*bka' drin*) of the superior.

This dynamic of benevolent authority has been explored by Trine Brox in her examination of Tibetan democracy in exile where she interrogates the discourse of the democratic process in the Tibetan government-in-exile as a gift of the Dalai Lama (*mang gtso'i gsol ras gnang ba*). For Brox this narrative results in democracy becoming imbued with the divinity of its donor, an enchanted gift.⁵⁰ In the 18th century context, I contend that the use of *gsol ras* is interesting, not because it implies an asymmetry between giver and recipient, but because it is first and foremost an interpersonal personal term, in an inherently affective and familiar register, as opposed to the more mundane administrative terminology analysed by Schwieger. The brokering of empire therefore was heavily reliant on the maintenance of close, personal relationships between the Emperor and the Tibetan Buddhist elites he

⁴⁹ Schwieger, "Some Remarks on the Nature and Terminology of Gift Exchange", 37.

⁵⁰ Trine Brox, *Tibetan Democracy: Governance, Leadership and Conflict in Exile*, (I.B Tauris 2016).

interacted with. The language in which gift exchanges are described, as personal gifts made out of benevolence, speaks to the subtly curated but familiar way in which Qianlong wanted to be seen by his interlocutors. The reproduction of the terminology in the narratives of Tibetan elites, that imbue Qianlong with the resplendent physical and compassionate mental attributes of Manjusri, reveal the potency of language in the construction of a bond of loyalty.

The Gift of Redemption

Traversing U-Tsang, Kham and Kongpo, and the eight provinces
of China
atop the rolling wheels of a horse-pulled carriage,
I arrived at the *great golden capital*,
The *ever-victorious palace was the (jewel) that adorns the world*.
Rows of great ministers spoke of the causes and conditions (of
my visit),
To them I explained the virtuous state of the dharma, and all the
beings residing in the the land of snows,
Not long after, I had the *good fortune of gazing upon the golden
countenance of the Manjusri Emperor - a god among men*.⁵¹

In 1793, the Tibetan Cabinet minister Doring Tenzin Paljor arrived in Beijing to plead his innocence before the Qianlong Emperor. Having suffered an ignominious defeat at the hands of the Gurkhas, Tenzin Paljor, who had been the Tibetan commander in chief, had a few months beforehand been a prisoner of Rana Bahadur Shah at the royal court in Kathmandu. The Gurkha War had in many ways been precipitated by the Shamarpa Lama's designs on the immense wealth bestowed upon his brother, the 6th Panchen Lama and Tashilunpo monastery by the Qianlong Emperor just over a decade prior. Only the swift intervention of Qing troops led to the expulsion of the Gurkha army by a combined Qing-Ganden Podrang force and the signing of a peace treaty at Betravati on the 2nd of October 1792. The disgraced Tenzin Paljor was freed but immediately summoned to Beijing to atone for his poor display of leadership. As a disgraced general however, Tenzin Paljor does not receive the warm audience that the Panchen Lama received. As he waited for his audience with the Qianlong emperor, he bemoaned the fact he not prepared an adequate gift offering. 'My lowly self has not even a single silk offering scarf to offer Manjusri Emperor' he remarked to two Manchu companions.⁵² Tenzin Paljor

⁵¹ Rdo ring bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor. *Rdo ring paṇḍi ta'i rnam thar*, vol 1-2, (Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang 1987), 960-961.

⁵² *Ibid*, 938.

emerged from the meeting escaping any serious punishment and received a generous stipend from the Qianlong Emperor. He was however, summarily dismissed from his post of cabinet minister (*bk'a blon*) and stripped him of the hereditary title of *taiji* that he had inherited from his father.

His narrative account of his stay in Beijing, remains the only description of the imperial capital written by a Tibetan government official. Doring's account has been studied most notably by Elliot Sperling and Li Ruohong, who draw parallels to the detailed accounts of Choson Korean dignitaries visiting the Qing court.⁵³ In many ways, Doring's account of Beijing, read along with his long form account of his time in captivity could be termed as imperial ethnography. Doring, one of the most accomplished literary stylists of his day, is attentive to both cultural differences and similarities between Lhasa and the imperial capital, and the text is unique for presenting novel accounts of court banquets, performances of Peking Opera and fireworks displays and even an ice-skating show.

Scholars working with Mongolian and Islamic sources have emphasized how Manchu rhetorical tropes and literary formulations found in administrative documents slipped into the vernacular usage of their Inner Asian imperium to form what they term a "language of loyalty".⁵⁴ The Tibetan lay elites of the 18th century were highly skilled Kavic poets, and their autobiographies have yet to be subjected to a thorough literary analysis. Tibetan autobiographies of this period were often written in a mixed prose-verse style, with a versified Kavic narrative describing the events related in a preceding long prose form. Historians often ignored the Kavic verses and made do with mining the prose for dates and figures, failing to realize the affective and emotional resonances in the verse, that actually serves to supplement rather than summarize the preceding prose section. In the two short verses provided above, I have stressed certain poetic features (snyan ngag) synonyms, figures of speech and allusions that highlight the role of Tenzin Paljor's Kavic literary representation of the Qianlong Emperor as a benevolent gift giver and his own self-representation as a recipient of imperial grace in the context of a construction of a Tibetan language of loyalty. Qianlong is Manjusri personified, with a golden

⁵³ Elliot Sperling, "Awe and Submission: A Tibetan Aristocrat at the Court of Qianlong", *The International History Review*, 20.2, 1998, 325-335. Li Ruohong, *A Tibetan Aristocratic Family in 18th Century Tibet: A Study of Qing-Tibetan Contact*, unpublished Ph.D dissertation, 2002.

⁵⁴ Chris Atwood, "Worshiping Grace: The Language of Loyalty in Qing Mongolia", *Late Imperial China*, 21, 2, 86-139. See also David J. Brophy, "The Junghar Mongol Legacy and the Language of Loyalty in Qing Xinjiang", *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 2013, Volume 73, Issue 2, p. 231-258.

countenance and with a mellifluous voice, who resides in a radiant palace.

Although Qianlong does not bestow the same largesse he did upon the 6th Panchen Lama unto our Pandita, there are still numerous gifts at play here. Tenzin Paljor's release from the clutches of the Gurkhas was secured by the Qing general Fukangan, his freedom therefore a gift from Qianlong. A generous stipend provided to him along with lodging in Beijing, yet another gift from the Emperor. At the same time, Qianlong rescinded the title of *taiji*, a gift he had bestowed decades early upon Tenzin Paljor's father mGon po dngos grub rab brtan, otherwise known as Noyon Pandita, in 1740.⁵⁵ We see that in these examples of gift exchange, the rDo ring familiar emerges indemnified, with successive sons of the family only able to reciprocate with their records of service in governance. The asymmetrical nature of this exchange is plain to see, the awe and submission that Sperling describes in his article is exemplified by Tenzin Paljor's inability to receive another audience with the Emperor, having to instead dress in monk's robes and join the crowd of monks lining the road as Qianlong's procession travelled from the imperial palace to Yonghegong temple to gaze upon his visage from a distance (*gyang mjal*).⁵⁶

A few years after his return from Beijing, Tenzin Paljor's heir, Mingyur Sonam Paljor is married and not long after the family receive an edict from the Qianlong Emperor through the Lhasa Ambans that restores the hereditary title of *taiji* and confirmed the ascendancy of the junior Doring to the position of cabinet minister. Tenzin Paljor commits the transcript of the edict into his autobiography and is effusive in his praise of the Emperor's benevolence that allows his heir to follow his father's footsteps (*pha bu go brjes or pha sul bu jags*) in service of the Ganden Podrang and the Qing empire.

Imperial Afterlives

It is important to note that these three examples of gift giving also betray the fact that this imperial logic did not represent an all-pervasive imperial centre that dictated the course of history for the periphery. While my examination of the afterlives of the luxurious gifts made to the Panchen Lama and Dalai Lama by the Qianlong Emperor, speak more to the Emperor as connoisseur of material culture, and do not necessarily move us beyond the aporia of the gift, Doring Tenzin Paljor's encounter with Qianlong, and his autobiographical inscription

⁵⁵ Tshe ring dbang rgyal. *Mi dbang rtogs brjod*. Lha sa: Bod ljong mi mangs dpe skrun khang, 2003, 48.

⁵⁶ Rdo ring bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor. *Rdo ring pañḍi ta'i rnam thar*, 1987, 947.

of Qianlong's edict follows the script of what Johan Elverskog terms Qing ornamentalism, whereby existing social hierarchies of class and hereditary title are upheld albeit superscribed with an imperial logic. Therefore, it seems it was for the aristocratic lay elites, for whom imperial baubles became the most potent sources of self-fashioning. In the words of Ann Stoler, sentiment became the 'substance of governing projects'.⁵⁷ The imperial logic that would undergird Qianlong's support for Tibetan traditional hierarchies and class organization, to a large extent depended on the literary representations of the aspirations, anxieties and emotions of both the Emperor, and Tibetan elites.

We see that in these contingent material encounters, that for a select group of elites - who had close familial or personal relationships with each other - texts and objects become intertwined to produce new conceptions of empire and of personal subjectivities. Gift exchange is therefore a site of possibility for the both giver, receiver and the object itself, where both the anxieties and aspirations of the Qianlong Emperor and his Tibetan interlocutors become writ large into the historiography of Sino-Tibetan relations in the 18th century and beyond.

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⁵⁷ Ann L. Stoler, "Affective States", in *A Companion to the Anthropology of Politics*, ed. David Nugent and Joan Vincent, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 4-29.

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The Old sNar thang Tibetan Buddhist Canon Revisited, with Special Reference to dBus pa blo gsal's *bsTan 'gyur* Catalogue

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1. Introductory Remarks

The compilation of Buddhist literature in Tibetan translation in small units is documented from as early as the so-called Grey Period, namely, the period between what are known as the Early and Later Disseminations of Buddhism in Tibet. Such compilatory units consisted mainly, but not exclusively, of scriptural works of varying scope and kinds, in one or more volumes—including Prajñāpāramitā (Sher phyin) collections, the Buddhāvataṃsaka (Sangs rgyas phal po che) and Ratnakūṭa (dKon mchog brtsegs) anthologies, Tantra collections (rGyud 'bum), collections of miscellaneous Sūtras (mDo mang), and Vinaya ('Dul ba), Stotra (bsTod pa), and Dhāraṇī (gZungs) collections. As has been demonstrated in several previous studies, such small collections later served as building blocks for various *bKa' 'gyur* editions.¹ Information regarding comparable units of non-scriptural works, which later served as building blocks for the *bsTan 'gyur*, is available only to a much lesser degree, but there is no doubt that these existed as well. Needless to say that mixed compilations containing scriptural works along with commentarial and other material directly related to them have also existed. Moreover, in what appears to be unique for the Later Period, collections were compiled

* The findings presented in the present paper have been gained during the project "A Canon in the Making: The History of the Formation, Production, and Transmission of the *bsTan 'gyur*, the Corpus of Treatises in Tibetan Translation," generously funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG), for which I am highly grateful. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Philip Pierce for proofreading my English.

Technical Note: For the cited Tibetan texts, efforts have been made to cite at least two versions whenever possible. Note, however, that accidental/insignificant variants, such as those concerning segmentation marks, *pa/ba* variants and the like, have not been recorded unless they have some significance. Orthographic abbreviations (*skung yig*) have been silently expanded.

¹ See, for example, Jampa Samten 1987a, 1987b, Harrison 1994, 1996, and Skilling 1997.

containing translations of a specific translator.² As a result of the Mongols' occupation in the twelfth century and their ensuing cultural influence, combined with their considerable financial support, one witnesses increasing production of collections of translated literature—particularly in circles with close ties to the Mongol court, such as the Sa skya tradition—some of which likewise served as building blocks for what later came to be known as the Tibetan Buddhist Canon. Although some of these collections are referred to in later Tibetan sources as *bKa' 'gyur* or *bsTan 'gyur* (the former term is found, however, more often), this is, as will be argued in the following, very probably a retrospective employment of these two terms, for there is little evidence that either of these two collections or the terms designating them existed prior to the fourteenth century.

It has been generally accepted, both by the tradition and modern scholars, that the translated Buddhist literature was for the first time systematically divided into two distinct collections, which were in turn arranged according to a premeditated scheme—that is, (a) one comprising the works containing the Word of the Buddha, which has come to be known as the *bKa' 'gyur* (“The Word of the Buddha in [Tibetan] Translation”), and (b) one comprising the treatises, commentaries, and other related works, which has come to be known as the *bsTan 'gyur* (“The Treatises in [Tibetan] Translation”)—during the compilation work carried out in sNar thang,³ presumably sometime in the 1310s. More recently, however, the opinion has also been expressed that there may be precedents for such large-scale undertakings of producing sets of the *bKa' 'gyur* and/or *bsTan 'gyur*—ones, that is, predating the compilatory undertaking in sNar thang, and that accordingly the two terms existed then as well.⁴ In the following, I hope to be able to convincingly demonstrate that this opinion is not well grounded, and that it is fully justified to consider the Old sNar thang *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur* to be the first such collections. I shall also argue that the designations *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur*—which are truncated forms of the phrases *bka' 'gyur ro tshal/cog* and *bsTan bcos 'gyur ro tshal/cog*—likely came into vogue only sometime after the compilatory work in sNar thang, and so probably were not coined there either.

² See Almogi (forthcoming).

³ For a brief historical account of this *bKa' gdams pa* monastery, which was founded in 1153 by gTum ston Blo gros grags pa (1106–1166; BDR: P3446), see Roerich 1949: 282–283. For a very recent overview of the *bKa' gdams pa* school, see Roesler 2019.

⁴ See the Introduction in van der Kuijp & Schaeffer 2009, particularly pp. 25–26, 29.

2. From *bka' bstan bcos 'gyur ro tshal/cog*
to *bKa' 'gyur and bsTan 'gyur*

In the introduction to their publication of *bCom ldan rig(s) pa'i ral gri's* (1227–1305; BDRC: P1217; henceforth *Rig ral*) *rGyan gyi nyi 'od*, van der Kuijp and Schaeffer provide a detailed and impressive survey of early productions of canonical collections. Some of the reports led them to question the hitherto prevailing assumption that the *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur* produced in sNar thang at the beginning of the fourteenth century were the first of their kind, and also to propose that although the terms *bka' 'gyur* and *bstan 'gyur* came into vogue in the fourteenth century, “there is some evidence to suggest that these designations date from the second half of the thirteenth century, at the latest.”⁵ It is clearly beyond the scope of the present study to discuss all the numerous sources provided by van der Kuijp and Schaeffer. It would, however, suffice to remark here in general that while there is no doubt that collections of translated literature of various kinds and forms were produced from early on, most evidence provided by them for the existence of the terms *bka' 'gyur* and *bstan 'gyur*, and thus of the two corresponding separate collections, prior to the fourteenth century is based on later sources (or undated / anonymous ones). An examination of the materials, along with other evidence, suggests that the terms *bka' 'gyur* and (more rarely) *bstan 'gyur*, and the matching notion of two distinct canonical collections, found in these later sources when reporting on earlier collections are instead retrospective projections onto the various undertakings described by their respective authors.⁶ These sources, therefore, can in my view serve as evidence for the existence of neither two distinct, systematically conceived and organized canonical collections nor the two terms associated with them. Several of the

⁵ See van der Kuijp & Schaeffer 2009: 10, and elsewhere throughout the Introduction.

⁶ See Tauscher 2015: 107, where it is similarly argued in regard to the employment of the term *bka' 'gyur* to the collections compiled and produced in Gu ge at the dawn of the Later Period of Diffusion. Tauscher also notes that the term *bka' 'gyur* is not found in Rin chen bzang po's biography, which was composed by his disciple Ye shes dpal, but that rather the term *sde snod gsum ka (tripiṭaka)* is used (though it remains unclear what the term exactly refers to there). For the usage of the term *sde snod gsum* in reference to translated works, see Skilling 1997: 89–90, particularly n. 19, where references to the *lDe'u chos 'byung* and *Yar lung chos 'byung* and other sources in which the term *sde snod gsum* has been used are given, and where Skilling states that the exact meaning of the term as used there (in the context of discussing translation activities during the Early Period) is unclear. See also *ibid.*: 97, where the remark found in Rin chen bzang po's biography that “Rin chen bzang po deposited a ‘complete *Tripitaka*’ (*sde snod gsum ka tshang ba*), a total of 468 volumes (*po ti*), in the monastery of Rad nis” is referred to along with references to secondary sources discussing it. For a citation from 'Gos lhas btsas's *sNgags log sun 'byin*, where the phrase is used in a similar meaning (...*lo tstsha ba rnam kyis sde snod gsum bsgyur zhing...*), see Almogi 2020: 43 n. 46.

sources provided and discussed by van der Kuijp and Schaeffer will be nonetheless re-addressed and discussed here.

In their introduction to Rig ral's *rGyan gyi nyi 'od*, van der Kuijp and Schaeffer devote an entire section to "Early Canonical Production in the Sa skya Tradition," where they discuss, among other things, 'Phags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan's (1235–1280; BDRC: P1048) production of what they refer to as a *bKa' 'gyur*, based on 'Phags pa's "official announcement of this manuscript corpus," which he wrote in 1278. This "announcement," regarded by van der Kuijp and Schaeffer as "the earliest reference to the presence of a Kangyur in Sa skya," is included in 'Phags pa's Collected Writings under the title *bDe bar gshegs pa'i gsung rab 'gyur ro 'tshal bzhengs pa'i gsal byed sdeb sbyor gyi rgyan rnam par bkra ba* (henceforth *gSung rab 'gyur ro 'tshal bzhengs pa*). Referring to this title,⁷ they also state that the "transition" from the term *gsung rab 'gyur ro 'tshal* to the later *bka' 'gyur ro 'tshal* "is not altogether significant."⁸ I wish to address two points in this regard: (a) whether van der Kuijp and Schaeffer's designation of the collection produced by 'Phags pa as *bKa' 'gyur* is justified, and (b) whether what they call the transition from *gsung rab 'gyur ro 'tshal* to *bka' 'gyur ro 'tshal* is more significant than they would have us believe. As related by 'Phags pa, the production was done in stages and in segments of individual independent collections—including various Prajñāpāramitā (Shes rab pha rol phyin ma) collections, the Buddhāvataṃsaka (Sangs rgyas phal po che) and Ratnakūṭa (dKon mchog brtsegs pa) anthologies, a Tantra collection (rGyud 'bum), a Sūtra collection (mDo sde mang po, or short mDo mang), and a Vinaya ('Dul ba) collection (not necessarily in this order)—with no evidence for a systematic organization of the entire material into a coherent collection in the sense of what later came to be known as the *bKa' 'gyur*.⁹ Based on the report found in the *gSung rab 'gyur ro 'tshal bzhengs pa*, van der Kuijp and Schaeffer, who assume it to have been one collection, a *bKa' 'gyur*, suggest two possible sequences in which it was arranged. However, there is no evidence that either of these sequences reflects an organizational scheme that yields a single well-defined collection. On the contrary, the fact that the various segments are mentioned in two different sequences could serve as counterevidence to this assumption. At least one of them may simply reflect the order in which the various collections were produced. This

⁷ This title is found twice, on the title page and immediately following it, at the beginning of the text. See the *gSung rab 'gyur ro 'tshal bzhengs pa* (A, 599, 600.1; B, 402.1–5).

⁸ See van der Kuijp & Schaeffer 2009: 14–32, for their discussion of early canonical production in the Sa skya tradition, and 20–23, for the discussion of 'Phags pa's *gSung rab 'gyur ro 'tshal bzhengs pa*.

⁹ As rightly pointed out in van der Kuijp & Schaeffer 2009: 22 n. 43, the verb to "arrange" (*grigs pa*) is not found in 'Phags pa's *gSung rab 'gyur ro 'tshal bzhengs pa*.

undertaking by 'Phags pa was in my opinion not necessarily different from other similar earlier projects to produce scriptural collections consisting of smaller independent units, and thus does not deserve the designation *bKa' 'gyur*.

As for the term *gsung rab 'gyur ro 'tshal*, except for its occurrence in the title, 'Phags pa refers to the collection (or rather collections) he had made either by their individual designations (i.e., rGyud 'bum, etc., as listed above) or, more generally, simply as *gsung rab rin po che* (/ *rin chen*), "The Precious Teachings."¹⁰ Moreover, I would like to suggest reconsidering the source/date of the text's title (*bDe bar gshegs pa'i gsung rab 'gyur ro 'tshal bzhengs pa'i gsal byed sdeb sbyor gyi rgyan rnam par bkra ba*). The question whether it stems from 'Phags pa himself (and thus also to be dated 1278) is legitimate, since, as has already pointed out, it is merely found as a cover and beginning title, and could very well be an editorial title added later, for example, during the compilation of 'Phags pa's Collected Writings. Such an assumption could be supported by what seems to be the "title" given by 'Phags pa himself, which is found at the end of the document and where again the phrase *gsung rab rin po che*, and not *gsung rab 'gyur ro 'tshal*, is used. This "title" might be rendered as follows: "A Text Faithfully Narrating the Production of All Precious Teachings [in Translation] with Precious Gold."¹¹ Of some interest is certainly the word "all" (*mtha' dag*), which is clearly a hint at an attempt to achieve (or give the impression of) completeness (although, as I shall argue below, it probably should not be taken too literally), so that the result of this undertaking could possibly be considered, retrospectively, a proto-*bKa' 'gyur*. Such proto-*bKa' 'gyurs*, as pointed out, for example, by Helmut Tauscher, present "an intermediate stage between the collections of imperial times and the fully developed Kanjurs." Ideally, they are "complete collections of the Buddha's word but not yet systematically arranged into Kanjurs," while "similar or related texts are compiled into larger volumes, which, however, do not have any particular order among them."¹² It would be perhaps more appropriate to consider the literary units produced by 'Phags pa (and others before and after him) as several of numerous other building blocks for what later became the *bKa' 'gyur*. And indeed we know that some of these small collections in Sa skya served as precisely that for the Old sNar thang *bKa' 'gyur*.¹³

¹⁰ See the *gsung rab 'gyur ro 'tshal bzhengs pa* (A, 609.2–3; B, 411.12–13): *de ltar gsung rab rin chen gser gyis rab bzhengs nas* | |.

¹¹ See the *gsung rab 'gyur ro 'tshal bzhengs pa* (A, 610.1–2; B, 412.10–11): *gsung rab rin po che mtha' dag rin po che gser gyis bzhengs pa'i tshul* | *tshul bzhin du brjod pa'i rab tu byed pa 'di ni dge slong 'Phags pa zhes bya bas* | **Sa pho stag gi lo smin drug gi zla ba'i tshes lnga'i nyin par dpal Sa skya'i chos grwa chen po sbyar ba'o** | |.

¹² See Tauscher 2015: 107.

¹³ See Jampa Samten 1987a, 1987b, Harrisson 1994, 1996.

With regard to the terminology, of particular interest is a passage where 'Phags pa explicitly states that the works translated by the *lo tsā bas* and *paṇḍitas* are known as '*gyur ro 'tshal*, "everything that / whatever has been translated."¹⁴ In fact a similar state of affairs is observed in regard to the two canonical collections compiled in sNar thang several decades later under the supervision of dBus pa blo gsal, aka Sangs rgyas 'bum and rTsoḍ pa'i seng ge¹⁵ (ca. 1270–ca. 1355¹⁶; BDRC: P3090), as attested in his *bsTan 'gyur* catalogue, which will henceforth be referred to as *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar*. The title as it appears on the title page of both manuscript versions lacks the term *bstan 'gyur* and simply reads *bsTan bcos kyi dkar chag* (though it, too, might well be a later editorial/copyist title). The translated works are referred to therein as either *gsung rab rin po che* ("Precious Teachings")—apparently referring both to the Word of the Buddha and to commentarial and other related works—or *bka' dang bstan bcos dri ma med pa* ("Immaculate Words [of the Buddha] and [Related] Treatises"), which are said to be '*gyur ro cog tu grags pa rnams* ("those [works] known as 'everything that / whatever has been translated'"), or in a less formal formulation, *bod du 'gyur ba ji snyed pa rnams* ("everything that / whatever has been translated in Tibet").¹⁷

Another example given by van der Kuijp and Schaeffer, this time as evidence that the term *bstan 'gyur* "dates from at least the middle of the second half of the thirteenth century," is a reference in the plural form—*bstan 'gyur chen po rnams*—found within a narrative of an oral teaching (*gsung sgros*) given by U rgyan pa Rin chen dpal (1229/30–1309; BDRC: P1448), which according to van der Kuijp and Schaeffer took place in the late 1270s.¹⁸ This, they state, is "the earliest reference

¹⁴ See the *gSung rab 'gyur ro 'tshal bzhengs pa* (A, 606.3; B, 408.14–16): *sdud pa po yis legs bsdus nas | | lo paṇ rnam kyis legs bsgyur ba | | 'gyur ro 'tshal du grags pa rnams | |*.

¹⁵ On the names of dBus pa blo gsal, see van der Kuijp 2011: 77–78.

¹⁶ The dates provided here are according to van der Kuijp & Schaeffer 2009: 10, but cf. van der Kuijp 2011: 79, where it is argued that if dBus pa blo gsal indeed wrote his *bstan rtsis* in 1280, as suggested by several sources, he was more likely born closer to 1260.

¹⁷ See the *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar* (A, 2a6–b1; B, 2a5–6, cf. Jampa Samten 2015: 1.24–25): ... *gsung rab rin po [A: po, B: pa] che'i tshogs rnams rim par bsdus shing rnam par phyé ba'i sgo nas bstan pa'i sgron ma 'jig rten du yun du gnas shing gsal bar mdzad la | ...*; *ibid.*: (A, 80b4–5; B, 59a2–3, cf. Jampa Samten 2015: 117.22–23): ... *mkhas pa rnams kyis bslab par bya ba'i [A: bya ba'i, B: bya'i] gnas Bod du 'gyur ba ji snyed pa rnams sngon gyi smon lam gyi stobs bzang po dang |*; *ibid.*: (A, 2b5–3a1; B, 2b4–6, cf. Jampa Samten 2015: 2.7–10): *skye dgu rnams kyi phan bde sgrub pa la brtson pa lha dang bcas pa'i ston pa yongs su rdzogs pa'i mkhas pa chen po 'Jam pa'i dbyangs kyis bde bar gshegs pa'i bka' dang bstan bcos dri ma med pa 'gyur ro cog tu grags pa rnams nye bar bzhengs pa las bstan bcos rnams kyi rim pa ni dkar chag tu bri bar bya'o | |*.

¹⁸ See van der Kuijp & Schaeffer 2009: 29. The authors refer to the *mKhas grub au rgyan pa'i gsung sgros rin po che gser gyi phreng ba*, a thirty-one folio manuscript (dBu med), C.P.N. catalogue no. 004804(3)/007005(3), marginal number Cha, 19a, to which I

to date of a Tengyur that is known to [them].” Nonetheless, the fact that the word is found there in the plural clearly shows that the phrase is not to be understood as “Tengyur” but rather simply as “the great translated treatises” (for more on the usage of the word in the plural, see below). Moreover, we cannot be certain that the transmitted narrative faithfully reflects each and every term used during the event it is reporting. On the contrary, it may be assumed that it underwent revisions of various kinds, even major ones, in the course of compiling and putting down in writing this master’s oral teachings (as in the case of, to give another example, sGam po pa’s oral teachings). One should bear in mind that such oral teachings are often compiled only after a master’s death. In the case of those of U rgyan pa Rin chen dpal, they were compiled and edited by his disciple Zla ba seng ge (b. 13th cent.; P5822). The date of the compilation is unknown to me, but it probably took place sometime in the first half of the fourteenth century after 1309 (the year of the master’s death). In addition, van der Kuijp and Schaeffer also draw our attention to a passage from the *Yar lung chos ’byung*, composed by Yar lung Jo bo Shākya rin chen sde (b. 14th cent; BDRC: P5273) in 1376 (Martin 1997, no. 96), in which the author reports that lHa Byang chub rin chen (1158–1232; P3449), the second abbot of the bKa’ gdams pa monastery of Se spyil bu, came to be known as lHa Lung gi dbang phyug (“lHa [chen], Master of Text Transmission”) “owing to his ability to give the *lung*-transmission of what he [i.e., Yar lung Jo bo] calls the Kangyur.”¹⁹ In this case, too, I feel that equating the phrase *bka’ ’gyur ro ’tshal* with “Kangyur” is somewhat hasty, as not only was the history composed one and a half centuries after lHa Byang chub rin chen passed away, but the phrase also appears to be used there non-terminologically and simply loosely means “all translated [works containing the] Word [of the Buddha].”

Another two sources provided by van der Kuijp and Schaeffer that I wish to briefly discuss here are the *lHo rong chos ’byung*, composed 1446–1451 (Martin 1997: no. 118) by rTa tshag Tshe dbang rgyal (1400–1499; BDRC: P8672), and the biography of the Second Karma pa Karma pakṣi (1204/6–1283; BDRC: P1487), composed by the Second Zhwa dmar mKha’ spyod dbang po (1350–1405; BDRC: P1413), and thus to be dated to the late fourteenth or very early fifteenth century. These two sources include the phrase *bka’ ’gyur ro ’tshal* in their description of the salvific activities of Karma pakṣi. This led van der Kuijp and Schaeffer to state that, according to the *lHo rong chos ’byung*, Karma

unfortunately have no access. Some other versions are provided by the BDRC, for which see under Zla ba seng ge (P5822).

¹⁹ See van der Kuijp & Schaeffer 2009: 14, and the *Yar lung chos ’byung* (106.8–9): ... *bka’ ’gyur ro ’tshal gyi lung bzhugs pas | lHa Lung gi dbang phyug zhes grags |*.

pakṣi had a “[Kanjur] in vermilion ink”(!) made,²⁰ adding that the biography mentions even two such sets. Now, despite the fact that both sources are rather late and the fact that they employ the phrase *bka' 'gyur ro 'tshal* rather than *bKa' 'gyur*, for various reasons it is worth looking at the two passages once again. The *lHo rong chos 'byung* states the following:²¹

[Karma pa Karma pakṣi] had everything that has been translated [containing] the Word [of the Buddha] written down, and [he himself] composed, both in China and in Tibet, numerous treatises on all [manner of topics, including such concerning] the Three Baskets (i.e., Vinaya, Sūtra, and Abhidharma), the New and Old Tantras, and the treatises and instructions [related to any of them]. [His own treatises] are called *rGya mtsho mtha' yas*, [a phrase] articulated at the beginning [of the works]. He was [thereby] creating auspicious circumstances for an unbiased propagation of the Doctrine.²²

The passage in the biography is somewhat less clear. It appears, however, that the *lHo rong chos 'byung* has echoed it, and with this in mind, and with one substantial emendation of the text, I would like to offer the following translation:²³

Having received extensive transmissions for countless scriptures, [Karma pa Karma pakṣi] taught [his] *bsTan pa rgya mtsho mtha' yas*—beginning with the *Ye shes rgya mtsho mtha' yas* and ending with the *Tshig bzhi tshigs su bcad pa*—pervading the world [with it] as much as all translated [works containing the] Word [of the Buddha and] the treatises, [these] two, do.

My emendation of the text from *bka' 'gyur ro 'tshal gnyis* to *bka' bstan 'gyur ro 'tshal gnyis* may prima facie seem far-fetched, but it is in my view the only way to accommodate the word “two” (“two *bKa' 'gyur* sets” makes no sense whatsoever in this context²⁴). If the passage from the *lHo rong chos 'byung* is indeed based on this (in my view corrupt)

²⁰ See van der Kuijp & Schaeffer 2009: 13.

²¹ *lHo rong chos 'byung* (237.21–238.2): *bka' 'gyur ro 'tshal bzhengs pa dang | sde snod gsium gsang sngags gsar rnying | bstan bcos man ngag thams cad la mtshan gyi thog mar smos pa'ang | rGya mtsho mtha' yas zhes pa'i bstan bcos rGya Bod du mang du mdzad nas bstan pa phyogs med du rgyas pa'i rten 'brel bsgrigs pa yin no |*

²² On the *rGya mtsho mtha' yas skor*, see Kapstein 2000: 97–106. A somewhat poor-quality scan of the cycle has been made available by the BDRC (W22340).

²³ *Karma pakṣi'i rnam thar* (72.2–3): ... *rab 'byam bka' la lung chen po thob pas bsTan pa rgya mtsho mtha' yas | Ye shes rgya mtsho mtha' yas man chad | Tshig bzhi tshigs su bcad pa yan chad la | bka' bstan [em.: bka' bstan, Ms: bka'] 'gyur ro 'tshal gnyis tsam 'dzam gling khyab par bstan cing |*...

²⁴ To be noted, however, is that the passage from the biography has been reproduced verbatim in the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (A, 906.8–20; B, 460.20–22), which likewise reads *bka' 'gyur ro 'tshal gnyis tsam!*

passage from the biography, it would mean that its reporting of Karma pakši “commissioning a *bKa’ gyur*,” or more precisely, “commissioning the production of everything that has been translated [containing] the Word [of the Buddha],” is historically erroneous, being perhaps a result of trying to make sense of the unintelligible passage.

Now, coming back to the phrase *bka’ gyur ro tshal*, the main problem with van der Kuijp and Schaeffer’s understanding of the passage (leaving aside their misinterpretation of *tshal* to mean “vermillion ink”) lies in their implied division of the phrase into the two components *bka’ gyur* and *ro tshal*.²⁵ As already hinted at above, the phrase actually consists of the components *bka’* and *gyur ro tshal*. This detail might seem negligible, but correctly understanding the phrase is vital for understanding not only the two above-discussed passages but also the actual process of formation of the Canon, with its two parts, and the formation of their respective designations *bKa’ gyur* and *bsTan gyur*. The phrase *gyur ro tshal* is already attested in the *lDan/lHan dkar ma*, in its opening paragraph, where it is found twice in combination with the word *chos* (or *dam pa’i chos*), which obviously includes both the *bka’* and *bstan bcos*.²⁶ It is thus clear that the phrase is known from at least the early ninth century—first in combination with the word *chos* in its broader sense—simply meaning “everything that / whatever has been translated” rather than referring to systematically compiled and arranged collections in such forms as the *bKa’ gyur* and *bsTan gyur*. As we shall see below, the plural forms *bka’ gyur ro tshal/cog rnam*s and *bstan bcos gyur ro tshal/cog rnam*s (or short: *bka’ gyur rnam*s and *bstan gyur rnam*s), occasionally found in early sources, must therefore refer to a number of individual works rather than numerous sets of the *bKa’ gyur* or *bsTan gyur*.

One question to be asked is what “everything that / whatever” in the phrase “everything that / whatever has been translated” actually

²⁵ A similar interpretation is observed in their translation of the phrase *gser rkyang gi bka’ gyur ro cog* (*gyur ro cog* being an alternative for *gyur ro tshal*) to mean “the entire Kangyur of pure gold” instead of “all translated [works containing] the Word [of the Buddha written] in pure gold.” See van der Kuijp & Schaeffer 2009: 12.

²⁶ See the *lDan/lHan dkar ma* (Lalou 1953: 319.5–6; Herrmann-Pfandt 2008: 1.7–8): ... **Bod** *kyi rgyal khams su dam pa’i chos gyur ro tshal gyi mtshan byang dkar chag* ...; and *ibid.*: (Lalou 1953: 319.12–13; Herrmann-Pfandt 2008: 1.24)... **Bod** *khams su chos gyur ro tshal gyi mtshan byang*.... The phrase is also found in the title of the catalogue, which reads: *Pho brang stong thang lDan/lHan dkar gyi chos* [CD: *chos*, GNP: *bka’ dang bstan bcos*] *gyur ro cog gyi dkar chag*. The reading variant *bka’ dang bstan bcos* (as recorded in Herrmann-Pfandt 2008: 1 n. 2) appears, however, to be a later editorial or copyist alteration. Compare the less terminological phrase found in the colophon, which reads (Lalou 1953: 337.10; Herrmann-Pfandt: 411: “Colophon”): *gsung rab mdo sde dang bstan bcos thams cad*. The *’Phang thang ma* catalogue appears not to include the phrase *gyur ro tshal/cog*.

means. I believe that it would be safe to say that during the Early Period, when translation, compilation, and cataloguing were centralized undertakings, it undoubtedly literally meant “everything” (or “nearly everything”), whereas during the Later Period, when we witness the formation of various schools, decentralization, and in fact fragmentation, this was far from being the case. Now collections were produced, first and foremost, on the basis of the holdings of the individual religious centre, and often also those of neighbouring ones.²⁷ Most importantly, they were influenced by the school affiliation and philosophical/doctrinal inclination of those who commissioned, donated, or edited them. This state of affairs inevitably had an impact on the selection of works to be included in, or excluded from, the projected collection—a point particularly relevant in regard to Tantric works. In the case of (alleged) revisions or new translations of the same work, this same state of affairs undoubtedly also influenced the choice as to which versions to include or exclude. In addition, financial considerations likewise played a role in influencing the size of these collections. Thus during the Later Period, particularly its early phases, “everything/whatever” should be understood as “everything that / whatever was available and accepted as authentic.”

As pointed out above, the term *bstan 'gyur* is not employed by dBus pa blo gsal in his catalogue. The catalogue of the Tshal pa *bsTan 'gyur* edition, which was prepared in the years 1317–1323 at the behest of the Tshal gung thang ruler sMon lam rdo rje (1284–1346/7; BDRC: P9825) and under the supervision of one Bla ma Kun dga' don grub—who, I have recently suggested, can possibly be identified with sNye mdo Kun dga' don grub (b. 1268; BDRC: P1452), one of the Third Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje's (1284–1339; BDRC: P66) teachers²⁸—does not employ the term *bstan 'gyur* either. This catalogue—which was compiled by dGe ba'i bshes gnyen dGe 'dun rin chen, who, too, I have suggested, may have been one of the Third Karma pa's teachers,²⁹ and which probably was also completed in 1323—does contain, however, several annotations in which the term is employed. The term is also found in the title on the front page. The manuscript, though, is not dated, so that both these annotations and the front-page title could be later scribal/editorial additions. In fact, there are indications—in terms of both palaeography-cum-codicology and content—that this is indeed the case, and therefore these occurrences should not be associated with the actual catalogue.³⁰

²⁷ See, for example, Skilling 1997: 98, Jampa Samten 1987a, 1987b, and Harrison 1994, 1996.

²⁸ See Almogi 2020: 114 n. 16.

²⁹ See Almogi 2020: 114–115 n. 17.

³⁰ The annotations found in the *Tshal pa bstan dkar* can be divided into two groups: (i) The first group consists of interlinear annotations, which appear to be written in

In contrast, Bu ston Rin chen grub's (1290–1364; BDRC: P155) religious history, composed in the years 1322–1326, does employ the terms *bka' 'gyur* and *bstan 'gyur* in its fourth chapter, which consists of the appended title index. For the works recorded in his index, Bu ston merely employs the general terms *bka'* and *bstan bcos*³¹—which, given that his index does not reflect the contents of any particular collection, is completely legitimate—but he does employ the terms *bka' 'gyur* and *bstan 'gyur* on several occasions to refer to existing collections or to their catalogues, as follows:

1. An occurrence of the term *bka' 'gyur* in a paragraph heading: *'dir sngar 'gyur nges pa deng sang gi bKa' 'gyur du ma tshud cing ma rnyed pa* (“in the following [are listed works that] are certainly Early Translations [but] are not included in present *bKa' 'gyur[s]* and [thus could] not be obtained”).³²
2. Two occurrences of the term *bstan 'gyur* with reference to a *bsTan 'gyur* catalogue (*bsTan 'gyur gyi dkar chag chen mo*³³ and *bsTan 'gyur dkar chag*³⁴), obviously referring to dBus pa blo gsal's catalogue to the sNar thang edition. In yet another instance, while listing the catalogues he relied on for the title index, he refers to the same catalogue and uses the full form of the phrase (*sNar thang gi bstan bcos 'gyur ro cog gi dkar chag*³⁵). It should be noted here in passing that it is remarkable that Bu ston does not refer to the catalogue of the sNar thang edition of the *bKa' 'gyur*, which was reportedly also compiled by dBus pa blo gsal (on which, see

the same hand as the main text, very possibly at the same time, and thus could, and perhaps should, be considered integral part of the catalogue. (ii) The second group consists of marginal annotations, which are undoubtedly written in a different hand, and are clearly later additions. (Although the scans available to me are in black and white, it can be said with certainty that the ink used for the annotations belonging to this second group is different from that used for the main text and the annotations belonging to the first group.) All annotations containing the term *bstan 'gyur* belong to the second group. Moreover, in all cases the term refers to *bsTan 'gyur* editions that are later than the Tshal pa edition—including those of rTse thang (69b, 86a, 87b, 93a, 96a, 99a), Zhwa lu, [gDan sa] thel, and Gong dkar (99a).

³¹ See the *Bu ston chos 'byung* (212.2–6; Nishioka 1980: 65): *gsum pa bka' dang bstan bcos Bod du ji ltar 'gyur/byung ba'i rnam grang la | [...] dang po la bka' dang | bstan bcos gnyis so | | bka' la...*; and *ibid.* (227.24; Nishioka 1981: 47): *gnyis pa bstan bcos kyi skor la...*

³² See the *Bu ston chos 'byung* (226.23; Nishioka 1980: 77, SIX), a subheading of the section *bKa' tha ma don dam rnam par nges pa'i 'khor lo bskor ba'i bka'* (“Teachings [that were propagated during] the last turning of the wheel [and that] determine the absolute”).

³³ See the *Bu ston chos 'byung* (308.23; Nishioka 1983: 114).

³⁴ See the *Bu ston chos 'byung* (313.4–5; Nishioka 1993: 118), in reference to Bc3048–Bc3060.

³⁵ See the *Bu ston chos 'byung* (314.10–11; Nishioka 1993: 119).

below).

3. In addition, there are a number of occurrences of the term *bsTan 'gyur*, always within a phrase stating that the work/s just listed was/were “not included in the *bsTan 'gyur*” (*bsTan 'gyur du ma chud / tshud*), it being unclear which *bsTan 'gyur* Bu ston is referring to there, a question that I shall attempt to answer in the following.

The scenario whereby the numerous references to a *bsTan 'gyur* that does not include some specified work/s were added later and the *bsTan 'gyur* in question is his own Zhwa lu edition (completed in 1335) can be excluded with a high degree of certainty, for at least some of these titles are recorded in his *Zhwa lu bstan dkar*. Moreover, there appears to be neither palaeographical/codicological nor philological evidence that suggests that these phrases were later insertions. Theoretically, they could be references to the Tshal pa edition of the *bsTan 'gyur*, which was produced in the years 1317–1323. This seems, however, unlikely, not only because Bu ston has not included this edition or its catalogue as one of his sources, but also because it, too, seems to have contained at least some of these works, as attested by its catalogue. It is, therefore, quite probable that he is referring here, too, to the sNar thang edition of the *bsTan 'gyur*, though possibly merely via its catalogue. And indeed, in all cases, the works in question seem (as far as one can judge on the basis of the titles) not to be listed in dBus pa blo gsal's catalogue. (For an overview of these instances, see Appendix A.) Interestingly, in one instance, Bu ston lists four works and states that two³⁶ of them are not found in the *bsTan 'gyur*. Indeed, of the four works in question only two are recorded in the *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar*, in one of the two chapters that include rare texts and therefore were added to the catalogue at a later (unspecified) point in time, namely, one in chapter 19, which is found in both available manuscript versions of the catalogue, and one in chapter 21, which is only found in the later, longer version (MS A). Accordingly, the earlier version is missing three of the four titles. This state of affairs implies that Bu ston must have had the later version at his disposal. This is also confirmed through a passage in which Bu ston discusses the issue of duplicates. There he states that the total number of works contained in dBus pa blo gsal's catalogue is 2,350, which is indeed the number indicated at the end of the later version.³⁷ To be noted is also that in other similar instances he does not refer to a *bsTan 'gyur*, but merely states that the work/s in question “was/were *previously* not included” (*sngar ma*

³⁶ On the reading *gnyis*, see Appendix A, table 1, no. 9.

³⁷ See the *Bu ston chos 'byung* (308.23; Nishioka 1983: 114.18–19): *bsTan 'gyur gyi dkar chag chen mo las | nyis stong sum brgya lnga bcur bshad kyang*.... For a discussion of the entire passage, see Almogi (forthcoming).

chud). These instances are too numerous to be examined within the framework of the present paper, but random examination of some of them shows a similar pattern, which suggests that Bu ston might be referring there, too, to the Old sNar thang edition.

In Bu ston's catalogue to the Zhwa lu *bsTan 'gyur*, which was compiled some years later, in 1335, one finds the full form *bstan bcos 'gyur ro 'tshal* in the title given in the colophons (i.e., the one found at the end of the work and the chapter colophons) and also in the passage where the Old sNar thang *bsTan 'gyur* is referred to as the collection upon which the Zhwa lu *bsTan 'gyur* was primarily based.³⁸ Generally speaking, the employment of the full form in work titles is not surprising, the more elegant form seeming only natural. This is probably the reason, then, for Bu ston's using the full form as well when referring to the sNar thang edition itself. However, unlike in his religious history, where he employs the term *bsTan 'gyur* numerous times, in his catalogue to the Zhwa lu edition he appears to use it only once, in the phrase *yar lung pa'i bstan 'gyur gyi dkar chag* (which could mean either a catalogue to a *bsTan 'gyur* commissioned by Yar lung pa or a *bsTan 'gyur* catalogue compiled by Yar lung pa).³⁹ It is unclear, though, which

³⁸ For the full title, see the *Zhwa lu bstan dkar*'s colophons, both the numerous chapter colophons and the colophon at the end of the catalogue. For the reference to the sNar thang edition, see *ibid.* (638.1): *chos gra chen po sNar thang na bzhugs pa'i bsTan bcos 'gyur ro 'tshal...* The catalogue to the sNe'u gdong *bsTan 'gyur*, which was compiled some three decades after Bu ston's catalogue, in 1362, and is based on the latter, to give another fourteenth-century example, also employs the full form *bstan bcos 'gyur ro 'tshal* in both the title found in the colophons and in the passage where it is stated that the Zhwa lu *bsTan 'gyur* served as its basis. See the *sNe'u gdong bstan dkar*'s various chapter colophons and end colophon. For the reference to the Zhwa lu edition as its basis, see *ibid.* (567.5): **Zha lu gser khang gi gtsug lag khang na bzhugs pa'i bsTan bcos 'gyur ro 'tshal la phyi mo zhus...**

³⁹ See the *Zhwa lu bstan dkar* (475.6–476.2): *bzhi po 'di Yar lung pa'i bsTan 'gyur gyi dkar chag la bton snang | Ti THi Di Ni bzhi la | gSang 'dus le'u bcu bdun pa'i 'grel pa bam po brgya rtsa bcu dang shu lo ka bcu gnyis pa | slob dpon rab tu byung ba'i mtshan Pra bha pa | gsang mtshan 'Phags pa Kun dga' snying pos mdzad zer ba | pañdi ta Phra ras kyis | 'Bal Byams pa'i shes rab dang | gNyan Byang chub tshul khriims gnyis kyi don du bsgyur ba bzhugs | 'di Kun dga' snying po rang gis mdzad pa yin min the tshom za bar snang ngo | 'di sngar gyi rnams kyis Ye shes zhabs lugs kyi skor du bris mod kyi | 'di ni | 'Phags skor dang | Ye shes zhabs lugs la sogs slob dpon du ma'i lugs bkod snang bas lugs gñid pa yin no | |* This passage is Bu ston's bibliographical record to the *Śrīgūhyasamājahātantrārājāṭikā (*rGyud kyi rgyal po chen po dpal gsang ba 'dus pa'i rgya cher 'grel pa*), whose authorship is ascribed to Ānandagarbha, and a translation of it to Pañḍita 'Phra ras (apparently identical with Phra la ring ba; see BDRC: P4CZ15607; Tibskrit suggests the reconstructed Sanskrit name *Sūkṣmadīrgha). Bu ston expresses there his doubt regarding the authenticity of its authorship ascription to Ānandagarbha, and also remarks that since the work seems to present a blend of various traditions he placed it in a separate section (i.e., neither in the section of the Jñānapāda tradition nor in that of the Ārya tradition). The work is not included in the sDe dge edition, but it is in the larger editions (PNG), where it also stretches over four volumes (e.g., P4787, *rGyud 'grel*, vols. Tsu, Tshu, Dzu, Wu). See also van der Kuip & Schaeffer 2009: 36, where a reference

edition Bu ston is referring to there and who this Yar lung pa is. In any case, it appears that by now the full forms *bka' 'gyur ro 'tshal/cog* and *bstan bcos 'gyur ro 'tshal/cog* have become the accepted designations for the two canonical collections of the translated works containing the Word of the Buddha and the treatises, respectively, and that their terminological abbreviations *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur* were likewise in use, at least by Bu ston, from the early 1320s onward.

To go back to Tshal pa circles, Tshal pa Kun dga' rdo rje aka dGe ba'i blo gros (1309–1364; BDRC: P4525)—in his overview of the production of canonical collections in dBus in the biography of his father—clearly uses both the full forms *bKa' 'gyur ro cog* and *bsTan bcos 'gyur ro cog* alongside the terminological *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur*.⁴⁰ To be sure, the biography appears to have been written after his father's death (i.e., after 1346/7) and is thus likewise a somewhat later source. Moreover, the *Deb dmar*—composed by him during the following two decades (1346–1363; Martin 1997, no. 77)—employs the truncated forms *bka' 'gyur* twice and *bstan 'gyur* once, the latter clearly in a non-terminological manner. In one instance Kun dga' rdo rje reports that Ānandamalla—who ruled the Ya rtse (Khasa) kingdom in the

to this passage is found and where the authors ask themselves whether this Yar lung pa could be Yar lung lo tsā ba Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1242–1346; BDRC: 2637). To the best of my knowledge, there is, however, no evidence that this master commissioned a *bsTan 'gyur* (or wrote a *bsTan 'gyur* catalogue). There is, notably, another reference to a *bsTan 'gyur* made by one Yar lung pa in Zhu chen's *sDe dge bstan dkar* (vol. 2: 306a6), which reads: ... **Zha lu gser khang gi gtsug lag khang gi bsTan bcos 'gyur ro 'tshal la phyi mor bgyis nas Yar lung pas bzhengs pa'i bsTan bcos 'gyur ro 'tshal nyid las....** This Yar lung pa is probably the ruler of sTag rtse who, as reported in the *Blues Annals*, commissioned a *bsTan 'gyur* based on the Zhwa lu edition. See Roerich 1949: 339. This figure can with certainty be identified with rDo rje tshе brtan of the Hor family of 'Phyong rgyas. At any rate, the Yar lung pa mentioned by Zhu chen cannot be the same one mentioned by Bu ston. That the passage in the *Zhwa lu bstan dkar* is a later interpolation is unlikely, since the four volumes containing Ānandagarbha's work are omitted from the sNe'u gdong edition (and thus also from later editions that reproduce it more or less faithfully, such as sDe dge). See the pertinent location in the *sNe'u gdong bstan dkar* (414.4). At any rate, even though the catalogue to the reported Yar lung pa edition has not been identified, the work is recorded in two other early catalogues, namely, in the *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar* (A, 19b3–4; B, 15a3–4): Dza Wa Zha Za *rnams la slob dpon Kun dga' [B: dga', A: dga'i] snying po'i [N_{js}338 = D1917/P2780] gSang ba [A: ba, B: pa] 'dus pa'i dka' 'grel Rin chen bzang po'i 'gyur dang | [N_{js}339 = Dx/P4787] 'Grel chen Phra ras kyi rang 'gyur [B: rang 'gyur, A: 'gyur] du grags pa rnams [A: rnams, B: om.] bzhugs | |, and in the *Tshal pa bstan dkar* (13b.7): Wa Zha Za 'A Ya Ra *rnams la Kun dga' snying pos mdzad pa'i [T213 = Dx/P4787] gSang ba [em.: ba, Ms; pa] 'dus pa'i 'grel chen Phra ras kyi 'gyur | |, so that the Yar lung pa edition referred to could well be an early copy of one of them.**

⁴⁰ See the *sMon lam rdo rje'i rnam thar* (20a7) for both *bsTan bcos 'gyur ro cog* and *bsTan 'gyur*; (20b6–7) for *bsTan 'gyur*; (20b3) for *bKa' 'gyur*; and (62a1) for *bKa' 'gyur ro cog*.

1290s (perhaps 1293–1299)⁴¹—restored Buddhagayā [*stūpa*/temple] and erected a golden *bKa' 'gyur*, among other activities.⁴² The second instance occurs in his brief biographical sketch of Bla ma Ri bo ba (/ rNgog) Rin chen bzang po (1243–1319; BDRC: P0RK1295),⁴³ who, he reports, commissioned a *bKa' 'gyur* in gold:⁴⁴

Bla ma Ri bo ba Rin chen bzang po [...], having gone to Khams at the age of thirty-four (lit. “in his 35th year”), travelled around [there] for two years (1278–1280). [Upon his return] he became the *bla ma* of the Tshal pa'i yang dgon's⁴⁵ meditation centre and of the [Tshal pa] ruling family. He [then] commissioned a golden *bKa' 'gyur*.

To be noted in passing is that, as remarked by Ducher, this undertaking is also reported in the full biography of rNgog Rin chen bzang po. The formulation there is somewhat different, and it is not wholly evident from it that he produced a *bKa' 'gyur* as opposed to a mixed collection, which was rather common at the time. The collection is, in any event, referred to there as *bka' bstan bcos thams cad ma lus par*, which may be no more than an attempt to suggest that efforts to reach some sort of comprehensiveness were made. The short report reads as follows:⁴⁶

⁴¹ For a list of the Ya rtse rulers, see Tucci 1956: 50, 54; Petech 2003: 37, 39; Sørensen 1994: 461–463. Note that, according to Petech 2003: 37, this *bKa' 'gyur* edition was in silver, not gold.

⁴² See the *Deb dmar* (44.2–3): **A nan smal gyis rdo rje gdan gsos | gser gyi bKa' 'gyur gzhengs | ...** The *rGya bod yig tshang chen mo*, composed by g.Yas ru sTag tshang dPal 'byor bzang po (b. 15th cent.; BDRC: P6979) in 1434 (Martin 1997, no. 115), seems to have reproduced this passage (and apparently also other passages) from the *Deb dmar*. See the *rGya bod yig tshang chen mo* (A, 160.17–19; B, 127.7–8): **A nan smal | ... gser gyi bKa' 'gyur bzhengs |**. Notable here is the immediately preceding report of Grags btsan lde having had numerous scriptures copied, where the term *gsung rab* is used. See *ibid.* (A, 160.14; B, 127.3): *gsung rab mang po'ang* [A: *po'ang*, B: *po*] *bzheng so | |*.

⁴³ For the biography of Bla ma Ri bo ba (or rNgog) Rin chen bzang po, see Ducher 2017: 307–311 (and *passim* for further discussions). See also van der Kuijp & Schaeffer 2009: 36–37, for a discussion of his dates.

⁴⁴ *Deb dmar* (77.14–22): **bla ma Ri bo ba Rin chen bzang po | ... so lnga pa la Khams su byon nas lo gnyis la 'khor | Tshal pa'i yang dgon | sgom sde dang | dpon brgyud kyi bla mar gyur | gser gyi bKa' 'gyur bzhengs | ...**

⁴⁵ The Tshal pa(i) yang dgon was founded by Bla ma zhang brTson 'grus grags pa (1123/1121–1193, BDRC: P1857) in 1175. See Sørensen, Hazod, Tsering Gyalbo 2007, vol. 1: 290 & vol. 2: 774.

⁴⁶ See Ducher 2017: 407 (§18.4): *... gsang sngags gyi rgyud sde dang | gzungs dang rig pa | mdo la sogs pa'i bka' bstan chos thams cad ma lus par gser dang dngul gyis glegs bam brgya* [em.: *brgya*, Text: *rgya*] *phrag du bzhengs cing | ...* Note, however, that Ducher's translation, which supplements the syllables 'gyur in order to gain the designations *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur*, seems to be a rather distorted rendering of the report. See *ibid.*: 309–310: “He commissioned hundreds of volumes [written] in gold and silver of all of the *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur* without omission, with the tantras of the Secret Mantra, dhāraṇī- and knowledge-[mantras], sūtras and so on.” See

[He] commissioned a hundred (or possibly: hundreds of) volumes [containing] all scriptures and treatises with no exceptions—[including those classified as or commenting on] *tantras*, *dhāraṇīs*, and *vidyās* of the Mantra[naya], the *sūtras*, and so forth—to be [written] in gold and silver.

The one instance Tshal pa Kun dga' rdo rje uses the truncated form *bstan 'gyur* in his *Deb dmar* is found in the short biography of the Third Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje (1284–1339; BDRC: P66) contained therein, where he reports on the *bsTan 'gyur* commissioned by the Karma pa, which was in fact prepared under his own supervision. Of particular significance is that the word *bstan 'gyur* is there in the plural, which is a clear indication that it is not being employed to refer to the collection as a whole but rather to individual works, that is, meaning “treatises in translation” or “translated treatises”.⁴⁷

At Tshal pa, having given the necessary requisites, [he] commissioned the making of marvellous [volumes containing] “treatises in translations” (*bstan 'gyur*) in gold. When consecrating them (*de rnams*), it was evident that an innumerable number of *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* actually dissolved [into the volumes (?)], and the sound of the Dharma resounded.

Since the composition of the *Deb dmar* stretches over almost two decades (1346–1363), it is impossible, based on it, to pinpoint exactly when these terms (or the truncated forms) started to be used by Kun dga' rdo rje or his milieu. One could, however, perhaps limit this span somewhat, considering the fact that the term *bka' 'gyur* is also found in the section colophons of the Tshal pa *bKa' 'gyur* prepared in the years 1347–1351, which have fortunately been preserved in the Li thang (aka 'Jang sa tham) *bKa' 'gyur* edition. In the colophons of the Sūtra, Tantra, and Vinaya sections, references are made to the set from sNar thang, which was taken as its basis and which is referred to therein as a *bKa' 'gyur*.⁴⁸ Interestingly, the term *bka' 'gyur* is also employed there in the

also van der Kuijp & Schaeffer 2009: 35–36, where references to reports concerning the production of a collection of canonical works commissioned by Ri bo ba are found, including in the above-mentioned *Deb dmar* and also in rTa tshag Tshed dbang rgyal's *lHo rong chos 'byung* (composed in 1446–1451), which despite having a somewhat different formulation—*mdo sngags kyi glegs bam brgya lhaḡ gser dngul gyis bzheḡs* (“He commissioned more than a hundred volumes of *sūtras* and *tantras* [written] in gold and silver”)—appears to refer to the same collection.

⁴⁷ *Deb dmar* (103.13–15): **Tshal pa la cha rkyen gtad nas gser gyi *bsTan 'gyur* phun sum tshogs pa bzheḡs de rnams rab gnas mdzad pa'i tshes sangs rgyas byang chub sems dpa' dpag tu med pa dngos su thim zhiḡg chos sgra sgroḡs par snang** l. Cf. van der Kuijp & Schaeffer 2009: 34, where *bstan 'gyur* is understood terminologically (“Tengyur”), and the plural *de rnams* is rendered as “these manuscripts.”

⁴⁸ The passages in question provided here are as cited in Jampa Samten 1987a. For the passage in the Sūtra section colophon, see *ibid.*: 31.29–30: ... *mkhas pa'i 'byung*

plural form in two instances in the Vinaya section, in both clearly referring to individual texts rather than to several *bKa' 'gyur* sets.⁴⁹

The above instances demonstrate that the terms *bka' 'gyur* and *bstan 'gyur* came to be employed alongside the full forms *bka' 'gyur ro 'tshal/cog* and *bstan 'gyur ro 'tshal/cog* already during the 1320s, as attested in the *Bu ston chos 'byung*, although the scholarly milieu in which the truncated forms were first coined, and where and when they started to be used terminologically to refer to the two parts of the Tibetan Buddhist Canon, remain uncertain. Of some interest is perhaps also the phrase *bka' bsgyur ba thams cad*, which is found in the biography of the Seventh sNar thang abbot mChims Nam mkha' grags (1210–1285, term of office: 1250–1285; BDRC: P1060), composed by the Eighth sNar thang abbot sMon lam tshul khrim (1219–1299, term of office: 1285–1299; BDRC: P1219) sometime between 1285 and 1299 (i.e., considering the dates of both persons involved).⁵⁰ Here, *bka' bsgyur ba* is not the truncated form of *bka' 'gyur ro 'tshal/cog*, but rather a simple compound consisting of the noun *bka'* and the verbal noun *bsgyur ba* (the intransitive and heteronomous form *'gyur ba* would have been better here, though). It is likewise evident that for a period of time the truncated forms *bka' 'gyur* and *bstan 'gyur* were employed both in a non-terminological manner to refer simply to individual texts (particularly when used in the plural), and in a terminological manner to refer to the two parts of the Tibetan Buddhist Canon. In any case, they seem to have been in common use in this latter sense by the mid-fifteenth century. This is attested in various histories and catalogues, including gZhon nu dpal's *Blue Annals*, in its report of the activities of

gnas dpal gyi sNar thang nas | bKa' 'gyur dri med phyi mor gdan drangs te | ... ("the immaculate *bKa' 'gyur* was brought from the Mine of Scholars, the Glorious sNar thang [to serve] as the principal copy"; for the one in the Tantra section colophon, see *ibid.*: 32.29–32: ... *mkhas pa'i 'byung gnas dpal sNar thang du lung rigs kyi dbang phyug shakya'i dge slong 'Jam pa'i dbyangs kyis legs par bzhengs pa'i bKa' 'gyur phyi mor gdan drangs nas...* ("the *bKa' 'gyur*, which was well made by the Buddhist monk 'Jam pa'i dbyangs, a master of scriptures and reasoning, in the Mine of Scholars, the Glorious sNar thang, was brought [to serve] as the principal copy"); and for the one in the Vinaya section colophon, see *ibid.*: 33.40: *de'i bKa' 'gyur gyi dpe phyi...* ("the *bKa' 'gyur* manuscripts [that were used as the basis for] it...").

⁴⁹ See Jampa Samten 1987a: 33.22–28: *bsod nams chen po'i dpal gyis phyogs las rnam par rgyal ba stobs kyis 'khor los sgyur ba'i rgyal po chen po'i bla'i mchod gnas bde bar gshegs pa'i gzhung lugs mang du thos pa rig pa dang grol ba'i spobs pa dge ba can | lung dang rigs pa'i dbang phyug gang* (text reads *gans*) *can gyi rgyud kyi mkhas pa chen po sdom brtson dam pa shakya'i dge slong 'Jam dpal dbyangs kyis bKa' 'gyur legs par bzhengs pa rnam* (text reads *rnam*) *las 'di dag ni...* ("of the translated [text]s [containing] the Word [of the Buddha] that were well made by the Buddhist monk 'Jam dpal dbyangs [...], these..."); and *ibid.*: 35.1–2: ... *bka' 'gyur legs par grub pa rnam las 'di dag...* ("of the translated [text]s [containing] the Word [of the Buddha] that were well made, these...").

⁵⁰ See the *mChims chen mo'i rnam thar* (46a1): ... *bka' bsgyur ba thams cad kyi gsung sgrogs | [...] rgyun ma chad par mdzad do | |*.

compiling and producing the Canon in sNar thang, Zhwa lu, and elsewhere⁵¹; Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po's (1382–1456; BDRC: P1132) undated catalogue to the Sa skya *bsTan 'gyur*, where the full and truncated forms are used side by side⁵²; and the late-fifteenth-century biography of Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags (1389–1442; BDRC: P6904), in its report on the rGyal rtse *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur* editions made at the behest of this ruler and his successors.⁵³

3. *The Compilation Activities in sNar thang:* *A General Remark*

Whether we consider the Old sNar thang collections to be the first *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur* (even though the terms as such might have been coined somewhat later and/or elsewhere), or whether we take them, as suggested by Peter Skilling, to have merely been a “conceptual prototype,” thereby setting the precedent for future similar large-scale systematic undertakings, rather than their “textual archetype,” what is most significant is that the compilation activities carried out there led to, to use Skilling's words, “the permanent bifurcation of the *bKa' bstan bcos* into *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur*.”⁵⁴ It is thus justified to assume that the history of the Tibetan Buddhist Canon as we know it today begins there, and that it was probably the compilation of the catalogue(s) of translated works carried out by Rig ral sometime in the second half of the thirteenth century that gave the first impetus for the compilation and systematization of the actual two collections. This large-scale compilation project is said to have been initiated and sponsored by one 'Jam (pa'i/dpal) dbyangs, a student of Rig ral. This grand project was carried out under the supervision of dBus pa blo gsal (who was a student of both Rig ral and 'Jam dbyangs), rGyang ro Byang chub 'bum (b. 13th cent.; BDRC: P3644), and others (the *Blue Annals*, for example, mention by name Lo tsā ba bSod nams 'od zer⁵⁵), and the catalogue(s) were then compiled by dBus pa blo gsal. The concluding section of dBus pa blo gsal's *bsTan 'gyur* catalogue, which conveniently resurfaced some

⁵¹ See the *Deb sngon* (411, 412), Roerich 1947: 338, and passim.

⁵² See the *Sa skya bstan dkar* (269b1–2, 270a6).

⁵³ See the *Rab brtan rnam thar* (169.17–20, 370.16, 370.21). Notable is also the collective designation *bka' bstan* employed by the author in *ibid.* (170.2): *bka' bstan bzhengs pa'i...* and (170.11–12) ... *bka' bstan la chos kyi rnam grangs...*

⁵⁴ See Skilling 1997: 100. Note that Skilling merely talks about the *bKa' 'gyur* here, but his statements are in my view likewise applicable to the *bsTan 'gyur*.

⁵⁵ A short biography of bSod nams 'od zer is found in the *sGra sgyur lo rgyus* (248–249) under the name sNar thang Punya rasmi. According to van der Kuijp & Schaeffer 2009: 10, bSod nams 'od zer was responsible for translating the names of the Indian scholars back into Sanskrit. For a short discussion of the glosses containing these “back translations,” see below.

years ago, describes this state of affairs as follows:⁵⁶

In accordance with the wish of the Buddhist monk 'Jam pa'i dbyangs, dBus pa blo gsal rTsod pa'i seng ge, rGyang ro'i btsun pa Byang chub 'bum, and others who touched (lit. "obtained") the dust under this [master]'s feet with [their] heads, acting as excellent contributing factors, took the Bla [ma]'s (that is, Rig ral's) great catalogue as [their] basis and had [books containing the translated treatises] properly made. After completing a fine consecration and [offering] a grand feast [to celebrate] their [completion], dBus pa blo gsal compiled a catalogue at the great college of sNar thang and offered it [to those present there (?)].

Not much is known about 'Jam dbyangs. Questions of his identity are somewhat complex and deserve a separate discussion. Here it would suffice to say that he has been commonly identified as 'Jam dgag Pakshi (the syllable *dgag* is also found in other spellings), who is reported to have been a chaplain at the court of the Mongolian king Buyantu Khan (1285–1320, r. 1311–1320), which allowed him to sponsor this huge and costly undertaking. Based on this identification, the compilation activities in sNar thang are commonly believed to have taken place sometime in the 1310s. To the best of my knowledge this identification is solely based on what is reported in the *Blue Annals*, which has been further cited by both traditional and modern scholars.⁵⁷ This figure is also referred to by some later Tibetan sources as mChims/'Chims 'Jam pa'i/dpal dbyangs, and has occasionally been further erroneously identified by Tibetan scholars with the seventh abbot of sNar thang, mChims Nam mkha' grags.

Regarding the cataloguing, dBus pa blo gsal is in fact reported to have written catalogues for both the *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur* produced in sNar thang. Such reports are found, for example, in dPa' bo gTsong lag 'phreng ba's (1504–1564/66; BDRC: P319) history composed 1545–1564 (Martin 1997: n. 168),⁵⁸ the Fifth Dalai Lama's (1617–1682;

⁵⁶ *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar* (A, 81a1–5; B, 58a5–b1): ... *shākya'i dge slong 'Jam pa'i dbyangs kyi thugs kyi dgongs pa ji lta bar | de nyid kyi zhabs kyi rdul spyi bos len pa dBus pa blo gsal rTsod pa'i seng ge dang | rGyang ro'i btsun pa Byang chub 'bum la sogs pas rkyen dam par bgyis te* [A: *te*, B, *ste*] | *Bla'i dkar chag chen mo* [A, *mo*, B, *po*] *nyid gzhir byas nas rnam par dag par bzhengs shing | rab tu gnas pa bzang po dang | de dag gi dga' ston rgya chen po dang bcas pa legs par grub pa'i rjes la | dpal sNar thang gi chos grwa* [A: *grwa*, B: *gra*] *chen por dBus pa blo gsal gyis dkar chag* [A: *chag*, B: *cag*] *tu bkod nas phyag tu phul ba'o* | | | | .

⁵⁷ See the *Deb sngon* (410–412). For English translations, see Roerich 1949: 337–339 and Harrison 1996: 75–76.

⁵⁸ See the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (A, 733.15–17; B, 374.25–27): *de gnyis ka'i slob ma dBus pa blo gsal Byang chub ye shes kyiis 'dul ba lung gi lung rgyun rgya nag nas blangs | bka' bstan 'gyur la bam tshad 'gyur byang sogs nges pa'i dkar chag brtsams* | . See also Skilling 1997: 99, where this reference is reported.

BDRC: P37) inventory of sMin grol gling monastery,⁵⁹ and 'Jigs med gling pa's (1729/30–1798; BDRC: P3) defence of the rNying ma school.⁶⁰ The bibliophile A khu ching Shes rab rgya mtsho (1803–1875; BDRC: P123) reports, however, that these catalogues had become rare by his period.⁶¹ At least the *bsTan 'gyur* catalogue appears to have still been in circulation as late of the second half of the eighteenth century.⁶² While the *bKa' 'gyur* catalogue is yet to surface, the *bsTan 'gyur* catalogue fortunately came to light some years ago, which provides us, for the first time, a closer look at these compilation activities.

4. *dBus pa blo gsal's bsTan 'gyur Catalogue*

Two manuscript versions of the catalogue to the Old sNar thang *bsTan 'gyur* edition compiled by dBus pa blo gsal are available. I have been able to determine neither the provenance nor the dates of either of these manuscripts.⁶³ The two manuscripts, which show some palaeo-

⁵⁹ See the *sMin grol gling gi dkar chag* (279.5): **dBus pa blo gsal gyis bka' bstan 'gyur gnyis ka'i dkar chag**....

⁶⁰ See the *Log rtogs bzlog pa'i bstan bcos* (694.1): **dBus pa blo gsal gyis bka' bstan 'gyur gnyis ka'i dkar chag**.... See also van der Kuijp & Schaeffer 2009: 33, where this reference is reported.

⁶¹ dBus pa blo gsal's catalogues are listed, along with his religious history, in A khu ching's list of rare texts. See the *A khu tho yig*: [10845] **dBus pa blo gsal gyi Chos 'byung dang** | [10846] **bKa' bstan gyi dkar chag** |.

⁶² As already noted by Vostrikov, dBus pa blo gsal's *bsTan 'gyur* catalogue was available to the Second 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa dKon mchog 'jigs med dbang po (1728–1791, term of office: 1764–1768; BDRC: P169), who cites it in his catalogue to the *Co ne bsTan 'gyur* edition composed in 1773. See Vostrikov 1970: 208 n. 601. For the cited passage, see the *Co ne bstan dkar* (441.8–17). The passage in question is taken from the *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar's* prologue (A, 1b3–2a1; B, 1b3–7).

⁶³ MS B, bears the text number Pi on the title page (top, centre), which suggests that it belonged to a collection. It is unclear which collection it was, but according to van der Kuijp this manuscript is stored at the Tibetan library of the Cultural Palace of Nationalities in Beijing. See van der Kuijp 1994: 388. This manuscript was published online by the TBRC in a 2-volume collection containing some of dBus pa blo gsal's writings, titled *dBus pa blo gsal gyi gsung phyogs bsdu*s (BDRC: W2PD17520). This collection presents, however, no codicological unit, but is rather a scan of various independent codicological units (including both manuscripts and xylographs) of various unspecified origins. MS A lacks such a text number, but it bears the shelf mark Phyi La 344 (likewise on the title page, top, centre), which appears to be a shelf mark of the 'Bras spungs monastery's gNas bcu lha khang collection. If so, the shelf mark would mean that the manuscript did not originally belong to the gNas bcu lha khang collection, but came from elsewhere, for such manuscripts are generally marked as "external" (Phyi), as opposed to those belonging to the original collection, which are marked as "internal" (Nang). The manuscript bearing the number Phyi La 344 is, unfortunately, one of those manuscripts that were not recorded in the two-volume 'Bras spungs catalogue, so that this assumption cannot be confirmed. See the *'Bras spungs dpe rnying dkar chag*, vol. 2: 1646, where one would have expected to find its record.

graphical and codicological differences,⁶⁴ differ in both length and content, and thus contain two different versions of the catalogue, reflecting two stages of the compilation process.⁶⁵ The manuscript containing the shorter version (MS B) is 58 folios long, and the version of the catalogue transmitted therein contains 20 chapters recording 141 volumes; while the one containing the longer version (MS A) is 81 folios long, and the catalogue version transmitted therein contains 21 chapters recording 144 volumes. According to the concluding statements, the shorter version records 2,015 works,⁶⁶ and the longer one 2,350,⁶⁷ that is, 335 more works. The counting method is, however, not always entirely transparent. This is evident, for example, from Jampa Samten's edition of the shorter version, where the total number determined by Jampa Samten is not always identical with the total number provided by the catalogue itself, that is, either in the concluding verses of individual chapters or in the statement at the end of the work. (For an outline of the two versions of the catalogue, including an overview of the total number of works recorded in their respective chapters, see Appendix B). One obvious difficulty is that several entries stand for entire mini-collections. The number of works contained in these individual collections is not always specified, but is nonetheless always included in the total number of works given at the end of each chapter. Moreover, even if the number of works contained in these collections could be deduced, in none of the cases does it correspond to the total number of works contained in these collections as found in the *bsTan*

⁶⁴ The two manuscripts are written in a similar but not identical dBu med script. While both are written in some variant of dPe tshugs, the script of MS A is slightly curly and has thus some slight affinity with 'Bru tsha. Moreover, some other palaeographical and codicological differences are observed, such as the scribal conventions regarding segmentation marks and the number of lines per page (6 in MS A and 7 in MS B). MS B has rubrication of chapter names and volume numbers (unfortunately, the scans of MS A are in black and white).

⁶⁵ To the best of my knowledge, the first reference in secondary sources to the existence of a manuscript containing the catalogue (shorter version) was made by van der Kuijp in an article from 1994, which cites a portion of the epilogue and the entire Epistemology and Logic section (*gtan tshigs rig pa yang dag pa'i rtog ge tshad ma'i bstan bcos*), that is, chapter 16 and the supplement in chapter 19. See van der Kuijp 1994: 388–392. An outline of the longer version is offered in van der Kuijp & Schaeffer 2009: 75–76. To be noted, however, is that van der Kuijp has not pointed out which version (short or long) was referred to by him in each case. (That the two manuscripts contain different versions might have been indeed overlooked by him.) An (uncritical) edition of the shorter version was published by Jampa Samten in 2015.

⁶⁶ *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar* (B, 58b1–2, cf. Jampa Samten 2015: 118.8–9): *de ltar thams cad sdoms pas rgya gar gyi bstan bcos dri ma med pa stong phrag gnyis dang | bcu phrag phyed dang gnyis kyis brgyan pa bzhugs so | |*.

⁶⁷ *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar* (A, 81b5–6): *de ltar snga phyi kun dril bas | | bstan bcos dri ma med pa'i tshogs | | stong phrag gnyis dang brgya phrag gsum | | bcu phrag lnga yis brgyan pa bzhugs | |*.

'gyur, so that it is impossible to determine which of these works were actually contained in the Old sNar thang edition.

Moreover, while one witnesses occasional differences between the two versions in nearly all chapters—not only concerning orthography and the like but also the actual bibliographical information (including additions or omissions of titles, differences in the bibliographical details of certain records, discrepancies in the order of the works, and the like)—two chapters show considerable differences, namely, chapter 1 containing the Stotra (bsTod pa) section and chapter 18 containing the Prayer (sMon lam, bKra shis, etc.) section. Chapter 1 in the shorter version, it is stated, records 100-plus (*brgya phrag gcig lhag*) works (Jampa Samten counts 108), while the figure for the same chapter in the longer version is 163 (it appears, however, to merely contain 162). The difference in chapter 18 is even greater: 15 works in the shorter version (Jampa Samten counts 14) as against 47 in the longer version.

Although one is tempted to think at first glance that the shorter version reflects the first draft of the catalogue, and the longer version the final one, this is obviously not the case. The actual first draft probably merely contained 18 chapters recording 131 volumes covering circa 1,815 works. This is the evident conclusion to be drawn from the closing statement of chapter 18:⁶⁸

The [works] contained in these volumes—[that is], from the homages, eulogies, and the like (i.e., chap. 1) up to the prayers, benedictions, and proclamations of the power of truth (i.e., chap. 18)—have tentatively been properly compiled into a catalogue.

What calls for particular attention is that this statement is found in both versions before the concluding verse of the chapter (all chapters conclude with a verse, which, among other things, provides the total number of works), whereas one would expect it to appear after it. One may wonder why it was copied in later versions of the catalogue in the first place. At any rate, this statement makes it clear that our shorter version, containing two additional chapters, is not the first draft but the second or even a later one. It appears that the compilation of the Canon in sNar thang was a long and gradual process, possibly stretching over several years if not decades. Considering that it was the first undertaking of its kind, such a long span is not at all surprising. The collection kept on growing in the spirit of the statement concluding the catalogue according to which whatever rare texts were obtained later

⁶⁸ See the *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar* (A 61a5–6; B, 49a4–5, cf. Jampa Samten 2015: 99): *de ltar phyag 'tshal ba dang bstod pa la sogs pa nas smon lam dang bkra shis dang bden pa'i stobs brjod pa'i bar gyis glegs bam 'di dag na bzhugs pa rnam dkar chags tu re shig legs par grub pa'o | |*.

should be copied and added.⁶⁹ (The inclusion of such a statement became standard, reflecting the overall striving for completeness on the part of the Canon's compilers and editors, which has led modern scholars to term the Tibetan Buddhist Canon an "open canon."⁷⁰) Accordingly, not only were existing volumes re-edited (along with the corresponding chapters of the catalogue), but new volumes were also added. These latter volumes were then recorded in the catalogue in three new chapters, as follows:

- Chapter 19 records works contained in "very rare manuscripts obtained later through much effort."⁷¹
- Chapter 20 records "works composed by the Eyes of the World, Tibetan codifiers/compilers [of the Buddha's Teaching] (or alternatively: by learned Tibetan mKhan po-s), contained in rare manuscripts."⁷²
- Chapter 21 (only in the longer version) records works contained in "some more rare manuscripts, [this time ones] obtained by rGyang ro pa, the upholder of the [Tri]piṭaka."⁷³

The addition of new works and their integration into the collection required a reorganization of the existing volumes and an adjustment of the catalogue accordingly. Obviously, adding new works to existing volumes would have been possible only to a certain extent. When the necessary changes to the individual volumes were minor, as in the case of the volumes recorded in chapters 2–17, they were in one way or another integrated into the existing volumes, including adding new works or changing the order of the works.⁷⁴ When, however, the

⁶⁹ See the *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar* (A, 81a6; B, 58b2): 'di dag las gzhan yang [A: yang, om.: B] dpe phyi dkon pa rnyed na phyis bri dgos pas da dung bsnan du yod do | |.

⁷⁰ This striving for completeness, however, was by no means carried out indiscriminately and uncritically. See Almogi 2020: Part One.

⁷¹ See the *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar* (A, 61b2; B, 49a7–b1, cf. Jampa Samten 2015: 101): *de nas yang dpe dkon pa phyis rnyed pa*, and *ibid.* (A, 69a2–4; B, 55b6–7, cf. Jampa Samten 2015: 113): *shin tu dkon pa'i dpe phyis brtson pa mchog gis rnyed nas bris pa'i le'u ste bcu dgu pa'o | |*, for the opening and concluding statements of chapter 19, respectively.

⁷² See the *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar* (A, 69a4; B, 55b7, cf. Jampa Samten 2015: 114): *da ni 'jig rten gyi mig tu gyur pa bod kyi sdud pa po dag gis mdzad pa'i dpe dkon pa*, and *ibid.* (A, 69b6–70a1; B, 56b2, cf. Jampa Samten 2015: 115): *bod kyi mkhan po mkhas pa rnams kyi mdzad pa'i dpe dkon pa bris pa'i le'u ste nyi shu pa'o | |*, for the opening and concluding statements of chapter 20, respectively.

⁷³ See the *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar* (A, 70a1): *slar yang dpe dkon pa rnams rnyed nas bris pa*, and *ibid.* (A, 79a3): *slar yang dpe dkon pa rnams sde snod 'dzin pa rGyang ro pas rnyed nas bris pa le'u ste nyi shu gcig pa'o | |*, for the opening and concluding statements of chapter 21, respectively.

⁷⁴ Nothing is known about the foliation system of the volumes of the Old sNar thang edition. It is, however, very likely that the foliation was not consecutive but that, as is often observed in old collections, each work had an independent foliation,

changes required were major, the existing volumes had to be rewritten (as probably happened in the case of the volumes recorded in chapters 1 and 18) or else new volumes added, in which case the newly added works could no longer be included in the sections where they thematically belonged, but were rather copied into one of the appended volumes (as in the case of the volumes recorded in chapters 19 and 21; the content and organization of the volume recorded in chapter 20, containing the autochthonous works, was naturally independent of the remaining volumes). Chapter 19 records the works contained in altogether nine new volumes added later, namely, six volumes (Ni–Tsi) to the Tantra section—following the last volume (Di) recorded in chapter 10—and three volumes (Nye–The) to the non-Tantric (mTshan nyid) section—following the last volume (Je) recorded in chapter 18. Chapter 20 consists of the bibliographical records of the single volume (De) containing the autochthonous works admitted to the sNar thang edition—some authored by translators active in the Early Period but a number of them anonymous. Chapter 21 contains the records of an additional three volumes (Ne–Phe). The vast majority of the works contained in these volumes are Tantric, only the last 27 works of the last volume (Phe) being classified as belonging to the mTshan nyid section. This state of affairs makes one wonder why the edition's compilers did not follow here the policy observed in chapter 19 and append the three volumes to the Tantra section (i.e., with volume numbers Tshi–Wi), while adding the remaining non-Tantric works to the last volume of the mTshad nyid section recorded in chapter 19 (The) or, alternatively, grouping them in an additional volume (which could have been, for example, numbered The'og, thereby enabling its placement before volume De containing the autochthonous works, commonly placed at the end). We can only speculate that this may have simply been the result of an error or because these volumes were added at a point in time when the compilation work was more or less concluded and not much thought was given any longer to the overall organization. Regarding the catalogue, we can in any case confidently say that there have been at least three versions of it, but there may have well been more of them. Moreover, we can also be quite certain that the longer version reflects the state of affairs in the early 1320s at the latest. As has already been demonstrated, Bu ston clearly had the longer version at his disposal when writing the title index contained in his religious history, which was composed in the years 1322–1326. A brief examination of the catalogue to the Tshal pa *bsTan 'gyur* edition, which was prepared in the years 1317–1323, shows that probably most of the

whereas the individual works were given a serial number marking their position within the volume (commonly on the front page or in the leftside marginal caption). If this was indeed the case, changing the order of the works or adding new works would have been a rather easy thing to do.

works recorded in chapter 21 were included in this edition, so that it could well be that the longer version reflects the sNar thang collection as it was as early as 1317.

Another clear indication that the Old sNar thang edition represents the first attempt at compiling a Tibetan Buddhist Canon with two distinct, systematically organized parts is the arrangement of the material as reflected in dBus pa blo gsal's *bsTan 'gyur* catalogue. The imperial catalogues generally organize the works according to a number of criteria including *yāna*, doxography, philosophical school, *sūtra* anthologies, commentaries, and the like alongside some more specific categories, such as works translated from the Chinese, compositions by King Khri srong lde btsan, unrevised translations, and unfinished translations. They do not, however, observe any systematic division between *bka'* and *bstan bcos*.⁷⁵ Rig ral, whose cataloguing activities probably gave the initial impetus to the compilation project in sNar thang, arranges his *rGyan gyi nyi 'od* according to three major categories, namely, the Early, Middle (Grey), and Later Periods of propagation of Buddhism in Tibet (*snga dar*, *bar dar*, and *phyi dar*, respectively). While in the Early Period section he follows a scheme similar to that found in the *'Phang thang ma* (which was his main source for it), in the sections of the Middle and New Periods he organizes the bibliographical records according to translators (in chronological order as far as possible), which are in turn grouped under various subcategories. For the latter two sections he relied on several catalogues compiled by gSar ma translators that apparently record both their own translations and others made by their circle.⁷⁶ There is no doubt, therefore, that the credit for introducing the new—and one may even say revolutionary—approach of separating the translated works into two distinct, systematically organized collections goes to dBus pa blo gsal (and his colleagues). Since the catalogue to the Old sNar thang *bKa' 'gyur* edition has not surfaced thus far, we do not have concrete evidence regarding its organization. Even if we assume that it did not reach the same level of compilation and systematic organization as the *bsTan 'gyur* (as suggested, for example, by Harrison⁷⁷), we have no reason to believe that dBus pa blo gsal applied a different approach to each of these collections.

Lastly, I would like to briefly touch upon the glosses found abundantly in the longer version and, to a much lesser extent, in the shorter one. Most of the names of the Indian authors are provided in the catalogue in Tibetan renderings (the names of the *paṇḍitas* cooperating in

⁷⁵ See Skilling 1997: 104–105 for an outline of the *lDan/lHan dkar ma*; Halkias 2004: 79–81 for an outline of the *'Phang thang ma*; van der Kuijp & Schaeffer 2009: 65–70 for an outline of the *rGyan gyi nyi 'od*.

⁷⁶ See Almogi 2020: 34ff.

⁷⁷ See Harrison 1994 in general, and p. 308 in particular.

the translation are, as a rule, not mentioned therein). An anonymous author took pains to gloss these Tibetan names with the presumably original Sanskrit names (in Tibetan transliteration), while in the fewer cases in which the Sanskrit names have been given the glosses offer the names in Tibetan translation. In any event, there is no doubt that in most cases the Sanskrit names were reconstructed, probably on the basis of some bilingual glossaries without concrete preknowledge of the authors' actual names. The knowledge of Sanskrit on the part of whoever was responsible for reconstructing the names was apparently not very good. This is evident not only from the often wrong reconstructions of the Sanskrit names or the Tibetan translation of the ones provided, but also from the Sanskrit transliterations, which are often likewise faulty, and which in turn are occasionally the reason for the faulty translations (or possible reconstructions). Moreover, while one can observe some consistency within one and the same chapter regarding the reconstructed forms of Sanskrit names or Tibetan renderings of given Sanskrit names, this is not always the case when some particular name appears in different chapters, which either further supports a mechanical "back translation" on the basis of bilingual glossaries or suggests that several persons were behind the glosses, who worked independently of each other. While a systematic examination of all glosses would be required before one could say anything more about them, here I shall merely provide several examples to illustrate this state of affairs (the glosses referred to are found in MS A unless specified otherwise):

- (i) In chapter 11 Seng ge bzang po (Haribhadra) is three times erroneously glossed as *si ngha bha dra* or *sing ha bhā dra* (Sinhabhadra),⁷⁸ while in chapter 21 one finds a rather unusual Tibetan rendering of the name, 'Phrog byed bzang po, which is glossed as *ha ra bhā dra*.⁷⁹
- (ii) In chapter 10 Sādhuputra is erroneously transliterated in MS A as *sā dhu su tra* (the syllable *su* appears to be a correction, though probably not of *pu*), and thus accordingly glossed as *legs pa mdo sde*.⁸⁰
- (iii) In chapter 10 Lakṣmīkara (/Lakṣmīṃkarā) is glossed in MS A as *dpal 'byung gnas*, and in MS B as *pad ma byed*,⁸¹ whereas in chapter 3, dPal mo mdzad (an erroneous reading in MS A for *dpal* Nyin mo mdzad (*śrī* Divākara) as in B) is glossed as

⁷⁸ See the *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar* (A, 38b5; B, 30b4 = N_{JS}829, D3790/P5188; A, 38b6; B, 30b6 = N_{JS}832, D3791/P5189; A, 39b5; B, 31b3 = N_{JS}850, D3793/P5191).

⁷⁹ See the *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar* (A, 79a1 = D4274/P5772).

⁸⁰ See the *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar* (A, 38a21; B, 30a3 = N_{JS}821, D1359/P2076).

⁸¹ See the *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar* (A, 33a1; B, 26a6 = N_{JS}695, D2485/P3311).

lakṣmi ka ra.⁸²

- (iv) And lastly, a rather well-known case of confusion, which is also reflected in later sources. In three instances in chapter 2 Mi thub zla ba is glossed as *dhaṃ ka da sha* (*Ṭaṅkādāsa or *Dhaṅkadāsa, among other suggestions⁸³) rather than Durjayacandra.⁸⁴ The colophons of D1185/P2315, which is recorded in the first of the three instances, name the author, notably, as sByang dka' ba'i zla ba (*sbyang dka' ba*, like *mi thub pa*, being a possible rendering of *durjaya*).⁸⁵ In another instance in chapter 2, Ḍaṃ ka dā sha is in turn glossed as *sbyang dka' zla ba* in MS A, whereas in MS B it is glossed as *bkul byed ma'i 'bangs* (which, however, rather renders *Cundādāsa).⁸⁶ Moreover, in chapter 19 Du dza ya tsan dra is glossed as *rgyal ba zla ba*,⁸⁷ while Mi thub zla ba is glossed as *a dzi ta tsandra* (Ajitacandra).⁸⁸ Notable also is that in chapter 3 sKar rgyal zla ba is glossed as *puṣya tsandra* (Puṣyacandra), which gives a correct literal reconstruction,⁸⁹ but later Tibetan cataloguers identified the author with Durjayacandra (reading *dka'* instead of *skar*, yielding *dka' rgyal*, or more ideally *rgyal dka'*, which is another possible rendering of *durjaya*).⁹⁰

⁸² See the *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar* (A 13b6; B 10a4 = N_{js}204, D1501/P2216). Cf. *ibid.*, chapter 19 (A, 64b5; B, 52a4 = N_{js}1387, D1261/P2390), where Nyin mo'i 'byung gnas zla ba is glossed as *di wa ā ka ra tsandra* (Divākaracandra); chapter 8 (A, 26b3; B 21a3 = N_{js}519, D2895/P3721), where Nyin mdzad rdo rje is glossed as *di wa a ka ra badzra* (Divākaravajra); and chapter 21 (A 70a6 = D1929/P2792), where Nyin byed grags pa is glossed as *di wa ka ra kīrti* (Divākarakīrti).

⁸³ See Tibskrit, s.v. Ḍhaṅkadāśa for various possible spellings/reconstructions of the name and several further references to both primary and secondary sources.

⁸⁴ See the *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar* (A, 10a4; B, 7a1 = N_{js}111, D1185/P2315; A, 10b2; B, 7a5, referring to four works = N_{js}118, D1240/P2369; N_{js}119a, D1239/P2368; N_{js}119b, D1307/P2437; N_{js}120, D1241/P2370; and A, 12a3; B, 8b4 = N_{js}172, D1321/P2453).

⁸⁵ This recurs in the *sDe dge bstan dkar* (vol. 2: 342a3), whereas the *Zhwa lu bstan dkar* (438.7) and *lNga pa chen po'i bstan dkar* (25b8–26a1) stick to Mi thub zla ba.

⁸⁶ See the *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar* (A, 10a6; B, 7a3 = N_{js}114, D1184/P2314).

⁸⁷ See the *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar* (A, 66a5; B, 53b1 = N_{js}1424, D1622/P2494).

⁸⁸ See the *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar* (A, 63a6; B, 51a1 = N_{js}1354, D1321/P2453).

⁸⁹ See the *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar* (A, 13a4; B, 9b3 = N_{js}189; D1404/P2120).

⁹⁰ While in his religious history Bu ston, too, states that the author is sKar rgyal zla ba, in his catalogue to the *Zhwa lu* edition of the *bsTan 'gyur* the name he gives is Mi thub zla ba. See the *Bu ston chos 'byung* (Bc2373) and *Zhwa lu bstan dkar* (424.3–4), respectively. The *sDe dge bstan dkar* (vol. 2: 352a7–b1), notably, provides the hybrid form rGyal dka' mi thub zla ba. The colophons of D1404/P2120 by contrast have the less felicitous form dKa' rgyal mi thub zla ba. Cf. also the colophons of D1461/P2178, which have rGyal dka' zla ba, the same as in the *sDe dge bstan dkar* (vol. 2: 335b4–5), while the *Zhwa lu bstan dkar* (429.4–5) states that the author is Mi thub zla ba.

There are ample such examples, but I believe the above four examples are sufficient to demonstrate that the glosses were not done systematically, which may hint that they were written by different persons and by mainly relying on bilingual glossaries. It should be perhaps added that Bu ston, in his catalogue to the Zhwa lu edition of the *bsTan 'gyur*, put much effort into removing the inaccuracies and inconsistencies regarding the authors' identities.

5. Concluding Remarks

The present paper focuses on the Old sNar thang Tibetan Buddhist Canon, with special reference to the *bsTan 'gyur* and with regard to mainly two issues. The first part of the paper focuses on the question of whether the compilation and production of the two canonical collections in sNar thang can justifiably be considered the first of their kind, and thus whether the Old sNar thang *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur*, as two distinct parts of a canon, are the first such collections produced on Tibetan soil. As part of the attempt to answer this question, the terms *bka' 'gyur* and *bstan 'gyur* were themselves discussed, mainly in an attempt to locate their earliest occurrences, commonly in reports of various production undertakings, and also to differentiate these from later similar reports. It is hoped that it has been convincingly demonstrated that the compilation and production project in sNar thang was indeed the first such undertaking and that the *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur* produced there can justifiably be considered the first of their kind, even if the organization of their content has not entirely matured and they thus differ in various ways from later editions. The second part of the paper is devoted to the actual undertaking in sNar thang, with a focus on the catalogue to the *bsTan 'gyur* collection compiled by dBus pa blo gsal. While a detailed outline of the two versions of the catalogue is offered in Appendix B, the catalogue has been mainly discussed in terms of the differences between the two versions, particularly with the aim of shedding light on the process of compilation as a whole, alongside an attempt at suggesting a *terminus ante quem* for the longer, later version. While many historical details surrounding the compilation project at sNar thang still remain uncovered, it is hoped that the present paper is a small contribution towards bringing them gradually to light.

Appendix A

References in the *Bu ston chos 'byung*
to the Old sNar thang *bsTan 'gyur*

A. Table I

The following is a list of the instances where the phrase *bstan 'gyur du ma chud / tshud* is found in the *Bu ston chos 'byung* (catalogue numbers according to Nishioka 1980–1983, which are followed by the reference to the phrase in the modern print edition, given within parentheses). These are followed by references to the *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar* (catalogue numbers for MS B according to Jampa Samten 2015, along with references to MSS A & B), *Zhwa lu bstan dkar*, and *Tshal pa bstan dkar* (catalogue numbers according to Jampa Samten 2016; merely in cases of works also found in DP), and sDe dge and Peking editions (catalogue numbers according to Ui et al. 1934 and Suzuki 1961, respectively). Whenever possible this is done by way of catalogue numbers; if these are not available, the existence of the work is marked with ✓ followed by the location of the entry in the respective catalogue (within parentheses). Cases where no reference for the work in question is found are marked with X.

	<i>Bu ston chos 'byung</i>	<i>dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar</i>	<i>Zhwa lu bstan dkar</i>	<i>Tshal pa bstan dkar</i>	sDe dge/Peking
1	Bc450 (228.16)	X	✓ (611.1–2)	X	D4110/P5611
2	Bc521 (231.17)	X	X	-	X
3	Bc980 (249.5)	X	X	-	X
4	Bc995 (249.15–16)	X	X	-	X
5	Bc1634– Bc1635 (269.6)	X	X	-	X
6	Bc1736 (272.6–7)	X	✓ (456.4–5)	X	D1683/P2555
7	Bc1956 (278.22)	X	X	-	X

8	Bc2118– Bc2127 (284.1)	×	×	-	×
9	Bc2235	✓ (A, 77a6– b1) / (B, NA)	✓	T1052 (43a5–6)	D2134/P2985
	Bc2236	×	✓	×	D2136/P2987
	Bc2237	✓ N _{JS} 1476 (A, 68a4–5; B, 55a3)	✓	×	D2133/P2984
	Bc2238 (287.5) ⁹¹	×	✓ (488.2– 3; 488.4–6)	×	D2137/P2988
10	Bc2380 ⁹² (287.5)	×	✓ (425.3)	T332 (18b1)	D1414/P2130

B. Table II

In several instances, one finds the phrase *sngar ma chud*, “previously not included,” but it appears that these cases are again references to the Old sNar thang *bsTan ’gyur* edition:

	<i>Bu ston chos ’byung</i>	<i>dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar</i>	<i>Zhwa lu bstan dkar</i>	<i>Tshal pa bstan dkar</i>	sDe dge/Pe- king
1	Bc1957– Bc1977 (279.4–5)	×	×	-	×
2	Bc2224– Bc2225 (286.20–21)	×	×	-	×

⁹¹ The phrase refers to two of these four works (Bc2235–Bc2238). Note, however, that Nishioka reads *gcig* (following the Lhasa version in the main text), but records that the variant *gnyis* is found in the three other versions consulted by him (DTS). See Nishioka 1983: 91 n. 4. The modern edition likewise reads *gcig*. Nonetheless, given that two (and not one) of the four works in question are not recorded in the longer version of the *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar*, the reading *gnyis* is clearly preferable (in the shorter version three of the works are not recorded). To be noted is also that of the two works that are included, one is recorded in chapter 19 (found in both versions A & B) and one in chapter 21 (found only in version A), both of which are later additions to the catalogue.

⁹² The phrase is recorded in the apparatus merely as a variant reading in version T (Nishioka 1983: 96 n. 4); in the modern print edition the phrase is missing (291.21). Interestingly, the work is listed in the *Tshal pa bstan dkar*!

3	Bc2487	X	X	X	D1589/P2297
	Bc2488	X	X	X	D1560/P2268
	Bc2489	X ⁹³	X	T482	D1561/P2269
	Bc2490	X	X	-	X
	Bc2491	X	X	-	X
	Bc2492	X	X	-	X
	(295.15)	X	X	-	X
4	Bc2539	X	✓	X	D1618/P2489
	Bc2540 (297.10)	X	✓ (450.6–7)	X	D1619/P2491
5	Bc2582	X	✓	X	D1706/P2577
	Bc2583	X	✓	X	D1707/P2578
	Bc2584	X	✓	X	D1708/P2579
	Bc2585	X	✓	X	D1709/P2580
	Bc2586	X	✓ (458.1–2)	T1152	X
	Bc2587	X	X	-	X
	(298.23)	X	X	-	X

There are several other instances in the *Bu ston chos 'byung* where it is simply stated “this/these is/are not included” (*di ma chud*), that is, without the phrases *bstan 'gyur du* or *sngar*. As this statement is too general there is no certainty that it refers to the Old sNar thang *bsTan 'gyur*. The instances are too numerous to be examined within the framework of the present paper, but a brief examination of several of these instances has shown that in none of them is/are the work/s in question recorded in the *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar*, which suggests that these could also be references to the Old sNar thang edition.

⁹³ Note that *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar* (A, 68a4–5; B, 55a3 = N_{JS}218): *grub thob rNgon pa pas mdzad pa'i rDo rje rnal 'byor ma'i sgrub thabs* |—which ascribes authorship to rNgon pa pa (*Lubdhaka =? Sabari) but has no translation ascription—could theoretically be identified with either Bc2289 or Bc2290: *mKha' spyod ma dmar mo'i sgrub thabs gnyis*—which has no authorship ascription but ascribes the translation to dPyal Chos bzang—and if so, both records could be referring to D1561/P2269: *rDo rje rnal 'byor ma mkha' spyod ma dmar mo'i sgrub thabs*—where rNgon pa is given as the author, and Chos kyi bzang po as the translator in collaboration with Niškalaṅka. If this is indeed the case, it may be that Bu ston overlooked the entry in the *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar* due to the discrepancies just listed.

Appendix B

A Comparative Table of Contents of the Earlier and Later Versions of
the *dBus pa blo gsal bstan dkar* (*bsTan bcos dkar chag*)

The words *lhag* and *rtsa* (the latter only when not followed by a number) are rendered here with the plus sign (+), so that, for example, the numbers *brgya phrag gcig lhag* and *brgya rtsa* are given as 100+. When the catalogue does not specify the total number, this is marked with Ø. When a section/chapter starts/ends somewhere in the middle of a volume, this is counted as half a volume in the specification of the total number of volumes of the section/chapter in question, but this is not a real quantitative value. The total number of works in each chapter for MS B is given here as follows: the total number as stated at the end of each chapter/the number as counted by Jampa Samten, followed by the respective catalogue numbers (N_{js}). When the total number includes works contained in collections that are counted as one record, the number of records as counted by Jampa Samten is followed by the corresponding estimated total number of texts within parenthesis. The total number of works recorded is commonly provided (in words) at the end of each chapter (with few exceptions) in the form of a verse, which is at times ambiguous. The pertinent phrase is thus cited in the respective footnotes (negligible variants found in the two MSS—for example, orthographical variants, variants resulting from *saṃdhi* rules, and the like—will not be recorded).

No.	Chapter's Title	B	A
[Prologue]			
1.	bsTod pa (A, 3a1–10a2; B, 2b6–6b5) 3 vols. Ka–Ga	100+ ⁹⁴ /108 N_{js} 1–108	163 ⁹⁵ /162
gSang sngags rdo rje theg pa'i bstan bcos			
2.	Kye'i rdo rje (A 10a3–9a7; B, 6b6–13a) 5 vols. Ka–Ca	70+ ⁹⁶ /77 N_{js} 109–185	70+ ⁹⁷ /79

⁹⁴ MS B (6b6; Jampa Samten 2015: 9): *brgya phrag gcig lhag*.

⁹⁵ MS A (10a2): *brgya dang drug bcu rtsa gsum*.

⁹⁶ MS B (9a7; Jampa Samten 2015: 14): *bdun bcu rtsa lhag*.

⁹⁷ MS A (13a1): identical.

3.	bDe mchog 'khor lo (A, 13a1–15b1; B, 9b1–11b1) 3.5 vols. Cha–mid. Ta	60 ⁹⁸ / 57 N _{js} 186–242	60 ⁹⁹ / 59
4.	sGyu 'phrul chen mo (A 15b2–16b6; B, 11b1–12b4) 1.5 vols. mid. Ta–Tha	32 ¹⁰⁰ / 30 N _{js} 243–272	32 ¹⁰¹ / 31
5.	gSang ba 'dus pa (A, 16b6–21b5; B, 12b4–17a1) 13 vols. Da–'A	120 ¹⁰² / 118 N _{js} 273–390	120 ¹⁰³ / 122
6.	Dus kyi 'khor lo (A, 21b5–23b6; B, 17a1–18b6) 5 vols. Ya–Sa	41+ ¹⁰⁴ / 42 N _{js} 391–432	41+ ¹⁰⁵ / 42
7.	rNal 'byor gyi rgyud (A 24a1–25a3; B, 18b6–19b6) 6.5 vols. Ha–mid. Ci	24 ¹⁰⁶ / 24 N _{js} 433–456	24 ¹⁰⁷ / 23
8.	sPyod pa'i rgyud dang Bya ba'i rgyud	270 ¹⁰⁸ / 172(271)	270 ¹¹⁰ / 177(276+)

⁹⁸ MS B (11b1; Jampa Samten 2015: 18) *drug bcu*.

⁹⁹ MS A (15b1): identical.

¹⁰⁰ MS B (12b2–4; Jampa Samten 2015: 21): *sgyu 'phrul sgyu ma'i chos sde lnga phrag gsum* | | *sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor gsal byed 'grel chen bzhi* | | *sangs rgyas thod pa dpal ldan gdan bzhi yi* | | *chos skor lnga dang brgyad rnam tshang bar bzhugs* | | (15+4+5+8=32).

¹⁰¹ MS A (16b4–6): identical.

¹⁰² MS B (16b7; Jampa Samten 2015: 29): *brgya dang nyi shu*.

¹⁰³ MS A (21b4): identical.

¹⁰⁴ MS B (18b4–5; Jampa Samten 2015: 33): *dpal ldan dus kyi 'khor lo'i rgyud 'grel skor* | | *bcu phrag gcig dang brgyad kyis lhag pa dang* | | *rgyud chen sgyu 'phrul dra ba'i rnam bshad gsum* | | *mtshan brjod chos skor bcu phrag gnyis lhag bzhugs* | | (18+ + 3 + 20+ = 41+).

¹⁰⁵ MS A (23b5–6): identical.

¹⁰⁶ MS B (19b6; Jampa Samten 2015: 35): *bcu phrag gnyis dang bzhi*.

¹⁰⁷ MS A (25a3): identical.

¹⁰⁸ MS B (24a2; Jampa Samten 2015: 45): *brgya phrag gnyis dang bdun bcu*.

¹¹⁰ MS A (30a5): identical.

	(A, 25a3–30a5; B, 19b6–24a2) 2.5 vols. mid. Ci–JI	+) ¹⁰⁹ N _{JS} 457–628	
9.	IHa so so'i mngon par rtogs pa (A, 30a5–32a3; B, 24a3–25b5) 1 vol. Nyi	380 ¹¹¹ / 46(386 +) ¹¹² N _{JS} 629–674	380 ¹¹³ / 48(38 8+)
10.	gSang sngags kyi lam gyi rim pa (A, 32a4–38a6; B, 25b5–30b1) 3 vols. Ti–Di	150 ¹¹⁴ / 151 N _{JS} 675–825	150 ¹¹⁵ / 179

¹⁰⁹ Strictly speaking, Chapter 8 contains 172 records, as counted by Jampa Samten. However, as pointed out by him, one of the records (N_{JS}556) refers to a collection (*rNam 'joms sgrub thabs brgya rtsa*), the number of the works contained therein being specified as 100+ (*brgya rtsa*), which would yield a total of 271+. The collection as found in the *bsTan 'gyur* includes altogether 108 works (D2942–D3049 / P3767–P3873). For a discussion on this collection, see Almogi (forthcoming).

¹¹¹ MS B (25b4; Jampa Samten 2015: 49): *brgya phrag gsum dang brgyad bcu*.

¹¹² Strictly speaking, Chapter 9 contains 46 records, as counted by Jampa Samten. However, as pointed out by him, two of the records (N_{JS}629 and N_{JS}630) refer to collections, the number of works contained in the former (*Ba ri sgrub thabs brgya rtsa*) being specified as 100+ (*brgya rtsa*) and in the latter (*sGrub thabs rgya mtsho*) as 242 (*nyi brgya bzhi bcu rtsa gnyis*), which would yield 386+. Note that MS B glosses *brgya rtsa* as what seems to be *cung* followed by the numeral 70? (Jampa Samten reads *cung med*, which cannot be endorsed), of which I can unfortunately not make sense. Based on the Tshal pa catalogue, Jampa Samten counts for the *Ba ri sgrub thabs brgya rtsa* 138 (T1255–T1392) and for the *sGrub thabs rgya mtsho* 245 (T1393–T1637), the latter in contradiction to the catalogue, which gives the number of works to be 242! He thus counts for chapter 9 a total of 427. See Jampa Samten 2015: 46 nn. 1 & 2, 49 n. 1. At any rate, the collections as found in the *bsTan 'gyur* include, however, 94 (D3306–D3399 / P4127–P4220) and 245/246 (D3400–D3644 / P4221–P4466) works, respectively. For a discussion on these collections, see Almogi (forthcoming).

¹¹³ MS A (32a3): identical.

¹¹⁴ MS B (30a7; Jampa Samten 2015: 58): *brgya phrag phyed dang gnyis*.

¹¹⁵ MS A (38a5–6): identical.

mDo'i phyogs kyi bstan bcos			
A.	[Treatises on Various Buddhist Works & Topics]		
11	mDo sde (A, 38a6–42a3; B, 30b1–33a7) 21 vols. Ka–Zha	71 ¹¹⁶ / 70 N _{JS} 826–895	71 ¹¹⁷ / 73
12	dBu ma (A, 42a3–44b6; B, 33a7–35b6) 12 vols. Za–Gi	69 ¹¹⁸ / 73 N _{JS} 896–968	69 ¹¹⁹ / 72
13	Sems tsam (A 44b6–47a2; B, 35b6–37b5) 14 vols. Ngi–Tsi	51 ¹²⁰ / 52 N _{JS} 869–1020	51 ¹²¹ / 52
14	Theg pa chung ngu (A, 47a2–49b4; B, 37b5–40a4) 13 vols. Tshi–Thu	51 ¹²² / 54 N _{JS} 1021–1074	51 ¹²³ / 52
15	Byang chub sems dpa'i lam	230 ¹²⁴ / 139(238+) ¹²⁵	230 ¹²⁶ / 140(239+)

¹¹⁶ MS B (33a7; Jampa Samten 2015: 65): *bdun bcu rtsa gcig*.

¹¹⁷ MS A (42a2): identical.

¹¹⁸ MS B (35b5; Jampa Samten 2015: 70): *drug bcu rtsa dgu*.

¹¹⁹ MS A (44b5): identical.

¹²⁰ MS B (37b4; Jampa Samten 2015: 75): *lnga bcu rtsa gcig*.

¹²¹ MS A (47a2): identical.

¹²² MS B (40a3; Jampa Samten 2015: 81): *lnga bcu rtsa gcig*.

¹²³ MS A (49b3): identical.

¹²⁴ MS B (45a6; Jampa Samten 2015: 91): *nyis brgya sum bcu*.

¹²⁵ Strictly speaking, the chapter contains 139 records, as counted by Jampa Samten. However, as pointed out by him, one record (N_{JS}1213) refers to a collection (*Chos chung brgya rtsa*, also known as *Jo bo chos chung*), which is specified as containing 100+ (*brgya rtsa*) works, so that the total number would amount to 238+ (Jampa Samten erroneously gives a total of 239). The collection in the *bsTan 'gyur* contains 103 works (D4465–D4567 / P5378–P5480). For more on this collection, see Almqvist (forthcoming).

¹²⁶ MS A (55b2): identical.

	(A, 49b4–55b2; B, 40a4–45a7) 5 vols. Du–Bu	N _{JS} 1075–1213	
B.	[Others]		
16 .	Tshad ma (A, 55b3–58a1; B, 45a7–47a7) 16 vols. Mu–Ke	Ø/50 N _{JS} 1214–1263	Ø/50
17 .	gSo spyad dang sGra la sog pa (A, 58a1–59b1; B, 47b1–48b4) 6 vols. Khe–mid. Je	Ø/33 N _{JS} 1264–1296	Ø/33
18 .	sMon lam dang bKra shis (A, 59b1–61b2; B, 48b5–49a7) 0.5 vol. mid.–end Je	15 ¹²⁷ /14 N _{JS} 1297–1310	47 ¹²⁸ /47
[Later Additions]			
19 .	Shin du dkon pa'i dpe phyis brtson pa mchog gis rnyed nas bris pa (A, 61b2–69a4; B, 49a7–55b7) 9 vols.: Ni–Tsi (6 vols. continuation of the Tantra section); Nye–The (3 vols. continuation of the Non-Tantric section (mDo'i phyogs kyi bstan bcos / mTshan nyid)	Ø/179 N _{JS} 1311–1489	Ø/181
20	Bod kyi mkhan po	Ø/21	Ø/21

¹²⁷ MS B (49a7; Jampa Samten 2015: 100): *lnga phrag gsum*.

¹²⁸ MS A (61b1): *bzhi bcu rtsa bdun*.

.	mkhas pa rnam kyis mdzad pa'i dpe dkon pa (A, 69a4–70a1; B, 55b7– 56b1) 1 vol. De	N _{JS} 1490–1510	
21	Slar yang dpe dkon pa rnam sde snod 'dzin pa rGyang ro pas rnyed nas bris pa (A, 70a1–79a2) 3 vols. Ne–Phe (Mixed: Mostly Tantric works (fols. 70a1–77b5), only the last 27 works of vol. Phe (fols. 77b5–79a1) are Non-Tantric)	NA	Ø/226
[Epilogue]			
Total number of work		2015 ¹²⁹ /1510 (2048+) ¹³⁰	2350 ¹³¹ /1868 (2406+)

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¹²⁹ MS B (58b1); Jampa Samten 2015: 118: *stong phrag gnyis dang* | *bcu phrag phyed dang gnyis*.

¹³⁰ The total sum is given by Jampa Samten as 2090 (reflecting his own calculation of the number of works contained in the individual small collections). See Jampa Samten 2015: 115 n. 1.

¹³¹ MS A (81a5): *stong phrag gnyis dang brgya phrag gsum* | | *bcu phrag lnga*.

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“Empty Like the Sky”: Polysemy and the Problem of “Mere Clear Awareness” at the Intersection of Sūtra and Tantra in Fifteenth-century Tibet¹

The *Wisdom Drop* says, “Everything external is momentary, the magical play of the joyful mind. Likewise, it is not other than mind. The mind is (empty) like the sky.”²

Ngor chen kun dga’ bzang po

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Detaphors bear the potential to agitate as well as to bridge the boundary of representation and reality. To describe the nature of the mind is to describe the nature of reality, a daunting task with especially high stakes for Buddhist authors. To say that “the mind is like the sky” is to place two equally elusive and unbounded entities side by side and to gesture toward a shared quality of emptiness that defies exemplification and description. Emptiness is a state of non-conceptuality, non-grasping, and expansiveness that provides the key to liberation from suffering. Neither the mind, the sky, nor their shared quality of emptiness can easily be measured or described. Metaphor functions as a container for comparison and a measure of the limitless and ineffable. Both the Sanskrit term *upamā* and the Tibetan term *dpe* express the comparative dimension of metaphor and its ties to “resemblance” and “measurement.”

Metaphorical language plays upon the simultaneity of sameness

¹ I would like to thank Drakpa Gyatso of the International Buddhist Academy for his expert advice and mentorship in the study and translation of Ngor chen’s texts and to claim any errors as my own. I benefitted from the opportunity to present the early phases of this research at the American Academy of Religion 2019 annual meeting on a Buddhist Philosophy Unit panel organized by Daniel McNamara and for Douglas Duckworth’s rigorous response. I would also like to thank José Ignacio Cabezón, Charles Hallisey, Nancy Lin, Rory Lindsay for their thoughts and suggestions on this work as it evolved. This research was made possible by faculty research grants from the College of Humanities at the University of Arizona.

² *ye shes thig le las/phyi yi thams cad skad cig ma/dga’ mo sems kyi cho phrul yin. de ltar sems la gzhan pa min. sems nyid [159c.4] nam mkha’ lta bu’o.* Ngor chen Autocommentary, 159c.1-159c.4.

and difference inherent in language itself. As they move across contexts, metaphors, like puns, transform and assume different meanings while attesting to the stickiness of language. By “stickiness,” I mean the manner in which words and phrases retain aspects of their previous contexts. The Sanskrit term for pun, *śleṣa*, evokes this sense of “adhering or clinging to” or “embracing” meanings.³ In the case of puns, the stickiness of language produces delight, a reveling in the conjunction of sameness and difference. However, the polysemic nature of language does not always produce delight and even when it does, like many good jokes, it can be accompanied by a sense of discomfort.

This article traces the interpretive movements of one fifteenth-century Tibetan Buddhist author wrestling with the stickiness of language. It exposes the variety of ways in which this author resists language’s polysemic quality in coping with an uncomfortable resemblance between two contexts for describing the mind’s “clarity” [Tib. *gsal ba*] and “self-awareness” [Tib. *rang rig*]. It also highlights choice moments in which the same author turns the polysemy of language to his advantage through an intertextual approach exemplified in his use of the metaphor “empty like the sky.” I conclude the article by illuminating the benefits of a literary approach to tantric polemical texts to show how a heightened attention to the language of these texts highlights deeper tensions between resemblance and identity troubling Buddhist authors. In gesturing toward their creative responses to these tensions, we begin to see a phenomenon in which “mirrors are windows,” akin to the mimetic patterns Ramanujan described in analyzing instances of repetition, reflection and inversion in Indian literature.⁴ In making these broader connections, this article suggests the literary approach as a complement to existing models for approaching tantric polemical texts from perspectives such as ritual, philosophy, lineage, apologetics and “sectarian differentiation.”⁵

In 1406, a Tibetan scholar monk, Ngor chen kun dga’ bzang po po (1382-1456), composed *Root and Commentary for Overcoming Objections to the Three Tantras*, a tantric polemical text and autocommentary.⁶

³ Monier-Williams Sanskrit-English Dictionary: v0.3 RCI, <https://lexica.indica-et-buddhica.org/dict/lexica>. Accessed August 2020.

⁴ A.K. Ramanujan, “Where Mirrors are Windows: Toward an Anthology of Reflection,” *History of Religions*, Vol. 28, No.3 (Feb., 1989), 187-216. I am grateful to Charles Hallisey for suggesting this work to me.

⁵ Cabezón introduces “sectarian differentiation” as an alternative model to sectarianism for describing the nature of conversation and conflict in fifteenth-century Tibetan polemics. He distinguishes the two phenomena as oriented around “belonging” and “pathology” respectively. José Ignacio Cabezón, Lobsang Dargyay, and Go-rams-pa Bsod-nams-señ-ge 2007: 7.

⁶ Ngor chen) Kun dga’ bzang po (1382-1456). *gsung ’bum/ Kun dga’ bzang po*. 1968 and W11577. “Overcoming objections to the Three Tantras” *Rgyud gsum gnod*

Ngor chen's biographer Sangs rgyas phun tshogs (1649-1705) writes: "Through debate, he reversed mistaken views. At an earlier time, some said that the great Dharma protector (Virupa) was a Cittamātrin [*sems tsam*] pandit and that the intention of his three tantras together with oral instructions was to spread the Cittamātrin perspective. (In response,) Ngor chen composed the great treatise that defends through scripture and reasoning, the *Root and Commentary for Overcoming Objections to the Three Tantras*."⁷ The biographer speaks of a charge that threatened the foundation of the Sakya tradition of Tibetan Buddhism to which Ngor chen belonged. The "three tantras" are the Hevajra root tantra and the two explanatory tantras, the *Samputa* and *Vajrapañjara*. These three texts form the basis for the Path and Fruit [*lam 'bras*] lineage originating in the figure of the Indian mahāsiddha Virupa and transmitted by the Sakyapa as their most treasured tantric tradition.⁸ The opponent's charge implies a direct correlation between the integrity of philosophical views and tantric ritual approaches. In combining the techniques of philosophical debate with tantric exegesis, the genre of tantric polemics provides the ideal medium for Ngor chen to respond to such a claim.

Ngor chen's *Overcoming Objections to the Three Tantras* reflects the importance of grounding tantric perspectives in Madhyamaka descriptions of emptiness. The scholastic climate of early fifteenth-century Tibet placed increasing emphasis upon polemics and philosophical debate as arenas for demonstrating skill in articulating the Madhyamaka perspective. Tibetan doxographers positioned the Madhyamaka as the most refined system for accessing soteriological truth, at the apex of the program for Buddhist learning. Unfortunately, the Madhyamaka emphasis upon theorizing the virtues and limitations of language and conceptuality did not always synch well with the profound tantric instructions. In particular, tantric accounts of the power

'joms. Vol.9: 155d-157a. "Commentary on Overcoming Objections to the Three Tantras." *Rgyud gsum gnod 'joms kyi 'grel pa*. Vol.9: 157a-164b * [referenced throughout as Ngor chen Autocommentary]

⁷ Sangs rgyas phun tshogs (b. 1649 d. 1705). 1688. [based on Dkon mchog lhun grub (b. 1497 d. 1557)]. The Source of the Wish Fulfilling Jewel, the Oceanic Qualities which Gather the Rivers: the Biography ("Liberation Story") of the Victorious Vajradhara Kun dga' bzang po. *Rgyal ba rdo rje 'chang kun dga' bzang po'i rnam par thar pa legs bshad chu bo 'dus pa'i rgya mtsho yon tan yid bzhin nor bu'i 'byung gnas*, 546.2-5.

⁸ Chogye Trichen Rinpoche's 2003 commentary on Grags pa rgyal mtshan's "Parting from the Four Attachments" mentions this charge and dismisses it by asserting that Virupa only taught Cittamātra before becoming a tantric mahāsiddha. See Thub-bstan-legs-bsad-rgya-mtsho, Thubten Choedak, Ngag-dbang-kun-dga'-theg-chen-dpal-'bar, Jay Goldberg, John Dewese, and Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan 2003: 161.

of the mind as an agent in transforming our realities proved challenging to align with the Madhyamaka perspective.

The “Consciousness Only”⁹ orientation of the Yogācāra tradition lent itself more easily to tantric explanations. The focus upon the mind as the primary agent of transformation allowed for the possibility of channeling the power of awareness for its liberating potential. However, the evolving dynamics of Tibetan scholasticism prohibited openly identifying with the Yogācāran or related Cittamātrin/Vijñapti-mātrin perspective. Although, in theory, different rules dictated the parameters of sūtra and tantra, despite the best intentions of many authors to hold the boundary, these two techniques for progressing toward liberation bled into one another.

Ngor chen’s pithy polemical root text is lauded among Sakyapas today as an eloquent and lucid expression of the integrity of their transmission of the Hevajra tantric tradition. The concise nature of his argument, consolidated in a mere five folia sides, is especially appealing since apparently “people don’t like elaborate explanations these days.”¹⁰ Ngor chen’s autocommentary, about 30 folia sides, is a testament to his command of the discourses of both sūtra and tantra as well as to a distinctly Sakyapa approach to describing the nature of the mind in tantric terms.

Defending the Emptiness of the Hevajra Tantra

Ngor chen explicitly composed his text in response to the charge that the “naturally co-emergent wisdom” [*rang bzhin lhan cig skyes pa’i ye shes*] described by the Hevajra tantras as “self-aware great bliss” [*rang rig bde ba chen po nyid*] reeked of the “mere clear awareness” [*gsal rig tsam*] of the Consciousness Only traditions. In investigating what precisely looks so Consciousness Only about the Sakyapa approach to tantra, this article demonstrates the relationship of clarity and emptiness to be of the utmost importance.

⁹ The biographer’s claim that Ngor chen composed a defense against the accusation that Virupa himself was a Cittamātrin may be slightly hyperbolic, reflecting the biographer’s own role in the “sectarian differentiation” of the Sakyapa and Dga’ldan pa traditions. The use of the term Cittamātrin [*sems tsam*] is also cause for reflection. Ngor chen himself almost exclusively uses the Vijñapti-mātra [*rnam rig tsam*] or Vijñapti-vada [*rnam rig smra ba*] terminology in his text. This subtle variation in the language may reflect transformations in the meanings of these terms and the attitudes toward their associated perspectives over the ensuing centuries. However, in many Tibetan contexts, these terms are used interchangeably with Yogācāra. For the sake of consistency, I use a generic term, “Consciousness Only,” to refer to this network of thought, except in cases where there is a significant shift in terms.

¹⁰ Ngor chen Autocommentary, 164a.4.

Ngor chen summarizes the opponents' view as follows:

A few Pāramitā *scholars (scholars of the sūtra) say that the *rang bzhin lhan cig skyes pa'i ye shes* which is the primary ultimate meaning of the two-part tantra, explanatory tantra(s), together with their oral instructions and the precious *lam 'bras* is explained in the tantras as "self-aware great bliss." Based on this, "self-awareness becomes awakening." So it is said...Moreover, the commentators say that "as for that so-called wisdom, being clear and aware, it is wisdom." Since they explain (that wisdom) as mere clear awareness (based on that quote), they explain the ultimate intention of the three tantras and oral instructions as merely the Vijñapti(-mātrin) position [*rnam rig tu gnas pa kho na yin zhing*]. Also, in the *Pearl Garland*, the commentary on difficult points of the root tantra composed by Shantipa (Ratnākāraśanti), it is also explained in the manner of the Vijñapti (-mātrin) [*rnam rig gi tshul*]. So they say.¹¹

Ngor chen's primary objective is to disambiguate a conflation of terms describing supreme enlightened wisdom and bliss. His opponents have misconstrued the supreme wisdom described by the Hevajra tantras as "naturally co-emergent wisdom" [*rang bzhin lhan skyes ye shes*], confusing it with the "mere clear awareness" [*gsal rig tsam*] of Consciousness Only. In response, Ngor chen endeavors to demonstrate how "naturally coemergent wisdom" is an expression of emptiness unsullied by the mentalistic implications of terms for mere clarity like *gsal rig tsam*. Likewise, he distinguishes the "self-aware great bliss" [*rang rig bde ba chen po nyid*] extolled in the Hevajra Tantra from "mere self-awareness" [*rang rig tsam*]. The tension underlying the text is the possibility that the confusion of these terms is not merely coincidental.

Ngor chen divides his argument into eight points of refutation:

1. the misconception of the tantra piṭaka and Consciousness Only view

- A. expressing the Consciousness Only position
- B. establishing the position of the tantra(s) itself
- C. comprehending "naturally coemergent" [*rang bzhin lhan skyes*]

¹¹ *pha rol tu phyin pa'i tshul la mkhas pa kha cig/ brtag pa gnyis pa bshad pa'i rgyud dang/de dag gi man ngag gsung ngag rin po che lam 'bras bu dang bcas pa'i* [157b.2] *brjod bya'i gtso bo mthar thug pa'i don du gyur pa rang bzhin lhan cig skyes pa'i ye shes ni/ rgyud las/ rang rig bde ba chen po nyid/ rang rig nas ni byang chub 'gyur. zhes sogs... 'grel byed dag* [157b.3] *gis kyang/ ye shes zhes bya ba ni gsal zhing shes pas na ye shes tel/zhes gsal rig tsam la 'chad pa'i phyir/ rgyud gsum man ngag dang bcas pa 'di'i dgongs pa mthar thug pa ni/ rnam rig tu gnas pa kho na yin zhing/slob dpon shan ti pas* [157b.4] *mdzad pa'i rtsa rgyud kyi dka' 'grel mi tig phreng bar yang rnam rig gi tshul du bkral ba yin no. zhes zer ro.* Ngor chen Autocommentary, 157b.1-4.

(if the opponent's claims were true):

2. There would be a contradiction with the main tantra.
3. The three tantras would no longer be the word of the Buddha.
4. The whole tantra piṭaka would become Consciousness Only.
5. Nāgārjuna and his disciples would become Consciousness Only.
6. The Madhyamaka would become Consciousness Only.
7. The Buddha would have entered the disciples into the wrong path.
8. Attaining liberation through reliance upon mantra would become impossible.

Ngor chen's refutations escalate in intensity to show a domino effect in which destabilizing the authority of the Sakya transmission of the Hevajra Tantra ultimately destabilizes the authority of all tantras, of the Madhyamaka and its most renowned Indian proponents, Nāgārjuna and his disciples, of the Buddha himself, and of the tantric path. In addressing Ngor chen's efforts to grapple with the stickiness and polysemy of the language of clarity and naturalness, this article focuses primarily on the first section of his argument. This first section, the most lengthy, consumes about seventeen of approximately thirty folia sides of the commentary. Ngor chen refutes the opponent's mistaken conceptions of both the Consciousness Only and tantric perspectives. In doing so, he creates space to articulate an accurate understanding of what it means to be "naturally coemergent" [*rang bzhin lhan skyes*] in the sense intended by the Hevajra Tantra.

Natural coemergence [*rang bzhin lhan skyes*] is one in a cluster of terms for which Ngor chen negotiates associations with Consciousness Only. They include:

- *rang rig [tsam]* "[mere] self-awareness,"
- *so so rang rig* "individual self-awareness,"
- *rang bzhin lhan skyes* "naturally co-emergent,"
- *rang rig lhan cig skyes pa* "self-aware co-emergence,"
- *rang rig bde ba chen po* "self-aware great bliss."

The terminology of the "self-aware" and "naturally" and "spontaneously" born or "co-emergent" describes a language of "naturalness" marked by the reflexive marker *rang* [Skt. *sva-*], generally translated as "self."¹² To be "self"-anything, born, aware or what have you, implies that an entity exists somehow outside the parameters of cause

¹² On issues of polysemy and the language of "naturalness" in Indian Buddhist texts, see R.M. Davidson, "Reframing Sahaja: Genre, Representation, Ritual and Lineage," *Journal of Indian Philosophy*. 30: 45-83.

and effect and of interdependence, and thereby is, in a sense, real or permanent. The form of naturalness evoked by *rang* therefore generates sensitive questions like: Can consciousness see itself? Is the nature of the mind inherently or primordially pure? This language is also pervaded by natures and essences [*rang bzhin, ngo bo*]. These natures and essences operate in perpetual tension with established descriptions of the true nature of phenomena as “essenceless.”

The language of naturalness found in forms like *rang bzhin lhan skyes* provokes highly charged questions with widely divergent answers across traditions, questions about whether we are naturally buddhas and whether enlightenment is something that happens naturally. For example, the “naturalness” of the enlightenment experience is at issue in the very narrative of the origins of Tibetan Buddhist identity, revolving around an alleged encounter at Samye monastery between the Indian monk Kamalaśīla and the Chinese monk, Mo ho yen. This iconic debate symbolizes the triumph of the Indian gradualist approach over the Chinese subitist one. The rhetorical power of the clash of perceptions of “naturalness” makes the historical basis of the encounter practically irrelevant. Mohoyen’s naturalness is perpetually raked up as the classic straw man of Tibetan Buddhist polemics. The Tibetan passion for doxography, the suppression of Consciousness Only perspectives, and the careful navigation of the language of Buddha nature are all symptoms of anxieties around naturalness in Tibetan scholastic circles.¹³ A literary approach to tantric polemics reveals the importance of this genre in responding to and even perpetuating such anxieties.

The following verse from the Hevajra root tantra is Ngor chen’s main source for concern: “As for the very self-aware great bliss, from self-awareness comes awakening” [*rang rig bde ba chen po nyid/ rang rig nas ni byang chub ’gyur*].¹⁴ *Rang rig* [*svasaṃvedana*], translated as “self-awareness” or “reflexive awareness,” is an especially tricky

¹³ While it may initially seem surprising that tantric perspectives would be evaluated in philosophical terms, the history of Tibetan doxography itself reinforces this tendency; for example, as Dalton shows, Tibetans overlaid a distinctly doctrinal orientation that diverged from ritual framework of Indian models in organizing the tantric corpus. Dalton also considers early non-Buddhist precedents for categorizing views like Bhaṭṭhari and acknowledges the contributions of Indian Buddhist scholars like Bhāvaviveka as well as those visiting Tibet later like Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla. Dalton: 118-120, 145. Harter re-examines the category of doxography in Tibetan Buddhism through the work of Red mda’ ba, presenting important insights into the assumptions attached to the term and re-evaluating its aptness for the Tibetan context. His attention to the quality of “accumulation” is especially interesting. Harter 2011:104 & 111.

¹⁴ *Hevajra Tantra* I.viii.46. *Kye’i rdo rje’i rgyud*, Sde dge bka’ ’gyur, Vol.80, 10a.7-10b.1. TBRC W4CZ5269.

category in the Indian epistemological sources by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti and their Tibetan interpretations.¹⁵ Making sense of the relationship of *rang rig* across genres and, in particular across sūtra and tantra, poses pronounced challenges.¹⁶ Within Ngor chen's commentary, the need to define what "good *rang rig*"¹⁷ looks like and to distinguish it from a problematic way of thinking about *rang rig* becomes imperative.

Ngor chen deploys citations from Nāgārjuna's praise texts to parse "self-awareness" accordingly. Ngor chen marshals evidence of multiple references within *Hymn in Praise of the Dharmadhātu* to "individual self awareness" [*so so rang rig*] in connection with qualities like purity and union [*sbyor ldan nyid*].¹⁸ He calls upon another praise text, the *Hymn to the Three Bodies*, to venerate *so so rang rig* as that which is immune to exemplification [*dpe med*], free even from the intangible power of metaphor to gesture toward the ineffable.¹⁹ In the process of evoking these references, Ngor chen imagines an opponent who might raise the objection that Nāgārjuna's praise texts are themselves Consciousness Only.²⁰ These texts inhabit a delicate exegetical terrain in which the Madhyamaka patriarch deviates from his expected "negative" descriptions of mind or of reality in favor of a more "positive" approach to communicating its essence.²¹ The *Hymn in Praise of the Dharmadhātu* is the most renowned of the three featured praises; the degree to which the tone and mode of representation expressed by this text diverges from Nāgārjuna's standard Madhyamaka treatises has prompted some scholars to nuance and diversify his authorial persona and others to doubt the attribution of this text to the Madhyamaka author.²² Ngor chen's use of passages from *Hymn in Praise of*

¹⁵ See, for example, Dunne 2013: 276-278 on questions of "reflexive awareness" and the "simultaneity" of cognitions.

¹⁶ For rigorous investigations of the category see the 2010 "Special Issue on Buddhist Theories of Self-Awareness (*svasaṃvedana*): Reception and Critique" in *Journal of Indian Philosophy*.

¹⁷ Doug Duckworth suggested this term (panel response, Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Denver, Colorado, November 2018).

¹⁸ Another reference to the text appears in the general discussion of natural co-emergence in Ngor chen's text to be discussed below. See Ngor chen Autocommentary 160d.4-5.

¹⁹ *gzhan yang chos dbyings bstod pa las/so sor rang rig rnam dag na/ sa rnams* [163a.2] *de yi bdag nyid gnas*. Ngor chen Autocommentary, 163a.1-2. On the relation of *rang rig* and *so so rang rig*, see Brunnholz 2007, 65.

²⁰ See Ngor chen Autocommentary 163b.6. He lists prophecies of Nāgārjuna's coming from two Mahāyāna texts, the *Lankavatāra* (a text with significant ties to "consciousness only") and the *Manjuśrī-mūla-kalpa* in resiting this assumption.

²¹ See Brunnholz, Karl, and Rang-byung-rdo-rje 2007: 53.

²² See Brunnholz, Karl, and Rang-byung-rdo-rje 2007: 25 & fn 64. See also references to Ruegg 1981 & Lindtner 1982.

the Dharmadhātu therefore exemplifies his skillful navigation of the stickiness of language. For if the very founder of the lauded Indian Madhyamaka tradition uses language that evokes associations with essentializing Consciousness Only views, who wouldn't be vulnerable to such charges?

Moreover, Ngor chen persists in citing Nāgārjuna's famous praise text in the face of a Tibetan citation history that would seem to be at odds with his own aims of defending the Sakyapa sūtric and tantric understandings of the nature of the mind and its reflexivity. Beyond concerns with the relationship of the Sakya teachings to Indian Consciousness Only thinkers, Ngor chen is concerned to distinguish his tradition from Tibetan thinkers who fell on the wrong side of the buddha nature debates of the preceding century and the heirs to their legacy. The buddha nature debates in Tibet took shape as a dispute around the potential of all beings to become buddhas or, put another way, around the possibility that beings are "naturally" enlightened. The ideas of Dol po pa (Dol po pa shes rab rgyal mtshan, 1292-1361) were especially contentious. Dol po pa's theory of "other emptiness" [*gzhan stong*] suggested that the heart of enlightened potentiality was empty only of "other" [*gzhan stong*] but not empty of its own nature. The eternalist connotations of this view, the implications that there was a truly existing, independent, and enduring nature, produced increasing discomfort for many Tibetan critics. Dol po pa appealed to the "positivistic" mode of expression in Nāgārjuna's praises to articulate the Jo nang pa understanding of the true nature of reality.²³

Reading polemical texts in a literary way connects Ngor chen to a broader world of Buddhist textuality, fueled by a perpetual tension between naturalness or essences and their refusal. Ngor chen's citations illustrate how terms describing natural and spontaneous arising or co-emergence like *rang bzhin lhan skyes* pose similar problems for Buddhist authors across genres and circulate through very different genres of Buddhist texts.²⁴ While the language of natural arising and

²³ Go-rams-pa Bsod-nams-señ-ge, José Ignacio Cabezón, Lobsang Dargyay, and Go-rams-pa Bsod-nams-señ-ge 2007: 29

²⁴ Davidson traces the related movements of *sahaja* across esoteric and philosophical genres of Indian Buddhist textuality and suggests the mutual significance of its permutations in the discourses of Yogācāra and Hevajra. He writes, "Sahaja is, in fact, a good test case for the manner in which esoteric Buddhist technical terminology, developed in one environment, moved into others, and was sometimes held at bay and sometimes surreptitiously appropriated in disparate venues...It is my proposal that *sahaja* was a preclassical word that became employed in scholastic, particularly Yogācāra, literature as an adjective describing conditions natural or, less frequently, essential with respect to circumstances encountered in an embodied state...While *sahaja* eventually was articulated as a technical term to identify the culminating experience of sexual practice...the term took on an

awareness may be prized in realms like *rdzogs chen* and *tathāgatagarbha* as well the Yogācāra, it may be met with skepticism or even hostility within philosophical and polemical genres of Madhyamaka thought. The contested aspects of natural co-arising, simultaneity and co-emergence suggested by the term *lhan cig skyes pa* [Skt. *sahaja*] therefore span the divide between sūtra and tantra.²⁵

Throughout the text, Ngor chen adopts a variety of strategies to cope with the clarity, self-awareness, and naturalness common to both Consciousness Only and Sakyapa discourses. His approach is deeply intertextual, forging connections between descriptions of mind and reality drawn from diverse genres of Buddhist literature. In the next section, I closely examine the manner in which Ngor chen uses the metaphor of the sky to frame the Sakyapa tantric perspective on mind as complementary with the Madhyamaka view. I reveal how Ngor chen uses the metaphor of the sky to turn the polysemic qualities of language to his advantage and to relate emptiness and bliss in a uniquely Sakyapa way.

Empty Like the Sky: Polysemy and Emptiness

Metaphors preserve the gap between representation and reality, suggesting shared qualities between entities without reducing them to

increasingly philosophical importance in the Hevajra environment." Davidson, "Reframing Sahaja," 46-47. He likewise suggests that exegetes inspired by its use in the tantric ritual context elaborated upon *sahaja* fueled in part by the rapidly expanding rhetoric of "nature" (*prakṛti*), "non artificial" (*akṛtrima*) and other rough synonyms." Davidson, "Reframing Sahaja," 66.

²⁵ Select Tibetan interpreters of the Madhyamaka, aware of its tantric connotations, consciously used *lhan cig skyes pa* to describe the relationship of the two truths in larger projects of bridging genres. Broido explores the use of this term by the sixteenth-century Bka' rgyud pa authors Pad ma dkar po and Mi bskyod rdo rje to "bridge" sūtra and tantra. Broido 1985: 10. Broido's conclusion gestures toward the possibilities for exploring similar attempts within other lineages. This article engages a compatible project within the fifteenth-century Sakyapa tradition, a project whose results may even have influenced Broido's authors. Broido claims that "Sahaja is a term of the mother-tantras, and indicates a stronger degree of connection than the terms 'mixing or inseparable' typically used in the Guhyasamāja literature." Broido 1985: 31. Kvaerne elucidates key dimensions of the term *sahaja*, which he translates as "simultaneously arisen," in the Indic tantric context, emphasizing its connection with the phases of ritual consecration. Kvaerne 1975-6: 89: "For the moment I shall limit myself to saying that I believe that 'simultaneously arisen' or the like is the most suitable translation, and (anticipating my conclusions) that the term *sahaja* is basically connected with the tantric ritual of consecration where it refers to the relation between the ultimate and preliminary Joys." Davidson inventories the various modern translations and interpretations of *sahaja*, arguing for an approach nuanced by attention to historical and ritual context. Davidson, "Reframing Sahaja," 48-52.

that thing. Ngor chen uses the metaphor of the sky as a container to transfer the emptiness so strongly articulated in the Madhyamaka perspective to the tantric descriptions of the mind in terms of wisdom and bliss. The sky is part of a broader linguistic inventory whose polysemic nature and appearance in potentially conflicting contexts contribute to the confusion of the Sakyapa and Consciousness Only views. The sky appears across multiple genres, including those regarded as essentializing in their treatment of the nature of mind and of enlightened potential. For example, Brunnhozl observes how: "The default example used throughout tathāgatagarbha texts for this nature of mind being without reference points, inexpressible, and indemonstrable is space."²⁶ Ngor chen taps into the power of the sky as a metaphor capable of moving across genres to cope with the impact of the movements of language itself. The roots of the English term for metaphor as a form of "carrying across" remind us that all language is transitive. Through the metaphor of the sky, Ngor chen navigates the resemblance between the language of clarity and naturalness found in tantric materials to that of Consciousness Only. In doing so he reveals the transitivity of language to be both a blessing and a curse.

Ngor chen argues that conflating the wisdom of bliss with the "mere clear awareness" of Consciousness Only is not the intention of the three tantras and the oral instructions of the Sakyapa Path and Fruit lineage. For example, he references the *Vairocana-Abhisambodhi Tantra* to express how despite explanations of the nature of the mind as "mere clear awareness," the nature of clear awareness is empty.²⁷ Ngor chen also uses the Indian mahāsiddha Virupa's commentary to explain the "self-aware great bliss" of the root tantra as "empty like the sky" and reinforces this equation of bliss and emptiness with a quote from the *Drop of Mahāmudrā*²⁸: "As for innately true [*rang dngos*] great bliss, it is well-known as the wisdom wind. As for that (bliss), it is explained as the sky, and the sky is taught to be empty. All emerges from emptiness. All dissolves into emptiness. Emptiness abides as utterly stainless, free from all aspects..."²⁹ This passage correlates *rang*

²⁶ Brunnhozl 2007: 109.

²⁷ Ngor chen, Autocommentary, 158c.6.

²⁸ The Sakyapas class these "Drop" [*tilaka*] texts as "continuum" tantras, a further diversification of the Hevajra cycle of three tantras (one root and two explanatory) promoted by the Sakyapa tradition as received from Virupa. Ngor chen himself, in the "Notes," appears to respond to objections from "a later Sakya Geshe" that this set of texts should not be included within the Hevajra cycle. This source also describes the line of transmission of these texts from the eleventh-century figure Prajñāgupta. See Sonam Tsemo, Sonam Gyatso, and Wayne Verrill 2012: Chapter 6.

²⁹ *phyag rgya chen po thig le las/ rang dngos bde ba chen po ni/ ye shes rlung du rab tu grags. de ni nam mkha' zhes su bshad. nam mkha' stong pa bstan pa'o. stong pa las ni thams cad*

ngos great bliss, the real deal great bliss, or great bliss “from its own side” with a vital element of tantric physiology, the wisdom wind.³⁰ The paradoxical relationship of emptiness and form is echoed in the description of this emptiness as both free from aspects and supreme among them, reminding the reader of the ways in which emptiness allows Mahāyāna authors to posit a matrix or source unimpeded by ontological confines. Ngor chen wields the metaphor of the sky in translating the qualities of emptiness from the context of sūtra to that of tantra.

A literary approach to polemics highlights Buddhist authors’ skepticism regarding the representational power of language alongside their struggles with and celebrations of its stickiness and its polysemy. Tzohar observes how metaphor assumes a performative function in Buddhist literature, particularly in the Yogācāran context; this function destabilizes essentialist views of meaning and supports the claim of an ineffable nature of reality.³¹ Tzohar is interested in the way Buddhist authors use language and in particular metaphor as both “medium” and “message” as well as the ways in which these metaphors bear multiple meanings simultaneously.³² This phenomenon of polysemy provides a valuable point of orientation for understanding the complexities of Ngor chen’s situation. In viewing his text through the lens of polysemy, I address the style of his intertextuality as it takes shape in his struggles with the conflation of Sakyapa and Consciousness Only descriptions of the mind’s clarity and self-awareness. Polysemy is, moreover, helpful in making sense of the manner in which Ngor chen transforms the “stickiness” of language into a tool for synthesizing sūtric and tantric descriptions of emptiness.

Ngor chen uses polysemy to address instances of resemblance to the language of Consciousness Only sources and to justify or transform that resemblance. For example, Ngor chen cites Sthiramati’s commentary on one of Vasubandhu’s key Yogācāra texts, the *Triṃśikā*, in which the sky, described as “one taste,” “stainless,” and “unchanging,” signifies the ultimate truth.³³ For Ngor chen, the sky also provides a means of connecting sūtric and tantric descriptions of

'byung. stong pa'i ngang du thams cad thim. [158d.5] stong pa yang dag dri med gnas. rnam pa thams cad dang bral ba/ mchog gi rnam pa skyed med dag/ rang dga' nyams su myong ba dngos. Ngor chen Autocommentary: 158d.4-158d.5.

³⁰ Komarovski 2016 translates *rang dngos* as “from its own side.” This translation lends itself nicely to the qualities of self-referentiality described above.

³¹ Tzohar 2018: 77.

³² Tzohar 2018: 85.

³³ *de'i 'grel pa blo brtan gyis mdzad par/ dam pa ni [157d.5] 'jig rten las 'das pa'i ye shes bla na med pa'i phyir ro. de'i don ni don dam pa'o. yang na nan mkha' ltar thams cad du ro gcig pa dang/dri ma med pa dang/mi 'gyur ba'i phyir ro/ yongs su grub pa de don dam pa zhes bya'o. Ngor chen Autocommentary, 157d.4-5.*

emptiness and extends this connection to link the Indian Buddhist *śīdha* tradition with the legacy of the Tibetan Sakya masters. Drawing upon a surplus of associations with the birthless, unchanging, spontaneous, and selfless punctuated by the reflexive terminology of *rang*, Ngor chen correlates the self-aware great bliss of the Hevajra tantras with emptiness itself. Ngor chen invokes Virupa to equate the “self-aware great bliss” of the tantra with the sky and the quality of selflessness: “This dharma which is selfless like the sky is great bliss.”³⁴ Ngor chen demonstrates that the teachings of the Sakyapa masters are commensurate with an accurate understanding of clear awareness and emptiness in terms of the two truths. He does so by deploying a host of citations from their works oriented around the metaphor of the sky.³⁵ Building upon these citations, he describes the true nature of the mind as follows:

Just as in the sky there is no beginning or end, the mind, moreover, is taught to be without beginning or end.

Just as the sky is not harmed by conditioned phenomena, so the mind is not hurt by adventitious conditions.

Just as the sky pervades all that is animate and inanimate (container and contents), the mind pervades all *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*.

Just as the sky is free from color and space and so forth, the mind is taught to be empty of all conceptualization of subject and object.

Based on that teaching, the intention of the Sakyapa venerables is that that mere clear awareness is the characteristic of the conventional mind but not the ultimate truth.³⁶

Ngor chen uses the language of being “empty of” and “free from” [*dang bral*] to express the Sakyapa view of the mind as being devoid of teleologies, of enduring traces of karmic consequences, and of duality. The positive valence of the mind is the quality of “pervasion” of

³⁴ *nam mkha' lta bur bdag med pa'i /chos 'di bde ba chen po'o*. Ngor chen Autocommentary: 158a.5. A further commentary on Virupa's text by Slob dpon dpal 'dzin extends the interpretation of that which is like the sky and selfless [*bdag med pa*] with transcendence and freedom [*'das shing bral ba*]. Ngor chen Autocommentary: 158d.1-2.

³⁵ See section on “Freedom” below for more thorough investigation of these passages.

³⁶ *nam mkha' la thog mtha' med pa bzhin sems kyang thog mtha' med par bstan. nam mkha' la 'dus byas kyi gnod pas mi tshungs pa bzhin sems kyang blo bur gyi rkyen gyis* [159b.6] *mi 'jig. nams mkha' snod bcud thams cad la khyab pa ltar/ sems kyis 'khor 'das thams cad la khyab. nams mkha' la kha dog dang sbyibs la sogs pa dang bral ba bzhin/ sems kyang gzung 'dzin la sogs pa'i rnam rtog ma lus pas* [159c.1] *stong pa bstan to. zhes gsungs pa'i phyir rje btsun Sakyapa nams kyi dgongs pa'ang gsal rig tsam de nyid kun rdzob sems kyi mtshan nyid yin gyi don dam du bzhad pa ni ma yin no*. Ngor chen Autocommentary: 157b.5-159c.2.

samsāra and nirvāṇa.

Ngor chen engages the sky in an intertextual way, exemplifying how naturalness as invoked through polysemy and thrives in perpetual tension with the absence of natures. The example of the sky illustrates how Buddhist metaphors operate in tension with a lack of recourse to or even perhaps “freedom from” exemplification. Tracing the manner in which metaphors like the sky function as both “medium” and “message” (to use Tzohar’s terms) allows us to more fully appreciate how Ngor chen correlates bliss and emptiness. Through perpetual tension between the “mere” vs. the “very,” essences and their refusal, the distinction of “good *rang rig*” from bad, Ngor chen solidifies a connection augmented by the play of freedom and union.

Resemblance or Identity?: Appearances as Mind

Through this multi-faceted approach, Ngor chen facilitates a more profound appreciation for the complexities of language itself, particularly in navigating the intersection of genres.

He reveals his self-consciousness of the sticky nature of language in writing: “Therefore, despite the mere resemblance of the manner of labeling appearances as mind to the Vijñapti (one) [*rnam rig pa dang ming tshul mtshungs pa tsam*], the (tantric) meaning is not equivalent.”³⁷ In this passage, Ngor chen resists the power of language to take on a life of its own, to allow for multiple meanings, and to create the possibility of conflating distinct approaches to understanding the true nature of mind and of reality. In some instances, Ngor chen suggests that sūtra and tantra use different language to describe the same thing; in others, he indicates that the thing they are attempting to articulate is beyond expression.

In elucidating how the tantric perspective on appearances, mind, and emptiness works, Ngor chen shows how all appearances are mind and that mind is empty. What is it about the Sakyapa understanding of the nature of the mind that looks like “Consciousness Only”?³⁸ In this section, I respond briefly and then reformulate the question to produce more robust answers. The Sakyapas do indeed place a comparable degree of emphasis upon the mind, appearances, and illusions to Consciousness Only, and they employ much of the same language and metaphors. The Sakyapas themselves might say, ‘Yes, we also think everything is mind, but we don’t say the mind is real like they

³⁷ *des na snang ba sems zhes rnam rig pa dang ming tshul mtshungs pa tsam yin gyi don mtshungs pa ni ma yin te*. Ngor chen Autocommentary, 159c.5.

³⁸ I am grateful to Karin Meyers for posing this question. (Q & A, AAR, Denver, November, 2018).

do.' In this vein, Ngor chen writes:

The *Wisdom Drop* says, "Nothing exists apart from the mind. Wherever and whatever [there is], this is everything. As for that, all is mind." So it says. Likewise, the point of the teaching of all appearances as mind in the (tantras, the) *Vajra-pañjara* and so on is not accepted as all appearances actually being mind like [for] the Cittamātra.³⁹ Since (according to tantra), the nature of the mind is emptiness, what emerges from that, all appearances are emptiness. The *Wisdom Drop* says, "Everything external is momentary, the magical play of the joyful mind. Likewise, it is not other than mind. The mind is (empty) like the sky."⁴⁰

Opponents or skeptics like those who inspired Ngor chen to compose this text might interpret this defense as mere semantics. Tropes like momentariness [*skad cig ma*] and illusion [*cho phrul*], familiar tropes of Consciousness Only genres, reinforce the overlap in descriptions of all appearances as mind.⁴¹

In both the Sakyapa tradition and in Consciousness Only traditions, metaphors are pedagogical tools for catalyzing an understanding of the true nature of things. Sakyapa pedagogy employs examples and metaphors resonant with Consciousness Only in guiding the practitioner toward the apprehension of the mind's empty nature. Ngor chen references these practices in his defense:

Should you say it is (i.e. that the tantric view is the same as Consciousness Only), in his "Union of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa," Rje btsun chen po (Grags pa rgyal mtshan) says: "Appearances are established as mind, but from the teaching of the eight, the four root (examples) of the dream and so on and the four branch (examples) of the hallucination [*mig yor*] and so on, there is no difference between these examples and these appearances. Although apprehended experientially, these appearances are not established in reality." It should be expressed directly in accord with the explanations of the unreality of appearances.⁴²

³⁹ This is the only place in the text in which Ngor chen uses the term Cittamātrin [*sems tsam pa*] rather than Vijñapti-vadin [*rnam rig smra ba*] or Vijñapti-mātra [*rnam rig tsam*].

⁴⁰ *de'i phyir ye shes thig le las/ sems las gzhan ni yod la min. [159c.2] gang zhig ci zhig 'di thams cad/ de ni thams cad sems yin no. zhes dang/de bzhin du/rdo rje gur la sogs par yang/snang pa rnams sems su bstan pa'i don yang sems tsam pa ltar snang ba thams cad sems su bden par khas mi len gyi [159c.3] sems kyi ngo bo ni stong pa nyid yin pa'i phyir/ de las byung zhing snang ba thams cad kyang stong ba nyid yin te/ye shes thig le las/phyi yi thams cad skad cig ma/dga' mo sems kyi cho phrul yin. de ltar sems la gzhan pa min. sems nyid [159c.4] nam mkha' lta bu'o. Ngor chen Autocommentary, 159c.1-159c.4.*

⁴¹ Tzohar 2018 uses magical illusions as a key example of the operation of polysemy in Yogācāran literature. See especially Chapter Two.

⁴² *gal te yin na rje btsun chen po'i 'khor 'das dbyer med las/ snang ba sems su sgrub pa [159c.6] la/ rmi lam sogs rtsa ba'i dpe bzhi dang/ mig yor sogs yan lag gi dpe bzhin stel*

Appearances are not real in any essential way and neither is the mind. Metaphors such as the hallucination provide accessible examples of how things appear and how we experience them even though they don't exist in any unshakeable sense. As the shared inventory of metaphors show, the Consciousness Only tradition offered compelling teaching tools for the Sakyapa, tools Ngor chen could not openly embrace. Ngor chen's resistance to the resemblance of Sakyapa descriptions of the mind to Consciousness Only counterparts is part of a larger response to a kind of linguistic taboo. Many Tibetan authors of his time are compelled to avoid using Consciousness Only modes of expression in order to avoid association with a philosophical view regarded as inferior to the ultimate Madhyamaka perspective by which all phenomena are regarded through the lens of emptiness. The taboo on Consciousness Only perspectives and modes of expression in Tibetan scholasticism and upon the language of essences more broadly within and across Buddhist discourses were compelling deterrents. Ngor chen's approach to metaphorical language such as "empty like the sky" reminds a reader of the gap between representation and reality and also cautions them to recall that resemblance does not always indicate identity.

The emptiness of the mind is vital in distinguishing the Sakyapa view of all appearances as mind from the Consciousness Only equivalent. What unique tools or frameworks do the Sakyapas possess for presenting the nature of the mind and reality as emptiness, great wisdom, and great bliss rather than as mere clarity or mere self-awareness? In the remaining sections of this article, I respond to this question by concisely introducing the nuances of three principles invoked by Ngor chen as integral dimensions of the Sakyapa orientation: freedom [*bral*], union [*gzung 'jug*], and ineffability [*brjod bral*].

Freedom

The term "free" [*bral*] appears over twenty times over the course of Ngor chen's text to express "freedom from" a range of limiting factors:

- dust [*rdul bral*] [159b.1, 159b.5]
- color and shape ... [*kha dog dang sbyibs la sogs pa dang bral ba*] [159b.6]
- svabhāva [*ngo bo nyid bral*] [159c.4],

brgyad gsungs nas dpe 'di rnams dang/ snang ba 'di la khyad par med del nyams su ni dpe 'i rnams kyang myong la/ bden par ni snang ba 'di dag kyang ma grub [159d.1] pa'o. zhes snang ba rnams bden med du bshad pa 'di rnams ji ltar drang smra bar bya'o. Ngor chen Autocommentary, 159c.5-159d.1.

- expression [*brjod bral*] [159d.6, 161a.5, 161a.6],
- proliferations [*spros pa dang bral*] [159b.3, 160a.4, 160b.3],
- the extremes of existence and nonexistence [*yod med kyi mtha' dang bral ba*] [160d.6]
 - from the two extremes [*mtha' gnyis dang bral ba*] [161b1]
 - from extremes [*mtha' dang bral ba*] [159b.1]
- separation (of the two truths) [*ya ma bral*] [161a.4],
- signs [*mtshan ma dang bral ba*] [158c.2, 158d.5 160b.6]
- form [*gzugs dang bral*] [161b.4]
- all activity [*rtsol ba thams cad dang bral ba*] [162b.6]
- birth and obstruction [*skye ba dang 'gag pa dang bral ba*] [164a.2]
- signs [*mtshan ma thams cad dang bral ba*] [161a.]
- transcendent and free [*'das shing bral ba*] [158d.2]
- illness [*nad dang bral ba*] [159a.2]

Ngor chen links the language of “freedom from” in Sakyapa discourse to a broader program of critiquing conceptuality as confining our appreciation of the true (empty) nature of things. For example, Ngor chen describes great empty bliss as follows:

As for this, from the *Samputa* it says, “Conceptualization is great ignorance and is the downfall into the ocean of saṃsāra.” In accord with this statement, anything which is endowed with conceptuality is suffering. Freedom from that is great bliss. It is put like this. For example, when there is freedom from illness, health without suffering, ordinary people call it happiness. For these (ordinary people), although there is no bliss apart from the absence of suffering, the mere absence of suffering is widely known as bliss. Likewise, although there is no virtue apart from the mere absence of evil deeds in the dharmadhātu, it is labeled as ‘virtue.’

Because it's taught like this, the two are not to be understood as equivalent.⁴³

The great empty bliss Ngor chen is attempting to describe is not to be confused with ordinary pleasure defined simply in dualistic terms as an absence of ordinary suffering. Ordinary happiness remains

⁴³ *'dir ni sam pu ti las/ rnam rtog ma rig chen po ste/ 'khor ba'i rgya mtshor ltung byed yin zhes pa ltar/ gang rtog pa dang bcas pa ni du kha yin la/ de dang bral ba ni bde ba chen po ste. [159a.2] ji skad du/ dper na nad dang bral ba na/ lus bde mya ngan med pa la/ sems bde zhes ni 'jig rten zer/ 'di dag du kha med pa las/ gzhan pa'i bde ba med mod kyil 'on kyang du kha mad tsam la/ bde ba yin zhes kun la grags. de bzhin [159a.3] chos kyi dbying la yang/ sdig pa med pa tsam zhig las/ lhag pa'i dge ba med mod kyil/ dge ba yin zhes btag par zad. ces gsungs pa ltar yin pas/ de gnyis mi mtshungs par shes par bya'o. Ngor chen Autocommentary, 159a.1-159a.3. See also [159b.2] mthar phyin ni srid pa zad pa'o. zhi ba ni gnad pa med pa'o. Ngor chen Autocommentary, 159a.1-159a.3.*

entrenched in the framework of labeling [*btag par*] that itself reinforces an inaccurate conceptual binary. Ngor chen distinguishes “mere absence of suffering” [*du kha med tsam*]— bound to a limiting view of the nature of reality— from great bliss. The recourse to relativity over duality resonates with Madhyamaka descriptions of the two truths and gestures toward a distinctly Sakyapa employment of their “inseparability” [*dbyer med*]. The language of freedom [*bral*], in this case from conceptualization, nuances the language of negation effected by absence [*med pa*]. Freedom transcends “mere” absence to express a more profound nature of things.

In confirming that the teachings of the Sakyapa masters concur with the view of the empty nature of mind and of wisdom, Ngor chen engages commentaries by the Sakya patriarchs on a verse from the Hevajra Tantra not cited in his text:⁴⁴ *ye shes 'di ni ches phra zhing/ rdo rje nam mkha'i dkyil lta bu/ rdul bral thar sbyin zhi ba nyid/ khyod rang yang ni de yi pha.*⁴⁵ This verse can be provisionally translated as follows: “This wisdom is subtle to comprehend, the vajra, like the center of the sky, free from dust, bestowing liberation, peaceful. You yourself are the father of that.”⁴⁶ In unpacking this verse, and in particular the metaphor of the sky, the commentators provide clues to a distinctly Sakyapa tantric approach characterized by two key forms of freedom: freedom from extremes [*mtha' bral*] and freedom from proliferations [*spros bral*].

The view of “freedom from extremes” [*mtha' bral*], especially its articulation in the works of Ngor chen’s student Go rams pa (Go rams pa Bsod nams Seng ge, 1429-89), has been lauded as one of the most significant Sakyapa contributions to the Madhyamaka view of the relationship to the two truths; its role in later fifteenth-century polemics between the Sakyapa and Gandenpa traditions has received considerable scholarly attention.⁴⁷ Go rams pa uses “freedom from extremes” together with “freedom from proliferations” to establish the Sakyapa

⁴⁴ I referenced this same section [159a.4-159b.4] briefly above in the previous section on polysemy.

⁴⁵ *Hevajra Tantra* II.xii.4. *Kye'i rdo rje'i rgyud*, Sde dge bka' 'gyur, Vol.80, 29a.7-29b.1. TBRC W4CZ5269.

⁴⁶ For more on this verse, see Chogye Trichen Rinpoche’s commentary in Thubstan-legs-bsad-rgya-mtsho, Thubten Choedak, Ngag-dbang-kun-dga'-theg-chen-dpal-'bar, Jay Goldberg, John Dewese, and Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan 2003:178.

⁴⁷ For examples, see Go-rams-pa Bsod-nams-señ-ge, José Ignacio Cabezón, Lobsang Dargyay, and Go-rams-pa Bsod-nams-señ-ge 2007 and Kassor 2011. Broido 1985: 33-43 treats “freedom from proliferations” [*spros bral*] as a “bridge” between Madhyamaka and tantra and between theory and practice within the writings of sixteenth-century bka' rgyud pa authors. For a thorough exploration of the term, see Hookham 1991: Chapter Five.

perspective as the “true middle way” and to distinguish it from both Jo nang pa eternalism and Gandenpa nihilism.⁴⁸ In eliminating the possibility of four extremes (existence, non-existence, both, and neither) through reasoning, *spros bral* leads to an experience of transcending both logic and the compulsion to grasp at concepts; supplemented by non-conceptual meditation, realizing freedom from proliferations leads to liberation.⁴⁹ For Go rams pa, such varieties of freedom provide an ideal method for realizing nonduality.⁵⁰ Cabezón highlights how Go rams pa uses freedom from proliferations “as much denominatively as descriptively” to “brand” a distinctly Sakyapa approach to Madhyamaka.⁵¹ Ngor chen’s text demonstrates an appeal to the language of freedom that sets the stage for Go rams pa’s later “branding” choices.

Ngor chen correlates the tantric and sūtric systems by invoking “freedom from extremes” and “freedom from proliferations” in the tantric context. In doing so, he refers to the profound language of the tantras themselves and to the tantric commentaries by Sakyapa masters. For example, Ngor chen cites Sakya patriarch Bsod nams rtse mo to identify this wisdom described in the tantra with the experience of the third tantric initiation [*gsum pa’i tshe myong ba gang yin pa’o*].⁵² He explains the center of the sky as the heart or essence [*snying po*] and free from extremes [*mtha’ dang bral ba’o*], in a notable play upon the tension between essences and their absence. Ngor chen also cites Grags pa rgyal mtshan’s response to an imagined opponent who would mistakenly identify “self-aware wisdom” [*rang rig yes shes*] as “mere self-awareness” [*rang rig tsam*]: “Free from proliferations [*spros pa dang bral bar*], it casts off the awareness of self and other, and it is not established as any such object of observation. As for the example

⁴⁸ Go-rams-pa Bsod-nams-señ-ge, José Ignacio Cabezón, Lobsang Dargyay, and Go-rams-pa Bsod-nams-señ-ge 2007: 48.

⁴⁹ See Kassor 2011 for a lucid presentation of *spros bral*. According to Kassor, Go rams pa’s articulation of freedom from proliferations presented a synthesis of theory and practice, reason and experience, that lent itself to ecumenical platforms though Go rams pa himself is “not necessarily ecumenically minded.” Kassor 2011:135.

⁵⁰ Go-rams-pa Bsod-nams-señ-ge, José Ignacio Cabezón, Lobsang Dargyay, and Go-rams-pa Bsod-nams-señ-ge 2007: 53-4.

⁵¹ Go-rams-pa Bsod-nams-señ-ge, José Ignacio Cabezón, Lobsang Dargyay, and Go-rams-pa Bsod-nams-señ-ge 2007: 48.

⁵² *de bzhin du slob dpon rin po che bsod nams rtse mos kyang/ ye shes ’di ni gsum pa’i tshe myong ba gang yin pa’o. ches phra ba [159b.1] ni rtogs par bka’ ba’o. rdo rje ni mi phyed pa’o. nam mkha’i dkyil ni mtha’ dang bral ba’o. yang ni dkyil ni snying po ste mtha’ dang bral ba ste/ nam mkha’ ’di dmigs pa med pa’o. rdul bral ni nyon mongs pa zad pa’o.* Ngor chen Autocommentary 159a.5-159b.2.

of that, it is said to be equal to the sky.”⁵³ The Sakyapa notion of “freedom from proliferations” [*spros bral* Skt. *niṣprapañcā*] therefore echoes familiar Consciousness Only concerns with the mind’s excessive tendencies to generate thoughts and images as well as to default to binaries.⁵⁴

Through his citations of the Sakya venerables, Ngor chen articulates a sky-like freedom achieved by meditative realization of freedom from proliferations. The meditation involves three stages:

- establishing appearances as mind (*snang ba sems su bsgrub pa*)
- establishing mind as illusion (*sems sgyu mar bsgrub pa*)
- establishing illusion as naturelessness (*sgyu ma rang bzhin med par bsgrub pa*)⁵⁵

This practice undeniably shares a vocabulary of appearances, illusions, natures and naturelessness with the Consciousness Only corpus. However, Sakyapa authors like Grags pa rgyal mtshan argue that the resemblance diverges after the first step of this contemplative

⁵³ *de spros pa dang bral bar bstan pa'i phyir/ rang gzhan yang dag rig pa spangs te/ de gnyis phan tshun ltos pa'i phyir dang/ dmigs par bya ba'i yul 'ga' [159b.4] yang ma grub pa'i phyir ro.de nyid dpe ni mkha' mnyam zhes bya ba smos te.* Ngor chen Autocommentary, 159b.3.

⁵⁴ In Go rams pa's understanding of freedom from proliferations: “Proliferations” refer not only to truly existent things (*bden pa'i dngos po*), but to all signs of negative and positive phenomena that mind engages in and diffuses toward (*blo 'jug cing 'phro ba dgag sgrub kyi chos kyi mtshan ma thams cad*). “Freedom” refers to the utter non-findability in terms of being free [even] from mere negative and positive phenomena (*dgag sgrub kyi chos tsam dang bral ba'i ci yang ma rnyed pa nyid*), transcendence beyond the objects of functioning of examples, sounds, and minds (*dpe dang sgra dang blo'i spyod yul las 'das pa*).” Komarovski 2016: 154, paraphrase of Go rams pa 1995g. 93-4. Go rams pa articulates freedom as “nonfindability” [*ma rnyed pa nyid*] and transcendence [*las 'das pa*] of frameworks of analysis, experience, and expression. As in Ngor chen's text, the freedom associated with knowing the true nature of reality is depicted as free from exemplification, from metaphors themselves. This claim derives its meaning from the centrality of metaphors to both the pedagogical system and to textuality. This particular application of freedom nuances absences with the quality of “non-findability in terms of being free [even] from mere negative and positive phenomena.” In this definition, *tsam* diminishes the binary between that which can be validated by reason and that which can be defeated by it.

⁵⁵ Thub-bstan-legs-bśad-rgya-mtsho, Thubten Choedak, Ngag-dbang-kun-dga'-theg-chen-dpal-'bar, Jay Goldberg, John Deweese, and Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan 2003 is a modern commentary upon the song of Grags pa rgyal mtshan describing this practice. See especially 151-183. Komarovski 2016: fn 45 references this practice in Go rams pa's and Shākya mchog ldan's writing. See also Komarovski 2011: 97.

practice.⁵⁶

Ineffability and Union

Whether it is possible to describe the true nature of things or even worthwhile to try is a question troubling the rhetorical use of the languages of natures and essences. Within Buddhist textuality, ineffability serves as both a positive descriptor of the nature of ultimate reality and an invective against conceptual clinging.⁵⁷ Ngor chen presents “freedom from expression” [*brjod bral*] as a key aspect of the mind’s true nature. Many of the forms of freedom he describes are forms of freedom from bases for description like color, shape, signs, and form. According to Ngor chen, “Thus, natural coemergence (*rang bzhin lhan skyes*) is taught as the freedom from expression [*brjod bral*] which is the nonduality of conventional and ultimate, but it is not taught as mere clear awareness.”⁵⁸ Ngor chen correlates this variety of freedom with nonduality, a proper understanding of the two truths, and natural coemergence; he also uses it as a tool in distinguishing the latter from “mere clear awareness.” He adds a disclaimer: “Thus, since it is not possible to assign another name to that which is free from all signs [*mtshan ma thams cad dang bral ba*] and free from observation [*dmigs su med pa*], it’s designated as “naturally coemergent” and “union” and so on. However, ultimately what is “union” [*zung ’jug*] is not taught as the totally pure view which is free from the two extremes.”⁵⁹ Representations does not equal reality but rather provide containers for regarding the “natural” state of things.

Discourses of “union” or “inseparability” are common for the Sakyapas, the most famous being the inseparability of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa.⁶⁰ The Sakyapas use inseparability as a tool for explaining their

⁵⁶ Thub-bstan-legs-bśad-rgya-mtsho, Thubten Choedak, Ngag-dbang-kun-dga’-theg-chen-dpal-bar, Jay Goldberg, John Dewese, and Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan 2003: 159.

⁵⁷ Tzohar 2018 explores important connections between the use of metaphor and ineffability. See especially Chapter Three where he examines the *Tattvārthapaṭalam* chapter of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* along with corresponding commentary from the *Viniścayasamgrahaṇī*. Komarovski 2008 has produced extensive work on the category of the ineffable, with particular attention to the Sakyapa approach.

⁵⁸ *des na kun rdzob don dam dag/ gnyis su med pa’i brjod bral la*. Ngor chen Autocommentary, 161a.5

⁵⁹ *des na mtshan ma thams cad dang bral ba dmigs su med pa de nyid la* [161b.1] *ming gzhan gdags mi nus pa’i phyir/ rang bzhin lhan skyes dang zung ’jug sogs kyis brtags kyil/ zung ’jug ces pa mtha’ gnyis dang bral ba’i lta ba yang dag pa’o. zung ’jug ces pa/ zhes kyang mi gsungs te*. Ngor chen Autocommentary, 161a.6-161b.2.

⁶⁰ Chogye Trichen Rinpoche describes a variety of forms of union and inseparability from the Sakyapa repertory: “of appearance and emptiness” “of sound and emptiness” “of bliss and emptiness” and “of awareness and emptiness.” Thub-bstan-

perspectival philosophical orientation and for avoiding the extremes of eternalism and nihilism. In the section devoted to explaining the “naturally co-emergent wisdom,” Ngor chen engages the “union of clarity and emptiness” [*gsal stong gzung 'jug*] to distinguish the nature [*ngo bo*] of this very special form of wisdom from mere clear awareness. Over the course of the passage, Ngor chen establishes a series of links between ineffability [*spros bral*], non-findability [*ma rnyed pa*], and union [*gzung 'jug*]. He carefully parses the nature [*rang bzhin*] of the mind (its emptiness) from its characteristic [*mtshan nyid*], clarity.

Thus, as for clarity, it is the conventional truth. As for emptiness, it is the ultimate truth. If you ask, how are these two united? The mind does not abandon clarity, (because) Clarity is the characteristic of the mind. But if you carefully examine that clarity, no matter what is sought, be it place, family, color, shape, and so forth, there is nothing that is found. The (quality of) non find-ability and non-establishment is called emptiness, the nature of the mind.⁶¹

Ngor chen identifies clarity as belonging to the world of concepts and things, of the conventions for operating within the ordinary or unenlightened perspective. Clarity characterizes the mind, but emptiness is the true nature of things. Ngor chen applies “non-findability” [*mi rnyed*] and “non-establishment” [*ma grub pa*] to explore the relationship of clarity and emptiness in terms of the two truths. While the properties on being “not” found and “not” established may initially appear to fit within a negative dialectic on the true nature of the mind and of reality, Ngor chen employs them here to indicate the content of an experience rather than an ontological reality. He connects this experience of nonduality and nonconceptuality with “union” [*zung 'jug*], writing:

Likewise, this inability to find anything whatsoever when seeking clarity is called emptiness. That seeker, emptiness, is called clarity. In short, in the time of clarity, there is emptiness. In the time of emptiness, (there) is clarity. *Gsal stong*, that which cannot be separated, for that there are various names taught: the unfabricated nature of mind, the wisdom of natural coemergence, or nondual, or inexpressible, or union, and so on. Likewise, it is nondual. Since when we hold fast to the

legs-bśad-rgya-mtsho, Thubten Choedak, Ngag-dbang-kun-dga'-theg-chen-dpal-'bar, Jay Goldberg, John Dewese, and Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan 2003: 177.

⁶¹ *des ni gsal ba ni kun rdzob kyi bden pa* [160a.6] / *stong pa ni don dam pa'i bden pa ste/ de gnyis ji ltar zung du 'jug ce na/ sems kyis gsal ba mi 'dor ni/ gsal ba sems kyi mtshan nyid la/ gsal ba de legs par brtags na/ gnas sam rigs sam kha dog gam/ dbyibs la* [160b.1] *sogs pa gang ltar btsal yang/ mi rnyed cing ma grub pa ni/ stong pa sems kyi rang bzhin zhes bya*. Ngor chen Autocommentary: 160a.5-160b.1.

concept of “union,” it becomes an extreme view, don't grasp it!⁶²

This kind of union is also related to Nāgārjuna's description of the relationship of conventional and ultimate: the two must be viewed separately before mixing them.⁶³ Drakpa Gyatso, a Sakyapa expert at the International Buddhist Academy described the relationship of clarity and emptiness found in the passage to me as follows: “There is no seeker separate from emptiness. That's the ultimate truth. When we look for the mind, it disappears. The seeker themselves is empty. The meaning here is that emptiness and clarity can't be separated.”⁶⁴ “Don't grasp it!” In presenting this particular form of “union,” Ngor chen warns against the temptation to reify it. The Mahāyāna emphasis on the interdependence and relativity of concepts reverberates here along with the understanding of emptiness as a state of not grasping at entities or concepts. The union of clarity and emptiness (*gsal stong gzung 'jug*) therefore builds upon the Consciousness Only emphasis upon nonduality while simultaneously engaging the Madhyamaka concern with nonconceptuality. Furthermore, it resonates with tantric descriptions of the union of wisdom and compassion and of “one taste.”⁶⁵ The language of “clarity” does resemble more positive descriptions of the nature of mind found throughout the literature of Consciousness Only, Buddha nature, and Other-emptiness. Ngor chen copes with this resemblance by emphasizing the consonance of “union” with a mainstream Madhyamaka perspective on emptiness in terms of the avoidance of extremes.

For the Sakyapas, the mind's clarity is its “capacity for transformation,” a quality that can be glimpsed in the gaps between the

⁶² *de ltar na/ gsal ba btsal bas ma rnyed pa la stong ba zhes bya. stong par tshol mkhan de nyid la gsal ba zhes bya ste. [160b.2] mdor na gsal ba'i dus nyid na stong ba/ stong pa'i dus nyid na gsal ba/ gsal stong gnyis so sor sus kyang dbyer mi phyed pa de la bcos min sems kyi ngo bo'am/ rang bzhin lhan cig skyes pa'i ye shes sam/ gnyis med dam/ brjod bral [160b.3] lam/ zung 'jug ces bya ba la sogs pa'i ming gi rnam grangs du mas bstan pa yin la/ de ltar gnyis med/ zung 'jug ces nges par bzung na yang lta ba mthar cad du 'byung ba'i phyir/ der yang mi 'dzin te. Ngor chen Autocommentary: 160b.1-160b.4.*

⁶³ Nāgārjuna says, “Because whenever one understands the conventional and ultimate as separate, they come to be intermingled, that is understood as union.” *klu sgrub [161b.3] kyis/ kun rdzob pa dang don dam dag/ so sor phyed ste shes gyur nas/ gang du yang dag 'dres gyur bas/ zung du 'jugs par de bshad do/ zhes so. Ngor chen Autocommentary, 161b.2-.3.*

⁶⁴ Drakpa Gyatso, International Buddhist Academy, Personal communication, June 2018.

⁶⁵ See Broido 1985: 26-31 for a discussion of the roots of “union” [Tib. *zung 'jug* Skt. *yuganaddha*] in the final krama of Nāgārjuna's *Pañcakrama*, its place in Bka' rgyud pa critiques of Tsong kha pa, and the resemblance of Bka' rgyud pa and Sakyapa approaches to the inseparability of the two truths and of appearance and emptiness.

disappearance of one thought and the arising of the next.⁶⁶ Clarity is also vital for appreciating how the deconstruction of the thought process results in understanding the nature of mind not to be a void but a “non-dual continuity.”⁶⁷ Clarity is at the crux of the polemical imperative. Ngor chen’s text responds to concerns with clarity. He wrote the commentary in response to a request from a student to clearly teach the meaning [*don gsal bar gyis*] of the pithy verses.⁶⁸ The language of clarity recurs throughout the text to reinforce textual validity, to confirm that something is clearly taught in the scriptures. Likewise, clarity plays a key role in establishing a theory of textual meanings as natural, flowing or radiating forth in an uninterrupted stream from enlightened masters of the past to commentators of the present. Clarity therefore establishes a sense of continuity of meaning, one that appears “natural.” This aspect of the use of clarity indicates that something is evident, and has the power, like the mind itself by some accounts, to “clear away misconceptions.” The subtle interplay of this sense of clarity as articulation and the more profound sense of clarity as inseparable from the empty nature of things produces the naturalness of meaning, as something presently obscured but essential and awaiting discovery.

*“Mirrors are Windows”:
On a Literary Approach to Tantric Texts*

This article has illuminated tensions around the rhetoric of naturalness in Tibetan scholasticism and has revealed the boundary between Buddhist philosophy and tantra in fifteenth-century Tibet to be porous. The confusion of the Sakyapa transmission of the Hevajra tantras with a Consciousness Only position and of “naturally coemergent wisdom” and “self-aware great bliss” with “mere clarity” threatened the integrity of both their philosophical and tantric traditions. Ngor chen’s tantric polemics were a defense of Sakyapa understandings of the nature of the mind and of emptiness itself. Attention to the language of “freedom,” “non-findability,” and “union” in Ngor chen’s text suggests a distinct awareness among Sakyapa authors of the importance of reflecting a coherent formulation of the Madhyamaka view, even in approaching tantric materials.

⁶⁶ Thub-bstan-legs-bśad-rgya-mtsho, Thubten Choedak, Ngag-dbang-kun-dga’-theg-chen-dpal-bar, Jay Goldberg, John Dewese, and Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan 2003: 176.

⁶⁷ Thub-bstan-legs-bśad-rgya-mtsho, Thubten Choedak, Ngag-dbang-kun-dga’-theg-chen-dpal-bar, Jay Goldberg, John Dewese, and Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan 2003: 179.

⁶⁸ Ngor chen Autocommentary: 164a.6.

Ngor chen provides a crucial link between later fifteenth-century Sakyapa authors navigating the philosophical morass of eternalism and nihilism and the positions they were critiquing, such as those of Tsong kha pa and Dol po pa. Scholarship to date has emphasized later fifteenth-century Sakyapa and Gandenpa polemical exchanges on their respective understandings of the Madhyamaka tradition. Two of Ngor chen's students, Go rams pa (Go rams pa Bsod nams Seng ge, 1429-89) and Shākya mchog ldan (1428-1507) have been especially influential both for Sakyapa self-understandings and academic interpretations of the tradition.⁶⁹ The suppression and subsequent revelation of their writings have also enhanced their allure for scholars.⁷⁰ Although the approach to tantra is more explicitly at issue in Ngor chen's text, he also plays a formative role in defending the Sakyapa approach to Madhyamaka, setting the stage for these later fifteenth century authors.

A literary approach to polemics highlights the skepticism of Buddhist authors regarding the representational power of language alongside their struggles with and celebrations of its stickiness and its polysemy. In analyzing the complexities of resemblance in Indian literature, the repetition, subversion and transformation of literary forms such as metaphors across genres, A.K. Ramanujan observes:

“Mimesis is never only mimesis, for it evokes the earlier image in order to play with it and make it mean other things. When the ‘same’ Indian poem appears in different ages and bodies of poetry, we cannot dismiss them as interlopers and anachronisms, for they become signifiers in a new system: mirrors again that become windows.”⁷¹

Ngor chen guides a reader in thinking more deeply about what it means to be “empty like the sky” in a complementary manner, revealing “mirrors again that become windows.” He illuminates the role of this metaphor of the sky in Consciousness Only texts of describing that which is “one taste,” “stainless,” and “unchanging” as well as to describe buddha nature. He simultaneously highlights its function within a broader Mahāyāna context to describe the selfless and empty nature of reality. He also uses the sky to bridge the Madhyamaka and tantric perspectives and as a container for regarding the nature of

⁶⁹ On Shākya mchog ldan, see Komarovski 2008, 2014, and 2016.

⁷⁰ Go rams pa's texts were “destroyed or otherwise removed” from monasteries by the Dga' ldan pa in the seventeenth century at on the orders of the Fifth Dalai Lama. They were republished and disseminated during the twentieth century, gaining attention within the “nonsectarian” (*ris med*) movement. Kassor 2011: 121-122.

⁷¹ A.K. Ramanujan. “Where Mirrors are Windows: Toward and Anthology of Reflection,” 207.

mind, of great bliss and of great wisdom as pervasive and free.

My hope is that this study contributes to a more robust appreciation of fifteenth-century Sakyapa polemics and of the use of language to synthesize sūtra with tantra as well as theory with practice. In examining the language of clarity and naturalness in Ngor chen's text in light of its intertextuality and polysemy, I encourage readers to resist the temptation to reduce resemblance to identity in Buddhist texts before taking a closer look.

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On the Version of the *Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* Used in the 18th Century Kalmyk Scrolls *

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The Tibetan collection kept at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, RAS, includes a number of items acquired by the Library of the Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences in the 18th century. Kalmyk manuscripts comprise an important part of them, being probably the world's biggest collection of the Kalmyk texts in Tibetan produced at the time. Some of these texts seem to have been found and brought to Saint Petersburg after a significant part of the Kalmyks migrated from the steppe region of southwestern Russia to their historical homeland Dzungaria, in 1771.¹ Without doubt, these are precious documents for the study of the Kalmyk book culture, bilingual from the very beginning as Tibetan was used along with Oirat (Kalmyk).² They can be divided into two main parts: 1) bundles of loose folios³ and 2) scrolls made to be inserted into the Buddhist prayer wheels.

In 2018–2019, two big scrolls of this kind, Tib. 960 and Tib. 963,⁴ were conserved and scrutinized (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1: Tib. 960 and Tib. 963 after the conservation

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¹ This migration is analyzed in-depth in Kolesnik 2003.

² Mongolian was also used but less frequently.

³ Some samples of this type are analyzed in Zorin, Kryakina 2019.

⁴ They were assigned such access numbers in 2014; previously, they had been kept among the unprocessed materials.

It is highly likely that they were listed by Johannes Busse (1763–1835), the librarian of the Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences, in his addition to the first catalogue of the Academy's collection of Tibetan texts compiled by Johannes Jährig at the end of the 1780s (published in 1796). Busse's list (dated 1798) has the following entry:

25. Ein großes Gebinde von Manuscriptrollen tibätischer Schrift im Gebiete des Donischen Korps in der Erde in ausdrücklich dazu gemachten Hölen von vier Luftlöchern gefunden. Sie lagen in einer Tonne, die in der Erde zwischen 4 Säulen befestigt war und auf Eisengegitter stand, eingeschikt vom Hofrath Steriz und aus der Conferenz erhalten am 20 April 1797.

(25. A large bundle of mss. scrolls in Tibetan script, found in the soil in especially made caves with 4 airshafts, in the Don Voisko [Lands]. They were contained in a drum fastened to 4 columns in the ground and based on an iron grid; submitted by Court Councilor Shterich and received from the Conference⁵ on April 20, 1797.)⁶

The person who passed the bundle to the Academy can be identified. It must be Pyotr Ivanovich Shterich (Šterić), a son of a Serbian noble man who had moved to Russia from Hungary in 1752. He retired from military service in 1794 and lived, up to his move to Saint Petersburg in 1802, in the east of the so-called Novorossiia, a new imperial province of Russia formed in the second half of the 18th century as a result of the Russian-Turkish wars. During that period Pyotr Shterich managed exploration and mining of coal and iron ore in the territory of the present Luhansk Oblast (Ukraine) which then belonged partly to Novorossiia, partly to the Don Voisko Lands. It seems quite plausible that his people could find the drum (praying wheel) hidden in the soil by the Kalmyks who had decided to migrate from Russia and could not take all their sacral objects with them.⁷

It is not clear how many manuscripts the bundle contained. The scrolls Tib. 960 and Tib. 963 fit Busse's description best of all, being the largest items among the Kalmyk manuscripts obviously intended to be inserted into praying wheels or other sacral objects. Moreover, the six parts into which they were dismantled were numbered in the

⁵ The Conference of the Academy of Sciences was the main board of collective discussions of researches and other issues since the foundation of the Academy in Saint Petersburg in 1725.

⁶ Busse's list is edited and annotated in Walravens, Zorin 2016 (this entry is discussed on p. 668–669).

⁷ The Kalmyks took part in the Russian-Turkish wars and a part of them was integrated into the Don Cossack Host, see Maksimov 2016. Another possibility is that the Kalmyks who had lived for a while in the territory of the present Luhansk Oblast migrated for some reasons to another part of south-western Russia, without any connection with the great migration to Dzungaria.

style typical of the Russian documents from the late 18th to early 19th century. Of course, it cannot be ruled out that the “large bundle” could also include some other scrolls that are now held in the IOM RAS although the characteristic Russian numbering on these two items seems to indicate their separate origin.

In 2018 when the project aimed at the study and conservation of these and three other scrolls started,⁸ Tib. 960 consisted of four parts made of 86 sheets in total,⁹ while Tib. 963 consisted of two large parts: the first was made of 71 sheets, the second of 138 sheets, with two more, the only block printed segment, being loosely attached to the latter. At the end of 2019, after a conservation treatment was applied to both scrolls, it turned out that a part of Tib. 960 had been wrongly glued to the larger part of Tib. 963. When all the parts were arranged in a right way both scrolls proved to be complete (apart from minor fragments missing), each consisting of 147 sheets (not to count the above-mentioned block printed appendix attached to Tib. 963 only). A suspicion that it could not be a coincidence was immediately justified. When the uneven lower edges of the sheets of Tib. 960 were placed against the upper edges of the corresponding sheets of Tib. 963 they fitted each other perfectly well (Fig. 2). It means that one large scroll was originally produced but, for some reasons, it was cut into two parts. They were put into the drum as separate scrolls and were lying this way together for some time since their lower parts have traces of serious damage caused by water.

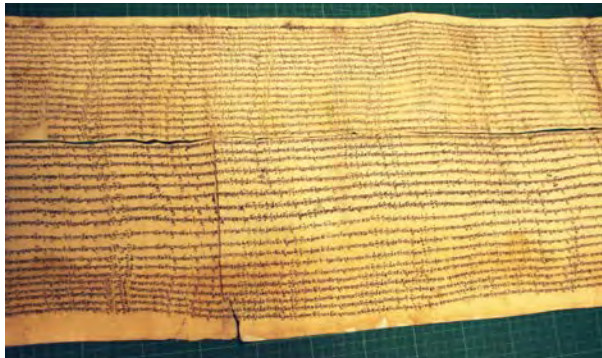


Fig. 2: a part of the initial larger scroll virtually reconstructed

⁸ Headed by Liubov Kryakina, the leading conservator of the IOM RAS; the author of this paper was responsible for the textological study and Svetlana Sabrukova for the digitization. The information about the project is available online: http://www.orientalstudies.ru/rus/collections/tibetica/projects_kalmyk_scrolls.htm. This website is in Russian but it provides links to the complete digital copies of the scrolls.

⁹ The sheets were joined with organic glue.

Each original sheet of paper (now cut into two parts) had a watermark of the Yaroslavl manufactory of Alexey Zatrapeznov dated from the middle of the 18th century (fig. 3).¹⁰ It means the scroll could be indeed produced before the Kalmyk migration from Russia in 1771.

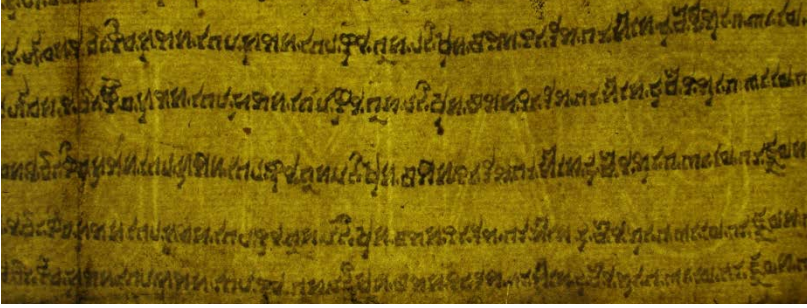


Fig. 3: the watermark with the Cyrillic letters ЯМАЗ
(the Yaroslavl Manufactory of Alexey Zatrapeznov)

Both Tib. 960 and Tib. 963 have traces of “restoration” made in the 18th or early 19th century. Numerous damaged fragments were replaced with new pieces of paper with the corresponding parts of Tibetan text written by another scribe. It would be natural to suggest that such work had to be done by the original owners, i.e. Kalmyks. However, it is more plausible that the “restoration” was made in Saint Petersburg since the pieces of paper used for this matter are not damaged by water and the paper seems to be more characteristic for the late 18th to early 19th century although the fragments are too small to contain any recognizable watermarks. It was definitely possible to find a person in Saint Petersburg who could copy the Tibetan text at the time. The handwriting is rather clumsy sometimes (Fig. 4). Moreover, the fact of the “restoration” carried out by the Kalmyks is more difficult to be explained because it means that they had to take the scrolls out of the drum for some reason and then place them back again.

¹⁰ See Klepikov 1959: 70.

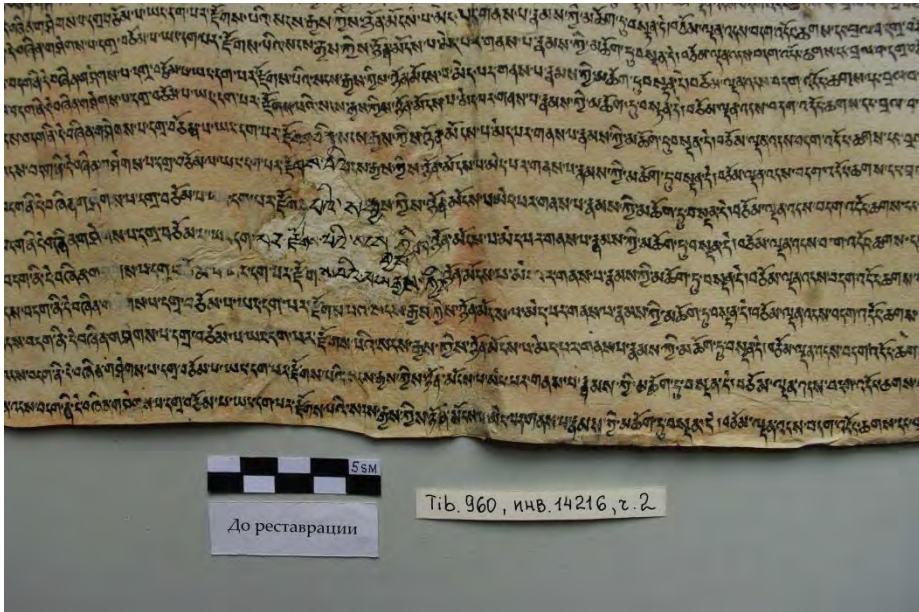


Fig. 4: one of the applications with the rewritten Tibetan text

The original manuscript contained thirty-five copies of *Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, each of them occupying one single line of the entire scroll. The upper part of it, Tib. 960, consists of seventeen lines and, therefore, seventeen copies of the Sūtra, while the lower one, Tib. 963, of eighteen lines and eighteen copies. The scrolls in Tibetan with the text arranged like that seem to be rather rare. Apart from highly fragile remnants of three or four similar Kalmyk scrolls kept at the IOM, RAS and the Russian National Library (Saint Petersburg) some Buryat scrolls from the 19th century can be mentioned. But they have a certain difference since they contain several texts, each occupying a single line of the scroll, or one long text that consists of several sections (*bam po*), each occupying a single line.¹¹

It does not mean, though, that a more traditional way of arranging the text when the entire sheets are filled with it sequentially was not used. The IOM RAS holds a few 18th century Kalmyk scrolls of this kind. Several of them are of small size, being made of relatively narrow sheets of paper. But there is another large-formatted scroll,

¹¹ Two examples of such Buryat scrolls produced in the middle of the 19th century were processed within the same project headed by L. Kryakina in 2020. One of them contains *Suvarṇaprabhāsa-sūtra*, each of its ten sections (*bam po*) occupying an entire line of the scroll, while each of the other ten lines presents a full copy of *Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*. The other scroll has twenty-four lines, each of them containing a complete *bam po* of *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*.

Tib. 960-2, that was conserved and scrutinized in 2020 (Fig. 5).¹² It is composed of five parts: the first four are separate copies of the same Sūtra and the last one contains two copies but the last copy misses the ending so we cannot be sure if it did not have more of them.¹³ Russian paper of several producers was used and all the watermarks found are dated from the middle of the 18th century. Therefore, the scroll was probably produced before 1771, the year of the Kalmyk migration.



Fig. 5: Tib. 960-2 before the conservation

Having thus introduced the unique 18th century Kalmyk scrolls that were revived for the academic and cultural use by the conservation laboratory at the IOM RAS, we can turn to analysis of the text of *Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* they contain. When preparing its

¹² These scrolls were mentioned above when the entry No. 25 of Busse's list was discussed. Theoretically, they could have been passed to the Academy by P. Shterich, too. However, I think it is more probable that they were collected independently of that acquisition.

¹³ All the sheets of the five parts were glued one by one, thus composing the scroll. The first part consists of 13 sheets (sheets 1–11 have 17 to 19 lines of the text per each; 12–13: 21 lines), the second of 11 sheets (1–7: 17 to 18 lines; 8–11: 21 lines), the third of 10 sheets (1–3: 17 to 19 lines; 4–10: 21 to 23 lines), the fourth of 9 sheets (1–7: 21 to 23 lines; 8–9: 25 and 24 lines), and of the last one only 21 sheets are found (1–15, 17: 17 to 19 lines; 16: 23 lines; 18–21: 22 lines).

transliteration, I realized it was different at certain points from the text found in the major block printed editions of the *Bka' gyur*. From my previous studies of some other Kalmyk manuscripts I knew that the Kalmyk scribes had made copies of *Vajracchedikā* in *pothi* format using for that purpose one of the versions of the *Mdo mang* collection produced in Tibet. Such copies are marked with the Tibetan letter *dza* in the margins while *Vajracchedikā* has this number in the structure of all known versions of this collection of texts that are believed to have a magical protective power. Therefore, I checked the text of *Vajracchedikā* included in the wide-spread *Mdo mang* collection produced in Kumbum monastery in the 18th century¹⁴ and made sure that the text of the scrolls basically followed its version. The text found in the even more famous *Gzungz bsdus* collection first compiled by Tāranātha Kun dga' snying po (1575–1634) is identical with that of the *Mdo mang*. However, it turned out that the text of the scrolls has some essential discrepancies with this version, too. Some of the points of difference between the versions found in the canon¹⁵ (including certain minor differences between the canonical editions), the *Mdo mang*/*Gzungz bsdus* and the Kalmyk scrolls are presented in the table below. The full list would take several pages, therefore I selected only the most significant points and added to them several secondary but representative points of difference.

	Bka' gyur (Dpe bsdur ma)	Mdo mang (Kumbum)	Tib. 963
1	chos gos bgos te page 327: line 9 ¹⁶	chos gos sku la gsol te folio 2a1	sheet 2
2	missing p. 328: l. 2 ¹⁷	de zas phyi ma'i bsod snyoms spangs pas f. 2a3	s. 3
3	zhal bsil te p. 328: l. 2	f. 2a4	zhabs bsil te s. 3

¹⁴ Available on the website of the Buddhist Digital Research Center (BDRC): <https://www.tbrc.org/#!/rid=W22348>.

¹⁵ The modern synoptic edition prepared in Beijing (Dpe bsdur ma 2006–2009) was used, where the Derge edition is taken as the basic texts and discrepancies with other editions are provided in a special list (*bsdur mchan*), the relevant ones are used by me in the footnotes. At certain points, when I was not sure in the correctness of the synoptic text, I consulted the original editions.

¹⁶ Note 8: Zhol: chos gos sku la gsol te.

¹⁷ Note 3: Zhol: +nas zas phyi ma'i bsod snyoms spangs pas.

4	blta'am p. 330: l. 19, etc.	blta bar bya snyam mam f. 4a5, etc.	s. 16, etc.
5	mi lta'o p. 330: l. 20 ¹⁸	blta bar mi bgyi lags so f. 4a6, etc.	s. 16, etc.
6	brgya stong du ma p. 331: l. 20 ¹⁹	'bum phrag du ma f. 5a1-2	s. 21
7	'dzin par 'gyur ro p. 335: l. 3, etc. ²⁰	'dzin par 'gyur lags so f. 7a3-4, etc.	s. 35, etc.
8	missing p. 335: l. 10	bcom ldan 'das gal te lan cig phyir 'ong ba 'di snyam du bdag gis lan cig phyir 'ong ba'i 'bras bu thob bo snyam du sems par gyur na de nyid de'i bdag tu 'dzin par 'gyur lags so sems can du 'dzin pa dang srog tu 'dzin pa dang gang zag du 'dzin par 'gyur lags so f. 7a6-7b1	s. 36-37
9	missing p. 343: l. 20	'di'i rnam par smin pa yang bsam gyis mi khyab pa nyid du rig par bya'o f. 13a2	s. 78
10	dper na mi zhig lus p. 348: l. 4	dper na skyes bu zhig mi'i lus f. 16a1	s. 98
11	sems kyi rgyud sems kyi rgyud ces bya ba ni de rgyud med p. 350: l. 4-5 ²¹	sems kyi rgyun sems kyi rgyun zhes bya ba ni de rgyun med f. 17a5-17a6	s. 108
12	de la mi mnyam pa gang yang med pas des na bla na med pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i byang chub ces bya'o bla na med pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i byang chub ni bdag med	de la mi mnyam pa dang mnyam pa gang yang med pas des na bla na med pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i byang chub ces bya'o bla na med pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i byang	mi mnyam pa gang yang med pas sems can med pa ²² gang zag med par mnyam pa ste dge ba'i chos de dag thams cad mngon par rdzogs par sangs rgyas so

¹⁸ Note 15: G.yung, Pe, Snar, Zhol: mi blta'o.

¹⁹ Note 11: Snar, Zhol: brgya stong mang po.

²⁰ Note 2: Snar, Zhol: 'dzin par 'gyur lags so.

²¹ Notes 3-5: Snar, Zhol: [—] sems kyi rgyun ces / zhes bya ba ni de rgyun med.

²² Tib. 960-2 (as well as Tib. 980, No. 3 which is touched upon at the end of the paper) adds here srog med pa.

	pa dang sems can med pa dang srog med pa dang gang zag med par mnyam ste dge ba'i chos thams cad kyis mngon par rdzogs par 'tshang rgya'o p. 352: l. 10–15 ²³	chub de ni bdag med pa dang sems can med pa dang srog med pa dang gang zag med par mnyam pa ste dge ba'i chos thams cad kyis mngon par rdzogs par sangs rgyas so f. 18b6–19a2	s. 119
13	phung po 'di la bsod nams kyi phung po snga ma des brgya'i char yang [Mdo mang: +nye bar] mi phod pa nas rgyu'i bar du yang mi bzod p. 353: l. 1–2 ²⁵	f. 19a4–19a5	phung po snga ma des brgya'i char yang nye bar mi 'gro ba nas rgyu'i bar du yang med(sic!) ²⁴ bzod s. 121
14	srog tu 'dzin pa dang gang zag tu 'dzin par 'gyur ro p. 353: l. 9	f. 19b1	gang zag tu 'dzin pa dang srog tu 'dzin par 'gyur ro s. 123
15	byang chub sems dpas p. 355: l. 1 ²⁶	f. 20b4	byang chub sems dpa' rnam kyis s. 131
16	gal te tshogs p. 355: l. 17	gal te rdul phra rab kyi tshogs f. 21a3	gal te rdul gyi tshogs s. 134
17	chos su 'du shes p. 357: l. 2	chos su 'du shes f. 22a1	chos su 'du shes s. 141
18	blangs nas 'dzin tam klog gam p. 357: l. 6–7	bris nas 'dzin tam gam f. 22a3	'chang ngam klog gam s. 142

The table shows that there are discrepancies of several types characterized with:

²³ Notes 4–5: Snar, Zhol: <...> byang chub de ni bdag med <...> mnyam pa ste <...>.

²⁴ Tib. 960-2 has *mi*.

²⁵ Note 1: Snar, Zhol: <...> yang nye bar mi bzod.

²⁶ Note 2: G.yung, Pe: byang chub sems dpa'.

- 1) use of synonyms (1, 6, 10, 11);
- 2) use of words with different meanings (3);
- 3) different arrangement of words in sentences (14);
- 4) small lexical additions/omissions (4, 5, 7, 15, 16, 17, 18);
- 5) additions/omissions of longer phrases and sentences (2, 8, 9);
- 6) combination of several types (12, 13).

The issue of the interrelation between the three versions has proved very complicated. The use of other available sources for their comparison helped to solve it only to a certain extent as will be shown below.

The canonical version is used consistently in the fragments of the Sūtra quoted in one of the two commentaries on *Vajracchedikā* found in the *Bstan 'gyur*, namely *Saptadārthaṭīkā* (*Don bdun gyi rgya cher 'grel pa*) ascribed to Vasubandhu. I could not find any cases when the quotations did not follow the canonical version.

The other *Ṭīkā* (*Rgya cher 'grel pa*), composed by Kamalaśīla,²⁷ shows a different approach. Its quotations of the Sūtra are of mixed character: while several major points in the last third (approximately) of the text correspond with the canonical version, there are many cases in the preceding part when another version is represented. It is not easy to identify clearly this version. First of all, it provides a third verb (neither *bgos* nor *gsol*) for the point 1 of the table: *chos gos mnabs* (f. 206b6). It does not provide a direct quotation for the point 3 of the table but its discussion of the relevant fragment shows that the author meant the feet (*zhabs*), not the face (*zhal*), that being characteristic for the Kalmyk scrolls in comparison with the *Mdo mang* version. The other points of the difference between the Kalmyk and *Mdo mang* versions (points 12–15 of the table) are the cases which either are not quoted in the *Ṭīkā* or follow the canonical version.

According to the colophon of Kamalaśīla's *Ṭīkā*, it was translated by Mañjuśrī, Jinamitra and Ye shes sde. The colophon of *Vajracchedikā* does not contain any information about its translators. However, the *dkar chag* of the Derge *Bka' 'gyur* attributes it to Śilendrabodhi and Ye shes sde, the same 8th century Tibetan lotsāwa who was mentioned above as one of the translators of the *Ṭīkā*, i.e. he is called the translator of the two texts which have a number of mutual discrepancies! The Derge *dkar chag* seems to be the earliest text that

²⁷ This *Ṭīkā* follows ideologically Vasubandhu's commentary, see the analysis of both of them along with a condensed versified commentary attributed to Aśaṅga in Tucci 1956: 39–171.

provides data on the translators of *Vajracchedikā*,²⁸ without any reference to its source. It also adds that a revised version (*skad gsar bcad kyi bcos pa*) was used. Bu ston rin chen grub (1290–1364), in the third part of his *Chos 'byung*, does not mention the names of the translators of *Vajracchedikā* but also informs us about a revised version (the same expression *skad gsar bcad kyi bcos pa* is used).²⁹ Even though the Derge editors could mean a newly revised version it had to be based on the text from the canonical collection codified by Bu ston. The text of the 18th century Narthang edition of the *Bka' 'gyur* could keep some traces of the earlier revision of the text, its minor discrepancies from the Derge version being generally closer to the Mdo mang version (see some examples in the footnotes to the table presented above).³⁰

If the initial *unrevised* version of the Sūtra is extant it must be found among the Dunhuang manuscripts in Tibetan dated from the 9th to 10th century. The A. Stein collection preserved at the British Library has a complete manuscript of *Vajracchedikā* (IOL Tib J 170) and fragments of four different manuscripts (IOL Tib J 100, 173, 174, 617)³¹ that are, nevertheless, seem to represent one version which is different from that of IOL Tib J 170. The latter is basically identical with the version reflected in Kamalaśīla's *Ṭīkā*³² and, therefore, it can certainly be the translation made by Ye shes sde (and Śīlendrabodhi). The table below shows the same eighteen points of the text as they are treated in IOL Tib J 170.

No.	IOL Tib J 170	F.	Version
1	chos gos gsol te	[58]a4	→ KS/Zhol (chos gos sku la gsol te)
2	missing	[58]b1	Derge/Narthang
3	zhabs bsll te	[58]b1	KS
4	blta bar bya snyam 'am	61a2–3	DM/KS
5	blta bar myi bgyi lags so	61a3	DM/KS
6	'bum phrag du ma	62a4	DM/KS

²⁸ Available on the website of the BDRC: <https://www.tbrc.org/#!/rid=W30532>, Vol. 103, f. 18b3–18b4. The *dkar chags* of other block printed editions do not provide such an information.

²⁹ Available on the website of the BDRC: <https://www.tbrc.org/#!/rid=W1NLM532>, f. 162b6.

³⁰ The latest block-printed edition made in Lhasa/Zhol most often follows the Narthang *Bka' 'gyur* but, eloquently enough, suggests *chos gos sku la gsol te* for the point 1.

³¹ They are catalogued in de la Vallée Poussin 1962.

³² It is different in regard of point 1 for which *Ṭīkā* uses the verb *mnabs*.

7	'dzin par 'gyur lags so	66a1, etc.	Narhang/DM/KS
8	missing	66a4	Derge/Narhang
9	missing	75a2	Derge/Narhang
10	dper na myi zhid lus	79b2	Derge/Narhang
11	sems kyI rgyun sems kyI rgyun ces bya ba ni de rgyun myed	81b3-4	DM/KS (→ Narhang)
12	de la myi mnyam ba gang yang myed pas des na bla na myed pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'I byang cub ces bya'o bla na myed pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'I byang cub de ni bdag myed pa dang [<i>sems can myed pa dang</i>] srog myed pa dang gang zag myed par mnyam ba ste dge ba'I chos thams cad kyis mngon bar rdzogs par 'tshang rgya'o	84a3- 84b1	→ Derge/Narhang (the missing part is put in the square brackets; it could be omitted by the scribe mistakenly)
13	phung po 'di la bsod nams kyI phung po snga ma des brgya'I char yang myi phod pa nas rgyu'I bar du yang myI bzod	84b4	Derge/Narhang/DM
14	srog tu 'dzin pa dang gang zag tu 'dzin par 'gyur ro	85a3	Derge/Narhang/DM
15	byang chub sems dpa's	87a2	Derge/Narhang/DM
16	gal te tshogs	88a1	Derge/Narhang
17	chos su 'du shes chos su 'du shes	89a4	Derge/Narhang/DM
18	blangs nas 'dzind tam klog gam	89b2	Derge/Narhang

As for the four Dunhuang fragments they do not have parts that overlap each other and so we cannot be sure if they really represent one and the same version of the Sūtra. However, one thing seems convincing. Each of the four items has inversions: IOL Tib J 174: *de'I tshe gal te* vs *gal te de'i tshe*, *'di la rab 'byor* vs *rab 'byor 'di la*; IOL Tib J 617: *de dag ni* vs *ni de dag*,³³ *ri rab rI 'i rgyal po* vs *ri'i rgyal po ri rab*, *chos nyId du ni sangs rgyas blta'* vs *sangs rgyas rnames ni chos nyid blta*; IOL

³³ KS has such an inversion, too.

Tib J 173: *gal te | bcom ldan vs bcom ldan gal te* (twice); IOL Tib J 100: *de 'di lta ste dper na rab 'byor vs rab 'byor 'di lta ste dper na*. In spite of these inversions and some other peculiarities, I believe it was a (more archaic?) variation of the same translation as the one found in IOL Tib J 170 rather than a completely different translation. The appendix to this paper contains an (artificially) reconstructed part of this translation juxtaposed to the later three versions. Its analysis shows that the (archaic?) version probably had no influence on the further transmission of the Tibetan *Vajracchedikā*.³⁴ It was the other version found in Dunhuang (represented in IOL Tib J 170 and Kamalaśīla's *Ṭīkā*) that served as a basic text for its further development.

It is impossible to say when exactly the three later versions of Tibetan *Vajracchedikā* appeared. In the Khara-Khoto collection of Tibetan texts kept at the IOM RAS there is an incomplete manuscript of *Vajracchedikā*³⁵ that must be dated from the 12th to 14th century. The extant folios³⁶ show that the manuscript contains a mixed version that combine features of the later canonical and *Mdo mang* / Kalmyk scrolls versions as well as some other features not attested in them. It is presently impossible to say if the Khara-Khoto manuscript reflects a transitory stage between IOL Tib J 170 and the *Mdo mang* / Kalmyk versions, mainly because it lacks too many folios with significant fragments of the text. Among the uncommon features of the manuscript the use of the verb *mnabs* (just as in Kamalaśīla's *Ṭīkā*) for point 1 of the table cannot be overlooked.³⁷

From the information recorded in Bu ston's *Chos 'byung* we can assume that the revised version of the translation of *Vajracchedikā* existed in the 14th century already. Perhaps, it was the version that is known to us now, probably in a modified way, as the text included in

³⁴ However, I need to point out that there are several cases when minor specific details found in this version are also detected in the *Mdo mang* version and/or Kalmyk scrolls, the most important example being the order of words in the phrase *chos rnamshes bya ba de dag ni* (see the Appendix, IOL Tib J 617: n1a3 and the corresponding fragment of Tib. 963) vs *chos rnamshes bya ba ni de dag* found in other versions.

³⁵ The fragment was divided between two items, XT-168 and XT-178, the latter having more folios. Two other items, XT-36 that consists of two folios and XT-191 that is just one half of a folio, are very small fragments of different copies of the *Sūtra*. The diplomatic edition of all these texts is included in the Catalogue of the Tibetan texts from Khara-Khoto kept at the IOM RAS that has been compiled by Alla Sizova, Anna Turanskaya and myself (the project is supported by the Russian Foundation for Basic Research, No.18-012-00386).

³⁶ The following folios are present: 2, 3, 7, 8, 13, 18–25, 27, 29, 32–39 and the last folio that has no number. Between f. 39 and the last one about two-fifths of the text had to exist.

³⁷ The preceding parts of the sentence are rearranged: *chos gos dang sham thabs mnabs vs sham thabs dang chos gos bgos/sku la gsol*.

the Narthang edition of the *Bka' 'gyur*. The editors of the Derge edition could take it and add some more changes or use a version that had been already modified.

It is tempting to make a link between the version found in the *Mdo mang* collection and translational activities of Zhalu Lotsāwa Chos skyong bzang po who edited the first block printed edition of this collection.³⁸ It was Chos skyong bzang po who finalized and edited the first of the above-mentioned canonical commentaries on *Vajracchedikā* ascribed to Vasubandhu. The colophon of this text states that it was mostly translated by “the all-knowing Gzhon nu dpal, the fourth hierarch of the Zhwa dmar sect” and the translation was completed by Chos skyong bzang po who, “having found an Indian manuscript of the work and comparing the book with the analogous expressions in the commentary of Kamalāśīla, endeavoured to correct the irregular forms and the disputed sentences or those somehow not perfectly translated”.³⁹ Thus, Chos skyong bzang po both edited the *Mdo mang* collection and had an access to some Sanskrit manuscripts related to *Vajracchedikā*. The problem is that the translation of *Saptadārthaṭīkā* keeps fidelity to the canonical version of the Sūtra. A closer investigation of his *Mdo mang* kept at the Bodleian Library may shed light on the circumstances of its compilation. Perhaps, Chos skyong bzang po could prepare a revised version of the Tibetan *Vajracchedikā* on the basis of the extant translation and with use of some Sanskrit manuscript(s).

It is as difficult to say when the version found in the Kalmyk scrolls came to being and whether it was derivative of the *Mdo mang* version or they two developed independently, being based on some older modification of the translation ascribed to Śīlendrabodhi and Ye shes sde. According to the additional versified colophon found in the Kalmyk scroll Tib. 960-2, there was some block printed edition of *Vajracchedikā* which the Kalmyk scribes used when making this scroll.⁴⁰ If it can be found somewhere⁴¹ it may provide us with some

³⁸ This book was described in Meisezahl 1968.

³⁹ The complete English translation of the colophon was made by G. Tucci, see Tucci 1956: 16–17.

⁴⁰ All the copies of *Vajracchedikā* found in Tib. 960-s have orthographical mistakes but since they are written by different scribes and, therefore, have different mistakes it allowed me to edit the text of the colophon as follows: *rdo rje gcod pa'i spar shing bsgrubs pa las | mthun rkyen 'grub par byed pas lus can rnams | rje btsun byams pa mgon po'i zhabs drung du | theg chen chos kyi dpal la sbyor [sbyong] bar [spyod par] shog | dam pa'i chos la cung zad blo sbyongs [sbyangs] pa'i | rab 'byams blo bzang zhes bya sbyin bdag byas | yig mkhan dge slong blo bzang 'phrin las dang | rkos mkhan dge tshul blo bzang la sogs pa'i | 'e cel [cil; ci'al] tsa'i gnyis su spar du bsgrubs | 'di yi dge bas bdag gzhan 'gro ba kun | shi 'phos gyur pa mod la dga' ldan du | chos kyi mthong ba'i khang bzang der skyes nas | mi pham chos kyi sras kyi thu bor shog | dge ba*

additional information on the text it used.

One more puzzling aspect is provided by another 18th or early 19th century Kalmyk copy of *Vajracchedikā* made in the pothi format (Tib. 980, No. 3) that contains the same text as the scrolls but marks it with the marginal number *dza*, thus referring to the structure of the *Mdo mang* collection. Although it could be a mechanical combination of two textual traditions we cannot rule out that the Kalmyks had in their possession some *Mdo mang* where the version of *Vajracchedikā* found in the Kalmyk scrolls was represented.

In the end, I would like to note that, according to my initial research, it was the *Mdo mang* version of *Vajracchedikā* that was most often used for the production of separate editions or manuscripts of the Sūtra. The collection of the IOM RAS has a big number of such separate books. Working on this paper, I checked some of them rather randomly and the texts I consulted turned out to contain this version of *Vajracchedikā*. Perhaps, the more thorough investigation that is planned by me for 2022/23 will bring some alternative results. However, a recent detailed study of separate editions of some other sūtras kept at the IOM RAS⁴² showed that their canonical versions were not used as frequently as one could expect, many texts following some other textual traditions. Therefore, it is not a surprise that the separate editions of *Vajracchedikā* can often differ from the versions found in the *Bka' 'gyur*.

The study of local traditions of making books in Tibetan such as the virtually unknown early Kalmyk tradition can prove productive for dealing with various textological problems connected with the transmission of Tibetan translations of Buddhist texts.

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'di yis skye bo kun | bsod nams ye shes tshogs bsags shing | bsod nams ye shes las byung bas | dam pa sku gnyis thob par shog | sher phyin 'di yis yi ge klog byed rnam | sher phyin chos kyi dpal la sbyong bar [spyod par] shog | rdo rje gcod pa 'di yis klog byed rnam | rdo rje 'chang gi go 'phang myur thob shog | | |. The colophon copied from the block print contains the names of people involved in its production and the place where it took place (see also the next footnote) but the first copy of the text is concluded with an additional remark *lub bzang bi chi pe* | (“written by Lubzang”) that obviously records the name of the Kalmyk scribe!

⁴¹ It is not clear where and when it was produced. The place of the production is mentioned in the following line: *'e cel* (or *cil*) *tsa'i gnyis su spar du bsgrubs*. However, I do not know so far how to identify the name *'e cel* (*cil*) *tsa* (?) and what the word *gnyis* (‘two’) means here exactly.

⁴² It was done for the collective work Zorin, Sabrukova, Sizova 2020.

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Appendix. The archaic version of the Tibetan translation of *Vajracchedikā* as can be partly reconstructed from the four Dunhuang fragments preserved at the British Library,⁴³ and compared with three later versions of the Sūtra

BL	Text according to Dunhuang mss	Text according to the Derge Bka' 'gyur, Mdo mang of Kumbum (DM) and Kalmyk scrolls (KS) ⁴⁴
IOL Tib J 174 (ms I): f. 6	[a1] @ myi gnas par sbyin ba sbyin no ci la yang myi gnas par sbyin ba sbyin no gzugs la yang myi gnas par < <i>sbyin</i> > ⁴⁵	[330 lines 3–16] [3b5]<...> mi gnas par sbyin pa sbyin no [par bya'o] <u>chos</u> [ci] la yang mi gnas par sbyin pa sbyin no [par bya'o] gzugs la'ang [la yang] mi gnas par sbyin
	[a2] ba sbyin no sgra dang dri dang ro dang reg bya dang chos la yang myi gnas par sbyin ba sbyin no rab 'byor ji ltar ⁴⁶ mtshan mar 'du	pa sbyin no [par bya'o] [+de bzhin du] sgra dang dri dang ro dang reg bya dang chos [3b6] la yang mi gnas par sbyin pa sbyin no [par bya'o] rab 'byor ci nas [+kyang] mtshan mar 'du
	[a3] shes pa yang myi gnas par de ltar byang chub sems dpa' sbyin ba sbyin no de ci'i phyir zhe na rab 'byor byang chub sems	shes pa la'ang [la yang] mi gnas pa [par] de ltar [4a1] byang chub sems dpas sbyin ba sbyin no de ci'i phyir zhe na rab 'byor byang chub sems

⁴³ All the digital images are freely available on the website of the International Dunhuang Project: <http://idp.bl.uk/> (access 09.12.2020).

⁴⁴ The canonical text is used as the basic one, the punctuation marks being put in accordance with it; discrepancies with the *Mdo mang* and Kalmyk versions are put in the brackets: if these two have the same reading no abbreviations are used, if they are different the letters DM or KS specify which version is meant.

⁴⁵ The left edge of the folio is a little damaged and it is not clear if this syllable was written — it is more likely that it was missing. The syllables that could be supposedly found on the damaged parts of the Dunhuang manuscripts are marked (in both columns 2 and 3) in italics.

⁴⁶ Significant points of difference between the Dunhuang mss and the three later versions of the text are marked in bold: the Dunhuang mss basically correspond better with the Derge edition but, sometimes, they have closer parallels with DM/KS, in all these cases (i.e. if at least one of the three versions has the same text as the Dunhuang mss) the relevant fragments are not marked in bold.

	[a4] dpa' gang myi gnas par sbyin ba sbyin ba de'i bsod nams kyi phung po'i tshad ni rab 'byor tshad gzung du sla ba ma yIn no	dpa' gang mi gnas par sbyin pa sbyin pa de'i bsod nams kyi phung po ni rab 'byor tshad gzung bar sla ba ma yin pa'i phyir ro
	[b1] rab 'byor 'di ji snyam du sems shar phyogs kyi nam ka'I tshad gzung bar sla 'am rab 'byor gyis gsol pa bcom ldan	rab 'byor 'di ji snyam du sems [4a2] shar phyogs kyi nam mkha' [mkha'i] tshad gzung bar sla'am [snyam mam] rab 'byor gyis gsol pa bcom ldan
	[b2] 'das de ma lags so bcom ldan 'das kyis bka' stsal pa' de bzhin du lho dang nub dang byang dang steng dang 'o<g gi?>	'das de ni ma lags so bcom ldan 'das kyis bka' stsal pa [+rab 'byor] de bzhin du lho dang nub [4a3] dang byang dang steng ⁴⁷ dang 'og gi
	[b3] phyogs dang phyogs mtshams dang phyogs bcu'I nam mkha'i tshad gzung bar sla 'am rab 'byor gyis gsol pa	phyogs dang phyogs mtshams dang phyogs bcu'i nam mkha' [mkha'i] tshad gzung [DM: bzung] bar sla'am [snyam mam] rab 'byor gyis gsol pa
	[b4] bcom ldan 'das de ma lags so bcom ldan 'das kyIs bka' stsal pa' rab 'byor de bzhIn te	bcom ldan 'das de ni ma lags so bcom [4a4] ldan 'das kyis bka' stsal pa rab 'byor de bzhin du
	<...>	<...>
IOL Tib J 174 (ms I): f. 10	[a1] bdag tu 'dzIn par gyur to sems can du 'dzIn pa dang srog tu 'dzIn pa dang gang zag tu 'dzIn par gyur to gal	[332 l. 13 – 333 l. 4] [5b1] <...> bdag tu 'dzin par 'gyur zhing sems can du 'dzin pa dang srog tu 'dzin pa dang gang zag tu 'dzin par 'gyur ba'i phyir ro gal
	[a2] te chos ma yIn bar 'du shes 'jug na de nyid de dag gi bdag tu 'dzIn par gyur to sems can du 'dzin pa dang	te chos [+bdag] med par [5b2] 'du shes 'jug na yang de nyid de dag gi [DM: gis] bdag tu 'dzin par 'gyur zhing sems can du 'dzin pa dang

⁴⁷ Tib.960 and Tib.960-3 has *ste* here but Tib.960-2 has *steng*.

	[a3] srog tu 'dzin pa dang gang zag tu 'dzIn par 'gyur to de ci'i phyir zhe na rab 'byor chos kyang gzung bar myi bya ste	srog tu 'dzin pa dang gang zag tu 'dzin par 'gyur ba'i phyir ro de ci'i phyir zhe na <u>yang</u> [—] rab 'byor byang chub [5b3] sems dpas chos kyang log par gzung [DM: bzung] bar mi bya ste
	[b1] chos ma yIn bar yang ma yIn no de bas na de las dgongs te de bzhin gshegs pas kyang chos kyi rnam grangs gzings lta bur she<s>	chos ma yin pa yang mi gzung [DM: bzung] ba'i phyir ro de bas na de la [las] dgongs te de bzhin gshegs pas chos kyi rnam grangs [+di] gzings lta bur shes
	[b2] pa rnam kyis chos rnam kyang spang bar bya na chos ma yIn ba rnam lta ci smos shes bshad do gzhan yang bcom ldan	pa rnam kyis [5b4] chos rnam kyang spang bar bya na chos ma yin pa rnam lta ci smos zhes gsungs so gzhan yang bcom ldan
	[b3] 'das kyis tshe dang ldan ba rab 'byor la 'di skad ces bka' stsal to rab 'byor 'di ci snyam du sems de bzhin gshegs	'das kyis tshe dang ldan pa rab 'byor la 'di skad ces bka' stsal to rab 'byor 'di ji snyam du [5b5] sems de bzhin gshegs
	[b4] pas bla na myed pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i byang cub tu gang yang mngon bar rdzogs par sangs sam de bzhin gshegs	<u>pas</u> [DM: pa'i] gang bla na med pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i byang chub [+tu] mngon par rdzogs par sangs rgyas pa'i chos de gang yang yod dam [snyam mam] de bzhin gshegs
	<...>	<...>
IOL Tib J 100 (ms II): section 2 ⁴⁸	[a1] myed do de 'di lta ste dper na rab 'byor skyes bu mun par zhugs pa lta gang dngos por lhu<ng>	[342 l. 21 – 343 l. 9] [12a6] med do rab [12b1] 'byor 'di lta ste dper na mig dang ldan pa'i mi zhig mun par zhugs nas [DM: na] ci yang mi mthong ba de bzhin du gang dngos por lhung

⁴⁸ It is a single folio of a concertina book; section 1 belongs to a different text.

	[a2] bas sbyin ba yongs su gthong ba'I byang cub sems dpa'r blta'o de 'di lta ste dper na rab 'byor	bas sbyin pa yongs su gtong ba'i byang chub sems <u>dpar</u> [dpa'] blta'o [bar bya'o] [+yang] rab [12b2] 'byor 'di lta ste dper na
	[a3] myIg dang ldan ba'I skyes bus nam n(!)angs te nyi ma shar nas gzugs rnam pa mang po mthong ba de	nam langs te nyi ma shar <u>na</u> [nas] mig dang ldan pa'i mis gzugs rnam pa sna tshogs dag mthong ba de
	[a4] bzhIn du gang dngos por ma lhung bas byin yong-su gthong ba'i byang cub sems par blta'o	bzhin du gang dngos por ma lhung bas sbyin pa yongs su gtong ba'i byang chub sems [12b3] <u>dpar</u> [dpa'] blta'o [bar bya'o]
	[a5] yang rab 'byor rigs kyl bu 'am rigs kyi bu mo chos kyI rnam grangs 'di 'dzin pa	yang rab 'byor rigs kyi bu'am rigs kyi bu mo gang dag chos kyi rnam grangs 'di len pa dang 'dzin pa
	[a6] dang 'chang ba dang klog pa dang kun chub par byed pa dang gzhan dag la yang rgyas par rab tu ston <pa>	dang [+ 'chang ba dang] klog pa dang kun chub par byed pa dang gzhan dag [12b4] la <u>yang</u> [—] rgya cher yang dag par rab tu ston pa
	<...>	<...>
IOL Tib J 174 (ms I): foliation missing	[a1] sems can de dag thams cad bsod nams kyI phung po dpag tu myed pa dang ldan par 'gyur ro bs<od nams kyi phung po>	[344 l. 5–19] [13a5] <...> sems can de dag thams cad ni bsod nams kyi phung po dpag tu med pa dang ldan par 'gyur <u>ro</u> [—] bsod nams kyi phung po
	[a2] mtshungs pa myed pa gzhal du myed tshad myed pa'I bsod nams kyI phung po dang ldan bar 'gyur te sems ca<n ... >	bsam gyis mi khyab pa [13a6] dang mtshungs pa med pa dang gzhal du med pa dang tshad med pa dang ldan par 'gyur te sems can
	[a3] <...> nga'I byang chub phrag pa la thogs <so> par 'gyur ro de cI'I phyir zhe na rab 'byor chu ngu la dad pas cho<s ...>	<i>de dag thams cad</i> nga'i byang chub phrag pa la <u>thogs</u> ⁴⁹ par 'gyur ro de ci'i phyir zhe na rab 'byor dman pa la mos [13b1] pa rnams kyis

⁴⁹ Tib.960 and Tib.960-3 has *thob* here but Tib.960-2 has *thogs*.

		chos <i>kyi rnam</i> grangs
	[a 4] <...> mnyan par myi nus bdag tu lta bas ma yIn sems can du lta ba bas ma yIn srog tu lta bas ma yI<n ...>	'di mnyan par mi nus te bdag tu lta ba rnam kyis ma yin sems can du lta ba rnam kyis ma yin srog tu lta ba rnam kyis ma yin [+zhing] <i>gang zag tu lta ba rnam</i> <i>kyis</i>
	[b1] <...> mnyan pa dang 'dzIn pa dang 'chang ba dang klog pa dang kun chub par byed myi nus te de ni gnas myed do	[13b2] mnyan pa dang blang ba dang gzung [DM: bzung] ba dang bklag [klog] pa dang kun chub par byed mi nus te de ni gnas med pa'i phyir ro <i>yang rab 'byor</i>
	[b2] <...> phy<o>gs gang tu mdo sde 'di<'i> ston pa'I phyogs de lha dang myi dang lha ma yIn du bcas pa'I 'jig rten gyI<...>	<i>sa</i> phyogs gang na mdo sde 'di ston pa'i sa phyogs de lha dang mi dang lha ma yin du [13b3] bcas pa'i 'jig rten gyis <i>mchod par</i> [DM: <i>pa</i>] [+ <i>bya bar</i>]
	[b3] 'os par 'gyur ro sa phyogs de phyag 'tshal bar 'os pa da(ng) ⁵⁰ bskor bar byas par 'gy<ur...>	'os par 'gyur ro sa phyogs de phyag bya bar 'os pa dang bskor [DM: skor] ba bya bar 'os par 'gyur te <i>sa phyogs</i>
	[b4] de mchod rten du 'gyur ro rab 'byor rigs kyi bu 'am rigs kyi bu mo gang 'di lta bu'I mdo sde '<...>	de mchod rten lta bur 'gyur ro [+yang] rab 'byor rigs [13b4] kyi bu'am rigs kyi bu mo gang dag 'di lta bu'i mdo sde'i <i>tshig</i>
	<...>	<...>
IOL Tib J 174 (ms I): f. 30	[a1] @ phung pos brgya'I char yang myI chog stong gi char yang brgya' stong gi char yang grangs su (+yang) bgrang ba(r)<'i> yang char yang	[345 l. 13 – 346 l. 4] [14a4] <...> phung po snga mas brgya'i char yang mi phod [nye bar mi 'gro] stong gi cha dang brgya stong gi ['bum gyi] cha dang

⁵⁰ Letters subscribed below are put in brackets.

	dper	grangs dang cha [tshad] dang bgrang ba dang dpe
	[a2] yang zlar yang rgyur yang myI bzod do rab 'byor de'I tshe gal te rIgs kyI bu 'am rIgs kyI bu mo de dag gis bsod nams	dang zla dang rgyur yang mi bzod do rab 'byor gal te [14a5] de'i tshe rigs kyI bu 'am rigs kyI bu mo [+gang] dag bsod nams
	[a3] kyI phung po ji tsam rab tu 'dzIn par 'gyur ba' rIgs kyI bu 'am rIgs kyI bu mo de dag gI bsod nams kyi phung	kyi phung po ji snyed rab tu 'dzin par 'gyur ba'i rigs kyI bu 'am rigs kyI bu mo de dag gi bsod nams kyi phung
	[a4] po ngas bshad na sems can rnam myos par 'gyur te sems 'khrugs par ' ong ngo yang rab 'byor chos kyI nam	po ngas brjod na sems can [14a6] rnam myo myo [myos myos] por 'gyur te [zhing] sems 'khrugs par ' gyur ro yang rab 'byor chos kyI nam
	[b1] grangs 'di bsam gyIs myI khyab ste 'di' rnam par smyIn pa yang bsam gyis myi khyab bo de nas bcom ldan	grangs 'di bsam gyis mi khyab ste 'di' rnam par smin pa yang bsam gyis mi khyab par [DM: pa nyid du] rig par bya'o [14b1] de nas bcom ldan
	[b2] 'das la tshe dang ldan pa rab 'byor gyis 'di skad ces gsol to bcom ldan 'das byang chub sems dpa'i	'das la tshe dang ldan pa rab 'byor gyis 'di skad ces gsol to bcom ldan 'das byang chub sems dpa'i
	[b3] theg pa la yang dag par zhugs pas ji ltar gnas par bgyI ji ltar bsgrub par bgyi ji ltar	theg pa la yang dag par zhugs pas [pa rnam kyis] ji ltar gnas par bgyi [14b2] ji ltar bsgrub par bgyi ji ltar
	[b4] sems rab tu gzung bar bgyi bcom ldan 'das kyis bka' stsal pa di la rab 'byor byang chub sems	sems rab tu gzung [DM: bzung] bar bgyi [+de skad ces gsol pa dang] bcom ldan 'das kyis [+tshe dang ldan pa rab 'byor la 'di skad ces] bka' stsal pa [to] rab 'byor 'di la byang [14b3]

		chub sems
	<...>	<...>
IOL Tib J 617 (ms III): Section 1 (pt. 1) ⁵¹	[n1a1] 'o bla na myed pa yang dag par rdzogs pa 'i byang chub de srog myed pa dang sems can myed pa dang gang zag myed	[352 l. 12 – 355 l. 9] [18b6] <...> 'o bla na med pa [19a1] yang dag par rdzogs pa 'i byang chub [DM: +de] ni bdag med pa dang [KS: —] sems can med pa dang srog med pa dang [KS: —] gang zag med
	[n1a2] par mnyam pa ste dge ba 'i chos thams cad kyis mngon bar rdzogs par 'tshang rgya 'o dge ba 'i chos rnam(+s)	par mnyam [+pa] ste dge ba 'i chos [KS: +de dag] thams cad kyis [KS: —] mngon par rdzogs par 'tshang rgya 'o [sangs rgyas [19a2] so] rab 'byor dge ba 'i chos rnam
	[n1a3] dge ba 'i chos rnamshes bya ba de dag ni rab 'byor de bzhin gshegs pas chos myed par gsungs te	dge ba 'i chos rnamshes bya ba ni de dag [KS: de dag ni] de bzhin gshegs pas [DM: de dag] chos [KS: +de] med pa nyid du [DM: +de bzhin gshegs pas] gsungs te
	[n1a4] de'i phyir dge ba 'i chos rnamshes bya 'o yang rab 'byor byang chub sems dpa' (+gang) gis stong gsum	des na dge ba 'i chos rnamshes bya 'o yang rab 'byor rigs kyi bu'am rigs kyi [19a3] bu mo gang la la zhig gis stong gsum
	[n1a5] gyi stong chen po 'i 'jlg rten gyi khams kyi ri rab ri 'i rgyal po rnam ji snyed pa de tsam du rin po	gyi stong chen po 'i 'jig rten gyi khams na ri 'i rgyal po ri rab dag ji snyed yod pa de tsam gyi rin po
	[n2a1] che sna bdun gyi phung po mngon bar bsdus te sbyin pa byIn	che sna bdun gyi phung po mngon par bsdus te sbyin pa byin pa bas gang gis shes

⁵¹ It is a fragment of a concertina book (part 1 consists of four segments, part 2 of three segments, no text is missing between them, i.e. they are not two fragments of the book but one split into two parts); section 2 belongs to a different text.

bas gang gIs shes rab kyI pha rol tu	[19a4] rab kyI pha rol tu
[n2a2] phyIn pa 'di las tha na tshIlg bzhi pa'I tshigs su bcad pa tsam bzung nas gzhan dag la yang bstan na	phyin pa 'di las tha na tshig bzhi pa'i tshigs su bcad pa [+gcig] tsam [KS: +yang] bzung nas gzhan [353] dag la yang [DM: +dag par] bstan na
[n2a3] rab 'byor bsod nams kyI phung po 'di la snga ma 'I bsod nams kyI phung pos brgya'i char yang myI phod	rab 'byor bsod nams kyI phung po 'di la <u>bsod nams kyi phung po</u> [KS: —] snga [19a5] ma des brgya'i char yang [+nye bar] mi <u>phod pa</u> [KS: 'gro ba]
[n2a4] pa nas dpe' 'i bar du yang myI bzod do rab 'byor 'di ci snyam du sems de bzhin gshegs pa 'di	nas rgyu' 'i bar du yang <u>mi</u> ⁵² bzod do rab 'byor 'di ji snyam du sems de bzhin gshegs <u>pa</u> [pas] 'di
[n2a5] ltar ngas sems can bkrol lo snyam du dgongs par 'dzin na rab 'byor de ltar myI blta 'o de ci 'i phyir zhe na	snyam du ngas sems can rnams bkrol lo zhes dgongs so snyam na [19a6] rab 'byor <u>de</u> [KS: —] de ltar mi <u>blta'o</u> [DM: lta'o] de ci 'i phyir zhe na
[n2a6] rab 'byor de bzhin gshegs pas bkrol ba'i sems can de dag gang yang myed do rab 'byor gal te	rab 'byor de bzhin gshegs pas gang bkrol ba'i sems can <u>de dag</u> [DM: —] gang yang med pa'i phyir ro rab 'byor gal te
[n3a1] de bzhin gshegs pas sems can gang yang bkrol bar gyur na de nyid de 'I bdag tu 'dzIn par 'gyur to	de bzhin gshegs pas sems can gang la la [19b1] zhig bkrol bar gyur na de nyid de bzhin gshegs pa'i bdag tu 'dzin par 'gyur
[n3a2] sems can du 'dzin pa dang srog tu 'dzIn pa dang gang zag tu 'dzin par 'gyur to rab 'byor b dag tu 'dzIn	sems can du 'dzin pa dang <u>srog tu 'dzin pa dang</u> gang zag [KS: gang zag tu 'dzin pa dang srog] tu 'dzin par 'gyur ro rab 'byor bdag tu

⁵² Tib.960 and Tib.960-3 has *med* here but Tib.960-2 has *mi*.

		'dzin
[n3a3] ces bya ba de 'dzIn pa myed par de bzhin gshegs pa gsung mod kyI byis ba so so 'i skye bo rnams kyIs gzung	ces bya ba ni [19b2] de [DM: —] 'dzin pa med par de bzhin gshegs pas gsungs na de yang byis pa so so 'i skye bo rnams kyis zung [DM: gzung]	
[n3a4] ngo rab 'byor byis ba so so 'I skye bo rnams shes bya ba de dag skye bo myed par de bzhin gshegs pas	ngo rab 'byor byis pa so so 'i skye bo rnams [KS: —] zhes bya ba ni de dag skye bo med par [pa nyid du] de bzhin gshegs pas	
[n3a5] gsungs te de 'i phyir byIs ba so so 'I skye bo rnams shes bya 'o rab 'byor 'dI ci snyam du sems	[19b3] gsungs te des na byis pa so so 'i skye bo rnams zhes bya 'o rab 'byor 'di ji snyam du sems	
[n3a6] mtshan phun sum tshogs pas de bzhIn gshegs par blta 'am rab 'byor gyIs gsol pa'	mtshan phun sum tshogs pas de bzhin gshegs par blta' am [bar bya snyam mam] rab 'byor gyis gsol pa	
[n4a1] bcom ldan 'das de ma lags so mtshan phun sum tshogs pas de bzhin gshegs par myI blta 'o	bcom ldan [19b4] 'das de ni ma lags te [so] mtshan phun sum tshogs pas de bzhin gshegs par mi blta'o [blta bar mi bgyi lags so]	
[n4a2] bcom ldan 'das kyIs bka' stsal pa rab 'byor gal te mtshan phun sum tshogs pas de bzhIn gshe°	bcom ldan 'das kyis bka' stsal pa rab 'byor [+de de bzhin no] de de bzhin te mtshan phun [19b5] sum tshogs pas de bzhin gshegs par mi blta'o [DM/ KS: blta bar mi bya ste/'o] rab 'byor gal te mtshan phun sum tshogs pas de bzhin gshegs	
[n4a3] °gs par blta bar gyur na' 'khor lo sgyur ba'i rgyal po yang de bzhIn	par blta bar gyur na 'khor los [KS: lo] sgyur ba'i rgyal po yang de bzhin [19b6]	

	gshegs par 'gyur te de bas na	gshegs par 'gyur te de bas na
	[n4a4] mtshan phun sum tshogs pas de bzhin gshegs par myI blta 'o de nas bcom ldan 'das la tshe	mtshan phun sum tshogs pas de bzhin gshegs par <u>mi</u> <u>blta'o</u> [blta bar mi bya'o] de nas bcom ldan 'das [354] la tshe
	[n4a5] dang ldan ba rab 'byor gyIs 'di skad ces gsol to bcom ldan 'das bdag gIs ji ltar bcom	dang ldan pa rab 'byor gyis 'di skad ces gsol to [+bcom ldan 'das [20a1] bdag gis ji ltar] bcom
	[n4a6] ldan 'das kyIs gsungs pa'i don 'tshal pa ltar na mtshan phun sum tshogs pa de bzhin gshg(s)	ldan 'das kyis gsungs pa'i don <u>bdag gis</u> [DM: —]'tshal ba ltar na mtshan phun sum tshogs pas de bzhin gshegs
IOL Tib J 617 (ms III): Section 1 (pt. 2)	[n5a1] par myi blta 'o de nas bcom ldan 'das kyIs de 'i tshe tshlg-su bcad pa 'di gsungs so gang mams nga la	par <u>mi blta'o</u> [blta bar mi bgyi lags so] de nas bcom ldan [20a2] 'das kyis de'i tshe tshigs su bcad pa 'di dag bka' stsal to gang dag nga la
	[n5a2] gzugs su mthong gang dag nga la sgra shes pa' log par spongs par zhugs pa ste skye bo de <?> yIs nga myi	gzugs su mthong gang dag nga la sgrar shes pa log par spong bar [pa'i lam du] <u>zhugs</u> ⁵³ pa ste skye bo de dag nga mi
	[n5a3] mthong chos nyId du ni sangs rgyas blta' 'dren pa rnam ni chos (+kyi) sku chos nyId rig par myI rung ste	mthong sangs [20a3] rgyas rnam ni chos nyid <u>blta</u> [lta] 'dren pa rnam ni chos kyi sku chos nyid <u>rig</u> [shes] par bya min pas
	[n5a4] de dag rnam par shes myi nus rab 'byor 'di ci snyam du sems mtshan phun sum tshogs pas de bzhin	de ni rnam par shes mi nus rab 'byor 'di ji snyam du sems mtshan phun sum tshogs pas de bzhin

⁵³ Tib.960 and Tib.960-3 has *bzhugs* here but Tib.960-2 has *zhugs*.

[n5a5] gshegs pa bla na myed pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i byang chub mngon bar rdzogs par sangs rgyas pa snyam du	gshegs [20a4] pa dgra bcom pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i [+byang chub tu mngon par rdzogs par] sangs rgyas so snyam du
[n5a6] 'dzIn na rab 'byor de ltar myi blta 'o rab 'byor mtshan phun sum tshogs pa ni de bzhin gsheg(s)	'dzin na rab 'byor khyod kyis de ltar <u>mi blta</u> [blta bar mi bya] ste rab 'byor mtshan phun sum tshogs pas de bzhin [20a5] gshegs
[n6a1] pa bla na myed pa yang dag par rdzogs pa 'i byang chub mngon bar rdzogs par sangs rgyas pa myed do rab 'byor	pa dgra bcom pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i <u>sangs rgyas kyis bla na med pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i</u> [—] byang chub [+tu] mngon par rdzogs par sangs rgyas pa med do rab 'byor
[n6a2] byang chub sems dpa 'i theg pa la yang dag par zhugs pa rnam kyIs chos gag kyang rnam par bshig pa 'am	[+khyod] ' di ji [—] snyam du sems [—] byang chub sems dpa'i theg pa la yang dag par zhugs pa [20a6] rnam kyis chos [+ gang] la la zhi g rnam par bshig <u>gam</u> [pa 'am]
[n6a3] chad pa btags pa snyam du khyod de ltar 'dzin na rab 'byord de ltar myi blta 'o byang chub sems dpa'I theg pa la yang	chad par btags <u>pa</u> [pa'o] snyam du 'dzin na rab 'byor [+de] de ltar <u>mi blta</u> [blta bar mi bya] ste byang chub sems <u>dpa'i</u> ⁵⁴ theg pa la yang
[n6a4] dag par zhugs pa rnam kyis chos gag kyang rnam par bshig pa 'am chad pa btags pa myed do yang rab 'byord	dag par zhugs pa rnam [20b1] kyis chos gang la [—] yang rnam par bshig pa 'am chad par btags pa med do yang rab 'byor
[n6a5] rigs kyi bu po 'am rIgs kyI bu mo gang gis gang 'ga'I klung gI bye ma snyed kyI 'jig rten gyi khams rin po che sna	rigs kyi bu 'am rigs kyi bu mo gang gis ' jig rten gyi khams gang gā'i ⁵⁵ klung gi bye ma snyed dag rin po che sna [20b2] bdun gyis

⁵⁴ Tib.960 and Tib.960-3 has *dpa'* here but Tib.960-2 has *dpa'i*.

⁵⁵ Tib.960 and Tib.960-3 has *ga+nggā'i* here but Tib.960-2 has *gang gā'i*.

	bdun	
	[n6a6] rab tu gang bar byas te sbyIn ba byin ba bas byang chub sems dpa' gang gIs chos rnam bdag myed skye ba myed pa la	rab tu gang bar byas te sbyin pa byin pa bas byang chub sems dpa' gang <u>zhig</u> [gis] chos <u>rnam</u> [kyi rnam grangs 'di] bdag med cing skye ba med pa la
	[n7a1] bzod pa rab tu thob na de dag de'I gzhi las bso(d) nams kyI phung po ches mang du skyed do yang rab 'byor byang chub	bzod pa thob na de nyid gzhi de las bsod nams kyi [355] phung [20b3] po ches mang du [+grangs med dpag tu med pa] skyed [bskyed] do yang rab 'byor byang chub
	[n7a2] sems dpa' bsod nams kyI phung po kun myI bzung ngo tshe dang ldan ba rab 'byord gyis gsol pa' bcom	sems dpas [KS: dpa' rnam kyis] bsod nams kyi phung po yongs su gzung bar mi bya'o tshe dang ldan pa rab 'byord gyis gsol pa bcom
	[n7a3] ldan 'das byang chub sems dpa'as bsod nams kyI phung po kun bzung bar bgyi 'am bcom ldan 'das kyis	ldan [20b4] 'das byang chub sems dpas bsod nams kyi phung po yongs su gzung bar mi bgyi lags sam bcom ldan 'das kyis
	[n7a4] bka' stsal pa rab 'byord kun bzung mod kyI log par myi bzung ste de'I phyir kun bzung zhes bya'o rab 'byord	bka' stsal pa rab 'byord yongs su gzung mod <u>kyis</u> [KS: kyi] log par mi gzung ste des na [20b5] yongs su gzung ba zhes bya'o [+yang] rab 'byor
	[n7a5] gang la la zhig de bzhIn gshegs pa bzhud dam byon tam bzhengs sam bzhugs sam mnal pa mdzad do zhes	gang la la zhig ' di skad du de bzhin gshegs pa bzhud dam byon tam bzhengs sam bzhugs sam mnal ba mdzad do zhes
	[n7a6] <...> des ngas bshad pa'I don myi shes so de ci'i <phy>i<r zhe na>rab 'b<y>ord de bzhin gshegs pa zhes bya ba ni	<i>de skad</i> [—] <i>zer na</i> des <u>na</u> [—] ngas bshad pa'i [20b6] don mi shes so de ci'i phyir zhe na rab 'byor de bzhin gshegs pa zhes bya ba

		ni
	<...>	<...>
IOL Tib J 173 (ms IV): f. 2	[a1] @ yang rab 'byor rigs kyi bu 'am rigs kyi bu mo gang gis stong gsum gyI stong chen po'i 'jig rten gyi khams kyi sa'i rdul rnams ji snyed	[355 l. 12 – 356 l. 6] [21a1] <...> yang rab 'byor rigs kyi bu'am rigs kyi bu mo gang [+la la zhig] gis stong gsum gyi stong chen po'i 'jig rten gyi khams na sa'i rdul <u>rnams</u> [—] ji snyed
	[a2] pa de 'di lta ste rdul phra rab kyi tshogs bzhin du phye mar byas na rab 'byor 'di ji snyam du sems rdul phra rab kyi tshogs	yod pa de dag [21a2] 'di lta ste dper na rdul phra rab kyi tshogs bzhin du phye mar byas na rab 'byor 'di ji snyam du sems rdul phra rab kyi tshogs
	[a3] de mang ba yin nam rab 'byor gyis gsold pa bcom ldan 'das de de bzhin te rdul phra rab kyi tshogs de mang ba lags so	de mang ba yin <u>nam</u> [snyam mam] rab 'byor gyis gsol <u>pa</u> [DM: ba] bcom ldan 'das de de [21a3] lta [ltar] lags te rdul phra rab kyi <u>tshogs</u> [chos] de mang <u>ba</u> [KS: —] lags so
	[a4] (de ci'i slad du zhe na gal te) bcom ldan 'das de dag tshogs lags na bcom ldan 'das kyis rdul phra rab kyi tshogs shes bka' myi stsald to de ci 'i slad du	de ci'i slad du zhe na bcom ldan 'das gal te [DM: +rdul phra rab kyi; KS: +rdul gyi] tshogs shig mchis par gyur na bcom ldan 'das kyis rdul phra rab kyi tshogs zhes [21a4] bka' mi <u>stsal</u> [DM: stsol] ba'i [KS: pa'i] slad du'o de ci'i slad du
	[b1] zhe na bcom ldan 'das kyis gang rdul phra rab kyi tshogs su gsungs pa de tshogs ma mchis par de bzhin gshegs pas gsung+ste de bas na rdul phra rab kyi	zhe na bcom ldan 'das <u>kyis</u> [DM: kyi] rdul phra rab kyi tshogs zhes gang gsungs pa de tshogs ma mchis par de bzhin gshegs <u>pas</u> [DM: pa'i] gsungs pa'i slad du ste des na rdul phra rab [21a5] kyi

	[b2] tshogs shes bgyi'o gang de bzhin gshegs pas stong gsum gyi stong chen po'i 'jig rten gyi khams su gsungs pa de khams	tshogs zhes [356] bgyi'o de bzhin gshegs pas stong gsum gyi stong chen po'i 'jig rten gyi khams zhes gang gsungs pa de khams
	[b3] ma mchis par de bzhin gshegs pas gsungs te de bas na stong gsum gyi stong chen po'i 'jig rten gyi khams shes bgyi'o	ma mchis par de bzhin gshegs pas gsungs te des na stong gsum gyi stong [21a6] chen po'i 'jig rten gyi khams zhes bgyi'o
	[b4] de ci'i slad du zhe na gal te bcom ldan 'das khams de ma mcis par gyur na de nyid rild por 'dzind par 'gyurd to de bzhin gshegs	de ci'i slad du zhe na bcom ldan 'das gal te [+ 'jig rten gyi] khams shig mchis par gyur na de nyid ril por 'dzin par 'gyur ba'i slad du'o [+de ci'i slad du zhe na] de bzhin gshegs



Tibetan Expertise in Sanskrit Grammar (5): Two Blo gros brtan pas on *Vyākaraṇa* – So many Sthiramatis¹

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Among the prolific Tibetan authors in the field of Sanskrit linguistics in the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries we find a triad of scholars named Blo gros brtan pa, respectively styled the second, third and fourth Blo gros brtan pa. They were indubitably thus regarded as members of a form of intellectual dynasty in reference (and reverence) to the famous Indian *paṇḍita* Sthiramati. Like their Indian namesake they were experts in various branches of Buddhist scholasticism. In this article I will discuss two works on Sanskrit grammar which can tentatively though confidently be attributed to two of the three Blo gros brtan pas. I will also briefly address the matter of the proliferation of Sthiramatis / Blo gros brtan pas in the Tibetan Middle Ages.

1. *Dpang lo tsā ba's translation of the Cāndra-vyākaraṇa Vṛtti.*

Given the fact that the *Cāndra-vyākaraṇa sūtra* text and a wide range of subsidiary treatises belonging to the *Cāndra* school have been included in the first, fourteenth-century redaction of the *Bstan 'gyur* section on Sanskrit grammar, it is remarkable that a Tibetan translation of Dharmadāsa's basic *vṛtti* commentary on the *Cāndra sūtra* text is conspicuously missing in this canon.²

¹ Cordial thanks are due to Burkhard Quessel (curator of the Tibetan collection of the British Library, London) for magnanimously providing information on and digital pictures of relevant holdings of that library, and to Dr. Péter-Dániel Szántó (presently postdoc researcher at LIAS, Leiden University) for his invaluable assistance in the reading of the '*Vartula*' script passages.

² HSGLT 1: 54.

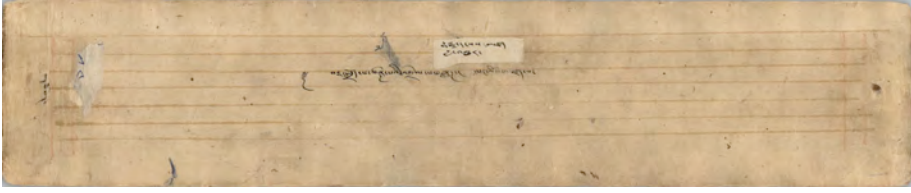


Illustration 1: Title page *Cāndra Vr̥tti*, BDRC W2PD17532 volume 3 section 1: f. 1r.

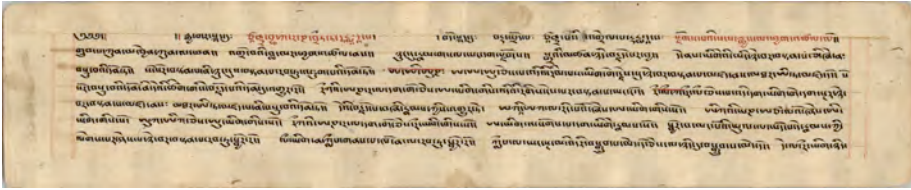


Illustration 2: Opening page *Cāndra Vr̥tti*, BDRC W2PD17532 volume 3 section 1: f. 1v.

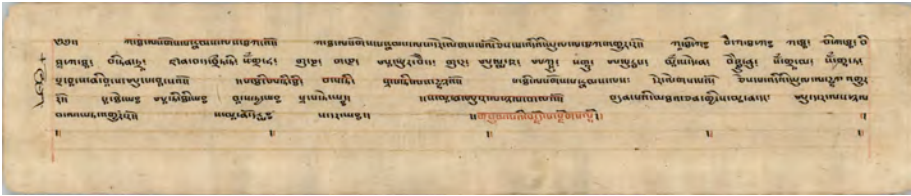


Illustration 3: Final page *Cāndra Vr̥tti*, BDRC W2PD17532 volume 3 section 1: f. 146r.

However, in the Buddhist Digital Resource Centre (BDRC) archives we find a 146 folio Tibetan manuscript³ which is a partial translation of that commentary (see illustrations 1-3).

The author's name is given in Sanskrit on the title page,⁴ in the title captions at the opening of the text,⁵ and in two chapter concluding formulae,⁶ and it is given in Tibetan (Chos kyi 'bangs) in the closing formulae of chapters 1.1 and 1.2.⁷

Was this translation for some reason or due to some circumstance not included in *Bstan 'gyur*? One obvious reason may have been that it

³ BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 3 section 1 p. 3-291 = f. 1r-146r5. Passages written in red ink in the manuscript are **in red ink** in my transcription. Passages marked with a horizontal red stroke in the manuscript are underlined in my transcription.

⁴ BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 3 p. 3 = f. 1r: *brda sprod pa tsandra pa'i 'grel pa bzhugs / sp(y?)ang [= dpang?] los (?) mdzad pa*. Affixed note tag above title: *dharmā da sas mdzad snga 'gyur*.

⁵ *rgya gar skad du : tsāndra byā ka ra ṅa br̥t ta dharmā dā sa / bod skad du : brda sprod pa : tsāndra pa'i 'grel pa dharmā dā sa*, f. 1v1.

⁶ Concluding formulae of *Cāndra* 1.3: *dharmā dā sa*, f. 47v7; and of *Cāndra* 1.4: *dharmā dā sha*, f. 60r5.

⁷ Concluding formulae of *Cāndra* 1.1 and of *Cāndra* 1.2: *chos kyi 'bangs*, f. 20r7; *chos kyi 'bangs*, f. 30v4.

is incomplete. It covers only the first three of the six chapters (*adhyāya*) of *Cāndravyākaraṇa*. However, incompleteness *per se* was not always an obstacle to canonization, as, for instance, elsewhere in the section on grammar we see that incomplete renderings of Durgasiṃha's commentary on *Kātantra* were included in *Bstan 'gyur*.⁸ Depending on the identification of the translator it may also have been too recent to have been included in Bu ston's redaction of *Bstan 'gyur*.

The translation ends abruptly at the end of chapter 3. No colophon of any kind is given. I have not been able to trace any indication of the translator's identity elsewhere in the manuscript. Was this translation made by Dpang Blo gros brtan pa (1276-1342)? The BDRC redactors have included it in volume 3 of a collection of his works (W2PD17532). Granted, in the manuscript itself I find no *prima facie* evidence that Dpang lo tsā ba was indeed the translator, but he may very well have been. After all, he was a leading authority on Sanskrit grammar in his era. And his biography informs us that he produced several works on *Cāndra* --which could apply to translating or actually authoring-- during or briefly after one of his early visits to Nepal,⁹ and that he made a 'corrected translation' (*'gyur bcos*) of *Cāndra* grammar.¹⁰ The latter may be a reference to Dpang lo tsā ba's canonized translation(s) of *Cāndra* works (*Adhikāra-saṃgraha* and *TiÑ-anta*), or it may (also) refer to his authorship of this *Cāndra Vṛtti* translation. I think we have sufficient reason to assume, for the time being, until further research may prove this assumption wrong, that Dpang lo tsā ba Blo gros brtan pa was indeed the translator of the present document.

In the 1930s Rāhula Sāṅkrīyāyana reported that two Sanskrit manuscripts of this *Cāndra vṛtti* commentary were preserved in Zha lu Ri phug.¹¹ Did the translator, whoever s/he may have been, use these very same manuscripts? It is certainly conceivable that this has been the case. However, if indeed Dpang Blo gros brtan pa was the translator, he may have translated this work during one of his many sojourns in Nepal and may therefore have availed himself of manuscript sources available locally there. We know that he translated the *Adhikāra-saṃgraha* and *TiÑ-anta*, two works on *Cāndra* grammar, in Patan in Nepal¹² and that he studied *Vyākaraṇa* there, in particular

⁸ HSGLT 1: CG 11 and CG 11A.

⁹ Ngag dbang skal ldan rgya mtsho's *Shel dkar chos 'byung* BDRC W1KG13996 p. 84-85 l. 20-1: *tsandra pa'i yig sna mdzad*.

¹⁰ Ngag dbang skal ldan rgya mtsho's *Shel dkar chos 'byung* BDRC W1KG13996 p. 85 l. 14-15: *sgra tsandra pa'i 'gyur bcos*.

¹¹ Sāṅkrīyāyana (1937: 41 nr. 285, 43 nr. 294), HSGLT 1: 54.

¹² HSGLT 1: CG 5 and 8: the *Bstan 'gyur* colophons give Patan (designated Ye rang and Rol pa'i grong khyer respectively) as the location in Nepal where Dpang lo tsā ba made these translations. See also, for the former translation, Ngag dbang skal

the *Cāndra* system, with local *paṇḍitas* such as Rāmaṇa-ācārya and Madana(?)-ācārya.¹³

The commentary contained in W2PD17532_3_1, which deals with *Cāndra-vyākaraṇa adhyāya* 1 to 3, comprises approximately two-fifths of the entire text of Dharmadāsa's *vr̥tti*. This may be an example of an unfinished translation. And this fact may have played a role in its non-inclusion in the *Bstan 'gyur* canon. Or we may be faced with a fragmented transmission of this manuscript, comparable to what we will encounter in the next part of this study. It is certainly not exceptional for a Tibetan manuscript set, especially one of some antiquity, to be split up in the course of time.

This manuscript belongs to the same set, therefore has a similar format and appears to be by the same hand as BDRC W2PD17532_4-7, that I will discuss *infra*. If this is indeed the case, the scribe could very well be Blo gros dbang phyug, main disciple of Snye thang lo tsā ba Blo gros brtan pa, and the manuscript would then (possibly) date from the fifteenth century (see 2.1 and 2.3 *infra*).

1.1. Subdivision of Dpang lo tsā ba's translation of the
Cāndra-vyākaraṇa Vr̥tti (BDRC W2PD17532, vol. 3 section 1)

- 1.1. *Adhyāya* 1 *pāda* 1: W2PD17532 p. 1-41 = f. 1r-20v1¹⁴
- 1.2. *Adhyāya* 1 *pāda* 2: W2PD17532 p. 41-64 = f. 20v1-30v4¹⁵
- 1.3. *Adhyāya* 1 *pāda* 3: W2PD17532 p. 64-96 = f. 30v4-47v7¹⁶
- 1.4. *Adhyāya* 1 *pāda* 4: W2PD17532 p. 96-121 = f. 47v7-60r5¹⁷
- 2.1. *Adhyāya* 2 *pāda* 1: W2PD17532 p. 121-142 = f. 60r5-70v2¹⁸
- 2.2. *Adhyāya* 2 *pāda* 2: W2PD17532 p. 142-171 = f. 70v2-86r2¹⁹

Idan rgya mtsho's *Shel dkar chos 'byung* BDRC W1KG13996 p. 85 line 1: *spyir btang dang dam pa rtog dkar bsgyur*.

¹³ Ngag dbang skal Idan rgya mtsho's *Shel dkar chos 'byung* BDRC W1KG13996 p. 84 l. 7-8: *dgung lo nyer gcig pa la bal por byon nas / rā ma ṅa ā tsarya dang / ma ṅa ṅa (?) ā tsarya la sgra tsandra pa bsan no*.

¹⁴ BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 3 section 1 *finitur*, p. 41 = f. 20r7-20v1: *brda sprod pa tsāndra pa'i 'grel pa chos kyi 'bangs kyis mdzad par skabs dang po'i rkang pa dang po rdzogs so*.

¹⁵ BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 3 section 1 *finitur*, p. 64 = f. 30v4: *brda sprod pa tsāndra pa'i 'grel pa chos kyi 'bangs kyis mdzad par dang po'i rkang pa gnyis pa rdzogs so*.

¹⁶ BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 3 section 1 *finitur*, p. 96 = f. 47v7: *brda sprod pa tsāndra pa'i 'grel pa dharma dā sa'i skabs dang po'i rkang pa gsum pa rdzogs so*.

¹⁷ BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 3 section 1 *finitur*, p. 121 = f. 60r5: *brda sprod pa tsāndra pa'i 'grel pa dharma dā shar* [sic] *skabs dang po rdzogs so*.

¹⁸ BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 3 section 1 *finitur*, p. 142 = f. 70v2: *gnyis pa'i rkang pa dang po rdzogs sho*.

¹⁹ BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 3 section 1 *finitur*, p. 173 = 86r2: *brjod pa gnyis pa'i rkang pa gnyis pa rdzogs so*.

- 2.3. *Adhyāya* 2 *pāda* 3: W2PD17532 p. 171-190 = f. 86r2-95v2²⁰
 2.4. *Adhyāya* 2 *pāda* 4: W2PD17532 p. 190-220 = f. 95v2-109v1²¹
 3.1. *Adhyāya* 3 *pāda* 1: W2PD17532 p. 220-235 = f. 109v1-117r2²²
 3.2. *Adhyāya* 3 *pāda* 2: W2PD17532 p. 235-249 = f. 117r2-125r4²³
 3.3. *Adhyāya* 3 *pāda* 3: W2PD17532 p. 249-273 = f. 125r4-138r1²⁴
 3.4. *Adhyāya* 3 *pāda* 4: W2PD17532 p. 273-291 = f. 138r1-146r5²⁵

2. *Snye thang lo tsā ba's Kātantra Commentary*

2.1. *BDRC W2PD17532_4-7*

Let us now have a look at a second manuscript set which BDRC has included in the 'various collected works' (*gsung phyogs bsdus*) of Dpang Blo gros brtan pa. It consists of seventeen volumes, a total of 1573 folios, written in a scholastic form of *dbu med* script, and it was included in the BDRC archives as volumes 4 to 7 of W2PD17532.

The first part of the manuscript contains a translation of the *Kātantra sūtra* text in one volume (26 folios; see illustrations 4-7).²⁶

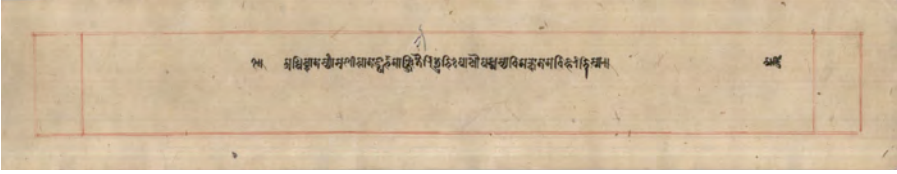


Illustration 4: Title page *Kātantra sūtra* text, BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 4 section 1 f. 1r.

- ²⁰ BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 3 section 1 *finitur*, p. 192 = 95v2: *skabs gnyis pa'i rkang pa gsum pa rdzogs so*.
²¹ BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 3 section 1 *finitur*, p. 220 = f. 109v1: *skabs gnyis pa'i brjod pa rdzogs sho*.
²² BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 3 section 1 *finitur*, p. 235 = f. 117r2: *gsum pa'i skabs dang po rdzogs so*.
²³ BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 3 section 1 *finitur*, p. 249 = f. 125r4: *gsum pa'i rkang pa gnyis pa rdzogs so*.
²⁴ BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 3 section 1 *finitur*, p. 275 = f. 138r1: *gsum pa'i rkang pa gsum pa rdzogs so*.
²⁵ BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 3 section 1 *finitur*, p. 291 = f. 146r4-146r5: *sa mā na u ra la nyal ba la'o / bāun pa'i mtha' can gyi sa mā na dang: u da ra las nyal ba la yat 'gyur ro* (= *Cāndra* 3.4.106, the final *sūtra* of final, fourth *pāda* of third *adhyāya*: *samānodare śayitah*. Commentary: *samānodarāt saptamyantāc chayite yaD bhavati*) *gsum pa'i brjod pa rdzogs sho /*
²⁶ BDRC: W2PD17532 vol. 4 section 1: p. 3-55 = f. 1r-26r4.

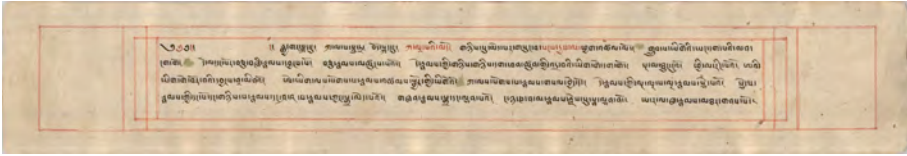


Illustration 5: Opening page *Kātantra sūtra* text, BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 4 section 1 f. 2r.

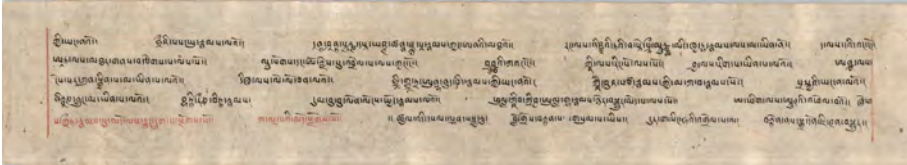


Illustration 6: Penultimate page *Kātantra sūtra* text, BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 4 section 1 f. 25v.

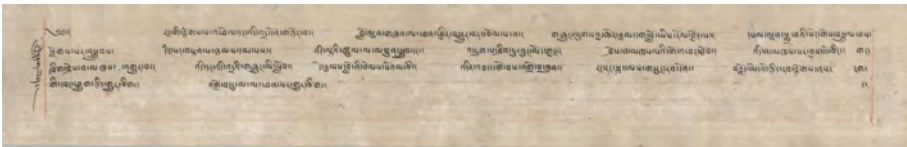


Illustration 7: Final page *Kātantra sūtra* text, BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 4 section 1 f. 26r.

The bulk of the manuscript is occupied by the *Ka lā pa'i 'grel bshad chen mo*, an extensive commentary on *Kātantra* grammar in sixteen volumes (see illustrations 8-13, 23-24). It covers the first three chapters (on *sandhi*, on nominal and verbal morphology respectively; totaling 1547 folios) but omits the final fourth chapter on primary nominal derivation (Sanskrit: *kṛt*).²⁷

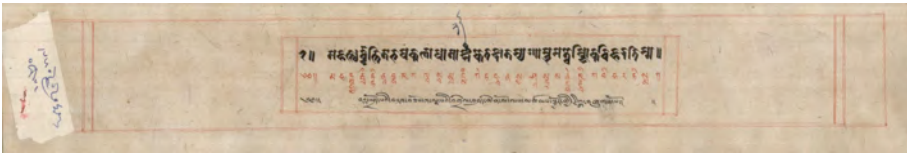


Illustration 8: Title page *Kātantra* commentary, BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 4 section 2 f. 1r.

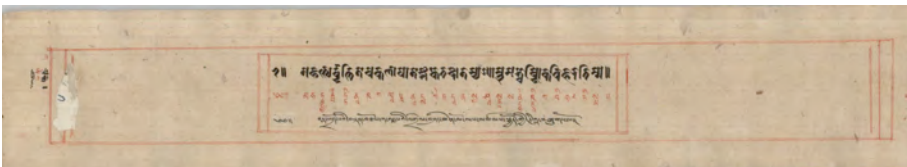


Illustration 9: Title page *Kātantra* commentary chapter 1, BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 4 section 2 f. 2r.

²⁷ BDRC: W2PD17532 vol. 4 section 2-vol. 7. This is indubitably *A khu tho yig* section 17 no. 3: *blo brtan bzhi pa'i sgra fi ka chen mo*, HSGLT 1: 92 note 216.

The *Kātantra sūtra* translation is the version by Dpang Blo gros brtan pa which is contained in *Bstan 'gyur*.²⁸ Its colophon, just like its canonical counterpart, identifies the translator as 'third Blo gros brtan pa' which is a common appellation of Dpang Blo gros brtan pa.²⁹ In contrast, the chapter colophons of the subsequent commentary consistently identify the author as the 'fourth Blo gros brtan pa'.³⁰

Why then would Dpang Blo gros brtan pa be referred to as the 'fourth Blo gros brtan pa' in virtually each chapter concluding formula of this commentary in the same manuscript set as the *Kātantra sūtra* translation where he is designated the 'third Blo gros brtan pa'? It seems far more likely that what we have here is a work by Snye thang lo tsā ba Blo gros brtan pa (mid-15th century), who is indeed often designated as the 'fourth Blo gros brtan pa'.³¹ He too was a renowned expert on Sanskrit grammar. In sum, I think we can confidently conclude that the *Kātantra* exegesis contained in BDRC W2PD17532 is not a work by Dpang Blo gros brtan pa (1276-1342), but by Snye thang Blo gros brtan pa (fl. 15th cent.).³²

The scribe of the manuscript was 'the eminently clear-minded' (*blo gros rab tu gsal ba*) Ngag dbang lo tsā ba Blo gros dbang phyug,³³ also known as (Khro phu) Snyan ngag pa Blo gros dbang phyug, a personal pupil of Snye thang Blo gros brtan pa. He requested the composition of his master's commentary on *Kātantra* discussed here (see also *infra*) and his commentary on Sa skya Paṇḍita's *Tshig gter*³⁴ contained in this same collection (and was the scribe of both) and therefore

²⁸ HSGLT 1: CG 10.

²⁹ BDRC: W2PD17532 vol. 4 section 1: *zhes pa kyt rnams su mdo las rkang drug pa rdzogs so / ka lā pa'i mdo rdzogs so / tshul 'di dpal ldan sa skya ru / blo gros brtan pa gsum pa yis / dur ga sing ha'i 'grel pa la / brten nas sgra don ji [numeral 4]n [= bzhin] bsgyur, f. 25v4-25v5.*

³⁰ *Dpal ldan blo gros brtan pa bzhi pas sbyar ba'o* (or orthographical variants of this, including the use of the numeral 4 instead of *bzhi*). All extant chapter colophons do so. For chapter 3.4 the last folio(s) is/are missing in the manuscript so we do not have a colophon for this chapter.

³¹ A prominent expert on Sanskrit grammar and poetics, who was a teacher of Gser mdog paṇ chen Śākya mchog ldan (1428-1507); HSGLT 1: 92; Smith (2001: 193, 315 note 604).

³² Correct therefore BDRC's attribution to Dpang lo tsā ba and inclusion in his 'assorted works' in W2PD17532. Parenthetically, correct also BDRC's cataloguing of the second chapter as entitled *me long*; it actually reads *ming le* which is brief for *ming gi le'u*, 'chapter on nouns'.

³³ All extant chapter colophons identify him as such. One might wonder if Blo gros rab tu gsal ba, or Blo gros rab gsal, is the name of a different individual and two scribes were involved, but this is highly unlikely considering the phrasing and interpunction of many of the chapter colophons.

³⁴ BDRC W2PD17532_3_4; also BDRC W23195. Here too BDRC's attribution to Dpang Blo gros brtan pa should be corrected: it is in fact a work by Snye thang Blo gros brtan pa.

he must have been contemporaneous with the author. No date is given for the manufacture of the manuscript, but as the scribe was—apparently—a contemporary of the author it can be dated to the fifteenth century. Some caution is required here as the fifteenth-century colophons may have been faithfully copied by a scribe at a later date.

The second and third folios of the commentary manuscript bear four delicate colored gouache illustrations, unfortunately without any identifying captions (see illustrations 10-13): the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī (2v left); the deity Śaṅmukha ('six-headed') Kārttikeya, who plays a prominent role in the origin legends of *Kātantra*, seated on his peacock mount (2v right); an unidentified Indian *paṇḍita*, possibly Śarvavarman, the author of the *Kātantra sūtra* text, with a palatial mansion in the background (3r left); and an unidentified Tibetan *blama*, possibly Dpang Blo gros brtan pa (translator of the *sūtra* text) or perhaps Snye thang Blo gros brtan pa (author of the commentary), with the Tibetan mountains in the backdrop (3r right).



Illustration 10: Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 4 section 2, f. 2v left.



Illustration 11: Deity Kārttikeya, BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 4 section 2, f. 2v right.



Illustration 12: Indian paṇḍita, Śarvavarman (?),
BDRC W12PD17532 vol. 4 section 2, 3r left.



Illustration 13: Tibetan bla ma, Dpang Blo gros brtan pa (?) or Snye thang Blo gros brtan pa (?),
BDRC W12PD17532 vol. 4 section 2, f. 3r right.

It is interesting to note that an Indic script is used not only in each of the Sanskrit chapter title captions, where one might expect this, but also for a more lengthy Sanskrit passage in the concluding parts of this manuscript (f. 50v2-51r2; see illustrations 23-24 *infra*). This appears to be a translation into Sanskrit of the following verses written (by the commentary's author) in Tibetan, and subsequently translated (by the author or a later redactor?) into rather clumsy cut-and-paste error-ridden Sanskrit.³⁵ One might perhaps have expected a little better Sanskrit from an author who has just finished an extensive commentary on *Kātantra* grammar. We know, however, that a limited competence of translating into Sanskrit and composing Sanskrit verses, is not unknown even among renowned Tibetan scholars in this field.³⁶ And, I suppose we should also reckon with the possibility that this Sanskrit translation may have been added at a later date by an editor or redactor involved in the transmission.

³⁵ I have appended a transliteration of the Sanskrit and Tibetan of these verses *infra* in 2.5. Particularly the last section of the Sanskrit passage was characterized (in a personal communication, April 2020) by Dr. Szántó as "total gibberish".

³⁶ See for instance Tucci (1957).

As I mentioned above, the commentary as we have it presently in the BDRC archives appears to be incomplete. It does not deal with the final, fourth chapter of the *Kātantra* rule system, on primary nominal derivation (*kṛt*) which constitutes approximately one-fifth of the entire *Kātantra* rule system. It would have been conceivable –certainly considering the bulk of the materials involved— that the author did not get to finish an integral commentary. The lengthy (Sanskrit and Tibetan) colophon materials which are appended at the end of the text as we have it in BDRC, i.e. the end of the third chapter, seem to suggest that the Sanskrit source on which the author based his commentary may have ended here also. And, the scribe was a contemporary and associate of the author and therefore would most likely have had access to the full work had the author finished it.

However, it turns out that we are faced here with a fragmented transmission of this manuscript and this text. As luck would have it, we are now in a position to fill in (at least most of) the blanks in this particular transmission. Fragments of two manuscripts of the same text are preserved in the British Library (henceforth BL) which were first signaled by the incomparable Gene Smith.³⁷

2.2. BL Or. 6626

BL shelf mark Or. 6626 consists primarily of fragments of a *dbu med* manuscript of the *Ka lā pa'i 'grel bshad chen mo*. The bundle contains a single folio (28) from a different text (as we will see below; see illustrations 16-17) and forty-three folios (*WAM* 6-49) from the fifth, penultimate *pāda* of the chapter on *kṛt* nominal derivation (with a chapter colophon at 49r4-5; see illustrations 14-15).³⁸ Leaving aside the isolated folio 28 for the moment, in BL Or. 6626 we have the comments running from *Kātantra* 4.5.6 (in part) up till the end of *pāda* 4.5. As this is part of the *kṛt* sections missing in the BDRC manuscript, we can conclude that Snye thang Blo gros brtan pa's '*Grel bshad chen mo* commentary indeed covered the entirety of the *Kātantra sūtra* text, and that the BDRC manuscript is in fact incomplete.

³⁷ Smith (2001: 194, 316 note 613), which is an updated version of his introduction to the 1969 edition of Bo dong Paṅ chen's Collected Works; and personal communication, Lausanne 1999. Sincere cordial thanks to Burkhard Quessel, curator of the Tibetan collection of the British Library, for generously providing information about and digital images of these manuscripts. It is interesting to note that Mr. Quessel was also present at the memorable 1999 meeting mentioned above when Gene Smith drew my attention to these manuscripts.

³⁸ Concluding phrase: *brda' sprod pa'i snying po ka lā pa'i mdo yi bshad pa las kṛt kyi mdo rkang pa lnga pa'i bshad pa rdzogs so/ // kṛt rkang pa lnga pa'i 'grel pa dpal ldan blo gros brtan pa bzhi pas sbyar ba'o*, BL Or. 6626 f. 49r4-5.

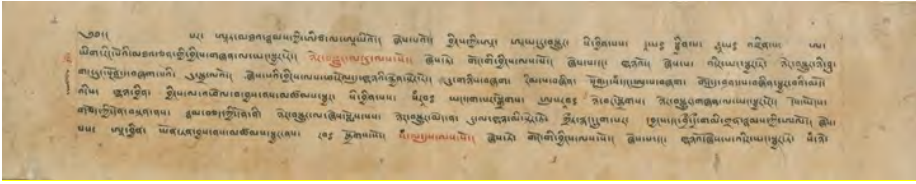


Illustration 14: *Kātantra* commentary 4.5.6 etc., BL Or. 6626 fol. 6r. WAM 6r.



Illustration 15: *Kātantra* commentary 4.5 final folio, BL Or. 6626 fol. 49r. WAM 49r.

What is more, judging by their paleographical and codicological features I feel confident that the BL Or. 6626 fragments in fact stem from the very same manuscript (set) partially preserved in BDR C W2PD17532. How these two (and the remaining as yet untraced) sections of this manuscript have become dispersed is entirely a matter of conjecture, but apparently they did. It is certainly not uncommon for Tibetan manuscripts, especially the more precious ancient ones, to be divided up at some point(s) in their history. In any case, these two remaining parts have now (virtually) been joined together again. *Bien étonnés de se trouver ensemble?*

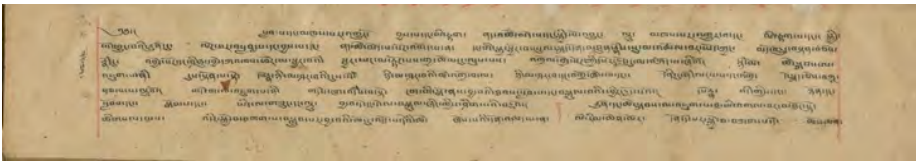


Illustration 16: Isolated folio, BL Or. 6626 fol. 28r.

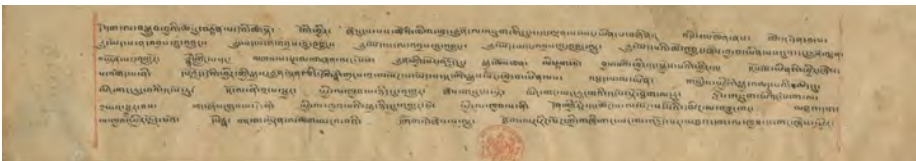


Illustration 17: Isolated folio, BL Or. 6626 fol. 28v.

As for the isolated folio 28 at the beginning of the bundle Or. 6626 (see illustrations 16 and 17), it deals with grammar, but not Sanskrit grammar. It is in fact a fragment of an as yet unidentified commentary

on *Sum cu pa* (SCP), one of the two basic treatises of Tibetan indigenous grammar. It contains comments on SCP 19, which deals with the enclitic particle *dang*, and SCP 21, on the pronoun *gang*. Reference is made to *Prasannapadā* and *Lam rim chen mo* (f. 28r7), which sets this fragment in a *Dge lugs pa* context. There is a reference to Rnam gling paṅ chen Dkon mchog chos grags' (1646-1718) commentary on the two basic treatises which is dated 1683 (f. 28v3),³⁹ so this would place this fragment in the late seventeenth century at the earliest. It appears not to belong to the Si tu tradition of Tibetan grammar as it does not follow the re-arrangement of SCP 19-23 that Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas (1699?-1774) has introduced in his *Sum rtags 'grel chen* (dated 1744).⁴⁰ As Si tu's re-ordering of SCP was adopted by most later grammarians, it seems likely that this fragment stems from a commentary written before mid-1740s. In sum, the approximate timeframe for composition of this commentary lies between 1683 and 1744.

Perhaps this folio was singled out and added to this volume also because of the unusual ornamental sign in red ink on f. 28r6-7. Judging by the British Museum stamp on f. 28v it was at one point received or regarded as a separate acquisition. Comparing this folio with the remainder of Or. 6626 one notes that it contains seven lines per folio side, instead of six in the remainder; it does not have an *E* or *WAM* marking in the margin; the *ductus* is slightly thinner than in the remainder. However, the general layout of the page and the execution of the script are very similar to the remainder. Perhaps it was produced at the same scriptorium as the remainder? Perhaps both belonged to a larger manuscript set containing treatises on Sanskrit as well as Tibetan grammar? Perhaps manuscripts were added to this set at various dates?

If indeed this single folio 28 was contemporaneous with the remainder of BL Or. 6626 and with BDRC W2PD17532 4_2-7 –which I should stress is by no means a certainty, but surely a possibility-- it would mean that this particular manuscript of the *'Grel bshad chen mo* cannot antedate the late seventeenth century. This then would imply that the colophon identifications of the fifteenth-century scribe(s) were evidently copied faithfully by the seventeenth / eighteenth-century scribe(s) of the manuscript at hand.

³⁹ Entitled *Lung du ston pa sum cu pa dang rtags kyi 'jug pa'i rnam 'grel legs bshad snang byed nor bu*; Tillemans & Herforth (1989: 9, 31); BDRC WIKG10590.

⁴⁰ Graf (2018: 442).

2.3. BL Or. 6752

BL shelf mark Or. 6752 also consists of sections of *Ka lā pa'i 'grel bshad chen mo*, covering the final four *pādas* on verbal morphology (3.5-3.8) and the entire final chapter on primary nominal derivation (4.1-4.6), in 277 folios (see illustrations 18-22).⁴¹ It is a *dbu med* manuscript, clearly in a format and scribe's hand different from the BDRC and BL Or. 6626 manuscripts.⁴² And its contents partially overlap with BDRC W2PD17532 and BL Or. 6626.

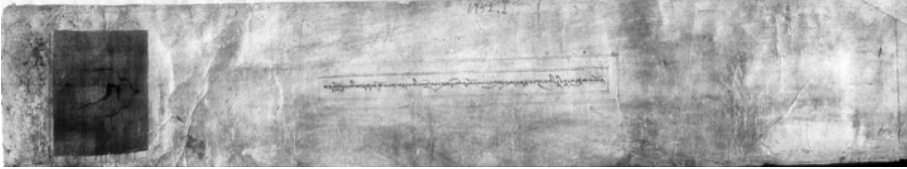


Illustration 18: Title page *Kātantra* 3.5, BL Or. 6752 vol. 1 page 1: E PA f. 1.

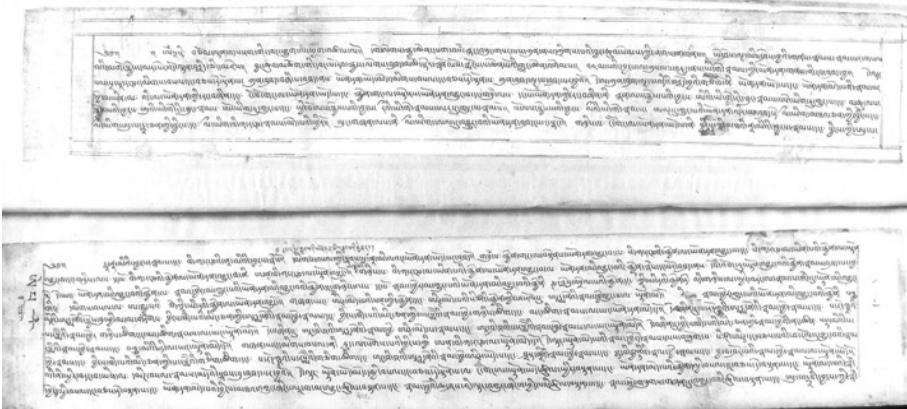


Illustration 19: Opening pages *Kātantra* 3.5, BL Or. 6752 vol. 1 page 2: E PA f. 1v-2r.

⁴¹ BL Or. 6752 consists of two volumes: *E*, sections *pa* to *ma* in 147 folios, and *Wam*, sections *tsa* to *za* in 130 folios. On the opening folio of volume 1 marked as “presented by the Secretary of State for India – 1905”. On the final folio of volume 1 marked “147 folios Dec 1906”.

⁴² BL Or. 6752 averages 10 lines per side of the manuscript, whereas BDRC W2PD17532 and BL Or. 6626 have an average of 6 lines per side.

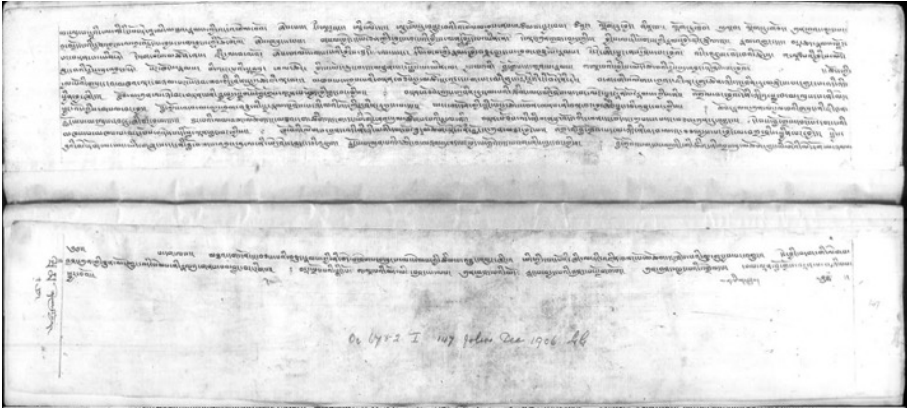


Illustration 20: Final pages *Kātantra* 3.8, BL Or. 6752 vol. 1 page 149: E MA f. 22v-23r.

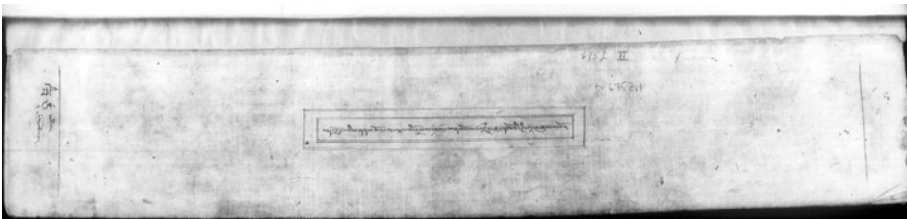


Illustration 21: Title page *Kātantra* 4, BL Or. 6752 vol. 2 page 1: WAM TSA f. 1r.

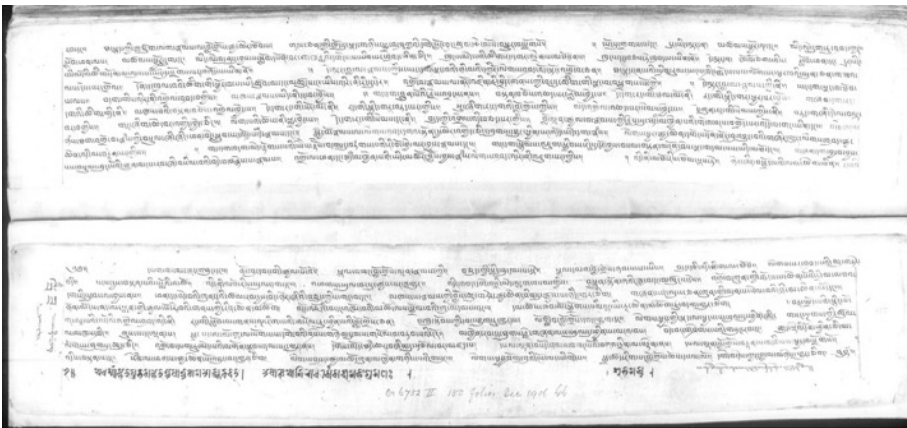


Illustration 22: Final pages *Kātantra* 4.6, BL Or. 6752 vol. 2 page 152: WAM ZA f. 31v-32r.

Here we have, therefore, partial remains of another manuscript of the '*Grel bshad chen mo*. This second manuscript of the text clearly attests to the popularity of this *Ka lā pa'i 'grel bshad chen mo*. It is also a further confirmation that Snye thang lo tsā ba's commentary did in fact cover

the fourth chapter of *Kātantra*, on *kṛt* formations, as well. For this particular manuscript we have a *terminus ante quem* in the English handwritten marginal captions dating the reception of it as a gift from the “Secretary of State for India” in 1905/1906.

Interestingly, in two of the chapter colophons in BL Or. 6752 the author’s own pupil Blo gros dbang phyug is identified as the scribe,⁴³ that is the same scribe as the one responsible for the BDRC manuscript and *ipso facto* probably also for the BL Or. 6626 manuscript. Blo gros dbang phyug is also credited, in the extensive section of colophon materials at the end of the manuscript, as one the individuals who requested Snye thang lo tsa ba to write this commentary.⁴⁴ If this same Blo gros dbang phyug indeed was the scribe of (part of) BL Or. 6752, this would place the date of this manuscript also in the fifteenth century. However, I suppose we should also reckon with the possibility that a later copyist may have faithfully copied these parts of the colophon as well.⁴⁵

Two more scribes are identified in BL Or. 6752: (Gsol ja ba) Blo gros bsod nams⁴⁶ and (Sgra tshad rig pa) Blo gros chos dpal.⁴⁷ The latter may have been a supervisor to the entire scriptorial project of production and correction. It is striking that the names of all four individuals involved in the creation of this text and the transmission of this manuscript begin with “Blo gros”. Do we have here an instance of the widespread custom in Tibetan Buddhism for monks to receive an ordination name which shares components with the name of the ordaining *bla ma*? Were not only Blo gros dbang phyug but also Blo gros bsod nams and Blo gros chos dpal (i.e. all three scribes mentioned in this manuscript) personal disciples of the author Snye thang Blo gros brtan pa, and were they ordained by the master himself? At present we can only speculate, but it certainly is not farfetched to suppose they may have been.

⁴³ BL Or. 6752: *Kātantra* 3.5 (f. 38r3) and *Kātantra* 4.1 (f. 41r5): *blo gros rab tu gsal ba / ngag dbang lo tsa ba blo gros dbang phyug*.

⁴⁴ BL Or. 6752: *Kātantra* 4.6 (f. 32r5): *rang gi slob ma gnas lnga rig pa'i pha rol tu phyin pa'i blo gros can / mthu stobs kyi dbang phyug tu gyur pa / lotstsha ba blo gros dbang phyug dang (...)* *dge ba'i bshes gnyen du mas gsol ba btab pa'i ngor*.

⁴⁵ Note, for instance, that in the much later manuscript copy (by Mgon po Tshe brtan, Gangtok, Sikkim 1977) of Snye thang’s commentary on *Tshig gter* (BDRC W23195) the text of the colophon of the manuscript it was evidently based on was copied verbatim, f. 153v5-6: (...) *snyan ngag pa blo gros dbang phyug gis yang yang gsol ba btab pa'i ngor / blo gros brtan pa bzhed [sic; = bzhi] pas sbyar ba'o / yi ge pa ni blo gros rab tu gsal ba khro phu snyan ngag dbang phyug go*.

⁴⁶ *Kātantra* 4.2 (f. 16v5); *Kātantra* 4.4 (f. 18r10-18v1); *Kātantra* 4.5 (f. 19r2).

⁴⁷ *Kātantra* 4.6 (f. 32r8).

The colophon materials brought together at the end of the manuscript⁴⁸ are diverse, and attempt to give an overview of the transmission of *Kātantra* treatises in Tibet. The colophon of the canonical translation of the *sūtra* text (HSGLT 1 CG 10) is quoted *in toto* first and foremost (f. 30v9-31r6). Then the focus moves to the complex transmission of the *Śiṣyāhitā* commentary (HSGLT 1 CG 12 and CG 14; f. 31r6-32r4).

The actual colophon of the present work specifies that the author's pupil Blo gros dbang phyug, the linguist (*sgra pa*) Amogha, and others had requested the author to compose this commentary, and that he did so on the basis of the grace (i.e. teaching or patronage?) of Bsod nams bzang po. A charming detail is the play on words with the two components of his most prominent pupil's name: *blo gros* and *dbang phyug*:⁴⁹

'This *Brda sprod pa'i snying po ka lā pa'i mdo'i 'grel bshad*, authored by the fourth (Dpal ldan) Blo gros brtan pa has now been completed. Faced by the petitions [to write this treatise] by many *kalyāṇamitras*, such as his own disciple translator Blo gros dbang phyug, whose mind (*blo gros*) has reached perfection in the five *vidyāsthānas* and who became master (*dbang phyug*) of power, and the grammarian Amogha, who reached perfection in the study of the Sanskrit language, who is skilled in the methods of *mantras* and is powerful, (...) [the author composed this work], basing himself on the grace of (Dpal ldan) Bsod nams bzang po.'

We find a line of Indic "Vartula" script containing the standard formula *ye dharmā hetuprabhavā* etc. and the concluding benediction *śubham astu* in the last line of the final folio of the manuscript (32r9; see illustration 22).

So, fitting the pieces of the puzzle together (again), we can conclude that in BDRC W2PD17532 and BL Or. 6626 we have two fragmented remains of the same manuscript (set). And on the basis of both BL Or. 6626 and BL Or. 6725 we can affirm that Snye thang Blo gros brtan pa's *Ka lā pa'i 'grel bshad chen mo* commentary did indeed cover the entirety of *Kātantra*'s rule system, including the fourth and final chapter on

⁴⁸ BL Or. 6752 vol. 2 (150-152), f. 30v9-32r9.

⁴⁹ BL Or. 6752 vol. 2 (152), f. 32r4-32r7: *brda sprod pa'i snying po ka lā pa'i mdo'i 'grel bshad 'di ni | rang gi slob ma gnas lnga rig pa'i pha rol tu phyin pa'i blo gros can | mthu stobs kyi dbang phyug tu gyur pa | lotstsha ba blo gros dbang phyug dang | legs sbyar gyi skad la sbyangs pa phul du phyin zhing | gsang sngags kyi tshul la mkhas shing | nus pa dang ldan pa | sgra pa a mo gha la sogs pa dge ba'i bshes gnyen du mas gsol ba btab pa'i ngor | mkhyen rab dang thugs rje gzhan las phul du phyin pa mnga' bas | bde bar gshegs pa'i gsung rab dang | rgyud sde'i don phyin ci ma log pa thugs su [= thugs su] chud cing | 'gro ba dpag tu med pa'i mgon skyabs dam par gyur nas | dgos 'dod thamd [= thams cad] char bzhi du stsol bar mdzad pa | dpal ldan bsod nams bzang po'i bka' drin la brten nas | dpal ldan blo gros brtan pa bzhi pas sbyar ba rdzogs so |.*

primary nominal derivation (*krt*). Therefore it has now been possible to reconstruct the entire text of Snye thang Blo gros brtan pa's 'Grel bshad chen mo Kātantra commentary. With its estimated total size of circa 2000 folios⁵⁰ (in six-line manuscript) it is certainly among the most extensive Tibetan works on Sanskrit grammar ever written in the pre-modern era, vying with Sa bzang mati paṅ chen's Kātantra commentary *Legs sbyar rab gsal snang ba* (431 folios in blockprint)⁵¹ and Bu ston's *Dpe 'grel chen po* commentary on the examples in Kātantra (543 folios in blockprint),⁵² and even Si tu Paṅ chen's *Cāndra* commentary *Legs bshad 'dren pa'i gru rdzings* (929 folios in blockprint).⁵³ Thus far no xylographs of the 'Grel bshad chen mo have come to light. It most certainly was a treatise of the caliber and stature that would have justified xylographic reproduction.

2.4. Subdivision of Snye thang lo tsā ba's Kātantra Commentary

2.4.1. BDRC W2PD17532 4.2-7.4

1. *Sandhi*: BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 4 section 2 p. 57-216 = f. 1-80r6⁵⁴

2.1. Nouns *pāda* 1: BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 4 section 3 p. 217-358 = f. 1-75r5⁵⁵

2.2. Nouns *pāda* 2: BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 4 section 4 p. 359-612 = f. 1-126r3⁵⁶

2.3. Nouns *pāda* 3: BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 4 section 5 p. 613-916 = f. 1-152r5⁵⁷

⁵⁰ The approximate ratio of folios of manuscript 'A' (BDRC W2PD17532 & BL Or. 6626) : manuscript 'B' (BL Or. 6752) = 5 : 2.

⁵¹ HSGLT 2: 91-98.

⁵² HSGLT 2: 81-89.

⁵³ HSGLT 2: 169-180.

⁵⁴ BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 4 section 2 *finitur*: f. f. 40r1-40r2: *brda sprod pa'i snying po ka la pa'i mdo yi bshad pa la / mtshams sbyor gyi mdo / rkang pa drug pa'i bshad pa rdzogs so / mtshams sbyor ji snyed pa'i 'grel pa / dpal ldan blo gros brtan pa bzhi pas sbyar ba'o / yi ge pa ni / blo gros rab tu gsal ba ngag dbang lotstsha ba blo gros dbang phyug gis bgyis pa'o.*

⁵⁵ BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 4 section 3 *finitur*: f. 75r3-75r5: *brda sprod pa'i snying po ka la pa'i mdo yi bshad pa la / ming bzhi par / ming le dang po'i mdo yi bshad pa rdzogs so // ming le dang po'i 'grel pa / dpal ldan bloos brtan pa bzhi pas sbyar ba'o / yi ge pa ni / shākya'i btsun pa nang [?] ba con ldan pa / bloos spyas [?] kyis leḍ par bgyis pa dge leḍ mchog tu gyur cig /*

⁵⁶ BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 4 section 4 *finitur*: f. 126r1-126r3: *brda sprod pa'i snying po ka la pa'i mdo yi bshad pa la ming bzhi par ming le gnyis pa'i mdo yi bshad pa rdzogs so // ming le gnyis pa'i 'grel pa / dpal ldan blo gros brtan pa bzhi pas sbyar ba'o / yi ge pa ni blo gros rab tu gsal ba / ngag dbang lo tsstha ba / blo gros dbang phyug gis bgyis pa'o.*

⁵⁷ BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 4 section 5 *finitur*: f. 152r4-152r5: *brda sprod pa'i snying po ka la pa'i mdo yi bshad pa las ming* [infralinear addition: *le*] [numeral: 4] *par / ming* [infralinear addition: *le*] [numeral 3] *pa'i 'grel pa la / [later handwriting: dpaldan bloos*

- 2.4. Nouns *pāda* 4: BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 5 section 1 p. 3-258 = f. 1-128r3⁵⁸
- 2.5. Nouns *pāda* 5: BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 5 section 2 p. 259-398 = f. 1-71r2⁵⁹
- 2.6. Nouns *pāda* 6: BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 5 section 3 p. 399-596 = f. 1-99r2⁶⁰
- 3.1. Verbs *pāda* 1: BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 6 section 1 p. 3-170 = f. 1-84r5⁶¹
- 3.2. Verbs *pāda* 2: BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 6 section 2 p. 171-456 = f. 1-144r4⁶²
- 3.3. Verbs *pāda* 3: BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 6 section 3 p. 457-610 = f. 1-77r3⁶³
- 3.4. Verbs *pāda* 4: BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 6 section 4 p. 611-992 = f. 1-190r5⁶⁴

brtan pas] sbyar ba'o / yi ge pa ni bloos rab tu gsal ba / ngag dbang *lotstsha ba bloos dbang phyug gis* bgyis pa'o / shu bham.

- ⁵⁸ BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 5 section 1 *finitur*: f. 128r2-18r3: *brda sprod pa'i snying po ka lā pa'i mdo yi bshad pa las / ming bzhi par / ming le bzhi pa'i mdo yi bshad pa rdzogs so // ming le bzhi pa'i 'grel pa dpal ldan blo gros brtan pa bzhi pas sbyar ba'o // yi ge pa ni blo gros rab tu gsal ba ngag dbang lotstsha ba blo gros dbang phyug gis bgyis pa'o // shu bham.*
- ⁵⁹ BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 5 section 2 *finitur*: f. 70v5-71r1: *brda sprod pa'i snying po ka lā pa'i [missing; mdo yi bshad pa] [71r1:] las bshad pa las / ming le bzhi par ming le lnga pa'i mdo yi bshad pa rdzogs so // ming le lnga pa'i 'grel pa / dpal ldan blo gros brtan pa bzhi pas sbyar ba'o / yi ge pa ni blo gros rab tu gsal ba / ngag dbang lotstsha ba blo gros dbang phyug giso // manggalam.*
- ⁶⁰ BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 5 section 3 *finitur*: f. 98v5-99r2: *brda sprod pa'i snying po ka lā pa'i mdo yi bshad pa las / ming le bzhi par ming le bzhi par / ming le drug pa'i mdo yi bshad pa rdzogs so / ming le drug pa'i 'grel pa / dpal ldan blo gros brtan pa bzhi pas sbyar ba'o // yi ge pa ni / blo gros rab tu gsal ba / ngag dbang lo tstsha ba blo gros dbang phyug gis bgyis pa'o // manggalam.*
- ⁶¹ BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 6 section 1 *finitur*: f. 84r5-84v1: *brda sprod pa'i snying po ka lā pa'i mdo'i bshad pa las / kun bshad pa'i mdo / rkang pa dang po'i bhad pa rdzogso / kun bshad dang po'i 'grel pa / dpal ldan bloos [= blo gros] brtan pa [numeral 4] pas sbyar ba'o / yig ge pa ni blo gros rab tu gsal ba / ngag dbang lotstsha ba blo gros dbang phyug gis bgyis pa'o // dge'o.*
- ⁶² BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 6 section 2 *finitur*: f. 144r3-144r4: *brda sprod pa'i snying po / ka lā pa'i mdo yi bshad pa la / kun pa'i mdo / rkang pa [numeral: 2] pa'i bshad pa rdzogsho / kun [numeral: 2] pa'i 'grel pa dpal ldan blo gros brtan pa bzhi pas sbyar ba'o / yige pa ni blo gros rab tu gsal ba / ngag dbang lotstsha ba blo gros dbang phyug gis bgyis pa'o // shubham.*
- ⁶³ BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 6 section 3 *finitur*: f. 77r2-77r3: *brda sprod pa'i snying po / ka lā pa'i mdo yi bshad pa la / rkun [sic] bshad pa'i mdo / rkang pa [numeral: 3] pa'i bshad pa rdzogsho / kun gsum pa'i 'grel pa / dpaldan blo gros brtan pa bzhi pas sbyar ba'o / yige pa ni blo gros rab tu gsal ba ngag dbang lotstsha ba blo gros dbang phyug gis bgyis pa'o // dge'o.*
- ⁶⁴ BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 6 section 4 *finitur*: f. 190r5: *pa rasmāi'i rnam dbye byung pa la / pitsa'i rkyen yang (?) na 'jig cing / yang (?) na mi [ends abruptly; no concluding formulae or colophons] [affixed tag: 6.6446.3]*

- 3.5. Verbs *pāda* 5: BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 7 section 1 p. 3-178 = f. 1-87r⁶⁵
 3.6. Verbs *pāda* 6: BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 7 section 2 p. 179-450 = f. 1-135r⁶⁶
 3.7. Verbs *pāda* 7: BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 7 section 3 p. 451-554 = f. 1-52r⁶⁷
 3.8. Verbs *pāda* 8: BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 7 section 4 p. 555-658 = f. 1-52r⁶⁸

2.4.2. BL Or. 6626

- 4.5. *Kṛt* formation *pāda* 5 (incomplete: first five folios missing): BL Or. 6626 (2-46): WAM 6-49r⁶⁹

2.4.3. BL Or. 6752

- 3.5. Verbs *pāda* 5: BL Or. 6752 vol. 1 (1-39): E - PA f. 1-38r⁷⁰

⁶⁵ BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 7 section 1 *finitur*: f. 86v4-87r2: *brda sprod pa'i snying po / ka lā pa'i mdo yi bshad pa la : kun bshad pa'i mdo : rkang pa lnga pa'i bshad pa rdzogs so / kun bshad lnga pa'i 'grel pa : dpal ldan blo gros brtan pa bzhi pas sbyar ba'o / yi ge pa ni : blo gros rab tu gsal ba : ngag dbang lotstsha ba blo gros dbang phyug gis bgyis pa'o // // slad (?) du ma dpe dag la gang mchis pa'i / yi ge'i gzugs dang dag dang ma dag sogs / par tu btab 'di'i dge ba gang mchis pa / mar gyur nam mkhyen go 'phang la reg shog / [minusc.: lan cig zhus ma XXXr dag /].*

⁶⁶ BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 7 section 2 *finitur*: f. 136r2-136r3: *brda sprod pa'i snying po ka lā pa'i mdo'i bshad pa las / kun bshad pa'i mdo rkang pa drug pa'i bshad pa rdzogs so / kun bshad drug pa'i 'grel pa dpal ldan blo gros brtan pa bzhi pas sbyar ba'o / yi ge pa ni / blo gros rab tu gsal ba ngag dbang lotstsha ba bloos dbang phyug gis bgyis pa'o // [minusc.: ma XXXr lan gcig zhus // bka' bcung (?) ba dang chos gnyis (?) kyis so //].*

⁶⁷ BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 7 section 3 *finitur*: f. 52r4-52r5: *brda sprod pa'i snying po / kā la [sic] pa'i mdo'i bshad pa las / kund [= kun bshad] pa'i mdo rkang pa bdun pa'i [PROBABLE LAPSUS; SYLLABLES OMITTED: bshad pa rdzogs so / kun bshad bdun pa'i ?] 'grel pa dpaldan bloos [= dpal ldan blo gros] brtan pa [numeral 4] pas sbyar ba'o / yi ge pa ni / bloos [= blo gros] rab tu gsal ba / ngag dbang lo tstsha ba blo gros dbang phyug gis bgyis pa'o // bkra shis.*

⁶⁸ BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 7 section 4 *finitur*: f. 51v5-52r2: *brda sprod pa'i snying po / ka lā pa'i mdo'i bshad pa las / kun bshad pa'i mdo rkang pa bryad pa'i bshad pa rdzogs so // kun bshad bryad pa'i 'grel pa dpaldan blo gros brtan pa bzhi pas sbyar ba'o / yi ge pa ni / blo gros rab tu gsal ba ngag dbang lo tstsha ba blo gros dbang phyug gis bgyis pa'o // su pra tiṣṭha badzra ye swahā manggalaṃ // [minusc.: mang (?) ltar (?) lan cig zhus dag / bris sub 'di las mang ba med do //].*

⁶⁹ BL Or. 6626 (45) *finitur*: f. 49r4-5: *brda sprod pa'i snying po / ka lā pa'i mdo yi bshad pa las / kṛt kyi mdo rkang pa lnga pa'i bshad pa rdzogs so // // kṛt rkang lnga pa'i 'grel pa / dpal ldan blo gros brtan pa bzhi pas sbyar ba'o // manggalaṃ [minusc.: gcig xx zhus]*

⁷⁰ BL Or. 6752 vol. 1 (1-39) *finitur*: f. 38r2-3: *brda' sprod pa'i snying po : ka lā pa'i mdo yi bshad pa las : kun bshad pa'i mdo : rkang pa lnga pa'i bshad pa rdzogs so // kun bshad pa lnga pa'i 'grel pa : dpal ldan blo gros brtan pa bzhi pas sbyar ba'o // yi ge pa ni / blo gros rab tu gsal ba / ngag dbang lo tsa ba blo gros dbang phyug gis bgyis pa'o / [minusc.: lan cig zhus].*

- 3.6. Verbs *pāda* 6: BL Or. 6752 vol. 1 (39-100): WAM - PHA f. 1-61r⁷¹
 3.7. Verbs *pāda* 7: BL Or. 6752 vol. 1 (101-126): WAM - BA f. 1-25r⁷²
 3.8. Verbs *pāda* 8: BL Or. 6752 vol. 1 (127-149): WAM - MA f. 1-23r⁷³
 4.1. *Kṛt* formation *pāda* 1: BL Or. 6752 vol. 2 (1-42): WAM - TSA f. 1-41r⁷⁴
 4.2. *Kṛt* formation *pāda* 2: BL Or. 6752 vol. 2 (43-60): WAM - TSHA f. 1-16v⁷⁵
 4.3. *Kṛt* formation *pāda* 3: BL Or. 6752 vol. 2 (60-83): WAM - DZA f. 1-23v⁷⁶
 4.4. *Kṛt* formation *pāda* 4: BL Or. 6752 vol. 2 (83-102): WAM - WA f. 1-18v⁷⁷

⁷¹ BL Or. 6752 vol. 1 (39-100) *finitur*: f. 61r7-8: *brda' sprod pa'i snying po / ka lā pa'i mdo yi bshad pa las / kun bshad pa'i mdo / rkang pa drug pa'i bshad pa rdzogs so // kun bshad pa drug pa'i 'grel pa dpal ldan blo gros brtan pa bzhi pas sbyar ba'o // [minusc.: lan cig legs par zhus] [61r8:] [minusc.: xxx xxx bya'i xxx 'dzin xxx xxx xxx blo gros mchog ldan rtod [= rtogs?] byin [?] dang bral ba'i / skal ldan [infralinear: xxx] xxx bshad ltar xxx xxx mkhyen pa'i xxx 'dir bkod do].*

⁷² BL Or. 6752 vol. 1 (101-126) *finitur*: f. 25r3-4: *brda' sprod pa'i snying po / ka lā pa'i mdo yi bshad pa las / kun bshad pa'i mdo / rkang pa bdun pa'i bshad pa rdzogs so // kun bshad bdun pa'i 'grel pa dpal ldan blo gros brtan pa bzhi pas sbyar ba'o // [minusc.: lan cig legs par zhus].*

⁷³ BL Or. 6752 vol. 1 (127-149) *finitur*: f. 23r2-3: *brda sprod pa'i snying po / ka lā pa'i mdo yi bshad pa las / kun bshad pa'i mdo : rkang pa brgyad pa'i bshad pa rdzogs so // kun bshad brgyad pa'i 'grel pa / dpal ldan blo gros brtan pa bzhi pas sbyar ba'o.*

⁷⁴ BL Or. 6752 vol. 2 (1-42) *finitur*: f. 41r5-6: *brda sprod pa'i snying po ka lā pa'i mdo yi bshad pa las / kṛt kyi mdo rkang pa dang po'i bshad pa rdzogs so // kṛt rkang dang po'i 'grel pa dpal ldan blo [41r6:] gros brtan pa bzhi pas sbyar ba'o / yi ge pa ni blo gros rab tu gsal ba / ngag dbang lo tsa ba blo gros dbang phyug gis bgyis pa'o / [minusc.: lan cig zhus so]*

⁷⁵ BL Or. 6752 vol. 2 (43-60) *finitur*: f. 16v4-5: *brda sprod pa'i snying po : ka lā pa'i mdo yi bshad pa las : kṛt kyi mdo : rkang pa gnyis pa'i bshad pa rdzogs so // kṛt rkang gnyis pa'i 'grel pa : dpal ldan blo gros brtan pa bzhi pas sbyar ba'o / yi ge pa ni : gsol ja ba blo gros bsod nams kyis bgyis pa'o / dge'o // [minusc.: lan cig legs par zhus/].*

⁷⁶ BL Or. 6752 vol. 2 (60-83) *finitur*: f. 23v6-8: *brda sprod pa'i snying po ka lā pa'i mdo / yi bshad pa las / kṛt kyi mdo : rkang pa gsum pa'i bshad pa rdzogs so // kṛt rkang gsum pa'i 'grel pa dpal ldan blo gros brtan pa bzhi pas sbyar ba'o / legs pa'i gsung mchog legs par gsal byed legs pa'i mchog gyur yi ge pa / rnam pa kun tu rnamkhyen [= rnam mkhyen] thob phyir rnam mang / dge la rab btson zhing / kun mkhyen bla ma kun tu mnyes byed kunas [= kun nas?] rgyas pa'i bloos [= blo gros] can / chos kyi tshul rnam chos bzhin snra ba chos dpal zhes bya gang de'o // [minusc.: lan cig nan tan du bgyis te zhus /] manggalabhawantu // //.*

⁷⁷ BL Or. 6752 vol. 2 (83-102) *finitur*: f. 18r10-v1: *brda sprod pa'i snying po ka lā pa'i mdo yi bshad pa las : kṛt kyi mdo rkang pa bzhi pa'i bshad pa rdzogs so // kṛt. rkang bzhi pa'i 'grel pa : dpal ldan blo gros brtan pa bzhi pas sbyar ba'o / yi ge pa ni / gsol ja ba blo gros bsod nams kyis bgyis pa'o // // manggalabhawantu [sic] // [minusc.: lan cig legs par nan tan du zhus / /].*

4.5. *Kṛt* formation *pāda* 5: BL Or. 6752 vol. 2 (102-120): WAM - ZHA f. 1-19r2⁷⁸

4.6. *Kṛt* formation *pāda* 6: BL Or. 6752 vol. 2 (121-151): WAM - ZA f. 1-30v9⁷⁹

Colophons: BL Or. 6752 vol. 2 (151-152): WAM - ZA f. 30v9-32r9

2.5. Appendix: Sanskrit verses in BDRC W2PD17532

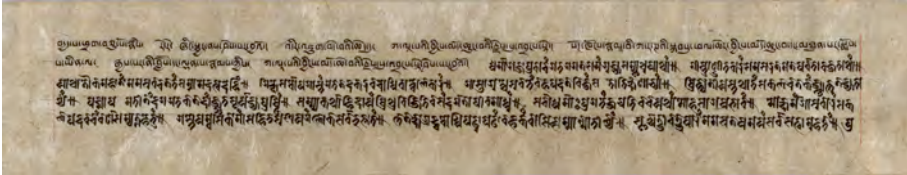


Illustration 23: *Kātantra* commentary, concluding sections, BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 7 section 4, f. 50v.

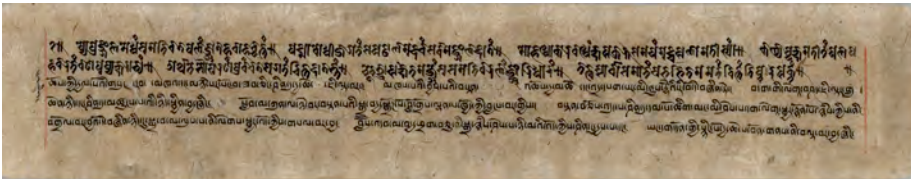


Illustration 24: *Kātantra* commentary, concluding sections, BDRC W2PD17532 vol. 7 section 4, f. 51r.

Transliteration of the (corrupt) Sanskrit verses at the end of *Kātantra* chapter 3.8 in BDRC W2PD17532_7_4, f. 50v2-51r2 (see illustrations 23-24):⁸⁰

dharmā-rājā-pravācaṃ gata-gagana-samaṃ guhya-sampr̥thu yāthāṃ //
śāstrā-[pa]ṇḍita-kāraṃ sama-sarata[?]-mata parvatā-vajra-tāthāṃ[?] //
yāthā tauka-mahānāṃ mama svaca-tataṃ samrāme datya dehīṃ //
śikṣe sarvopāsāstaṃ śata-tada-kara[?]-vaco dhivān dholakāraṃ[?] //
śāstrā gutye suvateṃ vaha[= bahu]-pada-tavijaṃ sa to tikṣaṇābhyāṃ
prihyatīsus tathātaṃ sakala catakam [?] jra[?]ttuta dyutādhyam //
padmopamatītaṃ daśa śatakataḍāṃ jñata sūrya-dyu-puṣṭim //
samyak arthāhidāṣaṃ prithu bijitivasam darśatā p̥tva mādhum \ //

⁷⁸ BL Or. 6752 vol. 2 (102-120) *finitur*: f. 19r1-2: *brda sprod pa'i snying po : ka lā pa'i mdo yi bshad pa las : kṛt kyi mdo : rkang pa lnga pa'i bshad pa rdzogs so // kṛt. rkang lnga pa'i 'grel pa : dpal ldan blo gros brtan pa bzhi pas sbyar ba'o / yi ge pa ni gsol ja ba blo gros bsod nams kyiṣ bgyis pa'o / [minusc.: lan cig zhus ti [?]] legs par bgyiso /] shu bham / / .*

⁷⁹ BL Or. 6752 vol. 2 (121-151) *finitur*: f. 30v: *brda sprod pa'i snying po ka lā pa'i mdo'i bshad pa las / kṛt kyi mdo rkang pa drug pa'i bshad pa rdzogs so // kṛt rkang drug pa'i 'grel pa / dpal ldan blo gros brtan pa bzhi pas sbyar ba'o / .*

⁸⁰ Sincere thanks are due to Dr. Péter-Dániel Szántó for his reading and analysis of this Sanskrit passage.

*sarvā dharmāḥ pragataṃ [?] jayati vaca yathāṃ moha sāgaṣa[?]bhāvaṃ /
 mokṣa rmaṅgāsu [= sumārge?] vāraṃ sakala-pada-vacaṃ-varṇa-sampanna-
 hetuṃ /
 śasteyam vase kāmāṃ sahita sukha yaśaṃ loka sarva tattātaṃ [?]
 tena kṣāgradvaco dhvi paṭuā paṭāṃ vahakaṃ vāsi yasmān mātīrṇyaṃ [??]
 sṛtyantī [?] candra pāraṃ mama sutaṣam ayaṃ X sarva sattvā muhantaṃ /
 prapye [?] prajñāṃ lamedhvaṃ [?] sumati catapalaṃ [?] jñāna-havāha[?]-
 vṛttaṃ [?]
 padmābodhvī [?] jagataṃ [?] sapaṭālam udacaṃ sarva-maṅgala-dātaṃ /
 moha-dhvokāra-vatdhvaṃ [?] kṣayakraru [?] samayaṃ [?] śuddha-śalāmati
 [?] syāṃ
 kalyas[?]dakṣam atītaṃ phalapahavarataṃ vaṇapuspakṣarābhyāṃ /
 tārthate [?] sausuraṇaṃ [?] pravamaṇcata [?] sugataṃ citta-dātataṃ [?]
 cūtan drāyaṃ kṣatamaṅgalaṃ susamativaralaṃ jñīridhvāraṃ [??] //
 tattvassarvāsamātaṃ subhahitamamataṃ vittaṃ tiṣṭarayaktaṃ [??] //*

Given that the Tibetan verses (f. 51r3-51v5), that follow immediately in the manuscript, are basically grammatically sound, whereas the Sanskrit is extremely maladroit and error-ridden it would seem that the Sanskrit is actually a translation from a Tibetan original, rather than the other way around:

*chos kyi rgyal po'i gsung rab mkha' dang mnyan par song ba zab cing shin
 tu rgya che XX ji lta bar /
 mkhas pa'i byas pa'i bstan 'chos rgya mtsho dang 'dra pa shin tu dam po
 tshig mang mo shes pa dag (/)
 legs sbyar rnon po rnam kyis ni chen nyid dang shin tu mtshungs pa 'di
 nyid sbyin bya zhing /
 slob ma kun la nye bar bstan pa'i sgra brgya sgrogs so blo gros ldan pa
 khyod kyi blangs bar gyis /
 bstan bcos 'dud pa shin tu dam po tshig mang mi shes pa dag legs sbyar
 rnon po rnam kyis ni 'grol bar bya'o de bzhin nyid du smra ba ma lus pa ni
 legs sbyar 'od kyis gsal bar bya /
 bloos [= blo gros] 'dab ma brgya phrag bcu ni sgra rnam shes pa nyi ma'i
 'od kyis shin tu rgyas pa dang /
 yang dag don gyi snying po rgya che sa bon gnas ni blta bar bya zhing
 sbrang ci 'thung bar gyis /
 chos rnam kun la rgyal ba'i gsung ni ji bzhin rmongs pa ma lus rab tu zhi
 bar bya ba dang /
 thar pa'i lam bzang mchog dang mtha'dag tshig dang ngag dang yige phun
 sum tshod pa'i rgyu [?] la ni /
 bstan bcos 'di ni gnasu 'dod cing phan dang bde dang grang pa dang bcas
 'jig /*

*rten kun du 'byung de bas bloos [= blo gros] dbang po dag pa'i mkhas pa
 mkhas [infralinear addition: pa] mang pos bsten 'di blo ldan blang bar
 bgyis /
 kho bo'i legs [infralinear addition: bshad] 'di ni nyi ma'i dbang po zla ba
 mchog ste sems can rmongs kun mthar [syllable obliterated] byed pa /
 'gro ba'i bloos [= blo gros] padma nyid ni 'dab ma dang bcas rgyas par byed
 la bkris sbyin par byed /
 skyes bu'i me tog la [infralinear addition: yang] yid gzhungs dang ni blo
 bzang 'bras bu la ni ye shes bdutsi [= bdud rtsi] 'jug //
 rmongs pa mun pa'i 'ching ba mnyam du zad par byed pa blo dang dad pa
 ngag gi [infralinear addition: s] blang bar gyis /
 bloos [= blo gros] dpag bsam shing gi tshig ni 'bras bu mchog gyur yi ge'i lo
 tog ma mnyam pa dag las /
 mtha' dag don dang bcas pa'i bcud rnam s kyi ni bde gsheḍ gsung la sems
 kyi tshim pa 'byung 'gyur zhing /
 yid kyid dbang po'i zhing la ting 'dzin bzang po mchog dang shes pa'i
 myu [infralinear addition: g] gu rgyas par 'gyur /
 de phyir bdag gi leg [infralinear addition: s] bshad kun gyi thun mong
 gyur 'di sems ni rnal du gnas [supralinear addition: par] blang bar rid [=
 rigs] /*

3. *So many Sthiramatis! A brief case study of the inheritance, adoption and sharing of personal ordination names in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*

What then about this construct of the four Blo gros brtan pas, the four Sthiramatis?

3.1. *Sthiramati*

Eponymous to the three Tibetan Blo gros brtan pas was, of course, the famous sixth-century Indian scholastic Sthiramati, one of the foremost commentators of the famous Indian master Vasubandhu. The Indian 'original' Sthiramati (470-550?), hailing from Valābhi (Gujarat) yet mainly active in the monastic academy of Nālandā, was an expert in *Yogācāra* and *Abhidharma* scholasticism, and was primarily famed for his commentaries.

His prime importance in the Tibetan traditions lies in his canonized extensive *Tattovārthā Ṭīkā* commentary on Vasubandhu's *Abhidharma-kośa*,⁸¹ and he wrote a *Vibhāṣā* commentary on the same master's *Pañcaskandhaka*.⁸² He also authored *Ṭīkā* commentaries on two early *Mahāyāna sūtras*, the *Akṣayamatīnirdeśa* and the *Kāśyapaparivarta*. The

⁸¹ Beijing *Bstan 'gyur* vols. *mdo* 129 f. 1-385r8 and 130 f. 1-565r8.

⁸² Beijing *Bstan 'gyur* vol. *mdo* 59 f. 1-67v1; Kramer (2013-2014).

remainder of his oeuvre is devoted to the exegesis of *Yogācāra* treatises, such as *Ratnagotravibhāga* and *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*, as well as a number of other works.

Although Sthiramati may not have been a direct disciple of Vasubandhu, he is often depicted as such in Tibetan pictorial art. For instance in this probably 19th-century Tibetan scroll painting portraying the famous Indian master Vasubandhu, we see Sthiramati seated at the foot of the master's throne (see illustration 25). Vasubandhu is shown teaching –quite unusually– at night under a star-sprangled sky, with Sthiramati bottom left and Vimuktisena bottom right. Vasubandhu is teaching (as his right hand gesture indicates) and debating (his left hand) at the same time. Sthiramati appears to be reading the *dpe cha* page he holds up. Or is he offering it to Vasubandhu? Is he offering his commentary to the *auctor intellectualis* of a number of the works he explored?



Illustration 25: Vasubandhu, with Sthiramati and Vimuktisena; scroll painting Tibet 19th century; Rubin Museum of Art no. P1999.33.5; Himalayan Art Resource no. 928.

Three Tibetan scholastics with the same ordination name (Tibetan *blo gros brtan pa* translates Sanskrit *sthīramati*) were styled the second, third and fourth Blo gros brtan pa respectively.

3.2. Shong Blo gros brtan pa

The 'second' Blo gros brtan pa was Shong Blo gros brtan pa (second half 13th cent.).⁸³ He was the younger brother (or perhaps nephew?) and pupil of the famed scholar Shong ston Rdo rje rgyal mtshan (c. 1235/1245-?).⁸⁴ He contributed nine translations to *Bstan 'gyur*, seven in the *Tantra* section, and two in the sphere of linguistics: a treatise on Sanskrit grammar entitled *Vibhakti-kārikā*⁸⁵ and his revision of his brother's translation of Daṇḍin's *Kāvyaśāstra*, which remained a standard textbook for the art of poetics in Tibet for centuries since.⁸⁶ He also figured prominently, together with his brother Rdo rje rgyal mtshan, in the transmission of the *Kālacakrantra*.

3.3. Dpang Blo gros brtan pa

Dpang lo tsā ba Blo gros brtan pa (1276-1342) was the 'third' Blo gros brtan pa.⁸⁷ He ranks among the foremost Sanskrit linguists of his day and age in Tibet. He was in fact a pupil of both Shong ston Rdo rje rgyal mtshan (see above) and Shong lo tsā ba, the 'second' Blo gros brtan pa.

He contributed no less than eight translations of Sanskrit grammatical treatises to the *Bstan 'gyur* canon.⁸⁸ In addition to his expertise in Sanskrit grammar and poetics he was also an achieved master in the Tibetan transmissions of *Abhidharma*, the *Kālacakrantra*, and epistemology (*pramāṇa*). A number of his translations in the field of *pramāṇa* can be found in *Bstan 'gyur*. Arguably the most notable among these is his rendering of Jinendrabuddhi's extensive *Ṭīkā* commentary on Dignāga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya* entitled *Viśālāmalavati*; it is not at all surprising that Dpang lo tsā ba chose to translate this particular commentary as it abounds in grammatical analyses.⁸⁹

⁸³ HSGLT 1: II.2.8, p. 88; Smith (2001: 193, 316 n. 602); BDRP P 1052.

⁸⁴ Smith (2001: 180, 193); BDRP P1046; Treasury of Lives: Shongton Dorje Gyeltsen.

⁸⁵ HSGLT 1: CG 6.

⁸⁶ HSGLT 1: II.2.8, p. 88; and see *infra*.

⁸⁷ HSGLT 1: II.2.9-II.2.10, p. 88-92; Smith (2001: 180, 193, 194); BDRP P 2085; Treasury of Lives: Pang Lotsāwa Lodro Tenpa; Ngag dbang skal ldan rgya mtsho's *Shel dkar chos 'byung* BDRP W1KG13996 p. 79-92; BDRP W1KG16556 p. 77-88; Khu byug (2013).

⁸⁸ HSGLT 1: CG 5, 8, 9, 11A, 14, 15, 24 and 32.

⁸⁹ HSGLT 1: 89.

He stood firmly in the robust tradition of Sanskrit studies in Sa skya monastery and the *Sa skya pa* school. In his adolescence he studied Sanskrit grammar and poetics at Sa skya, and specifically in Mang mkhar khra tshang with Mchog ldan pa.⁹⁰ Interspersed with his frequent visits of Nepal and India (traditionally the number of seven visits is mentioned)⁹¹ and subsequently, he taught extensively in Sa skya and other *Sa skya pa* convents, and acquired great fame as an outstanding scholar and teacher.

His particular skills are famously epitomized in this verse:⁹²

‘Acquired the key to the aphorisms of Shong ston.
Opened the treasury of the Sanskrit language.
Acquired the jewels of various traditions.
Master to celebrate the feast of aphorisms.’

His emphasis on the use of Indic originals of his source materials not only showed in his writing but also in his teaching. This is neatly exemplified by the following episode from his biography, speaking of the time when he was teaching in Sa skya or Gnas po che monastery in his early twenties. In it we hear a distant echo of the complaints voiced by his students on the skills and efforts required from them (apparently including reading of Sanskrit commentaries) by this –no doubt—demanding tutor:⁹³

‘As his teaching of *Abhidharma* and *Pramāṇa* was based on the *Sa skya pa* traditions and Indian commentaries, his students found it hard to grasp and therefore they requested him to write a commentary, and he subsequently commenced writing [a commentary].’

Later on in his life he spent several periods teaching in monastic colleges in various areas of central Tibet, such as Bsam yas, Gung thang,

⁹⁰ Ngag dbang skal ldan rgya mtsho’s *Shel dkar chos ’byung*, BDRC W1KG13996 p. 83: *de nas mang mkhar khra tshang du bla ma mchog ldan pa’i drung du byon nas / ston pa de ka lā pa dang / tsandra pa’i byings dang / snyan ngag me long gsan.*

⁹¹ Ngag dbang skal ldan rgya mtsho’s *Shel dkar chos ’byung*, BDRC W1KG13996 p. 85: *slar yang bal po dang rgya gar du lan bdun gyi bar du byon no.*

⁹² Ngag dbang skal ldan rgya mtsho’s *Shel dkar chos ’byung*, BDRC W1KG13996 p. 84 quoting from one of his translation colophons: *shong ston legs bshad lde mig blangs // legs sbyar skad kyi gter kha phye // sna tshogs gzhung lugs rin chen blangs // legs bshad dga’ ston ’gyed la dbang.*

⁹³ Ngag dbang skal ldan rgya mtsho’s *Shel dkar chos ’byung* BDRC W1KG13996 p. 86-87: *mngon pa dang tshad ma sa sde dang rgya ’grel gyis (gyi) steng nas gsungs pas grwa pa rnams ’dzin dka’ bar byung nas tikka mdzad par zhus pas / de nas rtsom pa’i dbu tshugs so.*

Stag lung, Byang Rwa sgreng, Gtsang phu Ne'u thog,⁹⁴ and in particular in Sa skya and Bo dong E, two strongholds of Sanskrit learning in Tibet. He was in fact the abbot of Bo dong E monastery in the last five years of his life.

His activities in translating and writing continued throughout his career. In addition to his canonized translations in the areas of grammar, epistemology and poetics, his biography refers, *inter alia*, to his authoring corrections and annotations to translations of *Cāndra* grammar,⁹⁵ *Abhidharmakośa*⁹⁶ and *Pramāṇavārttika*.⁹⁷ We have his commentary on *Kāvyaḍarśa*,⁹⁸ as well as a summary of this same basic treatise presumably also by him.⁹⁹ And, of course, above we have met with –what I assume to be– his partial translation of Dharmadāsa's *vṛtti* on *Cāndra vyākaraṇa*.

His major original writings on Sanskrit grammar were his *Brda sprod pa'i snying po gsal ba*, 'Essence of grammar clarified' (also known as *Dpang lo'i shog cig ma*, 'One-leaf [treatise] of Dpang lo', possibly 1309) along with its auto-commentary dated 1339,¹⁰⁰ and his undated *Tshogs gsum gsal ba*, 'Three collectives [of language] clarified',¹⁰¹ which he wrote probably towards the end of his life at the behest of Gzhon nu seng ge.¹⁰² He may also be the author of a brief yet extremely technical grammatical analysis of the Sanskrit term *pratītyasamutpāda* preserved in one of the interstices of *Bstan 'gyur*.¹⁰³

3.4. Snye thang Blo gros brtan pa

⁹⁴ Ngag dbang skal ldan rgya mtsho's *Shel dkar chos 'byung* BDRC W1KG13996 p. 89: *lha sa dang bsam yas dang / gung thang / stag lung / byang rwa sgreng / gtsang phu ne'u thog*.

⁹⁵ Ngag dbang skal ldan rgya mtsho's *Shel dkar chos 'byung* BDRC W1KG13996 p. 85: *sgra tsandra pa'i 'gyur bcos*; see also above, section 1.

⁹⁶ Ngag dbang skal ldan rgya mtsho's *Shel dkar chos 'byung* BDRC W1KG13996 p. 85: *mdzod kyi 'gyur bcos dang mchan*.

⁹⁷ Ngag dbang skal ldan rgya mtsho's *Shel dkar chos 'byung* BDRC W1KG13996 p. 85: *rnam 'brel ('grel) gyi 'gyur bcos dang mchan rnams mdzad*.

⁹⁸ BDRC W2PD17532_3_2: *snyan ngag me long gi rgya cher 'grel pa gzhung don gsal ba*, f. 1-135v6; f. 135v6: *dpal ldan blo gros brtan pa zhes bya bas sbyar ba*. Ngag dbang skal ldan rgya mtsho's *Shel dkar chos 'byung* BDRC W1KG13996 p. 88: *de nas sa skya bla brang du byon / me long gi 'tikka mdzad*.

⁹⁹ BDRC W2PD17532_3_3: *snyan ngag me long gi bsdus don*, f. 1-7v2.

¹⁰⁰ HSGLT 2: I.2.2.8, p. 70-75.

¹⁰¹ HSGLT 2: I.2.2.9, p. 75-79.

¹⁰² HSGLT 2: I.2.2.9, p. 77; Ngag dbang skal ldan rgya mtsho's *Shel dkar chos 'byung* BDRC W1KG13996 p. 89: *bla ma gzhon nu seng ges bskul nas tshogs gsum gsal bar mdzad*.

¹⁰³ Verhagen (1996); Verhagen (forthcoming A: section 3.1.2).

The designation ‘fourth’ Blo gros brtan pa falls to Snye thang lo tsā ba Blo gros brtan pa (mid-15th cent.).¹⁰⁴ In the present article we have met with his extensive commentary on *Kātantra* grammar. He also authored corrections to the translation of Daṇḍin’s manual of poetics, *Kāvyaḍarśa*, initially made by one of the—as one might say—‘founding fathers’ of this lineage, Shong ston Rdo rje rgyal mtshan, which had already been improved upon by the second and third Blo gros brtan pa. In fact, two of the four xylograph *Bstan ‘gyur* editions contain the version by Dpang lo tsā ba (the Peking and Snar thang recensions), whereas the other two have the version of Snye thang Blo gros brtan pa (*in casu* the Sde dge and Co ne redactions).¹⁰⁵ He also wrote an extensive commentary on Sa skya Paṇḍita’s *Tshig gi gter*, a partial translation of the *Amarakośa* Sanskrit lexicon.¹⁰⁶ He may not have been a direct disciple of Dpang lo tsā ba, but he was for all intents and purposes an heir to his tradition of *Vyākaraṇa* and *Alaṅkārasāstra* studies.

Was the appellation ‘fourth Blo gros brtan pa’ perhaps created by Snye thang Blo gros brtan pa himself?¹⁰⁷ Did he regard or represent himself as an heir to the transmissions via Shong and Dpang Blo gros brtan pa? Or was this moniker conferred by his entourage? In the latter case a likely candidate could be the scribe of the *Kātantra* ‘*Grel bshad chen mo*’ manuscript introduced above, Blo gros dbang phyug, who was a personal disciple of Snye thang Blo gros brtan pa. The available colophons and other sources unfortunately do not provide us with a definite answer to this particular question.

3.5. Three Blo gros brtan pas

All three Tibetan ‘Sthiramatis’ were master philologists involved in the transmission of grammar and poetics and related areas of scholasticism and they may therefore have been regarded as a kind of dynasty by their contemporaries or in retrospect. Parenthetically, the ordination name Blo gros brtan pa was by no means unique to the three individuals we have been discussing. We find Blo gros brtan pa also as the name of, for instance, the seventh Dga’ ldan khri pa Blo gros

¹⁰⁴ The available biographical data on this individual are extremely sparse; HSGLT 1: 92 & notes 216 & 217; Smith (2001: 315 note 604).

¹⁰⁵ Van der Kuijp (1996: 379).

¹⁰⁶ BDRC: W2PD17532_3_4: *tshig gter gyi rgya cher ‘grel pa*; also BDRC W23195: *mngon brjod kyi bstan bcos tshig gi gter zhes bya ba’i ‘grel pa rgya cher don gsal ba*; BDRC W23195 f. 153v5-6: *snyan ngag pa blo gros dbang phyug gis yang yang gsol ba btab pa’i ngor / blo gros brtan pa bzhed [sic] pas sbyar ba’o / yi ge pa ni blo gros rab tu gsal ba khro phu snyan ngag dbang phyug go*.

¹⁰⁷ As suggested by Gene Smith (2001: 315 n. 604).

brtan pa (1402-1476)¹⁰⁸ and Kha che paṅ chen Blo gros brtan pa, a 'Kashmiri great scholar' of unknown exact date, who was involved in the transmission of the *Abhidharmakośa* in Tibet.¹⁰⁹

In a wider perspective the three Blo gros brtan pas in question belong to the transmission lineage of Sanskrit grammatical studies in Tibet from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, which I have documented in HSGLT 1.¹¹⁰ In this particular *guru-śiṣya-paramparā* Dpang Blo gros brtan pa constitutes a veritable hub. He was a pupil of prominent Sanskrit linguists of this time: Stag sde ba Seng ge rgyal mtshan (1212-1294), Shes rab seng ge (1251-1315), Shong ston Rdo rje rgyal mtshan (c. 1235/1245-?), and Shong Blo gros brtan pa (second half 13th cent.). And, in his turn, he taught many of the brightest of the next generation of Indo-Tibetan philologists, such as his nephew Byang chub rtse mo (1303-1380), Sa bzang Ma ti paṅ chen Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1294-1376), and Blo gros dpal (14th century). Via scholars such as Zha lu Chos skyong bzang po (1441-1528) and Skyogs ston Ngag dbang rin chen bkra shis (ca. 1495-after 1577) this lineage continues uninterrupted until the sixteenth century, and in fact way beyond. The celebrated Sde gzhung rin po che Kun dga' bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1906-1986) appears to have been the last living holder of the full (*lung*) transmission of the *Sa skya pa* scholastic tradition on Sanskrit grammar.¹¹¹

We may wonder then what is the position of the fourth Blo gros brtan pa, i.e. Snye thang Blo gros brtan pa in this dynasty? Can his place in the transmission lineage of Sanskrit scholasticism be established? Minimal biographical data are available on Snye thang Blo gros brtan pa so there is very little to go on in this respect. Seeing his date he cannot have been a direct disciple of either Shong or Dpang. Snye thang Blo gros brtan pa built and expanded upon work by both his earlier namesakes, so the least we can say is that he certainly stands in what could be called a scholastic scriptural connection to Shong and Dpang, the second and third Blo gros brtan pas.

3.6. Minute excursus: Sanskrit grammar and the *Kālacakratāntra*

Speaking of the transmission lineages of Sanskrit linguistics, I would like to turn very briefly to a question that presented itself to me already in the 1980s in the course of my Ph.D. research, and which has nagged me ever since. It struck me then that almost invariably the scholars / translators involved in the area of Sanskrit grammar in the 13th and

¹⁰⁸ Treasury of Lives: The Seventh Gaden Tripa, Lodro Tenpa.

¹⁰⁹ BDRC P10023.

¹¹⁰ HSGLT 1: 324-326.

¹¹¹ Private communication Prof. David Jackson, 1996 (?), then Hamburg University.

following centuries were also experts in *Kālacakratantra*.¹¹² Was this coincidence, or was there some structural correlation between these two fields? Obviously, in this period the lore of the *Kālacakratantra* was widely popular in Tibet. So the correlation between the *Kālacakra* and *vyākaraṇa* traditions may be entirely coincidental.

However, it should be noted that the *Kālacakratantra* tradition is particularly rich in the employment of language and script based elements in its *praxis*, most notably perhaps in its *rnam bcu dbang ldan* (Sanskrit *daśabala*) monogram emblem. It is telling, for instance, that Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290-1364) wrote an 'instruction tool' (*bshad thabs*) specifically on the linguistic issues of *Kālacakratantra*, containing *inter alia* a lengthy exposé on *rnam bcu dbang ldan* and a pseudo-grammatical analysis of the Sanskrit term *evam*.¹¹³ We find a continuation of this in similar work of Zha lu Chos skyong bzang po (1441-1528), *in casu* in his epitome of Sanskrit linguistics entitled (*Ka lā pa'i*) *Spyi don gsal ba'i snying po*.¹¹⁴ In it he devotes a section to the grammatical techniques applied in the *Kālacakratantra* tradition.¹¹⁵ The author's close association with the *Kālacakratantra* is shown also by the homage to the Buddha *Kālacakra* at the beginning of this treatise (*namah śrīkālacakrāya*),¹¹⁶ whereas commonly in Indo-Tibetan linguistics such homage would be addressed to deities of language such as Mañjuśrī or Sarasvatī.

So, we see that some of the most prominent grammarians / philologists of the Tibetan 'Middle Ages' have written works specifically on the linguistic aspects of the *Kālacakratantra*. And we know that the majority of the Tibetan scholars of Sanskrit grammar were involved in the transmission of that same *Tantra*. Still it remains an open question whether this correlation is purely coincidental or signals a significant link between the two fields of expertise. Future research may shed some light on this tantalizing question.

4. Concluding Observations

This article has provided further evidence of the intensive attention paid to the indigenous Indic traditions of Sanskrit grammar in Tibetan scholasticism of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The incomplete translation of the *Cāndra vṛtti*, which I assume to be by Dpang lo tsā ba

¹¹² HSGLT 1: 212-213.

¹¹³ HSGLT 1: 96; HSGLT 2: 1.2.2.10, p. 79-81; Verhagen (1993: 325-329); (forthcoming A: section 3.1.3.2).

¹¹⁴ BDRC: W1KG9085; Verhagen (forthcoming A: section 3.1.3.2) and (forthcoming B: section 2).

¹¹⁵ BDRC: W1KG9085 f. 9r2-10r2.

¹¹⁶ BDRC: W1KG9085 f. 1v1.

Blo gros brtan pa (1276-1342), and the extensive commentary on *Kātantra* by Snye thang lo tsā ba Blo gros brtan pa (fifteenth century) clearly attest to this.

In the latter case it has been possible to reunite incomplete remnants of one single manuscript which are kept in distinct archives, namely the Buddhist Digital Resource Centre and the British Library. The dating of this manuscript set remains a vexing uncertainty. The scribes mentioned in the colophon materials point to a date in the fifteenth century. On the other hand, if the single manuscript folio 28 in BL Or. 6626 is indeed contemporaneous with the rest of BL Or. 6626 and with BDRC W2PD17532, and we take this as a *Leitfossil* so to speak, the set would date from the late seventeenth century at the earliest. As we should also reckon with the possibility that manuscripts may have been added to the set at various dates, the question of the date of the BDRC W2PD17532/BL Or. 6626 set remains undecided: ranging from the fifteenth to late seventeenth / early eighteenth century.

Moreover, also on the basis of a second (incomplete) manuscript of this same treatise in the British Library, we are presently able to reconstruct the entire text of Snye thang lo tsā ba's *Kātantra* commentary and we can now conclude that Snye thang's commentary covered all four chapters of *Kātantra*'s rule system. This indeed makes it one of the most voluminous treatises –if not the most voluminous-- on Sanskrit grammar ever written in Tibetan in pre-modern times.

Within this scholastic tradition three major exponents shared the ordination name Blo gros brtan pa and they were considered as masters continuing the work of their famous Indian namesake Sthiramati (sixth century CE). Perhaps they themselves professed to be heirs to the legacy of Sthiramati, or their entourage proffered them as such. Whatever may have been the case –probably it was a bit of both-- they bore the designations 'second' to 'fourth' Blo gros brtan pa with good right.

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BL = British Library, London.

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Jeannine Bischoff, Petra Maurer, and Charles Ramble (eds.), *On a Day of a Month of the Fire Bird Year. Festschrift for Peter Schwieger on the occasion of his 65th birthday*, Lumbini (Lumbini International Research Institute), 2020. xviii + 1015 pp. ISBN: 978-9937-0-6110-0.

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Including an Introduction by Jeannine Bischoff, this volume has 49 contributions, in their range and diversity reflecting the breadth of Schwieger's own research interests. They also reflect what one of the contributors to the volume refers to as his "widely regarded personal qualities", and it is therefore not surprising that – although consisting of more than one thousand pages, in itself an impressive achievement on the part of the editors and the publishers – the *Festschrift* could have, as Bischoff points out, easily been expanded if the submission deadline had been extended.

It is impossible for a reviewer of a book of such proportions and dealing with a wide range of topics to do justice, or even to simply mention, every single contribution. A brief mention of the major categories to which the majority of the articles can be assigned, and a necessarily somewhat arbitrary mention of a few of the contributions, is all that can be achieved.

As Schwieger himself is primarily a historian, it is perhaps not inappropriate to draw particular attention to a few of the contributions that fall into the category of "history".

Alex McKay (30), "The beginnings of colonial rule in Sikkim: according to the Council minute books", relates to the history of British colonial influence in the Himalayas, in this case, Sikkim. Based *inter alia* on unpublished documents, it explores how, having deposed the native ruler of Sikkim in 1888-1889, the British authorities strove to achieve political control by renovating the taxation system and introducing modern infrastructure through a consultative Council. The limited success of this policy up to the retirement of the first British Political Officer in Sikkim in 1918 is described with the close attention to detail and primary sources characteristic of McKay.

"Explaining the Dalai Lama to the Tibetans: Basil Gould's report on the enthronement of the 14th Dalai Lama" by Ulrike Roesler (35), explores the British involvement with the Tibetan government in Lhasa from a double perspective: not only that of the British, but also that of the Tibetans. Her article presents a report published in Delhi in 1948 by Basil Gould (1897-1972), who represented the British Raj at the enthronement of the 14th Dalai Lama in 1940. The report was

translated into Tibetan by the Sikkimese Rāṇi Chos-nyid rDo-rje (1897-1994) in Kalimpong, and subsequently printed in Lhasa with the approval of the Tibetan government. The Tibetan version is generally faithful to the English original, but some of Gould's comments, which would make no sense to a Tibetan reader, as well as certain sensitive political issues, such as the possible return of the Ninth Panchen Lama to Tibet, were omitted. The Tibetan translation was used by the British Mission in Lhasa as a gift to Tibetan officials and friends at the eve of the demise of an independent Tibetan state.

To the theme of "colonial rule" could perhaps be added an article by *John Bray* and the late *Tsering D. Gonkatsang (04)*, "Two Ladakhi accounts of the enthronement of Maharaja Pratap Singh of Jammu & Kashmir in 1886", since Jammu and Kashmir had been incorporated into the orbit of British India after 1857. There are two vivid Ladakhi accounts of the event, and, as the authors point out, they "represent what amounts to a new genre of Ladakhi historical writing". One of these accounts was published by A.H. Francke in 1926, while the other found its way into the British Library and has hitherto remained unpublished. The article presents an analysis of the two texts in their historical context; British perspectives on the enthronement; a discussion of the text published by Francke; and finally, a translation and text edition of the British Library manuscript.

A carefully documented article by *Syrhoi Sou (42)*, "Srong btsan sgam po. Historische Figur vs. Darstellung in tibetischen Schulbuchtexten", compares the divergent ways in which the historical narrative of the first Tibetan Emperor, Srong-btsan sgam-po (7th century C.E.), is presented in modern Tibetan-language schoolbooks in Tibet itself and in the Tibetan diaspora. Briefly stated, Marxist-Leninist ideology, introduced in the early 1950's, has remained the exclusive norm in China and Tibet, whereas in the diaspora, historical writing, inspired by Buddhism since the 11th century and regarding the early kings as divine emanations, remains normative. Thus, the Chinese textbooks do not mention the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet during the reign of Srong-btsan sgam-po, highlighting instead the missionary, self-sacrificing role of his spouse, the Chinese princess Wencheng, in spending her life among the less civilized Tibetans to promote "friendly relations" between the two nations and the consequent advantages that accrued to the Tibetans – points which are entirely absent from the textbooks published in the Tibetan exile, where the Tibetan Emperor is revered as a divine emanation of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. While this overall picture is not surprising, the article is, to the best of my knowledge, the only research-based attempt to deal with this – or similar – highly sensitive topics as reflected in Tibetan schoolbooks in a comparative perspective.

Alice Travers (43), "Changing emblems of social domination: a brief note on Tibetan aristocratic crests in the first half of the 20th century", is an inquiry into the crested stationary that ten Tibetan aristocratic families started to use during the first half of the 20th century, a topic about which very little has been known. According to Travers, the crests are "a magnificent example of cultural hybridity", combining Western and Tibetan symbolic elements, conforming, however, more or less closely to the Western heraldry in overall structure. They can be understood as "examples of the creativity displayed by the aristocracy in its strategies to maintain its social domination in Tibet during the first half of the 20th century. One such strategy was the appropriation of particular aspects of western modernity".

Turning to Buddhist studies, which are well represented in the volume, a few might be mentioned as rather random examples among many excellent contributions.

With regard to study of ritual, Cathy Cantwell (6), "Engaging the senses in the Tibetan tantric "Major Practice Session" (*sgrub chen*)", explores a communal ritual in which the lay participants are offered the possibility of developing the pure vision of the world as an enlightened "maṇḍala" through engaging receptively – but without the requirement of meditation and long periods of spiritual discipline – with the full range of their senses in the ritual performance of the principal lama and his assistants. As Cantwell points out, this religious practice, viewed as a strategy to widen access to a religious doctrine, raises interesting questions concerning the relationship between lay people and ritual experts.

As for the Bön religion, Kalsang Norbu Gurung (16), "A restricted Bon ritual and its Buddhist lineages", deals with a ritual, the *byad 'grol*, "liberation from a curse". The article focuses "on one particular *byad 'grol* text entitled *Chang khros ma'i man ngag*, "An instruction for cleansing with beer"". After presenting a translation of this short text, and comparing it with three other versions, the author discusses how this ritual was performed by a several Buddhist masters, foremost the Fifth Dalai Lama, providing a fascinating example of how the conflict between Bön and Buddhism was sometimes of little relevance in the context of religious practice.

Two articles deal with yoga in Tibet. Petra Maurer (29), "How to strengthen the scholar's back? Reflections on *rgyab, back* and related terms", starts with a useful survey of modern yoga in the West, particularly in Germany, followed by a survey of "Tibetan yoga", and, finally, a discussion of the Tibetan term *rgyab*, "back". A study of *yantra yoga* is contributed by Saadet Arslan (3), "Yantra Yoga – 'Phrul 'khor movements beyond deity and mandala". In the early sources within the "Great Perfection" (*rdzogs chen*) tradition studied by

Arslan, '*phrul 'khor* has the specific meaning of "body movement", and as such is still practised.

Monastic history is of course an important field in Buddhist studies, and one to which Schwieger himself has made important contributions. *Franz-Karl Ehrhard* (13), "Historiographical notes on the Zhal snga bka' brgyud pa", is a study of an important source for "assessing the monastic institutions of the Gelugpa school in the various regions of Tibet". Bearing the short title *dGa' ldan chos 'byung*, it was written c. 1625 by dKar-nag Lo-tsā-ba. Ehrhard presents a translation of the section of this text that deals with the western regions of East Tibet, supplemented by notes by another Gelugpa scholar, Phan-bde chos-rje Sākya lHa-dbang, whose work was composed in 1640. Ehrhard shows how dKar-nag Lo-tsā-ba's text was an important source for the *Baidūrya ser po* of sDe-srid Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho, written in 1692, as well as later authors.

Nor are textual studies neglected. An important contribution to the history of transmission of the vast compilation of text known as the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* (*Collection of Ancient Tantras*) is contributed by *Orna Almogi* (02), "Spiritual masters and master copies on the move: on a recently discovered manuscript edition of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* from East Tibet and its origin". Almogi presents information on a 33-volume set of the collection that has recently surfaced in East Tibet, and discusses the history of its compilation. She then inserts this set into a succinct and clarifying survey of six groups of *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* collections, providing a highly useful tool for further research.

Further textual studies are, among others, *Michela Clemente* (07), "Appearances can be deceptive: the case of Ngmpp At 61/21"; *Lewis Doney* (12), "A note on the canonical attribution of treasure texts: Ratna gling pa and the *Zangs gling ma*"; *Karl-Heinz Everding* (15), "Sangs rgyas gling pa's apokryphe Biographie des U-rgyan padma 'byung gnas"; and *Matthew T. Kapstein* (23), "The *Jātakamālā* of Āryasūra with the supplement of the third Rgyal dbang karma pa rang byung rdo rje".

Tibetan society and cultural institutions are currently receiving considerable attention by scholars, and are well represented in the present volume, for example by *Thierry Dodin* (11), "Rope sliding and pole swirling in Lhasa: some remarks on the acrobatic performances of the traditional Gyalpo Losar"; *Isabelle Henrion-Dourcy* (21), "A lasting legacy for Tibetan performing arts today: on the monks of Rme ru and Kun bde gling performing drama in Lhasa in the first half of the 20th century"; and *Berthe Jansen* (22), "Law and order during the Lhasa great prayer festival".

Going back to the 15th century, *Jörg Heimbels* (18), "In need of donations: a letter written by Go rams pa to encourage the collecting of offerings in Eastern Tibet", presents a critical edition and translation of a letter issued by Go-rams-pa bSod-nams seng-ge (1429-1489), an abbot of Ngor Monastery, to a group of monks he sent to Eastern Tibet to collect offerings. This is a valuable contribution to the (still) little-studied topic of the details of the economic life of monasteries in pre-modern Tibet.

A number of other contributions also deal with aspects of Tibetan society, for example *Fernanda Pirie* (32), "The making of Tibetan law: the *Khrims gnyis lta ba'i me long*", a legal treatise from the latter part of the 14th century, and *Charles Ramble* (34), "Longing for retirement: the testament of Chos mdzad nyi shar, the last Ya ngal", which deals, among other things, with the issue of inheritance in late 19th-century Mustang (Nepal).

Finally, two contributions dealing with Buddhism in Mongolia should be mentioned: *Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz* (25), "Negotiating the Buddhist future: Rdo rje shugs ldan in Mongolia", and *Veronika Veit* (44), "Shamanism and Buddhism in Mongolia: religious and historical aspects from an historian's point of view". The former paper outlines the history of the deity rDo-rje Shugs-ldan in the Mongolian regions and then explores the practice of its cult in today's Mongolia, paying "particular attention to the conflicting constructions of a Mongolian Buddhist identity" in which the cult of this deity plays a potentially ambiguous role; the latter is a useful survey of the two religious forces that have been at play in setting the course of Mongolian history.

Even this cursory presentation, necessarily omitting many studies that would merit individual presentation, will, it is hoped, be sufficient to make it evident that this volume has something of interest to almost anyone engaged in Tibetan studies, illustrating the vibrant state of Tibetan studies today, to which Peter Schwieger himself has so significantly contributed.



Alexander Kingsbury Smith, *Divination in Exile. Interdisciplinary Approaches to Ritual Prognostication in the Tibetan Bon Tradition*, Leiden/London (Brill), 2021. xi+195 pp. [Brill's Tibetan Studies Library, Vol. 47].

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Documented in written sources from the Tibetan imperial period (7th-9th centuries CE), divination remains an important element of daily life for many Tibetans. Nevertheless, until recently, divination has received relatively slight attention from scholars. This, however, has to some extent been changing over the last decade, especially among anthropologists. Alexander K. Smith's study is a major contribution to this trend.

Divination in Exile is an important study for two reasons: it is a detailed textual study of *lde'u 'phrul*, a specific – and hitherto unstudied – technique of divination using a set number of black and white pebbles, only practised, it seems, within the Bön religion, and, secondly it adopts an anthropological approach pioneered by Barbara Gerke's study, *Long Lives and Untimely Deaths: Life-Span Concepts and Longevity Practices Among Tibetans in the Darjeeling Hills, India* (2011), but in doing so it draws on a wide range of anthropological studies of divination in other cultures, in particular in contemporary African societies, as a way to better understand the meaning and dynamics of Tibetan divinatory practice, thus demonstrating the benefits of a broad comparative approach in fieldwork-based Tibetan studies.

The author provides a very useful overview of previous research on Tibetan divination and discusses various theoretical approaches to the anthropological study of divination in general. In his book, Smith demonstrates the benefits of combining fieldwork and textual studies, not only in the sense of penetrating the intricacies of Tibetan divination manuals with the help of expert Tibetan teachers, but also in observing and analysing the interaction between the specialist diviner and his clients, the clients' understanding of the significance and validity of the divination, and the diviner's interpretation and adaptation of the explanations provided by the manual consulted.

Turning to details, there are some minor flaws, and, in a few instances, additional information may be offered. To take the least important, but unfortunately rather visible, flaw first: the volume suffers from a lack of proof reading – a defect which in the final analysis is the publisher's responsibility, not that of the author or the editors. Not least is the Bibliography replete with printing errors and inconsistencies. A comprehensive list would be long and tedious as well as

useless, but at the very least the names of persons quoted should be correct. Thus Giraule (and Dieterlen) should be Griaule, and the work in question was published in 1963, not 1945 (p. 30); Italo (Calvino) should be Italo (p. 37); (Elisabeth) Stuchbury should be Stutchbury (p. 43), and so on, adding up to a rather long list.

On p. 41 ff., the name of the Tibetan emperor Srong btsan sgam po is everywhere (with one exception) misspelt Srong *bstan* sgam po. On p. 54, there is a misspelling of the name of the late Abbot of sMan-ri Monastery, the Bön monastery in Himachal Pradesh: Lung rtogs bstan pa'i *rnyi* ma should be ... bstan pa'i *nyi* ma. On p. 55, the Tibetan term *dge shes* should be corrected to *dge bshes*. These points are in themselves trivial, but they are mentioned as they would go unnoticed by interested scholars outside Tibetan studies. On p. 15, "elevates anxiety" should be corrected to "eliminates anxiety" (as is found correctly on p. 21). On p. 16, reference is made to Dieter Schuh's "seminar work" where "seminal work" is surely intended.

A more substantial error is located on p. 66. Smith refers to "the Bon *dkar chag* edited by Dan Martin, Yasuhiko Nagano, and Per Kvaerne (2001)". The same reference is repeated on p. 67. The volume that these three scholars edited was, however, published in 2003, and is correctly listed in the Bibliography (p. 183). That volume is, however, not relevant on p. 66, where the context is not that of the Bön Kanjur, with which the 2003 volume is concerned, but the catalogue of the Bön Tenjur, which was published in 2001, not by Martin, Nagano and Kvaerne, nor as Smith mistakenly claims in the Bibliography (p. 184) by Nagano and Kvaerne, but by Samten G. Karmay and Y. Nagano. The confusion between these two important catalogues – the 2001 and the 2003 one – is therefore complete.

The reference on p. 66 serves to introduce a series of divination texts, listed on p. 67, found in the Bön Tenjur. However, the numeric citations provided by Smith do not correspond to those found in the 2001 catalogue (Karmay and Nagano), as one would expect, but to the code numbers used to identify the texts in the BDRC/TBRC (Buddhist Digital Resource Centre, formerly Tibetan Buddhist Resource Centre) data base. This fact is, as far as I can see, not mentioned by Smith, which may give rise to confusion. The references to the Tenjur catalogue will, however, be found as the last four digits of the respective BDRC/TBRC codes.

There is a further mistake on p. 66. Smith refers to the two collections of canonical texts in the Bön religion, known as the *bKa' 'gyur*, the 'Word' of the Enlightened Teacher, and the *brTen 'gyur*, the collection of commentaries, respectively. He correctly notes that the name of the latter collection is spelt differently from the spelling used by Buddhists for their corresponding collection, viz. the *bsTan 'gyur*.

However, he then states that, "Combining these two sections together, the canon is frequently described using the compound noun *bka' brten*". This is in fact not the case, as is clearly explained by the Tibetan scholar sGa-ston Tshul-khrims rGyal-mtshan (14th century), who provides a definition, quoted in my article "The Canon of the Tibetan Bonpos" (*IJJ* 16:1-2, 1974) (and reproduced by Smith): the *bKa' brten* is thus called "As it has been composed in dependence (*rten*) on the Word (*bka'*) of the Teacher", this being a precise definition of commentaries. The term *bKa' brten* unequivocally refers to the *brTen 'gyur*.

In his presentation of Bönpos in the contemporary diaspora community, Smith refers to Krystyna Cech's DPhil dissertation (Oxford 1987), *The Social and Religious Identity of the Tibetan Bonpos with Special Reference to a North-West Himalayan Settlement*. This is an excellent study, but should be supplemented by an equally valuable and more recent PhD dissertation, unfortunately likewise unpublished: Yushan Liu, *A Minority Within a Minority. Being Bonpo in the Tibetan Community in Exile* (Edinburgh 2012).

A minor addition to the Bibliography could be made: for bibliographical information concerning the author of one of the divination texts listed by Smith (p. 68), the Bönpo scholar Hor btsun bsTan 'dzin Blo gros rgya mtsho (1889-1975), the most complete biographical source is Per Kværne, "Hor btsun bstan 'dzin blo gros rgya mtsho (1889-1975): A Little-known Bön Scholar from Amdo", in: Ute Walenböck, Ute, Bianca Horlemann, and Jarmila Ptáčková (eds.), *Mapping Amdo. Dynamics of Power, Archiv Orientální*, Supplementa XI, 2019, pp. 57-63.

In a couple of instances, apparently puzzling names can be understood as the result of scribal errors in the manuscripts. Thus, "the land of Ye nyag" (p. 75), listed after China, Zhang Zhung and China, is almost certainly "Me nyag", the Tibetan name of the Tangut empire, as *ye* and *me* are very easily confused. In the name of "the Indian *rishi shi' la nga wa dza*" to whom two divination texts are attributed (pp. 68-69), *nga* is either a misreading of or a scribal error for *da* – the two syllables are very easily confused in manuscript. The name should be reconstructed as Śiladhvaja, which translates into Tibetan as Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan. As Tibetan monastic scholars were in the habit of converting their Tibetan names into Sanskrit, the name could refer to one of several Bön lamas by the name of Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan: gNyon ston Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan, b. 1144; sGa-ston Tshul-khrims rgyal-mtshan, 14th century, referred to above; an abbot of sMan ri Monastery who was enthroned in 1511; a lama born in 1893; or 'Gru sgom Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan, b. 1898. The colophon of the first text states that the author was *gshen gyi drang srong*

(Karmay and Nagano 2001, p. 933), thus a fully ordained Bönpo monk (*drang srong* not indicating an "Indian *rishi*", but being the title corresponding to the Buddhist *dge slong*, a *bhikṣu* or fully ordained monk). Unfortunately, further identification of this lama cannot be made at present, although the first candidate on the list, gNyon ston, is unlikely to have been a *drang srong*, leaving us with four candidates, among whom sGa-ston and the abbot of sMan ri monastery are probably the strongest candidates.

The title of the book, "Divination in Exile", would, or so it seems to the present reviewer, indicate that the focus of the volume is on the Tibetan diaspora community, primarily in India. However, although the author's study of divination over many years was located in the Bönpo monastery in India, which as such is part of the diaspora community, this does not *ipso facto* make the book a study of divination "in exile", the more so as Smith's chief interlocutor, the head teacher of the monastery, was born in Dolpo in Nepal, is a Nepalese citizen, and hence does not belong to the Tibetan exile community. His clients likewise have various origins, and even consult him by mobile phone from inside Tibet. In fact, the monastic community in question is of mixed origin: Kinnaur in Himachal Pradesh, Dolpo and Mustang in Nepal, and Tibet itself, with only a minority belonging to the Tibetan exile community. One might expect that the book would focus on ways in which divination is understood and practised specifically "in exile", in other words, that there was a focus on change and development as compared to divination in Tibet in pre-modern times. However, such change does not seem to have been particularly conspicuous in the Tibetan diaspora community. In fact, with regard to the manuals used by the Tibetan diviner with whom the author studied, "many aspects relevant to modern life are absent from the *lde'u 'phrul's* interpretive framework" (p. 102). This leads Smith to the question of "how, specifically, do diviners work to re-signify pre-modern textual prognostics in order to suit the social and ethical complexities of life in modern Tibetan societies?" (p. 103). Drawing upon comparative material from Botswana, Smith suggests that the diviner, while having considerable scope for "*ex post facto* elaboration", places the client's queries "within a traditional cosmological schema, which serves to re-affirm – rather than challenge – pre-modern epistemological values" (*ibid.*). This could be a very fruitful line of further research, applicable not only to divination, but also to other sectors of contemporary Tibetan belief systems in the diaspora, but it is not pursued further in the present volume.

Returning to the substance of the book, the merits of which far outweigh the imperfections mentioned above, I would emphasise, as Smith himself does, that one reason for choosing a collection of divi-

nation texts from the Bön rather than the Buddhist religion, is that "Bon narratives outlining the introduction and usage of divination have been almost entirely overlooked by Western scholarship" (p. 41). Moreover, Smith points out that an important Bön text, the *mDo dri med gzi brjid*, dating to the 14th century, "offers the only extant pre-modern taxonomy of divination practices and their relationship to other forms of ritual action" (p. 59). This taxonomy is carefully studied and explained by Smith (pp. 59-64) and will no doubt be useful for future studies of Tibetan divination. Smith provides translation and transliteration of selected passages from several relevant texts, and a complete translation, transliteration, and facsimile edition of one of the texts dealing with *lde'u 'phrul* divination. As Smith points out, "to date there has been very little scholarly interest in the comparative study of post-11th century divination manuscripts" (p. 140). Since these texts were written "to respond to questions posed by the diviners' clientele", they are a unique source to Tibetan everyday social life through the centuries.

Divination in Exile is a carefully researched study, and, as far as divination is concerned, without any real precedent in Tibetan studies. Anyone wishing to undertake further exploration of this field must engage with this book. Smith's broad comparative approach cannot be sufficiently recommended, and his short conclusive essay, "An Interdisciplinary Approach to Tibetan Divination", points to the way to proceed, exemplified by his book, by "studying both ethnographic literature and indigenous etiological narratives", as well as "working closely with diviners in contemporary ethnographic environments" (p. 139).

