

A mdo, Collected Works (*gSung 'bum*), and Prosopography


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*lHa sa na mjal ba mang/
Khams na tshong pa mang/
A mdo na mkhas pa mang//*

“In lHa sa, there are many pilgrims,
in Khams, there are many merchants,
in A mdo, there are many scholars.”¹

1. Introduction

 Although A mdo, a northeastern part of the Tibetan plateau, has been important throughout Tibetan history, its role in both the political and cultural scenes in particular began to loom large from the seventeenth century. This essay attempts to demonstrate the growth of A mdo's importance in the cultural scene by focusing on the development of Tibetan collected works (Tib. *gsung 'bum*). This essay uses a prosopography to study Tibetan cultural history, applying this methodology specifically to the study of *gsung 'bum*. I hope that this essay will illuminate new substantive and methodological aspects within the study of A mdo and Tibetan studies at large.

¹ A contemporary Tibetan folkloric saying; my gratitude for providing this phrase goes to Dr. Dorje Tseten, a soon-to-be professor at Qinghai University for Nationalities. I also would like to express my sincere gratitude to my academic advisor Prof. Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp and two anonymous reviewers of this essay for their invaluable suggestions to improve previous drafts. Last but not the least, I also thank Mr. Andy Francis for his expertise in proofreading this essay.

2. *Emerging Importance of A mdo*

It is interesting to note that people from A mdo are a dominant force in contemporary Tibetan intellectual culture. *A mdo bas* make up a large proportion of the “brainworkers” in both A mdo and Tibetan areas outside of A mdo. We see evidence of this in the current state of the Department of Tibetan Studies at Central University for Nationalities (a.k.a. Minzu University of China) in Beijing, where a majority of students (and even lecturers) come from A mdo. There are a few possible explanations for this phenomenon. One plausible explanation is that the regional imbalance in advanced academic representation is a direct result of a discrepancy in the education policies of the Central Chinese Government, which differs for different Tibetan-populated regions.² While this circumstance might be one of many reasons behind this phenomenon of late, those who have a broader understanding of the cultural history of pre-modern Tibet will know that the dominance of *A mdo bas* in Tibetan intellectual culture likely has roots that reach deeper than contemporary education policy in the People’s Republic of China.

A number of leading Tibetan studies scholars have pointed out that eastern Tibet grew in importance in late pre-modern history. In his brief but profound general history of Tibet, Matthew Kapstein noted “a remarkable shift in Tibet’s cultural geography” in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.³ In a similar vein Sam van Schaik also provided an account of importance of the Khams area in the politics and culture in the same period in his overview of Tibetan history.⁴

More recently several studies have looked more closely at A mdo’s role in Tibetan history. Among others, Paul Nietupski’s extensive study of the Bla brang monastery revealed that the monastery played a central role not only at the local level, but in the context of tripartite relations between A mdo, Central Tibet, and Qing China, as well. To support his observation, Nietupski analyzed the scholarship of the third Gung thang dKon mchog bstan pa’i sgron me (1762–1823) to illustrate literary innovations that Bla brang contributed to Tibetan literary heritage.⁵ It is true that producing extensive literary

² For the history of PRC’s education policy in Tibet, especially of language, see Janet Upton 1999: 281–323 and Ma Rong 2014: 83–106. I owe the latter reference to Mr. Ling-wei Kung of Columbia University.

³ Kapstein 2006: 164–68.

⁴ Van Schaik 2011: 160–69. Van Schaik deals only with the Khams area, and in many aspects the importance of Khams should be separately considered from that of A mdo.

⁵ Nietupski 2010: 25–31.

collections was a new direction in scholarship at Bla brang, but there is room for further examination in Nietupski's assertions. We must place his argument in a broader context in order to determine whether the new trend was just an institution-specific cultural phenomenon or perhaps a cultural phenomenon in the A mdo region.

Gray Tuttle has made other important contributions to our understanding of A mdo cultural history, especially in his recent three studies, which contribute insights into the discussion at hand. Tuttle uses an analytic reading of *mDo smad chos 'byung* to superbly study the shifting concept of geography in historical writing regarding Central Tibet's dominance over Eastern Tibet. Thus, his study indicates yet another aspect of conceptual innovation of literature developed in the A mdo area.⁶ In another study Tuttle focuses on the history of the founding of monasteries in A mdo. By dividing development of monasteries in A mdo into four diachronic stages, Tuttle makes it clear that A mdo began to take initiative in the establishment of religious institutions during the latter of those stages.⁷ Furthermore, Tuttle's broad discussion of "the spread of incarnation lineages across time and throughout Tibetan territory" was not originally intended to make a case for the historical importance of A mdo, but it becomes obvious in the course of his piece that the dGe lugs pa specifically in the region of A mdo became

⁶ Tuttle 2011: 135–72. Along with the overall discussion in the article, by pointing out the downfall of the *mNga' ris* region after the early eighteenth century, Tuttle seems to suggest a broader viewpoint regarding the "shift to the east" (147). His brilliant analysis notwithstanding, Tuttle's reading of one of key phrases from *mDo smad chos 'byung* in his article requires further reflection. Tuttle asserts that Gushri Khan offered only the thirteen myriarchies to the fifth Dalai Lama and the area consists only of four horns (*ru bzhi*) by providing a translation of relevant part (141–42). However, the context of the passage in question is about how the names for the "four horns" have changed before and after Gushri Khan's conquest, *not* about whether or not Gushri Khan offered *only* the thirteen myriarchies to the Dalai Lama. Here I provide full Tibetan transcription and translation of the relevant passage for readers' consideration: *bar dbus gtsang ru bzhi ni/ snar gtsang la g.yas ru dang/ ru lag gnyis/ dbus la dbu ru dang/ g.yo ru gnyis zer yang/ chos rgyal ku shri han gyis bod khri skor bcu gsum dbang du bsdud te rgyal dbang rin po cher phul phyin la g.yas ru/ g.yon ru/ sBus ru/ gung ru bzhi byed do/* "As for the four horns of *dBus* and *gTsang* in the middle, in former times it was said that two, that is, *g.Yas ru* and *Ru lag* were in *gTsang*, and two, that is, *dBu ru* and *g.Yo ru* were in *dBus*. However, after Dharmaraja Gushri Khan conquered Tibet's thirteen myriarchies and offered them to the Precious Victor (i.e., the fifth Dalai Lama) [the four horns] became four of *g.Yas ru*, *g.Yon ru*, *sBus ru* and *Gung ru*." (dKon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas 1982: 1). The thirteen myriarchies of course historically existed within *dBus* and *gTsang* territories, but this passage seems not to strongly corroborate Tuttle's assertion that "A mdo fell outside the fifth Dalai Lama's realm of authority."

⁷ Tuttle 2011: 126–40.

the leading players in the institution of incarnation lineages.⁸ By meticulous and extensive use of relevant Tibetan historical source materials, Tuttle's works on the A mdo conception of geography, its development of monastic institutions, and the history of emanation bodies (Tib. *sprul sku*) fully demonstrate the importance of A mdo in Tibetan cultural history.

Evidence for the emergence of A mdo as a dominant force on the cultural scene is not only found in the form of the growing influence of social institutions like monasteries or reincarnation lineages, but also in literary innovations within Tibetan intellectual history. In what follows I will further consider the impact that *A mdo ba* thinkers have had on Tibetan literary culture.

3. "Collected Works" (Tib. *gsung 'bum*) as a Barometer of Tibetan Literary Culture

When it comes to traditional literary culture in Tibet, canonical works are likely the first of its exemplars to leap to mind. The redaction and publication of the Buddhist canon is surely an important part of Tibetan literary history. The publication of canons dates back to the time of the Tibetan Empire (7–9th centuries), and its vitality has not dimmed even today with continuous efforts to publish Tibetan canonical literature and extensive studies on it.⁹ Nonetheless, as the Tibetan terms for such literature (Tib. *bka' 'gyur* and *bstan 'gyur*) indicate, the publication of canons or "collections of translations ('gyur)" is considered, in essence, an act of reproduction—either translations from Indian originals or redactions of old Tibetan translations—rather than an act of creation.

The literary form of "collected works (Tib. *gsung 'bum*)" written by Tibetan intellectuals are precisely the opposite. Although they follow specimens mainly from *bstan 'gyur* in topics, collected works can provide broader aspects of what are called the "ten forms of knowledge (Tib. *rig gnas bcu*)" in Tibetan intellectual circles, even covering subjects beyond the scope of Buddhist studies.¹⁰ With its

⁸ Tuttle *forthcoming*.

⁹ For more details of the history of Tibetan Canonical literature, see Eimer and Germano 2002.

¹⁰ For a brief but useful introduction to these "ten forms of knowledge," see Schaeffer 2011: 292–93. When Lokesh Chandra discusses the significance of *gsung 'bum* in his *Materials for a history of Tibetan literature*, he situates the scope of such works only within the rubric of "the Five Sciences" (Chandra 1963: 15–16). However, the contents of *gsung 'bum*—especially those of later generations—go beyond the scope of "five greater forms of knowledge (Tib. *rig gnas che ba lnga*)," i.e., interior knowledge, logic, language, medicine, and artistic crafts. I hope to

broader sphere of themes, this realm of Tibetan literature represents the *bona fide* creativity of Tibetan intellectuals.

Although the body of this literature is huge, the conception of cataloging works under the term “*gsung 'bum*” does not have a long history. The term itself is found in earlier literature, but the first cataloging activity under which the term “*gsung 'bum*” began to be used the way we use it nowadays dates back only to eighteenth century’s *Bka’ gdams pa dang dge lugs pa’i bla ma rags rim gyi gsung 'bum dkar chag* by Klong rdol bla ma Ngag dbang blo bzang (1719–1794).¹¹ However, once the practice of cataloging *gsung 'bums* took root, catalogers began to use the term to cover a diverse array of Tibetan literary works. As seen in Ngag dbang blo bzang’s case, it started with collections from a small number of *bKa’ gdams pa* and *dGe lugs pa* masters, but in one catalogue compiled in 1980s, even works from early times of the Tibetan Empire are included under the category of *gsung 'bum*.¹²

“Collected works” are observed from a different perspective in a discussion of the desired level of competency for “the learned (Tib. *mkhas pa*)” in Tibetan culture. What is at issue here is whether it was necessary that the act of producing literature have a central—or at least not marginal—role among the Tibetan learned. It is widely known that mastery of three scholarly activities, i.e., explanation, debate, and composition (Tib. *'chad rtsod rtsom gsum*), is required among Tibetan intellectuals. Although the emphasis on which of the three activities should be most important varies over time and space, as José Cabezón has pointed out, it is a common notion that for scholarly monks “scholarship was measured not by one’s ability as a

use prosopographical methods in a future study to analyze the pattern and the trend of which subjects of knowledge are emphasised more in different *gsung 'bum* collections throughout time and space.

¹¹ This work is included in the *Klong rdol bla ma Ngag dbang blo bzang gi gsung 'bum* (Klong rdol bla ma Ngag dbang blo bzang 1991: vol. 2, 495–638. I follow Ahua Awanghuadan’s opinion that it is the first activity of cataloging *gsung 'bums*. For this see Awanghuadan 2012: 81. Of course, the activity of cataloging works of Tibetan intellectuals dates back to even earlier periods, an example of which is the fifteenth-century Ngor chen Kun dga’ bzang po’s catalogues of *Sa skya* masters such as his *Thob yig rgya mtsho* in *The Works of Ngorchon Kunga Zangpo* (Nor chen Kun dga’ bzang po 2005: folios 89–217). However, it seems that the use of the term *gsung 'bum* as a heading and its resultant bibliographic conception in cataloging activities had not existed in these earlier periods. I would like to thank Prof. Leonard van der Kuijp for bringing this issue to my attention.

¹² *Bod kyi bstan bcos khag cig gi mtshan byang dri med shel dkar phreng ba* (a.k.a. *Bla brang dkar chag*) places Srong btsan sgam po’s works as its first entry for *gsung 'bum*. For this see Grags pa *et al.* 1985: 89–90. It would be interesting to see how the extent of the concept of *gsung 'bum* has changed over time and from region to region.

writer.”¹³

We need to think more carefully about the relationship between “an act of writing” and “an act of producing literature.” First, as Cabezón puts it, the act of “*rtsom*” is not “the act of writing,” but “the act of com-pilation or con-junction.”¹⁴ Therefore, even though the act of writing itself might be discouraged, the act of compiling what one has explained and what one has debated might be encouraged. Second, it should be remembered that the exact Tibetan term for “collected works” is “*gsung ’bum*,” a compound word comprising a honorific form of the gerund “saying (*gsung*)” and what was generally a numeric term for “hundred-thousand (100,000),” but which may also mean “multifarious (*’bum*).”¹⁵ So even though the “sayings” exist in written form, the text represents the corpus of a teacher’s teaching itself, even in the absence of any manuscript. As Kurtis Schaeffer suggested, sGam po pa bSod nams rin chen’s (1079–1159) *gsung ’bum* might have been created by spoken communication, whereas ’Jam dbyangs bzhad pa’i rdo rje’s (1648–1721) was surely based on written communication.¹⁶ Whether spoken or written, both are called “*gsung ’bum*”—the significance is placed on the creativity of its “sayings,” not on whether it was originally spoken or written.

Even though the act of writing is not equivalent to producing literature, we still need to give a second thought to the writing culture itself, because development of a writing culture has a direct correlation to the development of the written form of literature. Has writing really continuously been discouraged in Tibetan culture? The three main dGe lugs pa monasteries, which originated in the vicinity of lHa sa, have traditionally discouraged the act of writing. Georges Dreyfus discussed this fact in his detailed, first-hand account of the education of Tibetan Buddhist monks. Although Dreyfus’ discussion is very informative, his explanation of why writing was discouraged, especially in those three monasteries and not in others, is not so plausible. According to Dreyfus, writing was discouraged in Lhasa’s monasteries “to counteract the danger of scholars becoming involved in politics.” Therefore, “other important but more remote dGe lugs centers, such as bKra shis lhun po and Bla brang, encouraged literary skills. Thus they (Bla brang in particular) are the source of most of the

¹³ Cabezón 2001: 236.

¹⁴ Cabezón 2001: 242. Tibetan has a specific verb for the meaning of “to write,” i.e., “*bri ba*.” For this see Cabezón 2001: 241, 257, n. 19.

¹⁵ It should be noted that sometimes “*gsung ’bum*” is translated as “collected writings.” But this translation does not correctly capture the meaning of “*gsung*”, which does not mean “writing,” even though *gsung ’bums* exist in a written or printed form. I have not heard of orally transmitted *gsung ’bum*.

¹⁶ Schaeffer 1999: 163.

dGe lugs literature written in the past two centuries. *The dGe lugs attitude toward writing appears to vary with distance from the political center.*¹⁷ Can we agree with this last statement? It is widely known that in the history of the dGe lugs pa sect, religious figures—either assistants for Dalai Lamas or leading figures such as Regents—have been fully involved in politics at least since the time of the fifth Dalai Lama. Thus it is difficult to accept Dreyfus' assertion unless more convincing evidence to the contrary is found. Dreyfus' conclusion would also leave us wondering why bKra shis lhun po has not produced as much literature as Bla brang.¹⁸ In addition, Bla brang itself has historically been involved in its own complex nexus of politics. So the “distance from the political center” seems not to be a feasible barometer for explaining differences in literary production. We should examine the divergent emphases on producing literature in different regions in a broader context. In-depth analysis of how written communication brought about *gsung 'bum* culture might yield a fuller picture of whether the act of writing was encouraged or discouraged. To do so, we need to use a methodology appropriate to available source materials.

4. “Big Data,” Prosopography, and *gSung 'bum* Studies

What is a better way to see long-term patterns of literature production? In order to observe “the forest” rather than “the trees,” it is necessary to see the history of Tibet in a new way. Researching long-term patterns involves a new research methodology using a large quantity of data from source materials. Chinese studies have recently provided a model for doing just that. As Song Chen has recently described, the method involves taking advantage of the potential of so-called “big data” in different ways.¹⁹ In a more specific research example, Peter Bol undertook a study using data from the project of the Chinese Biographical Database. His use of data from biographies and geostatistical analyses has a lot to suggest for other fields of study such as Tibetan Studies.²⁰

The same potential use of “big data” that other fields of humanities have taken advantage of exists within Tibetan Studies as

¹⁷ Dreyfus 2003: 120–21 (emphasis mine).

¹⁸ For evidence for this discrepancy, see Part 4 of this essay. The *gTsang* area has not produced much literature in the dGe lugs pa tradition.

¹⁹ Chen 2016.

²⁰ The possibility of using “prosopography” is mainly inspired by Bol 2012: 3–15. Although prosopography appears prominently in the title of the article, Bol does not go into detail regarding the techniques of prosopography in the article itself.

well. We can see it in two ways: First, there exists a huge amount of data relevant to Tibetan Studies. Biographies—including not only longer biographies that are worthy of individual in-depth studies, but the smaller and fragmentary biographies still waiting to be processed and utilised—provide a good example for potential use of “big data.”²¹ Second, data has become more and more available in digital formats and can thus be handled in a more convenient way. The Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (www.tbrc.org) is currently the largest source for this purpose. The body of its database can be used not only for philological research, but for statistical analysis. Other noteworthy sources are the Treasury of Lives (treasuryoflives.org) and Himalayan Art Resources (www.himalayanart.org). We already have an extensive amount of data with which to do research.

What can we do with such a large body of data? One thing we can do is applying a method called “prosopography.” As Verboven and others have pointed out, prosopography originated as a new research method because of the problem of the representativeness, in which researchers focus only on a single or a very small number of unique historical figures. A basic tenet of prosopographical research is that “by subjecting an ideally large number from a pre-defined population to the same questionnaire, the particular characteristics of that population as a whole become visible,” and its goal “is not interested in the unique but in the average, the general and the ‘commonness’ in the life histories of more or less large numbers of individuals.”²²

This research method is well suited to the study of *gsung 'bums* and their authors. Although some scholars have paid attention to the subject of *gsung 'bum*, rarely is more than a single person's *gsung 'bum* studied. Take Schaeffer's study on 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa's *gsung 'bum*, for example. Although Schaeffer's detailed analysis of each colophon and its historical background provided new insights, a broader intellectual map in which 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa and his works are duly located and evaluated would be more desirable. In

²¹ Although extensive and longer biographies have been the principal subjects of study, it is worth considering what we can do with short and fragmentary biographies and their collections as well.

²² Verboven, Carlier, and Dumolyn 2007: 36–37. As one of reviewers of my essay indicated, it seems dangerous to claim to present “characteristics of the population as a whole” especially in Tibetan Studies that lack such data at present. However, Verboven's suggestion is still worthy of consideration, because we can take it as a methodological tool for studying each group of small population, *not really* for the whole Tibetan population or the whole population of elite Tibetans at a given time.

what follows, I will explore a basic level of such a mapping using prosopographical research methods.²³

5. *Patterns of gsung 'bum Productions*

As Verboven's manual warns, prosopographical research is labor intensive.²⁴ What a single individual can do for a short period time is very limited. Notwithstanding, in what follows, I attempt to corroborate what I have suggested in the first part of this essay—that specifically *A mdo ba* scholarship is a significant contributor to the history of dGe lugs pa *gsung 'bum* production.

First I will provide a basic account of the criteria used to collect data and its limitations.

I limited my data set to works produced among the dGge lugs pa, because the dGe lugs has a largest number of *gsung 'bums* among the major sects of Tibetan Buddhism. Of course, data sets comprised of works produced by other sects will yield different patterns, but the patterns yielded by the largest group of scholars working in *A mdo* should most represent the features of the cultural activity in the region.

I began collecting data from the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, initially collecting basic biographical data on 146 dGe lugs pa scholars for whom records of *gsung 'bum* exist in the TBRC database. However, I soon realised that the TBRC database does not represent an exhaustive collection of such sources, and that additional data could be gathered from other sources. One such additional source is *Shes bya'i gter mdzod*, a three-volume catalogue of *gsung 'bums* preserved in the Library of Cultural Palace of Nationalities in Beijing.²⁵ This catalogue has 182 entries with a short biography for each entry, but among them only 126 entries are related to dGe lugs pa scholars. A large portion of these 126 entries is duplicated in the TBRC records, but among them there were 20 entries unique to this catalogue. Another important and extensive catalogue is *Po ta la'i gsung 'bum dkar chag*, which has 201 entries, each with a short

²³ Indeed Kurtis Schaeffer has pioneered the use of this kind of “big data” to illustrate patterns of literary production. In his case, however, he goes for a specific genre, i.e., Tibetan auto/biographies, for the analysis of Tibetan literary production. For this, see Schaeffer 2010: 263–306. Interestingly, Schaeffer's study also reveals a pattern of emerging importance for *A mdo*, which is very similar to those revealed by my analysis of *gsung 'bum* below. I owe this reference to one of the reviewers of the essay.

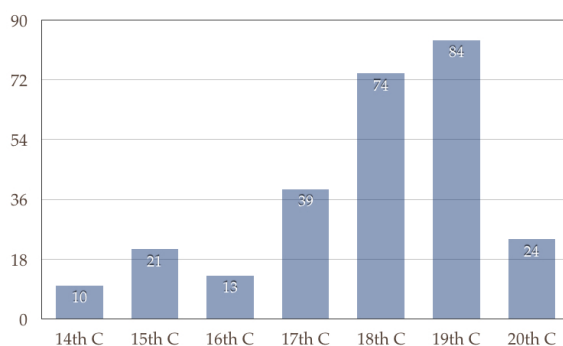
²⁴ Verboven, Carlier and Dumolyn. 2007: 53.

²⁵ *Mi rigs dpe mdzod khang* 1984–1997.

biography.²⁶ This is the largest collection for dGe lugs pa *gsung 'bum*, but 45 entries from the TBRC database do not appear in this catalogue. Comparison of the three catalogues yielded 265 *gsung 'bums* authored by dGe lugs pa scholars. Fig. 1 roughly illustrates the pattern of *gsung 'bum* authorship in chronological order by century.

The graph indicates that the number of *gsung 'bums* produced by dGe lugs pa scholars has increased over the centuries and that any supposed dGe lugs pa discouragement of producing “new sayings” have not been successful, if they even really existed. To gain a more complete picture of dGe lugs pa production of *gsung 'bums* I re-sorted the data used to create Figure 1 by authors’ principal seats of activity. The result yielded further meaningful patterns (Fig. 2).²⁷

Production of Collected Works in the dGe lugs School



265 works from 14th to 20th centuries

Fig. 1

²⁶ Mi rigs dpe mdzod khang 2013.

²⁷ I follow mostly TBRC’s record of “main seat” for each individual, and in case it is not available from TBRC, I consulted biographies in *Po ta la’i gsung 'bum dkar chag* and *Shes bya’i gter mdzod* for relevant information. I am aware that more analytic elaboration is needed to fully specify the principal seat of activity, but I believe that many of the institutions specified as “main seats” are representative enough of local intellectual activity. In the meantime, as one of reviewers of my essay points out, the regional origin of each *gsung 'bum* author deserves the same attention as the other factors discussed here, because some *gsung 'bum* authors from A mdo or Khams “finished their education in Lhasa and stayed on there” (in reviewer’s words). However, such analysis would entail work beyond the limited scope of this paper, which I hope to complete in the near future.

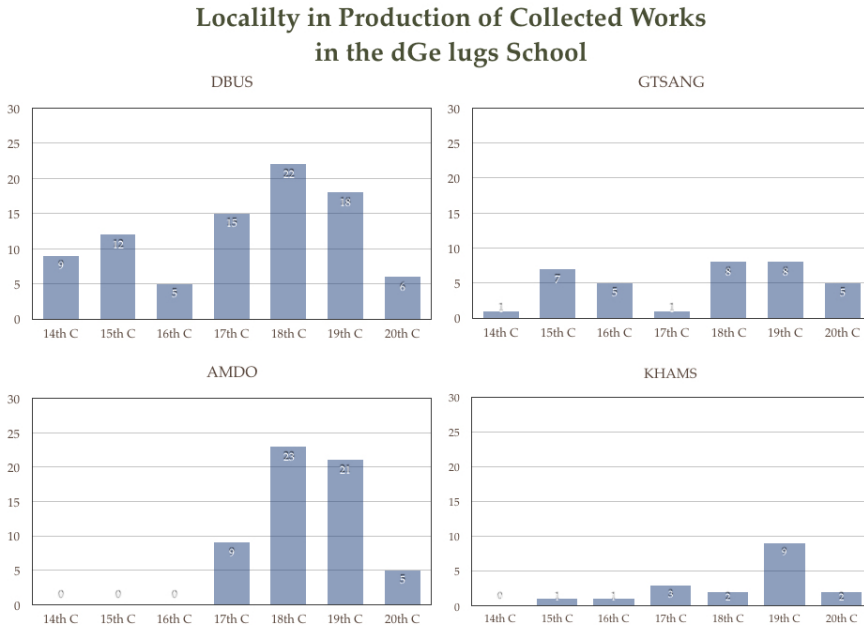


Fig. 2

We can make several interesting observations based on these charts. First, the region of *dBus* led the movement of *gsung 'bum* production, driving the pattern that appeared in Fig. 1. *dBus* has never lost its position as the leader in production of new dGe lugs pa literature. Second, the region of *gTsang* has never been a hotbed of *gsung 'bum* production, despite its distance from the political center. Although the dGe lugs pa victory over the *gTsang* regime in the mid-seventeenth century signaled its political dominance over the region, scholarly activities may have proceeded in a different way. This is worth further study, particularly including an analysis of literary activities of other sects in the region. Finally, our analysis clearly shows that A mdo became a leader in the production of *gsung 'bum* beginning in the eighteenth century, even surpassing the rate of production in the historical center of dGe lugs pa activity, *dBus*. The pattern becomes particularly obvious when the four charts are combined into a stacked bar chart (Fig. 3).

Locality in Production of Collected Works in the dGe lugs School

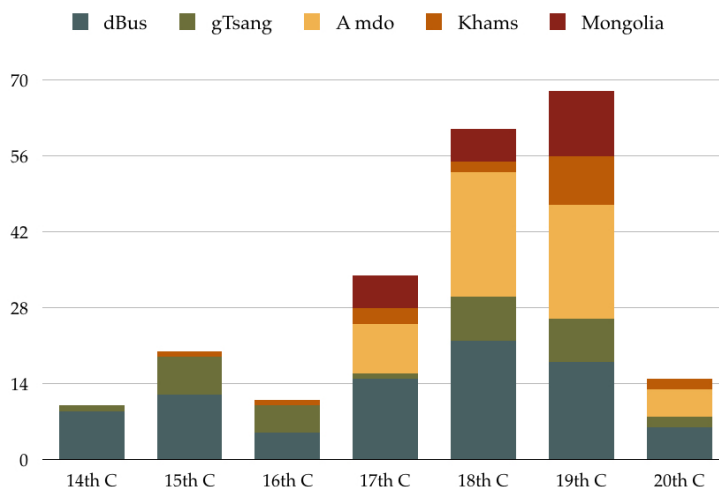


Fig.3

6. Background to the Development

We should consider possible background reasons for this development. Only tentative answers are available at the moment, but it seems obvious that there were two prominent factors: a Manchu factor and a Mongolian factor. The first factor relates to the fact that the Qing dynasty's political dominion over diverse groups of Tibetans and Mongols paved the way for more frequent interaction among these people than existed in previous eras when conflicts among them were commonplace. Consequently, as a hub of this type of interaction, A mdo grew more and more important to cultural development.²⁸ The second factor relates to the Mongols' active participation in religious professions and patronage activity. Because A mdo was the gateway to Tibetan "high" culture for the Mongolian people, the more Mongolians engaged in cultural activity,

²⁸ This stabilising effect of Qing dominion over Inner Asia might be similar to "Pax Mongolica" after the conquests of the Mongol Empire. But one key difference between the two is that the former was more about cultural transmission and exchange, whereas the latter seemed to be more about trade relations based on the "Silk Road." Of course the Qing case is much more limited in terms of the extent of territory involved.

the more significant A mdo became.²⁹ These two factors persisted throughout the Qing period and have been resuscitated in recent decades after a brief cessation. This may be why we see a similar trend even nowadays in the Tibetan intellectual scene. Notwithstanding these two important factors, however, the most significant driving force of this phenomenon has been none other than the intrinsic dynamics of Tibetan intellectual activity itself.

7. Conclusion and Postscript

This essay analyzed the production of *gsung 'bum* among dGe lugs pa scholars to visualise the importance of the region of A mdo to Tibetan literary culture. To that end, I have provided a brief review of relevant accounts regarding A mdo, followed by a description of the importance of *gsung 'bum* among Tibetan intellectual activities. I introduced the recent efforts of research scholars, especially those in Chinese Studies, as a sound potential research methodology in Tibetan Studies. Finally, I attempted to demonstrate the use of this new method, even if only in a rudimentary, entry-level fashion.

It is my hope that this trial will inspire broader interest in “big data” and prosopographical research in Tibetan studies. Given the development of more systematic databases and better analytic criteria, we can more readily examine patterns that are undetectable with other research methodologies. One potential follow-up project would be to analyze the general pattern of arrangement inside *gsung 'bum* using a well-planned categorisation for the genres that appear there. Such a study would likely provide a better picture of the relative complexity of various Tibetan intellectual activities. Although this paper is only a simple, tentative step in that direction,

²⁹ As shown in Fig. 3, there are Mongolian data not included in locality charts in Fig. 2. My source materials have some data on Mongolian scholars, but I excluded them in the main part of the discussion because they do not affect my argument to a large extent. As a matter of fact, we have several Mongolian catalogues of *gsung 'bum* and some of these show a large number of authors counted as Mongolian scholars. For example Gombojab (1959: 1–49) even has 208 entries for Mongolian *gsung 'bum* authors. Despite its importance, I did not go further into this catalogue because data are very sketchy at best and do not provide enough information compared to the Tibetan catalogues I have used for this essay. Another good example is Chandra's *Eminent Tibetan polymaths of Mongolia* (1961). It provides biographies for each author, but lists only 19 scholars. However, these Mongolian catalogues surely deserve detailed study, the result of which would provide further insight into the pattern of *gsung 'bum* production in areas under the influence of Tibetan Buddhism.

this new methodology promises to be a game-changer once more researchers take it up and interest in it grows.

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