

# HOR *KHRIMS* AND THE TIBETANS: A RECAPITULATION OF ITS ENFORCEMENTS IN THE YEARS 1240-1260\*

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The years 1240-1260 are a chapter in the history of the application of Hor *khirms* (the “Mongol law”) in Tibet that stands out from the other periods in the Tibeto-Mongol relations in view of the Hor’s several legislative efforts to find a suitable formula of governance on the plateau. The earliest provisions of the Mongol policy, devised *ad hoc* for the lands of Tibet, were formulated during this period.

The years in question cover the lapse of time in Tibetan history from the 1240 Mongol expedition on the plateau—the first Mongol campaign officially documented in the local sources, although earlier ones occurred—to the reign of Se chen rgyal po who reformed the previous policies.

## O go ta’s handling of secular matters in Tibet

Following the ascent of O go ta to the Mongol throne (r. 1229-1241) after Jing gir rgyal po’s reign (1206-1227),<sup>1</sup> Tibet remained relatively untouched by Hor pa legislation until iron rat 1240. Hence O go ta did not influence the plateau’s affairs

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\* Elena is one of the few individuals in my generation, who became Tibetologists in Rome. Despite a pioneering work, a school of Tibetan studies was not born locally. It goes to her credit that she indeed has created one from her efforts and dedication. If Tibetan studies in Rome have a future is also due to Elena. She has transmitted her passion to a number of valiant students who have grown into senior Tibetologists. Decenni di lavoro meritano ben altro che questo insignificante omaggio!

<sup>1</sup> 1206 is the *locus classicus* for the official inception of Jing gir rgyal po’s reign as emperor of the Mongols. The Tibetan tradition has a drastically different vision of this event, for it recognises earth tiger 1218 as the commencement of his imperial spree. *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p. 254,17-255,7) says: “Tha’i dzung Jing gir rgyal po was born in wood male horse 1174. He had seven siblings. Having (p. 255) reached thirty-three years of age in earth male tiger 1218, he, by means of [his] exceedingly cruel army, took the capital out of the hands of the acting emperor of the Thang (spelled so), namely Tha rdzi, one of the rulers after Mi nyag rGyal rgod. The Hor [lord] held control of the capital of the Chinese Thang for twenty-three years (1206?-1227) and went to heaven, aged sixty-six, on the twelfth day of first month of fire female pig 1227 in the district Mi nyag Gha”.

The way Tha rdzi and rGyal rgod are positioned chronologically in the passage seems not to be consonant with their actual regnal years.

from the legal point of view for most of his reign. From O go ta's 1240 campaign on, armed intervention in Tibet fell under the direct authority of the emperor, with military actions being carried out by his generals. After this campaign—and thus at the very end of his reign—O go ta issued imperial orders, so that steps were taken to introduce his form of governance of Tibet.

A valuable record of what Tibetan historians (wrongly) consider as the first Mongol invasion of Tibet is found in ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan's *Si tu bka' chems*.<sup>2</sup> In the course of this campaign, its Mongol chief Dor ta, as is well known, cut off the heads of 500 Rwa sgreng monks, and wiped out rGyal lha khang.

A description of Do rta's military antecedents in Eastern Tibet, prior to his appearance in Central Tibet is surprisingly missing in the sources. Next to nothing is known of his endeavours in Khams. A single sign of his military activity in the region, which does not allow a comprehensive understanding of his local strategy, is provided by the fact that he opened his way towards the west by destroying monastic institutions en route. A single case of the destruction he caused to a monastery is provided in the modern work *Nang chen nyer lnga'i rgyal rabs ngo sprod lo rgyus* which says that he levelled 'Dam dkar dgon, a Karma Kam tshang monastery in mDo stod, in earth pig 1239,<sup>3</sup> the year before he created havoc in Central Tibet and other lands.

2 *Si tu bka' chems* in *Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* (p. 109,2-19): "During the time of the *khu dbon*, two in all, the Hor law came [to Tibet]. Hor Dor ta nag po, the head of the troops, cut off the heads of 500 monks of Byang Rwa sgreng. The whole of Tibet turned into a place where earth and stones shook. dPon po Dor ta then seized Ra sog 'jam mo (in Sog yul adjoining Nag(s) shod). When sPyan snga rin po che went to Dun thang, dpon po Dor ta captured dgon (sic for *sgom*) pa Shak rin. While he was preparing to murder him, [sPyan snga rin po che] prayed to sGrol ma and a rain of stones fell from the sky. dPon po Dor ta said: "You are good at producing stones" and prostrated, bowing his head to his feet. He spared the life of the *dgon* (sic for *sgom*) pa. Having entered the door of Tibetan forests, [sPyan snga rin po che] offered him the nectar of all of them on that occasion, accepted what was happening and offered submission. [Dor ta] dismantled the impregnable castles of east and west lHo brag, bsNyal, Lo ro, Byar po, Mon dPal gro, lHo Mon—that is from the land of rKong po in the east all the way to the border of Bal po. Having introduced the enforcement of the law, *chos khirms* and *rgyal khirms* rose in the sky and shone like the sun in the east. They appeared in this land where Tibetan is the only language. This was due to the kindness of sPyan snga rin po che [who benefited] the realm of Tibet. One may judge that Dor ta nag po's appearance in Tibet happened during the reign of O go ta, the son of Jing gir rgyal po".

*mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (p. 1416,14-17): "Later, in iron rat 1240, the Hor troops, with Dor tog (spelled so) as commander, came to Tibet for the first time from the territory [of] Byang ngos under [the command of] Go dan. As prophesied by O rgyan rin po che that peace in mDo stod, mDo smad, Sog chu, Ra sgreng and other [localities] would be disrupted and that this would be a cause for sorrow, people in mDo stod, mDo smad, Sog chu kha etc. were killed".

3 *Nang chen nyer lnga'i rgyal rabs ngo sprod lo rgyus* (p. 20,8-12): "'Dam dkar dgon was a Karma bKa' brgyud monastery established at the edge of the hill behind the 'Dam dkar settlement on the northern bank of the rDza chu, some five kilometers from sKye dgu [mdo]. Initially the monastery must have been on the rDza chu's southern bank. In 1239 Sog po Dor ta nag po, when he came to Tibet, destroyed it viciously. Then its location was moved [where it is] now".

He swept over Tibetan territory from Kong po to its southernmost reaches, all the way to the border of Bal po, tearing down all castles he found on the way in lHo brag, bsNyal, Lo ro, Byar po, Mon dPal gro and lHo Mon (present-day Bhutan).<sup>4</sup>

The reason for leading his warriors to the extreme limit of the Tibetan world in the opposite direction of the Mongol lands is not elucidated in the sources. I would suggest that Dor ta's strategy was motivated by two tactical reasons. He may have met local opposition, which withdrew south in front of the advancing Mongol army or may have decided to bring his conquest to the extreme limit of the Tibetan plateau in the south.

Ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan's account adds that Shak rin, the 'Bri gung *sgom pa* at the head of the Tibetan resistance to the Mongols, was captured and on the verge of being put to death by Dor ta, were it not for the intercession of sPyan snga rin po che (1175-1255, on the gDan sa mthil throne 1208-1235), the great Phag mo gru pa religious master, who saved his life.

Dor ta's campaign in Tibet, which reached areas on the plateau close to the Himalayan range and thus remarkably far from the territory of the Mongol army's provenance, left behind devastation in gTsang, too, a region not mentioned in the sources dealing with the 1240 invasion as having been affected by the Mongol chieftain's wrath.

The inclusion of gTsang among the areas disrupted by this invasion is found in a text which belongs to a less officially historical genre than *chos 'byung-s* or *lo rgyus-s*. Neglected by the historical literature of Tibet, *gNas rnying skyes bu rnams kyi nam thar*, a monograph dedicated to this monastery, records a devastating attack by Dor ta, which caused death and destruction.<sup>5</sup> The text confirms that violence was

4 In iron tiger 1290, at the time of the 'Bri gung *gling log*, dpon chen Ang len, after the sack of 'Bri gung, led the army of the Yuan and Sa skya pa alliance all the way to the areas south and south-east of 'Bri gung to crush attempts of pro-'Bri gung resistance. *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (p. 1420,1-2) says that Ang len's army took Dwags po and Kong po. Developments of Ang len's campaign focused on targets similar to those of the military expedition led by Dor ta in 1240 (see the note above for description of the expedition in *Si tu bka' chems*).

5 *gNas rnying skyes bu rnams kyi nam thar* (f. 19a,4-19b,4): "When the Hor troops went on a rampage (*sdang pa*, lit. "became hostile") in dBus gTsang, Dor to (spelled so) seized sKyebs gNas gsar mkhar [attacking it from] the side of Cor. Many people were killed. Everyone went to Dur khrod gling (i.e. the cemetery of gNas rnying). People who travelled on the rGya road (i.e. the road from Nyang stod to lHo Mon), did not dare to leave unless accompanied by a few others. At that time, everyone heard that even various kinds of animals were lamenting. After all [kinds of] *mi ma yin-s* of Hor Bod appeared, and when everyone was in terror, [gNas rnying Chos kyi rin chen] subjugated these *mi ma yin*, and so he planted the seeds of liberation. He blessed all the places in order to restore peace. Having thought to protect all the people of the realm of Nyang po'i *rgyal kham*s from fear, he spent three days at Dur khrod gling. He blessed some corpses with *mantra-s* and carried others on his body (*glo skyor*). By being there, [Chos kyi rin chen], taken by compassion for those who were spared, was responsible for three miracles, by which he made all the phenomenal gods to appear [against] the *mi ma yin-s* of Hor Bod. He behaved like a rje btsun Mi la *yogi*

a major aspect of the campaign. The castle of sKyegs gNas gсар was seized and its temple damaged. The Hor troops, together with unspecified Tibetan allies,<sup>6</sup> pillaged the place for three days, leaving behind a number of dead. Even animals were killed. This reminds one of the typical pattern of Mongol destruction, one of obliterating every form of life from a besieged site.

That the Mongols targeted the monastery may have depended upon its strategic location on the route that links Nyang stod, one of the core areas of gTsang, to the Himalayan borderlands (the hills of lHo Mon and the territory that will be later known as 'Bras ljongs), and Bengala farther away.

Hence one can conjecture that Dor ta's campaign, said by t'ai si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan to have targeted a wide area from Kong po to Bal po (see above n. 2), was a military action articulated along several fronts rather than a single one of an improbably huge extension. After the Mongol warriors reached the centre of dBus in undescribed circumstances, where they attacked Rwa sgreng and then rGyal lha khang, their campaign split into at least three different fronts. One front was in the direction of lHo kha, and affected areas such as bsNyal and Kong po. Another was directed towards lHo brag and must have reached as far as lHo Mon. A third front of the invasion attacked gTsang and perhaps advanced towards Bal po eventually, as mentioned in *Si tu bka' chems*.

A record of efforts to prevent the pillage of a monastery is contained in Kun dga' blo gros's *Nyang stod bla ma'i mtshan gyi deb ther*.<sup>7</sup> It seems that two attempts were made in succession to neutralise the impending disaster, when Hor warriors were on rampage. The first was by *bla ma*-s of the Nyang stod and 'Bring mtshams regions, the best known of them being Man lung pa. The other was by local masters, manifestly when the matter boiled down to an attack to their own monastery gNas rnying, which

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[throughout the territory] all the way to 'Brin chu (the "Brin River"). Likewise inconceivable miracles took place".

6 Compulsory military service was one of the impositions inflicted by Mongol domination upon the Tibetans. The fact that Dor ta's troops were joined by an unidentified Tibetan military contingent in the siege of gNas rnying engenders unsolved historical questions. Besides ascertaining who these Tibetans were, one would like to know what circumstances had led to forcing this burden upon them. Was it the consequence of a regime of vassalage preexisting Dor ta's military action, not recorded in the sources to my knowledge, or a more topical situation at the time of the 1240 Mongol campaign?

7 Kun dga' blo gros's *Nyang stod bla ma'i mtshan gyi deb ther* (p. 462,2-5), written in earth dog 1418, says: "Before chos rje Sa pan went to brGya (sic) yul, splinter Hor groups belonging to the Hor troops, mostly bad people, were creating grave disturbance (*gnar* spelled so for *snar*). When the times were not peaceful, religious exponents of Nyang stod as far as 'Bri mtshams confronted them for talks. The heads of the mission to meet them, when they met at Za ri in the area, i.e. Man lung rin po che, Ka la drug rin po che, 'U brag rin po che and sNgo tsha rin po che from 'Bri mtshams, those four, were the chief leaders. It appears in old documents that [personalities], such as the gNas rnying mkhan po Chos [kyi] rin [chen] and the lHo pa'i *bla ma*, having worked [at the problem] locally, met the Hor, and this was when they laboured for a conciliation".

confirms that this was the main target of the action described in *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa'i rnam thar*. That the events refer to the Dor ta invasion seem to be meant by the reference that they took place before Sa skya pandi ta left for Hor yul (wrongly mentioned as rGya yul in the source). He began his journey to Byang ngos to meet Go dan in 1244.

The allusion to splinter groups of Hor warriors being in charge of this military action is another clue that the tactics adopted were to split the Mongol army and to assign them to the multiple fronts of the campaign.

Following the invasion by Dor ta—the Mongol warrior aptly styled *nag po*, for he disseminated destruction in the lands of Central Tibet and farther away with a cruelty of which the Tibetans became aware from then on in their relations with the Mongols—O go ta was in a position of power vis-à-vis the Tibetans.

A first move was to launch a census of the Tibetan population. This well known pillar of the Mongol system of dominance was a task undertaken by Dor ta himself and Li byi ta, both addressed as military chiefs in the concerned passage of *Si tu bKa' chems* in *Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru*.<sup>8</sup>

Most significantly, the well known Mongol administration of Tibet was set up in 1240 by O go ta in the aftermath of Dor ta nag po's campaign. The practice whereby military campaigns in Tibet were followed by the imposition of a Mongol structure of governance was inaugurated at that time.

It is not clear whether O go ta's reform was influenced by Go dan, a son of O go ta and a younger brother of the Hor emperor Go yug, to whom, in the previous year (earth pig 1239), the fiefdom of Byang ngos, the old frontier area of the Tangut kingdom, had been entrusted. He thus was posted near Tibet to supervise its affairs.<sup>9</sup>

Having identified who his new subjects were, O go ta passed orders to them for the first time in the history of the relations between the Hor and the Tibetans. O go ta decided, with an imperial decree, to delegate Tibetan officers in Tibet to run the affairs of the country. His policy was thus to leave local power in the hands of Tibetan dignitaries of well known charisma in the absence of a supreme leader of the country, whom Dor ta could not locate because he did not exist.

8 The *bstan rtsis* appended to *Si tu bka' chems* in *Rlangs Po ti bse ru* (p. 447,21-448,2) says: "In iron male rat 1240, by Hor rgyal po O ko (p. 448) ta's (spelled so) order, Hor dmag Li byi ta and Dor ta, these two, having been sent earlier and later, took censuses of the population's households (*dud*)".

9 *Si tu bka' chems* in *Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* (p. 110,2-3): "rGyal bu Go dan was the Byang ngos pa ruler [handling matters] in the direction of Tibet". Wylie (1977 p. 109-113) sees in Go dan the driving force behind the expedition. That Go dan's headquarters were in Byang Mi nyag (i.e. at Byang ngos) indicates that the management of Tibetan affairs was run from the erstwhile Tangut kingdom. This is explicitly mentioned by dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba (*mKhas pa'i dga' ston* p. 1416,14-17; see above n. 2) when he traces back to Mi nyag Byang ngos the starting point of the 1240 Mongol invasion of Tibet. Do be ta's campaign against Tibet in 1252 was again launched from Byang ngos (ibid. p. 1419,6-7).

The decree granted the administration of Tibet to the 'Bri gung pa/Phag mo gru pa camp, who exercised power for a brief period of time—from 1241 up to Go yug's reform of a few years later (see below).<sup>10</sup> In the organisation of power delegated by the Mongols to Tibetans in Tibet, the 'Bri gung *sgom pa*, i.e. *sgom pa Shak rin*, was granted supreme authority over dBus gTsang (he was the *spyi dpon*), having, as subordinates, a governor (*dpon*) of gTsang—a dBus pa by the way: he was rDo rje dpal, the Phag mo gru pa *sgom pa*—and one governor (*dpon*) overseeing the Yar 'brog lho pa (presumably the people of lHo brag). This latter was gZhon nu 'bum, whose provenance I am in no position to ascertain. O go ta also appointed a governor overlooking the affairs of sTod mNga' ris skor gsum, whose title was *gnam sa dpa' shi* (see *Si tu bKa' chems* in *Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* p. 448,7-8, where it is wrongly spelled *gnam pa dpa' shi*).

I cannot explain the overlapping of roles between the governor of dBus gTsang, who was the *spyi dpon*, and the governor of gTsang, who was a *dpon*, but it should be noted that no role in this delegation of power to local officers was awarded to the Sa skya pa.

The *bstan rtsis* appended to ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan's *Si tu bka' chems* adds that, on the occasion of O go ta's iron rat 1240 appointments, a *khri dpon* (lDan ma *sgom brTson*) was chosen to lead the Phag mo gru pa (see n. 9 above). The traditional assessment of the inception of the *khri skor* system is, as is well known, placed in earth dragon 1268.<sup>11</sup> The allusion to the existence of a Phag mo gru pa *khri dpon* in iron rat 1240, almost thirty years before the actual beginning of the system—a

10 The *bstan rtsis* appended to *Si tu bka' chems* in *Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* (p. 448,2-10) reads: “[In iron male rat 1240] the Hor law was enforced. [The Hor] supported gdan sa Phag gru and 'Bri khung thel. Local lords were chosen to establish *rgyal khirms* and *chos khirms* in Bod yul dBus gTsang [and] mNga' ris skor gsum. The emperor made 'Bri khung the main territory of dBus gTsang, and *sgom pa Shak rin* was nominated *spyi dpon* (“supreme headman”). The emperor appointed rDo rje dpal ba to be the gTsang pa's *dpon*, gZhon nu 'bum to be the g.Yor po Yar 'brog lho pa's *dpon*, [and] a *rnam pa* (sic for *gnam sa*) *dpa' shi* to be the mNga' ris skor gsum *dpon*. They were appointed as leaders to administer the law in their own [territories]. In the same year, the lord (i.e. sPyan snga rin po che) appointed lDan ma *sgom brTson* to be the Phag gru's *khri dpon*”.

11 On the *khri skor bcu gsum* system see *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p. 298,7-9): “In the earth male dragon year (1268), the envoys A kon and Mi gling, these two, who had been directly sent by the imperial court, came. All the human communities and the lands [of Tibet] took the name of the great Hor-s”).

*Ngor chos 'byung* (p. 326,7) says: “When ['Gro mgon 'Phags pa] was thirty-four, in the earth male dragon year (1268) *dpon chen Shakya bzang po* established the *khri skor bcu gsum*”). See also Wylie (1977 p. 125), where the establishment of the *khri skor* system is connected with the Mongol census of Tibet in the same year.

If the territorial dimensions of the *khri skor* system are taken into account, it is natural to wonder why it is commonly believed that the system was introduced with the populations of Central Tibet in mind, and no others. This important historiographical question—whether this territorial restriction was actually the case—needs to be assessed on another occasion.

state of affairs aptly noted by Sörensen-Hazod (2007 p.556-557)—deserves consideration, unless it is being used anachronistically, as in literary references to the alleged existence of 15<sup>th</sup> century *khri skor-s* in mNga' ris smad and southern Byang thang (see, for instance, Vitali 2012 n. 239).

Persistence of an earlier notion is more common than transfers of events to an earlier date. If the statement under study is taken ad litteram, the process of creation of *khri skor-s* in dBus gTsang would have begun earlier than the inception of the sovereignty exercised by the Yuan dynasty over Tibet with the Sa skya pa as their agents. In any event, the matter is confusing because, in another passage, ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan defines the same lDan ma sgom brTson not as a *khri dpon* but as a *spyi dpon*, the title held by the 'Bri gung sgom pa Shak rin.<sup>12</sup>

This problem notwithstanding, one has the impression that the ta'i si tu's reference to O go ta's allocations of posts is intentionally incomplete, for Byang chub rgyal mtshan seems to mention only the situation among the Phag mo gru pa and their associates, such as the 'Bri gung pa, and that other positions of authority may have been granted to other aristocratic families of Central Tibet.

O go ta was the Hor pa emperor who expanded the role of the Tibetans, until then eminently religious, as their interaction with the Tangut court shows, into more secular areas as an effect of his iron rat 1240 appointments of Tibetan officers to be in charge of functions of various regions of the plateau.

### Go yug, Go dan and Sa pan

Things changed soon after O go ta's death in iron ox 1241. The new emperor Go yug (r. 1241-1246) reformed the system O go ta had enforced upon Tibet almost immediately.<sup>13</sup> He chose a different political solution, namely to delegate supreme

12 *Si tu bka' chems* in *Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* (p. 111,16-112,2): "When sPyan snga rin po che was the *bla ma* of 'Bri gung (1235-1255; see *lHo rong chos 'byung* p. 369,21-370,1), the Hor law was enforced. The Phag mo gru *khri skor* was assigned to Hu la hu. For the sake of lDan ma sgom brTson, who was a useless *spyi dpon*, following his support of the request to sgom pa Shak rin's that troops should be brought in, but not as far as Thang po che and 'Phyong rgyas, [the 'Bri gung pa secular chieftain] offered [him] the white land, part of the sNa nam *brgya skor*. Moreover, the *sgom pa* said: "A border area at this 'Ol kha [land of ours, the 'Bri gung pa,] will turn out to be a great service [rendered] to the *gdan sa* (i.e. the Phag mo gru pa). You (p. 112) should accept it", but [lDan ma sgom brTson] replied with a prostration: "*sGom pa rin po che!* Our own community will not be able to hold it"."

13 *bsTan rtsis* appended to *Si tu bka' chems* in *Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* (p. 448,10-14): "In iron female ox 1241, O ko (spelled so) ta died, thirteen years on the throne having elapsed. Go yug ascended the throne in that year. Given that Go yug assigned persons of dBus gTsang to be the *bla mchod* of his younger brother Go dan, Mongol [troops] were not sent to Tibet during the reign of Go yug".

This is a reference to Sa skya pandi ta, with the additional idea that the decision to chose him as the representative of the Tibetans in Hor yul was an enterprise of the emperor.

control of dBus gTsang to his younger brother Go dan who, in charge of affairs in Tibet since 1239, modified the previous policy. As is well known, Go dan appointed Sa skya pandi ta Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182-1251) as his *bla ma* and Tibetan political interlocutor (see below n. 13). It is no less well known that, in wood dragon 1244, Sa pan with his two young nephews, 'Phags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1235-1280) and Phyag na rdo rje (1239-1267), began his journey to the court of Go dan in the Hor yul borderland.<sup>14</sup>

The fact that Sa pan brought his two young nephews along with him to Hor yul seems to amount to the implementation of a political principle adopted by the Mongols vis-à-vis the populations they subjugated. Family members of surrendering rulers were kept at the Mongol court as hostages. Young 'Phags pa and Phyag na rdo rje may well have been considered Tibetan hostages and their Sa skya pa uncle the unofficial ruler of Tibet.<sup>15</sup>

The appointment of Sa pan transformed the type of governance in Tibet, which had been dominated by the bKa' bryud pa schools until then, in a drastic manner. The system passed from being an indirect Mongol administration with Tibetan officers in charge of dBus gTsang to a direct handling of local affairs with a Mongol prince bearing supreme responsibility. However, one should note that mNga' ris skor gsum, assigned separately to a *gnam sa dpa' shi* by O go ta, continued to be tied to the same power structure under the 'Bri gung pa/Phag mo gru pa block for a few decades more, as another passage of *Si tu bka' chems* in *Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* proves (ibid. p. 113,11-114,8; also Vitali 1996 p. 558 and n. 952).

That Sa pan exercised—or was forced to exercise—a secular role assigned to him by Go dan is revealed in the famous letter sent by the great Sa skya pa master to the Tibetan chieftains. Its disputed authenticity notwithstanding, Sa pan's missive to the Tibetan chieftains has next to nothing concerning religion, only a number of caveats, recommendations and orders of a secular nature.<sup>16</sup>

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14 *bsTan rtsis* appended to *Si tu bka' chems* in *Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* (p. 448,16-18): "In wood male dragon 1244, chos rje Sa pan, uncle and nephews, three in all, were invited by rgyal bu Go dan to Hor yul Byang ngos. They reached [there]. sPyan snga rje sent along sgom pa Shak rin from 'Bri khung thel".

These statements show that the Tibetan delegation meant to meet Go dan was not restricted to the Sa skya pa but was more representative of the power structure in Tibet, for it included supreme secular authorities from the bKa' bryud pa ranks.

15 Did the Mongols, then, see Sa skya pandi ta as a ruler of Tibet? And consequently, were the many *bla ma*-s at the various Mongol courts (*ti shri*-s being a case apart) considered hostages, regardless of local acceptance of these religious masters as spiritual leaders?

16 I see in the text of the letter many issues being discussed that seem to bear closely upon the Tibeto-Mongol relations of those days, but this does not help to establish whether Sa pan composed the letter; perhaps he was only its compulsive signatory.

The way Sa pan's letter to the Tibetan dignitaries is formulated indeed gives the impression that he is writing from a Mongol perspective so much so that one wonders whether it was actually drafted by him or whether he was passing on the orders and recommendations of his overlords.



The time of Go dan's appointment of Sa pan as his Tibetan interlocutor crucially shows that it was partially ineffective. Go dan and Sa pan actually met only for the first time in fire sheep 1247, one year after Go yug's death that brought his short reign to an end.<sup>17</sup> Go dan's father Mo 'gor was chosen as successor in the same year;<sup>18</sup> his ascension to the throne culminated in his official appointment in earth bird 1249, followed by his proclamation as emperor in the *quriltai* of iron pig 1251 (for all this, see Boyle 1971 p. 224 n. 96 and p. 228 n. 124). The selection of Mo 'gor rgyal po frustrated Go dan's regnal ambitions.

Sa pan thus found himself with no prospects of obtaining a position of preeminence. The dominant Tibetan tradition holds that both Go dan and Sa skya pandi ta's passages occurred in iron pig 1251. But while this is valid for Sa pan, a 1251 death for Go dan is highly improbable. A reference to him for the year 1253 is *terminus post quem* for his passing (Wylie 1977 p. 110, Petech 1990 p. 14).

On the one hand, the Tibetan master's nephews were still too young to take on a significant role vis-à-vis the Mongols, so that Sa skya pa aspirations were toned down for a while; on the other, Go dan's ambitions even regarding his authority over Tibet were sidelined by Mo 'gor rgyal po's reform of its administration. It was not death that jeopardised Go dan's control of the High Asian plateau but the new emperor's system of governance over Tibet.

### **Mongol Campaigns on the Plateau during Mo 'gor rgyal po's Reign and his Organisation of Tibet**

Tibet's system of governance was indeed modified a few years later by Mo 'gor rgyal po. In doing so, this Mongol emperor reverted to the two consolidated mechanisms priorly used by O go ta in Tibet: military campaigns and censuses.

It is well known that the Tibetan historians attribute two campaigns to Mo 'gor rgyal po. With the first, in iron dog 1250, he reminded the Tibetans of Mongol military might by sending an army led by Do be ta to invade Tibet from Byang ngos. The Mongol warriors killed a great number of people and tore down Mon mkhar mGon po gdong.<sup>19</sup>

The exact location of Mon mkhar mGon po gdong is not clear to me, but Mon mkhar, rather than being in some peripheral lower land, is the name of the territory

17 *bsTan rtsis* appended to *Si tu bka' chems* in *Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* (p. 448,1-20): "In fire male tiger (sic for horse: 1246), when [sPyan snga rin po che] was seventy-two years old, Go yug died, six years on the throne having elapsed".

18 *bsTan rtsis* appended to *Si tu bka' chems* in *Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* (p. 448,20-21): "In fire female sheep 1247, Mon gor (spelled so) rgyal po ascended the throne".

19 Among several sources dealing with it see *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (p. 1419,6-7), which reads: "In iron bird (sic for iron dog 1250), the emperor Mong gor gan ascended the throne and sent Do be ta's Hor troops against Tibet from Byang ngos. Countless men were killed at Mon khar mGon po gdong".

associated with rNam sras gling,<sup>20</sup> the palace on the southern bank of the gTsang po, opposite the bSam yas area on the river's northern side. Hence Mon mkhar, an area traditionally under the Bya pa family,<sup>21</sup> whose fiefdom was in gNyal,<sup>22</sup> should be sought in lHo kha. One of the Phag mo gru pa *gzhi ka bcu gsum*, mostly in lHo kha, which were set up by their khri dpon rDo rje dpal during the 13<sup>th</sup> century, was Mon mkhar rGya thang (see, e.g., pan chen bSod nams grags pa, *Deb ther dmar po gsar ma* (Tucci transl.) p. 206). This is a sign that Do be ta's Mongols stroke hard in the heart of Tibet.

In the same year, iron dog 1250—and probably just after Do be ta's campaign against Tibet—Mo 'gor rgyal po issued an imperial decree, the existence of which is mentioned in the *bsTan rtsis* appended to the *Gang can rig mdzod* edition of *Si tu bka' chems* (on its significance for the policy devised for Tibet see below).<sup>23</sup>

20 *Guru bKra shis chos 'byung* (p. 682,11-17) has this to say about the birth place of the great rNying ma master zhabs drung Padma 'phrin las: “On the south bank of the gTsang po, among the areas of g.Yon ru there is one known as Mon mkhar, in whose surroundings, [populated] with herders in later times, the battlefield of rgyal po Khyi ka ra thod, illegitimate descendant of the lineage of the earlier *chos rgyal-s*, was located. So goes an account. However it may have been, in this area—a heavenly abode—at the rival *gzhis ka* of rNam sras gling, [Padma 'phrin las]... was born ... in iron female snake 1641”. For another placement of rNam sras gling in the area of Mon mkhar, see *Si tu Chos kyi rgya mtsho, dBus gTsang gnas yig* (p. 175,1-14).

21 A lineage of the Bya pa *khri dpon-s* is found in *rGyal rabs chos 'byung shel dkar me long mkhas pa'i mgul rgyan* (p. 247,9-248,5): “It is well known that the Bya pa *khri dpon-s* stemmed from the family of 'Dab bzang and gShog bzang, the rulers of the Yar lung smad Bya. In early time that family counted on a few *mkhas grub*. Some two generations after A mi Bya nag chen po Rin chen 'od, Kun dga' rin chen attended upon the Sa skya *dpon*, Kun dga' bzang po. Thereafter, dPal bzang touched the feet of 'gro mgon 'Phags pa. His son 'Phags chen sPyan ba ba and others appeared. His son was Tshul khriims bzang po and the latter's son was dKon mchog bzang po; the latter's son bKra shis dpal bzang was appointed Bya pa *khri dpon* by gong ma Grags rgyal. His son was rGyal ba bkra shis; the latter's son bKra shis dar rgyas was especially devoted to Karma pa Chos grags rgya mtso. He made a *bKa' 'gyur* written in golden letters. His son Nor bu bkra shis [and another one] were born, two in all. His son 'Brug pa *sprul sku* was born. In accordance to the wish of his parents, he held the secular power in the later part of his life. His sons were bsTan (p. 248) 'dzin Nor bu and mTsho skyes rdo rje, two in all. His sons were Mi pham tshe yi dbang po [and another one], two in all. His sons were Karma tshe dbang grags pa [and another one], two in all. The Gangs dkar rulers appeared in succession. Likewise, in those days the community chieftains, whose secular power was truly high, were exclusively appointed by order of the imperial *sde srid-s*”.

22 The role and political status of the Bya pa aristocrats during the Mongol period—and the years that preceded it—are a rather complex issue. The Phag mo gru pa complained of some favoritism accorded to the gNyal pa by the Mongols at their own expense, which led to a territorial curtailment of the Phag mo gru pa territory. This seems to have been the scenario after the formation of the Yuan dynasty, for Do be ta's 1250 campaign was especially harsh on them. For an extremely succinct assessment of the Bya pa people and principality see, e.g., pan chen bSod nams grags pa, *Deb ther dmar po gsar ma* (Tucci transl. p. 236).

23 *bsTan rtsis* appended to *Si tu bka' chems* in *rLangs Po ti bse ru* (p. 449,3-17): “In iron male dog 1250, which was the seventy-sixth year [after sPyan snga rin po che's birth], in the presence of Mon

The 1250 military campaign was followed by another one in the next year, led by Hur ta,<sup>24</sup> whose target was again the heart of dBus and again the area south of the gTsang po, for he raided Gra, Dol and gZhung, the three areas situated in lHo kha.

Those were hectic years for Tibet, which suffered frequent Mongol attacks. *rGya Bod yig tshang* has a cryptic account of the campaign in Khams and lJang that occurred soon after the expeditions of 1250 and 1251. Its commander—manifestly rgyal bu Go pe la—is defined as the Hor *rgyal po* in the passage. The imperial title is assigned to him retroactively in this case, for this military action predated Se chen rgyal po's 1260 ascension to the throne. *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p. 277,2-5) reads:

“When the Hor sent troops against lJang yul, [people] were conscripted downwards (*mar*)<sup>25</sup> from the two 'ja' mo of mDo smad, in addition to the 'jams-s of China. [The Mongols] having struck with progressive violence, the two 'ja' mo of mDo stod, [namely] Ga re and Go dpe, turned out to be utterly gracious to dBus gTsang”.

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gor rgyal po, each monk, *lo tsa*, great community and division of Tibet, each high and low ranking representative [at court], who was the *bla mchod* of the emperor and his brothers, made a petition. rGyal bu Go dan having received Tibet, the system of assigning [the Tibetans] to some leaders was introduced in the following way. The 'Bri khung pa were assigned to Mon gor rgyal po; the Sa skya pa to Go dan himself; the Tshal pa to Se chen Go pe la; the Phag mo gru pa, g.Ya' bzang pa [and] Thang po che pa to sTod Hor rgyal po Hu la hu; Rab btsun, Gru gu sngang and Kha rag, these three, to rgyal bu sBo lcog; the lHa sa (spelled so for lHa pa), 'Brug pa [and] La stod Thang chung, these three, to rgyal bu Mo gha la; except the rGya ma family, the Bya yul pa were assigned to Si ga gan (i.e. khan); the Ki kam pa [and] Khra sa ngab pa to Gal du la. As requested to Mon gor, each of [these princes] was entrusted with protecting a land. The lands of 'Jang, brKyang and Phag mo gru, each of these three, were sought from Mon gor by rgyal bu Hu la. A 'ja' sa (“patent”) was issued”.

The assignment of lands belonging to various noble families of Central Tibet, defined (anachronistically?) as *khri skor*-s, to Mongol princes is mentioned in another passage of *Si tu bka' chems* in *Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* (p. 110,1-6) but in a reductive formulation: “The throne was given to Mon 'gor rgyal po and, at that same time, rgyal bu Go dan was made lord of Byang ngogs (spelled so for Byang ngos) [located] in the direction of Tibet. Since [Tibetan] *bla mchod*-s (“officiating *bla ma*-s”) were appointed to Go dan A ka la, the 'Bri khung pa were assigned to Mon 'gor rgyal po, the Tshal pa were assigned to Se chen rgyal po, the Phag mo gru pa were assigned to rgyal bu Hu la hu and the sTag lung pa were assigned to A ri bho ga, to these four royal lineages. A leader at the head of each *khri skor* was chosen”.

24 *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (p. 1419,8-7): “The next year (i.e. iron pig 1251, after the campaign led by Do be ta in iron dog 1250) the Hor troops of Hur ta came. They killed [many people] including rGyal tsha Jo 'ber. The proverb “This was when grass [did not] grow in Gra, Dol [and] gZhung anymore” was formulated”.

25 What does the term *mar* stand for in this context cannot be assessed with any amount of precision. Where the direction “*mar*” leads to in the unfolding of the expedition should be worked out in the light of rgyal bu Go pe la's itinerary in order to approach lJang yul (to the south of Khams), succinctly outlined in these passages. I would think that the trajectory of the Mongol army's advance was from somewhere in China to A mdo, and from there to northern Khams (mDo stod) and farther on towards an area possibly on the way to the Nan-ch'ao kingdom. But this is nothing more than a guess.

These sentences are cryptic. They obviously refer to the steps adopted by the Hor to recruit people for the lJang yul campaign. They first did it in China and then at the two 'ja' mo of A mdo. The Mongol striking force escalated in the campaign, due to the involvement of the two 'ja' mo of mDo stod (northern Khams), where recruitment also took place. The latter turned out to be beneficial to dBus gTsang in an unspecified manner. Does this being “beneficial” implies that Central Tibet was spared from providing soldiers to rgyal bu Go pe la's army?

Go pe la set out against lJang at the end of 1252, crossed the rMa chu probably in early 1253 and, in the later part of the same year, advanced in Khams territory as far as the southern reaches of the plateau (Chavannes 1903 vol. II, p. 2-3). He conquered Ta-li, the capital of lJang, in 1254 (Peliot 1962 p. 169-p. 181 and p. 747) or else in December 1253 (Matsuda 1992 p. 252-253). The campaign in lJang is dated in the *re'u mig* of Sum pa mkhan po's *dPag bsam ljon bzang* (p. 854), which says:

“Wood tiger (1254): the Hor emperor went to war against Ga ra lJang (the Black Mywao). In the next year he turned back”.

The “next year” (i.e. 1255) was when Go pe la sent his invitation to Karma Pakshi to join him in Eastern Tibet, but the second Karma pa preferred to accept the summons of Mo 'gor rgyal po. He travelled all the way the Hor yul to meet the emperor (see below).

The fact that Mon mkhar mGon po gdong can be traced to lHo kha indicates that during the early 1250s Mongol campaigns were directed towards different Tibetan regions. Two were against Central Tibet; another affected Khams and was eventually aimed at lJang. It seems that they were the outcome of an overall strategy conceived by Mo 'gor rgyal po, after he ascended the throne, in order to exert his power over the most populated regions of Tibet and the neighbouring Yunnanese kingdom.

As for the other typical tool used by the Mongols to control a subjugated land, A skyid and A gon were assigned the duty of undertaking in unspecified territories a census of the Tibetan population which amounted to the notable number of ten millions,<sup>26</sup> a figure that exceeds the present-day demographics of its people. One wonders, given the number mentioned, whether the census covered the entire Tibetan plateau—an important issue indeed—but this is not revealed by any piece of Tibetan literature.

26 *bsTan rtsis* appended to *Si tu bka' chems* in *Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* (p. 448,21-449,3): “In fire female sheep 1247, when [sPyan snga rin po che] was seventy-three years old, Mon gor rgyal po ascended the throne. The next year, earth male monkey 1248, Si tu A skyid [and] A kon were entrusted to the [concerned] lands. (p. 449) They undertook the census of the people of Tibet and their households (*dud*), amounting to the number of ten millions. Both the *gdan* [*sa* and] *khri* [*dpon*] having rendered service, Mon sgor (spelled so) granted to the *rje* (i.e. sPyan snga rin po che) and rGyal ba [rin po che], uncle and nephew, a 'ja' sa and other [awards]”. 1248 is too early a date for the events described in the passage.

The orders issued by Mo 'gor rgyal po in 1250 with his ordinance were conservative but also innovative in that he expanded the organisation introduced by O go ta. He did not drastically reform the status quo established by his predecessor Go yug, for he confirmed Go dan's jurisdiction over Central Tibet and assigned the Sa skya pa to him, but this appointment was short lived.

In addition, Mo 'gor rgyal po granted authority over various lands of Central Tibet to several noble families from these territories, including the 'Bri gung pa and Phag mo gru pa, who had been dispossessed of their preeminence by the previous Hor pa administration, and to Mongol princes, in an effort that aimed at introducing a wider distribution of power.

With Mo 'gor rgyal po's 1250 reform, each one of the Tibetan aristocratic families traditionally controlling areas and estates in Central Tibet were forced to pay tribute to one or another eminent Mongol prince in exchange for protection and favours, including that of living life at court, a burden and a privilege at the same time. It was protection at a price, the reward for paying heavy taxes to the Mongol princes being the recognition of these aristocratic families' authority over the lands from which this taxation came.<sup>27</sup> Hence, the association with a Mongol prince at the same time was a guarantee of control over their respective estates.

The provision whereby the Mongol nobility exercised authority over their foreign lands collectively did not apply to Tibet (see Sørensen-Hazod 2007 p. 557). This is proven by the system conceived for Tibet, which was adopted first by O go ta and developed by Mo 'gor rgyal po. Mongol princes held exclusive control of individual appanages in Tibet.

Ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan in his *bKa' chems* (see *ibid. passim*) spends more than a few words—adducing facts in support—on the Mongol system of dividing territories in Tibet among their princes. He says that the system of collective ownership did not apply to Tibet. He states that Se chen rgyal po, upon ascending the throne, took over apportioned estates in Central Tibet and granted them to his protégés, the Sa skya pa—and, therefore, ultimately to himself.

Besides well known burdens imposed by the Mongol chieftains upon the aristocratic families at the head of various Tibetan territories, such as taxation, compulsory labour or the maintenance of the postal relay network, another strict duty was that these families had to provide military support to their princely master. This service had been demanded already during the reign of O go ta, and an instance of its application in Tibet is mentioned in a local source (see above for the circumstances of Dor ta's attack on gNas rnying). That the Tshal pa provided compulsory military service to rgyal bu Go pe la is recorded in the reference to the military campaign waged by this Mongol prince against lJang yul. A masterly passage in *rGyal rabs*

<sup>27</sup> In the letter Sa pan urges Tibetans to pay taxes to the Mongols, this being a direct sign that, rather than protection to the main families of the Land of Snows, it was a matter of Mongol exploitation of their subjects.

*sogs Bod kyi yig tshang gsal ba'i me long* depicts this state of affairs in succinct but unequivocal terms. Tshal pa troops fought in lJang alongside Go pe la's Mongols, and are praised for their bravery.<sup>28</sup>

On the religious front, Mo 'gor rgyal po is well known for his close interaction with Karma Pakshi (*Karma Pakshi'i rang nam* p. 100,3-104,7). The way it is described in the biographies of the second Karma pa, this interaction seems to have been eminently spiritual, a feature confirmed by the absence of signs that this bKa' brgyud pa school benefited from any imperial endowment. Moreover, no aristocratic family from Tibet, which could be associated with them, is mentioned in the emperor's

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28 *rGyal rabs sogs Bod kyi yig tshang gsal ba'i me long* affirms that dpon chen rGyal rin (1233-1289)—the Tshal pa *dpon sa* from the age of twenty-three in wood hare 1255 until his death in earth ox 1289—went to the imperial court in 1259. A member of a delegation composed of fifty dignitaries, dpon chen rGyal rin, on that occasion, met rgyal bu Go pe la who took him along when the Hor prince waged war on lJang (spelled so) yul. The Tshal pa troops did well in the campaign and rGyal rin became a loyalist of the Mongol prince. The Tshal pa *dpon sa* was back to Eastern Tibet together with his superior and participated in the *quriltai* of the first month of the monkey year 1260, during which rgyal bu Go pe la took the throne for himself. Se chen rgyal po held rGyal rin in high regard and covered him with lavish gifts on the occasion.

*rGyal rabs sogs Bod kyi yig tshang gsal ba'i me long* (p. 111,4-6): “In the year of the sheep (1259), [dPon Sangs rgyas dngos grub] accompanied dpon Rin rgyal (i.e. rGyal rin), who was on his way to the imperial court. The former went there taking along Ban khos pa Shes rab 'bum, Lo pa dpon Shak and Byang Ji ston pa, altogether fifty [dignitaries]. They met rgyal bu Gu be la. [dPon rGyal rin] escorted rgyal bu Gu be la, who brought troops against lJang yul, and took along [troops of his own]. [His troops' warfare] was excellent. After coming back, in the first month of the monkey year (1260), the prince was given the throne and took the name Se chen rgyal po. 'Tshal pa (spelled so) Rin rgyal (i.e. rGyal rin) [note: the three sons born to him were the eldest spyang mnga' Nyi ma shes rab, the middle dpon dGa' bde and the youngest Rin chen dbang phyug] was awarded one *bre* of silver, along with brocade and silk. He was given countless gifts”.

The chronology of rGyal rin's interaction with rgyal bu Go pe la, and therefore the lJang yul campaign, is postdated in *rGyal rabs sogs Bod kyi yig tshang gsal ba'i me long*, which places rgyal bu Go pe la's campaign in lJang yul in 1259. Go pe la's military action indeed occurred in 1254-1255 (see Chavannes 1903 p. 2-3 and Szerb 1980 p. 272-277), preceded and followed by the Mongol prince's presence in Khams. Tibet's 1259 delegation was manifestly sent after the Tshal pa *dpon sa* had participated in the successful campaign against lJang rather than before this event.

*Gung thang dkar chag* (see Sörensen-Hazod 2007 p. 151) has a similar late dating of rGyal rin's interaction with rgyal bu Go pe la and the lJang yul expedition. Also see *ibid.* (n. 398), where Sörensen-Hazod mention the date 1253-1254 for the campaign against lJang and say it continued until 1259.

The presence in lJang yul of Tshal pa troops led by their *dpon sa*, rGyal rin, does not help disentangle another chronological problem—the passage of the Sa skya pa under the jurisdiction of Go pe la at the expense of his brother Go dan (see below in the text). The fact that Go pe la led Tshal pa troops to lJang does not rule out the possibility that other ones under different Tibetan chieftains might have been conscripted on the occasion. The lack of a reference to a Sa skya pa military contingent participating in the expedition does not disprove that it was part of it, and thus that the Sa skya pa were at the service of Go pe la at the time. The absence of any reference to them in *rGyal rabs sogs Bod kyi yig tshang gsal ba'i me long* is useful neither to support nor to dismiss this possibility.

decree, for the simple reason that no aristocratic family of Tibet supported the Karma pa. The exception to this state of affairs was the patronage of the Karma pa by the dBu royal house of 'Bri klung, to which Karma Pakshi belonged, which did not extend to dBu gTsang, for it was restricted to areas of northern Khams (see Vitali, in press).

This observation concerning the status granted to the second Karma pa by Mo 'gor rgyal po entails another one. In the same way as the 1240 edict issued by O go ta, the 1250 decree ignores religious issues entirely. One then wonders whether O go ta's religious contacts were restricted to Tshal pa bla ma Gung thang pa (see their interaction in *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* p. 1415,19-1416,9), and Mo 'gor rgyal po's to Karma Pakshi, excluding occasional exchanges between the latter and 'gro mgon 'Phags pa.

It was during the reign of Mo 'gor rgyal po that the ties between rgyal bu Go pe la, the future Se chen rgyal po, and 'gro mgon 'Phags pa were established. In wood bird 1253, the young Sa skya pa *bla ma*, aged nineteen at that time, went to meet Mu gu du la and Go pe la,<sup>29</sup> respectively a son and a brother of Sa pan's mentor Go dan (*rGya Bod yig tshang* p. 256,2-4). Already during their first meeting the young *bla ma* favourably impressed Go pe la, with whom he established personal bonds. These events indicate that a further realignment between princely families of Tibet with Mongol princes took place soon after Mo 'gor rgyal po's edict. Go pe la, who was originally given the Tshal pa, received the Sa skya pa, whose services Go dan lost. The granting of the Sa skya pa (and the Tshal pa on a minor scale) to Go pe la remained a political constant for the entire existence of the Yuan dynasty. Hence rgyal bu Go pe la sharpened his political vision on how to handle Tibet in the years during which he was in the erstwhile Byang Mi nyag kingdom and Khams.<sup>30</sup>

It would then seem that the great *bla ma*/patron relationship between the two, a milestone in the history of Tibet, was the outcome of the religious and secular policy of the Go dan camp and the Sa skya pa, initiated by the latter and Sa pan. It apparently suffered a setback with Sa skya pandi ta's death, but the seed had been planted that eventually germinated into the power structure that cemented Yuan sovereignty over Tibet.

29 *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (p. 1419,1-5): "In water ox 1253, when he was nineteen years old, bla ma 'Phags pa met Mu gu du la, Go dan's eldest son, and rgyal bu Go pe la Se chen. Se chen realised that 'Phags pa rin po che had an excellent body, speech and mind and was pleased [with him]. He said: "I accept the Sa skya pa [as the Tibetans under my aegis]!", and asked him to stay on. ['Phags pa] became his *bla ma* when Se chen was thirty-nine years of age".

30 The sequence of events in those years in a nutshell was:

- Do be ta invaded Tibet, advancing to Mon mkhar mGon po ldong in 1252;
- Go pe la led the Hor pa military expedition against lJang in the years 1252-1254, using his presence in Khams as a base for this action;
- Hur ta led a military campaign in Central Tibet in 1253, focusing on lHo kha;
- Go pe la and 'gro mgon 'Phags pa met in 1253.

rGyal bu Go pe la's choice of 'gro mgon 'Phags pa as his own *bla ma* also had the consequence that the Tshal pa were supplanted by the Sa skya pa in the future emperor's favours, but they still remained his faithful sympathisers.

The literature mentions the location of the meeting between Go pe la and 'Phags pa took place (Lu pa'i shan; see Szerb 1980 p. 275-276 and n. 71). There is a two year gap before the next major event in the relationship between the Tibetans and this Mongol prince occurred. Having brought back his army to Khams in wood hare 1255 after his campaign in lJang, rgyal bu Go pe la is documented as having moved at least up to Zla rgyud (and almost certainly to areas south of there),<sup>31</sup> if not elsewhere in the region. It is possible, then, that Go pe la and 'gro mgon 'Phags pa met in the periphery of northern Khams. And Khams was where Go pe la saw Karma Pakshi as the latter was on his way to Hor yul, following Mo 'gor rgyal po's invitation to him that had been delivered at mTshur phu by the Mongol prince's envoys earlier that year.<sup>32</sup>

More significantly, Go pe la's interest in religious affairs and his leading an army into Khams document the future emperor's involvement with Tibet as early as the first half of the 1250s. His presence in the region represented a continuation of Go dan's responsibilities and policy on the plateau. It assured continuity to the appointment of a Mongol prince with the duty of supervising the affairs of Tibet, but whether he inherited his elder brother's role is nowhere indicated in the literature. His focus on Khams during that period probably was topical rather than strategic.<sup>33</sup>

It seems, then, more than coincidental that, since the campaign in Khams and lJang in 1252-1254 and the 1253 encounter between Go pe la and 'Phags pa, Go dan had no part whatsoever in the unfolding of these important events. It therefore seems that there was a change in the handling of Tibetan affairs, with Go pe la taking on a major and direct role in Tibet in place of Go dan.

Given the more pronounced convergence of the political and religious functions that is to be ascribed to the undertakings of Se chen rgyal po not long after he ascended the throne, eventually *yon mchod* was no more limited to the religious sphere.

31 *Ras pa dkar po'i mam thar* in 'Ba' rom chos 'byung (p. 220,5-7): "When Hor Se chen rgyal po was known as rgyal bu Gau pe la (spelled so), he brought troops to Zla rgyud. [Hence] he came to mDo smad (i.e. to Khams in this case)".

32 *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (p. 888,3-5) reads: "[Karma Pakshi] crossed mDo Khams and met rgyal bu [Go pe la] at Rong yul gSer stod in the year of the hare 1255 when [the Karma pa] was aged fifty-two, having been born in wooden rat 1204".

33 It is to a certain extent accepted among scholars that rgyal bu Go pe la had a larger share of power over Tibet, granted to him by Mo 'gor rgyal po's 'ja' sa. I do not see in this emperor's edict any indication that the future Se chen rgyal po was *primus inter pares*. That rgyal bu Go pe la ascended to preeminence in the handling of the Tibetan affairs was due to his presence on the eastern side of the plateau in the years after Mo 'gor rgyal po's edict. This is due to the fact other Mongol princes to whom appanages, provided by the aristocratic families of Central Tibet, were reserved did not set foot on Tibetan soil—probably not even Go dan who had been in charge of Tibet during the reign of the previous Mongol emperor.



Se chen initiated this new approach through a series of tactical steps that made 'gro mgon 'Phags pa his *bla ma*—a relationship he had begun to care about, as said above, over ten years before—followed by several Sa skya pa *ti shri*-s after the great Sa skya pa's death.<sup>34</sup>

On the secular front internal to Tibet, the political scenario on the plateau underwent an evolution towards the end of the twenty year period from 1240 to 1259. The rivalry between the 'Bri gung pa/Phag mo gru pa block and the Sa skya pa grew bitter, the latter having been raised to a position of authority comparable to that of the two bKa' brgyud pa powerhouses through Go dan's choice of members of this school as his interlocutors. This created a situation that metamorphosed into a polarisation of local might in Tibet.

In the succeeding period, the enmity between the 'Bri gung/Phag mo gru pa and the Sa skya pa escalated from episodes of hostility of a limited extent to broader dimensions, impinging on Mongol affairs, when they each took side for one of the two princes—A rig bho ga and Go pe la—vying for the throne. The divergent political leaning of these Tibetan schools marked their destiny for decades to come, but this is a new chapter in the relations between the Hor, Hor *khirms* and the Tibetan aristocrats, on a more familiar historical territory—the Sa skya pa/Yuan period of Tibet—about which it has been written profusely.

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34 The Sa skya *ti shri*-s to the Yuan emperors were in succession: 'gro mgon 'Phags pa (1260-1276), Rin chen rgyal mtshan (1276-1279) Darma pa la rakshi ta (1279-1286), Ye shes rin chen (1286-1294), Grags pa 'od zer (1294-1303), Rin chen rgyal mtshan (1303-1305), Sangs rgyas dpal (1305-1314), Kun dga' blo gros rgyal mtshan (1315-1325), dBang phyug rgyal mtshan (1325-1327), Kun dga' legs pa'i 'byung gnas (1325), Rin chen bkra shis (1329), Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1333-1358) and bSod nams blo gros (1358-1362).

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