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# Divided by scholasticism: Revealing early sources on what separated the monasteries of Rwa sgrenḡ and Gsang phu

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## Introduction

**R***wa sgrenḡ* and *Gsang phu* emerged as the two foremost monasteries founded by direct disciples of Atiṣa (Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna, 982–1054) in eleventh century Tibet. In contemporary writings they are both routinely referred to as Bka' gdams monasteries, but are also portrayed as having very different approaches, with *Rwa sgrenḡ* frequently being characterised as more “contemplative” (Davidson 2005: 279, Apple 2018: 18), and *Gsang phu* being known for the analytical nature of its traditions (Hugon 2016: 290). The respective emphases on religious and intellectual practices that is seen as distinguishing the two monasteries is also often portrayed as what *defined* them as institutions. These differences seem to invite a series of questions, regarding historical relations between the two monasteries, how they ended up with such contrasting approaches, and indeed how, if both monastic communities regarded themselves as followers of the Bka' gdams tradition, they were able to explain and manage the diverging perspectives of their institutions. Although academic writings might reasonably be expected to provide at least partial answers, we surprisingly find that they have virtually nothing to say on these matters.

A point that we first need to be aware of is that while rarely drawing attention to the fact, contemporary writings present us with two *distinct* images of the Bka' gdams tradition.<sup>1</sup> The first is of a distinct religious *school*, with 'Brom ston Rgyal ba'i 'byung gnas (1004–1064), the prominent Tibetan disciple of Atiṣa, represented as its “founding father” (Roesler 2019: 1145) and *Rwa sgrenḡ* Monastery, established by 'Brom ston in 1056–1057, as the school's official seat. This school is described through the prism of “lineages” (see, for instance, Roesler 2019,

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was written as part of the research project “The Dawn of Tibetan Buddhist Scholasticism (11th–13th centuries)” (TibSchol). This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement no. 101001002). I would like to thank my colleague and fellow project-member Dr Zhouyang Ma for his useful comments on an earlier draft of this article.

Vetturini 2013), especially those transmitted by 'Brom ston's principal disciples, known collectively as the "three brothers" (*sku mched gsum*)—Po to ba Rin chen gsal (1027–1105), Spyān snga ba Tshul khriṃs 'bar (1038–1103), and Phu chung Gzhon nu rgyal mtshan (1031–1106).<sup>2</sup> The second image of the Bka' gdams is of a looser-knit set of groups and practices linked with Atiśa. Rather than being equated solely with 'Brom ston's religious school, this Bka' gdams is expanded to embrace *entities* (groups, monasteries, and traditions) lying outside that school's generally accepted borders. Among these, the entity of chief interest in this article is the monastery of Gsang phu.<sup>3</sup>

The earliest biographies on Atiśa (discussed below) recount how following the master's demise, his remains and belongings were divided into four portions and distributed among major disciples. The monasteries of Rwa sgrenṅ and Gsang phu grew from the structures built to house two portions of these relics. 'Brom ston established the monastery of Rwa sgrenṅ in what became the Bka' gdams heartland (i.e., 'Phan po and Byang), whereas Gsang phu was founded around sixteen years later (1073) near Lhasa, by Rngog Legs pa'i shes rab (d.u.), who is portrayed as another of Atiśa's three foremost Tibetan disciples.<sup>4</sup> Rwa sgrenṅ and Gsang phu were in the vanguard of the new brand of Tibetan monastery that arose at the start of the "later diffusion" period, as part of the revival of institutional monasticism in central Tibet, the collapse of which had been prompted by the breakup of the Tibetan empire. Their contribution to the evolution of the monastic institution itself in Tibet seems difficult to overstate. Unlike many of the earlier temples,<sup>5</sup> these monasteries housed full-time, resident communities. And while the role they served as centres for the upholding of monastic discipline was one based on established custom, the collective religious practices their communities engaged in did more to shape tradition than follow it. Rwa sgrenṅ's apparent devotion to 'Brom ston's interpretation of Atiśa's teachings made it one

<sup>2</sup> These individuals were brothers only in the figurative sense.

<sup>3</sup> Authors and editors now very regularly evoke this second, broader image of the Bka' gdams. And whether it be in expansive treatments of Tibetan religious and cultural history (e.g. Davidson 2005), writings on more specific topics, including even Rwa sgrenṅ itself (e.g. Iuchi 2016), or recent collections of historical manuscripts reproduced in Tibet (such as the *Bka' gdams gsung 'bum*), the wish to include Gsang phu is obviously a major consideration behind it.

<sup>4</sup> The other member of this triad is Khu ston brtson 'grus (1011–1075).

<sup>5</sup> Initial efforts towards revival, beginning in the late tenth century, focussed on the reintroduction of monastic ordination (for an early source on this see Martin 2016) and the physical restoration of pre-existing structures, including some monasteries, but predominantly numerous small temples. For a description of these temples, and the 'clans' that supported their reconstruction, see Davidson (2005: 84–112).

of the first monasteries with a recognisable *Tibetan* religious affiliation, and thus a precursor for the school-based model that went on to dominate. Gsang phu, for its part, became the first monastic home of a system now commonly described as Tibetan *scholasticism*. The point at which the two monasteries' approach began to diverge can be traced back to the tenure of Rngog Blo ldan shes rab (1059–1109) at Gsang phu. Rngog lo (the sobriquet by which he is often known in early sources), the nephew of the monastery's founder and his direct successor, was the key developer of a new set of intellectual practices, the introduction of which at Gsang phu appears to have signalled a major change in direction there.

Nothing illustrates the disparity between the two depictions of the Bka' gdams better than Gsang phu's respective place within them. In the first depiction, Gsang phu is marginalised. In the second depiction, Gsang phu occupies the foreground and is sometimes presented as the preeminent Bka' gdams monastery. The existence of these two differing notions of the Bka' gdams tradition, and the fact that scholars often fail to specify which of them they are referencing, partly explains why their claims occasionally appear to diametrically oppose each other. Thus, while some assert Rwa sgreng formed the heart of the Bka' gdams, a perspective from which Rngog lo's analytical traditions were regarded as "somewhat heterodox" (Vetturini 2013: 172), others propose that Gsang phu was "center stage" (Davidson 2005: 279) and Rwa sgreng was merely a "satellite" (ibid.). The main question regarding these two understandings of the Bka' gdams must be about what historical grounds they rest upon. The first image closely reflects what appears in the various "Bka gdams histories".<sup>6</sup> And although aspects of the histories' depiction require interrogation, the image itself is without doubt of considerable age.

There are far more questions about the historical basis for the second depiction. In the case of Gsang phu, for example, most appear to regard the fact that its founder was a direct disciple of Atiśa as sufficient grounds for classifying it as a Bka' gdams monastery. However, if Rngog lo's developments at Gsang phu indeed led to profound changes there, even in the generation immediately following that of the founder, the extent to which its residents regarded themselves as sharing the same tradition as their Rwa sgreng counterparts becomes a moot point. Sources that might help us to understand such questions are in short supply, and Iuchi remarks (2016: 23) that those currently available yield little information about relations between Rwa sgreng

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<sup>6</sup> By "Bka' gdams histories" I mean not only the genre of works bearing the title *Bka' gdams chos 'byung* (see Iuchi 2018), but also larger histories that have significant sections devoted to the Bka' gdams school. As remarked below, the differing format of these two varieties appears to shape representation of the Bka' gdams.

and other monasteries, including Gsang phu. The fact that Rwa sgreng and Gsang phu are increasingly seen as belonging to two *separate* fields of research, respectively focussing on the Bka' gdams religious school and scholasticism, further seems to divert attention from the issue of relations. But the dearth of evidence has not deterred some who subscribe to the second notion of the Bka' gdams. Davidson is one of many who view Rwa sgreng and Gsang phu as belonging to a single "*Bka' gdams lineage*" (2005: 279). And in recent years, it has also become somewhat routine to refer to Gsang phu as a Bka' gdams monastery. Nor does Davidson appear to be alone in assuming that the popularity of Gsang phu traditions during the twelfth century resulted in Rwa sgreng effectively ceding the field of scholarship to it, justifying the description of Rwa sgreng as Gsang phu's "satellite" (Davidson 2005: 279). How this is to be squared with ubiquitous reports of a tradition of study based on the "six Bka' gdams texts" (*Bka' gdams gzhung drug*),<sup>7</sup> associated with Po to ba, seemingly distinct from the Gsang phu programme is not immediately obvious. And while Apple's recent work (2018) avoids the issue of historical relations, it presents a picture of an independent Rwa sgreng tradition of scholarship, not one that is submissive to Gsang phu.

This article aims to bring some degree of clarity to the historical relations between Gsang phu and Rwa sgreng, together with their traditions of scholarship, primarily by examining the role that scholasticism played in dividing the two monasteries. Gsang phu's more intellectual approach undoubtedly contrasted with what, as already noted, is regularly characterised as the more "contemplative" style of Rwa sgreng. Gsang phu's championing of scholasticism also certainly played a huge part in what separated them. But the Bka' gdams histories, some of which have been regarded as the most reliable sources on the early centuries of the later diffusion, contain no reports of splits or even friction arising from developments at Gsang phu. To investigate this article's central question it is therefore both necessary and desirable to examine earlier sources. Fortunately, important manuscripts of works from the era in question have recently become available,<sup>8</sup> and this article's main sources are writings dateable to the twelfth century. These throw new light on the reception of scholasticism and what appears to have been its impact on Rwa sgreng.

The rise of Gsang phu and scholasticism more generally can be seen as a disruptor of established patterns. Vetturini, for instance, talks of "a resistance among the bKa' gdams pas to the rising tide of

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<sup>7</sup> The individual works are listed below.

<sup>8</sup> Reproductions of most of these manuscripts are found in the *Bka' gdams gsung 'bum* collection.



institutionalized dialectics...and mass instruction, inconsistent with the practical and personally transmitted teachings handed down by Atiśa to small groups of disciples” (2013: 175). Our early sources, which serve as a window into the state of Rwa sgren traditions during the twelfth century, provide some support for this. But I argue that in what they tell us about the reactions to Gsang phu scholasticism, they also reveal a *constructive* (although inadvertent) role that it played in the formation of other religious identities, specifically those of Rwa sgren and the Bka’ gdams tradition, but also potentially much further afield.

### **Tibetan scholasticism and understanding reactions to it**

Research on Tibetan scholasticism, which initially largely concentrated on the intellectual content of its writings, has recently expanded to the investigation of its early growth and the diffusion of ideas and discourses within scholarly networks.<sup>9</sup> Less attention has been given to reactions and responses *outside* these scholarly writings and networks. The twelfth century was unquestionably a formative period for Tibetan religious expression. Hence, investigating the wider *impact* of Tibetan scholasticism, how it might have affected or shaped religious discourses and institutions, is also key to understanding it as a historical phenomenon. As alluded to above, the scholasticism associated with Gsang phu was the earliest form to become established on Tibetan soil. Like its European counterpart, it was a systematised form of thinking and philosophy that relied heavily on the use of logic. Also like that counterpart, it was not limited to a single institution: scholasticism encompassed various monasteries, groups, and individuals. But Gsang phu has a special claim to our attention not only in being the earliest institutional home of Tibetan scholasticism, but also the first institution to develop a successful model of learning that other monasteries would go on to adopt.

Current understanding of early Tibetan scholasticism is composite.<sup>10</sup> From the late eleventh century onwards, writers produced a relatively large amount of literature, but the vast majority was exegetic and intellectual in nature. Early writers show few signs of being self-reflective about their tradition, rarely comment on its achievements, and apparently composed no descriptive histories. For accounts of the tradition as a whole, we rely largely upon outsiders, including authors of the Bka’ gdams histories (considered in the next section). When

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<sup>9</sup> This is one area of focus for the TibSchol project in which I am involved.

<sup>10</sup> For previous discussions on features of scholasticism see Hugon (2016) and Samuels (2020).

authors of the histories refer to what is now termed "scholasticism", they tend to rely on expressions such as "Gsang phu traditions" and in many cases, label it "Rngog's lineage". The language of lineage is employed obsessively in Bka' gdams histories, although only rarely is it meant in the literal sense of unilineal transmission. But the connotations of restrictive communication seem especially inappropriate as a description of Gsang phu traditions, since learning there was clearly very public and could involve large groups. Despite such limitations, the Bka' gdams histories include many useful details about traditions they associate with Rngog lo and Gsang phu. But it is only outside the genre, in such works as the *History of the Pramāṇa Tradition* (*Tshad ma'i 'byung tshul*) by Shākya mchog ldan (1428–1507),<sup>11</sup> in which "lineage" (*rgyud*) is replaced with "system" (*lugs*), that we find a fuller conception and description of this tradition as a movement, and gain some sense of its profound impact. What these sources agree on is that the tradition they describe *begins* with Rngog lo. And while questions remain about this, it is abundantly clear that these authors do not see the tradition as the continuation or revival of an earlier one, but recognise that it is new, innovative, and decidedly Tibetan.

Tibetan scholasticism is marked by its heavy reliance on methods of critical analysis, and draws considerably from the Indian Pramāṇa tradition as a source of inspiration. Early Tibetan scholasticism expressed itself both in the intellectual content of its writings and in the domain of organised learning, and its innovations manifested in three main spheres: 1. Textual analysis expressed through composition, 2. The creation of educational institutions and materials, 3. The development of educational processes and practices. Firstly, Rngog lo's compositions included groundbreaking commentarial writings. Being the first Tibetan works on certain *sūtra*-based topics, these initiated native traditions of exegetical writing, and also (in the case of his works on the *Pramāṇaviniścaya* and *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*) effectively delineated two of the fields that went on to define scholastic education. The style of Rngog lo's writing can be regarded as even more historically significant than the content. His surviving works are the first Tibetan compositions to subject Indian treatises to a rigorous and interrogative treatment that is now seen as characteristic of Tibetan scholasticism. Features of this treatment already apparent in his writings are the imposition of organisational divisions and outlines not overt in the original work, a reliance on standardised analytical and descriptive frameworks, and the critical assessment of different scholars' interpretations

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<sup>11</sup> This descriptive name is a common abbreviation of the text entitled *Tshad ma'i mdo dang bstan bcos kyi shing rta'i srol rnams ji ltar 'byung ba'i tshul gtam du bya ba nyin mor byed pa'i snang bas dpyod ldan mtha' dag dga' bar byed pa* (2006).

and assertions. As the tradition expanded beyond commentarial writings, analysis and discourse was increasingly structured around how particular things were *defined*. Authors systematically considered the definitions and assertions of other scholars, invariably finding fault with them, before presenting their own conclusive position. Analysis and criticism were also presented in a logical format, and commonly depicted as a debate, i.e., an exchange between two parties. This dialectical quality to the discourse in scholasticism in particular shaped perception of it. And as the passages below illustrate, proved an emotive issue in twelfth century religious discourse. Apart from composing commentaries, similar in style to Indian writings, Rngog lo also created a distinctive brand of “summary” (entitled *don bsdus*),<sup>12</sup> within which he experimented with different formats for the presentation of material.

Secondly, in the sphere of educational institutions and materials, Rngog lo is credited with the creation of the first institutions (more literally, “units” or “sections”) dedicated to learning, based on dialectical principles (known as *mtshan nyid kyi grwa* or *bshad grwa*), and functioning within the wider structure of the monastery. The model proved incredibly popular and was exported into monasteries irrespective of their affiliation. Rngog lo’s successors also built upon his concept of the “summary”<sup>13</sup> to make further innovations in the spheres of format and content. The expanded category ranged from outlines to entirely new treatments of topics, some of which were obviously intended to serve as educational materials. Both the creation of these “units” and the production of materials for them seem indicative of a shift from informal, less regulated styles of knowledge transmission and learning to a recognisable form of institutional *education*.

In the third sphere, that of educational processes and practices, written sources are less specific, and attributions to Rngog lo are less direct. However, the evidence linking Gsang phu with the creation of the first scholastic curriculum is very strong. This was an amalgam of the two more traditional areas of monastic learning, Vinaya and Abhidharma, with the two delineated by Rngog lo’s commentaries (Pramāṇa and *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*-mediated Prajñāpāramitā). This curriculum did not proscribe learning at Gsang phu. As affirmed in numerous accounts, individuals could approach teachers informally for instructions on a whole range of extra-curricular topics, including tantra and medicine. Closely related to this organisation of learning, the

<sup>12</sup> Among Rngog lo’s surviving writings, there are seven of these summaries, six on individual Indian treatises and one on a *sūtra*. He is known to have compiled many more, a point returned to below.

<sup>13</sup> The titles of the works by Rngog lo’s successors commonly reverse the word order (i.e., *bsdus don*, etc.).

evidence linking Gsang phu with development of the first institutional processes of examination and the awarding of scholastic titles is also compelling. Gsang phu was, furthermore, known to have divided the scholastic calendar into distinct sessions (akin to terms or semesters), a practice that probably originated there. Tradition also holds that it was at Gsang phu that formalised practices of Tibetan public disputation were first developed and utilised for educational purposes.

The Gsang phu approach was eventually propagated through the foundation of various satellite institutions, but starting from Rngog lo's time, Gsang phu itself began to attract those from outside, who would study particular topics for months or years, before returning to their original areas and monasteries. This first Tibetan centre of mass study proved tremendously popular, and for more than a century, had no rival. Among the ranks of those drawn there for study purposes were the scions of influential families and figures now regarded as central to the foundation of the new schools, including the second Sa skya hierarchy, Bsod nams rtse mo (1142–1182) the “first Karmapa”, Dus gsum mkhyen pa (1110–1193), and (almost certainly) Phag mo gru pa Rdo rje rgyal po (1110–1170). And by no later than the twelfth century, a specific designation (i.e., *mtshan nyid pa*) was used for exponents of the dialectical approach followed at Gsang phu.<sup>14</sup>

This brief sketch of early scholasticism has identified different spheres within which it made an early impact. The proliferation of “dialectical units” and the adoption of the scholastic curriculum, from the twelfth century onwards, are the greatest testimony to the spread of the Gsang phu model of education and scholasticism's general advance. The huge role played by Rngog lo in establishing a native tradition of commentarial writing also helped ensure scholasticism's influence in the textual sphere. However, in the topic of Pramāṇa,<sup>15</sup> we discover another dimension to scholasticism's historical impact. Scholasticism stimulated a huge growth in knowledge about Buddhist Pramāṇa theory, based on the writings and thinking of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, according to which perception and inference were the only genuine epistemic means (i.e., *pramāṇa*) through which incontestable knowledge could be gained. This helped popularise the view that inference and logic had indispensable soteriological value. Scholasticism's influence can partly be measured by the increase in writings on Pramāṇa (i.e., epistemology and logic) and the expansion of the dialectical style such writings employed into other areas of learning. Only in the wake of attacks on Gsang phu scholarship by Sa skya Paṇḍita

<sup>14</sup> See Samuels (2020: 100).

<sup>15</sup> Here we should distinguish Pramāṇa as a topic of study (covering both logic and a theory of knowledge) from *pramāṇa*, referring to an epistemic means for gaining reliable knowledge. In Tibetan, both are denoted by the same term, *tshad ma*.

(1182–1251) did the territory of scholasticism become more fractured,<sup>16</sup> although Tibetan interest in *Pramāṇa* never waned. However, it is notable that the expression of anti-*pramāṇa* sentiments seems to begin in Tibet when Gsang phu was at its zenith during the mid twelfth century, when scholasticism's promotion of *Pramāṇa* propelled it into religious discourse. Direct disciples of Sgam po pa Bsod nams rin chen (1079–1153), the figure credited with the foundation of the Dwags po Bka' brgyud tradition, appear to have been among the foremost early critics. Jackson judges the brand of Bka' brgyud promoted by such figures as Zhang Tshal pa (1123–1193) and his teacher, Sgom pa Tshul khrim snying po (1116–1169), the nephew and successor of Sgam po pa, to be “anti logic but also anti-intellectual” (Jackson 1995: 90). These individuals were clearly opposed to conceptual approaches more generally, but the historical context within which their criticisms were made, as much as their content, suggest that they were responding to the growth of institutionalised monasticism and the intellectualisation of Buddhism. They specifically rejected a role for analysis and inference in the path, and delivered an unrelenting message about the need to rely on personal instruction to gain realisation. They also sometimes made more direct attacks on the notion of *pramāṇa*, portraying Atiśa as a *pramāṇa* sceptic or even denier.<sup>17</sup>

Between the proponents of scholasticism, who fully accepted the notion of *pramāṇa* and all that it entailed (i.e., the role of reasoning and inference), and those among Sgam po pa's followers who completely rejected these, was an expansive middle ground, occupied by those who acknowledged a limited place for *pramāṇa*. Some of these individuals referred to epistemological models that appear to be *alternatives*

<sup>16</sup> Voicing criticisms of fellow scholars' views was par for the course within scholasticism. But Sa skya Paṇḍita sought to distinguish himself from Gsang phu's scholarship as a whole, thereby creating the notion of differing *systems* of Tibetan *Pramāṇa* interpretation and styles of scholarship.

<sup>17</sup> These portrayals centre on the very literal glossing of a single verse in Atiśa's *Satyadvayāvatāra* (Dergé 3902) (72b3) *mngon sum rjes dpag dgos pa med / mu stegs rgol ba zlog pa'i phyir / mkhas pa rnams kyis byas pa yin*. Those within the anti-*pramāṇa* camp read the words as Atiśa denying the existence of *pramāṇa* and asserting that the logic associated with *pramāṇa* was created *solely* to refute Indian non-Buddhist traditions, and is thus without soteriological value. As discussed by Jackson (1995: 92, 93, and 98), this relies on some questionable de-contextualisation. This sceptical version of Atiśa is also roundly rejected by Tibetan proponents of *pramāṇa*. But it is endorsed by Apple, who also says that Atiśa “disparaged the practice of debate” (2022: 9). Vetturini (2013: 10 n.11, 172), in more moderate terms, portrays Atiśa as not being particularly favourable to debate and other analytical practices (now associated with Gsang phu). The evidence for these varying depictions of Atiśa will be assessed on a later occasion.

to the twofold version of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti.<sup>18</sup> Many individuals now classified as belonging to the Dwags po Bka' brgyud traditions occupied this middle ground. On *pramāṇa* itself there were various shades of opinion (and not a little ambiguity). But a large number, including Sgam po pa himself, accepted a limited place for reasoning and inference, specifically in the realisation of emptiness.<sup>19</sup> 'Jig rten mgon po (1143–1217), who is identified as founder of the 'Bri gung Bka' brgyud, is located much further along the spectrum, on the *pramāṇa*-affirming side.<sup>20</sup> Within the Bka' gdams tradition, those who the Bka' gdams histories identify as belonging to the “personal instructions” group (i.e., *man ngag pa*, discussed below) express views that situate them in this middle ground, and can be seen to share very close affinities with those in various branches of the Bka' brgyud tradition. As this brief discussion on the reception of Pramāṇa theory shows, the magnitude of scholasticism's impact on Tibetan religious discourse and expression cannot be fully appreciated if we limit ourselves to its direct intellectual output. It is also necessary to explore reactions to scholasticism that may have taken the form of *resistance* to its message or *alternatives* that were developed in response to it.

### **“Religious histories” on Bka' gdams, Rwa sgren, and Gsang phu relations**

Given Gsang phu's acknowledged historical importance, the fact that the Bka' gdams histories only assign it a peripheral place in their depiction of the Bka' gdams tradition (i.e., the image of the religious school) may seem to raise questions about how objectively these histories deal with that monastery. The representation of Gsang phu in these writings, a topic that previous studies occasionally touch on rather than fully assess, therefore requires some clarification.

Independent works bearing the title *Bka' gdams chos 'byung* (i.e., “Bka' gdams religious history”) start to appear from the fifteenth century, which *if* we accept the widely held view about when the Bka' gdams ceased to exist as a separate school, means that their

<sup>18</sup> In the *Bka' gdams gsung 'bum* manuscripts, we find occasional references to fourfold divisions of *tshad ma* (i.e., *pramāṇa*) that do not match the fourfold categories sometimes referenced in Sanskrit Madhyamaka writings, and also threefold divisions (see also Ma 2025: 68) that do not correspond with what appears in Pramāṇa writings. But these must be discussed at a later date.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, *Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i zhus lan* (2000), where such statements as *chos thams cad gtan tshigs kyi gzhihs nas ma grub par byed* (40b5) are attributed to Sgam po pa.

<sup>20</sup> Jackson sees what he describes as 'Jig rten mgon po's “pro-Pramāṇa” (1995: 89) stance as a response to the *pramāṇa* scepticism of the aforementioned disciples of Sgam po pa.

composition begins during that school's twilight phase. The two earliest examples of works now commonly referred to as *Bka' gdams chos 'byung* were composed by (Pañchen) Bsod nams rtse mo (1433–?)<sup>21</sup> and Bsod nams lha'i dbang po (1423–1496). The next work in the genre was authored by Las chen Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1432–1504), a student of Bsod nam lha'i dbang po. These three, together with the *Deb ther sngon po* ("Blue Annals") by 'Gos lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal (1392–1481), a broader religious history, not dealing exclusively with the Bka' gdams, were written in a period of under two decades.<sup>22</sup> Later *Bka' gdams chos 'byung* are by authors with clear non-Bka' gdams affiliations, perspectives, and often, agendas.<sup>23</sup> But even among the first group of *Bka' gdams chos 'byung*, (Pañchen) Bsod nams rtse mo, who was the fourth abbot of Bkra shis lhun po Monastery, can be distinguished from the other three authors, in the extent to which he projects himself as belonging to Tsong kha pa's Dga' ldan (Dge lugs) tradition. And even the works of the other three writers are testaments to the burgeoning of that tradition, and the rapid progression of the discourse on whether it should be regarded as the inheritor of the Bka' gdams legacy.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, as a genre, the *Bka' gdams chos 'byung* should be recognised as products of an era that witnessed the rise of the Dge lugs. The works of the other three authors—'Gos lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal, Bsod nams lha'i dbang po, and Las chen Kun dga' rgyal mtshan—are more

<sup>21</sup> Despite the fact that the title given to this work in the recently published version refers to it as a *Bka' gdams chos 'byung* (i.e., in *Pañchen ye shes rtse mo'i bka' gdams chos 'byung dang rnam thar* 2015), it is not the author's own designation. But based on the work's content, there seems good reason to accept Iuchi's assertion (2018: 339) that this should be counted as one of the first two texts of the genre.

<sup>22</sup> 'Gos lo tsā ba's *Deb ther sngon po* (1984), composed in 1476 or 1478, Bsod nams rtse mo's *Bka' gdams rin po che bstan 'dzin rnams kyi byung khungs* (2015), dated 1484, Bsod nams lha'i dbang po's *Bka' gdams chos 'byung rnam thar nyin mor byed pa'i 'od stong* (1977) written in 1484, and Las chen Kun dga' rgyal mtshan's *Bka' gdams chos 'byung gsal ba'i sgron me* (2003), composed in 1494.

<sup>23</sup> For a full list of these works see Iuchi (2018).

<sup>24</sup> As Vetturini observes (2013: 22), these authors were not in agreement about whether the Dge lugs could be regarded as the "new Bka' gdams" (*bka' gdams gsar ma*). The Dge lugs issue does not seriously affect their representation of the Bka' gdams school's earlier history, and being tangential to the topic of this article, need not detain us here. But the political dimension to the issue, including how much assertions and denials of continuity were entangled with discourses about the future direction and affiliation of individual monasteries (and potentially claims to the ownership of monastery assets as much as its religious traditions), certainly requires investigation. The evidence and criteria used to date the Bka' gdams school's disappearance to the fifteenth century also requires some clarification. The fact that this dating seems to coincide with the rise of the *Dge lugs* tradition could be seen to suggest that the latter is to be regarded as a straightforward continuation or replacement for the Bka' gdams, a view that is too simplistic to be regarded as historically credible.

interesting cases, and it could be argued that they are the only Bka' gdams histories composed by authors who would appear to identify as Bka' gdams pa.<sup>25</sup>

Predating the *Bka' gdams chos 'byung* (and the aforementioned issue), however, are treatments of the Bka' gdams in earlier religious histories, composed by non-Bka' gdams authors.<sup>26</sup> Throughout these writings (i.e., both the *Bka' gdams chos 'byung* and these earlier Bka' gdams histories), there is a great deal of consistency regarding the relations between the Bka' gdams tradition and Gsang phu. These histories, composed over centuries, by authors of various affiliations, offer almost no support for the current practice of describing Gsang phu as a Bka' gdams institution. Reading the *Bka' gdams chos 'byung* alone may well give the sense that Gsang phu is being marginalised, but the limitations imposed by the format must be recognized as playing a major part in this.<sup>27</sup> Where the format allows it, authors acknowledge the importance of Gsang phu traditions, and thereby scholasticism itself, by representing it as independent of the Bka' gdams school. The separation between the Bka' gdams and Gsang phu traditions is presented as a *fait accompli*. No explanations are given of the events that led to this separation, although a shared heritage is acknowledged, albeit tenuously, through the kinship link between the uncle and nephew

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<sup>25</sup> The issue is not entirely clear-cut for any of these three authors. While agreeing with Vetturini that Bsod nams lha'i dbang po should not be seen as a "dGe lugs master" (Vetturini 2013: 9 n.9), I would go further, and assert that in his *Bka' gdams chos 'byung*, he primarily projects himself as a Bka' gdams pa. And while he has Dge lugs sympathies, he certainly does not use his *Bka' gdams chos 'byung* in the way that Pañchen ye shes rtse mo and later, Pañchen Bsod nams grags pa (1478–1554) do theirs, as a vehicle for arguing that the Dge lugs tradition represents the "new Bka' gdams". The slightly more complex case of Las chen Kun dga' rgyal mtshan is considered briefly below (note 54). As for Gzhon nu dpal, his identifying with the Bka' gdams tradition does not stretch to seeing himself as a member of Tsong kha pa's Dga' ldan tradition, which he describes with the perspective of an outsider. It also seems doubtful that he would have considered the idea of simultaneously belonging to the Bka' gdams and Bka' brgyud traditions as problematic.

<sup>26</sup> These include *Deb ther dmar po* (1993) by Tshal pa Kun dga' rdo rje (1309–1364), composed in the 1350s or 60s, *Yar lung jo bo'i chos 'byung* by Shākya Rin chen sde (fl. fourteenth century), dated to 1376, and *Rgya bod yig tshang chen mo* (1985), by Dpal 'byor bzang po, written in 1434.

<sup>27</sup> When the work in question was a larger religious history, comprising descriptions of multiple Tibetan traditions, the author could not only include a section on the Bka' gdams, but was able to devote a separate one to Gsang phu immediately after it, as demonstrated in the earliest works, viz. *Deb ther dmar po*, *Yar lung jo bo'i chos 'byung*, *Rgya bod yig tshang chen mo*, and *Deb ther sngon po*. For authors of the *Bka' gdams chos 'byung*, this option was not open, and they were therefore forced either to incorporate aspects of the Gsang phu tradition within the Bka' gdams school framework, or exclude them altogether.



Rngog.<sup>28</sup> Most of the authors in the pre-sixteenth century Bka' gdams histories also express genuine respect for Gsang phu practices and are reverential towards Rngog lo. Shākya Rin chen sde prefaces his section on Gsang phu traditions by effusively announcing that "There is hardly any study [tradition] created in this snowy land (i.e., Tibet) that do not come through the great translator (i.e., Rngog lo)".<sup>29</sup> The only exception to the portrayal of two separate traditions is made by Bsod nams lha'i dbang po, whose vision of the Bka' gdams goes some way to including Gsang phu elements. Celebrating Rngog lo for being the first creator of "dialectical units", he pronounces that "Rngog lo tsā ba, ... belonged to the supreme lineage of Atiśa's disciples".<sup>30</sup> That exception aside,<sup>31</sup> the point these historians are at pains to make is that the Bka' gdams and Gsang phu traditions were not just separate, they *stood* for different things.

Only in a rather liberal sense can these writings on the Bka' gdams be described as "histories". They are not comprehensive descriptions of events or institutions, and the information they provide on these two is sporadic. They are names and details organised around the theme of "lineage" (i.e., *rgyud*), mainly in the sense of 1. Institutional (especially abbatial) successions, and 2. Lists of significant teachers and their disciples. Biographical information about the individuals concerned is also appended. In conformity with this, the sections on Gsang phu and Rngog lo's tradition are also, generally, based on the monastery's abbatial succession, the disciples of the abbots, and significant deeds of both, especially the founding of further monasteries.

The histories reveal little about relations between Rwa sgreng and Gsang phu, but the vision of the Bka' gdams school they present is relevant to events described below, so a brief analysis of this seems necessary here. The representation of the school through the framework of lineages is highly schematic and unmistakably heavily *curated*. The most prominent lineages are the three respectively identified with each of the "three brothers", mentioned above. The designations given to their three lineages' in the *Bka' gdams chos 'byung* suggest they represent different groups or branches, partly distinguished by their

<sup>28</sup> This wish to represent "Rngog lo's tradition" as separate from the Bka' gdams is already evident in the twelfth century *Chos 'byung me tog snying po sbrang rtsi'i bcud* (1988), an even earlier religious history, composed by Myang/Nyang Nyi ma 'od zer (1124–1192), although the representation had not yet taken on the formulaic style of the aforementioned histories.

<sup>29</sup> *gangs can gyi ljongs na bshad nyan mdzad pa phal cher lo tsha ba chen po las ma brgyud pa med* (*Yar lung jo bo'i chos 'byung* 153).

<sup>30</sup> *rngog lo tsā ba ... a ti sha'i slob rgyud kyi mchog tu gtogs* (1977: 366, 80b3).

<sup>31</sup> Bsod nams lha'i dbang po's inclusion of Gsang phu is not, however, total, since he finds no place for writings by Gsang phu scholars in his enumeration of the works that he proposes form the Bka' gdams canon (see below).

approach, i.e., those who rely on the text (the *gzhung pa*), those who rely on personal instructions (the *man ngag pa* or *gdams ngag pa*), and a third.<sup>32</sup> These are also portrayed as component parts, which collectively constitute the school, and circumscribe its boundaries.<sup>33</sup> The lineages of the 'three brothers' (who were all disciples of 'Brom ston) clearly support the 'Brom ston and *Rwa sgren*-centric notion of the Bka' gdams school. But as Roesler (2019: 1145) observes, the 'Brom ston-centric view of the school in the Bka' gdams histories is also found earlier, in the *Bka' gdams glegs bam* (the so-called "*Bka' gdams Scripture*"). Within this, we find the edited version of a biographical tradition that the histories say was transmitted by Atiśa to Rngog Legs pa'i shes rab (Roesler 2019: 1154). It relies heavily on two earlier expansive biographies of Atiśa, the *Rnam thar rgyas pa yongs grags* ("Widely-known Extensive Biography"), which is generally regarded as a thirteenth century work, and *Rnam thar rgyas pa* ("Extensive Biography"), which is believed to be from the twelfth century.<sup>34</sup> The latest of the three biographies (i.e., the *Bka' gdams glegs bam*) is divided into two sections, the teachings related to the "father" and "son(s)" (the *pha chos* and *bu chos*), and clearly projects the 'Brom ston-centric vision of the Bka' gdams.<sup>35</sup> The *Bka' gdams glegs bam* tradition evidently underwent considerable *development* during the thirteenth century, and 1302 is

<sup>32</sup> There are variations in this third lineage. These, together with the terms and composition of the three divisions are considered below.

<sup>33</sup> The threefold division is the most popular and historically resilient version of the Bka' gdams constituents, although not the only one. Some histories include additional lineages, the main of which are those of 'Brom ston's immediate successors as abbots at Rwa sgren (see below) and that of Atiśa's disciple and translator, Nag tsho Tshul khri ms rgyal ba (1011–1064), although even when the lineages are expanded in this way, 'Brom ston remains the central figure.

<sup>34</sup> The *Rnam thar rgyas pa yongs grags* is generally credited to Mchims Nam mkha' grags (1210–1285/9), the seventh abbot of Snar thang Monastery. The current version of the *Rnam thar rgyas pa* is ascribed by some (including the editors of the *Bod kyi lo rgyus rnam thar phyogs bsgrigs*, in which a reproduction of it appears) to Bya 'dul 'dzin (Bya Brtson 'grus 'bar, either 1091–1166 or possibly 1100–1170/1174). Needless to say, there are questions about the relationship between these written accounts and the oral traditions that preceded them. Based on certain Bka' gdams histories, Roesler (2019: 1154) reports that the biographical tradition was passed from Atiśa to Rngog Legs pa'i shes rab, then through Shes rab rgyal mtshan to Phu chung ba. But the majority of contemporary scholars (Ehrhard 2004: 436 n.223, Seresi 2015: 413, etc.) follow Eimer (1982: 42-3), who proposes that one Rong pa Lag sor pa gathered oral materials on Atiśa, using Nag tsho as a chief informant. Lag sor pa's disciple Zul phu ba (who these scholars identify as Bya 'dul 'dzin Brtson 'grus 'bar) was then the recipient of these materials, based upon which he composed the first biography. The *Rnam thar rgyas pa* and *Rnam thar rgyas pa yongs grags* are both believed to derive independently from this common ancestor, i.e., the original work of Zul phu ba, which does not survive.

<sup>35</sup> Atiśa is the "father", and among the "sons", Rngog Legs pa'i shes rab and Khu ston are depicted in junior and subordinate roles to 'Brom ston.

reported (e.g., Ehrhard 2002: 33, Vetturini 2013: 18) to have been a culminative year in the process. The “Scripture” is not simply a refined version of earlier accounts, but was expanded to include other materials (see Ehrhard 2002: 33-4).<sup>36</sup> Important figures from Snar thang were instrumental in this augmentation. From its foundation in 1153, Snar thang Monastery appears to have been seen as Rwa sgrenḡ’s stalwart ally,<sup>37</sup> and the Bka’ gdams histories present it as the school’s second monastery, closely followed by the likes of Lo and Bya yul. In his contribution to the tradition, as on other occasions, Mchims Nam mkha’ grags (the presumed author of the *Rnam thar rgyas pa yongs grags*) reveals himself to be a champion editor of the Bka’ gdams image.

Scrutiny of the threefold scheme’s constituents reveals much about the provenance of the vision of the Bka’ gdams as a school. Unlike the designations for the first two lineages (discussed below), the third is not historically stable, although a pattern seems detectable in its variations. Authors who composed histories on the Bka’ gdams tradition, but belonged to “new” (*gsar ma*) schools other than the Bka’ gdams itself largely reproduce the lineage vision, but differ on how they identify the third. Hence, while the Bka’ gdams authors refer to it as the lineage of the *Bka’ gdams glegs bam*, the non-Bka’ gdams authors prefer to use other designations, the most popular of which is the *lam rim* (“stages of the path”) lineage.<sup>38</sup> These non-Bka’ gdams authors appear to have regarded Atiṣa’s legacy as part of a common heritage. Their preference for alternative designations to the *Bka’ gdams glegs bam* for the third lineage seems partly to be explained by the latter’s strong association with the ‘Brom ston and Rwa sgrenḡ-centric view of the Bka’ gdams.

Regarding the presence of the *Bka’ gdams glegs bam*’s tradition in the scheme, it can firstly be observed that it is not the version of the third

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<sup>36</sup> For a full break down of the contents of the two sections found in the earliest printed versions of the *Bka’ gdams glegs bam* see Sernesi (2015: 433-36).

<sup>37</sup> For evidence of the positive relations, see the letter recording offerings dispatched from Snar thang to Rwa sgrenḡ discussed by Roesler (2021).

<sup>38</sup> It would appear that the earliest known Bka’ gdams history, Tshal pa Kun dḡa’ rdo rje’s *Deb ther dmar po*, has been particularly influential. Its short section on the third lineage (1993: 65-66) interestingly presents the whole range of alternatives from which later authors might be seen to select. Thus, it describes the lineage as that of the *lam rim pa*, but also includes mention of Bya ’dul ’dzin (i.e., the author of the biographical work that was a main source for the *Bka’ gdams glegs bam*), as well as the *Bka’ gdams ’og ma*, a later structure built below Rwa sgrenḡ, which by some accounts grew into a separate institution. The Sa skya author ‘Jam mḡon a mes zhabs (1597–1659/1660), in his Bka’ gdams history, entitled *Jo bo rje dpal ldan a ti sha’i rjes ’brangs bka’ gdams kyi byung tshul legs par bshad pa nyung gsal kun dḡa’* (composed in 1634), identifies this as the third lineage (2000: 219, 4a6).

lineage that appears in the earliest histories.<sup>39</sup> Secondly, while the other versions of the third lineage are described as groups (both individuals and institutions), differentiated by their contrasting approaches, the fifteenth century Bka' gdams authors classify the *Bka' gdams glegs bam* lineage as a "secret teaching" (*gsang chos*)" (Ehrhard 2002: 38). This description seems traceable to the work's compilation, during the thirteenth century, when biographical materials were combined with the tantric practice of the "Sixteen drops" (*thig le bcu drug*), in an apparent attempt to imbue the work with mystical potency and more closely align it with traditional notions of a lineage.

Dispelling any sense that the third constituent needs to be a separate group, with their own distinctive approach, the *Bka' gdams glegs bam* is treated as a tradition of biographical narrative, supported by an esoteric practice, the combination of which could apparently be accepted *in addition* to whatever approach an individual followed. Ehrhard (2002: 29) describes aspects of this enhancement as part of a "strategy to unify the three important transmitters of Bka'-gdams-pa". The idea of the third component lineage as a unifier was to become a recurring theme in later writings,<sup>40</sup> but the specific identification of the *Bka' gdams glegs bam* with the third component quite obviously encouraged the idea that the 'Brom ston-centric vision of the Bka' gdams that it embodied was the unifying force for a tradition that was geographically dispersed, and within which different approaches had emerged.

The apparent adaptability of the third lineage suggests that the historicity of the scheme and its contents should be regarded separately. There is clearly a pattern of representing key elements within the Bka' gdams tradition in terms of threefold divisions. The three constituent lineages, three brothers, three main disciples of Atiśa, and the various extensions of the latter<sup>41</sup> show a dedication to triadic depiction that should prompt questions about whether schematisation has taken precedence over content, and may occasionally have predated it. The *seed* for the most persistent triadic representation, that of Atiśa's main Tibetan disciples, is found in the earliest known biographical material on Atiśa, the *Bstod pa brgyad cu pa* ("Eighty verses of praise"), composed by Nag tsho Tshul khri ms rgyal ba. This singles out 'Brom ston,

<sup>39</sup> The *Deb ther dmar po* (1993: 65-66) refers to the *lam rim pa* group as the third. The *Rgya bod yig tshang chen mo* (1985: 480-81) essentially reproduces this, although it provides no name.

<sup>40</sup> It is even chosen by Las chen, who depicts the Dga' ldan/Dge lugs tradition as "The new Bka' gdams, within which the two rivers of the text and personal instruction (traditions) are merged (*gzhung dang gdams ngag gnyis ka'i chu bo gcig tu 'dus pa bka' gdams gsar ma*, 2003: 823).

<sup>41</sup> In some later sources, other areas in which Atiśa resided each have their own list of three main disciples.

Khu ston, and Rngog ston for mention,<sup>42</sup> and while it does so in a non-schematic fashion, it surely served as a major written source for a division that features in almost every later writing on the Bka' gdams.<sup>43</sup> However, for the point at which triadic schematics become embedded in Bka' gdams historical representation, we must look to the twelfth century. The early decades for Rwa sgren appear to have been relatively stable. 'Brom ston's tenure (1056–1065) was followed by that of Rnal 'byor pa chen po (Rnal 'byor pa Byang chub rin chen 1015–1077/8),<sup>44</sup> incumbent from 1065 to 1077/8, and Dgon po ba Dbang phyug rgyal mtshan (1016–1082/3), abbot from 1077/8, apparently until his death, all of whom were direct disciples of Atiśa. Dgon po ba's death marked the end of this phase and the effective departure from the scene of those whose relations with Atiśa had been direct. The problems this created are discussed below, but to bridge the generational transition, serious efforts were made to promote three individuals who were disciples of 'Brom ston (i.e., the 'three brothers') as the natural heirs to Atiśa's tradition.<sup>45</sup> As a narrative strategy this proved brilliantly successful, as attested by most later writings on the Bka' gdams, which present a smooth and direct succession from Atiśa, through 'Brom ston to the 'three brothers'. Ehrhard (2002, 2004) makes valuable observations about the role of figures from Snar thang in the creation of the *Bka' gdams glegs bam*, which involve attempts to deify the 'three brothers'. But the section revealing these attempts in the *Bka' gdams glegs bam*, which can be designated the “epilogue”, essentially reproduces, largely verbatim, what appeared in the much earlier *Rnam thar rgyas pa*. The historical context for this was the concerted campaign undertaken to deal with the challenges relating to succession and continuity that faced Rwa sgren as a result of the earlier generation's passing.

<sup>42</sup> See 34 (17b4) of the praise, reproduced in *Legs par bshad pa bka' gdams rin po che'i gsung gi gces btus nor bu'i bang mdzod*, edited by Don grub rgyal mtshan (1985). See also Eimer (1989).

<sup>43</sup> By the twelfth century this had been transformed into the standard, schematic formula (i.e., *khu rngog 'brom ston gsum*), identifying Khu ston brtson 'grus, Rngog Legs pa'i shes rab, and 'Brom ston. Also, in this first appearance, these are identified as Atiśa's three disciples in Tibet (*bod*, although it could be debated what this term means), whereas in many later sources, these are his main disciples in central Tibet (i.e., *dbus gtsang*).

<sup>44</sup> Due to the fact that they share the epithet rnal 'byor pa, certain contemporary sources (and possibly some Tibetan authors) confuse this figure, also known as Ames Byang chub rin chen, with a later individual named Shes rab rdo rje (d.u.), who appears to have been a disciple of Po to ba, or his student, Sha ra ba Yon tan grags (1070–1141).

<sup>45</sup> Why three individuals were chosen, and whether this is the expression of a pre-existing predisposition or the effective start of the slight obsession with triadic representation is unclear.

The campaign's message was that "the three brothers are Atiśa's heirs [lit. substitutes/ replacements]"<sup>46</sup> and that they alone could guarantee the continuity of the 'Brom ston-based Bka' gdams. The main strategies deployed to support this were the identification of the three brothers with various triads of deities, including the "Protectors of the three lineage-types" (*Rigs gsum mgon po*). The most distinctive triad comprises three important statue-deities of Lokeśvara/ Avalokiteśvara, all with origins in the Kathmandu Valley. This is supported by a narrative connecting Atiśa with Swayambhunath, said to foretell the three brothers' succession.<sup>47</sup> This campaign must have been a largely post-mortem affair, aimed at the creation of a Bka' gdams pantheon rather than securing religious or secular power for the 'three brothers'.<sup>48</sup> The epilogue in the *Rnam thar rgyas pa* is the earliest record of these attempts to promote the 'three brothers' through identifying them with various triadic schemes, and includes a short section on each of them, but contains no clear reference to the three Bka' gdams constituent lineages. And given that the evidence linking these individuals with three distinctive approaches is very tenuous, it seems safe to infer that the connection between the 'three brothers' and the three lineages was a later creation. One might also reasonably wonder whether the threefold lineage scheme itself (which only seems to appear in sources significantly later than references to the 'three brothers') derives from the division of the brothers.

<sup>46</sup> *A ti sha'i gdung sob pa / 'phags pa sku mched gsum po yin* (*Rnam thar rgyas pa* 84b2). The term used for "representative" (*gdung sob pa*) here reprises references to Atiśa's physical remains (*gdung*)—literally, "bone(s)" —, which feature in the immediately preceding discussion in the biography about the distribution of Atiśa's relics among his main disciples. While the orthography of the second term is amended in the later biographies (i.e., using *gsob*, instead of *sob*), this cannot disguise the fact that "representative" here evokes the language of the funerary practice that involved creating a physical effigy of the deceased person to house bone remains. There is evidence that this was formerly a widespread practice in Tibet, although it is now largely confined to its cultural periphery, where in some cases, the effigy is still known as a *sob* (see Ramble 1982: 335).

<sup>47</sup> Since the later biographies essentially reproduce what appears in the *Rnam thar rgyas pa*, Ehrhard's discussion of this material in later sources (2004: 72-73) serves as a reasonable guide to its content. Despite the three statues of Lokeśvara/ Avalokiteśvara all being originally associated with the Kathmandu Valley, the Ārya Vati eventually found its way to Tibet, and was housed in Skyid grong for centuries. The other two statue-deities, Jamali and Bhugma, remain in the Kathmandu area, and are at the centre of major local cults. There is some indication that the "three brothers" epithet for the statue-deities in Nepal is of some antiquity. There can be little doubt that the existence of this epithet was a very convenient concurrence for those promoting the 'three brothers' in Tibet, if not the source of their inspiration.

<sup>48</sup> This can be deduced not just from the fact that the first biography seems to have been written decades after their demise, but also the events described below.

### Text versus personal instruction

At the heart of the threefold scheme of Bka' gdams constituent lineages is the division between the textual and personal instruction groups. Unlike the 'third lineage' this division seems to be substantive and well attested. The names for these two are also historically stable. The first category of individuals is always rendered by a single term (*gzhung pa*), whereas the second is denoted by two interchangeable designations (*man ngag pa* or *gdams ngag pa*).<sup>49</sup> References to these as separate categories within the Bka' gdams tradition go back to the twelfth century.<sup>50</sup> The fact that, as already observed, the divide between Gsang phu and branches of the Bka' gdams has been depicted as one between "institutionalized dialectics" and "personally transmitted teachings" (Vetturini 2013: 175) may cause us to wonder whether references to the two categories is a way of alluding to this divide. The religio-cultural aversion to criticising institutions by name hinders our ability to judge decisively on such matters. But the Bka' gdams histories consistently identify those at Rwa sgren as the chief representatives of "textual" branch and even our earlier sources give no indication that the division originated in a split, centred upon Gsang phu.

There is no evidence that the divide was ever truly formalised. The arbiters of who and what belong in the respective categories are the historians. But preferences that institutions or individuals appear to have expressed obviously play a major part in their judgements. Hence, the textual (*gzhung pa*) category is dominated by Rwa sgren and Snar thang-monasteries that are known, at certain points in their

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<sup>49</sup> The question of whether *man ngag pa* and *gdams ngag pa* could have been separate groups appears only to have crept in relatively recently. It seems to be another expression of the nagging concerns attached to the threefold scheme: i.e., the awareness that it is traditional to describe the Bka' gdams as having three lineages/groups, but confusion about what to identify as the third. A growing urge among Tibetan scholars to gloss *man ngag* and *gdams ngag* differently appears to have fuelled the idea that the *man ngag pa* and *gdams ngag pa* designations could have denoted two separate groups. Even the editors of the *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* succumb to this, and hesitatingly propose (1993: 73) that the *man ngag pa* might be a third lineage (distinguished from the *gzhung pa* and *gdams ngag pa*). Little attempt is ever made, however, to substantiate this claim by identifying institutions or individuals belonging to each group. Furthermore, Bka' gdams histories from the pre-modern era do not portray these as separate groups, and generally use the two designations interchangeably. More importantly, this interchangeability is entirely consistent with the earlier, twelfth centuries writings discussed below. Hence, the idea that the *man ngag pa* and *gdams ngag pa* formed separate groups is one that can probably be dismissed as having no historical foundation.

<sup>50</sup> Reference to it is found in Myang/Nyang ral nyi ma'i 'od zer's *Chos 'byung me tog snying po sbrang rtsi'i bcud* (1988: 469), but various mentions in the manuscript sources cited below confirm its existence.

history, to have hosted traditions of textual learning. The network of individuals associated with these two institutions, including abbots, teachers, and students/disciples constitute the *community* to whom the *gzhung pa* designation primarily applied. The sections in the histories on the textual category also include various details of important figures in these networks, together with their significant achievements, other institutions that they founded, and so forth.<sup>51</sup>

The sections dealing with the *man ngag pa/gdams ngag pa* invariably feature the monastery of Lo (*Lo dgon*),<sup>52</sup> as could easily be foreseen, given that its founder, Spyān snga ba Tshul khriṃs 'bar, is the 'brother' primarily identified with the second lineage in the schematic portrayal of the later histories. But there are no indications of how this or any other monastery practically realised its preference for instruction-based transmission. There are, furthermore, *fewer* references to monasteries in the sections on the *man ngag pa/gdams ngag pa*, and noticeably more to various "temples" (*lha khang*, *gtsug lag khang*, and *mchod khang*), hermitages, and retreat sites. Many of those identified as belonging to the group (figures such as Kha rag sgom chen and Zla ba rgyal mtshan) are also known to have led more peripatetic and relatively solitary existences. Large numbers of those who followed Bka' gdams traditions undoubtedly chose not to do so in the monastic setting, and the wider diffusion and less organised nature of those designated *man ngag pa/gdams ngag pa* means that they probably never formed a cohesive community, which is not to say that they did not constitute a loose 'confederacy' of those sharing similar religious outlooks, including perhaps misgivings about institutionalised monasticism. It is very significant that in their section on the instruction-based group, several Bka' gdams histories<sup>53</sup> include a biographical sketch of Sgam po pa. The immediate reason for his inclusion was obviously the fact that his early teachers were Bka' gdams pa. However, his later discipleship to Mi la ras pa (1040?–1123), which is cited as the basis for the Dwags po Bka' brgyud traditions' formation, also made him the most high-profile rejectionist of the Rwa sgreng-Bka' gdams pa interpretation of Atiśa's tradition. However we interpret Las chen's inclusion of Sgam po ba in his *Bka' gdams chos 'byung*,<sup>54</sup> it appears to underline the point

<sup>51</sup> Further evidence that the *gzhung pa* and *man ngag pa/gdams ngag pa* were substantive categories is also found in later sources, including the *gsan yig* (i.e., record of teachings personally received) by Mkhas grub Dge legs dpal bzang (1385–1438). He divides the Bka' gdams into these two categories (1978: 52), listing teachings and individuals associated with them, but makes no mention of a third category.

<sup>52</sup> They also include mentions of Bya yul dgon, which as Las chen's *Bka' gdams chos 'byung* (344) states, had close relations with Lo dgon.

<sup>53</sup> Las chen (2003: 343) and 'Jam mgon a mes zhabs (2000: 219, 4a4).

<sup>54</sup> Las chen represents an inconvenience for those obsessed with exclusive sectarian categorisations. This single individual composed his magnum opus on the Bka'



that those in the instruction-based category were considered to form a single group only in the very laxest of senses.

In addition to its communal and institutional expressions, the textual-instructional divide must be recognised as the fundamental *opposition* and potential source of tension within the very notion of the Bka' gdams itself. The names of the two groups suggest a difference over the preferred medium for knowledge-transmission: that is, the textual versus the oral. The oral imparting of instructions was regarded as emblematic of a particular style of spiritual practice with which Atiśa became associated, involving close contact between teacher and disciple (the so-called *guru-śiṣya* relationship), facilitating personal guidance or even supervision of meditation as the main route to realisation. But following Atiśa's demise, efforts to secure his legacy demanded increasing engagement with the written sphere, to ensure that there was some physical record of materials that had hitherto existed only in the oral domain, including many of his instructions and, as we saw above, his biography. This movement into the textual sphere appears to have induced anxiety in some quarters over the potential betrayal of the tradition's original principles.

This tension does not appear to have manifested in an internal discourse between two sides expressing opposing perspectives, but

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gdams tradition, held tenure at the Phag mo gru monastery of Rtse thang, but was a devoted disciple of Dge 'dun grub, the 'first Dalai Lama' (1391–1474), and also teacher of the staunchly Dge lugs Panchen Bsod nams grags pa. Patently, therefore, he cannot be placed neatly in any single affiliation 'box'. Las chen's *Bka' gdams chos 'byung* was composed at a time of heightened political tension, as the Rin spungs dynasty was reaching the zenith of its power, and as a result of which (in the following year of 1498) members of the Dge lugs tradition would be prohibited from participating in the Lhasa Prayer Festival (*Smon lam chen mo*). What might be gleaned from a deeper reading of Las chen's works about how he managed to guide Rtse thang through the religious and political frictions of the time would be very interesting. But on the level of faith, there is no obvious sign that he felt his loyalties were torn between different traditions. His biography of Sgyan snga Bsod nams rgyal mtshan (1386–1435, *Bsod nams rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rnam par thar pa mthong ba don ldan* 2004)—who probably served as abbot of the Phag mo gru monastery of Gdan sa mthil—just like his *Bka' gdams chos 'byung*, give the impression of an author who is personally committed to the tradition he is writing about. The vision revealed in the latter work particularly was that followers of Sgam po pa, as much as those of 'Brom ston, or Tsong kha pa shared a common lineage of instruction-based teachings stretching back to Atiśa. Las chen also seems to anticipate the imminent disappearance of the Bka' gdams as an independent school, and cares what will happen to its heritage, but perhaps also has concerns about the future direction of the Dge lugs. As illustrated below, he was no fan of the analytical approach associated with Gsang phu, and in his *Bka' gdams chos 'byung*, he seeks to counter the view that it can be regarded as authentic Bka' gdams. Hence, his work presents the commitment to Atiśa's instructions-based approach as a unifying force, but portrays aspects of the analytical traditions of scholasticism as divisive.

seems evident in the insistent restating of principles and cautioning against excessive textual learning not rooted in practice. Remarks about the need for meditation and close contact with a qualified spiritual guide become so standardised in later writings as to have a generic quality. But in the earlier manuscripts sources, they are often more pointed, and there is a sense of them being directed at specific targets and perhaps commenting on ongoing events. Thus, in one twelfth century text, attributed to a certain Rje lung pa,<sup>55</sup> we find critical comments aimed at “this group who [rely on] textual exposition”.<sup>56</sup> The writer goes on to reaffirm principles, citing remarks by several early Bka' gdams luminaries. Without directly discouraging textual learning, he appears to propose that limits be placed upon it, remarking that Dge bshes Sne zur pa<sup>57</sup> would only listen to a particular work once or twice... He (the author) criticises “repeated” study, insisting that, “[The practice of] meditation does not require a great deal of textual learning”.<sup>58</sup> In the same section the author also refers to how those of the textual group are gaining a larger following due to their “analysis and writings” ...,<sup>59</sup> hinting that this may be at odds with core principles. Here it is not immediately obvious whether the target is the institution of Gsang phu or Rwa sgren. This ambiguity is not infrequent, and it seems likely that the commitment to institutionalised monasticism and organised textual learning shown by those at Gsang phu and Rwa sgren meant that, irrespective of their individual styles, they were perceived as belonging to the same camp by some of those who identified with the instruction-based approach.<sup>60</sup>

If there was ever a question among Atiśa's followers about the relative merits of text and personal instruction, these are addressed head

<sup>55</sup> The editors of the *Bka' gdams gsung 'bum* attribute this work, entitled *Dri ma med pa'i 'od ces bya ba bden pa gnyis kyi rnam bshad* (2006: vol. 24), to Rje lung pa, but provide no details about him and admit they are unsure of his identity. As I will discuss in a later article, this individual was a close disciple of Zla ba rgyal mtshan, and appears in Bka' gdams histories under a variety of names. An initial examination of the work's contents also reveals that rather than Rje lung pa himself, it is more likely to have been compiled by an anonymous disciple.

<sup>56</sup> *gzhung bshad pa'i tshan pa 'di* (2006: 11, 2a3).

<sup>57</sup> Sne'u zur pa Ye shes 'bar (1042–1118) was a prominent figure associated with Rwa sgren in the early decades and a disciple of Dgon po ba, the second abbot.

<sup>58</sup> *bsgom pa la gzhung mang po thos mi dgos* (2006: 13, 3a2).

<sup>59</sup> *gzhung bshad pa'i tshan pa 'di la 'khor mang bar yong ba ni lta rtog 'dra 'am yi ge 'dri bas skyo rogs byas pas 'khor mang ba yin gsung* (2006: 11, 2a3).

<sup>60</sup> Certainly by the fourteenth century, to distinguish their style from other varieties of textual learning, exponents of Gsang phu scholarship were referred to as those who followed the *gzhung chen* approach. But I am unsure when this designation was created.

on in the manuscript of another piece of twelfth century writing, composed by Lce sgom pa Shes rab rdo rje.<sup>61</sup> He recounts:

Once more, when the great Jo bo rje [Atiśa] the singular divine one, arrived in central Tibet, his three disciples, Khu [ston], Rngog [Legs pa'i shes rab], and 'Brom [ston] asked Jo bo whether, for an individual (lit. a single basis) to attain the states of liberation and full enlightenment, it is *sūtras* and *śāstras* that are more important or the personal instructions of the lama. Jo bo responded that personal instruction is more important than texts. Asked why this was, Jo bo replied that even if one knew the [whole] *tripiṭaka* well enough to recite it and was a scholar with respect to the characteristics/definitions (*mtshan nyid*) of all phenomena, unless at the time of practice one implements the instructions of one's lama, the person and the dharma will go their separate ways.<sup>62</sup>

This seems to lay to rest any questions regarding which medium and perhaps even approach is superior. However, the remarkable *convenience* of having Atiśa address the issue so directly and stating his response so unequivocally to his three main disciples cannot pass without comment. What is also striking about this passage is its pointed reference (and implied criticism) of those who are essentially “skilled in definitions” (*mtshan nyid la mkhas [pa]*), a phrase that seems as though it could have been specially coined for advocates of the approach followed at Gsang phu. Such a reference would, of course, be anachronistic, since Gsang phu was only founded after Atiśa's demise. Somewhat surprisingly, we discover that this combination of words features in Tibetan translations of canonical works. But even if it could be established that Atiśa might have used such wording,<sup>63</sup> we might speculate that the author, who was very much in the Rwa sgreng

<sup>61</sup> He was apparently an indirect disciple of Po ta ba, who wrote a commentary on the latter's celebrated *Dpe chos*. A variety of dates have been suggested for him, including 1124/5–1204/5 and 1140/50–1220. The text in which the passage cited here appears in is entitled *Bka' gdams thor bu ba zhes pa'i man ngag* (2015).

<sup>62</sup> *yang jo bo chen po rje lha 1 dbus su byon dus su // jo bo'i slob ma khu rngog 'brom gsum gyis / jo bo la rten gyi gang zag 1 thar pa dang thams cad mkhyen pa'i go 'phang thob par byed pa la // bka bstan chos kyi gzhung dang: bla ma'i gdams ngag gnyis gang tso che lags zhus pas / jo bo'i zhal nas / bzhung bas man ngag gtso gsung: de ci lags zhus pas sde gnod 3 kha thon du 'chad shes cing chos thams cad kyi mtshan nyid la 'khas kyang nyams su len pa'i dus su: bla ma'i bdams ngag gi lag len med na chos dang gang zag so sor 'gro gsung:* (2015: 498, 2b3–4).

<sup>63</sup> I have yet to locate other accounts of the episode, and am keen to see how they might differ in depiction and wording, and what these might reveal about the slants and perspectives of those who recount them and whether they have identifiable targets.

camp, would not have been unhappy with them being interpreted as if they might refer to the style of scholarship at Gsang phu.<sup>64</sup>

Remarks in twelfth century writings about the text's inferiority to personal instruction and the intrinsic risks of textual study seem to express genuine concern over the growing influence of formalised learning. But they also appear to be well-rehearsed rhetoric, expressing an orthodoxy that even those deeply involved with textual learning seem to have been reluctant to challenge. Furthermore, as we see in what follows, those in the textual (*gzhung pa*) camp appear to have hit upon smarter ways of negotiating the sensitivities attached to reliance on the text than directly challenging the orthodoxy.

### **Turmoil and ascent: the formative phase in relations (1085–1160)**

Sporadic references, such as contained in the previous section, can be informative about attitudes. But now we turn to a specific period of history. As mentioned above, it was in the wake of Atiśa's demise (in 1054) and the distribution of his remains and belongings that Rwa sgreng and Gsang phu emerged as two major institutions. Atiśa's early biographies generally depict relations between 'Brom ston and Rngog Legs pa'i shes rab as amicable. Following the passing of this first generation of disciples, there is little concrete information about cross-institutional contacts.<sup>65</sup> But the years between 1085 and 1160 represent, I believe, the formative phase in relations between Rwa sgreng and Gsang phu; the time during which the lines between scholasticism and the Bka' gdams opposition to it were drawn. On Rwa sgreng at the onset of this period, Apple proposes that:

Potowa became the fourth abbot of Radreng in the early 1080s when he was around fifty years of age. At this time the three spiritual brothers became more prominent and the term "Kadampa" became popularized as a reference for those who follow the precepts and practices given by Atiśa and Dromtonpa. Potowa popularized the use of six texts...Additional texts utilized

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<sup>64</sup> The case for this not being an anachronistic interpolation may seem to be strengthened by the appearance of a corresponding term in Tibetan translations of canonical works. But there are questions about the provenance of this presumed correspondent term (*\*lakṣaṇakuśalāḥ*). While not pursuing the question of its attestation in Sanskrit sources here, I observe that whenever it appears in the Tibetan translation that is claimed to be of Sanskrit origin, the translation has *always* been made from Chinese, and not directly from Sanskrit.

<sup>65</sup> Roesler says that Atiśa's disciples failed to agree on his successor and "split after a last joint assembly held in 1055" (2019: 1149), but I am unsure about the basis for this report and find no support for it in early sources.

by Potowa included *Atiśa's Entry to the Two Realities* and *A Lamp for the Path to Awakening* (Apple 2018: 22).

Apple paints this period, heralded by the assumption of office<sup>66</sup> by Po to ba, 'Brom ston's disciple, and the 'brother' chiefly associated with the Bka' gdams pa textual-based tradition, as the one in which the main features now understood to characterise the school coalesced. Apple's account ends with Po to ba eventually standing down from the post, going off into meditational retreat, a detail consistent with what appears in the main biographies. Certain later histories appear to support this upbeat image.<sup>67</sup> But some also make reference to the brevity of Po to ba's tenure, saying that it ended abruptly and in controversial circumstances.<sup>68</sup> The histories that propagate this upbeat image depict the event (if they mention it at all) as an isolated one, and report Po to ba's post-Rwa sgren spiritual career positively. They make no special comment on the chronology of the three brothers' deaths. But if these figures were as important to the Bka' gdams school as later reports suggest, the rapid succession in which their passings occurred (Spyan snga in 1103, Po to ba in 1105, and Phu chung in 1106) would surely have been greeted with some consternation. However, these individual events were part of a far deeper crisis, since when Phu chung, the last of the 'brothers' died, some two decades after Po to ba's departure, Rwa sgren remained leaderless and total collapse appears to

<sup>66</sup> I sometimes use "abbot", although the term in question (*gdan sa ba*) could perhaps more informatively be rendered "monastery head" or "monastery leader". As discussed below, this is distinguished from the monastery's "head/master of teaching" (*chos dpon*). In some cases it appears that certain individuals held both roles dually, whereas in others, the incumbents were separate.

<sup>67</sup> Apple's description appears to draw from the accounts in *Deb ther sngon po* (1984: 328) and also Las chen's history (2003: 429), which indeed mention the popularisation of the name and Po to ba's association with the "six Bka' gdams texts" (*Bka' gdams gzhung drug*): 1. *Śikṣasamuccaya* (D 3940), 2. *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra* (D 3871), 3. *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (D 4037), 4. *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* (D 4020), 5. *Jātakamāla* (D 4150), 6. *Udānavarga* (D 4099).

<sup>68</sup> Sources that provide details of the circumstances of the departure refer to a clash with and insulting remarks directed at Po to ba by another monk or monks. The common denominator in these reports is the use of designation *Khams pa* for the other party or parties. Among the histories composed by three authors who appear to identify as *Bka' gdams pas*, in the *Deb ther sngon po* (1984: 326), this is an individual referred to as *Khams pa Sgom chung ba*. In Bsod nams lha'i dbang po's *Nyin mor byed pa'i 'od stong* (1977: 308, 51b1) it is a group, referred to as Zhang Chos rgyal, etc., who are all described as *Khams pa*. Las chen's *Bka' gdams chos 'byung* (2003: 425) only alludes to the problem, a matter I return to below. A further reference to the *khams pa* is found in another account of the clash, which predates those in the histories, and is discussed below. Vetturini (2013: 115 n.560) notes that there are different versions of the controversy involving Po to ba. Apple makes no mention of the contentious circumstances of Po to ba's departure at all.

have been a real prospect. Although the *Deb ther sngon po* gives some details, among the Bka' gdams histories, it is the two works composed in 1484, by (Pañchen) Bsod nams rtse mo and Bsod nams lha'i dbang po (and most specifically the latter) that present a fuller picture and acknowledge the calamitousness of the crisis that overtook Rwa sgrenḡ.<sup>69</sup> These two accounts<sup>70</sup> closely match that found in the earliest surviving history of Rwa sgrenḡ (or *Rwas sgrenḡ*),<sup>71</sup> composed by 'Brom Shes rab me lce, probably in 1299, another work that has only recently resurfaced.<sup>72</sup> According to this work, Po to ba's tenure lasted only a year, meaning that his unceremonious departure would have been around 1084 or 1085.<sup>73</sup> 'Brom Shes rab me lce reports that this began a *sixty-five* year break in the Rwa sgrenḡ succession.<sup>74</sup> That the three early biographies of Atiśa<sup>75</sup> chose to end their narrative with Po to ba's departure from Rwa sgrenḡ, giving no hint of a crisis, is surely no coincidence.<sup>76</sup>

'Brom Shes rab me lce says that just one or two years after Po to ba's death, reports of Rwa sgrenḡ's sad decline reached Mtha' bzhi sgom pa (d.u.), a disciple of the 'three brothers', and that he travelled there

<sup>69</sup> Davidson's reference to problems arising after Po to ba's tenure (2005: 279) derives from his reading of later Bka' gdams histories. But the sources that allow us to gain a fuller picture of events have only become available more recently.

<sup>70</sup> See Bsod nams rtse mo (2015: 38-39) and Bsod nams lha'i dbang po (1977: 308-310, 51b-52b).

<sup>71</sup> The author uses this variant spelling throughout.

<sup>72</sup> The full title of the work is *Rgyal ba'i dben gnas rwa sgrenḡ gi bshad pa nyi ma'i 'od zer*. A reproduction of the only known manuscript was published in *Bod kyi lo rgyus rnam thar phyogs sgrigs* (2010). Iuchi (2016) provides an annotated edition of the work together with an introduction. As she remarks (2016: 7), the colophon's reference to "wood-pig" as the year of composition might alternatively mean 1335. I favour the earlier dating, for reasons outlined below.

<sup>73</sup> (Pañchen) Bsod nams rtse mo also says that the tenure lasted for a year, whereas Bsod nams lha'i dbang po says that it was either for one year or three. The *Deb ther sngon po* and other histories (including the *Deb ther dmar po* 1993: 62) prefer the longer period (i.e., departure around 1088).

<sup>74</sup> There are many reasons for regarding 'Brom Shes rab me lce's account of this period as the most credible. In addition to being the earliest and fullest description of events, its author is the quintessential "friendly witness"; an avowedly pro-Rwa sgrenḡ party, whose name suggests clan or some other shared group relationship with 'Brom ston. Bsod nams lha'i dbang po, who like (Pañchen) Bsod nams rtse mo, supports 'Brom Shes rab me lce's account in almost every regard, can also be seen as a friendly witness. Why the other Bka' gdams-affiliated authors ('Gos lo tsā ba and Las chen Kun dga' rgyal mtshan) felt disposed to downplay the crisis seems obvious, but even the fragments of information that the former provides appear to correspond with 'Brom Shes rab me lce's account.

<sup>75</sup> That is, the *Rnam thar rgyas pa*, *Rnam thar rgyas pa yongs grags*, and *Bka' gdams glegs bam*.

<sup>76</sup> It is tempting to see their closing scene of Po to ba disappearing into the wilderness as an image with an apt (and perhaps metaphorical) poignance.

to see for himself. Apparently distressed at what he discovered, and determined to intervene, he set out to visit various notable figures associated with the Bka' gdams tradition to enlist their support. Donations were gathered, woman and animals were expelled from the property, buildings were renovated, new monks were recruited, and the rules of monastic discipline were restored, with Mtha' bzhi sgom pa himself being appointed temporary head. After a long interregnum, the Rwa sreng succession was only restored with the appointment of Zhang 'Od 'jo ba.<sup>77</sup> As remarked by Iuchi (2016: 28-30), 'Brom Shes rab me lce reports that the Tangut ruler<sup>78</sup> was successfully petitioned for help and it was during Zhang 'Od 'jo ba's tenure that a monk-patron relationship was established.<sup>79</sup> The accounts of 'Brom Shes rab me lce, Bsod noms lha'i dbang po, and (Pañchen) Bsod noms rtse mo make it clear that the breakdown was not simply in administration and order, but also in any effective programme of teachings. (Pañchen) Bsod noms rtse mo distinguishes between the two, as does Bsod noms lha'i dbang po, who says that "The interregnum [during which] there was no leader at Rwa sreng was for thirty years. The [system of teaching] dharma also fell into serious decline".<sup>80</sup> The *Deb ther sngon po* (1984: 326) offers support for the latter, referring to a "Dharma famine" (*chos kyi mu ge*) that hit Rwa sreng,<sup>81</sup> beginning with the death of Dgon po

<sup>77</sup> There are scant details about the identity and dates of this individual. Basing her calculations on the length of his tenure, Iuchi proposes that he died in 1150. She also reports (2016: 21 n.60) that in some later sources, he is named as Dar ma g.yung drung or Dar ma grags. But I believe that at least some are references to other individuals. 'Od 'jo ba is an epithet for those who served as abbot at 'Od 'jo Monastery. This monastery ('*Od 'jo longs spyod kyi sgang*'), which appears to have been located in 'Phan yul, was founded by Zhang 'Od 'jo ba's teacher, Dar ma grags (aka dge bshes Stabs ka, d.u.). He served as the monastery's first head. Hence, the references to 'Od 'jo ba Dar ma grags. The *Deb ther sngon po* (346) has a short section on this monastery. It says that one Rong ston kha bo che was the early abbot of the monastery, and that later it was led by a Gzhon nu yon tan. Some later sources perhaps confuse this figure with Po to ba's celebrated disciple, Sha ra ba Yon tan grags, who the *Deb ther sngon po* (1984: 333) says died in 1141, aged 72. The same source says that Gzhon nu yon tan, (the abbot of 'Od 'jo) was born in 1067 (*me mo lug*), and died aged 87, in 1153 (*chu mo bya*). Another piece of evidence, cited below, would seem to corroborate that this figure is Zhang 'Od 'jo ba.

<sup>78</sup> Iuchi (2016: 28) identifies the ruler as King Weiming Renzong (reign: 1139–1193).

<sup>79</sup> 'Brom Shes rab me lce states that Zhang 'Od 'jo ba's twenty-five-year-old disciple dge bshes Gdugs phub pa was the individual appointed in the role, which presumably means he was dispatched to the Tangut kingdom.

<sup>80</sup> *ra sreng du gdan sa bar stongs lo sum cu dang / chos tshugs la yang dar rgud cher byung* (1977: 308, 51b3). Vetturini (2013: 217) notes the variant *tshul* (for *tshugs*) in some editions.

<sup>81</sup> Las chen, in his *Bka' gdams chos 'byung* (2003: 425), also mentions the famine, but is less clear about its causes.

ba Dbang phyug rgyal mtshan, Po to ba's immediate predecessor.<sup>82</sup> It also directly attributes this "famine" to the lack of monastery-head, remarking that the early demise of several abbots discouraged others from taking up the post.

It is perhaps worth recapping how far, within a few steps, we have come from Apple's account of Po to ba's abbotship and the apparent suggestion that he was responsible for establishing a teaching programme that included some of Atiśa's works. Early Tibetan accounts do not support the idea that Po to ba implemented a programme based on the six works at Rwa sgren, and even the *Deb ther sngon po* makes no such claim, although it does directly link the "six texts" with Po to ba. However, even if he tried to initiate such a programme, it was clearly not successful, because the whole monastic institution appears to have been on the verge of collapse around Po to ba's ears!<sup>83</sup>

Due largely to their full acknowledgment of the crisis at Rwa sgren, the accounts of 'Brom Shes rab me lce and Bsod nams lha'i dbang po, and even the truncated version of (Pañchen) Bsod nams rtse mo, have a degree of consistency and coherence that cannot be matched by authors who apparently wish to downplay or ignore the crisis, and whose abbatial successions include some major discrepancies.<sup>84</sup> In this crisis we discern the most likely reason behind the campaign to promote the 'three brothers',<sup>85</sup> the probable scenario runs as follows: The crisis at Rwa sgren was sparked by the death of Dgon po ba in 1082/3, who was likely perceived to be the last in the generation of direct disciples of Atiśa capable of assuming a leadership role. Seniors at Rwa sgren turned to a new generation, in the form of Po to ba, who was a celebrated teacher, but had an unproven track record as

<sup>82</sup> He had succeeded Rnal 'byor chen po (Byang chub rin chen), and the tenure of these first two successors of 'Brom ston lasted thirteen and seven years respectively (Iuchi 2016: 20). Other sources agree that these two headed the monastery for two decades, if not always about the length of their respective tenures.

<sup>83</sup> Practically every modern reference work and popular writing on the Bka' gdams tradition cite the "six texts". The *Deb ther sngon po* is the main source for this claim. And although some reference to this group of works and Po to ba's links with it occur in slightly earlier sources (discussed below), none of them suggest that they formed the basis of study at Rwa sgren. Apple also claims that even at 'Brom ston's time, Rwa sgren had a distinct "curriculum" (2018: 20). No clear evidence is provided for this claim and passages in the twelfth century works examined below appear to counter it. There can be no doubt that 'Brom ston, Po to ba, and others taught at *Rwa sgren*. But it is a huge and unwarranted leap to gather references to teachings on individual texts, then describe them as constituting a "curriculum". For more on that topic see Samuels (2021).

<sup>84</sup> It also seems significant that the *Deb ther dmar po* makes no attempt to provide an abbatial succession for Rwa sgren, although it gives them for other monasteries, including Snar thang and Gsang phu.

<sup>85</sup> As discussed below, a third, apparently earlier source provides further insights into the crisis.



a leader.<sup>86</sup> Whether he officially assumed the abbotship or merely agreed to act as a stand-in, he clearly decided not to continue in the role, and seems to have handed over responsibilities to certain trusted disciples. A series of individuals were called upon and various different arrangements experimented with, including a splitting of roles, with abbots of other monasteries taking joint responsibility for Rwa sgren and their own main institution. But seniors watched, no doubt with growing desperation, as each arrangement failed, and the monastery fell into ever deeper decline. Only with the appointment of Zhang 'Od 'jo ba was some success in restoring Rwa sgren's fortunes achieved, with several of his immediate successors enjoying long tenures. But as 'Brom Shes rab me lce informs us, Zhang 'Od 'jo ba himself was one of the 'shared' appointments, since he served jointly as abbot for Rwa sgren and 'Od 'jo. This detail would seem to confirm the identification for him given above (see note 77). The fact that it was during his tenure that the support of the Tangut king was secured was surely a crucial factor, and *perhaps* created a precedent (if not a model) for future arrangements, such as the Sa skya-Mongol one, by means of which Rwa sgren was able to regain kudos and a lucrative stream of revenue.<sup>87</sup> The fact that this shift towards new patronage occurred

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<sup>86</sup> The histories give the impression that his reputation was gained on the basis of his combining teaching and scholarship with a semi-reclusive lifestyle. According to the *Deb ther sngon po* (1984: 327), it was only at the age of 51 (1078), several years before his appointment at Rwa sgren, that he was coaxed out of this lifestyle to "work for the benefit of others" (*gzhan don mdzad*). This suggests he had no real background in monastic leadership and administration.

<sup>87</sup> Later Tibetan authors try, it appears, to make sense of the confused sources they consulted by essentially *constructing* an abbatial succession using the names of those featuring in those sources, even if their exact role in events was probably ambiguous. The *Bai dārya gser po* (1989: 183) by Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653–1705), for instance, makes no mention of a break, but cites five names between Po to ba and 'Od 'jo ba. In this version, Po to ba is succeeded by his disciple, Sha ra ba Yon tan grags, followed by his teacher, dge bshes Stabs ka ba, before reverting to another of Po to ba's disciples, Dol pa Shes rab rgya mtsho (1059–1131). The author also says that Rngog lo was the abbot preceding Po to ba. The reason for his inclusion in the list is explained below. By fully embracing the notion of the crisis, it should be possible to resolve some of the conflicting accounts regarding the Rwa sgren abbatial succession. Evidence scattered throughout other histories could also be incorporated to create a clearer picture of events. The *Deb ther sngon po* (1984: 326), for instance, does not present a crisis in the manner of 'Brom Shes rab me lce and Bsod nams lha'i dbang po, but provides some details of events after 'Od 'jo ba. It says that following his tenure, "before too long" (*ring po ma lon par*) someone called Mkhan po Gur ston was appointed, but soon left the post. Following this, an individual named Rma ston was invited, but declined. However, the *Deb ther sngon po* reports that following an intervention from Lha 'gro ba'i mgon po, he reversed his decision, and enjoyed a successful tenure. Given the Bka' gdams context, the most likely Lha 'gro ba'i mgon po is the figure identified in Mkhas grub Dge legs dpal bzang's *gsan yig* (1978: 52) as Byang chub 'od zer (and

almost simultaneous with the collapse of the Pāla Empire (around 1161) in north-eastern India, under whose auspices the great monastic institutions like Vikramaśīlā, Somapura, and even Nālandā had flourished, helping to supply Tibet with religious masters of Atiśa's ilk, seems unlikely to have been mere coincidence. But the campaign surrounding the 'three brothers' helped restore damage to the Bka' gdams

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in other sources as Byang chub 'od), the third abbot of the 'Chad ka gsar ma ("new 'Chad ka) Monastery in 'Phan yul, but if so, his dates (1186–1259), would be too late. Brom Shes rab me lce's work has different names for the successors of Zhang 'Od 'jo ba; that is, Rgya 'Dul ba and slob dpon Jo gdan rtsang pa, but the length of tenures (one year and five years respectively) seems to match the account in the *Deb ther sngon po*. Shākya Rin chen sde (*Yar lung jo bo'i chos 'byung*: 61b1) has another figure, Rnal 'byor Sher rdor (see note 44), taking over straight after Po to ba, but then acknowledges a break in the succession (or record) until 'Od 'jo ba. But immediately after, the account is very similar to that in the *Deb ther sngon po*, with Gur ston succeeding 'Od 'jo ba, and the extra detail that Lha 'gro ba'i mgon po's student, Rma ston, was resident in Klung shod mkhar thog (which possibly points to the Bka' gdams Monastery of Mkhar thog in 'Phan po) at the time of being invited. In contrast with the *Deb ther sngon po*, 'Brom Shes rab me lce (2010: 274, 21b5) says that Gur ston's tenure was a long one, lasting fifteen years. As Iuchi observes (2016: 21) he appears to be the last abbot referred to by 'Brom Shes rab me lce. However, a comment that has not been picked up on relates to Gur ston's immediate predecessor, slob dpon Sna ra ba, of whose tenure it is said, "During that time, the devil(s) murdered many monastics" (*de'i dus su bdud kyiis dge 'dun mang po skrong*s, 2010: 274, 21b4). The content and language of this leave little doubt that this refers to the Mongolian attack led by Doorda Darqan (*Dor rta*), which has generally been dated to 1241, and which later historians report involved attacks on *Rwa sgreng* and *Rgyal lha khang*, resulting in a number of monastic deaths. The date 'Brom Shes rab me lce reports for slob dpon Sna ra ba's death, *chu mo glang* (i.e., most likely 1253) also supports this. Hence, far from being Zhang 'Od 'jo ba's immediate successor, it appears that Gur ston did not take up his post until almost a century later! That is, not in 1153, upon the death of 'Od 'jo ba, but around 1253, with the passing of slob dpon Sna ra ba. Could it really be the case that the *Deb ther sngon po* (and the *Yar lung jo bo'i chos 'byung*), either by accident or design (we recall the *Deb ther sngon po*'s cryptic expression "before too long"), have skipped a whole century? Astonishing as such a proposal might appear to many in Tibetan studies, it is one that should be seriously considered. 'Brom Shes rab me lce's account, in fact, refers to two figures named 'Od 'jo ba who served as Rwa sgreng abbots (Zhang 'Od 'jo ba and Dgon 'Od 'jo ba), and it appears likely that they and their tenures were conflated by later historians. But it also seems that the same historians may have conflated two separate periods of crisis in the Rwa sgreng succession, one in the twelfth century, the other in the thirteenth. Whether even a thirteenth century dating for Gur ston's tenure can accommodate the identification of Lha 'gro ba'i mgon po as Byang chub 'od (which a twelfth century one cannot) remains open to question. But this may just be another of the discrepancies apparent in the later histories, since Lha 'gro ba'i mgon po does not feature in 'Brom Shes rab me lce's account. The fact that this account seems to end with the tenure of Gur ston appears to support the earlier dating for his work (i.e., 1299 rather than 1335). The reference to the Mongol raid and the deaths at Rwa sgreng would therefore count as a rare example of a relatively early mention of the event by a Bka' gdams writer.

narrative, and the predominant memory of the period (as reflected in the histories) is of the continuity these figures represented rather than a tradition in turmoil.

So much for Rwa sgreng itself, but what should interest us even more here is that Rwa sgreng's decades of crisis (i.e., circa 1085 to 1160) coincide *exactly* with the ascent of Gsang phu, encompassing the whole of Rngog lo's tenure and a major portion of its other most famous son, Phywa pa Chos kyi seng ge (1109–1169), the sixth abbot. That the sharply contrasting fortunes the two institutions experienced were merely coincidental would defy credibility. Again, 'Brom Shes rab me lce proves himself to be the most reliable and informative historian of events, since he confirms interactions between the two monasteries. He specifically reports that Rngog lo was invited to Rwa sgreng to teach at this time. This was a highly unusual if not unique occurrence. Ignoring for a moment what we understand to be the significant differences in the two monasteries' styles, there appears to be no record of any other teaching arrangements or reciprocal exchanges between them. Nor does 'Brom Shes rab me lce mention any other figures being invited to Rwa sgreng to teach. He provides these details:<sup>88</sup>

Up until that point [when 'Od 'jo ba became abbot], for sixty-five years following Pu to ba's departure there had been no fixed monastery-head and [other] such things. [But] Mtha' bzhi, etc. and [various] elders had [essentially] taken charge [lit. "sat"] in as [assembly-] heads. It is also said that there were no real dharma study activities. At one point [responsibility] was handed to Rngog Blo ldan shes rab, who served as head of dharma teaching for several years. Twice each month, at night, he presided, [teaching while] seated upon a metal stool, [set upon] a heap of ashes.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>88</sup> *de yan chad la pu to ba bzhud ting ... phyin chad der lo drug bcu rtsa lnga'i bar der gdan sa ba la sogs pa gtan phebs pa* [19b5] *med / mtha' bzhi la sogs pa dang / 'gres po 'dra bas gral mgo' byed yin / chos kyi nyan bshad yang bsh..a' ma med pa de 'dra byung skad / skabs cig rngog blo ldan shes rab la phul bas / khong gis* [19b6] *chos dpon lo kha yar (mdzad) / nub mo me bus pa'i thal phung gi steng na / lcags (kyi) khri'u shing btsugs yin zla ba re re gnyis gnyis bzhugs pa gcig mdzad* (2010: 270 and Iuchi 2016: 109).

<sup>89</sup> The credence of these details seems enhanced by their idiosyncratic nature. I am unaware of any tradition involving heaping ashes from where a teaching could be delivered. But whether the mound was specially prepared for the occasion or the 'ready-made' one (i.e. a large monastery like Rwa sgreng surely had a dedicated ash-heap), delivering teachings from such a place strikes one as a ritualised act of humility. I also understand the seat to be a stool (rather than a small, but elaborate throne). In the manuscript marginalia, an unknown hand has added "wood" (*shing*) to the "metal stool", suggesting that he understands this to be a small bench or stool with a wooden frame, probably covered or overlaid with metal. But this clarification does nothing to make it sound any more Tibetan. Was this perhaps a token of Rngog lo's many years in Kashmir, from where he had only recently

If 'Brom Shes rab me lce's account is correct, far from inviting Rngog lo for a one-off guest appearance, senior figures made him the "head/master of teaching" (*chos dpon*) at Rwa sgren. This arrangement is also attested by Bsod nams Lha'i dbang po. Practical considerations must have played a part in determining the frequency of the teaching.<sup>90</sup> But the symbolic significance of the original and foremost Bka' gdams monastery needing to turn to its junior must have been huge.<sup>91</sup> It seems unsurprising that later narrators of the Bka' gdams school's<sup>92</sup> story were inclined to edit out references to the decades of crisis at Rwa sgren and the need to turn to Rngog lo and Gsang phu for help. We are left to wonder what impact these events and Gsang phu's eclipsing of Rwa sgren made upon the latter's community, and whether it left a legacy of resentment. With regard to that, the question that seems most insistent is whether Rngog lo discharged his duties in a manner that respected Rwa sgren traditions, or whether he used the opportunity to introduce the analytical approach that he was developing at Gsang phu: a question considered below.

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returned? Portable stools of various designs were certainly used in Indic culture during this time in religious and social contexts, as much to reinforce notions of social standings, as for comfort and convenience.

<sup>90</sup> Bimonthly teaching sessions sounds like a relatively light programme, although the ceremony described surrounding these events suggest these were only the more formal side of his activities there. That Rngog lo could have regularly shuttled between Gsang phu to Rwa sgren (a distance of close to 100 km as the crow flies) cannot be totally ruled out, but would seem far less likely than the obvious alternative. And indeed there is evidence (see next note) that he took up temporary residence at Rwa sgren for the "duration"

<sup>91</sup> Due to uncertainty about the chronology, the possibility that this might refer to an arrangement in place *between* the time of Rngog lo's return from Kashmir and his appointment as head of Gsang phu cannot entirely be ruled out. But the assertion that the arrangement lasted for several years makes this seem less likely. Added to which, Bsod nams Lha'i dbang po (1977: 309, 52a2) agrees that Rngog lo was handed responsibility for teaching at Rwa sgren, and performed this simultaneously with his Gsang phu duties, situating this arrangement between Rngog lo's ascension during the 1190's and his death (in post) in 1109. Bsod nams Lha'i dbang po unfortunately reveals nothing further about Rngog lo's teaching (or seating arrangement), but he adds another detail about the latter's involvement with Rwa sgren, stating that for several years, in conjunction with his role at Gsang phu, Rngog lo spent one or two months at Rwa sgren during the "break in the teachings' programme" (*chos bar*) (i.e., at Gsang phu) (*rngog blo ldan shes rab la phul bas / gsang phu dang sbrel te lo kha yar du du chos bar zla ba gcig gnyis tsam bzhuks pa yang mdzad do*).

<sup>92</sup> Mchims Nam mkha' grags' biography of Po to ba (entitled *Pu to ba'i rnam thar*, contained in the *Bka' gdams gser phreng*), for instance, refers to the time that its subject studied at Rwa sgren, but makes no mention of him having served as the head. This might seem to suggest that by excluding reference to the crisis when recounting the events of the time, Mchims sought to erase it from the historical memory. But there is more to say on this matter below.

**When text is personal instruction:  
remarks on Atiśa's *upadeśa* writings**

The twelfth century Tibetan writings examined below all take, as their subject, works by Atiśa that belong to a category very salient to the text-instruction divide, that of *upadeśa* (denoting “instruction”, etc.). In the Tibetan writings on them, as elsewhere, the two terms often translated as “personal instruction” (i.e., *gdams ngag* and *man ngag*) are largely used interchangeably. But specifically as labels for Atiśa's works, *man ngag* assumes greater prominence, due to being the main translation term for the Sanskrit *upadeśa*. Atiśa was obviously fond of naming or describing his works as *upadeśa*.<sup>93</sup> Five titles from his extant writings in Tibetan feature *man ngag*. To these should be added the *Satyadvayāvatāra*, since within the text, Atiśa describes its contents as a *upadeśa/man ngag*.<sup>94</sup> The provenance of these works is important to our investigation. Based on their contents, details in their translation colophons, and so forth, it seems reasonably certain that *Ekasmṛtyupadeśa*, *Bodhicittamahāśukhāmnāya*, and *Madhyamakopadeśa* were written in Tibet. It is possible that the *Sūtrārthasamuccayopadeśa* is also a Tibetan composition.<sup>95</sup> The *Ratnakaraṇḍodghāṭanāmadhyamakopadeśa* appears to

<sup>93</sup> The total number of works attributed to Atiśa is discussed below.

<sup>94</sup> Four of the five works in the Dergé Tengyur feature *upadeśa* in the Sanskrit title and *man ngag* in their Tibetan. These are: *Ekasmṛtyupadeśa* (*Dran pa gcig pa'i man ngag*) D 3928, *Madhyamakopadeśa* (*Dbu ma'i man ngag*) D 3929, *Ratnakaraṇḍodghāṭanāmadhyamakopadeśa* (*Dbu ma'i man ngag rin po che'i za ma tog kha phyé ba zhes bya ba*) D 3930, and *Sūtrārthasamuccayopadeśa* (*Mdo sde'i don kun las btus pa'i man ngag*), D 3957 & D 4482. The *man ngag* in the title of the fifth work, *Bodhicittamahāśukhāmnāya* (*Byang chub kyi sems bde ba'i man ngag*) D 1696, is a translation of *amṇāya* rather than *upadeśa*. The sixth work is the *Satyadvayāvatāra* (*Bden pa gnyis la 'jug pa*), D 3902. Two other works that probably had *upadeśa* in their original titles (*Yi ge drug pa'i man ngag* and *Bde mchog gi rgyud la brten pa'i lung gi man ngag*) have been attributed to Atiśa, but appear not to survive.

<sup>95</sup> The information in colophons cannot be accepted uncritically. Added to which, in general, the details they supply about when a text was translated into Tibetan may tell us very little about the date of its composition. However, when the colophon of a work by Atiśa states that it was translated by Rgya Brtson 'grus seng ge (usually in collaboration with Atiśa), it would seem to be a reasonably clear indication that it is a pre-Tibetan composition, since Rgya Brtson 'grus seng ge, by all reports, died in Nepal (circa. 1041), while accompanying the master to Tibet. When the colophon states that the translation was by Tshul khriṃs rgyal ba (Nag tsho lo tsā ba), again, usually in collaboration with Atiśa, it seems to indicate the work itself was composed in central Tibet, then translated relatively soon after. The works whose colophons attribute their translation to Rma Dge ba'i blo gros seem to have been written by Atiśa in Gu ge and Spu hreng, prior to his arrival in central Tibet. The colophon to the *Sūtrārthasamuccayopadeśa* states that it was translated by Nag tsho, but the qualification here is that Nag tsho is unusually referred to here as *zhu chen*. This might suggest that he was revising an earlier translation, although no mention of such an earlier translation is made.

have been written in India. Contemporary scholarship understands the *Satyadvayāvatāra* to be a work Atiśa wrote before he arrived in Tibet, but this is a point considered below.

There are two striking features of Atiśa's general pattern of composition. Firstly, he generally chose not to engage in commentarial writings. The only borderline exception to this the *Bodhimārgapradīpa-pañjikā* (D 3948), although this is the autocommentary to his *Bodhipathapradīpa* (D 3947).<sup>96</sup> Secondly, works within his oeuvre are almost all incredibly short.<sup>97</sup> The vast majority of Atiśa's surviving writings were those composed in Tibet, and he appears to have decided that the short, pithy format, exemplified by his *upadeśa*, was the best suited for his Tibetan audiences. This fact alone must greatly have shaped understanding of Atiśa's style, and it partly explains why those following the Bka' gdams tradition would wish to show their loyalty to it, through emulation.<sup>98</sup>

Turning to the reception of these works, when presented with a Sanskrit religious term, such as *upadeśa*, and an apparent Tibetan equivalent (such as *man ngag*), it is easy to assume that the latter is a specially coined translation. But in the case of *man ngag*, there is little to support this.<sup>99</sup> The Tibetan terms *man ngag* (like *gdams ngag*) carries strong (although not exclusive) connotations of oral transmission. It is

<sup>96</sup> Patchy as records of Atiśa compositional activities prior to his time in Tibet are, there is currently no evidence that he was any more inclined to commentarial writing at that stage in his life. But an early list of Atiśa writings provided by Bcom ldan Rig(s) pa'i ral gri, in his *Bstan pa rgyas pa rgyan gyi nyi 'od* (2006: 199-202) refers to Atiśa's autocommentary to *Satyadvayāvatāra*. However, no such work is known in Tibetan, and the Tibetan commentators on the *Satyadvayāvatāra* (discussed below), writing before Bcom ldan Rig(s) pa'i ral gri, appear to make no reference to it.

<sup>97</sup> His *Bodhimārgapradīpapañjikā* (102 folios in the Dergé Tengyur) is his only really long composition. The *Ratnakaraṇḍodghāṭanāmamadhyaṃakopadeśa* (20.5 folios) is one of his few works of medium length, and is also by far the most extensive of his *upadeśa*. Below this, even works such as his *Dharmadhātudarśanagīti* (D 2314 and D 4475, nearly six folios) and *Karmavibhaṅga* (D 3959, five folios) count as relatively long works for Atiśa. But the length of his remaining *upadeśa* really illustrate his preference for brevity. Their lengths are: *Ekasmṛtyupadeśa* (1 folio), *Madhyamakopadeśa* (1 folio), *Sūtrārthasamuccayopadeśa* (2.5 folios), *Bodhicittamahāsukhāmnāya* (1 folio side), and *Satyadvayāvatāra* (1.5 folios).

<sup>98</sup> Whether the *Ratnakaraṇḍodghāṭanāmamadhyaṃakopadeśa*, Atiśa's sole lengthy *upadeśa*, was an aberration or indicates that his conception of *upadeśa* underwent a change in Tibet must remain a matter for conjecture.

<sup>99</sup> The view that *man ngag* and *gdams ngag* are translation terms has, to my knowledge, never been questioned, and the common presumption (e.g., Kapstein 1996: 274) appears to be that the explanation for their origins must be sought in pre-existing items of Sanskrit vocabulary. But even minor probing reveals that these two do not have settled Sanskrit equivalents. A cursory look at the titles of works in the Tibetan canon also tells us that the term *man ngag* was favoured for translating *upadeśa*, rather than *gdams ngag*, as proposed by Kapstein (1996: 274).

not easy to account for this if the term originates in *upadeśa*.<sup>100</sup> An alternative scenario to *man ngag* and *gdams ngag* being conduits for foreign notions of orally conveyed instruction would see Tibetans predisposed to understanding *upadeśa* in a particular way. This would envision a pre-existing culture within which direct, oral communication was regarded as essential, particularly for conveying information of a practical (and not necessarily religious) nature, a culture of which terms like *man ngag* and *gdams ngag* would be expressions. This scenario would see the terms as having been recruited for translation purposes, but some gap in meaning between them and *upadeśa* still remaining.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>100</sup> *Upadeśa* has a long history in Sanskrit outside Buddhist writings. Oberhammer et al. (1996: 33-6) survey the early history of a term which, as Hugo (2013: 284 n.38) observes, covers a range of meanings too wide to be rendered by any single English word, but includes notions of “instruction”, “teaching”, and “advice”. *Upadeśa* was especially important in Vedic exegesis (Hugo 2013: 284), and in the *Mīmāṃsā Sūtra* (ca. 300–200 BC) it denotes instruction on the sacred texts, with the early commentarial tradition describing it as a particular type of determinate speech. Later, Maṇḍana Miśra (660–720?) made *upadeśa* a key component within his influential theory of action, defining it in terms of instruction that guided towards correct activity. The *practical* aspect is reported always to have been a prevalent one to *upadeśa* (Hugo 2013:284). For Maṇḍana, with his overwhelming concern for the correct performance of Vedic ritual (see Hugo 2013), this was action directed towards the achievement of religious goals. In Buddhist Sanskrit writings, *upadeśa* are described as instructions, but with more emphasis on them being *accurate* representations of earlier *sūtra* teachings. But notably we find Asaṅga directly linking it with Abhidharma material, in the sense of being a *summary* of essentials (Oberhammer et al. 1996: 35-6). This latter fits with what would become, for generations of Tibetan scholars, one of the most familiar uses of *upadeśa*; namely in the subtitle description of the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* (i.e., *Prajñāpāramitopadeśaśāstra*), stressing that it was a condensation of the Prajñāpāramita essentials. Its format (i.e., the list-like succinctness of its delivery) can be presumed to inform this subtitle more than its content or medium of communication. Hence, *upadeśa* has a whole range of meanings and associations (many of which chime with Tibetan understanding of *man ngag*), including brevity and pithiness, being a condensation of essentials, and conveying information for practical usage. But in none of this do we find any basis for the strong association with *orality* that we see in the case of *man ngag*. The imagery evoked in sections of Atiśa’s *upadeśa* does, however, have an oral aspect to it, raising the question of whether an oral dimension to *upadeśa* has simply gone unreported. I would like to express thanks to my IKGa colleagues Dr Akane Saito and Dr Thomas Kintaert for the information and references they provided regarding the use of *upadeśa* outside Buddhist literature.

<sup>101</sup> A large part of the evidence that seems to support this scenario relates to an analysis of the terms *gdams ngag* and *man ngag* and their early usage, especially outside the religious sphere. Due to the limits of space, these must be presented on a separate occasion. But the idea that *man ngag* and *gdams ngag* are derived from Sanskrit runs into two obvious problems relating to translation conventions. Firstly, neither term appears to match any known Sanskrit etymology (for *upadeśa*, etc.). Secondly, the first syllable of *man ngag* is also totally oblique (and indeed may not be of Tibetan origin). The chances that translators attempting to convey an unfamiliar

The two *upadeśa* by Atiśa directly relevant to the discussion here, in that they are the subjects of the Tibetan manuscript writings, are the *Satyadvayāvatāra* and the *Madhyamakopadeśa*. What links them is that they both deal with the “view” (i.e., the correct understanding of Madhyamaka). A third work, Atiśa’s *Ratnakaraṇḍodghāṭanāmamadhya-makopadeśa* should also be mentioned. It shares the last part of its title (i.e., *Madhyamakopadeśa*) with the *main* work of that name. Although, in fact, only a portion of it deals with Madhyamaka, it shares further affinities with the other two, in its projection of a Madhyamaka *upadeśa* lineage. Despite both dealing with Madhyamaka, the *Satyadvayāvatāra* and *Madhyamakopadeśa* are very different in style. *Satyadvayāvatāra* is a terse, versified expositional work, of a kind demanding, if not designed for commentary. It mentions the names of various schools and scholars, and alludes to the philosophical positions held by them. The *Madhyamakopadeśa* is almost the opposite, with a looser, more informal style and tone. Among Atiśa’s works it is unique, in that it is clearly intended as an instruction on meditation, in the form of a guided analysis, directing the reader towards the correct understanding and meditative experience of emptiness, and is structured around the meditation session. Also perhaps uniquely, it contains *no* citations from scripture, references no names of scholars, etc., and Atiśa twice states that in this work he has suspended the accepted scholarly practices of supporting assertions with scripture and reasoning, a choice he obviously made to enhance its meditational dimension.

It seems unsurprising that the direct, more informal style of the *Madhyamakopadeśa* would be appealing to those in the Bka’ gdams tradition. Given that it was a written composition, it also demonstrates that the category of *upadeśa* (and perhaps particularly Tibetan understanding of it as *man ngag*) had a peculiar adeptness for straddling, if not blurring the divide between the written and oral spheres. In this respect, Atiśa’s *upadeśa* could be seen as the perfect subject for those wishing to advance textual learning among a Bka’ gdams community, some portions of which were suspicious of formalised study.

### **The three anonymous writings and the background of their appearance**

The remainder of this article focusses mainly on key passages within anonymous Tibetan works, the contents of which can only be explained when viewed in the context of the crisis at Rwa sgreng and the subsequent promotion of Atiśa’s *man ngag*. The Tibetan works

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Indic concept to their Tibetan audience would have chosen to do so by creating a composite term with an equally mystifying component seem to be virtually nil.



considered here are, loosely speaking, commentaries on the *Madhyamakopadeśa* and *Satyadvayāvatāra*. Two of the three, the *Dbu ma'i man ngag gi bshad pa* (henceforth UMS<sub>h</sub>) and *Dbu ma'i man ngag gi 'bum* (henceforth UMB) focus on the *Madhyamakopadeśa*, and the third, entitled *Bden gnyis 'bum* (henceforth DNyB), on the *Satyadvayāvatāra*.<sup>102</sup> These three Tibetan works are anonymous and undated. Their existence was unknown to modern scholarship until reproductions of them were recently published among a host of other works.<sup>103</sup> They appear to belong to the mid twelfth century,<sup>104</sup> that most fecund era in the development of Tibetan Madhyamaka thinking and interpretation, marked by the introduction of the Svatantrika–Prāsaṅgika distinction, arising from the groundbreaking translations and commentaries of Pa tshab nyi ma grags (1055–1145?), who championed the thought of Candrakīrti. Gsang phu scholarship at the time, by contrast, seems largely to have favoured the system of “Madhyamaka [interpretation of the] three eastern [masters]” (*dbu ma shar gsum*),<sup>105</sup> and Phywa pa Chos kyi seng ge in particular was known for his opposition to Candrakīrti. The huge upsurge of interest in Madhyamaka coincided with the decades of crisis at Rwa sgrenḡ. As noted above, Davidson claims that during this time, Rwa sgrenḡ was reduced to the status of Gsang phu’s satellite; a relatively common understanding among those who assume that Rwa sgrenḡ and Gsang phu were both Bka’ gdams monasteries, and that the popularity of Gsang phu’s traditions resulted in Rwa sgrenḡ ceding the field of scholarship to the Gsang phu ‘specialists’. But the manuscript sources examined here (which were not available when the ‘satellite picture’ was formed) tell a different story, demonstrating that certain parties associated with Rwa sgrenḡ wanted it to maintain its own, distinct voice. So, while references to Rwa sgrenḡ

<sup>102</sup> James Apple’s earlier work on some of these texts must be acknowledged. He was the first to bring attention to texts within this group and make several useful observations about them, including that they are by Tibetans (in one case linked with Rwa sgrenḡ), claiming to represent the Madhyamaka tradition of Atiśa. He also correctly observed that the title folios of the UMB and DNyB have been switched, resulting in them being miscatalogued in the *Bka’ gdams gsung 'bum*. Apple’s *Jewels of the Middle Way* (2018) marks the culmination of his work on them. I have some more specific remarks on aspects of his translation and interpretation below.

<sup>103</sup> Reproductions of manuscripts and the only known versions of these works appear in the first tranche of the *Bka’ gdams gsung 'bum*.

<sup>104</sup> Apple speculates that these are very earlier compositions, and specifically proposes that the DNyB could have been written ca. 1100 (2018: 125). He also conjectures about a number of possible authors. But the evidence I present below seems to establish that this is around half a century too early.

<sup>105</sup> The “eastern” is usually understood to refer to the Bengal area, and the “three [masters]” are generally identified as Jñānagarbha, Śāntarakṣita, and Kamalaśīla (i.e., those who would eventually be represented as advocating a Svatantrika Madhyamaka position).

within the works suggest that the crisis there formed the backdrop to their composition, the authors do not align themselves with either of the aforementioned schools of Madhyamaka interpretation. They agree with Pa tshab, in holding Candrakīrti to be Nāgārjuna's premier commentator, but do not view his interpretation as incompatible with the 'Svatantrika' commentator Bhāviveka.<sup>106</sup> They also present their position on Madhyamaka as uniquely loyal to Atiśa's tradition.

The idea of Rwa sgren as Gsang phu's satellite also ignores the important evidence in the educational domain: there appears to be no record of a "dialectical unit" being founded at Rwa sgren during this time, or that Pramāṇa was formally studied there. Given the popularity of both, and the fact that even Rwa sgren's chief ally, Snar thang, would eventually succumb, the absence of these at the former monastery must surely be interpreted as evidence of resistance to these two key features of scholasticism.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Various references in Atiśa's writings suggest that this is an accurate representation of his position. According to Apple, Atiśa "synthesized the teachings of Bhāviveka and Candrakīrti" (2022: 8), and this partly characterises what Apple proposes was Atiśa's "undifferentiated Madhyamaka" (ibid.: 1), his "vision of Madhyamaka as Great Madhyamaka (*dbu ma chen po*)" (ibid.: 17). But Vose (2009: 24) shows that Atiśa was not averse to criticising Bhāviveka, suggesting the former was not quite so 'undifferentiating'.

<sup>107</sup> The fact that Snar thang seems to have exhibited a similar resistance, preferring to stay loyal to what those in charge there probably saw as the 'original' Bka' gdams tradition, must have played a huge role in the close relationship Rwa sgren and Snar thang enjoyed. But as reported in the *Deb ther dmar po* (1993: 63), Skyel nag Grags pa seng ge founded a "dialectical unit" (*mtshan nyid kyi grwa sa*) there during the tenure of the fifth abbot, Zhang ston Chos kyi bla ma (1184–1241), somewhere between 1232 and 1241. In Las chen's later account, this foundation is dated to the time of the seventh abbot, Mchims Nam mkha' grags. But this possibly conflates the foundation with the installing (in 1262) of Bcom ldan Rig pa'i ral gri (1227–1305), as the principal instructor there. The latter's tenure in that position was a very stable one, lasting forty-four years. He was also a Pramāṇa specialist, and as his biography confirms, his teaching on the subject was at the heart of the programme of learning he oversaw at Snar thang. It has been observed (van der Kuijp 2003: 433 n.113) that Mchims' biography of Zhang ston makes no mention of the unit's foundation during his time. This should not, I believe, surprise us, since Mchims cannot be regarded as an impartial (or entirely reliable) witness. As we have already seen, Mchims was a chief editor of the Bka' gdams image, and he unquestionably respected scholarship, particularly in the field of Abhidharma, a specialisation he inherited through his family. But he appears to have held Pramāṇa and scholasticism in poor regard. His own record of the teachings he personally received (i.e., his *gsan yig*, 2009), enumerates several hundred texts ranging over a whole host of subjects, but makes no mention of any Indian Pramāṇa works, although there is a *solitary* reference to instruction he received according the Gsang phu-style "Pramāṇa summary" (*tshad ma bsdu pa*, 2009: 43, 5a3). There are also a number of comments in his writings that betray a disdainful attitude to dialectical learning, which he portrays as clashing with Bka' gdams traditions. The fact that Mchims is reported to have been part of a group that invited Bcom ldan Rig(s) pa'i

The specific aspects distinguishing the Madhyamaka interpretation represented in the three anonymous writings under discussion will be investigated on another occasion. Here, the focus is on remarks interspersing the commentarial content, particularly in the prologue sections. The majority of the content is clearly aimed at an audience sympathetic with the Bka' gdams perspective. Apple correctly observes that the tradition of Madhyamaka represented in works such as these was "contemplative in nature" (2018: 1). There is a notable emphasis on Atiśa's *upadeśa/man ngag* being designed for meditational useage. There also appears to be a *de*-emphasis on them as written compositions, as attempts are made to project them as personal instructions with oral origins. These messages would particularly have appealed to those in the instruction-based camp (i.e., *man ngag pa/gdams ngag pa*) of the Bka' gdams, some of whom harboured concerns about an expansion of textual scholarship. That said, some remarks in these works are harsher in tone, and are obviously directed at elements outside the tradition. It becomes apparent, as we see below, that these are *responses* to earlier criticisms about the approach adopted at Rwa sgrenḡ. The value of these responses lies both in the historical information they contain and the testimony to the discourse they represent.

### Rngog lo at Rwa sgrenḡ: more than a hint of controversy

Taking into account both what we now know about Rngog lo's involvement with Rwa sgrenḡ and the existence of these anonymous works, the discovery that Rngog lo shared an interest in the two aforementioned *upadeśa* by Atiśa takes on additional significance. A list of Rngog lo's writings, compiled by his disciple and biographer, Gro lung

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ral gri may therefore seem incongruous, although as recorded in the latter's biography, he had received teachings from Mchims on Abhidharma, a personal connection that is likely to have been a factor. Van der Kuijp (2003: 412) points to a claim relating to an earlier time, made by Shākya mchog ldan (writing in 1479) according to which 'Bru sha Bsod nams seng ge, a disciple of Phwya pa's, had first introduced Pramāṇa teachings at Snar thang, based on Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇaviniścaya*. Just to issue a minor corrective, Shākya mchog ldan's claim (in his *Rngog lo tsā ba chen pos bstan pa ji ltar bskyangs pa'i tshul mdo tsaṃ du bya ba ngo mtshar gtam gyi rol mo* 1995) is not that 'Bru sha "founded there a seminary" (van der Kuijp 2003: 412), but that he initiated "study of the *Pramāṇaviniścaya*" (*snar thang du rnam par nges pa'i bshad srol btsugs*, 1995: 453, 6a6), which seems a crucial distinction. That said, historical sources are not in agreement on the matter, and what exactly 'Bru sha Bsod nams seng ge did at Snar thang and whether his efforts were successful require further investigation. What can be said is that if the writings from Snar thang and those about Mchims' predecessors are anything to go by, prior to the creation of a "dialectical unit" there some time between 1232 and 1241, while the monastery was a place of some scholarship, the style promoted within scholasticism was not regarded with approval there.

pa Blo gros 'byung gnas (ca. 1040–1120), lists “summaries” of Atiśa’s *Satyadvayāvatāra* and *Madhyamakopadeśa*.<sup>108</sup> The list places *Madhyamakopadeśa* and *Satyadvayāvatāra* together, using *man ngag* as the name of the former, rather than a description of both.<sup>109</sup> Writing much later, in his *Bka’ gdams chos ’byung* (composed in 1494), Las chen acknowledges both, but also remarks that “The extensive commentary on the *Madhyamakopadeśa* [we now] see, which is said to have been composed [by Rngog lo], does not appear on Gro lung pa’s list”.<sup>110</sup> Las chen does not state whether he had access to either “summary”, but he clearly indicates the existence, in the late fifteenth century, of a larger commentary, attributed to Rngog lo, although unfortunately, none of these three works survive.<sup>111</sup>

Rngog lo is known to have written a number of *Madhyamaka* summaries, none of which are known, with certainty, to be extant,<sup>112</sup> but the *Madhyamakopadeśa* and *Satyadvayāvatāra* seem to be the only clear examples of him summarising or commenting on writings by Atiśa.<sup>113</sup> The versified style and relatively scholarly content of the *Satyadvayāvatāra* could be said to make it amenable to analytical treatment, either in the form of an actual commentary or the identification of its structural outlines. But the *Madhyamakopadeśa* is a different matter. Atiśa could not have been more explicit that this was material intended for meditational use rather than study, which would normally have placed it firmly outside the areas of interest to scholasticism. Whether as a full commentary or a scholarly “summary”, Rngog lo is reported to be the first Tibetan to produce writings on the

<sup>108</sup> They are referred to as the *bden chung dang man ngag gnyis* in the biography (14b2). For a legible version see the image reproduced in Kramer (2007: 141).

<sup>109</sup> Gro lung pa describes them (see previous note) as “the shorter work on the truth(s) and the instruction”. In the early sources particularly, Tibetan authors refer to the *Satyadvayāvatāra* by the “shorter” designation (i.e., *bden chung*), apparently to distinguish it from Jñānagarbha’s *Satyadvayavibhāṅgavṛtti* (*Bden gnyis rnam par ’byed pa* D 3881), the main title for which in Sanskrit (although not Tibetan) is the same as Atiśa’ work.

<sup>110</sup> *dbu ma’i man ngag la ’dis mdzad zer ba’i Tika rgyas pa cig snang ba ni gro lung pa’i dkar chag na mi snang go* (Las chen 2003: 152).

<sup>111</sup> Although there are no Tibetan versions of these works, there is a text in Tangut language (the existence of which was made known to me by my colleague, Zhouyang Ma) that claims to be based on Rngog lo’s instruction on the *Satyadvayāvatāra*. This work, presumably by one of Rngog lo’s disciples, is currently being examined by another scholar, Mengxi Li, and I keenly await the results of her research.

<sup>112</sup> For a comprehensive list of Rngog lo’s writings as identified by Gro lung pa, together with those on lists compiled by two later authors see Kramer (2007: 109–13, 126). But Kramer makes no reference to the list compiled by Bcom ldan Rig(s) pa’i ral gri (2006: 251–53).

<sup>113</sup> See note 115 for a possible proviso to this.

*Madhyamakopadeśa*.<sup>114</sup> One reason for the attention he gave to the work may have been the avuncular link, since Rngog Legs pa'i shes rab is reported to have been the first recipient of Atiśa's teaching.<sup>115</sup> But could these works by Rngog lo have been expressly aimed at the Rwa sgreng audience during his time teaching there? As with the content of the teaching itself, the question is again whether Rngog lo's writings on Atiśa's two *upadeśa* would have catered for what we understand to be the Rwa sgreng style, or whether, in the treatment of these works, he saw an opportunity to promote his analytical approach.

Putting aside the issue of the commentary, it is not at all obvious why a summary of the *Madhyamakopadeśa*, a very short and accessible work, might have been deemed necessary, *unless* the approach had some analytical dimension: Rngog lo does not give the impression of being someone likely to summarise a meditation session. The prospect of him having composed these works for an audience at Rwa sgreng is enticing. It does not seem unrealistic to hope that a copy of this work may yet resurface, but until such a time, the intriguing questions about its style and content must remain matters for speculation.<sup>116</sup> However, in another source, we unexpectedly discover a reference to Rngog lo

<sup>114</sup> None of the lists of Rngog lo's writings featured in Kramer (see previous note), nor the one compiled by Bcom ldan Rig(s) pa'i ral gri, mention this lengthier work (although some refer to a longer work by Rngog lo on the *Satyadvayāvatāra*). It should also be remarked that Las chen's wording (see note 110) regarding the reliability of this attribution is non-committal. But we can probably exclude the possibility that the work in question was either the UMSH or UMB. Neither fit the description of an extensive *Tika*. It is also difficult to imagine that Las chen could mistake their style and content for that of Rngog lo.

<sup>115</sup> A number of sources also refer to a work on *lam rim* by Rngog lo. Kramer (2007: 113-14 n.180), among others, notes its appearance on Shākya mchog ldan's list of Rngog lo's works, and seems (again among others) sceptical about its existence. But just five years after its mention by Shākya mchog ldan, it again appears, on the list compiled by Bsod nams lha'i dbang po (1977: 380, 87b), who supplies specific details, perhaps suggesting direct knowledge of the work. He refers to three traditions of *lam rim*, distinguishing Rngog lo's from those of Po to ba and Spyana snga ba. Rather than a writing on Atiśa's *Bodhipathapradīpa*, he identifies the work by Rngog lo as a twenty-folio "clarification" (*gsal byed*) on six stanzas on *lam rim* ascribed to his uncle, Legs pa'i shes rab. He goes on to say the *Bstan rim chen mo*, the famous work by Gro lung pa, Rngog lo's disciple, which is usually said to be the first work of the *bstan rim/lam rim* genre, is an expansion on the two earlier works. Kramer questions the existence of the work partly because, he reports, it is not mentioned by Gro lung pa. It should also be remarked that it does not appear on Bcom ldan Rig(s) pa'i ral gri's list. Leaving aside this issue, as with the *Satyadvayāvatāra* and *Madhyamakopadeśa*, the underlying assertion seems to be that Rngog lo only ventured into the territory associated with Atiśa and the *Bka' gdams* when the avuncular link justified it or called upon him to do so.

<sup>116</sup> How those at Rwa sgreng might have reacted if Rngog lo subjected the *Madhyamakopadeśa*, Atiśa's quintessential instruction on meditation, to his analytical treatment is one such fascinating question.

and his reception at Rwa sgren, which might count as circumstantial evidence regarding the compositions. Despite the fact that, as remarked above, Mchims' biography of Po to ba made no mention of its subject's tenure at Rwa sgren, his (Mchims') biography of 'Brom ston shows no such reticence.<sup>117</sup> This work predates 'Brom Shes rab me lce's work,<sup>118</sup> and includes what is both the earliest and most comprehensive account of Po to ba's departure from Rwa sgren (*Snar thang gser phreng* 196b-197a). Mchims' preparedness to elaborate on the circumstances seems motivated by his wish to defend Po to ba's decision to leave. But Mchims does not set this in the context of the crisis. This goes beyond trying to protect Po to ba from any blame for the subsequent turmoil. Mchims patently (and sometimes clumsily) tries to avoid any reference to the crisis. Mchims also divulges a detail that it easily missed. Namely, that like Po to ba, his two other 'brothers' elected to stay away from Rwa sgren during the period in question. That is, they appear to have chosen not to intervene in the crisis. Both justifying their choice and deflecting attention away from events at Rwa sgren itself, Mchims says, "We are reliably told that if the 'three brothers' had just stayed at Ra sgyeng (i.e., Rwa sgren) the tradition would not have spread as extensively as it has. It is due to each of them having remained separately, as individual lords of the doctrine, that the Rwa sgyeng dharma-tradition has spread everywhere".<sup>119</sup> This direct reference to the "Rwa sgyeng (i.e., Rwa sgren) dharma-tradition" is also a rare admission that Rwa sgren's version of the Bka' gdams tradition was not the only one that existed.

Mchims' determination to circumvent references to the Rwa sgren crisis extends to him implying that the succession in the abbotship was unbroken. He says that after Po to ba (198a), 'Od 'jo ba Dar ma grags took over in the "wood-monkey" year (1104). Tibetan and contemporary scholars alike (as mentioned above) have mistaken this for the much later *Zhang* 'Od 'jo ba, whereas it is almost certainly dge bshes Stabs ka ba (Dar ma grags). Mchims' account of the two decades between Po to ba's departure and Stabs ka ba's apparent arrival is very sketchy, and his assertion that the latter held the post for fourteen years seems unreliable. The objectivity of Mchims' reporting on matters pertaining to scholasticism has already been called into question.

<sup>117</sup> Like Po to ba's biography, 'Brom ston's biography (entitled *Dge bshes ston pa'i rnam thar*) is included in the *Snar thang gser phreng*.

<sup>118</sup> Even taking the earlier dating for 'Brom Shes rab me lce's account, since the *terminus post quem* for the composition of this biography would be Mchims' death in 1289, it would predate it by at least a decade, although in all likelihood, it was written well before that time.

<sup>119</sup> *sku mched gsum ra sgyeng kho nar bzhugs na 'di 'dra'i bstan pa rgyas pa mi 'byung ba la / so sor bstan pa'i bdag po mdzad pas ra sgyeng pa'i chos srol phyogs thams cad du dar zhing rgyas par gyur pa yin gsung skad* (*Snar thang gser phreng* 197a5-6).

His biography of 'Brom ston reports the case of one Lhab chung ston, who "abandoned the company of eight thousand monastic dialecticians to go to present himself before dge bshes Ston pa (i.e., 'Brom ston)".<sup>120</sup> This is a regular trope for Mchims: his narratives frequently feature monks who, disillusioned with dialectical study, turn away from it to the 'real' (i.e., Rwa sgren-style) Bka' gdams. A number of sources confirm that Lhab chung ston (d.u.) was 'Brom ston's disciple. But here Mchims is caught out using the narrative as a vehicle to express his own biases, since he anachronistically imports features of scholasticism, including the term "monastic dialecticians" (*mtshan nyid kyi gra pa*), and dialectical study as a mass activity itself, into the pre-Rngog lo period.

Nevertheless, Mchims' reporting of Po to ba's departure and events immediately following it deserve our attention. He portrays the tenure of the first three abbots as a golden epoch, during which time they were said to be appropriately known as the "[true] Rwa sgren spiritual guides" (*ra sgyeng ba'i dge ba'i bshes gnyen*). But then Mchims says that when the leadership role fell to Po to ba, due to his age (between 56 and 58 at the time), he was less than enthusiastic about taking up the post, and having only taught a little, became the subject of criticism. Mchims says that the immediate prompt for Po to ba's departure was derogatory comments he heard directed against him by a young monk, referred to as Khams pa Sgom bu.<sup>121</sup> But Mchims portrays an earlier set of disparaging remarks as far more damaging to Po to ba's standing. These were by the more authoritative-sounding figure, referred to as Dpon Chos kyi rgyal po, who Mchims accuses of being motivated by envy. Rather than denoting a secular role, the title *dpon* ("official") was used at Rwa sgren for occupants of various religious posts. And while Chos kyi rgyal po sounds like an official title, it actually referred to a specific individual. No doubt this is the same Zhang Chos rgyal, mentioned in Bsod nams lha'i dbang po's account of events. Statues owned by this individual are included in Mchims' inventory of Rwa sgren's holy objects, in a list of names made up exclusively of previous abbots and respected teachers (2010: 199a6). His prominence as a religious figure at Rwa sgren is confirmed by 'Brom Shes rab me lce's history, which mentions Dpon Chos kyi rgyal po five times, and identifies several major iconographic features he commissioned at Rwa sgren. The reliquary for his own remains was constructed next to Dgon po ba's, suggesting that he was probably a close disciple. Po to ba was an outsider, brought in to succeed Dgon po ba,

<sup>120</sup> *lhab chung ston pas mtshan nyid kyi gra pa stong brgyad brgya yod pa bor nas dge bshes ston pa'i spyas ngar byon* (*Snar thang gser phreng* 193b2).

<sup>121</sup> That is, similar to the name mentioned in the *Deb ther sngon po* (see note 68).

so the potential for tension in the relationship is certainly imaginable.

In reporting what occurred immediately after Po to ba's departure, Mchims makes a remark of immense importance. He says,

Then, dpon Chos kyi rgyal po invited *dge bshes* Rngog lo tsha ba. But it is said that the majority [at Rwa sgren] were displeased with this, and [expressed this by] referring to him as 'the *dge bshes* institution-head' (*dge bshes gdan sa ba*), and that from that point on, the assembly-head / master (*tshogs dpon*) at Rwa sgren was known as the 'institution-head'.<sup>122</sup>

The title by which Rngog lo was reportedly dubbed, which references both his credentials as a scholar and leader (i.e., of Gsang phu), may not immediately sound unflattering, but is clearly intended to convey an unwelcome institutional shift away from the time when Rwa sgren had been led by "spiritual guides" (*kalyāṇamitra*). It implies that with Rngog lo's appointment, Rwa sgren was in the hands of someone with technical rather than spiritual qualifications.<sup>123</sup> Mchims' own biases may have predisposed him to viewing the act of inviting the head of Gsang phu into the heart of Rwa sgren negatively, and to judge it as driven by Dpon Chos kyi rgyal po's envy (presumably of Po to ba). But his identification of this individual's role in the process (which seems entirely credible) supplies us with another piece of the historical puzzle. It also gives voice to an undercurrent of resentment over Rngog lo's involvement at Rwa sgren that appears to have lingered for several centuries.

### The anonymous works' spin on Atiśa's *upadeśa*

While the *Satyadvayāvatāra* only makes one mention of meditation, the Tibetan commentator in the DNyB makes no less than forty-two references to it. This conveys not just the anonymous authors' message that what *man ngag* in general and specifically those dealing with Madhyamaka are talking about is meditation, but also that the *Satyadvayāvatāra*'s purpose was the same as that of the

<sup>122</sup> *de nas dpon chos kyi rgyal pos dge bshes rngog lo tsha ba spyang drangs pa la phal cher mi mnyes pas dge bshes gdan sa ba zhes btags te de man chad kyi ra sgyeng gi tshogs dpon la gdan sa ba zhes gleng bar gda' (Snar thang gser phreng 197a1-197b2).*

<sup>123</sup> Mchims asserts that the designation originally given to Rngog lo was transferred to the title of assembly-head/master, rather than claiming that Rngog lo himself was given that post or confirming that such a post existed at the time. Hence, it is uncertain whether his assertion clashes with 'Brom Shes rab me lce and Lha bsod nams dbang po's description of Rngog lo's role as that of "head/master of teaching" (*chos dpon*).



*Madhyamakopadeśa*. Relating to this purpose, the first folio of UMSH explains the etymology of the term *upadeśa* by stating that “It is through this brief text that the [meaning/truth] is understood, and one is able to meditate on that [truth], and thus it is the easy means of realisation. Due to this, it is *man ngag* (*upadeśa*).”<sup>124</sup> The emphasis on how this *upadeśa* is an instruction intended for use in meditation, facilitating swift realisation, might seem to be directly aimed at the internal audience. However, reading the whole section, one notices strong correspondences with the standard analytic framework that opens writings in the tradition of scholasticism. This framework, already apparent in the works of Rngog lo, begins with a classification of the Buddha’s words and authoritative explanations of these (i.e., *bka’* and *bstan bcos*).<sup>125</sup> The opening section of UMSH appears to be an *alternative* version of this, in which *upadeśa* replaces these two, and is presented as the ultimate form of speech (and paramount medium of teaching). In scholasticism, *upadeśa* is not a distinct category, and no obvious significance is attached to the name.<sup>126</sup>

It is, however, in the discussion on the provenance of these writings by Atiśa that the authors provide us with the clearest image of their understanding of the *upadeśa*. As stated above, based primarily on references in the *Satyadvayāvatāra*’s colophon, contemporary scholarship generally sees the work as one of Atiśa’s pre-Tibetan compositions. But the accounts in some later Tibetan sources, including various Bka’ gdams histories, are at variance with this. These assert that the work was composed when Atiśa was in Lhasa, during the final decade of his life. The *Deb ther sngon po* describes the sequence of events as follows: “There [in Lhasa] following the request by Rngog [Legs pa’i shes rab] to the paṇḍit [Atiśa] and the translator [Nag tsho], they translated [Bhāvaviveka’s] *Madhyamakahrdayavṛttitarkajvālā*, [and Atiśa] composed the long and short *man ngag* / *upadeśa* of it”.<sup>127</sup> The colophon to the Tibetan version of Bhāvaviveka’s work confirms that Atiśa and

<sup>124</sup> *de gzhung nyung ngu ‘dis go ba dang bsgom du btub pas thabs sla bas rtogs pas man ngag yin* (UMSh: 318, 1b5).

<sup>125</sup> This section on the “initial statement” (Skt. *ādivākya*, Tib. *ngag dang po*) was already a feature of Indian Buddhist exegetical literature, but the tradition of Tibetan scholasticism developed and standardised its form. The contents of these sections are discussed further below.

<sup>126</sup> This is apparent in Rngog lo’s description of the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*. In his *Mngon rtogs rgyan ‘grel rin po che’i sgron me bsdus don* (2006) he gives *upadeśa* / *man ngag* no special gloss, simply combining it with *bstan bcos*. In sharp contrast with the etymology in the UMSH (note 124), he states only that “Since [this] *śāstra* [is one that] reveals [that the Prajñāpāramitā] has the ultimate object/ive, it is [referred to as] the *Upadeśaśāstra*” (*bstan bcos don daM chen po dang ldan par bstan pas ni man ngag gi bstan bcos kyi bshad pa ‘di*, 2006: 126, 1b7-8).

<sup>127</sup> *der rngog gis lo paṇ la zhu ba phul nas / rtog ge ‘bar bar sgyur / de’i man ngag tu dbu ma’i man ngag che chung gnyis mdzad* (1984: 316).

Nag tsho worked on the translation together, with the former teaching the text to Nag tsho, who translated it accordingly. We can also be sure that the two *man ngag* referred to in the *Deb ther sngon po* are the *Madhyamakopadeśa* and the *Satyadvayāvatāra*.<sup>128</sup> Neither of Atiśa's works seems to indicate that it is an instruction on Bhāvaviveka's work, but the deeper analysis of all three writings that would be necessary to assess what substance the claim might have must wait until another occasion.<sup>129</sup> The more pertinent question might seem to be why *two* separate *man ngag* would be deemed necessary, given that both (according to our authors' conception of *man ngag*) are instructions on meditation. Here we seem to encounter a genuine difference in the conception of *upadeśa*. Unlike in Gro lung pa's list, those in the Rwa sgren-Bka' gdams tradition represent both the *Madhyamakopadeśa* and *Satyadvayāvatāra* as *man ngag*. That is, *man ngag* is not just the name of an individual work, but is a description that may encompass a number. This finds some basis in Atiśa's writing, since in all three of his Madhyamaka-related *upadeśa*,<sup>130</sup> the *upadeśa* itself is not identified with either individual texts or fixed wording. Instead, the concept is a more fluid one: it is a lineage of instruction, transmitted from Nāgārjuna through Candrakīrti. What form it might take, and which portion or aspect of it are revealed on any particular occasion appear to be matters on which the custodian (i.e., Atiśa) could exercise discretion. This would explain how the *Madhyamakopadeśa* and *Satyadvayāvatāra*, despite their differing content, could both be described as *upadeśa* / *man ngag* arising from the same source, although it still does not tell us why two would be necessary for the same recipient(s).

<sup>128</sup> Given the correspondence in their names and the distinctions in their length, it might seem more logical to understand the "long/er" *man ngag* as a reference to the *Ratnakaraṇḍodghāṭanāmamadhyaṃakopadeśa* and the "short/er" as the *Madhyamakopadeśa*. But as remarked above (note 109), the "shorter" designation had already been attached to the *Satyadvayāvatāra* for several centuries, to distinguish it from Jñānagarbha's *Satyadvayavibhaṅgavṛtti*. Furthermore, the *Ratnakaraṇḍodghāṭanāmamadhyaṃakopadeśa*'s colophon also clearly states it was composed in *Vikramaśilā* (although the possibility of other versions of the text without this colophon cannot be ruled out). But more important than either of these facts is that the *Deb ther sngon po*'s assertion of shared Tibetan origins for the *Madhyamakopadeśa* and the *Satyadvayāvatāra* is also found in our much earlier anonymous sources.

<sup>129</sup> The possibility that the narrative may be conflating two separate, and perhaps unrelated events (i.e., the translation and the compositions) should also be considered. But quite apart from his contribution to the translation, Atiśa's connection with *Tarkajvālā* seems to be confirmed in Nag tsho's *Bstod pa brgyad cu pa* (1985: 34, 17b6), which refers to an occasion when Atiśa taught it at Somapura Monastery (current day Bangladesh), during which he forecast his own death, twenty years in the future.

<sup>130</sup> That is, his *Madhyamakopadeśa*, *Satyadvayāvatāra*, and *Ratnakaraṇḍodghāṭanāmamadhyaṃakopadeśa*.

While the anonymous works do not confirm all the details of the *Deb ther sngon po*'s account, they certainly identify common origins for the *Madhyamakopadeśa* and *Satyadvayāvatāra*. Regarding the *Madhyamakopadeśa*,<sup>131</sup> the UMSH begins by saying that “this dharma<sup>132</sup> is one that was composed following a request by Rngog Legs pa'i shes rab.<sup>133</sup> The prologue does not state where the composition was undertaken and makes no mention of the *Tarkajvālā*. But immediately following the reference to Legs pa'i shes rab it details an exchange, which is obviously supposed to have occurred after the composition, and for which “the translator (lo tsā ba)”<sup>134</sup> is cited as the witness and source. ‘Brom ston and Dgon po ba (i.e. the individual who would become the third abbot of Rwa sgren) are both mentioned,<sup>135</sup> and the account states, “We are informed that Dgon po ba said, ‘[What] appears written here [and what Atiśa] has given [us in this text] is the dharma that [Atiśa] explained [to me earlier] in private’.”<sup>136</sup> The prologue on the *Satyadvayāvatāra* in the DNyB (again making no mention of a place or Bhāvaviveka's *Tarkajvālā*) describes the process of the text's appearance in four steps: 1. The request (by Legs pa'i shes rab), 2. The composition (by Atiśa), 3. The translation, and 4. The reaction (of Dgon po ba). That reaction is reported in the following terms: “On reading this, we are [reliably] told that geshe Dgon po ba declared ‘What is written here is just like the personal instruction that Atiśa conveyed to me [orally]!’”<sup>137</sup> Dgon po ba's reaction is clearly projected as part of the process, and is immediately followed by a remark about the lineage's purity,<sup>138</sup> preceding the passage in the *Satyadvayāvatāra* on the pure lineage of Nāgārjuna's (Madhyamaka) *upadeśa/man ngag* passing through Candrakīrti. In both cases, we note that Dgon po ba is essentially verifying the authenticity of the teaching. Superficially, reference

<sup>131</sup> Unusually, the Tibetan translation of the *Madhyamakopadeśa* has two colophons, the second of which makes very explicit reference to Legs pa'i shes rab's involvement in the teaching.

<sup>132</sup> While the authors seem to conceive of the *man ngag* in the collective sense, they use the term dharma (*chos*) to denote the particular form of instruction embodied in the text in question.

<sup>133</sup> *chos di' dge bshes gsang phu bas zhus nas mdzad* (UMSh 318, 1b1).

<sup>134</sup> This, we can be reasonably sure, is Nag tsho lo tsā ba, the *Madhyamakopadeśa*'s translator.

<sup>135</sup> Further work on deciphering this exchange is required, a task hindered by the poor quality of the reproduction of the manuscript in the *Bka' gdams gsung 'bum*.

<sup>136</sup> *dgon po ba'i zhal nas nga la lkog du skrol pa'i chos de 'di na bris nas snang ba la gnang skad* (UMSh 318, 1b2).

<sup>137</sup> *dge bshes dgon po bas 'di gzigs nas nga la A ti shas gdams ngag gnang ba bzhin tu 'di na bris na 'dug gsung bar gda'* (DNyB 372, 1b3).

<sup>138</sup> *khong rgyud dangs pa de kun la gnang ba bzhin du gsungs ba yin pas* (DNyB 372, 1b3). “He” (*khong*) refers to Dgon po ba, and this line is followed by further remarks about his transmission of the teaching.

to these exchanges may seem to be included merely to affirm the consistency of Atiśa's spoken and written teachings. But in both cases, and especially clearly in the second, what *authenticates* the written composition is the verification that it is the product of a personally conveyed oral instruction. This message that the text, even when composed by Atiśa, remains inferior to the personal instruction, and only gains validity through confirmation that it accords with that instruction, is surely exactly the one that elements of the internal audience would have craved to hear.

These origin accounts for the *Madhyamakopadeśa* and *Satyadvayāvatāra* downplay the idea of them as written compositions, instead highlighting their oral origins. The evidence that seems to directly counter both the assertion of Tibetan and oral roots for the *Satyadvayāvatāra* is contained in its colophon. While not specifying a place of composition, it mentions two figures, namely Suvarṇadvīpiya Sugataśrīmitra (i.e., Atiśa's teacher Gser gling pa)<sup>139</sup> and a bhikṣu named Devamati.<sup>140</sup> Based on the references to these figures, contemporary scholarship generally understands the work as hailing from Atiśa's earlier time in Sumatra (circa. 1012 to 1024).<sup>141</sup> The twelfth century Tibetan writings on the *Satyadvayāvatāra* throw little light on events to which the colophon refers. DNyB and another contemporary writing on the *Satyadvayāvatāra* are obliged to pass comment on the colophon, but do this by providing cursory glosses to some of the terms.<sup>142</sup> Making no attempt to explain the combined meaning of the

<sup>139</sup> I follow Sinclair (2021: 5) for this version of his personal name. Suvarṇadvīpiya Dharmakīrti, the one based on Tibetan sources (i.e., *Gser gling pa Chos kyi grags pa*), seems more likely to be an epithet.

<sup>140</sup> The relevant line in the *Satyadvayāvatāra*'s colophon is: *gser gling rgyal po gu ru pha la yis / dge slong de ba ma ti btang gyur nas* (D 3902: 145, 73a6).

<sup>141</sup> There is agreement that the two references to the "king of Suvarṇadvīpa" (*gser gling gi rgyal po*) are to Suvarṇadvīpiya Sugataśrīmitra. The identity of Devamati has been more open to discussion. Lindtner (1981: 198) tentatively reads it as a *nom de plume* for Atiśa. But the majority (Solonin & Liu 2017: 154, Apple 2018: 117, etc.) see Devamati as an agent of the teacher dispatched and responsible, in some manner, for overseeing the composition of the work. Due to the reference to these two individuals, the composition is assumed to have been undertaken in Sumatra, although there is no clear picture of why Atiśa's teacher would need to rely on an agent for communication. In this understanding the *Satyadvayāvatāra* is a textual composition, written at the behest of Suvarṇadvīpiya Sugataśrīmitra, for his personal perusal. In this sense it seems incompatible with the version of the origins that identifies Legs pa'i shes rab as the instigator and a group of his fellow Tibetans as the first recipients.

<sup>142</sup> The second work is the *Bden pa gnyis kyi rnam par bshad pa*, which an annotation in the manuscript attributes to Rnal 'byor pa Shes rab rdo rje (who is likely to have been a disciple of Po to ba). The author glosses "dispatched" (*btang byas*) as referring to a messenger, and hence clearly understands that the colophon reveals something about one individual working on behalf of another. But his comments

wording or the event to which they refer, neither work acknowledges that the colophon contains an origin account. The only direct reference any of the anonymous texts make to this version of the *Satyadvayāvatāra*'s provenance is in the UMB, which says, "Jo bo [Atiśa] composed [this *Satyadvayāvatāra*] after Suvarṇadvīpiya Sugataśrīmitra instructed him, 'You [should] write [your] presentation of the two truths in a letter and courier it to me'"'.<sup>143</sup> Again, no mention is made of the location: the author does nothing to dispel the impression that Devamati was an individual dispatched to Tibet by Suvarṇadvīpiya Sugataśrīmitra to both deliver the instruction, then convey the work, in the form of a letter, back to Sumatra, once it was completed. As we see below, the UMB's author has another reason for mentioning this account, unrelated to settling its exact provenance, although in his reference to it, he appears to confirm that this is the widely known understanding of the work's origin. The main evidence against Tibet being the location of these events is, however, not the mention of Suvarṇadvīpiya Sugataśrīmitra and Devamati, but that Rgya Brtson 'grus seng ge is given as the name of the text's translator.<sup>144</sup> But none of the authors make any attempt to reconcile what appear to be two conflicting accounts of the *Satyadvayāvatāra*'s origins.

One of the main objectives that the anonymous authors divulge in the prologues is that they want the *Madhyamakopadeśa* and *Satyadvayāvatāra* to be treated as an inseparable pair. In pursuit of this objective, they assert that both works share the same origins: the physical versions of the two are not written compositions, but reproductions of oral instructions that Atiśa delivered directly to Tibetan disciples, and both were requested by Legs pa'i shes rab. The authors' projection of the works as belonging together<sup>145</sup> seems partly to be

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are remarkably uninformative about the context, and seem to betray not a little confusion.

<sup>143</sup> Jo bos mdzad cing de nyid kyi bla ma gser gling pas khyed dbu ma'i bden pa gnyis kyi 'jog lugs cig yi ger bris la skur dang gsung nas mdzad pa yin (UMB: 336, 1b4).

<sup>144</sup> As stated above, he is reported to have died before reaching Tibet. The possibility that colophons contain errors is one to which we must always remain alert. However, none of the authors contest the idea that Rgya Brtson 'grus seng ge translated this work.

<sup>145</sup> As already remarked (note 102), due to the presumably inadvertent switching of their cover folios, the UMB and DNyB have been miscatalogued by editors of the *Bka' gdams gsung 'bum*. The editors' mistake seems understandable. In addition to the fact that the descriptive portion of the works' title is shared (i.e., they are both designated 'bum), the UMB, a text that is supposed to be commenting on the *Madhyamakopadeśa*, begins as though its subject is the *Satyadvayāvatāra*, discussing the two truths and the *Satyadvayāvatāra*'s origins. Far from indicating that the UMB's author was given to bouts of mental wandering, this tells us he was very concentrated on creating the impression that the *Madhyamakopadeśa* and *Satyadvayāvatāra* belonged together.

informed by the concept of Atiśa's Madhyamaka *upadeśa*: it is a lineage of realisation-inducing instruction of which both works' contents are expressions.<sup>146</sup> But as becomes apparent in the next section, there was also another reason, specifically related to Rwa sgreng, for these authors wanting to unite the two works.

### Institutional responses

All three anonymous works share affinities of perspective, but two of them, the DNYB and UMB, are even more closely related, and will be the focus of the following examination.<sup>147</sup> The clearest evidence regarding the historical context and date of their appearance is in the DNYB. Its author states, "During my time also, the 'three brothers' and their great disciples and their own disciples [in turn] have passed away and their system has declined. And various other systems have arisen."<sup>148</sup> The author goes on to link these circumstances with the decline in the pure tradition of Atiśa's Madhyamaka view. His melancholy observations seem to situate the composition a few generations after the initial crisis at Rwa sgreng, seemingly close to the end of that period (between 1150 and 1160).<sup>149</sup> As remarked above, coincidental with the

<sup>146</sup> The author of the UMB (340, 3b5) asserts that the written version is only *man ngag* in the figurative sense, and that the only "actual Madhyamaka *man ngag*" is an unbroken stream of realisation generated in the continua of successive beings.

<sup>147</sup> In what follows, I focus on a number of key passages in the DNYB and UMB. Apple has produced translations of both works (2018: 123-170 and 291-326), but these have some serious shortcomings. Without dwelling on these, I would observe that Apple approaches such materials solely as religious writings, testaments to the unbroken continuity in Atiśa's traditions, rather than seeing their value as historical documents. This means that he fails to appreciate the context of their creation—namely, that they arise from the Rwa sgreng crisis—and that amid the exposition on Madhyamaka, there is a conversation with another interlocutor. This places Apple in a poor position to explain (and indeed comprehend) why certain comments are made and what they are intended to mean. It is particularly obvious that he has not taken the time to analyse the argument in the UMB's prologue section (aspects of which I summarise below). Consequently, his translation of this section in particular is largely incoherent.

<sup>148</sup> *kho bo'i ring la yang sku mched gsum dang de'i slob ma chen po dag dang de dag gi slob ma dag kyang 'das shing de dag gi lugs kyang nub la / lugs mi 'dra ba sna tshogs byung ba yin / jo bos dbu ma'i lta ba ...* (DNYB 391, 11a3-4).

<sup>149</sup> The author mentions no names of individuals known to have lived beyond the mid to late twelfth century. Apple (2018: 124) uses the reference to the 'three brothers' in the passage cited above in support of his dating the work to ca.1100. This is obviously erroneous, since the UMB's author remarks that after the demise of the 'three brothers' (between 1103 and 1106) he has witnessed the passing of two *further* generations of important disciples, which clearly places the work several decades later. Among the notable figures associated with the Bka' gdams tradition whose deaths occurred during Rwa sgreng's decades of crisis, and to whom the author is likely to be referring are Sne'u zur pa (died 1118) and Ka ma ba Shes rab

crisis there was an explosion of activity in the field of Madhyamaka. The DNyB's author states the need to re-establish Atiśa's Madhyamaka tradition, after what he suggests is a time in which it had come close to disappearance. The author particularly makes the point that the pure Madhyamaka view Atiśa held was that of Candrakīrti, and with respect to the unidentified "various other systems" that he says sprung up during the decline of Atiśa's tradition, it is again worth reminding ourselves of Phywa pa's opposition to Candrakīrti.

The most open declaration that these works represent a Rwa sgren voice is in UMB, where the author directly addresses his prologue to the "followers of Rwa sgren".<sup>150</sup> The fact that the Tibetan figures mentioned in relation to the Madhyamaka view by our anonymous works seem exclusively to be associated with Rwa sgren and the Bka' gdams school is another clear sign of authorial affiliation. These figures include 'Brom ston, and Po to ba especially, but as was noted above, Dgon po ba (the third abbot of Rwa sgren), who is assigned the dual role of verifier and main custodian of Atiśa's Madhyamaka *upadeśa*. And despite the fact that the prologues acknowledge Legs pa'i shes rab's involvement in events, through his request to Atiśa, neither he nor any other figures associated with Gsang phu feature further in what the works say about Atiśa's tradition.

The DNyB and UMB seem to have a shared understanding of the events that led up to the near disappearance of Atiśa's Madhyamaka tradition and what measures should be undertaken to restore it. Reference is made to controversies about the authenticity of certain writings identified as Atiśa's. The DNyB says that many works have "been [falsely] attributed to Atiśa",<sup>151</sup> but were not in fact the teachings of the great scholar, and that they are "not worthy of faith/confidence".<sup>152</sup> The UMB goes further, stating that "A group of the others [i.e., works] that are [falsely] attributed to the lord [Atiśa, are actually by] Tibetans".<sup>153</sup> In both cases the authors are making general observations about a large number of works that were reportedly composed by Atiśa. Neither identify by name those that they regard to be of questionable provenance,<sup>154</sup> but the UMB singles out from the works "just

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'od (1131) – who are reported to have been Dgon po ba's two main disciples – Glang ri thang pa (1123), Dol pa ba (1131), Bya yul ba Gzhon nu 'od (1138), and Sha ra ba Yon tan grags (1141).

<sup>150</sup> *Rwa sgren ba'i rjes su 'brang ba rnams* (UMB 336, 1b3).

<sup>151</sup> *jo bo la kha 'phangs pa mang ba cig yod* (DNyB 372, 1b5).

<sup>152</sup> *yid ches ba'i gnas ma yin* (DNyB 372, 1b6).

<sup>153</sup> *gzhan ma tsho cig jo bo la kha 'phang pa'i bod ma yin* (UMB 336, 1b2).

<sup>154</sup> The authors of the UMB and DNyB use the same distinctive term, *kha 'phangs pa*, which clearly denotes a misattribution. But they seem to stop short of an accusation that the works concerned are willful forgeries. There is more on this term below.

these three"<sup>155</sup> among what he refers to as "[those] called Atiśa's short [works]" (*jo bo'i chos chung*),<sup>156</sup> saying these are genuine compositions by Atiśa, a matter about which "there is no need for [contentious] discourse".<sup>157</sup> The DNyB also refers to "just these three dharmas", which appear to be the same ones.<sup>158</sup>

Two of the three writings concerned are obviously the *Madhyamakopadeśa* and *Satyadvayāvatāra*. It is at this point that the UMB's author introduces the account about the *Satyadvayāvatāra* having been written and dispatched to Suvarṇadvīpīya Śūgataśrīmitra. This he presents as one of the main reasons why there can be confidence in the work (i.e., because its origin is known).<sup>159</sup> It is not specified what the third work is, but the most likely candidate is the *Bodhipathapradīpa*, which is a short text of less than three folios. Furthermore, doubts about its authorship seem unlikely. This appears to be Atiśa's first composition in Tibet, written at the request and under the patronage of the rulers of Guge, prior to the master's arrival in central Tibet. This origin story was presumably well known, and if any of Atiśa's works are likely to have been widely available in the twelfth century, it is this one.<sup>160</sup> The only other candidate, for reasons explained below, is another short work by Atiśa, the *Caryāsaṃgrahapradīpa*.<sup>161</sup>

As observed above, even ignoring Atiśa's *upadeśa* works, the vast majority of his writings, which he certainly composed in Tibet, are extremely short and generally pithy. It is interesting to learn that the authorship of certain short writings said to be by him was questioned, little more than a century after his death. In 'Brom Shes rab me lce's inventory of Rwa sgreng's most hallowed material objects, he places what he reports were just over fifty texts personally owned by Atiśa (28b5-29a4) at the top of the list of the "blessed objects of speech" (*gsung gi rten*), a sizeable portion of which must have been Sanskrit writings. But the situation with texts containing Atiśa's own teachings is much less clear. It is obvious that no agreed canon of his writings existed at this time, and texts purportedly by him, it can probably be

<sup>155</sup> *gsum po 'di tsam yin* (UMB 336, 1b2).

<sup>156</sup> UMB 363, 1b1.

<sup>157</sup> *chos 'di gsum tsam* (DNyB 372, 1b5).

<sup>158</sup> *zer mchu mang po dgos pa med* (UMB 336, 1b3).

<sup>159</sup> The fact that, as alluded to above, the UMB's author uses this origin account to help build his case for the existence of a core set of authentic works composed by Atiśa would appear to confirm that knowledge of the account was widespread. It is also difficult to see how this reference to the account could be interpreted as anything other than a personal endorsement of its veracity.

<sup>160</sup> It is reported to have been composed at the request of the western Tibetan ruler Lha Byang chub 'od (984–1078).

<sup>161</sup> *Spyod pa bsdus pa'i mgron ma* (D 3960), a single-folio text.



presumed, trickled into Rwa sgren in an unregulated fashion, from different sources over several decades.

One might expect that the most likely objective of these attempts to grapple with the issue of distinguishing genuine works from those of dubious provenance would be that of forming a reliable corpus of Atiśa's writings. There are indeed strong echoes of the discussion in the early *Bka' gdams chos 'byung* by Bsod nams lha'i dbang po, who attempts to create a comprehensive survey of Bka' gdams literature, a point discussed further below. But even *if* the creation of such a corpus was one of the author's objectives, we can be certain that the provenance controversy rumbled on for many decades. Hence, when Bcom ldan Rig(s) pa'i ral gri, writing more than a century later, presents what he claims is a definitive list of authentic writings by Atiśa, he is still reporting on the controversies surrounding what he describes as works falsely attributed to the master.<sup>162</sup>

However, the UMB's author, who gives the impression of being a figure of authority at Rwa sgren, reveals another purpose, more specifically linked with Rwa sgren as an institution. Directly addressing the Rwa sgren community on the short writings by Atiśa, he refers to certain "songs" by him, like the *Caryāgīti*,<sup>163</sup> but says that because these are tantric works, they are "not suitable [as ones] to be listened to and taught in an [open] assembly".<sup>164</sup> He then singles out just these "three works" as the ones that, by contrast, can be "listened to and taught in an assembly".<sup>165</sup> He also remarks that "while there are many presentations of the two truths, for followers of Ra sgren, it is to these dharmas in their entirety that [we] can adhere".<sup>166</sup> The various references he makes to the "assembly" and the activities of "listening" (i.e., learning)

<sup>162</sup> At the end of the list in his *Bstan pa rgyas pa rgyan gyi nyi 'od* (see note 96), Bcom ldan Rig(s) pa'i ral gri uses the same term (*kha 'phangs pa*) as our anonymous authors, which with respect to the latter, I translated as "[falsely] attributed". Bcom ldan Rig(s) pa'i ral gri uses the term liberally throughout the work in question, as he frequently seeks to identify texts of purported Indian origin that he judges to be Tibetan compositions. But as with our anonymous authors, Bcom ldan Rig(s) pa'i ral gri's understanding of the term (*kha 'phangs pa*) seems to be one that accommodates rather than should be equated with the notion of a forgery. Thus on occasions, when he intends the term to be understood in the accusatory sense, he adds the specification that the composition involved an act of "willful deception" (*bshu ba'i bsam pa kha 'phangs byas pa* 2006: 243).

<sup>163</sup> The first is Atiśa's *spyod pa'i glu* (ID 1496). The second, referred to as his *Rdo rje'i glu*, appears to be his *Dharmadhātudarśanagīti*, which later turns up in the *Bu chos* of the *Bka' gdams glegs bam* (Ehrhard 2002: 37).

<sup>164</sup> *gsang sngags la brten pa mang po cig yod de tshogs su mnyan bshad byar mi btub* (UMB 336, 1b2).

<sup>165</sup> *tshogs su mnyan bshad btub pa* (UMB 336, 1b1-2).

<sup>166</sup> *bden pa gnyis la 'jog pa mang po yod kyang / ra sgren ba'i rjes su 'brang ba rnams chos 'di kun bzhin du byas pas chog* (UMB 336, 1b3).

and teaching confirm that he is talking about organised study, or more particularly, he is prescribing texts that should be used for institutional learning at Rwa sgreng.

The information contained in this discussion is extremely valuable for understanding historical developments in two separate spheres. The first relates to the creation of a Bka' gdams canon. In the sixth chapter of his work, Bsod namd lha'i dbang po seems to be the first to make a serious attempt to delineate such a corpus, which he divides into four collections. 1. The "Six Bka' gdams texts", 2. The "Hundred or so works of the lord (Atiśa)" (*Jo bo'i chos chung brgya rsta*),<sup>167</sup> 3. The Bka' gdams glegs bam, and 4. Assorted Tibetan writings (namely, works belonging to genres classically associated with the Bka' gdams, such as *blo sbyong*, *lam rim*, *dpe chos*, anthologies of advice [*man ngag* or *gdams ngag*], and short tantric works). Our focus here should be on the second (i.e., the "Hundred or so works").<sup>168</sup> Although the conception of these works as a collection is Tibetan, as with the six texts, the contents are understood to be exclusively of Indian origin. As such, the collection has been appended to different versions of the Tibetan Tengyur (see Vetturini 2013: 152 and Roesler 2015: 504 n.29). The works contained in the collection are not all by Atiśa, but it has been proposed that the collection itself might represent "a set of concise core texts that were considered essential within Atiśa's tradition" (Roesler 2015: 504). Roesler (ibid.) suggests that the collection may go back to the twelfth century if not earlier, but little concrete evidence has so far emerged regarding the agents and steps involved in its compilation. Bsod namd lha'i dbang po breaks down the collection into categories, dividing them by genre.<sup>169</sup> He also identifies the work's authors, and ascribes a total of thirty-eight to Atiśa.<sup>170</sup> He furthermore enumerates a whole series of works outside the collection, attributed to Atiśa.<sup>171</sup>

<sup>167</sup> As discussed below, there is an important spelling variation in the title. In canonical and other later writings, we see *chos 'byung* rather than *chos chung*.

<sup>168</sup> Bsod namd lha'i dbang po deals with the collection on folios 84a-87a of his work.

<sup>169</sup> See Vetturini (2013: 151-60) for a useful itemisation.

<sup>170</sup> This is far more than the twenty-seven enumerated and translated by Sherburne (2000). Vetturini points out where Sherburne's attributions diverge from those of Bsod namd lha'i dbang po, but does not directly ascribe the *Śaranagamanadeśanā* (D 3953) and *Cittotpādasamvaravidhikrama* (D 3969) to Atiśa. However, Bsod namd lha'i dbang po clearly identifies these as Atiśa's writings, and the count of thirty-eight is based on this.

<sup>171</sup> Bsod namd lha'i dbang po clearly relies on Bcom ldan Rig(s) pa'i ral gri's much earlier *Bstan pa rgyas pa rgyan gyi nyi 'od*. Nevertheless his survey represents a much more concerted effort to create an authoritative classification of Atiśa's writings. He lists many writings (mainly tantric *sādhana*s, rituals, and letters containing spiritual advice), correctly enumerated by Vetturini (2013: 158-160) as forty-eight, that he (Bsod namd lha'i dbang po) appears confident are further works by Atiśa. He also lists another group attributed to Atiśa, saying that their provenance can, for

Useful as Bsod nams lha'i dbang po's classification is, it conceals the order within which works in the collection are consistently organised.<sup>172</sup> Its first portion is made up of a core set of writings by Atiśa, to which others (including further works by Atiśa) appear to have been added later. The first four works in the collection, which can be regarded as the seed of this core, are the very works mentioned above: namely, in order of appearance, the *Bodhipathapradīpa*, *Caryāsaṃgraha-pradīpa*, *Satyadvayāvatāra*, and *Madhyamakopadeśa*. Our anonymous writings never mention the collection of the "Hundred or so works", and quite obviously hail from a time well before the formation of it in its current form. The correspondence between the UMB and DNyB's three texts and the configuration forming the basis of the collection is too close to be merely coincidental. Our manuscript works are surely documenting the elementary stage in the collection's development. For the UMB's author, "Atiśa's short dharma [teachings]" (*Jo bo'i chos chung*) connotes a disordered group of writings, apparently only brought together due to their brevity and claims of shared authorship. Evidently, however, significant doubts remained as to whether they were all truly by Atiśa. The UMB and DNyB combine the *Satyadvayāvatāra* and *Madhyamakopadeśa* with a pre-existing third (i.e., almost certainly the *Bodhipathapradīpa*),<sup>173</sup> and assert that these

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the most part, be trusted, but that he does not intend to scrutinise the authenticity of each individually in his *Bka' gdams chos 'byung* (within which the list features). However, he also names writings on certain tantric deities (see Vetturini 2013: 159) that he reports are ascribed to Atiśa in certain canonical catalogues (*bstan 'gyur gyi tho rnam su jo bo'i mdzad byang sbyar ba*, 1977: 379, 87a4). Bsod nams lha'i dbang po statement that he has not included these in his list shows that he has misgivings regarding their authorship. A detailed comparison of the lists provided by Bcom ldan Rig(s) pa'i ral gri and Bsod nams lha'i dbang po must wait until another occasion. But these sources, combined with references in the considerably earlier UMB and DNyB are witness to the longevity of this controversy over provenance.

<sup>172</sup> The order in which the works in the collection are presented in the Dergé, Peking, and other editions of the Tengyur, and is reproduced in more recent publications, such as *Jo bo'i chos 'byung brgya rtsa*, edited by Bstan 'dzin phun tshogs (2002), is consistent. Vetturini refers to "diverging compilations" (2013: 151) of the collection, and proposes that "inconsistent numbering of works" (ibid.) is behind a discrepancy in the total number of constituents, which some claim is a hundred and eleven, and others, a hundred and twelve. However, Mkhas grub Dge legs dpal bzang's "record of teachings personally received" (*gsan yig*, 1978: 46-51), clearly states that the total number of works in the collection is a hundred and three. Further inspection is required to determine whether such differences are ones of substance or just enumeration.

<sup>173</sup> The regularity with which we encounter the *Bodhipathapradīpa*, *Satyadvayāvatāra*, and *Madhyamakopadeśa* presented as a group in later writings is likely to convince us that they constitute another of the by now familiar *Bka' gdams* triadic schemes. The biography to Bcom ldan Rig(s) pa'i ral gri (2006: 47, 3b), for instance, says that he received the *Bodhipathapradīpa*, *Satyadvayāvatāra*, and *Madhyamakopadeśa* as a triad, from an individual known as 'Dul 'dzin dpal bzang. Mchims' *gsan yig* (2009:

constitute a set of three works whose provenance can be totally trusted. This foundation of authenticity, once established, would go on to serve as the whole basis for the later collection. This would also make sense of the variation in the collection's name. The designation for the collection preferred by later writers (i.e., *jo bo'i chos 'byung*),<sup>174</sup> which unexplainably employs the term that denotes a religious or lineage history (i.e., *chos 'byung*), can be said with relative certainty to represent an act of creative editing. Based on the fact that they were all short and believed to be by Atiśa, the original group of writings were reasonably described as "Atiśa's short works" (*jo bo'i chos chung*). But with the collection's expansion, and its inclusion of much longer commentarial works, such as Śāntarakṣita's *Samvaraviṃśakavṛtti* (D 4082) and Atiśa's own *Bodhinārgapradīpapañjikā*, some were probably concerned that the syllable originally conveying "short" (i.e., *chung*) might now seem to carry the demeaning connotation of "lesser", so replaced it with one that had a similar sound, creating a popular, pseudo-etymology. The collection is commonly characterised as one that deals mainly with the bodhisattva's conduct.<sup>175</sup> This is somewhat at odds with the way that the *Satyadvayāvatāra* and *Madhyamakopadeśa* are presented in our anonymous works, where it is argued that they are texts dealing with the view. One might suspect that the *Caryāsaṃgrahapradīpa*, a work that explicitly describes the bodhisattva's conduct, was inserted into the original core group, to support the aforementioned claim. There are a number of such inconsistencies that must lead to the conclusion that the collection was not created as a whole: our texts bear witness to the first of the several stages in its evolution.<sup>176</sup> As to the

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38, 2b2, and 41, 4a1-2) also refers to two separate occasions on which he received this triad of teachings.

<sup>174</sup> Mkhas grub Dge legs dpal bzang's *gsan yig* (see note 172), for instance, composed in the early fifteenth century, uses *chos 'byung*.

<sup>175</sup> Bsod nams lha'i dbang po, for instance, gives *spyod phyogs brgya rtsa* ("The hundred or so [works relating to] the domain of conduct") as the alternative title for the collection, using the point about it teaching how a bodhisattva acts as his justification (*byang chub pa sems dpa'i spyod pa gtso bor ston pas spyod phyogs brgya rtsa*, 1977: 373, 84a8).

<sup>176</sup> Compilers of the various Tengyurs incorporated the collection as a whole, but differed on how it should be characterised and where it should be placed. Rather than assigning it to a specific category, compilers of the Dergé Tengyur simply appended it at the very end, as a separate volume (D 4465 to D 4576), following the *Sna tshogs* section. Others, including compilers of the Narthang (vol.121 N 4167 to N 4269) and Peking (vol.121, Q 5378 to Q 5480) Tengyurs, incorporated the collection within the *Mdo 'grel* section. The choice to retain the collection as an integral whole meant that in all of the above cases, certain works appear twice in the Tengyur (i.e., once in the *Jo bo'i chos chung/'byung* section, and once according to their individual content categorisation). It should also be noted that the number of works in the collection in the Dergé version roughly corresponds with Bsod nams

individual(s) who had a hand in this evolution or even might have been responsible for creating a final version of the collection, thirteenth century writings seem to offer some tantalising clues.<sup>177</sup>

The other sphere that the prologue passages inform us about relates to the actual objective of the UMB and DNYB's authorship. The stated purpose behind the composition of the anonymous works is, according to the DNYB's author, the restoration of Atiśa's Madhyamaka tradition. The assertions about trustworthy attributions may sound (as remarked above) like they preface the creation of a literary corpus, and while the UMB and DNYB clearly contribute to the *Jo bo'i chos chung*/*'byung brgya rtsa*'s formation, this does not appear to have been their immediate purpose. Instead, the sights of the UMB and DNYB are set upon the achievement of a more bespoke institutional objective. They recommend the bringing together of the *Satyadvayāvatāra* and *Madhyamakopadeśa* (two works that respectively embody slightly more scholarly and meditative perspectives on Madhyamaka), and that these be combined with a third text, almost certainly the *Bodhipathapradīpa*, and that the three works be *taught*. The recommendation is not that the three works be *added* to a pre-existing corpora: no mention is made of the "six Bka' gdams texts" or any other body of writings that are already being studied. This, on the one hand, simply adds weight to the mid-twelfth century dating of these works. They belong to the tail-end of the crisis period, when efforts are being made to bring the decades-long interruption in teaching, the "dharma famine", to a halt. But even if no living witnesses remained to Rwa sgren practices prior to this interruption (beginning before Dgon po ba's death in 1082/3),

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lha'i dbang po's enumeration, whereas that in the Narthang and Peking versions matches that of Mkhas grub Dge legs dpal bzang's list.

<sup>177</sup> Bcom ldan Rig(s) pa'i ral gri's biography, for instance, lists teachings its subject received from the sixth abbot of Snar thang, Sangs rgyas sgom pa (1179–1250). Included in a group of Bka' gdams-sounding materials, reference is made to a *Gtsang nag pa'i chos chung brgya rtsa* (2006: 57, 8a). Admittedly, later in the biography (2006: 66, 13a), it is reported that *Jo bo'i chos chung brgya rtsa* was received from another teacher. But in Mchims' *gsan yig* also there are references to *Gtsang nag pa'i chos chung* (2009: 37, 2a4) and *Gtsang pa'i chos chung* (2009: 39, 3a8). Again, these appear among Bka' gdams-sounding materials, although elsewhere, once more, there are references to *Jo bo'i chos chung brgya rtsa* (e.g., 6a). The eponymous *Gtsang nag pa* is highly unlikely to be Phywa pa's famous, twelfth century disciple *Gtsang nag pa* Brtson 'grus seng ge. But the name could be a contraction of *Gtsang pa jo nag pa*, who appears to be a twelfth century figure, and features in some sources (such as the first volume of the Fifth Dalai Lama's *gsan yig*, 1991: 87) in relation to the lineage of teaching of certain works in the *chos chung brgya rtsa* collection. That *gsan yig* (1991: 89–100) also contains another detailed breakdown of works within the *Jo bo'i chos chung brgya rtsa*, which it says total one hundred and three. *Gtsang nag pa'i chos chung* may yet prove to be a red herring, but the contexts in which its title crops up make it sound like a Bka' gdams-related collection. So, both it and the mystery individual whose name is attached to it warrant further investigation.

it may still seem curious that no mention or allusion is made to earlier teachings, especially if these are attempts to *revive* former practices. Instead, the discussion is framed as one about which of Atiśa's works are appropriate to teach. Only now, it appears, has it become necessary to select individual works by Atiśa for the purpose at hand, while rejecting others. The remark about works on tantra makes no reference to precedents. This, it appears, is organisation of a rudimentary order. The most rational explanation for the remarks in the UMB and DNyB is that they are part of the *first* real attempts to organise and create a programme of study at Rwa sgrenḡ, not just from the works of Atiśa, but more generally.<sup>178</sup> This does not mean, of course, that this is the beginning of learning at Rwa sgrenḡ. In the case of the *Bodhipathapradīpa*, it seems highly likely that some tradition of less formalised and probably more personalised instruction on it already existed. But the recommendation that the three texts can be used as the basis for more structured learning at Rwa sgrenḡ unquestionably marks the creation of something new: what could be described as the move towards a nascent curriculum. Most importantly, these remarks clearly are not aimed at prescribing (and in the case of tantra) proscribing knowledge transmission at Rwa sgrenḡ in general terms. They are concerned with what materials are fitting to teach in "the assembly", suggesting that the shift or transition we are seeing here is one towards *public* teaching before larger groups.

### A response to what and to whom?

The UMB and DNyB share a number of features. Firstly, while claiming to belong to a meditation-based tradition of Madhyamaka introduced into Tibet by Atiśa, they represent an attempt to inject a more contemplative perspective into the sphere of Madhyamaka commentarial writing. Secondly, the two works share the same institutional objectives. The Madhyamaka tradition of Atiśa they refer to, which it is suggested has come perilously close to disappearance, appears to symbolise Rwa sgrenḡ and its practices. And as outlined above, the proposal that three works by Atiśa should serve the basis of a new form of institutional study among the "followers of Rwa sgrenḡ" obviously constituted part of efforts to bring a decisive end to the crisis that had engulfed Rwa sgrenḡ. Thirdly, the UMB and DNyB share the descriptive portion of their title (i.e., *'bum*). In fact, there are so many correspondences in their argument, the sentiments they express, as well as

<sup>178</sup> This point also distinguishes these discussions from those on the formation of *Jo bo'i chos chung/kyung brgya rtsa* as a collection. All versions of the collection include texts on tantra, whereas here, tantric works are being excluded from the activity under discussion.

the passages they cite and the language and distinctive phraseology they sometimes employ,<sup>179</sup> that we can be reasonably sure that they were authored by a single individual. The identity of the individual(s) remains a mystery, but Zhang 'Od 'jo ba must be placed high on the list of likely candidates, simply by virtue of being the first head of Rwa sgreng who reportedly achieved success in attempts to restore its fortunes.

While the crisis provides the context, the specific references and critical tone of some remarks alert us to the presence of some *other*, towards or against whom they seem to be directed, and from whom those in the Rwa sgreng community are being encouraged to distinguish themselves. The DNYB's author seems to provide a clue about the target of the criticisms when he likens the decline in Atiśa's tradition of Madhyamaka in Tibet with that of Nāgārjuna's own system earlier in history, saying that the latter was mentioned in Candrakīrti's *Prasannapadā*. He does not cite the passage in question, but it is recognisable as lines featuring in the closing stanzas of the Tibetan translation of Candrakīrti's work.<sup>180</sup> The DNYB's author lists Candrakīrti, among an illustrious group of figures he associates with the Madhyamaka *upadeśa*, as someone who is *against* the conceptual approach. In the *Prasannapadā*'s first chapter, Candrakīrti refutes aspects of the Pramāṇa tradition, designating his opponent as a "logician" (Skt: *tārṅika*, Tib: *rtog ge ba*). It is in this respect that the DNYB's author seems to regard Candrakīrti as an especially potent ally.<sup>181</sup> Throughout the DNYB, the author rails against the analytical approach. Regarding the gaining of meditative experience he says that "It [truth] is not something that can be realised by valid cognition that sees the ordinary or

<sup>179</sup> For instance, to recommend that the three works by Atiśa be adopted, both works use exactly the same wording, i.e., *chos 'di kun bzhin du byas pas chog* (UMB: 336, 1b3 and DNYB: 372, 1b6). More examples are given below.

<sup>180</sup> *des mdzad pa'i // gzhung rnam dang ni de yi slob ma'i tshogs de dag kyang dus mang zhig na nyams par gyur // de nyid nyi ma nub pas deng sang gzhung lugs gsal po de ni gang na'ang med* (D 3860: 199a 6-7).

<sup>181</sup> In the DNYB passage linking the decline of the two Madhyamaka traditions, the author incorporates a number of words found in Pa tshab's translation (see previous note), although due to the paraphrasing, it is difficult to tell whether he relies on that translation. The author selects the passage in the *Prasannapadā* because he wants to draw a parallel between Candrakīrti's reference to the Madhyamaka decline and that which he asserts has befallen Atiśa's tradition in Tibet. And it is in this context that he refers to the passing of the various generations (cited in note 148). Pa tshab's translation of the *Prasannapadā* (completed some time before 1145) made the work accessible to a wider Tibetan audience, although Tibetan scholarship had some knowledge of the work's contents before that translation. Here the DNYB's author displays that he has knowledge of the wording of this specific verse. This, added to the fact that he seems to choose the work because of its attack on the Pramāṇa tradition, suggest to me a conversance with the *Prasannapadā* that is likely to derive from consulting Pa tshab's translation.

through [relying on] logic: it must be realised by means of the lama's personal instruction".<sup>182</sup>

As discussed above, the UMB and DNyB evoke the notion of faith as the means of overcoming doubts about the authorship of the three short works attributed to Atiśa. But there is an even more striking way that the theme of faith is used to convince and motivate the community to see itself in a certain way, which also gives us a clear glimpse of the unnamed other. Following the title and single line of praise that head the text, the DNyB launches with the words:

Generally speaking, there are two [categories of] those who engage [in the Buddhist path]. There are those with wisdom, the followers of dharma, and the faithful, the followers of the person. We practice as the faithful and should exclusively follow that person in whom there can be conviction.<sup>183</sup>

The division between these two types of follower, the *dharmānusārin* and *śraddhānusārin*,<sup>184</sup> appears frequently in the Prajñāparamita and Abhidharma writings, especially in relation to the topic of the "twenty saṃgha" (*dge 'dun nyi shu*). Kamalāśīla also made the distinction in his *Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā*.<sup>185</sup> All these sources were well known to Tibetan scholars, who regularly referred to the distinction. An implicit premise in most of these Indian writings, inherited by Tibetans, is that the first type of follower has superior faculties. This seems to receive a further boost with the advent of scholasticism, and we see the follower of dharma increasingly being equated with the "follower of reasoning" (*rigs pa'i rjes su 'brang ba*, *\*nyāyānusārin*), a description that features in the works of both Rngog lo and Phywa pa.<sup>186</sup> It is made increasingly clear that the dharma or logical approach is preferable, and the faith-based follower is inferior. In later traditions of scholasticism, such as that of the Dge lugs, the alignment of that school's approach with that of the follower of logic is total, and the "follower of faith" carries a pejorative connotation. The stages of evolution through which a

<sup>182</sup> *de tshu rol mthong ba'i tshad ma'am rtog ges mi rtogs pas / bla ma'i gdam ngag las rtogs par bya ba yin pa dang* (DNyB 373, 2a1-2).

<sup>183</sup> *spyir shes rab \*can\* chos kyi rjes su 'brang ba dang / dad pa can gang zag gi rjes su 'brang ba'i 'jug pa gnyis las / rang cag ni dad pa can du byas la yid ches pa'i gang zag gi rjes su 'brang ba kho nar grub pa cig tu byed dgos pa yin* (DNyB: 372, 1b1-2).

<sup>184</sup> Tib. *chos kyi rjes su 'brang ba and dad pa'i rjes su 'brang ba*.

<sup>185</sup> *De kho na nyid bsdus pa'i dka' 'grel* (D 4267), commentary to Śāntarakṣita's *Tattvasaṃgrahakārikā* (D 4266). See McClintock (2010: 300) for a translation and brief discussion on these lines in Kamalāśīla's work.

<sup>186</sup> It appears, for instance, in the third verse of Rngog lo's *Mngon rtogs rgyan 'grel rin po che'i sgron me bsdus don*, where it says, *chos smra rten dang rigs pa'i rjes 'brangs pas* (2006: 126, 1b2-3). It also features in Phywa pa's *Tshad ma rnam par nges pa'i 'grel bshad*, which has *'di rigs zhes pa ste rigs pa'i rjes su 'brangs nas so* (2006: 426, 196b8).



textual distinction between two kinds of practitioner became identified with specific religious groups in Tibet, with advocates of scholasticism eventually using “follower of reason” as a means of self-identification, requires further investigation. Suffice here to say that even in the twelfth century, the designation’s association with scholasticism was strong. The DNYB’s opening statement, beginning with the evocation of the division, then inviting those it addresses to see themselves *as* the “followers of faith” is, so far as I am aware, a unique *subversion* of the emblem, and what can only be interpreted as a call for its Rwa sgren audience to distance themselves from what scholasticism was beginning to project as the ideal practitioner (i.e., one who chiefly relied on logical reasoning).

The UMB, which is equally critical of the analytical approach and the use of logic as the DNYB, seems to sweep away any lingering doubts about the target of these criticisms. Its author remarks: “The Lhasan(s) say(s) to [us,] the one(s) from Ra sgren, that as far as the view is concerned, [we] put [our] hopes in a deity.”<sup>187</sup> Quite apart from the fact that it is difficult to make sense of this remark unless the “Lhasan(s)” is understood to denote a person or persons affiliated with Gsang phu,<sup>188</sup> the subsequent remarks by the author appear to confirm this identification. The UMB’s author sees himself as engaged in a discourse with those at Gsang phu. The “view” is an obvious reference to the understanding of emptiness and the two truths. The author’s proposal that study of the *Satyadvayāvatāra* and *Madhyamakopadeśa*, two works dealing with the view, be formalised at Rwa sgren is responding to critical comments that have been directed against Rwa sgren. But in addition to this proposed measure, the author also formulates a retort to those at Gsang phu. There are several distinguishable parts to this, all of which are informative. In the first, the author volunteers to defend Rwa sgren against the disparaging remarks directed at it. His rebuttal of the criticism regarding the reliance on faith begins with the words, “[Well indeed,] for the view, we exclusively put our hopes in the deity!”<sup>189</sup> He goes on to say that followers of the Mahāyāna, who are seeking to realize the two truths need to direct their prostration

<sup>187</sup> *lha sa ba ra greng ba la lta ba lha la re zer te / lta ba lha la re ba kho no yin la* (UMB: 341, 4a1).

<sup>188</sup> Due to the vernacular style of the remark, it could be interpreted as referring to single individual or a group. Regarding the first, it should be noted that Phywa pa was born in Stag rtse rdzong, slightly to the east of Lhasa. However, it is reasonably clear that the object of the criticism (i.e., the *Ra sgren ba*) is not a particular person from the monastery, so much as its residents more generally. The direct reference to Rwa sgren, the conversational tone of its delivery, together with its slightly unrefined content do not suggest a comment of literary origin. This sounds far more likely to be reporting “This is what he/they are saying about us”.

<sup>189</sup> *lta ba lha la re ba kho no yin la* (UMB: 341, 4a1).

and offerings to the Buddha, using him as a witness to the actions they are undertaking. They also need to clear away their karmic obscurations to realisation of the two truths through confession, and make prayers to receive the blessing to be able to gain that realisation. The passage, which is a short description of Rwa sgren practices designed to bring realisation of emptiness, is virtually identical to one appearing in the DNYB.<sup>190</sup> Rather than evidence of an intertextual relationship involving two parties, this seems to be a straightforward case of a single author reusing his own words.<sup>191</sup> The passages in both works end with the words, “The logical approach is incapable of bringing realization of the two truths”. Putting both references to the deity together, it seems that the original criticisms were aimed at an over-investment in deity-related practices. Although this might be interpreted in different ways, the image conjured is of someone praying to a deity, perhaps in the form of an image, for understanding of the view. As such, it implies criticism of an approach that is portrayed as over reliant on faith and is irrational, since the act of praying is incongruous with the intended result. In his spirited defence, rather than rejecting what was likely intended as a caricature of someone praying before a deity for realisation, the UMB’s author essentially *owns* the criticism. This parallels the ownership of the “follower of faith” characterisation at the start of the DNYB. Identifying the ‘deity’ or divine one in question as the Buddha, the UMB’s author argues that the act of praying to the Buddha is entirely rational, as he sits at the centre of the nexus of practices that must be undertaken to achieve a result that reliance on logic alone can never yield.

<sup>190</sup> *rang cag theg pa chen po rnams kyis bden pa gnyis rtogs par bya ba nyid du brtsams pa yin pas / de bzhin gshegs pa mngon sum du byas la phyag btsal mchod pa phul la bden pa gnyis rtogs pa'i gags su gyur pa'i las sgrib rnams de bzhin gshegs pa dpang du gsol la bshags / bden pa gnyis kyi don ji lta ba bzhin du rtogs par mdzad du gsol zhes gsol ba btab na de'i byin brlabs kyis bden pa gnyis rtogs par gyur ba las / de gnyis rtog ges gtan la dbab par mi nus pa'o //* (DNYB: 373, 2a6-8).

*theg pa chen po rnams kyis bden pa gnyis rtogs par bya ba nyid du brtsams pa yin pas thams cad mkhyen pa yid kyis mngon sum du byas la phyag btsal mchod pa dbul de dpang du gsol la / bden pa gnyis rtogs pa'i gags su gyur pa'i las sgrib rnams thams cad bshags par bya zhing / gsol ba btab na de'i byin brlabs kyis bden pa gnyis rtogs pa las / de gnyis rtog ges gtan la dbab par mi nus //* (UMB: 341, 4a1-2).

<sup>191</sup> Aside from the fact that the two passages use different epithets for the Buddha: *thams cad mkhyen pa* (*sarvajñā*) in UMB as opposed to *de bzhin gshegs pa* (*tathāgata*) in DNYB, little separates them. Both passages also employ the same non-standard spelling for “obstacle” (i.e., *gags* rather than *gegs*), although the possibility that this might be an idiosyncrasy of the scribe (who appears to be the same for both manuscripts) cannot be completely ruled out. Another peculiarity that the two works share is their way of rendering the Sanskrit *paṇḍita*. Namely, *pan bi ta* (UMB: 336, 1b5) and *pan pi ta* (DNYB: 372, 1b5).

In a second portion of his response, the author attempts to distinguish Rwa sgrenḡ's practices from those of its detractors (i.e., those at Gsang phu). Indirectly referring to the familiar scheme of Buddhist scholarship's joint reliance on the resources of scripture and reason, he argues that scripture is superior. Making out a case for rooting one's practice in the Buddha and his pronouncements, he says "The master(s) who realised *dharmata*-truth treated the [Buddha] alone as *pramāṇa*".<sup>192</sup> On scripture taking precedence over reasoning, he adds "Whenever the master Bhāvaviveka set out the profound meaning, he advised that it could not be established merely with dry logic, but solely by setting out the Buddha's pronouncements [on the matter]."<sup>193</sup> The UMB's author does not specify where Bhāvaviveka expresses this position, but obviously has his *Madhyamakaratnapradīpa*<sup>194</sup> in mind. The view represented in the UMB should more correctly be identified as that of Bhāvaviveka's commentator, Avalokitavrata. In his *Prajñāpradīpaṭīkā*,<sup>195</sup> he asserts that Bhāvaviveka regularly provides scriptural backing for his reasoning establishing the final view. However, Avalokitavrata makes the point with an extreme paraphrasing of the position expressed in Bhāvaviveka's work, announcing, for instance, "I do not teach that the aggregates are without essential nature merely by means of dry logic of my own devising. There are also scriptural passages [such as] these [that confirm it]."<sup>196</sup> Whatever we make of Avalokitavrata's rewording of Bhāvaviveka's/Nāgārjuna's position, it is useful for the UMB's author, who makes the reference to "dry logic" (*śuṣkatarka*) sound like an unfavourable judgement of reasoning's worth in comparison to scripture.

Kamalaśīla also seems to represent an unnamed presence in this discourse. Śāntarakṣita makes only brief remarks about reasoning and scripture both having a role to play in establishing an understanding of the ultimate, in the autocommentary (D 3886) to his *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*. But in Kamalaśīla's commentary on the work (*Madhyamakālaṃkārapañjikā* D 3886), this is developed into a discussion about the relationship between logic and scripture in this context. And although he once comes close to using the "dry logic" language of his

<sup>192</sup> *chos nyid bden pa gzigs pa'i slob dpon gyis kyang de nyid kho na tshad mar mdzad* (UMB: 344, 5b3).

<sup>193</sup> *legs ldan 'byed pas zab mo'i don gtan la dbab pa thams cad kyang rtog ge skam po tsam gyis gtan la me phebs gsung gyis lung kho nas gtan la phab* (UMB: 344, 5b5).

<sup>194</sup> *Dbu ma rin po che'i sgron ma* (D 3854), Bhāvaviveka's commentary on Nāgārjuna's root treatise.

<sup>195</sup> *Shes rab sgron ma rgya cher 'grel pa* (D 3859).

<sup>196</sup> *kho bos rang gi bstan pas rtog ge skam po tsam gyis phung po rnams ngo bo nyid med pa nyid du bstan pa ma yin te / de ltar lung de dag kyang yod do //* (D 3859: 61b2). Avalokitavrata repeats the same formula some thirteen times, simply replacing one subject (here, the aggregates) with another on each occasion.

likely contemporary Avalokitavrata, it is important to clarify his very different perspective on this. He writes:

Because reasoning produces ascertainment it brings complete satisfaction. [With respect to this] someone could say “Well if that’s the case, reasoning alone should be sufficient. What’s the purpose of scripture?” [We respond,] it is not like that, as scripture is the jewel (*akālaṃkāra*) adorning reasoning. If one does not [treat it as such,] certain scholarly individuals could abuse one, saying “This is the dry analysis of a logician”<sup>197</sup>

While stressing, therefore, the aridity of logic divorced from Buddhist scripture, Kamalaśīla clearly casts the latter in a subordinate role. He furthermore presents faith derived from ascertainment, and relying on inference, as an ideal. None of this would be music to the ears of the UMB’s author, and it may well be that he mobilises Bhāvaviveka (or rather Avalokitavrata’s outspoken version of Bhāvaviveka) as a counter to Kamalaśīla. It should also be noted that Phywa pa wrote his own commentary to Śāntarakṣita’s *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*, which relies heavily on Kamalaśīla. Phywa pa unsurprisingly follows Kamalaśīla in presenting faith based on realisation gained through reasoning and inference as the ideal.<sup>198</sup>

Concluding this portion of his retort to Rwa sgrenḡ’s detractors, the UMB’s author remarks, “[Though you say we believe that] ‘the view is revealed by a deity’, [we say,] that deity is Buddha! And it is from his scriptural pronouncements that realization of the [ultimate] state [of things] is generated. It is not realized by conceptual logic”.<sup>199</sup> The implication is clearly that the Rwa sgrenḡ community’s emphasis on scripture shows that they have their priorities right, whereas those at Gsang phu concentrate disproportionately on the less important portion of the twofold scheme, namely, reasoning.

A third portion of the UMB’s response is contained in the following statement:

<sup>197</sup> rigs pa ni nges pa skyed par byed pas yongs su tshim par byed pa yin no / ji ste gal te de lta na go rigs pa kho nas chog mod / lung gis ci zhig bya zhe na / ma yin te / lung ni rigs pa’i rgyan yin pa’i phyir ro / de lta ma yin na / ‘di ni rtog ge ba skam pos brtags pa yin no zhes mi mkhas pa kha cig gis brnyas par yang ‘gyur ro (D 3886 87b1).

<sup>198</sup> There are various issues within this topic that require further investigation, including how Kamalaśīla and Phywa pa, among others, gloss Śāntarakṣita’s reference to the *śraddhānusārin* in his *Madhyamakālaṃkāravṛtti* (D 3885), and more generally, the association between the *dharmaṇusārin* and *śraddhānusārin*, their respective relationships with reasoning and scripture, and assertions about the different ways that they are said to develop faith, one of the prominent discourses in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* commentarial tradition. This topic will be explored elsewhere.

<sup>199</sup> lta ba lhas ston zhes bya ba sangs rgyas la lha zhes bya ba la de’i lung las gnas lugs rtogs pa’i lta ba skye yi rtog ges mi rtogs pa yang yin (UMB: 344, 5b7).

In the *sūtras* on Vinaya, various [of the Buddha's] pronouncements were gathered. In [Śākyaprabha's] *Prabhāvatī*<sup>200</sup> there is much use of the objection-response [method with respect to these. But any such] analysis [determining] whether there are contradictions in the pronouncements is settled solely by means of scripture. In the Abhidharma commentary and the commentary to the Great [treatise on] Dependent Relatedness<sup>201</sup> also, however much this objection-response [method] is employed, matters are always settled by scripture alone.<sup>202</sup>

Further to his argument that scripture, rather than reasoning, must be regarded as the final arbiter and guide to truth, the author appears to address a possible misgiving. He states that even when treatise writers seem to question authoritative pronouncements, they are employing a *method*, and that such a question always anticipates the introduction of some other scriptural pronouncement to provide a definitive answer. The term chosen by the author to denote the objection-response method (*brgal lan*, \**codyaparihāra*) shows that he is referring to the last element of a fivefold scheme recommended by Vasubandhu in his *Vyākhyāyukti* ("Principles of Exegesis" D 4061)<sup>203</sup> as a way of structuring commentary on passages of scripture. The fivefold scheme was enthusiastically embraced by Tibetan scholasticism, and it is regularly cited immediately following the "initial statement" (note 125). But early scholasticism's use of this fifth element is especially interesting, with moves made to develop it into a more systematic methodology and organisational scheme, applied to treatises. This is probably traceable to Rngog lo, who applies it in his commentary to the *Pramāṇaviniścaya* (*Tshad ma rnam nges kyi dka' ba'i gnas rnam par bshad pa 'grel pa*), in which he divides large sections of the text into "objection" (*brgal ba*) and "refutational-response" (*lan*).

<sup>200</sup> *Āryamūlasarvāstivādisāmaṇerakārikāṭṭiprabhāvātī* (D 4125). 'Phags pa gzhi thams cad yod par smra ba'i dge tshal gyi tshig le'ur byas pa'i 'grel pa 'od ldan.

<sup>201</sup> These two Indian commentaries (*mdzod 'grel tig* and *rten 'brel chen po'i ti ka*) are also mentioned in the DNyB. The first, in all likelihood is Vasubandhu's *Abhidharma-kośabhāṣya* (D 4090). The root text of the second is almost certainly Nāgārjuna's *Pratītyasamutpādayavākhyāna* (D 3837). The commentary could be the *Pratītyasamutpādayakārikā* (D 3836), the autocommentary, which like the root work is contained in the *Jo bo'i chos chung/ 'byung brgya rtsa*. But based on the designation and description of it in the UMB, it seems more likely to be the *Pratītyasamutpādādivibhaṅganirdeśa* (D 3995), Vasubandhu's commentary on the original.

<sup>202</sup> 'dul ba'i mdor yang lung nyi tshe bsdu / 'od ldan du rgal lan mang po byas de yang / lung kho nas 'gal mi 'gal dpyod / mdzod 'grel ti ka dang rten 'grel chen po'i ti ka kun nas brgal lan ji tsam cig 'byung ste yang / lung kho nas gtan la phab (UMB: 344, 5b4).

<sup>203</sup> For more on the treatise's background and content see Skilling (2000).

The UMB's author does not reject Vasubandhu's scheme, but seems to be reaffirming a widely held understanding of its fifth element; namely, that it should only be a two-step exchange. The objection (whether genuine or contrived) prompts a response, necessarily citing a passage of scripture, which provides a resolution. His emphasis is clearly on the nature of the response, and it is easy to imagine that Rngog lo's position, suggesting that the response could be a critical one, more in the form of a refutation than a resolution, might have provoked the UMB's author to make his remark. However, his singling out of Śākyaprabha's *Prabhāvatī* appears to provide a more specific clue. Among Phywa pa's recently resurfaced writings we discover a commentary composed by him on the *Prabhāvatī*. Within this he enumerates Vasubandhu's fivefold scheme, and in explanation of the objection-response element, he says:

The purpose [of the objection-response (*brgal lan*) exchange] is [1.] to reveal one's own tenet position and [2.] to [allow] future beings to become skilled in the sequential-chain of objection and refutation.<sup>204</sup>

Phywa pa makes no obvious attempt to apply this to the Vinaya context, neither does he seem particularly concerned with hermeneutics. Instead, he equates the objection-response method with disputation practice, going on to describe the interlocutors involved as "opponents" (*rgol ba*). And in what must count as one of his clearest statements about the purpose of the agonistic exercise, he describes the dialectical exchanges of objection and refutation in didactic terms, and perhaps even, as ends in themselves. That is, one engages in dialectical exchanges to show others how it is done. Another recently resurfaced commentary on the *Prabhāvatī* (entitled '*Dul ba 'od ldan gyi tikka*') is by one Brtson 'grus 'bar. Bringing us almost full circle, this is none other than Bya 'Dul 'dzin Brtson 'grus 'bar, the individual so instrumental in transmitting biographical materials on Atiśa that served as the basis for the *Bka' gdams glegs bam*, who was *also* the one who ordained Phywa pa as a bhikṣu and taught him Vinaya. Phywa pa had almost certainly received instruction on the *Prabhāvatī* from Brtson 'grus 'bar, but the latter's commentary appears to make *no* mention of Vasubandhu's scheme or the objection-response method. While a more detailed

<sup>204</sup> *dgos pa ni rang gi grub mtha' bstan pa dang / ma 'ongs pa'i gang zag rnam brgal lan gyi 'phreng pa la mkhas par bya'o* ('*Od ldan zhes bya ba'i Tikka tshig don rab gsal*, 260, 6b6-7).

comparison of the two commentaries is required, this one difference in the two works seems to attest to Phywa pa's spirit of innovation.<sup>205</sup>

It seems highly likely that the UMB's remarks about the objection-response method are a response to Phywa pa, intending to counter the idea that such exchanges were in any way adversarial or structured around opposition. If one thing unites writings classifiable as Bka' gdams and distinguishes the brand of learning they promote from that of scholasticism, it is their *absence of dialectics*. Scholars aligned with the Rwa sgreng-Bka' gdams approach appear to have a genuine distaste not so much for an analytical or questioning style, but rather the assertive, argumentative, and refutation-based approach associated with scholasticism. An episode clearly intended to be illustrative of this, is found in Mchims' biography of Po to ba:

When [during the teaching] two monks were heatedly disputing, [Po to ba] gently smiled and said to them, "[As you know] even engaging in a dharma disputation in the presence of dge bshes ['Brom ston] is unbecoming, so are you [really now actually] arguing right in front of me?"<sup>206</sup>

Whether or not the reference this makes to monastic etiquette relating to 'Brom ston is accurate, the sentiments expressed here, about an aversion for formal disputation, and its association with vulgar behaviour appear to have been widespread. Language, as much as content, was also important for those following the Rwa sgreng-Bka' gdams tradition. They noticeably distanced themselves from certain terms that became strongly associated with dialecticism and disputation,

<sup>205</sup> The *Bka' gdams gsung 'bum* contains two versions of what appear to be the same text, a third commentary on the *Prabhāvatī*, entitled 'Grel ba 'od ldan gyi tshig don gsal byed. The editors ascribe the work to Sbal ti Brtson 'grus dbang phyug (1129-1215), who they identify as the founder of Skyor mo lung Monastery, and another student of Bya 'Dul 'dzin Brtson 'grus 'bar. This identification is based on the colophon, which states that one Brtson 'grus dbang phyug was the author. But this could conceivably be someone other than Skyor mo lung's founder. More importantly, the text seems far closer in style to Phywa pa's treatment of the *Prabhāvatī* than Bya 'Dul 'dzin Brtson 'grus 'bar's, and includes discussion of Vasubandhu's fivefold scheme and *even* what appears to be the same section on the objection-response method (*brgal lan*) as in Phywa pa's work. This suggests that the author was considerably influenced by Phywa pa's style, which would not fit the current profile of Skyor mo lung's founder. One therefore wonders whether the author was a student of Phywa pa. Needless to say, the issue requires further investigation.

<sup>206</sup> Jo bo gnyis rA rA rtsod pa byas pa la / dge bshes kyi spyang sngar chos kyi rtsod pa byar mi rung na / khyed gnyis nga'i drung du tshig gi rtsod pa byed dam gsung nas zhal 'dzum yal mdzad nas snang (Pu to ba'i rnam thar 7a1). This passage also appears almost verbatim in Las chen's *chos 'byung* (2003: 46), and the biography is his most likely source.

including “dispute” (*rtsod pa*) and eventually, even the aforementioned objection-response sequence (*brgal lan*). Less abrasive descriptions were chosen for religious exchanges involving those of their own tradition, such as the discourse between ‘Brom ston and Khu ‘dol reported in the DNYB (383, 7a5), which is characterised as a “[open] discussion” (*‘bel gtam*).

Given what they found objectionable about dialectical practices, it seems unsurprising that followers of the Rwa sgren-Bka’ gdams tradition preferred to express their opposition to scholasticism in the form of occasional dismissive comments or unfavourable characterisations, rather than sustained tirades or refutations. But statements by later writers, ostensibly talking about the Bka’ gdams tradition itself can be particularly revealing. Among a series of succinct encapsulations that Las chen offers in his Bka’ gdams history, we find:

The distinctive features of [Bka’ gdams] dharma exposition are:

A minimum of objection and response (*brgal lan*), refutation, “dharma disputes”, and controversial statements

And refraining from [engagement in] bullying expressions of power, self-composed [elements of teaching], and “summaries” (*bsdus don*).<sup>207</sup>

Thus, dispelling any ambiguity about his target, Las chen presents a checklist of practices associated with Gsang phu and scholasticism more generally. It may strike us as ironic that he defines Bka’ gdams teaching entirely through negation, in contradistinction to features that characterise the Gsang phu approach.

The theme running through the UMB and DNYB is that what the Bka’ gdams should stand for is a total faith in and reliance upon the Buddha and the paragon guide, Atiśa. These are presented as the Bka’ gdams tradition’s fundamental tenets, contrasting with scholasticism’s multivocality, dialecticism, questioning attitude to authority, and claim to rely on logic more than scripture. What is less clear is whether any of the remarks in the UMB and DNYB are accusatory in tone. That is, whether they are intended not just to demonstrate how true to the original Bka’ gdams message those at Rwa sgren have remained, but how far from it they feel those at Gsang phu have wandered. From the UMB’s many references to the “deity” (*lha*), we can be reasonably sure that this term featured in the criticisms of Rwa sgren to which the author responds. And while he always glosses “deity” as the Buddha, we should not forget Atiśa’s unusual epithet, the “singular divine one” (*lha cig*). Thus, it is at least possible that the author’s repeated use of

<sup>207</sup> *chos bshad kyi khyad par ni / brgal lan sun ‘byin chos dmag zer mchu nyung / dbang za rang gzo bsdus don mi mdzad cing* (2003: 46).



the term is intended as a coded reference to Atiśa, the deity from whom those in the Rwa sgrenḡ-Bka' gdams tradition received instruction on the view, through his *Satyadvayāvatāra* and *Madhyamakopadeśa*.

### Conclusions

This article places a spotlight on the period spanning just over a century following Atiśa's death (in 1054), which must be regarded as one of the most formative eras for Tibetan religious Buddhist traditions. Those who invited Atiśa to Tibet had looked southward to Buddhist masters and institutions in north-eastern India, and approached them in a supplicatory fashion for guidance. But his passing could be seen as ushering in a new era, within which Tibetan figures, such as 'Brom ston, 'Khon Dkon mchog rgyal po (1034–1102), and Sgam po pa, who would later be identified as the founders of new schools, flourished, and native forms of institutionalised monasticism were first expressed and gained a firm foothold. By the end of the century in question, with the Pāla Empire spiralling into decline, increasingly self-reliant Tibetan religious traditions were assertively being exported to the Tangut state.<sup>208</sup>

When later Tibetan historians began describing the first stages in the evolution of these new schools, their accounts reflected the spirit of expansion that prevailed in those times, but they were also premised on the notion of continuity: they proposed that each school, from the time of its inception, had certain practices and principles that lay at its heart. And as is particularly apparent in the Bka' gdams histories, these schools were also portrayed as being circumscribed by unambiguous borders of faith and resting upon solid, monumental institutions. Hence, the Bka' gdams pa (i.e., followers of the Bka' gdams tradition) were both united and defined by a common purpose, and they looked to Rwa sgrenḡ as their stable centre. These authors were less inclined to dwell on (or sometimes even admit) the stuttering progress, setbacks, and upheaval that almost inevitably characterise the formation of religious systems. And they categorically did *not* acknowledge that religious identities might be flexible and formed through processes of negotiation.

The first image of the Bka' gdams identified at the beginning of this article is largely faithful to this vision. It presents a schematic and highly edited view of the Bka' gdams tradition that easily lends itself to idealisation. In terms particularly of the continuity and homogeneity it projects, it cannot be regarded as historically realistic. The second, less prescriptive image of the Bka' gdams escapes this fault. Its more

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<sup>208</sup> For more on this topic see Zhouyang Ma (2023).

heterogeneous notion of the Bka' gdams has the ring of historical credibility, and for investigating the evolution of practices during the century or so in question, it seems sensible to remain open to the idea that we may be dealing with multiple interpretations of Atiśa's traditions, and even different versions of Bka' gdams. However, the manner in which this more inclusive understanding of the Bka' gdams is being applied requires scrutiny. From the late twelfth century onwards we begin to see clear written evidence of claims to belong to a Bka' gdams tradition. These are expressed in terms of personal compositions and in contemporary records (in biographies and catalogues of teachings received, etc.). Thus, there are clear historical grounds for classifying particular individuals as Bka' gdams pa and certain institutions as Bka' gdams monasteries. But prior to this, the only real referent for these classifications is the first generation of Atiśa's disciples. Hence, Gsang phu is classified as a Bka' gdams institution purely on the grounds that its founder, Legs pa'i shes rab, was a principal disciple of Atiśa. Such references to a Bka' gdams tradition and institutions during the first generation are, strictly speaking, inaccurate. Even the most pro-Bka' gdams historians, including 'Gos lo tsā ba and Las chen, acknowledge that a tradition identifying and referring to itself as Bka' gdams only truly emerged during Po to ba's time. This admission that the Bka' gdams tradition did not truly materialise until several decades after 'Brom ston's death, rare that it is, deserves to be taken seriously. It could, however, well be argued that in the case of founder figures in particular, there should be a historical dispensation for such anachronisms. Nāgārjuna may not have declared himself to be the founder of the Madhyamaka school, but that need not totally invalidate the claim that he should be described as such, retrospectively. Equally, while it may not be historically correct to refer to Gsang phu as a Bka' gdams monastery during Legs pa'i shes rab's time, even sticklers for historical accuracy may be prepared to let it pass without comment.

However, in the present case, by the second generation, with Rngog lo's ascension, Gsang phu was undoubtedly launched on a separate trajectory from the tradition that was developing among those at Rwa sgreng, who identified with 'Brom ston, and were perhaps already using the designation Bka' gdams to distinguish their tradition from others. The contents of the manuscript sources examined in this article tell their own story about the period in question, and the findings presented here will necessarily be new to those who have grown accustomed to referring to Gsang phu as a Bka' gdams monastery. But the separation between the Gsang phu and Bka' gdams traditions is one about which *later* Tibetan historians could hardly have been clearer. As set out in this article, the Bka' gdams histories overwhelmingly present Gsang phu and its traditions as *independent* of the Bka' gdams

school. Since most of these histories have been widely available for many decades, and in the case of the *Deb ther sngon po*, even in English translation, what explains the increasing contemporary practice of describing Gsang phu as a Bka' gdams monastery? It is surely not based upon the findings of any historical research. The suspicion must be that a growing appetite for historical simplification and an impatience with nuance is to blame here. The Gsang phu identity is placed in the Bka' gdams category largely as a matter of convenience, and especially by those who believe that in the twelfth century as much as the twenty-first, Tibetan Buddhist traditions must belong to one of four categories (i.e., those of the four main schools).

What later historians say about Gsang phu and its relation to the Bka' gdams tradition should be counted as significant, but for the definitive word on whether Gsang phu was a Bka' gdams monastery we must turn to the recently resurfaced manuscript sources. The issue is one of *self-identification*. That is, did those from Gsang phu think and talk of their monastery, practices, and themselves as Bka' gdams (pa)? While it must be acknowledged that these manuscript sources are limited in their range and that the analysis of their contents is still at a relatively early stage, the works by early Gsang phu writers have thus far yielded no mentions of the Bka' gdams tradition, let alone claims to follow it. The absence of references to Atiśa's traditions is also somewhat deafening.<sup>209</sup>

In the present case, it is fortunate that the combination of the early manuscript sources and some later more candid historical witnesses allows us to uncover much, not just about the split between Rwa sgreng and Gsang phu, but also the formation of their respective traditions. Absolutely central to an understanding of events is the succession crisis at Rwa sgreng. Before considering Gsang phu, it is briefly worth reflecting on what the crisis tells us about Rwa sgreng's place within the wider Bka' gdams tradition. The fact that Rwa sgreng was able to call upon a relatively large number of monasteries, with whom it apparently shared the notion of a religious affiliation, reminds us of the extent of the Bka' gdams network. It also suggests that the crisis was localised to Rwa sgreng: these other monasteries were in a position to respond to the appeals, and even 'lend out' some of their top figures, seeming to demonstrate that they remained viable institutions through the decades of *Rwa sgreng's* crisis. This fact alone should

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<sup>209</sup> In the sense that they can only be based on the sources and evidence currently available, judgements in this area are provisional. The materials in the early manuscripts are disproportionately intellectual in content (i.e., they are primarily commentarial writings and "summaries"). Liturgical writings, auto-biographical materials, personal letters, and so forth, should they ever emerge, may offer another perspective.

discourage any sense that Rwa sgreng's fate can necessarily be equated with that of the wider Bka' gdams tradition. By the middle of the twelfth century, this network already encompassed a considerable number of dispersed, independent or semi-independent monasteries, to say nothing of what we can assume was a large proportion of committed individuals outside the monastic system. Since neither Rwa sgreng nor any other single authority actively controlled religious expression in this network, it seems safe to infer that it harboured a greater interpretational range of Atiśa's traditions than the unified vision projected in later sources would have us believe.

Up until the time of the crisis, while Rwa sgreng and Gsang phu were the two main monasteries founded by Atiśa's followers, Rwa sgreng was the clear senior. Differences first began to surface when Rngog lo succeeded his uncle at Gsang phu, but initially, these were not pronounced enough to prevent those at Rwa sgreng turning to Gsang phu, in the form of Rngog lo, during the former's hour of need. Controversies surrounded the start of the crisis and Rngog lo's involvement with Rwa sgreng. There was the dispute that prompted Po to ba's departure and what now appears to be the curious decision of all 'three brothers' to avoid the monastery during the crisis. And while 'Brom Shes rab me lce and Bsod nam lha'i dbang po report Rngog lo's involvement in positive terms, a slightly earlier historical witness (namely, Mchims Nam mkha' grags), depicts the appointment as an unwelcome intervention by one dpon Chos kyi rgyal po, who is accused of being motivated by envy. Mchims also says that the appointment itself was not well received at Rwa sgreng. He cannot be regarded as an impartial witness, and it seems quite possible that the real 'crime' he felt Dpon Chos kyi rgyal po was guilty of was that of directly exposing Rwa sgreng to the influence of Gsang phu's analytical traditions. Although Rngog lo's writings on Atiśa's *upadeśa* works are not extant, the mere fact that he composed them seems highly likely to be linked with his time at Rwa sgreng, where it is easy to imagine that a scholastic slant on the *upadeśa* would not have been well received. But whether it was due to individuals representing Gsang phu taking advantage of the crisis by seeking to convert those at Rwa sgreng to the analytical approach they were developing, or simply the painful awareness among those at Rwa sgreng that Gsang phu's brand thrived while its own languished, as the DNyB and UMB appear to attest, the crisis leaves a legacy of resentment.

Whatever role in the divide the crisis played, the main difference between Rwa sgreng and Gsang phu was undoubtedly over their opposing attitudes to scholasticism. In the language of the DNyB, this was quite literally a divide between "faith" and "reason". And while this is glossed as differing approaches to gaining experience of

ultimate truth, the disagreement seems to be a wideranging one over the methods and practices promoted within scholasticism, and a genuine disapproval of dialectics and disputation among followers of the Rwa sgrenḡ-Bka' gdams tradition.

Finally, I return to my argument about the constructive role of early scholasticism in the creation of religious identities and in shaping the Tibetan religious landscape. This article has identified some clear examples of historical editorship of the Bka' gdams image. Much of this was necessitated by the crisis at Rwa sgrenḡ. But by the time that the Bka' gdams histories begin to appear, damage to the narrative of continuity in the tradition appears largely to have been repaired. The biographies of Atiṣa, with their promotion of the 'three brothers', seem to have played no small part in this. From the mid-fourteenth century, Rwa sgrenḡ-Bka' gdams and Gsang phu traditions are mainly represented as separate and independent of each other, and any overt signs of tensions in their relationship have been banished. But the idea that at the time of the crisis, both traditions were fully formed, and particularly that the Rwa sgrenḡ community were already unified by a distinct approach that was implacably opposed to the new analytical practices of scholasticism seems untenable, especially in light of Rngog lo's apparently lengthy engagement there. However, by the end of the crisis, this situation had changed. The UMB and DNyB represent important and perhaps unique historical records of the emerging Rwa sgrenḡ-Bka' gdams identity and the way it was being developed in *contradistinction* to that of the "followers of reason" at Gsang phu. In terms of their subject matter, the two works mark attempts to create a distinct commentarial voice, with a meditative perspective, which seems intended to counter the predominating intellectual approach that had been championed by Gsang phu authors. They use Atiṣa's *upadeṣa/man ngag* as the vehicle for this meditative perspective, presenting these works less as written compositions than expressions of personalised, oral instructions.

In the discourse interspersing the Madhyamaka content, the followers of the Rwa sgrenḡ tradition are also encouraged to distance themselves from scholasticism, together with the identity and practices associated with it. The works not only directly respond to criticisms of the Rwa sgrenḡ approach, but take the opportunity to set out what defines this approach, describing, from a number of angles, what distinguishes it from that of the logicians at Gsang phu. But most crucially of all, as part of the response, the works propose the implementation of practical measures. These are presented as steps towards the *restoration* of Atiṣa's Madhyamaka tradition, but this is a thin disguise for what is patently the introduction of new elements, intended to formalise and organise learning at Rwa sgrenḡ. We can be certain, both from

the context of their introduction and the form they take, that these measures were inspired by the Gsang phu innovations in the field of curricula and public teaching. Since by the time of the UMB and DNyB's composition (most likely between 1150 and 1160) Gsang phu's groundbreaking model of learning was proving immensely popular, it also seems reasonably clear that a programme of study that placed Atiśa's *Bodhipathapradīpa*, *Satyadvayāvatāra* and *Madhyamakopadeśa* at its core was intended as an alternative and perhaps rival to the style of learning at Gsang phu. There is, as yet, no clear evidence regarding the implementation and success of this proposed programme of study at Rwa sgrenḡ, although the decades of stability there from the 1150s onwards were obviously due to organisational improvements, and a new programme of teaching does appear to have ended the decades of "dharma famine". The UMB and DNyB also represent the earliest evidence of efforts to combine the aforementioned *upadeśa/man ngag* to form a triad for didactic purposes. As numerous biographies and records of teaching from later centuries attest, this proved a resounding success, and teaching this triad became a widespread and enduring practice.

Hitherto, the rise of Tibetan scholasticism has mainly been understood in terms of its most tangible manifestations; namely, in the foundation by Gsang phu scholars of satellite institutions and the adoption of Gsang phu-style scholastic curricula and "dialectical units" in monasteries unaffiliated with Gsang phu. With the reappearance of early manuscript sources and the refining of techniques used to analyse them there is the potential for the rediscovery of early intertextual discourses informing us about other aspects of scholasticism's impact. As the UMB and DNyB certainly demonstrate, and the anti-*pramāṇa* rhetoric that developed in some quarters may also indicate, responses to scholasticism that took the form of outright resistance or the creation of alternatives to it may have been every bit as *formational* to the identity of certain religious traditions as adoption and imitation. This article can be seen as the first step in the exploration of these other varieties of response.

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# Some Bibliographic Remarks on the Contributions to the Language Arts by Two Early Fifteenth Century Tibetan Writers, Bo dong Paṇ chen and Snar thang Lo tsā ba

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## A. Bo dong Paṇ chen

For understanding Bo dong Paṇ chen's works and days, we have three full-length studies, the most extensive and well-known is the one written by 'Jigs med 'bangs, alias Amoghasiddhi [\*Don yod grub pa] of Yar 'brog in 1453.<sup>1</sup> It is in part based on the earlier biographical work by Ngag dbang grags pa (1418–1496), the twelfth abbot of Stag lung monastery that has so far not surfaced.<sup>2</sup> The other two are his biographies by Mi bskyod rdo rje, both the verse text and the prose commentary on his verses, and an anonymous piece. Mi bskyod rdo rje's study is based on the biographies by 'Jigs med 'bangs and Ngag dbang grags pa, whereas 'Jigs med 'bangs' biography was the primary source for the anonymous work.<sup>3</sup> All three can be stylistically characterized as *bcad lhug spel ma can* in that they are written in a mixture (*spel ma*) of verse (*tshigs su bcad pa*) and prose (*lhug pa*), where the parts in prose comment on the verse-text. We learn from them that

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<sup>1</sup> Diemberger 1997 is in part a translation-cum-synopsis of 'Jigs med 'bangs 1990. 'Jigs med 'bang's work is also sometimes called the *Yar 'brog ma*. In fact, 'Jigs med 'bangs was a layman and the brother of the Myriarch-ruler of Yar 'brog principality Hyen du [shri] (<? Ch. *xingdu* [shi] 行都[使]) Kun dga' rgyal mtshan – my student (now Professor) Mr. Sun Penghao kindly pointed out to me in an email dated April 14, 2021, that in the early Ming "there was an administrative entity called *xingdu zhihuishi si* 行都指挥使司 for Yar 'brog (*anbuluo* 俺不罗)" and suggested that the title \*行都使 originated with the name of this administration. Of course, the term "myriarch" (Tib. *khri dpon*) is a left-over from the administrative units of ten thousand (*wanhu* 萬戶) that were put in place when the Tibetan area was occupied by the Mongols. Lastly, the name "'Jigs med 'bangs" – "Fearless Servant" – suggests a close connection with Bo dong Paṇ chen, one of whose names was 'Jigs med grags pa, "Renowned Fearless one"! For notes on Bo dong Paṇ chen and his work on proper behavior and ethical norms (*lugs kyi bstan bcos*), see now Ortega 2019.

<sup>2</sup> For the *Ngag dbang ma*, see, for example, 'Jigs med 'bangs 1990: 58, 456.

<sup>3</sup> Like 'Jigs med 'bangs, Mi bskyod rdo rje, alias Nam mkha' nyi ma, was yet another disciple of Bo dong Paṇ chen, as was the author of Anonymous 2016.

upon taking his novitiate vows under his maternal uncle Lo tsā ba Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1352–1405) at the age of six or seven, Bo dong Paṅ chen's name-in-religion was Chos kyi rgyal mtshan.<sup>4</sup> His final ordination as a fully-fledged monk took place under the same Lo tsā ba, Red mda' ba Gzhon nu blo gros (1349–1413), and Bsam gtan rin chen while they were residing in the great seminary of Shel dkar.<sup>5</sup> The passages where this is noted in his biographies or elsewhere do not tell us when this event took place. This is a trifle strange since the narration of such an important event is often accompanied by a date. But of course, it must have taken place before his uncle's passing in 1405. The available sources also do not relate whether he was given a new name-in-religion at the time of his final ordination. Dge lugs pa sources date his controversial debate with Mkhas grub Dge legs dpal bzang po (1385–1438) to 1400 or 1401 and give his name as Chos kyi rgyal mtshan. The earliest evidence for this event is found in Mkhas grub's replies to an undated series of allegations by Kon ting gug shri (< Ch. 灌顶国师, *guangding guoshi*) Nam mkha' bzang po (ca. 1390–ca. 1450) to the effect that he had wantonly criticized many ideas and treatises that were considered precious in Sa skya pa circles. These included his alleged rejection of Sa skya Paṇḍita's (1182–1251) *Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter*.<sup>6</sup> In his defense, Mkhas grub writes that a debate with Mkhan chen Chos rgyal ba [= Chos kyi rgyal mtshan], who had systematically (*thar chags*) found many internal contradictions in the *Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter*, had taken place in Byang Ngam ring in the winter of a dragon-year. This would be towards the end of 1400 or sometime in the first half of January of 1401, at the latest. Mkhas grub relates furthermore that he was victorious in defending Sa skya Paṇḍita's text and adds that the written evidence for this can be found in the record of the debate (*rtsod yig*) that was recorded by Don bzang rgyal mtshan of Ngam ring. This debate is mentioned *in extenso* in Bo dong Paṅ chen's biographies where it is prefaced by a substantial account of Bo dong Paṅ chen's debate with a certain Bsod nams skyabs who had some reservations

<sup>4</sup> Pasang Wangdu et al. 1996: 77 state that "Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan" was the name he was given when "he was ordained a monk." The term in question is *rab tu byung ba* (*pravrajyā*) which simply means "to renounce the world." The notion that he was ordained a monk is repeated in the translation-cum-synopsis of 'Jigs med 'bangs' work in Diemberger et al. 1997: 46. However, 'Jigs med 'bangs 1990: 47, 49 state [a] that he was given this name when, at the age of six, he received the layman (*dge bsnen*, *upāsaka*) vows from his uncle and [b] that not long thereafter his uncle gave him the name-in-religion "Chos kyi rgyal mtshan" when he took his novice (*dge tshul*, *śrāmanera*) vows; see also Mi bskyod rdo rje No Date: 6a-b, and Anonymous 2016: 20.

<sup>5</sup> 'Jigs med 'bangs 1990: 96, 149; Mi bskyod rdo rje No Date: 6a-b, and Anonymous 2016: 47.

<sup>6</sup> Mkhas grub 1980-82: 795-796; for Nam mkha' bzang po, see van der Kuijp 2022.



about the *Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter*.<sup>7</sup> I intend to revisit the various accounts of these debates on another occasion. But we should mention that the sixteenth century Sa skya pa savant Mang thos Klu sgrub rgya mtsho (1523–1596) strikes an interesting cautionary note when he suggested that we cannot lay much store on the partisan remarks as to who lost or who won the debate.<sup>8</sup>

Reading through Tibetan biographies and autobiographies one notices that at some yet unidentified point in time authors writing on one or the other language arts began to sign their works with names that indicate that they had enjoyed sustained and formal studies of and could therefore claim expertise in this domain of knowledge. As a rule, these names more often than not include "Dbyangs can [ma, Sarasvatī]" or "Tshangs sras," a clip of "Tshangs kyi sras mo," that is "daughter of Brahmā"—this of course an alternative name for Dbyangs can ma, the patron-goddess of the language arts—, and I suppose we can call these names "pen names."<sup>9</sup> When precisely this custom had its inception is something that will have to be investigated on another occasion. Suffice it to mention here that Dalai Lama V Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho's (1617–1682) pen name was Tshangs sras bzhad pa'i rdo rje gdong drug dga' ba'i bshes gnyen, that of the Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653–1705) was Dbyangs can dgyes pa'i blo ldan gdong drug snyems lang tsho, and that Tshangs sras dgyes pa'i blo ldan was Mdo mkhar ba Tshe ring dbang rgyal's (1697–1763) pen name.

Neither Tsong kha pa nor Mkhas grub, both *snyan ngag mkhan*—poets in their own right<sup>10</sup>, nor Snar thang Lo tsā ba have such pen names associated with them. But an interesting and early exception is the truly exceptional Bo dong Paṇ chen, and 'Jigs med 'bangs goes to some length in systematically describing his studies of the language arts.<sup>11</sup> Reminiscent of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa (1308–1364) who did the same, Bo dong Paṇ chen used a number of different names when signing his writings—for these, see below. This also holds for his pen

<sup>7</sup> 'Jigs med 'bangs 1990: 196–207, 207–216, Mi bskyod rdo rje No Date: 57b–59b, 59b–62a, and Anonymous 2016: 103–106, 106–213. Earlier, Bo dong Paṇ chen had debated with G.yag ston Sangs rgyas dpal (1348–1414) about an interpretation of passages of the *Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter*.

<sup>8</sup> Mang thos 1987: 206. Given that Mang thos 1987: 204–212 is devoted to Bo dong Paṇ chen, his oeuvre and his students, we can surmise that Mang thos was well-disposed towards him even if he did not always agree with his views.

<sup>9</sup> Sometimes Gdong drug is used; for example, the well-known Dpa' ris scholar Dor zhi Blo bzang thub bstan chos 'phel's (b. 1936) pen name is Dor zhi Gdong drug snyems pa'i blo ldan rnam dpyod mchog gi sde.

<sup>10</sup> For these two men and especially Mkhas grub, see van der Kuijp 2022.

<sup>11</sup> 'Jigs med 'bangs 1990 mentions Sanskrit grammar (*sgra*) 119–121, Sanskrit prosody (*sdeb sbyor*) 129–130, poetics/poetry (*snyan ngag*) 130–132, lexicography (*mngon brjod*) 132–134, and dramaturgy (*zlos gar*) 134–136.

names. Young Bo dong Paṇ chen was reputedly visited by many visions of Dbyangs can ma and these visions periodically returned throughout his life. He thus began to compose poems at a young age. We are told that when he wrote his odes to Dbyangs can ma such as the *Rje btsun lha mo'i bstod pa bung ba'i glu dbyangs* and other poetic works, he signed these with "Dbyangs can dga' ba'i paṇḍita"<sup>12</sup> and when he composed other poetic works after having been privy to these visions, he signed himself as "Dbyangs can gyi yid la dga' ba'i spel ba'i paṇḍita".<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, one of these, his annotations to his great-uncle Lo tsā ba Byang chub rtse mo's (1315–1379) translation of Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta* [Tib. *Sprin gyi pho nya*] that he apparently composed at the request of Byang bdag Rnam rgyal grags bzang (1395–1475), the lord of Byang principality, has to my knowledge not yet been found.<sup>14</sup>

Far from being his collected or complete oeuvre, the large collection of treatises called *De kho na nyid kyi 'dus pa rgyas pa* or *-rgya mtsho* contains many of his own compositions, but also some that were written by other scholars such as his great great-uncle Dpang Lo tsā ba Blo gros brtan pa (1276–1342) and Bu ston Rin chen grub (1209–1364). Several editions of this sizable collection were published; these are the following<sup>15</sup>:

1. *Encyclopedia Tibetica. The collected works of Bo-don Paṇ chen Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal*, edited by S. T. Kazi. Delhi: The Tibet House, 1969-1981. Vols. 137.<sup>16</sup>
2. *Bo dong Paṇ chen gyi gsung 'bum chen mo*, edited by Hi ma la'i rig mdzod 'tshol bsdu phyogs sgrig khang. Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2014. Vols. 95.

<sup>12</sup> The *Bung ba'i glu dbyangs* ode to Dbyangs can ma is signed by "Dbyangs can dga' ba, but the *Phag mo dkar mo'i bstod pa ka smad dang sbyar ba*, an acrostic ode to the white Vajravārāhī, is indeed signed by "Dbyangs can dga' ba'i paṇḍita"; see, respectively, *Bo dong* vol. 95, 102, 94.

<sup>13</sup> 'Jigs med 'bangs 1990, 60, 61. I have not seen the latter, but he signed his long series of odes to tantric deities – see *Bo dong* vol. 95, 288 – with the following names: 'Bum phrag brgya pa, Slob dpon 'Chi med sde, and Blo gros mi zad pa.

<sup>14</sup> 'Jigs med 'bangs 1990: 132. The Tibetan version and reception of the *Megadhūta* and much else was studied in consummate detail in Epperson 2017. One of several letters Bo dong Paṇ chen had written to Byang bdag was subtitled *Sprin gyi pho na*; see *Bo dong* vol. 95, 332-336.

<sup>15</sup> The *Bo dong* collection at no. 3 is an edition of what are so far all the extant works of Bo dong Paṇ chen and includes a record of what he had studied, his *gsan yig*. It was referenced in Anonymous 2016: 48 and can now be consulted in *Bo dong* vol. 98, 435-483.

<sup>16</sup> An undated recent reprint of this collection in *pothi* format is found in bdrc.org, no. W4CZ369500.

3. *Bo dong Paṇ chen Phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi gsung 'bum*, edited by Spong rong Zla ba and Padma chos sdings dgon. Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 2019. Vols. 101. [= *Bo dong*]

The idea of creating such a *De [kho na] nyid kyi 'dus pa* or '*Dus pa* compendium occurred to him when he was around thirty.<sup>17</sup> The result was a stupendous intellectual and literary tour de force that resulted in four versions of different length: an extensive (*rgyas pa*), a middling ('*bring po*), a brief (*bsdus pa*), and a synoptic précis (*shin tu bsdus pa snying po*) one. And 'Jigs med 'bangs informs us of their respective size<sup>18</sup>:

- |    |                                   |  |
|----|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. | <i>Rgyas pa</i>                   | one hundred and ten volumes ( <i>glegs bam</i> ) |
| 2. | ' <i>Bring po</i>                 | twenty volumes                                   |
| 3. | <i>Bsdus pa</i>                   | two volumes                                      |
| 4. | <i>Shin tu bsdus pa snying po</i> | one small volume                                 |

The '*Dus pa*'s initial architecture that is relevant to this essay is as follows (my translations of the headings are rather loose)<sup>19</sup>:

Four gates of entry ('*jug pa'i sgo bzhi*)

I. Gate of entry for the ignorant (*byis pa' jug pa'i sgo*)

1. Lesson for the body (*lus kyi bslab pa*)
2. Lesson of speech/language (*ngag gyi bslab pa*)
  - a. Reading lesson (*yi ge klog pa'i bslab pa*)
  - b. Writing lesson ('*bri ba'i bslab pa*)
3. Lesson for the mind (*yid kyi bslab pa*)

II. Gate of entry for the learned (*mkhas pa' jug pa'i sgo*)

1. Manufacture domain of knowledge
2. Healing arts
3. Language arts
4. Logic and epistemology

<sup>17</sup> For an account of its inception and printing, see *Bo dong* vol. 100, 494-523

<sup>18</sup> 'Jigs med 'bangs 1990: 254; see also Sharson 2016. Anonymous 2016: 127-187 gives a list of the contents of this barely studied collection.

<sup>19</sup> 'Jigs med 'bangs 1990, 241: 252-253.

## III. Gate for entering "sutric"-Buddhism

## IV. Gate for entering "tantric"-Buddhism

Given these preliminary remarks, let us now examine Bo dong Paṇ chen's extant writings on the language arts. I use here the computer-generated texts of *Bo dong* which includes the collection of "newly acquired" treatises that were originally published in 2009. His biographies do make note of a substantial body of his works of poetry in the form of odes (*bstod pa*), and many of these shorter pieces are now available for study and...enjoyment. I have not itemized these below since their colophons are not especially rewarding. Two additional long pieces come into play; these are his poetic retellings of the life of the Buddha and his compilation of *jātaka*-rebirth tales of the Buddha.<sup>20</sup> It will be noted that several texts are incomplete. Further, I recommend that when these are studied, one should compare the readings of this recension with those of the 1969-1981 publication. In what follows, I retain the spelling mistakes in the original texts. Titles with an \* are made-up titles. On occasion, there are no colophons and where there are colophons, I reproduce the information that they provide in the order it is given.

I2a *Legs sbyar kyi skad kyi bklag thabs*, vol.1, 48-73.

Subject: On Sanskrit and its pronunciation.<sup>21</sup>

As was pointed out by Ms. Li Xiaonan, my visiting PhD student in 2023, this work is substantially identical to Dpang Lo tsā ba's *Tshogs gsum gsal ba*, his work on the triad (*tshogs gsum*, *trikāya*) of pho-neme/letter/graph (*yi ge*, *vyañjana*), word (*ming*, *nāma*), and phrase (*tshig*, *pada*).<sup>22</sup>

I2b1 \**Dag yig mthong ba don ldan*, vol. 1, 73-85.

Author: Dbyangs can dga' ba'i blo gros.

<sup>20</sup> For the first, see *Bo dong* vol. 9, 1-146. The second is cited in Anonymous 2016: 129 as the *Skye rabs kyi phreng ba snyan dngags kyi bstan bcos padma dkar po'i chun po ngang pa'i bu mo'i yid la dga' ba spel ba*, but it does not seem to be included in his works. The collection of *jātaka* tales that is found in *Bo dong* vol. 9, 147-477 and vol. 10 is a version of the Āryaśūra's (4<sup>th</sup> c.) *Jātakamālā*.

<sup>21</sup> 'Jigs med 'bangs 1990: 98 relates that his teachers of Sanskrit were Lo tsā ba Nam mkha' bzang po (ca.1350-ca.1420) and Lo tsā ba Shes rab dpal. Both men are given capsule biographies in 'Dar stod Dgra 'dul dbang po 1987: 306.

<sup>22</sup> See Verhagen 2001: 75-79.

- Subject: On Tibetan orthography.
- I2b2 \**Yi ge 'bri ba*, vol. 1, 85-93.
- Subject: On writing and penmanship.
- II1 *Sgra ka lā pa'i 'grel pa[ 'i stod cha/smad cha]*, vols. 2-4, 1-349.
- Subject: Sanskrit grammar; an unidentified commentary on *Kātantra* / *Kalāpasūtra*.<sup>23</sup>
- II2 \**Sdeb sbyor rtsa 'grel*, vol. 4, 351-397.
- Subject: On Sanskrit prosody.  
Incomplete?
- II3 \**Ming gi mngon par brjod pa*, vol. 4, 399-430.
- Subject: Lexicography based on a translation of the first part of the *Amarakoṣa*.
- II4 *Snyan ngag gi mtshan nyid rab tu gsal ba'i me long*, vol. 5, 1-52.
- Subject: A Tibetan recension of Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa* [*Snyan ngag me long*].  
Chapter 1: 1-9  
Chapter 2: 9-37  
Chapter 3: 37-52
- II5 *Snyan ngag me long gi 'grel pa de nyid gsal ba*, vol. 5, 53-217.
- Author: Not identified but must be Dpang Lo tsā ba.<sup>24</sup>
- Subject: Commentary on the *Snyan ngag me long* [which the author wrote in Sa skya monastery].
- II6 \*[*Snyan ngag gi*] *don gyi rgyan rab tu gsal ba'i me long*, vol. 5, 217-238.

<sup>23</sup> For the Indic corpus in Tibetan translation of this work, see Verhagen 1994: 63-72, 81-84, 116-117, 193-198.

<sup>24</sup> Though anonymous, this text is essentially yet another recension of the *Snyan ngag me long* commentary by Dpang Lo tsā ba; see Dpang Lo tsā ba 1981 and No Date[b]. See Dimitrov 2002: 48-50 and 2011: passim.

- Author: Dpal 'Chi ba med pa'i sde, alias Phyogs las rnam par rgyal ba'i lha, 'Jigs med grags pa or my/his second name Dhar-madvādza [= Chos kyi rgyal mtshan].
- Subject: A study of the semantic figures of speech (*don rgyan*, *arthālaṃkāra*) of the *Snyan ngag me long* with narratives that include the one on the Bodhisattva Rtag tu rngu ba [Sadāprarudita].
- II7 \**Snyan ngag gi rgyan gsal byed mdor bsdus pa*, vol. 5, 238-246
- Author: Dbyangs can dga' ba.
- Place: In the Dpal E monastery.
- Subject: The fifty-five main semantic figures of speech and it cites to this effect their enumeration in *Snyan ngag me long* II, 4-7, but also adds several figures of speech based on phonology (*sgra rgyan*, *śabdālaṃkāra*).
- II8 \**Snyan ngag gi lus mdzes par byed pa brgyan sum cu rtsa lnga'i rnam par bshad pa*, vol. 5, 247-252.
- Author: Dpal 'jigs med pa, Dbyangs can dga' ba.
- Subject: Explanation of thirty-five poetic figures
- This text is based on a different manuscript of the same work of II7.
- II9 *Snyan ngag gyi bstan bcos yid kyi shing rta*, vol. 5, 253-333<sup>25</sup>
- Author: Dbyangs can dga' ba, Phyogs las rnam rgyal, 'Jigs med grags pa.
- Date: Written when he was twenty-three [= twenty-two] years old.
- Subject: A long *snyan ngag*-style poem in three chapters.

<sup>25</sup> See also Bo dong Paṅ chen 1976 and Bo dong Paṅ chen 2017[a]. A careful study of this work may uncover that it is a partly disguised historical poem that has events of the immediate past as its subject matter.

- II10 *Snyan ngag gi bstan 'chos padma dkar po'i chun po ngang bu mo'i yid la dga' ba 'phel*, vol. 5, 333-369.<sup>26</sup>

Author: Phyogs las rnam rgyal.  
 Subject: A narrative poem that retells the famous  
*Jātaka* story of the hungry tigress.  
 Chapter 1: *Stag mo lus yongs su btang ba*  
 Incomplete?

- II11 *Kun tu dga' ba'i zlos gar*, vol. 5, 369-385.

Subject: Drama, compare here the titles of the canonical  
*Nāgānanda* and *Lokānanda*!

- II12 *Snyan ngag gi bstan bcos dbyangs can mgul rgyan*, vol. 5, 385-412.

Author: 'Jigs med phyogs thams cad las rnam par rgyal  
 ba.

Subject: A poetic dramatic work in five chapters:

Chapter 1: *Zlos gar gyi gleng gzhis blo  
 gsal gyi yid 'dzin pa ku mu  
 ta'i dga' ston*, 385-392.

Chapter 2: *Zlos gar gyi bkod pa utpala  
 la'i dga' ston*, 392-395.

Chapter 3: *Zlos gar sgyur ba'i tshul  
 snying gi mun pa sel ba  
 padma'i dga' ston*, 395-399.

Chapter 4: *Zlos gar gyi yan lag gzhon  
 nu'i lang tsho dga' ba'i dga'  
 ston*, 399-405.

Chapter 5: *Bsam gtan bde ba rnam par  
 'phel ba'i yon tan gyi  
 mdzod*, 405-412.

Note: This work must of course not be confused with  
 King Bhoja's (11<sup>th</sup> c.) *Sarasvatikaṇṭhābharaṇa*  
 which Sa skya Paṇḍita knew and even cites  
 twice.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> This youthful work is mentioned *inter alia* in 'Jigs med 'bangs 1990: 94.

<sup>27</sup> Gold 2007: 119-120. Bo dong Paṇ chen also re-used the expression *dbyangs can mgul rgyan* as a subtitle for his ode to Dbyangs can ma; see *Bo dong* vol. 95, 94-96.

- II13 *Khyad par du 'phags pa phun sum tshogs pa'i bkod pa tswa rgyad* [read: *bco brgyad*] *kyi rnam par thar pa rin po che'i phreng ba skye dgu mdzes par byed pa'i mgul rgyan*, vol. 95, 300-306.<sup>28</sup>

Author: Shā kya'i dge slong Mang du thos pa 'Jigs med grags pa phyogs las rnam par rgyal ba.

Subject: A biographical ode to Si tu (< Ch. *situ* 司徒) Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags (1389–1442) of Rgyal mkhar rtse and his family.

The biography of the Si tu by an unidentified author – Anonymous 1987 – was largely composed around this poem by using, again, the *bcad lhug spel ma can* style, where the verses that describe the eighteen extraordinary (phun tshogs *bco brgyad*) surrounding the Si tu's life were taken from this work.<sup>29</sup> As we read in Anonymous 1987: 267, Bo dong Paṇ chen had personally handed this composition to the Si tu sometime at the end of 1440 or the beginning of 1441. They had had met several times before and the Si tu was a patron of Bo dong E monastery and a host of other monasteries. This work is also referred to as the *Dharma ra dza rnam par thar pa rin chen phreng ba*. Anonymous 1987, 1 virtually verbatim cites its verses of homage and statement of purpose without identifying their source. And Anonymous 1987: 12, 21, 25, etc. cites its verses and attributes these to a list of names, all of which point to one person, Bo dong Paṇ chen: Mkhas grub chen po Phyogs las rnam rgyal, Mkhas grub chen po 'Jigs med grags pa, Mkhas grub Dbyangs can dga' ba, Mkhas grub Blo gros mi zad pa, Mkhas grub chen po Sangs rgyas bskyangs pa, Mkhas grub 'Chi med grub pa, Mkhas grub 'Bum phrag brgya pa, Mkhas grub Gsang ba byin pa, Mkhas grub Mkha' 'gro dbang po, Mkhas grub chen po Yon tan

<sup>28</sup> For another manuscript of this work, see Bo dong Paṇ chen 1972.

<sup>29</sup> This work was begun in the year 1479 in Nor bu khyung rtse, the second palace of the ruling house of Rgyal mkar rtse, and was completed in 1481 during the full moon day of the month *khrrums* (*bhādrapada*), that is, ca. September 8. The scribes were Rdo rje tshe brtan and Bsod nams bkra shis. It falls into three main parts (*spyi don*): [1] pp. 3-21; pp. 36-281; [3] pp. 281-376; concluding colophon, 376-379. The first part deals with the Si tu's family background, the second with his life, and the third with his descendants and the fortunes of the principality.



mi zad pa, Mkhas grub Chos kyi rgyal mtshan, Mkhas grub chen po Ri khrod 'dum bu pa, and Mkhas grub Ngang tshul zhi ba.

Striking is that none of the colophons of the above treatises contain any dates of their composition. As we will presently see, it is different with the colophons of Snar thang Lo tsā ba's writings.

### B. Snar thang Lo tsā ba

As stated above, not much is known about Snar thang Lo tsā ba.<sup>30</sup> One of his teachers of Sanskrit was Bo dong Lo tsā ba Rdo rje rgyal mtshan. 'Dar stod notes in his capsule biography that another of his teachers of Sanskrit and the language arts was the influential Shab smad Lo tsā ba Thugs rje dpal (?–after 1439)<sup>31</sup> who in turn had been a student of Lo tsā ba Nam mkha' bzang po and Lo tsā ba Shes rab dpal. He was the author of commentaries on the *Cāndravyākaraṇa* and the *Kātantra*.<sup>32</sup> 'Dar stod also singles out 'Gos Lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal (1392–1481)<sup>33</sup> and Khirms [also: Khrus] khang Lo tsā ba Bsod nams rgya mtsho'i sde (1424–1482) as his two main students where the language arts were concerned, and he figures in the list of Rong ston's last disciples.<sup>34</sup> Further, he also received some oral information on the *Kāvyadarśa* from Vanaratna (1384–1468) or Nags kyi rin chen, as he cites him to this effect.<sup>35</sup>

*Gsung 'bum*, bdrc.io, W3CN18538

<sup>30</sup> 'Dar stod 1987: 308–309.

<sup>31</sup> Anonymous 1987: 256–257 states that he and Bkra shis rgya mtsho were ultimately responsible for editing and printing a *Gzungs 'bum*, a collection of spells from sutras and tantras, that had been compiled by Bu ston; see Bu ston 1965–1971. They also added some further spells to Bu ston's collection. The team that was assembled for this project included Mkhas pa Snye mo Shag ram pa Dpon mo che Mgon dpal and Dpal Phyag rdor 'phel as scribes and Mkhas pa Gong dkar ba Dpon mo che Bzod pa 'phel, Bzad pa Dpon, and Mon mo Rdor ra, master and apprentice, as the carvers of the printing blocks. They began their editorial and scribal work around the middle of 1439 at the great Dpal 'khor lo bde [also: sde] chen seminary and completed it a little over three months later in the beginning of September. The printing began during the middle of the following year and was completed on the auspicious date of the full moon day of the month *sa* [*ga*] (*vaiśākha*) of the iron-female-hen year, April 6, 1441.

<sup>32</sup> For his commentary on the first, see Lo tsā ba Thugs rje dpal 1976. Verhagen 2001: 177–178 pointed to the sharp criticism Si tu Paṇ chen Chos kyi 'byung gnas (1699–1774) levelled against his work.

<sup>33</sup> His short introduction to Sanskrit is found in 'Gos Lo tsā ba No Date.

<sup>34</sup> Gser mdog Paṇ chen 1975: 336.

<sup>35</sup> Snar thang Lo tsā ba 1976: 2, 415.

1. *Sdeb sbyor gyi bstan bcos lha'i rnga dbyangs sgra brgya pa*, fols. 1-18 [pdf. 167-202]; *dbu med* manuscript.

Colophon: ...*dpal snar thang gi mkhan po gnas brtsan bcu drug gi sprul pa / bsod nams mchog grub grags pa bzang dpal gyi bka' gnang ba dang / ... dge ba'i bshes gnyen nam mkha' bsod nams kyis kyang yang dang yang du bskul ba'i ngor / ... snar thang paṇ chen samgha shris / sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa lo lnga stong du gnas pa las / lnga brgya phrag bdun rdzogs pa'i rjes / mdo sde'i dus lta bu shing mo yos kyi lo'i rgyal gyi zla tshes gcig la / dpal rtse thang gi chos grwa chen pos sbyar ba'o // ...*

Petitioners: Snar thang monastery's fifteenth abbot  
Bsod nams mchog grub bzang dpal  
(1399–1458) and Dge bshes Nam mkha'  
bsod nams.  
Author: Paṇ chen Samgha shri.  
Date: The first day of the month *rgyal* (*pauṣa*) of the  
wood-female-hare year; December 20, 1435.  
Place: The great seminary of Rtse thang.  
Subject: A study of Sanskrit prosody.

The year 1435 is calculated in accordance with the duration of the Buddha's teaching after his passing by using the five-thousand-year scenario that was perhaps first formulated by Buddhaghosa (5<sup>th</sup>c.). This was later adopted by the author of the large study of the *Prajñāpāramitā* sutras<sup>36</sup> which, when translated into Tibetan, then did the rounds in Tibetan intellectual circles. Snar thang Lo tsā ba states that seven five-hundred-year units have passed and that we are now in the sutra-epoch (*mdo sde'i dus*) which extends from 3500-4000 years. While he does not say when the wood-female-hare year might have taken place in the five-hundred-year sutra-epoch, the only such year that can come into play is the year 1435. See also below under nos. 4 and 6.

<sup>36</sup> He is often identified as Daṃṣṭrāsena, a strange name as there ever was one! For the many problems associated with the authorship of this work and the various Tibetan identifications of its author, see van der Kuijp Forthcoming[a].

2. *Rten 'brel gyi sgra sgrub niṣṭha'i 'dod rkyen ngo bzung ba dang bcas pa*, fols. 1-5b [pdf. 203-212]; *dbu med* manuscript.<sup>37</sup>

Colophon: ... *paṇḍi ta samgha shris dpal rtse thang gi chos gra chen po'i gtsug lag khang du bya lo zla ba brgyad pa'i skar ma rgyal yongs rdzogs par sbyar ba'i yi ge pa ni dge ba'i bshes gnyen dpal ldan legs so //*

Author: Paṇḍita Samgha shri.  
 Scribe: Dge bshes Dpal ldan legs.  
 Date: The completion of the constellation *skar ma rgyal (puṣya)* of the eighth month of a hen-year (?1417, ?1429, ?1441).  
 Place: Temple of the great seminary of Rtse thang.  
 Subject: Grammatical analysis of the expression *pratitya-samputpada*.<sup>38</sup>

3. *A pra shi kha'i don 'grel*, fols. 5b-7a [pdf. 212-14]; *dbu med* manuscript.

No colophon.

Subject: The meaning of the four syllables *a pra shi kha*.

In his famous chronicle, Bu ston mentions *a pra shi kha* in the following sentence<sup>39</sup>:

*kha cig nges tshig sgra'i bshad pa min par  
 'dod mi 'thad de / a pra shi kha la sogs pa  
 sgra'i bshad par gnas bryad du bshad pas so  
 //*

The earliest attestation of this expression occurs in the *Gnas brgyad chen po'i rtsa ba* of which Lce Khyi 'brug<sup>40</sup> (ca. 800) was the ostensible author; there we read:

<sup>37</sup> A manuscript of an undated and shorter study of which begins with a line of homage to Nāgārjuna is found in Bkra shis rgya mtsho No Date. I wonder if he could be the same Bkra shis rgya mtsho as the one mentioned above in note 31.

<sup>38</sup> Candrakīrti (7<sup>th</sup> c.) has given a detailed grammatical analysis of the term, together with a criticism of Bhāviveka's earlier explanation, in his *Prasannapadā*; see MacDonald 2015: 18-39.

<sup>39</sup> Bu ston 1988: 40. The translations of this sentence that I have seen are not altogether happy ones.

<sup>40</sup> Verhagen 2001: 6-14 has given a preliminary assessment of this complex little work.

*yan lag bsgyur ba ni / tshig gcig gi sgra'i yan  
lag phral te / ji ltar a pra shi kha zhes bya ba  
so sor phral la / a las bsgyur na / a ne na dhi  
[var. dhī] dza mi tre / pra biṣṭe haṃ bandha  
re / shi ra mā kra mya bā de ni [var.: na] /  
kha gaṃ ne na muṇḍo pa tshi tya / zhes bya  
ba lta bu'o //*

The manuscript of Snar thang Lo tsā ba's text reproduces the Sanskrit stanza, warts and all, as follows [letters in bold reflect the manuscript's letters in red] and offers a Tibetan translation:

*a ne na dvi ja mittre ṇa /  
**pra** biṣṭe va na rda re /  
**shi** ra mū kra mya /  
**kh**arge na muṇḍe pa tshi tya / zhes pa bsgyur na  
/*

*grogz po 2 skyes pa 'di yis ni /  
nags su rab zhugs bdag bzung nas /  
thor tshugs rkang pas mnan nas ni /  
ral gris mgo bo nye bar bcin*

This twice born [brahmin] friend,  
Entered the forest and took me.  
Trampling with his foot on my hairknot,  
He cut off my head with a sword.

The Dalai Lama V gives another "translation" of the verse in his 1645 study of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* and its associated literature. Unfortunately, he does not identify his source<sup>41</sup>:

*/ snying dang 'dra ba'i grogz pa 'dis /  
/ dben pa'i gnas su bdag bzung ste /  
/ rkang pas mgo bo mnan byas nas /  
/ ral gris mgo bo nye bar bcad /*

This friend who is like my heart,  
Took me to an isolated place.  
Holding my head down with his feet,

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<sup>41</sup> Dalai Lama V 2009: 5.

He cut off my head with a sword.

4. *Don rgyan gsal ba'i me long mkhas pa dga' byed 'od zer 'bum phrag brgya*, fols. 1-26b [pdf. 217-269]; *dbu med* manuscript.

Colophon: ... *chos kyi rje rin po che bsod nams blo gros kyis kyang snga gong mas bkas gnang gis bskul ba dang / dge ba'i bshes gnyen khyad par can...rnam yang du yang du bskul ba'i ngor / ... skad gnyis smra ba snar thang pa paṇ chen sam gha shris ri bo chen sman chen gyi nags 'dab / dpal snar thang gi chos grwa chen po'i gtsug lag khang du / sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa lo 3 stong lnga brgya drug bcu rtsa lnga 'das pa'i chu pho byi ba yongs 'dzin gyi lo sa ga zla ba'i dga' ba'i tshes bcu cigi nyin par legs par sbyar ba'i dge bas*

Petitioners: Chos kyi rje Rin po che Bsod nams blo gros and others.  
 Author: The bilingual Snar thang pa Paṇ chen Sam gha shri.  
 Place: The temple of the great seminary of Dpal Snar thang, the forest of Ri bo chen sman chen.  
 Date: The eleventh day of *dga' ba* of the month *sa ga* (*vaiśākha*) of the water-male-rat, the *yongs 'dzin* (*paridhāvin*) year; May 10, 1432.  
 Subject: Illustrations of the poetic figures based on semantics.

Snar thang Lo tsā ba specifies that the year 1432 indicates that three thousand five hundred and sixty-five years had passed of the Buddha's teaching. This means that "the Buddha's teaching" began in *circa* 2133 BCE, which is the years of the Buddha's passing according to the Sa skya pa school. The first treatise in *Gsung 'bum*, bdrc.io, W3CN18538, 81b-82a [pdf 165] is a large composite study of ritual texts anent Amoghapaśa that he wrote under the long-standing grace of a certain Shī la ratna [Tshul khriims rin chen]. He completed it on the full moon day of the first half of the month *sgron*, the third month,<sup>42</sup> of the year wood-female-hen, the *sa*

<sup>42</sup> The third month is the month *nag* (*caitra*) and I am not familiar with its putative equivalent *sgron*.

*skyong* (*pārthiva*), year; ?April 14, 1405. The year 1405 is said to correspond to the year when two thousand and four hundred and eighty-three years will have passed (*'gro ba*) since the full enlightenment of the Teacher in Vajrāsana (*ston pa yang dar par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas rdo rje gdan du mngon par rdzogs par sangs rgyas nas lo nyi stong dang bzhi brgya gya gsum 'gro ba*). He thus follows here quite a different calculation from the one of the Sa skya pa school. He then states that this is also the year in which Śrīpāla, the [seventeenth] Kalkī king for the first time mounted the throne to teach Buddhism in Shambhala (*byang sham bha lar rigs ldan dpal* [82a] *skyong seng ge'i khri la thog mar chos ston pa la phebs pa sa skyong zhes bya ba shing mo bya'i lo zla ba gsum pa sgron zla ba'i dkar phyogs kyi nya la rdzogs pa..*). See also nos. 1 and 6.

5. *Snyan sngags kyi 'grel snar thang pas mdzad pa...*, fols. 1–58 [pdf. 270–384]; *dbu med* manuscript.

Colophon:...*shar rgyal mo rong*s [sic!] *pa chen po zhes bya ba rong ston sha kya rgyal mtshan gyis /...bka' gnang yang yod pa dang / khyad par...bzad kyi ston pa blo gros rgya mtshos snyan ngag 'di la fi ka gcig kyang mdzod gsung ba yod pas / sa mo bya'i lo'i ston zla tha chung smin drug gi zla ba'i rgyal gyi nyin gnas lnga yongs su rdzogs pa'i paṇḍi ta chen po sam gha shris dpal ldan snar thang gi chos sde chen po'i gtsug lag khang du legs par sbyar ba'o // sngar gyi tik rnying pa 'di la yi ge pas nor pa yang lung du byas snang zhing / mi bde ba re re tsam 'dug pa'ang : legs par bcos nas dag par byas yod pas / dus phyis kyi ma phyi mdzad pa rnam* 'di la mdzad par zhu /

Petitioners: Rong ston and Bzad ston Blo gros rgya mtsho.  
 Date: November 20, 1429.  
 Author: The fully-fledged great Paṇḍita Sam gha shri.  
 Place: The temple of the great seminary of Lustrous Snar thang.  
 Subject: Commentary on the third chapter of the *Snyan ngag me long* / *Kāvyaḍarśa*.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>43</sup> For his work *in toto*, see Dimitrov 2002: 51-52, 127-129 and below nos. 9-10.

The afterword states that the older commentaries contained scribal mistakes that he corrected. And he thus expresses the wish that those who prepare master copies (*ma phyi*) later will heed these corrections. Note that he does not ascribe these errors to specific authors.

6. *Ming gi mngon brjod gser phreng rol pa*, fols. 1-30 [pdf. 385-443]; *dbu med* manuscript.

Colophon: ...*yang dag pa yongs kyi dge ba'i bshes gnyen bka' bcu pa la sos / yang yang du bskul ba dang / gzhan yang / dge ba'i bshes gnyen sde snod 'dzin pa nam mkha' bsod nams kyis kyang / snga mo nas bskul ba dang / khyad par du yang gung ru ba'i dbon po...grags pa rgya mtsho zhes bya bas / yang yang du nan gyis bskul ba la brten nas...mang du thos pa'i dge slong skad gnyis smra ba sang gha shris / sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa lnga stong du gnas pa las / lnga brgya pa phrag bdun rdzogs pa'i rjes / mdo sde'i dus / sa mo lug gi lo ste / don grub kyi lo yis dbyu gu'i zla ba'i yar gyi ngo la dpal rtzes thang gi chos grwa chen po'i gtsug lag khang du legs par sbyar ba'i yi ge pa ni dge ba'i bshes gnyen nam mkha' bsod nams so / de'i logs las shus pa'i phyag dpe' 'di'i / sor mo'i bzlos gar li pi ka ra shri* [sublinear gloss: *yi ge pa ni dpal ldan rgyal mtshan*] ??? *tshes legs par bris / snyan ngag pa kun la phan par shog /*

Petitioners: A Bka' bcu pa, Nam mkha' bsod nams and the nephew of Gung ru ba, Grags pa rgya mtsho.  
 Author: Sang gha shri, the bilingual well-versed monk.  
 Date: The first half of the month *dbyu gu* [ninth] of the earth-female-sheep year, the year *don grub* (*siddhārtha*); October 9-22, 1439.  
 Place: The temple of the great seminary of Lustrous Rtses thang.  
 Scribe: Nam mkha' bsod nams.  
 Subject: A lexicon.  
 Copier: Scribe (*li pi ka ra* < Skt. *lipikara*) Dpal ldan rgyal mtshan.

For the year, see also nos. 1 and 4.

7. *Sum cu pa* [supralinear gloss: *snar thang pa sang ga shris*] [sub-linear gloss: *'i mchan tik*], fols. 7 [pdf. 445-457]; *dbu can* manuscript.

Colophon: *sum cu pa'i 'chan ti ka glags pas don thams cad grub pa zhes bya ba 'di ni / dpal gtse [sic!] thang gi gtsug lag khang du / skad gnyis smra ba sam ga shris / bshes gnyen mang pos bskul ba'i ngo bor sbyar ba yin no //*

Place: The temple of Dpal Gtse [= Rtses] thang.  
 Author: The bilingual Sam gha shri.  
 Petitioner: Many spiritual friends.  
 Subject: An interlinear commentary (*mchan 'grel*) of the *Sum cu pa*.

#### Other Writings of Snar thang Lo tsā ba

8. *Ming tshig brjod pa kun gyi gzhir gyur pa sgra bsgrubs nyer mkho blo gsal dag gis longs spyod mkhas pa'i yid phrog, dbu med* manuscript, bdrc.org, no. W4PD1207, vol. 56, fols. 20.

Author: Ma hā paṇḍi ta Sam ga shri [superscript: Lo tsā ba Dge 'dun dpal].  
 Place: The temple of the great seminary of Lustrous Rtses thang.  
 Petitioners: Bla ma A mo gha, Chos rgyal bzang po.  
 Date: The third day of the eighth month of a hen-year (?1417, ?1429, ?1441).

9. *Snyan ngag me long gi rgya cher 'grel pa* and *Snyan ngag me long gi bshad pa bklags pas don thams cad 'grub pa, dbu med* manuscript, 2 vols, bdrc.io, no. W27415.

Full commentary on the *Snyan ngag me long*; with the identical colophons of above no. 5 and below no. 9. This work is listed in the bibliography under Snar thang Lo tsā ba 1976. We learn that it was written posterior to those of [Gung thang pa] Bde ba'i blo gros and 'Jam dbyangs Kha che [?Bsod nams dpal] as he cites them.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Snar thang Lo tsā ba 1976: 1, 79 and 215. Van der Kuijp Forthcoming[b] is a study of some salient parts of this work. Only 'Jam dbyangs Kha che's commentary on the second chapter of the *Snyan ngag me long* has been published so far; see 'Jam dbyangs Kha che, 1985. 'Dar stod 1987: 304 states that aside from his *Snyan ngag*



10. *Snyan ngag me long ba'i bshad pa bklags pas don thams cad 'grub pa, dbu med* manuscript, bdrc.io, no. W2CZ7881, fols. 187.

See above nos. 5 and 10.

11. *Sngags kyi bklag thabs bsdus pa*, Sku 'bum Byams pa gling monastery xylograph, fols. 3, bdrc.io, no. W1KG10582.

Author: The bilingual Snar thang Lo tsā ba.  
 Petitioner: Bshes gnyen Blo gros dpal 'bar in Thang po che.  
 Subject: How to pronounce Sanskrit mantras.<sup>45</sup>

12. *Sngags kyi bklag thabs bsdus pa'i 'grel ba mthong ba don gsal*, Sku 'bum Byams pa gling monastery xylograph, fols.16, bdrc.io, no. W1KG10582.

Author: Lo tsā ba Saṃ gha shrī of Snar thang.  
 Petitioner: Bshes gnyen Blo gros dpal 'bar, the teacher of Thang po che.  
 Date: 1420  
 Sponsor: The monk Ngag dbang bzod pa was responsible for the carving of the blocks for the xylograph.  
 Subject: A commentary on no. 12.

At least two additional commentaries were written on the *Sngags kyi bklag thabs bsdus*; these are:

- a. Author: Bhu su ku<sup>46</sup>  
 Title: *Sngags kyi bklag thabs bsdus pa'i ṭi ka brda' sprod nges don smra ba'i mgrin rgyan, dbu med* manuscript, bdrc.io, no. W8LS31161, fols. 18.

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*me long* commentary, he also wrote a poetic work titled *Gtam rgyud ganga'i chu rgyun*. To my limited knowledge, neither work has been sighted so far.

<sup>45</sup> For this work and the auto-commentary [no. 12], see van der Kuijp 2024: 489-491. An earlier treatise belonging to this genre is a brief study of the subject by Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1291-1362), even if he is not known to have studied Sanskrit to the same extent as Snar thang Lo tsā ba; see Dol po pa 2001. The same can be said of Slob dpon Bsod nams rtse mo's (1142-1182) work on Indo-Tibetan linguistics which also contains some guidelines on the pronunciation of Sanskrit, for which see Slob dpon 2007.

<sup>46</sup> On him and his work, see van der Kuijp 2024: 492-493.

Date: The first half of the month *khnums stod* (*bhādrapada*) of the iron–hen year; 1561 or thereafter.<sup>47</sup>

Place: Sman ljongs rang nyid bsti ba'i gnas

b. Author: Gser thog pa Blo bzang tshul khriṃs rgya mtsho (1845–1915).

Title: *Sngags kyi bklag thabs btus pa'i mchan 'grel 'phags yul mkhas pa'i mgrin rgyan*, xylograph, *Collected Works*, vol. 6. bdrc.io, no. W29702, fols. 60.

Date: Not available.

Place: Ewaṃ dga' 'khyil, the new quarters of the Rtse bla brang of Gser thog dgon Dga' ldan 'gro phan gling.

13. *Sgra rgyan bsal* (sic) *ba'i me long mkhas pa dga' byed 'od brgya, dbu med* manuscript, *Brda sprod ma dpe phyogs bsdus*, vol. 12. bdrc.io, no. W3CN54, fols. 12.

Author: Snar thang Paṇ chen Sam gha sgr̥.

Place: The temple of the great seminary of Dpal Brtse [= Rtses] thang.

Date: During the eighth day of the month *mgo* (*mārgaśīrṣa*) of the wood–female–hare year: November 28, 1435.

Subject: Illustrations of the figures of speech based on phonology, here cadence<sup>48</sup> (*zung ldan*, *yamaka*), and those that are difficult to create (*bya dka'*, *duṣkara*).

Currently not available is his *Kātantra* commentary which he must have written before 1429 because he cites it in his *Snyan ngag me long* commentary.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> See van der Kuijp[b].

<sup>48</sup> Gerow 1971: 223 ff.

<sup>49</sup> Snar thang Lo tsā ba 1976: 1, 184.

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## Abbreviations:

bdrc.io      Buddhist Digital Research Center  
*Bo dong*      *Bo dong Paṇ chen Phyogs las rnam rgyal gyi gsung 'bum*,  
 edited by Spong rong Zla ba and Padma chos sdings  
 dgon. Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun  
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# Contextualizing a Mystery of Indic Commentaries on the *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna*

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his paper explores Indic commentaries on one of the most important Mahāyāna aspirations, the *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* (*Bzang spyod smon lam*), i.e., *Aspiration for Good Conduct*. Its aim is to demonstrate that four out of the five Indic commentaries on the *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* in the Tibetan *Bstan 'gyur* canonical collections are subject to a synoptic problem, i.e., they come down to the same (currently unavailable) Sanskrit archetype that reached Tibet in multiple hyparchetypes. The currently known attributions of these hyparchetypes are to \*Bhadrapaṇa (?), Buddhakīrti (?), Dignāga (c. 480–540), Guṇaprabha (c. 6th century), Nāgārjuna (c. 2nd–3rd century), and Vasubandhu (4th century), and potentially there could be other hyparchetypes circulating in India and reaching Tibet in the 9th–11th century. Why did compilers of the *Bstan 'gyur*s include four commentaries on the *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* that were so similar? It is likely thanks to the tremendous importance of this aspiration within the Tibetan tradition, as well as to the prominence of the attributed authors. In other words, it is not likely that texts attributed to Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, or Dignāga could be excluded from the *Bstan 'gyur*. In the following study, I will look at the genre of these hyparchetypes, their dates, and witnesses, as well as subject them to synoptic and stemmatic analyses.

## Sigla Codicorum

### Manuscripts:

M <sub>A1</sub>	IOL Tib J 147	}	Anonymous hyparchetype
M <sub>A2</sub>	PT 151		
M <sub>B1</sub>	IOL Tib J 146	}	*Bhadrapaṇa's hyparchetype
M <sub>B2</sub>	IOL Tib J 148 and PT 150		

### *Sde dge bstan 'gyur* Editions:

D <sub>B</sub>	*Bhadrapaṇa (Rgyan bzang po). <i>'Phags pa bzang po spyod pa'i smon lam gyi rgyal po'i rgya cher 'grel pa</i> ( <i>Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhānarājaṭikā</i> ). Tōh 4014, <i>Sde dge bstan 'gyur, mdo 'grel</i> , vol. 117 ( <i>nyi</i> ), ff. 234r4–252v4 (pp. 467–504).
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- D<sub>D</sub>** Dignāga (Phyogs kyi glang po). *Kun tu bzang po'i spyod pa'i smon lam gyi don kun bsdus* (Samantabhadracaryāpraṇidhānārthasaṃgraha). Tōh 4012, *Sde dge bstan 'gyur, mdo 'grel*, vol. 117 (nyi), ff. 182r1–201r4 (pp. 363–401).
- D<sub>N</sub>** Nāgārjuna (Klu grub). *'Phags pa bzang po spyod pa'i smon lam gyi rgyal po chen po'i bshad sbyar* (Āryabhadracaryāmahāpraṇidhānārājanibandhana). Tōh 4011, *Sde dge bstan 'gyur, mdo 'grel*, vol. 117 (nyi), ff. 163v4–182r1 (pp. 326–363).
- D<sub>V</sub>** Vasubandhu (Dbyig gnyen). *'Phags pa bzang po spyod pa'i smon lam gyi 'grel pa* (Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhānaṭikā). Tōh 4015, *Sde dge bstan 'gyur, mdo 'grel*, vol. 117 (nyi), ff. 252v5–269r7 (pp. 504–537).

### Introduction

The Noble Kinglike<sup>1</sup> Aspiration for Good Conduct (Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhānārāja, *'Phags pa bzang po spyod pa'i smon lam gyi rgyal po*),<sup>2</sup> hereafter *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna*, is commonly known in Sanskrit under its abbreviated title as *Bhadracaryā* or *Bhadracarī* and is considered one of the most important Mahāyāna aspirations (*praṇidhāna*, *smoṇ lam*). It is well known in the Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan traditions as an independent text, as well as the final part of the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*,<sup>3</sup> a Mahāyāna sūtra that is, itself, included as the final chapter of the large *Buddhāvataṃsakasūtra*.<sup>4</sup> In the Tibetan tradition, it is commonly referred to as *Bzang spyod smon lam*, i.e., *Aspiration for Good Conduct*, and is one of the most popular devotional texts.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Regarding “kinglike” in the translation of the *Aspiration's* title, the Skt. *rāja* in the compound *Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhānārāja* does not explicitly represent a simile (i.e., *rājopamaṇidhāna*) but rather a metaphor. Following the Tib. rendering *'Phags pa bzang po spyod pa'i smon lam gyi rgyal po*, King of Aspirations would be more precise. However, in English, it would require a repetition of the word “aspiration,” i.e., *The Aspiration for Good Conduct, King of Aspirations*. To avoid that, “kinglike” has been chosen as a translation option.

<sup>2</sup> *'Phags pa bzang po spyod pa'i smon lam gyi rgyal po* (Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhānārāja) [*The Noble Kinglike Aspiration for Good Conduct*]. Tōh 1095.

<sup>3</sup> *Shin tu rgyas pa chen po'i mdo sangs rgyas phal po che zhes bya ba las sdong pos brgyan pa'i le'u ste bzhi bcu rtsa lnga pa'o* (Buddhāvataṃsakanāmanamahāvaiṇipulyasūtrāt gaṇḍavyūhasūtrah paṭalāḥ) [*“The Stem Array” Chapter from the Mahāvaiṇipulya Sūtra “A Multitude of Buddhas”*]. Tōh 44–45.

<sup>4</sup> *Sangs rgyas phal po che zhes bya ba shin tu rgyas pa chen po'i mdo* (Buddhāvataṃsakanāmanamahāvaiṇipulyasūtra) [*The Mahāvaiṇipulya Sūtra “A Multitude of Buddhas”*]. Tōh 44.

<sup>5</sup> See a contextual exploration of the *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* in Vasylieva 2024 “The Sanskrit *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* and Its Tibetan Translation in Textual, Doctrinal,

A question may arise: “If the *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* is merely an aspiration, wouldn’t its words and meanings be self-evident? Why does it need a commentary?” In response to that, the *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna*’s words are not self-evident because it is composed in the Buddhist versified (*gāthā*) Sanskrit<sup>6</sup> and it has specific features unshared by the Classical Sanskrit. Moreover, the *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* contains many compounds (*samāsa*) that may have several possible separations (*vigraha*) into constituent words and thus allow for multiple interpretations. Furthermore, its meanings are not self-evident because it is much more than just an aspiration prayer, it is rather a quintessential summary of the whole bodhisattva path. In this sense, it is a *dhāraṇī* (*gzungs*), an instrument for the retention of the Mahāyāna Dharma.

It is thus not surprising that the commentaries on the *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* are plentiful. In the Tibetan tradition alone, at least ten can be currently found among the digitalized collections of the Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC), and there are certainly many more. Among them, there are commentaries of such prominent Tibetan masters as Śākya mchog ldan<sup>7</sup> (1428–1507), Jo nang rje btsun Tāranātha<sup>8</sup> (1575–1634), and Lo chen Dharmaśrī<sup>9</sup> (1654–1717). If one were to ask about the foundation upon which all these Tibetan commentaries are based, their initial framework may be found in the *Bstan ’gyur* canonical collections. There are six *Bstan ’gyur* commentaries on the *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna*: five Indic and one Tibetan.

The five Indic commentaries are attributed to Nāgārjuna (Klu grub),<sup>10</sup> Dignāga (Phyogs kyi glang po),<sup>11</sup> Śākyamitra (Shā kya bshes

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and Historical Contexts.”

<sup>6</sup> Regarding Buddhist Sanskrit, see, e.g., *Aspects of Buddhist Sanskrit* 1991.

<sup>7</sup> Shā kya mchog ldan. *Kun tu bzang po’i spyod pa’i smon lam gyi rgyal po’i rgya cher bshad pa dad pa rgya mtsho’i ’jug ngogs* [An Extensive Explanation of the Aspiration for Samantabhadra’s Conduct “A Gateway to the Ocean of Faith”]. In *Gser mdog paṇ chen shā kya mchog ldan gyi gsung ’bum gzhugs*, vol. 8, 375–461.

<sup>8</sup> Jo nang rje btsun Tā ra nā tha. *’Phags pa bzang po spyod pa’i smon lam gyi rgya cher ’grel pa ’phags mchog rnams kyi gsang ba’i mdzod* [An Extensive Commentary on the Noble Aspiration for Good Conduct “The Secret Treasury of the Exalted Nobles”]. In *Gsung ’bum*, vol. 17, 107–225.

<sup>9</sup> Lo chen dha rma shrī ngag dbang chos dpal rgya mtsho. *’Phags pa bzang po spyod pa’i smon lam gyi ’grel chung* [A Short Commentary on the Noble Aspiration for Good Conduct]. In *Gsun ’bum*, vol. 19, 344–364.

<sup>10</sup> Nāgārjuna. *’Phags pa bzang po spyod pa’i smon lam gyi rgyal po chen po’i bshad sbyar* (Aryabhadracaryāmahāpraṇidhānārājanibandhana) [Discourse on the Noble Kinglike Great Aspiration for Good Conduct]. Tōh 4011.

<sup>11</sup> Dignāga. *Kun tu bzang po’i spyod pa’i smon lam gyi don kun bsdus* (Samantabhadracaryāpraṇidhānārthasaṅgraha) [Synopsis of the Aspiration for Samantabhadra’s Conduct]. Tōh 4012.



gnyen),<sup>12</sup> \*Bhadrapaṇa (Rgyan bzang po),<sup>13</sup> and Vasubandhu (Dbyig gnyen).<sup>14</sup> Moreover, there are four Dunhuang manuscripts—two (IOL Tib J 146 and IOL Tib J 148/ PT 150) of the commentary attributed to \*Bhadrapaṇa and two (IOL Tib J 147 and PT 151) of an anonymous commentary that is not part of the *Bstan 'gyur* canonical collections. This commentary may be the one attributed to Guṇaprabha (Yon tan 'od) in the 9th century Tibetan catalogues (*dkar chag*) of the translated works.<sup>15</sup> Note that it is an assumption, and there is no available data to verify it. Thus, altogether there are six currently available Indic commentaries on the *Bhadracaryāprañidhāna*. Their examination leads to an interesting finding: four out of the five *Bstan 'gyur* commentaries—attributed to Nāgārjuna, Dignāga, \*Bhadrapaṇa, and Vasubandhu, as well as the fifth anonymous Dunhuang commentary—are strikingly similar. Only one Indic commentary, attributed to Śākyamitra, is different both in length and content.

With the support of comparative textual analysis, I would like to present the following hypothesis: the similarity of the five above-mentioned Indic commentaries is not just an example of a scholarly tendency of the time; rather they come down to the same (currently unavailable) Sanskrit archetype that reached Tibet in multiple hyparchetypes. Three out of the five commentaries—those attributed to Dignāga, \*Bhadrapaṇa, and Guṇaprabha—reached Tibet during the early spread of Dharma (*snga dar*) of c. 641–842, and the remaining two—of Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu—during the later spread (*spyi dar*) of 986—the beginning of the 14th century. The five above-mentioned hyparchetypes are not the only ones that were present in the 8th–14th century Tibet. Thus, Lo tsā ba Ye shes sde (mid 8th–early 9th century), mentions in his *Bstan 'gyur* subcommentary an Indic commentary of Buddhakīrti (Sangs rgyas grags pa).<sup>16</sup> There could have been more hyparchetypes circulating throughout India

<sup>12</sup> Śākyamitra. 'Phags pa bzang po spyod pa'i smon lam gyi rgyal po'i rgya cher 'grel pa (*Āryabhadracaryāprañidhānarājaṭikā*) [*Extensive Commentary on the Noble Kinglike Aspiration for Good Conduct*]. Tōh 4013.

<sup>13</sup> \*Bhadrapaṇa. 'Phags pa bzang po spyod pa'i smon lam gyi rgyal po'i rgya cher 'grel pa (*Āryabhadracaryāprañidhānarājaṭikā*) [*Extensive Commentary on the Noble Kinglike Aspiration for Good Conduct*]. Tōh 4014.

<sup>14</sup> Vasubandhu. 'Phags pa bzang po spyod pa'i smon lam gyi 'grel pa (*Āryabhadracaryāprañidhānaṭikā*) [*Extensive Commentary on the Noble Kinglike Aspiration for Good Conduct*]. Tōh 4015.

<sup>15</sup> Pho brang stong thang lhan dkar gyi chos 'gyur ro cog gi dkar chag bzhugs [*The Catalogue of All the Translated Dharma from Stong thang lhan dkar Palace*]. Tōh 4407, *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*, vol. 206, f. 306v2; *Dkar chag 'phang thang ma* [*The Catalogue from 'Phang thang*] 2003, 37.

<sup>16</sup> Ye shes sde. Bzang spyod kyi 'grel pa bzhi'i don bsdu nas brjed byang du byas pa bzhugs [*Mnemonic Synopsis of the Four Commentaries on the Aspiration for Good Conduct*]. Tōh 4402, *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*, vol. 206, f. 184r2 and f. 213r7.

and reaching Tibet at that time. However, only one of them is currently located—*Āryabhadracaryāpraṇidhānaṭīkā* attributed to Vasubandhu. It is mentioned in a publication in Japanese by Xuezhong Li,<sup>17</sup> in which he asserts that it is one of 156 palm-leaf manuscripts found in Nor bu gling kha in Tibet, and its copy is preserved in a box no. 37 at the China Tibetology Research Center (CTRC) in Beijing. It is a complete manuscript of 19 folios with a colophon that attributes the composition to Ācārya Vasubandhu. Unfortunately, there is no edition of this manuscript published yet, and there is no access to the manuscript itself.

The initial Sanskrit archetype of the hyparchetypes most probably was called *\*Bhadracaryāpraṇidhānaṭīkā* (*Bzang po spyod pa'i smon lam gyi 'grel pa*), hereafter *Ṭīkā*—in English, the *Commentary on the Aspiration for Good Conduct*. Although all the authors to whom it is attributed could have composed the *Ṭīkā*, my hypothesis is that the *Ṭīkā* was composed by a rather unknown author, and it was so well-written that started to be attributed to the greatest philosophers of the time. Assuming that the actual author is one of the attributions, the authorship should likely be attributed to *\*Bhadrapaṇa*. This will be further explained below.

Even without having access to the Sanskrit manuscript of the hyparchetype attributed to Vasubandhu, the *Ṭīkā* provides a unique opportunity for its study and translation, since it is available in five different Tibetan translations. This is a truly unique situation. Although many texts had several Tibetan translations in the past, only a few reached our times, primarily because, as a rule, only one translation was included in the canonical collections, and those not included were mostly lost.

As far as I am aware, there is only one recent Western-language research paper published by Jens-Uwe Hartmann<sup>18</sup> focused on the synoptic commentaries. Although, Hartmann does not call them “synoptic,” he draws the same conclusion stating that “In reality, the exemplars of commentaries 1, 2, 4 and 5 ascribed respectively to Nāgārjuna, Dignāga, rGyan bzang po, and Vasubandhu must have been derived from the same Indian text.”<sup>19</sup> It seems rather remarkable that the Western-language scholarship on the *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* apparently does not pay much attention to the commentarial tradition on it. For example, multiple English translations of the *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* show that the translators mostly treat it as an isolate without reliance on any commentary. The Japanese scholarship, as far as I can tell, is far ahead in this field. The synoptic problem

<sup>17</sup> Li 2020, 406–401.

<sup>18</sup> Hartmann 2023.

<sup>19</sup> Hartmann 2023, 131.

was first addressed by Keikyo Nakamikado and Koji Takahashi in a paper published in the Japanese language in 2005, in which it is stated that although the four commentaries have different titles, they are very similar and essentially the same.<sup>20</sup> Keikyo Nakamikado appears to be the main Japanese scholar who researched the *Bhadracaryāprañidhāna* and its *Bstan 'gyur* commentaries in the context of the tradition of Pure Land Buddhism.<sup>21</sup> Alone and together with Ryuzen Fukuhara and Koji Takahashi he published a series of papers containing annotated Japanese translations of the synoptic hyparchetype attributed to Dignāga and the first seven chapters of the subcommentary by Ye shes sde.<sup>22</sup>

### Defining the Genre of the *Ṭikā*

First, considering the genre of the *Bhadracaryāprañidhāna* as belonging to the *buddhavacana* (*bka'*), i.e., the Word of the Buddha, we can categorize the *Ṭikā* as being a Mahāyāna *śāstra* (*bstan bcos*), a treatise explaining the Word of the Buddha. In accordance with this status, *Ṭikā*'s hyparchetypes are included into the Tibetan *Bstan 'gyur* collections. The word *śāstra* is often translated as a "treatise" and could be understood as indicating a "teaching" or an "instruction."<sup>23</sup> Vasubandhu provides its conventional etymology (*nirukti*, *nges pa'i tshig*) in his *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, "it is called *śāstra* because of instructing disciples [by means of it]."<sup>24</sup>

However, in accordance with the explanation within the Buddhist tradition, *śāstra* is more than just a pedagogical text. It is endowed with special transcendental qualities. Vasubandhu explains its contextualized etymology in the *Vyākhyāyukti*,

Regarding its etymology (*nirukti*), since it cures (*śāsti*) and protects (*saṃtrāyate*), it is [called] *śāstra*:

It cures from all the enemies of afflictions  
And protects from the unfortunate states of existence.

<sup>20</sup> Nakamikado and Takahashi 2005, 2.

<sup>21</sup> Pure Land Buddhism or Pure Land School (Chinese *Jīngtūzōng*, Japanese *Jōdo bukkyō*) is a broad branch of Mahāyāna Buddhism focused on achieving rebirth in Buddha Amitābha's pure land called Sukhāvatī. It is one of the most widely practiced traditions of Buddhism in East Asia.

<sup>22</sup> Nakamikado and Takahashi 2005, Nakamikado and Fukuhara 2008, Nakamikado and Fukuhara 2010, Nakamikado and Fukuhara 2011, Nakamikado 2012, and Nakamikado 2013.

<sup>23</sup> In terms of the Sanskrit grammar, the term *śāstra* is derived by adding the suffix *ṣṭrn* (*tra*), which indicates an instrument, to the *√śās*, i.e., "to teach," "to instruct," etc. See Pāṇini 3.2.181-3.

<sup>24</sup> *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (Pradhan 1975, 2): *śiṣyaśāsanācchāstram*.

Since it possesses qualities of curing and protecting,  
It is [called] *śāstra*. These two [qualities] do not exist  
in other traditions.<sup>25</sup>

It implies that, within the Buddhist tradition, *śāstra* is understood as a means that serves the transcendental purpose of liberating one from saṃsāra.

Second, we can define the *Ṭīkā*'s genre as a commentary on the *Bhadracaryāpranidhāna*. That said, it must be noted that there are many different possible Sanskrit equivalents for what we may call a "commentary" in English: *arthasaṃgraha*—a synopsis, *avacūrikā*—a short commentary, *bhāṣya*—an explanation, *brhaṭṭīkā*—a large commentary, *nibandhana*—a discourse or a connected explanation, *padabhañjikā*—a commentary which separates and analyses words; *pañjikā*—a running commentary which explains every word or a commentary on difficult points; *piṇḍārtha*—a concise meaning commentary, *pradīpaka*—a commentary that "illuminates" the meaning, *prabandha*—explanation of the subject matter, *prakaraṇa*—an exposition, *pravibhāga*—a detailed explanation, *saṃgraha*—a summary, *saṃskāra*—a compositional analysis, *ṭippanīkā*—a gloss commentary, *ṭīkā*—a gloss commentary or a word and meaning commentary, *upadarśana*—a commentary that "exhibits" the meaning, *vārttika*—an explanation or a critical analysis of earlier commentaries, *vibhāṣā*—a great commentary, *vibhāga*—a commentary that discusses distinctions or correlations, *vivarana*—an exposition or elucidation; *vṛtti*—a running commentary; *vyākhyā*—an explanation, and so on. Thus, Sanskrit authors created a varied set of texts which can fall into the English category of a "commentary." Some of these texts are line-by-line or word-by-word explanations, some entail elaborate philosophical analyses, while others provide just brief comments. Thus, when we try to answer the question of what makes a text a "commentary," the only criterion that unites all the cases mentioned above is that a commentary depends on, and closely attends to, a root text. The mode of its engagement with that root text, however, may vary substantially.

Regarding the Sanskrit technical term *ṭīkā*, according to Jonardon Ganeri, a *ṭīkā* is a commentary whose function is to elucidate obscure or otherwise tricky words in the root text. Ganeri notes that "the

<sup>25</sup> Vasubandhu. *Rnam par bshad pa'i rigs pa* (Vyākhyāyukti) [Principles of Exegesis]. Tōh 4061, *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*, vol. 136, f. 123r2–3: *ngeṣ pa'i tshig tu 'chos pa dang | skyob par byed pas | de'i phyir bstan bcos so | lnyon mongs dgra rnams ma lus 'chos pa dang | lṅgan 'gro srid las skyob pa gang yin te | l'chos skyob yon tan phyir na bstan bcos te | lṅgyis po 'di dag gzhan gyi lugs la med*. This verse appears in Skt. in Candrakīrti's *Prasannapadā* (La Vallée Poussin 1903, 3): *yacchāsti vaḥ kleśaripūnaśeṣān saṃtrāyate durgatito bhavācca | tacchāsanāttrāṇaguṇācca śāstraṃ etadvayaṃ cānyamateṣu nāsti*.

*Śabdārthacintāmaṇi*<sup>26</sup> defines a *ṭīkā* as ‘an explanation of difficult words [in the root text]’ (*viśamapadavyākhyāyām*).<sup>27</sup> Ganeri further explains the *ṭīkā* through the Oxford English Dictionary definition of the English “gloss:” “A word inserted between the lines or in the margin as an explanatory equivalent of a foreign or otherwise difficult word in the text; hence applied to a similar explanatory rendering of a word given in a glossary or dictionary. Also, in a wider sense, a comment, explanation, interpretation.” He concludes that the *ṭīkā*, like a gloss, is also used in a more general sense, as a synonym of *vr̥tti* or *vivarāṇa*.<sup>28</sup> In relation to this definition, it is worth mentioning that a gloss is a simple explanation of a term, while the *ṭīkā* is not a gloss itself but rather a collection of glosses. That said, the commentary that is subject to our study is consistent with the more specific definition of *ṭīkā* since it attends to and explains individual words, as well as with the wider definition, since it serves as a more general explanation of the *Bhadracaryāpranidhāna*.

To further define the genre of the *Ṭīkā*, it is useful to consider the Tibetan tradition of classification of Indian *śāstras*. Bu ston rin chen grub (1290–1364) in his *Chos 'byung*, i.e., *History of Buddhism*,<sup>29</sup> divides *śāstras* into two categories:

1. not based on the Word of the Buddha (*bka' la mi brten pa*) and
2. based on the Word of the Buddha (*[bka' la] brten pa*).

*Śāstras* that are based on the Word of the Buddha are further divided into two categories:

- 2.1 *śāstras* that comment on the Word of the Buddha itself (*bka' nyid la 'grel ba btab pa*) and
- 2.2 *śāstras* that are composed by applying the meaning of the Word of the Buddha to one's mind (*bka'i don rang rgyud du brtsams pa*), i.e., compositions based on the personal understanding of the meaning of the Word of the Buddha.

The first, *śāstras* that explain the Word of the Buddha, are further

<sup>26</sup> Ganeri 2008, 3: fn. 6 indicates “*Śabdārthacintāmaṇi*. Jaipur: Printwell, 1992 [1860], vol. 2, p. 1031.” It most probably refers to Sukhananda Natha's *Śabdārthacintāmaṇi*, a Sanskrit encyclopedic dictionary in 4 vol., which contains vocabulary of the Sanskrit *śāstras* and explains etymology of terms in accord with Pāṇini.

<sup>27</sup> Ganeri 2008, 3.

<sup>28</sup> Ganeri 2008, 3.

<sup>29</sup> Bu ston rin chen grub. *Bde bar gshegs pa'i bstan pa'i gsal byed chos kyi 'byung gnas gsung rab rin po che'i mdzod ces bya ba bzugs so* [The Scripture on the Origins of Dharma that Explains the Teaching of Sugatas Called “The Precious Treasury”]. In *Gsung 'bum*, vol. 24, f. 22r5–7 (p. 675).

divided into five categories:

- 2.1.1 *ṭikā* (*rgya cher 'grel pa*): extensive commentaries on both words and meaning, e.g., *Pratimokṣasūtratīkā* in fifty volumes<sup>30</sup> (*tshig don gnyis ka rgya cher 'grel ba so so thar pa'i 'grel pa bam po lnga bcu pa lta bu rgya cher 'grel*);
- 2.1.2 *padabhañjikā*(?), *tshig 'byed pa*(?):<sup>31</sup> word commentaries which explain parts of words (*tshig gi cha*) together with their analysis (*prapañca*(?), *spros pa*), e.g., a commentary<sup>32</sup> on the two [compilations of] *Udānavarga*<sup>33</sup> (*tshig gi cha spros pa dang bcas nas 'chad ba ched du brjod pa'i tshoms gnyis kyi 'grel pa lta bu tshig gi 'grel ba*);
- 2.1.3 *pañjikā* (*dka' 'grel*): commentaries on difficult points, e.g., the two *Samcayagāthāpañjikas*<sup>34</sup> (*go dka' ba'i don rnam par 'byed pa sdud 'grel gnyis lta bu dka' 'grel*);

<sup>30</sup> So sor thar pa'i rgya cher 'grel pa bam po lnga bcu pa, i.e., *An Extensive Commentary on the "Pratimokṣa Sūtra"* in fifty volumes most probably refers to Vimalamitra's *So sor thar pa'i mdo rgya cher 'grel pa 'dul ba kun las btus pa* (*Pratimokṣasūtratīkāvinayasaṃuccaya*) [*An Extensive Commentary on the "Pratimokṣa Sūtra," A Compendium of Monastic Discipline*], Tōh 4106, which consists of fifty volumes (*bam po ni lnga bcur byas so*).

<sup>31</sup> Mentioned *tshig gi 'grel pa* does not seem to be a direct translation of a Sanskrit term, and based on Bu ston's categorization, this commentary type seems to refer to Skt. *padabhañjikā* (*tshig 'byed pa*). Since further mentioned commentary on the *Udānavarga* is titled *vivaraṇa* (*rnam par 'grel pa*), it is not entirely clear whether Bu ston refers to it or something else.

<sup>32</sup> There is only one commentary on the *Udānavarga* included into the *Bstan 'gyurs*: Prajñāvarman's *Ched du brjod pa'i tshoms kyi rnam par 'grel pa* (*Udānavargavivaraṇa*) [*Exposition of Chapters of Inspired Utterances*]. Tōh 4100.

<sup>33</sup> Two [compilations of] *Udānavarga* (*'chad ba ched du brjod pa'i tshoms gnyis*): *'chad ba che du brjod pa'i tshoms* is identified as *Ched du brjod pa'i tshoms*, i.e., *Udānavarga*. Its mentioning as dual is unclear because the Tibetan *Bka' 'gyurs* and *Bstan 'gyurs* contain only one *Udānavarga* (*Ched du brjod pa'i tshoms*) [*Chapters of Inspired Utterances*]. Tōh 326 and Tōh 4099 (the *Catalogue from Lhan dkar* also lists only one *Udānavarga* (*Ched du brjod pa'i tshoms*), Lalou no. 309 (Lalou 1953, 326), which is a translation of the compilation attributed to the Sarvāstivādin Ācārya Dharmatrāta (2nd century CE). Thus, it might refer to either compilations or recensions of the *Udānavarga* itself, or the *Dhammapada* (*Dharmapada*) (there are several *Dhammapadas*, e.g., Pāli *Dhammapada*, Gāndhārī *Dharmapada*, and Patna *Dhammapada* (Ānandajoti Bhikkhu 2020, 1–10) and, according to Woodville Rockhill, 300 verses of the *Udānavarga* are nearly identical with the verses of the *Dhammapada* and 150 more verses resemble verses of the *Dhammapada* (Rockhill 1883, viii).

<sup>34</sup> The two *Samcayagāthāpañjikas* most probably refer to Haribhadra's *Bcom ldan 'das yon tan rin po che sdud pa'i tshigs su bcad pa'i dka' 'grel zhes bya ba* (*Bhagavadratnagaṇasamcayagāthāpañjikānāma*) [*Commentary on the Difficult Points of the "Verses that Summarize the Perfection of Wisdom"*], Tōh 3792, and Buddhāśrījñāna's *Sdud pa tshigs su bcad pa'i dka' 'grel* (*Samcayagāthāpañjikā*) [*Commentary on the Difficult Points of the "Verses [that Summarize the Perfection of Wisdom]"*], Tōh 3798.

- 2.1.4 *piṇḍārtha* (*bsdus don*): concise meaning commentaries which summarize the principal part of the subject-matter in a concise form, e.g. a *Piṇḍārtha* commentary by Vimalamitra<sup>35</sup> (*don gyi gtso bo bsdus nas ston pa sdud pa'i don bsdus dri med bshes gnyen gyis mdzad pa lta bu bsdus don gyi 'grel pa*); and
- 2.1.5 *vākyārtha* (*ngag don*): merely sentence-meaning commentaries which reveal the [true] meaning of a sentence (*vākyā*, *ngag*) (also assertion, statement, etc.) by condensing it (*ngag gi don dril nas ston pa ngag don tsam gyi 'grel ba*).

Thus, according to Bu ston, *ṭīkā* refers to the type 2.1.1 “extensive commentaries on both words and meaning.” In accordance with the Tibetan title of the hyparchetypes attributed to \*Bhadrapaṇa and Vasubandhu, *ṭīkā* is rendered as *rgya cher 'grel pa* and *'grel pa* respectively. Similarly, in Ye shes sde's subcommentary on the Indic commentaries, the Sanskrit term *ṭīkā* is featured at the beginning and the Tibetan term *'grel pa* in the end.<sup>36</sup>

Moreover, the hyparchetype attributed to Nāgārjuna is titled *nibandhana* in Sanskrit and *bshad sbyar* in Tibetan, i.e., a discourse or a connected explanation. The reason for it may be the verse of dedication in the end of the *Ṭīkā* that refers to it as *bshad sbyar* (*smon lam rgyal po 'di'i bshad sbyar byas pa yis*,<sup>37</sup> i.e. “Composing this discourse on the Kinglike Aspiration,” etc.). Sanskrit *nibandhana* (literal meaning is “binding together” or “tying”) means “a literary composition” rather than indicating a specific type of a commentary. A well-known *śāstra* that bears this title is *Arthaviniścayasūtranibandhana*, a commentary on the *Arthaviniścayasūtra*,<sup>38</sup> “written by Vīryaśrīdatta (8th century, Nālandā), which belongs to the Abhidharma literature and survives in original Sanskrit.”<sup>39</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *Piṇḍārtha* commentary by Vimalamitra may refer to the commentary on the \**Guhyagarbhatantra* attributed to Vimalamitra: *Dpal gsang ba snying po'i don bsdus 'grel pa* (*Śrīguhyagarbhapīṇḍārthaṭīkā*). P4755. *Pe cin bstan 'gyur*, vol. 77, ff. 1v1–311v4. On the attribution, see Kano 2008, 144–145, fn. 65.

<sup>36</sup> Ye shes sde. *Bzang spyod kyi 'grel pa bzhi'i don bsdus nas brjed byang du byas pa bzhugs* [*Mnemonic Synopsis of the Four Commentaries on the Aspiration for Good Conduct*]. Tōh 4402, *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*, vol. 206, f. 184r2 and f. 213r7.

<sup>37</sup> \*Bhadrapaṇa. *'Phags pa bzang po spyod pa'i smon lam gyi rgyal po'i rgya cher 'grel pa* (*Āryabhadracaryāprañidhānārājaṭīkā*) [*Extensive Commentary on the Noble Kinglike Aspiration for Good Conduct*]. Tōh 4014, *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*, vol. 117, f. 252v3.

<sup>38</sup> *Don rnam par nges pa zhes bya ba'i chos kyi rnam grangs* (*Arthaviniścayanāmadharmaparyāya*) [*The Dharma Instruction “Distinctly Ascertaining the Meanings”*]. Tōh 317.

<sup>39</sup> Horiuchi 2021, 1060. Also see the Sanskrit edition of *Arthaviniścayasūtra* in Samtani 1971.

As for the hyparchetype attributed to Dignāga, it is titled *arthasaṃgraha* in Sanskrit and *don kun bsdus* in Tibetan, i.e., a “synopsis.” This title must be due to the first sentence of the *Ṭīkā* that mentions *bsdus pa'i don* (*kun tu bzang po spyod pa'i smon lam gyi bsdus pa'i don ni bcu ste*,<sup>40</sup> i.e., “The synopsis of the *Aspiration for Samantabhadra's Conduct* is tenfold”).

Dunhuang manuscripts of the *Ṭīkā*'s hyparchetypes feature the words of the root text written in red vermilion, which distinguishes them from the surrounding text of the commentary that explains these words and elucidates the meaning of the root text, and it is in accord with the above-mentioned meaning of the *Ṭīkā* as a “word and meaning commentary.” Moreover, there is another category of commentaries composed within the Tibetan tradition—the “annotated commentary” (*mchan 'grel*). If the *Ṭīkā* was a text developed within the Tibetan commentarial tradition it could be classified as a *mchan 'grel*.

To demonstrate the thematic structure of the *Ṭīkā*, let us look at its structural outline. Its structure is stated to be tenfold. However, the *Ṭīkā* comments on 60 verses of the *Bhadracaryāprañidhāna* but these ten parts cover only verses 1–54. Lo tsā ba Ye shes sde in his subcommentary adds the eleventh part “Concise Dedication.” Its subsections 11.1–11.5 appear in the *Ṭīkā* as well, although it does not single out the eleventh part as a separate section of the outline:<sup>41</sup>

1. Paying Homage to the Tathāgatas
  - 1.1 Paying homage with one's body, speech, and mind all at once (v.1)
  - 1.2 Paying homage with one's body (v.2)
  - 1.3 Paying homage with one's mind (v.3)
  - 1.4 Paying homage with one's speech (v.4)
2. Worshipping the Tathāgatas
  - 2.1 Excelled worship (v.5–6)
  - 2.2 Unexcelled worship (v.7)
3. Confessing Wrongdoing (v.8)

<sup>40</sup> \*Bhadrapaṇa. 'Phags pa bzang po spyod pa'i smon lam gyi rgyal po'i rgya cher 'grel pa (*Āryabhadracaryāprañidhānārājaṭīkā*) [Extensive Commentary on the Noble Kinglike Aspiration for Good Conduct]. Tōh 4014, *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*, vol. 117, f. 234r5.

<sup>41</sup> Ye shes sde's subcommentary (Ye shes sde. *Bzang spyod kyi 'grel pa bzhi'i don bsdus nas brjed byang du byas pa bzhuḡs* [Mnemonic Synopsis of the Four Commentaries on the Aspiration for Good Conduct]. Tōh 4402) reproduces the tenfold outline of the *Ṭīkā* adding the eleventh part “Concise Dedication.” Since the *Ṭīkā* covers 60 verses of the *Bhadracaryāprañidhāna*, it does not include subsections 11.6 “Dedicating the root of virtue accumulated through recitation” (v.61) and 11.7. “Dedication so that all beings may be reborn in the abode of Amitābha” (v.62) which are part of the subcommentary.



4. Rejoicing in Merit (v.9)
5. Requesting to Turn the Wheel of Dharma (v.10)
6. Asking the Tathāgatas to Remain (v.11)
7. Dedicating the Roots of Virtue (v.12)
8. Subdivisions of the Aspiration
  - 8.1 Intention
    - 8.1.1 Intention to worship the tathāgatas and fulfill their wish (v.13)
    - 8.1.2 Intention to purify buddhafiels (v.14)
    - 8.1.3 Intention to bring benefit and happiness to all beings (v.15)
  - 8.2 Not forgetting bodhicitta (v.16–19)
  - 8.3 Stainless application (v. 20)
  - 8.4 Benefiting beings (v.21)
  - 8.5 The armor (v.22)
  - 8.6 Meeting with bodhisattvas who are similar to oneself (v.23)
  - 8.7 Pleasing virtuous friends (v.24)
  - 8.8 Directly perceiving the tathāgatas (v.25)
  - 8.9 Upholding the sublime Dharma (v.26)
  - 8.10 Acquiring the inexhaustible treasury (v.27)
  - 8.11 Engagement
    - 8.11.1–2 Engagement with seeing the buddhas and their fiels (v.28–29)
    - 8.11.3 Engagement with the speech of the buddhas (v.30)
    - 8.11.4 Entering the turning of the wheel of Dharma (v.31)
    - 8.11.5 Penetration into the entrance of eons (v.32)
    - 8.11.6 Seeing the tathāgatas and engaging with their sphere of activity (v.33)
    - 8.11.7 Engagement with manifesting buddhafiels (v.34)
    - 8.11.8 Engagement with going into the presence of the tathāgatas (v.35)
  - 8.12 Power (v.36–37)
  - 8.13 Antidote
    - 8.13.1 Overcoming karma (v. 38.1)
    - 8.13.2 Overcoming afflictions (v. 38.2)
    - 8.13.3 Overcoming the power of Māra<sup>42</sup> (v. 38.3)

<sup>42</sup> Māra refers to the four kinds of obstructive forces that create obstacles on the spiritual path: (1) Māra of the aggregates (*skandhamāra*, *phung po'i bdud*), which symbolizes clinging to forms, perceptions, and mental states as real; (2) Māra of the afflictions (*klesāmāra*, *nyon mongs kyi bdud*), which symbolizes being overpowered by afflictions; (3) Māra the lord of death (*mrtyumāra*, *'chi bdag gi bdud*), which symbolizes both death itself—the cutting short of the precious human life—and also the fear of change, impermanence, and death; and (4) Māra the son of

- 8.14 Activity (v.39–v.40)
- 8.15 Dedication by means of emulating the training
  - 8.15.1 Dedication emulating the training of the buddhas (v.41)
  - 8.15.2 Dedication emulating the training of bodhisattvas (v.42–v.44)
- 8.16 Summary (v.45)
- 9. Extent of the *Aspiration* (v.46)
- 10. Benefits of the *Aspiration*
  - 10.1 Benefits in this life
    - 10.1.1 Acquisition of superior merit (v.47–v.48)
    - 10.1.2 Seeing the tathāgatas (v.49)
    - 10.1.3 Obtaining an equal status with the bodhisattva (v.50)
    - 10.1.4 Purifying karmic obstructions (v.51)
  - 10.2 Benefits in the lives to come
    - 10.2.1 Benefits gathered as the cause (v.52)
    - 10.2.2 Benefits gathered as the result (v.53–v.54)
- 11. Concise Dedication
  - 11.1 Dedication in the manner of bodhisattvas (v.55)
  - 11.2 Dedication in the manner of tathāgatas (v.56)
  - 11.3 Freedom from obstructions (v.57)
  - 11.4 Obtaining a body conducive to the *pāramitās*<sup>43</sup> (v.58)
  - 11.5 Receiving a prophecy and accomplishing benefit of beings (v.59–v.60)

The outline shows that the *Ṭikā* begins with the explanation of the seven branches<sup>44</sup> (*saptāṅga, yan lag bdun*), i.e., the seven aspects of devotional practice which constitute a method of gathering accumulations and overcoming afflictions, and then continues with the practice

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gods (*devaputramāra, lha'i bu'i bdud*), which symbolizes craving for pleasures and peace.

<sup>43</sup> *Pāramitā* (*pha rol tu phin pa*) is a quality of “transcendent perfection.” Ten such qualities are: (1) generosity (*dāna, sbyin pa*); (2) discipline (*śīla, tshul khrims*); (3) patience (*kṣānti, bzod pa*); (4) heroic effort, or diligence (*vīrya, brtson 'grus*); (5) meditative concentration (*dhyāna, bsam gtan*); and (6) wisdom (*prajñā, shes rab*) that comprise the training of a bodhisattva. The sixth *pāramitā* can be further divided into four: (7) the skillful means (*upāyakauśala, thabs la mkhas pa*); (8) power (*bala, stobs*); (9) aspiration (*praṇidhāna, smon lam*); and (10) primordial wisdom (*jñāna, ye shes*), resulting in ten *pāramitās*.

<sup>44</sup> Seven branches (*saptāṅga, yan lag bdun*), the seven-branch practice, or the seven aspects of devotional practice, a method of gathering accumulations and overcoming afflictions: (1) prostration, the antidote to pride; (2) worshiping, the antidote to greed; (3) confession, the antidote to anger; (4) rejoicing, the antidote to jealousy; (5) requesting to turn the wheel of Dharma, the antidote to ignorance; (6) requesting not to pass into nirvāṇa, the antidote to wrong views; and (7) dedication of merit, the antidote to doubts.

of generating intention, cultivating bodhicitta, seeing the buddhas, associating with bodhisattvas, etc., followed by the seven kinds of engagement, teaching on antidotes and the statements of benefits, and finally concludes with dedications. In this sense, it can be viewed as a comprehensive explanation of various aspects of the bodhisattva's practice.

### The *Ṭīkā* in Its Historical Context

Unlike the *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* that, although having many roles and functions, carries the status of belonging to the *buddhavacana* that transcends the ordinary human domain, the *Ṭīkā*'s status is that of a literary composition that was created by a person who lived in a certain historical time. Thus, we may expect the task of its historical categorization not to be that complicated; yet it turns out to be challenging. The reason for this is that all historical interpretations should be based on evidence from historical sources, and this principle poses difficulties when applied to the context of ancient India—mainly for two reasons: the dearth of historical chronicles, and, arguably, the non-existence of the concept of authorship in the Western academic sense of the author as the creator of original composition, i.e., author's "origination function."<sup>45</sup> If one were to ask why it is so important for us to determine the time when a certain text was composed and the identity of its author, it is probably because by knowing these details we will be able to categorize it, put it into a certain framework, make parallels, and produce interpretations. As Paul Harrison says, in this search for the origins we deal with a kind of methodological cliché, "(...) the idea that if we can understand the beginnings of something, we are better placed to understand the whole thing, as if its essential character were somehow fixed and readable in the genetic encoding of its conception."<sup>46</sup> Thus, we see the unknown as a puzzle to be solved looking for the clues that will connect the unknown with something that we assume to know.

### Dating the *Ṭīkā*

My research on the Chinese Buddhist canonical collections was limited to Bunyiu Nanjio's *Catalogue of the Chinese Translation of the Buddhist Tripitaka*,<sup>47</sup> and on the Chinese Buddhist manuscripts—to Kazuo Enoki's catalogue of the Chinese Buddhist manuscripts in

<sup>45</sup> Regarding the "origination function" and other critical discussions of authorship, see Schwermann and Steineck 2014, 4–15.

<sup>46</sup> Harrison 1995, 49.

<sup>47</sup> Nanjio 1883.

Dunhuang.<sup>48</sup> Thus, I cannot assert with certainty that none of the *Ṭikā*'s hyparchetypes reached ancient China, and that no Chinese translations of any of them were produced. At any rate, since I don't have any account of them, I cannot establish the *terminus ante quem* for the composition of the *Ṭikā* based on the dates of its Chinese translation. Moreover, I cannot rely on the dates of its author since it is attributed to at least six different individuals. What is left is to review the sources that the *Ṭikā* engages in the attempt to find any indications of the time when it may have been composed.

The *Ṭikā* contains references to sixteen identified sources:

- **ten Mahāyāna sūtras:** (1) *Caturdharmanirdeśasūtra*,<sup>49</sup> (2) *Gocarapariśuddhisūtra*,<sup>50</sup> (3) *Karmāvaraṇaviśuddhasūtra*,<sup>51</sup> (4) *Tathāgatacintyaguhyanirdeśasūtra*,<sup>52</sup> (5) *\*Tathāgatakośasūtra*,<sup>53</sup> (6) *Maitreyavimokṣa* of the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*,<sup>54</sup> (7) *Mañjuśrībuddhakṣetraguṇavyūha*,<sup>55</sup> (8) *Upāliparipṛcchāsūtra*,<sup>56</sup>

<sup>48</sup> La Vallée Poussin 1962, 245–258.

<sup>49</sup> A verse included into the Potala Skt. manuscript of the *Caturdharmanirdeśasūtra*. See Tseng 2010, vol. 1, 404: M<sub>A2</sub>25<sup>11-13</sup>, D<sub>B</sub>248r2–3, D<sub>D</sub>196v2–3, D<sub>N</sub>177r4–5, D<sub>V</sub>265r1–2. Note: Here and in what follows, folio numbers of the manuscripts of the anonymous hyparchetype refer to the attributed folio numbers (see Vasylieva 2004. *A Study of the Bstan 'gyur Synoptic Indic Commentaries on the Bhadracaryāpranidhāna in the Context of the Subcommentary by Lo tsā ba Ye shes sde*. Appendix II. Manuscripts, 2. M<sub>A1</sub> and M<sub>A2</sub>, pp. cciii–ccxxvi).

<sup>50</sup> 'Phags pa spyod yul yongs su dag pa'i mdo (*Āryagocarapariśuddhisūtra*) [*The Noble Sūtra on the Purification of the Sphere of Activity*] refers to *Spyod yul yongs su dag pa'i le'u*, Ch.16 of the *Buddhāvataṃsakasūtra*. Tōh 44-16: M<sub>A2</sub>21<sup>5-6</sup>, D<sub>B</sub>245r3, D<sub>D</sub>194r1, D<sub>N</sub>174r7–174v1, D<sub>V</sub>262r6.

<sup>51</sup> 'Phags pa las kyi sgrib pa rnam par dag pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo (*Āryakarmāvaraṇaviśuddhināmanamahāyānasūtra*) [*The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra on the Purification of Karmic Obstructions*]. Tōh 218: M<sub>A2</sub>23<sup>2-8</sup>, D<sub>B</sub>246v1–4, D<sub>D</sub>195r1–5, D<sub>N</sub>175v2–5, D<sub>V</sub>263v1–4.

<sup>52</sup> 'Phags pa de bzhin gshegs pa'i gsang ba bsam gyis mi khyab pa bstan pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo (*Āryatathāgatacintyaguhyanirdeśanāmanamahāyānasūtra*) [*The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra Teaching on the Unfathomable Secrets of the Tathāgatas*]. Tōh 47: M<sub>A1</sub>10v2–4, D<sub>B</sub>242r6–7, D<sub>D</sub>191v1–2, D<sub>N</sub>171v2–3, D<sub>V</sub>259v7–260r1.

<sup>53</sup> 'Phags pa de bzhin gshegs pa'i mdzod kyi mdo (*\*Āryatathāgatakośasūtra*) [*The Noble Sūtra of the Tathāgata's Treasury*] (not included in the Tibetan *Bka' 'gyur* collections): M<sub>A2</sub>23<sup>8-24</sup>, D<sub>B</sub>246v4–247r6, D<sub>D</sub>195r5–195v7, D<sub>N</sub>175v5–176r7, D<sub>V</sub>263v5–264r5.

<sup>54</sup> *Byams pa'i rnam par thar pa* (*Maitreyavimokṣa*) [*Liberation of Maitreya*], ch. 54 "Maitreya" of the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*: M<sub>A2</sub>24<sup>12-13</sup>, D<sub>B</sub>243r1–3, D<sub>D</sub>192r2–4, D<sub>N</sub>172r6–7, D<sub>V</sub>260v2–3.

<sup>55</sup> 'Phags pa 'jam dpal gyi sangs rgyas kyi zhing gi yon tan bkod pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo. (*Āryamañjuśrībuddhakṣetraguṇavyūhanāmanamahāyānasūtra*) [*The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra "The Array of Qualities of Mañjuśrī's Buddhafield"*]. Tōh 59: M<sub>A2</sub>28<sup>14-29</sup>, D<sub>B</sub>249v4–5, D<sub>D</sub>198r6, D<sub>N</sub>179r1–2, D<sub>V</sub>266v3–4.

<sup>56</sup> 'Phags pa 'dul ba rnam par gtan la dbab pa nye bar 'khor gyis zhus pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo (*Āryavinayavinīśayopāliparipṛcchānāmanamahāyānasūtra*) [*The Noble*

- (9) *Vajracchedikāsūtra*,<sup>57</sup> and (10) *Vīradattapariṣcchāsūtra*;<sup>58</sup>
- **four non-Mahāyāna texts:** (11) *Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra*,<sup>59</sup> (12) *Karmaśataka*,<sup>60</sup> (13) *Karmavibhaṅga*,<sup>61</sup> and (14) *Sūkarikāvadānasūtra*,<sup>62</sup> as well as
  - **two attributed texts:** (15) Āryadeva's *Catuḥśataka*<sup>63</sup> and (16) Mātṛceṭa's *Varṇārhavarṇastotra*.<sup>64</sup>

When it comes to Mahāyāna, although, as Harrison says, “the more one considers the methodological problems involved, the less one can say about the origins of the Mahāyāna,”<sup>65</sup> the mentioned Mahāyāna sūtras do not typically appear among the lists of “early Mahāyāna sūtras.” For example, the *Gaṇḍavyūha* as a collection of sūtras is considered to represent a middle period of development within Mahāyāna and dates c. 200 to 300 CE.<sup>66</sup> Thus, taking these references to sūtras as a framework, we can say that the *Ṭikā*'s *terminus post quem* is c. 2nd century CE.

Moreover, in the commentary on verses 28–29 of the *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* (8.11.1–2 Engagement with Seeing the Buddhas and Their Fields) the *Ṭikā* provides a quotation from Āryadeva's *Catuḥśataka*, and in the commentary on verse 30 (8.11.3 Engagement

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*Mahāyāna Sūtra Ascertaining the Vinaya: Upāli's Questions*. Tōh 68: M<sub>A2</sub>24<sub>9-12</sub>, D<sub>B</sub>247r7–247v3, D<sub>D</sub>196r1–2, D<sub>N</sub>176v1–2, D<sub>V</sub>264r6–264v1.

<sup>57</sup> *'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa rdo rje gcod pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo* (Āryavajracchedikānāmaprajñāpāramitāmahāyānasūtra) [*The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra of the Perfection of Wisdom "The Diamond Cutter"*]. Tōh 16: M<sub>A2</sub>24<sub>13-25</sub>, D<sub>B</sub>247v2–3, D<sub>D</sub>196r3–5, D<sub>N</sub>176v3–5, D<sub>V</sub>264v1–3.

<sup>58</sup> *Khyim bdag dpas byin gyis zhus pa'i mdo* (Vīradattapariṣcchāsūtra) [*The Sūtra Requested by the Layman Vīradatta*]. Tōh 72: M<sub>A2</sub>21<sub>10-11</sub>, D<sub>B</sub>245v2, D<sub>D</sub>194r3–4, D<sub>N</sub>174v3–4, D<sub>V</sub>262v4.

<sup>59</sup> *Mngon par 'byung ba'i mdo* (Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra) [*Sūtra on Going Forth*]. Tōh 301: M<sub>A1</sub>2r4–5, D<sub>B</sub>234v7–235r1, D<sub>D</sub>185r1, D<sub>N</sub>164v1, D<sub>V</sub>253v3.

<sup>60</sup> *Las brgya tham pa* (Karmaśataka) [*The Hundred Deeds*]. Tōh 340: M<sub>A2</sub>25<sub>8-9</sub>, D<sub>B</sub>248r1, D<sub>D</sub>196v1–2, D<sub>N</sub>177r3, D<sub>V</sub>264v7–265r1.

<sup>61</sup> *Las rnam pa 'byed pa* (Karmavibhaṅga) [*The Exposition of Karma*]. Tōh 338: M<sub>A2</sub>22<sub>7-9</sub>, D<sub>B</sub>246r2–3, D<sub>D</sub>194v3–4, D<sub>N</sub>175r3–4, D<sub>V</sub>263r3–4.

<sup>62</sup> *Phag mo'i rtogs pa brjod pa zhes bya ba'i mdo* (Sūkarikāvadānasūtra) [*Sūtra "The Magnificent Account about a Sow"*]. Tōh 345: M<sub>A2</sub>22<sub>15-23</sub>, D<sub>B</sub>246r6–7, D<sub>D</sub>194v7–195r1, D<sub>N</sub>175r7–175v1, D<sub>V</sub>263r7–263v1.

<sup>63</sup> Āryadeva. *Bstan bcos bzhi brgya pa zhes bya ba'i tshig le'ur byas pa* (Catuḥśatakaśāstranāmakārikā) [*A Verse Treatise called "The Four Hundred"*]. Tōh 3846: M<sub>A1</sub>10v4–5, D<sub>B</sub>242v1, D<sub>D</sub>Ø, D<sub>N</sub>171v4–5, D<sub>V</sub>260r2.

<sup>64</sup> Mātṛceṭa. *Sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das la bstod pa bsngags par 'os pa bsngags pa las bstod par mi nus par bstod pa zhes bya ba* (Varṇārhavarṇebhagavatobuddhasyastotresākyaṣṭava) [*In Praise of the Praiseworthy Bhagavat Buddha Eulogizing the One Who Cannot Be Eulogized*]. Tōh 1138: M<sub>A1</sub>11r6–7, D<sub>B</sub>242v7–243r1, D<sub>D</sub>192r1–2, D<sub>N</sub>172r5–6, D<sub>V</sub>260v1–2.

<sup>65</sup> Harrison 1995, 48.

<sup>66</sup> Osto 2004, 60.

with the Speech of the Buddhas)—a quotation from the *Varṇārhavarṇastotra* attributed to the ancient Indian poet Mātṛceṭa.<sup>67</sup> The dates of Mātṛceṭa are contested. Most commonly it is said he was born at the end of the 1st century CE and composed his works in the 2nd century CE. It is also mentioned by traditional sources that he was converted to Buddhism by Āryadeva, who is usually dated 2nd–3rd century CE.<sup>68</sup> Thus, taking Āryadeva's latest date as a framework, we can establish the *Ṭīkā's terminus post quem* as 3rd century CE. The *Ṭīkā's terminus ante quem* can be established with the reliance on the Tibetan imperial catalogues as the early 9th century CE. Thus, we may say that the *Ṭīkā* was composed between 3rd and early 9th century CE.

### The *Ṭīkā* in India: Authorship and the Synoptic Problem

As it has already been mentioned, the comparative analysis of the Indic commentaries in the Tibetan canonical collections shows that four out of the five commentaries attributed to \*Bhadrapaṇa, Dignāga, Nāgārjuna, and Vasubandhu are subject to a synoptic problem, i.e., they most probably come down to the same currently unavailable Sanskrit archetype. To the list of these four attributions, we should also add Guṇaprabha and Buddhakīrti since the former appears in the Tibetan imperial catalogues and the latter is mentioned by Ye shes sde in his subcommentary. Evidence for the synoptic problem will be provided further on, in the section devoted to the *Ṭīkā* in Tibet. And here, I will try to address the question of the *Ṭīkā's* authorship.

The above-mentioned hypothesis entails two assumptions: (1) there was an initial archetype, a unitary original text of the *Ṭīkā* produced in Classical Sanskrit in ancient India, and that (2) there were multiple hyparchetypes of it, attributed to various authors, coexisting in ancient India. Regarding the hypothesis and the two assumptions it entails, it is to be clearly stated that there is no historical evidence from ancient India at my disposal to confirm them. All I rely on is the currently available Tibetan textual record from the imperial catalogues of the early 9th century, Dunhuang manuscripts of the 9th–early 11th century, five *Bstan 'gyur* canonical collections dated 1724–1773, and recent evidence of the location of the Sanskrit hyparchetype attributed to Vasubandhu in Tibet—all in all, not that much. However, this situation seems not be uncommon in the investigations that touch upon the

<sup>67</sup> Mātṛceṭa. *Sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das la bstod pa bsngags par 'os pa bsngags pa las bstod par mi nus par bstod pa zhes bya ba* (*Varṇārhavarṇebhagavatobuddhasyastotreśākyaastava*) [In Praise of the Praiseworthy Bhagavat Buddha Eulogizing the One Who Cannot Be Eulogized]. Tōh 1138.

<sup>68</sup> Regarding Mātṛceṭa's dates and life story, see Hartmann 1988, 77–184; also, Shomakhmadov and Hartmann 2022, 58–70.

criteria of authenticity in ancient India. As Peter Skilling characterizes it,

In our investigation, we do not have much to go on. We have no ancient (or even mediæval) Indian *sūtra* catalogues, no correspondence or diaries, no specificities whatsoever which might expose the historical underpinnings of the ideology of authenticity—or rather ideologies, given the intricacy of the family tree(s) of Indian Buddhism.<sup>69</sup>

In the absence of historical evidence, we can still rely on the method of textual analysis to reconstruct the ancient Indian context for the *Ṭīkā*. Regarding that, it must be understood that it is just an attempt at reconstruction.

First, there is a need for the evaluation of the *Ṭīkā*'s hyparchetypes as subject to the synoptic problem. Before we proceed to their comparative textual analysis, which will be done in the next part, dedicated to the *Ṭīkā* in Tibet, there is a need to explain more in detail what the synoptic problem is, and then evaluate the attributions to establish the most probable authorship.

As for the first necessary evaluation, the term “synoptic problem” was introduced into the biblical textual studies, specifically textual criticism of the New Testament, to establish the literary relationships among the first three Gospels—those of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. These three Gospels have so much in common that scholars called them “synoptic,” from Latin *synopticus*, i.e., “seeing together,” which means they can be reviewed side by side while being displayed in three parallel columns. As Raymond Brown explains,

(...) there must have been some dependence of one or two on the other or on a common written source. (...) so much of the order in which that common material is presented, and so much of the wording in which it is phrased are the same that dependence at the written rather than simply at the oral level has to be posited.<sup>70</sup>

There are several solutions offered to solve this synoptic problem. The first posits a protogospel, i.e., a gospel that existed before the synoptic Gospels, a no-longer-extant Aramaic Gospel on which all three synoptic Gospels drew. The second is that Matthew was the first Gospel, and Luke used Matthew. And the third, the most common, is that Mark was written first, and Matthew and Luke drew on it while writing

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<sup>69</sup> Skilling 2010, 2.

<sup>70</sup> Brown 1997, 111–112.

independently from each other and relying on one more, currently unavailable, source (the so-called “Two-Source Theory”). According to Brown, no solution on the Gospels’ synoptic problem solves all difficulties.<sup>71</sup>

Regarding the solution to the synoptic problem of the *Ṭīkā*’s hyparchetypes, I am inclined towards a hypothesis of a common source, i.e., a currently unavailable Sanskrit archetype. With this in view, the next question to consider would be its authorship. Although it is possible that the *Ṭīkā*’s author was someone else, not included among the attributions of its hyparchetypes, for the sake of context reconstruction let us assume that it is one of the six attributions that we currently know: \*Bhadrapaṇa, Dignāga, Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, Guṇaprabha, or Buddhakīrti. These six could be further subdivided into two groups: the earlier attributions (\*Bhadrapaṇa, Dignāga, Guṇaprabha, and Buddhakīrti) and the later attributions (Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu). The two groups are separated by at least two centuries—early 9th and 11th century respectively.

Moreover, they could be divided into two groups as to their renown and importance. Thus, Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, Dignāga, and Guṇaprabha belong to the eight luminaries of ancient India, called in the Tibetan tradition “six ornaments and two supreme ones” (*rgyan drug mchog gnyis*). Among them, Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, and Dignāga are counted among the six greatest philosophers, each of them considered a founder of one of the main philosophical schools: Nāgārjuna of Madhyamaka, Vasubandhu of Yogācāra, and Dignāga of the Buddhist Pramāṇa, while Guṇaprabha is considered one of the two principal masters of Vinaya.<sup>72</sup> In drastic contrast to that, nothing is currently known about \*Bhadrapaṇa and Buddhakīrti.

Although the biographical details and dates of all the attributed authors are uncertain, if we place their most common dates in a chronological order, they will range from the 2nd to the 6th century CE: Nāgārjuna (c. 2nd–3rd century), Vasubandhu (3rd–4th century), Dignāga (480–540), and Guṇaprabha (c. 550–630). The dates of \*Bhadrapaṇa and Buddhakīrti are unknown. Furthermore, Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, and Dignāga are connected by their affiliation to Nālandā University. Moreover, Dignāga is considered Vasubandhu’s disciple. Guṇaprabha is also counted among Vasubandhu’s disciples, although it seems chronologically problematic.<sup>73</sup>

If one were to ask who among Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, Dignāga, and Guṇaprabha, based on an analysis of their literary corpora, could

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<sup>71</sup> Brown 1997, 112–115.

<sup>72</sup> Edeglass 2023, 207.

<sup>73</sup> See Nietupski 2009, 2–3.



have authored the *Ṭīkā*, the answer would be: anyone, since all of them are credited with authorship of Mahāyāna sūtra commentaries and treatises on the bodhisattva path. Thus, there are many such treatises ascribed to Nāgārjuna, for example, the *Āryaśālistambakamahāyānasūtraṭīkā*<sup>74</sup> and the *Āryaśālistambakakārikā*,<sup>75</sup> as well as the *Bodhicittavivaraṇa*,<sup>76</sup> *Bodhyāpattideśanāvṛtti*,<sup>77</sup> *Mahāyānaviṃśaka*,<sup>78</sup> and *Sūtrasamuccaya*<sup>79</sup> among others. It is worth mentioning, however, that the attribution of some of these texts to Nāgārjuna is contested.<sup>80</sup> According to Christian Lindtner, for example, only the *Bodhicittavivaraṇa* and the *Sūtrasamuccaya* among them are genuine, while the *Āryaśālistambakakārikā* and the *Mahāyānaviṃśaka* are “perhaps authentic.”<sup>81</sup>

In Dignāga’s corpus, there are the *Āryaprajñāpāramitāsaṃgrahakārikā*,<sup>82</sup> *Guṇāparyantastotraṭīkā*,<sup>83</sup> and *Yogāvatāra*.<sup>84</sup>

In Vasubandhu’s corpus, there are the *Āryadaśabhūmivivākhyāna*,<sup>85</sup> *Āryākṣayamatīrdeśaṭīkā*,<sup>86</sup> *Āryabhagavatīprajñāpāramitāvajracchedikāsaptārthaṭīkā*,<sup>87</sup> *Mahāyānasamgrahabhāṣya*,<sup>88</sup> and

<sup>74</sup> Nāgārjuna. ‘Phags pa sā lu ljang pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po’i mdo’i rgya cher bshad pa (*Āryaśālistambakamahāyānasūtraṭīkā*) [Extensive Commentary on the Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra “The Rice Seedling”]. Tōh 3986.

<sup>75</sup> Nāgārjuna. ‘Phags pa sā lu ljang pa’i tshig le’ur byas pa (*Āryaśālistambakakārikā*) [Verses on the Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra “The Rice Seedling”]. Tōh 3985.

<sup>76</sup> Nāgārjuna. Byang chub sems kyi ‘grel pa zhes bya ba (*Bodhicittavivaraṇanāma*). Tōh 1800. Byang chub sems kyi ‘grel pa (*Bodhicittavivaraṇa*) [Exposition of the Bodhicitta]. Tōh 1801.

<sup>77</sup> Nāgārjuna. Byang chub kyi ltung ba bshags pa’i ‘grel pa (*Bodhyāpattideśanāvṛtti*) [Commentary on the Confession of Bodhisattva Downfalls]. Tōh 4005.

<sup>78</sup> Nāgārjuna. Theg pa chen po nyi shu pa (*Mahāyānaviṃśaka*) [Twenty Verses on the Mahāyāna]. Tōh 3833.

<sup>79</sup> Nāgārjuna. Mdo kun las btus pa (*Sūtrasamuccaya*) [Compendium of Sūtras]. Tōh 3934.

<sup>80</sup> Carpenter 2023, 8–9.

<sup>81</sup> Lindtner 1987, 10–17.

<sup>82</sup> Dignāga. ‘Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin ma bsdu pa’i tshig le’ur byas pa (*Āryaprajñāpāramitāsaṃgrahakārikā*) [A Verse Summary of “The Noble Perfection of Wisdom”]. Tōh 3809.

<sup>83</sup> Dignāga. Yon tan mtha’ yas par bstod pa’i ‘grel pa (*Guṇāparyantastotraṭīkā*) [Commentary on the Praise of Limitless Good Qualities]. Tōh 1156.

<sup>84</sup> Dignāga. Rnal ‘byor la ‘jug pa (*Yogāvatāra*) [Introduction to Spiritual Practice]. Tōh 4074.

<sup>85</sup> Vasubandhu. ‘Phags pa sa bcu pa’i rnam par bshad pa (*Āryadaśabhūmivivākhyāna*) [Explanation of the Noble Ten Bhūmis]. Tōh 3993.

<sup>86</sup> Vasubandhu. ‘Phags pa blo gros mi zad pas bstan pa rgya cher ‘grel pa (*Āryākṣayamatīrdeśaṭīkā*) [An Extensive Commentary on The Teaching of Ākṣayamati]. Tōh 3994.

<sup>87</sup> Vasubandhu. ‘Phags pa bcom ldan ‘das ma shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa rdo rje gcod pa’i don bdun gyi rgya cher ‘grel pa (*Āryabhagavatīprajñāpāramitāvajracchedikāsaptārthaṭīkā*) [An Extensive Commentary on the Seven Subjects of the Perfection of Wisdom “The Diamond Cutter”]. Tōh 3816.

<sup>88</sup> Vasubandhu. Theg pa chen po bsdu pa’i ‘grel pa (*Mahāyānasamgrahabhāṣya*) [Explanation of A Summary of the Mahāyāna]. Tōh 4050.

*Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkārabhāṣya*<sup>89</sup> among others.

And, finally, in Guṇaprabha's corpus there are the *\*Bodhisattvabhūmivṛtti*<sup>90</sup> and the *\*Bodhisattvaśīlaparivartabhāṣya*.<sup>91</sup> As for *\*Bhadrapaṇa* and *Buddhakīrti*, there are no other works attributed to them in the Tibetan *Bstan 'gyur* collections, and nothing is known about them from the ancient Indian or Chinese sources.

We need to take into account that only a portion of all the works of Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, Dignāga, and Guṇaprabha has reached our time, as well as that there are many pseudepigrapha attributed to Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu. However, if we consider their literary corpora as they are presented within the Tibetan tradition, it is noticeable that Dignāga is not credited with any treatise directly related to the bodhisattva conduct. Only the very concise *Yogāvatāra* partially touches upon the subject, but its attribution to Dignāga is disputed (e.g., according to Lindtner, it is "wrongly ascribed to Dignāga"),<sup>92</sup> which makes the *Ṭikā* stand out in his literary corpus.

Second, chronologically, first thing to note is that the earlier attributions to *\*Bhadrapaṇa*, Dignāga, Guṇaprabha, and *Buddhakīrti* are more probable than the later attributions to Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu. Moreover, we need to correlate the attributions with the *Ṭikā*'s references to Āryadeva and Mātṛceṭa. As for the first, Āryadeva is dated later than Nāgārjuna, which rules Nāgārjuna out as a potential author of the *Ṭikā*. The earliest reference to Āryadeva is his hagiography translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva c. 405 CE.<sup>93</sup> As for the second, the earliest attested reference to Mātṛceṭa appears in *\*Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*<sup>94</sup> that is attributed to Nāgārjuna. The work is preserved only in Chinese and was translated by Kumārajīva between 402 and 405.<sup>95</sup> Since its attribution to Nāgārjuna is contested,<sup>96</sup> we cannot use it as evidence that Nāgārjuna referred to Mātṛceṭa's work, but nevertheless it can serve as proof of a reference to Mātṛceṭa's work in an Indian *śāstra* in the early 5th century CE. This would witness in favor of Dignāga's (480–540) and Guṇaprabha's (c. 550–630)

<sup>89</sup> Vasubandhu. *Mdo sde'i rgyan gyi bshad pa* (*Sūtrālaṃkāravākyā* or *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkārabhāṣya*) [Explanation of The Ornament for the Mahāyāna Sūtras]. Tōh 4026.

<sup>90</sup> Guṇaprabha. *Byang chub sems dpa'i sa'i 'grel pa* (*\*Bodhisattvabhūmivṛtti*) [Commentary on the Bhūmis of a Bodhisattva]. Tōh 4044.

<sup>91</sup> Guṇaprabha. *Byang chub sems dpa'i tshul khriṃs kyi le'u bshad pa* (*\*Bodhisattvaśīlaparivartabhāṣya*) [Explanation of the Chapter on Bodhisattva Discipline]. Tōh 4045.

<sup>92</sup> Lindtner 2003, 131.

<sup>93</sup> *Life of the Bodhisattva Deva* (or Āryadeva), no. 1462 of Nanjio's catalogue (Nanjio 1883, 322).

<sup>94</sup> Hartmann 1988, 177.

<sup>95</sup> *\*Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*, no. 1169 of Nanjio's catalogue (Nanjio 1883, 257).

<sup>96</sup> Ramanan 1975, 13.

authorship of the *Ṭikā*.

And finally, it seems unlikely that a treatise composed by the greatest of the great—Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, Dignāga, or Guṇaprabha—would have been attributed to the unknown \*Bhadrapaṇa or Buddhakīrti. The converse is much more likely: the *Ṭikā* was composed by a rather unknown author but, due to the quality of its composition as well as the importance of the *Bhadracaryāpranidhāna* it comments upon, it gained popularity and started to be attributed to prominent philosophers. Thus \*Bhadrapaṇa and Buddhakīrti, in my opinion, are most probable attributions among all, and between these two—\*Bhadrapaṇa is the most probable due to the fact that the *Ṭikā*'s hyparchetype attributed to him, as Dunhuang collections show, seems to be popular in imperial Tibet and made its way to Dunhuang in at least two manuscripts that belong to separate recension lines. Furthermore, these manuscripts provide evidence that the commentary was not just kept but studied in Dunhuang, as can be deduced from their interlinear glosses.

What do we know about \*Bhadrapaṇa? Nothing, in fact. Even his Sanskrit name is a reconstruction and should be used with an asterisk. The author is stated only in Tibetan as Rgyan bzang po in the attributed hyparchetype in the two Dunhuang manuscripts and all the *Bstan 'gyur* collections. At the beginning of the subcommentary by Ye shes sde he is referred to in Sanskrit, but his name is spelled differently in all the *Bstan 'gyur* collections, and none features \*Bhadrapaṇa. Moreover, all versions contain agentive particle *sa* after *ka* in *ṭikā* which makes it read as a part of the name, not a reference to the text, i.e., Bhadrpahitikā (*Co ne*), Bhadravanitikā (*Sde dge*), Bhadravahastika (*Snar thang*), Bhadrpahastika (*Pe cin*), and Bhadrpahastika (*Gser bris ma*). If we recognize *ṭikā* as referring to the text, then the variants would be:

1. Bhadrapahi in the *Co ne bstan 'gyur*:

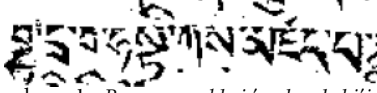
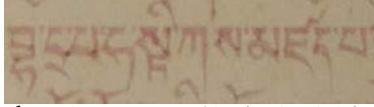
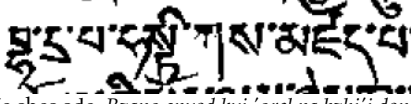


Fig. 1: Ye shes sde. *Bzang spyod kyi 'grel pa bzhi'i don*, *Co ne bstan 'gyur*, vol. 206, f. 189r6.

2. Bhadravani in the *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*:



Fig. 2: Ye shes sde. *Bzang spyod kyi 'grel pa bzhi'i don*, *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*, vol. 206, f. 184r2.

3. Bhadravaha in the *Snar thang bstan 'gyur*:Fig. 3: Ye shes sde. *Bzang spyod kyi 'grel pa bzhi'i don*, *Snar thang bstan 'gyur*, vol. 214, f. 212v3.4. Bhadrapaha in the *Pe cin bstan 'gyur*:Fig. 4: Ye shes sde. *Bzang spyod kyi 'grel pa bzhi'i don*, *Pe cin bstan 'gyur*, vol. 214, f. 217r3.5. Bhadrapaha in the *Gser bris ma bstan 'gyur*:Fig. 5: Ye shes sde. *Bzang spyod kyi 'grel pa bzhi'i don*, *Gser bris ma bstan 'gyur*, vol. 214, f. 265r2.

Thus, Sanskrit \*Bhadrapaṇa is not directly attested in the witnesses of Ye shes sde's subcommentary. How then did this Sanskrit reconstruction of Rgyan bzang po appear? My research demonstrates that it appeared for the first time in Palmyr Cordier's catalogue of the Tibetan collection in the National Library of France published in 1915.<sup>97</sup>

## 1. The catalogue entry on the hyparchetype attributed to \*Bhadrapaṇa:

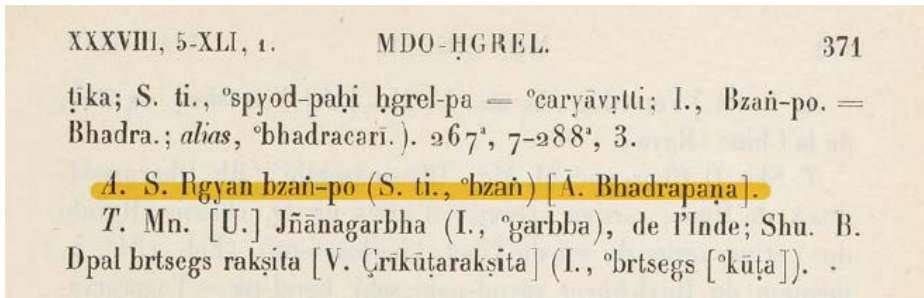
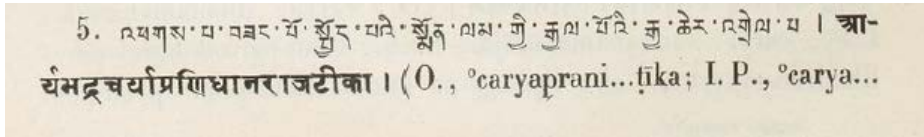


Fig. 6: Cordier 1915, 370–371.

<sup>97</sup> Cordier 1915, 371 & 492.

## 2. The catalogue entry on Ye shes sde's subcommentary:

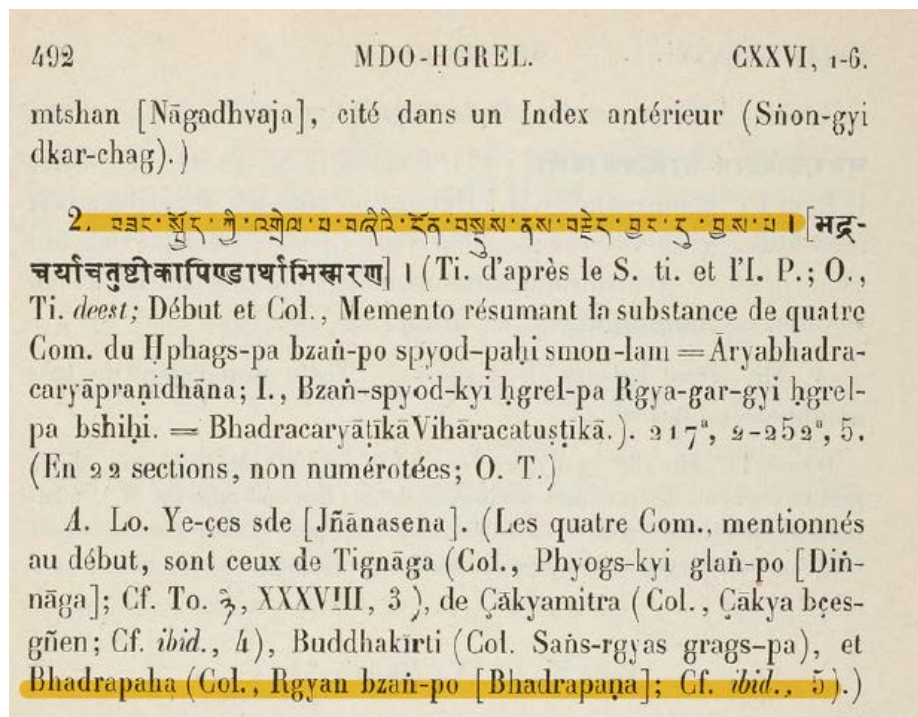


Fig. 7: Cordier 1915, 492.

These records show that Cordier reconstructed Rgyan bzang po as \*Bhadrapaṇa from Bhadrapaḥa attested in the *Pe cin bstan 'gyur*. As we can see, \*Bhadrapaṇa appears in Cordier's catalogue without an asterisk because reconstructions are marked there by square brackets. However, when the entry travelled to La Vallée Poussin's catalogue of Tibetan Dunhuang manuscripts<sup>98</sup> of Stein collection (currently part of the British Library), which he compiled in 1914–1918, it appears (as far as I can judge with reliance on its publication of 1962) without either an asterisk or square brackets. And later, it continues appearing everywhere without an asterisk as if it were attested in Sanskrit. \*Bhadrapaṇa is also often spelled as Bhadrāṇa, which, I think, is due to the entry in the Peking Tripitaka Online Search.<sup>99</sup> Among most

<sup>98</sup> No. 146 of La Vallée Poussin's catalogue attributes the composition to Ācārya Bhadrapaṇa with a reference to Cordier's catalogue. See La Vallée Poussin 1962, 56.

<sup>99</sup> Pe cin Tripitaka Online Search. Tibetan Works Research Project. The Shin Buddhist Comprehensive Research Institute, Otani University, [https://web.otani.ac.jp/cr/twrpe/Pe\\_cin/](https://web.otani.ac.jp/cr/twrpe/Pe_cin/)

recent references, 84000 Project features Bhadrapaṇa without an asterisk, and what is more, in the introduction to the English translation of *The Magnificent Account About a Sow* (*Sūkarikāvadāna*) by Bodhinidhi Translation Group it is said that he lived in the 8th century.<sup>100</sup> I wish there was a footnote provided for this claim, so as to know its source, but, unfortunately, there is none.

Although Cordier does not seem to offer any explanation of his Sanskrit reconstruction of \*Bhadrapaṇa, there is a valid, in my opinion, explanation of the Sanskrit-Tibetan correspondence, provided by Dorji Wangchuk, who takes Tib. *rgyan* usually translated as “ornament,” “decoration,” “jewelry,” etc., in its second meaning of “bet,” “stake,” or “lot,” which does correspond to Skt. *paṇa* (“bet,” “stake,” also “wealth,” etc.). And there is no difficulty with *bzang po* that commonly renders *bhadra*, i.e., “good.” Thus, \*Bhadrapaṇa would mean “Good Bet” or “Good Lot.”<sup>101</sup> There seems to be no other way to approach it apart from this type of philological analysis because \*Bhadrapaṇa does not appear in either Bu ston’s *History of Dharma*,<sup>102</sup> or Tāranātha’s *History of Dharma in India*.<sup>103</sup>

Summing it up, the attempt at reconstructing the ancient Indian context of the texts has brought me to the conclusion that among all the attributions it is \*Bhadrapaṇa who is the most probable author of the *Ṭikā*’s archetype. This, of course, cannot be proven. That being the case, bracketing the question of who its actual author was, it is worth considering the *Ṭikā* through the lens of all the attributions under a broader scope of “author-function.” The author-function is not a direct analog for the person we call the author. Rather, it is our understanding of how a text is produced, distributed, and consumed. The author-function renders irrelevant such questions as: “Who is the real author?” and “Have we proof of their authenticity and originality?” replacing them with new questions, such as: “What are the modes of existence of this discourse; where does it come from; how is it

<sup>100</sup> *The Magnificent Account About a Sow* (*Sūkarikāvadāna*), “Introduction,” i.5: “In this commentary, Bhadrapaṇa, who also lived in the eighth century, similarly refers to *The Magnificent Account About a Sow* to illustrate “the power of support,” as Śāntideva does in the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*.”

<sup>101</sup> Wangchuk 2020.

<sup>102</sup> Bu ston rin chen grub. *Bde bar gshegs pa’i bstan pa’i gsal byed chos kyi ’byung gnas gsung rab rin po che’i mdzod ces bya ba bzhuḡs so* [The Scripture on the Origins of Dharma that Explains the Teaching of Sugatas Called “The Precious Treasury”]. In *Gsung ’bum*, vol. 24: 633–1056.

<sup>103</sup> Jo nang rje btsun Tā ra nā tha. *Dam pa’i chos rin po che ’phags pa’i yul du ji ltar dar ba’i tshul gsal ston dgos ’dod kun ’byung zhes bya ba bzhuḡs* [Demonstration of the Way the Precious Sublime Dharma Spread in the Noble Land Called “Accomplishment of All Wishes”]. In *Gsung ’bum*, vol. 16: 101–545.

circulated; who controls it,” and so on.<sup>104</sup> Thus, the fact that such luminaries as Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, and Dignāga were considered authors of its Indian hyparchetypes bestowed upon them a great deal of implicit authority that almost certainly influenced their reception in the Tibetan tradition. Indeed, these attributions may be a major reason why these hyparchetypes were included into all the *Bstan 'gyur* collections and thus considered canonical texts.

### The *Ṭīkā* in Tibet: Synoptic and Stemmatic Analysis

Currently, all the Tibetan *Bstan 'gyur* collections contain five Indic commentaries on the *Bhadracaryāprañidhāna*:

- *Discourse on the Noble Kinglike Great Aspiration for Good Conduct* (*Āryabhadracaryāmahāprañidhānarājanibandhana*, 'Phags pa bzang po spyod pa'i smon lam gyi rgyal po chen po'i bshad sbyar) attributed to Nāgārjuna;
- *Synopsis of the Aspiration for Samantabhadra's Conduct* (*Samantabhadracaryāprañidhānārthasaṃgraha*, Kun tu bzang po'i spyod pa'i smon lam gyi don kun bsdu pa) attributed to Dignāga;
- *Extensive Commentary on the Noble Kinglike Aspiration for Good Conduct* (*Āryabhadracaryāprañidhānarājaṭīkā*, 'Phags pa bzang po spyod pa'i smon lam gyi rgyal po'i rgya cher 'grel pa) attributed to Śākyamitra;
- *Extensive Commentary on the Noble Kinglike Aspiration for Good Conduct* (*Āryabhadracaryāprañidhānarājaṭīkā*, 'Phags pa bzang po spyod pa'i smon lam gyi rgyal po'i rgya cher 'grel pa) attributed to \*Bhadrapaṇa; and
- [Extensive] *Commentary on the Noble Kinglike Aspiration for Good Conduct* (*Āryabhadracaryāprañidhānaṭīkā*, 'Phags pa bzang po spyod pa'i smon lam gyi 'grel pa) attributed to Vasubandhu.

The Tibetan imperial catalogues of the early 9th century list four Indic commentaries on the *Bhadracaryāprañidhāna*: by \*Bhadrapaṇa, Dignāga, Guṇaprabha, and Śākyamitra. Thus, the *Catalogue from Ldan kar* includes them into the “Commentaries on Mahāyāna Sūtras” (*Theg pa chen po'i mdo de'i ṭīkā*):

- 'Phags pa bzang po spyod pa'i rgya cher 'grel pa by Ācārya Śākyamitra (Slob dpon Shākya bshes gnyen), 800 *ślokas*, which is two *bampos* and 200 *ślokas* in length (Lalou no. 559);
- *Bzang spyod pa'i bshad sbyar* by Ācārya Guṇaprabha (Slob dpon

<sup>104</sup> See Foucault 1969, 299–314.

Yon tan 'od), 500 *śloka*s, which is 1 *bampo* and 200 *śloka*s in length (Lalou no. 560);

- *Bzang po spyod pa'i 'grel pa* by Ācārya Dignāga (Slob dpon Phyogs kyi glang po), 450 *śloka*s, which is 1.5 *bampo* in length (Lalou no. 561);
- *Bzang po spyod pa'i 'grel pa* by Ācārya \*Bhadrapaṇa (Slob dpon Rgyan bzang po), 450 *śloka*s, which is 1.5 *bampo* in length (Lalou no. 562).<sup>105</sup>

The *Catalogue from 'Phang thang* lists four commentaries on the *Bhadracaryāpranīdhāna* in the section “Commentaries on Various Sūtras” (*Mdo sde sna tshogs kyi 'grel pa*):

- *Bzang po spyod pa smon lam gyi 'grel pa* by Ācārya \*Bhadrapaṇa (Slob dpon Rgyan bzang po), 1.5 *bampo* in length;
- *Bzang po spyod pa smon lam gyi 'grel pa* by Ācārya Dignāga (Slob dpon Phyogs kyi glang po), 1.5 *bampo* in length;
- *Bzang po spyod pa smon lam gyi rgya cher 'grel pa* by Ācārya Śākyamitra (Slob dpon Shākya bshes gnyen), 2.5 *bamp*os in length; and
- *Bzang po spyod pa smon lam gyi bhad sbyar* by Ācārya Guṇaprabha (Slob dpon Yon tan 'od), (?) *śloka*s in length.<sup>106</sup>

There are five main conclusions I would make based on the comparison of the *Bstan 'gyur* collections with the lists in the imperial catalogues:

1. There is no commentary attributed to either Nāgārjuna or Vasubandhu in the catalogues, which implies that these hyparchetypes have been translated into Tibetan later than the 9th century;
2. The commentaries attributed to Dignāga and \*Bhadrapaṇa are the same in length—450 *śloka*s (1.5 *bampo*);
3. The commentary attributed to Dignāga has the same title as the commentary attributed to \*Bhadrapaṇa—*\*Bhadracaryāpranīdhānaṭīkā*—which would imply that the title of this commentary in the *Bstan 'gyur* collections most probably has been changed;
4. The commentary attributed to Śākyamitra is almost twice as long as the rest of the commentaries (800 *śloka*s), which

<sup>105</sup> *Pho brang stong thang lhan dkar gyi chos 'gyur ro cog gi dkar chag bzhugs*, *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*, vol. 206, f. 306v1–3; Lalou 1953, 332.

<sup>106</sup> *Dkar chag 'phang thang ma*, 37.



is the same as it is currently in the *Bstan 'gyur* collections, and confirms that the attribution of this commentary has not been changed, and that it is different from the synoptic commentaries;

5. The commentary attributed to Guṇaprabha is called *nibandhana* (*bhad sbyar*) instead of Dignāga's and \*Bhadrapaṇa's *ṭīkā* (*'grel pa*) and is 50 *śloka*s longer—500 instead of 450. As for the title, its difference does not mean much, e.g., the commentary attributed to Nāgārjuna is likewise called *nibandhana*, and it is one of the synoptic commentaries. As for the length difference, to decide on whether 50 *śloka*s is a significant difference we need to define the length of a *śloka*.

Apparently, the *bampo*, i.e., a “bundle,” “volume,” etc., is the largest unit of length and the *śloka* is the smallest. From the lengths listed in the *Catalogue from Ldan kar* we can deduce that 1 *bampo* equals 300 *śloka*s. Considering that manuscripts of the time were mostly in the *pothī* format, i.e., unfolded leaves with a hole in the middle joined by a string, a *bampo* may refer to a bundle of such leaves tightened with a string.

As for the length of one *śloka*, it is unclear. In the Sanskrit tradition, *śloka* refers to a verse, especially a verse in Anuṣṭubh meter which contains 16 syllables. In accordance with the references provided by Georgios Halkias, 1 *śloka* in the catalogues refers to a unit of 8 syllables.<sup>107</sup> However, as it has been mentioned in relation to the *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* in the imperial catalogues, they list it as containing 97 *śloka*s. The *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* has 62 verses with 22 syllables per verse. If 1 *śloka* was 8 syllables, then it would have 170.5 *śloka*s. Thus, the assertion that 1 *śloka* consists of 8 syllables makes little sense, at least in the case of the *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna*. Moreover, I can hardly imagine distinguished Tibetan translators counting syllables in Sanskrit manuscripts to produce their length in *śloka*s, especially in the case of prose texts. It is a process that is time-consuming and does not seem to be of any visible benefit. Instead, I would think of *śloka*s as something demonstrative that can characterize the source Sanskrit manuscripts and be easily verified just by looking at one page and counting the overall number of pages.

Thus, I would make a different suggestion inspired by the image of the oldest available *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna*'s palm-leaf Sanskrit manuscript Add.1680.1 dated 1068 CE:

<sup>107</sup> Halkias 2004, 65: fn. 52.

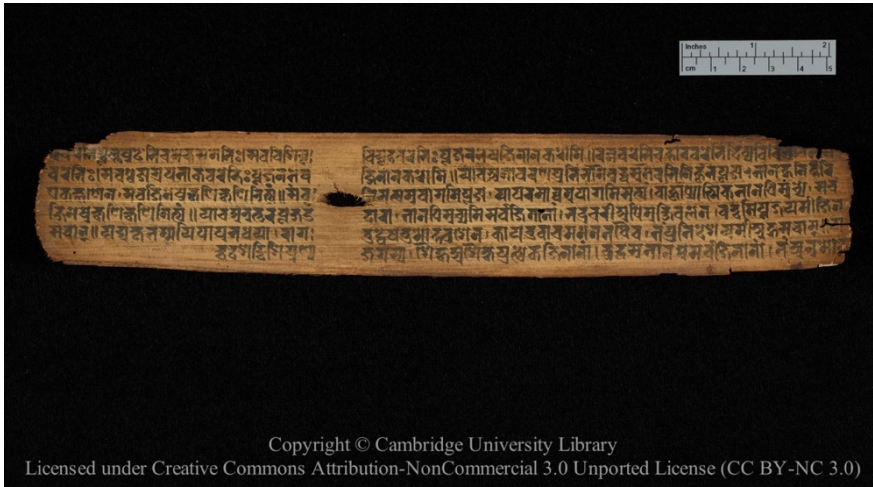


Fig. 8: MS Add.1680.1, f. 2r.

As we can see on the photo above, this manuscript is a *pothī*, and the string hole divides its text into two columns. If we count half-lines in each column separately, there would be 12 such half-lines per one folio side. This manuscript contains 115 such half-lines of the *Bhadracaryāpranīdhāna* (ff. 1v2–6r6). If the manuscript had 4 folios (8 sides), then it would give us the number of 96. For example, MS Add.1326 contains 46 full lines (69v4–73v1) or 92 half-lines. Thus, depending on the script and the size of *akṣaras* per line, the *Bhadracaryāpranīdhāna* can be written in Sanskrit in approximately 90–120 half-lines. Thus, one *śloka* may refer to one half-line (or one line in one column), which means that one full line consists of 2 *ślokas*.

We can further apply this hypothesis to the *Ṭīkā*'s Sanskrit hyparchetype attributed to Vasubandhu that has been found in Tibet. In accordance with Xuezu Li,<sup>108</sup> this manuscript consists of 19 folios. If each side of one folio contained 6 lines, then it would amount to 12 *ślokas* per folio side or 456 *ślokas* per manuscript. If the last folio side was only half-filled, i.e., contained 3 instead of 6 lines, then it would be exactly 450 *ślokas* as indicated in the catalogues for the hyparchetypes attributed to \*Bhadrapaṇa and Dignāga.

Assuming this hypothesis is correct, 50 *ślokas* would constitute roughly two folios. This poses a question: is a two-folio difference significant? On the one hand, if the format of the manuscripts was the same, i.e., they were written on the palm leaves (or paper) of the same size in the same script with the same number of *akṣaras* per line, then it would be a significant difference. On the other, since the sizes of

<sup>108</sup> Li 2020, 406.

palm leaves, scripts as well as the number of *akṣaras* per line in the manuscripts significantly vary, a two-folio difference is not that big. Thus, it cannot rule out a possibility that the commentary attributed to Guṇaprabha is one of the synoptic commentaries. This is one of the reasons this commentary was analyzed among the synoptic commentaries in the previous section.

Moreover, there are two anonymous manuscripts of the *Ṭikā*'s Tibetan translation—IOL Tib J 147 and PT 150—that are different from all the rest. They might contain a translation of the commentary attributed to Guṇaprabha. This, however, cannot be verified, because IOL Tib J 147 lacks the beginning and the end, and the colophon of PT 151 does not mention either the author or translators and calls this commentary a “sūtra:” “The sūtra that explains the *Noble Great Aspiration for the Conduct of Samantabhadra*” (*‘Phags pha’ kun du bzang pho sphyod pha’i smon lam cen pho ‘greld pha’i mdo* (Old Tibetan orthography preserved). Basing on its textual analysis, I would suggest that it is the oldest Tibetan translation of the *Ṭikā*'s hyparchetype among all those currently available. There are several reasons for this hypothesis. First, direct quotations of the *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* in this translation are very different from the *Bka’ ‘gyur* and Dunhuang versions of the *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna*, which may imply that this hyparchetype had been translated before the translation of the *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* was standardized. Moreover, it features non-standard translation of common terms, for example, *g.yung drung rdzogs pha’i byang chub* instead of *yang dag par rdzogs pa’i byang chub* for *samyaksambodhi*, *mur ‘dug pa* instead of *mu stegs pa* for *tīrthika*, *yang dag par gshegs pa* instead of *de bzhin gshegs pa* for *tathāgata*, *Gnas bden* instead of *Dga’ ldan* for *Tuṣita*, and so on. This commentary is not included into the *Bstan ‘gyur* collections. Moreover, the *Catalogue from ‘Phang thang* does not provide the data on its length, which might indicate that it was not available when this catalogue was compiled. This might also be the reason why it is not mentioned in Ye shes sde’s subcommentary.

Among the four synoptic commentaries currently available as attributed texts, the one attributed to Dignāga does not mention the translators. It is also different from the rest of the synoptic commentaries because it includes an outline, called, just like the commentary, “synopsis of the aspiration” (*smom lam gyi don kun bsdus pa*), with references to the root verses. It takes two folios in the *Sde dge bstan ‘gyur*.<sup>109</sup> Recall that the commentary attributed to Guṇaprabha, according to the *Catalogue from Ldan kar*, is two folios longer. If this outline was part of the Sanskrit text of that hyparchetype as well, then it would explain its difference in length. However, it may have been

<sup>109</sup> D<sub>D</sub>182r2–184r7.

added by Tibetan translators because this commentary might have served as a technical support for the Tibetan translation of the *Bhadracaryāprañidhāna*. I explored the hypothesis that its potential translator might have been Lo tsā ba Ye shes sde. However, through comparative analysis of the terms in it and the subcommentary of Ye shes sde such a hypothesis did not seem tenable.

Regarding the hyparchetype attributed to \*Bhadrapaṇa, it was translated by Paṇḍita Ācārya Jñānagarbha and Lo tsā ba Ska ba dpal brtsegs. Since Ska ba dpal brtsegs is a well-known translator of the early spread of the Dharma (*snga dar*) in Tibet, there is no difficulty in dating this translation. It is the only attributed hyparchetype available as two Dunhuang manuscripts (IOL J 146 and IOL J 148/ PT 150). The first manuscript is part of the Stein collection in the British Library, and it is complete. The second manuscript is incomplete and divided between two collections—half of it belongs to the Stein collection in the British Library and half to the Pelliot collection in the National Library of France.

Moreover, a comparison of the translations of the hyparchetype attributed to \*Bhadrapaṇa and the hyparchetype attributed to Dignāga demonstrates that the translation of \*Bhadrapaṇa's hyparchetype was apparently more faithful to the Sanskrit version. The translation of Dignāga's hyparchetype is more concise and occasionally omits some sentences or passages. Of course, these sentences may be missing from the Sanskrit text itself, but it is also possible that it was the choice of the Tibetan translator to omit them because, as the analysis shows, they often contain explanations of the uncommon words of the *Bhadracaryāprañidhāna* in *gāthā* Sanskrit and complicated aspects of Sanskrit grammar, which either become repetitive or do not make much sense when rendered in Tibetan. For example, one section of the explanation of the verse 4 (part 1.4) is missing in Dignāga's hyparchetype. In accordance with the translation of \*Bhadrapaṇa's hyparchetype, it contains the following explanation: "Again, since the **inexhaustible praise-oceans** (*akṣayavarṇasamudrān*) is a *samānādhikaraṇa*,<sup>110</sup> **qualities** (*guṇān*) is its specification (*viśeṣa*). Thus, the actual meaning (*vākyādhyañhāra*) [of **proclaiming qualities of all the jinas**] is "proclaiming oceans of inexhaustible praises."<sup>111</sup> As we can see, it is a rather technical explanation. Nevertheless, Ska ba dpal brtsegs, who apparently was a great Sanskritist, did an amazing job, faithfully

<sup>110</sup> *Samānādhikaraṇa* (*gzhi mthun pa*) apparently means that the Skt. compound *akṣayavarṇasamudrān* and the noun *guṇān* refer to the same object (*dravya*), which is *jināḥ*, and agree in grammatical qualities with both being masculine accusative plural.

<sup>111</sup> D<sub>B</sub>235v7: *yang na bsngags pa mi zad rgya mtsho zhes bya ba ni gzhi mthun pa yin pa'i phyir yon tan zhes bya ba 'di'i khyad par yin te | bsngags pa mi zad pa rgya mtsho rnam rab tu brjod cing zhes bya ba'i tha tshig go.*

rendering even such technical passages into Tibetan.

As for the hyparchetypes attributed to Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu, they were translated into Tibetan during the later spread of the Dharma (*phyi dar*) in Tibet. The hyparchetype attributed to Nāgārjuna was translated by a Kāśmīri Paṇḍita Tilakakalaśa (Thig le bum pa)<sup>112</sup> and a well-known Lo tsā ba Rngog blo ldan shes rab (1059–1109). Thus, there is no difficulty in dating this hyparchetype to the 11th century. The hyparchetype attributed to Vasubandhu was translated into Tibetan by the Indian Paṇḍita Ācārya Ānanda and Lo tsā ba Bhikṣu Bhadrapāla. The identity of Bhadrapāla is difficult to establish, as this is the only translation attributed to him in the *Bka'* 'gyur and *Bstan* 'gyur collections. It is possible that the name Bhadrapāla is the Sanskrit reconstruction of Bzang skyong. While there is one Lo tsā ba Bzang skyong who is dated to the 9th century,<sup>113</sup> it is unlikely that this is the same person because Paṇḍita Ānanda was a Kāśmīri scholar who lived c. 11th century,<sup>114</sup> which shows that this hyparchetype was translated in the 11th century.

Now, to demonstrate the synoptic problem, let us look at the references to other texts contained in the *Tīkā* as they appear in the *Sde dge bstan* 'gyur. Among the sixteen identified sources, fifteen are shared by all the hyparchetypes, and only one—a reference to Āryadeva's *Catuhṣataka*—is missing in Dignāga's hyparchetype. The references appear in the same places, and although they use different wording, it is obvious that they translate the same Sanskrit text. As it has been already mentioned, among the identified references there are:

- **ten Mahāyāna sūtras:** (1) *Caturdharmanirdeśasūtra*, (2) *Gocarapariśuddhisūtra*, (3) *Karmāvaraṇaviśuddhasūtra*, (4) *Tathāgatācintyaguhyānirdeśasūtra*, (5) *\*Tathāgatakośasūtra*, (6) *Maitreyavimokṣa* of the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*, (7) *Mañjuśrībuddhakṣetragaṇavyūha*, (8) *Upālipariṣcchāsūtra*, (9) *Vajracchedikāsūtra*, and (10) *Viradattapariṣcchāsūtra*;
- **four non-Mahāyāna texts:** (11) *Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra*,

<sup>112</sup> BDRC Resource ID P4CZ15246: primary name is Tilakakalaśa (Ti la ka ka la sha), primary title is paṇḍita chen po Tilakakalaśa, 11th century. BDRC, <http://purl.bdrc.io/resource/P4CZ15246>

<sup>113</sup> BDRC Resource ID P4256: primary name is Bzang skyong, primary title is Lo tsā ba Bzang skyong, early translator, 9th century. BDRC, <http://purl.bdrc.io/resource/P4256>

<sup>114</sup> BDRC Resource ID P8252: primary name is Ānanda, primary title is Kha che'i paṇḍita Ā nanta or A nanta, 11th century. BDRC, <http://purl.bdrc.io/resource/P8252>

- (12) *Karmaśataka*, (13) *Karmavibhaṅga*, and  
 (14) *Sūkarikāvadānasūtra*, as well as  
 ▪ **two attributed texts:** (15) Āryadeva's *Catuḥśataka* and  
 (16) Mātṛceṭa's *Varṇārhavarnastotra*:

### 1. *Caturdharmanirdeśasūtra*

A verse included into the Potala Skt. manuscript of *Caturdharmanirdeśasūtra*. (Tseng 2010, vol. 1, 404): *kṛtvābudho 'lpam api pāpam adhaḥ prayāti kṛtvā budho mahad api prajahāty anarthān | majjaty ayo 'lpam api vāriṇi saṃhataṃ hi pātrikṛtaṃ mahad api plavate tad eva*. The Tibetan 'Phags pa chos bzhi bstan pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo (*Āryacaturdharmanirdeśanāmamahāyānasūtra*) [*The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra "Teaching the Four Factors"*], Tōh 249, does not contain it. It appears without an attribution in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (Pradhan 1975, 357): *kṛtvā budho 'lpam api pāpamadhaḥ prayāti kṛtvā budho mahad api prajahāty anartham | majjanyadho 'lpam api vāriṇi saṃhataṃ hi pātrikṛtaṃ mahad api plavate tadeva*:

#### **M<sub>A</sub>225<sub>11-13</sub>**<sup>115</sup>

*gzhung las 'byung ba myi shes phas ni sdig chung zad byas pha dang yang thur du 'gro'o mkhas phas cen pho byas pha'i nyes pha yang 'byung bar 'gyur ba ni 'di lta ste | phor bur brdungs na cen pho'ang chu'i steng na 'phyo |*

#### **D<sub>B</sub>248r2-3:**

*de skad du mi mkhas pas ni sdig pa chung ngu byas kyang 'og tu 'gro | | mkhas pas chen po byas kyang gnod pa rab tu spong bar 'gyur | | lcags kyi gong bu chung yang chu yi 'og tu 'bying 'gyur la | | de nyid snod du byas na che yang steng na 'phyo bar 'gyur | | zhes bshad pa lta bu yin no | |*

#### **D<sub>D</sub>196v2-3:**

*de ltar yang gsungs pa | mi shes pas ni sdig pa chung byas 'og tu 'gro | | mkhas pas nyes pa che byas kyang ni yang bar 'gyur | | bsgongs pa'i lcags ni chung yang chu yi 'og tu 'byings | | de nyid snod du byas na che yang steng na 'phyo | | zhe'o | |*

#### **D<sub>N</sub>177r4-5:**

*de skad du yang | mi mkhas sdig pa cung zad byas kyang 'og 'gro zhing | |*

<sup>115</sup> Here and in what follows, folio numbers of the manuscripts of the anonymous hyparchetype refer to the attributed folio numbers (see Vasylieva 2004, PhD Dissertation, Appendix II. Manuscripts, 2. M<sub>A1</sub> and M<sub>A2</sub>, pp. cciii–ccxxvi). Quotations from the manuscripts preserve Old Tibetan orthography.

*mkhas pas chen po byas kyang don med rab spong ste | |lcags ni chung yang  
chu stengs bzhas na nub 'gyur ba | |de nyid che yang snod du byas na lding  
ba bzhin | |zhes gsungs so | |*

**D<sub>v</sub>265r1–2:**

*de bzhin du yang gsungs pa | mi mkhas sdig pa chung ngu byas kyang 'og tu  
'gro | |mkhas pas chen po byas kyang des ni don med gnod pa spong | |lcags  
kyi gong bu chung yang chu yi 'og tu 'bying | |snod byas na ni chen po yang  
ni steng du lding | |zhes so | |*

**English translation:**<sup>116</sup>

Thus, it is said:

Even minor misdeeds prove the downfall of the foolish.  
While even great misdeeds do not affect the wise.  
An iron ball, though small, sinks in water.  
But even a great mass of iron, when made into a vessel, floats.

**2. Gocarapariśuddhisūtra**

*'Phags pa spyod yul yongs su dag pa'i mdo* (Āryagocarapariśuddhisūtra)  
[The Noble Sūtra on the Purification of the Sphere of Activity] refers to the  
*Spyod yul yongs su dag pa'i le'u*, Ch.16 of the *Buddhāvataṃsakasūtra*. Tōh  
44-16:

**M<sub>A</sub>221<sub>5-6</sub>:** *de kun gyab 'phags ba'i spyad yul yongsu dag pha zhes bya ba'i  
mdo ste la ltos shog*

**D<sub>B</sub>245r3:** *'di thams cad ni 'phags pa spyod yul yongs su dag pa'i mdo la blta  
bar bya'o | |*

**D<sub>D</sub> 194r1:** *de ni 'phags pa spyod yul yongs su dag pa'i mdo la ltos shig*

**D<sub>N</sub>174r7–174v1:** *'di thams cad spyod yul yongs su dag pa'i mdor blta bar  
bya'o | |*

**D<sub>v</sub>262r6:** *de yang 'phags pa spyod yul yongs su dag pa'i mdo la blta bar  
bya'o | |*

<sup>116</sup> Here and in what follows, English translation is based on the hyparchetype attributed to \*Bhadrapaṇa.

### English translation:

One should look all this up in the *Āryagocarapariśuddhisūtra*.

### 3. *Karmāvaraṇaviśuddhasūtra*

'Phags pa las kyi sgrib pa rnam par dag pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo (*Āryakarmāvaraṇaviśuddhināmamahāyānasūtra*) [*The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra on the Purification of Karmic Obstructions*]. Tōh 218, Sde dge bka' 'gyur, vol. 62, ff. 284r–297v:

**M<sub>A2</sub>23<sub>2-8</sub>:** las kyis bsgrigs pha las bde ba'i mdo sde las 'byung ba dge slong zhig myi tshangs phar sphyod pha dang myi bsad pha'i pham ba gnyisu gyurd pha las phyis yid rab du 'gyod cing gdung nas gtsug lag khang gcig nas gcig du grong gcig nas gcig du song zhing 'gro ba kun kyi mdun du kye ma 'o bdag ni bslus so | kye ma 'o bdag ni bslus so zhes phyi phyir 'gyod de bshags shing bslar bton bas na las kyang srabs phar gyurd te de sems gdung zhing 'dug phal byang chub sems dpha' mngon bar shes pha thob pha zhig gis de la zab mo'i chos shed khong du chud phas na de'i sdig pa rtsa ba nas byung ste chos ma skyes ba'i bzod pha thob phar 'gyur tho | de bas na ngan song gi the tshom 'dul ba' chos thams cad gyis bsgrigs pha rnam phar sbyong ba 'di yin te zab mo'i chos la mos pha bzhin 'di la dad cing bslang phar bya' o |

**D<sub>B</sub>246v1–4:** ji skad du las kyi sgrib pa rgyun gcod pa'i mdo las 'di lta ste | dge slong zhig mi tshangs par spyod pa dang | mi gsod pa'i phas pham pa gnyis byung ba dang | phyis mi dga' zhing yid gdungs nas myos pa bzhin du gtsug lag khang nas gtsug lag khang dang | grong nas grong dang | lam po che la sogs par 'gro na yang | sdig pa de skye bo kun gyis mngon sum du yang dag par rab tu 'chags te | yang dang yang du kye ma kyi hud bdag ni ma rung ngo | | bdag ni nyams so zhes smra zhing las de srab mor gyur gyi bar du sdig pa 'chags pa'i stobs kyis sel bar byed do | | de ltar sems shin tu gdungs par gyur pa de la byang chub sems dpa' mngon par shes pa thob pa zhig gis chos zab mo de dang de lta bu bshad pa dang | de na de chos thams cad la bdag med par rtogs pas sdig pa thams cad rnam pa thams cad du rtsad nas bton te mi skye ba'i chos la bzod pa thob par gyur to zhes gsungs pa lta bu yin no | | chos zab mo la mos pa 'di ni ltung ba dang | 'gyod pa thams cad sel ba dang | sgrib pa thams cad sbyong ba yin no zhes bya ba de ltar dad par bya ste |

**D<sub>D</sub>195r1–5:** 'di skad du las kyi sgrib pa so sor sbyong ba'i mdo las kyang 'di lta ste | dge slong gzhan zhig gis mi tshangs par spyod pa dang | ma bsad pa'i phas pham pa gnyis byung nas 'gyod de mi dga' bas yid gdungs te smyon pa bzhin du gtsug lag khang nas gtsug lag khang gzhan du | grong nas grong



gzhan du | tshong dus la sogs par song nas sdig pa de dag 'gro ba thams cad  
 kyi mdun du 'chags te | e ma'o bdag nyams so | | bdag nyams so | | zhes phyi  
 phyir smras pa ste | sdig pa bshags pa'i dkrugs shing gis drung nas ji tsam  
 nas las de bsrabs par gyur kyang | de'i phyir de shin tu sems la gdung zhing  
 'dug pa de la mngon par shes pa thob pa'i e ma'o bdag nyams so | | bdag  
 nyams so | | zhes phyi phyir smras pa ste | sdig pa bshags pa'i dkrugs shing  
 gis drung nas ji tsam nas las de bsrabs par gyur kyang | de'i phyir de shin  
 tu sems la gdung zhing 'dug pa de la mngon par shes pa thob pa'i byang chub  
 sems dpa' gzhan zhig gis zab mo'i chos ji lta ji lta bar bshad de | gang gis  
 de'i sdig pa thams cad kyi thams cad du rtsa ba nas phyung nas chos thams  
 cad bdag med par rtogs nas mi skye ba'i chos la bzod pa thob par gyur to | |  
 ngan song thams cad kyi nyes pa thams cad kyi the tshom sel ba dang | sgrib  
 pa'i chos thams cad sbyong ba ni zab mo'i chos la mos pa 'di yin te | 'di bzhin  
 du mos par byos shig ces gsungs so | |

**D<sub>N</sub>175v2-5:** ji skad du las kyi sgrib pa rnam par sbyong ba'i mdo las | dper  
 na dge slong gzhan zhig gis mi tshangs par spyod pa dang | ma gsod pa'i  
 phas pham pa gnyis byas te phyi nas de skyo ba skyes shing snying la gdung  
 ba skyes par gyur te | smyon pa bzhin du gtsug lag khang nas gtsug lag khang  
 dang | grong nas grong dang | srang nas srang du rgyu zhing skye bo thams  
 cad kyi mdun du bdag bcom mo | | bdag bcom mo zhes yang dag par sgrogs  
 te | yang nas yang kyi hud kyi hud ces zer zhing sdig pa bshags pa'i stobs kyis  
 'dor bar byed pa nas las de bsrabs pa'i bar du byas par gyur to | | de de ltar  
 sems shin tu gdungs par gyur pa na mngon par shes pa thob pa'i byang chub  
 sems dpa' gzhan zhig gang gis chos zab mo de lta de lta bu bstan pas chos  
 thams cad bdag med pa nyid du rtogs nas thams cad nas thams cad rnam pa  
 thams cad nas sdig pa de thams cad drungs phyung nas mi skye ba'i chos la  
 bzod pa thob par gsungs pa bzhin no | | zab mo'i chos la lhag par mos pa 'di  
 ni ltung ba dang 'gyod pa thams cad sel ba dang | las kyi sgrib pa thams cad  
 rnam par sbyong bar byed pa yin no zhes de ltar dad par bya ste |

**D<sub>v</sub>263v1-4:** ji skad du las kyi sgrib pa rnam par dag pa'i mdo las kyang  
 gsungs pa | dge slong zhig la mi tshangs par spyod pa dang | mi gsad pa'i  
 pham pa gnyis byung ba la | phyis 'gyod pa'i sems kyis gdungs nas | snying  
 'bar bar gyur te smyon pa lta bur lha khang nas lha khang dang | grong nas  
 grong dang | yul 'khor la sogs par song nas skye bo mang po'i mdun du sdig  
 pa bsal bar byed de | ha ha brkus so | | brkus so zhes yang dang yang sdig pa  
 bshags pa'i stobs kyis spangs zhing ji srid de'i las de chung bar byed par gnas  
 te | de'i don kho nas yid gdungs par gyur pa dang | de las gzhan mngon par  
 shes pa dang ldan pa'i byang chub sems dpas de dang de bzhin du zab mo'i  
 chos bstan pas | gang gis de'i sdig pa rnam pa thams cad byang nas chos la  
 bdag med par yang dag par rtogs te | mi skye ba'i chos la bzod pa thob par  
 gyur to zhes so | | ltung ba'i 'gyod pa thams cad sel bar byed pa dang | las  
 kyi sgrib pa thams cad dag par byed pa yin pas | zab mo'i chos 'di la mos pa

*dang dad par bya'o* | |

### English translation:

It is recounted in the *Karmāvaranaviśuddhasūtra* that one monk who engaged in sexual intercourse and killed a person—the two defeats (*parājita*)<sup>117</sup>—later regretted it and felt deep distress. Like a madman he went from temple to temple, from town to town, wandering the roads and other places. He wholeheartedly and genuinely confessed this wrongdoing in the presence of all the people he met. He lamented again and again, “Oh no! I am unworthy! I have broken my vows!” He was saying it until his [negative] karma diminished and was cleared away by the power of confessing wrongdoing. One bodhisattva knew through developed clairvoyance that he was deeply distressed and taught him the profound Dharma. Then he realized that all phenomena are devoid of self, and by the power of this, all sorts of his wrongdoings were extracted with the very root, and he attained patience to accept phenomena as non-arising (*anutpattikadharmakṣānti*).

#### 4. *Tathāgatācintyaguhyānirdeśasūtra*

*'Phags pa de bzhin gshegs pa'i gsang ba bsam gyis mi khyab pa bstan pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo* (*Āryatathāgatācintyaguhyānirdeśanāmamahāyānasūtra*) [*The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra Teaching on the Unfathomable Secrets of the Tathāgatas*], Tōh 47, contains the same list of the four inconceivable things—karma, *nāgas*, the absorbed in *dhyāna* (*dhyāyin*), and the Buddha. See *Sde dge bka' 'gyur*, vol. 39, f. 104r3–4: *grogs po dag de bzhin gshegs pas bsam gyis mi khyab pa 'di gsungs te | bzhi gang zhe na | 'di lta ste | las bsam gyis mi khyab pa dang | glu bsam gyis mi khyab pa dang | bsam gtan pa bsam gyis mi khyab pa dang | sangs rgyas bsam gyis mi khyab pa'o*:

**MA110v2-4:** *bsam gyis myi khyab pa'i | gzhung las | gsungs pa | ngo mtshar du gyurd | cang myed | myed de | mkhas pa rnam gyi dbang po las kyang | 'gyur na' | | de la ngo mtshard du ci yod ces 'byung ba dang | 'jig rten gyi mgon pos | gsungs pa | bsam gyis myi khyab pa | ni | rnam pa bzhi ste | bsam gtan pa dang | las dang klu dang sang rgyas rnam gyi | mthu ched po'o | |*

<sup>117</sup> Refers to the four defeats (*catvāraḥ pārājikā dharmāḥ*, *phas pham par 'gyur ba'i chos bzhi*), the four main transgressions of the monastic vows that lead to expulsion from the monastic order: (1) having sexual intercourse; (2) taking what is not given (stealing), (3) depriving a human being of life (killing), and (4) claiming attainment of a superior human state (claiming attainment of stages of pure mental concentration that have not been achieved).

**D<sub>B</sub>242r6–7:** *bsam gyi mi khyab pa nyid las kyang | gang tshe sa stengs mkhas pa rnams | | mig 'phrul gyi ni rnam pa la | | ya mtshan cung zhig yod min pa | | de tshe ngo mtshar ci zhig che | | 'jig rten mgon po skyob pa yis | | bsam gtan las dang klu rnams dang | | sangs rgyas bdag nyid che rnams kyi | | bsam gyis mi khyab bzhir bshad do*

**D<sub>D</sub>191v1–2:** *bsam gyis mi khyab par lung las kyang bshad pa | mkhas pa dag gis sa 'di la | | ngo mtshar 'gyur ba cung zad med | | sgyu ma'i rnam par gyur pa la | | ya mtshan du ni su zhig 'dzin | | bsam gtan las dang klu rnam dang | | sangs rgyas rnams kyi che ba nyid | | 'jig rten mgon po 'dren pa des | | bsam gyis mi khyab rnam bzhir bshad |*

**D<sub>N</sub>171v2–3:** *bsam gyis mi khyab pa nyid kyang | | gang tshe sa ni mkhas rnams la | | mtshar min cung zad yod min pa | | de tshe dbang po rnams kyis ni | | rtog pa nyid la mtshar ci yod | | 'jig rten mgon po skyob pa yis | | bsam gtan las tshul klu rnams dang | | sangs rgyas bdag nyid che rnams kyi | | bsam mi khyab pa bzhir gsungs so | | zhes brjod pa 'dzin no | |*

**D<sub>V</sub>259v7–260r1:** *bsam gyis mi khyab pa yang gang gsungs pa | | ngo mtshar cung zad yod par ni | | 'jig rten mkhas pas ma mthong ste | | dbang pos mngon du gyur pa nyid | | de la ngo mtshar ci zhig yod | | bsam gtan pa las klu dag dang | | sangs rgyas mthu yi bdag nyid che | | 'jig rten mgon po skyob pa yis | | bzhi po bsam mi khyab par gsungs | | zhes so | |*

### English translation:

It is said in the *\*Acintyanirdeśasūtra*:

Since (*yathā*) there is nothing amazing (*adbhuta*)  
In the magical creations  
Of the skillful (*kuśala*) on this earth  
So (*tathā*) what is greatly amazing?

The Lord Protector of the World (*lokanātha*) taught  
That there are four inconceivable things (*catvāry acintyāni*):  
*Dhyāna*, karma, *nāgas*,  
And the greatness (*māhātmya*) of the Buddha.

### 5. *\*Tathāgatakośasūtra*

'Phags pa de bzhin gshegs pa'i mdzod kyi mdo (*\*Āryatathāgatakośasūtra*) [The Noble Sūtra of the Tathāgata's Treasury] is not included in the Tibetan Bka' 'gyur collections:

**MA223<sub>8</sub>–24<sub>3</sub>:** 'phags pha yang dag phar gshegs pha'i mdzod gyi mdo sde las bka' stsald pha | | yab 'od srung pha bsad pha'i nang na mchog ni rang sangs rgyas kyi tse yal bar byed pha mcog ste srog bcad pha'i nang na de mcog go | | ma byin bar lend pha'i nang na dkon mcog gsum gyi brkus pha de mcog go | | 'dod phas log phar spyod pha'i nang na ma dang dgra bcom ba la nyal ba ni mcog go | | mrdzun kyi nang na ni yang dag phar gshegs pha la smod pha de mcog go | | phra ma'i nang na ni dge 'dun kyi dbyen byed pha de mcog go | | tshig gyal ba'i nang na ni chos 'dod pha la bgegs byed pha ni mcog go | | chags phar byed pha'i nang ni drang phor byed pa dang drang phor zhugs pha'i rnyed pha la dphrog phar sems pha de mcog go | nang du sems dpha'i nang na mtshams myed phar 'gro ba de mchog go | 'og phar lta ba' nang na ni lta bzhin du sdug pha de mchog go | sta | myi dge ba'i las kyi lam bcu pho'i 'di ni thams cad kyang ngan song gi nang na ce ste 'od srung de las sems can la la zhis ngan song can pho myi dge ba'i las kyi lam bcu pho de dang ldan bar gyurd pha las des yang dag pha gshegs pha'i rgyu dang rkyen du ldan bar bstand pha la zhugs nas chos 'di la ni bdag gam sems can nam srog gam | gang zag gam byed pha'am gang gis so sor rigs shes bya ba gag gyang myed de de lta ma byas phar mngon bar yid la byed cing skyu ma chos lta bur nyon mongs pha lta bur rang bzhin gyis yongsu dag pha lta bur chos tams cad la 'jug ste chos thams cad la thog nas rnam phar dag pha mngon du dad cing mos na sems can de ni ngan song du 'gro ba'o zhe nga myi smra'o |

**DB246v4–247r6:** ji skad du | 'phags pa de bzhin gshegs pa'i mdzod las | 'od srungs gang gi pha yin la rang sangs rgyas kyang yin pa de bsad na 'di ni srog gcod pa rnams kyinang na mi bzad pa yin no | | 'di lta ste | dkon mchog gsum gyi dkor'phrog pa 'di ni ma byin par len pa rnams kyi nang na mi bzad pa yin no | | 'di lta ste | ma yang yin la dgra bcom ma yang yin pa de la nyal po byas na 'di ni 'dod pas log par g.yem pa rnams kyi nang na ma rungs pa yin no | | 'di lta ste | de bzhin gshegs pa la skur pa 'debs pa 'di ni brdzun smra ba rnams kyi nang na ma rungs pa yin no | | 'di lta ste | dge 'dun gyi dbyen byed pa 'di ni phra ma rnams kyi nang na rungs pa yin no | | 'di lta ste | 'phags pa rnams la kha zer ba 'di ni tshig rtsub po rnams kyi nang na ma rungs pa yin no | | di lta ste | chos 'dod pa rnams rnam par g.yeng bar byed pa 'di ni tshig 'khyal pa rnams kyi nang na mi bzad pa yin no | | 'di lta ste | yang dag par song ba dang yang dag par zhugs pa rnams kyi rnyed pa 'phrog par sems pa 'di ni brnab sems kyi nang na ma rungs pa yin no | | 'di lta ste | mtshams med par 'gro bar 'gyur ba 'di ni gnod sems rnams kyi nang na ma rungs pa yin no | | 'di lta ste | lta ba shin tu thibs po ni log par lta ba rnams kyi nang na ma rungs pa yin no | | mi dge ba'i las kyi lam bcu po 'di dag ni gang las kyang kha na ma tho ba che ba yin no | | 'od srungs gal te sems can 'ga' zhis mi dge ba'i las kyi lam de dag kha na ma tho ba che ba bcu po de dag dang ldan par gyur la | de yang de bzhin gshegs pas bstan pa'I chos rgyu dang rkyen dang ldan pa la 'jug ste | 'di la bdag gam | sems can nam | srog gam | gang zag gam | gang zhis byed pa'am | gang zhis mong bar 'gyur

ba ni 'ga' yang med do | | de lta bas na chos thams cad ni ma byas pa mjon  
par 'dus ma byas pa sgyu ma'i chos nyid kun nas nyon mongs pa med pa rang  
bzhin gyis 'od gsal ba'o zhes bya ba la 'jug la | chos thams cad ni gzod ma nas  
dag pa'o zhes bya bar dad cing mos na | sems can de ngan song du song bar  
nga mi smra'o | |

**D<sub>D</sub>195r5–195v7:** ji ltar 'phags pa de bzhin gshegs pa'i mdzod kyi mdo las  
kyang | 'od srungs gang zhig gi pha yang yin la rang sangs rgyas kyang yin  
pa de 'tsho ba dang bral na 'di ni srog gcod pa'i nang na mchog go | | ma byin  
par len pa'i mchog ni 'di lta ste | dkon mchog gsum gyis dkor rku ba'o | | 'dod  
pas log par g.yem pa'i mchog ni 'di lta ste | ma yang yin la dgra bcom ma  
yang yin pa la nyal ba'o | | brdzun du smra ba'I mchog ni 'di lta ste | de bzhin  
gshegs pa la skur ba'o | | phra ma'i nang na mchog ni 'di lta ste | dge 'dun  
gyi dbyen byed pa'o | | tshig rtsub mo'i nang na mchog ni 'di lta ste | 'phags  
pa rnams la 'phya ba'o | | tshig kyal pa'i nang na mchog ni 'di lta ste | chos  
'dod pa rnams rnam par g.yeng bar byed pa'o | | chags pa'i mchog ni 'di lta  
ste | yang dag par song ba dang yang dag par zhugs pa rnams kyi rnyed pa  
'phrog par sems pa'o | | ngan sems kyi nang na mchog ni 'di lta ste | 'phags  
pa rnams la mi brten pa'o | | log par lta ba'i nang na mchog ni 'di lta ste | lta  
ba la shin du zhen pa'o | | mi dge ba bcu'i las kyi lam 'di dag thams cad ni  
kha na ma tho ba chen po ste | 'od srungs gal te sems can 'ga' zhig gis kha na  
ma tho ba chen po mi dge ba bcu'i las kyi lam 'di dag dang ldan par gyur pa  
des de bzhin gshegs pas rgyu dang rkyen du ldan pa'i chos bshad pa la zhugs  
nas | 'di la bdag gam | sems can nam | 'tsho ba'am | gang zag gam | byed  
pa'am | so sor myong bar byed pa gang yang med de | de bas na chos thams  
cad ni ma byas pa | mngon par 'dus ma byas pa | sgyu ma'i chos nyid nyon  
mongs pa med pa | rang bzhin gyis yongs su dag pa la 'jug cing | thog ma  
nas rnam par dag pa'i chos thams cad la mngon par dad cing shin tu mos pa'i  
sems can de ni ngan song du 'gro bar ngas ma smras so | |

**D<sub>N</sub>175v5–176r7:** ji skad du | 'phags pa de bzhin gshegs pa'i mdzod kyi mdo  
las | 'od srungs gang zhig pha yang yin la rang sangs rgyas kyang yin pa de  
srog dang bral bar byed la 'di ni srog gcod pa rnams kyi nang nas lci ba yin  
no | | 'di lta ste | dkon mchog gsum gyi dkor 'phrog pa 'di ni ma byin par len  
pa rnams kyi nang nas lci ba yin no | | 'di lta ste | ma yang yin la dgra bcom  
ma yang yin pa de la log par bsgrub pa 'di ni 'dod pas log par spyod pa rnams  
kyi nang nas lci ba yin no | | 'di lta ste | de bzhin gshegs pa la skur pa 'debs  
pa 'di ni brdzun du smra ba rnams kyi nang nas lci ba'o | | 'di lta ste | dge  
'dun gyi dbyen byed pa 'di ni phra ma rnams kyi nang nas lci ba yin no | | 'di  
lta ste | 'phags pa rnams la gshe ba 'di ni tshig rtsub mo rnams kyi nang nas  
lci ba yin no | | 'di lta ste | chos 'dod pa rnam par g.yeng ba 'di ni ngag 'khyal  
pa rnams kyi nang nas lci ba'o | | 'di lta ste | yang dag par song ba rnams  
dang | yang dag par zhugs pa rnams kyi rnyed pa 'phrog par sems pa 'di ni  
brnab sems kyi nang nas lci ba'o | | 'di lta ste | mtshams med pa nye bar rtsom

pa 'di ni gnod sems kyi nang nas lci ba'o | | 'di lta ste | lta ba shin tu thibs  
 por gyur pa 'di ni log par lta ba rnams kyi nang nas lci ba yin te | mi dge ba'i  
 las kyi lam bcu po 'di dag thams cad ni kha na ma tho ba chen po yin no | | 'od  
 srungs gal te sems can gcig 'ga' la la zhig mi dge ba bcu'i las kyi lam gyi las  
 kha na ma tho ba chen po 'di dag dang ldan par gyur la | de yang de bzhin  
 gshegs pa'i chos bstan pa rgyu rkyen du ldan pa la 'jug ste | 'di la gang zhig  
 byed pa'am | gang gis myong bar byed pa bdag gam | sems can nam | srog  
 gam | gang zag ni 'ga' yang med do snyam zhing de ltar chos thams cad bcos  
 bu nyid dang | mngon par 'dus ma byas pa nyid dang | kun nas nyon mongs  
 pa med pa nyid dang | sgyu ma'i chos nyid dang | rang bzhin gyis 'od gsal  
 ba nyid la 'jug cing | chos thams cad gdod ma nas rnam par dag pa nyid la  
 mngon par dad par byed | lhag par mos par byed na sems can de ngan song  
 du 'gro bar nga mi smra'o | |

**D<sub>v</sub>263v5–264r5:** ji skad du 'phags pa de bzhin gshegs pa'i mdzod las rgyas  
 par gsungs te | 'od srungs gang phar yang gyur la rang sangs rgyas kyang  
 yin pa de'i srog bcad na 'di ni srog gcod pa'i nang na lci ba'o | | ma byin pa  
 len pa'i nang na lci ba ni 'di lta ste | dkon mchog gsum gyi dkor phrogs  
 pa'o | | mi tshangs par spyod pa'I nang na lci ba ni 'di lta ste | ma yang yin  
 la dgra bcom ma yang yin pa de la spyod pa'o | | brdzun du smra ba'i nang  
 na lci ba ni 'di lta ste | de bzhin gshegs pa la skur pa'o | | phra ma'i nang na  
 lci ba ni 'di lta ste | dge 'dun gyi dbyen no | | tshig rtsub po'i nang na lci ba  
 ni 'di lta ste | 'phags pa la tshig ngan par smras pa'o | | ngag 'khyal pa rnams  
 kyi nang na lci ba ni 'di lta ste | chos 'dod pa g.yeng bar byed pa'o | | brnab  
 sems kyi nang na lci ba ni 'di lta ste | yang dag par zhugs pa'i rnyed pa la  
 brnab sems so | | gnod sems kyi nang na lci ba ni 'di lta ste | mtshams med  
 pa byed pa'i sems so | | log par lta ba rnams kyi nang na lci ba ni 'di lta ste |  
 shin tu thibs pa'i lta ba ste | 'di ltar mi dge ba'i las kyi lam bcu po thams cad  
 kha na ma tho ba chen po dang bcas pa ste | 'od srungs de la gal te sems can  
 gcig brgya lam na 'di lta bu'i kha na ma tho ba chen po dang bcas pa dag gi  
 mi dge ba'i las kyi lam bcu po dang ldan par gyur na | de yang de bzhin gshegs  
 pas rgyu rkyen dang yang dag par ldan pa'I chos bstan pas grol bar 'gyur te |  
 de la cung zad bdag gam | sems can nam | srog gam | gang zag gam | byed  
 pa po'am | myong ba po ni 'ga' yang med do zhes yid la byas shing mngon  
 par 'dus nas | nyon mongs pa med pa sgyu ma lta bu'i chos nyid | chos thams  
 cad rang bzhin gyis gsal bar 'gro bar 'gyur ba'o | | gdod ma nas rnam par  
 dag pa'i chos thams cad la | dad pa dang ldan pas mos pa'i sems can de ngan  
 song du 'gro bar mi 'gyur ro zhes nga smra'o | |

### English translation:

It is said in the \*Āryatathāgatakośasūtra,

Kāśyapa, when one kills one's father who is a *pratyekabuddha*,  
 this is the worst (*parama*) among all kinds of killing

(*prāṇātipāta*). Stealing offerings made to the Three Jewels is the worst among all kinds of taking what is not given (*adattādāna*). Sleeping with one's mother who is an *arhatī* is the worst among all kinds of sexual misconduct (*kāmamithyācāra*). Denigrating the Tathāgata is the worst among all kinds of telling lies (*mṛṣāvāda*). Causing discord in the saṅgha is the worst among all kinds of slander (*paśunya*). Insulting a noble being is the worst among all kinds of harsh speech (*pāruṣya*). Distracting the one who yearns for the Dharma is the worst among all idle gossip (*saṃbhinnapralāpa*). An intention (*cetanā*) to acquire belongings of those who have rightly gone (*samyaggata*)<sup>118</sup> and those who have set forth (*saṃprasthita*)<sup>119</sup> is the worst among all kinds of covetousness (*abhidhyā*). Committing deeds with immediate retribution (*ānantarya*)<sup>120</sup> is the worst among all kinds of malice (*vyāpāda*). Having an extremely obscured view<sup>121</sup> is the worst among all kinds of wrong view (*mithyādr̥ṣṭi*). These are the worst wrongdoings among the ten unvirtuous paths of karma (*daśākuśalakarmapatha*).<sup>122</sup>

Kāśyapa, when beings turn in this way to the unvirtuous paths of action associated with the ten great misdeeds, and then, endowed with the causes and conditions, engage with the Dharma taught by the Tathāgata: “With respect to that, there is

<sup>118</sup> The one who has gone rightly (*samyaggata*, *yang dag par song ba*) refers to a being who has attained the fruition of any vehicle, i.e., Śrāvakayāna or Mahāyāna, which means arhatship or complete and perfect buddhahood.

<sup>119</sup> The one who has set forth (*saṃprasthita*, *yang dag par zhugs pa*) refers to a being who follows a path of any vehicle, i.e., Śrāvakayāna or Mahāyāna to attain self-liberation or buddhahood, e.g., *śrāvakayānasamprasthita* or *mahāyānasamprasthita*.

<sup>120</sup> It refers to the five deeds with immediate retribution (*pañcānantaryāni*, *mtshams med pa lnga*): (1) killing one's father (*pitṛvadha*, *pha gsod pa*); (2) killing one's mother (*mātrvadha*, *ma gsod pa*); (3) killing an arhat (*arhadvadha*, *dgra bcom pa gsod pa*); (4) maliciously drawing blood from the body of the Tathāgata (*tathāgataduṣṭacittarudhirotpādaḥ*, *de bzhin gshegs pa'i sku la ngan sems khyis khrag 'byin pa*); (5) creating a schism in the saṅgha (*saṅghabhedasceti*, *dge 'dun gyi dbyen byas ba*).

<sup>121</sup> An extremely obscured view (*lta ba shin tu thibs po*). D<sub>7</sub> renders it differently as *lta ba la shin du zhen pa*, i.e., “extreme fixation on one's view.”

<sup>122</sup> The ten unvirtuous paths of action (*daśākuśalakarmapathāḥ*, *mi dge ba'i las kyi lam bcu po*) refer to the ten non-virtues (*daśākuśalāni*, *mi dge ba bcu*): (1) taking life, or killing (*prāṇātipāta*, *srog gcod pa*), (2) taking what is not given, or stealing (*adattādāna*, *ma byin par len pa*), and (3) sexual misconduct (*kāmamithyācāra*, *mi gtsang spyod pa*) constitute the three of the body (*kāyakarmapathāni*); (4) lying (*mṛṣāvāda*, *rdzun du smra ba*), (5) slander, or sowing discord (*paśunyavāda*, *phra ma*), (6) harsh speech (*pāruṣyavāda*, *tshig rtsub*), and (7) idle gossip (*saṃbhinnapralāpa*, *ngag 'chal*) constitute the four of the speech (*vākakarmapathāni*), and (8) covetousness (*abhidhyā*, *brnab sems*), (9) malice (*vyāpāda*, *gnod sems*), and (10) wrong view (*mithyādr̥ṣṭi*, *log lta*) constitute the three of the mind (*manaskarmapathāni*).

no 'self' (*ātman*), 'being' (*sattva*), 'life force' (*jīva*), or 'individual' (*pudgala*). There is neither 'doing' (*kāraṇa*) or 'experiencing' (*pratisamvedana*). Therefore, all phenomena are uncreated (*akṛta*) and uncompounded (*anabhisaṃskṛta*). The illusory essence of phenomena (*dharmatā*) is undefiled (*asaṃkliṣṭā*) and luminous by nature (*prabhāsvarā prakṛtyā*)," and have faith and yearning towards "All phenomena are primordially pure (*ādiśuddha*)," I don't say those [beings] will be reborn in the adverse states.

## 6. Maitreyavimokṣa of the Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra

**6.1 Maitreyavimokṣa**, ch. 54 "Maitreya" of the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra* (Suzuki and Idzumi 1934 & 1949, 475): *ye dharmamegha sugatāna daśaddiśāsu ekāsane sthita pibanti asaṃpramūḍhāḥ aparāntakalpaniyutānyavitrptacittā sahabuddhisāgarasamānamayaṃ vihārah*; Byams pa'i rnam par thar pa (Maitreyavimokṣa) [Liberation of Maitreya], *Sde dge bka'* 'gyur, vol. 38, f. 296r1–2: *gang rnam phyogs bcu'i bde gshegs rnam kyi chos sprin la | lstan gcig gnas bzhin rmongs pa med par 'thung byed kyang | lphyi mtha'i bskal pa khrag khrig 'grangs par mi ngoms sems | lblo chen rgya mtsho lta bu'i gnas ni 'di 'dra'o*:

**M<sub>A1</sub>11r7–11v2**: *de bzhin du phags pa sdong pos brgyan pa'i mdo sde dang | 'phags pa byams pa rnam par | grol ba las gsungs | pa yang yang dag par gshegs pa'i chos gyi sprin ni phyogs bcu nam mkha'i rnam | sta la 'khod bzhin du | thos pas bskal pa bye ba khrag khrig du yang | sems ngoms myi myong ste | lde'i blo ched po ni | rgya mtsho mtshungs par | lspyod zhes 'byung | l*

**D<sub>B</sub>243r1–3**: *de bzhin du 'phags pa sdong po bkod pa'i mdo 'phags pa byams pa'i rnam par thar pa las kyang | gang zhig skad cig 'dug nas ma rmongs par | lbskal pa dung phyur bye ba mang po phyogs bcu yi | lbde gshegs chos sprin nyan par ngoms pa'i sems med pa | l'di ni blo chen rgya mtsho lta bu'i gnas pa yin | lzhes gsungs te |*

**D<sub>D</sub>192r2–4**: *sdong pos brgyan pa'i mdo sde 'phags pa byams pa'i rnam par thar pa las bshad pa | phyogs bcu'i bde bar gshegs pa rnam kyi chos sprin la | lgnas gcig 'dug nas rmongs pa med par gyur te nyan | lbskal pa bye ba mang por sems kyi ngoms pa med | lblo chen rgya mtsho dang ni mnyam par spyod par shog |*

**D<sub>N</sub>172r6–7**: *de bzhin du 'phags pa sdong po bkod pa'i mdo'i 'phags pa byams pa'i rnam par thar pa las kyang | l'di ni gang dag theg mchog la gnas rmongs med dang | lbskal pa bye ba khrag khrig mang po rnam su yang | lngoms*



*med sems kyis phyogs bcu'i bde gshegs rnam kyis ni | | chos sprin mthun par  
byed pa rnam kyis gnas yin no | | zhes gsungs pa yin te |*

**D<sub>v</sub>260v2–3:** *de bzhin du sdong po bkod pa'i mdo byams pa'i rnam par thar  
pa las kyang gsungs te | gang phyogs bcu'i bde bar gshegs pa'i chos kyis sprin  
stan gcig la gnas te ma rmongs par 'thung bas bskal pa bye ba khrag khrig gi  
bar du sems ngoms pa med par blo chen po rgya mtsho dang mtshungs par  
bdag gnas par bya'o zhes so | |*

### English translation:

Likewise, it is said in the *Maitreyavimokṣa* of the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*,

This is the dwelling of those with great understanding like an  
ocean,  
Who without any bewilderment drink on one seat  
From the Dharma clouds of the *sugatas* in the ten directions  
And will never have enough even in a hundred thousand  
million eons.<sup>123</sup>

**6.2 Maitreyavimokṣa**, ch. 54 “Maitreya” of the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*  
(Suzuki and Idzumi 1934 & 1949, 494): *bodhicittam hi kulaputra (...)  
kalpoddāhāgnibhūtam sarvaduṣkṛtanirdahanatayā; Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*, Tōh  
44, *Sde dge bka' 'gyur*, vol. 38, ff. 309v1–310r7: *rigs kyis bu byang chub kyis  
sems ni (...)* *nyes byas thams cad sreg pas bskal pas tshigs pa'i me lta bu'o:*

**M<sub>A2</sub>24<sub>12-13</sub>:** *yang bka' stsald pha rigs kyis bu byang chub kyis sems ni nyes byas  
thams cad la bskald pha'i myer 'gyur ro zhes pha las stsogs pha'o |*

**D<sub>B</sub>247v1–2:** *de bzhin du rigs kyis bu byang chub kyis sems kyis ni nyes byas  
thams cad nges par sreg pa'i phyir bskal pa'i me lta bu yin no zhes bya ba la  
sogs pa gang gsungs pa lta bu yin no | |*

**D<sub>D</sub>196r2–3:** *de las yang gsungs pa | rigs kyis bu byang chub kyis sems ni nyes  
byas thams cad sreg pa'i bskal pa'i me lta bur 'gyur ba'o zhes bya ba la sog  
pa'o | |*

**D<sub>N</sub>176v2–3:** *de skad du 'phags pa sdong po bkod pa'i mdo las kyang | rigs  
kyis bu byang chub kyis sems ni nyes par byas pa thams cad nges par sreg pa  
nyid kyis bskal pa sreg pa'i me lta bu'o zhes bya ba la sog pa gsungs  
pa'o | |*

<sup>123</sup> English translation of the verse by Roberts 2022, *The Stem Array*.

**D<sub>v</sub>264v1:** *ji skad du | sdong po bkod pa'i mdo las kyang gsungs te | rigs kyi bu byang chub kyi sems ni bskal pa chen po'i me lta bu ste | nyes byas thams cad sreg pa'o zhes bya ba la sogs pa'o | |*

### English translation:

It is also said, “Noble son (*kulaputra*), since bodhicitta burns all evil actions (*duṣkṛta*), it is like the elemental fire (*agnibhūta*) of the conflagration (*uddāha*) of the eon (*kalpa*),” and so on.

## 7. Mañjuśrībuddhakṣetragaṇavyūha

*'Phags pa 'jam dpal gyi sangs rgyas kyi zhing gi yon tan bkod pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo.* (*Āryamañjuśrībuddhakṣetragaṇavyūhanāmamahāyānasūtra*) [*The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra “The Array of Qualities of Mañjuśrī’s Buddhafield”*]. Tōh 59, *Sde dge bka' 'gyur*, vol. 41, f. 279r8: *'khor ba'i tha ma med pa yi | | sngon gyi tha ma ji srid pa | | de srid sems can phan don du | | spyod pa dpag yas spyad par bya:*

**M<sub>A2</sub>28<sub>14</sub>–29<sub>1</sub>:** *de'i smon lam ji lta bu zhe na 'jam dpal gzhon nu rgyal pho nam ka bzang zhes bya bar gyurd pha'i tshe smras pha 'khor ba'i mtha' dang pho de nam zad kyi bar du bdag sems can la phan ba'i phyir sphyad phar bya'o zhes sphyod pha de lta bu las stsogs pha rgyas phar ro*

**D<sub>B</sub>249v4–5:** *de'i smon lam ji lta bu zhig ce na | 'phags pa 'jam dpal chos kyi rgyal por gyur pa na | 'khor ba la thog ma'i mu dang mtha' yas pa ji srid pa de srid du sems can la phan pa kho na'i phyir spyad pa tshad med pa spyod par gyur cig ces smon pa de lta bu la sogs pa rgyas par ji srid du 'byung ba lta bu yin no | |*

**D<sub>D</sub>198r6:** *de'i smon lam ji lta bu zhe na | gzhung las | 'phags pa 'jam dpal nam mkha' zhes bya ba'i rgyal por gyur pa'i tshe 'khor ba thog ma dang tha ma dang bral ba ji srid pa de srid du sems can rnams la tshad med pa'i phan pa spyad do zhes bya ba la sogs pa rgya chen po rnams so | |*

**D<sub>N</sub>179r1–2:** *de'i smon lam gang yin zhe na | ji skad du 'phags pa 'jam dpal rgyal po nam mkhar gyur pas | 'khor ba tha ma med pa yi | | sngon gyi tha ma ji srid pa | | de srid sems can phan don du | | spyod pa dpag yas spyad par bgyi | | zhes bya ba la sogs pa rgya cher gsungs pa bzhin no | |*

**D<sub>v</sub>266v3–4:** *de'i smon lam ji lta bu zhe na | 'phags pa 'jam dpal chos kyi rgyal por gyur pa na gsungs pa | ji srid dang po'i mtha' nas ni | | 'khor ba'i mtha' ma spangs pa ru | | de srid sems can phan pa nyid | | bdag ni spyod pa spyod par shog | ces pa la sogs pa rgyas par gsungs so | |*

### English translation:

What are his aspirations like? When the noble Mañjuśrī was a Dharma king<sup>124</sup> he said: “For as long as the beginningless and endless saṃsāra lasts, for that long shall I practice only the immeasurable conduct for the sake of beings.” He made such an aspiration and others extensively.

### 8. *Upāliparipṛcchāsūtra*

*‘Phags pa ‘dul ba rnam par gtan la dbab pa nye bar ‘khor gyis zhus pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po’i mdo (Āryavinayaviniścayopāli-paripṛcchānāmamahāyānasūtra) [The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra Ascertaining the Vinaya: Upāli’s Questions]. Tōh 68. Instead of byang chub sems (i.e., “bodhicitta”), the Sde dge bka’ ‘gyur edition of the sūtra features thams cad mkhyen pa nyid kyi sems (i.e., “omniscient mind”). See Sde dge bka’ ‘gyur, vol. 43, f. 124r7–124v4: khor ‘di la theg pa chen po la yang dag par zhugs pa’i byang chub sems dpa’ ni gal te snga dro’i dus kyi tshe | nyes pa byung la gung tshigs kyi dus kyi tshe thams cad mkhyen pa nyid kyi sems dang ma bral bas gnas par byed na theg pa chen po la yang dag par zhugs pa’i byang chub sems dpa’i tshul khrims kyi phung po yongs su ma gtugs pa kho na yin no | gal te gung tshigs kyi dus kyi tshe na nyes pa byung la phyi dro’i dus kyi tshe thams cad mkhyen pa nyid kyi sems dang ma bral bas gnas par byed na theg pa chen po la yang dag par zhugs pa’i byang chub sems dpa’i tshul khrims kyi phung po yongs su ma gtugs pa kho na yin no | gal te phyi dro’i dus kyi tshe na nyes pa byung la mtshan mo’i thun dang po la thams cad mkhyen pa nyid kyi sems dang ma bral bas gnas par byed na theg pa chen po la yang dag par zhugs pa’i byang chub sems dpa’i tshul khrims kyi phung po yongs su ma gtugs pa kho na yin no:*

**M<sub>A</sub>224<sub>9-12</sub>:** *‘phags pha nye skyon gis kun dris pha’i mdo las ‘byung ba ‘di ltar byang chub sems dphas snga dro kun du ltung ba byung na gun la byang chub gyis sems mngon du byang na byang chub sems dpha’ de’i tshul khrims kyi phung pho ni mtha’ yas phar rig phar bya’o | de bzhin du nyi ma’i gung la kun du ltung bar byung las nub kar byang chub gyi sems mngon du byang na byang chub sems dpha’i de’i tshul khrims kyi phung pho ni de bzhin du rig phar bya’o zhes pha dang*

**D<sub>B</sub>247r7–247v3:** *ji skad du | ‘phags pa nye ba ‘khor gyis zhus pa’i mdo las | gal te byang chub sems dpa’ snga dro ltung ba byung ba nyi ma’i gung la*

<sup>124</sup> Refers to the Dharma king Ākāśa (Nam mkha’), one of the previous births of Mañjuśrī in accordance with *‘Phags pa ‘jam dpal gyi sangs rgyas kyi zhing gi yon tan bkod pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po’i mdo (Āryamañjuśrībuddhakṣetra-guṇavyūhanāmamahāyānasūtra) [The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra “The Array of Qualities of Mañjuśrī’s Buddhafield”]. Tōh 59.*

*byang chub kyi sems mngon du byed na | byang chub sems dpa' de'i tshul khrims kyi phung po yongs su gtugs pa med pa kho na yin par rig par bya'o | | de bzhin du nyi ma'i gung la ltung ba byung ba | phyi dro byang chub kyi sems mngon du byed na de kho nas byang chub sems dpa' de'i tshul khrims kyi phung po mi zad par rig par bya'o zhes bya ba sogs pa gang gsungs pa dang |*

**D<sub>D</sub>196r1-2:** *ji skad du 'phags pa u pā lis dris pa'i mdo las gsungs pa de ste byang chub sems dpa' snga dro nyes pa byung na nyi ma gung la byang chub kyi sems mngon du byas na de'i tshul khrims kyi phung po mtha' yas par rig par bya'o | | de bzhin du nyi ma gung la nyes pa byung na phyi dro byang chub kyi sems mngon du byas na de'i tshul khrims kyi phung po mi zad par rig par bya'o zhes bya ba la sogs pa'o | |*

**D<sub>N</sub>176v1-2:** *ji skad du 'phags pa nye ba 'khor gyis zhus pa'i mdo las | gal te byang chub sems dpa' snga dro'i dus na ltung ba dang bcas pa nyi ma phyed na byang chub kyi sems mngon du byed na byang chub sems dpa' de'i tshul khrims kyi phung po ni mtha' med pa nyid du rig par bya'o | |*

**D<sub>V</sub>264r6-264v1:** *ji skad du | 'phags pa u pā lis zhus pa'i mdo las | gal te byang chub sems dpa' de la snga dro'i dus su ltung ba byung bar gyur na | gung gi dus su byang chub kyi sems mngon du bya'o | | de ltar na byang chub sems dpa' de'i tshul khrims kyi phung po phyin ci ma log par rig par bya'o | | de ltar gung gi dus su ltung ba byung bar gyur na ni phyi dro'i dus su byang chub kyi sems mngon du bya'o | | de ltar na byang chub sems dpa' de'i tshul khrims kyi phung po phyin ci ma log par rig par bya'o zhes pa la sogs pa'o | |*

### English translation:

It is said in the *Āryopāliparipṛcchāsūtra*,

If a bodhisattva commits a downfall in the morning, but actualizes bodhicitta at noon, one should know that the aggregate of discipline (*śīlaskandha*) of that bodhisattva is not at all inhibited (*aparyādatta*). Likewise, if he commits a downfall at noon, but actualizes bodhicitta in the evening, one should know that the aggregate of discipline of that bodhisattva is not at all inhibited.

### 9. Vajracchedikāsūtra

Vajracchedikāsūtra §16a (Harrison and Watanabe 2006, 130–131): *ye te subhūte kulaputrā vā kuladuhitaro vā imān evaṃrūpāṃ sūtrāntān udgrahiṣyaṃti dhārayiṣyaṃti paryavāpsyāṃti | te paribhūtā bhaviṣyaṃti suparibhūtās ca bhaviṣyaṃti | | yāni teṣāṃ satvānāṃ paurvajanmikāni karmāṇi kṛtāny apāyasaṃvartanīyāni dṛṣṭa eva dharṃe paribhūtatayā pūrvajanmikāny aśubhāni karmāṇi kṣapayīṣyaṃti | buddhabodhiṃ ca prāpsyāṃti; 'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa rdo rje gcod pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo (Āryavajracchedikānāmaprajñāpāramitāmahāyānasūtra) [The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra of the Perfection of Wisdom "The Diamond Cutter"]. Tōh 16, Sde dge bka' 'gyur, vol. 34, f. 127v4–5: rab 'byor rigs kyi bu'am | rigs kyi bu mo gang dag 'di lta bu'i mdo sde'i tshig 'di dag len pa dang | 'dzin pa dang | klog pa dang | kun chub par byed pa de dag ni mnar bar 'gyur | shin du mnar bar 'gyur ro | | de ci'i phyir zhe na | rab 'byor sems can de dag gi tshe rabs snga ma'i mi dge ba'i las ngan song du skye bar 'gyur ba gang dag byas pa dag tshe 'di nyid la mnar bas tshe rabs snga ma'i mi dge ba'i las de dag byang bar 'gyur te sangs rgyas kyi byang chub kyang thob par 'gyur ba'i phyir ro:*

**M<sub>A</sub>224<sub>13</sub>–25<sub>1</sub>:** sum brgya pha las bka' stsald pha yang rab 'byord rigs kyi bu pho'am rigs kyi bu mo gag gis mdo 'di lta bu 'dzingd tam blags sam klog gam kun du rgyas phar byed pha yang rung ste | de dag sphangs phar 'gyur ro shin du sphang phar 'gyur ro | de ci'i phyir zhe na sems can de dag tse snga ma'i las myi dge ba byas phas ngan song du ltung bar 'gyur ba'i rnames da ltar gyi tse 'di la brnyas phar gyurd phas na tse snga ma'i myi dge ba'i las bya bar 'gyuro | zhes de lta bur las stsogs pha ste

**D<sub>B</sub>247v2–3:** sum brgya pa las kyang | rab 'byor rigs kyi bu'am rigs kyi bu mo gang la la dag mdo sde 'di lta bu 'dzin pa dang | 'chang ba dang | klog pa dang | kun chub par byed pa de dag ni brnyas par 'gyur | shin tu brnyas par 'gyur ro | | de ci'i phyir zhe na | sems can de dag gi tshe rabs snga ma'i las mi dge ba ngan song du 'gro bar 'gyur bar byas pa gang dag yin pa de dag mthong ba'i chos kho na la brnyas pa zad par 'gyur ro zhes gsungs so | |

**D<sub>D</sub>196r3–5:** sum brgya pa las gsungs pa | rab 'byor rigs kyi bu'am rigs kyi bu mo gang gis 'di lta bu'i mdo sde 'chang ba dang | 'dzin pa dang | klog pa dang | kun chub par byed pa de la yongs kyis brnyas par 'gyur shin tu yongs kyis brnyas par 'gyur ro | | de ci'i phyir zhe na | gang sems can de dag gis tshe rabs snga ma la mi dge ba'i las byas te | gang ngan song du skye bar 'gyur ba de dag tshe 'di la yongs kyis brnyas pas tshe rabs snga ma'i las mi dge ba de dag 'byang bar 'gyur ro zhes bya ba la sogs pa bshad do | |

**D<sub>N</sub>176v3–5:** sum brgya pa las kyang | rab 'byor rigs kyi bu'am | rigs kyi bu

mo gang dag 'di lta bu'i rang bzhin gyi mdo sde 'di dag 'dzin par 'gyur ba dang | 'chang bar 'gyur ba dang | klog par 'gyur ba dang | kun chub par byed par 'gyur ba de dag ni gdung bar 'gyur | shin tu gdung bar 'gyur te | de ci'i phyir zhe na | sems can de dag ni tshe rabs snga ma'i mi dge ba'i las ngan song 'grub pa dang rjes su mthun pa byas pa gang yin pa de dag mthong ba'i chos nyid la yongs su longs spyod pas na sngon gyi mi dge ba'i las de dag zad par 'gyur ba'i phyir ro zhes gsungs te |

**D<sub>v</sub>264v1–3:** sum brgya pa las kyang gsungs pa | gang yang rab 'byor rigs kyi bu'am | rigs kyi bu mo rnam pa 'di lta bu'i tshul gyis mdo 'di len par byed pa dang | 'dzin par 'gyur ba dang | klog par 'gyur ba dang | tshul bzhin du yid la byed par de yongs su 'gyur ba dang | shin tu yongs su dag par 'gyur ro | | ci'i phyir zhe na | gang sems can de dag gis skye ba snga mar mi dge ba'i las byas pas ngan song du skye bar nges pa mthong ba'i chos nyid la myong bar 'gyur ba skye ba sngon ma'i mi dge ba'i las yongs su zad par 'gyur ro zhes pa la sogs pas sdig pa'i las gang nges par myong bar 'gyur ba shin tu yongs su byang bar byed par 'gyur ro zhes pa'o | |

### English translation:

It is likewise said in the *Trisatikā*,<sup>125</sup>

Subhūti, those noble sons and daughters who will learn, memorize, recite, and master such discourses as these will be despised, they will be thoroughly despised. Why is that? Whatever unvirtuous actions leading to the adverse states these beings have done in former lives, through being despised, they will exhaust them in this very life.

### 10. *Vīradattapariṣcchāsūtra*

Khyim bdag dpas byin gyis zhus pa'i mdo (*Vīradattapariṣcchāsūtra*) [*The Sūtra Requested by the Layman Vīradatta*]. Tōh 72, *Sde dge bka'* 'gyur, vol. 43, f. 202v6: byang chub sems kyi bsod nams gang | | de la gal te gzugs mchis na | | nam mkha'i kham ni kun gang ste | | de ni de bas lhag par 'gyur. Its Skt. is found in Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākrama* (Namdol 1984, 170): *bodhicittād vai yat punyam tacca rūpi bhaved yadi | ākāśadhātum sampūrya bhūyaścottaritam bhavet*:

**M<sub>A2</sub>21<sub>10-11</sub>:** bka' stsald pha byang chub kyi sems bskyed pha la gzugs yod na ni nam ka'i kham kun gang nas kyang lhag phar 'gyuro |

<sup>125</sup> The *Sūtra* in the Three Hundred Lines (*Trisatikā*, *Sum brgya pa*) is an alternative title for the *Vajracchedikāsūtra*.

**D<sub>B</sub>245v2:** *ji skad du | byang chub sems kyi bsod nams gang | | de ni gal te gzugs can gyur | | nam mkha'i kham kun bkang nas ni | | de bas kyang ni de lhag gyur | |*

**D<sub>D</sub>194r3–4:** *'di skad du | byang chub sems kyi bsod nams gang | | gal te de ni gzugs gyur na | | nam mkha'i kham kyang gang gyur cing | | de bas de ni lhag par 'gyur | | zhes gsungs so | |*

**D<sub>N</sub>174v3–4:** *ji skad du | byang chub sems kyi bsod nams gang | | gal te de la gzugs mchis na | | nam mkha'i kham ni kun gang nas | | de bas kyang ni lhag par 'gyur | | zhes gsungs so | |*

**D<sub>V</sub>262v4:** *ji skad du gsungs pa | byang chub sems ni bskyed pa yi | | bsod nams gal te gzugs gyur na | | nam mkha'i kham kun gang ba dang | | de bas kyang ni lhag par 'gyur | |*

### 11. *Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra*

*Mngon par 'byung ba'i mdo (Abhinīṣkramaṇasūtra) [Sūtra on Going Forth]. Tōh 301, Sde dge bka' 'gyur, vol. 72, f. 58v3: sdig pa'i chos ni ngas bcom pas | | de bas nyer 'gro nga rgyal ba'o. Also quoted in the Udānavarga 21.5 (Bernhard 1965, 280): jīṭa me pāpakā dharmās tato 'ham upagā jinah; Ched du brjod pa'i tshom (Udānavarga) [Chapters of Inspired Utterances]. Tōh 326, Sde dge bka' 'gyur, vol. 72, f. 227v4: sdig pa'i chos las nga rgyal bas | | de bas nyer 'gro nga rgyal ba:*

**M<sub>A1</sub>2r4-5:** *de 'di ltar bcom ldan 'da'as gyis gsungs pa nyer 'ong | | nga ni sdig pa'i chos rnam las rgyal bas na | rgyal ba'o zhes | 'byung ba lastsogs pa'o | |*

**D<sub>B</sub>234v7–235r1:** *ji skad du bcom ldan 'das kyis | mi dge'i chos las nga rgyal te | | de bas nyer 'gro nga ni rgyal ba yin | | zhes gsungs pa lta bu ste |*

**D<sub>D</sub>185r1:** *sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das kyis 'di skad du | sdig pa'i chos rnam las rgyal bas | | nyer 'gro nga ni rgyal ba yin | | zhes gsungs pa la sogs pa'o | |*

**D<sub>N</sub>164v1:** *ji skad du bcom ldan 'das kyis | sdig pa'i chos las nga rgyal te | | des na nyer 'gro nga rgyal ba | | zhes bya ba la sogs pa gsungs pa bzhin no | |*

**D<sub>V</sub>253v3:** *ji skad gsungs pa | sdig pa mi dge'i chos las nga rgyal te | | de bas nyer 'gro nga ni rgyal ba yin | | zhes bya ba la sogs pa ste |*

### English translation:

As the Bhagavat said,

I am victorious over unvirtuous *dharmas*.  
Thus, Upagā,<sup>126</sup> I am a Jina.

### 12. Karmaśataka

*Avadānaśataka* (Vaidya 1958, 263): *na praṇaśyanti karmāṇi kalpakotiśatair api | sāmagrīm prāpya kālaṃ ca phalanti khalu dehinām*; *Las brgya tham pa (Karmaśataka) [The Hundred Deeds]*. Tōh 340, *Sde dge bka' 'gyur*, vol. 73, f. 10r2–3: *lus can dag gi las rnams ni | |bskal pa brgyar yang chud mi za | | tshogs shing dus la bab pa na | | 'bras bu nyid du smin par 'gyur*:

**M<sub>A2</sub>25<sub>8-9</sub>**: *gzhung las 'byung ba las ji byas so cog bskald pha brgyar yang myi stord the skabs dang dusu 'phrod phar gyur na myi rnams kyi las de yang 'bras bu rgyas phar 'gyur zhes pha las stsogs pha'o |*

**D<sub>B</sub>248r1**: *lus can kun gyi las rnams ni | |bskal pa brgyar yang chud mi za | | tshogs shing dus la babs pa na | | 'bras bu smin pa nyid du 'gyur | | zhes bya ba la sogs pa gang gsungs pa ste |*

**D<sub>D</sub>196v1–2**: *gang gsungs pa | bskal pa brgya dag snyed du yang | | las rnams chud zar mi 'gyur te | | tshogs dang dus dang ldan pa na | | lus can rnams la 'bras bur smin | | zhes bya ba la sogs pa de ji ltar shes par bya zhe na |*

**D<sub>N</sub>177r3**: *'o na bskal pa bye ba brgyar yang ni | | las rnams chud mi za ba de | | tshogs shing dus la bab pa na | | lus can rnams la 'bras bu 'byin | | ces bya ba la sogs pa gsungs pa gang yin pa de ji ltar drang zhe na |*

**D<sub>V</sub>264v7–265r1**: *gang 'di skad du gsungs pa | bskal pa bye ba brgya ru yang | | las ni chud zos mi 'gyur te | | tshogs pa'i dus su 'bras bu ni | | lus can la ni smin par 'gyur | | zhes pa la sogs pa de ji ltar ma nges she na |*

### English translation:

“Why then is it said:

The actions of beings never go to waste,  
Even in a hundred eons.

<sup>126</sup> Upagā (Nyer 'gro) refers to the mendicant (*parivrājaka*, *kun tu rgyu*) Upagā.



They are accumulated, and, once the time comes,  
The result will come to fruition?"

### 13. *Karmavibhaṅga*

*Las rnam pa 'byed pa (Karmavibhaṅga) [The Exposition of Karma]. Tōh 338, Sde dge bka' 'gyur, vol. 72, ff. 282v7–283r1: shin tu mi bzad las rnams byas pa ni | | bdag la smod dang rab tub bshags pa dang | | sdom par byed pas de dag srabs 'gyur gyis | | shin tu rtsa nas phyin ces mi smra'o:*

**M<sub>A2</sub>22-7-9:** *bka' stsald pha | shin du ma rungs las byas rnams | | bdag gis re 'gyod 'byung 'gyur ba | | bshags pha dang ni sdom ba ste | | rtsa nas shin du 'byung zhes sma'o | |*

**D<sub>B</sub>246r2–3:** *ji skad du | shin tu mi bzad las rnams byas pa ni | | bdag la rnam par smod pas bsrabs par 'gyur | | rab tu bshags dang sdom par byed pa yis | | de dag shin tu rtsa nas bton par bshad | | ces gsungs pa lta bu yin no | |*

**D<sub>D</sub>194v3–4:** *'di skad du | ma rung ba yi las byas pa | | bdag gis 'gyod pas bsabs par 'gyur | | bshags nas bsdams pa byas na ni | | de dag rtsa nas 'don par bshad | |*

**D<sub>N</sub>175r3–4:** *sdig pa shin tu mi zad byas pa dag | bdag la rnam par smod pas srab par byed | | rab tu bshags dang sdom par byed pas ni | | de dag rtsa nas 'byin par ngas bshad do | | zhes ji skad gsungs pa bzhin no | |*

**D<sub>V</sub>263r3–4:** *ji skad du gsungs pa | las byas pas ni shin tu skrag pa yis | | bdag la rnam smad pas ni chung 'gyur te | | de dag bshags dang sdom par byas pa yis | | shin tu rtsad nas 'byin par nga smra'o | | zhes so | |*

### English translation:

It is said,

I have committed hideous actions.  
By feeling remorse  
They will be diminished  
By confessing them and promising not to do them again,  
They will get completely erased.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>127</sup> According to the *Karmavibhaṅga*, these words were spoken by Ajātaśatru before he was about to die and knew he would be reborn in Avīci hell.

#### 14. *Sūkarikāvadānasūtra*

*Phag mo'i rtogs pa brjod pa zhes bya ba'i mdo* (*Sūkarikāvadānasūtra*) [*Sūtra* "The Magnificent Account about a Sow"]. Tōh 345, *Sde dge bka' 'gyur*, vol. 75, ff. 289v–291r:

**M<sub>A2</sub>22<sub>15</sub>–23<sub>1</sub>:** *bsam ba'i stobs kyis pha ni phag du skye ba'i gzhung 'di bzhin te lha'i bu zhig 'ci 'phos nas phagi mngal du skyes shing sdug bsgal ba'i las kyi 'bras bu mngon du 'ongs pha las gsum la skyabsu song ba mthag du thams cad shin du byang ste sumchu rtsha gsum du shi 'phos nas gnas bden gnam du skyes so | |*

**D<sub>B</sub>246r6–7:** *rten gyi stobs kyis yongs su dag par byed pa ni dper na phag mo'i rtogs pa brjod pa las | lha'i bu 'chi 'pho bar 'gyur ba'i chos can zhig phag mo'i mngal du skyes nas myong bar 'gyur ba'i las kyi 'bras bu smin par mngon du phyogs pa las gsum la skyabs su song ba tsam gyis thams cad shin tu rtsa ba nas bton te | sum cu rtsa gsum pa'i lha las shi 'phos te dga' ldan pa dag gi nang du skyes so zhes 'byung ba lta bu yin no | |*

**D<sub>D</sub>194v7–195r1:** *rten gyi stobs kyis kyang ji ltar ched du brjod pa'i sde las | 'pho bar 'dod pa'i lha'i bu gzhan zhig btsog pa phag gi mngal du skye bar nges pa'i las kyi 'bras bu mngon par gyur nas | gsum la skyabs su song ba tsam gyis thams cad sbyangs te sum cu rtsa gsum gnam gyi lha las shi 'phos nas dga' ldan gnas su skyes so | |*

**D<sub>N</sub>175r7–175v1:** *rten gyi stobs kyis kyang dper na phag mo'i rtogs pa brjod pa las | lha'i bu tshe zad pa 'ga' zhig grong gi phag mo'i mngal du skye bar byed pa nges par myong bar 'gyur ba'i las 'bras bu bskyed pa la mngon sum du phyogs par gyur la | de yang gsum la skyabs su song ba tsam gyis thams cad gtan du drungs phyung nas sum cu rtsa gsum pa'i lha rnam nas shi 'phos nas dga' ldan gyi lha rnam kyi nang du skyes pa bzhin no | |*

**D<sub>V</sub>263r7–263v1:** *rten pa'i stobs kyang ji lta bar phag mo'i rtogs pa brjod pa las | lha'i bu zhig 'chi ba'i dus byas nas phag mo'i mngal du skye ba myong bar 'gyur ba'i las kyi 'bras bu mngon du byed pa | gsum la skyabs su 'gro ba tsam gyis thams cad rtsa ba nas bton nas | sum cu rtsa gsum pa'i lha dag gi nang nas shi 'phos te | dga' ldan gyi lha dag gi nang du skyes so | |*

#### English translation:

Regarding the purification through the power of support (*āśrayabala*), it is recounted, for example, in the *Sūkarikāvadānasūtra* that a son of gods (*devaputra*) was due to die and be reborn in the womb of a sow experiencing the result of the ripening of his karma (*karmavipāka*). But

before it was actualized, he took refuge in the Three Jewels, and at that very moment the result was completely extracted with its root. He was transferred to the Heaven of the Thirty-Three (*trāyastriṃśa*) and then reborn among the Tuṣita gods.

### 15. Āryadeva's *Catuḥśataka*

Āryadeva. *Catuḥśataka* 12.5 as quoted in Candrakīrti's *Bodhisattvayogācārakatuhśatakaṭīkā*, ch. 12 (Suzuki 1994, 248–249): *buddhokteṣu paro'kṣeṣu jāyate yasya saṃśayaḥ | ihaiva pratyayas tena kartavyaḥ sūnyatām prati*; Āryadeva. *Bstan bcos bzhi brgya pa zhes bya ba'i tshig le'ur byas pa* (*Catuḥśatakaśāstranāmakārikā*) [*A Verse Treatise called "The Four Hundred"*]. Tōh 3846, *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*, vol. 97, ff. 13r7–13v1: *sangs rgyas kyis gsungs lkog gyur la | | gang zhig the tshom skye 'gyur ba | | de yis stong pa nyid bsten te | | 'di nyid kho nar yid ches bya*; Candrakīrti. *Byang chub sems dpa'i rnal 'byor spyod pa bzhi brgya pa'i rgya cher 'grel pa* (*Bodhisattvayogācārakatuhśatakaṭīkā*) [*Commentary on [Āryadeva's] "Four Hundred Verses" on the Yogic Conduct of Bodhisattvas*]. Tōh 3865, *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*, vol. 103, f. 186v4: *sangs rgyas kyis gsungs lkog gyur pa | | gang zhig the tshom skye 'gyur ba | | de yis stong pa nyid bstan te | | 'di nyid kho nar yid ches bya*:

**M<sub>A1</sub>10v4-5:** *sangs rgyas gyi bka' de bzhin du gtan la bab pa | mngon du ma khuḡs pas na | | the tsom du gyurd te | | 'jig rten thams cad kyang | stong pa nyid lta bu'i | rtags gyis yid ces par bya' | |*

**D<sub>B</sub>242v1:** *'di gsal rab tu bsgrubs pas na | | gang zhig sangs rgyas kyis bshad pa | | lkog tu gyur pa dag la ni | | the tshom skye ba de yis 'dir | | stong pa nyid du yid ches bya | |*

**D<sub>D</sub> –**

**D<sub>N</sub>171v4-5:** *'di la shin tu gsal bar rab tu bsgrags pa yin te | sangs rgyas kyi gsung lkog gyur la | | gang zhig the tshom skyed byed des | | 'di nyid du ni stong nyid la | | yang dag par ni yid ches bya'o | | zhes bya ba'o | |*

**D<sub>V</sub>260r2:** *'di yang shin tu gsal bar rab tu bsgrubs zin to | | lkog don sangs rgyas kyi gsungs la | | gang blo the tshom skye 'gyur ba | | des ni 'dir ni yid ches pas | | stong pa nyid la rab tu bya | |*

### English translation:

Therefore, it is clearly ascertained:

For whomever a doubt (*saṃśaya*) arises  
 Regarding things spoken by the Buddha (*buddhokta*)  
 That are beyond perception (*parokṣa*),  
 Here itself that person should elicit belief (*pratyaya*)  
 in emptiness (*śūnyatā*).

### 16. Mātrceṭa's *Varṇārhavarṇastotra*

Mātrceṭa. *Varṇārhavarṇastotra*, vv. 5.21–22 (Hartmann 1987, 182–183):  
*kim adbhutatara(m) tasmāt kim ā*(xxv - vx | xxxv - - x xxxv - vx | | 21)  
 ( xxxv - - x a) *nekeva ca lakṣyate | madauddeśika[m] evai[t](a)d iti sa[rvo]*  
*'va(gacchati | | 22); Sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das la bstod pa bsngags par 'os*  
*pa bsngags pa las bstod par mi nus par bstod pa zhes bya ba (Varṇārha-*  
*varṇebhagavatobuddhasyastotreśākyastava) [In Praise of the Praiseworthy*  
*Bhagavat Buddha Eulogizing the One Who Cannot be Eulogized]. Tōh 1138,*  
*Sde dge bstan 'gyur, vol. 1, f. 91r6: mos pa du ma dang ldan pa | | mang po*  
*'khod par gyur pa la | | gsung gcig bka' ni stsal ba las | | du ma lta bur snang*  
*'gyur te | | kun gyis 'di ni bdag gi ched | | kho na'o snyam du go ba*  
*gang | | de las ya mtshan che ci mchis | | de las ngo mtshar che ci mchis:*

**M<sub>A1</sub>11r6-7:** *de lta bur ngo mtshar che ba ma yin dkon ba ma yin | bar gsungs*  
*pa ni dad pa mang po bsam ba tha dad pa grangs myed par 'khod pa'i rnam*  
*kyang | tshig cig gsungs pa na | 'gro ba thams chad gyis kyang | so sor rang*  
*la gsungs par go'o | |*

**D<sub>B</sub>242v7–243r1:** *de skad du | mos pa du ma dang ldan pa | | mang po nye*  
*bar 'khod pa la | | gsung gcig bka' ni bstsal mod kyis | | du ma gcig tu gda'*  
*ba ste | 'di dag kho na'i ched yin zhes | | 'gro ba kun gyis rtog pa gang | | de*  
*la ya mtshan che ci mchis | | de la ngo mtshar ci zhig mchis | | zhes gsungs*  
*so | |*

**D<sub>D</sub>192r1–2:** *lung las kyang 'di skad du gsungs te | 'khor bar 'khor ba mang*  
*po rnam | | dad pa'i rnam pa sna tshogs la | | gsung gcig tu ni bshad mod*  
*kyi | | du ma'i rnam par go bar gyur | | bdag la nyi tsher 'chad do snyam | |*  
*'gro ba kun gyis ji ltar go | | ya mtshan de las ci zhig che | | de ltar ngo mtshar*  
*ci zhig yod pa 'di lta ste |*

**D<sub>N</sub>172r5–6:** *de skad du yang mos pa sna tshogs can gyi ni | | 'khor mang*  
*rnam ni gnas pa la | | gsung gcig bka' ni stsal pa na | | gsung rnam du mar*  
*go 'gyur zhing | | nga yi ched du yin no zhes | | skye bo kun gyis rtogs 'gyur*  
*gang | | 'di las ches rmad ci yod de | | 'di las ches mtshar ci zhig yod | | ces*  
*gsungs pa dang |*

**D<sub>v</sub>260v1–2:** *de bzhin du yang gsungs pa | de'i phyir ngo mtshar mi che  
ste | | 'di ni shin tu ngo mtshar che | | mang po nye bar 'dug pa la | | gang  
de mos pa'i dbang gis ni | | tshig gcig gi ni bshad pa yang | | du ma nyid du  
mtshon nas ni | | bdag nyid la ni ston to zhes | | skye bo mang pos go bar  
'gyur | | zhes so | |*

### English translation:

It is said:

What could be more wonderful (*adbhutata*) than this,  
What could be more wondrous than this?  
When many listeners with diverse inclinations  
Sit together,

As you speak a word,  
It is heard as many words.  
Thinking “This is meant only for me”  
All wandering beings understand it.

Summing it up, the synoptic commentaries are almost identical in their content. Rarely, they feature some differences in the sequence of passages, but mostly the sequence is also the same. The hyparchetypes attributed to \*Bhadrapaṇa, Nāgārjuna, and Vasubandhu are the closest to each other. The hyparchetype attributed to Dignāga is slightly different, which may be explained by a different recension of the Sanskrit text or by ascribing the differences to the Tibetan translation style.

The last question to address is whether Tibetans recognized the similarity among these commentaries, and, if so, why they produced their multiple translations. I think the answer partly has to do with the criteria for scriptural authenticity in Tibet. As Peter Skilling defines it, in Tibet “the decisive determinant [for the authenticity] was whether a text had been translated from an Indian, or Indic original. (...) That is, authenticity depends upon source language and origins.”<sup>128</sup> Also, according to Orna Almogi,

Generally speaking, the most decisive conditions for authenticity and canonicity of Buddhist scriptures and treatises within the Tibetan cultural sphere have been, perhaps in this order, (1) the work's provenance, that is, a solid proof of its Indic origin, (2) the existence of a verifiably valid tradition, and (3) the work's content, that is, its being the actual Word of the Buddha

<sup>128</sup> Skilling 2010, 1–2.

in the case of a scripture, or its being in accord with the Word of the Buddha in the case of a non-scriptural work.<sup>129</sup>

Since the synoptic Sanskrit hyparchetypes were brought to Tibet from India, Tibetans, apparently, did not question their authenticity. Moreover, the three translations of the imperial time could have been produced by different translators who might not have been in close contact. As for the two post-imperial translations, they were produced at least two centuries later than the imperial three, after a time of serious disruption of the Dharma activities in Tibet when many texts were destroyed or hidden to prevent their destruction. The two post-imperial hyparchetypes most probably were brought to Tibet from Kāśmīr. At least, it is known that Rngog blo ldan shes rab lived and worked in Kāśmīr and similarly to the translator of the hyparchetype attributed to Vasubandhu cooperated with Kāśmīri paṇḍitas. The translators of the later spread usually were sponsored and worked locally, and often did not have any access to the imperial translations. And if they had access to the imperial catalogues, they did not have an opportunity to recognize these texts as already translated because they had different attributions. As a result, five different Tibetan translations were produced and reached our time, which is a truly unusual situation, as it has already been explained.

### Conclusion

To summarize, I have attempted to demonstrate that the similarity of the five Indic commentaries on the *Bhadracaryāpraṇidhāna* (four *Bstan 'gyur* commentaries and one anonymous Dunhuang commentary probably attributed to Guṇaprabha) is due to the synoptic problem, i.e., they come down to the same currently unavailable Sanskrit archetype that reached Tibet in multiple hyparchetypes: three out of the five—those attributed to Dignāga, \*Bhadrapaṇa, and Guṇaprabha—during the early spread of Dharma (*snga dar*), and the remaining two—of Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu—during the later spread (*spyi dar*). The initial Sanskrit archetype of the hyparchetypes most probably was called \**Bhadracaryāpraṇidhānaṭīkā*. Although all the authors to whom it is attributed could have composed the *Ṭīkā*, my hypothesis is that the *Ṭīkā* was composed by a rather unknown author, and it was so well-written that started to be attributed to the greatest philosophers of the time. Assuming that the actual author is one of the attributions, in my opinion, the authorship should likely be attributed to \*Bhadrapaṇa. I hope that the located Sanskrit manuscript of the hyparchetype

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<sup>129</sup> Almogi 2020, 18.

attributed to Vasubandhu will soon become available either as a copy or an edition, which will further prove the hypothesis of the synoptic problem and provide this indispensable Sanskrit witness for further research of the *Bhadracaryāprajñāhāna*'s synoptic commentaries.

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'Phags pa de bzhin gshegs pa'i gsang ba bsam gyis mi khyab pa bstan pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo (*Āryatathāgatācintyaguhyānirdeśanāmamahāyānasūtra*) [*The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra Teaching on the Unfathomable Secrets of the Tathāgatas*]. Tōh 47, *Sde dge bka' 'gyur*, vol. 39, ff. 100r1–203v1.

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## In Honor of the Jubilees of Anna Tsendina and Vladimir Uspensky

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 In 2024, Prof. Anna Tsendina and Prof. Vladimir Uspensky, two leading scholars of Tibetan and Mongolian history and written sources, highly respected by their colleagues in Russia and abroad, celebrated their 70th birthdays. Both graduated from the renowned Faculty of Oriental Studies at the Leningrad State University. Although Tsendina moved to Moscow and Uspensky remained in Leningrad/Saint Petersburg, they have always maintained close academic and friendly ties. For the authors of this contribution, they represent an admirable link to the great Saint Petersburg tradition of Tibetan and Mongolian studies, which dates back to the 18th century. It is also a great comfort to know that we can always rely on their immense knowledge and scholarly advice. We are delighted to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt congratulations on their significant Jubilees and to wish them robust health and many more accomplishments in research and teaching.

### *Birthday anniversary of Prof. Anna Damdinovna Tsendina*

Anna Tsendina was born in Ulaanbaatar on August 11, 1954, into the family of the well-known Mongolian scholar and writer Tsendiin Damdinsüren (1908–1986). Her mother, Lyubov Zevina (1911–1987), came from a Jewish revolutionary family and studied Mongolian in Leningrad in the 1930s, where she met Damdinsüren and later followed him to Ulaanbaatar. Anna was their fourth child (and only daughter), and she jokes that she ended up in Mongolian studies both by chance and... not by chance. Her father, one of Mongolia's most prominent scholars, author of the national anthem of Mongolia, and compiler of the first major Russian-Mongolian dictionary, never pressured her to pursue Oriental studies. In the late 1960s, Damdinsüren

was sent on a long-term assignment to Leningrad, and the family relocated there. In 1971, Tsendina enrolled at Leningrad State University, which at that time was the only institution in the country with a school of Oriental studies and a vast collection of manuscripts in Mongolian, Tibetan, and many other languages. Although Tsendina grew up in Ulaanbaatar, it was her mother who persuaded her to apply to the Mongolian Studies department.

After graduating in 1977, she moved to Moscow to work as an announcer at the international broadcasting radio station, which broadcast to Mongolian-speaking regions of China, where she worked for thirteen years. At the same time, she enrolled in the part-time graduate program at the A. M. Gorky Institute of World Literature of the USSR Academy of Sciences, joining a department where remarkable Orientalists worked, including sinologist Boris Riftin (1932–2012), indologist Pavel Grintser (1928–2009), and folklorist Sergey Neklyudov. The latter became her unofficial advisor for her PhD thesis, “Mongolian Novels of the 17th–19th Centuries and Indo-Tibetan Narrative Traditions”, which she successfully defended in 1984.

After joining the Institute of Oriental Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences (now the Russian Academy of Sciences, or RAS) in 1990, Anna Tsendina embarked on research into various medieval and later Mongolian texts. Her first major work, published in 1999, was the edition and translation of “The History of Erdene Zuu”, a unique early 19th-century text dedicated to the history of Buddhism’s spread in Mongolia and the founding of the first monastery in Northern Mongolia.

In 2003, together with Alexey Sazykin (1943–2005), she published a Russian translation of the verse autobiography of the renowned Buryat monk Agvan Lobsan Dorjiev (1853–1938), which he composed in Mongolian in 1921. This book included an introduction, commentaries, and a facsimile edition of the rare Buryat manuscript preserved in the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, RAS.

Two years later, Anna Tsendina, in cooperation with Aleksandr Zheleznyakov, published the book “History in the Works of Scholar Lamas”, which contains Russian translations of three previously unpublished chronicles written by Mongolian lamas in the 17th, 19th, and 20th centuries. These chronicles clearly illustrate the development of historical thought among nomadic peoples.

Her next book, “Mongolian Chronicles of the 17th–19th Centuries” (2007), was based on the habilitation dissertation she successfully defended in 2004. In this work, Anna Tsendina analyzed the narrative structure of Mongolian chronicles, the literary traditions upon which medieval authors relied, and the techniques they employed. She explored the stages of development of these chronicles and identified

elements of cross-cultural influence, examining their relationships and roles in the formation of Mongolian literature.

In 2014, she published, in cooperation with Rinchensambuugiin Otgonbaatar, the book "Samples of the Written Tradition of Northern Mongolia" (available in both Russian and Mongolian versions). This important edition included texts in Mongolian and Tibetan that were composed within the linguistic tradition of the northern Mongols from the late 16th to the early 20th centuries. It featured examples of manuscripts and block prints showcasing various writing systems used in Mongolia, including a range of syllabaries in Mongolian and Tibetan, original works on the systems of transliteration and transcription of foreign texts, and Mongolian texts written in Tibetan script, as well as those in the less-known Soyombo and "square" scripts.

Anna Tsendina has devoted significant effort and time to making Damdinsüren's legacy and personal collection accessible to the academic community. She occasionally jokes that her father was a 'dry drunkard' because he would spend his entire salary on manuscripts and books. During the Soviet era, Damdinsüren organized several expeditions to the countryside with the primary aim of discovering manuscripts and block-printed books hidden in mountains, caves, and other hard-to-reach locations. Today, many of these books are housed in the National Library of Mongolia. However, nearly five thousand manuscripts and xylographs are also preserved in his personal library at his house-museum in central Ulaanbaatar. Together with Damdinsüren's closest students, Gaadambin Bilguudei and Rinchensambuugiin Otgonbaatar, Tsendina has published nine volumes of his collected works, along with three volumes of rare manuscripts he collected and a catalog of his library.

A new edition of "The Yellow History" (*Sir-a tuyuji*), a unique Khalkha chronicle from the 17th to early 18th centuries, was published in 2017. This edition features a corrected Russian translation by A. Tsendina that clarifies and rectifies many aspects of previous translations. It also includes, for the first time, a facsimile of the so-called "W. W. Radloff's Version", preserved in the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, RAS.

In the most recent monograph, "Life Reflected in Texts: Folk Magic of the Mongols (Late 16th to Early 20th Centuries)", Anna Tsendina explores previously unknown Mongolian texts on omens, dream and fortune-telling books, various amulets, spells, and prayers used by the Mongols in their daily routines. The book introduces unique manuscripts and block-printed books collected by Damdinsüren and Otgonbaatar.

In Russia, a wide audience is well aware of Anna Tsendina's semi-popular book "... and the Land is Called Tibet" (2002). In this book,

she presents major information about the political history of Tibet from ancient times to the mid-20th century in an amusing yet professional manner. It covers the formation of Tibetan ethnic identity, the emergence of the Tibetan Empire in the 7th to 9th centuries, the establishment of a theocratic monarchy, the imposition of Manchu suzerainty, the struggle for independence, and its incorporation into the People's Republic of China. The book is also adorned with vivid details about various aspects of Tibetan culture.

Meanwhile, among foreign scholars who do not read Russian or Mongolian, Tsendina is best known as a co-author of Jan-Olof Svanteson's "The Phonology of Mongolian", the first comprehensive description of the phonology and phonetics of the Standard Mongolian language.

After defending her habilitation dissertation in 2004, Anna Tsendina attained a position as a professor at the Institute of Eastern Cultures and Antiquity at the Russian State University for the Humanities. In 2006, she successfully established a department for Mongolia and Tibet, where she has been training students ever since. Today, this department is part of the Institute of Classical East and Antiquity at the Higher School of Economics.

Throughout these years, Prof. Anna Tsendina has been actively teaching, giving lectures, and writing books. While most of her works are scholarly, she has also written a collection of stories titled "Terton Mandavasarpini Was Crazy" (published in 2023), showcasing her literary talents and sense of humor. This collection is of great interest to all who love and appreciate Mongolia.



Prof. Anna Tsendina at her desk (2024). Photo courtesy of Yana Leman.

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### *Birthday anniversary of Prof. Vladimir Leonidovich Uspensky*

Vladimir Uspensky was born on December 12, 1954, in Leningrad. His grandfather was a Christian Orthodox priest, hence the surname, which is typical of the Russian clergy. In Soviet Russia, however, it was best to keep this connection a secret. In 1975, Uspensky enrolled in the Faculty of Oriental Studies at Leningrad State University. As he shared in his 2018 interview for the “Oral History of Tibetan Studies” project,<sup>1</sup> his initial choice was Persian philology. However, he ultimately decided to study Mongolian upon learning that it could lead to a job working with old books at the Leningrad Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, USSR Academy of Sciences (now the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, RAS). As an admirer of old book culture, this opportunity prompted him to pursue the field of Mongolian studies. Simultaneously, he studied Tibetan under the guidance of Prof. Bronislav Kuznetsov (1931–1985).

In 1981, Vladimir Uspensky graduated from the university with honors and entered the doctoral program at the Leningrad Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, completing it in October 1984. Following this, he was hired as a junior researcher. In 1985, he successfully defended his dissertation titled “The Works of the Gong Gombojab as a Textual Monument of 18th-Century Mongolian Historiography”. From 1986 to 1991, he served as the academic secretary for International Relations at the Leningrad (later Saint Petersburg) Branch of the Institute and subsequently worked in various departments, eventually

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<sup>1</sup> URL: <https://oralhistory.iats.info/interviews/vladimir-uspensky/> (access 14.12.2024). Interviewed by Anna Sehnalova.

attaining the position of a leading researcher at the Department of Turkology and Mongolian Studies.

From 1992 to 1996 and again from 2002 to 2005, Vladimir Uspensky participated in a Russian-American project aimed at creating an electronic catalog of the Institute's Tibetan collection, about which he wrote a presentation article in 1996. In 2005, he served as the curator of the Tibetan collection but was forced to leave this position shortly after, against his will. He dedicated considerable effort to studying the history of this renowned collection and introducing some of its most interesting items to the academic community. Thus, in 2006 and 2011, he published articles on the hieromonk Amphilochius (1885–1937), a lecturer at the Kazan Theological Academy, and Paul Schilling von Canstadt (1786–1837), whose collections became part of the Institute's holdings. Previously, in an article from 1996, Uspensky introduced a manuscript copy of the fascinating "Secret Biography" of the Fifth Dalai Lama, which included extensive illustrations that he had discovered. He also prepared a presentation CD-ROM on this manuscript. Numerous other publications included information about materials from the Institute's Tibetan and Mongolian collections. During this period, Vladimir Uspensky also became the foremost expert on the corresponding collections held at the library of Saint Petersburg State University.

In 1996–1997, he was a visiting professor at the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. This period resulted in several major publications issued in Tokyo in English. The series began with a monograph on the Manchu prince Yunli (1697–1738), a brilliant connoisseur of Tibetan Buddhism who personally communicated with the 7th Dalai Lama and wrote works on Buddhist themes in the Mongolian language. The monograph was based on volumes that had belonged to Yunli and were brought to Russia by Vasily Vasilyev (1818–1900) in the mid-19th century, which Vladimir Uspensky identified in the University's library. Simultaneously, he worked on the catalog of Mongolian manuscripts and xylographs preserved at Saint Petersburg University, which was issued twice, in two volumes (1999–2000) and in one volume (2001), introducing this significant collection to academia in its entirety for the first time. Additionally, in 2006, he edited a unique manuscript of the Mongolian translation of the Sakya hierarch Pakpa Lama's (1235–1280) encyclopedic work "Explanation of the Knowable", also preserved in the same collection.

In his habilitation dissertation, defended in 2004 and later revised into the book "Tibetan Buddhism in Peking" (2011), Uspensky summarized many years of research on the flourishing of Tibetan Buddhism in China's capital during the Manchu Qing dynasty. He

explored a variety of topics, including the lamas of Peking and their high-ranking patrons, Buddhist temples, the printing of religious texts, and the creation of religious art objects. Unfortunately, this outstanding book has not been translated into English.

In November 2007, Vladimir Uspensky left the Institute, which had been rebranded as the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, RAS, and began working as a professor at the Faculty of Oriental Studies, Saint Petersburg State University. He served as the head of the Department of Mongolian and Tibetan Studies from 2009 to 2016 and again from 2018 to 2023. Despite the demands of teaching and administrative work, he continued his research on Mongolian and Tibetan textual sources.

In 2014, he co-authored and edited a collective book that serves as a guide to the collections of manuscripts and xylographs in various Eastern languages preserved in the library of Saint Petersburg State University. He has also published a series of articles on various aspects of Mongol-Tibetan relations, particularly the period of Khoshut dominance over Tibet in the second half of the 17th century. His latest article, on the Mongolian-language correspondence relating to the Fifth Dalai Lama's visit to Beijing in 1652–1653, was published in the special issue of *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, dedicated to the Oirat Legacy and the Origins of Tibetology (2024).

From the early days of his academic career, Prof. Uspensky has had a deep interest in Vasily Vasilyev, an eminent Russian scholar of the 19th century. In the 1850s, Vasilyev was moved from Kazan to Saint Petersburg along with other Orientalists and their collections. This transfer brought Yunli's books and other acquisitions by Vasilyev to Saint Petersburg, where Uspensky studied them extensively. He also published a paper on Vasilyev's plans to introduce Tibetan as an official subject of education in Russia, which, unfortunately, were never realized (2019). Vasilyev's connection to Kazan, now the capital of Tatarstan, resonated with Prof. Uspensky's personal ties to the region, as his wife, the Indologist Elena Uspenskaya (1957–2015), belonged to a subethnic group of Kryashens, sometimes referred to as Baptized Tatars.

In recent years, Prof. Uspensky has maintained close ties with the Saint Petersburg Buddhist Temple, built by Agvan Dorjiev between 1909 and 1915. This relationship follows the longstanding tradition of cooperation between academic scholars and Buddhist priests that always (from the 18th century) characterized Russian Tibetology and Buddhology. Uspensky has occasionally taught Old Mongolian to the lamas of this temple and has participated in various events organized by its authorities. At the same time, they kindly agreed to sponsor Ogyen Tsering, the first ethnic Tibetan doctoral student in Saint Petersburg, to begin his program at the University. Although he is not

the official supervisor in this case, Prof. Uspensky assigns great significance to this project, as it may ultimately contribute to promoting the teaching of Modern Tibetan in Saint Petersburg, a relatively new subject at the University. Previously, Prof. Uspensky supervised three PhD dissertations on topics related to Tibetology, all of which were successfully defended.<sup>2</sup>

It is always difficult to predict the future regarding Russia, but we sincerely hope that Tibetology in Saint Petersburg and other Russian educational centers, supported by distinguished scholars such as Prof. Anna Tsendina and Prof. Vladimir Uspensky, will continue to develop successfully in the fourth century of its history.



Prof. Vladimir Uspensky at the conference dedicated to the 70th anniversary of Anna Tsendina (October 7–8, 2024, Moscow, HSE University).

Photo courtesy of Yana Leman.

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<sup>2</sup> They were written by Delyash Muzraeva (1994), who is now the leading Tibetologist at the Kalmyk Scientific Center, RAS (Elista); Yulia Elikhina (2006), the curator of the Mongolian, Tibetan, and Khotanese collection at the State Hermitage; and Maria Soloshcheva (2014), who has focused on administrative work in the Department of Asian and African Studies at the National Research University Higher School of Economics in Saint Petersburg.

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## Community Territorialization through Monastery Construction in Tsongön (Qinghai): Pastoralist Migration and Settlement in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries

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**D**uring the late eighteenth century and nineteenth century, Tibetan communities repeatedly raided and occupied the pastures of the Kokenuur Mongol banners, which were political units established after the Qing conquered them in 1724. Qing officials sent in troops on several occasions to drive the Tibetan communities back south and protect the banners,<sup>1</sup> but by 1859 officials acquiesced to Tibetan demands for land and began bestowing titles on their leaders. Within a few decades, Tibetan communities began building their own community monasteries on the grasslands (see Map 1). I argue that the Tibetan pastoralist polities engaged in a practice of territorialization through the establishment of local monasteries. These grassland monasteries linked multiple groups into a larger political community as patrons of their monastery, facilitated ties between the political communities on the grasslands and the monastic networks of prominent lamas in eastern Amdo,<sup>2</sup> and provided religious personnel to tame territorial deities. These developments together represented a structural shift on the grasslands from Mongol banners to Tibetan pastoralist polities. Mongol banner leaders, or *jasaks*, lost much of their territory and authority to Tibetan leaders who received chiliarch titles (*stong dpon*; Ch. *qianhu*) from the Qing and whose political authority relied on building local monasteries to structure their polities. In other words, the administrative system imposed by the Qing on the Tsongön grasslands unraveled and was replaced by Tibetan polities. More broadly, I argue that the

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\* I am grateful to Gray Tuttle, Brenton Sullivan, Eveline Washul, and Gyatso Marnyi for their comments on a draft of this article. Any errors are my own.

<sup>1</sup> For more information on these conflicts, see Max Oidtmann, "Overlapping Empires: Religion, Politics, and Ethnicity in Nineteenth-Century Qinghai," *Late Imperial China* 37, no. 2 (2016): 41–91.

<sup>2</sup> Amdo is a Tibetan term denoting a cultural region that includes most of present-day Qinghai Province, Gansu Province, and a portion of Sichuan Province. I use "eastern Amdo" here to refer to the regions east of the Sun and Moon Pass (Nyi zla la, Ch. Riyue shan) where farming is possible and there was an established presence of large monasteries.

establishment of Tibetan monasteries should be analyzed as a process of community territorialization and that territorialization is one of monasteries' many social roles.<sup>3</sup>

### Overview

In 1857, the seventh year of the Daoguang Emperor's reign, the Qing empire was in dire straits. The Nian, Taiping, Miao, and Panthay rebellions were raging. While attempting to quell these uprisings, the Qing were also losing the Second Opium War and, in 1860, were forced to sign the Treaties of Tianjin by Great Britain, France, Russia, and the US. The violent incursion of international markets into the Qing empire would soon be felt far and wide, including in the grasslands surrounding Lake Tsongö (Mtsho sngon po; Ch. Qinghai hu; Mong. Kokenuur) in what is today Qinghai Province. In this year of turmoil, the Governor-General of Shaanxi and Gansu Provinces, Lebin (1797-1875),<sup>4</sup> received what should have been good news. The "wild barbarians," (Ch. *yefan*) who were currently illegally occupying Mongol banner territories, had expressed a desire to surrender (Ch. *toucheng*) to the Qing Dynasty after decades of raiding and conflict.<sup>5</sup>

What had prompted this turn? As it turns out, the Kangtsa (Rkang tsha), the strongest group among the Tibetans who had invaded the banners, were offering to "surrender" in exchange for temporary access to a dry, semi-arid area north of the Yellow River and had received the consent of the Mongol banner that owned the land. Though the region that the Kangtsa requested use of was marginal, it was north of the Yellow River, a boundary that Qing officials had spent some six decades attempting to prohibit them from crossing with armed force and blockades. It seemed likely that the Kangtsa were requesting approval to reside there in order to expand far beyond the requested territory into other banner grasslands. It was

<sup>3</sup> I follow Fabio Duarte here in defining territorialization. "[For] territory the process of attributing values is centrifugal; it is a way of marking these elements with values [...] any other person, entity or action that is present or occurs within this same portion of space is guided by, or even subject to the values imposed on the space. This is when values become rules" Fabio Duarte, *Space, Place and Territory: A Critical Review on Spatialities* (London: Routledge, 2017), 44.

<sup>4</sup> Renming quanwei, <https://newarchive.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/sncaccgi/sncacFtp> (hereafter RMQW), entry number 001343. He held this post from 1856-1862. RMQW is a database containing biographical information on historical figures compiled by the Institute of History and Philology at Academia Sinica in Taipei.

<sup>5</sup> Zhang Jixin, *Record of Experiences as an Official (Dao Xian huanhai jianwen lu)* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1999), 230-231.

clear to Qing officials that this was not an unconditional surrender, but rather a negotiation for territory and recognition in exchange for less trouble in the Lake Tsongön region. Despite the reservations of Qing officials, the empire—mired in multiple rebellions and conflicts—simply did not have the military capacity to force the Kangtsa and other Tibetan communities out of the Mongol banner lands. Ultimately, the settlement of these negotiations opened the door for the Tibetan communities to settle and territorialize the pastures around Lake Tsongön.

The Mongol banners in Qinghai were political units organized by the Qing officials after their forces defeated the Mongol rulers in Qinghai in 1724.<sup>6</sup> Each banner had a hereditary leader, or *jasak*, and a defined territory. The banner system in Qinghai was based largely on the reforms instituted by the Qing in Inner Mongolia. This system of rule, the *jasak*-banner system, was instituted over most of the Inner Asian territory incorporated by the Qing. In contrast was the *junxian* (lit. prefectural and county) system used in Han Chinese areas and areas deemed acculturated.<sup>7</sup> In 1725, Xining Guard (Ch. Xi-

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<sup>6</sup> The Lake Tsongön grasslands have a very complex history that is beyond the scope of this article. Many different communities have settled and established polities on it over the centuries. The Tibetan Empire (c. 600-c. 850 CE), stationed soldiers in the region, and most Tibetans there today claim descent from them. A succession of different Mongol polities entered the region beginning in the sixteenth century, including the Tümed Mongols and their leader Altan Khan. The majority of the Mongol groups that would be organized as banners by the Qing Empire were Khoshud Mongols, who arrived in the mid-seventeenth century. Many of the pastoralists living in the region, most of whom we would now consider Tibetan, were displaced by these different Mongol incursions or incorporated as their subjects. My use of the term “territorialization” may raise for some readers the question of who the indigenous subject is in this history. This is a complicated question that runs the risk of anachronistically projecting present ethnic categories into the past. The use of Tibetan here is shorthand for many different political communities, but it is important to recognize they probably did not see themselves as part of a larger Tibetan nationality. Identity was locally rooted and based on place, their monastery, their spoken language, and the political community. This is not to say that these communities, who are now officially considered Tibetan and identify as such, did not recognize their affinities with other groups discussed as Tibetan in the present article. They shared religious practices, pilgrimage and trade routes, the knowledge that their ancestors came from Central Tibet, a written language, and spoke mutually intelligible forms of Tibetan. The groups discussed as Tibetan in this article certainly recognized their differences from the Mongol nobility. It is also likely that some of the Tibetans who territorialized the Lake Tsongön grasslands during the nineteenth century were descendants of people who were displaced and knew their families had previously lived in the Lake Tsongön grasslands.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew W. Mosca, “The Expansion of the Qing Empire Before 1800,” in *The Limits of Universal Rule: Eurasian Empires Compared*, ed. Jörg Rüpke, Michal Biran,

ning wei) was upgraded to Xining Prefecture (Ch. Xining fu)<sup>8</sup> as Qing officials began to expand the *junxian* system there and attempted to incorporate Tibetan communities as regular subjects since they were believed to have submitted.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, by leaving their former lands and occupying the Mongol bannerlands, the Tibetan communities not only rejected their new status as regular subjects of Qing governance, they also deterritorialized and dismantled the primary mode of governance for non-Chinese communities, i.e. the *jasak*-banner system in the region.<sup>10</sup> In its place, the Tibetan communities territorialized the lands with a monastic-polity system and gained recognition of their leaders by Qing officials.

As a result of the displacement of the Mongol banner system and spread of Tibetan polities, these grasslands and the farming regions of eastern Amdo became tightly connected through monastic networks, and the expansion of international markets into the grasslands facilitated this process. A broader implication of my argument is that the establishment of monasteries should be analyzed as a form of territorialization in other Tibetan contexts. The establishment of a monastery could reinforce the ties between separate groups—called *tsowa* (*tsho ba*) or *dewa* (*sde ba*)—as a cohesive political community by making them the monastery's patron communities, or *lhadé* (*lha sde*). The monastery then served as a claim to territory by the political community that established and supported it.<sup>11</sup>

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and Yuri Pines (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 324–25, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108771061.011>.

<sup>8</sup> Yingju Yang, *New Gazetteer of Xining Prefecture* (*Xining fu xin zhi*), ed. Yonghong Cui, Qinghai difang shizhi wenxian congshu (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1988 [1746]), 29.

<sup>9</sup> See General Nian Gengyao's pacification plan in Nian Gengyao, *Compilation of Nian Gengyao's Manchu-language Memorials Translated into Chinese* (*Nian Gengyao Man Han zouzhe yi bian*) (Tianjin guji chubanshe, 1995), 280–294, esp. 285.

<sup>10</sup> The Mongol banners did not disappear altogether but continued to persist with much smaller populations and diminished territory. See Oidtmann, "Overlapping Empires: Religion, Politics, and Ethnicity in Nineteenth-Century Qinghai," 78 for an overview of a census taken in 1910.

<sup>11</sup> There is a rich variety of Tibetan social group terminology, and the same terms can have different meanings in different places and among pastoralists and farmers. In the Lake Tsongön region under study here, *tsowa* and *dewa* generally referred to a community of herders that shared common pastureland, had a common leader, and were made up of encampments called *rukor* (*ru skor*). The political community I refer to here does not have a consistent Tibetan term, and they are generally referred to simply by their name, e.g. the Kangtsa or the Khyamru.

### 1. Qing and Tibetan Negotiations

In addition to Governor-General Lebin's memorial detailing the Kangtsa offer, there is also a source that offers a critical, behind-the-scenes look at the extent to which the Qing had secured control of the raiding situation, and the circumstances surrounding the negotiations with the Tibetan pastoralists. Zhang Jixin (1800-1878),<sup>12</sup> who held the post of Gansu Provincial Administration Commissioner (Ch. *buzhengshi*)<sup>13</sup> under Lebin from 1856-1858, kept a detailed autobiography of his years in various government posts.<sup>14</sup> He recounts how unstable the Lake Tsongön grasslands were at this time. In 1856, the Ru ngen (Ru sngan)<sup>15</sup> community had occupied positions outside the Jiayu Pass, which connects the interior of China to Xinjiang, raided a government caravan and seized 50,000 taels of silver. A couple of months later, they intercepted a memorial and destroyed it.<sup>16</sup> Lebin's forces tracked them to a mountain west of Lake Tsongön, which they had prepared to defend. The Qing forces were met with stiff resistance but eventually captured the Ru ngen leader, Talo Gyakhyil (Rta lo rgya 'khyil), and some twenty-two other captives. They beheaded all of them.<sup>17</sup> Writing more generally of the situation in Qinghai, Zhang stated that the trading inns (Ch. *xiejia*)<sup>18</sup> were har-

<sup>12</sup> RMQW 003346. For a short biography of Zhang, see Ting Zhang, *Circulating the Code: Print Media and Legal Knowledge in Qing China* (University of Washington Press, 2020), 84–86.

<sup>13</sup> Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), entry number 487.

<sup>14</sup> Ting Zhang writes, "The information in Zhang's autobiography is likely trustworthy. In most cases, Zhang seems candid and sincere. Unlike most contemporary officials, Zhang did not write his autobiography for publication and did not brag about his own contributions" (*Circulating the Code*, 218).

<sup>15</sup> There are several Tibetan spellings for this group's name, including Ri sngun and Ru ngen.

<sup>16</sup> Zhang Jixin, *Record of Experiences as an Official* (*Dao Xian huanhai jianwen lu*), 222.

<sup>17</sup> There is a modern, Tibetan-language account of this conflict that denies Ru ngen wrongdoing and claims it took place in 1853; see Btsun kho, *Ru sngan khag gsum gyi lo rgyus dung gi 'bod brda* (Zi ling: Mtsho sngon bod rigs zhib 'jug tshogs pa, 2004), 46–47.

<sup>18</sup> In recent years, more research has been dedicated to these institutions. See Bianca Horlemann, "Tibetan Nomadic Trade, the Chinese 'Xiejia' System and the Sino-Tibetan Border Market in Stong 'Khor/ Dan'Gaer In 19th/ 20th Century A Mdo," in *Studies on the History and Literature of Tibet and the Himalaya* (Kathmandu: Vajra Publications, 2012), 109–43; Bianca Horlemann "Tibetans and Muslims in Northwest China: Economic and Political Aspects of a Complex Historical Relationship," *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 21 (2012): 141–86; and Yang Hongwei and Max Oidtman, "A Study of Qing Dynasty 'Xiejia' Rest Houses in Xunhua Subprefecture, Gansu," in *Muslims in Amdo Tibetan Society: Multidisciplinary Ap-*



boring stolen goods from the grasslands and everyone in Xining, Pingfan, Guide, and Bayanrong, including the Tibetans, Mongols, and Muslims, were involved in the raiding. Furthermore, he wrote that government officials in Qinghai were complicit. Remarkably, he also claimed that more than 53,000 Tibetans had crossed the Yellow River and were now occupying the Lake Tsongöñ grasslands, an enormous population transfer for this sparsely populated region.<sup>19</sup>

When the Kangtsa entered negotiations in 1857, Lebin was unable to personally travel and sent Naxun Agula on his behalf. Naxun Agula reported to Lebin that he had met with the Kangtsa leader in a temple, who vowed that his people would no longer engage in raiding if they were allowed to live on the land north of the river. The Kangtsa leader even offered the use of his community's cattle to open land for cultivation, and he offered his community's horses and labor to extract copper from the mountains in the Tsaidam basin in exchange for barley. When Zhang heard this report, he was incredulous. Lebin also had misgivings and was of the opinion that refusing or accepting their surrender were both dangerous options, for if they accepted the Kangtsa's surrender on their terms, they would likely raid and seize more Mongol banner territories. However, if they refused their surrender, the Tibetan pastoralists would likely occupy more banner lands regardless, continue raiding Qing caravans, and causing other problems. Rather than make a decision, Lebin decided to instead take the situation "day by day."<sup>20</sup>

The new Xining Amban,<sup>21</sup> the Manchu Tugabu (d. 1860),<sup>22</sup> was also reluctant to decide how to handle the problem and feigned ignorance of the situation, deferring to Lebin. According to Zhang, this angered Lebin. Zhang reminded Tugabu that the responsibility of the Tibetans and Kokenuur Mongols were supposed to be under his direct authority as the Xining Amban, and only then under the purview of the Governor-General. However, Tugabu stalled for a year. He then secretly arranged for the Mongol nobility to come to the office and sign their agreement to share their land with the Tibetans

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*proaches*, ed. Marie-Paule Hille, Bianca Horlemann, and Paul K. Nietupski (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 21–46.

<sup>19</sup> Zhang Jixin, *Record of Experiences as an Official* (*Dao Xian huanhai jianwen lu*), 230–31.

<sup>20</sup> Zhang Jixin, *Record of Experiences as an Official* (*Dao Xian huanhai jianwen lu*), 231.

<sup>21</sup> The Xining Amban was an office created after the Qing conquest of Qinghai in 1724. It was tasked with overseeing the administration of the Qinghai Mongol banners and some Tibetan communities. For more information on this office, see Gray Tuttle, "The Institution of the Qinghai Amban," in *Histories of Tibet: Essays in Honor of Leonard W.J. van Der Kuijp*, ed. Kurtis R. Schaeffer, Jue Liang, and William A. McGrath (New York: Wisdom Publications, 2023), 569–83.

<sup>22</sup> RMQW 001526.

and assume responsibility for them. Only at Naxun Agula's repeated urging did the Mongols present a statement, but it deferred their acceptance, stating that they did not understand these matters well but would surely sign if Lebin and other officials instructed them to do so. When Tugabu showed their statement to Lebin, he did not have confidence in their consent to allow the Tibetans into their territories and the officials feared that the Mongols would neglect to take responsibility for the Tibetans in their territory. Zhang often speaks of an agreement in which the Mongol banners would be guarantors (Ch. *bao*) for the Tibetans, but clearly the Mongols were in no position to protect, enforce discipline on, or resist the tens of thousands of Tibetans who had crossed into their territory. In other words, *bao* appears to be a euphemism for not complaining about the conduct of the Tibetans in their land, not appealing for military support from the Qing if they began raiding the banners or others, and accepting responsibility for the Tibetans' conduct and its consequences.<sup>23</sup> The Mongol leaders had suffered continual raiding for the greater part of a century and the mass flight of their subjects in more recent decades. It is hardly surprising that they were reluctant to agree to the permanent presence of tens of thousands of Tibetans in their territory and accept full responsibility for any problems that arose from them.

The Kangtsa responded to the silence stemming from indecision by the Xining Amban and the Governor-General of Shaanxi and Gansu by raising the stakes. In 1857, they seized a high lama and his party who were passing through the Tsaidam on their way to Beijing from Tibet. They seized their personal belongings, horses, and the tribute items they were bringing to the court. The Kangtsa released one monk to let the authorities know that if they were allowed to surrender, i.e. stay on the occupied land, they would allow the high lama to proceed to Beijing, but if not, they would kill him. Naxun Agula was sent out to negotiate with the Kangtsa leader and returned saying that he had convinced the Kangtsa to return the stolen items and let the caravan proceed, but that if the caravan returned from Beijing before a memorial was issued clearly accepting their surrender and their right to stay on the land, they would not allow the lama and his party to return back to Tibet.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Zhang cites an instance where of Mongol "craftiness" in which the banners pledged to be responsible for the Yongsha community but quickly pursued a complaint against them. See Zhang Jixin, *Record of Experiences as an Official* (*Dao Xian huanhai jianwen lu*), 232.

<sup>24</sup> Zhang Jixin, *Record of Experiences as an Official* (*Dao Xian huanhai jianwen lu*), 232. Gombozhav Tsybikov (1873-1930), a Buryat Mongol and Russian subject who traveled through Amdo at the turn of the century, recounted how his party took

We can see the use of the term “surrender” as a euphemism in accordance with Qing official discourse.<sup>25</sup> Understanding this stand-off between the Qing and pastoral communities as a negotiation, one in which the pastoralist polities held considerable leverage, is much more clarifying. Qing officials were facing a situation in which they were losing control of a significant portion of one of their most loosely incorporated territories and their *jasak*-banner administration was breaking down. If officials refused the pastoralists’ demands, it was clear they would remain without Qing authorization, continue raiding, and not comply with Qing orders. If on the other hand, the Qing accepted their offer, they could engage in formal relations with the communities, expect that they would cease raiding Qing authorized caravans, and that they would offer occasional military service to Xining. Accepting the Kangtsa’s terms betrayed imperial weakness, but it prevented the loss of a significant borderland holding routes into Tibet and Xinjiang. Accordingly, the standoff was resolved when the Qing officials capitulated and accepted the terms of the

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the southern route around Lake Tsongön in 1900 to avoid the Kangtsa and their notorious leader, Lama Rabten. It was apparently well known among travelers at the time of Tsybikov’s journey that the Kangtsa had previously held the political and religious leader of Mongolia, the Jibdzundamba Khutugtu, hostage when he passed through their territory while returning to Mongolia from Tibet. Tsybikov states that the Amban was unable to force his release and a large ransom had to be paid on the condition that he protected Mongols traversing through in the future. According to Tsybikov, Lama Rabten realized this was a lucrative opportunity and began collecting a toll of approximately two *qian*, or 30 kopecks, per person from then on backed by a threat of physical force. See Gombozhav T. Tsybikov, *A Buddhist Pilgrim at the Shrines of Tibet* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 28. According to a modern Tibetan source, Lama Rabten lived from 1814-1893, so he would have been dead by the time Tsybikov would have passed through, but it is not surprising that he did not know this. In any case, the Kangtsa were still a threat and collecting tolls. Modern Tibetan and Chinese sources give a quite different account stating that the Jibdzundamba had been attacked by bandits several times while traveling to Lhasa and approached the Kangtsa leader for protection. Lama Rabten was happy to oblige and dispatched some armed escorts to accompany him. The Tibetan government was apparently grateful and rewarded Lama Rabten with valuables and a copper seal declaring him a “great chiliarch” (*stong dpon chen mo*). See Rgya po and Tshul khriims, *Mtsho sngon po’i Rkang tsha’i lo rgyus mes po’i zhal lung* (Zi ling: Kan su’u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1996), 20–21; Gangcha xian zhi bianzuan weiyuanhui, ed., *Gangcha County Gazetteer* (*Gangcha xian zhi*), Qinghai sheng difangzhi congshu (Xi’an: Shaanxi renmin chubanshe, 1997), 652; and Sha bo bkra shis, *Mtsho sngon lho rgyud mna’ mthun tsho ba brgyad kyi spyi khyab stong dpon chen mo Rkang tsha’i Dpal bzang mchog dang ’brel ba’i lo rgyus snying bsdu*s (Zang kang: Then mā dpe skrun kung zi, 2004), 55–58.

<sup>25</sup> For more on the implications of Qing discourse, see Lydia He Liu, *The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

Kangtsa.<sup>26</sup>

Zhang Jixin was not optimistic about this outcome for several reasons. The Kangtsa had never been conquered, the Mongols' agreement to their presence did not seem sincere, recognition of the Kangtsa leader did not address other Tibetan groups who had previously migrated into banner lands, and he thought it would likely encourage even more Tibetans to cross the river.<sup>27</sup> He believed the country did not possess the military strength to conquer the Tibetans around Lake Tsongön with ongoing rebellions elsewhere in the empire. Furthermore, the Mongols had only agreed to temporarily allow them to stay on a piece of land without adequate grass or water. Zhang asked if the Tibetans wished to migrate because they did not have adequate grass or water south of the river, why would they migrate to another inhospitable piece of land and honor their agreement to stay there?<sup>28</sup>

Regardless of Zhang and other officials' reservations, they were left with little choice but to make peace with the Kangtsa and accommodate their demands. With the emperor's approval, Lebin dispatched officials to accept the Kangtsa and the other groups' surrender, take a census, and delineate their territory.<sup>29</sup> The emperor appeared resigned in his response and approved of the plan, stating that their only option was to "maintain loose control" (*zhihao jimi* 只好羈縻[縻]), work to maintain the peace, and instruct the Mongols to strengthen themselves. He claimed that if the Tibetans continued to cause problems, they could expel them later. Given the empire's failure to do so for decades coupled with its ongoing crises, this last claim appears to be more about asserting imperial dignity than a realistic assessment. Perhaps even more unrealistically, he claimed

<sup>26</sup> Zhang Jixin, *Record of Experiences as an Official* (*Dao Xian huanhai jianwen lu*), 235–36; Lebin 樂斌, XF 08/08/22 (September 28, 1858), "奏為遵旨派委明幹大員隨同西甯辦事大臣查辦投誠番務復奏事," 故樞 003137 / 603000220-002, National Palace Museum Qing Dynasty Archives, Taipei; Lebin 樂斌, XF 08/11/25 (December 29, 1858), "奏為查明寧夏地方出產米糧價值及道路情形難以招商販運緣由奏祈聖鑒(附件:奏西寧口外剛咱等族野番請投誠一案)," 故宮 128472 / 406009648, National Palace Museum Qing Dynasty Archives, Taipei.

<sup>27</sup> Zhang Jixin, *Record of Experiences as an Official* (*Dao Xian huanhai jianwen lu*), 236, 256–57.

<sup>28</sup> Zhang Jixin, *Record of Experiences as an Official* (*Dao Xian huanhai jianwen lu*), 235–236.

<sup>29</sup> Lebin 樂斌, XF 08/11/25 (December 29, 1858), "奏為查明寧夏地方出產米糧價值及道路情形難以招商販運緣由奏祈聖鑒(附件:奏西寧口外剛咱等族野番請投誠一案)," 故宮 128472 / 406009648, National Palace Museum Qing Dynasty Archives, Taipei.

that if the Mongols were able to rebuild their strength, they could drive out the Tibetans themselves.<sup>30</sup>

In 1858, an official proposed withdrawing troops from the area after recognizing the Kangtsa claims,<sup>31</sup> and in 1859 the Kangtsa leader Lama Rabten (Bla ma rab brtan), formerly a rebellious troublemaker of high order, was bestowed the fourth-rank cap badge and a peacock feather (Ch. *sipin hualing*).<sup>32</sup> The blockade was lifted, they were able to access goods and trade their products in the market town of Tongkor (Stong 'khor; Ch. Dan'gaer)<sup>33</sup> again. With the Qing government no longer a looming threat, the Kangtsa were able to begin transitioning into a new phase of settlement.

## 2. Tibetan Forms of Territorialization

Official recognition for these communities meant most importantly an end to military attacks by Qing forces and the lifting of blockades preventing them from accessing grain and other market goods. However, recognition by the Qing dynasty tells us little about how the communities made these grasslands their homes. After securing the acquiescence of the Qing government to occupy the former pastures of Mongol banners, the pastoralist communities had to territorialize their new lands. To understand this process, we must examine Tibetan views on land, local gods, the roles of monasteries, and the mediation of religious specialists. We must also examine related historical developments in the Qing. Ultimately, this process of pastoralist territorialization simultaneously influenced and was influenced by larger structural changes in the late Qing. As we will see, the Great Northwestern Rebellion (c. 1862-1874)<sup>34</sup> and the Hehuang Rebellion (1895-1896) strengthened the relationship between the new pastoralist polities and some reincarnate lamas and monasteries in

<sup>30</sup> Fuji 福濟, XF 09/06/01 (June 30, 1859), “奏為親督委員出口查勘投誠野番謹將籌辦大概情形具陳事,” 故樞 003153 / 603000236-001, National Palace Museum Qing Dynasty Archives, Taipei.

<sup>31</sup> Deng Chengwei, *Supplement to the Xining Gazetteer (Xining fu xu zhi)*, ed. Zhang Jiaqing, Lai Weili, and Ji Shenglan, Qinghai Difang Shizhi Wenxian Congshu (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 2016 [1883]), 120.

<sup>32</sup> *Wenzong shilu* 331:926 (XF 09/10/17), in *Veritable Records of the Qing Dynasty (Qing shilu)* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985).

<sup>33</sup> Another Tibetan spelling is Stong skor. The location of the old town is in present-day Huangyuan County and is now a tourist site.

<sup>34</sup> This conflict is also known as the Dungan Revolt and the Tongzhi Hui Revolt. See Hannah Rebecca Theaker, “Moving Muslims: The Great Northwestern Rebellion and the Transformation of Chinese Islam, 1860-1896,” PhD diss., (University of Oxford, 2018), 75-109.

eastern Amdo. Beginning around 1880, an international wool boom brought wealth to the pastoralist polities, which also facilitated stronger relationships with eastern Amdo and the establishment of new, permanent monasteries on the grasslands. This process offers us a window into the territorial roles of Tibetan monasteries.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the missionary and ethnographer, Robert Ekvall, observed that many pastoralist communities in Amdo had successfully fended off the ecclesiastical rule of monasteries, and in so doing, had maintained more power within their "chiefs" (*mgo ba*) and elders.<sup>35</sup> The situation in the Qinghai grasslands from the 1860s echo Ekvall's descriptions of other Amdo communities. Due to the lack of regional monasteries during this period, the pastoralists living around Lake Tsongön in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century were also largely free from monastic dictate.

Why, then, would local rulers want to build monasteries? In an unstable context in which groups are continually fighting over pastureland and raiding one another, I argue that the establishment and patronage of monasteries is a form of placemaking and territorialization. Founding, or sponsoring the establishment of a monastery, is an act of claiming. Due to the unique role of monasteries in Tibetan societies as administrative, financial, and quasi-military institutions, they are the major form of built place in Tibet. In terms of organizing Tibetan conceptions of space, they are matched only by natural phenomena, namely mountains, rivers, and lakes. In a politically unstable region, the establishment of a monastery is a form of staking claim to a place that has cultural significance. In a legend about the transmission of Buddhism into Tibet, the seventh-century Guru Rinpoche, or Padmasambhava, subdued Tibet's local spirits through the construction of temples and paving the way for the introduction of Buddhism. This legend also involves the subjugation of local territorial deities, which we will discuss below. Perhaps more importantly for local rulers, founding a monastery also established them as a respected and powerful political leader acting as a patron for the Buddhist teachings and a lama. In other words, the priest-patron relationship in this context is a form of territorialization; the local ruler was bolstered through his relationships with the local lama and with the major lama from the mother monastery.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Robert B. Ekvall, *Cultural Relations on the Kansu-Tibetan Border* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939), 69.

<sup>36</sup> Tibetan monasteries commonly have a "mother monastery" (*ma dgon*) with whom the child (*bu dgon*), or branch monastery (*dgon lag*), is affiliated. This relationship varies widely between institutions, but common features include a shared liturgical calendar and visits from the mother monastery's important la-

Furthermore, the establishment of local monasteries in the grasslands would facilitate ties between the new polities and major monasteries, most notably with Ditsa,<sup>37</sup> in eastern Amdo, and Ragya,<sup>38</sup> in southern Amdo (see Map 2). While the local communities benefited from affiliating with these major monasteries, they were also able to maintain considerable local power as they were geographically distant and the mother monasteries were not able to exercise nearly the same degree of authority that they could over their own nearby patron communities. For example, Labrang was able to intervene in village politics and collect outright taxes, not just religious donations, from patron communities within its territory that were relatively far from Lake Tsongön.<sup>39</sup> The new monasteries provided the established monasteries, particularly its high lamas, with new religious patrons, but the established monasteries could not expect to exert this level of political control in the Tsongön grasslands. In fact, when local leaders sponsored the construction of a community monastery, they benefited from affiliating with major monasteries and lamas while also securing the institutional benefits of the local monastery. For example, local monasteries allowed communities to incorporate refugees, participate in trade networks, store trade items, and produce grain. In other words, the establishment of local monasteries allowed polities to territorialize the grasslands, while also allowing them to participate in the larger networks of major monasteries and lamas without subordinating too much of their own authority.

Tibetans also have indigenous concepts of territoriality involving local gods. The land is full of different types of invisible beings, and communities must act appropriately to avoid misfortune. Territorial deities (*gzhi bdag*; *yul lha*) are believed to cause problems or help inhabitants living in an area, depending on their relationship with the people. For example, the deities can control weather, natural disasters, crop outcomes, and the health of local people. Local deities are propitiated to handle mundane matters, whereas Buddhist deities are more closely connected with notions of karma, rebirth, and en-

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mas to the branch monastery. Monks from a branch monastery often pursue further training at its mother monastery as well. For more on the shared liturgical calendars between mother and child monasteries, see Brenton Sullivan, *Building a Religious Empire: Tibetan Buddhism, Bureaucracy, and the Rise of the Gelukpa* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).

<sup>37</sup> Buddhist Digital Resource Center, <https://www.bdrc.io> (hereafter BDRC), G1PD96117. I have omitted Tibetan transcriptions for places and people with a BDRC entry for ease of reading because they easily be retrieved from there.

<sup>38</sup> BDRC G398.

<sup>39</sup> Paul Kocot Nietupski, *Labrang Monastery a Tibetan Buddhist Community on the Inner Asian Borderlands, 1709-1958* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), 62.

lightenment. If territorial deities are kept happy, they can act as a source of fortune (*g.yang*) for communities. Their abodes are usually holy mountains, though the mountain and the deity itself are coterminous. In order to ensure that they act as benevolent forces, it is common for lamas to subjugate (*'dul ba*) these deities with Buddhist ritual.<sup>40</sup>

The territorial deities are associated with martial activity and usually depicted on horseback with weapons. For a group to successfully conquer and occupy a territory, they must win over the territorial deity.<sup>41</sup> Conversely, if the settled community maintains a good relationship with the territorial deity, it will help them prevent and defend against invasion. A local deity is also believed to have a strong connection with a polity's leader.<sup>42</sup> Many communities view their local deity as an ancestor, in some cases, specifically the ancestor of the leader's lineage.<sup>43</sup>

Territorial deities are propitiated in shrines, or *labtsé* (*la brtse*),<sup>44</sup> that communities build for them, and they travel throughout their domain, so the maintenance of these shrines is important to the welfare of the community. Labtsé are typically located on a mountain and can be placed on the summit, a mid-section of the mountain, or

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<sup>40</sup> There is a substantial body of literature on territorial deities. See, e.g., Anne-Marie Blondeau and Ernst Steinkellner, eds., *Reflections of the Mountain: Essays on the History and Social Meaning of the Mountain Cult in Tibet and the Himalaya*, Veröffentlichungen Zur Sozialanthropologie (Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, 1996); Anne-Marie Blondeau, ed., *Tibetan Mountain Deities, Their Cults and Representations: Papers Presented at a Panel of the 7th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*, Graz, 1995, International Association for Tibetan Studies (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1998); and Samten G. Karmay, *The Arrow and the Spindle: Studies in History* (Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point, 1998). For an excellent explanation of the relationship between territorial deities, the community, and lamas, see Martin Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State in Tibetan Buddhism: The Foundations of Authority in Gelukpa Monasticism* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), esp. 243-262.

<sup>41</sup> Rahel Tsering, "The Warrior in the Mountain and His People: Labtse Mountain Cult and Its Social Significance in an Amdo Tibetan Village," in *Mapping Amdo: Dynamics of Change*, ed. Jarmila Ptáčková and Adrian Zenz (Prague: Oriental Institute, the Czech Academy of Sciences, 2017), 126.

<sup>42</sup> Samten G. Karmay, "The Cult of Mountain Deities and Its Political Significance," in *The Arrow and the Spindle: Studies in History*, by Samten G. Karmay (Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point, 1998), 432 ; Niangwujia and Hanna Havnevik, "The Remaking of a Tibetan Mountain Cult Festival: The Worship of Landscape Deities in the Rebgong Valley, Amdo," *Religion* 53, no. 3 (2023): 457, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2023.2211396>.

<sup>43</sup> Niangwujia and Havnevik, "The Remaking of a Tibetan Mountain Cult Festival," 457.

<sup>44</sup> This term has numerous Tibetan spellings.



its base, but are higher than the community.<sup>45</sup> The visible parts of a labtsé include a central pillar (*srog shing*), large arrow-spears, woolen cords, juniper branches, flags, and other items. The subterranean foundation of the labtsé contains a dugout chamber, filled with a deity's effigy, grains, a treasure vase, butter, and weapons.<sup>46</sup> In short, monasteries and labtsé serve as territorial markers for political communities.

### 3. *The Merging of the Tsongön Grasslands and Amdo Through Monastic Networks*

While the communities established a permanent presence in their new lands, conflicts in the east implicated them. Soon after the nomadic communities won Qing acceptance of their presence north of the Yellow River, the Great Northwestern Rebellion (c. 1862-1874) broke out. The destruction spread from Shaanxi across eastern Amdo. Muslim rebels targeted communal sites, including Tibetan monasteries and Chinese temples.<sup>47</sup> Some of the newly settled communities were called on to provide fighters to defend monasteries, e.g. the Eight Lhadé Tsowa (Lha sde tsho brgyad), sent members to defend Kumbum monastery.<sup>48</sup> Tibetan pastoralist polities were called in by both the Qing state and their religious networks to defend monasteries in eastern Amdo. For their service, some leaders of pastoralist polities received state recognition and titles.<sup>49</sup>

In the aftermath of this revolt, eastern Amdo was transformed. Many monasteries were destroyed or damaged, and many of their patron communities were also harmed. Furthermore, Qing government payments to monasteries, instituted to replace monastic taxation on local communities during the post-1724 reforms, almost surely dried up. Monasteries needed funds to rebuild and could not look to their patron communities or the Qing government. As we will see below, a handful of important incarnate lamas provided the funds for reconstructing eastern Amdo and built relationships with the recently settled nomadic polities, collecting donations on teaching tours and also overseeing the establishment of monasteries in the

<sup>45</sup> Nangchukja, *A Mang rdzong Tibetan Life*, Asian Highlands Perspectives 11 (Xining: Asian Highlands Perspectives, 2011), 8.

<sup>46</sup> Rahel Tsering, "Labtse Construction and Differentiation in Rural Amdo," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 37 (2016): 451–68.

<sup>47</sup> Wesley Byron Chaney, "Land, Trade, and the Law on the Sino-Tibetan Border, 1723-1911," PhD diss., (Stanford University, 2016), 312.

<sup>48</sup> BDRC G160.

<sup>49</sup> See e.g., Dge ming dpal, *Lha sde tsho brgyad kyi lo rgyus kun 'dus gsal ba'i me long* (n.p., 2005), 44-45.

grasslands in subsequent decades. An international wool boom beginning in the 1880s served as a boon for the pastoralist polities, benefitting the communities themselves, allowing them to make donations to powerful lamas—as we will see below—and helping with the establishment of their own permanent monasteries on the grasslands. Through this process, the Tsongön grasslands and eastern Amdo became more closely linked.

During the Great Northwestern Rebellion, two incarnate lamas, The Fourth Tarshul Rinpoche, Gendun Lobzang Chökyong Gyatso (1810-1884/1888)<sup>50</sup> and the Third Shingza Rinpoche, Lobzang Tenpé Wangchuk Tsultrim Puntsok (1825-1897),<sup>51</sup> would spearhead efforts to restore damaged monasteries in eastern Amdo. Later, they would train younger lamas and aid in the construction of new monasteries in the grasslands of western Amdo. All of these lamas hailed from grasslands communities and also held strong connections with established Gelukpa (Dge lugs pa) monasteries in eastern Amdo.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, they were in an ideal position to connect the pastoralist polities and their new monasteries with the established monasteries in eastern Amdo. Ultimately, the networks these lamas formed with one another and with grasslands communities through the establishment of new monasteries represented a transformation of political structures on the grasslands, namely a shift from the banner system to one of local monasteries and their patrons enmeshed in networks of powerful tulkus and their home monasteries.

The Fourth Tarshul Rinpoche, Chökyong Gyatso, was born in 1810 in Chojé Lukhar, in what was officially Mongol banner territory, in the Tarshul Tsowa.<sup>53</sup> During the late 1850s, the Atsok (A tshogs) would occupy this land, and at least a section of the Tarshul

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<sup>50</sup> BDRC P267.

<sup>51</sup> BDRC P324.

<sup>52</sup> The Gelukpa were the politically dominant school of Tibetan Buddhist from the seventeenth century onward and have a long history of expansion in Amdo. See Gray Tuttle, "Building up the Dge Lugs Pa Base in A Mdo: The Role of Lhasa, Beijing and Local Agency," *Journal of Tibetology (Zangxue Xuekan)* 7 (2012): 126–40 and Brenton Sullivan, *Building a Religious Empire: Tibetan Buddhism, Bureaucracy, and the Rise of the Gelukpa*. In the above article, Tuttle outlines four periods of Gelukpa expansion in Amdo. The present article could be considered a fifth period of expansion beginning c. 1880.

<sup>53</sup> A contemporary source states that the Dushul, Wanshul, and Tarshul tsowas together make up what is called the Three Tarshul Tsowas (*thar shul tsho gsum*); see Bla nag pa ye shes bzang po, *Mang ra'i lo rgyus* (Zhang kang: Zhang kang then mā dpe skrun khang, 2001), 32. Another contemporary source states that the Tarshul tsowa was one of the Four Arrows (*Mda' bzhi*) of Cagan Nomunhan and moved with them from south of the river in present-day Mang County (Mang rdzong; Ch. Guinan xian) to east of Lake Tsongön in present-day Dabzhi County in the nineteenth century (*Mda' bzhi rdzong*; Ch. Haiyan xian).

Tsowa would follow the prominent banner leader, Cagan Nomunhan, to flee from raiding.<sup>54</sup> His family was nomadic, and it is unclear if they were banner subjects or not. His incarnation line holds a throne at Lamo Dechen monastery.<sup>55</sup> Tarshul Rinpoche began touring and making offerings to repair the numerous monasteries that were damaged or destroyed during the Great Northwestern Rebellion. The Third Shingza Rinpoche,<sup>56</sup> Lobzang Tenpé Wangchuk Tsultrim, was born in 1825 east of Amnye Machen, near Ragya. His mother was named Rinchen Drolma and was the daughter of a Torglut Mongol ruler in the east. His father, Gonpo Dorjé, was a Mongol *jasak* in the lineage of Gushi Khan and was also a descendant of an important patron for Ragya during its founding, *Jasak Wangchuk Rabten* (Dbang phyug rab brtan).<sup>57</sup> He took Tarshul Rinpoche as a teacher and received many teachings from him.

In 1867, the violence reached the subprefectural seat at Guide (Khri ka), a Qing outpost surrounded by Tibetan communities. The local Muslim leaders Fa Zhengqing, Ma Shuangge, and Wang Zaxi led a force of 3,000 people to attack Guide. They killed the magistrate (Ch. *tongzhi*) and more than 300 commoners. When a Qing leader mounted a counterattack, Fa Zhengqing called in Ma Wenyi's forces for support and killed the official and others. Four months would pass from Fa Zhengqing's initial attack before the city was recaptured.<sup>58</sup> During this time, the assembly halls of many nearby Tibetan monasteries were burned down, including Gongwa Dratsang,<sup>59</sup> Chokrong Dratsang,<sup>60</sup> Horgya Dratsang (Hor rgya grwa tshang),

<sup>54</sup> 'Brug thar and Sangs rgyas rin chen, *Mda' bzhi'i lo rgyus gsal ba'i me long zhes bya ba bzhuks so* (Lanzhou: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2013), 34.

<sup>55</sup> BDRC G271. For more on this monastery, see Hanung Kim, "Preliminary Notes on Lamo Dechen Monastery and Its Two Main Incarnation Lineages," *Archiv Orientalní Suppl* 11 (2019): 77–97; Gray Tuttle and Tsehuajia, "Power and Politics in Chentsa Before Communist Rule," 2010, <http://places.kmaps.virginia.edu/features/15480>; Gray Tuttle, "An Overview of Amdo (Northeastern Tibet) Historical Politics | Mandala Collections - Texts," August 29, 2013, <https://texts.mandala.library.virginia.edu/text/overview-amdo-northeastern-tibet-historical-politics>.

<sup>56</sup> There are different enumerations for the number of incarnations of the Shingza Rinpoches.

<sup>57</sup> Mkhas btsun bzang bo, *Rwa rgya dga' ldan bkra shis 'byung gnas bshad sgrub dar rgyas gling gi gdan rabs gser gyi phreng ba zhes bya ba bzhuks so* (Lanzhou: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2017), 147.

<sup>58</sup> Guide xian difangzhi bianzuan weiyuanhui, ed. *Guide County Gazetteer (Guide xian zhi)*, Qinghai sheng difangzhi congshu (Xian: Shaanxi renmin chubanshe, 1995), 12.

<sup>59</sup> BDRC G1837.

<sup>60</sup> BDRC G1836.

Minyak,<sup>61</sup> Tretsé,<sup>62</sup> Dekyi (Bde skyid),<sup>63</sup> and Serkya (Ser kyA).<sup>64</sup> Tarshul Rinpoche helped rebuild these with the assistance of Gong-wa Dratsang's treasurer.

Both Tarshul Rinpoche and Shingza Rinpoche, who had been born into Mongol nomadic communities, were recognized as incarnate lamas and brought to monasteries in eastern Amdo. Given their loyalty to Gelukpa Tibetan Buddhism, they helped rebuild during the Great Northwest Rebellion, would oversee the construction of monasteries by the pastoralist groups after they won Qing recognition, and would go on to train other incarnate lamas who would oversee the construction of additional monasteries. One of these lamas, the Fourth Amdo Zhamar, Gendun Tendzin Gyatso (1852-1912),<sup>65</sup> was born to a nomadic family of Mongol lineage within the Dabzhi (Mda' bzhi; lit. "The Four Arrows"), which was one of Cagan Nomunhan's banner communities that fled to northeast of Lake Tsongön from south of the Yellow River. He was recognized as the reincarnation of the Third Amdo Zhamar, Ngakwang Tendzin Gyatso (1807-1848),<sup>66</sup> whose seat was at the major monastery of Lamo Dechen. He would go on to have a strong relationship with both Tarshul Rinpoche and Shingza Rinpoche. He was enthroned at his predecessor's seat in 1855, and in 1859, he received novice vows from Tarshul Rinpoche.<sup>67</sup> In 1903, he founded Ditsa monastery, which at its height had 3,000 monks and would serve as the mother monastery for many of the new grassland monasteries in the Lake Tsongön grasslands.<sup>68</sup>

This network of high lamas—Tarshul Rinpoche (Lamo Dechen), the Shingza Rinpoches (Ragya), the Amdo Zhamar (Ditsa), and the

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<sup>61</sup> BDRC G1KR2522.

<sup>62</sup> BDRC G1853.

<sup>63</sup> This is likely BDRC G1KR2540.

<sup>64</sup> Shes rab bstan dar, *Chos skyong rgya mtsho'i rnam thar* (Lan kru'u: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2016), 39–40.

<sup>65</sup> BDRC P196.

<sup>66</sup> Tsering Namgyal, "The Third Amdo Zhamar, Ngawang Tendzin Gyatso," *The Treasury of Lives: A Biographical Encyclopedia of Tibet, Inner Asia and the Himalayan Region*, January 2013, <https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Third-Amdo-Zhamar-Ngawang-Tendzin-Gyatso/6099>. BDRC P373.

<sup>67</sup> Grags pa rgya mtsho, *Rje zhwa dmar dge 'dun bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho'i rnam thar* (Zi ling: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1990), 67.

<sup>68</sup> Tsering Namgyal, "The Fourth Amdo Zhamar, Gendun Tendzin Gyatso," *The Treasury of Lives: A Biographical Encyclopedia of Tibet, Inner Asia and the Himalayan Region*, January 2013, <http://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Fourth-Amdo-Zhamar-Gendun-Tendzin-Gyatso/3296>.

Arol Rinpoches (Rongwo)<sup>69</sup>—trained the incarnations of one another and served as the institutional foundation for the newly settled communities in the Tsongön grasslands to build their own community monasteries. From Ragya monastery, the Third Shingza Rinpoche, and his successor, the Fourth Shingza Rinpoche would serve as the main lama for the construction of community monasteries south and west of Lake Tsongön. From his base at Ditsa monastery, the Amdo Zhamar would serve as the main lama for numerous new community monasteries that became its branch monasteries (*dgon lag*), especially in Kangtsa. The Second Arol Rinpoche trained the Third Shingza Rinpoche and the Fourth Amdo Zhamar. His successor, the Third Arol Rinpoche, Lobzang Lungtok Tenpé Gyeltsen Pel Zangpo (1888-1958), would travel within the mother-child networks of monasteries belonging to the Shingza Rinpoches and the Amdo Zhamar, and he would gather material and political support to build the enormous monastery of Drakkar Treldzong in the 1920s.<sup>70</sup> Considerable support was given by the Atsok, Shabrang (Shabrang), Kangtsa,<sup>71</sup> and other communities when Arol Rinpoche visited their newly established monasteries.<sup>72</sup> Drakkar Treldzong became a monastery for the wider Tsongön grasslands region and its different political communities. The founding of Drakkar Treldzong, therefore, was an outcome of migration, territorialization, and local monastery construction in the Tsongön grasslands.

That these same lamas that helped rebuild monasteries in eastern Amdo went on to build relationships with the pastoralist polities around Lake Tsongön makes sense. It required significant funds to rebuild the monasteries in eastern Amdo, and the patron communities in the region were also devastated from the wars. Likewise, the Qing state was strapped for cash. It is likely that after the rebellions the state was unable to fulfill its post-1724 annual payments to the eastern Amdo monasteries, let alone foot the bill for the reconstruction of the monasteries. At a time when wars had ravaged the east and decimated the wealth of monastic institutions, the pastoralist polities represented a potential new source of offerings. Furthermore, the economic situation of the pastoralist polities was on the rise as international demand for wool surged and Chinese treaty ports had been forced into the international market.

<sup>69</sup> BDRC G163.

<sup>70</sup> BDRC G1917.

<sup>71</sup> Bse tshang 06 Blo bzang dpal ldan chos kyi rdo rje, *Skyabs rje A rol rin po che rje btsun blo bzang lung rtogs bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rnam thar*, in *Gsung 'bun Blo bzang dpal ldan chos kyi rdo rje* (Pe cin: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2001), 6 vols., vol. 2: 204-5.

<sup>72</sup> Dge ming dpal, *Lha sde tsho brgyad kyi lo rgyus kun 'dus gsal ba'i me long*, 292.

During a period of relative calm following the defeat of the Great Northwestern Rebellion in 1874, a confluence of factors led to a booming wool trade for which the Tibetan communities living on the Tsongöñ grasslands supplied much of the wool. Beginning in the 1880s, international demand for wool began to surge driven by increased demand from U.S. and European carpet factories.<sup>73</sup> Foreign firms from the United States and Britain set up branches in China to procure the wool and ship it abroad. James Millward outlines four levels of place in this trade: producers' market towns where pastoralists traded the wool to merchants; local collection-transshipment centers where merchants bought wool from other merchants; regional collection-transshipment centers, e.g. Xining; and, finally, the export city of Tianjin.<sup>74</sup> The primary markets in Amdo at this time were Tongkor, Xining, and Lanzhou. Tibetan nomads traveled into these markets and stayed in trading inns oftentimes run by Hui Muslims. There were also important markets outside of Labrang and Kumbum monasteries.<sup>75</sup> Ragya monastery and Guide also served as important regional trading centers. Ragya's trading role is of interest as it became the mother monastery for many of the pastoralist polities' new monasteries, as we will discuss below. It served both as one of their trading centers and a place to train their monks. Muslim traders also traveled into pastoralist communities and stayed with hosts while engaging in trade, and these relationships between host and guest oftentimes became long-lasting.<sup>76</sup> Tibetans exchanged livestock, wool, hides, musk, and salt for tea, grain, and manufactures.

Several sources claim that Tibetans saw little profit and were swindled by Hui Muslim and Han Chinese traders.<sup>77</sup> Although it is likely that some traders made unscrupulous profits, there is good

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<sup>73</sup> For more on the wool trade, see James A Millward, "The Chinese Border Wool Trade of 1880-1937," in *The Legacy of Islam in China: An International Symposium in Memory of Joseph F. Fletcher*, ed. Dru C. Gladney (Harvard University Press, 1989); Horlemann, "Tibetan Nomadic Trade, the Chinese 'Xiejia' System and the Sino-Tibetan Border Market in Stong 'Khor/ Dan'Gaer In 19th/ 20th Century A Mdo"; Horlemann, "Tibetans and Muslims in Northwest China: Economic and Political Aspects of a Complex Historical Relationship"; and Jonathan Neaman Lipman, "The Border World of Gansu, 1895-1935," PhD diss., (Stanford University, 1981).

<sup>74</sup> Millward, "The Chinese Border Wool Trade of 1880-1937," 2.

<sup>75</sup> Horlemann, "Tibetan Nomadic Trade, the Chinese 'Xiejia' System and the Sino-Tibetan Border Market in Stong 'Khor/ Dan'gaer In 19th/ 20th Century A Mdo," 110.

<sup>76</sup> Ekvall, *Cultural Relations on the Kansu-Tibetan Border*, 54-55.

<sup>77</sup> See Horlemann, "Tibetan Nomadic Trade, the Chinese 'Xiejia' System and the Sino-Tibetan Border Market in Stong 'Khor/ Dan'gaer In 19th/ 20th Century A Mdo," 112, for several sources that discuss Hui Muslim and Han Chinese traders called "cunning foxes" who were reported to cheat Tibetans among others.

reason to doubt these claims give a comprehensive picture of the trade. First of all, they rely on stereotypes of nomads as dupes and Muslims as dishonest and conniving traders. Secondly, Tibetans showed signs of affluence during the wool boom. For example, Bianca Horlemann has noted how contemporary observers in the early twentieth century recorded the nomads' possession of expensive, modern firearms as opposed to the poor-quality guns they possessed at the end of the nineteenth century, their valuable jewelry, and a "higher social status" than Tibetan farmers.<sup>78</sup> Thirdly, Tibetans themselves traveled to markets and knew the selling prices for wool. For instance, the United States diplomat and Tibetologist, William Rockhill (1854-1914) observed Tibetans' unwillingness to sell wool at low rate in Guide in 1892:

The principal trade of Kuei-tê [Guide] is in lamb skins; a little musk is also brought here, and wool is becoming an important staple of trade, but the Tibetans have suddenly got such wild ideas of the great price foreigners are willing to pay for it, that they are holding it back and refusing to sell any for three or four times the price they would gladly have accepted three years ago.<sup>79</sup>

I contend that another indication of the wealth accrued by the communities is their construction of monasteries. Building a temple hall requires wood, stone, clay, artisans, and a large enough surplus that monks can ideally withdraw from herding and receive support from their families in monasteries.

#### *4. Case Studies of the Pastoralist Politics*

##### **The Atsok**

The Atsok (A tshogs) are part of a larger confederation called the Eight Lhadé Tsowa that migrated into Mongol bannerlands and stayed after 1860. In 1889, the Atsok founded their first monastery, Atsok Göñ Dechen Chökhör Ling (hereafter Atsok monastery; see Map 2),<sup>80</sup> on the banks of the Yellow River, just south of Karmo Yekhyil (Dkar mo g.yas 'khyil). The founder was Lama Konchok

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<sup>78</sup> Horlemann, "Tibetans and Muslims in Northwest China: Economic and Political Aspects of a Complex Historical Relationship," 166–67.

<sup>79</sup> William Woodville Rockhill, *Diary of a Journey Through Mongolia and Tibet in 1891 and 1892* (Smithsonian Institution, 1894), 90.

<sup>80</sup> BDRC G1918.

Chödar (Dkon mchog chos dar; 1854-1919),<sup>81</sup> who was born in the Atsok Risar (A tshogs Ri gsar) Tsowa and was the third incarnation of the founder of Geu Teng monastery.<sup>82</sup> He traveled to Ragya monastery and took full ordination vows from the Third Shingza Rinpoche, Lobzang Tenpé Wangchuk. Atsok monastery became a branch monastery of Ragya. The connection to Ragya monastery is significant and part of a larger pattern of monastic formation in the pasturelands south of Lake Tsongö in which most of the monasteries in the region became branches of Ragya.

Ragya monastery was also an important trading center. The botanist and explorer, Joseph Rock (1884-1962), observed that Muslim traders brought barley and tea to Ragya to trade for wool, butter, and cheese.<sup>83</sup> As monks from its branch monasteries frequently enrolled at Ragya, this created social ties between it and the patron communities of its branch monasteries, e.g. the Atsok and Ragya. Ragya's position as a trade center contributed to it becoming the mother monastery for many branch monasteries in the grassland communities that produced wool.<sup>84</sup>

Atsok monastery remained a modest institution for several decades; however, in the early twentieth century, the new Eight Lhadé Tsowa leader, Jangsem Bum (Byang sems 'bum; 1870-1944), significantly expanded it. Jangsem Bum's leadership marked a new kind of rule among the former Eight Lhadé Tsowa. His life and rise to power are instructive for understanding the political dynamics in grassland communities and the advent of monasteries in the region. Under his

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<sup>81</sup> Qinghai sheng bianji zu, ed., *Social and Historical Survey of Tibetans and Mongols in Qinghai Province* (Qinghai sheng zangzu mengguzu shehui lishi diaocha) (Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 2009), 20. Mtsho sngon zhing chen mtsho lho bod rig rang skyong khul nang bstan mthun tshogs, Krung go bod brgyud btho rim nang bstan slob gling, and Nang bstan zhib 'jug khang, eds., *Mtsho Lho Bod rigs rang skyong khul gyi dgon sde khag gi lo rgyus snying bsdu*s (Zi ling: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1999), 622, gives a birth year of 1812, but this is probably an error.

<sup>82</sup> Dge ming dpal, *Lha sde tsho brgyad kyi lo rgyus kun 'dus gsal ba'i me long*, 295-97.

<sup>83</sup> Joseph F. Rock, *The Amnye Ma-chhen Range and Adjacent Regions: A Monographic Study*. (Rome: Is. M.E.O., 1956), 66.

<sup>84</sup> More research is needed to better understand the economic relationship between Ragya and the vast network of communities that built its branch monasteries. It is clear, however, that high lamas visited these communities and collected donations and that nearby communities with branch monasteries traded at Ragya. It is possible that monks from Ragya went on trade trips to affiliated communities on behalf of the monastery, as monks from Kumbum did, but this requires more research. See the discussion of Kumbum monks ("lamas") going on trade trips for their monasteries by the Catholic missionary Louis Schram, who lived in Amdo from 1911-1922 Louis Schram, *The Monguors of the Kansu-Tibetan Frontier* (Xining: Plateau Pub., 2006), 349-50.



reign, the Atsok became the most powerful group within the Eight Lhadé Tsowa. Jangsem Bum was born into a relatively wealthy family in the Atsok Tsowa and ordained as a monk at Ragya. He was a charismatic speaker and put his oratory skills to use, accumulating wealth by mediating conflicts, including a 1903 battle between the Wongtak (Bong stag) and Eight Lhadé Tsowa. He also reportedly participated in raiding and reprisals against other tsowa, earning quite a reputation for his bravery.<sup>85</sup>

Jangsem Bum's rise resulted from a conflict between the Ma rulers in Xining and the Eight Lhadé Tsowa. As the Ma family began to consolidate power in 1912 when Ma Qi (1869-1931) became the Xining military commander, they began to wrest control of trade in the region. The Eight Lhadé Tsowa experienced this firsthand when in 1913, a group of their prominent members, including their current chiliarch, Chortsang Troben (Phyor gtsang khro ban), traveled to Ragya for business. On the way, they encountered a group of Xining-based Hui merchants traveling to Songpan. They killed seven of the Hui merchants, stole 200 of their pack horses as well as a number of valuable items. The merchants who escaped returned to Xining and reported the attack, whereupon Ma Qi sent people to investigate the matter. In 1914, he sent more than 1,000 troops under the command of Ma Lin to attack the Eight Lhadé Tsowa. The Eight Lhadé Tsowa's chiliarch, Chortsang Troben, and his son were killed.<sup>86</sup>

Following this incident, there are two different versions of what occurred. In one version, Jangsem Bum, not yet the chiliarch, helped mediate peace between Ma's forces and the Eight Lhadé Tsowa. In another version of events, Jangsem Bum actually aided Ma's forces when they invaded. Regardless of this discrepancy, his role in the conflict and its mediation led to his appointment to chiliarch in 1916 by the Ma regime. In 1918, the Ma regime stationed a small garrison in Atsok territory, specifically at Daheba in present-day Xinghai County. The Ma regime used the garrison as a mid-point for military operations from Xining to Yushu and Golok.<sup>87</sup> Jangsem Bum would go on to serve as a senator (Ch. *canyiyuan*) in the Qinghai government and had an office in Xining.<sup>88</sup> These were significant interventions in local politics and demonstrate that Ma Qi's administration in

<sup>85</sup> Qinghai sheng bianji zu, ed., *Social and Historical Survey of Tibetans and Mongols in Qinghai Province* (Qinghai sheng zangzu mengguzu shehui lishi diaocha), 19-20. See also Dge ming dpal, *Lha sde tsho bryad kyi lo rgyus kun 'dus gsal ba'i me long*, 52-56.

<sup>86</sup> Dge ming dpal, *Lha sde tsho bryad kyi lo rgyus kun 'dus gsal ba'i me long*, 51.

<sup>87</sup> Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi, ed., *Qinghai wenshi ziliao xuanji*, vol. 3 (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1963), 112.

<sup>88</sup> Dge ming dpal, *Lha sde tsho bryad kyi lo rgyus kun 'dus gsal ba'i me long*, 56.

Qinghai had developed an unprecedented political reach. During the Qing dynasty, officials were unable to select rulers in these communities and, instead, fought them during times of war or recognized them as centurions (Ch. *baihu*) or chiliarchs (Ch. *qianhu*) in times of peace. Through maintaining peaceful relations with the Ma regime while consolidating his own local power through Atsok monastery, Jangsem Bum would go on to become a powerful figure until his death nearly thirty years later.

A few years after receiving the chiliarch title, Jangsem Bum moved to Atsok monastery and took charge of it when its founder went to Ditsa for study.<sup>89</sup> As such, he assumed the roles of religious and political leader, although he delegated control of day-to-day responsibilities to his nephew. Jangsem Bum sought to increase the size and power of Atsok monastery and in doing so, increased his own power as well. He reportedly instituted a monk tax to increase the number of monks, restricted monks from returning to lay life, greatly expanded the number of buildings at Atsok monastery, and made lavish donations to other monasteries.<sup>90</sup> Although the monk population is not known during Jangsem Bum's reign, in 1958 Atsok monastery had about 250 monks.<sup>91</sup> The Atsok, along with other tsowa in the region, were also major sponsors of Drakkar Trel dzong monastery (f. 1924).

Atsok monastery, like all of the new pastoralist monasteries, implicated communities into a reciprocal relationship with the institution and bound them to it as its patrons, which in turn bound the communities to the secular leader, who was the monastery's primary patron. The relationship between the monastery and its communities was at once religious, economic, social, and political. Atsok monastery generated considerable revenue by renting out livestock and pasture, granting high-interest loans, chanting, performing ceremonies e.g. funerals, using unpaid labor, and collecting regular donations.<sup>92</sup> Some communities were obligated to pay outright taxes, and many communities were expected to contribute religious donations

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<sup>89</sup> Dge ming dpal, *Lha sde tsho bgyad kyi lo rgyus kun 'dus gsal ba'i me long*, 53. Another version is that he took charge of the monastery when the founder died in 1921, a couple of years after the founder died; see Qinghai sheng bianji zu, *Social and Historical Survey of Tibetans and Mongols in Qinghai Province* (Qinghai sheng zangzu mengguzu shehui lishi diaocha), 20.

<sup>90</sup> Qinghai sheng bianji zu, *Social and Historical Survey of Tibetans and Mongols in Qinghai Province* (Qinghai sheng zangzu mengguzu shehui lishi diaocha), 20.

<sup>91</sup> Pu Wencheng, ed., *Tibetan Buddhist Temples of Gansu and Qinghai Provinces* (Gan Qing zang chuan fo jiao si yuan) (Xining: Qinghai renmin chubanshe, 1990), 229.

<sup>92</sup> Qinghai sheng bianji zu, *Social and Historical Survey of Tibetans and Mongols in Qinghai Province* (Qinghai sheng zangzu mengguzu shehui lishi diaocha), 14-15.

and boys to become monks. In turn, monasteries were expected to provide religious services, be a source of virtue and general welfare for the community, take in monks, and provide mediation during disputes. The disparate patron communities were linked together as part of a monastery's network and as a political community. The monastic network was activated during specific events, for example, in war when patron communities were expected to send men to the monastery to fight or during holiday festivals in which communities were obligated to provide material support to the monastery.

Furthermore, a monastery could serve as the basis for the expansion of a polity's territory. In the 1920s, Atsok monastery began encroaching on the pastureland of Karmo Yekhyil. Karmo Yekhyil is a fertile area lying along the western bank of the Yellow River which borders Atsok monastery. Prior to 1921, Karmo Yekhyil was pastureland, and the monks cultivated only a few *mu* of it around the monastery.<sup>93</sup> However, as the monk population increased under Jangsem Bum's policies, they began cultivating more and more land. Jangsem Bum also recruited people from other regions including Tibetan, Hui, and Han Chinese farmers to build houses, turn up the soil, and cultivate crops. By 1935, it was a hamlet with dozens of households, and the farmed land under his control had increased to more than 1,700 *mu*.

Sometimes rulers displace existing communities. For example, when the Atsok were expanding into Karmo Yekhyil, they also started a conflict with the Jatang Tsowa (Bya thang tsho ba) in order to eventually take over their territory. The Jatang was composed of around fifty or sixty households engaged in farming. In 1925, the Atsok began grazing their livestock on Jatang territory, provoking a response. The conflict lasted several years, and casualties mounted on both sides. In 1929, the Jatang population had grown very small, so they fled their territory altogether. Jangsem Bum invited many different groups of farmers to this region, as he did in Karmo Yekhyil, and he sent officials to collect taxes there. The Jatang were also required to sponsor an annual recitation of the Kanjur. By 1949, the population had grown to more than 50 households, and the territory encompassed more than 1,700 *mu*.<sup>94</sup>

Many of the people immigrating into the Atsok polity were poor or fleeing warfare and wound up as *tawa* (*mtha' ba*), meaning "those [living] on the edge [of the monastery]." In other regions, *tawa* re-

<sup>93</sup> This was a land measurement that varied over time but was roughly 1/6 of an acre.

<sup>94</sup> Qinghai sheng bianji zu, *Social and Historical Survey of Tibetans and Mongols in Qinghai Province* (Qinghai sheng zangzu mengguzu shehui lishi diaocha), 20.

ferred to merchant communities outside of monasteries, but in this region the term referred to families that were destitute without home or resources. There were about 50 of these tawa households living around Atsok monastery by the 1950s. They worked for the monastery performing tasks such as collecting water, and milking and slaughtering livestock in exchange for a place to stay and a share of the dairy products they produced.

Jangsem Bum also actively courted the members of other Tibetan tsowa to join the Atsok. Many of these communities, like the tawa, immigrated into the region during periods of conflict and political unrest in their homelands, but rather than becoming tawa, they became sub-divisions of existing tsowa.

The story of Jangsem Bum is one of an ordinary man rising into a powerful leader through the skillful expansion of Atsok monastery during a prosperous time. He was a clever and charismatic figure, and these traits helped him excel as a mediator between tsowa and the Ma regime. He recognized the power that a strong monastery could provide him and built up Atsok monastery, which both strengthened the ties between the polity's individual tsowa and established the polity's territory.

## The Kangtsa

The Kangtsa lived in southern Trika (Ch. Guide)<sup>95</sup> before migrating north of Lake Tsongön in the nineteenth century.<sup>96</sup> They had their own namesake monasteries in Trika, Lower Kangtsa monastery.<sup>97</sup> Some of their monks also enrolled at nearby Nyegön monastery,<sup>98</sup> which was a branch of Lamo Dechen.

In the early nineteenth century when conflict was commonplace

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<sup>95</sup> BDRC G1136. Present-day Trika County (Ch. Guide xian) occupies a portion of the cultural region of Trika.

<sup>96</sup> There also communities of Kangtsa living in present-day Xunhua County and Dzorgé County that are believed to have migrated earlier during the sixteenth century Mongol conquests in Tsongön. See Rgya po and Tshul khriims, *Mtsho sngon po'i Rkang tsha'i lo rgyus mes po'i zhal lung*, 8. Additionally, some of the Kangtsa group that migrated north of Lake Tsongön in the nineteenth century remained in Trika.

<sup>97</sup> BDRC G1862.

<sup>98</sup> BDRC G1858. Nyegön monastery still today receives monks from the Kangtsa who remained in Trika and from the Kangtsa who settled north of Lake Tsongön. See *Mtsho sngon zhing chen mtsho lho bod rig rang skyong khul nang bstan mthun tshogs*, *Krung go bod brgyud btho rim nang bstan slob gling*, and *Nang bstan zhib 'jug khang*, *Mtsho lho Bod rigs rang skyong khul gyi dgon sde khag gi lo rgyus snying bsdus*, 156. This was also confirmed to me by a monk at the monastery when I visited it in 2024.

between Tibetan communities and Mongol banners, some Mongols conspired with a Chinese official in Xining. The official summoned the Kangtsa leaders under the pretense of a robbery lawsuit. Allegedly, he prepared a banquet, and after they had gotten drunk, he had them all executed.<sup>99</sup>

The Kangtsa became weak at this time without their leaders and were a target of constant raiding, causing them to scatter more. When a Kangtsa monk living in Nyegön monastery in Trika, Lama Rabten (1814-1893), heard of the plight of his community, he reportedly gathered two other Kangtsa monks in the monastery and said to them, "While the situation of us Kangtsa has become so bad, why do we remain here? Shouldn't we return [to the grasslands of Lake Tsongön], rule our own territory, and deliver vengeance on our enemies?" The three went before the master of Nyegön monastery, the Third Nyé Drubchen, Tenpé Gyeltsen (1802-1849),<sup>100</sup> and he approved of their plan.<sup>101</sup>

In 1830, Lama Rabten disrobed, organized a military force, and headed north across the Yellow River. His forces attacked Mongol groups and drove them from the land. After taking back the Kangtsa lands north of Lake Tsongön, numerous Kangtsa tsowa who had been living south of the Yellow River began to migrate there. By 1860, the Qing recognized the right of several other Tibetan communities to reside in the lands surrounding Lake Tsongön. When Lama Rabten's forces arrived on the banks north of Lake Tsongön, they consisted of the six original Kangtsa Tsowa (*tsho sgo drug*) and approximately ten other tsowa. Following this, more and more tsowa migrated to join the Kangtsa, leading to pasture becoming scarcer but an increase in the number of people under the Kangtsa's authority.

Neten Wangyel (1879-1933) rose to power as chiliarch some years after the death of Chiliarch Chakgyel (Lcags rgyal), whose death is discussed below. Neten Wangyel was not in the direct lineage of the previous chiliarch. His father was a member of the Yungrong (G.yung rong) Tsowa—a tsowa within the Kangtsa polity—and his mother was from the Arik. When he came to power, the numerous tsowa constituting the Kangtsa had begun breaking into smaller

<sup>99</sup> Rgya po and Tshul khirms, *Mtsho sngon po'i Rkang tsha'i lo rgyus mes po'i zhal lung*, 9.

<sup>100</sup> BDRC P1262. Mtsho sngon zhing chen mtsho lho bod rig rang skyong khul nang bstan mthun tshogs, Krung go bod brgyud btho rim nang bstan slob gling, and Nang bstan zhib 'jug khang, *Mtsho lho Bod rigs rang skyong khul gyi dgon sde khag gi lo rgyus snying bsdu*, 157–58.

<sup>101</sup> Rgya po and Tshul khirms, *Mtsho sngon po'i Rkang tsha'i lo rgyus mes po'i zhal lung*, 16–17.

groups and occupying the pastures they wanted without answering to a Kangtsa leader. In order to unite the various tsowa, Neten Wangyel thought that it was necessary for the tsowa to have a common monastery.<sup>102</sup>

In order to find a lama to establish the monastery, Neten Wangyel went to Ditsa monastery (f. 1903), and he met with its founder, The Fourth Amdo Zhamar Rinpoche, Gendun Tendzin, who we saw earlier was a student of Shingza Rinpoche and the Second Arol Rinpoche. The Amdo Zhamar advised Neten Wangyel that he should invite Sera Khyenpa Jikmé Gyatso (Se ra'i mkhyen pa 'jigs med rgya mtsho) to found the monastery in Kangtsa. The resulting monastery, Kangtsa Göichen, was completed in 1915. Kangtsa Göichen was offered as a branch monastery of Ditsa, and at its height in the 1940s, it had over 200 monks.<sup>103</sup>

After founding Kangtsa Göichen, Neten Wangyel was able to call all of the Kangtsa tsowa together to establish rules concerning the boundaries between tsowa's pastures. He also instituted a system in which tsowa were not allowed to freely use pastures according to their private interests. He had a jail and a court built as well as a manor for his residence. He also prohibited the hunting of wildlife in Kangtsa territory. When he visited the Ninth Panchen Lama at Kumbum, Neten Wangyel offered the merit from this prohibition to the Ninth Panchen Lama (1883-1937), who in turn is said to have praised him as a good leader.<sup>104</sup>

## The Khyamru

The connection between local deity, monastic establishment, tulkus, major monasteries, and polity formation is perhaps most evident among the Khyamru ('Khyam ru).<sup>105</sup> The Khyamru, whose name literally means "wandering group," attribute their name to being driven out of their lands during different periods of Mongol rule in

<sup>102</sup> Rgya po and Tshul khriims, *Mtsho sngon po'i Rkang tsha'i lo rgyus mes po'i zhal lung*, 23-25.

<sup>103</sup> Rgya po and Tshul khriims, *Mtsho sngon po'i Rkang tsha'i lo rgyus mes po'i zhal lung*, 23, 110-13.

<sup>104</sup> Rgya po and Tshul khriims, *Mtsho sngon po'i Rkang tsha'i lo rgyus mes po'i zhal lung*, 23-25. I have not been able to determine the date of this event. The Ninth Panchen Lama fled Tibet in 1923 after a dispute with the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, but did not pass through Kumbum. In 1935, he arrived at Kumbum and stayed for there a year before heading back to Tibet, but Neten Wangyel had already died two years before this in 1933. See Fabienne Jagou, *The Ninth Panchen Lama (1883-1937): A Life at the Crossroads of Sino-Tibetan Relations* (Paris: École Française d'Extrême; Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2011), 58, 97-101, and 139-41.

<sup>105</sup> This name is also spelled as 'Khyams ru.

Tsongön and living in unfixed locations.<sup>106</sup> They are also called the Chinyinlung (Spyi nyin lung). They believe that “*chi*,” meaning leader, refers to the ruling lineage, and “*nyinlung*,” meaning sunny valley, refers to a place they lived for many years, the sunny side of Zabmonak (Zab mo nags).<sup>107</sup>

The Khyamru migrated numerous times south of the Yellow River, eventually moving from Zabmonak to Mangra.<sup>108</sup> In 1813, when the Third Jamyang Zhepa, Tubten Jikme Gyatso (1792-1855),<sup>109</sup> was on his way back to Amdo from Central Tibet, he stayed with the Khyamru, made them religious objects, and encouraged them to build a monastery. The Khyamru built a temple, and Alak Tsultrim Nyendrak Gyatso took charge of it.<sup>110</sup> The legendary yogi, Shabkar,<sup>111</sup> passed through the Khyamru and Kangtsa territory while they were both still in the Mangra region in the early nineteenth century.<sup>112</sup> During an 1821 incursion into the grasslands around Lake Tsongön, the Khyamru established a tent monastery north of the river. Gradually, they built it into a permanent monastery, though the precise timeline for this is unclear. In order to establish it as a permanent monastery, the Khyamru had to secure access to the land.

After the Khyamru began settling in Mongol bannerlands north of the river, Alak Tsultrim Nyendrak Gyatso, who held considerable

<sup>106</sup> Blo bzang byang chub, *Spyi nyin lung 'khyam ru'i dpon skor gyi lo rgyus khri gshog rgyal mo'i gzi byin* (Xianggang: Xianggang tianma tushu youxian gongsi, n.d.), 44-45.

<sup>107</sup> Blo bzang byang chub, *Spyi nyin lung 'khyam ru'i dpon skor gyi lo rgyus khri gshog rgyal mo'i gzi byin*, 44-45.

<sup>108</sup> BDRC G1281. There is a present-day county named after the region, Mangra County (Ch. Guinan).

<sup>109</sup> BDRC P124. Pu Wencheng, *Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries of Gansu and Qinghai (Gan-Qing Zang chuan fo jiao si yuan)*, 234.

<sup>110</sup> Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos 'byung*, ed. Smon lam rgya mtsho (Lan kru'u: Kan su'u mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1982 [1864]), 268. Alak Tsultrim was born into a *tsowa* that was subordinate to the Khyamru, and he entered Lamo Dechen at young age. He became a renowned scholar there and was its 34<sup>th</sup> abbot; see Mtsho sngon zhing chen mtsho lho bod rig rang skyong khul nang bstan mthun tshogs, Krung go bod brgyud btho rim nang bstan slob gling, and Nang bstan zhib 'jug khang, *Mtsho lho Bod rigs rang skyong khul gyi dgon sde khag gi lo rgyus snying bsdus*, 357; Zla ba tshe ring, *La mo bde chen chos 'khor gling gi lo rgyus* (Pe cin: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2014), 121.

<sup>111</sup> BDRC P287.

<sup>112</sup> Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, *Mdo smad chos 'byung*, 268; Zhabs dkar ba tshogs drug rang grol, 'Gro ba mgon zhabs dkar ba'i sku tshe'i smad kyi rnam thar thog mtha'i bar du dge ba yid bzhin nor bu dgos 'dod kun 'byung, in *Gsung 'bum tshogs drug rang grol*, (Zi ling: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2002), 10 vols., vol. 2: 165.

political power in the community,<sup>113</sup> entered negotiations with the local Mongol leader, and in order to clear the blood debt for all the bannermen killed and to purchase their land, he paid 10,000 sheep, 1,000 black yak, twenty fifty-ounce pieces of silver,<sup>114</sup> among other items.<sup>115</sup> In addition to offering the Mongol leader livestock, gold and silver to leave, another modern source relates that Alak Tsultrim secured the return of the Mongols' horses, which had previously been stolen by another Tibetan pastoralist group, the Wongtak. After returning the horses, he reportedly told the Mongol leader, "If you stay on this land of unruly Tibetans, the outcome will not be good."<sup>116</sup>

The monastery is colloquially known as Khyamru monastery, and it received its full name, Khyamru Göṅ Trashi Gepel Ling, from the Third Jamyang Zhepa. The twelve Khyamru tsowa became its patrons, or "base of offerings" (*mchod gzhi*).<sup>117</sup> In 1861, the monastery received an official seal from the Xining Amban in 1861.<sup>118</sup>

<sup>113</sup> For example, Alak Tsultrim received the title of either Great Jasak Lama (*jasag da bla ma*; Ch. *zhasake da lama*) or Jasak Lama (Ch. *zhasak lama*). Great Jasak Lama was the highest of four ranks given to reincarnate lamas by the Qing Dynasty; see Kim, "Preliminary Notes on Lamo Dechen Monastery and Its Two Main Incarnation Lineages," 86n26. Interestingly one source claims that the Jamyang Zhepa bestowed it on him in 1861, which must be an error because he died in 1855 (Mtsho sngon zhing chen mtsho lho bod rig rang skyong khul nang bstan mthun tshogs, Krung go bod brgyud btho rim nang bstan slob gling, and Nang bstan zhib 'jug khang, *Mtsho lho Bod rigs rang skyong khul gyi dgon sde khag gi lo rgyus snying bsdus*, 358). Another source claims Alak Tsultrim received the title, without specifying who bestowed it, in 1813, the same year that Jamyang Zhepa passed through the Khyamru community in Mangra. After this, Alak Tsultrim proceeded to build a temple (*lha khang*) there (Pu Wencheng, *Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries of Gansu and Qinghai (Gan-Qing Zang chuan fo jiao si yuan)*, 234). Alak Tsultrim is also mentioned seizing

<sup>114</sup> The unit in this passage is unclear and not technically ounces (*dngrul lnga bcu ma nyi shu*).

<sup>115</sup> Mtsho sngon zhing chen mtsho lho bod rig rang skyong khul nang bstan mthun tshogs, Krung go bod brgyud btho rim nang bstan slob gling, and Nang bstan zhib 'jug khang, *Mtsho lho Bod rigs rang skyong khul gyi dgon sde khag gi lo rgyus snying bsdus*, 357-8.

<sup>116</sup> Blo bzang byang chub, *Spyi nyin lung 'khyam ru'i dpon skor gyi lo rgyus khri gshog rgyal mo'i gzi byin*, 71-72.

<sup>117</sup> Mtsho sngon zhing chen mtsho lho bod rig rang skyong khul nang bstan mthun tshogs, Krung go bod brgyud btho rim nang bstan slob gling, and Nang bstan zhib 'jug khang, *Mtsho lho Bod rigs rang skyong khul gyi dgon sde khag gi lo rgyus snying bsdus*, 350-1. The term *mchod gzhi* is often translated as "monastic estates" in Central Tibet, but I have translated it more literally here because of the agricultural connotations of the term.

<sup>118</sup> Pu Wencheng, *Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries of Gansu and Qinghai (Gan-Qing Zang chuan fo jiao si yuan)*, 234; Blo bzang byang chub, *Spyi nyin lung 'khyam ru'i dpon skor gyi lo rgyus khri gshog rgyal mo'i gzi byin*, 72-73.



After the Khyamru crossed the river, their leader was Nyingchukgyel (Snying phyug rgyal, b. 1820). Under his rule, their territory greatly expanded. As they settled, a dispute arose over grasslands between the Khyamru and another group, the Gomé Karji (Sgo me dkar brjid). Tongkor Rinpoche's treasurer, who held close relations with the Qing authorities, requested that they side with the Khyamru. Additionally, one of the Khyamru member's, Sölo (Bsod lo), was a skilled speaker, so the Khyamru prevailed in the lawsuit. After this, the Xining Amban conferred the title of chiliarch on Sölo. Sölo and the community then built a laptsé for the Khyamru's natal deity, Lönpö Serchen (Blon po gser can) in their new territory.<sup>119</sup>

The Khyamru, like the Kangtsa, established a strong relationship with the Fourth Amdo Zhamar after settling north of the river. Chiliarch Sölo married Luwang Tsomo (Klu dbang mtsho mo), and together they had four children, two daughters and two sons. In 1879, Zhamar Rinpoche advised the youngest son of the Khyamru chiliarch, Bumkyong Tsering ('Bum skyong tshe ring, b. 1860), to marry Lhamtsho (Lha mtsho), the daughter of a prominent man in the Kangtsa polity named Nya Sengchen (Gnya' seng chen).<sup>120</sup> Bumkyong Tsering succeeded his father as chiliarch, and under his leadership, the Khyamru incorporated more than 16 large communities (*tsho chen*) and many other small communities. The Khyamru leader maintained an inner circle of leaders from these numerous communities. The Khyamru communities entered a priest-patron relationship with the Amdo Zhamar and were major donors for the establishment of Ditsa monastery, which he founded in 1903. At this time, the Khyamru also held an extensive ritual at the laptsé for Lönpö Serchen, and the respective tsowa within the Khyamru built laptsé for their deities. For three days, they hosted festivities including horse races, shooting competitions, singing, and dancing. The lamas, monks, and leaders also held meetings about Khyamru affairs. The festivities concluded with Tarshul Rinpoche offering the Kalacakra empowerment and Chiliarch Bumkyong Tsering and his father, the former chiliarch, dressed in their regalia and making vast offerings to the lama.<sup>121</sup>

Chiliarch Bumkyong Tsering also mediated disputes. In one incident, he is said to have settled a matter between a farming and pas-

<sup>119</sup> Blo bzang byang chub, *Spyi nyin lung 'khyam ru'i dpon skor gyi lo rgyus khri gshog rgyal mo'i gzi byin*, 73–74.

<sup>120</sup> Nya Sengchen is also known as Nya Kelzang (Gnya' skal bzang) and was the leader of the Nya Zholma, or Lower Nya, tsowa. Rgya po and Tshul khirms, *Mtsho sngon po'i Rkang tsha'i lo rgyus mes po'i zhal lung*, 96.

<sup>121</sup> Blo bzang byang chub, *Spyi nyin lung 'khyam ru'i dpon skor gyi lo rgyus khri gshog rgyal mo'i gzi byin*, 74–76.

toralist community by prohibiting an armed monk from collecting revenue from them. His official recognition as the chiliarch by the Qing reinforced his authority. In another incident in 1908, some members of the Mengak (Dme sngags) were raiding cattle from the Kangtsa, and the Kangtsa chiliarch, Chakgyel, came to help. He was killed while fighting with the bandits. In the aftermath, Bumkyong Tsering asked the Fourth Amdo Zhamar to mediate the dispute, which resulted in the Mengak surrendering to the Khyamru and becoming one of their tsowa.<sup>122</sup>

Like his father, Bumkyong Tsering's son, Lubha (Klu b+ha), also married a Kangtsa woman, Lutso Gyal (Klu mtsho rgyal), and he also maintained retinue of leaders from the many different tsowa within the Khyamru polity.<sup>123</sup> Through the patronage of Khyamru monastery, their relationship with their natal deity, and acting as patrons of Amdo Zhamar, the Khyamru territorialized their land.

### Conclusion

The decline of the Mongol banners and Qing power in the nineteenth century presented an opportunity for Tibetan pastoralist communities to gradually encroach on, invade, and settle the Mongol banner lands before negotiating a resolution with Qing officials that recognized their land claims and allowed them to participate again in the border trade. The violent incursion of imperialist powers and international markets into China at once weakened the Qing state while also generating wealth for pastoralists, who were able to benefit from the international wool boom. Meanwhile, the Great Northwestern Rebellion pushed prominent lamas, who were based in eastern Amdo but hailed from the grasslands, to find new patron communities, establish relationships with the new pastoralist polities, and support their establishment of local monasteries. The pastoralist polities engaged in a practice of territorialization through the establishment of monasteries, the propitiation of territorial deities, and joining the monastic networks of the prominent lamas. All of the developments together represented a structural shift on the grasslands from banner to pastoralist polity. Mongol Jasaks were eclipsed by Tibetan chiliarchs, and the new political leadership relied on build-

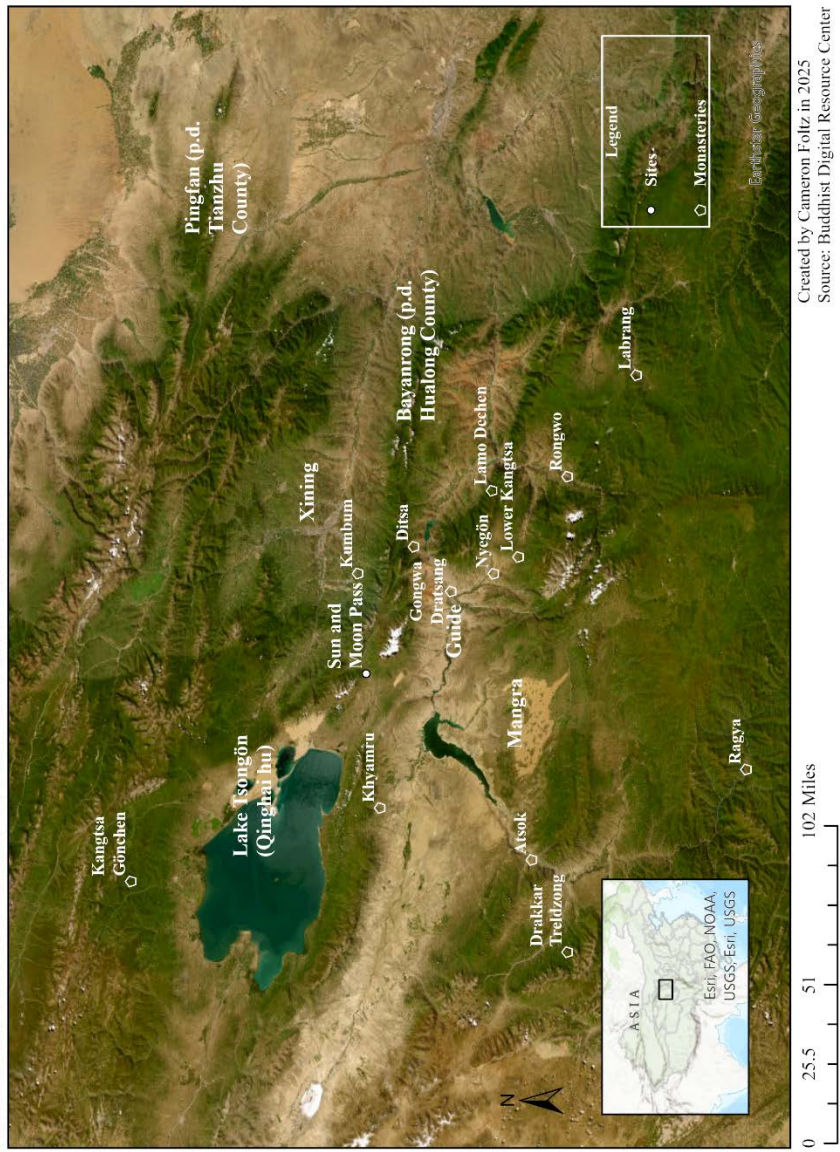
<sup>122</sup> Blo bzang byang chub, *Spyi nyin lung 'khyam ru'i dpon skor gyi lo rgyus khri gshog rgyal mo'i gzi byin*, 76–77; Rgya po and Tshul khri, *Mtsho sngon po'i Rkang tsha'i lo rgyus mes po'i zhal lung*, 22.

<sup>123</sup> Blo bzang byang chub, *Spyi nyin lung 'khyam ru'i dpon skor gyi lo rgyus khri gshog rgyal mo'i gzi byin*, 77–79.

ing local monasteries to structure their polities. As a result, these grasslands and eastern Amdo became much more tightly connected through monastic networks.



Monasteries and Places Mentioned



Map 2

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# Exploring Meditation in Tibet: Insights from Tsongkhapa and Yeshe Gyaltsen's Guide to Tranquil Abiding

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## 1. Introduction

**T**his paper investigates the significance and roles of meditation in Tibet as understood by Tsongkhapa (1357–1419) and Yeshe Gyaltsen (1713–1793). The study is divided into three main sections. The first section, “Meditation in the Context of Tripartite Learning,” elucidates the integrated approach to tripartite learning proposed by the Indian scholar Kamalāsīla, later emphasized by the Tibetan scholar Tsongkhapa. This approach contrasts with the exclusive approach adopted by the Chinese scholar Hvasang.

The second section, “Understanding the Concept, Purpose, and Process of Meditation,” provides a comprehensive understanding of meditation, emphasizing the importance of mind regulation during both meditative and non-meditative periods. This is followed by the section “Types of Meditation,” which explores various forms of meditation and introduces Yeshe Gyaltsen’s Guide to Tranquil Abiding.<sup>1</sup>

The third section provides the topical outlines of the work, *dGa’ ldan phyag rgya chen po’i khrid yig snyan brgyud lam bzang gsal ba’i gron me*, authored by the Tibetan scholar Yeshe Gyaltsen (1713–1793), hereafter referred to abbreviated Tibetan title as GPLG (*Bright Lamp of the Excellent Path of Oral Transmission: An Instruction Guide of Ganden Great Seal*).

Finally, this paper presents the first English translation of the Tranquil Abiding section of the GPLG text. The original Tibetan text is found in the twenty-second volume of Yeshe Gyaltsen’s works in the Derge edition, catalogued as text number D 6217, spanning folios 49b–69b.

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<sup>1</sup> Tib. *zhi gnas*; Skt. *Samatha*. Hereafter I will use Tranquil Abiding as English translation of *śamatha*. Tranquil abiding is an advanced meditative state in which the meditator has attained a physical and mental pliancy derived from focusing the mind. It is characterized by stable single-pointed attention to a chosen object with all mental distractions calmed (Jinpa 2006, p. 663).

Throughout the translation section, various numbered references are enclosed in brackets. For instance, (D1a.1) indicates that 'D' corresponds to the Derge (*sDe dge*) edition, '1' indicates folio one, 'a' represents the front side of the folio, and '1' denotes line one. Similarly, (2b.5) indicates folio two, the reverse side, and line five. To facilitate readers' comprehension, topical outlines are provided in square brackets, such as [2. The Prerequisites for Tranquil Abiding].

## 2. Meditation in the Context of Tripartite Learning: Listening, Contemplation and Meditation

In the following, we will explore the various elements of meditation from the perspective of Tsongkhapa incorporating insight from Indian masters. Within the framework of Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy, it is widely acknowledged that a spiritual trainee must engage in a tripartite learning<sup>2</sup> process : listening, (*thos pa*), contemplation (*bsam pa*),<sup>3</sup> and meditative practice (*sgom pa*). In Tibet, there are diverse perspectives regarding tripartite learning facets. To contextualize, the role of these facets in Kamalaśīla's work (c. 740–795), which is believed to have been composed in Tibet, covers various topics. One of these topics includes the author's critique of Hwashang's view on tripartite learning facets. Hwashang, argued that these facets are distinct and separate. While listening and contemplating involve discursive thinking, meditative practice necessitates the dissolution of discursive thoughts to prevent the formation of fixated views that perpetuate suffering. Consequently, Hwashang viewed the initial two stages as separate from the third. Tsongkhapa, in the 14th century, draws from Kamalaśīla's critique of Hwashang's perspective and presents his own critiques of Hwashang's tripartite learning process. Tsongkhapa states:

*For those who are not familiar with study of profound scriptural treatises, including the canonical teachings and their commentaries as practical guidance asserts, when a trainee engages in meditation on a spiritual path, they should exclusively apply the placement meditation ('jog sgom) without frequent analysis of its object. Discursive intellect [thinking], characterized by a repeated analysis of an object, is only relevant during*

<sup>2</sup> Tripartite learning is sometime classified as follows: Learning through (1) Hearing, (2) Reflection, (3) Meditation or Cultivation.

<sup>3</sup> Some modern scholars opt to translate the Tibetan term 'bsam pa' as 'reflection'. However, since the Tibetan term 'bsam pa' conveys the meaning of 'thinking,' I prefer translating it as 'contemplation'. This choice aligns with the modern usage of 'contemplation,' which also encompasses the concept of 'thinking,' as indicated by the Oxford dictionary.

*the learning process through listening and contemplation. [However, during the learning process of meditative practice, application of] discursive thoughts hinder the trainee in achieving spiritual awakening because they involve fixating on objects.*<sup>4</sup> (Tsongkhapa 2015, p. 78).

*[Furthermore, the assertion that] all discursive thoughts fixate on their objects, leading to the view that analytic meditation obstructs the path to awakening, represents a misconception. This perspective aligns with the thought of the Chinese abbot Hwashang. However, it will be refuted in the sections on Tranquil Abiding and 'special insight'.<sup>5</sup>*

Tsongkhapa, like Hwashang acknowledges tripartite learning facets but difference lies in his perspective to listening, contemplation, and meditative practice. Tsongkhapa asserts these facets are progressive and essential for achieving spiritual awakening. In this process, trainees to learn a chosen topic, one should begin actively listening to others' knowledge. Subsequently, they delve deeper into their understanding by relying on their own capacities. To contemplate the topic thoroughly, they utilize proper sources and engage in critical reasoning. Finally, repeated familiarity with the subject matter after resolving doubts and acquiring accurate knowledge through listening and contemplation, is referred to as 'sgom pa' or meditative practice. Tsongkhapa asserts that meditative practice can take two forms: analytic or discursive meditation (*dpyad sgom*) and placement meditation ('*jog sgom*) without analysis. Tsongkhapa classifies these two kinds of meditative practice based on the approach to familiarizing oneself with the listened and contemplated topic. One approach involves analyzing the topic, while the other does not. Thus, he further contends that treating all types of meditation as equivalent to placement meditation is like holding a single grain in one's hand and declaring all grain should be of the same kind. This suggests that meditation should not be narrowly confined, as Tsongkhapa emphasized.<sup>6</sup> He criticizes the view that such a perspective on meditative practice fails to grasp the key points of meditation. He

<sup>4</sup> *gsung rab dgongs 'grel dang bcas pa'i gzhung chen mo rnams man ngag tu 'char ba la blo kha ma phyogs pa rnams na re / lam bsgom pa'i tshe ni / yul la yang yang mi dpyod par / 'jog sgom kho na bya ste / so sor rtog pa'i shes rab kyis yang dang yang du dpyod pa ni / thos bsam gyi skabs yin pa'i phyr dang / rtog pa rnams ni mtshan mar 'dzin pa yin pas 'tshang rgya ba la gegs byed pa'i phyr ro zhes zer ro //.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82 : *gzhan yang rtog pa thams cad / mtshan 'dzin yin pas / tshang rgya ba'i gegs su bzung nas so sor rtog pa'i sgom thams cad / 'dor ba'i log rtog gi tha cad 'di ni / rgya nag gi mkhan po hwa shang gi lugs yin la / de dgag pa ni/ zhi gnas dang / lhag mthong gi skabs su / bshad par bya'o //.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81 *sgom zhes pa de / rgya chung chung zhig la mi bzung ngo /.*

quotes the following verse lines from *The Ornaments of Sūtras*:

*Initially, correct thinking is developed through listening, and then wisdom<sup>7</sup> arises from familiarizing oneself with correct thinking, leading to a proper understanding of reality<sup>8</sup>*

Therefore, Tsongkhapa summarizes that wisdom arising from meditative practice, which leads to an understanding of reality, depends on prior wisdom that involves contemplating the correct thinking about the listened topic. This indicates how aforementioned tripartite learning facets are progressive for achieving spiritual awakening. He further emphasizes the importance of listening and contemplation for meditative practice. As one engages extensively in listening, wisdom emerges in abundance. With this abundant wisdom, numerous thoughts for contemplation also arise. As these contemplative thoughts multiply, a multitude of wisdom emerges from them. Subsequently, from this accumulated wisdom, meditative wisdom arises. Through this process, trainees can adopt a multi-faceted approach to abandoning faults and cultivating virtuous qualities. Tsongkhapa also highlights the importance of both listening and contemplation for meditation being presented in the sūtras of the Buddha and their corresponding treatises.<sup>9</sup> Thus, Tsongkhapa's perspective challenges Hwashang's claim that meditation exclusively emphasizes single-pointed practice, while discursive meditation, based on listening and contemplation, is limited to the outer scope of understanding.

<sup>7</sup> There are two Tibetan source words that are translated into English term, 'wisdom'. (a) 'Wisdom' is a translation of the Tibetan term 'ye shes' (Skt. *jñāna*), which refers to primordial cognition cultivated by supra-mundane beings. (b) The same English term is also used to translate the Tibetan term 'shes rab'. In this context, it conveys the meaning of intelligence or discriminative awareness (Skt. *prajñā*). Consequently, *prajñā* is translated as 'wisdom' in English, a common choice for rendering the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* as *Sūtras of Wisdom Perfection*. 'Gnosis,' derived from the Greek is etymologically linked to the Sanskrit word '*jñāna*,' which means 'knowledge.' Because of this shared origin, 'gnosis' is sometimes used as a translation for 'ye shes.'

<sup>8</sup> 'di na dang por thos la brten nas tshul bzhin yid la byed pa 'byung // tshul bzhin yid la byed pa goms las yang dag don yul ye shes 'byung // Quoted by Tsongkhapa in LRC, p. 78).

<sup>9</sup> des na thos pa / ji tsam mang ba tsam du / de las byung ba'i shes rab mang la / de mang ba tsam du bsam pa mang ba dang / de mang ba tsam du / de las byung ba'i shes rab mang ba dang / de ji tsam mang ba bzhin du / bsgom pas nyams su len pa mang la // de mang na / skyon 'gog pa dang / yon tan bsgrub pa'i tshul mang bas / sgom byed pa la thos bsam gal che bar gsung rab dang dgongs 'grel dang bcas pa nas gsungs pa yin //.



### 3. Understanding the Concept, Purpose and Process of Meditation

Now the divergence between Hwashang and Tsongkhapa's perspective is particularly evident in their understanding of meditation, what is the concept of meditation for Tsongkhapa? He describes meditation as a cognitive discipline or process where the mind consistently engages with a positive focal target.<sup>10</sup> According to Tsongkhapa, meditation serves a significant purpose, which is to engage the mind with a positive target, aligning it in a manner that promotes interaction with the chosen focal point. This engagement is not arbitrary; it is a deliberate effort to manage the mind. The mind, often perceived as the source of all mental distress, can be a formidable challenge to control. In the past, throughout time, the mind has controlled the trainee and not the other way. It has a tendency to pursue afflicted thoughts, which act as obstacles to mental liberation.<sup>11</sup> Thus, achieving control over the mind is not merely beneficial, but crucial. Consequently, the act of meditation becomes a compelling reason for the mind to seek control over itself.

Next, in the practical process of meditation, as outlined by Tsongkhapa, the trainee initially identifies the focal targets, their quantities, and their order. Subsequently, they cultivate a strong attitude to avoid forgetting the focal content previously ascertained. During the actual meditation session, Tsongkhapa advises regulating the focal targets with mindfulness and meta-awareness, ensuring neither addition to nor omission from the initial recollection of focal target. To cultivate a focused mind during meditation, it is essential to avoid getting distracted by random focal objects or thoughts. If the trainee fails to maintain this restraint, their ability to regulate their attention on the intended focal target will be compromised. Starting from the outset, it is crucial for the trainee to develop correct mind-regulation practices. Otherwise, their pursuit of positive endeavors through such practice may be hindered throughout life.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 67: *sgom zhes grags pa sems dge ba'i dmigs pa la yang dang yang du gtod pa'i dmigs rnam skyong ba /*

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 67: *tog ma med pa nas / rang sems kyi dbang du gyur cing / sems rang gi dbang du ma gyur la / sems kyang nyon mongs pa la sogs pa'i sgrib ba rnam la / rjes su phyogs pas / nyes skyon thams cad skyed par byed pa'i sems 'di / rang gi dbang du 'gyur bar byas nas / dge ba'i dmigs pa la / ji ltar 'dod 'dod du bkol du rung bar byed pa'i ched du yin no /*

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 67: *de yang / gang zin zin nas / dmigs pa la bskyangs na / rang ji ltar 'dod pa ltar gyi dge ba'i dmigs pa / grang 'di tsam dang / go rim 'di bzhin btang snyam nas / btang yang 'gror mi nyan pas / ji ltar 'dod pa bzhin du dge ba'i dmigs pa la / bkol du rung pa'i gegs chen por 'gyur zhing / dang po nas / lang du song bas / tshe hril po'i dge sbyong skyong can du 'gro ' /*

#### 4. Types of Meditation

In exploration of meditation, we first delved into tripartite learning facets and then discussed Tsongkhapa's perspective regarding two distinct meditation types: (1) placement meditation and (2) analytic meditation. Placement meditation is a meditative practice that involves concentrating the mind on a positive focal target, maintaining single-pointed attention. Analytic meditation is a meditative practice, in which the trainee directs their attention to either a conventional or ultimate focal object, examining it through intellectual analysis. According to Tsongkhapa, all types of mental concentrations<sup>13</sup> (Skt. *samādhi* Tib. *ting nge 'dzin*) in placement meditation fall under the category of Tranquil Abiding, whereas all types of positive intellect in analytic meditation belongs to the category of 'special insight'.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, Tsongkhapa outlines how to regulate the mind during a meditation session (Tib. *thun*) and in the interval between meditation sessions (Tib. *thun mtshams*), which can be referred to as the interval session. When introducing the meditation session, the aforementioned aspects of focusing the mind are presented in formal way. During the interval session, Tsongkhapa advises trainees to read texts that teach about the precepts of meditation, which are practiced during the meditation session. He says, without recalling the contents of the meditation or allowing the mind to wander during the interval session, progress in [later] meditation [session] may be limited.<sup>15</sup> This implies that the retentive aspect of the mind plays essential role in both meditation and interval sessions. The act of practicing mindfulness and meta-awareness during interval sessions enhances the meditation session.

<sup>13</sup> Yeshe Gyaltsen explains that the Tibetan term '*ting nge 'dzin*' refers to a mental factor that maintains its single pointedness by directing its focus toward an object: *sems dang sems byung gi tshul gsal bar ston pa blo gsal mgul rgyan* (Necklace of Fortunate One: Exposition on Mind and Mental Factors) folio.15a: *btags pa'i dngos po la dmigs nas rgyud ldan du 'jog pa'i sems rtse gcig pa'o* // Thupten Jinpa in *Illuminating the Intent: An Exposition of Candrakīrti's Entering the Middle Way*, published in 2021 p. 654 writes that the English term 'concentration', which corresponds to '*ting nge 'dzin*' in Tibetan describes "a meditative state in which ones' mind abides in deep equipoise." It is "often used interchangeably with meditative absorption (*bsam gtan*, *dhyaṇa*)." He further says "the term need not always connote a meditative state. In Abhidharma taxonomy of mental factors it is described as the mind's natural capacity for single-pointedness and focus."

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 534: *dge ba'i dmigs pa la / sems rtse gcig pa / yan chad kyi ting nge 'dzin rnams / zhi gnas kyi phyogs su 'du la / ji lta ba'am / ji snyed pa'i don / so sor 'byed pa'i shes rab dge ba rnams / lhag mthong gi phyogs su 'du ...* /.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 69: *thun gyi ngo bo la 'bad nas thun btang pa'i mtshams su / bskyang rgyu'i dmigs rnam la dran shes ma bsten par rgya yan du btang na / skyed shin tu chung bas / thun mtshams su'ang / de ston pa'i chos rnams blta ba dang / yang yang dran par bya /*.

### 5. Yeshe Gyaltsen's Guide to Tranquil Abiding: Cultivating Mental Clarity, Stability and Balance

In Yeshe Gyaltsen's "Guide to Tranquil Abiding Meditation," readers are taken through a detailed exploration of Tranquil Abiding meditation. Beginning with the prerequisites for Tranquil Abiding, the guide lays the groundwork for a successful meditation practice.

It identifies and addresses common obstacles, such as the Five Mental Faults, and provides effective remedies with the Eight Antidotes.

Yeshe Gyaltsen emphasizes the importance of overcoming laziness and highlights the essential qualities of mental concentration. Readers are encouraged to cultivate a strong aspiration toward concentration by exploring various objects of meditation, including the benefit of choosing the mind as an object.

The guide meticulously instructs on engaging in meditation after recognizing the object, and how to identify the criteria for this recognition. It cautions against a perfectionist attitude, which can hinder progress, and promotes a balanced approach.

Valuable insights from Mañjuśrī's advice to Tsongkhapa are shared, detailing the threefold characteristics of mindfulness and the cultivation of meta-awareness. Techniques on focusing and maintaining the object of concentration, avoiding potential mistakes, and regulating distractions are thoroughly discussed.

Furthermore, pith instructions for mental placement<sup>16</sup> (*sems gnas*) and unique methods for handling distractive thoughts are provided, along with guidance on how to tighten or relax focus on the object of meditation.

The guide uses six metaphors to illustrate settling the mind in meditation and distinguishes between laxity, mental dullness, mental excitation, and discursiveness or scattering. It concludes with an overview of the nine levels of mental placement and their connection to the four mental applications, offering a comprehensive framework for cultivating Tranquility Abiding.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has delved into the multifaceted roles and significance of meditation in Tibetan Buddhism through the lenses of Indian and Tibetan scholars, such as Kamalaśīla, Tsongkhapa and

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<sup>16</sup> Mental placement is a technique that involves concentrating the mind on the meditation object, mainly by enhancing the stability and clarity of the mind. In the context of the Great Seal practice, mental placement means directing the mind to the mind itself (Gnon Na 2024).

Yeshe Gyaltsen. By examining their integrative approach to tripartite learning, listening, contemplation, and meditation, this study has highlighted his progressive vision for spiritual awakening, which challenges the more segmented view of meditation proposed by Hvasang. Tsongkhapa's emphasis on the interdependence of analytic and placement meditation reveals a nuanced understanding of meditative practice as both a means of intellectual engagement and a vehicle for experiential insight.

Yeshe Gyaltsen's *Guide to Tranquil Abiding*, presented here in its first English translation, offers a practical framework that details the stages, obstacles, and remedies associated with the meditation. By systematically outlining the stages of mental placement, Yeshe Gyaltsen emphasizes the importance of balancing tight and relaxed concentration while highlighting mindfulness and meta-awareness as essential tools for practitioners.

Together, the teachings of Tsongkhapa and Yeshe Gyaltsen provide a comprehensive roadmap for cultivating Tranquil Abiding, contributing a profound legacy of meditation practice to Tibetan Buddhism. This approach to contemplative study not only deepens the understanding of Tibetan contemplative philosophy but also highlights the enduring relevance of the ancient Indian practices of listening, contemplation, and meditation in the modern era.

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**Outlines of Bright Lamp of the Excellent Path: Mahāmudrā  
Instructions of the Ganden Oral Transmission**

*dGa' ldan phyag rgya chen po'i khrid yig snyan rgyud  
lam bzang gsal ba'i sgron me las sa bcad kyī rim pa*

by Yeshe Gyaltsen (1713-1793)

[Praising and Going for Refuge to the Exalted Object] (D1a.1)

[I] pay homage and take refuge at the feet of the Venerable Spiritual Master who is inseparable from Śākyamuni Buddha and Buddha Vajradhara.

[Supplication] (1a.1)

May [you] guide [me] at all times with great compassion!

[Verse 1. Praising the objects of refuge through paying homage to them individually] (1a.2)

Never wavering from great bliss clear light mind  
endowed with two purities, yet by force of compassion,

Filling all the infinite realms with emanations,  
[I] pay homage to Buddha Śākyamuni Vajradhara<sup>17</sup>!

[Verse 2-9 is not available here]<sup>18</sup>

[Verse 10. The author's expression of humility in composing the text]  
(2b.5)

How could the wings of a poor tiny fly  
take the measure of boundless space?  
Likewise, a poor ignorant person like me  
lacks the ability to explain profound topics.

[Verse 11. The author's pledge to compose the text] (3a.1)  
Still, since I have been urged to do so by holy beings<sup>19</sup>,  
I shall write down some of the instructions of the Oral Transmission  
from Spiritual Masters who have attained the state  
accomplished by this very same supreme path.  
The Profound Path: Instruction of the Great Seal has three headings:

1. Source of the Instructions (3a.4)
2. Great Qualities of the Instructions (16a.1)
3. How to Practice the Actual Instructions (23b.2)
  - 3.1.1. How to practice during the meditation session (23b.2)
    - 3.1.1.1. Preliminary [session] (23b.2)
      - 3.1.1.1.1. Mode of going for refuge and generating  
bodhicitta, the altruistic wish for Buddhahood (23b.3)
        - 3.1.1.1.1.1. Mode of taking refuge (28a3)
        - 3.1.1.1.1.2. Mode of generating bodhicitta, the  
altruistic wish for Buddhahood (33a2)
      - 3.1.1.1.2. How to practice meditation and recitation of  
Vajrasattva in order to purify non-virtuous actions and  
obscurations (35b5)
      - 3.1.1.1.3. How to meditate on Guru Yoga, make offerings,  
*maṇḍala*, and supplication in order to receive blessings  
(40a2)
        - 3.1.1.1.3.1. Meditating upon the Spiritual Master in the  
merit field (40a2)
        - 3.1.1.1.3.2. How to supplicate the Spiritual Master,  
having made offerings and *maṇḍala* offering (42b3)
    - 3.1.1.2. In actual [session] (23b3)

<sup>17</sup> Vajradhara, an esoteric manifestation of the Buddha, who is regarded here [and in Vajrayana Buddhism] inseparable from the historical Buddha.

<sup>18</sup> From verse 2-9 is not available because from verse one starting, rest of the verses were about paying homage to individual object of refuge.

<sup>19</sup> *lCang skya rol pa'i rdo rje ye shes bstan pa'i sgron me* (1717-1786).

- 3.1.1.2.1. Mode of meditating on Tranquil Abiding (49b2)
  - 3.1.1.2.1.1. Reliance upon prerequisites [conducive conditions] of Tranquil Abiding (49b4)
  - 3.1.1.2.1.2. Stages of cultivating mental stability (51b4)
  - 3.1.1.2.1.3. How Tranquil Abiding is accomplished (66b2)
- 3.1.1.2. 2. How to find the profound view and meditate on 'special insight' (69b3)
  - 3.1.1.2.2.1. How to seek the view (69b4)
  - 3.1.1.2.2.2. How to meditate on the view once it has been found (113b2)
  - 3.1.1.2.2.3. How 'special insight' is accomplished through meditation (116b4)
- 3.1.1.3. Mode of practicing in the end [session] (119a6)
- 3.1.2. How to practice between meditation sessions (120b2)

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**Meditation Guide for Tranquil Abiding (*Śamatha*) Cultivation in the Bright Lamp of the Excellent Path: *Mahāmudrā* Instructions of the Ganden Oral Transmission**

*dGa' ldan phyag rgya chen po'i khrid yig snyan rgyud  
lam bzang gsal ba'i sgron me las zhi gnas kyi skor*

Authored by Yeshe Gyaltsen (1713-1793)  
and

Translated by Lobsang Tshultrim Gnon Na

(49b.2) Secondly, the main exposition is in two parts: How to do Tranquil Abiding meditation and how, having investigated the profound view, to do 'special insight' meditation. How to do Tranquil Abiding meditation is sub-divided into three parts: The prerequisites for tranquil abiding, stages of mental placement [stages of Tranquil Abiding meditation], and how Tranquil Abiding meditation is cultivated.

**[2. The Prerequisites for Tranquil Abiding]**

As for the first, *Root Mahāmudrā* [*Highway of Victorious Ones: Root Text of dGe ldan Mahāmudrā*]<sup>20</sup> says,

<sup>20</sup> Tib. *dGe ldan phyag rgya chen po'i khrid yig snyan rgyud* by Paṇ chen Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan. Yeshe Gyaltsen uses the term, *Root Mahāmudrā* which refers to the main text of *Mahāmudrā* of Gelug tradition, which is titled: *Highway of Victorious*

Therefore, for this there are two ways: seeking meditation on the basis of the view and seeking the view on the basis of the meditation. Here will be explained the latter. This assertion that there are two ways, seeking meditation on basis of the view, and seeking the view on the basis of meditation. In the first, having sought an understanding of the view, when that is found, practicing Tranquil Abiding focused on it. The second involves first stilling the mind, practicing mental abiding, and then seeking the view. Although it says there are two ways, practicing Tranquil Abiding and then 'special insight', or 'special insight' and then tranquil abiding, (50a.1) that is totally unsuitable. Why? Because it is impossible to develop special insight without prior development of tranquil abiding. Furthermore, having developed the factor of meditative stability by accomplishment of tranquil abiding, when analytical wisdom is brought to bear it can induce a special pliancy. Such pliancy cannot be induced without prior development of Tranquil Abiding no matter how much analysis is done on its own. As Tsongkhapa said [in *Condensed Meaning of Stages of Path to Awakening*]<sup>21</sup>

*I do not see that the root of cyclic existence can be severed  
by engaging in single-pointed meditation alone.  
Neither will wisdom, without realization of tranquil abiding,  
eliminate delusion, no matter how much analysis is applied.  
Yet, wisdom that has thoroughly cognized the nature of existence,  
mounted upon the horse of unmoving tranquil abiding,  
with the sharp weapon of Middle Way reasoning, free from extremes,  
destroys all fixations conceiving of extreme views.  
By examining properly with expansive wisdom,  
May intelligence cognizing reality grow and flourish!*

Thus, it was taught. I just mention this as an aid to eliminate doubt about these words of the root text. For details, such as the respective natures of Tranquil Abiding and 'special insight'; their sequential order, how they are cultivated and so forth, these should be learned from *Great Treatise on the Stages to Awakening*, which is an only lamp for the three worlds.

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*Ones: Root Text of dGe ldan Great Seal.* From this point onward, I request readers to remember this clarification whenever encountering the term 'Root Mahāmudrā' in this translation section.

<sup>21</sup> This text: *Condensed Meaning of Stages of Path to Awakening* (Tib. *Byang chub lam gyi rim pa'i bsdus don*) is often called the Small Treatise, and the *Small Treatise on the Stages of Path to Awakening* is called the Medium Treatise; therefore, there is a classification of Great, Medium and Small Treatises on the Stages of Path to Awakening.

Regarding prerequisites for tranquil abiding, Ārya Asaṅga in his *Grounds of Hearers*<sup>22</sup> extensively summarized the meanings presented in the scriptures into thirteen prerequisites. Kamalaśīla further summarized them in his *Middle Treatise on the Stages of Meditation*<sup>23</sup> into six prerequisites. I shall present them here accordingly. The six prerequisites for Tranquil Abiding are: 1. Dwelling in an isolated place that is endowed with five qualities; 2. Having few desires; 3. Being content; 4. Abandoning much socializing, excessive activities and so forth; 5. Abandoning negative intentions such as aspiration towards worldly aims and so forth. One who sincerely wishes to cultivate Tranquil Abiding should gather the causes for success. If the collective causes are not complete, no matter how much effort is applied, Tranquil Abiding will not be attained. In that regard, Atiśa [in *Lamp for the Path to Awakening*]<sup>24</sup> stated:

*With the limb of Tranquil Abiding in decline  
even if you meditate with great effort  
for many thousands of years  
Mental concentration*<sup>25</sup> *will not be achieved.*

Thus, it was taught. 'Brom Rin po che<sup>26</sup> said:

*We think it is just the fault of the instructions! (51a.1) Having merely received the instructions yet not having progressed in the cultivation of mental concentration is the fault of not abiding by the prerequisites.*

It is like that. Reliance upon the prerequisites for Tranquil Abiding is indispensable for tantric practice as well. In the tantric scriptures such as glorious Guhyasamāja it is said that one must abandon all distractions while practicing in isolated places. The requirement to practice while abiding by pure vows and commitments is mentioned not once but numerous times. Learn about this from the lives of the mahāsiddhas<sup>27</sup>.

Among these six prerequisites, staying in isolation, keeping pure morality, and having few desires are said to be primary. Keeping pure

<sup>22</sup> Skt. *Śrāvaka-bhūmi*; Tib. *Nyan thos kyi sa*.

<sup>23</sup> Kamalaśīla. 2006, p. 88 *Madhyamaka Bhāvanākrama*; Tib. *sGom rim bar pa*.

<sup>24</sup> Atiśa Dīpankara Śrījñāna's excerpts from *Bodhipathapradīpa*. The title of text in Tib. *byang chub lam gyi sgron ma*.

<sup>25</sup> Skt. *Samādhi*; Tib. *Ting nge 'dzin*. *Ting nge 'dzin* refers to the state where the mind is totally focused with single-pointed concentration on a chosen object. (Thupten Jinpa, *Mind Training*, 2006 p. 660).

<sup>26</sup> 'Brom ston pa, (1005-1064) heart disciple of Atiśa, founder of the *bKa' gdams*.

<sup>27</sup> Tib. *grub chen*, (hereafter use), Eng. great adept.



morality is the chief of these. With pure morality Tranquil Abiding can be swiftly achieved. Without pure morality, no matter how much mental effort is applied, one will be unable to delight in mastery of a fully qualified Tranquil Abiding. Furthermore, if ethical discipline is kept, by the blessings and merit of that, not by just intending to practice, but by actually practicing, one may achieve an extraordinary state of mental quiescence; you should understand this.

This is the case because, with the motivation of renunciation, an intense aspiration for liberation, (51b.1) when one blocks the four doors of transgression by guarding them with the five branched method, as said in *Guide to the Bodhisattva Conduct*,<sup>28</sup>

*One practicing this conduct should be just as wary  
to avoid committing bad karma as someone carrying  
a vessel filled with mustard oil while another standing by  
with a sword threatens to kill them if they spill a drop.*

Accordingly, being mindful of one's actions of body, speech, and mind, and undistracted by such things as the mundane activities of this life, one who is constantly mindful and alert to abandon misdeeds and accomplish virtue will swiftly accomplish mental concentration of single-pointed mental focus. It is very important to personally understand the definite need for the other prerequisites as well, not just by mimicking what others say.

### **[3. Aligning with either Common Preparation or Uncommon Preparation]**

Secondly, as for the cultivation of mental placement, one should begin with either the common preparation of six precepts, or the uncommon preparation of the guide to the four preliminaries. In either case one must meditate from reliance upon the master up to engaging in the bodhicitta practices according to the general way of training so as to bring out the experiences of actual mental transformation. In particular one must meditate on renunciation and bodhicitta until one's mind is definitely deeply moved by experience of them. (52a.1) If one does not begin with these two roots of the path, although the practitioner puts great mental effort into Tranquil Abiding, the view, and so forth, influenced by attachment to this life and a self-seeking attitude, it will in no way become a cause for liberation or omniscience; it will only be a cause for continued saṃsāric migration. The importance of first planting these two roots of the path was

<sup>28</sup> Tib. *Byang chub sems pa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa*, *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra* of Śāntideva.

emphasized in the mystical teachings that Je Tsongkhapa received from Mañjuśrī.

Having begun with the preliminaries mentioned above, with regard to the actual meditation<sup>29</sup> of developing pure meditative concentration, Protector Maitreya [In *Distinguishing the Middle and the Extremes*]<sup>30</sup> said:

*It arises from the causes: abandoning the five faults,  
and relying upon the eight applications.*

#### [4. The Five Mental Faults]

Accordingly, one must practice the eight applications as antidotes to the five faults. The five faults are laziness<sup>31</sup>, forgetting the instructions, the two: laxity and mental excitation, application, and non-application.

#### [5. The Eight Antidotes]

The antidotes to laziness are four: faith<sup>32</sup>, aspiration<sup>33</sup>, enthusiastic effort<sup>34</sup>, and pliancy<sup>35</sup>. The antidote to forgetting the instructions is mindfulness<sup>36</sup>. The antidote to laxity and excitation is meta-awareness<sup>37</sup>. The antidote to non-application<sup>38</sup> is application which involves making an effort, whereas the antidote to [unnecessary]

<sup>29</sup> In actual session, how to cultivate the proper mental concentration consist of six parts:

- a. Identifying the five faults
- b. Identifying the eight antidotes
- c. Reason for cultivating eight antidotes
- d. Identifying the qualities of mental concentration
- e. Identifying types of objects of mental concentration
- f. Identifying the object of mental concentration of this (textual) context and purpose of cultivating this concentration, and
- g. How to seek the object of this mental concentration.

<sup>30</sup> Tib. *dbus dang mtha' rnam par 'byed pa*, Skt. *Madhyāntavibhāgākārikā*.

<sup>31</sup> Skt. *kausīdya*; Tib. *le lo*

<sup>32</sup> Skt. *sraddhā*; Tib. *dad pa*.

<sup>33</sup> Skt. *chanda*; Tib. *'dun pa*.

<sup>34</sup> Skt. *vīrya* (*vyayama*); Tib. *brtson 'grus*.

<sup>35</sup> Skt. *praśrabdhi*; Tib. *shin sbyangs*.

<sup>36</sup> Skt. *smṛti*; Tib. *dran pa*.

<sup>37</sup> Skt. *saṃprajanya*; Tib. *shes bzhin* Eng. meta-awareness, introspection, vigilance.

<sup>38</sup> Skt. *anābhisaṃskāra*; Tib. *'du mi byed pa*.

application<sup>39</sup> is non-application, leaving it alone with equanimity<sup>40</sup>.

### **[6. Reason for Cultivating the Eight Antidotes]**

When beginning to develop mental concentration by means of these, laziness is an obstacle. Therefore, laziness is said to be an obstacle at the preliminary stage. (52b.1) Furthermore, under the influence of laziness one will not begin mental concentration meditation; or begin but not be able to sustain it continuously; or develop it somewhat and then fall back, not developing it all the way to completion. Therefore, if one truly desires to develop pure mental concentration, one definitely needs methods to reverse laziness.

### **[7. The Complete Cessation of Laziness]**

If one attains the bliss-endowed mental and physical pliancy, and a workability of controllable to do whatever wished with the mind, laziness is reversed from the root. To attain this one must be able to take joy in making continuous effort. For this to happen one must have great delight in mental concentration without any hesitation. For that to happen one must develop a strong aspiration seeking to attain mental concentration. For that to happen one must develop a stable faith captivated by seeing the qualities of mental concentration. Therefore, one should first train in faith by contemplating the good qualities of mental concentration.

### **[8. The Qualities of Mental Concentration]**

If Tranquil Abiding is accomplished one's body and mind will be pervaded by bliss of pliancy. Thus, one will abide in bliss in this lifetime. One will have control of one's own mind; if placed on an object it remains like a mountain. (53a.1) When used it can engage any desired virtuous object at will. In particular, by analyzing ultimate reality from a state of stable Tranquil Abiding one will attain special insight and be able to swiftly abandon delusion. And by meditating on suchness with skillful means, even the predisposition for dualistic appearances can be eliminated; and so on, the qualities are inconceivable. Je Tsong kha pa in (*Lam rim nyams mgur ma*, hereafter LRG) states:

*Mental stabilization is the king that rules the mind;*

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<sup>39</sup> Skt. *abhisamāskāra*; Tib. *'du byed pa*.

<sup>40</sup> Skt. *upekṣa*; Tib. *btang snyoms*.

*When settled (left) it is like the king of mountains, unmoving;  
When relaxed (loosed) it engages all objects of virtue;  
inducing great bliss of pliability of body and mind.*

*Knowing this the powerful yogis always  
destroy the enemy, distraction, and remain in mental concentration.  
I, a yogi, have practiced like that.  
You who seek liberation, please do likewise!*

Thus, it was taught. Furthermore, to attain the state of awakening, one needs to complete accumulation, transformation, and purification. In order to swiftly complete powerful collections and in order to ripen limitless sentient beings one must attain the higher perceptions.<sup>41</sup> As said in *Lamp for the Path to Awakening*:<sup>42</sup>

*The cause for completing the accumulations  
with the natures of merit and wisdom,  
is said by all buddhas  
to be having the higher perception.*

*(53b.1) Just as a bird without wings  
cannot fly through the sky  
one without power of the higher perception  
cannot accomplish the welfare of sentient beings.*

*With higher perception, the merit created  
in a single day and a night  
cannot be matched without higher perception  
even in a hundred lifetimes.*

*One who wishes to swiftly complete  
The collections for full enlightenment  
will accomplish the higher perceptions  
through effort, not laziness.*

*One not accomplished in Tranquil Abiding  
will not attain the higher perception  
therefore, Tranquil Abiding must be developed;  
put forth the effort again and again.*

<sup>41</sup> Skt. *Abhijñā*; Tib. *mngon shes*; Eng. knowledge of others' minds, past and future, heightened auditory and visual faculties, etc.

<sup>42</sup> Composed by Skt. Atiśa Dīpankara Śrījñāna; Tib. *Jo bo rje dpal ldan A ti sha dpal mar me mdzad*.

Thus, for higher perceptions to arise Tranquil Abiding must be achieved. If Tranquil Abiding is attained the collections are swiftly completed by means of the higher perceptions. One will be able to ripen countless beings, and so forth. Without attaining Tranquil Abiding one will be unable to accomplish completion, ripening, and purification.

Furthermore, all Ārya paths of the three vehicles are attained in dependence upon tranquil abiding; Tranquil Abiding is indispensable to progress in the paths. Furthermore, if Tranquil Abiding is attained, the mind may be applied to any desired meditation from reliance on the spiritual guide onwards, (54a.1) as easily as water flows through a canal, so that any virtuous practice undertaken will become very powerful. If one lacks single-pointed concentration, practice will be prey to distraction and probably not penetrate the essential point. As said in *Guide to the Bodhisattva Conduct*,

*A person whose mind is distracted  
lives in the fangs of delusion.*

Also:

*Although mantra recitation and austerities  
are performed for a long time  
doing it with a distracted mind  
is meaningless, say the wise.*

It is like that.

### **[9. Urging Aspiration to Cultivate Mental Concentration: Varied Objects of Mental Concentration]**

Thus, by repeatedly thinking about the qualities of mental concentration, if one develops a strong aspiration to attain it, one will feel an urge to practice mental concentration arising from within oneself, and so swiftly attain it; and that attainment will not degenerate and will be perfected. These stages leading up to mental concentration come from the instructions of Buddha Maitreya, so we should not deviate from those instructions.

One who has developed a strong aspiration to attain mental concentration must then select a focal object for the concentration because, if a focal object is not found, there will be no basis upon which to meditate. Buddha taught many categories of objects for mental concentration.

### [10. Identifying the Objects of Meditation: Objects of Mental Concentration]

(54b.1) Four of these are (1) pervasive objects, (2) objects of observation for purifying behavior, (3) objects of expertise, and (4) objects of observation for purifying mental afflictions. There are four kinds of pervasive objects. They are (1a) objects of placement without analysis<sup>43</sup> (1b) objects of analysis<sup>44</sup> (1c) limits of things and (1d) all-accomplishing. These four pervade all objects of mental concentration. There is no object not included within these four, so they are called pervasive objects. The other three, objects for purifying behavior, and so forth, are specific types of objects. I will not discuss their identification here because it will become too lengthy.

The objects for mental concentration we will consider here are objects of placement without analysis and objects which are limits of things. With regard to limits of things, there are relative and ultimate levels, how things appear and how they exist; this category of objects are limits of things as they appear, on the relative level. Out of that infinite, limitless category we will focus on mind.

### [11. Benefit of Choosing Mind as an Object of Mental Concentration]

Thus, the object we shall meditate upon here is our own mind. We can practice mental concentration and it has a special purpose. Furthermore, we must seek an object that is not just for stilling the mind. Not understanding this essential point, focusing on a stone or piece of wood, clearly illustrates that one is ignorant of the instructions in the scriptures of Buddha or the great trail blazers of the Mahāyāna<sup>45</sup>. Putting a piece of wood in front of you and meditating on it shows a lack of understanding of what mental concentration is. Mental concentration is one of the five types of ascertaining mental factors; not generated in sense consciousness. (55a.1) There is an extremely important reason to take our mind as our object of meditation. We have been controlled by our mind since beginningless time. Not being able to control our own mind, it leads us everywhere wandering without choice in the three realms of *samsāra*<sup>46</sup>, controlled by mental afflictions and experiencing ceaseless suffering. If we want to free ourselves from this sea of suffering, we must get control of our own

<sup>43</sup> In *Great Treatise* the term is used 'non-conceptual images'.

<sup>44</sup> In *Great Treatise* the term is used 'conceptual images'.

<sup>45</sup> Asaṅga and Nāgārjuna.

<sup>46</sup> Cycle of life existence that is influenced by contaminated action and affliction.

mind. Therefore, it is very important to identify the entity of our mind, focus on it, and meditate on it with single-pointed focus.

As Nāgārjuna said, [in *Letter to a Good Friend*]:<sup>47</sup>

*Subdue your mind! Buddha has proclaimed:*

*Mind is the root of Dharma.*

*(55b.1) As said in Guide to the Bodhisattva Conduct*

*Letting loose the elephant of mind*

*harms us like the deepest hell.*

*No enemy in this world could harm us*

*Like this mad, untamed elephant!*

*If the elephant of mind is firmly bound*

*On all sides by the rope of mindfulness,*

*All fear will cease to exist*

*And all virtue will come to hand.*

*Tigers, lions, elephants, bears,*

*Snakes and all types of enemies,*

*Guardians of the hells,*

*Evil spirits and cannibals,*

*This mind, alone, imputes them all;*

*Therefore, all is mentally imputed.*

*By subduing mind alone*

*All of those will be subdued.*

*Similarly, all fear and danger*

*and all the immeasurable suffering*

*Arise from the mind;*

*This was taught by the Right Speaker Buddha.*

Also:

*If I don't comprehend this secret of mind,*

*Though wanting happiness and to overcome misery,*

*I will wander aimlessly, without meaning.*

*Therefore, I shall well hold and protect my mind.*

In particular one who has received tantric initiation and keeps the vows and commitments should, at first, identify the nature of this gross mind, focus on it single-pointedly and bring it under control. Having done that, once it is serviceable to focus on any desired object, one should seek the profound view and get some experience of

<sup>47</sup> Skt. *Suḥrillekha*; Tib. *bShes pa'i spring yig*.

suchness. Once one has this experience, within a state of stable Deity yoga, one should penetrate the vital points of the subtle body and strive in the methods to bring the extremely subtle wind-mind under control. When the extremely subtle wind-mind manifests and is controlled, the subtle concepts and their moving winds automatically stop and the transcendent wisdom of innate clear light dawns. That [timeless] wisdom is the cause of omniscience, like a fertile seed. Without having to gather accumulations over countless eons of lifetimes, on the basis of this single clear light mind the accumulations can be quickly completed. This is the ultimate swift path to awakening; you should understand the ultimate meaning of these profound instructions. Thinking of this, Saraha [in *Treasury of Adamantine Songs*<sup>48</sup>] said:

*Mind itself is the seed of all  
It emanates saṃsāra and nirvāṇa.<sup>49</sup>  
It grants fruition to one's wishes;  
I bow to wish-fulfilling jewel-like Mind!*

*By mind's clinging one is bound,  
and by its release, doubt is no more.  
[56b.1] That which binds the foolish  
swiftly liberates the wise!*

Thus, he spoke, and great adept Tilopa [in the pith-instruction called, *Mahāmudrā Upadeśa*]<sup>50</sup> said:

*Cut mind's root and settle in naked awareness!  
Let the thought-polluted water clear!*

Also, Āryadeva [in the chapter called "Utterly purifying the obscuration of mind"]<sup>51</sup> says:

*With their practice of Deity yoga  
the wise stabilize their mind.  
Clouds of bad views are released*

<sup>48</sup> Skt. *Dohakośa*; Tib. *Dohā* is translated *rdo rje'i glu*; *kośa* is translated *mdzod*; Eng. *Dohā* is translated *adamantine song*; *kośa* is translated *treasury*. See also Braitstein's preface in *The Adamantine Songs* (2014, p. xiii).

<sup>49</sup> Worldly existence and liberation.

<sup>50</sup> Tib. *Phyag rgya chen po'i man ngag*; also, in Tibetan known as *phyag chen gang ga ma'i man ngag*.

<sup>51</sup> Skt. *cittāvaranāvisodhanamaprakāraṇa*; Tib. *sems kyi sgrib pa rnam par sbyong ba zhes bya ba'i rab tu byed pa*.



*and the sun of mind becomes clear.*

Thus, the tantras and scriptures of the great adepts speak about meditation focused on the extremely subtle mind and wind as that which gives rise to all the higher realizations.

### **[12. Engaging in Meditation After Recognizing the Object of Meditation]**

When you have identified the focal object and begin to meditate on it, adjust your physical posture well. Make prayers to your master with faith and devotion so strong that tears come to your eyes and you get goosebumps, as explained above. After that the Master dissolves into you. Firmly feeling that the Master's mind and your mind have mixed together inseparably, meditate on your mind's clear and knowing nature, totally empty like space, without any form at all. With sharp awareness identifying whatever appearance is arising, with strong aspiration, think, "I shall mentally hold this object, and hold it single-pointedly."

At this time mentally hold just that focal object; (57a1) no activities of the past, present, or future, no hopes or fears. Not letting yourself be carried away by any thought whatsoever, focus on your mind's clear and knowing nature, holding it single-pointedly. Not making it very long at first, still your mind for a little while.

### **[13. Identifying the Criterion of Recognizing Object of Mental Concentration]**

Even if your object does not appear very clearly and precisely as the Master has introduced it, if it is only partial or general, be satisfied with that and, thinking, "This is the object, you must hold it." Otherwise, striving to meditate and visualize, hoping for the object to immediately appear very clearly, just as the Master introduced it, is the completely wrong approach; it shows a lack of understanding the instructions on mental concentration.

### **[14. Perfectionist Attitude Identified as Hindrance to the Progress of Meditation]**

Such intensive effort can clear the mind slightly but does not help to develop mental concentration; moreover, it causes scattering and big obstacles in developing mental concentration. In that case the mind quickly becomes hardened and irritated, and apprehensive to meditate again. It is said that you can even become nauseous and

ready to vomit just from seeing the meditation cushion! With these points in mind, the *Root Mahāmudrā text* [*Highway of Victorious Ones: Root Text of the dGe ldan Great Seal*] states:

*One should settle in mental concentration for short durations.*

At this time, (57b1) when the mind fastens on to its object, the first mental placement is reached. With regard to this meaning, the *Root Mahāmudrā text* states,

*With the object vaguely appearing  
without altering it at all  
with thoughts, such as of hope or fear,  
briefly settle in equipoise, unmoving.*

When thus mentally holding the object, you do not stop paying attention as if going unconscious or falling asleep. Instead, you must employ [1.] special mindfulness, not forgetting the object, and [2.] Meta-awareness occasionally checks whether the mind has wandered or not. Focusing single-pointedly on the object and settling on it with continuous mindfulness is the root, the foundation. Meta-awareness arises as a result of mindfulness, so there is no way to have meta-awareness without knowing the essential points of how to practice mindfulness. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize that cultivating proper mental concentration is achieved through the practice of sustaining mindfulness.

In this regard, when focusing on the object, it is not a sitting where you cease your mental engagement like when you are sleeping and falling unconscious. After focusing on the object, without forgetting it, sustain the meditation through extraordinary mindfulness and meta-awareness that looks at whether the focus is being wandered from its object or not. For that, it is the foundation, that a person focuses on the object single pointedly and then settle [the mind] with continuous mindfulness. Since meta-awareness arises as a result of mindfulness, there is no means to sustaining meta-awareness without knowing the key points of sustaining mindfulness. Thus, it is extremely important to understand that sustaining the proper training of mental concentration is the way of sustaining mindfulness. As for mindfulness the *Abhidharma*<sup>52</sup> states:

*What is mindfulness? A non-forgetfulness of an object with which the mind is familiar, which functions to prevent wandering.*

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<sup>52</sup> *Abhidharmasamuccaya*.

As taught, there are three required characteristics:

1. the object characteristic. It must be a familiar object. Seeing that very object pointed out by the teacher's instructions, (58a1) familiarize yourself with it again and again.
2. the mode of apprehension [cognitive] characteristic. It is cultivating just that object without forgetting it. As for this non-forgetfulness, it is not sufficient just to be able to remember it when you ask someone about it or when you think about it. It must focus single-pointedly on the object without losing it even slightly, remembering it uninterruptedly.
3. the characteristic function. Once there is such cognitive characteristic, there will be no distraction to something other than the object.

Seeing mindfulness with these three characteristics as important for mental concentration meditation, the precious lord Maitreya said that forgetting the instructions is a fault when seeking to develop mental concentration, so mindfulness is needed to serve as its antidote. Proper mental concentration depends on how you cultivate mindfulness.

### [15. Threefold Characteristics of Mindfulness in Mañjuśrī's Advice to Tsongkhapa]

The importance of mindfulness endowed with the three characteristics was taught in the root words of a brief instruction that Mañjuśrī gave to Je Tsongkhapa. That same text<sup>53</sup> states:

*Having meditated on renunciation and bodhicitta  
in presence of the unceasing great flame of mindfulness  
kindling of the six objects is definitely burned up.*

Thus, whether mental concentration is common or uncommon (58b1) is dependent solely on the force of mindfulness.

As for meta-awareness, within a state of not losing the mode of apprehension of mindfulness holding its object single-pointedly, it checks whether the mind is remaining on its object or not, whether obstacles such as mental excitation and laxity are occurring or not. Furthermore, while mentally holding the object, if a new watchful mind is generated, this is the fault of not knowing how to meditate. [A fault arising from excessively applying alert and watchful mind.]

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<sup>53</sup> Tib. 'Jam dbyangs chos skor; Eng. *Cycle of teachings of Mañjuśrī*.

Checking like that will not only not help development of mental concentration; it will harm it greatly.

### **[16. How Meta-awareness is Cultivated with Mindfulness]**

Therefore, without losing mental hold on the object, you have to know how to check with subtle awareness. For example, it is said to be like when two people are walking down a path; while looking at the path they can check their companion's movement out of the corner of their eye. As said in *Lobsang's Melodious Laughter*:<sup>54</sup>

*Within a state of equipoise, meta-awareness is  
to see whether mental excitation or laxity has arisen or not.  
It is mental factor that checks from a corner of the mind,  
It is like a detective agent  
Non-distraction is the fruit of mindfulness.*

Without losing the mode of apprehension of mindfulness single-pointedly holding the focal object, checking from time to time to see whether or not the mind has wandered from its object; whether or not mindfulness is abiding with a single focus. (59a.1) This hones mindfulness' mode of apprehension, makes it more powerful, prevents wandering from the object; awareness will arise when distraction is about to occur, it is taught.

### **[17. How to focus on the object of mental concentration]**

Therefore, the object of meditation to visualize or know is the clear and cognizing state of one's own mind. Binding the mind to the object generates a strong aspiration wishing to hold it single-pointedly without moving from it. Not thinking of any other object, just continually remembering the object and cultivating the continuum of that mind is the sacred method for a beginner to accomplish the first mental placement.

### **[18. Potential mistake in the cultivation of mindfulness]**

Otherwise, just stopping paying attention, and meditating without mindfulness, it is impossible for pure meta-awareness to develop from that. The practice of mental concentration is the practice of mindfulness; it is impossible for a result to arise without a cause.

Some scriptures speak of not paying attention to anything, not

<sup>54</sup> Tib. *Blo bzang bzhad pa'i sgra dbyangs* /.

thinking of anything, being non-conceptual; the scriptures of the great adepts, in particular, have many words to that effect. Some who are deceived by this, teach that you must cease all mental activity and go unconscious; they are making a huge mistake and do not understand Tranquil Abiding practice even partially; those with intelligence should not trust such advice. (59b1)

### [19. Do not change the object of meditation]

What these scriptures are saying is that when practicing Tranquil Abiding ones mind must not move to anything other than the focal object. This is extremely important. Furthermore, when one is meditating single-pointedly on one's own mind as the focal object, if anything else appears, forms of deities, seed syllable letters, one must not follow them but continue to hold only the original focal object. Otherwise, shifting to various objects will become a big obstacle to developing mental concentration. As Aśvaghōṣa said,

*Relying on one object  
stabilize your thoughts  
Moving to many objects  
will stir up mental afflictions.*

And Lord Atiśa as well:<sup>55</sup>

*Rest your mind in virtue  
on whatever single focal object.*

Thus, it is taught that to cultivate mental concentration one must mentally hold one focal object only.

Since this practice of mindfulness is very difficult, accomplishment of proper mental concentration is rare. If one relaxes this mode of mindfulness focusing on the object, and just remains in a thoughtless state, a slight factor of stability may be generated, but subtle laxity is not prevented. (60a1) Since there were many mistaking this subtle laxity for Tranquil Abiding, unable to bear it, Tsongkhapa said, at the end of his composition, *Queries from a Sincere Heart*<sup>56</sup>, written about view and meditation:

*If darkness of extremes of permanence and nihilism is not cleared away,*

<sup>55</sup> In *Bodhipathapradīpa*. Tib. *Byang chub lam gyi sgron ma*.

<sup>56</sup> Tib. *Dri ba lhag bsam rab dkar*. *Miscellaneous Writings*, Vol. kha. 85b3-100a3, bKra shis lhun po par nying. (BDRC bdr: W29193).

*one will not see the sun of clear light reality.  
 If one does not seek a wish-fulfilling jewel-like spiritual guide  
 who is well versed in learning, contemplation, and meditation,  
 the result will not emerge. Instead, this could be a cause  
 for rebirth as a perception-less god<sup>57</sup>, or worse, an animal.  
 I can't bear this for great meditators who are striving day and night!  
 If it is a mistake to mention this in an aside, be patient.*

About this, it is said in the *Root Mahāmudrā* Text:

*Like mental engagement ceases during sleep and unconsciousness,  
 Do not cease mental engagement during meditation.  
 Keep a watchful eye from afar with mindfulness that does not stray!  
 And when thought movements are noticed, apply meta-awareness.  
 At the nature of clarity and cognition  
 Look nakedly, with sharp concentration*

That is the meaning taught.

#### **[20. Four uncommon pith instructions on cultivating mental placements]**

(60b.1) Thus, when practicing the mental 'placements' there are four uncommon essential precepts: looking at the entity of thoughts, letting them disappear on their own; (61a1) trampling and flattening thoughts; looking at how thoughts manifest and abandoning them; and uncommon precepts in regard to these. As for the first, the *Root Mahāmudrā* text states:

*Whatever thoughts arise.  
 Identify them as just that.*

Thus, when focusing on the clarity and cognition which is the nature of one's own mind and holding it single-pointedly, if another thought arises, while remembering the original object, by nakedly looking 'from a side of the mind' at the entity of whatever thought has arisen, it cannot remain and dissolves like a bubble in water; suddenly, naturally disappearing, leaving one abiding in the clarity-cognition of one's mind. This was repeatedly said by great adepts such as Saraha, Śavaripa, and Tilopa, and is highly praised as an instruction for beginners to still the mind and accomplish the mental placements.

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<sup>57</sup> Tib. 'du shes med pa'i lha.

As for trampling and flattening thoughts, the root text states:

*Or, like a swordsman  
immediately cut down whatever thought arises.*

Like the story of the battle between an archer and swordsman told in the Vinaya Scripture, while (61a.1) abiding single-pointedly in holding the clarity-cognition of one's own mind, when any other thought arises, not allowing it to remain for even an instant, immediately severing its continuum.

The story of taming elephants is similar. Like an elephant driver advises the elephant to remain subdued. If the elephant misbehaves, the driver promptly uses a sharp hook to subdue it through the process of subjugation. Like that, we tell the mind it is good if it remains single-pointedly on the clarity-cognition [aspect of the mind] pointed out by the master's instructions. If it moves, we immediately sever the movement and allow ourselves to remain singly focused on the object. As [Bhāviveka] said in *Essence of the Middle Way*,<sup>58</sup>

*Bind the mad elephant of the mind  
to the stable pillar of the object;  
tying it with the rope of mindfulness,  
and gradually controlling it with the hook of meta-awareness.*

Saraha also taught to train the mind like the example of the elephant tamer.

[Thirdly,] as for looking at how thoughts manifest and abandoning them, the *Root Mahāmudrā* text states:

*When looking at the entity of thoughts which arise  
they naturally disappear and clear emptiness appears.  
Likewise, checking when mind is still  
there is no obscuration, but vivid clear emptiness.*

*Seeing is said to mix stillness and movement.  
Whatever thought arises  
recognize the movement without stopping it  
(61b1) settling on the entity of that,  
it is like the example of a bird  
flying from a cage on a ship.*

Thus, while holding the object single-pointedly, if one is unable to stop

<sup>58</sup> Its auto-commentary is *Blaze of Reason* (Skt. *Tarkajvāla*, Tib. *rTog ge 'bar ba*).

the repeated proliferation of thought, without wandering from singly focused memory of the root object, look nakedly at the entity of whatever thought has arisen; look where it goes and how it goes. When looking like that, when a bird is kept in a cage on a ship, just wanting to get out and fly, when it is let out in the middle of the ocean it flies and flies. But when it finds no place to land it has to come back to the very same ship, and then stays there with no more wish to fly. Likewise, thoughts have nowhere to go but land back to the very same singly focused mind and remain as if invisible.

**[21. The uncommon way of regulating the distractive thoughts]**

[Fourthly,] as for the uncommon precepts in regard to these practices, it is said in the *Root Mahāmudrā* text:

*While abiding at the end of cutting  
without losing mindfulness, gently relax.  
sharply concentrating, gently relax  
That is where the mind is placed.*

Furthermore, as it is said,

*The very mind, which is bound by compulsion,  
if relaxed, is liberated, without doubt.*

*(62a.1) Thus, relax without distraction.  
When looking at the entity of thoughts that arise  
they naturally disappear and clear emptiness appears.  
Likewise, checking when mind is still  
there is no obscuration, but vivid clear emptiness.  
Seeing is said to mix stillness and movement, it is proclaimed.*

When practicing focusing single pointedly on the focal object pointed out by the master's instructions and stop the proliferation of thought as explained in the instructions above.

**[22. Having understood the teacher's instruction of the object of meditation, how to eliminate the distractive thoughts should be implemented as mentioned earlier]**

When the mind is slightly stilled and not moving to another object, you must master the way to sustain the continuation of this. With regard to that, you must learn the important precept of finding the suitable balance between tightness and looseness of concentration. If



you are way too tight the mind will be disturbed, issuing thoughts will arise, and the mind will wander. If you are too loose, although the mind will be somewhat stilled it will be influenced by laxity; this will obstruct attainment of pure mental concentration. To find the right balance is extremely difficult, so attainment of proper mental concentration is extremely rare, it is said. Master Candragomin said in the *Confession Praise*:<sup>59</sup>

*If you rely on effort, mental excitation will occur.  
If you abandon it, laxity will arise.  
The right equipoise is difficult to find.  
My mind is disturbed, so what should I do?*

Again, the *Confession Praise*:

*If effort is applied excitation will occur.  
Loosening effort gives rise to laxity.  
The midpoint between these is difficult to find.  
My mind is disturbed, so what should I do? (62b1)*

### [23. How to tighten and relax the object of meditation]

So what balance should we employ? It is said we should tight the concentration and relax the immediate desire for meditation. [Two-fold mindfulness:] To illustrate, when settling single-pointedly on the focal object, one should not be too tight in one's immediate desire to meditate, but relaxed; and, deep within, while focused continually on the object, not wandering to any other object with tightly concentrated mindfulness: these two together. It is with this thought in mind that statements are made such as 'undistracted, relax,' or 'vividly concentrate and loosely relax.' There are many who fail to comprehend a key point in the scriptures of the great masters. They interpret such statements in the teachings of these accomplished adepts, assuming that 'if you relax, realization will dawn' or [in some cases] 'settling without cognitive mode of the mindfulness might result in some stability', but misunderstandings these teachings often lead to the belief that 'the best relaxation is the best meditation'. Those who subscribe to these beliefs may find themselves habituating to laxity. Mistaking it for pure meditation, all their hard effort is fruitless. As the great dBen sa pa<sup>60</sup> states:

<sup>59</sup> Tib. *bshags bstod*; skt. Deśanātava. Candragomin and Aśvaghoṣa are perhaps one same person.

<sup>60</sup> Blo bzang don 'grub (1505-56/66).

*When awareness is placed in non-conceptuality  
with heightened tight concentration,  
one cannot sustain the continuity of stability;  
and if it is relaxed it is apparent that some stability quickly develops.*

*(63a.1) Yet, mistaking the development of laxity for meditation  
they proclaim that the deepest point about meditation  
is that the best meditation is the best relaxation.  
Abandoning such foolish talk, may I develop faultless tranquil abiding!*

*If too tight, mental excitation makes it difficult to develop stability.  
If too loose, laxity develops, and it is difficult to have expansion and  
clarity.*

*Finding the balance is difficult; when relaxed, laxity develops.  
If the best relaxation is the best meditation there is no reason for it to be  
difficult!*

*Therefore, for it to become a cause of mastering the full measure of  
meditation,  
this must be purified and restrained. May I be protected from this!*

#### **[24. Six Metaphors of Settling the Mind in Meditation]**

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that without the essential instructions of a master, cultivating mental concentration can cause significant difficulties. This [challenge, along with the importance of guidance,] is also exemplified in the ancient story of Cūḍapanthaka.<sup>61</sup>

And on a further note, present day trainees more easily attain the mental abidings if they practice by means of six modes of settling:

1. Settling like the sun free from clouds
2. Settling like a great condor sailing through the sky
3. Settling like an ocean free of waves
4. Settling like a young child looking at the temple
5. Settling like the tracks of a bird in space
6. Settling like soft wool spreading out

These come from the scriptures of many great adepts such as Saraha. Settling like a young child looking at the temple (63b.1) is an especially good precept for beginners, repeatedly praised by the great adepts of

<sup>61</sup> Tib. 'Phags pa lam phran bstan, is one of the *gnas brtan bcu drug*. Skt. Cūḍapanthaka is one of the sixteen elders (Skt. *ṣoḍaśasthavirā*).

India. Lord Milarepa (rJe Mi la ras pa) also highly praised these instructions for practice. Their individual meanings have already been explained in the *Extended Bright Lamp*<sup>62</sup> so they will not be set forth here. On the basis of their practice the nine mental placements are attained in succession. The way they are attained in the perception and experience of individual disciples, the way that obstacles are cleared, how the practice is advanced, and so forth, should be pointed out in detail by the master. (63b.3)

To summarize, once you are single-pointedly focused on the object, check your experience. If you find that the tightness of your concentration is causing mental excitation, loosen it slightly. If you find that the looseness of your concentration is causing laxity, tighten it slightly. Concentrated to a suitable degree between these two, again seek the factor of stability, free from discursive thought or scattering. Once you have stability, be wary of laxity by emphasizing the factor of clarity with intensity of your awareness. By alternating between emphasizing the factors of stability and clarity you will develop faultless mental concentration. On the contrary, do *not* stabilize the mind in mere clarity without intensity in its mode of ascertainment.

Some might wonder laxity and mental excitation are the principal obstacles of mental concentration that are emphasized in the scriptures, as well as their means of abandonment; (64 a1) so why are means of severing discursiveness emphasized in this instruction? That is a very important point to question, and we must settle the matter. Mental excitation is included in discursiveness, and there is a great deal of discursiveness that is not mental excitation; so, stopping discursiveness is simply a bigger category. Furthermore, when developing meditative stability by means of these instructions, the focal object itself is automatically very clear. [so, laxity which prevents clarity is not such a problem.] Also, for beginners, the primary obstacle to meditation is said to be the proliferation of discursive thoughts. Therefore, [this instruction] primarily focuses on methods to eliminate such thoughts.

In addition, this instruction is to be paired in union with the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment teachings. In the extensive and shorter Stages of the Path treatises, gross and subtle forms of both laxity and mental excitation have been identified, and how to rely on their antidotes has already been taught in detail. Keeping those instructions as the basis, we should understand that the tradition of these pith instructions are a skillful means for beginners to develop meditative stability more easily. Furthermore, when taught in connection with the

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<sup>62</sup> Auto-commentary to *The Highway of Victorious One: Root Text of dGe' ldan Mahāmudrā*, by Paṇ chen Blo bzang Chos kyi rgyal mtshan.

uncommon mode of instructions of tantra, in the root scriptures of these instructions, those of Guhyasamāja, and in many scriptures of the mahāsiddhas such as their songs of spiritual realization, the means of drawing in discursive thought is emphasized. (64 b1) When the eighty subtle concepts and their movement collect inward this includes all perceptions and objects, so it brings them all to a cease. Then, when the primordial mind manifests, Great Seal wisdom quickly dawns; this appears to be the ultimate intention behind this mode of instruction.

So, what is the means of abandoning laxity and excitation according to these instructions? The absorption to be accomplished here is one endowed with clarity and non-conceptuality. Clarity is hindered by laxity and non-conceptuality is hindered by excitation. Laxity is the mind laxity inwards and, although various levels of subtlety of laxity are identified, the scriptures describe it as unclear and more deceived. To identify a meditative experience free from both gross and subtle laxity, we depend on the scriptures of Je Tsongkhapa, alone. They include clear instructions on identifying gross and subtle laxity in the oral lineage, as set down in *The Melody of Lobsang's Laughter*:

*When cultivating unmoving mental concentration,  
if intensity of focus slackens slightly  
subtle laxity has taken hold.  
When there is clarity without intensity,  
middling laxity has arrived.  
If clarity is also missing, then laxity is gross. (65 a1)*

### **[25. Differentiating Laxity from Mental Dullness and Mental Excitation from Discursiveness or Scattering]**

Laxity (*bying ba*) and mental dullness (*rmugs pa*) are not the same. Laxity is taught to derive from mental dullness; under the influence of mental dullness, the body and mind feel heavy and unserviceable. Mental dullness is said to be a facet of ignorance. Mental excitation (*rgod pa*) is an outward discursiveness or scattering (*'phro ba*). There are multiple types of scattering: through attachment, through aversion, scattering to unspecified neutral objects, scattering to virtuous objects, and so forth. Mental excitation, however, is a scattering and running of the mind towards a pleasing object out of attachment. Protector Maitreya teaches that meta-awareness must be utilized as the antidote to laxity and excitation. Within undistracted mindfulness, meta-awareness must be set to check whether laxity or excitation are arising or not. There are two methods of generating meta-awareness. As for one, while in a state of undistracted mindfulness, maintaining that

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continuous state of mindfulness is itself the principal cause for developing meta-awareness. As said in *Guide to the Bodhisattva Conduct*,

*It is when mindfulness is present  
then meta-awareness, that which exists  
to protect it, will arrive.*

As for the uncommon method of generating meta-awareness, while in a state of undistracted mindfulness, it is that which checks whether laxity or excitation is arising or not. As said in *Guide to the Bodhisattva Conduct*: (65 b1)

*That which checks from time to time  
on the situation of body and mind;  
just that, in short, is the protective  
defining characteristic of meta-awareness.*

As for how to rely on the antidote to laxity and excitation, antidotes to laxity include contemplating the beneficial qualities taught in the *Stages of the Path* such as the qualities of the spiritual guide, the great meaning of human life with leisure and endowments, positive karmic cause and effect, qualities of the Three Jewels, and so on. Once you have induced certainty about these, the mere thought of them uplifts the mind, making it very easy to stop laxity. Furthermore, attending to these characteristics is extremely important. When laxity is dense, and when mental dullness and drowsiness develop, these antidotes should definitely be contemplated. If the laxity is light and only occasional, without scattering, tighten your concentration and continue to meditate. If the laxity is extremely dense and occurs repeatedly; if you are oppressed by sleepiness; if the meditation is lost to scattering; then rely upon the aforementioned antidotes; stand up and go for a walk; recite teachings on the drawbacks of mental dullness and sleepiness; look at the moon and stars and directions; wash your face with water, and so forth, as taught in *Vinaya*, *Hearer Grounds* and elsewhere. (66 a1) By putting effort into meditation that is mixed with sleepiness, your whole life could be spent in faulty practice, and all your efforts would become fruitless; so it is very important to be skilled in the points of these instructions. As for instructions to forcefully stop laxity: when laxity is very strong, say PHAT loudly and eject your mind into space. Mix your mind inseparably with the empty sphere of space and rest it in a space-like state of very clear and bright total emptiness. This clears the laxity; then continue meditating.

As for antidotes to mental excitation, this includes contemplating

impermanence, contemplating the suffering of saṃsāra, and so forth. If the excitation is weak, without losing the meditation to scattering, use any of the above instructions which sever excitation and scattering, and again focus on the object. As for instructions to forcefully stop excitation, if you are troubled by strong excitation, leave the focal object aside for some time and focus on the coming and going of your breath. Then press the upper energy winds of the body, white in color, downwards; and draw the lower energy winds of the body, yellow in color, upwards, (66 b1) joining them together at the level of the navel. Hold the mind unmoving there in vase breath meditation. Once the fault of scattering and mental excitation is pacified, meditate on the original focal object as before. You should learn more detail about the causes of laxity and excitation, individually and in common, how to rely upon their antidotes, and so forth, from the long and shorter *Stages of the Path to Awakening* treatises.

Third is how, in dependence on this, the stages of mental placement are generated. As said in the root text of Great Seal:

*The nature of such an equipoise  
is unobscured, clear and bright,  
not made of any form,  
completely empty like space,  
and vividly appearing as anything.*

Having arranged all the above-mentioned prerequisites for stabilizing the mind, by focusing single-pointedly on the object by means of mindfulness and meta-awareness and extending the duration of your meditation, your mental placement will gradually improve until you can effortlessly remain as long as you wish, even months or years. Unobscured by any laxity or scattering whatsoever, very clear and bright, like an untarnished mirror, able to reflect any of the animate or inanimate worlds; able to count even the smallest particles in a pillar or any form that appears; (67 a1) it will rest in the state of space-like emptiness which lacks any form whatsoever. If such absorption is not sustained by bliss of physical and mental pliancy it is called a 'single-pointed mind of the desire realm;' and when it is sustained by bliss of physical and mental pliancy it becomes Tranquil Abiding.

### **[26. The Nine Levels of Mental Placement and Their Relation to the Four Applications]**

Such Tranquil Abiding is taught to be the indispensable foundation for the path of all three vehicles; and definitely necessary in order to

progress by way of any of the paths of the four classes of tantra, as well. Here, according to the Great Seal Commentary, when practicing such mental concentration, it is accomplished by applying eight antidotes to eliminate five faults; and attaining nine mental placements by way of six forces and four mental applications. The five faults and eight antidotes have already been explained. The nine mental placements are: 1. placing mind on its object, 2. continual placement, 3. replacement, 4. close placement, 5. subduing, 6. pacifying, 7. completely pacifying, 8. making single-pointed, and 9. equal placement. The six forces are: 1. the force of hearing, 2. force of contemplation, 3. force of mindfulness, 4. force of meta-awareness, 5. force of enthusiasm, and 6. force of familiarity. (67 b1) As for how the mental placements are attained by these forces: the first mental placement is attained through the force of hearing; the second mental placement is attained through the force of contemplation; the third and fourth mental placements are attained through the force of mindfulness; the fifth and sixth mental placements are attained through the force of meta-awareness; the seventh and eighth mental placements are attained through the force of enthusiasm; and the ninth mental placement is attained through the force of familiarity. The four mental applications are: 1. application of tightly concentrated engagement; 2. application of occasional, interrupted engagement; 3. application of uninterrupted engagement; and 4. spontaneous engagement. As for how these applications engage the nine mental placements: the first and second mental placements are with concentrated engagement; the third through seventh mental placements are with interrupted engagement; the eighth mental placement is with uninterrupted engagement; and the ninth mental placement is with spontaneous engagement.

These instructions on how to meditate on the nine mental placements were taught by Je Tsongkhapa in the oral lineage only; he did not explain it in his other written commentaries. Yet, if you examine his collected works in detail, you can ascertain that he had these instructions. In his *Queries from a Sincere Heart* (68 a1) there are many objections from an opponent regarding various points of these instructions, which Je Tsongkhapa refutes; and from that these instructions may be gleaned. In the Tranquil Abiding chapter of his shorter *Stages of the Path* Tsongkhapa indicates, a mode of meditation such as this, which takes the mind itself as the focal object, is clearly taught. Not placing the mind on any other focal object such as the form of a deity, cultivates just a non-conceptual mind; just rest in that without thinking about any mental object whatsoever. Remembering this, remain undistracted from the mind without scattering. Not wandering, remaining undistracted, means the same thing as

remembering the focal object without forgetting it. Thus, this meditation is not something other than cultivating mindfulness, because it also relies on mindfulness to bring out its force of ascertainment.

Thus, it is clearly indicated. He also clearly indicates the existence of these instructions on how to eliminate scattering. From the same text: At first various objects such as forms appear. As soon as they appear they automatically subside and disappear. Finally, when settling in equipoise, no signs of forms, sounds, etc., appear; only the mind's clarity and cognition and an aspect of bliss. For it to transform it into non-conceptuality, by not thinking or paying attention to anything, whatever thought that arises will be like a bubble bursting in water, unable to connect with discursive scattering, disappearing on the spot. (68 b1) Then, by meditating as before, there is no need to intentionally stop experiences of cognition and bliss; as soon as they arise it is like their covering is peeled away; they cannot bear to stay and automatically subside and disappear. The experience of cognition and bliss becomes more subtle. At that point, when in meditative equipoise, there is no appearance of anything, including your body. An experience arises in which your mind seems to be inseparable from space. When you arise from this there is an experience of your body suddenly appearing. Afterwards, although deluded thoughts of anger and so forth may arise, they are not at all like before. They are weaker and cannot last for long. This is the stage referred to as 'closely pacified.' There is an experience of great clarity which seems as if you could count all the tiny particles in the pillars and walls. When stability is very strong, even sleep will not be the same as before. There will be an experience of sleep mixing with the absorption, many dream appearances also disappearing, and so on.

Thus, he clearly teaches it here. The words of the Great Seal root text regarding this are (69 a1) none other than the teachings of the great adepts (mahāsiddhas); and their ultimate intention is high levels of the tantric path. The instructions presented here, however, are intended for beginners to easily accomplish focusing their minds. As said in the *Descent to Lañkā Sūtra*:<sup>63</sup>

*Just as physicians give medicines  
to patients for their sicknesses,  
Buddhas give sentient beings  
teachings fully suited to their minds.*

And, as said in the *Precious Garland*,

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<sup>63</sup> Skt. *Lañkāvatāra Sūtra*.



*Just as language teachers have students  
learn to read the alphabet,  
so Buddhas reveal to trainees  
the teachings that they can bear.*

As said, Buddhas' activities and skillful means are unexcelled. Ultimately, these instructions will also ripen the mind to quickly develop high practices of the tantric path. To take an example, the words of great adept Saraha:

*If the mind element, bound by compulsion,  
is released, one is liberated, without doubt.*

He is describing bondage by the various dualistic concepts being released through the skillful means of tantra. Penetrating the points of the subtle body allows the extremely subtle mind to manifest just as it is. By meditating on that, all concepts and their movement cease, a clear light mind appears and, in dependence upon that, one quickly attains (69 b1) liberation. That was Saraha's intention in saying this. His means of focusing the mind was presented here as instructions for beginners to be able to focus their minds; in dependence upon them, the ultimate focusing of the mind will also be realized.

The secret aspects of these instructions, as often said before, should be taught only to those who have received highest yoga tantra initiation, who are keeping their commitments. Those who have not received the four initiations should be given these instructions only in their non-exclusive form. This completes the instructions on focusing the mind, including those of the orally transmitted tradition.

**[End of translation of Yeshe Gyaltsen's Guide  
to Tranquil Abiding]**

**Author's colophon**

(122a2) This teaching, *Bright Lamp of the Excellent Path of oral Transmission : An Instruction Manual of Gelug Great Seal*, has been written at the behest of the Supreme Changkya Tulku, who sits like crown among the eminent teachers who are akin to victorious banners, unparallel to maintaining, safeguarding, and disseminating Tsongkhpa's doctrine.

He requested me to write an introductory guide to the Instruction of the Profound Path of the Great Seal, in accordance with the Gelug Oral Tradition that elucidates profound key points, substantiated by

scriptural quotations and logical reasonings, and supplemented with oral instructions.

Therefore, I, Yeshe Gyaltsen, a fully ordained monk, who had privilege to receive this teaching of oral instruction from master who have traversed on this remarkable path and attained high realization, have composed this text at Tashi Samtenling, which is tucked away in the remote forest area of Kyirong, lies on the border of Tibet and Nepal. May this teaching establish cause of victory against the degeneration of the Buddha's doctrine.

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## Notes on the Iconographical Program of Giorgi's *Alphabetum Tibetanum* (1762)

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here is hardly a book more vexed in Tibetan Studies than the *Alphabetum Tibetanum* of the Augustinian Agostino Antonio Giorgi (1711–1797).<sup>1</sup> Giorgi's "alphabet" or "ABCs" of Tibetan was among the very first academic monographs on Tibetan religion and culture published in Europe. Although it was read favorably by Sir William Jones (1746–1794), Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), and G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831), Giorgi's *Alphabetum Tibetanum* has been widely denigrated.<sup>2</sup> To take but one example: Wilfrid L. Heeley described it in 1874 as the "ponderous" tome of a stay-at-home traveler whose Coptic, Syriac, Hebrew, and Sanskrit marked it as a "striking monument of the misplaced erudition of the age."<sup>3</sup> And—to be perfectly frank—Giorgi's zany theorizing and ineptitude with the Tibetan language make the *Alphabetum Tibetanum* an easy target.<sup>4</sup> In the headlong rush to criticize Giorgi, many have failed to acknowledge that the *Alphabetum Tibetanum* made several important advances in Tibetan Studies, not least in the representation of Tibetan art. Books published in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries largely depicted Tibetan art with Western conventions and according to Western tastes. In contrast, Giorgi based his images of Buddhist art on Tibetan prototypes, credited a Tibetan iconographer (*lha 'bri pa*) named Yon tan, reproduced the artist's images according to Tibetan artistic conventions, and explained his images using texts from the Buddhist canon.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The *Alphabetum Tibetanum* was published in two versions, one short and one long. The first is Giorgi 1759 [1763] and the second is Giorgi 1762 [1763]. For a German translation of the latter, see Lindegger 1999–2001.

<sup>2</sup> For a sampling of the charges made against Giorgi, see Pomplun 2020: 194–196.

<sup>3</sup> Heeley 1874: 139.

<sup>4</sup> A notable exception to the targeting of Giorgi is Bellini 2011. See Kaschewsky 1988 and Kaschewsky 1997 as well.

<sup>5</sup> Giorgi identifies the Tibetan painter as "Jon-de La-hu-rì." The Tibetan reproduced on the images in the *Alphabetum Tibetanum* shows the first name to be Yon tan, which is misspelled *yon ten*. La-hu-rì, which is supposed to represent the garbled *la'u ri'ab* phonetically, is likely *lha 'bri pa*, "iconographer."

Giorgi's image of the Wheel of Existence (*bhavacakra*, *srid pa'i 'khor lo*) is especially important in this regard. As the centerpiece of an historically significant iconographical program, Giorgi's depiction introduced Europeans both to one of the most famous Buddhist images and to the Buddhist notions it was meant to illustrate, namely, the twelve links of dependent arising (*pratītyasamutpāda*, *rten cing 'brel ba 'byung ba*). Compared to the better-known images of Tibetan art found in books by Athanasius Kircher (1602–1680), Bernard Picart (1673–1733), Orazio della Penna di Billi (1680–1745), and Paulinus a Sancto Bartholomaeo (1748–1806), Giorgi's iconographical program marked a decided advance in Western depictions of Asian art. As it so happens, Giorgi's image was also published over a century before the famous reproduction of the Wheel of Existence by the Scottish explorer Lieutenant Colonel Laurence Austine Waddell (1854–1938), who is sometimes credited with introducing the image to Europe.<sup>6</sup> In what follows, I would like to outline the iconographical program in Giorgi's *Alphabetum Tibetanum*, explain its significance, and compare it to contemporary depictions of Tibetan art in Europe.

### 1. Agostino Antonio Giorgi and the *Alphabetum Tibetanum*

Francesco Maria Giorgi was born in San Mauro on May 10, 1711, the eldest son of Antonio Giorgi (1685–1723) and Antonia Semprini (1687–1767), whose families had lived in San Mauro since the sixteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Giorgi became a novice in the order of Augustinian Hermits in 1726 and made his novitiate in Bologna, taking the name Agostino Antonio after professing his vows in 1727. Giorgi studied with many of the best scholars of the order, conducting his philosophical studies under Agostino Gioia (1695–1751), who would later be elected the order's Prior General, and doing his theological studies under Gianlorenzo Berti (1696–1766), the greatest Augustinian theologian of the eighteenth century. Giorgi completed his course of studies in 1738 and was ordained by Cardinal Prospero Lambertini (1675–1758), the future Pope Benedict XIV. Before he had turned fifty, Giorgi had secured a chair at the papal university La Sapienza, appointments to the Congregation for Rites and the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, and the directorship of the Bibliotheca Angelica, one of the most important libraries in Rome. At the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, Giorgi worked with Costantino Ruggieri (1714–1763) and his successor Giovanni Cristoforo Amaduzzi (1740–

<sup>6</sup> Waddell 1892: 133–155.

<sup>7</sup> For a biography of Giorgi, see Grigioni 1912.

1792), and his circle eventually widened to include the collectors Francesco Carafa (1722–1818) and Stefano Borgia (1731–1804).<sup>8</sup> Giorgi himself made important contributions to Western knowledge of Etruscan, Arabic, Syriac, and Samaritan monuments and manuscripts—as well as to the understanding of the Sahidic, Akhmimic, and Fayyumic dialects of Coptic. He was named Procurator General of the Augustinian order in 1764, thus serving as its chief financial officer and fundraiser, and Vicar General in 1785, the second highest rank in a religious order that counted over 20,000 members worldwide. Giorgi lost the election for Prior General in 1786 and was passed over by the order’s leadership during the general chapter of 1792. He died on the morning of May 4, 1797.

The first edition of Giorgi’s *Alphabetum Tibetanum* was a typical work of eighteenth-century Italian Orientalism. It consisted of a preface, twenty-three small chapters, and three appendices, with basic discussions of Tibetan orthography, pronunciation, and grammar. True to the *alphabetum* genre, its first appendix includes interlinear translations and transliterations of the Sign of the Cross, the Lord’s Prayer, the Hail Mary, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments. Its second appendix consists of transliterations of six small Tibetan documents obtained from the Propaganda archives, with translations and explanations of basic Tibetan vocabulary. Its third appendix, however, took up the academic discussion on the Tibetan language that had begun in Europe with Maturin Veyssière de la Croze (1661–1739), Étienne Fourmont (1683–1745), and Theophilus Siegfried Bayer (1694–1738). The second edition of Giorgi’s *Alphabetum Tibetanum* is a different beast altogether [Fig. 1]. In it, Giorgi took on the entire Orientalist establishment of his day, including Samuel Bochart (1599–1667), Johann Heinrich Hottinger (1620–1667), and Joseph de Guignes (1721–1800). His chief adversary, however, was the Calvinist Isaac de Beausobre (1659–1738), who had questioned the accuracy of patristic accounts of Manichaeism.<sup>9</sup> Giorgi advanced an extended argument that Tibetan Buddhism was an admixture of earlier Buddhist traditions that had survived in Southeast Asia and later traditions that were derived from Manichaeism and other “Gnostic” sources. Giorgi compared Tibetan Buddhism to Egyptian, Greek, Indian, and Japanese myths, charted the eastward course of Manichaeism along the Silk Road and its influence on Mahāyāna Buddhism, and provided an account of the history of Tibet, its provinces and rulers, the Tibetan calendar, and so forth. In this regard, the second edition of Giorgi’s

<sup>8</sup> On Borgia’s role as a collector of Tibetan artifacts and manuscripts, see De Rossi Filibeck 2023: 163–165.

<sup>9</sup> Beausobre 1734.

*Alphabetum Tibetanum* offered its readers nothing less than a comprehensive history of religions, an extended argument about the relationship of Tibetan Buddhism to Manichaeism, and an academic monograph on Tibetan history, geography, and culture. Were this not enough, Giorgi appended the entire first edition of the *Alphabetum Tibetanum* as a second part, bringing the entire production to well over 800 pages.

Whatever one might make of its arguments, the second edition of the *Alphabetum Tibetanum* is historically significant as a work of typography. The Press at the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith had long been at the forefront of non-Western typography, having introduced Europe to several Asian and African languages, but Giorgi's *Alphabetum Tibetanum* was the first book to use genuine Tibetan typeforms, with punches that were carved for the Capuchin mission by Antonio Fantauzzi (fl. 1720–1740).<sup>10</sup> In addition to Tibetan, the second edition also made lavish use of the Congregation's Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, Coptic, Arabic, and Devanāgarī founts. Paolo Antonio Ciccolini (fl. 1750–1770) served as the artistic designer, Alessio Giardini (fl. 1760–1791) did the engraving, and a young Giambattista Bodoni (1740–1813) designed the decorations and the frontispiece for the second part. Johann Joachim Winckelmann—yes, *that* Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768), the man many consider to be the founder of modern art history—wrote the formal *approbatio*.<sup>11</sup>

Be that as it may, Giorgi depended on missionaries for his knowledge of Tibetan religion and culture. It is an open question whether he knew much of the writings of the Jesuit Ippolito Desideri (1684–1733), the bulk of which languished in the Jesuit archives.<sup>12</sup> The Augustinian drew deeply on the Capuchin missionaries, especially Orazio della Penna di Billi (1680–1745), who undertook the reorganization of the mission in 1738 after living in Tibet from 1716 to 1733, from whom Giorgi took his descriptions of Tibetan cosmology, monasticism, history, geography, customs, and calendar.<sup>13</sup> Fr. Orazio, usually seen as the most talented Capuchin in Tibet, passed away

<sup>10</sup> For an overview of Tibetan typography in Europe in the eighteenth century, see Henkel 1973; Baerdemaeker 2020; and Kapstein 2024: 20–39.

<sup>11</sup> Giorgi 1762 [1763]: 7.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the reception of Desideri's account of Tibet see: Sweet and Zwilling 2010. Bellini thinks that one can establish Giorgi's dependence on Desideri based on similarities in their descriptions of the Wheel of Existence. See Bellini 2011: 55, 70–72.

<sup>13</sup> For important overviews of the Capuchin mission in Tibet, see Petech 1952–1956) [=MITN] 1: xv–cxx; Engelhardt 2002; Engelhardt 2005; and Sweet and Zwilling



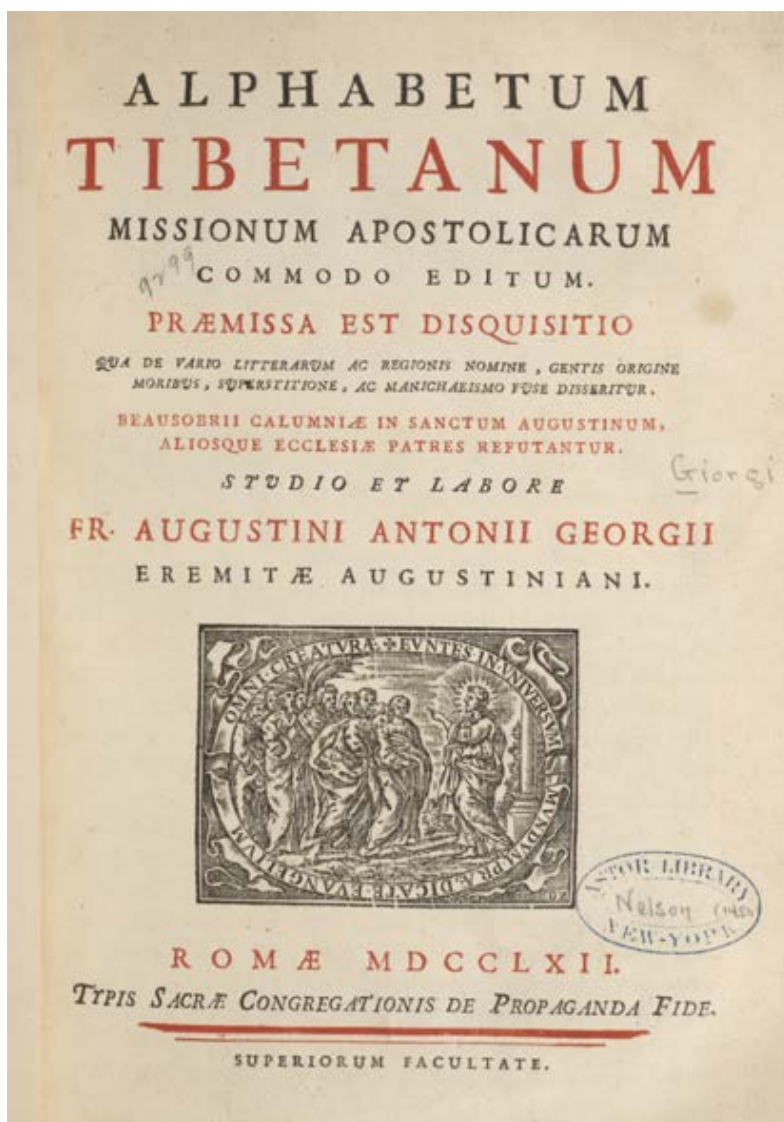


Fig. 1. Title page. Engraving, 28.8 × 20.3 cm. From Giorgi 1762 [1763]. New York, New York Public Library, call no. b14218996. Image © The New York Public Library.

2022. For a collation of Giorgi's borrowings from the Capuchins, see MITN 5: xciv-c. For a modern edition of Orazio della Penna, see Marini 2005.

before Giorgi began work on the *Alphabetum Tibetanum*, so Giorgi depended also on the Capuchin Cassiano da Macerata (1708–1791) for his life of the Buddha, a summary of Tibetan rituals, his description of Tibet temples, and his interpretation of Tibetan texts.<sup>14</sup> Fr. Cassiano had studied Tibetan with Orazio della Penna as the Capuchins returned to Tibet, but he lived in Lhasa for only about a year and a half. As a result, the Tibetan translations of Giorgi's *Alphabetum* cannot always be trusted.

## 2. The Iconographical Program of the *Alphabetum Tibetanum*

Whatever its flaws—which are many—the *Alphabetum Tibetanum*'s iconographical program marks a significant advance both in the Western depiction of Tibetan Buddhist images and in the European understanding of Tibetan Buddhism. Giorgi copied actual Tibetan images, attributed them to an actual Tibetan artist, and reproduced his images according to Tibetan iconographical norms—all things that had not been done in previous works on Buddhism published in Europe. What is more, Giorgi's use of images was scholarly. They served to support and to illustrate his presentation of various aspects of Tibetan religion and culture rather than merely to excite his readers' fantasies; indeed, Giorgi used the images in the exact way they were used in Tibet, namely, to teach and to illustrate basic aspects of Buddhist doctrine and cosmology. Giorgi also used his images to depict the material culture of Tibet. The *Alphabetum Tibetanum* includes images of Tibetan books and writing instruments, the floorplan of a Tibetan temple, and several small illustrations of Buddhist symbols. Its iconographical program, however, consists chiefly of five large images:

- (1) The Procession by which Ministers of the Sacred Proceed to the Final Act of Solemn Sacrifice (*Pompa qua Sacrorum Ministri ad ultimam Solemnis Sacrificii actionem procedunt*), which shows a Mönlam procession.
- (2) The True Image of the World (*Figura Mundi Sincera*), a reproduction of a Tibetan painting depicting Buddhist cosmology according to the *Lokaprajñapti*.
- (3) The Cycle of Transmigrations (*Cyclus Transmigrationum*), a reproduction of a Tibetan painting of the Wheel of Existence.

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<sup>14</sup> De Rossi Filibeck 1998.

- (4) The Prayer Oṃ Maṇi Padme Hūṃ (*Oratio Hom-mani-peme-hum*), which depicts various Tibetan ritual implements connected with the Buddhist mantra.
- (5) Some of the Deities, Great and Small, Lamas, Monks, Sorcerers, Meditators, Governors, and Tibetan Men and Women from Lhasa, of whom Mention is Made in the A[lphabetum] T[ibetanum]" (*Effigies nonnullorum numinum, maximi minorumque lhamarum, trabarum, magorum, ritrobarum, debarum, virorum ac mulierum tibetanarum, lhassensium, de quibus mentio fit in A. T.*)<sup>15</sup>

A striking feature of these images—and this is no small thing—is that they actually look like the Tibetan artworks and figures they attempted to represent, especially the gatefolds depicting Buddhist cosmology and the Wheel of Existence, which were copied from Tibetan originals.

Let us consider each image in turn. The first gatefold depicts a "Procession in Which the Ministers of the Sacred Make Their Way to the Final Act of Solemn Sacrifice" [Fig. 2]. Giorgi's description of this procession deserves to be quoted at length:

In the solemn sacrifice, a mass of barley flour, kneaded into the shape of a cone, serves as material for the burnt offering. This sacred cone, which is called *Thurmā*, *rtur ma* [sic], is embellished with lotus blossoms and brought from a temple outside the city in a procession led by a lama, or priest, who is chosen to perform this ceremony in certain months of the year. Only during *Monlam*, *smon lam*, which is solemnly celebrated in the first month as a kind of jubilee and corresponds to the 22nd day of the month in our February, the Supreme Lama, or someone in his place, such as the divine *Lhama Kadèn*, *dga' ldan*, provides the service. A long procession is formed: standard bearers carry sixteen standards in front, on the tops of which is found the *trīsula* [sic], *trisul*, or trident, which is the symbol of *Mhadei* [*mahādeva*]. The lamas, and the *Kelong*, *dga slong* [sic], or professed monks, dressed in miters and a kind of pallium, proceed in pairs, beating timpani, blowing trumpets, and singing hymns. These are followed by *Nga-rambā*, *sngags rams pa*, Magi, dressed in felt caps and vestments shaped like dalmatics, woven with designs

<sup>15</sup> Giorgi's program is somewhat confusing in that he explicitly identifies four of his images as "plates" (*tabulae*), even though these do not correspond to the four gatefolds. The first gatefold of the Mönlam procession [Fig. 2] is not identified as a plate. Giorgi's first self-identified plate is therefore the second gatefold [Fig. 3], the second plate is the third gatefold [Fig. 4], the third plate shows the Tibetan ritual implements [Fig. 5], and the fourth plate corresponds to the fourth gatefold [Fig. 6].

of skulls and *Turcè*, *rdo rje*. Ministers in stoles follow, of which six swing thuribles, and two carry silver-covered conch shells full of barley beer, which are used as pitchers.<sup>16</sup>



Fig. 2. Alessio Giardoni (engraver), The Procession by which Ministers of the Sacred Proceed to the Final Act of Solemn Sacrifice (*Pompa qua Sacrorum Ministri ad ultimam Solemnis Sacrificii actionem procedunt*). Engraving, 28.5 × 40 cm. From Giorgi 1762 [1763], between 212-213. New York, New York Public Library, call no. b14218996. Image © The New York Public Library.

<sup>16</sup> "In solemnī sacrificio Massa ex hordeo in Coni morem formata holocausti materiem suppeditat. Sacrum Conum floribus Loti impressum, *Thurmà rtur ma* nuncupatum, e Templo extra unbis moenia praeunte pompa singulis anni mensibus sacrum consumaturus educit Lhama Sacerdos: In *Monlam smon lam* tantum, quod mense primo tanquam solempne quoddam Jubilaeum celebrator, Luna XXII. in Februarium nostrum incidente, supremus Lhama, eiusque loco, qui est *Lhama Kadèn dga' ldan* divina ministrat. Longa instituitur Processio: Praeferunt Vexilliferi signa sexdecim, in quorum vertice *trtsula* [sic] *trisul*, Tridens est symbolum *Mhadei*. Lhamae et ipsi quoque *Kelong dga slong*, Religiosi Professi Mitra, ac Pallio veluti Sacerdotali induti, bini procedunt pulsantes tympana, inflantes buccinas, hymnosque canentes: Sequuntur *Nnga-rambà*, *sngags rams pa* Magi, tecti pileo et vestibus, quae calvariis, ac *Turcè rdo rje* intertextae formam exhibent Dalmaticarum: Tum stolati Ministri, quorum sex Thuribula accensa, duo reliqui argenteam concham hordei, et urceum gestant cerevisiae plenum." Giorgi 1762 [1763]: 211-212.

Giorgi's description is not bad at all. He goes on to mention monks that are not fully ordained (*gra ba*) and laymen, the tripod and yak-skin used in the ritual, the consecration and immolation of cake offerings (*gtor ma*), and the accompanying dances. The similarities Giorgi saw in the liturgies of Catholicism and Tibetan Buddhism are genuinely analogous. The "miters" worn by the fully ordained monks (*dge slong*) are depicted accurately, as are the censers, drums, and "trumpets" (*rgya gling*).

The first plate shown on the second gatefold, "The True Image of the World," is a depiction of Tibetan cosmology from the *Treatise on the Arrangement of the World* (*Lokaprajñāpti*, 'jig rten gzhaḡ pa) [Fig. 3]. Here, Giorgi reproduces a Tibetan prototype and follows Tibetan iconographical conventions. The capital letters S, T, V, and W mark the east, south, west, and north, respectively. Starting from the bottom, the capital letters indicate Asia [A], including China [B], India [C], Tibet [D], Uḡḡḡyāna [E], and Shambala [F], whereas capital letters G and H represent the islands to the east and west of Asia, both of which are identified as Buddhist lands. Following counterclockwise, the capital letters I, K, and L represent the western continent and its two islands; M, N, and O the northern continent and its two islands; and P, Q, and R the eastern continent and its two islands, completing the four continents and eight islands of traditional Buddhist cosmology. These lands are all found on a single plane from which the cosmological map projects upwards. Numbers 1-7 and letters a-g thus depict tiers of mountain rings and their seas on the mythical Mount Meru as it ascends to the celestial spheres. Numbers 8-33 depict the various realms of the gods and realized beings on an ascending scale according to the longevity of their lives and their freedom from desire and attachment. They are divided accordingly into the gods of the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*, 'dod pa'i kham), the realm of pure form (*rūpadhātu*, gzugs kham), and the formless realm (*arūpadhātu*, gzugs med kham). Numbers 32 and 33, which are indicated on the map only by small houses placed at the base from which the god realms are projected, thus represent the two final formless realms, the realm of nothingness (*ākāṃcanyāyatana*, ci yang med pa) and the realm of neither existence nor nonexistence (*naivasamjñānāsamjñāyatana*, yod min med min), the two most rarefied realms of Buddhist cosmology. Returning to the desire realms, number 34 depicts the mythical Jampū tree, whose fruit bestows near-immortality upon the gods, and numbers 35-38 depict the four great oceans of Buddhist cosmology. Giorgi also lists each tier with its dimensions, the life span of its inhabitants, and the Tibetan names of the deities and preternatural beings that govern each realm in the body of his text.



Fig. 3. Alessio Giardoni (engraver) and Paolo Antonio Ciccolini (designer) (after Yönten the Iconographer), *The True Image of the World* (*Figura mundi sincera*). Engraving, 58 × 40 cm. From Giorgi 1762 [1763], between 472-473. New York, New York Public Library, call no. b14218996. Image © The New York Public Library.

Giorgi was also aware of his image's value and limitations:

Our engraving was made by a Tibetan painter, expressed in accordance with the latest opinions of the lamas. An earlier one, sent to Rome by Father Orazio, was lost, so that only this draft of the complex whole remains. We ourselves have used this one, which was made on the basis of a tracing, but it had to be accommodated to the technique of copperplate engraving.<sup>17</sup>

Giorgi's second plate on his third gatefold "The Cycle of Transmigrations" represents the famous Wheel of Existence [Fig. 4].<sup>18</sup> Tradition of course credits this iconography to the Buddha, who commanded the image to be drawn in the vestibules of monasteries.<sup>19</sup> The Buddha's injunction appears in several different stories, with minor variations here and there, occurring in the story of Anāthapiṇḍika's gift of the Jetavana Grove to the Buddha and his nascent community, in one of the Buddha's conversations with his disciple Ānanda about the paranormal endowments of Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, and in the story of the kings Udrāyaṇa's and Bimbisāra's attempt to capture the likeness of the Holy One.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> "Haec nostra Tabula constructa est a Pictore Tibetano, cui placuit potremam Lhamarum opinionem exprimere. Prior, quae Romam missa fuerat a P. Horatio, jam periit, una superstitute descriptione systematis. Hac plane diagrapha usi nos ipsi sumus; sed ea in praesentis accommodanda est schemati insculptae Tab." Giorgi 1762 [1763]: 481.

<sup>18</sup> Lyudmila Klasanova informs me that the engraving of the Wheel of Existence from Giorgi's *Alphabetum Tibetanum* held at the National Gallery in Bulgaria has the additional inscription "Cyclus Transmigrationum ex Theologia Lhamarum ex linteo quod fixum est Velitris in Museo Borgiano Pictor Tibetanus Ion-de Lahuri ex archetypo sacro in Lhapranga Lhassensi asservato coloribus expressit," that is, a "Cycle of Transmigrations from the Theology of the Lamas that was copied from the canvas of the Tibetan painter Yönten the Iconographer in the Museo Borgiano in Velletri from a sacred prototype expressed in colors and preserved in the Bla brang in Lhasa." Compare Figure 12, below. Dr. Klasanova also tells me that the engraving in the Bulgarian National Gallery, which influenced the orthodox iconographer Zahari Zograf (1810–1853), was probably purchased by his father, who traveled in Western Europe during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. I am grateful for this information, which was communicated to me personally on July 17, 2024.

<sup>19</sup> The first known use of the Wheel of Existence as a visual symbol of *samsāra* is found in a painting executed on a porch in the Ajaṇṭā complex from ca. 460–480 CE. Paintings of the Wheel of Existence had spread along the Silk Road to China by the ninth century, and they probably began to appear in Tibet by the late tenth century. See Teiser 2006; Zin and Schlinghoff 2022.

<sup>20</sup> For a summary, see Sopa 1984.





Fig. 4. Alessio Giordani (engraver) and Paolo Antonio Ciccolini (designer) (after “Yönten the Iconographer”), The Cycle of Transmigrations (*Cyclus Transmigrationum*). Engraving, 52 × 41 cm. From Giorgi 1762 [1763], between 486-487. New York, New York Public Library, call no. b14218996. Image © The New York Public Library.



In most of these stories, the Buddha enjoins his followers to write the following verses under the image of the Wheel of Existence, which Giorgi reproduces:

*brtsam par bya zhing 'byung bar bya // sangs rgyas bstan la 'jug par bya  
// 'dam bu'i khyim na glang chen bzhin// 'chi bdag sde ni gzhom par bya//  
gang zhig rab tu bag yod par// chos 'dul 'di la spyod 'gyur ba// skye ba'i 'khor  
ba rab spangs nas// sdug bsngal tha mar byed par 'gyur//*<sup>21</sup>

Gather up, cast away, and enter the Buddha's teaching. Trample the Lord of Death's minions like an elephant in a house of reeds. Whoever practices this dharma and monastic discipline with great care, having thoroughly abandoned the wheel of births, will bring suffering to an end.

This text appears frequently in the Buddhist canon, most prominently in the *Vinaya-vastu* and the *Vinaya-vibhaṅga*.<sup>22</sup> We may reasonably assume that Giorgi learned it through Orazio della Penna Billi, who read it in the *Prātimokṣa-sūtra*, a text he studied with Desideri in 1717.<sup>23</sup>

Giorgi's copy, which is based on a Tibetan design of the seventeenth or early eighteenth century, is typical, showing the boar, rooster, and serpent that represent the three poisons, the intermediate state, and the six realms. Compare it, for example, to an eighteenth-century Wheel of Existence in the Rubin Museum [Fig. 5]. What is more important, one finds the twelve links of dependent arising (*dvādaśāṅga-pratītyasamutpāda*, *rten 'brel yan lag bcu gnyis*) with their symbols. Traditionally of course these are:

- (1) Ignorance (*avidyā*, *ma rig pa*)
- (2) Formation (*saṃskāra*, *'dus byed*)
- (3) Consciousness (*viññāna*, *rnam par shes pa*)
- (4) Name and form (*nāma-rūpa*, *ming dang gzugs*)
- (5) The six sense organs (*ṣaḍāyatana*, *skye mched drung*)
- (6) Contact (*sparsa*, *reg ba*)
- (7) Sensation (*vedanā*, *tshor ba*)
- (8) Craving (*bhavarāga*, *sred pa*)
- (9) Grasping (*partigraha/upādāna*, *len pa*)
- (10) Existence (*bhava*, *srid pa*)
- (11) Birth (*jāti*, *skyes pa*)
- (12) Old age and death (*jāra-maraṇa*, *rga dang shi*)

<sup>21</sup> Giorgi 1762 [1763]: 469. Giorgi makes several mistakes in his transcription.

<sup>22</sup> See Sde dge 1, vol. 1 'dul ba ka 91b7-92a2 and Sde dge 3, vol. 7 'dul ba ja 115a2-115a3, respectively.

<sup>23</sup> Sde dge vol. 5 'dul ba ca 20b4-20b6.



Fig. 5. *The Wheel of Life*, 18th century. Ground mineral pigment on canvas, 63.5 × 44.8 cm. New York, Rubin Museum of Art, Gift of the Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation, inv. no. F1997.40.10. Image © Rubin Museum of Art.

These twelve links are symbolized by (1) a blind man or woman, (2) a potter with his wares, (3) a monkey, (4) a person on a boat, (5) an abandoned house, often having windows to represent the senses, (6) a couple embracing, (7) a man with his eye pierced by an arrow, (8) a man receiving a drink from a woman, (9) a man or a monkey plucking fruit from a tree, (10) a husband and a wife, or sometimes an attractive or pregnant woman, (11) a woman giving birth, and (12) a man carrying a corpse on his back.<sup>24</sup> As we shall see below, Giorgi does not get each of these elements correct, but he appears to be mistaken for interesting reasons.

Giorgi's third plate, "The Prayer Om Maṇi Padme Hūṃ," illustrates the various objects in his discussion of the Tibetan formula, all of which are related to Giorgi's explanation of the term *maṇi* [Fig. 6]. Giorgi wisely starts his discussion by noting that the term admits of many meanings.<sup>25</sup> I am tempted to say that it all goes downhill from there, since the presence of the word *maṇi* in the mantra is one of the chief reasons Giorgi believed Tibetan Buddhism to be Manichaeism in inspiration. Leaving the Augustinian's creative etymology aside, his descriptions are fairly innocuous. The image contains the cairn (*lha tho*) often erected on mountaintops or high places [A], a *dar po che* or *dar lcog*, the flagstaff upon which prayers are written [B], a hand-held prayer wheel [C], a home adorned with prayer flags [D], three large prayer wheels [E], and another prayer wheel that shows the mantra written both in Tibetan and in "Sanskrit" [F]. Each of these objects is treated according to Giorgi's comparative fancy, but his understanding of their apotropaic and ritual uses is sound. He correctly characterizes the cairns as sites at which pilgrims leave prayer flags and other votive offerings, and he rightly realizes that the *dar po che* serves to avert misfortune (*depulsoria mali*). Giorgi's description of the *maṇi lag khor*, which he calls a "traveling *maṇi*" (*maṇi gestatorius*), is also spot on.

Giorgi's iconographical program is rounded out by a fourth plate, "Some of the Deities, Great and Small, Lamas, Monks, Sorcerers, Meditators, Governors, and Tibetan Men and Women from Lhasa, of whom Mention is Made in the A[lphabetum] T[ibetanum]," that depicts various participants, human and divine, who have been described over the course of his work [Fig. 7]. These images allow Giorgi to provide illustrations for the entire volume, including Amitābha, Avalokiteśvara, Vajrapāṇi, and Padmasambhava. Here,

<sup>24</sup> For a table that compares several variations, see Teiser 2006: 10-11.

<sup>25</sup> "Maṇi praeterea apud Tibetanos nomen est ad plura significanda accommodatum." Giorgi 1762 [1763]: 508.

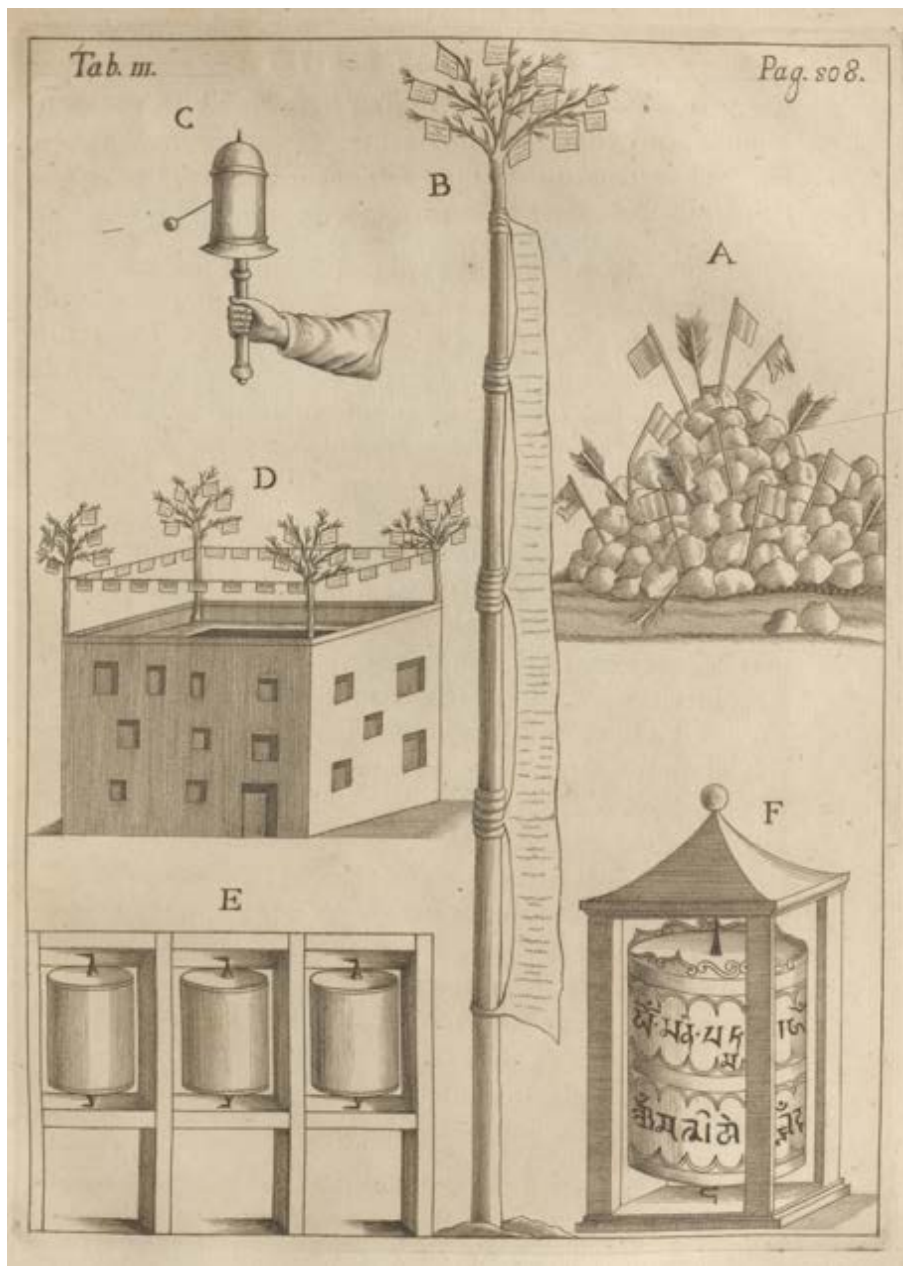


Fig. 6. Alessio Giardoni (engraver), The Prayer Om Maṇi Padme Hūṃ (*Oratio Hom-mani-peme-hum*). Engraving, 24.6 × 18.1 cm. From Giorgi 1762 [1763], between 508-509. New York, New York Public Library, call no. b14218996. Image © The New York Public Library.

too, Giorgi is more accurate than his predecessors; if the religious figures are modelled more three-dimensionally to accord with European tastes, his basic iconography is sound, and the varieties of Tibetan dress are more detailed than in the more romantic depictions found in earlier works. Apparently, Ciccolini and Giardoni could not resist the urge to place Vajrapāṇi in a slightly more dramatic contrapposto than is usual.



Fig. 7. Alessio Giardoni (engraver), Some of the Deities, Great and Small, Lamas, Monks, Sorcerers, Meditators, Governors, and Tibetan Men and Women from Lhasa, of whom Mention is Made in the A[lphabetum] T[ibetanum] (*Effigies nonnullorum numinum, maximi minorumque lhamarum, trabarum, magorum, ritrobarum, debarum, virorum ac mulierum tibetanarum, lhassensium, de quibus mentio fit in A.T.*). Engraving, 28.5 × 36 cm. From Giorgi 1762 [1763], between 552–553. New York, New York Public Library, call no. b14218996. Image © The New York Public Library.



Still—to be fair—Tibetan canons do require Vajrapāṇi to be depicted in *pratyālīḍha*, the posture appropriate to warriors in Indian drama, especially those who have hurled javelins or other weapons.<sup>26</sup>

### 3. The Artistic Merits of Giorgi's Program

Giorgi's images might not seem especially dazzling today. Here, though, it might be helpful to compare Giorgi's program to contemporary depictions of Tibetan art which were not based on Tibetan models. Such depictions, based largely on missionary reports—presumably reports with little concern for artistic form—follow Western visual conventions with anachronistic—and often comical—results. Consider, for example, a famous image from the Jesuit Athanasius Kircher's *China illustrata*, "The Idol Manipe in the City of Barantola in the Kingdom of Lhasa, with Another Idol of Manipe" (*Idolum Manipe in urbe Barantola regni Lassa; Aliud Idolum Manipe*), which—even if the Jesuit was unaware that two different figures were represented—shows Tibetans bowing before images of Amitābha and Avalokiteśvara [Fig. 8].<sup>27</sup> Kircher shows a somewhat conservative taste for the time: he depicts the statues as Roman busts or figures on basic pedestals, monumental compositions based on cubes and regular pyramids with square bases. Perhaps he makes the slightest nod to more modern tastes by the high apex implied in the statue of Avalokiteśvara, even if it sags a little to the right, but spiral compositions more typical of mannerist or baroque tastes—or even simple diagonals—are conspicuously absent in Kircher's images. Tibetan statuary is similarly monumental, and its iconographical conventions favor compositions based on interlocking geometrical forms, but the volumes of Tibetan sculpture project neatly from the clean, regular lines of Tibetan painting. Kircher does not do badly representing the bodhisattva's heads, although the canonical form has eleven heads, not the nine depicted by Kircher. Tibetan artists, however, would never bisect the bodhisattvas in the way that Kircher did to accommodate them to Roman tastes, nor would they be especially concerned with the softer, more naturalistic forms depicted by Kircher.

<sup>26</sup> The Indian contrapposto is described with other dramatic poses in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* XI.70-72, the traditional Indian treatise on the performing arts. See, for example, Ghosh 2016, 1: 276-291. For Tibetan examples of Vajrapāṇi that would have been known in Orazio's milieu, see Cüppers, van der Kuijp, and Pagel 2012, plates 100-103.

<sup>27</sup> Kircher 1667: 72.



Fig. 8. The Idol Manipe in the City of Barantola in the Kingdom of Lhasa, with Another Idol of Manipe (*Idolum Manipe in urbe Barantola regni Lassa; Aliud Idolum Manipe*). Engraving, 17.7 × 20.1 cm. From Kircher 1667: 72. New York, New York Public Library, call no. b13034598. Image © The New York Public Library.

Kircher—or one of his informants from the missions—has also removed all but two of the arms, effectively destroying the symbolism of the bodhisattva's measureless ability to assist those in need. Indeed, it is difficult to say that Kircher attempted to reproduce Tibetan artworks at all; having none at his disposal, he simply improvised. Nor does the Jesuit discuss the artworks' pedagogical function or the Buddhist doctrines associated with them.

Consider, too, Bernard Picart's embellishment of Kircher's image, "The Idol Manipe, or the Divinity of Lhasa to whom One Offers Those Who Have Been Killed by Buth" (*Manipa Idole, ou Divinité de Lassa, à*

*laquelle on offre ceux, que Buth a tué*) [Fig. 9].<sup>28</sup> The French engraver, working in 1727, seems to have found Kircher's tastes a little stodgy. If anything, though, Picart strays even further from Tibetan conventions than Kircher does. Once again, Avalokiteśvara is placed on a pedestal in half-form with decidedly European forms and volumes. Picart, however, places Kircher's simple pedestal on a large double plinth, adds another plinth to separate the statue from the pedestal and decorates the statue with "Chinese" characters. Picart also depicts the scene in an awkward two-point perspective, or to be more precise, two different two-point schemes. In the first, the projection of the statue is so basic as to be almost strictly isometric. The second, which follows an orthogonal towards the door, is made more dramatic by the addition of some figures, although they appear to occupy a rather different space than the statue or the supplicants in the foreground. The supplicants, who appear to be illuminated by a second source of light, are composed even more haphazardly. The two swooning figures on the left appear to fall under the first perspectival scheme, with the foregrounded figures occupying—but not quite harmonizing—the two schemes in a central tangle of forms. The single slain woman, who falls to the right of the pile, is drawn on a horizontal line that defies both schemes, being as spatially awkward as the figures behind her.

Picart also seems to have been slightly unhappy with Avalokiteśvara's proportions. He trims the deity by raising the vertical, adds just enough to the lower body to suggest a classical torso, and slightly elevates the angle of the arms. By happy accident, Picart eschews Kircher's Roman arch, but he places the statue in an architectural setting that is equally strange. One presumes it to be a domed structure, rather than a circular tent like those depicted through the door; it supports several hanging lamps, and the wall paintings appear to be part of the structure. The paintings, which appear to adopt Chinese conventions, are more or less accurate to the period, but the rug is rather incongruous. One need not criticize Kircher or Picart too severely, though. Faced with the lacunae found in any text or verbal description, an artist is forced to make choices that an author—or in this case a missionary—might leave undetermined. But, here again, there is no effort to depict the Tibetan artworks according to anything resembling Tibetan conventions, nor did the images themselves contribute much to Western understandings of Buddhism beyond what was said in the texts.

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<sup>28</sup> Bernard and Picart Bernard 1728 [1727]. For other examples of what he calls "pictorial plagiarism," see Brauen 2004: 15.



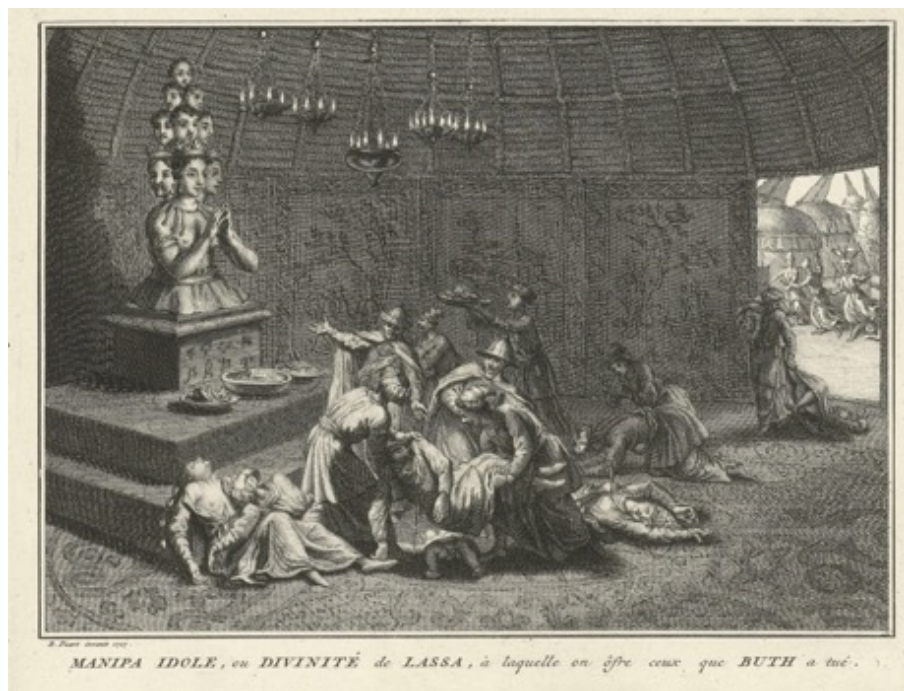


Fig. 9. Bernard Picart (engraver), The Idol Manipe, or the Divinity of Lhasa to Whom One Offers Those Who Have Been Killed by Buth (*Manipa Idole, ou Divinité de Lassa, à laquelle on offre ceux, que Buth a tué*). Engraving, 33.5 × 22.3 cm (sheet). From Bernard and Picart 1728, 2, part 1, between 354-355. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. RP-P-1911-3219. Image © Rijksmuseum.

Giorgi's image may be also compared favorably to another "Image of Tibetan Transmigrations" (*Tibetische Transmigrations Tafel*) based on Orazio della Penna di Billi's description [Fig. 10].<sup>29</sup> This image, which was made without a prototype, is a perfect example of just how far an artist can stray when he is working solely from a written text or verbal description. What has gone wrong? First, hard as it might be to imagine, this image fuses Orazio della Penna's descriptions of the *Lokaprajñapti* and the *bhavacakra*. The central heap, then, is not the Wheel of Existence, even though the six realms are shown with it, but rather the "quadrangular world mountain" (*viereckigen Welt-Berg*) that arises from the four great oceans in Indian cosmology that Giorgi

<sup>29</sup> Orazio della Penna di Billi 1740: 114-119.

depicted in Fig. 3.<sup>30</sup> Following the description found in the text, there is “an abominable monster,” which, according to the Tibetan opinion, is a symbol of human deeds [A]; the Tibetan “pseudo-God,” who is thought to be the composite of all the Tibetan saints and who has a body made entirely of gemstones [B]; “Sciachia tu-pha,” the final reformer and reviver of the Tibetans’ “pseudo-religion” [C]; and his mother [D]. Arguably, the strangest aspect of this image is the substitution of a more-or-less iconographically correct Garuda for Yama, the Lord of Death, who is said in the text to “attack” the world. It is not clear why he is placed to the far right. Similarly, the description of the Buddha appears to subsume an understanding of the *buddha*, *dharma*, and *samgha* by interpreting the word “jewel” to indicate the buddhas’ and bodhisattvas’ impassible, adamantine bodies. By distinguishing the Tibetan “God” from the Buddha, the author might suggest a dim understanding that the historical Śākyamuni was but an incarnation or emanation, but it is hard to imagine such a notion would have been understood or intended here. From there, one finds the six realms with gods placed in the upper left [1], demi-gods placed in the upper center [2], animals placed in the lower left and the lower right [3], ghosts placed on the upper right [4], hell-beings placed in a central cavity [5], and human beings sailing the seas to the far left, looking up at Mount Meru in apparent wonder. Iconographic errors abound. The placement is all wrong. The gods, who appear to be wearing jeweled turbans, listen to the priest of some solar religion as they enjoy star-shaped toys. The ghosts, which the text rightly describes as “the tantalized” or “tantalians” (*Tantaler*), appear to be enjoying their food and having a grand old time. While the animals on the right seem to be minding their own affairs, those on the left seem to be clamoring to get into hell, where the damned are placed more modestly in distant caves, presumably so that the indignity of their sufferings might not be exposed to devout eyes.

<sup>30</sup> “Nun folget die weittere Erklärung dises gegenwärtigen Kupfer-Bilds; und zwar Anfangs, was anbetreift die Figuren, so mit denen Buchstaben gezeichnet seynd. ‘A. Diss stellet uns vor ein abscheuliches Monstrum, welches nach der Thibetischen Meynung seyn solle ein Sinbild der Menschlichen Wercken, so sie Las dbang sgam po phywa benambsen [...] ‘B. Zeiget an ihren Affter-Gott, welcher auss allen Thibetischen Affter-Heiligen zusam gegeisteret, einen materialischen Leib von lauter kostbaren Edelgesteinen haben solle [...] ‘C. Hier wird vorgestellt der letzte Reformator und Wider-Ergäntzer der Thibetischen Affter-Religion, Sciachia tupha genant, welcher, wie sie glauben, ihr Gesetz von vilen Fehleren gereiniget, und solches mit Beyhilff seiner Lehr-Jünger in 300 Bücher solle verfassen haben [...] ‘D. Die Mutter dess erst-erwehten Reformators“ Orazio della Penna Billi 1740: 118.



Fig. 10. Image of Tibetan Transmigrations (*Tibetische Transmigrationen Tafel*). Engraving, 17.7 × 25 cm. From: Orazio della Penna 1740, between 118-119. Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, call no. 4 H.eccl. 600-1/2. Image © Bayerische Staatsbibliothek.

In a detail that would have probably been surprising even to Christian viewers, the scene of judgement records what appears to be a rising number of sins—first 100, then 200, then 1,000. Of course, Buddhists would have been shocked to see that the demi-gods—seemingly for the first time in beginningless existence—enjoy sole possession of the mythical Jampū Tree.

Giorgi's image is not without its flaws either. Ciccolini and Giardoni, while adhering as much as they could to the rigorously two-dimensional conventions of Tibetan iconography, could not resist a little three-dimensional modelling, especially in the musculature of the figures' arms [Fig. 6]. There are also some peculiarities in Giorgi's depiction of the twelve links of dependent arising. If one looks more closely, one sees that Giorgi's list is not quite right. He has

- (1) Ignorance (*ma rig pa*)
- (2) Ideation (*'dus shes*)
- (3) Formation (*'dus byed*)
- (4) Consciousness (*rnam par shes pa*)
- (5) Name and form (*ming dang gzugs*)

- (6) The six sense organs (*skye ched* [sic] *drung*)
- (7) Contact (*reg ba*)
- (8) Sensation (*tshor ba*)
- (9) Craving (*sred pa*)
- (10) Grasping (*len pa*)
- (11) Birth (*skyes pa*)
- (12) Old age and death (*rga dang shi*)

This is strange. The relative paucity of misspellings suggests that Orazio della Penna is the source of this list, unless perhaps Cassiano copied the terms at some point, but someone seems to have confused things along the way. Giorgi does not have existence (*srid pa*), which is often inserted as the tenth step in most lists of the twelve links and includes ideation (*'dus shes*) as the second step between ignorance and mental formations. There is logic to this, though, as ideation is better known as the third of the five aggregates that comes before mental formations (*'dus shes*) in the traditional Buddhist list of aggregates from which sentient beings are composed, viz. form (*rūpa*, *gzugs*), feeling (*vedanā*, *tshor ba*), ideation (*saṃjñā*, *'dus shes*), mental formations (*saṃskāra*, *'dus byed*), and consciousness (*viññāna*, *rnam par shes pa*). My guess is that Orazio della Penna, like many beginning students of Buddhist philosophy, got his lists confused.

The iconographic images follow a different sequence as well. Following clockwise in the traditional iconographic order, one sees:

- (1) A blind man with a walking stick
- (2) A potter with his vases
- (3) A monkey
- (4) A couple embracing
- (5) A person on a boat
- (6) An abandoned house
- (7) A man receiving a drink from a woman
- (8) A person pierced by an arrow
- (9) A person in bed
- (10) A woman plucking fruit from a tree
- (11) A husband and a wife
- (12) A corpse being carried

Here is how Giorgi describes each, with its accompanying emblem:

- (1) The lack of understanding (*intellectu carens*): the burden-bearer (*bajulus*)
- (2) The inclination to evil (*propensio ad malus*): the wayfarer (*viator*)

- (3) To act evilly (*male agere*): the potter (*figulus*)
- (4) A symbol of the soul (*symbolum animae*): a consuming ape (*simia comedens*)
- (5) Name and body (*nomen et corpus*): a sailor and his ship (*navis et gubernator*)
- (6) The heart and the six bodily senses (*cor, et sex corporis*): an uncompleted and abandoned house (*deserta et imperfecta domus*)
- (7) Touch (*tactus*): a man and woman embracing (*vir et mulier inter amplexus*)
- (8) The power of sensing (*vis sentiendi*): a man with an arrow in his eye (*sagitta hominis oculo infixata*)
- (9) Desire (*cupiditas*): a woman offering an ascetic a goblet of beer (*mulier cervisiae poculum offerens ascetae*)
- (10) Grasping (*ablatio*): a woman plucking fruit from a tree (*mulier fructus ex arborae decerpens*)
- (11) Birth or transmigration (*nativitas, vel transmigratio*): a husband and wife (*conjuges*)
- (12) A dying old man (*senex moriens*)

As one can see from the numbers in the image, these are out of order. Still, the only image that cannot be immediately associated with those in traditional lists is the image of the person in bed. Perhaps this was supposed to be an image of a woman giving birth, and Orazio della Penna or Ciccolini did not understand the original image. Most Tibetan images are relatively explicit in this respect, but some are more modest, and it is always possible that Ciccolini worked at least partially from memory. Nor did any of the Europeans realize that the burden-bearer in Giorgi's Cycle of Transmigrations was carrying a corpse, whose limbs can barely be made out in Giardoni and Ciccolini's design [Fig. 11]. As a result, Giorgi used the image to represent ignorance (the first link) rather than old age and death (the twelfth), displacing the image of a blind man to serve as a representation for ideation, the new second link. From there the images follow the traditional sequence, even if they are presented in the wrong order spatially. This makes it a bit hard to fathom what happened with the design. Perhaps Ciccolini took liberties with the composition without realizing that the figures of the outer circle followed a particular order. Still, even if one supposes that the numbers and the Tibetan names were added to the engraving to correct the artist's mistake, Giorgi's description shows that he did not understand the images traditionally associated with each link.



Fig. 11. Alessio Giardoni (engraver) and Paolo Antonio Ciccolini (designer), Man Carrying a Corpse, detail of Fig. 4.

Still, if Giorgi's image is superior to the fantastical creation of the *Missio Apostolica Thibetano-Seraphica*, it is also more accurate than the "The Tribunal of Yama" (1791) found in the *Systema Brahmanicum* of the Discalced Carmelite Paulinus a Sancto Bartholomaeo [Fig. 12].<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Paulinus a Sancto Bartholomaeo 1791: 177–180. Upon close inspection, one sees that the images are not strictly identical; it appears that Paulinus re-used Ciccolini's design, but that another engraving was made. On Paulinus, see Županov 2006.





Fig. 12. Unknown artist, copy of Alessio Giardini (engraver) and Paolo Antonio Ciccolini (designer) (after "Yönten the Iconographer"), The Tribunal of Yama (Tribunal dei Yama). Engraving, 28.1 × 24.2 cm. From Paulinus a Sancto Bartholomeo 1791, pl. 23. New York, New York Public Library, call no. b14156307. Image © The New York Public Library.

This image, which was copied from the *Alphabetum Tibetanum*, has been simplified in many respects, and Paulinus repeats the errors in the order of the twelve links and their symbolic representations. The

Tibetan is the same, but rewritten, sometimes less legibly. Of the explanatory letters and numbers, all are absent, save M, N, and O, which indicate the three poisons and the upward and downward rebirths in the intermediate state. These, though, were all that Fr. Paulinus needed for his exposition, which was more concerned to demonstrate the Tibetans' dependence on the Indian myths he knew from his missionary work in Kerala between 1776 and 1789. Although Paulinus rightly calls Yama by his Tibetan name, *gshin rje chos rgyal*, the Carmelite is content to argue that the first link in dependent arising, *ma rig pa*, or the lack of understanding, which is symbolized by the burden-bearer (*baiulus*), is the corrupted form of an Indian word that means forgetfulness. Paulinus is wrong, of course. Unfortunately, however, his argument was based on one of Giorgi's own mistakes. With Paulinus, though, there is no attempt to explain the Buddhist doctrine the image was meant to illustrate beyond what he needed to advance his own arguments for the dependence of Tibetan Buddhism on "Brahmanical" myths. His image has been stripped of its pedagogical elements. The six realms, the twelve links of dependent arising, and the accompanying Tibetan text have been abandoned.

My suspicion is that Paulinus did not describe the Wheel of Existence in detail because he presumed an educated reader would consult the *Alphabetum Tibetanum*, which was still a respected authority, even if Fr. Paulinus mercilessly criticized Giorgi himself. If the Carmelite still depended upon the Augustinian's tome almost thirty years later, he was fighting a very different battle. Giorgi hoped to use the whole of what was known about Tibetan religion and culture in the first half of the eighteenth century to show that the Calvinist Isaac de Beausobre was wrong to criticize the historical accuracy of texts by Tertullian, Irenaeus, Epiphanius, Augustine, and other ancient Christian writers. Fr. Paulinus, by contrast, hoped to use his knowledge of Indian and Tibetan religion to show that the atheism emerging in Europe was a historical anomaly, unknown in other eras and lands beyond the modern West. The Wheel of Existence, he argues,

shows the changes that mortals will undergo after death, when everything will be examined in the open and rewards or punishments will be assigned for merits and demerits. At this point someone from the ranks will rise up [...] a trifier, a dress-dealer, or an arrant fool, and accuse the Indians, the Tibetans, and the other nations of Asia of Spinozism, materialism, or atheism....<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> "Atque mortalium vicem ea tabula conspiciendam exhibit, quae post mortem subeunda erit, dum omnia in propatulo examinanda et pro meritis aut demeritis praemio aut poena afficienda erunt. Hic iam ex offibus [...] exsurgat gerro,



With this, though, a rather different chapter in the history of the Western fascination with Tibet begins, in which Buddhism would be thought irreligious—if not nihilistic—and the accomplishments of both Giorgi and Paulinus would soon be forgotten.

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nugigerulus, aut morio, et Indicas, Tibetanas, ac reliquas Asiae gentes spinosismi, materialismi, aut atheismi accuset...." Paulinus a Sancto Bartholomeo 1791: 178.

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# *Dharmabhāṇakas, Siddhas, Avatāraśiddhas, and gTer stons: Rethinking Treasure (Part Three)*<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

One of the principal ways in which traditional Mahāyāna Buddhists could classify their texts was according to the nature of their proposed authorial voices: those texts thought to be uttered by the Buddha (however conceived) could be classified as Buddha word (*buddhavaṇana*, *bka'*) while those understood to be authored by human intellects could be classified as treatises (*śāstra*, *bstan bcos*). Thus in the Tibetan tradition, for example, the former, the actual words of the Buddha himself in Tibetan translation, found their home in the Kangyur (*bka' 'gyur*), while the latter, the Tibetan translations of treatises mainly authored by the great Buddhist masters of India, were gathered in its parallel collection, the Tengyur (*bstan 'gyur*).

It is true that on closer examination, the boundaries between *buddhavaṇana* and *śāstra* can in several instances prove quite elusive, so that a complex philosophical debate arose around such issues, notably in Tibet.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, in simpler bibliographical terms, or as a rule of thumb, I think one can still say that the production of *buddhavaṇana* is, by definition, considered to be beyond the capacity of ordinary people. Mere mortals like ourselves should not just compose a text and then

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<sup>1</sup> Several colleagues have contributed to this paper: Anna Sehnalova, Cathy Cantwell, Berthe Jansen, Dagmar Schwert, Dan Martin, David Drewes, David Germano, David Gellner, David Gray, Eric Greene, Fabrizio Torricelli, George Fitzherbert, James Gentry, Jan-Ulrich Sobisch, John Nemec, Joie Chen, Jonathan Silk, Lewis Doney, Marta Sernesi, Michael Radich, Natalie Gummer, Per Kvaerne, Péter-Dániel Szántó, Reinier Langelaar, Rob Campamy, Ryan Overbey, Tomoko Makidono, Ulrike Roesler, and more. My heartfelt thanks to them all. I am also very grateful for the support of Wolfson College, Oxford, and the participants of the Treasure Seminar held there since 2017, and DFG grant ME 20006/3-1 at RUB Bochum, 2017-2019.

<sup>2</sup> See for example the excellent discussions in Schwert 2020 of the blurred boundaries between the categories of valid scriptures of the Buddha (*lung tshad ma*) and valid expositions by Indian masters (*bstan bcos tshad ma*) in the 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud Mahāmudrā transmission, and the broader Tibetan controversies around the different kinds of *tshad mas* (*pramāṇas*).

attribute it to the Buddha, since this could be considered amongst the worst kinds of forgery. On the contrary, and by definition, *buddhava-cana* is usually understood as sacred scripture that has to be and can only be revealed to us by an enlightened mind. Yet nevertheless, a major distinguishing feature of Mahāyāna Buddhism and its tantric offshoots was that just such revelation of *buddhava-cana* was considered to have continued almost unabated long after the passing of the historical Buddha, with huge quantities of hitherto unknown *buddhava-cana* continuing to appear down the centuries. Nor could such a momentous event as the first appearance of a newly discovered scripture uttered by the Buddha himself be easily consigned to mere chance. On the contrary, as I describe below, Mahāyāna *sūtra* texts clearly indicated that their appearance or revelation was considered to be the outcome of the enlightened intentionality and prophetic power of the immanent Buddha of Mahāyāna, while parallel metanarratives existed also in tantric Buddhism. In what follows, I am going to use the term *scripture* to designate *buddhava-cana*, and I am going to use the term *revelation* to describe the introductions of such previously unknown scriptures into human history.

The social and cultural institutions and conventions that necessarily must once have existed in South Asian Buddhism to separate texts deemed as authentic but newly come to light scripture, from texts deemed as human compositions, or even as forgeries, still remain extremely little understood (although their equivalent mechanisms in Tibet are still extant and available for study). Be that as it may, few would argue with the proposition that South Asian Mahāyāna Buddhism and its tantric offshoots were religions substantially based around the acceptance of an ongoing revelation of hitherto unknown scriptures. Even the most conservative traditional Buddhist masters must have had to concede that while *sūtras* generally purported ultimately to have been taught by the historical Buddha, and tantras by the timeless *dharmakāya* Buddha, even the most important examples of such scriptures could nevertheless reach us via circuitous routes that required an additional and subsequent event of revelation into our human world. These circuitous processes are prominently described, for example, in the widely accepted origin myths of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, which is among the earliest of Mahāyāna scriptures, and the *Kālacakra*, which is among the latest of the great tantric revelations.<sup>3</sup> Mahāyāna and Tantric Buddhist history in South Asia was therefore the history of more

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<sup>3</sup> The *Prajñāpāramitā* scriptures, some of which are amongst the earliest Mahāyāna *sūtras*, were said to have been brought from nāga world (*nāgaloka*) to the human world by Nāgārjuna, hundreds of years after the Buddha originally taught them.

than a thousand years of belief in and acceptance of a continuous, ongoing, revelation of scriptures taught by the Buddha (however understood) but previously unknown to contemporary humans, beginning with the earliest Mahāyāna *sūtras*, up to the final revelations of the late tantric period. This acceptance of the ongoing revelation of scriptures is surely amongst the most definitive and significant features of South Asian Mahāyāna and Tantric Buddhism, without which they would have been very different religions. It is also one of the main features differentiating them from Theravāda Buddhism. If we want to understand South Asian Mahāyāna and Tantric Buddhism at all, understanding their processes of ongoing scriptural revelation is surely indispensable; yet, unfortunately, they still remain very little understood indeed.

Because belief in the ongoing revelation of scriptures was such an integral feature of South Asian Mahāyāna, it is very hard to imagine how it could have failed to impact on Tibetan Buddhism too. Like their counterparts in China, Tibetan Buddhists must immediately have been confronted in the Mahāyāna scriptures they translated, with numerous narratives describing prophetic declarations made by the Buddha about the future propagations of his *sūtras* by reincarnated Dharma Preachers (*dharmabhāṇaka*, *chos smra ba*). Such narratives about *dharmabhāṇakas* offered a culturally accepted template for authentic scriptural revelation.

The figure of the *dharmabhāṇaka* in Mahāyāna has been the focus of considerable Buddhological scholarship in recent years.<sup>4</sup> In brief, the Mahāyāna *dharmabhāṇaka* is a constantly recurring figure who appears in a great many Mahāyāna *sūtras*, and is typically understood as a literary representation of the first persons to publicly recite any given Mahāyāna *sūtra*. The consensus scholarly view is that such *dharmabhāṇakas* were considered by Indian Mahāyānists to be the prophesied reincarnate revealers of the *sūtras* in which they appear. Thus Drewes, Gummer, *et al.*, propose the *dharmabhāṇaka* should be understood as the prophesied reincarnations of the Buddha's close dis-

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Likewise John Newman (2021: 1) describes the origin myth of the Kālacakra, the very last of the major Indian Vajrayāna scriptures, thus: "The foundational texts of the Kālacakra tantra provide an origin story in which this system of mysticism was taught by the Buddha Śākyamuni at Śrī Dhānyakāṭaka. The original text of the tantra, the *Paramādibuddha* (the Kālacakra *mūlatantra*) is said to have been redacted by Dharmarāja Sucandra – emperor of Sambhala and an emanation of the tenth stage bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi – who wrote the tantra down in a book and carried it to Sambhala. Hundreds of years later, the tradition maintains, the Kālacakra tantra was brought from Sambhala and introduced in India."

<sup>4</sup> See *inter alia* Harrison 1990: xxi; Hino 2010; Drewes 2011 and 2022; and Gummer 2012, 2014, and 2021.

ciples who had first heard the *sūtra* directly from the Buddha in a previous life. They (or their mind streams) had been ‘entrusted’ (*parindanā* / *gtad pa*) by the Buddha with the stewardship of the *sūtra*, thus creating a deep karmic destiny and connection with the *sūtra* text that could persist across future reincarnations. Simultaneously a physical copy of the *sūtra* could sometimes be hidden in the environment, to be guarded by long-lived *yakṣas*, *nāgas*, or other territorial deities, whose long life-span served to bridge the time of the Buddha with the time of the Mahāyāna *sūtra*’s first preaching. All of this is accompanied by the Buddha’s prophecy about how the disciple or disciples will reincarnate in future times, long after the Buddha’s *parinirvāṇa*, to recover the *sūtra* text from its concealment and preach it. This trope is indeed repeated in a very large number of Mahāyāna *sūtras*, and is seen as the standard narrative for explaining their sudden coming to light in the early centuries CE India. See my discussion below of these themes, which Drewes has dubbed “the ‘standard claim of Mahāyāna *sūtra* literature’”. Despite having been a staple topic within Mahāyāna *sūtra* scholarship for several years now, this understanding of the *dharmabhāṇakas* has been a bit slow to penetrate Tibetan studies, and I was not completely aware of its full ubiquity until comparatively recently. On the contrary, I had mistakenly thought it occurred in only a few *sūtras*. Yet, as I show below, this trope seems to have been a major component in the development of the foundation myths of rNying ma Treasure (*gter ma*) in Tibet.

Perhaps even more impactful than these *sūtra* narratives, and especially through the first few centuries after the establishment of Tibetan Buddhism, numerous Tibetan pilgrims, scholars, translators, and traders, visiting South Asia must also have been directly exposed to actual concrete practices of ongoing tantric revelation. These continued apace so long as Buddhism flourished, most notably in some special holy places geographically proximate to Tibet, such as Uḍḍiyāna and Bengal.

Some Tibetologists have suggested to me that forms of Buddhism which gradually developed elsewhere, notably China and Tibet, might somehow have remained insulated from and ignorant of the ongoing revelation of scriptures in India. This is difficult to believe, because ongoing revelation is deeply inscribed in so many Mahāyāna scriptures. Regarding China, to take just one example out of many: the *Pratyutpanna-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra* is amongst the very first Mahāyāna *sūtras* to be translated into Chinese, in Luoyang, in 179 CE, and became hugely influential in China. As Paul Harrison pointed out in his landmark studies (Harrison 1978, 1990), the *sūtra*’s very name invokes ongoing revelation: *The Samādhi of Direct Encounters with the Buddhas of the Present*. The message of the *sūtra* is uncompromising:

Yes, the Buddha has long ago passed away, yet we still can receive fresh discourses directly from him, as though he were still alive, through visionary encounters with a Buddha in their pure land such as Amitāyus in Sukhāvatī (Chapter 3), through prophesied rediscovery of purposely long-buried texts (Chapter 13), through receiving teachings in visionary dreams (Chapter 14), and so on. As Paul Harrison explains (Harrison 1990: xx-xxi), a 'major concern' and 'main aim' of this *sūtra* is 'justifying the continuing production of Mahāyāna *sūtras*'. It seems inconceivable that the Chinese could have translated this text so early, valued it so highly, for so many centuries, and not noticed this central message. Ditto its translation into Tibetan. Yet as we will see below, this is only one of dozens of Mahāyāna *sūtras* to convey such a message.

Turning to Tibet and tantra (again, only one example out of many), we can cite a biography of Tilopā (*rNal 'byor gyi dbang phyug ti lo pa'i lo rgyus*) from a bKa' brgyud *gser phreng* collection that possibly dates to the 12th century and is traditionally attributed to Mar pa. This text purports to show that during his many years in India, Mar pa not only became deeply acquainted with the revelatory practices of his Indian teachers, but also prominently conveyed that knowledge through his writings to his substantial bKa' brgyud religious heritage in Tibet (see Torricelli 2018: 102, 171-178). Whether this biography of Tilopā represents unmodified Indian narratives (perhaps less likely), or Tibetan modifications of them (perhaps more likely), there can be no doubt that the idea of ongoing scriptural revelation in India was widely recognised among Tibetan followers of the Mar pa traditions.<sup>5</sup>

The prolific nature of such tantric revelations in Indic Buddhism should not be underestimated. Even if we are to exclude the numerous *dhāraṇī* scriptures, and the later Nepali revelations, Isaacson and Sferra have estimated that around 500 original tantric scriptures of South Asian origins remain extant, some in Sanskrit, others only in Tibetan and Chinese translations. They further suggest these were mainly produced over a roughly 500 year period, from the 6th to the 11th centuries.<sup>6</sup> We thus arrive at an admittedly very approximate average frequency of around one scriptural revelation per annum, through five centuries. The real figure is likely to have been higher, not only because we know without doubt that more texts were revealed than the 500 which have survived loss or destruction, but also because the Sanskrit tradition resembled its Tibetan *gter ma* successor in the practice of re-revealing the same scripture to different persons on different occasions

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<sup>5</sup> Thanks to Marta Sernesi and the late Fabrizio Torricelli for their advice on this issue.

<sup>6</sup> Isaacson and Sferra: 2015: 307-15.



(for the act of revelation could be a profound spiritual experience in itself, far more than a mere addition to the collection of holy texts).<sup>7</sup> Over the same period, there were also a great number of Śaiva tantric revelations. Given the often considerable intertextuality of Buddhist and Śaiva tantric scriptures and the often polytropic nature of tantric devotion in India, the revelations of Śaiva tantras were unlikely to have gone entirely unremarked by Indian tantric Buddhists.

One should also point out that fresh scriptural productions continued in Nepal even after the decline of Buddhism in the Indian heartlands. Isaacson and Sferra observe that 'the compilation of tantric scriptures seems to have continued in Nepal almost up to modern times'.<sup>8</sup> Some of these became very important: the 15th century, for example, saw the appearance in Nepal of both the *Svayambhūpurāṇa* and the *Guṇākaraṇḍavyūha*; the former remains the basis for all the extensive *vrata* practices in contemporary Newar Buddhism, while the latter provides the scriptural basis for their important cult of Lokeśvara or Matsyendranāth.<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Dunhuang sources bear witness to a number of indigenous Tibetan Buddhist tantric scriptures that appeared already well established by the 10th century, indicating that Tibetans very soon produced their own revelations.<sup>10</sup> It is not unreasonable to speculate that they began by using models for scriptural production directly inspired by their foreign Buddhist teachers, since for a period of at least one or even two hundred years, the earliest Tibetan scriptural productions occurred contemporaneously with tantric Buddhist scriptural revelation that was still occurring in India, and undoubtedly the Tibetans produced these early scriptures very much in the mould of Sanskrit Buddhist tantras, albeit with some signs of localisation. The Tibetan Empire had adopted Buddhism in the last decades of the 8th century, initiating a prolonged period of intensive interaction between Indian Buddhist teachers and their Tibetan students and translators. It is true that some of the famous Indian tantric scriptures already existed

<sup>7</sup> See Torricelli 2018: 177, where Tilopā receives afresh the already known Cakrasamvara in fifty one chapters, and Cantwell 2020a and 2020b for a detailed study of the re-revelation of already known texts in Tibetan *gter ma*. For an eye-witness account of the powerful religious experiences associated with a contemporary *gter* discovery in East Tibet, see Hanna 1994. For an autobiographical account of Guru Chos dbang's life-changing experiences connected with the excavation out of the earth of his *Yongs rdzogs bka' brgyad* and the associated mystical flight to meet Padmasambhava in his pure land to get direct instruction on these teachings, see Guru Chos kyi dbang phyug 1979: 141 ff.

<sup>8</sup> Isaacson and Sferra 2015: 315.

<sup>9</sup> Rospatt 2015: 827.

<sup>10</sup> Cantwell and Mayer 2012: 6-9, 84-86. For a detailed analysis of the textual evidence suggesting a Tibetan compilation of these texts, see Mayer 1997.

when Buddhism was introduced to Tibet in the last decades of the 8th century, for example, the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*, the *Sarvatathāgata-tattvasaṃgraha*, and the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*. Some others, such as the *Guhyasamāja*, were possibly making their first appearance around that time. However, many others, including most of the tantras that were eventually to become the most influential in Tibetan Buddhism, were only revealed in India *after* the formal adoption of Buddhism by the Tibetan Empire. Hence the earliest *Cakrasaṃvara* scriptures perhaps appeared within the 9th century; the *Catuspīṭha* perhaps in the late 9th century; the *Hevajra* maybe in the early 10th century; the *Abhidhānot-tara* possibly also in the 10th century; the *Kālacakra* probably in the early 11th century; and so on.<sup>11</sup> At least a hundred and possibly as many as two hundred particularly fruitful years which saw the revelation of influential tantric scriptures in India were therefore *contemporaneous* to a parallel period of early revelations of similarly influential rNying ma tantric scriptures in Tibet, and did not precede it.

Surprisingly perhaps, little study has yet been made of the impacts of the Sanskrit Buddhist revelatory traditions on contemporaneous Tibet. This earliest phase of Tibetan Buddhist scriptural production was characterised by what one might call the anonymous appearances of mainly tantric scriptures—anonymous in the sense of seldom having easily identifiable or prominently named revealers, places of revelation, or moments of revelation. By contrast, the next phase of Tibetan Buddhist scriptural production was characterised by the open identifications of named text revealers, the places at which their revelations took place, and the occasions of their revelations. For convenience, I shall for present purposes call this later phase the age of *gter ma* revelation, even though in my usage here it will also subsume the technically distinct system of *dag snang* or 'Pure Vision'. In many or even most cases, *dag snang* does not necessarily count as *gter ma*, yet it can often participate in the same religious culture, thus sharing with *gter ma* proper the quality of usually being open about the identifications of its named text revealers.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> For the dates of the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*, the *Sarvatathāgata-tattvasaṃgraha*, the *Cakrasaṃvara*, and the *Hevajra*, see Isaacson and Sferra 2015: 315; for the dates of the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*, see Tribe 2015: 353; for some possible dates for the *Guhyasamāja*, see Tanemura 2015: 327; for the dates of the *Catuspīṭha*, see Szántó 2015: 320; for the dates of the earliest *Cakrasaṃvara* and *Abhidhānottara*, see Sugiki 2015: 363-4; for the dates of the *Kālacakra*, see Sferra 2015: 341.

<sup>12</sup> *Dag snang* or Pure Vision is a method of revelation in which a Buddha, such as Amitābha, appears before a devotee and transmits to them a new teaching or scripture. It is well attested in Mahāyāna texts such as the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra* (Chapter 3), and has been widely adopted by the rNying ma school, but similarly occurs in other schools of Tibetan Buddhism. The rNying ma are usually quite open about

Our earliest knowledge of the first phase, of anonymously produced Tibetan Buddhist mainly tantric scriptural texts, comes to us from the Dunhuang finds, where they are witnessed in particular genres that were eventually preserved in the *rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum* canon (henceforth NGB). As far as I am aware, no one has written very much at all about the processes of scriptural production in this early phase, although they must surely have had significant influences on later developments. Indeed, it is quite possible that many of the procedures and protocols for scriptural production used in this early phase of anonymous revelations were carried over into the later *gter ma* traditions; for undoubtedly, there is considerable overlap of both style and content between even the earliest among the mainly anonymous *rNying ma* tantras nowadays contained in the NGB, and the later *gter ma* texts.

Regarding style, it is said traditionally that the NGB texts are a prime measure by which the validity of a *gter ma* can be assessed: if a *gter ma* diverges too far from the NGB's doctrinal, ritual, and iconographic norms, it might not be considered valid. Regarding content, there can be considerable intertextuality between the NGB scriptures and *gter ma* revelations, with numerous instances of shared textual passages. Moreover, a certain proportion of NGB texts can simultaneously be classified as *gter ma*, for example Myang ral Nyi ma 'od zer's (c. 1124 -1192) *rDzogs chen Man ngag sde yang ti'i skor* root tantra, *rGyud kyi rgyal po nyi zla 'od 'bar mkha' klong rnam dag rgya mtsho klong gsal gyi rgyud* (Rig 'dzin vol. Ja folios 25b-40b; Tb. 270); rDo rje gling pa's (1346 – 1405) important *rDzogs chen Man ngag sde* tantra *Chos thams cad kyi don bstan pa rdzogs chen thig le nyag gcig ye nas bya btsal bral ba* (Rig 'dzin vol. Nga folios 88b-204b; Tb.188); and Ratna gling pa's (1403-1479) Hayagrīva root tantra *dPal che ba'i mchog rta mgrin gsang ba 'dus pa* (Rig 'dzin vol. 'A folios 247b-254b; Tb. 580). Albeit mainly shorn of their *gter ma* punctuation (*gter tsheg*), the above three texts openly identify themselves as *gter ma* in their colophons, which clearly name their discoverers; hence they should also be preserved separately within the par-

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the identities of the recipients of Pure Vision teachings and the circumstances of the revelation; such revelations are not anonymous. According to Tulku Thondup, most Pure Vision teachings in Tibet do not count as *gter ma*, except when the vision awakens in the recipient a memory of a teaching imprinted in the essential nature of their mind in a previous life (Thondup 1986: 61-62; 101; 165). Nevertheless, treasure revealers not infrequently make visionary journeys to Padmasambhava's pure land to receive teachings directly from him, which can be further explications of, or otherwise associated with, the texts they discovered elsewhere as *gter ma*. Similarly, Dagmar Schwerk tells me (personal communication 14<sup>th</sup> April 2024) that the relationship between *dag snang* and *gter ma* in the Bhutanese '*Brug pa bka' brgyud* (*lho 'brug*) is highly interesting.

allel collections of their discoverers' own *gter ma*. However, identifications of NGB texts as having *gter ma* origins are not always so clear cut as the above examples, and the true situation is not yet known.<sup>13</sup> For

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<sup>13</sup> When cataloguing the 406 texts of the *Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu* edition of the NGB, Cathy Cantwell and I very provisionally tagged 55 texts (approximately 13.5% of the total) that seemed very likely to be identified as *gter ma*, and provisionally tagged a further 25 texts (approximately 6.2% of the total) that were possibly identifiable as *gter ma*. But not all editions of the NGB need be the same: for example, it has been suggested by other scholars that the Bhutanese NGB recension in 46 volumes might have a higher proportion of texts with *gter ma* origins than the *Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu* edition. It is not yet known with any degree of accuracy what further proportion of NGB texts might also have started as root tantras of *gter ma* origins, but subsequently have lost clear markings as such. Making such identifications is not as simple as it might at first appear. Firstly, there is strong evidence that very old tantric texts sometimes adopted as explicits a variety of seals of secrecy that could resemble what later became accepted as *gter ma* conventions, yet which in their own historical contexts do not necessarily seem indicative of *gter ma*, or at least, not as we now know it (see Cantwell 2017: 149 note 19, citing Ba ri lo tsā ba 1974: 231-42; Cantwell 2022: 47, and note 6; and Cantwell 2022(2024): 151, and notes 107 and 108). Secondly, the re-revelation of already existing tantric text and even entire scriptures seems to have been an attested practice in India, and similar practices of textual reuse was widely continued in Tibetan rNying ma *gter ston* circles, who would sometimes also repackage the re-revealed text (Cantwell 2020a, 2020b). For example, we now have solid textual evidence that the entire 150-plus pages of the *Phur pa* section of Myang ral's *bDe gshegs 'dus pa* revelation was constructed out of the wholesale reuse of a complete much earlier text in six sections, some folios of which have also survived at Dunhuang (Cantwell 2020b). Current knowledge of such practices remains in its infancy, although a ground-breaking and meticulously researched start has been made by Cathy Cantwell (Cantwell 2020a, 2020b). As Cantwell points out (personal communication 14<sup>th</sup> April 2024), it will therefore require a much more sustained philological investigation to ascertain beyond doubt which of the NGB texts indubitably have *gter ma* origins, and which do not. In a brilliant recent article, James Gentry (2023: 144-5) reports that a *gter ma* root tantra revealed by Ratna gling pa appears in parallel as a root tantra in the mTshams brag NGB, but here with a slightly different title and shorn of nearly all of its *gter ma* identifiers such as *gter tsheg* and *gter ma* colophons. Ratna gling pa was a key redactor of the NGB, so that Gentry tentatively attributes the presence of this text in the NGB to a deliberate attempt by Ratna gling pa to obfuscate the tantra's origins as his own *gter ma*, and pass off the NGB version as a much older text revealed by Padmasambhava. Elsewhere in the mTshams brag NGB however, a subsequent *gter ma* root tantra also revealed by Ratna gling pa is openly acknowledged as his own *gter ma* (see the example I cite above). This raises the question, why would Ratna gling pa, as redactor of the NGB, apparently conceal the identity of one of his *gter mas*, but not the other? One should also note that removal of the *gter tsheg* is a commonplace when transcribing a *gter* root tantra into the NGB, and is found in a significant proportion of NGB texts that openly claim to be the discoveries of named *gter stons*, so that this feature cannot be used as evidence for deliberate obfuscation, as Gentry has tentatively suggested. For example, within the mTshams brag NGB, out of the three root tantras that are clearly and openly identified as *gter ma* which I give as examples

largely pragmatic and historical reasons, few new scriptures have been added to the NGB corpora since the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless many important *gter stons* have continued up until our own times to discover root tantras amongst their *gter ma*, which (to current knowledge) seem congruent with the genres of NGB texts. For example, the late Dil mgo mKhyen brtse's (1910-1991) treasure cycle *Padma tshe yi snying thig* contains such a root tantra, which is widely accepted as a valid scripture, but it has not been added to the NGB. For an English translation of one such scripture revealed by 'Jigs med gling pa (1729-1798), also accepted as scripturally valid but not included in the NGB, see van Schaik 2003.

Although the revelation of texts of this genre seems to have continued into our own times, we know surprisingly little about how such texts were revealed in their earliest phase, almost 1,200 years ago. All we can currently know with any real certainty about the first and very important foundational period of this kind of Tibetan tantric scriptural revelation is that it seems to have resembled much of the parallel and contemporaneous South Asian tantric revelation both by largely being anonymous, in the sense of not generally having easily identifiable or prominently named revealers, places of revelation, and times of revelation; and also in the broadly similar styles and contents of the texts produced. For the greater part of the oldest NGB materials dating from this early period that have so far been studied in detail seem to consist mainly of careful calques of Indian tantric scriptures, albeit with a few localised features (Mayer 1997, Cantwell and Mayer 2007, 2012). It might be noteworthy that an important example of this genre, the *Phur pa bcu gnyis*—which has no colophon that claims it was translated—seems to tacitly celebrate the fact of its compilation in Tibet, insofar as its original redactors and subsequent rNying ma exegetes alike have quite explicitly and deliberately eschewed any effort to erase its evidence for Tibetan compilation, even where it was within their power

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above, two (Myang ral's Tb. 270 and Ratna gling pa's Tb.580) have lost all of their *gter tsheg* whatsoever, and the third (rDo rje gling pa's Tb.188) virtually all of its *gter tsheg*, except for those few occurring on seals such as *samaya% rgya rgya rgya%* which here are used to mark sections within the text. I would therefore suggest two alternative scenarios that might be equally plausible as Gentry's tentative suggestion of deliberate obfuscation: (i) it's possible that a whole sequence of Ratna gling pa root tantras, upon incorporation into the NGB, were allocated a collective secondary *gter ma* colophon naming Ratna gling pa but placed only after the last text in the sequence, thus leaving earlier texts with only individual primary colophons naming Padmasambhava (ii) it's also possible that Ratna gling pa's *gter ma* discovery might have been his re-revelation of an earlier already current root tantra traditionally attributed to Padmasambhava, so that he felt no need to include his own name.

to do so (Mayer 1997: 629-630). It goes without saying that our investigations would be made very much easier if we knew more about tantric revelation in India, but unfortunately, I remain unaware of any sustained academic studies of this highly important yet frustratingly inaccessible topic.

The second phase of revelation, which I am here calling *gter ma*, was no longer anonymous and usually had clearly identifiable revealers (it also bifurcated interestingly into two religious streams, Buddhist and Bon, but here we can only focus on the Buddhist).<sup>14</sup> The underlying social historical factors associated with the emergence of this second period are quite complex, including the further penetration of Buddhism within Tibetan communities, the decline of scriptural revelation in India, a Tibetan nostalgia for the past glories of Empire, and a period of widespread opening up of old burial tumuli in Tibet. The latter two have already been discussed by Ronald Davidson (2005, 2006) and Guntram Hazod (2016). I will be revisiting social-historical factors at greater length elsewhere, but here, my focus is on methods of revelation *per se*.

In no longer being veiled by anonymity, this second phase differed from much or most Indian Buddhist revelation, but resembled the contemporaneous scriptural revelatory practices in nearby Kashmir. At that time, Kashmir was host to many Tibetans visiting Kashmir's Buddhist monasteries,<sup>15</sup> while the regions of Gilgit and Brusha (nowadays usually considered parts of greater Kashmir) are suggested to have been under the actual political control of the Western Tibetan Kingdom of Guge until the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>16</sup> As specialists in Śaivism point out (Sanderson 2007; Williams 2017; Nemec 2020, 2022), in this Kashmiri

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<sup>14</sup> It is important to note that *gter ma* was from the start bifurcated into two separable yet intertwined religious traditions, Buddhist and g.Yung drung Bon. In what follows, I will regrettably but necessarily be focusing exclusively on the Buddhist traditions. This is, quite simply, because I do not yet know enough about the emergence of g.Yung drung Bon *gter ma*. The topic raises important social-historical questions that are high on my agenda for upcoming research, but have not yet been satisfactorily answered. As Per Kvaerne recently wrote to me, "The question is not so much which of the two traditions is the older one (which might be very difficult to establish), but how and why the two traditions arose at roughly the same time and in all likelihood in similar milieus, and how and why they came to share so many characteristic traits. Much more work must be done on studying the Bön textual material containing narratives of the earliest Bön termas, and try to establish the genesis and chronology of the Bön tradition in this respect, as well as the contents of the Bön termas themselves." (Per Kvaerne, personal communication, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2023).

<sup>15</sup> See Nemec 2020: 285, note 4.

<sup>16</sup> See the recent works by John Mock, who further supports the earlier suggestions with newly discovered inscriptional evidence (Mock 2023a, 2023b, 2023c).

tradition of revelation, chiefly associated with non-dual Śaiva traditions like the Kaula, but also with some Buddhist examples, publicly named scriptural revealers became normalised.<sup>17</sup> In important instances, they were described as revealing their new tantric scriptures in the holy place of Uḍḍiyāna. While the nascent Tibetan *gter ma* system resembled its Kashmiri contemporaries (see Cantwell and Mayer 2023) in prominently referencing Uḍḍiyāna, for example citing Padmasambhava of Uḍḍiyāna as the patron of revelation, it differed from the Śaivas by developing other more conspicuously Buddhist narratives. Most prominently, as I will discuss below, it adapted for its own use the aforementioned Mahāyāna literary device of prophetic declarations made by the Buddha regarding the future propagations of his *sūtras* by reincarnated *dharmabhāṇakas* who would appear after his *parinirvāṇa*. Localising the Mahāyāna *sūtra* trope to Tibet and to the history of Tibet's various schools of Buddhism, Tibetans began developing narratives of the rediscovery by named and prophesied *gter stons* of sacred texts that had been hidden for later recovery by the important Buddhist missionaries to Tibet, notably Vimalamitra, and above all, Padmasambhava, who now stood in for the Buddha. Similarly, the great Indian missionary Atiśa Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna was himself said to have discovered some such texts in Tibet.

Fortunately, the major academic author on the origins of *gter ma*, Ronald Davidson, has consistently affirmed that the evolution of the *gter ma* tradition in Tibet should be seen as a confluence of both Indian and Tibetan influences.<sup>18</sup> Less fortunately perhaps, given the vast range of his writings, constraints of time seem never to have allowed him to enlarge as well as he undoubtedly could have done on the Indian aspects. On the contrary, his focus has necessarily and correctly prioritised the non-Buddhist indigenous Tibetan aspects. There are good reasons for this. Firstly, it continues the conversations begun by Erik Haarh in the 1960's and Michael Aris in the 1980's. Secondly, the Tibetan aspects are more elusive than the Indian aspects because little direct textual evidence of them survives, and despite the sustained attention they have received, comparatively few real certainties have yet emerged. Exploring them has thus become an intriguing intellectual challenge that Davidson and most subsequent authors have been unable to resist. I must confess I am no exception, and for the last few years, have been working with an anthropological colleague towards a major work that aspires further to clarify the extremely important

<sup>17</sup> Several colleagues have remarked that scriptural revelation by named persons also occurred elsewhere in India, for example, the Deccan. However, the Tibetan exposure to this practice in tantric Śaivism and Vajrayāna Buddhism is more likely to have occurred in Kashmir.

<sup>18</sup> Davidson 2005: 212-219.

non-Buddhist indigenous components of the *gter ma* traditions. In particular, following remarkable indications in Guru Chos dbang's *gTer 'byung chen mo*, I look at the indigenous categories of *gter* (treasure) and *bcud* (essence) within the nexus of environmental (and sometimes also ancestral) beliefs and practices connected with Tibetan territorial deity cosmologies. Thus the present paper offers a decidedly one-sided view of my understanding of *gter ma*; for a more complete understanding, the reader is invited to look at Mayer 2019 and the video podcast Mayer 2024,<sup>19</sup> which latter offers a preliminary presentation on *gter* in relation to Tibetan territorial deity cosmologies. It is my belief that recent ethnographic contributions to this field, notably those from Anna Sehnalova, will go a long way towards demystifying the so-far little understood topic of indigenous Tibetan factors in the emergence of *gter ma* (Sehnalova 2024).

However, a discussion that merely acknowledges Indian influences without actually examining them, is manifestly incomplete. It seems plausible (although so far little discussed) that cultural influences relevant to *gter ma*, such as *nāga* beliefs, might have reached Tibet from Nepal, Kashmir, and other South Asian regions, even before the formal adoption of Buddhism in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century. So far, insufficient studies have tackled the Indian influences, and despite Davidson's and Janet Gyatso's assertions of their importance,<sup>20</sup> the heritage has persisted of earlier authors such as Haarh who seemed barely aware that they even existed, so that many authors still overlook them. Obviously, it would be retrograde in the extreme to try to reduce Tibetology to an appendage of Indology, as it sometimes was in its early days. But to ignore the extraordinarily creative civilisational exchanges that occurred between Tibet and South Asia over many centuries would equally be a wasted opportunity. This was a rare interaction between two vibrant cultural spheres, the study of which offers numerous insights.

Our own study will therefore invest a proportionate effort into researching South Asian, Chinese, and other possible influences on *gter ma* too, for if we don't first know what might have come to Tibet from its various neighbours,<sup>21</sup> how can we differentiate what was indigenously Tibetan? Secondly and even more critically, we believe that the

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<sup>19</sup> Mayer 2019 suggests possible Chinese, Mongolian, and other sources; and Mayer 2024, 'Asian Territorial Deity Cosmologies as Vehicles for the Transmission of Buddhадharma', at <https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/asian-territorial-deity-cosmologies-vehicles-transmission-buddhadharma-oxford-treasure-seminar>

<sup>20</sup> Gyatso 2015: 398-9.

<sup>21</sup> rNying ma texts can sometimes claim to be translations from several different languages, such as the languages of Uḍḍiyāna, or Brusha/Bruzha. I am not aware of any detailed studies of this phenomenon.



various South Asian and indigenous elements often became inseparable, like the ingredients of a cake after baking, and thus difficult to reverse-engineer. This process was facilitated by a number of independently occurring structural similarities between some aspects of the treasure cultures found in both India and Tibet; for example, in both cultures, Indian and non-Buddhist Tibetan traditions alike, treasures were guarded by potentially dangerous territorial deities who also controlled the broader environment, and through that, wealth, fertility and economic wellbeing. Our approach therefore will not be to attempt the impossible by separating out indigenous aspects on their own from the outset. Rather, we will set out with a more holistic view that accepts and directly addresses the fascinating interactions of South Asian and indigenous non-Buddhist cultures.

We are fortunate that restoring a better balance should not prove too difficult, since the Sanskrit Buddhist influences on *gter ma* are easy to access and describe from a plethora of extant textual sources, both in Sanskrit and in Tibetan translation. From the point of view of Indologists and scholars of Indian Buddhism, they might even look obvious. Certainly my undemanding and straightforward efforts in this regard cannot be compared with the astonishing brilliance and virtuosity demanded of scholars like Ronald Davidson, and Guntram Hazod, who have done so much to infer the altogether more elusive non-Buddhist indigenous Tibetan influences on *gter ma* from often little more than circumstantial evidence connected with the Imperial burial cults.<sup>22</sup>

Thus in a lengthy paper published in 2022, and more briefly in a blog posting of 2023,<sup>23</sup> I make a start by reflecting on how the Indian term *nidhi* was consistently (perhaps even invariably) translated into the Tibetan word *gter*. Since it appeared upon investigation that the word *gter* was not evident in Old Tibetan before its usage in Buddhist translations, Joanna Bialek has speculated that it might have been a Buddhist neologism specifically created for the purposes of translating the Sanskrit term *nidhi*.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Hazod (2016) has made a tremendously important contribution from a social-historical perspective: he has shown how the *gter ma* traditions began to appear in the very period when traditional burial tumuli full of grave goods were widely being opened up and emptied. Davidson's (2005, 2006) main contribution has likewise been social-historical and has brilliantly anticipated some of the anthropological findings of scholars such as Charles Stewart (2012): he showed how *gter ma* discovery was linked to nostalgia for the lost empire and its bodhisattva emperors, and an attempt to recover some of their charisma for the benefit of present and future generations.

<sup>23</sup> Mayer 2022 and Mayer 2023.

<sup>24</sup> Joanna Bialek, personal communication, 7 September 2021. To Bialek's speculation, I add another of my own, that the word *gter* might possibly have had a pre-

Despite its ubiquity across a very wide range of Indian texts of many genres and many periods,<sup>25</sup> for some reason the complex and ancient Indian category of *nidhi* has perhaps not so far been sufficiently widely studied by Indologists, which might explain why it has barely been heard of by many Tibetologists.<sup>26</sup> Yet it seems to have played a very central role in Indian understandings of wealth within a landscape dominated by territorial deities (most notably, *nāgas* and *yakṣas*). Through their integration into a wide variety of Buddhist texts, Indian conceptions of *nidhi* came to exert a powerful influence on the conceptualisation of the Tibetan *gter* traditions, not least through Guru Chos dbang's influential *gTer 'byung chen mo*. In Indian thinking, the *nidhis* are perhaps most popularly classified in terms of the Nine *Nidhis* of Kubera, the king of the *yakṣas* (territorial tree spirits), who is the owner of all wealth in the natural environment. Other enumerations, such as eight *nidhis* in some Purāṇas, Gaṇeśa, Lakṣmī, and Hanuman cults, or four *nidhis* in Buddhist texts, or just the two *nidhis* of lotus (*padmanidhi*) and conch (*śaṅkhanidhi*) to summarize all the nine, are also widespread, but the principal tends to remain the same: the classifications into nine, eight, four, or two, *nidhis* acted as shorthand for summing up all known categories of wealth and economic wellbeing. It should be noted that *nidhis* were also sometimes personified, often in the forms

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history in the Tibetan terminology of indigenous environmental concepts, just as it does today; and thus by extension also in the fields of mining and mineralogy.

<sup>25</sup> See Mayer 2022 and 2023.

<sup>26</sup> As far as I know, Norman 1992 is the only academic study dealing with very important the nine *nidhis*, but is based exclusively on ancient or old sources, and does not deal with important later and tantric sources. Bautze-Picron 2002 is an art-historical study of the two *nidhis*, Padma and Śaṅkha, and also the artistic depiction at Ajaṇṭā of many *nidhis* as *yakṣa* personifications of all manner of natural wealth. An excellent further article on the histories of Padma and Śaṅkha *nidhis* is currently in press from John Guy (Guy forthcoming). The two *nidhis* Padma and Śaṅkha, which can serve as a shorthand for all nine *nidhis*, are also prominent in the Jambhala iconography, usually depicted as lotus and conch shell upon which Jambhala in *yakṣa* form sits or stands, but I am not yet aware of any study of them from the scholars of Tibetan and Tantric Buddhist art. Other art historical studies include Chandra, M., (1964-1966) '*Nidhiśrṅga* (Cornucopia): A Study in Symbolism'. *Bulletin of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India*, 9, pp. 1-33, and Tarr, G. (1969) 'The Śiva Cave-temple of Dhokeśvara. The Development of the Nidhi'. *Oriental Art*, 15, 4, pp 269-80. My earlier work (Mayer 2022) focused mainly on tantric adoptions of *nidhi*, including translations from the *Kriyātantras* of procedures for finding *nidhi*. I drew inspiration from Balbir's ground breaking work (1993), which is more focused on the science of treasure hunting (*nidhi-vāda*), rather than on how the *nidhis* were cosmologically understood as environmental and economic factors controlled by, or personified as, territorial deities. The latter and core topic has not yet been systematically approached by academic study at all, with the partial exception of Vogel 1926, who made a commendable if brief start, and my own very preliminary efforts so far (Mayer 2024). If there are richer pickings to be found within the anthropological and ethnographic literature, I am not yet aware of it.

of the *nāgas* (territorial serpent spirits) or *yakṣas* (territorial tree spirits) who guarded or embodied them.

The term *nidhi* is ancient, widespread, and to this day remains truly ubiquitous in India, as a web search can show.<sup>27</sup> It occurs, for example, over a hundred times in the Sikh scripture, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, has chapters devoted to it in some *Purāṇas*, plays a prominent role in the iconography and cult of Lakṣmī, and is a major topic of focus in certain strata of tantric literature, especially Buddhist. Yet as K. R. Norman has observed, it is also a very old category, integral to the ancient roles of *nāgas* (and *yakṣas* and other territorial deities) as guardians of environmental wealth and similar hidden treasures, and thus amply attested in early Jain and Pāli texts.<sup>28</sup> In similar vein, Nalini Balbir (1993) has remarked on how classical Indian narrative literature has numerous references to *nidhi* and *nidhivāda*, the art of discovering *nidhi*. Balbir's paper is only a first introduction to the very broad topic of treasure or wealth finding in India, and was largely derived from a comparatively narrow range of those literary and Jain narrative texts that already comprised her special areas of academic focus. Yet even without paying very much attention beyond these confines, for example amongst tantric texts, she nevertheless discussed *nidhivāda* in relation to at least thirty different narrative works.

I continue in Mayer 2022 by looking at Guru Chos dbang's (1220-1270) comprehensive exploration of the full range of meanings of this translational terminology *gter* in his *gTer 'byung chen mo*, and how he

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<sup>27</sup> A Google search (20th August 2023) for the 'Nine Nidhis' produced over 900,000 results for '*nava nidhis*', over 100,000 results for the more Sikh-friendly '*nau nidh*', and even 86,000 results for the English search term '*nine nidhis* of Kubera'. On closer inspection, many of these were from English-language Indian websites, representing a vast range of different sectarian, cultural, and regional belief systems. Kubera the king of *nidhis* himself threw up 10,600,000 such search results, although many of these were for his namesakes, be they financial advisers, crypto currency dealers, fintech programs, or even video games. One can also search for the eight *nidhis*, often associated with Hanuman, and find very large numbers of hits (1,230,000). I am not sure what numbers would appear if the searches were made in Hindi or Tamil. By contrast, as far as I am currently aware, Norman 1992 is the only academic study specifically of the Nine Nidhis, and there are no academic studies at all of Kubera other than some art-historical works. Even Lakṣmī and Jambhala in their famous capacities as wealth deities seems to have been largely overlooked by modern academic research. While sex and violence in Indian religions have been amply studied for many years, perhaps some prudishness or reticence still inhibits research into these extremely important traditions. Yet in truth they do not reflect merely an ethos of religiously justified greed, as scholars seem to suspect, but rather, they can embody profound reflections on how human well-being is grounded in our landscape and our environment, and their continuities with India's ancient territorial deity traditions are also of great interest.

<sup>28</sup> Norman 1992: 190.

seeks to understand it in the light of the rich and complex Indian understandings of its Sanskrit original, *nidhi*. Presumably because he is Buddhist, Chos dbang, like his successors Ratna gling pa and U rgyan gling pa,<sup>29</sup> upholds the distinctive Indian Buddhist enumeration of *nidhi* as fourfold, which distinguishes Indian Buddhist writings on *nidhi* from the various ninefold classifications of *nidhi* favoured by the Brahmins and the Jains, or the eightfold classifications found in some Purāṇas. As K. R. Norman points out,<sup>30</sup> the Buddhist four-fold enumeration is very old, and is described in such varied texts as the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, the *Divyāvadāna*, the *Mahāvastu*, a number of Pāli commentaries, the Khotanese *Book of Zambasta*, the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra*, the *Maitreyavyākaraṇa*, the *Karmasataka*, and other Mahāyāna sources. But the inquisitive Chos dbang seems to have gone further, and I suspect he might also have consulted some of the Tibetan language *abhidhāna* (*mngon brjod*) literature related to Amarasiṃha's *Nāmalīṅgānusāsana* lexicon, more popularly known as the *Amarakośa*, since his very wide-ranging and extremely thoughtful analysis of all the possible meanings of the word *gter* does seem to subsume popular Indian understandings of the famous *Nine Nidhis*, as found in the *Amarakośa* and its derivative literature, or for that matter the 12th century Jain Hemacandra's *Triṣaṣṭiśālākāpuruṣacaritra* (which as far as I know was not translated into Tibetan).

However, the most important point to bear in mind is that very close parallels existed between Indian ideas of territorial deities and the natural wealth or *nidhis* that they guard, and Tibetan beliefs about *gzhi bdag* and the *gter* that they guarded. I suggest such beliefs were already present and well established in Tibet long before Chos dbang's time, and indeed, long before Buddhism became the established religion of Tibet. One need only compare textual and ethnographic data from South Asia and Tibet to see how clearly this is the case. To what degree such similarities derived from cultural diffusion and to what degree they developed independently as the typical cultural expressions of many pre-modern agricultural and pastoral systems, might never be knowable, but I suspect both of these factors were substantially at work over many centuries. Certainly I believe that Chos dbang interpreted his Indian texts as merely creating a new and more Buddhist language for a terrestrial deity cosmology that was already deeply familiar to Tibetans.

Also in the same paper (Mayer 2022), I present a translation made with the help of P. Ogyan Tanzin Rinpoche, of sixteen pages I selected from the Indian Buddhist *Āryavidyottama-mahātantra* on the finding

<sup>29</sup> Doctor 2005: 21-22.

<sup>30</sup> Norman 1992: 187.

and opening of treasure doors, or *gter sgo*.<sup>31</sup> This is only one among the dozens of passages on *nidhi* in the Indian Buddhist *kriyātantras*. It describes treasure doors as complex and varied magical portals, whose hidden location is disclosed to yogins in dreams bestowed on them by special treasure gods. Such portals are guarded by dangerous spirits and deities but can nevertheless be magically opened and closed, to expose the treasures they conceal. Such material was indubitably influential on the later Tibetan *gter ma* tradition. This particular *Ārya-vidyotta-mamahātantra* passage also has extensive thematic parallels with the *nidhiśāstras*, the Sanskrit texts describing the work of the *nidhivādins*, the typically tantric specialised treasure hunters of medieval India who recovered hidden treasures from the landscape guarded by *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, and other territorial deities, as well as from old temples, religious statues, and the like. Although the *nidhivādins* are often typified as Śaiva, and sometimes in literary narrative specifically as Pāśupata by affiliation, according to Balbir (1993), some of the still extant *nidhiśāstras* make particularly prominent reference to the Buddhist figure, Nāgārjuna.

In a further paper recently published in Leonard van der Kuijp's *Festschrift*,<sup>32</sup> Cathy Cantwell and I make a start on looking at Padmasambhava as a *siddha* in the context of the closely entwined Śaiva and Buddhist tantric cultures of his native Uḍḍiyāna, a task which has never been approached before. If the term *siddha* might seem familiar to Tibetological scholars, then, as I have learned from Śaiva scholars such as John Nemec,<sup>33</sup> appearances can be deceptive, because *siddha* had very differing implications in different genres of medieval Sanskrit literature. In earlier texts such as Epics, Purāṇas, and in Kāvya, *siddhas* were mythic semi-divine beings who lived in the sky (*antarikṣa*), comparable to *gandharvas*, *yakṣas*, and the like. In later centuries, for most Buddhists, *siddhas* were human beings who achieved realisation through the practices of Vajrayāna.

But in Kashmir's non-dual Śaiva traditions, the term *siddha* was more complex. While some *siddhas* could be accomplished human beings approximately resembling the Buddhist definition, others could be very much more: they could be divine or semi-divine non-humans, primordially realised from the very start, who merely adopted the

<sup>31</sup> *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* or 'Phags pa rig pa mchog, D746, filling folios 1a to 237b of the Sde dge Kangyur's Volume 95. The 16 pages I translate are from folio 70b to 78b of this edition.

<sup>32</sup> Cantwell and Mayer 2023.

<sup>33</sup> Lecture delivered to the Oxford Treasure Seminar, Monday 25th April, 2020, 'Perfected Beings in Human Form: The Siddha Tradition in Śaiva Tantra.' Available as a podcast from: <https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/perfected-beings-human-form-siddha-tradition-saiva-tantra>

guise of human *siddhas* to descend from their exalted spiritual abodes to specific geographical locations in the Kashmir region, notably Uḍḍiyāna, for the express purpose of disseminating previously unheard tantric scriptures. The term that came to be applied to such primordially realised *siddhas* descended from on high to disseminate tantric scriptures was *avatāraka*, which Sanderson translates as “promulgator,” (2007: 263-4) and Williams as “agent of revelation” (2017: 135, 136, etc). Another term used was *avatīrṇa*, implying Śiva descended to earth. Some *avatāraka* or *avatīrṇa siddhas* could be hugely significant, as sources of entire tantric dispensations. For example, Abhinavagupta (fl. 975-1025) described the three *siddhas* Tryambaka, Āmardaka, and Śrīnātha, as the agents of revelation respectively of the non-dual, dual, and non-dual-cum-dual teachings of Śiva, while his learned 13th century commentator Jayaratha described the *avatāraka siddha* Matsyendranātha as the sole source of revelation of the entire Kaula tradition.<sup>34</sup>

Despite being so heavily mythologised, these *avatāraka* or *avatīrṇa siddhas* are believed by most modern scholars to have been historical persons, and Kalhaṇa's 12th century history of Kashmir, the *Rājataranginī*, discusses them.<sup>35</sup> It is still not clear to me if some version of the *avatāraka* or *avatīrṇa siddha* trope already accompanied Padmasambhava in the late eighth and early ninth century, or if it was retrospectively applied to him in later years, but the more I reflect, the more confident I am that the mythology of Padmasambhava as preserved in Tibet reflects the cultural backdrop of this Kashmiri tradition of *siddhas* as primordially realised divine emanations, working specifically as agents of non-dual tantric revelation, and often with a connection to Uḍḍiyāna. It is equally striking how the first emergence of named *avatāraka* or *avatīrṇa siddhas* in Kashmir and of named *gter stons* in nearby Tibet are historically near contemporaneous, and that the mythology of the Tibetan *gter stons* refers so repeatedly to Uḍḍiyāna.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Sanderson 2007: 264; Williams 2017: 166.

<sup>35</sup> Sanderson 2007: 427: “Kalhaṇa speaks of the reign of Avantivarman (c. 855/6-883) as one that was marked by the descent of Siddhas among men for the benefit of the world. That this development had a major impact on Kashmirian society is evident in the fact that Kalhaṇa records it. For he is generally silent about the recent history of religion in the valley beyond noting the religious affiliations of certain kings and the temples and other religious foundations that they established. Such figures as Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha, Abhinavagupta, and Kṣemarāja, who loom so large in the learned literature of the Śaivas of Kashmir and beyond, receive not even a passing mention.”

<sup>36</sup> Within the Krama tradition, a named individual, Jñānanetra (a.k.a. Śrīnātha, circa 850–900), is said to have revealed the *Kramasadbhāva* and *Kālikulapañcaśataka* scriptures, in Uḍḍiyāna. See Williams 2017: 147 and Sanderson 2007: 264; for the Sanskrit colophons, see Sanderson's footnote 97. By contrast, gShen chen klu dga' was

Tibetology has sought for many years but without complete success to understand the Padmasambhava and related *gter ma* mythology exclusively through the prism of Tibetan history and culture. I suggest these tasks might have been eased a bit by considering from the outset the distinctive Kashmiri cultural background as well. That is not to say of course that indigenous Tibetan culture can be ignored in any study of *gter ma*, because it's certainly possible, for example, that the cultural conventions of the tumulus burial cults also contributed to the eventual public identification of *gter stons*.

Still awaiting my attention is an attempt to compare the constant references to *ḍākinīs* in the Tibetan *gter ma* tradition, with the similarly prominent role of *ḍākinīs* in Indian Vajrayāna revelation. Following Indian tradition, some Tibetans had a special reverence for Uḍḍiyāna *ḍākinīs*, who played a prominent role in Sanskrit Vajrayāna revelatory narratives, for example, in Līlavajra's revelation of the Sanskrit *Vajrabhairavatantra* in Uḍḍiyāna,<sup>37</sup> or Lūyīpāda's and Tilopā's re-reception of already revealed Cakrasaṃvara tantras there.<sup>38</sup> Uḍḍiyāna is of course also the homeland of Padmasambhava, and a major location for revelation by Śaiva *siddhas*.

### **Mahāyāna's 'standard claim' and the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra***

For the remainder of this paper, I want to return to the Mahāyāna theme of *dharmabhāṇakas* reincarnating into future times to propagate the *sūtras* they had first heard directly from the Buddha in his own lifetime, which as I mentioned above came to play a highly visible role in the construction of Tibetan *gter ma* narratives. Returning to this theme will also give me the opportunity to correct a basic mistake I made in a recent article, *Rethinking Treasure (part one)*, in which I gave a brief preview of this topic in advance of a more detailed article still to come. In *Rethinking Treasure (part one)*, I presented a list of characteristics shared by an Indian Mahāyāna *sūtra*, the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra* (henceforth *Pratyutpanna Sūtra*), and

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active only by the early 11th century, although we can infer there were *gter stons* a generation or two before him. A direction of influence is therefore possibly indicated not only by the constant referencing of Uḍḍiyāna in the Tibetan *gter ma* tradition, but also because the earliest known named scriptural revealers in Kashmir seem to have preceded their Tibetan counterparts by a few decades.

<sup>37</sup> Wenta 2020: 118.

<sup>38</sup> Torricelli 2018: 94-5, 171, 177; personal communication, 22nd April 2021.

the Tibetan *gter ma* traditions. The *Pratyutpanna Sūtra* has been extensively studied by Paul Harrison,<sup>39</sup> and much of its materials on the concealment and revelation of Mahāyāna *sūtras* does indeed display striking parallels with the Tibetan *gter ma* tradition, so that my analysis was correct, as far as it went. However, I also made a mistake: I naively imagined that the *Pratyutpanna* was somehow unique, or at least rare, in containing such narratives. On the contrary, as I have since learned from David Drewes, Natalie Gummer, and other Mahāyāna scholars, the scenario described in the *Pratyutpanna* is not by any means rare, let alone unique. The diametric opposite is actually the case. This narrative structure is so commonplace in Mahāyāna *sūtras*, so ubiquitous, that it constitutes what David Drewes has termed the 'standard claim' of Mahāyāna *sūtra* literature, and is replicated in dozens of different Mahāyāna *sūtras* as the prime method of explaining their existence. As David Drewes wrote to me:<sup>40</sup>

The standard claim is that the Buddha spoke the *sūtra* to bodhisattvas during his (final) life and appointed them with the task of returning to this world to reveal them five hundred years later. This scenario is actually presented already in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*.

Numerous Mahāyāna *sūtras* contain self-referential narratives intended to explain their own existence. The internal logic of these narratives bears partial resemblance to that of the *jātakas*, the stories of the Buddha's past lives, since similar themes of karmic cause and effect, of travel through time, and of reincarnation, are found in both. But in these Mahāyāna *sūtras*, the narratives are specifically focused on how the *sūtra* will continue to be propagated after the Buddha's *Nirvāṇa*, and into the future.

The *Pratyutpanna Sūtra*'s narrative to this effect is typical of numerous other *sūtras*. Much of it occurs in Chapter 13, which opens with the interlocutor, the layman Bhadrapāla, asking the Buddha: 'Reverend Lord, at a future time, in that age following the *Nirvāṇa* of the Tathāgata, will this *samādhi* [of the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra*] circulate and spread here in Jambudvīpa?' The Buddha replies that while the *samādhi* of the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra* will continue to circulate for 40 years after his *Nirvāṇa*,<sup>41</sup> at a later date, copies of it will have to be sealed up within caskets (*sgrom bu*), and hidden in caves, *stūpas*, rocks and mountains, where they will be protected by *nāgas* and suchlike deities. Then, says the Buddha (Chapter 13B), in the degenerated last 500

<sup>39</sup> See especially Harrison 1978 and Harrison 1990.

<sup>40</sup> David Drewes, personal communication, 21st January, 2022.

<sup>41</sup> Harrison 1990: 96-98 explains why the correct reading is 40 years, not 4,000 or 40,000 years.



years, when true dharma [Mahāyāna?] is rejected and false dharma [deprecating Mahāyāna?] prevails, and when all kinds of other bad things will happen,<sup>42</sup> a few beings of exceptionally great merit and karma will deliberately appear, for the specific purpose of recovering the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra* from its hiding places. These special persons will rediscover the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra*, make copies of it, study it, and expound it to others. On hearing the Buddha say these words, the interlocutor Bhadrapāla and his laymen colleagues were deeply moved, and made a mighty aspiration that they should be the ones to reincarnate into that dreadful last 500 years, to recover the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra* from its places of concealment, and teach it to others. But they were not unaware of the gravity of their undertaking, and the difficulties with which it would be fraught; for as they observed, they would be proclaiming teachings that will not have been heard before, and preaching a profound Dharma in which the inhabitants of future times might not believe. Others in the audience exhorted the Buddha to entrust the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra* to these noble volunteers so that they could fulfil their great aspiration, which the Buddha duly did. The Buddha then made very exact prophecies specifying the eight named individuals within his audience who would be the ones to reincarnate in the future to uphold the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra*, and enlarged on the very great merits they would acquire by so doing. Although these eight individuals were all laymen, there is no mention of what their status should be when they reincarnate. The Buddha then prophesied that a further 500 persons within his audience would also reincarnate in those future times, to receive, make copies of, and further propagate the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra* teachings recovered by the reincarnations of the eight laymen.<sup>43</sup>

The similarities of this narrative to those of the Tibetan *gter ma* traditions are self-evident, and I set them out in more detail in the table at the end of this paper. If there are any readers unfamiliar with the Tibetan *gter ma* narratives, then all one really needs to remember are a few key substitutions:

- Firstly, the location is moved from Jambudvīpa in general, to Tibet in particular.
- Secondly, important Buddhist missionaries to Tibet, notably Vimalamitra, and, above all, the Second Buddha Padmasambhava, become substituted for the Buddha of the Mahāyāna texts.

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<sup>42</sup> For a full citation and some discussion of the oft-repeated formula describing the dystopian last 500 years, see Harrison 1990: 96-98, 13B.

<sup>43</sup> See Harrison 1978: 102-115, and Harrison 1990: 96-113.

- Thirdly, the close students of these missionaries, especially those of Padmasambhava, accordingly become the ones prophesied to reincarnate in the future to revive and propagate the teachings.
- Fourthly, along with this basic narrative framework, some other less crucial details and items of terminology are also adopted.

A colleague has tentatively suggested a possible rNying ma divergence from the *sūtra* narrative, pertaining to the understanding of the age of degeneration. He suggests that the 'last 500 years' formula in Mahāyāna sources such as the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra* implies that the reappearances of hidden scriptures will only occur after the *buddhadharma* has entirely disappeared from the world; while *gter ma* were (and are) of course recovered while Buddhism is still established in Tibet, notwithstanding any rhetoric to the contrary.<sup>44</sup> Yet I don't think that this need be counted as a divergence, since the suggestion is seemingly based on a misunderstanding of the Mahāyāna texts. As Harrison (1990: 97-98, note 2) points out, the composers of the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra* rhetorically considered themselves to be living in the last 500 years; but quite certainly *buddhadharma* was by no means extinct in South Asia between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries CE, when that *sūtra* was created. The consensus among contemporary Mahāyāna scholars is to agree with Harrison: the entire logic of what Drewes has dubbed the 'standard claim' supports Harrison's view, not only in respect of the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra*, but also in respect of all the many other Mahāyāna *sūtras* which appeared in the early centuries C.E., yet which characterised their time of revelation to be the dystopian 'last 500 years'.

Moreover, rNying ma authors from Guru Chos dbang in the 13<sup>th</sup> century up to Kong sprul in the 19<sup>th</sup> century also believed the revelation of the Mahāyāna *sūtras* to have happened in an historical period equivalent to the one known to us as the early centuries CE, notwithstanding those *sūtras'* formulaic rhetoric about a 'last 500 years'. Chos dbang explains how the majority of Mahāyāna *sūtras* that were extant in his own time (13<sup>th</sup> century) had previously been buried as *gter* in Uḍḍiyāna (*o rgyan thod dkar gyi yul du*) before being recovered; and he further explains that other Mahāyāna *sūtras* familiar in Tibet such as

<sup>44</sup> It is interesting that this quibble was originally raised by a famous 14<sup>th</sup> century Tibetan critic of *gter ma*, dPal 'dzin. As my colleague wrote to me: "This general point of difference has been made by Tibetan critics of *gter* like dPal 'dzin who saw in the apologetic citation of *sūtras* like this a false equivalence—for dPal 'dzin the *sūtras* emphasize that concealment is for revealing dharma teachings in a period when there is no dharma (or its practice is severely attenuated)."

“the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* and the *Mahāratnakūṭa* and so on” had previously been hidden in treasure caskets [*gter sgrom sbas*] in the temple at Vikramaśīla, before being rediscovered (Guru Chos kyi dbang phyug, 1979: 91). Similarly Kong sprul in his *Biographies of the Hundred Treasure Revealers* (*gTer brgya’i rnam thar*) actually cites the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra* (Kong sprul 2007: 347) as well as the *Sarvapunya-samuccaya-samādhi-sūtra* (Kong sprul 2007: 349), and then remarks that shortly after the Buddha’s passing, much of the Mahāyāna was preserved only in the worlds of *devas* and *nāgas* and was no longer visible to humans, but that eventually, many of the Mahāyāna sūtras were recovered by the masters of the Mind Only school, while the *Perfection of Wisdom in 100,000* was revealed by Nāgārjuna from *nāgaloka* (Kong sprul 2007: 350).<sup>45</sup> It is perfectly clear that neither the Mind Only masters nor Nāgārjuna lived after the dharma had left this world; both lived during the early centuries CE, when *buddhadharma* still thrived in India. Indeed, as Kongtrul goes on to say (2007: footnote 42), this fact underlines the central apologetic for the rNying ma *gter ma* tradition: just as Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna scriptures were initially hidden among the territorial or wordly deities of India (*lha klu la sogs pa*) and then only gradually revealed to humans over the centuries following the Buddha’s *parinirvāṇa*, so also, he implies, the *gter ma* texts of Tibet were initially hidden among the territorial deities of Tibet, and then only gradually revealed to humans over the centuries following Padmasambhava’s departure. Thus the rNying ma pa simply continue this age-old Buddhist tradition.

We must conclude that rather than having a single literal meaning to indicate a time after *buddhadharma* has disappeared altogether, the ‘last 500 years’ formula must instead be seen as a somewhat rhetorical device, fluid of interpretation, and capable of many different applications. For Rig ‘dzin rgod ldem, for example, the ‘last 500 years’ could

<sup>45</sup> [350 line 2] *thun mong mchog gi sprul sku thub pa’i dbang po’i gsung rab rnams kyang bka’ bsdu rim par byung ba’i rjes su theg chen gtso bor gyur pa’i* [line 3] *sde snod phal mo che lha klu la sogs pa’i gnas tha dad pa rnams su byon cing mi snang bar gyur la/ rgyud sde rnams ni rdo rje ‘dzin pa dang mkha’ gro ma rnams kyis bsdu shing o rgyan dharma ganydzo sogs su rgyas btad sde gnyer du* [line 4] *mdzad pa las / phyis dus su babs pa’i tshe theg pa chen po’i mdo sde rnams sgrub sel sogs byang sems rnams las sems tsam gyi slob dpon rnams kyis blangs pa dang/ sher phyin stong phrag brgya pa ‘phags pa klu sgrub* [line 5] *kyis klu yul nas spyen drangs ps sogs mang la/ grub chen sa ra ha/ rta mchog / mtsho skyes/ lū yi pa/ tsi lu pa sogs mchog gi dngos grub brnyes pa rim par byon pa rnams kyis gsang ‘dus bde dgyes dus* [line 6] *‘khor gtso bor gyur pa’i rgyud sde spyen drangs pa thams cad zab gter kho na yin pas rgya gar dang gangs can yul gyi khyad par dang / gang zag rnams ‘byon snga phyi’i dus tshod tsam las sgo thams cad nas don gcig par shes par* [351 line 1] *bya’o/* / For a useful English translation of the *gTer brgya’i rnam thar*, see Jamgon Kongtrul, trans. Yeshe Gyamtso 2011.

mean something as parochial as a specific obstacle to his current patron, a regional king of Mang yul Gung thang; yet the 'last 500 years' formula when associated with this localised obstacle could still serve to signal the prophesied moment for one of his *gter ma* revelations (Valentine 2024: 154-5).

Strictly speaking then, my analysis in *Rethinking Treasure (part one)* can be considered correct: there are indeed very striking parallels between the basic narrative structure of the *Pratyutpanna Sūtra* and those used to explain Tibetan *gter ma*. However, where my analysis fell short is that I had not realised the extent to which narratives resembling those of the *Pratyutpanna* are typical of Mahāyāna *sūtras* in general. As I mentioned earlier, David Drewes has described such narratives as the 'standard claim' of Mahāyāna *sūtra* literature, which is replicated across numerous such texts to explain their existence. Although not always the same in every detail, the basic structure remains constant in most cases.

More pertinently to my purposes, we can say with certainty that many of the famous *sūtras* best known in early Tibetan Buddhism have such themes, and in most cases, present them quite prominently: the *Akṣayamatinirdeśa*, the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, the *Kāraṇḍavyūha*, the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka*, the *Samādhirāja*, the *Suvarṇabhāṣottara*, the *Pratyutpanna*, the *Vimalakīrti*, and probably several more that I am not yet aware of. If Tibetan *gter ma* literature came to reproduce a conspicuous Mahāyāna *sūtra* literary trope, then this is not down to the disproportionate influence of a single text, but rather, to the pervasive cultural influence of the entire *sūtra* genre.<sup>46</sup>

### **The central role of Mahāyāna *sūtras* in early Tibetan Buddhist thinking**

Since this is the case, it becomes much easier to understand what was previously puzzling to me: how, when, and by whom, did such narratives become appropriated for the usages of Tibetan *gter ma* literature? To approach these questions, it is best to begin by investigating the nature of Tibetan engagement in Buddhist scholarship in the period leading up to the first appearances of *gter ma*, which Dan Martin has established as being not later than the final decades of the 10th century.<sup>47</sup> As Ulrike Roesler has pointed out in a recent paper delivered at

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<sup>46</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of this topic, see David Drewes' lecture to the Oxford Treasure Seminar, 'Early Explanations for the Appearance of Mahāyāna *sūtras*', 16th May, 2022; podcast at: <https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/early-explanations-appearance-mahayana-sutras>

<sup>47</sup> See Martin 2001.

Oxford,<sup>48</sup> before the 11th century, and especially during the so-called “early dissemination” of the dharma in Tibet, it was the Mahāyāna *sūtra* corpus that dominated Tibetan Buddhist scholarship. She observes that taken together, Mahāyāna *sūtras* made up approximately two thirds of the texts listed in the two early Imperial translational catalogues, the *Ldan dkar ma* and ‘*Phang thang ma*. She continues with these words:

In addition to the sheer predominance of *sūtra* over *śāstra* in terms of numbers, we are also informed in a document from the Tibetan Imperial court that two *sūtras*, the *Ratnameghasūtra* and the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, were among the earliest texts translated into Tibetan and the vocabulary used became normative for subsequent translations. It is therefore evident that during the 8th and 9th centuries Mahāyāna *sūtras* were given pride of place among the Buddhist texts received from India and elsewhere. They were among the first Buddhist texts to be translated; they form the largest group of texts among the Buddhist translations; and they are listed first in the imperial catalogues.....it was not until the second translation period, from the 11th century onwards, that there was a noticeable shift away from the Mahāyāna *sūtras* and towards the later stages of tantric literature on the one hand, and scholastic literature on the other.

As Roesler acknowledges, Buddhist translations were a public activity sponsored by the royal court, and on the ground, tantric Buddhism would also have been practiced more privately by a number of often hereditary lay householder lineages, some of which might have been quite influential, and also by monastics, probably reflecting Indian usages of the time. But that in no way detracts from her main point that the period is characterized by the considerable impact of Mahāyāna *sūtras* amongst those actively involved in the dissemination of Buddhist texts, since those were the greater and most revered part of the Buddhist translations generally available at the time.

Named *gter stons* began to appear in the 10th and early 11th century, probably building on various already existent traditions. Certainly gShen chen klu dga’, the early Bon po *gter ston* active in the early 11th century, describes for us a *gter ma* culture that is already complex and mature, and which cannot have been extremely new in his own

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<sup>48</sup> Ulrike Roesler: ‘The Mahāyāna Scriptures in Tibet: Recitation, Veneration, and Use’. Paper delivered to *Reading Mahāyāna Scripture Conference, 2021*, St Anne’s College, University of Oxford, 25 September 2021. Thanks to Ulrike Roesler for supplying me with a printed version of her talk.

time.<sup>49</sup> It therefore seems highly probable that the very earliest *gter stons* emerged from an intellectual environment preceding the 11th century shift that Roesler describes, in other words, from an intellectual environment in which the study of Mahāyāna *sūtras* was still paramount. It might therefore be significant that some among the early Buddhist *gter ma* traditions seem to have contained prominent Mahāyāna motifs, while this became less evident in later *gter ma*.

Two of the earliest Buddhist *gter ma* literatures to have survived, the *bKa' chems ka khol ma* and the *Maṇi bka' 'bum*, are traditionally said to have been discovered in the Jokhang in Lhasa, notionally in the 11th century. However, the textual history of these texts is convoluted to say the least. Langelaar's forthcoming work (Langelaar forthcoming, b) shows them to have extremely open redactions, to exist in widely divergent editions, and to contain many materials that postdate the lives of their ostensible revealers. Langelaar presents strong evidence to suggest that the different redactions of the *Maṇi bka' 'bum* in particular can best be looked upon as variable compendia of materials pertaining to Srong btsan sgam po, that were for the sake of convenience attributed to the *gter ma* revelations of two famous rNying ma masters, Grub thob dngos grub (precise dates unknown), and his student Myang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (c. 1124–1192). These collections of Srong btsan sgam po lore contain much overlapping text presenting the first great Tibetan religious king as an emanation of Avalokiteśvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, who was to become the patron deity of Tibet. They therefore drew substantially from the famous Mahāyāna *sūtra*, the *Kāraṇḍavyūha*, which introduced for an Indian public the cult of Avalokiteśvara and his mantra, *oṃ maṇi padme hūṃ*. The various *Maṇi bka' 'bum* traditions could even be seen as serving in some senses an equivalent function as the *Kāraṇḍavyūha* for a Tibetan audience, to convey its basic message of devotion to Avalokiteśvara and his mantra. Guru Chos dbang (1212–1270) later produced a further text under the name of *Maṇi bka' 'bum*.

Even though, as Langelaar has demonstrated, any simplistic attributions of these texts to the *gter ma* discoveries of Grub thob dngos grub and Myang ral Nyi ma 'od zer are probably unreliable, and even though they contain many later materials, I suspect it is likely that a core of Srong btsan sgam po and *Kāraṇḍavyūha* related traditions existed early enough to have been known to the seminal early *gter stons* Myang ral Nyi ma 'od zer and Guru Chos dbang, who did so much to

<sup>49</sup> Dan Martin tells me that the Bon *Klu-'bum* for example was recovered as *gter ma* well before gShen chen klu dga' was born. Traditional Bon chronologies tell us this, and also find further corroboration: gShen chen's father was a master of the *Klu-'bum*, and it was this that inspired him to call his son Klu-dga'. Personal communication, 14th April 2022.

codify the *gter ma* traditions.<sup>50</sup> It is therefore of interest that these narratives draw as heavily on *sūtra* themes as on tantric ones, in contrast to later rNying ma *gter mas*, which are mostly tantric. In addition, Myang ral was the author of historical works, such as the *Chos 'byung me tog snying po brang rtsi'i bcud*, that had much to say about general Buddhism in India, while Chos dbang also shows an awareness of Mahāyāna themes in his *gTer 'byung chen mo*.

What this appears to indicate is that the two great tantric masters who did so much to codify the rNying ma *gter ma* system were themselves in all likelihood well versed in Mahāyāna *sūtra* literature. In my view, we therefore need not be surprised that Myang ral was also capable of adopting a prominent Mahāyāna *sūtra* motif for use at the very heart of his vision of *gter ma*, which is indeed how rNying ma apologists understood their tradition (Kapstein 1989), and especially since there were already most likely precedents for Myang ral to work from. While it might be that Myang ral showed little sign of engagement in *śāstric* Buddhist scholarship, this need not mean that he was ignorant of Mahāyāna *sūtra* literature, which, as Roesler has pointed out, remained a predominant field of Buddhist learning until quite shortly before Myang ral's own times. The same is true of the early Bon *gter ston*, gShen chen klu dga': while his *gter mas* included many genres of scripture, the *sūtra* scriptures of his *Khams brgyad* were by far the greatest in terms of sheer bulk.<sup>51</sup> Of course *gter ma* was from the start replete with tantric influences, for example, *ḍākinīs* adopted from the non-dual tantras, and *nidhivāda* notions taken from the *kriyātantras*; yet *sūtrayāna* influences seem to have been equally important to the early development of the *gter ma* traditions, notably in the framing narrative we are describing here (see my discussion below of the rNying ma 'vision-narrative' as an adaptation of Mahāyāna's 'standard claim').

As further circumstantial evidence in support of my hypothesis, we can turn to the example of Myang ral's older contemporary, the Bka 'gdams pa turned bKa' brgyud pa, sGam po pa bSod nams Rin chen (1079–1153). sGam po pa became commonly known as Zla 'od gzhon nu or Candraprabha Kumāra, after the protagonist by that name in the Mahāyāna's *Samādhirājasūtra*. In this influential *sūtra*, Candraprabha Kumāra is the principal interlocutor whom the Buddha prophesies

<sup>50</sup> Their contributions include the first comprehensive literary formulations of the narrative structures that framed and gave shape to rNying ma *gter ma* discovery, as well as complex theoretical explorations and practical advice. I am referring here to such works as Myang ral's famous biography of Padmasambhava, the *bKa' thang Zangs gling ma*, his huge *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa*, and Chos dbang's analysis of the meaning of the word *gter* and the practice of its recovery, in his *gTer 'byung chen mo*.

<sup>51</sup> Personal communication, Dan Martin, 14th April 2022.

will reincarnate as a *dharmabhāṇaka* in future ages, to promote the teachings of the *Samādhirājasūtra* after the Buddha's *nirvāṇa*. According to Marta Sernesi,<sup>52</sup> the belief that Gampopa was just such a reincarnation of Candraprabha probably shortly post-dated his life time, developing among his direct (or second-generation) disciples who were engaged with the tradition building activities of the early bKa' brgyud masters, in the late 12th century. His recognition as Candraprabha was specifically attributed to his bKa' gdams pa teacher dGe bshes Po to ba, and became widely accepted in Tibet. Thus, as David Jackson describes, sGam po pa's alleged promotion of a controversially *sūtra*-based (rather than tantra-based) *Mahāmudrā* meditation system also came to be interpreted as derived from the *Samādhirājasūtra*, which it was believed sGam po pa had specifically reincarnated to propagate.<sup>53</sup> Indeed the central teaching of this *sūtra* is a meditation on Evenness, or *mnyam pa nyid*, an important technical term in some bKa' brgyud traditions of *Mahāmudrā*<sup>54</sup> and also in the parallel doctrines of *rDzogs chen*.<sup>55</sup> Be that as it may, we can see that classic Mahāyāna *sūtra* literary themes of prophecy, reincarnation, and the revelation of previously concealed teachings, surely played a vital role in the tradition-building that characterised 12th century Tibet.

In a lecture delivered to the Société Française d'Études du Monde Tibétain in Paris on 23rd March 2022, *Travelling in Time: The Role of Jātaka Stories and Prophecies in the Construction of the Kadampa School*, Ulrike Roesler has given an interesting account of the important role of certain classic Indian Buddhist literary conventions in the tradition-building texts of the Bka' gdams pas.<sup>56</sup> Here she develops on themes earlier introduced by Matthew Kapstein on the 12th century emergence of a Tibetan *jātaka* literature now populated by great Tibetan teachers (Kapstein 2003:774-5), associated with the move among Tibetans of that time towards rediscovering the Buddhist holy land of India within Tibet and Tibetans. Specifically, Roesler paints a compelling picture of

<sup>52</sup> Marta Sernesi, personal communication, 28<sup>th</sup> August, 2023. She adds: "There is a statement attributed to the Kadampa master [Potoba] that the Great Seal is the teaching of the *Samādhirājasūtra*, and this statement has been linked to the belief that Gampopa was the bodhisattva's reincarnation. The *Blue Annals* add that Potoba believed Gampopa to be the reincarnation of Candraprabha, but this is not found in the early biographies of Gampopa nor in Kadampa sources."

<sup>53</sup> Jackson 1994: 17-18.

<sup>54</sup> This is a complex topic, since there are differences in the understandings of *Mahāmudrā* between different bKa' brgyud traditions, for example, between the 'Brug pa and Karma pa schools. Thanks to Dagmar Schwerk for this information (personal communication, 14<sup>th</sup> April 2024).

<sup>55</sup> It also plays the central role in the *Guhyagarbhatantra* and *\*Upāyapāśatantra*, two key Mahāyoga tantras often thought to have a connection with rDzogs chen.

<sup>56</sup> Accessed from the SFEMT YouTube channel on 16th April 2022: <https://youtu.be/fLfNqUpCTOo>



how *jātaka* and *sūtra*-derived notions of *vyākaraṇa*, time travel, and re-incarnation, were adapted for incorporation into the narratives of the *Pha chos* and *Bu chos* of the *Bka' gdams glegs bam*. Analysing the Sanskrit term *vyākaraṇa*, Roesler explains that it means rather more than its usual translation as 'prophecy'. *Vyākaraṇa* implies a broader understanding of causality through all the three times of past, present, and future, a supernormal knowledge (*abhijñā*) accessible only to the very most advanced beings, and a necessary component of the omniscience ascribed to a Buddha. In these narratives, Atiśa moreover assumes a role parallel to the Buddha's in the Indian literary prototypes, and Atiśa's leading disciples assume roles parallel to those of the Buddha's leading disciples. Thus when Atiśa discloses the past and future births of his disciples to illustrate their longstanding karmic destinies with his teachings through many lifetimes, he thereby simultaneously signals his own Buddha-like knowledge of the three times.

### **The rNying ma 'vision-narrative' and its adaptation of Mahāyāna's 'standard claim'**

Turning now to the largest and most influential *gter ma* tradition in Tibetan Buddhism, the still thriving *gter ma* practices of the rNying ma school, we can see that such knowledge of the three times is equally central to their narratives. Inspired notably by the mythic templates established by Myang ral (1124 – 1192) and his successor Chos dbang (1212-1270), rNying ma *gter ma* ideology came to be articulated and codified into what I am very provisionally going to call a 'vision-myth' or maybe a 'vision-narrative', I am not sure yet. I am referring here to the coherent and consistent but nevertheless flexible mythic narrative structure, centered on the story of Padmasambhava and his contemporaries, which has determined the shape and content of the visionary experiences of rNying ma treasure finders for so many centuries. Padmasambhava was of course not the only concealer of *gter ma* in rNying ma historiography, but his mythos became predominant, and will serve as our focus here.<sup>57</sup> By lending form to treasure finders' visionary

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<sup>57</sup> From a strictly chronological perspective, it could be argued that the cult of Padmasambhava was not very widely established until the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, and that Vimalamitra was a significant figure earlier on, that even non-Indian persons like gNubs were said to have buried *gter mas* for rediscovery, and that several very early rNying ma *gter ma* traditions seem not to have been Padmasambhava-centric at all. Nevertheless, it was the Padmasambhava narrative established by Myang ral in the 12<sup>th</sup> century that eventually became the dominant narrative within rNying ma, and continues to be so to this day. Thanks to David Germano for his thoughts on this issue.

experiences, the Padmasambhava mythology has also shaped, predicted, and explained the content of their actual treasure discoveries. In turn, the 'vision-narrative' itself becomes reaffirmed, perpetuated, and enriched, with each subsequent visionary experience, and with each subsequent treasure discovery, century after century. While this vision-narrative has perhaps served most prominently to underpin the ongoing revelations of new *gter mas*, it simultaneously supports many other aspects of rNying ma ritual, practice, and identity, since so many of these are inseparably connected with treasure discovery, and with Padmasambhava and his circle.

Anthropologists might detect some resemblance between my provisional terminology of vision-myth or vision-narrative, and the anthropological idea of the 'myth-dream'. The idea of the 'myth-dream' was first articulated by a Canadian anthropologist, the late Kenelm Burridge (1922-2019), and subsequently adopted and refined by further scholars. Recently, Charles Stewart used Burridge's ideas in his remarkable study of the key role played by communally occurring and communally curated religious dreams, in the miraculous rediscoveries by a Greek Orthodox community of a series of long-hidden ancient sacred icons, reputedly buried on their island of Naxos by early Christian refugees from Egypt.<sup>58</sup> The dreams were received by several persons, continued over time, and were characterised by specific, coherent, repeated narratives. They indicated to the villagers where they should dig to find the icons, while also illustrating their ancient origins and sacred power. Today, after decades of sustained religious outpouring, these icons form the basis of one of the most popular pilgrimage sites in Greek Christianity. The myth-dream Stewart describes in Naxos is, from an anthropological perspective, not very unusual, and ethnographers have described comparable examples in various parts of the world. Perhaps what David Drewes has termed the 'standard claim' of the Mahāyāna *sūtras* was one such myth-dream, since it worked as an implicit mythic structure that lent a unifying cohesion to the multifarious revelations of Mahāyāna *sūtras* by different *dharmabhāṇakas* over long periods of time.

But what sets the rNying ma vision-narrative apart from the 'myth-dreams' of most other cultures, including the Mahāyāna, is the truly comprehensive manner in which it has been extracted from its wider contexts and developed into an independent theme, moving from the implicit to the explicit, becoming formally codified and organised, been committed to writing not merely once but many times over, and developed as a major literary genre in its own right. As far as we currently know, this extraordinary rNying ma vision-narrative was first

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<sup>58</sup> Stewart 2012.

committed to writing by the 12th century master, Myang ral Nyi ma 'od zer, in his seminal work, the *Zangs gling ma*, although Myang ral surely drew on earlier sources. A central concern of Myang ral was to portray the very soil of Tibet and the *gter stons* inhabiting it as the new holy land populated by siddhas and saints, equivalent to India in its sanctity and thus in its capacity to support the manifestation of new Buddhist scripture. Hence we are much reminded of Kapstein's discussion (2003:774-5) of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Tibetan preoccupation towards rediscovering the Buddhist holy land of India within Tibet and Tibetans—indeed, the fuller emergence of the Buddhist *gter ma* tradition with its associated mythology at just this time can surely be seen as part of that movement.

In a variation on Po to ba's alleged recognition of sGam po pa as the reincarnation of Candraprabha Kumāra, and like all *gter stons* who were to follow after, Myang ral necessarily accepted himself as a prominent figure from the vision-narrative. In Myang ral's specific case, he was the reincarnation of Padmasambhava's and Vimalamitra's most illustrious disciple of all, the Emperor Khri srong lde btsan.<sup>59</sup> Yet we should take note that such an identification with an emperor seems not have been entirely unique to the rNying ma, since at some stage the *bKa' chems ka khol ma* too was similarly used to identify Atiśa as the reincarnation of Emperor Srong btsan sgam po.<sup>60</sup> Be that as it may, Myang ral's identity as the reincarnation of Khri srong lde btsan enabled him to rediscover both the *Phur pa 'phrin las* section and the actual Root Tantras of the majestic *bDe gshegs 'dus pa* cycle directly from the Emperor's own personal manuscripts, the very same manuscripts entrusted by Vimalamitra and Padmasambhava to the Emperor 400 years previously, and then concealed as *gter ma*.<sup>61</sup> Further iterations of

<sup>59</sup> See Hirshberg 2016: 25-27, 53, 65-68, 170, 191-97

<sup>60</sup> Thanks to Tomoko Makidono (personal communication 5th July 2022) and Reinier Langelaar (personal communication 19th July 2022) for pointing out the complexity of the *bKa' chems ka khol ma* tradition, and the difficulty of ascertaining exactly when the narrative of Atiśa as the reincarnation of Srong btsan sgam po first appears in it. Yet this narrative certainly does appear at some stage. Langelaar in particular is to be commended for his excellent and detailed attempts at clarifying the transmission of the *bKa' chems ka khol ma* (Langelaar forthcoming, a). He reports that the narrative of Atiśa as the reincarnation of Srong btsan sgam po appears in his witness M (the widely used Lanzhou edition edited by sMon lam rgya mtsho), and his witness S (published by the Ser gtsug nang bstan dpe rnying 'tshol bsdu phyogs sgrig khang in Lhasa). However, this narrative is absent in other editions.

<sup>61</sup> As described in Cantwell (2022/2024: 152-153), the colophons of the *Action Phurpa* section thus declare themselves to be 'Emperor Khri srong lde btsan's own manuscript' (*rgyal po khri srong lde'u btsan gyi phyag dpe*), while the colophons of the several Root Tantras (*rtsa ba'i rgyud*) similarly declare themselves to be *rgyal po'i bla dpe*, another way of saying the same thing.

the rNying ma vision-narrative were subsequently committed to writing by numerous later masters, the most influential of which was probably O rgyan gling pa's (1323 – c. 1360) 14th century *Padma bka' thang*. The rNying ma vision-narrative has by now become so popular, so well known, and so influential, that it counts as the cultural property of all Tibetans, regardless of school or lineage. The name given to such texts is often *bka' thang*, a notoriously difficult term to understand or translate. However, in popular rNying ma usage, which is what concerns us here, it typically refers to a genre of biographies or histories concerning Padmasambhava revealed as *gter ma* treasure.<sup>62</sup>

The religious aspect of the *bka' thang* genre is so far less explored than the cultural or social historical aspects. Yet it is important to understand that the primary function has always been religious. It continues to play a key role in the inner religious lives of contemporary Buddhists, informing their meditative experiences, religious dreams, and visions, as well as shaping the still ongoing revelations of *gter mas*. Its relatedness to the outer forms of religious life is equally pronounced. Whole episodes of the *bka' thang* can originate in tantric ritual, subsequently transcribed into symbolic narratives about Padmasambhava. *bKa' thang* derived liturgies such as Rig 'dzin rgod ldem's *Le'u bdun ma* should be recited at every 10th day *tshogs*, which themselves worship the Padmasambhava of the *bka' thangs*. One could cogently argue that the *bka' thang* narratives live even more within their innumerable liturgical and visionary manifestations, than in the comparatively fewer famous long texts by O rgyan gling pa or Sangs rgyas gling pa.

In these richly devotional texts, themselves usually discovered as *gter mas*, Padmasambhava is envisaged as a Second Buddha, the re-appearance of Śākyamuni as a direct emanation from the Buddha Amitābha, who takes miraculous birth fully-formed and fully-enlightened upon a magical lotus in a lake in Uḍḍiyāna. Like his *avatāraka* or *avatīrṇa* Śaiva counterparts, his purpose in manifesting is to teach non-dual tantras that were often not known to humans before: as Khenpo Palden Sherab puts it, "...Buddha Śākyamuni presented Hīnayāna and Sūtra Mahāyāna teachings, while Guru Padmasambhava taught the Vajrayāna..."<sup>63</sup> Yet Padmasambhava also has a special karmic relationship with Tibetans, so that he can manifest teachings for them

<sup>62</sup> See Rangjung Yeshe Dictionary, s.v. *bka' thang*.

<sup>63</sup> In the developed rNying ma tradition as represented by Guru Chos dbang (1220-1270) and O rgyan gling pa (1323-?1360), Padmasambhava is envisaged as the Buddha himself who needs no human teachers either for his own realisation, or to transmit teachings to others. For example, Chos dbang makes visionary journeys to visit Padmasambhava in his Pure Land of Zangs mdog dpal ri to receive tantric

that no other nations have received. Thus the *bka'thang* texts usually place special emphasis on his stay in Tibet, with a discussion of his prolific concealment of *gter mas* in the Tibetan landscape.

And here the *bka'thang* literature borrows one of its main narrative frameworks from the Indian Mahāyāna literary convention previously described. As a knower of the three times, the Second Buddha Padmasambhava has the ability to understand all karmic causes and effects in the minutest detail. Like the Buddha of the Mahāyāna *sūtras*, he too can foresee the future vicissitudes of his teaching dispensation down to the smallest particulars. Armed with that foresight, like the Buddha of the Mahāyāna *sūtras*, he can see that the teachings he has just given his disciples in 8th century Tibet, will need to be concealed for a time, and then re-revealed in future centuries. Like the Buddha

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teachings (Guru Chos kyi dbang phyug 1979: 139 ff). In similar vein, Chapter 3 of O rgyan gling pa's definitive *Padma bka' thang* describes how across numerous different world systems, just as in ours, the Buddhas appear in dyadic form, comprising a Śākyamuni-type emanation to teach the *sūtras*, and a Padmasambhava-type emanation to teach the secret tantras (O rgyan gling pa 1985, ff.32-43). A prominent modern rNying ma scholar, the late *mKhan po* Palden Sherab, explains the Śākyamuni-Padmasambhava dyad of our own world thus:

"For the most part, Buddha Shakyamuni presented Hinayana and Sutra Mahayana teachings, while Guru Padmasambhava taught the Vajrayana. ...The Buddha only gave Vajrayana teachings privately, to select groups of disciples. Because the essence and even the form of these higher teachings is beyond common conception, they are also known as secret teachings. After the Buddha entered mahaparinirvana, these secret doctrines were preserved by a host of wisdom dakinis. ...When Guru Rinpoche appeared as the reincarnation of Buddha Shakyamuni, he revealed the Vajrayana teachings in their entirety. This is why Guru Rinpoche is known as the Buddha of the Vajrayana." Palden Sherab 1992: 2-3.

We do not yet know when such a narrative first appeared. On the one hand, Kalhaṇa writing in the 12th century associates 'descended siddhas' especially with the reign of Avantivarman (c. 855/6-883), and there is quite strong evidence to suggest some of the Dunhuang sources could be interpreted as portraying Padmasambhava as a 'second Buddha' (Dalton 2020: 33-42) and revealer of non-dual tantras (Cantwell and Mayer, 2023). On the other hand, the testimony from Myang ral (1124-1192) needs further study, and might transpire to pull the other way. It's true that Chapters 2 and 3 of the now popular redaction of the *Zangs gling ma* contained in Volume 1 of the *Rin chen gter mdzod* (Doney's ZL1) do seem to envisage Padmasambhava as a *nirmāṇakāya* independent of any need for human masters either for his own realisation or to transmit teachings to others (for an English translation, see Kunsang 1993: 37-44). But Lewis Doney informs me that what he currently believes to be the earliest *Zangs gling ma* recension, his ZL3, does not necessarily support such a view: while it does describe Padmasambhava as achieving *siddhi* under the non-human tutelage of wisdom *ḍākinīs*, it lacks further sentences found in ZL1 that unambiguously affirm Padmasambhava's subsequent study with human gurus was merely to dispel his contemporaries' fears about someone who displayed miracles without having a teacher, and also to establish for future generations the necessity of having a master (personal communication 10th August 2022; see Doney 2014: 44, 110-11, 233-34). The testimony from Myang ral's huge *bKa' brgyad bDe gshegs 'dus pa* has yet to be studied.

in the Mahāyāna *sūtras*, Padmasambhava's knowledge of even the most minute workings of *pratityasamutpāda* allow him to discern to which of his disciples he should at this moment entrust each particular teaching, and in which particular future time, and in which precise location in Tibet, they must be reborn to recover those teachings. He also knows exactly where, when, and with which companions, they should recover them in those future lives. Like the Buddha's students in the Mahāyāna *sūtras*, Padmasambhava's students too are inspired to take mighty vows, to be reborn in those future times, to uphold the teachings with which Padmasambhava has entrusted them. Accordingly, like the Mahāyāna *sūtras*, numerous *bka' thang* texts attribute prophecies to Padmasambhava, in which he discloses details about the future vicissitudes of his teachings, their concealments, his entrustments of those teachings to his close students, the vows of those students to be reborn to propagate them in future lives, and many particulars about their rediscoveries. O rgyan gling pa's *Padma bka' thang* is perhaps the most famous for the sheer quantity and detail of its prophecies, but all *bka' thang* texts describe them. And accordingly, at a more abstract doctrinal level, the classic Mahāyāna *sūtra* process of entrustment (*parindanā*, *gtad pa*) that occurs so prominently in the Mahāyāna *sūtra* narratives is adopted as the central doctrinal cornerstone of rNying ma *gter ma* transmission by leading scholastic exegetes.<sup>64</sup>

If we turn from the *bka' thang* literature to the practical mechanics of revelation in Tibet, we find that tantric and indigenous themes play equally prominent roles, which we have no space to discuss here. Nevertheless, I should mention that the outer classificatory envelope containing these mechanics once again adopts Mahāyāna categories as paramount. Paul Harrison has researched Indian Mahāyāna scriptural revelation for many years. He argues that its various mechanics of revelation are summarised in Śāntideva's *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, where it cites a

<sup>64</sup> This will necessarily have to be the subject of a separate more doctrinal study. In brief I can only mention here that Dodrupchen III Jigme Tenpai Nyima's *Las 'phro gter bgyud kyi rnam bshad nyung gsal ngö mtshar rgya mtsho* takes *gtad rgya* as its central premise for explaining *gter ma* transmission, and we are also aware of much earlier presentations of this understanding. The Tibetan term *gtad pa* is a translation of the Sanskrit *parindanā* or *parīdanā* and related forms. Unfortunately, despite its ubiquity in Mahāyāna *sūtras*, Paul Harrison tells me that he is not aware of any in-depth academic studies of this term (personal communication, 15<sup>th</sup> March 2022). Hence I have begun my own investigation, based on 20 entire chapters or chapter sections from scriptural texts in the Kangyur which specifically address this term. My current impression, based on the several of these occurrences that I have managed to analyse so far, is that Tibetan authors such as Dodrupchen III Jigme Tenpai Nyima and the others who did make detailed investigations of this term, represented it accurately.

passage from the *Sarvapunya-samuccaya-samādhī-sūtra*. Harrison translates as follows:

Vimalatejas, the Buddhas and Lords resident in other world systems show their faces to reverent and respectful *bodhisattvas* and *mahāsattvas* wanting the dharma, and they cause them to hear the dharma. Vimalatejas, treasures of the dharma are deposited in the interiors of mountains, caves and trees for *bodhisattvas* and *mahāsattvas* wanting the dharma, and endless dharma-teachings in book form come into their hands. Vimalatejas, deities who have seen former Buddhas provide *bodhisattvas* and *mahāsattvas* wanting the dharma with the inspired eloquence of Buddhas.<sup>65</sup>

Very similar tripartite classificatory structures were applied to Buddhist revelation in Tibet, through appropriation of the Mahāyāna schema. Although already thematically apparent in earlier authors such as Guru Chos dbang (1220-1270) and Klong chen pa (1308–1364),<sup>66</sup> this tripartite classification possibly acquired its familiar present-day terminology rather more recently. Nowadays we know them as [1] *dag snang* or 'Pure Vision', meeting the Buddha face to face in a vision and receiving teachings; [2] *sa gter ma*, or 'Earth Treasure', meaning sacred texts concealed within the material world; and [3] *dgongs gter* or 'Mind Treasure', a direct divine inspiration of the mind permitting the spontaneous confident utterance of dharma.

### Conclusion

To summarise: Tibetology has long been unanimous that the *gter ma* traditions of Tibet developed from the confluence of indigenous and foreign influences. India, China, and Tibet independently had complex and varied treasure cultures, several of which merged over time. So far, however, the various Indian influences have remained largely unexplored. I am hoping to make a start on this potentially fruitful but hopefully not very difficult undertaking of researching the Indian influences (even if most of my research effort still remains devoted to

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<sup>65</sup> Harrison 2005: 124-5

<sup>66</sup> There is ample evidence from Chos dbang's autobiographical writings that in parallel with his discoveries of earth treasures (*sa gter*), Chos dbang also enjoyed prolonged face-to-face encounters with Padmasambhava in his paradise to receive important teachings from him, in a process that might later have been associated with pure vision (*dag snang*). I'm not yet clear if Chos dbang also enjoyed the kind of experiences nowadays associated with mind treasure (*dgongs gter*). However, in the following century, Klong chen pa does seem to have done so, for example, in the production of his *Seven Treasures*, which can sometimes be classified as Mind Treasures.

Tibetan influences). It promises to be interesting. On the one hand, it seems likely there might have been some direct historical continuity between Indian and Tibetan revelatory practices in the largely anonymous revelation of some early rNying ma tantras. As careful calques of Sanskritic tantras and largely based on reused Indian text, they were quite likely produced with the same revelatory methods that were still being used at that time by Indian gurus. By contrast, the slightly later *gter ma* system was a uniquely Tibetan mélange of numerous sources with no precise counterpart anywhere else. Unlike Indian Buddhism's largely anonymous *dharmabhāṇakas* and often anonymous tantric *sid-dhas*, it openly identified its text revealers. Mixing the contemporaneous tantric traditions of Kashmir and India with powerful indigenous Tibetan elements, it drew them all together within frame narratives inspired by Mahāyāna *sūtra* literary motifs apparently long discontinued in India,<sup>67</sup> but which thereby found a remarkable new life in 10th century Tibet.

TABLE 1
Thirteen literary motifs shared between the <i>Pratyutpanna Sūtra</i> Chapter 13, wider Mahāyāna <i>sūtra</i> literature in general, and Tibetan <i>gTer ma</i> literature.
All locations in the <i>Pratyutpanna Sūtra</i> from Harrison 1978 and 1990.
[1] <i>Pratyutpanna Sūtra</i> : Concealment of the <i>sūtra</i> so it can be reintroduced afresh following a foreseen future religious decline (13 B-D).
Mahāyāna <i>sūtra</i> literature: Motif is widely present, whether concealment is conventional or supernatural.
<i>gTer ma</i> literature: Motif is widely present, whether concealment is conventional or supernatural, but substituting Tibet for Jambudvīpa.

<sup>67</sup> A later instance of this mythic structure in a Mahāyāna context and outside of Tibet can be found in a source from late 6th century China. In his *Lidai sanbao ji* (T 2034), compiled in 594, the canonical cataloguer Fei Changfang ruled that a key factor rendering the nun Nizi's previously unheard *sūtra* canonical, was that she had remembered it from a past life (*suxi*). By contrast, Fei Changfang did not accept "divine transmission" (*shenshou*), i.e. transmissions direct from deities. As Campamy writes, "for Fei, "divine transmission" (*shenshou*) is either a non-existent phenomenon or, if it does occur, it is not a way in which authentic *sūtras* are produced. What he does admit as authentic are *sūtras* "learned in a former life" (*suxi*) and spontaneously recalled and chanted in this life" (see Campamy 1995: 8-9). However, as Eric Greene observes, although these and similar criteria might have been acceptable in some circles during the earlier periods of Chinese Buddhism, such criteria later came to be rejected by the official bibliographic traditions, for whom only translated *sūtras* with a proven Indic origin could officially be deemed authentic (Eric Greene, personal communication, 5th July 2023).



[2] <i>Pratyutpanna Sūtra</i> : Specific prophecies regarding the already spiritually advanced future discoverers of the PraS (13 K, esp. vv. 3-11, 14-15).
Mahāyāna <i>sūtra</i> literature: Motif is widely present.
<i>gTer ma</i> literature: Motif is widely present (substituting Padmasambhava's 25 close disciples reincarnating as <i>gter stons</i> , for the Buddha's close disciples reincarnating as <i>dharmabhāṇakas</i> ).
[3] <i>Pratyutpanna Sūtra</i> : All future reincarnating discoverers are present among the audience when the Buddha first teaches the <i>sūtra</i> (13; 13 K vv. 3-11).
Mahāyāna <i>sūtra</i> literature: Motif is widely present.
<i>gTer ma</i> literature: Motif is widely present (substituting Padmasambhava and his 25 close disciples for the Buddha and his close disciples).
[4] <i>Pratyutpanna Sūtra</i> : Future reincarnating discoverers make aspirations to teach the <i>sūtra</i> in the future times (13 D-H).
Mahāyāna <i>sūtra</i> literature: Motif is widely present.
<i>gTer ma</i> literature: Motif is widely present (substituting Padmasambhava's 25 close disciples and teachings for those of the Buddha).
[5] <i>Pratyutpanna Sūtra</i> : The Buddha first directly teaches and then entrusts ( <i>parindanā</i> / <i>gtad</i> ) these named disciples with the <i>sūtra</i> , with the prophecy they will rediscover it again and again in repeated future lives (13, 13 H).
Mahāyāna <i>sūtra</i> literature: Motif is widely present (concepts <i>parindanā</i> / <i>gtad</i> and <i>vyākaraṇa</i> / <i>lung bstan</i> often explicit, other times implied).
<i>gTer ma</i> literature: Motif is widely present (substituting Padmasambhava and his 25 close disciples for the Buddha and his close disciples).
[6] <i>Pratyutpanna Sūtra</i> : White-robed non-monastic status of the eight who will later incarnate to recover the <i>sūtra</i> (13 C, 13 E; Harrison 1990: xvii). Their status after reincarnation not specified.
Mahāyāna <i>sūtra</i> literature: When attending the Buddha, future <i>dharmabhāṇakas</i> often non-monastic, or monks. After reincarnating as <i>dharmabhāṇakas</i> , even if monastic, can be married, or transgressive (e.g. Kāraṇḍavyūha sūtra).
<i>gTer ma</i> literature: When attending Padmasambhava, future <i>gter stons</i> often non-monastic, or monks. After reincarnating as <i>gter stons</i> , even if monastic, need consorts to reveal <i>gter ma</i> ; often transgressive.

[7] <i>Pratyutpanna Sūtra</i> : Five hundred prophesied recipients, who also heard the original teaching of the PraS in their past lives, will repeatedly be reborn to accompany the eight prophesied treasure discoverers, to receive, copy and propagate the newly revealed teachings (13 G-H, 13 K v.3, 14-15).
Mahāyāna <i>sūtra</i> literature: Motif is sometimes present (prevalence not yet ascertained).
<i>gTer ma</i> literature: Motif often present, and systematised (cf. the <i>chos bdag</i> who is first to receive the <i>gter ma</i> from the <i>gter ston</i> , and is charged with putting it in writing and disseminating it).
[8] <i>Pratyutpanna Sūtra</i> : It is predicted that after rediscovery, the <i>sūtra</i> and its discoverers might be seen as controversial, and not readily accepted by the wider Buddhist public (13 F, 13 K vv. 12-13).
Mahāyāna <i>sūtra</i> literature: Motif is widely present.
<i>gTer ma</i> literature: Motif is widely present (substituting <i>gter ma</i> texts and their <i>gter stons</i> for Mahāyāna <i>sūtras</i> and their <i>dharmabhāṇakas</i> ).
[9] <i>Pratyutpanna Sūtra</i> : Uses a key technical term <i>gtad pa</i> (13 H).
Mahāyāna <i>sūtra</i> literature: <i>Gtad pa</i> / <i>parindanā</i> widely present.
<i>gTer ma</i> literature: <i>Gtad pa</i> widely present, becomes doctrinally central.
[10] <i>Pratyutpanna Sūtra</i> : Concealed manuscripts are stored in caskets ( <i>sgrom bu</i> ) (13K v. 8).
Mahāyāna <i>sūtra</i> literature: <i>sGrom bus</i> can occur in those Mahāyāna <i>sūtras</i> where scriptures are concealed in the environment.
<i>gTer ma</i> literature: <i>sGrom bus</i> occur in the particular class of <i>gter ma</i> where scriptures are concealed in the environment ( <i>sa gter</i> ).
[11] <i>Pratyutpanna Sūtra</i> : Treasure caskets ( <i>sgrom bu</i> ) are hidden in such places as caves, <i>stūpas</i> , rocks and mountains (13 K v.9; 13 B).
Mahāyāna <i>sūtra</i> literature: Motif occurs when texts are concealed in the environment.
<i>gTer ma</i> literature: Motif occurs where texts are concealed in the environment ( <i>sa gter</i> ), extending also to lakes, the sky, temples, statues, etc.
[12] <i>Pratyutpanna Sūtra</i> : <i>Nāgas</i> and suchlike deities are charged with protecting the casket during its long concealment (13 K v.9).
Mahāyāna <i>sūtra</i> literature: Motif present where texts are concealed in the environment.
<i>gTer ma</i> literature: Motif present where texts are concealed in the environment ( <i>sa gter</i> ), specifically <i>nāgas</i> etc. inhabiting Tibet's landscape.

[13] <i>Pratyutpanna Sūtra</i> : Prophecies of where the PraS will be rediscovered ('in the north', 13 K v.14-15).
Mahāyāna <i>sūtra</i> literature: Motif shared by many Mahāyāna <i>sūtras</i> , can be in this world system or another.
<i>gTer ma</i> literature: Motif ubiquitous, usually specifying locations in Tibet.

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