

**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 1453.¹ 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.² 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.³ 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

¹ 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.

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

³ 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 Paṇ chen's name-in-religion was Chos kyi rgyal mtshan.⁴ 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.⁵ 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*.⁶ 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 Paṇ chen's biographies where it is prefaced by a substantial account of Bo dong Paṇ chen's debate with a certain Bsod nams skyabs who had some reservations

⁴ 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 bsn̄yen*, *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.

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

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

about the *Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter*.⁷ 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.⁸

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."⁹ 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 right¹⁰, 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.¹¹ 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

⁷ '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*.

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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.

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

¹¹ '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"¹² 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".¹³ 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.¹⁴

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 following¹⁵:

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. 137.¹⁶
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.

¹² 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.

¹³ '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.

¹⁴ '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.

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ 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.¹⁷ 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 size¹⁸:

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|--|
| 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)¹⁹:

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

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

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

¹⁹ '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.²⁰ 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.²¹

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*).²²

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

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

²⁰ 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 (4th c.) *Jātakamālā*.

²¹ '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.

²² 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*.²³
- 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.²⁴
- 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.

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

²⁴ 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 Dharmadvāda [= 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, 253-333²⁵
- 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.

²⁵ 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, 333-369.²⁶

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 (11th c.) *Sarasvatikaṇṭhābharaṇa*
 which Sa skya Paṇḍita knew and even cites
 twice.²⁷

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

²⁷ 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, 300-306.²⁸

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.²⁹ 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

²⁸ For another manuscript of this work, see Bo dong Paṇ chen 1972.

²⁹ 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 *khruṃs* (*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.³⁰ 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)³¹ 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*.³² 'Dar stod also singles out 'Gos Lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal (1392–1481)³³ 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.³⁴ 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.³⁵

Gsung 'bum, bdrc.io, W3CN18538

³⁰ 'Dar stod 1987: 308–309.

³¹ 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.

³² 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.

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

³⁴ Gser mdog Paṇ chen 1975: 336.

³⁵ 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 (5thc.). This was later adopted by the author of the large study of the *Prajñāpāramitā* sutras³⁶ 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.

³⁶ 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.³⁷

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*.³⁸

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 sentence³⁹:

*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 'brug⁴⁰ (ca. 800) was the ostensible author; there we read:

³⁷ 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.

³⁸ Candrakīrti (7th 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.

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

⁴⁰ 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 /
kharge na muṇḍe pa tshi tya / zhes pa bsgyur na
/*

*grog 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 source⁴¹:

*/ snying dang 'dra ba'i grogs 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,

⁴¹ 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...rnams 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 khirms rin chen]. He completed it on the full moon day of the first half of the month *sgron*, the third month,⁴² of the year wood-female-hen, the *sa*

⁴² 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 mgon 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*s '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* / *Kāvyaṇḍarśa*.⁴³

⁴³ 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 shrī* [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 <i>dbyu gu</i> [ninth] of the earth-female-sheep year, the year <i>don grub</i> (<i>siddhārtha</i>); 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 (<i>li pi ka ra</i> < Skt. <i>lipikara</i>) 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.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ 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.⁴⁵

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 ku⁴⁶
 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.

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.

⁴⁵ 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.

⁴⁶ 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.⁴⁷

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 cadence⁴⁸ (*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.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ See van der Kuijp[b].

⁴⁸ Gerow 1971: 223 ff.

⁴⁹ Snar thang Lo tsā ba 1976: 1, 184.

Bibliography

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
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