

Tibetan Manuscript and Xylograph Traditions

The Written Word and Its
Media within the Tibetan Culture Sphere

Edited by

Orna Almogi



INDIAN AND TIBETAN STUDIES 4

Hamburg • 2016

Department of Indian and Tibetan Studies, Universität Hamburg

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Edited by Harunaga Isaacson and Dorji Wangchuk

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To the Tibetan scholars, scribes, and carvers
of the past, present, and future

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Preface

Textual scholarship, including text and book cultures, has a long and rich history throughout the Tibetan cultural sphere. Since the development of the Tibetan script—according to traditional sources sometime in the 7th century—tens (or perhaps hundreds) of thousands of texts, be they of Indic origin or autochthonous Tibetan, have been written down on Tibetan soil. Consequently, a much greater number of books, be they in the form of manuscripts or xylographs, were produced, transmitted, and further reproduced throughout the centuries. Tibetan textual scholarship thus becomes highly interesting and relevant for all of us who strive to gain a nuanced and well-founded knowledge of Tibetan intellectual culture, intellectual history, religion, philosophy, textual criticism, literature, or language.

In recent years we have been witnessing a growing interest in Tibetan textual scholarship—including Tibetan text and book cultures—that goes beyond the mere textual and contentual matters. Issues concerning material and visual aspects of Tibetan book culture—including writing materials, economical and logistical aspects of production, patronage, codicology, palaeography, technology, craftsmanship, artistry, and art—and such concerning Tibetan text culture—including traditional textual scholarship in general and compilatory processes and editorial policies in particular—have come to the forefront of Tibetan Studies. Religious and sociological aspects of Tibetan book culture have likewise been increasingly addressed—particularly those focusing on the book as being a ritual or reverential object, an artefact possessing magical powers, a prestigious item to be owned, a merit-accruing object, or a piece of art.

With the conviction that a better understanding of these aspects will advance and enhance Tibetan textual studies as a whole, a conference on “Manuscript and Xylograph Traditions within the Tibetan Cultural Sphere: Regional and Periodical Characteristics” was held at the Universität Hamburg in May 15–18, 2013. As the title suggests, the conference aimed at discussing and identifying regional and periodical characteristics of various manuscript and xylograph traditions within the Tibetan cultural sphere. The present volume contains twelve of the papers presented at the conference along with

an introductory essay, which all together cover many of the above-mentioned issues regarding Tibetan manuscripts, xylographs, and legal handwritten documents, stemming from different periods of Tibetan history and from various regions within the Tibetan cultural sphere, including such that had been under its influence in the past. Although the volume is far from addressing neither all traditions of text and book cultures within the Tibetan cultural sphere nor all issues concerning them, it is hoped that it nonetheless will be a modest contribution to the advancement of research in this field along with several other recent publications with a similar or related focus.

I would like to particularly thank Dorji Wangchuk for his cooperation and assistance in organising the conference and in making it possible through the financial support of the Khyentse Center for Tibetan Buddhist Textual Scholarship (KC-TBTS), and likewise for his support in various ways during the editing of the present volume. Special thanks are also due to the Khyentse Foundation whose financial support of the KC-TBTS enabled both the conference and the publication of the present volume. And last but not least thanks are also due to Eric Werner for his help in solving some last-minute technical problems during the preparation of the final version of the volume.

Orna Almogi

Hamburg, July 30, 2016

Prologue: Tibetan Textual Culture between Tradition and Modernity

Orna Almogi (Hamburg) & Dorji Wangchuk (Hamburg)¹

1. Introductory Remarks

The part of material or tangible culture that has sacred or spiritual significance within the traditional Tibetan context conventionally falls under one or the other of what is called the “Three Receptacles” (*rten gsum*), namely, the “Receptacle of the [Buddha’s] Body” (*sku'i rten*), which refers to images of Awakened Beings, the “Receptacle of the [Buddha’s] Speech” (*gsung gi rten*), comprising scriptures and other sacred texts, and the “Receptacle of the [Buddha’s] Mind” (*thugs kyi rten*), which refers to sacred structures called *stūpas* (or *caityas*). Cultural artefacts recognised as one of these three types of physical objects are omnipresent in the Tibetan cultural sphere, and indeed Tibetan temples and monasteries invariably contain *buddha* images (in the form of statues, wall drawings, and painted scrolls), books (in the form of manuscripts, xylographs and, more recently, modern books), and *stūpas*. In fact, a study of Tibetan culture can never be complete without having studied these three categories of material objects. Of the three, the Receptacle of the Buddha’s Speech—which stands for the Teaching, or Doctrine (*dharma*), taught by the Buddha—clearly enjoys a higher standing. There is said to be no difference between it and the actual Buddha in terms of their power to present the norms of ‘adoption’ and ‘avoidance’ (*blang 'dor gyi gnas ston pa*) and to maintain the continuity of the Doctrine (*bstan pa'i rgyun 'dzin pa*).² One of the arguments why the “Receptacle of the [Buddha’s] Speech” should be revered like the Buddha himself stems from the idea that the Buddha is said to have prophesised that he would manifest himself in the form of texts or

¹ We would like to thank Karma bde legs and mKhan po 'Jam dbyangs yon tan rgya mtsho for providing us information regarding their own activities in recent years concerning Tibetan text and book cultures. Thanks are also due to Philip Pierce for carefully proofreading our English.

² dPal sprul's *Zhal lung*, p. 301.2–6; Padmakara 1994: 187.

scriptures (*yi ge'i gzugs*). In this context, the following verse has been often cited in Tibetan sources:³

At the turn of the last of the [ten] five-hundred-year spans [of
the Buddhist Doctrine]
I will abide in the form of scriptures.
At that time, consider them to be me
And show them due respect.

Moreover, in some sources, books (*glegs bam: pustaka*) are considered to be a certain kind of “seal” (*mudrā*) left behind by the Buddha to carry on his salvific activities.⁴ One also comes across sources according to which each of the Three Jewels can manifest as all Three Jewels.⁵ The high esteem towards books is reflected in a Tibetan dictum that states: “Do not place a statue above a [volume of] scripture,”⁶ which suggests a hierarchy that needs to be observed among sacred objects based on their degree of sanctity.

Needless to say, it will be impossible to do justice to the significance of sacred books and their multi-faceted roles in the Tibetan culture in the present essay. What we shall thus seek to do is provide a general outline of the nature and the role of the medium of transmission in the Tibetan textual culture. The term “textual culture” is used here in the sense of embracing both text and book cultures, that is, (a) the culture associated with written texts—as one aspect of

³ See, for example, dPal sprul's *Zhal lung* (pp. 300.13–301.1): *bcom ldan 'das kyis | lnga brgya'i tha mar gyur pa na || nga ni yi ge'i gzugs su gnas || nga yin snyam du yid byos la || de tshe de la gus par gyis || zhes gsung zhing |*. For an English translation, see Padmakara 1994: 187. The verse has been also cited, occasionally with some slight variation, by Klong chen pa Dri med 'od zer (1308–1364) in his *Ngal gso skor gsum*, p. 351.17–19, and by mKhan po Kun dpal (1862–1943) in his commentary on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (*sPyod 'grel*, p. 249.12–14). Both specify its source as the *sNyan gyi gong rgyan*, which is another name of (i.e. another translation for the title) *Buddhāvatamsaka*, otherwise widely known in Tibetan as *Phal po che*. (Indeed, *avatamsaka* can be rendered as “ear ornament” or “ear ring”; see Monier Williams 1899, s.v.) Unfortunately, however, a search of the Tibetan translation of the *Buddhāvatamsakasūtra* did not yield any occurrence of the verse.

⁴ On this notion, see Almogi 2009: 104.

⁵ See, for example, Wangchuk 2007: 28–29.

⁶ dPal sprul's *Zhal lung*, p. 301.1–2: *'jig rten pa'i kha skad la yang | bka' thog tu sku ma 'jog zer ba ltar |*; Padmakara 1994: 187.

the Tibetan intellectual culture—and (b) that of the book as a physical object that serves as a medium for storing these texts (including manuscripts, xylographs, and modern printed books)—as an aspect of the Tibetan material culture.⁷ (The qualifying ‘Tibetan’ refers to the Tibetan cultural sphere as a whole and has no particular geo-political implication.) We opt for this collective term, as we believe that the physical or material aspects of Tibetan textual culture and the doctrinal and cultural contexts in which Tibetan textual scholarship is set are so closely linked with each other that it is difficult to understand the one without understanding the other.⁸

2. The Medium

Generally, texts have been stored and transmitted in the Tibetan cultural sphere in either a manuscript or xylograph form. Manuscripts—commonly modelled after the Indian palm leaf format—were the first and the main medium used following the development of the Tibetan script (according to tradition, in the 7th century) and the massive translation projects initiated in subsequent centuries. Although xylographs—first produced with know-how introduced into Tibet from China—of single Tibetan texts and smaller collections are reported to have been prepared from a relatively early stage on,⁹ the technique began to be used on a fairly

⁷ Our usage of the term “textual culture” follows the definition provided at Textual Culture, the website of a research group based at Stirling, UK: “the material processes and ideological formations surrounding the production, transmission, reception, and regulation of texts” (<http://www.textual-culture.stir.ac.uk/>).

⁸ For a comprehensive study of the culture of the book in Tibet, see Schaeffer 2009. For a recent publication focusing on printing in Tibet, see Diemberger, Ehrhard, Kornicki 2016. For a publication focusing on the material aspect of book culture in Tibet, see Helman-Ważny 2014.

⁹ Several Tibetan prints were found in Central Asia. For a recent discussion on early prints, see the contribution by Sam van Schaik in Diemberger, Ehrhard, Kornicki 2016. Note that according to Grönbold, the oldest Tibetan xylograph was found in Turfan and goes back to the 9th century (Grönbold 1982: 368). The so called Yongle (永樂) edition of the *bKa' 'gyur*, dating from 1410 and created in Peking, is considered to be the first xylograph edition of the Tibetan canon (see Silk 1996: 153, 155), and thus no doubt the first large-scale printing project of Tibetan textual corpora.

large scale in Tibet only from the 15th century onwards.¹⁰ The first truly big printing enterprise undertaken on Tibetan soil was, however, that of the Li thang edition of the *bKa' 'gyur* carried out between 1608 and 1621, followed by a xylographic edition of the entire Tibetan canon, known as the sNar thang edition, which was completed in 1742. This was a milestone in the history of the Tibetan culture of the book, which was followed by several similar undertakings in sDe dge and Co ne. In the course of time, hundreds of printeries (*par khang*) large and small sprang up, a detailed survey of which, including those that no longer survive, is an urgent desideratum. However, despite the increasing production of xylographs, manuscripts have never ceased to be produced in the Tibetan cultural sphere, the two media having existed side by side for centuries virtually up to this very day.

In modern times (but prior to computers becoming widespread), other printing methods also came into use. Apparently, movable type printing presses never made inroads into Tibet proper, though they were exploited nearby, particularly in China and India.¹¹ In addition, Tibetans in Indian exile started to resort to other modern printing techniques, such as offset lithography. By now, however, digital technology has penetrated Tibetan society, both within and outside Tibet. Tibetan texts are typed into computers and have increasingly been published in a modern book format (but also in the traditional *po ti* format), or else they are preserved and disseminated in the form of scans and as searchable transliterated digital texts.¹² In recent

¹⁰ On early printing activities in West Tibet, see the contributions by Michela Clemente, Franz-Karl Ehrhard, Hildegard Diemberger, and Marta Sernesi in this volume. For further discussions of early printing activities in Tibet, see Diemberger, Ehrhard, Kornicki 2016.

¹¹ The history of the use of Tibetan movable type printing presses and typography has been studied by Jo De Baerdemaeker for his PhD thesis titled “Tibetan Typeforms: An Historical and Visual Evaluation of Tibetan Typefaces from Their Inception in 1738 up to 2009.” The thesis was submitted in 2009 at the Department of Typography & Graphic Communication, University of Reading, United Kingdom. For more information, see <http://www.typojo.com/>. We thank Burkhard Quessel of the British Library for providing us the link to Baerdemaeker’s website.

¹² The Asian Classics Input Project (ACIP) (<http://www.asianclassics.org/>) has no doubt been a pioneer in inputting Tibetan canonical texts, thus making them easily searchable. Recent developments in OCR of Tibetan script—that is, commonly modern typesets or fonts of dBu can—has

years we have seen various editions of the entire Tibetan canon being inputted into computers and published in a modern book format, or scanned and published on the Web as digital texts. One thus wonders whether digital forms will one day replace all previous methods of storing and transmitting Tibetan texts and so render them redundant. Most Tibetans, including traditional scholars, seem to agree that no traditional methods of producing and disseminating texts can match the efficiency of computer technology. However, while it is true that certain printing methods, such as movable type presses, have been rendered redundant by computer technology, Tibetans, surprisingly, still keep on producing manuscripts and xylographs. One explanation might be that Tibetans see separate benefits from adopting new technologies, on the one hand, and from retaining the old manuscript and xylograph traditions, on the other. The new technologies are appreciated for their effectiveness in terms of production, transmission, dissemination, and preservation of “textual continuity” (*dpe rgyun*), which is a prerequisite for guaranteeing the “reading continuity” (*lung rgyun*) of a text,¹³ without which a textual tradition is regarded as dead. In other words, with the help of these new technologies, one can relatively easily guarantee that both textual and reading continuities are sustained. In this regard, the kind of medium in which a text has been stored and transmitted does not seem to be an issue at all, and thus a nomadic master can theoretically give his disciples a reading transmission from a hard drive storing Buddhist texts.¹⁴

dramatically increased the number of searchable texts, particularly via the TBRC website. Currently, several efforts are being made to also enable accessibility to texts available in other Tibetan script forms. Kurt Keutzer, Berkley, has been working on OCR for Tibetan block prints. Likewise, the collaborative project “Scholar and Scribes” conducted at the Universität Hamburg and Tel Aviv University has been experimenting with OCR-free searchability in manuscripts written with various types and subtypes of scripts including dBu med. For a brief description, see <https://www.kctbts.uni-hamburg.de/en/research/projects.html>.

¹³ It may be noted in passing that Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (1813–1900), in his catalogue to the “Golden Teachings” (*gser chos*) of the Shangs pa bka' brgyud school, distinguishes texts with both “textual continuity” (*dpe rgyun*) and “reading continuity” (*lung rgyun*) from those without the latter. See Hufen 2009: 124, 183, 235.

¹⁴ As is well known, the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (TBRC), for example, has distributed several Apple iPad sets containing thousands of

The role of a book in the Tibetan textual culture is not, however, limited to these particular functions alone. There are other performative functions that a book (or a text) plays in Tibetan culture. A sacred book (or text) is not only something that can be read, studied, and understood, but is an object of veneration, being a representation of the Buddha's Speech, which is accorded respect by being wrapped up in silk scarves and enshrined in or on a statue, *stūpa*, temple, or house altar. Its very presence is thought to sanctify or protect its surroundings. Carved woodblocks are looked upon similarly. It is widely believed, for example, that the woodblocks preserved in the sDe dge printery have protected sDe dge in the past from both natural and man-made disasters. In this respect, an external hard disk, CD ROM or Apple iPad containing digital Tibetan Buddhist scriptures would hardly be seen by Tibetan masters as being adequate substitutes for manuscripts or xylographs, or even modern books. And although we already hear of digital texts being deposited in *stūpas* built in the West—and this with the approval of Tibetan masters who are known for their practical approach—this custom does not seem to have penetrated widely into the Tibetan cultural sphere. Requests for xylographs from the sDe dge printery, for example, are still so frequent that the woodblocks quickly wear out and have to be repeatedly repaired, if not replaced altogether. Manuscripts, too, continue to be produced. One of the most striking examples is the 110/120 volume *rNying ma bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* manuscript edition that was produced in Tibet several years ago (to which we shall return below). Moreover, deluxe editions of scriptures or treatises written with ink that contains gold, silver, or other precious substances, are necessarily in manuscript form.¹⁵ And of course a xylograph is based on a carefully prepared manuscript. Therefore, so long as there is the belief among Tibetan Buddhists in the power of accumulating merit by commissioning new editions of

volumes of Tibetan Buddhist texts to a number of Tibetan masters, thus enabling them access to texts that have been thus far inaccessible to them. The extent to and the manner in which the tradition makes use of texts stored in this modern form is yet to be looked into.

¹⁵ We were not able to obtain any accurate information on the number of deluxe editions being produced within the Tibetan cultural sphere nowadays. On deluxe editions produced within the Tibetan cultural sphere in the past, see the contribution by Dorji Wangchuk in this volume.

scriptures and treatises, it seems very likely that the manuscript and xylograph traditions will continue to thrive.



Fig. 1: Tibetans, believing in the power of sacred Buddhist books as the “Receptacles of Buddha’s s Speech,” crawl under shelves loaded with books at dPal ’khor chos sde monastery in rGyal rtse to receive blessings

The main driving force behind the production of manuscripts and xylographs and the transmission of texts in the Tibetan cultural sphere is first and foremost the desire to guarantee the continuity and vitality of the Buddha’s Teaching. For the Tibetan tradition, two types of uninterrupted transmission seem to go hand in hand, namely, one in terms of “textual continuity” (*dpe rgyun*) and one by way of “reading continuity” (*lung rgyun*), upon both of which the “continuity of exposition” (*bshad rgyun*) and “continuity of practical instruction” (*khrid rgyun*) are based. Although textual continuity—that is, the physical existence of a text (in the form of a manuscript, xylograph, or modern book)—by itself does not guarantee or imply a corresponding reading continuity, the latter presupposes that the former exists. A spiritually living textual tradition thus necessarily presupposes that a treatise or scripture is supported by both textual and reading transmissions, since although the disruption of a reading tradition may not necessarily hinder one from engaging intellectually with a treatise or a scripture, a text without a reading transmission is

often seen as being spiritually lifeless. There are, for example, accounts of Tibetan masters who, upon hearing of some last remaining person bearing the reading transmission of a certain text or corpus, made great efforts to travel long distances to receive it, and then to bestow it on numerous other persons, thus rescuing the transmission from extinction. There is no doubt that the Tibetan emphasis on both textual and reading transmissions, which seems to be a unique phenomenon, has contributed a great deal to keeping the Tibetan textual culture vibrant. 'Jigs med gling pa (1729/30–1798), for example, states that while preparing his 25-volume manuscript collection of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* it became evident, from his examination of old religious histories (*chos 'byung*) and the record of teachings received (*gsan yig*) by mNga' ris pañ chen Padma dbang rgyal (1487–1542), that in some cases both textual and reading continuities had died out, implying that the textual tradition of some texts had probably been lost forever. And so he decided to take the sMin grol gling 23-volume edition of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* (all of whose texts had obviously presupposed a reading transmission) as the basis for his own edition.¹⁶

The second important driving force behind the production, dissemination, and transmission of texts seems to lie in the performative functions that sacred books and texts have in the Tibetan culture. As representations of the Buddha's Speech, books are considered special objects of veneration, to which many other qualities and functions are ascribed. The production, dissemination, transmission, and veneration of these sacred books, particularly deluxe manuscript editions of certain scriptures or scriptural corpora, are said to enable one to accrue immense merit, a notion that has its origin in Indian Buddhism.¹⁷ Obviously, however, these activities do

¹⁶ 'Jigs med gling pa's *rNying rgyud rtogs brjod* (A, p. 428.3–4; B, pp. 570.6–571.1): *chos 'byung rnying pa kha cig dang | mn̄ga' ris pañ chen la soḡs pa'i gsan yig la dpyad na dpe lung gnyis ka'i rgyun nub pa'ang 'ga' shas [B shig] mchis pa las | 'dir smin gling gi rgyud 'bum pod chen nyi shu rtsa gsum pa phyi mor bzung |*.

¹⁷ For a scholarly presentation of the benefits derived from obtaining access ('dzin pa) to scriptures, and from possessing ('chang ba), reading (*klog pa*), and putting them down in writing (*yi ger 'dri ba*), see, for example, Si tu pañ chen Chos kyi 'byung gnas's (1699/1700–1774) *bKa' 'gyur dkar chag*, pp. 455.13–468.6. References to the ten kinds of merit-accurring Dharmic activities (*chos spyod bcu: dharmacarita*), most of which involve scriptures and other sacred texts, can be found in Negi 1993–2005, s.v. (with

not occupy the topmost rung of the ladder of Buddhist spiritual engagement, but are considered to be the activities of a beginner (*las dang po pa: ādikarmika*). It has likewise been pointed out that according to one version of the *sBa/dBa’/rBa bzhed* they are to be practised by “Gradualists” (*rim gyis pa*).¹⁸ It is assumed that the degree of merit that one accrues from these deeds depends on the type and sanctity of the scriptures as well as on the scale of the work and quality of the edition. Moreover, the merit accumulated through these deeds may be dedicated to either the living or the dead if so desired. A sacred text may be produced or commissioned for various reasons including: (a) as a commemoration for one’s deceased master, (b) as a dedication for a deceased member of the family, (c) as a ‘support’ for the personal practice, that is, the reverential object (*thugs dam*) of a living master, (d) in order to prolong the life of some particular person, often one’s spiritual master, (e) for the benefit of the living—for example, to avert specific hindrances, such as epidemics, drought, or other calamities—and (f) as objects of veneration to be enshrined in or on statues, *stūpas*, temples, or private altars. The belief was that texts in general—and even smaller parts of them, down to individual letters and words—possess special powers. The account by the Capuchin monk Georgi of *bla mas* who, having learned that the Capuchins stored their movable type under the stairs of their house in Lhasa, avoided climbing the stairs shows how much respect the Tibetans had for letters as such.¹⁹ However, it goes without saying that despite the enormous veneration for the written word, there are also accounts of the destruction of books within the Tibetan cultural sphere for various reasons. There exist reports of some Tibetans using folios of old palm leaf manuscripts as amulets or consuming small pieces of old palm leaf manuscripts, in

references to *Madhyāntavibhāga* 5.9–10 and *Mahāvyutpatti*, nos. 902–912). For different lists of these activities, see Nor brang’s *Chos rnam kun btus*, vol. 2, pp. 2133–2134, and Phur pu tshe ring’s *Nang rig tshig mdzod*, pp. 659–660. Numerous examples of the production of deluxe and xylographic editions for various reasons, including for accruing merit, commemoration, veneration and the like, have been provided by the contributors of the present volume. See particularly the contributions by Almogi, Clemente, Diemberger, Ehrhard, Wallace, and Wangchuk.

¹⁸ Karmay 1988: 96, n. 59.

¹⁹ Grönbold 1982: 377.

the belief that they possessed special healing powers.²⁰ Moreover, damaged manuscripts and xylographs that cannot be used any longer are often broken into small pieces or even reduced to powder and then mixed into the various construction materials in order to confer auspiciousness upon new buildings and other constructions, particularly temples or *stūpas*.²¹ At the same time, however, books have occasionally been destroyed (or at best prohibited) under the shadow of religious or political ideologies.²²

3. Current Efforts to Preserve Tibetan Textual Culture within the Tibetan Cultural Sphere

The traditional Tibetan textual culture is still very vibrant in different parts of the Tibetan cultural sphere. Admittedly, a great portion of it nowadays involves preserving existing manuscripts and xylographs and publishing the texts contained therein by means of modern technologies, but, as stated above, the production and dissemination of manuscripts and xylographs is still an integral part of the Tibetan textual culture, and in no sense a negligible one. The leading institution in the preservation and dissemination of Tibetan manuscripts and xylographs in digital forms is no doubt the Tibetan Buddhist Research Center (TBRC). The contribution of the TBRC—founded by the celebrated Tibetologist Gene Smith (1936–2010), who dedicated most of his life to the preservation of Tibetan texts and their dissemination, first in the form of facsimile editions and later in digitised form—is well known, and we shall not overly dwell on it here.

It is beyond the scope of this contribution to portray a comprehensive and representative picture of the ongoing activities within the Tibetan cultural sphere devoted to preserving and disseminating old Tibetan books/texts, which have come down to us mainly in the form of manuscripts and xylographs, by resorting to

²⁰ dGe 'dun chos 'phel (1903–1951), for example, reports in his *gSer gyi thang ma* (p. 17.18–21): *de bzhin dad pa can 'ga' zhig gis gzhung cha tshang re re'i nas shog gu re tsam brkus te mgul srung byed pa dang | dpe ldeb kyi shog bu sen mo tsam du bkog ste byin rlabs zhes za ba dang |*. See also Wangchuk 2015: 536.

²¹ See, for example, Almogi 2015: 3.

²² For a recent discussion of the destruction of books within the Tibetan cultural sphere, particularly book burning (which could also be referred to as “biblioclasm” or “libricide”), see Wangchuk 2015.

digital and other innovative technologies. A number of institutions and publishers continue to disseminate old Tibetan books/texts, but we wish to briefly mention here only two such private institutions that have been directly inspired by Gene Smith's life-long efforts. First, the dPal brtsegs Research Centre for Old Books/Texts (dPal brtsegs bod yig dpe rnying zhib 'jug khang), a private institution based in Lhasa, is one of the most conspicuous examples of ongoing activities devoted to preserving and disseminating old Tibetan books/texts. dPal brtsegs was founded in 2000 on the initiative of gZan dkar Rin po che Thub bstan nyi ma (b. 1943),²³ who was inspired by the efforts of the TBRC.²⁴ It used to be directed by Karma bde legs,²⁵ a lay person originally from Khams Ri bo che in East Tibet, who has been working with old Tibetan manuscripts since 1998, first in East Tibet and later mainly in central Tibet (dBus and gTsang). In order to gain knowledge about Tibetan culture in general and Tibet's textual culture in particular, Karma bde legs first acquired a traditional education in various monasteries in East Tibet, including Kah thog, dPal yul, and sDe dge rDzong gsar, and studied under such teachers as mGo/'Gu log mkhan po Thub bstan mun sel tshul khrims rdo rje (henceforth: mKhan po Mun sel; 1916–1993)²⁶ and mGo log mkhan po bsTan pa dar rgyas. On one occasion he went together with mKhan po bsTan pa dar rgyas to Kah thog monastery, where they received a reading transmission of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum*, and empowerments related to and a reading transmission of the *rNying ma bka' ma*.²⁷ It was on this occasion that mKhan po Mun sel

²³ For a brief biography of gZan dkar Rin po che Thub bstan nyi ma, see bsTan 'dzin kun bzang's *rDzogs chen gdan rabs*, pp. 796.22–799.4.

²⁴ That gZan dkar Rin po che drew inspiration from the efforts of Gene Smith (also known as sKu zhabs 'Jam dbyangs rnam rgyal) is clear from his *'Bras dkar sngon brjod*, p. 1.7–10.

²⁵ The information that we provide here about the dPal brtsegs Centre and its activities has been gleaned from the numerous prefaces to the publications that several individuals involved with the Centre have written, including those by gZan dkar Rin po che and Karma bde legs. It is based, in addition, on an interview that we conducted with Karma bde legs on September 3, 2010 at the dPal brtsegs Centre in Lhasa, and on several other conversations in the years that followed.

²⁶ For a biographical sketch of mKhan po Mun sel, composed while he was still alive, see 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan's *Kah thog lo rgyus*, p. 153.5–21.

²⁷ A short blog article on the *rNying ma bka' ma* collection has been published on the TBRC website. See Paldor & Sheehy 2010. The article

inspired three key persons—Karma bde legs, Tshe ring rgya mtsho (aka Tshe ring rgyal mtshan), and Kah thog mkhan po 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan²⁸—to initiate the ambitious project of compiling a new *rNying ma bka' ma* collection, which has come to be known as the *rNying ma bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* (*The Greatly Enlarged rNying ma bka' ma*), or the *Kah thog rnying ma bka' ma*. It was first published in two manuscript versions in the traditional *po ti* format, comprising 110 and 120 volumes (TBRC: W21508 & W25983, respectively). Another edition, in a modern book format, comprising 133 volumes (TBRC: W1PD100944) was finally published in Chengdu in 2009 in collaboration with Tshe ring rgya mtsho. Despite this unprecedented success, Karma bde legs has not been fully satisfied with the result, noting that the team was completely inexperienced—it was their first project of this kind—and also was

seems to be based on Karma bde legs's *bZhugs byang sngon brjod*, pp. 3.15–5.2, that is, his preface or foreword to the catalogue (*bzhugs byang*) of the *rNying ma bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* compiled by Kah thog mkhan po 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan and published in 2005. Otherwise, no previous attempt to investigate the history of the *rNying ma bka' ma* collection seems to have been made.

²⁸ mKhan po Mun sel's wish to see the compilation of a new *rNying ma bka' ma* collection is reported by 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan in his *bKa' ma'i bzhugs byang*, p. 205.9–18, by Karma bde legs in his *bZhugs byang sngon brjod*, p. 4.13, and by gZan dkar Rin po che in his *'Bras dkar sngon brjod*, p. 1.11–13. Karma bde legs is described by mKhan po 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan as “[mKhan po Mun sel's] noble intimate disciple [close to his] heart, a *bla ma* of learnedness and ethical spiritual integrity from Ri bo che” (*nang thugs kyi zhal slob dam pa ri bo che'i mkhas btsun bla ma*). mKhan po 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan provides the name of Karma bde legs's partner as Tshe ring rgyal mtshan (*bKa' ma'i bzhugs byang*, p. 205.9), whereas Karma bde legs (*bZhugs byang sngon brjod*, p. 4.14) refers to him as Tshe ring rgya mtsho. In any case, it is clear that Tshe ring rgyal mtshan and Tshe ring rgya mtsho are one and the same person. The third key person is Kah thog mkhan po 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan, whose full name is given as Thub bsttan 'jam dbyangs legs bshad bsttan pa'i rgyal mtshan. Karma bde legs (*bZhugs byang sngon brjod*, p. 4.14) refers to him as 'Jam dbyangs legs bshad bsttan pa'i rgyal mtshan. 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan is the compiler of the *bKa' ma'i bzhugs byang* and *Kah thog lo rgyus*; a biographical sketch of him by Nyag rong ba Thub bsttan bsod nams bsttan pa can be found in the *Kah thog lo rgyus*, pp. 1.1–11.13.

under pressure to publish as soon as possible in order to fulfil a wish of their late teacher mKhan po Mun sel.²⁹



Fig. 2: left: Employees of the dPal brtsegs Research Centre in Lhasa at work; right: Karma bde legs in the dPal brtsegs Research Centre's bookstore

The *rNying ma bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* project sparked a long search for manuscripts (and xylographs) containing texts pertinent to this collection, then copying, typing, or scanning them, and finally compiling and publishing them. In the course of compiling the collection, many other old manuscripts were located. It has become clear by now how much work remains to be done. When scholars from the Collation Bureau of the Tibetan Canon in Chengdu, among them the famed gZan dkar Rin po che,³⁰ recognised Karma bde legs's experience and abilities, they invited him to join them in the search for manuscripts related to the Tibetan Buddhist canon, including both the *bKa' gyur* and the *bsTan gyur*. He accepted their invitation and contributed greatly to their undertaking in various ways. The Collation Bureau of the Tibetan Canon argued that a centre in Lhasa was needed in order to facilitate their work and asked for official recognition of such a centre to last up to 2007. Thereafter dPal brtsegs registered itself as a private research centre and has been operating as such. The setting up of the centre in Lhasa in 2000, which was done in collaboration with mKhan po 'Gro 'dul rdo rje, resulted, however, in more than merely publishing old books/texts. It has also begun training young Tibetans in different fields of their

²⁹ The details of how the *Kah thog rnying ma bka' ma* came to be collected and published will be discussed on another occasion by Dorji Wangchuk.

³⁰ That gZan dkar Rin po che was impressed and inspired by the private initiatives undertaken by Karma bde legs and his colleagues to compile the *rNying ma bka' ma* collection is made clear in his '*Bras dkar sngon brjod*', p. 1.11–13.

own textual culture. The beginnings were modest. Karma bde legs started with about fifteen young Tibetans, mainly teaching them to read and write various Tibetan scripts and introducing them to relevant computer technologies. Since then dozens of young Tibetans have had the privilege of receiving training, and many of them have gone on to work at the centre.

The bond between gZan dkar Rin po che, a representative (one can say) of old Tibet, and the young, talented, and industrious Karma bde legs has grown steadily, and shortly after the centre was set up gZan dkar Rin po che started assigning Karma bde legs various tasks (such as the compilation of rDo grub chen Rin po che's writings assembled from gSer rta monastery and surrounding areas in East Tibet). In fact, it was thanks to gZan dkar Rin po che that Karma bde legs, who was planning to study Chinese and indeed had already enrolled at the University in Chengdu, finally decided to devote himself to the preservation of old Tibetan books/texts. Upon gZan dkar Rin po che's insistence he abandoned his plans, not wanting to refuse the request of this famed master. In or around 2001 the centre started another huge project of cataloguing all manuscripts and xylographs preserved in 'Bras spungs monastery near Lhasa and dPal spungs monastery in Khams. The main focus was at first on the 'Bras spungs library, and on July 3, 2002 Karma bde legs and his team started putting the 'Bras spungs catalogue down in writing.³¹ Almost 30,000 volumes, representing texts of various traditions, were tallied. Interestingly, only around ten percent of them were labelled "internal" (*nang*), which meant that they originally belonged to the 'Bras spungs library, the vast majority (around ninety percent) having been marked "external" (*phyi*), which meant that they had their origin elsewhere. Some of them came from rTse thang dGa' ldan Chos 'khor gling (in sNe gdong county of lHo kha prefecture)—originally a bKa' brgyud monastery (the place where 'Gos gZhon nu dpal (1392–1481) composed his famous *Blue Annals* (*Deb ther sngon po*)) but later converted into a dGe lugs institution—and unsurprisingly, many of them were Jo nang texts, which, as is well known, were confiscated during the reign of the Fifth Dalai Lama. Due to the huge amount of material, the catalogue took four years to complete, and involved altogether up to fifty people. The project,

³¹ Karma bde legs's *Phyogs sgrig gsal bshad* (pp. 9.16–10.1): *de nas spyi lo 2002 zla 7 pa'i tshes 3 nyin nas bzung 'bras spungs dgon du dpe rnying srung skyob dang 'brel ba'i dkar chag 'bri skabs* |.

which was carried out in collaboration with Shes rab bzang po (Tibet University) and mKhan po 'Gro 'dul rdo rje,³² was financed by gZan dkar Rin po che. In the following years, dPal brtsegs started to survey the libraries of all major monasteries in central Tibet (including Se ra, rGyal rtse, Zhwa lu, sNye mo dgon pa, and 'Phan po Nālendra) and prepare catalogues of their collections. It is important to note that dPal brtsegs does not acquire manuscripts and normally does not even borrow them for scanning or cataloguing, but almost always works *in situ* (one exception was manuscripts from the Potala, which were taken out for cataloguing and scanning under the supervision of government authorities). However, although the centre focuses on the preservation of the texts in these old manuscripts and xylographs rather than of the physical objects themselves, it does make some effort to help the monasteries preserve and better store their old books, and often provides them with adequate boxes for storage and cloths for binding single volumes (*dpe ras*).

As the name of the centre suggests, its focus is old (and rare) books/texts. Within several years, the centre has located and scanned more than ten thousand volumes.³³ Of these, ninety-nine percent are manuscripts, and the remaining one percent old xylographs. So far hundreds of volumes have been published in different series.³⁴ Some of the publications are facsimile editions, such as the *bKa' gdams gsung 'bum*—a collection of *bKa' gdams* texts, most of which were hitherto inaccessible, the *Phyag bris gces btus* Series—which contains books that differ in content but are all of great calligraphic and palaeographic value (or in some other way aesthetically rare or

³² Karma bde legs's *Phyogs sgrig gsal bshad*, p. 10.9–15; sKa ba Shes rab bzang po's *dPe rnying ngo sprod*, pp. 7.1–10.17.

³³ See Khrung go'i bod rig, *dPe skrun gsal bshad*, p. 1.5–7, where it is stated that during the recent past decade (*nye ba'i lo bcu tsam gyi ring la*)—that is, the one ending in the year 2006—the dPal brtsegs Centre located ten thousand volumes of old Tibetan books/texts (*bod yig dpe rnying khrir longs pa*). The publishers obviously here include the activities of Karma bde legs and his team even prior to the foundation of the dPal brtsegs Centre in 2000.

³⁴ A complete list of works compiled or published by dPal brtsegs cannot be provided here. Some of the series initiated by it include: (1) *Mes po'i shul bzhag*, (2) *Phyag bris gces btus*, (3) *bKa' gdams gsung 'bum phyogs sgrig*, (4) *bKa' gdams dpe dkon gces btus*, (5) *rTsom yig sogs dpe cha sna tshogs*, which includes catalogues of various kinds, such as the '*Bras spungs dkar chag*', (6) *mKhyan brtse'i 'od snang*, (7) *Bod kyi lo rgyus rnam thar phyogs bsgrigs*, and (8) *rNying ma rgyud 'bum phyogs bsgrigs*.

unique), the collected works of Bo dong pa Phyogs las rnam rgyal (1376–1451), and a collection of old xylographs. A great number of texts, further, have been inputted into computer and published in either a traditional *po ti* or modern book format, and some even in both. dPal brtsegs has published, for example, a new edition of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* in 58 volumes in the traditional *po ti* format as well as a further (enlarged) edition of the collection in a modern book format. Many other books/texts that the centre has located and scanned (and in some cases inputted into computer) will be published in the coming years. A large portion of the published material is distributed free to different monasteries and other institutions.

All these activities of compiling, publishing and disseminating books involved many resources and required an enormous amount of funding. In the initial years of its operation, gZan dkar Rin po che provided the centre with approximately half of its budget, and Karma bde legs had to resort to innovative ways to come up with the other half—by, for example, running a bookstore and even a restaurant, and producing and selling traditional Tibetan artefacts, such as *thang kas* and incense. In this way dPal brtsegs not only steeps young Tibetans in the Tibetan textual culture and modern technologies relevant to its preservation and dissemination, but also supports their family members by providing them training and work in traditional Tibetan handicrafts. Over the years, the centre has employed dozens of men and women to handle the manuscripts in one way or another (including scanning, preparing the scans for facsimile editions, inputting texts, and proofreading them). Most of them have lived in the modest lodgings provided by the centre.³⁵ dPal brtsegs is no doubt the best example demonstrating that even though technologies, and with them the required skills, have (at least partly) changed, Tibetans continue as in the old days to engage in and make their living from book production and to build and sustain communities around it.

dPal brtsegs is certainly the biggest private centre in Tibet dealing with Tibetan manuscripts and xylographs, but not the only one. As a further example we may mention another private centre based in Chengdu called 'Jam dbyangs shes rig dar spel khang ("'Jam

³⁵ The small complex in which the centre is housed comprises a few classrooms, a relatively large computer room, where the work is in various stages of progress, a room for the chief editors, where the final proofreading takes place, an office, dormitories, a kitchen, and a dining hall.

dbyangs Centre for the Promotion of Education”), which is managed by mKhan po ’Jam dbyangs yon tan rgya mtsho (aka ’Jam blo) of the Sa skya tradition. In many ways it is similar to dPal brtsegs, though it is much smaller. It, too, aims at the preservation and dissemination of Tibetan books/texts and trains young Tibetans for this purpose. One marked difference between the two centres is the spectrum of areas and genres covered. Indeed the ’Jam dbyangs Centre targets old manuscripts and xylographs that have not been the focus of attention of the dPal brtsegs Centre. The main objectives (*bsgrub bya gtso bo*) of the ’Jam dbyangs Centre are the collecting, inputting, and publishing of four kinds of textual corpora (*dpe tshogs*): (a) texts dealing with secular subjects (or what is called by the tradition ‘common fields of knowledge’), (b) texts dealing with certain cycles of Tantric teachings, such as the Phur pa [teachings] of the Sa skya tradition (*sa lugs kyi phur pa*), (c) collected writings of Tibetan scholars from Khrom ljongs (in Khams), and (d) commentaries on scriptures from the *bKa’ gyur* that are used by Tibetan Buddhists for recitation. Thus far the centre has already scanned thousands of xylographs and manuscripts, of which several hundreds have been inputted and are currently undergoing various phases of proofreading. The centre, however, also considers the possibility of publishing facsimile editions of xylographs and manuscripts.



Fig. 3: Employees of the 'Jam dbyangs Centre in Chengdu at work

As mentioned earlier, the tradition of producing xylographs—that is, not only printing from extant woodblocks but also carving new ones—is still alive in the Tibetan cultural sphere. One of the most noteworthy examples is no doubt the great sDe dge printery in Khams, which was founded by the sDe dge king bsTan pa tshe ring

(1678–1738) in the year 1729, and which survived the Cultural Revolution and was reopened in 1980.³⁶ One of the unique features of the sDe dge printery, which contains approximately half a million blocks, is that it has been operating in a non-sectarian manner, producing woodblocks and printing texts of scriptures and treatises related to a wide variety of Tibetan Buddhist schools. Under the current director, Tshe dbang 'jigs med Rin po che, a Bon po skrul sku, Bon scriptures are now being set with newly carved woodblocks and printed. Tibetans still hold xylographic prints from the sDe dge printery in such high esteem that they continue to order new prints, and as a result the woodblocks soon get worn out and need to be replaced. One disconcerting fact for textual scholars, however, is that even nowadays, as in the past, restored or recarved blocks are never marked as such, so that in a new print it is impossible to tell apart the folios printed with original or old blocks from the ones printed with restored or new ones. During a visit in 2010 we were told, to our astonishment, that a new xylograph edition of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* is under preparation. It will be larger than the existing sDe dge edition, which comprises 25 volumes (plus one volume containing a catalogue), and will include a great number of scriptures found in other editions. This would mean the carving of tens of thousands of new woodblocks, and represent, provided the project materialises, one of the largest new xylographic productions of our time.



Fig. 4: left: Wooden blocks stored at the sDe dge printery; right: Workers at the sDe dge printing house cleaning the wooden blocks of the *bKa' 'gyur*

³⁶ For a recent account of the history of the sDe dge printery in Tibetan, see lHa lung & Zla g.yang's *sDe dge'i par khang lo rgyus*.

The sDe dge printery may be the most famous one of its kind, but it is by no means the only one that still operates nowadays. dPal yul monastery in Khams, to name another example, also houses a printery, though a much smaller one. Recently the carving of a new xylographic edition of the *rNying ma bka' ma* was completed there. This undertaking is the revival of a project initiated by the seventh throne-holder of the monastery, Padma mdo sngags bstan 'dzin (1830–1892), and continued by the eighth, O rgyan mdo sngags chos kyi nyi ma (1854–1906) and the tenth, Karma Theg mchog snying po (1908–1960). This 137-volume xylograph edition (TBRC: W1PD159541) consists of 133 volumes (covering 45,215 pages) printed from newly carved blocks—whose carving started in 1982 and was completed in 2012—and four volumes (covering 1540 pages) containing Anuyoga ('dus mdo) treatises printed from the older blocks, which makes 46,755 pages in total (note, however, that the colophon indicates the total as 46,824, possibly, provided the first two figures are correct, counting the blank pages).³⁷ It is perhaps noteworthy that while the current (twelfth) throne-holder of the dPal yul tradition, Karma sku chen Rin po che (b. 1970), questioned going to the trouble of producing tens of thousands of xylographs in the age of computer technologies, the older *mkhan pos* insisted on reviving the project as a tribute to the previous throne-holders and as a needed mainstay for the continuity of their tradition.³⁸

³⁷ See the “bibliographic note” in the TBRC entry which reads: *snga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa 'di ni dpal yul dgon pa'i sprul sku thub bzang mchog gis gtso skyong gnang ste | 1982 lor shing par gyi dbu btsugs | 2012 lor njug grub pa'o | 'di'i nang par gsar du brkos pa pod 133 la ldeb grangs 45,215 dang shing par sngar yod 'dus mdo pod bzhi la ldeb grangs 1540 ste | bsdoms pod 137 la ldeb grangs 46,824 bzhugs | dkar chag tu pod 140 'khod 'dug pa ni dmyal ba'i mdo dbang rnyed na slar 'dzud pa'i ched du pod rtags me tse tshe gsum stong par bzhag 'dug.*

³⁸ A detailed account of compiling and printing the *dPal yul rnying ma bka' ma* based on available sources, particularly ones such as Rag mgo mchog sprul's *bKa' ma'i dkar chag*, will be attempted by Dorji Wangchuk elsewhere.



Fig. 5: left: Wooden blocks at the dPal yul printing house; right: Carving tools at the dPal yul printing house

Another printery worthy of mention here is the Sems kyi nyi zla located in rGyal thang (nowadays also known as Shangrila), which was built relatively recently and whose size vies with that of the sDe dge printery. In recent years thousands of blocks have been carved there including a new set of the *bKa' 'gyur* (apparently based on the Lhasa edition), and numerous autochthonous works, mainly by dGe lugs authors. Although these xylographs have little significance for historical-philological studies, the establishment of this new printing house is of particular value for the preservation of some aspects of the material culture connected with the book culture in the Tibetan cultural sphere, particularly for the revival of several handicraft traditions related with carving and printing (it appears that the ink and paper used there are modern).

It is unclear to what extent traditional ink and paper are still produced and used within the Tibetan cultural sphere for the production of manuscripts and xylographs. Unfortunately, in many cases, this know-how is preserved and kept alive only ‘artificially’ through projects that are often state-funded or supported by various international bodies. In many cases they additionally depend on tourism or the production and sale of modern artefacts. The best example in this regard are no doubt the efforts being made in Bhutan to preserve the related craftsmanship through the establishment of state-supported centres and programs, which in turn also serve as tourist attractions.



Fig. 6: left: Newly carved woodblocks stored at Sems kyi nyi zla printery; right:
Young printers at work in Sems kyi nyi zla printery

4. Concluding Remarks

In this introductory essay we wished to briefly discuss the role of the book—as a container and transmitter of texts, on the one hand, and as an artefact in its own right, on the other—within the Tibetan cultural sphere both in the past and the present. The few examples of current activities devoted to the production, preservation, and dissemination of Tibetan texts and books described in it clearly demonstrate that Tibetan text and book cultures are still alive and thriving, thanks not only to modern technologies but also to traditional methods, and perhaps more than anything else due to the high esteem the Tibetan tradition has for books, as highlighted in the first part of this article. These cultures stand testimony to the fact that despite the great devastation that the tradition underwent in the previous century, the continuity has never been completely disrupted. They demonstrate that current activities to revive various Tibetan textual traditions and the efforts to preserve and disseminate Tibetan books—be they in the form of manuscripts, xylographs, or modern printed books—are in most cases not being carried out in a sterile environment disconnected from Tibetan tradition, but are in fact often initiated, motivated, and supported by the tradition, inasmuch as visionary Tibetan masters or monastic institutions are the main forces behind many of these activities.

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bZhugs byang sngon brjod = Karma bde legs, *sNgon brjod*. In *bKa' ma'i bzhugs byang*, pp. 1–5.

gSar skrun mtshan tho = dPal brtsegs dpe tshong khang, *dPal brtsegs bod yid dpe rnying zhib 'jug khang gis dpe cha gsar du bskrun pa'i mtshan tho*. [Lhasa: dPal brtsegs dpe tshong khang, n.d.]

gSer gyi thang ma = dGe 'dun chos 'phel, *rGyal khams rig pas bskor ba'i gtam rgyud gser gyi thang ma* (*stod cha*). In *dGe 'dun chos 'phel gyi gsung rtsom*, 3 vols. Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yid dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 1994, vol. 2.

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The *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* Set at the National Archives Kathmandu: The History of Its Production and Transmission

Orna Almogi (Hamburg)¹

1. Introductory Remarks

When I started my study on the history of the formation, production, and transmission of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* (the *Collection of the Ancient Tantras*), nine editions—eight manuscript and one xylograph—were accessible, for five of which there already exist catalogues of varying scope:

- (1) The mTshams brag illuminated manuscript edition (Tb), with an online catalogue compiled by the Tibetan & Himalayan Library (THL),
- (2) The Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu illuminated manuscript edition (Tn), also known as the Waddell edition, with a detailed online catalogue compiled by Cathy Cantwell, Robert Mayer, and Michael Fisher,
- (3) The gTing skyes plain manuscript edition (Tk), with a catalogue compiled by Eiichi Kaneko (1982) and an online

¹ The findings presented in this article are some of the results of two research projects generously funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG): (a) “The Manuscript Collections of the Ancient Tantras (*rNying ma rgyud 'bum*): An Examination of Variance,” conducted within the framework of the Researcher Group “Manuscript Cultures in Asia and Africa” (FOR 963, 2008–2011), and (b) “Doxographical Organisational Schemes in Manuscripts and Xylographs of the Collection of the Ancient Tantras,” conducted within the framework of the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC/SFB 950, 2011–2015), both at Universität Hamburg. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Nepal Research Centre in Kathmandu for their assistance in various ways over this period, which greatly facilitated my research, and likewise thank Philip Pierce (Kathmandu) for proofreading my English. Thanks are also due to Kelsang Lhamo and Jeff Wallman, TBRC, for their help in obtaining access to some scanned material.

- catalogue compiled by the THL,
- (4) The Nubri illuminated manuscript edition (Nu), uncatalogued,
 - (5) The illuminated manuscript edition (Na) stored at the National Archives Kathmandu (NAK), uncatalogued,
 - (6) The sGang steng plain manuscript edition (Gt-p), uncatalogued,
 - (7) The sGang steng illuminated manuscript edition (G-i), with a catalogue compiled by Cathy Cantwell, Robert Mayer, Michael Kowalewky, and Jean-Luc Achard,²
 - (8) dGra med rtse plain manuscript edition (Gm),

² Cantwell and Mayer name the illuminated set catalogued by them, together with Michael Kowalewky and Jean-Luc Achard, “sGang steng-b” and the other, plain set from sGang steng, which was digitised later, “sGang steng-a,” justifying their decision as follows: “We adopt this nomenclature because, as we will explain below, we believe the finer and more expensive manuscript we photographed first and which is presented here was made later than the simpler more cheaply produced one we one (sic) discovered later.” (Cantwell et al. 2006: 5). They further support their assumption with findings gained through philological studies, but nonetheless state in their conclusion that they “do not yet know for certain” which set is the earliest, but they do justify their decision by stating that “it is more likely that the finer one presented here is later, since it is the more expensively made of the two” (*ibid.* 10). As I shall show below, historical sources indeed seem to support the assumption that the plain set (provided this is indeed the reported set) was produced earlier than the illuminated one. However, since the connection between the two sets is yet to be established, I suggest naming the two sets sGang steng-p and sGang steng-i (“p” standing for “plain” and “i” standing for “illuminated”). It is hoped that future studies—philological, historical, or bibliographical—will help shed more light on the relation between the two editions and on the exact role of each of them in the history of the transmission of the Central Bhutanese group. To be noted here is that the oral tradition in sGang steng monastery is not confident in this regard either, though it appears that there is a tendency to believe that the illuminated set served as the master copy for the sets from mTshams brag and dGra me rtse (personal communication with sGang steng sprul sku at sGang steng monastery on September 9, 2009, and further verifications via Khenpo Seng nge rdo rje in February 2016). Cantwell and Mayer for their part have suggested that the mTshams brag edition is not a copy of the illuminated sGang steng set, but rather that both are copies of a third, as yet unidentified, exemplar (*ibid.* 9–10).

- uncatalogued,³
 (9) sDe dge xylograph edition (Dg), with a catalogue complied by Jean-Luc Achard (2003) and an online catalogue compiled by the THL.

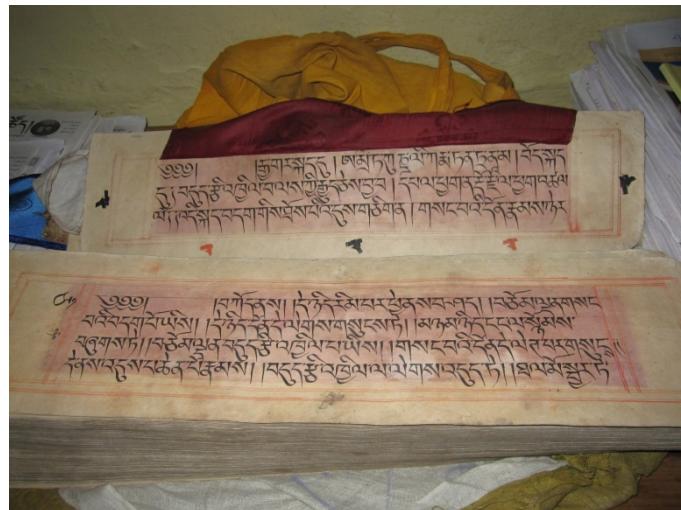


Fig. 1: Modestly decorated first pages of the dGra med rtse *rNying ma rgyud 'bum*, exemplified by vol. Ci, fols. 1b & 2a: the text on fol. 1b is written on thicker-layered paper, which is held together by what seem to be black and red strips of leather, whose end knots serve as decorative elements, while a silken curtain is mounted above the written area; the written area of both fols. 1b and 2b are smeared with reddish colour.

Right from the outset of my study of the history of the transmission of the collection, it was clear that a thorough examination of the content of the Nubri and the NAK sets—which were microfilmed by the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation

³ Although I consider the dGra med rtse edition, written in black ink on white paper, to be plain, it should be nonetheless noted that some efforts have been made to lend the edition a somewhat fairer look: the title page (i.e. folio 1b of each volume) is written on thicker-layered paper, held together by what seem to be black and red leather strips, while the resulting knots serve as decorative elements; textile curtains are mounted on these same title pages; and the written area of the first two written pages (i.e. folios 1b and 2a of each volume) is smeared with reddish colour (see fig. 1).

Project (NGMPP)⁴—would be necessary, not only for gaining an accurate picture of the history of their formation, production, and transmission, but also for better understanding the history of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* in general, and the place these two sets occupy within the collection's various groups of transmission in particular.⁵ For this purpose, the Nubri and NAK sets stood at the centre of my initial investigation of the collection. In the following, I shall present some of the main findings regarding these two editions, primarily focusing, however, on the NAK set and only by extension on the Nubri one.

2. The Tibetan-Nepalese Borderlands *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* Editions: General Remarks

My study of these two sets—which, for reasons that will be made clear below, I collectively designate the “Tibetan-Nepalese Borderlands group”—has initially focused on their content and its arrangement, primarily following historical-philological and bibliographical methods. Some of the questions that arose in the course of the investigation were later on further addressed by employing various scientific methods, including material analysis (mainly of the inks and pigments, but to a lesser extent also of the paper) and multispectral imaging of the NAK set.⁶

Both the NAK and Nubri sets have been previously studied by Franz-Karl Ehrhard. As early as 1979, Ehrhard recorded seven volumes of a *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* set in his catalogue of the NAK collection of Tibetan texts that had been microfilmed thus far by the

⁴ The microfilming of both sets was carried out under the supervision of Franz-Karl Ehrhard, who was at the time the director of the Nepal Research Centre (NRC), the NGMPP branch in Kathmandu.

⁵ The cataloguing of the remaining two sets, sGang steng-p and dGra med rtse, has clearly been less urgent for this purpose due to their great similarity to the two other 46-volume Bhutanese sets—mTshams brag and sGang steng-i—for which catalogues already exist.

⁶ The findings of these scientific investigations, which took place in March 2013 in the National Archives Kathmandu, have been published in Almogi, Kindzorra, Hahn & Rabin 2015 and Almogi, Delhey, MacDonald & Pouvkova 2015.

NGMPP (i.e. on the basis of the microfilms).⁷ But it was not until 1989, after gaining access to the NAK Tibetan collection itself, that the entire Tibetan holdings, including the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* set stored there, could be microfilmed. During the microfilming, it became clear that the set is incomplete. The team determined, most probably correctly, that the original number of volumes of the set was 37, but at the time it was believed that only 32 of them had survived and were in the safekeeping of the Archives.⁸ In 1992, this time during an expedition to Nubri (Samagaon), the NGMPP microfilmed a second *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* set. The Nubri set was complete, consisting of 37 volumes, and it soon became clear that the Nubri and the NAK sets are closely related to each other in terms of contents, organisation, and the history of their transmission. Ehrhard studied the two collections, paying particular attention to the second of the two *dkar chag*-s that were microfilmed together with the Nubri set, and published his findings in a 1997 article.⁹

In regard to the Nubri set, Ehrhard showed that several editions were produced at the behest of Brag dkar rta so sprul sku Chos kyi dbang phyug (1775–1837) at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries, one of them during the years 1813–1814. This latter set was reportedly prepared on the basis of a set from Glang 'phrang, which could be borrowed thank to one sKal bzang of the rDo dmar family. Ehrhard notes that the set was later kept in Brag dkar rta so and is today in the hands of Slob dpon 'Gyur med, who enabled the NGMPP to microfilm it. In regard to the edition stored at the NAK, Ehrhard suggested—on account of its similarity to the Nubri set and the fact that some of the volumes bore the seal of the Śrī Tīn

⁷ Ehrhard 1980: 245–246. The volumes recorded by Ehrhard are Cha, Nya, Tha, Pha, Ba, Tsa, and Chi. Note, however, that in Ehrhard 1997: 254, the number of volumes recorded at the time is erroneously noted as being eight.

⁸ Ehrhard 1997: 254.

⁹ The first *dkar chag*—titled *rNying ma rgyud 'bum gyi glegs bam nang gi chos tshan bzhugs byang dkar chag dpe rdzi bsam 'phel nor bu'i 'phreng ba* (NGMPP Reel No. L 426/4, 26 fols. = *dKar chag* 1)—contains the list of titles included in the edition. The second—titled *sNga 'gyur gsang chen rnying ma rgyud 'bum gyi glegs bam yongs rdzogs gzheng tshul dkar chag tu bkod pa rdzogs ldan snang ba gsar pa'i dga' ston* (NGMPP Reel No. L 426/5, 14 fols. = *dKar chag* 2)—contains a descriptive account of the production of the edition. Ehrhard has translated and edited two excerpts from the latter. His findings, summarised in the following paragraphs, are based on his 1997 article.

Mahārāja Bhim Shumser Jang Bahadur Rana, who was the prime minister of Nepal from 1929 to 1932—that it is possibly the set reported to have been produced shortly after the Nubri set by a disciple of Brag dkar rta so sprul sku, one O rgyan 'phrin las bstan 'dzin, who belonged to the Nyang clan of gZhung in Rong shar (i.e. the family responsible for the founding and upkeep of the main temple of Junbesi in Solu Khumbu), and to have later been given to Prime Minister Bhim Shumser. He further suggests that Sangs rgyas Bla ma (1856–1939) of the Nyang clan, who was under the protection of the Rāṇa family and who was the person behind the renovation of the gZhung temple in Junbesi in 1914, was involved in the gifting of the set to Bhim Shumsher. In regard to the content of these two editions, one of the interesting discoveries by Ehrhard at that time was the fact that the last two volumes of both sets contain rDzogs chen *tantras* that are not included in the gTing skyes edition, but are found in the *Bai ro rgyud 'bum*.

My first step in the investigation of the two sets in question was to edit the *dkar chag* containing the bibliographical list that was microfilmed by the NGMPP together with the Nubri set (i.e. *dKar chag* 1). In addition, I located the titles mentioned there in the Nubri set itself and compared the Nubri and the NAK sets in terms of their contents and organisation. Moreover, I also attempted to identify the individual texts contained in these two sets with those found in the other known editions. Very soon, several things became clear:¹⁰

- (a) Despite the great similarity between the Nubri and NAK sets, they differ in enough ways to presuppose a slightly different history of transmission.
- (b) While the Nubri edition is more or less uniform in terms of its organisation, format, and layout, the NAK set is rather chaotic in these points, betraying rather poor editorial skills, and perhaps also a lack of familiarity with the literary material, on the part of its producers and editors.

¹⁰ The information provided in the present article regarding the overall organisation of the Nubri and NAK sets—including volume and text numbers, the identification and location of the individual texts within the sets, and the comparison between the two sets—is based on the current draft of the catalogue in Almogi (forthcoming-a).

- (c) The texts found in the last two volumes noted by Ehrhard as missing from the gTing skyes edition are all found in the editions belonging to the Central Bhutanese group.¹¹
- (d) Both sets contain texts that could not be located thus far in any of the other accessible *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* editions that are catalogued.
- (e) The NAK set apparently suffered from the moment it was conceived from a very ill thought-out organisational concept, which is particularly evident in the assignment of the volume numbers and the foliation. The fact that the set was in Nepalese possession seems to have contributed to the disorder, for the librarians in charge could seemingly not read Tibetan (though there was an attempt to insert folio numbers in Indian numerals on the verso of folios, apparently in order to facilitate the handling of the set by staff with no knowledge of Tibetan). These circumstances are perhaps the reason, too, why during the microfilming by the NGMPP only 32 volumes could be identified, although 35 were present and were in fact microfilmed.
- (f) And most importantly, the two sets clearly differ from the gTing skyes and the Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu editions in various ways, and therefore the four editions cannot be classified into one and the same group called "south-central," as previously suggested by Robert Mayer and Cathy Cantwell.¹²

3. The Six Groups of Transmission of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum*

In connection with this last point, I would like to briefly present now an overview of the currently accessible *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* sets by way of grouping them in terms of the history of their transmission. During the past years, four further sets have become accessible. Two sets were digitised in Bhutan in 2012 within the framework of the above-mentioned project "Doxographical Organisational Schemes in Manuscripts and Xylographs of the

¹¹ On the groups of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* editions in terms of the history of their transmission, see below.

¹² See, for example, Cantwell & Mayer 2007: 70–78; 2012: 26–30.

Collection of the Ancient Tantras":¹³ (1) a unique set from gDong dkar la monastery (Dk), Paro (sPa gro) district, and (2) an illuminated set from sPa sgar monastery (Pg), Thimphu (Thim phu/phug) district.¹⁴ Two further sets were digitised in 2013: (3) another unique set located in Khams (Kh), the digital images of which were obtained by me in the fall of 2013 from mKhan po 'Jam blo from the 'Jam dbyangs shes rig dar spel khang in Chengdu, and (4) an illuminated set from Sangs rgyas gling monastery (Sg), Tawang (rTa dbang), which was digitised by an Oxford University project under Cathy Cantwell, Robert Mayer, and Ngawang Tsepag. While the discoveries of the sPa sgar and Sangs rgyas gling editions have little significance in terms of advancing our understanding of the history of the transmission of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* collection, that of the gDong dkar la edition has great significance in this regard, since it represents a unique, hitherto unknown line of transmission. As for the Khams edition, although its content and organisation appears to be different from all other accessible editions, it is still unclear how significant it is as far as the collection's history of transmission is concerned, and the matter is yet to be thoroughly investigated. The structure and content of these two editions cannot, however, be discussed here and will be treated separately elsewhere. On the basis of my extensive studies of the Nubri and NAK sets and my preliminary investigations of the gDong dkar la and Khams editions (catalogues of all four sets are currently under preparation),¹⁵ I suggest the following grouping of the thirteen¹⁶ editions accessible to date:¹⁷

¹³ The digitisation of this set was made possible thanks to the financial support of the DFG and fruitful cooperation with the Preservation of Bhutan's Written Heritage, directed by Karma Phuntsho.

¹⁴ For a discussion of these two sets in general, and for preliminary findings regarding the history of the transmission of the gDong dkar la set in particular, see Almogi 2015.

¹⁵ A detailed catalogue of the Nubri and NAK sets is nearly completed. Preliminary title lists of both the gDong dkar la and the Khams editions have also been compiled, and detailed catalogues of both are currently under preparation.

¹⁶ I may add that we currently know of several other sets, which are unfortunately not accessible thus far. For some examples, see Almogi 2015: 10, n. 25.

(a) The Central Bhutanese group comprises six sets, all of which consist of 46 volumes and obviously ultimately go back to the same origin: (i) sGang steng plain manuscript edition (Gt-p), (ii) sGang steng illustrated manuscript edition (Gt-i), (iii) mTshams brag illustrated manuscript edition (Tb), (iv) dGra med rtse plain manuscript edition (Gm), (v) sPa sgar illustrated manuscript edition (Pg), and (vi) Sangs rgyas gling illustrated manuscript edition (Sg), which is unfortunately incomplete (vols. 11, 12 and 41 being missing). The relation of these six editions among themselves has not been thus far satisfactorily clarified. It is, however, quite certain that the sGang steng sets are among the earliest ones and that they (or one of them) have played an important role in the history of the transmission of the other editions in this group. From the information obtained thus far it seems that the earliest among them is the plain sGang steng set, which, according to historical sources, was produced in 1642 by Pad gling gsung sprul III Phan pa bzang po alias Kun mkhyen Tshul khrims rdo rje (1598–1669; TBRC: P1692) as a commemoration set (*dgongs rdzogs*) for his teacher sGang steng sprul sku I rGyal sras Padma 'phrin las (1565–1642; TBRC: P2659) right after his death.¹⁸ According to his autobiography, Pad gling gsung sprul III commissioned various objects to commemorate the death of sGang steng sprul sku I, the most important of which was a complete 46-volume *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* set. The scribes and other craftsmen are stated there to have been brought from distant places and the work to have been brought

¹⁷ For more information regarding the sets listed here—including place of storage, publication details when applicable, details regarding their digitisation, existing catalogues, and accessibility—see the bibliography.

¹⁸ The identification of the set reported in historical sources as having been produced at the behest of Pad gling gsung sprul III with the sGang steng plain set is primarily based on my communication with the current sGang steng sprul sku. Moreover, as will be shown shortly, since the illuminated sGang steng set can very likely be identified with another sGang steng set reported in historical sources, which clearly describe it as being illuminated, the identification of the plain set with the one reported to have been produced at the behest of Pad gling gsung sprul III suggests itself rather forcefully.

to completion with much care.¹⁹ The set that served as the master copy for this edition is stated in Karma bde legs's *rGyud 'bum dkar chag* as having been borrowed from lHa lung, and the production as having taken about four months and as having required about 40 scribes (at least some of whom appear to have been from sNye mo).²⁰ No information regarding the circumstances of the production of the master copy (reportedly from lHa lung)—which is clearly older than all accessible sets of the Central Bhutanese group, and possibly the one to which all ultimately goes back—could be obtained thus far. The sGang steng illuminated set is said to have been produced in 1726/27 as a commemoration set for sGang steng sprul sku II bsTan 'dzin legs pa'i don grub (1645–1726²¹;

¹⁹ *Tshul rdor rnam thar* (fol. 18b1–5): *rje bla ma'i dgongs rdzogs su ... gtso bor rnying ma rgyud 'bum pu sti bzhi bcu zhe drug tshang ba yig mkhan sog srgyang ring mo nas bkug cing do gal bskyed de| rten bzhengs rnams 'khos** [= 'khur?] *khyer gyis gang pher bsgrubs*. *This syllable seems to have undergone a correction in which the original final letter (unclear which letter it was) has been deleted and instead the final letter -s has been inserted, however, not exactly in its place but below the syllable (obviously due to lack of space). Note that the author of the *Tshul rdor rnam thar* is indicated by the TBRC (W8LS15799) as anonymous. However, it is made clear in the introductory part that this is an autobiography. This is also evident from the fact that the biography is written in the first person.

²⁰ See Karma bde legs's *rGyud 'bum dkar chag* (35.10–36.1), which cites an unspecified biography of Pad gling gsung sprul III Kun mkhyen Tshul khrims rdo rje as its source for this information (apparently merely relying on information provided by Karma Phuntsho). I have not been able to identify this source. Note that according to Karma bde legs (*ibid.* 35.17–18), the number of volumes are there said to be 45 (and not 46). One wonders, however, whether there has been a confusion here with the report on the sGang steng illuminated set (for the Tibetan text, see note 22).

²¹ The TBRC notes that 1726 as sGang steng sprul sku II's year of death is questionable. However, 1726 is supported by his biography, which states that he died when reaching the age of 82. According to the Tibetan custom this is to be interpreted as his 82th year (i.e. when he was 81 years old), which, having been born in 1645, yields 1726. That he died in 1726 and not in 1727 (i.e. when he actually was 82) is further supported by the fact that his reincarnation, sGang steng sprul sku III Kun bzang 'phrin las rnam rgyal, was born in 1727 (TBRC: P3AG16). The exact time of his death is further specified in his biography as the midnight of the 15th of the 9th month (i.e. “the month in which the Buddha's Decent Festival takes place”). See

TBRC: P514). It has been further stated that the set was prepared under the auspices of the rGyal tshab—to be identified as Mi pham dbang po (1709–1738; TBRC: P531), the reincarnation of rGyal sras bsTan 'dzin rab rgyas (1638–1698; TBRC: P512)—who also consecrated the set, that its front pages were written in gold on black paper, and that it consisted of “about 45!” volumes.²²

The mTshams brag set is reported to have been commissioned by mTshams brag sprul sku I Ngag dbang 'brug pa (1682–1748; TBRC: P526), the founder of mTshams brag monastery and a disciple of sGang steng sprul sku II bsTan 'dzin legs pa'i don grub (1645–1726; TBRC: P514). His biography, composed by rJe mkhan po IX Shākyā rin chen (1710–1759; TBRC:

the *sGang steng sprul sku gnyis pa'i rnam thar* (204.8–10): *rje nyid dgung grangs bryad cu gya gnyis bzhes pa'i skabs lha babs zla ba'i dus chen bcos lnga'i nam gung la mya ngan las 'das so*]. The fact that sGang steng sprul sku II died towards the end of the Gregorian year (i.e. Nov. 9th) would mean that, even if the set was commissioned immediately after his death, its production must have stretched into 1727.

²² See the biography of sGang steng sprul sku II composed by rJe mkhan po X bsTan 'dzin chos rgyal (1701–1766/7; TBRC: P541), the *sGang steng sprul sku gnyis pa'i rnam thar* (208.6–12), which states: *gsung rten kun bzang rdor sems kyi thugs bcud rgyud 'bum rin po che pusta ka grangs tshad bzhi bcu zhe lnga tsam yod pa shog deb dang po'i rigs la mthing shog gser yig zhun ma las bgyis pa dag kyang dgongs rdzogs su dmigs te 'phral rang du grub bo* de *rnam* kyang rgyal tshab sprul pa'i sku dang tshul ldan gyi skyes chen mang pos rab tu gnas par mdzad cing| slar yang sprul pa'i sku myur 'byon gyi gsol 'debs thugs dam yang bskul bar byas so]. See also Karma bde legs's *rGyud 'bum dkar chag* (36.1–8), which refers to the same source (relying, however, on Karma Phuntsho's report). My identification of the rGyal tshab with Mi pham dbang po (as silently done by Karma bde legs) is based on various passages in the *sGang steng sprul sku gnyis pa'i rnam thar*, including (196.12–13): ... *mi ring bar rje rgyal ba'i sras mi pham dbang po nyid rgyal tshab tu mnga' gsol ba'i dgongs pas*..., and (206.8–9): ... *rgyal tshab sprul pa'i sku rje btsun mi pham dbang po*.... Note that Karma bde legs states that it appears that the sGang steng illuminated version was made on the basis of the plain one. Also note that Cantwell and Mayer point out an oral tradition prevalent in sGang steng (based on oral communication with Karma Phuntsho) and conclude that the second illuminated set was produced in Me ri dkar po, a temple now lying in ruins above Nor bu lding across the pass from sGang steng. Cantwell & Mayer 1997: 68–69.

P530), mentions his commissioning of the edition only briefly.²³ There the origin of the master copy is stated to be Punakha. This, however, is something that needs further verification, since sGang steng monastery, which has thus far been widely believed to be the source of the master copy, is located in Wangdue Phodrang (dBang 'dus pho brang) district and not in Punakha. The date of production is not provided either but it has most probably begun in 1726²⁴ and been

²³ *Ngag dbang 'brug pa'i rnam thar* (561.3): *gzhan yang rnying ma'i rgyud 'bum 'di dkon par gzigs te| sku gzhogs spungs thang nas ma dpe g.yar po zhus| shog bu'i rtsol ba mdzad de phral du sgrub pa gnang|*. Dan Martin, in his unpublished notes, refers to another version of this same biography.

²⁴ The passage provided by the TBRC entry of the Sangs rgyas gling edition (for which see note 25) reads *rab byung bcu gcig pa* (i.e. the 11th sexagenary cycle), which would place the year *zil gnon me rta* noted there in 1666. I tentatively suggest emending the text to *rab byung bcu gnyis pa* (i.e. the 12th sexagenary cycle), which would yield the year in question as 1726, and which, considering the fact that the birth year of mTshams brag sprul sku Ngag dbang 'brug pa, the commissioner of the set, is 1682, would make much better sense. This would mean that the production of the set had taken about two years (from 1726 to 1728), which could be considered long compared to the production of other sets, which reportedly took only several months. To be noted, however, is the remark found in the same passage that the production took many years (*mi lo du ma'i ring bzhengs par grags*), which may suggest that the author of the passage indeed took 1666 as the year in which the production started (so that the production stretched over 62 years, which is indeed a long period!). Mi nyag Thub bstan chos dar, who has obviously paraphrased and slightly shortened this same passage, notes the year in which the production started as 1728. This discrepancy may well be an attempt by Thub bstan chos dar to make up for what he probably saw as a problem in the dates provided in the passage (he indeed completely omits the sentence that identifies 1666 as the year in which production started). See the *mTshams brag rnying rgyud dkar chag* (16.20–21: ...*rab byung bcu gnyis pa sa sprel spyi lo 1728 lor bzhengs pa'i 'go brtsams|...*). The uncertainty about the dates of production are also reflected in Karma bde legs's catalogue, which identifies the year in which the project began as 1725 and the year in which it ended as 1748, just before mTshams brag sprul sku's death. See the *rGyud 'bum dkar chag* (36.12–13): ...*lo 1725 la dbu btsugs te 1748 lo zhing du ma gshegs gong tsam du grub pa dang|...* Note that Dan Martin, in his unpublished notes, suggested that the set was produced around 1730.

completed in 1728.²⁵ These dates as the years of production of this set make one wonder what the exact connection between it and the one commissioned by rGyal tshab Mi pham dbang po and others at around the same time to commemorate sGang steng sprul sku II. One asks oneself, for example, whether mTshams brag sprul sku, too, conceived the set as commemoration to sGang steng sprul sku II (who was his own teacher), whether the same set served as the master copy, and whether there was any logistical coordination between the two projects (e.g. sharing the same scribes and editors).

The production date of the Sangs rgyas gling edition²⁶ is unclear but, provided it is a copy of the mTshams brag set, it

²⁵ TBRC: W1KG16449, “Authorship Statement”: *mtshams brag rnying ma rgyud 'bum ni dpal sgang steng dgon pa'i sprul sku [b]stan 'dzin legs pa'i don grub kyi zhal slob mtshams brag sprul sku ngag dbang grub pas rab byung bcu gcig [= gnyis?] pa'i zin [= zil] gnon me rta'i hor zla dang po'i rgyal ba gsum par dbu btsugs| rab byung bcu gnyis pa sa sprel spyil [= spyi] lo 1728 lor rgyud rgyal legs par grub pa ste | mi lo du ma'i ring bzhengs par grags| pusti 46 dang| chos tshan 904| ldeb 40399 bzhugs| ldeb 'bring bris ma| dbu ldeb gser bris ma yin| bris gzugs sogs spus ka shin tu legs| dkar chag mi bzhugs| sde dge'i rnying rgyud la mtshon na| dang po gnyis med kyi rgyud sde a ti yo ga'i skor| de la'ang nang gses kyi yang ti'i skor dang| spyi ti'i skor| man ngag gi sde'i skor| klong sde'i skor| sems sde'i skor| gnyis pa ma rgyud a nu yo ga'i skor| de la'ang nang gses kyi rtsa ba'i mdo bzhi'i skor dang | mtha' drug gi rgyud kyi skor| gsum pa pha rgyud ma hā yo ga'i skor| de la'ang nang gses kyi sgyu 'phrul gyi skor dang| tantra sde bco brgyad kyi skor| sgrub pa bka' brgyad kyi skor bcas kyi rab dye gnang yod||.* Compare Mi nyag Thub bstan chos dar's modern catalogue to the mTshams brag edition from 2009 which provides the same passage in a slightly paraphrased and shortened form. See the *mTshams brag rnying rgyud dkar chag* (16.18–17.9).

²⁶ As I have already noted in a recent publication (Almogi 2015: 10, n. 26), the Sangs rgyas gling edition is referred to by the TBRC (W1KG16449) as *mTshams brag dgon pa'i bris ma* (under “Bibliographical Title”) and it is only under “Other Title” that it is recorded as the “Sangs rgyas gling manuscript of the *rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum*. ” There I have suggested that the (somewhat misleading) title *mTshams brag dgon pa'i bris ma* was apparently given on the basis of a reference to mTshams brag in what seems to be the colophon to the entire collection provided on the TBRC entry under “Authorship Statement” (for the text see note 25). The source of the passage is not indicated in the TBRC entry. Kelsang Lhamo from the TBRC was not able to name its source either (email communication from 29.02.2016). It should be noted, however, that judging by some apparent

would be later than the latter. The production dates of the dGra med rtse and sPa sgar sets have not yet been determined. This leaves us with the sGang steng plain edition produced in 1642, the sGang steng illuminated edition of 1726/27, and the mTshams brag edition probably dating from 1726–1728, that is, from around the same time as the sGang steng illustrated set, while the relationship among the Gt-p, Gt-i, and Tb sets is not completely clear.

(b) The South-Western Tibetan group comprises two sets, both apparently of 33 volumes originally: (i) Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu illuminated manuscript edition (Tn) (incomplete), and (ii) gTing skyes dGon pa byang plain manuscript edition (Tk). The two sets represent the fruit of activity surrounding the production and transmission of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* in South-Western Tibet during the late 18th century and perhaps also at the beginning of the 19th century. As for the Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu set, as shown by Cantwell and Mayer, it was commissioned in honour of Kah thog rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu (1698–1755), perhaps by actual students of his or later followers of his tradition, and thus can likely be dated to the late 18th century.²⁷ As already pointed out by Dan Martin, the gTing skyes set is probably the set reported in the biographies of the gTing skyes dGong pa byang throne-holders composed by mTha' grol rdo rje. There it is listed among the numerous books that the founder of dGon pa byang (TBRC: G1KR1628), Padma chos 'phel (alias Bya btang mKhas grub lha rje alias

modern influences on the style of writing (e.g. providing the equivalent of the Tibetan year in the Gregorian calendar), the passage seems to have come from an external source rather than being the original colophon of the collection. Moreover, the fact that it states that there is no *dkar chag* also supports the assumption of an external, later source. Note also the fact, likewise supportive, that it is included in Mi nyag Thub bstan chos dar's modern catalogue to the mTshams brag edition from 2009 in an almost verbatim form (see note 25), that is, several years before the digitisation of the Sangs rgyas gling set. In any case, the passage obviously reports on the production of the mTshams brag set and not of the Sangs rgyas gling one. Whether the Sangs rgyas gling set is a mTshams brag set that later on was transported to Sangs rgyas gling, or whether it is a copy of the mTshams brag set, with the passage in question reporting the production of its master copy, is yet to be clarified.

²⁷ Cantwell 2002.

Tshe ring don 'grub, 1772/1773–1836; cf. TBRC: P2DB20793), deposited in the monastery's temple.²⁸ The year of the monastery's founding, and thus a terminus post quem of the set's production, is unknown, but considering the dates of Padma chos 'phel, it would be reasonable to assume that he carried out activities of such monumental scale during the second half of his life and thus place the set's production in the early decades of the 19th century. This would position it slightly later than the Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu set. The relation between the two sets is, however, yet to be determined.

(c) The Tibetan-Nepalese Borderlands group also consists of two sets, apparently both originally in 37 volumes: (i) the Nubri set (Nu), an illuminated manuscript edition that was produced in Brag dkar rta so and is currently stored in Nubri, and (ii) the NAK set (Na), an illuminated manuscript edition probably produced in the Solu Khumbu area and is currently stored at the National Archives in Kathmandu (incomplete). As pointed out earlier, both were produced at the beginning of the 19th century: the Nubri set was produced in Brag dkar rta so at the behest of Brag dkar rta so sprul sku Chos kyi dbang phyug during the years 1813–1814, and the NAK set probably in the Solu Khumbu area shortly after the Nubri set at the behest of one O rgyan 'phrin las bstan 'dzin, a disciple of Brag dkar rta so sprul sku. As I shall show below, although the NAK set is probably later than the Nubri one, it reflects an earlier (i.e. older) stage in the history of the transmission than the Nubri set, as is clearly evident from its organisation.

(d) The Western Bhutanese group, consisting thus far of one set, namely, the gDong dkar la plain manuscript edition (Dk). As I have shown elsewhere, the set was probably produced in 1647 in East Bhutan, at the behest of sPa gro Chos dbang lhun grub (b. 17th cent.; TBRC: P2718) and under the sponsorship of King Dewa of Kha ling, his queen and other residents of the area.²⁹ This set comprises 28 volumes, and from a preliminary study of it, it has become clear that it differs greatly from all other sets accessible thus far and indeed represents an independent compilation. There is no doubt that it is

²⁸ See the *gTing skyes 'khrungs rabs rnam thar* (49.6–50.1). See also Martin (unpublished).

²⁹ Almogi 2015: 3–7.

independent of the Central Bhutanese group, which came into being around the centre of the Pad gling tradition in lHa lung. To be noted is that the earliest available set amongst the Central Bhutanese group (i.e. the plain sGang steng) was produced only a few years prior to the gDong dkar la edition. There is therefore no doubt that a thorough study of it will shed more light on the history of the *rNying ma rgyud bum* collection in general and its transmission in Bhutan in particular. An interesting feature of this set is that it is rich in editorial glosses, which give numerous hints regarding the process of its compilation and the policies followed by its editors (see fig. 2). These glosses are valuable not only for our better understanding of the collection's history of transmission but also for our better understanding of the text and book cultures in Tibet in general, for they provide us with unique glimpses into the compilatory and editorial processes shaping large corpora of Buddhist literary collections (be they canonical, para-canonical, or extra-canonical)—processes that have been practised within the Tibetan cultural sphere for centuries.³⁰

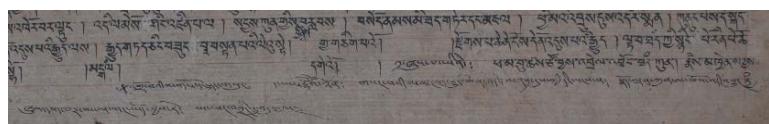


Fig. 2: Editorial glosses in the gDong dkar la edition, as exemplified here by vol. Ga (3), fol. 53a (image 65)

(e) The fifth group, which will be tentatively called (Central Bhutanese)–Eastern Tibetan,³¹ likewise consists thus far of only one set of 34 volumes, which are written in dBu med in black ink with rubrication in red (see fig. 3). For lack of sufficient details regarding its exact origin, it is simply referred to here as the Khams edition (Kh). As stated above, I obtained digital images of this set from mKhan po 'Jam blo (of the 'Jam dbyangs shes rig dar spel khang) during a visit to Chengdu in the fall of 2013. This set of images consists of 34 folders,

³⁰ Some of these glosses have been discussed in Almogi 2015: 3–9.

³¹ The designation of this group as “(Central Bhutanese)–Eastern Tibetan” is tentative and is based on preliminary study of the edition.

numbered 1–34. To be noted, however, that the 34th folder contains images of an as yet unidentified modern reproduction of a dBu med manuscript (bearing page numbers in printed Arabic numerals), which obviously differs from the first 33 volumes in both codicological and palaeographical terms. The set—which is currently stored in gZhi chen monastery,³² a subsidiary of Kah thog monastery in the Serta area—is, like the gDong dkar la set, unique in terms of content and organisation. My preliminary study of this Khams edition shows that, while it too bears witness to independent compilatory work on the part of its producers, its compilers had access to a set related to the Central-Bhutanese group. It seems that, just as in the case of the Tibetan-Nepalese Borderlands group, this edition represents a transitional or intermediate stage between the South-Western Tibetan and the Central Bhutanese groups. However, since it includes not only texts found in the editions of both the Tibetan-Nepalese Borderlands and Central Bhutanese groups, but also texts that are only found in the Central Bhutanese group, it clearly represents a stage in the transmission that is later than the one reflected by the Tibetan-Nepalese Borderlands group. Moreover, its organisation does not resemble any of the other groups, so that its exact relation to them is yet to be determined. It appears, however, to resemble more the Central Bhutanese group in terms of content (if not in terms of organisation). Thus the suggestion to

³² The TBRC also reports on a *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* set from gZhi chen monastery (W2PD17382). However, this set is said to consist of 39 volumes. Since the TBRC has not released the scans yet I have not been able to compare the two sets and to verify whether they are one and the same set or different ones. Nonetheless, shortly before the publication of the present paper I have been able to obtain the first three volumes of the gZhi chen dgon set with the kind help of Kelsang Lhamo from the TBRC. A brief look indeed confirmed my initial intuition that the two are in a way the same set, as these first three volumes of the “gZhi chen dgon set” turned out to be identical with folders 8, 10, and 23 of the “Khams set,” respectively. Since according to Karma bde legs (personal communication on June, 5, 2016) the original set indeed comprises only 34 volumes, it is possible that the 39-volume set reported in the TBRC consists of the 34-volume “Khams set” and additional supplementary volumes resulting from, most probably recent, compilatory work by Tibetan scholars in and around gZhi chen dgon (possibly merely scans of already published related material, as it is the case with folder 34). This matter will be looked into in the coming months.

tentatively name the group it represents (Central Bhutanese)–Eastern Tibetan. According to personal communication with Karma bde legs (previously of dPal brtseg, Lhasa), this edition was apparently compiled at the behest of Khyab gdal lhun grub (b. 17th cent.) from Brag dmar monastery³³ (the current digitisation efforts in gZhi chen were carried out by mKhan po 'Chi med rig 'dzin from Bla rung sgar, likewise in the Serta area). The exact time and place of compilation and production, the master copies used, the persons involved, and the exact role of Brag dmar Khyab gdal lhun grub are, however, as yet to be clarified. If this edition indeed dates from the late 17th or early 18th century (provided it was indeed commissioned by Brag dmar Khyab gdal lhun grub), the circumstances of its production, if they come to light, are surely bound to shed light on the collection's history of transmission in East Tibet, of which little is known thus far.³⁴



Fig. 3: Khams *rNying ma rgyus 'bum* edition, written in *dBu med* script with black ink on white paper with rubrication in red ink, exemplified by vol. 2, fol. 1b (image 102)

(f) The (Central)–Eastern Tibetan group consists of the only xylographic edition of the collection that has ever been produced. Despite the fact that this group is represented by only a single set from East Tibet, it seems more accurate to designate it “(Central)–Eastern Tibetan” and not simply “Eastern Tibetan,” since, as is well known, it was prepared at the behest of the queen of sDe dge Tshe dbang lha mo—the wife of the sDe dge king Sa dbang bzang po, who died at the

³³ This figure is very likely to be identified with Kun bzang khyab gdal lhun grub (TBRC: P6988), whose date of birth is given as the 17th century, and his primary seat as Brag dmar dgon pa (TBRC: G3069), which is located in the county of dPal yul rdzong and is a branch of Kaḥ thog monastery.

³⁴ The circumstances of the production of this set, and the history of its transmission, will be discussed in a separate publication. See Almogi (forthcoming-b).

early age of 25 years—between the years 1794 and 1798. It is said to be based on several sets, but the master copy was obviously the Central Tibetan set (or a copy of it) commissioned by 'Jigs med gling pa (1729/30–1798; TBRC: P3) in Padma 'od gling some years earlier.³⁵ A comparison of its contents with 'Jigs med gling pa's title list of the Padma 'od gling set contained in his history-cum-catalogue of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* shows that the two are indeed very similar, though not identical.³⁶

4. The NAK Set, Its Production, Organisation, and History of Transmission

In the following I wish to return to the two Tibetan-Nepalese Borderlands editions, with an emphasis on the NAK set. On the basis of my comparison of the content of these two sets, the following conclusions could be drawn thus far:

(a) Due to the fact that, unlike the Nubri set, the NAK set suffers from great deficiencies in regard to the organisation of its individual texts, volumes numbers, and foliation it clearly represents an earlier stage than the Nubri set in terms of the overall history of the transmission of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* in the Tibetan-Nepalese Borderlands. (This of course does not mean that the former was produced earlier than the latter!) Thus, the Nubri set could not have possibly served as the master copy for the NAK set—as one is tempted to believe based on the assumption that the latter was very probably produced after the former and the reported master-disciple relationship between Brag dkar rta so sprul sku, who was behind the production of the Nubri set, and O rgyan 'phrin las

³⁵ A modern account of the production of the sDe dge edition of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* has been provided in Mi nyag Thub bstan chos dar's catalogue of this edition. See the *sDe dge rnying rgyud dkar chag* (38–44).

³⁶ 'Jigs med gling pa's title list of the Padma 'od gling edition was indexed in Mi nyag Thub bstan chos dar's catalogue to the sDe dge edition of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* from 2000 (see the *sDe dge rnying rgyud dkar chag*, 270–305) and in Achard 2003. The latter also enables a good comparison to be made between the Padma 'od gling and the sDe dge editions, providing as it does the catalogue numbers of the sDe dge edition of the equivalent texts.

bstan 'dzin from Rong shar, who, it has been suggested, was the figure behind the production of the NAK set.

(b) The Tibetan-Nepalese Borderlands group—of presumably originally 37 volumes in each of its sets—clearly represents an intermediate stage between the South-Western Tibetan group—consisting of the *gTing skyes* and *Tshe dbang nor bu* editions, presumably originally 33 volumes each—and the Central Bhutanese group—consisting of six sets of 46 volumes each. As Ehrhard already pointed out, *dkar chag* 2, which was transmitted together with the Nubri set, informs us that when Myang ston mn̄ga' bdag Rig 'dzin rgya mtsho (b. 17th cent.), a disciple of *gTer bdag gling pa* (1646–1714; TBRC: P7), was acting as the chief editor of the *sNar thang* xylograph edition of the *bKa' 'gyur* prepared at Shel dkar at the behest of the ruler Pho lha ba/nas bSod nams stobs rgyas (1689–1747; TBRC: P346)—that is, sometime between 1730 and 1732—he asked the ruler to invite a master named Ngag dbang lhun grub grags pa from lHo brag lHa lung to participate in the endeavour. Consequently, Ngag dbang lhun grub grags pa came to dPal mo chos sding in La stod (TBRC: G1KR1648), a monastery founded by Bo dong 'Jigs med grags pa alias Phyogs las rnam rgyal (1376–1451; TBRC: P2627), and gave there teachings—including a text transmission of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum!*—to various personalities of the area. It is further reported that after the teaching and reading transmission, Ngag dbang lhun grub grags pa called upon the disciples to make a copy of the entire collection of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* in order to increase the reading transmission and to likewise carry out a reading transmission of the collection at least once. As a result, several sets were produced. Considering this report, it is very plausible that the text transmission of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* given by Ngag dbang lhun grub grags pa was based on a copy of a collection that he brought with him from lHo brag lHa lung, which, as we know, was the centre of the Pad gling reincarnation lineages and the location where the prototype for the Central Bhutanese editions very probably originated.³⁷ In this case, it is also very likely that this lHa lung set served as the master copy for the Tibetan-Nepalese borderlands editions. This would suggest that the texts contained in the last two

³⁷ On the first 46-volume edition, see Almogi (forthcoming-b).

volumes of these two editions and other texts that are not found in the editions of the South-Western Tibetan group but in those of the Central-Bhutanese one were already included in the lHa lung edition, and maybe were even added to the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* there for the first time. However, we have no exact information as to its predecessor, or in other words, to the prototype I assume to have served as the master copy for the Tibetan-Nepalese Borderlands editions, and which I suggest represents an intermediate, or transitional, stage in the history of the transmission of the collection, reflecting its state at a particular point on the line of transmission between the South-Western Tibetan group, on the one hand, and the Central Bhutanese group, on the other. To be kept in mind is that if the master copy of the Tibetan-Nepalese Borderlands editions was indeed a copy brought by Ngag dbang lhun grub grags pa from lHo brag lHa lung in 1730, it would appear that Ngag dbang lhun grub grags pa brought along with him a copy representing an earlier stage of the 46-volume Central Bhutanese group despite the fact that several copies of the 46-volume edition have already existed (i.e. at least the sGang steng plain edition of 1642, sGang steng illuminated edition of 1726/27, mTshams brag edition of probably 1726–1728, and the one reported to have been prepared by Pad gling gsung sprul IV Ngag dbang kun bzang rdo rje in the 1710s or early 1720s). The reasons for Ngag dbang lhun grub grags pa's choice of the master copy could have been very practical ones, such as availability (we still do not have any explicit information regarding the existence of the 46-volume edition in lHa lung itself), but also other matters could have played a role, such as the tradition he belonged to and the lineage of reading transmission he received.

As I pointed out earlier, the NAK set is incomplete and suffers from major organisational deficiencies, a fact that initially led to difficulties in identifying and determining the number of available volumes. During my cataloguing of the NAK set—which also included a comparison with the Nubri set—it became clear that 35 of what were probably originally 37 (Ka-Ji) volumes are currently stored in the National Archives, with only volumes Za and Sha being missing. Most of the organisational deficiencies seem to have had their origin already at the time the set was being produced. They mainly take the form of the wrong assignment of volume numbers—

which in turn led to some confusion in the way the individual volumes were stored in the National Archives. While the originally 37 volumes of the NAK set should have been, exactly as in the case of the Nubri set, assigned the numbers Ka–Ji, what we find is that in several cases certain volume numbers have been assigned twice, and in two other cases volume numbers have probably not been assigned at all:

(a) Two volumes are assigned the number Ja. During the cataloguing it became clear that one of them, designated by me Ja2, should be in fact volume Zha, which at first seems to be missing. This volume is, however, unfortunately incomplete, the first 81 folios being missing. As I have shown elsewhere, there seem to be no particular features common to volumes Ja and Ja2 (= Zha) which could possibly explain this confusion: the hands are different and no shared pattern of the employment of the ink varieties could be observed. It could, however, be demonstrated that the ink varieties used in Ja2 (= Zha) are rather similar to those used in some of the last volumes of the collection, which are generally of poorer quality—that is, in terms of the performance of the scribes and artist, the materials used, and the editorial scrutiny—and which appear to have been possibly produced towards the end of the project, perhaps by a different group of scribes in the same or a different location, and very probably also under some financial strain. This fact may not fully explain the reason for the confusion in the assignment of the volume number, but perhaps it partly does.³⁸

(b) In addition to one volume numbered Tha, which corresponds to its counterpart in the Nubri set and thus can be assumed to be bearing the correct volume number, we find another small volume that is likewise assigned the number Tha. This volume, which I have designated Tha2, merely consists of 133 folios and only contains one text. This text corresponds to the third text in volume Da in the Nubri set and is indeed missing from volume Da in the NAK set.³⁹ Also to be noted is

³⁸ For more on vol. Ja2 (= Zha), see Almogi, Kindzorra, Hahn & Rabin 2015 and Almogi, Delhey, MacDonald & Pouvkova 2015.

³⁹ Nu.203 (vol. 11 (Da): fols. 117–267); Na (vol. Tha2: fols. 1–133), corresponding to Tb.371.

the fact that unlike in the case of the other volumes, the first two folios of Tha2 are not illuminated. Unfortunately, no evidence could be found thus far—either through palaeographical examination or by means of material analysis of the types of ink used—that could hint at the origin of Tha2 and explain its existence or coming into being.⁴⁰

(c) We also find two volumes with the number Ma. The volume I designate Ma2 is incomplete, missing the first 191 folios. As I have pointed out elsewhere, it had been initially assigned the volume number Pha, but the number was later on altered to Ma. The reasons for this change have thus far not been clarified, neither through historical-philological inquiry nor by way of material analysis or multispectral imaging. Nonetheless, it could be established, through both palaeographical examination and material analysis of the ink—that Ma2 was highly likely to have been an integral part of the collection from the time of its production and so is not of external origin. It should be, however, perhaps pointed out that most of the texts contained in Ma2 are found in volume Ma of the Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu edition, which could be a useful piece of evidence regarding the history of the transmission of this cluster of texts, provided more pieces of the puzzle surface in the future. Furthermore, all five texts contained therein (i.e. fols. 192–390) match the first five texts in volume Pha of the Nubri set.⁴¹ Interestingly, the counterparts of the remaining 15 texts in volume Pha of the Nubri edition (Nu.237–244) are found in volume Da in the NAK set (fols. 1–164),⁴² while the counterparts of the texts contained in volume Pha of the NAK set are all found in volume Ba of the Nubri set.⁴³ These differences between the Nubri and the NAK sets in

⁴⁰ For more on the identification of vol. Tha2 and a discussion of its possible origin, see Almogi, Kindzorra, Hahn & Rabin 2015. See also Almogi, Delhey, MacDonald & Pouvkova 2015.

⁴¹ Nu.232–236 (vol. 14 (Pha), fols. 1–212); corresponding to Tb.404, Tb.402, Tb.403, as yet unidentified, Tb.406, respectively.

⁴² Nu.237–244 (vol. 14 (Pha), fols. 212–370), while Nu.240 contains 8 texts (fols. 319–345); corresponding to Tb.409.1, Tb.409.2, as yet unidentified, Tb.616–623, Tb.-Tk.341, Tb.625, Tb.384, Tb.624, respectively.

⁴³ The texts correspond as follows: the first three texts in vol. Pha (fols. 1–272) of the NAK set correspond to the last three texts in vol. Ba (Nu.248–

the distribution of texts within the individual volumes should be weighed against the fact that in general there is otherwise a rather good correspondence between the two sets.

(d) At least two volumes seem not to have been initially assigned a number at all, namely, Wa and Ji. Moreover, as I have already pointed out elsewhere, both of these volumes seem to have been at some point erroneously assigned the number Tsa (while the latter has also been occasionally confused with the number Ca due to the graphical similarity of these two Tibetan letters), a mistake that was obviously soon recognised by the persons involved in the production. The reason that these volumes initially lacked a number and that they were then falsely assigned the same number (in both cases there may have been some graphical confusion) has unfortunately not been satisfactorily clarified thus far.⁴⁴

Besides these obvious irregularities and confusion regarding the assignment of volume numbers, one often also observes confusion regarding the assignment of folio numbers in the NAK set. Several of these cases have been examined by way of multispectral imaging. As has already pointed out, the processed images seem to support the historical-philological and palaeographical-codicological analyses which suggest that the work load appeared to have been distributed among the scribes in bundles of ten folios and that at least in some cases the confusion in the foliation is probably a result of this division of labour (possibly when not properly supervised and coordinated).⁴⁵

Despite the evidently poor editorial quality, the production of the NAK set must have been regarded as a prestigious project, as is commonly the case with the production of such huge corpora. The

250, fols. 112–381) of the Nubri set, and the last two texts in vol. Pha (fols. 272–348) of the NAK set correspond to the first two texts in vol. Ba (Nu.245–246, fols. 1–79) of the Nubri set. For more on the identification of vol. Ma2 and a discussion of its possible origin, see Almogi, Kindzorra, Hahn & Rabin 2015. See also Almogi, Delhey, MacDonald & Pouvkova 2015.

⁴⁴ For more on the problems surrounding the volume number assignment of NAK volumes Wa and Ji (including confusion in the title pages of the latter), see Almogi, Delhey, MacDonald & Pouvkova 2015.

⁴⁵ On the problems regarding the foliation in the NAK set, see Almogi, Delhey, MacDonald & Pouvkova 2015.

fact that the first two written pages (i.e. fols. 1b & 2a) of most of the volumes in the set are illuminated—the text being written with golden ink on black paper and decorated with illustrations—further confirm the prestigious nature of this undertaking. Nonetheless, the quality of the illuminated pages varies greatly, including (i) the quality of the gold (which turned out to be in most cases a mixture of gold and orpiment in varying ratios, while only in some cases was the ink found to be made of pure gold, and in some others it consisted of orpiment alone with no gold component at all), (ii) the usage of red ink instead of golden ink (particularly in the last volumes),⁴⁶ (iii) the quality of the illustrations (some of which were, for example, left unpainted or only partly painted), (iv) the quality of other decorative elements, such as the curtained windows of the verso of the first folios (some windows, for example, were left uncut), and (v) inconsistency in the layout. Some examples of the varying quality of the illuminated front pages of the NAK set—of, in particular, their declining quality in terms of both material and artistry—as well as variation in their layout are provided below (see figs. 4–8).⁴⁷ As I have suggested elsewhere, the inconsistency in the quality of the gold and the illustrations—which seem to be declining particularly in the last volumes—appears to hint at financial difficulties towards the end of the production project.

⁴⁶ For more on the quality of the golden and red types of ink used in the NAK set and on the pigments used for the illustrations, see Almogi, Kindzorra, Hahn & Rabin 2015.

⁴⁷ For an example of the prevalent style of illuminated folios in the NAK set, on the one hand, and an example of an illuminated folio from the set displaying a distinct style, on the other, see Almogi, Kindzorra, Hahn, Rabin 2015: 113, figs. 13 & 14.

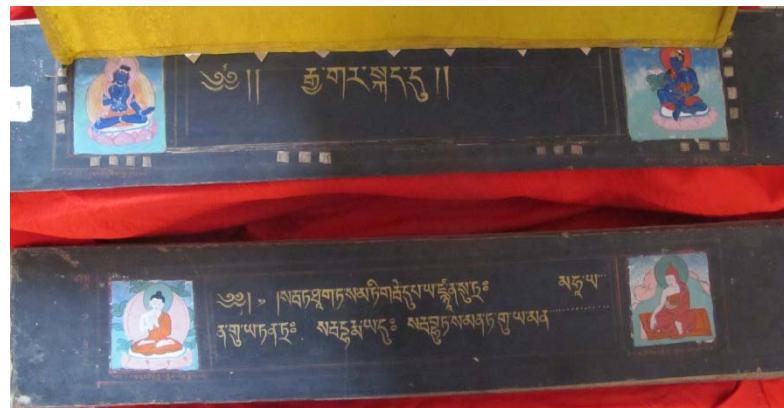


Fig. 4: The quality and style of the illuminated front pages of the NAK *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* as they were probably initially envisioned by its commissioners, here exemplified by vol. Nya, fols. 1b & 2a: text written in golden ink on black paper, with two painted illustrations on the left and right sides of each page; fol. 1b with a window mounted by a silken curtain

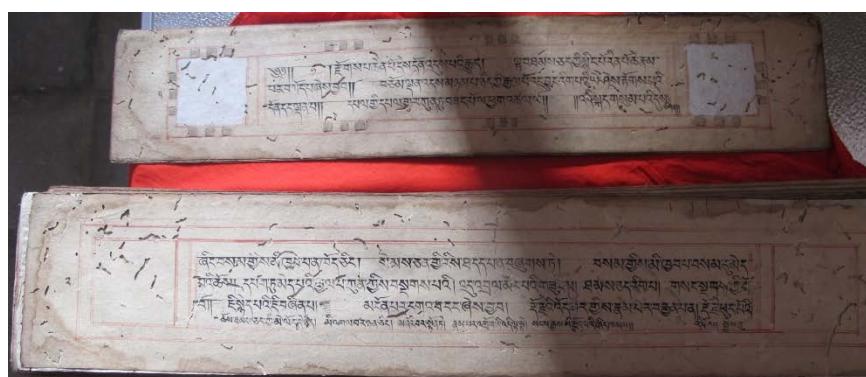


Fig. 5: The fluctuating quality of the illuminated front pages in the NAK *rNying ma rgyud 'bum*, here exemplified by vol. Tha, fols. 1b & 2a: text written in black ink on white paper (instead of golden ink on black paper); no illustrations, with merely the square spaces on the left and right sides of fol. 1b painted white to serve as the background for the (obviously planned) illustrations, while the equivalent spaces on fol. 2a were left blank; no window in fol. 1a



Fig. 6: The declining quality of the illuminated front pages in the NAK *rNying ma rgyud 'bum*, here exemplified by vol. Sa, fols. 1b & 2a: text on fol. 2a written in red instead of golden ink on black paper; fol. 1b left blank and with the window uncut; all four illustrations were left unpainted



Fig. 7: The declining quality of the illuminated front pages in the NAK *rNying ma rgyud 'bum*, here exemplified by vol. Gi, fols. 1b & 2a: text written in red instead of golden ink on black paper; no window in fol. 1b



Fig. 8: The declining quality of the illuminated front pages in the NAK *rNying ma rgyud 'bum*, here exemplified by vol. Ngi, fols. 1b & 2a: text written in red instead of golden ink on black paper; illustrations left unpainted

To sum up, as we have seen, the organisational incoherency and fluctuating quality of the craftsmen's skill and style and of the writing material used could be partly explained on the basis of the observations and findings made thus far, and several plausible assumptions could be accordingly articulated: (i) At least some of the volumes of the NAK set were produced by a different team of scribes, possibly at a different location. (ii) Different artists, likewise possibly in different locations, were responsible for the illustrations. (iii) The sponsors of this huge undertaking very probably faced financial difficulties, particularly towards its end phase. (iv) The division of labour among the scribes possibly involved the distribution of bundles consisting of ten folios each. (v) The editorial proofreading was in all likelihood carried out in a centralised manner.

5. Concluding Remarks

In this paper, I have touched upon and discussed several issues regarding the history of the transmission of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* in general and that of the NAK set in particular. I first pointed out the existence of a hitherto unrecognised distinct group among the currently accessible *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* sets, one that reflects a separate line of transmission, namely, the Tibetan-Nepalese Borderlands group, consisting of the Nubri and NAK sets, which thus far have been grouped together with the Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu and the gTing skyes sets (under the designation "south-central"). Secondly, I have presented a scheme of six groups, presenting six distinct lines of the transmission of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* collection, with an attempt to briefly discuss the dates and the

circumstances of their production, so as to enable us to better understand the relation between the sets within one and the same group on the one hand and between the groups on the other. This was followed by a brief discussion of the historical background of the Nubri and NAK sets and of their content in comparison to other sets, on the basis of which I suggested that the Tibetan-Nepalese Borderlands group represents an intermediate or transitional stage between the South-Western Tibetan and the Central Bhutanese groups. Lastly, I discussed some distinct features of the NAK set, particularly in comparison to the Nubri set, focusing on selected irregularities in the NAK set. On the basis of this examination I proposed that the NAK set represents a stage in the transmission line of the collection in the Tibetan-Nepalese Borderlands that is earlier than that of the Nubri set, even though the NAK set was probably produced later than the Nubri one. However, all the circumstances surrounding the production of the NAK set have yet to be uncovered.

Considering all the irregularities that slipped through the editorial oversight—as reflected in organisational matters, such as text order, assignment of volume numbers, and foliation—and the fluctuating quality of the material and its visual impact—as reflected in writing materials, the skills and style of the craftsmen (scribes and artists), and layout—several questions arise regarding the production of the NAK set. These include (i) whether the organisational deficiencies reflect the state of the master copy; (ii) whether there was no capable scholar available; (iii) whether the set was produced in haste; (iv) whether its production was partially outsourced or staggered—that is, it was produced in different places or at different points in time; (v) what led to the logistical or financial difficulties that the production process seems to have faced; and (vi) whether all the volumes currently stored at the National Archives have been an integral part of the collection from the very beginning or whether some are later additions. While some of these questions will have to remain unanswered as long as no further evidence comes to light, attempts have been made to answer some of them, at least partially, by combining historical-philological studies with codicological-cum-palaeographical investigations and scientific examinations (including analyses of the ink and paper and multispectral imaging). The present article augments my two recent publications concerning the NAK set, which have mainly presented the research results of codicological-cum-palaeographical studies combined with scientific methods—including material analysis of the ink and paper and multispectral imaging of select folios from the NAK set—conducted in an attempt

to answer some of the questions that have ensued as a result of observations made during my historical-philological (i.e. particularly bibliographical) studies of the Nubri and NAK sets. It particularly discusses findings resulting from historical-philological studies—of mainly bibliographical, biographical, and historical material of various sorts—in an attempt to shed more light on the history of the production and transmission of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* collection in the Tibetan-Nepalese borderlands in general and of the NAK set in particular.

Moreover, the findings gained through the study of the circumstances of the production of the NAK set go beyond their significance to the study of the history of the formation, production and transmission of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* collection. As I have shown in my recent discussion of the gDong dkar la edition,⁴⁸ the study of the circumstances leading to the formation of a *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* set—and in fact of any other large corpus of Buddhist literature for that matter—could shed more light on the book and text cultures within the Tibetan cultural sphere in general, and on the compilatory process, editorial policies, scribal practices, and logistical matters in particular. This is in addition to the increasing knowledge obtained in recent years regarding the material aspects of the culture of the book within the Tibetan cultural domain, particularly concerning paper but also ink and pigments.

⁴⁸ Almogi 2015: 3–9.

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Different Facets of Mang yul Gung thang Xylographs

Michela Clemente (Cambridge)

1. Introduction

This paper has the aim of discussing different facets of Mang yul Gung thang xylographs. It will present preliminary remarks on the distinctive features of these prints, particularly focusing on craftsmen involved in some aspects of their production. The identity of these artists turned out to be extremely important for the recognition of these xylographs, so that the information on a number of craftsmen who worked on these will be provided here too. Detailed files of these artists are available in an on line database built for two correlated projects.¹ I indeed created entries on craftsmen involved in Gung thang projects in general, as well as painters and carvers who worked on illustrations in particular. These entries will also supplement the TBRC database in case no corresponding records are available here.²

¹ The former project is titled “Transforming Technologies and Buddhist Book Culture: The Introduction of Printing and Digital Text Reproduction in Tibetan Societies,” and has been conducted at the University of Cambridge in cooperation with the British Library (2010–2015). The project was funded by the British Art and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and led by Professor Uradyn Bulag. The latter project is titled “Tibetan Book Evolution and Technology” (TiBET). It was granted by the Marie Skłodowska Curie Intra-European Fellowship and hosted by the University of Cambridge (May 2013–2015). The database is available through the websites of both the AHRC and the TiBET projects, respectively at <http://www.tbbbc.socanth.cam.ac.uk> and www.tbevoltech.socanth.cam.ac.uk. I wish to express my thanks to Burkhard Quessel, Terry Chilvers and Christopher Kaplonski who worked on the database, and to Camillo Formigatti who built the website of the TiBET project.

² In such cases, a new person (or place) record with a temporary key is created in a local authority file. When the local authority records are submitted to the TBRC database, the temporary key attributes will be updated to permanent TBRC references, thanks to an agreement with this organisation. I wish to thank Burkhard Quessel and Jeff Wallman for

At first, however, I shall provide the background of and the circumstances that led to this research. I have begun to develop an interest in Tibetan prints while I was working at the IsIAO Library in Rome, and at that time, I had also noticed some distinguishing features and started to think about systematically identifying them in a form of a template.³

During the years 2010–2015 I had the opportunity to be involved in the above-mentioned AHRC project.⁴ At the end of 2011, I was asked to travel to Kathmandu in order to identify and examine the Gung thang xylographs kept at the National Archives, during which occasion I also had the opportunity to look at many prints from the same area microfilmed by the NGMPP.⁵ During my examination of all these prints, I was able to notice further minor peculiar characteristics. Xylographs coming from printing houses located in that area seem to have their own slight distinctive features. In other words, it seems possible to identify the xylographs' origin—that is, the printing house where each of them was printed or else the

making this possible. I also would like to thank Dorji Gyaltshen, Lobsang Yongdan and Camillo Formigatti for creating entries of historical sources.

³ After having defended my PhD thesis in 2009, I presented an abstract of a project related to xylographs and their distinctive features to the Faculty of Eastern Studies at 'La Sapienza' University in Rome as a proposal for a postdoctoral scholarship. The proposal reached the last stage and was approved by the committee, but unfortunately the Faculty was then dissolved due to a reform. The initial idea of this project came about during the cataloguing of the Tucci Tibetan collection by Professor Elena De Rossi Filibeck, with whom I had the chance to cooperate since 1998. After the dissolution of the Faculty, I continued to study this subject with her. This was facilitated thanks to the numerous xylographs preserved at the IsIAO Library. My work focused particularly on Gung thang prints which I had already studied for my PhD dissertation. I would like to take this opportunity to heartily thank Elena De Rossi Filibeck for passing this idea on to me, for teaching me during University hours and while working at the IsIAO Library, as well as for her constant help and support over the years.

⁴ I would like to express my thanks to Dr. Hildegard Diemberger (Cambridge) and Prof. Franz-Karl Ehrhard (Munich) for giving me this opportunity.

⁵ I would like to thank the late Dr. Albrecht Hanisch, the Acting Director of the Nepal Research Centre (NRC) at that time, Mr. Nam Raj Gurung, the NRC manager, and the NRC staff for their precious help during my stay there. I also wish to thank Dr. Michael Pahlke, Punya Parajuli and the staff at the National Archives in Kathmandu for their assistance.

network of artists that worked at a certain printing house or on a specific project—through an analysis of the numerous extant Gung thang xylographs collected by the above-mentioned project. This, in turn, will enable the narrowing down of the amount of places of provenance. Most artists, indeed, are usually associated with some printing houses or else with several masters who undertook big projects.

This observation has led to my initiating the correlated TiBET project, which intended to study extant early Tibetan prints from the South Western area, with the aim of identifying their provenance on the basis of typical stylistic features in addition to studying their colophons as well as conducting material analyses.⁶ The project has focused on the 15th–early 16th century xylographs kept in the UK as well as on many prints collected by the AHRC project coming from various libraries in Tibet, the National Archives of Kathmandu, and the Tucci Tibetan Collection of the IsIAO Library in Rome.⁷ The codicological data obtained from the study of these xylographs has been used to supplement the historical information and has provided the starting point for a method of identification of early prints, based on codicological features.

The xylographs have been studied according to codicological standards and in cooperation with experts from different disciplines. By examining these prints from different standpoints, I have been working towards the creation of a template to identify the various printing houses located in the Mang yul Gung thang kingdom and also the network of artists who worked in those places. Over the years the two kingdoms of Mang yul Gung thang and La stod lHo became indeed important centres for the printing of Buddhist texts thanks to the support of their rulers. This has been underlined by

⁶ I wish to thank Hildegard Diemberger, Libby Peachey, Katie Boyle, Burkhard Quessel, Christopher Kaplonski, Fabio Miarelli, Terry Chilvers, Michael Pahlke, Daniel Starling, Filippo Lunardo, Paola Ricciardi, Agnieszka Helman-Ważny, and Bruce Huett for their help with different aspects of this project.

⁷ I would like to underline the fact that the IsIAO Library is not accessible anymore since the Italian Institute for Africa and the East was shut down in 2011. A process of liquidation is ongoing and the destiny of this huge and significant Library is as yet unclear. Fortunately, all Gung thang prints have been photographed before the closedown of the Library and they are now accessible in the above-mentioned database.

Franz-Karl Ehrhard,⁸ who also highlighted the fact that the xylographs printed in Mang yul Gung thang in the 15th and 16th centuries played a significant role in spreading the tradition of those works.⁹ The same occurred in La stod lHo.¹⁰ The royal courts of both kingdoms had indeed established spiritual ties with several religious schools, Bo dong and bKa' brgyud in particular.¹¹ It seems that the earliest extant Tibetan-language xylograph printed in Tibet was completed at Shel dkar (La stod lHo) in 1407.¹²

2. How to Create a Template: Remarks on Material Analysis

In order to create a template, xylographs should be examined by taking into consideration

- (i) the materials used;
- (ii) the codicological style of the edition;
- (iii) book cover typology (if applicable);
- (iv) the information provided in the printing colophon.

In this section, however, I will confine myself to (i) making some general remarks on the importance of material analysis for the identification of Tibetan xylographs and for the creation of a template, and (ii) discussing the codicological style of the prints in question. Unfortunately, all xylographs collected for this project but one lack a book cover, therefore this subject cannot be addressed here.¹³ Furthermore, since several articles underlying the significance

⁸ See Ehrhard 2000a, 2000b, 2000c. On the introduction of printing in Gung thang and the patronage of its royal family, see also Diemberger & Clemente 2013.

⁹ See, for example, the history of the *Mani bka' bum*, the *Padma thang yig*, and the *rGyud bzhi* in Ehrhard 2000a: 14–15; Ehrhard 2013. On the history of this kingdom, see also Everding 2000; Everding 2004.

¹⁰ On the history of La stod lHo, see Diemberger 2007: 37–38; Everding 1997.

¹¹ See Ehrhard 2000a: 12.

¹² On this xylograph, see Diemberger 2012: 22, 23–26, 28–31; the contribution of Diemberger in this volume; Porong Dawa 2016. This xylograph was discovered by the dPal brtsegs Research Institute in collaboration with the University of Cambridge and the British Library. The work is available in the CD-ROM of the dPal brtsegs book (see dPal brtsegs, text no. 1).

¹³ On the importance of book covers' types, see Clemente 2011: 58–60.

of colophons as historical sources have already been published, I will limit myself to mainly referring to those essays.¹⁴

(i) Material Analysis

Materials used to prepare xylographs are valuable sources to locate the time and place of production. They are also extremely important for understanding the production process. In this paragraph I will briefly discuss paper, pigments and wood analyses. Although the ink composition should also be taken into consideration for a full understanding of the process, since it has already been discussed within the Tibetan context in various publications, I will leave it out here.¹⁵

(a) Paper

According to Agnieszka Helman-Ważny, paper analysis may help identifying the provenance of, and reveal links between, groups of books with the same distinguishable features. That is, by identifying the fibre composition and studying the variations in the production methods, raw materials, and treatment of the paper surface, it is to some extent possible to determine the time and place of production and also understand the technologies involved from a regional and periodical perspective. Helman-Ważny also underlines the fact that in order to achieve higher precision of such estimations, it is necessary to collect more reference material which will allow us to evidence what type of paper was used and where.¹⁶ Collaboration with experts of plants used for paper-making would be helpful to enhance our knowledge of this subject. Furthermore, an investigation of the distribution of these plants over the centuries would help to better understand their use in paper production. As Alessandro Boesi indeed pointed out, we cannot rely on the current abundance and distribution figures of the species used for paper-making to get a clear picture of their existence in the past.¹⁷

¹⁴ See Bacot 1954; Clemente 2007. See also Clemente 2011: 60–61.

¹⁵ On the composition of ink used within the Tibetan cultural sphere, see Almogi et al. 2015; Cüppers 1989; Elliott, Diemberger, Clemente 2014: 105.

¹⁶ See Helman-Ważny 2016. See also Helman-Ważny 2004, 2007, 2010, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c; Helman-Ważny & Van Schaik 2013; Nöller & Helman-Ważny 2013.

¹⁷ See Boesi 2014: 96. See also Boesi 2016.

(b) Pigments

Information on pigments used by artists working in Tibet and in the neighbouring areas is relatively scarce, and the vast majority relates to *thang ka* paintings. Many of these pigments could be sourced from specific regions in Tibet. Other pigments were instead imported from neighbouring countries such as Nepal, China and India.¹⁸ Regarding the analytical methods for pigments, Ricciardi and Pallipurath state the following: “A large number of analytical methods are currently used for the technical investigation of cultural heritage objects, including works of art on paper, such as manuscripts and prints. The most sophisticated of these, which are also the most accurate, require taking small samples from the objects. Because of the damage, however small, that this causes to the art object, these methods are more and more often being substituted by so-called non-invasive analytical methods, which do not require sampling and can be used *in situ*, often without the need to even touch the object.”¹⁹ This is the case of reflectance spectroscopy and fibre optic reflectance spectroscopy (FORS). Preliminary results highlight the potential of non-invasive scientific analysis as a tool to further our knowledge of the materials and painting techniques of Tibetan artists. Such analysis may help us date the manuscripts and prints, by identifying the artists behind their illustrations. If a substantial corpus of Tibetan books were to be analysed in the future, we may be able to explore the relationship between artists working in Tibet and in neighbouring countries, based on their use of certain materials and artistic techniques.²⁰ The use of FORS in combination with x-ray fluorescence (XRF) often provides a relatively complete characterisation of pigments and mixtures, particularly when FORS analysis is extended into the shortwave-infrared range (to 2500 nm).²¹ This has been made clear by Ricciardi et al. who state: “While FORS yields information about the chemical structure and the presence of certain functional groups for both inorganic and organic materials, XRF yields elemental information and so is mostly useful

¹⁸ On this subject, see Jackson & Jackson 1976.

¹⁹ Ricciardi & Pallipurath 2014: 103.

²⁰ See Ricciardi & Pallipurath 2014: 104. See also Ricciardi & Pallipurath 2016.

²¹ See Ricciardi et al. 2013: 3819.

for the identification of inorganic materials. Both FORS and XRF can rely on portable instruments and are non-invasive and quick.”²²

(c) Wood

Printing and book technology has always been dependent on wood. The materials range of application extends from wooden tables to xylographic blocks and book covers. Wood identification is a straightforward way to obtain basic information about materials used for production, their origin and the local workshop areas. A variety of wood species are available in different Tibetan regions, while others could be imported from Nepal, India or Bhutan.²³ Tomasz Ważny makes the following general remarks regarding wood identification: “Determination of wood species is possible by means of microscopic techniques. Samples in the form of small splinters of wood are usually sufficient to prepare thin sections representing the transverse, tangential and radial directions. In situations when sampling is not possible, microslices 0.01–0.02 mm thick can be done directly on the object, that leave no visible trace. These microslices are then observed under a biological microscope in transmitted light and compared with reference materials. Identification at the level of genera and sometimes species is possible in this way by experienced wood scientist.”²⁴ Wood selected for printing blocks should have properties such as hardness, low abrasiveness and structure allowing the carver to obtain high precision shapes. At the same time it should have a uniform structure and a reduced tendency to crack.²⁵

As one could understand from this short presentation, material analysis is a promising field of research for deepening our knowledge of several aspects of manuscript and xylograph production. Thanks to the funding of the AHRC project, paper and pigment analyses have been undertaken on selected materials. However, as underlined by experts in this field, it is necessary to collect and analyse a substantial amount of samples to gain significant results.²⁶

²² Ricciardi et al. 2013: 3820.

²³ For a list, see Ważny 2014: 113.

²⁴ Ważny 2014: 114–115.

²⁵ See Ważny 2014: 115. See also Ważny 1999; Ważny 2016; Ważny & Helman-Ważny 2001.

²⁶ Agnieszka Helman-Ważny collaborated with the AHRC and TiBET projects and inserted in the shared database the information coming from

(ii) Mang yul Gung thang Prints Distinctive Features: The Style of Editions

In 2007 I briefly described the style of some xylographs printed at Brag dkar rta so,²⁷ one of the most famous printing houses of the Mang yul Gung thang area. Over the years, I realised that most features illustrated in that article could actually be ascribed to Gung thang prints in general. These xylographs are recognisable through at least five distinctive features:

- (a) front page (i.e. the drawn frame of the title);
- (b) layout;
- (c) *ductus*;
- (d) orthographic peculiarities;
- (e) woodcut representations.

Here I will confine myself to some preliminary remarks on the various distinctive features on the basis of the xylographs analysed until now. I will also provide information on a number of artists who were active in the Mang yul Gung thang kingdom in the 16th century.

(a) Front Page

Usually the front page of Gung thang prints has a very similar and characteristic drawn frame. This can vary from a simple to a more elaborated drawing which may differ even in xylographs produced at the same printing house (see figs. 1, 2 & 3²⁸).

her analysis of paper samples. Data are linked to images of the respective fibres.

²⁷ See Clemente 2007. On Brag dkar rta so and some prints produced there, see Clemente 2009: 3.5, 3.6, 3.7; Clemente 2014b; Clemente 2015; Diemberger & Clemente 2013: 128–129, 134–137.

²⁸ I would like to thank the former President of IsIAO, the late Professor Gherardo Gnoli, and the former Director of the Library, Dr. Francesco D’Arelli, for allowing me to study these prints. All photographs shown in this paper, unless differently credited, were taken by Laura and Claudia Primangeli (L&C Service) thanks to a collaboration between IsIAO and the University of Cambridge within the framework of the project “Transforming Technologies and Buddhist Book Culture: The Introduction of Printing and Digital Text Reproduction in Tibetan Societies.”



Fig.1: The biography of lHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal, Brag dkar rta so (vol. 657/6, IsIAO Library, Rome, photograph by L&C Service)



Fig. 2: The Six Adamantine Songs of Mi la ras pa compiled and edited by lHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal, Brag dkar rta so in 1550 (vol. 1089/2, IsIAO Library, Rome, photograph by L&C Service)



Fig. 3: 'Brom ston's previous lives, Kun gsal sgang po che, 1539–1540 (vol. 363/1, IsIAO Library, photograph by L&C Service)

It is also possible, however, to find Gung thang prints with a simple title page (see fig. 4).



Fig. 4: Explanatory text on the four stages of Mahāmudrā, Brag dkar rta so, 1556 (vol. 1356, IsIAO Library, Rome, photograph by L&C Service)

Moreover, as far as I know, this characteristic drawn frame is not found in any xylograph printed outside this area, so that it indeed seems to be peculiar of Mang yul Gung thang prints, at least during the 16th century.²⁹

²⁹ For a preliminary study of the different types of drawn frame in Gung thang xylographs, see Clemente & Lunardo (in press).

(b) Layout

Mang yul Gung thang prints have a simple layout and mostly 7 lines per page. To my knowledge, only xylographs printed at gNas (near sKyid srong, Mang yul) may have 8 lines per page.

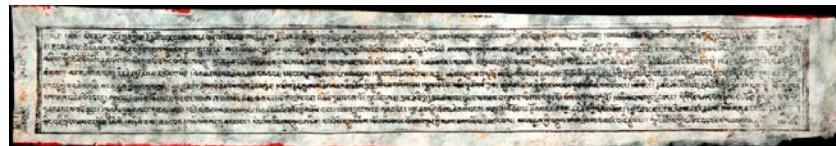


Fig. 5: Vinaya work, gNas, 1561 (vol. 587, IsIAO Library, Rome photograph by L&C Service)

The above example (fig. 5) is a xylograph³⁰ produced by Rab 'byams pa Byams pa phun tshogs (1503–1581), a disciple of two renowned religious masters of the so-called 'gTsang smyon's school,³¹ namely lHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal (1473–1557)³² and rGod tshang ras chen (1482–1559).³³ Byams pa phun tshogs followed his teachers' example and undertook many printing projects in the Gung thang kingdom starting from 1555.³⁴ According to Ehrhard, in the 1560s Byams pa phun tshogs mainly printed works of the Sa skya school, Vinaya texts in particular.³⁵ The above mentioned xylograph is indeed a Vinaya work titled '*Jam dbyangs zhal gyi pad dkar 'dzum phye nas | lung rigs gter mdzod ze 'bru bzheng la | blo gsal rkang drug ldan rnam 'phur lding rol | legs bshad sbrang rts'i dga' ston 'gyed pa*' printed in 1561 at gNas, the birthplace of Byams pa phun tshogs. One of the carvers of this print is the famous bCu dpon rDo rje rgyal mtshan (see ibid. fol. 123b6), who worked on many printing projects in Gung thang and was active at least between 1538 and

³⁰ For its cataloguing, see De Rossi Filibeck 2003: 314. See also Clemente 2016: 426.

³¹ On gTsang smyon's school, see Clemente 2009: chaps. 1.2, 3.6, 3.7; Larsson 2012: 229–273; Schaeffer 2009: 58–63; Schaeffer 2011; Sernesi 2011; Sernesi (forthcoming); Smith 2001: 73–79.

³² On this master, see Clemente 2007; Clemente 2009; Clemente 2014b; Clemente 2015; Clemente (in press-a); Diemberger & Clemente 2013.

³³ On this master, see Ehrhard 2010; Larsson 2012: 255–261; Sernesi 2007: chap. 2; Sernesi 2011: 191–192, 197–198; Sernesi (forthcoming).

³⁴ See Ehrhard 2012: 160.

³⁵ Ehrhard 2012: 163.

1563.³⁶ He also acted as scribe of the same xylograph. He seems to have been indeed one of the few artists with different specialisations, that is to say, calligraphy, drawing of illustrations, carving of blocks and carving of illustrations.³⁷ According to the information gathered from the colophons and signatures of some prints produced in this area, he was certainly involved in the production of the following xylographic editions: the *Zhus lan nor bu'i phreng ba lha chos bdun ldan gyi bla ma brgyud pa rnam kyi rnam thar* (vol. 361/3, IsIAO Library, see fol. 201b)³⁸ printed at Kun gsal sgang po che in 1538; the *Jo bo yab sras kyi gsung bgros pha chos rin po che'i gter mdzod | byang chub sems dpa'i nor bu'i phreng ba rtsa 'grel sogs* (vol. 361/4, IsIAO Library, see fol. 266b),³⁹ also printed at Kun gsal sgang po che in 1538; the biography and spiritual songs of 'Ba' ra ba rGyal mtshan dpal bzang (vol. 671/1, IsIAO Library, see fol. 20b)⁴⁰ printed in 1540 at rDzong dkar; the *sKyes mchog gi zhus lan thugs kyi snying po zab mo'i gter mdzod* (vol. 671/6, IsIAO Library, see fol. 391a7)⁴¹ printed in 1540 at mDzo/'Dzo lhas (on the banks of the dPal khud mtsho, not far from Chos sdings, Gung thang); the *sTon pa sangs rgyas kyi skyes rabs brgyad bcu pa slob dpon dpa' bos mdzad pa* (vol. 707, IsIAO Library, see fol. 170a6)⁴² printed at Brag dkar rta so, most likely in 1541 or 1553; the biography of gTsang smyon Heruka written by lHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal (vol. 706, IsIAO Library, see fol. 65a7);⁴³

³⁶ On this artist, see Clemente 2007: 131, 132, 137, 146, 153; Clemente (in press-b); Ehrhard 2000a: 73–79; Eimer & Tsiring 1990: 71–72; Roesler 2000: 228; Schaeffer 2011: 470.

³⁷ On this subject, see Clemente (in press-b).

³⁸ For its cataloguing, see De Rossi Filibeck 2003: 132. See also Clemente 2016: 425. Another copy of this text is available in TBRC: W00KG09688.

³⁹ For its cataloguing, see De Rossi Filibeck 2003: 132. See also Clemente 2016: 425.

⁴⁰ For its cataloguing, see Clemente 2016: 423; De Rossi Filibeck 2003: 335; Ehrhard 2000a: 45 n. 38, 61–63.

⁴¹ For its cataloguing, see De Rossi Filibeck 2003: 335. See also Clemente 2015: 190; Clemente 2016: 427; Ehrhard 2000a: 130–141. Two microfilms of the same edition are preserved at the National Archives of Kathmandu (NGMPP L538/5, L195/11).

⁴² For its cataloguing, see De Rossi Filibeck 2003: 341. For the translation of the colophon, see Clemente 2011: 60–61; Clemente 2015: 190; Clemente 2016: 421; Clemente (in press-b).

⁴³ For its cataloguing, see De Rossi Filibeck 2003: 341. Information about the drafting of this work is provided in lHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal's

NGMPP E2518/10, L12/2) and printed at Brag dkar rta so in 1543—for which he also acted as carver of the first illustrations (*stod cha*, i.e. the first in the volume); Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan’s *mgur ’bum* (vol. 709/4, IsIAO Library, see fol. 43b3)⁴⁴ printed in 1545, in which he also acted as carver of the first illustrations; the xylograph titled *sKyes bu gsum gyi lam rim rgyas pa khrid du sbyar ba | rje btsun gsang ba’i byin gyis mdzad pa* (dPal brtsegs, text no. 27, see the signatures after the last line of fols. 2b, 10b, 53b, 90b, 150b) printed in 1546—of which bCu dpon rDo rje rgyal mtshan also carved the illustrations; Tilopa’s *rnam mgur* (NGMPP L1107/4, see the signature after the last lines of fol. 17b)⁴⁵ printed at Brag dkar rta so in 1550; Chos dbang rgyal mtshan’s biography (NGMPP L66/5, see fols. 126b1, 127b6–128a1, 128a2)⁴⁶ printed at Kun gsal sgang po che in 1551, of which he was also a sponsor and the carver of the first illustrations; gTsang pa rgya ras’s spiritual songs (NGMPP L581/4, see the signature after the last line of fol. 52a)⁴⁷ printed at Brag dkar rta so in 1551; Mi la ras pa’s *rnam thar* and *mgur ’bum* (BL 19999a3, see fol. 250a7; NGMPP L250/8–251/1), written by gTsang smyon Heruka and printed by lHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal at Brag dkar rta so in 1555;⁴⁸ the *dPe chos rin po che spungs pa’i ’bum ’grel* (NGMPP L10/22, see fol. 170a7)⁴⁹ printed at Brag dkar rta so in 1555—for which rDo rje rgyal mtshan also worked as scribe; the

rnam mgur (see vol. 657/5, fols. 16a6–16b5). For a description of this work, see Clemente 2007: 124, 135–137; Clemente 2015: 188; Diemberger & Clemente 2013: 134; Sernes (forthcoming). For a presentation of the text, see Larsson 2009: 50–52; Larsson 2012.

⁴⁴ For its cataloguing, see De Rossi Filibeck 2003: 342. It was reproduced in U rgyan rdo rje 1976: 181–271. For the story of its consecration, see Ehrhard 2000a: 64–65.

⁴⁵ See also NGMPP E2517/6; dPal brtsegs (text no. 32); U rgyan rDo rje 1976, 37–83. On this work, see Clemente 2015: 191; Clemente 2016: 421; Schaeffer 2011: 469; Smith 2001: 76.

⁴⁶ The colophon is provided in Ehrhard 2000a: 165–170. On this work, see also Clemente (in press-b).

⁴⁷ See also E2518/7, L970/4, L194/10. On this work, see Clemente 2015: 190; Clemente 2016: 421; Schaeffer 2011: 472.

⁴⁸ On this text, see Diemberger & Clemente 2013: 135; Eimer & Tsing 1990: 71–72; Eimer 2010; Roesler 2000: 227–229; Schaeffer 2009: 62; Schaeffer 2011: 470; Sernes 2011: 200, 225–226.

⁴⁹ See also L813/2 and E2617/9. On this work, see Clemente 2015: 193; Clemente 2016: 422; Roesler 2000; Roesler 2011; Schaeffer 2011: 476.

biography and songs of lHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal (vol. 657/5, see fols. 2b, 45b, 54a1–2, 54a3)⁵⁰ printed at Brag dkar rta so, of which he was a sponsor as well; the biography of Ras chung pa written by rGod tshang ras chen and printed at gNas in 1559 (vol. 657/4, IsIAO Library, see the signature after the last line of fol. 4b, fol. 241a7)⁵¹—for which rDo rje rgyal mtshan also acted as carver of the first illustrations, scribe and sponsor; the biography of Ras chung pa written by lHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal (vol. 657/3, see the signature under the last line of fol. 42b)⁵² printed at Brag dkar rta so in 1563; the biography and songs of Gling ras pa printed by lHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal at Brag dkar rta so (NGMPP E2518/6, see his signature under the last line: fols. 1b, 11b, 34b, 56b);⁵³ the biography of rDo rje 'chang written by Tilopa (NGMPP L456/14, see fol. 11a7)—in which he appears to have acted as drawer and carver of the illustration.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ For its cataloguing, see De Rossi Filibeck 2003: 331. NGMPP L477/13; dPal brtsegs, text no. 31. On this work, see Clemente 2007: 124, 130–132; Clemente 2009; Clemente 2014b; Clemente 2015: 187–188; Clemente 2016: 421; Diemberger & Clemente 2013.

⁵¹ For its cataloguing, see De Rossi Filibeck 2003: 330–331. According to his biography, Byams pa phun tshogs spent 5 months with rGod tshang ras chen at Ras chung phug, where he received a great number of reading authorisations, including that of the biography of Ras chung pa, which was based on a xylographic edition of the text (see Ehrhard 2012: 158). Then, in 1559 he decided to print the biography of Ras chung pa written by rGod tshang ras chen, after having dreamt of the latter. He began to work in the 4th Hor month of the Sheep year, when he was 57, and finished on the 15th day of the 5th Hor month of the same year. This work was first printed in 1531 at Ras chung phug (see Roberts 2007: 40–47). For its description and the translation of its colophon, see Clemente 2007: 125–126, 143–150. My attribution there of this xylograph to Brag dkar rta so, however, turned out to be wrong. See also Clemente 2016: 425; UL Tibetan 155.1.

⁵² For its cataloguing, see De Rossi Filibeck 2003: 330. See also NGMPP E2518/3. On this work, see Clemente 2007: 125, 142–143; Clemente 2015: 189; Clemente 2016: 422; Diemberger & Clemente 2013: 135.

⁵³ The exact date of printing is unknown, but it should have been printed between 1525 and 1557. On this text, see Clemente 2015: 190; Clemente 2016: 420; Clemente (in press-b); Diemberger & Clemente 2013: 135; Schaeffer 2011: 472; Smith 2001: 76.

⁵⁴ See Clemente 2015: 191. See also NGMPP L969/4 (incomplete, fols. 2 and 11 being missing); dPal brtsegs (text. no 22_1); U rgyan rdo rje 1976: 85–105.

The fact that prints from gNas usually have 8 lines per page instead of 7, is one of the characteristic features that slightly vary among 16th century Gung thang prints. By analysing a xylograph from gNas printed in the 17th century,⁵⁵ I discovered that this holds the same feature. This might imply that each printing house employed its own layout for the production of printing blocks, but this subject needs to be further investigated since the number of identified xylographs from gNas is still limited.

Furthermore, xylographs from gNas appear to have a different size. They seem considerably bigger than those coming from other printing houses located within the kingdom. The average size of most Gung thang xylographs is around 46–48x7–9 cm. Prints from gNas seem to measure around 64–67x11 cm.⁵⁶

Xylographs from Chab rom phug, which should be located near the village of Rud, further south of Kun gsal sGang po che, appear to have distinct dimensions as well. The average size of the examined prints is 31x7.5–8 cm.

What might also help distinguish one edition of the same work from another is the observation of corrections of the wooden blocks (which are commonly made by replacing the mistaken syllables or words with a piece of wood of equal size with the correct characters). These corrections are often identifiable by slightly slanted writing or a differing size of characters.⁵⁷ Further, deleted parts resulted in gaps in the blocks. When longer passages were deleted, parts of the letter headlines were kept in the dotted form.⁵⁸

(c) *Ductus*

The *Ductus* depends on the individual calligrapher (*yig mkhan*). Schools of calligraphy and printing have already been established in sNye mo and E yul (Central Tibet) as well as in La stod lHo in the

⁵⁵ The 17th century xylograph from gNas is a Vinaya work. See Vol. 586. For its cataloguing, see De Rossi Filibeck 2003: 314. See also Clemente 2016: 426.

⁵⁶ On prints from gNas, see Clemente 2016: 413, 425–426.

⁵⁷ See Eimer 2016. Examples are discussed in Eimer 1980: 198–207; Eimer 1988: 50–52. If an insertion covered more than one line, the respective plate had to be made completely anew to prevent the inserted piece of wood from causing the entire block to burst (see Eimer 2016; cf. Eimer 1986: 6).

⁵⁸ See Eimer 1980: 198–199.

15th Century.⁵⁹ A printing house often employed the same group of experts—including calligraphers, painters (*le lha'i rig byed*), carvers (*rkos mkhan*) and carvers of illustrations (*le lha'i rkos byed*)—to accomplish the work.⁶⁰ By reading the colophons and the signatures of artists which can be found at the bottom of many folios of Gung thang prints, it might be possible to distinguish the style of particularly famous calligraphers who worked for certain printing houses.⁶¹ Sometimes, however, the network of artists is associated with the promoters of printing projects rather than with the printing house.⁶²

A renowned calligrapher who was active in the Mang yul Gung thang kingdom is mKhas pa nang tshar⁶³ 'Phags skyabs, also simply called mKhas pa 'Phags pa.⁶⁴ According to the colophons of some prints from this area, he was involved in the following xylographic editions: the '*Bras bu'i skabs rnam par bzhag pa* (NGMPP AT 61/21[_5], see fol. 291b1)⁶⁵ printed at Khyung rdzong dkar po between 1514 and 1521; the *Phyag rgya chen po'i khrid yig bzhugs || skal bzang gso ba'i bdud rtsi snying po bcud bsdus* (vol. 286/3, IsIAO Library, see fol. 81a4)⁶⁶ printed at Chab rom phug in 1515; the royal

⁵⁹ See Ehrhard 2000a: 13.

⁶⁰ See Clemente 2007: 151; Clemente (in press-b).

⁶¹ This is also true for carvers. By examining colophons and carvers' signatures of the 15th–16th century xylographs, one notices that many craftsmen involved in the great printing projects carried out in this area came from La stod lHo and Mang yul Gung thang. For example, many carvers came from Zur mtsho, in La stod lHo (see also Sernesi 2011), as well as from gTsang, a village located to the south-west of rDzong dkar. This could imply that one of the schools of calligraphy and printing existed in the Gung thang area.

⁶² This seems to be the case of lHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal, who used to collaborate with more or less the same group of craftsmen for printing projects and renovation works of *stūpas* and temples. On this subject, see Clemente (in press-a).

⁶³ Nang tshar is a generic term for regions inside the Western part of the royal domain of Mang yul Gung thang. See Ehrhard 2000a: 70.

⁶⁴ On this artist, see Ehrhard 2000a: 70–71.

⁶⁵ See also NGMPP L189/3, L501/2; NAK 754 no. 5, 927 no. 6. This text is reproduced in Ehrhard 2000b: 211–240. On this work, see also Ehrhard 2000a: 70.

⁶⁶ For its cataloguing, see De Rossi Filibeck 2003: 2. See also Clemente 2016: 426; Ehrhard 2000a: 70–71. This text is reproduced in Ehrhard

edition of the *Mani bka' bum* (Tibetan 149, Cambridge University Library, see fol. 369b6)⁶⁷ printed at Khyung rdzong dkar po in 1521; Yang dgon pa's spiritual songs (vol. 286/1, IsIAO Library, see fol. 163b4)⁶⁸ printed at Kun gsal sgang po che in 1523–1524; the *Phyag rgya chen po'i dka' ba'i gnas gsal byed sgron ma* (AT 61/21[_7]–62/1, see the signature after the last line of fol. 25a);⁶⁹ the biography of bTsun pa Chos legs⁷⁰ (NGMPP L18/3, see fol. 149b4);⁷¹ and the *dPal gsang ba 'dus pa'i dkyil 'khor bsgrub pa'i thams dngos grub rgya mtsho* (vol. 638/1, IsIAO Library, see fol. 16b7).⁷² By examining the writing style of this calligrapher in the above-mentioned prints, it might be possible to learn to distinguish it from that of other scribes. Nevertheless, the study of *Ductus* presents several issues. As a matter of fact, the style of each calligrapher may be influenced by many elements such as materials (paper, ink, etc.) and writing tools. Furthermore, the style of the carver may influence the calligrapher's style. The kind of wood employed for blocks and the tools used to carve these may slightly change the style as well. The study of *Ductus* should be taken into account to help identifying xylographs but it should be corroborated by further elements.⁷³

2000b: 241–321. See also NAK 754 no. 6; NGMPP AT 61/21[_6], L501/2, L390/3.

⁶⁷ For its cataloguing, see <http://catalogue.socanth.cam.ac.uk/exist/servlet/db/mssbp.xq> and the database of the TiBET Project. On this work, see Clemente 2014a; Clemente 2016: 423; Ehrhard 2000d; Ehrhard 2013; Ricciardi & Pallipurath 2014; Ricciardi & Pallipurath 2016. See also NGMPP E2933/5–2934/1, E2934/3–2935/1, AT 167/5–168/1.

⁶⁸ For its cataloguing, see De Rossi Filibeck 2003: 2. See also Clemente 2016: 424; Diemberger & Clemente 2013: 131. For further details regarding the production of this xylograph, see Ehrhard 2000a: 29–30. See also NGMPP L755/4–L756/1, L211/2.

⁶⁹ See also NGMPP L501/2_2, L948/1, L340/16; NAK 754 no. 7, 927 no. 7.

⁷⁰ On this master, see Ehrhard 2000a: 15; Ehrhard 2000b: IX–XIII; Ehrhard 2000d: 201, 204–209.

⁷¹ See also NGMPP L66/7–L67/1; dPal brtsegs, text no. 15. The transliteration of the colophon is provided in Ehrhard 2000a: 95–100.

⁷² For its cataloguing, see De Rossi Filibeck 2003: 327.

⁷³ On this subject, see Clemente (forthcoming).

(d) Orthographic Peculiarities

Calligraphers sometimes employed orthographic peculiarities that make the identification of the printing house/s in which they worked, and thus also of the provenance of a certain xylograph, possible. For example, Brag dkar rta so xylographs have some orthographic peculiarities—some of which have already been identified by Cyrus Stearns and Marta Sernesí—that can be summarised as follows:

- commonly expected prefixes are often missing (*rtul zhugs* for *brtul zhugs*, *rlang* for *brlang*) or are substituted by another (*gshes bnyen* for *bshes gnyen*, *gzung* for *bzung*);
- the particles *kyi* and *kyis* are frequently alternated;
- the use of grammatical particles is often independent of the preceding word's suffix (*cing* for *zhing*, *cig* for *zhig*, *pa* for *ba*);
- there is a standard use of some *skung yigs*—orthographic abbreviations in which two or more syllables are joined into one contraction (*mkha'gro* for *mkha' gro*, *namkha'* for *nam mkha'*, *gsungo* for *gsung ngo*, *phebs so* for *phebs so*, *bzheso* for *bzhes so*);
- a mere phonetic rendering of words is often found (*rlung* for *klung*, *phyags* for *chags*, *zug* for *gzugs*).

Additionally, I have noted two further peculiarities:

- the addition of a final *s* (*khang bzangs* for *khang bzang*, *srings* for *sring*, *go 'phangs* for *go 'phang*, *thag thugs* for *thag thug*);
- the addition of a subscribed *ya* (*rkyed* for *sked*, *khyog* for *khog*).⁷⁴

Looking for further orthographic peculiarities in Gung thang prints and recording them systematically may help to identify the provenance of a certain xylograph from that area.

(e) Woodcut Representations

Usually, the first and last pages of Gung thang xylographs carry illustrations of renowned religious masters and deities (*le lha'i ri mo*), colored or black and white. A careful observation reveals a certain degree of resemblance between the various illustrations with

⁷⁴ For a few examples, see Clemente 2009: 22; Sernesí 2004: 263; Smith 2001: 67–68; Stearns 2000: XII.

regard to the drawing lines of several details (hats, halos, the base of the throne, the scenery behind the figures, etc). By reading colophons and looking for possible signatures in these xylographs we can extract information about the craftsmen and try to locate the printing houses where they worked or else the printing projects with which they were associated. A study of the style of illustrations found in Gung thang xylographs has been carried out thanks to a collaboration with Filippo Lunardo.⁷⁵

Usually, at least two artists were involved in the creation of such illustrations: the painter, who drew the pictures, and the carver, who cut them into the wooden block. Sometimes the illustrations of some of the printed copies were coloured (possibly by the same painter who drew them).⁷⁶ This is, for example, the case of the royal edition of the *Mani bka' bum* preserved in the Cambridge University Library (Tibetan 149, see fig. 6).



Fig. 6: The royal edition of the *Mani bka' bum* printed in 1521 at rDzong dkar (Tibetan 149, Cambridge University Library, photograph by CUL)

⁷⁵ This subject is still little researched, with the exception of some pioneering essays (see De Rossi Filibeck 2002; Jackson 1996: 122–131; Pal & Meech-Pekarik 1988; Sernesi [in press]). For preliminary results of the research, see Clemente & Lunardo (forthcoming); Lunardo (forthcoming-a); Lunardo (forthcoming-b).

⁷⁶ It also occurred that a second painter coloured the illustration subsequently.

According to its colophon, the illustrations were painted by two artists, namely mKhas pa Dri med and mKhas pa rDor mgon.⁷⁷ The presence of more than one painter seems to be confirmed in the results of a reflectance spectroscopy carried out by Paola Ricciardi and Anuradha Pallipurath at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge.⁷⁸ They analysed four illustrations that can be separated into two pairs (fols. 319a–320a and 370b–371a) on the basis of the identified pigments and summarised their findings as follows: “Both artists used cinnabar (or vermillion), possibly mixed with a small amount of a red earth, to paint red areas. Green areas were painted with mixtures of indigo with yellow pigments, probably different on the two set of pages, which the spectroscopic analysis was unable to identify. ‘True’ blue areas only exist on fols. 370v and 371r, where they were obtained with azurite; the greenish-blue hues on fols. 319r and 320r were instead obtained by either mixing or, more likely, layering azurite and indigo. The identification of yellow pigments was possible by combining the spectral results with images obtained under ultraviolet illumination: the yellow areas on fols. 370v–371r show a strong luminescence emission, suggesting the presence of an organic dye. The lack of emission on the other folios, in addition to the spectral features of the yellow areas, suggests instead the use of orpiment.”⁷⁹

The painter mKhas pa Dri med is a famous Gung thang artist who was active at least from 1521 to 1563. He is also known as ‘a lineage holder of sPrul sku sMan thang’ (*sprul sku sman thang pa'i brgyud 'dzin*) since he is associated with sMan thang pa sMan bla don grub’s tradition.⁸⁰ According to David Jackson, in the middle of the 16th

⁷⁷ Ricciardi & Pallipurath 2014: 103.

⁷⁸ I would like to thank Paola Ricciardi and Anuradha Pallipurath for carrying out this analysis. On the technique of the reflectance spectroscopy, see Aceto et al. 2014.

⁷⁹ See also Ricciardi & Pallipurath 2016.

⁸⁰ sMan bla don grub rgya mtsho (b. 1409) was an outstanding painter who became famous for a new stylistic synthesis. He indeed founded in gTsang a tradition known as the sMan bris/ris, or ‘the painting-style of sMan [thang pa],’ which is the first national school of painting. He took as his basis the art of China and Nepal and enhanced it with numerous artistic features. His most significant stylistic innovation was the greater degree to which he incorporated Chinese-style landscapes and other features into the backgrounds of his paintings. sMan thang pa’s key change seems to have been a more consistent employment of simplified Chinese-style blue and

century, this tradition spread to Gung thang.⁸¹ According to Lunardo, the association with this tradition and style is very clear in the illustrations of Gung thang prints analysed so far. mKhas pa Dri med depicted the illustrations of Klong chen pa's *Theg pa'i mchog rin po che'i mdzod* printed at Kun gsal sgang po che in 1533 (NAK 743 no. 2, see fol. 508b).⁸² According to Jackson, these drawings "are some of the few datable works from the early sMan-thang tradition."⁸³ mKhas pa Dri med also worked with other two artists, namely mKhas pa Chos dpal and mKhas pa sMon lam, on the drawings of the images of a xylograph titled *bKa' rgya | khu chos gnyis | lung bstan | rdor glu | kha skong rnams* (vol. 363/2, IsIAO Library: fol. 341b4–5) printed at Kun gsal sgang po che in 1539.⁸⁴ mKhas pa Dri med also drew the illustrations of the following xylographs: the *Nyams yig ma ni'i lu gu rgyud* by bTsun pa Chos legs, printed at Khyung rdzong dkar po in 1521 (NAK 754 no. 1, see fol. 36b7);⁸⁵ the royal edition of

green landscapes for his backgrounds. Concomitant with this was the abandonment of the prevailing red (or reddish-orange) and blue backgrounds filled largely with the decorative designs favored by Newar or Bal bris artists. He wrote a manual on painting methods and a major treatise on iconometric theory and practice in which he set forth his tradition in detail. At least two written descriptions exist of sMan thang pa's style by traditional authorities. The first and earliest by De'u dmar dge bshes dates probably to the first half of the 18th century. It reports the following information: the coat of pigment and shading are thick; the figures are not placed in close groups, but a bit more spread out; necks are long, shoulders are withdrawn (or high?) and clearness predominates; there is much shading; the colours are detailed, soft and richly splendid; malachite (*spang shun*) and azurite (*mthing shun*) pigments predominate; the forms of robes and scarves are not symmetrical (see Jackson 1996: chap. 3). On this master and his tradition, see also Clemente 2009: 3.7; Denwood 1996; Lo Bue-Ricca 1990: 27–28.

⁸¹ Jackson 1996: 122.

⁸² See also NGMPP AT 53/17–54/1 and L1121/3–L1122/1. The printing colophon of this xylograph is provided in Ehrhard 2000a: 104–114. On this work, see also Clemente 2016: 424; Ehrhard 2000c: IX.

⁸³ Jackson 1996: 122.

⁸⁴ For its cataloguing, see De Rossi Filibeck 2003: 132. See also Clemente 2016: 425; Diemberger & Clemente 2013, 129–130 n. 67; Ehrhard 2000a: 118–129. So far I have found the names of these two artists only in the colophon of this work.

⁸⁵ See also NGMPP AT61/21[_1]. For the transliteration of the printing colophon, see Ehrhard 2000a: 87.

the *Mani bka' bum*, which was printed at Khyung rdzong dkar po in 1521 as well (Tibetan 149, Cambridge University Library); Yang dgon pa's spiritual songs (vol. 286/1, IsIAO Library, see fol. 163b5) printed at Kun gsal sgang po che in 1523; the biography of gTsang smyon Heruka written by lHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal (vol. 706, see fol. 65a5) printed at Brag dkar rta so in 1543, where he instead appears as carver of the illustrations; Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan's spiritual songs (vol. 709/4, see fol. 43b5) printed in the La 'debs Valley in 1545; the *rNal 'byor dbang phyug lha btsun chos kyi rgyal po'i rnam thar gyi smad cha* (vol. 657/6, IsIAO Library, see fol. 32a4),⁸⁶ on which he worked with another artist called mKhas pa Don bzang.⁸⁷ This latter work was printed at Brag dkar rta so after 1557. mKhas pa Dri med also drew the illustrations of a xylograph of the *rJe rgod tshang pa'i rnam thar rgyal thang pa bde chen rdo rjes mdzad pa la mgur chen 'gas rgyan pa* by rGyal thang pa printed at Brag dkar rta so in 1563 (NGMPP L211/3, see fol. 42a7).⁸⁸

A well-known carver of illustrations was mKhas pa bSod nams bkra shis—also referred to as *mkhās pa chen po*—who was involved in many printing projects in Mang yul Gung thang at least from 1523 to 1555⁸⁹ (see figs. 7 & 8).



Fig. 7: The Biography of Atisa in the *bKa' gdams glegs bam* printed in 1538 at Kun gsal sgang po che (vol. 361/1, IsIAO Library, photograph by L&C Service)

⁸⁶ For its cataloguing, see De Rossi Filibeck 2003: 331. For a description of the work and the translation of the colophon, see Clemente 2007: 124, 130–135. On this biography, see Clemente 2009; Clemente 2014b; Clemente 2015: 188; Clemente 2016: 421; Clemente (in press-a); Diemberger & Clemente 2013: 123, 130, 131, 134–137. See also NGMPP L456/7.

⁸⁷ mKhas pa Don bzang was another renowned painter associated with sMan thang pa sMan bla don grub's tradition. See Ehrhard 2000a: 79.

⁸⁸ See also NGMPP E2518/8, L969/5–970/1. On this work, see Clemente 2015: 190; Clemente 2016: 423; Diemberger & Clemente 2013: 135; Schaeffer 2011: 472; Smith 2001: 75–76, 289 n. 183. On mKhas pa Dri med, see also Sernes 2016.

⁸⁹ See Ehrhard 2000a: 71–73, 75, 79.



Fig. 8: Secret precepts, two discourses by Khu ston, prophecies, *vajra* songs and appendixes, printed by Chos dbang rgyal mtshan (1484–1549) at Kun gsal sgang po che in 1539–1540 (vol. 363/2, IsIAO Library, photograph by L&C Service)

He worked as the carver of the illustrations of the following xylographs: Rig 'dzin mChog ldan mgon po's biography printed at Kyung rdzong dkar po in 1527 (NGMPP L189/4);⁹⁰ Klong chen pa's *Theg pa'i mchog rin po che'i mdzod* (NAK 743 no. 2, see fol. 508b)—of which he also acted as sponsor; the *Zhus lan nor bu'i phreng ba lha chos bdun ldan gyi bla ma bryud pa rnams kyi rnam thar* by rGyal ba'i 'byung gnas (vol. 361/3, IsIAO, see fol. 246a7); the '*Brom ston pa rgyal ba'i 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs bka' gdams bu chos le'u nyi shu pa* (vol. 363/1, IsIAO, see the signature of fol. 214a)⁹¹ printed at Kun gsal sgang po che in 1539; the *bKa' rgya | khu chos gnyis | lung bstan | rdor glu | kha skong rnams* (vol. 363/2, IsIAO, see the signature of fol. 343a), for which he acted as carver of the blocks and as sponsor as well; the biography and spiritual songs of 'Ba' ra ba rGyal mtshan dpal bzang (vol. 671/1, IsIAO, see the signature of fol. 10b); the *sKyes mchog 'ba' ra bas mdzad pa'i sgrub pa nyams su blang ba'i lag len dgos 'dod 'byung ba'i gter mdzod* (vol. 671/5, IsIAO, see the signature of fol. 225b);⁹² printed at Khyung rdzong dkar po in 1540; the *sKyes mchog gi zhus lan thugs kyi snying po zab mo'i gter mdzod* (vol. 671/6, IsIAO, see the signature of fols. 367b, 397a).

He also worked as carver of the blocks on two xylographs: Yang dgon pa's spiritual songs (vol. 286/1, IsIAO, see fol. 164a2); and lHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal's biography and songs (vol. 657/5, IsIAO, see fol. 54a3). Since the name of the carver of illustrations is sometimes omitted in colophons and/or signatures, it might be

⁹⁰ See also NGMPP L9/3; dPal brtsegs, text no. 16. On this work, see Clemente 2016: 423; Ehrhard 2000a: 32–33, 101–103.

⁹¹ For its cataloguing, see Clemente 2016: 425; De Rossi Filibeck 2003: 132; Diemberger & Clemente 2013: 129–130 n. 67.

⁹² For its cataloguing, see De Rossi Filibeck 2003: 335. See also Clemente 2016: 424; NGMPP L195/10, L1208/4.

possible that bSod nams bkra shis also engraved the drawings of the above-mentioned prints.⁹³

It has been hypothesised that the illustrations could be carved on separate panels and then fixed to the blocks and re-employed.⁹⁴ This may be possible but so far I have found no examples of the same illustration in two different xylographs. I did indeed find very similar woodcut representations in different works, but with some minor distinctions. A research on this subject, however, is ongoing and results will be published in due course.⁹⁵

3. Conclusion

Colophons are precious sources for information, but unfortunately not all xylographs have a colophon and, even if they do, it may not provide us with all the information we need. Many of the available prints are incomplete and thus often lack a colophon, which makes it difficult to identify their origin. This is the reason why it is important to gather and systematically store all available information (e.g. in the form of a template).

What has been presented here is only the initial result of my research. In the years to come these preliminary remarks on the distinctive features of Mang yul Gung thang xylographs will be supplemented by further results from the study of other colophons as well as the observation of several prints. Information on many of the artists who worked on these prints is already available on the database of the above-mentioned AHRC and TiBET projects, and further data will be uploaded in the coming months. This information will hopefully assist us in determining the provenance of those xylographs for which we have too little data.

Despite the increased attention recently paid to the production of Tibetan literary artefacts (manuscripts, xylographs and digital reproductions), this research is still largely based on textual studies. Little has been done to correlate visual features with what we learn from the texts themselves. In addition, most of these studies have so far been restricted to manuscripts, while prints generally remained unexplored in this respect. With this project, I hope to have started

⁹³ On this subject, see Clemente & Lunardo (in press).

⁹⁴ See, for example, Eimer 2016; Sernesi 2016.

⁹⁵ For an example of similar illustrations in two different xylographs, see Clemente (in press-b); Lunardo (forthcoming-a).

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filling this gap by gathering and systematically storing available data on the Mang yul Gung thang printing houses, in order to expand this research to other Tibetan areas in the future.

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Vol. 671/1 = 'Ba' ra ba rGyal mtshan dpal bzang (1310–1391). *rJe btsun 'ba' ra pa [sic] rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rnam thar mgur 'bum dang bcas pa.* Xylograph kept in the Tucci Tibetan Collection, IsIAO Library, Rome (fols. 1a–190b).

Vol. 671/5 = 'Ba' ra ba rGyal mtshan dpal bzang (1310–1391). *sKyes mchog 'ba' ra bas mdzad pa'i sgrub pa nyams su blang ba'i lag len dgos 'dod 'byung ba'i gter mdzod.* Xylograph kept in the Tucci Tibetan Collection, IsIAO Library, Rome (fols. 223a–365a).

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www.tbrc.org

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Early Tibetan Printing in Southern La stod: Remarks on a 1407 Print Produced at Shel dkar

Hildegard Diemberger (Cambridge)

1. Introduction

Si tu Chos kyi rin chen, a great ruler of southern La stod, died in 1402. He was a very popular Dharmarāja, and his deeds became celebrated in an epic cycle called “The Thirteen Good Deeds of Si tu” (*Si tu legs mdzad bcu gsum*), which has been reported in the 18th century Buddhist History of Shel dkar (*Shel dkar chos 'byung*).¹ Having established Shel dkar as the new capital of Southern La stod on and around the steep hill where it is still located, he established the Shel dkar chos sde monastery in 1385 and shortly afterwards its schools of philosophy and meditation practice (*bshad grwa, sgrub grwa*). Although vastly popular at the end of his life, his ascent to the throne had been troubled, following the deaths of his predecessors in rapid succession, and his early rule had been complicated by conflicts with northern La stod. As he accessed the throne he was confirmed in this position by the Mongolian emperor Togon Themur,² following a pattern that had been established by his predecessors, who travelled to the Yuan court to receive seals and titles.

When Si tu Chos kyi Rin chen passed away, his son lHa btsan skyabs sponsored a wide range of Buddhist merit-making deeds, as was customary. The printing of the *'Grel chung don gsal*—that is, the commentary to the *Abhisamayālamkāra* by Haribhadra (P5191)—was instigated as part of these activities. According to the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* (fol. 43v), this print seems to have been instigated by Lo chen Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1352–1403) just before he passed the throne on to his nephew, the famous Bo dong Phyogs las rnam rgyal (1376–1451). Having ascended the abbatial throne of Shel dkar chos sde in 1403, the latter supervised this print edition, which was soon followed by the printing of other texts.

¹ See Pasang Wangdu & Diemberger 1996; Everding 2006.

² See the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* (fol. 12r).

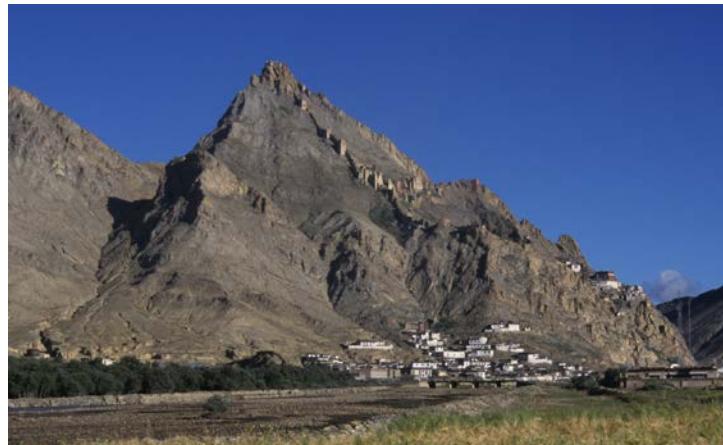


Fig. 1: Shel dkar

In 2009 Porong Dawa, one of the leading members of the Paltsek Research Institute, found this print in the monastery of sNye mo Bye mkhar where it had been taken to, together with miscellaneous Bo dong pa texts, after Shel dkar chos sde experienced a period of crisis and was eventually turned into exclusively dGe lugs pa institution at the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama. Porong Dawa also found the same text in manuscript form among the Bo dong pa texts preserved at sNye mo Bye mkhar, which he reproduced as part of a newly published Bo dong pa collection.³ With his colleague Kawa Sherab Sangpo he also discovered a Yuan print (*hor spar*) amidst the same set of books,⁴ namely, the *Kālacakratantra* (in Tibetan translation) printed under the aegis of U rgyan pa Rin chen dpal (1230–1309) and sponsored by the Mongolian ruling family at the end of the 13th century.

The print of the '*Grel chung don gsal*' is so far the earliest extant print from Tibet and has been recently published within a collection of early prints, edited and commented by Porong Dawa himself.⁵ In this paper I will look at the information that can be gleaned from this

³ See the *Ta si tu lha btsan skyabs kyi 'grel chung don gsal par du bsgrubs pa'i dkar chag tshigs bcad*: Lhasa 2009 for the manuscript edition of the printing colophon and Porong Dawa 2013 for the print edition.

⁴ See Sherab Sangpo 2013; 2009.

⁵ This collection has the title *Bod kyi shing spar lag rtsal gyi byung rim mdor bsdus* and was published in May 2013 in Lhasa by the Paltsek Research Institute. It consists of a printed book and two CDs reproducing and discussing fifty Tibetan prints (see also Porong Dawa 2016: 195–211).

print, as a way to reflect from different angles on the early days of the introduction of printing technologies into Tibet.

2. The Physical Features of the 1407 Shel dkar Print of the '*Grel chung don gsal*'

The 1407 print of the '*Grel chung don gsal*' consists of 90 folios in *pothi* format, is incomplete, but its entire colophon has survived. The printed text presents a number of features that remind of manuscripts: each page has five lines; no rectangle frame surrounds the text; and most strikingly, there are two circles that remind of those depicted in early canonical Tibetan manuscripts to imitate the holes in Indian palm-leaf manuscripts through which a string used to be passed to tie the folios together. Only some of the oldest Tibetan paper manuscripts dating from up to the 11th century have real functional holes, but the practice of depicting circles in their stead, sometimes with small non-functional holes pierced through them, remained a relatively common feature, especially in Prajñāpāramitā texts, for many centuries and found a broad range of doctrinal interpretations.⁶

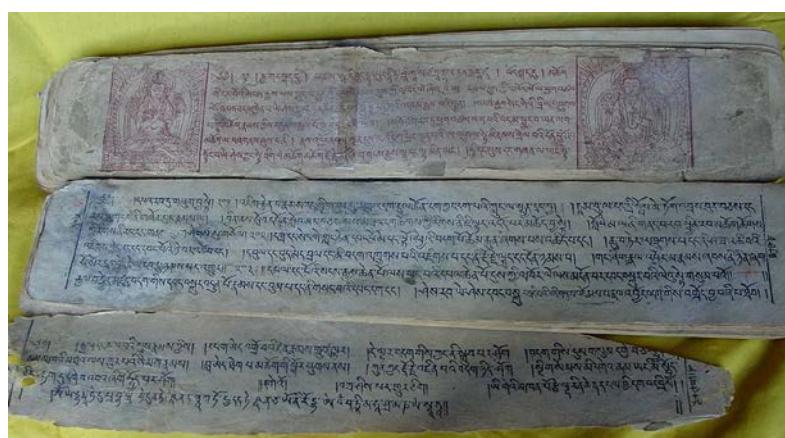


Fig. 2: The Hor print of the *Kālacakratantra* printed under the aegis of U rgyan pa (located at sNye mo Bye mkhar)

According to a preliminary calligraphic investigation the '*Grel chung don gsal*' print presents some similarities with Yuan prints,

⁶ For examples in Dunhuang manuscripts see http://www.kingship.indologie.uni-muenchen.de/themes/tibetan_kingship/tibetanwriting/palaeography_and_codicology/index.html; for a discussion of this feature in prints, see Scherrer-Schaub 2016.

especially that of the *Kālacakratantra* printed under the aegis of U rgyan pa (mentioned above) that was found as part of the same collection. The *ductus* of the 1407 print is not as fine but is certainly less thick than in many other Tibetan prints. The ‘vertical’ strokes in the letters are shorter but give a similar ‘square’ impression. Given the fact that there are at least two instances in which U rgyan pa’s prints are included in the Bo dong pa corpus (i.e. vol. 116 of the Bo dong pa collection that was taken to India and reprinted as the *Encyclopaedia Tibetica*, and the Bo dong pa collection preserved at sNye mo monastery), this inclusion might be more than a simple coincidence: U rgyan pa—who was born in and sometimes resided on the southern margin of the Zur tsho area—could have been instrumental in passing on the text (and the relevant printing skill or inspiration?) to dPang lo tsā ba, who would have handed it down to his nephew Byang chub rtse mo, who would have passed it on to his nephew Grags pa rgyal mtshan, and then Bo dong Phyogs las rnam rgyal, following their Zur tsho centred ‘nephew lineage’ (*dbon rgyud*).

The print’s paper, according to C14 dating was produced shortly after the blocks were carved and certainly predates the transfer of the print to sNye mo Bye mkhar. It is made of a mix of Daphne bark and Stellera roots with traces of another unidentified fibre.⁷ Daphne is the leading component in the paper, which confirms the widespread perception that paper made of either a mix of Daphne and Stellera or Daphne alone is the most suitable for printing. While Stellera grows abundantly in the Shel dkar area, Daphne would have been available through trade with the Himalayan regions. A reference in a slightly later Shel dkar print colophon (see below) to Chinese paper (*rgya shog*), celebrated for its whiteness, may indicate that the smoother and whiter Chinese paper was also imported and highly appreciated. It is clear, however, that access to a significant amount of easily obtainable paper was a pre-requisite for any printing process.

The ink is well-distributed on the letters, but the relatively thin *ductus* shows the typical irregularities of woodblock prints. The ink can be assumed to be soot-based and to have been either produced locally or imported, with China⁸ and the Himalayan regions⁹ as

⁷ See Helman-Ważny 2016: 532–554.

⁸ Ink from China was particularly appreciated in manuscript production, as mentioned, for example, in an 11th century manuscript from Ke ru (see Pasang Wangdu 2016: 555–559).

possible places of origin. Not much can be said at this stage about the binders used for the production of this ink, which will require further investigation.

The type of wood from which the blocks were carved can only be guessed. Considering samples of extant early blocks from the region and the local oral tradition,¹⁰ birch wood (*shing stags pa*) is the most likely candidate. It would have been easily available on the Himalayan slopes of southern La stod, an abundance that would have made Shel dkar a good place for the carving of the sNar thang Canon in the 18th century. Although birch wood might be considered too soft, old Himalayan birches have stems of considerable size and density (due to the slow growing process) that makes them suitable. The light colour of the wood can be of considerable advantage. According to contemporary Bhutanese carvers, birch is the best wood for printing blocks with wild avocado sometimes being preferred because of its even lighter colour, which allows for the strongest contrast between the contours of the letters and the background.¹¹ In the 16th century the biography of Pad ma gling pa (1450–1521) was carved in birch blocks in Bhutan where there is certainly a wide range of species to choose from.¹² Whether other woods—such as pear, which is widely used in China for this purpose—offered some advantages compared to birch in terms of allowing for finer lines and better resilience to wearing out is a question that needs further exploration.

⁹ According to Tibetan and Sherpa informants resinous pine-wood (especially *Pinus Wallichiana*) is traditionally an appreciated source for the best quality soot for ink produced in the Himalayan region.

¹⁰ During my fieldtrips in the TAR, Nepal and Bhutan birch was mentioned by local monks and craftsmen as the main source of wood for printing blocks in sNye mo, sNar thang, Shel dkar, Brag dkar rta so in Mang yul Gung thang, as well as in Sherpa areas in Nepal. This was confirmed by the analysis of printing blocks from Sa skya and sNar thang carried out by the ethnobotanist Alessandro Boesi.

¹¹ Dorji Gyaltshen, personal communication.

¹² Assessment by the National Library of Bhutan. Personal communication with Dorji Gyaltzen and members of the laboratory.

3. The Colophon of the 1407 Shel dkar Print of the '*Grel chung don gsal*'

The printing colophon of the '*Grel chung don gsal*' (fols. 89r1–90r5; for the Tibetan text, see the Appendix) contains a considerable amount of information and is organised as a series of praises. It sets out from a praise of the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, Maitreya to whom this treatise is attributed, and the author of the commentary (fols. 89r1–3):

The realisation (*mngon rtogs*) of the eightfold philosophical system resounds widely like the voice of thunder; the eight different streams of the Dharma are like clouds dropping a rain of *vajra* flames. With the eyes of stainless knowledge shining like the sun, with the strength of the limbs [that are trained through] spiritual practice, and waving the ‘dreadlocks’ of the realisation of the Dharmakāya with majesty, may the invincible [Maitreya], speaking with the voice of a lion, be victorious!

May the fearless Haribhadra be victorious! He is the best commentator of the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, explaining the nature of the mind, the *Abhisamaya* [basic text] itself, and the entire Perfection of Wisdom [literature].

The famous commentary on the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* by Haribhadra, a disciple of Śāntarakṣita, was very popular among the treatises dealing with the Prajñāpāramitā literature and eventually became a standard part of the monastic curriculum.¹³ It is likely that the printing of this text was connected to the teaching needs of the *bshad grwa* established a few years earlier at Shel dkar monastery¹⁴—this seems implied by the later part of the colophon. The link with the Prajñāpāramitā literature may provide a particular justification for the presence of the two circles, which were probably depicted on the manuscript that served as the master copy.

After this general introduction, the colophon reports a praise of the deceased ruler Si tu Chos kyi rin chen, his son and successor lHa btsan skyabs, his country with its main monastery, the queen who may well have been involved in the sponsorship of the printing,¹⁵ the

¹³ See Dreyfus 2003: 174–182.

¹⁴ See the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* (fol. 21r–24v).

¹⁵ Women, especially aristocratic ones, were often involved in printing projects (see Diemberger 2016: 267–308).

ministers, the members of the court, and other important people (fols. 89r3–89v2):

Appointed by the ruler of the east—lord subjugator (lit. ‘putting the feet on the hair’) of multitudes, holding the name of Dharmarāja Ta hu’i—Chos kyi rin chen is the jewel in the crown. The young son from the lineage of the white moon rising on Shel dkar Rin chen rtse is saluted by [subordinated] polities (*rgyal phran*) as numerous as the stars in the sky and is endowed with the power of bringing light to the whole of the four continents. Ta si tu lHa btsan skyabs has an unlimited stream of wealth, an army whose whirling cloud of dust can obscure the sun and political power that covers the earth like a big forest. Considering the great monastery that prospered under his patronage, this was made evident by all the wearer of the saffron robe (i.e. monks) who gathered there. The precious queen ruling over the land, [even] beyond [its] boundaries, is like the moon in a continuous stream of nectar bringing happiness. More magnificent than the goddesses, she became the queen ruling over both [the temporal and the religious] orders according to the Dharma. The minister of interior is like Vaiśravana with eyes for wealth, the minister of external affairs is like a demigod (*lha min*) with eyes for the army. The youthful members of the court with their attractiveness and glowing complexion are handsome like gods assembling in the sky. The political representatives of the whole area seem bustling without missing any opportunity to be involved.

Si tu Chos kyi rin chen is celebrated as empowered by the ruler of the east, i.e. the Yuan emperor, from whom he had received a seal and a title like his predecessors (see above). The rulers of southern La stod were very tightly connected to Sa skya as *khri dpon*, and some of the ancestors of Si tu Chos kyi rin chen acted as Sa skya *dpon chen*.¹⁶ The expression *ta hu’i*—not too dissimilar from the *tha hu’i* mentioned together with ‘wife’ and ‘son’ referring to the ruler to whom the Hor print produced by U rgyan pa was dedicated—indicates the Yuan Emperor, possibly Khublai Khan. Despite the uncertainty of this identification, the reference to the Yuan emperor as a source of power and inspiration for the La stod ruler is evident

¹⁶ The last of these *dpon chens* was ’Od zer seng ge (rl. 1315–1317 and ?–1328/9), grandfather of Chos kyi rin chen. See the *Shel dkar chos ’byung* (fols. 5r–6r); see also Everding 2006; Petech 1990: 144.

from the context. After praising the ruler and his country as a prosperous and glorious place the colophon explains the purpose of the printing (fol. 89v2–3):

In order to fulfil the wishes of the Dharmarāja Chos kyi rin chen, the king lHa btsan [skyabl], who is like the King of the Gods (i.e. Indra), with his most virtuous attitude printed the excellent treatise by [Hari]bhadra.

This passage reproduces a customary formula for the productions of prints to make merit for a deceased person. In practice the merit-making activity is carried out by those who remain in this world to complete the wishes of the departed.

The colophon then gives some details of the lead craftsmen involved (fol. 89v4):

The excellent carving was made by the brothers bSod nams dpal, the emanation of the heavenly craftsman with his fingers quick as lightening, and bSod nams rin chen, with his unsurpassable intellect; they were masters (*mkhas pa*) whose skills [were famed all over] Tibet.

The term *mkhas pa*, commonly used for skilled artisans in this region, and the lack of religious titles would seem to indicate that these were Tibetan lay craftsmen of great fame. They may have been block-carvers, or wood-workers more generally. Si tu Chos kyi rin chen had been involved in a massive production of secular and religious buildings and statues, and in other works of engineering over the previous decades, so that there certainly was no lack of artisans in the area. Whether at the very beginning of the 15th century block carving was already widely practised in this part of Tibet or whether this represented a new development within more general wood-carving skills remains an open question (see below).

The following passage in the colophon refers to the chief scribe and the printing process (fol. 89v4–5):

From the hill of Shel dkar in the east, which had become an ornament of the world, from the hands of the leading scribe Byang skyabs, hundreds of thousands of treatises in printed form spread like the rays of the sun to the lotus garden (i.e. the teaching place) of each monastery (*chos ra*).

This and the following passage seem to link the text as emerging from the hands of the scribe to its multiplication, distribution and use in monastic seminaries. This is likely to be connected not only to the

establishment of the schools of religious studies at Shel dkar but also its branches that were rapidly being set up.¹⁷ The colophon ends with the following passages (fols. 89v5–90r5):

At that time, everywhere there were many youths, with their bright minds endowed with the wings of scriptural and philosophical knowledge, singing the melody of good sayings and enjoying the step of the dance like a swarm of bees.

May the good merits of this [action], like the light of autumn moon, brighten the sky of Buddhism, may it eliminate all the darkness of others and let the water-lily (*ku mud*) of our gardens flourish!

May the life of the king be stable like the earth; may he obtain wealth like an unending river; may the great fire that defeats enemies burn; may his reputation spread all over the world like the wind.

At the time in which auspicious garlands of flowers rain from the sky, may [the song] ‘The myriarchy (*khri skor*) enjoys happiness and has no obstacle,’ arising from the throat of beautiful girls, spread in the middle of the feast. Even if there are on the earth many kings that are proud like a tall mountain, few are like the sun spreading the light of hundreds of thousands of treatises by printing. The King of the South is one who has the power to lift in an excellent way the doctrines of the Buddha from the mud, taking the deeds of the earlier royal ancestors as model.

Finally, a last paragraph gives information about the time and place of the printing as well as the official who managed the operation (fol. 90r5):

From the palace of holy Shel dkar, with the manager of the interior (*nang gnyer*) Jo bo rGya dar providing perfect service, the '*Grel pa don gsal*, famous like the sun and the moon, was printed in the year called *thams cad 'dul*, also the Fire Pig year, in the month of *gro zhun* (i.e. the 7th month of the Hor calendar). May this flourish in [all ten] directions and [all the three] times and in any moment. May it be auspicious!

¹⁷ See the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* (fols. 30v–32r).

The referred Fire Pig year can be identified as 1407. The official Jo bo rGya dar who certainly played an important part in the logistics of the operation is otherwise unknown.

4. Bo dong Phyogs las rnam rgyal's Printing Activities in Southern La stod

According to the *Shel dkar chos 'byung*, the print of the '*Grel chung don gsal* was instigated by Grags pa rgyal mtshan as part of the funerary ceremonies for Si tu Chos kyi rin chen (to whom Grags pa rgyal mtshan had promised that he would remain on the *Shel dkar* throne until his death). As it is unlikely that two print editions of the same text were produced within a short period of time in the same locality, 1407 is presumably the completion date of the printing project started by Grags pa rgyal mtshan and taken over by Bo dong Phyogs las rnam rgyal. The phrase *par gsar gzheng* mentioned in the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* (fol. 43v) seems to entail an element of novelty, as *par* means 'print' and *gsar gzheng* is a verbal construction that can be used when something new is produced or built. This phrase may also reflect the heightened attention of the 18th century author of the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* for anything related to printing, since he compiled his local Buddhist history at *Shel dkar* in the wake of the carving of the blocks of the Buddhist Canon that were eventually transferred to sNar thang.¹⁸

Shortly after the 1407 project a work by Bo dong Phyogs las rnam rgyal himself was printed at *Shel dkar* under Si tu lHa btsan skyabs. This was the *rGyud sde spyi rnam* of the *dPal de kho na nyid 'dus pa*, a copy of which has also been recently retrieved by Porong Dawa. The brief colophon states that "the *rGyud sde spyi rnam* by the venerable [Bo dong Phyogs las rnam rgyal] was printed when the venerable was on the throne of the abbatial seat of *Shel dkar*" (*rje btsun bla ma'i rgyud sde spyi rnam spar| rje btsun shel dkar gden sa mdzad pa'i tshe*, fol. 260r5). In addition to celebrating the features of this treatise on the fundamentals of the Tantra system, it makes an interesting reference to Chinese paper as white crystal and reports the observation that "the shape of letters shines on the crystal-like Chinese paper like the smile of a beautiful girl" (*shel lta dkar ba'i rgya shog dbu su ni| yi ge'i rnam par sgeg mo btsun pa 'dra*, fol. 260r6). It also mentions the craftsmen as "Emanations of

¹⁸ See the colophon of the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* (fol. 113v–116r); see also Schaeffer 2009: 90ff.

Viśvakarma, who landed here [i.e. in Shel dkar]; the great wish fulfilling tree of Shel dkar monastery provided all what was necessary for printing, with the four colleagues bKra shis dpal, Rin chen rgyal mtshan, 'Jam dbyangs, and dPal dbang providing the fundamental management” (*gang 'di byi sho skar ma'i rnam 'phrul| sa la 'phos 'dra bzo chen rnam pa la| shel dkar chos sde dpag bsam shing chen las| dgos 'dod byung ba'i spar kyi do dam pa| bkra shis dpal ldan| rin chen rgyal mtshan| 'jam dbyangs dpal dbang grogs mched rnam bzhi bsgrubs*, fol. 260r5–6).



Fig. 3: Bo dong pa Phyogs las rnam rgyal, sNye mo Bye mkhar

Porong Dawa suggests a tentative dating of this printing project between 1407 and 1411.¹⁹ This was the time in which Bo dong Phyogs las rnam rgyal was primarily resident in Shel dkar as abbot before the construction of his main residence in sPo rong dPal mo chos sdings. In any case, the colophon implies that Bo dong Phyogs las rnam rgyal was alive and on the throne of Shel dkar, so that the printing certainly took place before his death in 1453.

While Bo dong Phyogs las rnam rgyal clearly embraced printing when this technology was still in its very early days in Central Tibet,

¹⁹ See Porong Dawa 2016: 195–211.

his students promoted it even more. This is demonstrated by the numerous printing projects they carried out in many areas of Tibet.²⁰ Southern La stod, together with Gung thang and Yar 'brog, was one of the main hubs for Bo dong pa printing activity. For example, in 1442²¹ the female ruler of Zur tsho, bDag mo Nam mkha' dpal bzang, sponsored the print of Bo dong Phyogs las rnam rgyal's *dPal de kho na nyid 'dus pa'i snying po*.

Within southern La stod, the area of Zur tsho as well as the adjacent sMan khab certainly played an important part in early printing projects, and not only in those belonging to the Bo dong pa tradition. Carvers from Zur tsho are mentioned as involved in the first edition of the biography-cum-spiritual songs of Mi la ras pa which was prepared in Na zlum Shel phug²² as well as in a wide range of 16th century print editions by gTsang smyon Heruka's disciples produced in places such as rTsib ri,²³ La phyi Se phug,²⁴ and Gung thang rDza ris bSam gtan gling.²⁵

The carvers involved in the two Shel dkar based printing projects of the beginning of the 15th century may have been from this area, but the evidence is scanty and allows only for informed guesses. The 1407 colophon does not give us any information on the brothers bSod nams dpal and bSod nams rin chen except that they were expert craftsmen (*mkhas pa*) "whose skills were famed all over Tibet." Even less is known of the craftsmen "Emanations of Viśvakarma who had landed" there for the print of Bo dong Phyogs las rnam rgyal's *rGyud sde spyi rnam*. At the time of these printing projects Shel dkar had been busy for several decades with a lot of religious and artistic projects involving craftsmen; however, this was a comparatively 'new place' where activities were largely connected to the establishment of the new capital of southern La stod in the middle of the 14th century. In contrast, the area around the old capital, Ding ri sGang dkar, had been a hub of political, religious and artistic activities for much longer. It was reckoned as a place of political

²⁰ See Tsing Dawa 2016: 237–266.

²¹ For the dating and a detailed description of Bo dong pa printing activities, see Tsing Dawa 2016: 237–266.

²² See Porong Dawa 2016: 195–211; also Sernesi 2011: 184–185.

²³ See Erhard 2010: 129ff.; Sernesi 2011: 170–237.

²⁴ See Diemberger 2016: 267–308.

²⁵ See Porong Dawa 2016: 195–211.

significance already during the imperial period,²⁶ and many religious masters resided there in the 11th and 12th centuries. During the early Sa skya period, especially when rulers of Southern La stod took over the role of Sa skya dpon chen, temples and monasteries were built. Among others, to the north-west of Ding ri sGang dkar the monastery of Na zlum dGe sdings with its elaborate woodcarvings of Nepali style was built in the birthplace of U rgyan pa—the master who had supervised the Hor print of the *Kālacakratantra* at the Yuan court mentioned above. Slightly further to the north, Zur tsho had been the home of Bo dong Phyogs las rnam rgyal's uncle and grand-uncles, who were the lineage holders of his tradition. It is therefore plausible that both Grags pa rgyal mtshan and Bo dong Phyogs las rnam rgyal drew on craftsmen from their homeland for their Shel dkar based printing projects at the beginning of the 14th century. If that was the case, these early carving masters might be seen as part of what later became a widely known and respected hub of printing craftsmanship centred in the western part of southern La stod. Zur tsho and sMan khab, celebrated for their scribal and carving craftsmanship, also benefitted from being at the cross-road between routes connecting the political centres of southern La stod to Mang yul Gung thang, northern La stod, and, within southern La stod, the gNya' nang area.

5. Patronage, Printing, and Politics

The 1407 print shows all the features of a royal printing project. From this point of view it can be compared with a range of other printing projects sponsored by local rulers, such as those sponsored by the kings of Gung thang.²⁷ More generally it can be seen as an example of a wider process that saw local rulers sponsoring printing

²⁶ See the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* (fol. 9r), where a reference is made to imperial military documents (*dmag debs*); see also the *bKa' thang lde snga* (p. 185), where this area is mentioned as part of Ru lag.

²⁷ See Ehrhard 2000; 2013; Clemente 2016: 394–423; Clemente (forthcoming); Diemberger & Clemente 2013. See also Everding 2000 for the wider setting. This form of patronage linked Tibet's temporal and spiritual power and shaped many aspects of its civilisation (see Seyfort Ruegg 1995), including its book culture. Printing in particular is likely to have promoted the emergence of certain texts as classics, and the popularity of books such as the *Mani bka' 'bum* is likely to have been enhanced by it. From this point of view printing may be seen as having had a part in developing and consolidating what George Dreyfus has defined as 'proto-nationalism' (Dreyfus 1994: 205–218; Clemente 2016: 267–308).

projects across Tibet.²⁸ Rather than representing a departure from earlier forms of book production, printing can be seen in direct continuity with the sponsorship of large scale manuscript production as a manifestation of the good governance of a successful Dharmarāja.

Printing projects, albeit a technical innovation,²⁹ were part of the meritorious deeds carried out while taking the imperial ancestors and the spiritual masters as an exemplar to be looked up to (*spyan yar lta*), as clearly stated in the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* (fol. 18r). The colophon of the 1407 print given above (see fol. 90r) is equally strong in highlighting a reference to the moral and political authority of the past. The passage stating that the ruler of southern La stod “has the power to lift the doctrines of the Buddha from the mud by taking the deeds of the earlier royal ancestors as model” is particularly evocative in this respect. This is achieved by being a ruler who is “like the sun spreading the light of hundreds of thousands of treatises by printing.”

Printing seems to have offered a competitive edge to the ruler of southern La stod among the local and regional powers that were repositioning themselves after the collapse of the Sa skya–Yuan rule. The source of inspiration in this case was not only imperial Tibet but also the Mongolian emperor Kublai Khan who had been a munificent sponsor of Tibetan printing and who represented a powerful exemplar of successful Dharmarāja. Si tu Chos kyi rin chen had been a great innovator in establishing the new capital, the new irrigation systems that provided southern La stod with unprecedented prosperity, tax reforms that incentivised animal husbandry on a large scale, as well as the opening and maintenance of trading routes.³⁰ His wealth gave him the means of sponsoring Buddhist enterprises such as the construction of temples, monasteries, and even monastic

²⁸ See Jackson 1990: 107–116.

²⁹ Printing seems to have remained a rarity, if practised at all, in Tibet proper until the beginning of the 15th century. This seems to have been the case despite earlier witnesses of Tibetan printing: a Tibetan print from Dunhuang (see Barrett 2016: 560–574); the well-known 12th century Tibetan prints produced by the Tanguts, the 13th/14th century prints produced by the Yuan emperors, as well as the mention of a Tibetan print produced in Eastern Tibet at the beginning of the 13th century (van der Kuijip 2010: 441ff.).

³⁰ The *Shel dkar chos 'byung* (especially fols. 33r–34v) refers to these innovations in concise but unequivocal terms.

colleges. With his death, he left a vacuum that his son and the court endeavoured to fill with his spirit. It is therefore not surprising that alongside the creation of lavishly decorated volumes of scriptures and treatises in manuscript form, they sponsored the more innovative reproduction and distribution of texts through printing.

Bo dong Phyogs las rnam rgyal, and before him presumably his uncle Grags pa rgyal mtshan, sought to support their vision of teaching the Doctrine to a large number of people by fulfilling the expectations around funerary merit-making activities in new, locally unprecedented ways. In doing so, they saw themselves as not only operating in continuity with the Buddhist tradition of book production, but even enhancing it. Bo dong Phyogs las rnam rgyal own discussion of book making activities does not single out printing as a particular technology (see Tsering Dawa 2016: 237–266); his printing projects and those of his disciples are just listed in his biographies together with manuscript productions. Often printing projects are not even mentioned in the biographies of the relevant masters, so that they become known only through the colophons of the pertinent prints when they surface, as is the case of U rgyan pa's Hor prints. It is only with later masters and larger enterprises that printing projects were increasingly highlighted, as was the case with gTsang smyon Heruka and his disciples. Especially in its early days, printing innovation could happen in the name of tradition without being celebrated or even named as such. The commemoration of the passing of the ruler offered an excellent opportunity to Grags pa rgyal mtshan and Bo dong Phyogs las rnam rgyal to provide scriptures for the newly established teaching and learning centres, since the production of 'supports and symbols of [Buddha's] speech' (*gsung rten*) was an expected way of making merits for the deceased. Bo dong Phyogs las rnam rgyal's production of books to be distributed on a new scale therefore followed the tradition in an innovative way—or, borrowing Elisabeth Eisenstein wording, "broke new paths in the very act of seeking to achieve old goals."³¹ In Europe, even the so-called 'printing revolution' set out in a low-key and not necessarily self-conscious way, and it was often in hindsight that the far-reaching consequences of innovation in book technology were realised.

There was another aspect of Si tu Chos kyi rin chen's innovative ways of carrying out meritorious deeds that may have had a direct

³¹ See Eisenstein 1979: 693; also Eisenstein 1983.

impact on the conditions that promoted printing. He enhanced trade through the opening and the maintenance of routes that were essential for obtaining birch wood and Daphne from the lower Himalayan areas. During this period, also thanks to the opening up of the Hidden Valleys (*sbas yul*), many areas that are the ecological niches for the sourcing of key materials for printing became increasingly accessible. In fact, while early printing projects seem to be located in or close to centre of political and religious power on the plateau, a significant number of later such projects were carried out in the Himalayan valleys closer to the source of wood and paper. This preliminary observation, based on a limited sample of 15th and 16th century prints, will need further exploration before any conclusions can be drawn.

6. Conclusion

A period of relative political fragmentation with a strong competition among rulers for forms of patronage that tried to imitate both the Tibetan imperial ancestors and also the more recent Yuan emperors may be considered one of the factors that propelled the spreading of printing technologies across central Tibet. While Hor prints made their way into the Land of Snow from the late 13th century onwards, possibly becoming a source of inspiration, it was only with the enhancement of trading routes and the opening of the Hidden Valleys in the Himalayas that materials such as birch wood and Daphne bark for the production of printing blocks and paper became easily available in large quantities. It was therefore a combination of factors that created the background against which spiritual masters engaged with the Buddhist tradition of book production in innovative ways, leading to the starting of printing projects, the establishment of printing houses, and the latter's rapid increase in number and size. The 1407 print offers us so far the earliest glimpse into a process that shaped a significant moment in Tibetan cultural history. The assessment of the full extent and impact of the introduction of printing into Tibet will, however, require much more systematic research, not only into textual sources but also into the relevant materials and landscapes.

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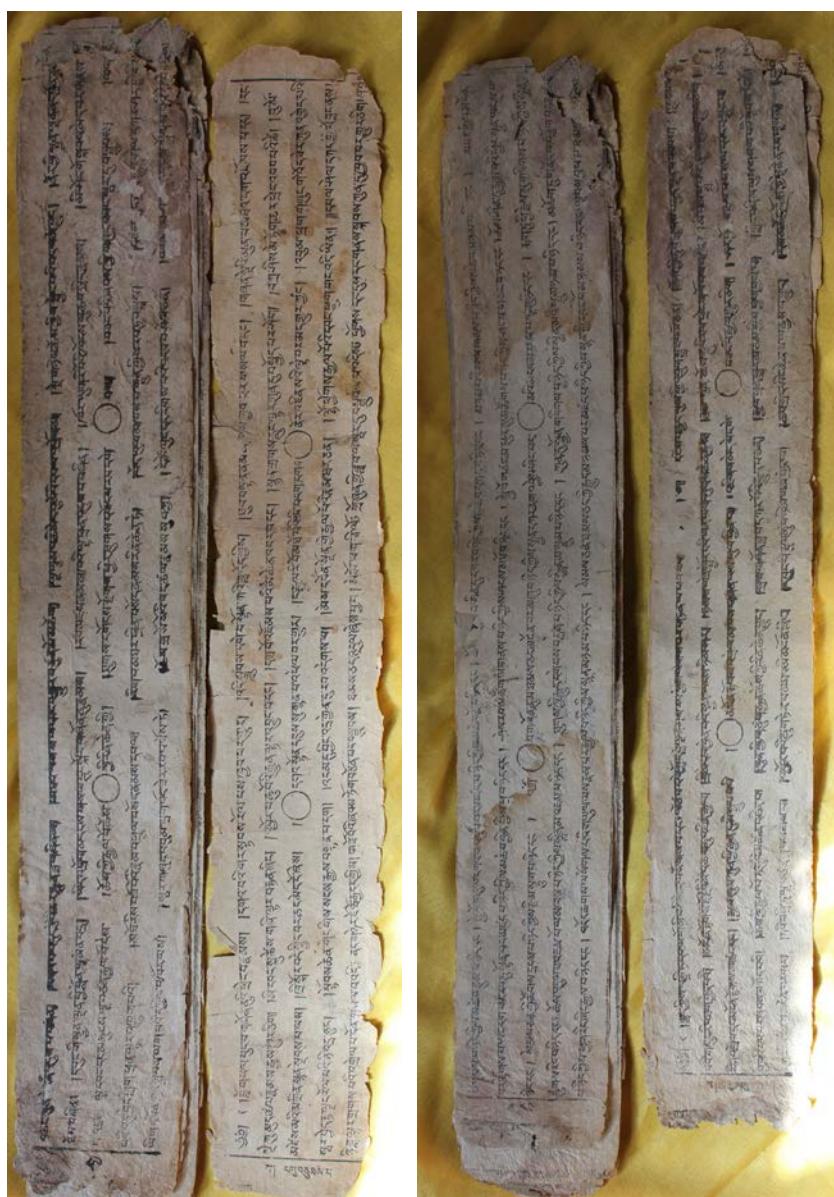
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Appendix

The Colophon of the 1407 Shel dkar Print of the '*Grel chung don gsal* (fols. 89r1–90r5)



Buddhist Hagiographies from the Borderlands: Further Prints from Mang yul Gung thang

Franz-Karl Ehrhard (Munich)

1. Introduction

For any investigation into the block-print culture of Tibet—whether in regional or chronological terms—and in order to study, in particular, such facets of it as format, ornamentation and artistry, as well as the modes of material production of individual xylographs, a variety of textual material is needed, which can be consulted either in its original form or by way of reproductions. In the region of South-Western Tibet, and especially the former kingdom of Mang yul Gung thang, there exists a great quantity of Buddhist literature which has been transmitted in the form of xylographs, the 16th century having already been identified as the period when the production of block prints got under way on a significantly large scale.

The editing and carving of these religious (and for the most part hagiographical) writings was undertaken at specific sites, often associated with the former presence of spiritual masters, but the writings themselves targeted a wider audience, not simply a regional one. The religious affiliation of the Buddhist craftsmen involved in these sometimes quite extensive printing projects, namely the strong presence of the Bo dong pa and bKa' brgyud pa traditions, has already been described. One finds works of the bKa' gdams pa, Sa skyā pa and rNying ma pa traditions as well, all executed as xylographic prints within a short span of time. Of particular use for research into these block prints from South-Western Tibet in the 16th century are the biographies of persons who conducted and supervised the different projects, and especially the information provided by the so-called “printing colophons” (*par byang*), a rich source for the social, economic and political background to these cultural endeavours.¹

¹ Different printing projects in Mang yul Gung thang and the relevant printing colophons, dating to the years 1514–1554, have been described in Ehrhard 2000a: 21–60 & 83–175; the particular biographies used were those

There are several features which point up the relevance of these particular xylographs for the later transmission of the Buddhist literary works in question. On the one hand, one can observe that the products from the workshops located in Mang yul Gung thang were not simply issued on one occasion as single editions but rather emerged as a series of reprints of particular works within a short period of time contributing to the wider dissemination of the texts. This can be observed, for example, in the case of such Buddhist classics as the well-known *Hundred Thousand Proclamations of the Mani [Mantra]* (*Mani bka' 'bum*), a heterogeneous collection of texts ascribed to Tibet's first Buddhist king Srong btsan sgam po, and the reprints issued shortly after the production of the original xylograph edition; another example would be the early reprints of the hagiographical works by the disciples of gTsang smyon Heruka (1452–1507), especially the *Mi la ras pa'i rnam mgur*, which were originally executed as xylographic prints with the support of the kings of Mang yul Gung thang and local rulers of neighbouring regions. These editions served in turn as archetypes for further prints (and manuscript copies) produced later in Central and Eastern Tibet or in the Himalayan regions of Ladakh and Bhutan. Once again it is mainly through a close reading of the available biographical records and the relevant printing colophons that a clear picture emerges of the circumstances of production and further transmission of these Buddhist xylographs.²

of the Bo dong pa monk Chos dbang rgyal mtshan (1484) and the 'Ba' ra ba bKa' brgyud pa yogin Nam mkha' rdo rje (1486–1553). For further projects (and printing colophons) from the period 1555–1580 under the supervision of gNas Rab 'byams pa Byams pa phun tshogs (1503–1581), a representative of bKa' brgyud pa and Sa skya pa traditions, and an account of the latter's life, see Ehrhard 2012: 150–167. Concerning the so-called "gTsang smyon school" active in Mang yul Gung thang and the different products from the printery of Brag dkar rta so (along with relevant printing colophons), consult Clemente 2007: 124–152, Schaeffer 2009: 58–72, and Schaeffer 2011: 43–477.

² The history of the transmission of the heterogeneous collection of the *Mani bka' 'bum* has been sketched in Ehrhard 2000b: 206–208; the xylograph used for this investigation was a reprint of the so-called "Royal Print" executed in 1521 at the court of the kings of Mang yul Gung thang. For the original xylograph from the year 1521, its printing colophon and later reprints of the two-volume set, see Ehrhard 2013: 144–157. The hagiographical works of gTsang smyon Heruka, including especially the original print of the *Mi la'i rnam mgur* and the later reprints are described in

Another point which is remarkable about these block prints is the fact that the well-executed and indeed beautiful results of Buddhist art and craftsmanship were, as is known at least in some cases, dispatched to religious and secular authorities in Central Tibet. The travelling involved provided the opportunity to search for rare manuscripts, which served in turn as master copies for later 16th-century prints. In addition, the prestige of the workshops from Mang yul Gung thang instigated visits to the region in order to have newly composed works transformed into the print medium.³

In order to document further printing activities in Mang yul Gung thang during this period I will present five projects in the following, all related to the production of Buddhist hagiographies, and some of them already known from earlier research. As the starting point, I take up a *rnam mgur* collection carved on wooden blocks at a popular workshop—an example which points up the importance of a royal mandate for gaining access to the expertise of artists and craftsmen. The remaining four cases enjoyed similar support from the court of Mang yul Gung thang, and especially from a powerful minister, who played an important role during a period when the kingdom was securing its borders in the south.

2. Printing Projects at Kun gsal sgang po che

A hermitage known as Kun gsal sgang po che, located near the village of gTsang to the south-east of the royal capital of rDzong dkar in Gung thang, was where a number of major printing projects were executed in the first decades of the 16th century. The person acting as carver, editor and supervisor of these xylographs was the Bo dong pa monk Chos dbang rgyal mtshan, the course of whose life, including his various activities as a Buddhist craftsman and, more pertinently, as the author of in some cases quite extensive printing colophons has been described on a previous occasion. In the present context I shall

Sernes 2011: 184–205. See also the contribution of Sernes in the present volume on the first and successive prints of the *Mani bka' 'bum* and the *Mila'i rnam mgur*.

³ For the dispatching of freshly produced xylographs from Mang yul Gung thang to Central Tibet and the obtaining of manuscript copies for producing the original prints in the case of the two-volume set of the *bKa' gdams glegs bam*, see Ehrhard 2000a: 42–46 and Sernes 2015: 412–413 & 422. Consult Ehrhard 2000a: 63–64, for the distribution of a newly printed *rnam mgur* collection of 'Ba' ra ba rGyal mtshan dpal bzang po (1310–1391) during a journey to Central Tibet.

simply refer once again to an episode which highlights the hermitage as a centre of extensive printing activities:

Then in the Horse year [= 1534], when he was resting in a state of excellent seclusion, there arrived in the seventh month from dBus [and] gTsang the official [known as] sKyid gshongs pa [Chos kyi grags pa], master and disciples, in order to execute as prints the biography and spiritual songs of sPrul sku Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan (1475–1530). [Chos dbang rgyal mtshan] undertook the instructing [of the carvers] and the redacting of the *rNam mgur*, together with its [supplementary] parts, [and] the composition of the printing colophon.⁴

sPrul sku Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, regarded as the reincarnation of his ancestor 'Ba' ra ba rGyal mtshan dpal bzang po, had been a central figure in the revival of the 'Ba' ra ba bKa' brgyud pa tradition in the Shangs valley of Central Tibet, and it was soon after the death of the master that his disciples would have decided to print his biography and spiritual songs. The choice of place to perform this task fell upon the hermitage of Kun gsal sgang po che, the quality of its products being already known from recent prints. This particular *rNam mgur* collection had not generally been available, and it was speculated that the wooden blocks for this edition were later (after the printing in Mang yul Gung thang) carried by Chos kyi grags pa back to Central Tibet. Recently a copy of this xylograph has surfaced and one can gain better insight into the course of the actual printing with the help of the relevant colophon, namely the one at the end of the biography, a work written by Chos kyi grags pa himself.

It is stated there that the project was considered as a memorial service for the “supremely qualified teacher” (*mtshan ldan bla ma*),

⁴ See Ehrhard 2000a: 39, n. 29, for this passage from the biography of Chos dbang rgyal mtshan. The official from Central Tibet, also known as sDe pa skyid gshongs pa nang so Chos kyi grags pa, belonged to the court of Chu shul lhun po rtse. This old fortress marks the southern entrance to the sKyid chu region and was among the thirteen administrative centres of Central Tibet; see Sørensen & Hazod 2007: 208–209, n. 542, and 336, pl. 62. It was at the time the residence of a religious dignitary called Chu shul mkhan chen, one of the teachers of Chos dbang rgyal mtshan. This master had been helpful in providing the original manuscript copy of the *Theg mchog mdzod* of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa (1308–1364), executed as a print in Kun gsal sgang po che in the previous year (1533); see Ehrhard 2000a: 37–38.

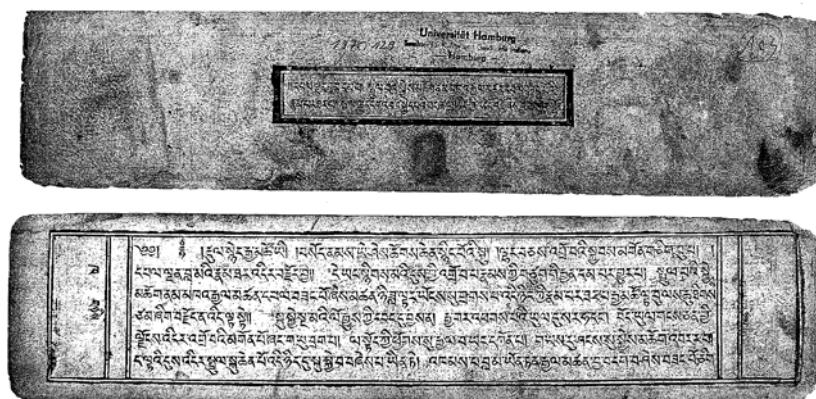
sPrul sku Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, and that the official from the court of Chu shul lhun po rtse had proceeded together with a group of ten persons to Mang yul Gung thang in order to execute the writings of his master and his own composition as “inexhaustible prints” (*mi zad par*). The ruler of the kingdom during this period was Kun bzang Nyi zla grags pa, also known as bDud 'dul mgon po lde (1514–1560), ample descriptions of whose spiritual qualities are provided in the printing colophon. Arriving at the royal palace of Khyung rdzong dkar po, the visitors were welcomed by the twenty-year-old ruler, called a “Dharmarāja who is an emanation” (*sprul pa'i chos rgyal*), and by his wife and son. The conduct of the king is compared to the ideal Buddhist lifestyle of his royal ancestors. Proper offerings having been made to the king, the wish of the official of Chu shul lhun po rtse to execute the works of his teacher as prints in the royal domain met with a positive response from him.⁵

As the wording of the following part of the printing colophon makes clear, it was upon official orders of Kun bzang Nyi zla grags pa that the necessary means were provided for the actual printing—in the first instance the scribes (*yig mkhan*) and the carvers (*par mkhan*). The work itself was done at the hermitage of Kun gsal sgang po che and was completed by a group of six craftsmen in the second month of the Wood Male-Horse year of 1534 within a span of two months. The task of correcting and supervising was performed by dGe slong Chos [kyi] seng [ge] (i.e. Chos dbang rgyal mtshan) and Chos kyi grags pa. The printing colophon containing the list of the donors starts with the names of two officials from the court of Mang yul Gung thang who carried out the orders of the ruler. Following the names of further donors it is noted that the host at the hermitage of

⁵ For the introductory verses and the first part of the printing colophon, covering the events up to the meeting in the palace of Khyung rdzong dkar po, see Chos kyi grags pa: *dPal ldan bla ma dam pa | sprul pa'i skye mchog nam mkha' rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rnam par thar pa*, fols. 56a4–57b1 [= Appendix I/1–2]. See Everding 2000: 558–559, on the reign of Kun bzang Nyi zla grags pa, who married a lady from Yar 'brog sNa dkar rtse; and Everding 2000: 561–562, for a translation of a printing colophon composed by Chos dbang rgyal mtshan in 1527, in which Kun bzang Nyi zla grags pa and his cousin Khri bKra shis dpal 'bar (16th cent.) are mentioned along with their spiritual names (bDud 'dul mgon po lde and Zil gnon mgon po lde) and there called “Dharmarājas [who are] brothers” (*chos rgyal sku mched*) or “rulers [and] protectors of the earth [who are] brothers” (*mi dbang sa skyong sku mched*).

Kun gsال sgang po che and his retinue organised a proper feast in order to celebrate the conclusion of the printing project.⁶

The printing of the *mam mgur* collection of sPul sku Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan finely illustrates the well-established block-print culture in Mang yul Gung thang in the 16th century. Among the social and economic factors contributing to its development, one should consider the cultural and religious efforts of the court at rDzong dkar, already documented for the period of earlier rulers. The technical and literary skills for undertaking such projects lay in the hands of members of the Bo dong pa school, supported by local artists and craftsmen.



⁶ The second and third parts of the printing colophon contain details of the actual printing and the list of the individual donors; see Chos kyi grags pa (as in note 5), fols. 57b1–58a6 [= Appendix I/2–3]. The name of the main scribe is given as Thugs rje skyabs pa of sNying[s] (south of gTsang); special mention is made of the “artist” (*mkhas pa*) [rDor mgon] Dri med, who produced the line drawings on the introductory and closing folios, the so-called “chapter deities” (*le'u lha*). Concerning [dPon yig] Thugs rje skyabs [pa] and further scribes from sNying[s], known as the second village from which the craftsmen of the workshop of Kun gsال sgang po che were recruited, see Ehrhard 2000a: 74–75. The artist [rDor mgon] Dri med, who belonged to the school of the famous Tibetan painter sMan thang pa sMan bla don grub (15th cent.), is also known to have been a member of the workshop of the Bo dong pa school and to have contributed to various printing projects starting from as early as 1521; see Ehrhard 2000a: 73–74 and Ehrhard 2013: 155, n. 24.

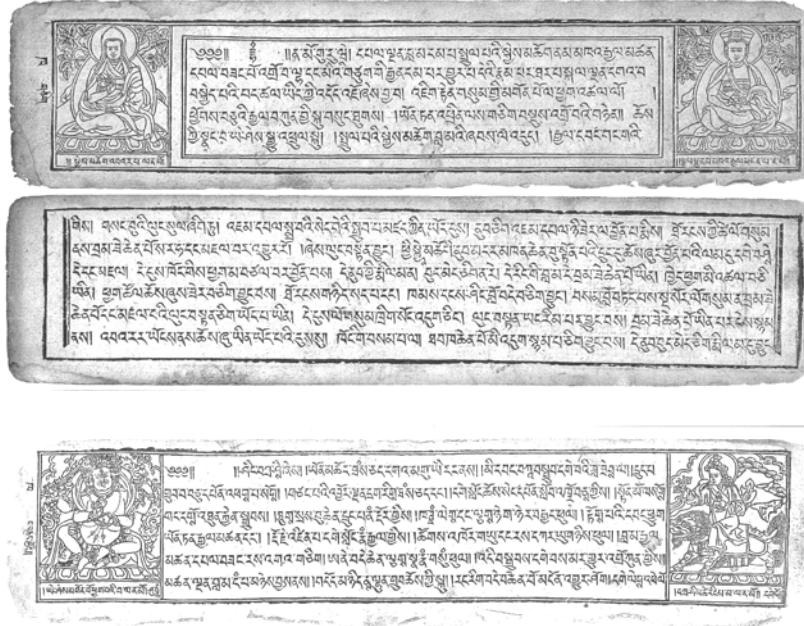


Fig. 1: 1534 print of the *rNam mgur* of sPrul sku Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan

The title page of the first part of this xylograph, only available in a single copy up to now, is missing. We have only the title page of the second part, displaying no particular ornamentation, just the title framed in a simple square-shaped frame. The page layout and the style of carving bear the marks of the workshop of Kun gsal sgang po che, while the portraits on the introductory folios of the second volume bear witness to the painting tradition of sMan thang pa sMan blo don grub as transmitted in the medium of printed text (see fig. 1).

3. The Hagiography of a Buddhist Icon

During the same period when different printing projects were under way in the Gung thang area with the support of the royal court in rDzong dkar, block prints were also being executed in Mang yul and the Himalayan valleys forming the southern border of the kingdom. One already documented case is the printing of the pilgrimage guidebook to the famous Avalokiteśvara statue known as Ārya Wa ti bzang po located in the 'Phags pa lha khang in sKyid grong. This work, covering 25 folios, bears the title *Biography of Paramārya Avalokiteśvara Wa ti bzang po, A Jewel in the Sky that Removes the Darkness of Ignorance* ('Phags mchog spyan ras gzigs dbang phyug wa ti bzang po'i rnam thar nam mkha'i nor bu ma rig mun sel) and is

one of three guidebooks popularising the legends about this Buddhist icon. It provides details about the temple where the statue was kept, the 'Phags pa lha khang, and about the history of further sacred sites in the region. This work was written in 1522 by one Byams pa rgyal mtshan (15th /16th cent.) on orders of a lay official (*drung*) by the name of dPon zhang bSam grub rdo rje. It is known that the latter completed a renovation of the temple in the years 1519 to 1523, and he is described in the text as belonging to the family lineage of the minister of the Zhang [pa] (*zhang blon*) called sNa chen po. It was the same dPon zhang bSam grub rdo rje who was the main donor for the xylograph edition of the guidebook, produced ten years later, in 1532.⁷

The first part of the printing colophon of this pilgrimage guidebook provides the following details about the date and place where the actual printing occurred:

[I who hold] the lineage of the Dharmarāja Zhang pa
 Phyag na rdo rje,
 [along with] the kings, fathers [and] mothers who protect
 the Doctrine, [i.e.] the brothers,
 in order to establish the teaching of the Buddha, and
 beings within [a state of] happiness, and
 to point out and make clear the deeds done by the
 forefathers:
 in the Water Male-Dragon year called Nandana [= 1532],
 in Yol mo gangs [kyi] rwa [ba], the highest among the
 Hidden Valleys,
 [with] faith [and] with energy, [and] having completely
 abandoned avarice,

⁷ For the author's colophon in the pilgrimage guidebook to the Ārya Wa ti bzang po, see Byams pa rgyal mtshan: '*'Phags mchog spyan ras gzigs dbang phyug wa ti bzang po'i rnam thar nam mkha'i nor bu ma rig mun sel*', fol. 25a4–7, and the translation in Ehrhard 2004: 134. This work is based on an earlier guidebook executed as a print in 1525 in sKyid grong on behalf of the lay official Tshe dbang mgon po, the keeper of Khams gsum rnam rgyal castle. The Bo dong pa monk Chos dbang rgyal mtshan was once again responsible for the printing of this work; see Ehrhard 2000a: 31 and Ehrhard 2000a: 137–139. The third guidebook, which relied on the earlier versions, was authored by a member of the Sa skya pa school and was only disseminated in the form of manuscript copies; see Ehrhard 2014: 15–43.

I have acted as donor for the completion [of this work] as
an inexhaustible print.⁸

The family lineage of Zhang bSam grub rdo rje is traced back in this case to Phyag na rdo rje, which seems to be an alternative name for the ancestor dPon zhang[s] or Zhang pa bTsan thog ['bum] (13th cent.), a ruler known to have controlled the region of Glo bo (present-day Mustang in the Nepalese Himalayas) and to have extended his sphere of influence up to the region of sKyid grong. Among the family members of the Zhang pa active in Mang yul, he is remembered as the first person to have contributed to the upkeep of the 'Phags pa lha khang. The kings of Mang yul Gung thang referred to in the printing colophon are the previously mentioned rulers Kun bzang Nyi zla grags pa and Khri bKra shis dpal 'bar, representing two different branches of the royal house; they had both received their spiritual names from the treasure discoverer Rig 'dzin mChog ldan mgon po (1497–1531) during the latter's stay in the royal domain in the years 1526 to 1527.⁹

The fact that the printing of the pilgrimage guidebook to the Ārya Wa ti bzang po shrine occurred in the Hidden Valley (*sbas yul*) of Yol mo Gangs [kyil] rwa [ba], in present-day Helambu in Nepal, and

⁸ The first part of the printing colophon can be found in Byams pa rgyal mtshan (as in note 7), fol. 25a7–b3 [= Appendix II/1]. The scribes engaged for the project are called sKyabs pa, described as an “artist of the Dharmarāja” (*chos rgyal lha bzo ba*), and mKhas pa Chos dpal bsham. The former was affiliated to the royal court and is also known as Gung thang dKon skyabs; see notes 13 and 20. Along with the scribe 'Dzem pa Tshe ring, the main carvers were rTogs ldan 'Od zer, praised for his expertise in reciting prayers, together with dPal 'byor from the village of Gro thang in Mang yul, and Rab ldan/brtan, who hailed from [Nub ris] lHa mdun; see the second part of the printing colophon, fol. 25b3–6 [= Appendix II/2]. Concerning the location of Gro thang, see Ehrhard 2004: 286; concerning that of [Nub ris] lHa mdun, Everding 2000: 514–515.

⁹ For the first renovation of the 'Phags pa lha khang, ascribed to bTsan thog ['bum], see Ehrhard 2004: 258 & 366, n. 88. An overview of the [Men zhang] sNa tshags pas as rulers of Mustang and the activities of individual members of the family in the sKyid grong region is given in Vitali 2012: 54–59. See Ehrhard 2000a: 33–34, on Rig 'dzin mChog ldan mgon po providing new spiritual identities to the two mentioned rulers and the journey of the treasure discoverer to sKyid grong in the year 1526 in the company of Khri bKra shis dpal 'bar; consult Ehrhard 2008a: 82–83 for the role of the same two rulers in inviting Rig 'dzin mChog ldan mgon po to Mang yul Gung thang.

that the printing blocks were kept there needs to be seen in the context of the presence of treasure discoverers in Mang yul Gung thang and the political situation at the borders of the kingdom. It is known that before his departure from the royal court Rig 'dzin mChog ldan mgon po nominated different religious and secular authorities to oversee the task of maintaining the old Buddhist temples of the royal domain and protecting the borders of Western Tibet by opening hidden sanctuaries. Among these persons one finds Chos rje Drang so ba, known also as the First Yol mo ba sPrul sku Śākyā bzang po (15th/16th cent.), Chos rje Che mchog pa (15th/16th cent.) of the mDo bo che family, and dPon Zhang bSam grub rdo rje. Concerning the last of these it is stated:

At the sacred spot of the Hidden Valley Yol mo Gangs [kyi] r[w]a [ba]—the starting point for [spreading] the teaching [where once] sites for the exposition and spiritual practice of the Buddhadharma had been set up and a *vihāra* had been constructed—he nominated as the holder of the seat dPon zhang bSam grub rdo rje, who had [already] performed [great] service to the *vihāra* of Ārya Wa ti bzang po, the self-manifested Lord of Mang yul sKyid grong, and he signed a written certification so that no obstacles might occur. As the priest who would remove the [personal] obstacles [faced by dPon zhang bSam grub rdo rje], he signed [a written document] that this activity for the teaching [should be that] of Chos rje Drang so [ba], the being who had [already] fully accomplished the renovation of Bya rung kha shor, the great Nepalese stūpa ...¹⁰

¹⁰ This quotation is from the *rnam mgur* collection of Rig 'dzin mChog ldan mgon po; see Ehrhard 2000a: 34–35, n. 22. For a biographical sketch of the First Yol mo ba sPrul sku Śākyā bzang po, who is generally regarded as the treasure discoverer of the rNying ma pa school responsible for opening the Hidden Valley of Yol mo Gangs [kyi] r[w]a [ba] and establishing a first temple there, see Ehrhard 2007: 25–29. The renovation of Bya rung kha shor, the Mahācaitya of Bodhnāth in Kathmandu, took place after the revelation of a relevant “treasure” (*gter ma*) in bSam yas in the year 1512. A 16th-century block print of the *Bya rung kha shor dkar chag* is available. It is stated in the printing colophon that it had been carved in the Hidden Valley of bTsum in a Dragon year ('brug lo) by one sMyon pa rDo rje dpal 'bar, a personal disciple of 'Bri gung Rin chen phun tshogs (1509–1557); see *mChod rten chen po bya rung kha shor gyi lo rgyus thos pas grol ba*,

The pilgrimage guidebook was thus printed at a time when the valleys in the south of Mang yul Gung thang had reaffirmed their status as hidden sanctuaries according to the prophecies of Padmasambhava and religious institutions were being newly established. An active role in this regard was played by dPon zhang bSam grub rdo rje, the official from the royal court who had been nominated personally for the task in a document written by a treasure discoverer who was regarded with great esteem by the kings of Mang yul Gung thang. The resulting cultural projects included the production of printed texts, with a prominent place being taken by the hagiography of the most sacred Buddhist icon of Mang yul Gung thang.

If one considers the particular features of this block print, one notes, as in the previous case, that the title page exhibits no ornamentation, the title of the work again being contained in a simple square-shaped frame. The page layout and the style of carving differs from the products of the workshop of Kun gsal sgang po che, as can be seen to good effect in the illustrations of the introductory folios. These depictions of Buddha Śākyamuni, Avalokiteśvara, Ārya Wa ti bzang po and Padmasambhava (together with their respective retinues) were executed by Buddhist craftsmen who hailed mainly from the southern region of Mang yul Gung thang (see fig. 2).



Fig. 2: 1532 print of the Ārya Wa ti bzang po rnam thar

NGMPP reel no. E 2517/4, fols. 17b5 ff. For this print and its colophon compare Ehrhard (forthcoming).

4. A Print of the Life of the Iron Bridge Builder

In the very same year as the pilgrimage guidebook was executed as a print in Yol mo Gangs [kyi] rwa [ba], another hagiography was carved on wooden blocks on the initiative of dPon zhang bSam grub rdo rje. This work of 114 folios has the title *Biography of the Mahāsiddha Thang stong rgyal po, the Iron Bridge Builder (Grub thob chen po lcags zams (sic) pa thang stong rgyal po'i rnam thar)* and was composed as a supplement (*kha skong*) to the earliest biography of the Tibetan *mahāsiddha* by Shes rab dpal ldan (15th cent.). The author of the later work is Kun dga' bSod nams grags pa dpal bzang (15th/16th cent.), the son of Shes rab dpal ldan. Two copies of this xylograph have survived in Western library collections, and a description of the work and a translation of the printing colophon has already been made available.¹¹

According to the author's colophon, the work was composed by Kun dga' bsod nams grags pa dpal bzang in the year 1528. It is known that he also composed a work dealing with Thang stong rgyal po's final activities and *parinirvāṇa*. It is noteworthy that the supplement to the biography written by Shes rab dpal ldan was executed as a block print only four years after its composition and it can thus be regarded as the first xylograph within the biographical tradition of the Tibetan *mahāsiddha*.¹²

The printing colophon states that this print of the life of the Iron Bridge Builder, who was also called the "heart son" (*thugs sras*) of Padmasambhava, was undertaken by the "Dharma minister" (*chos*

¹¹ The two copies of this xylograph of the biography of Thang stong rgyal po are part of the collection of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, München (2 L. tibet.33 z), and of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz (Hs. Or. 1612). A digital version of the former copy can be accessed under http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/bsb00043080/image_1; a description of the latter copy and an edition and translation of the printing colophon are contained in Everding 2015: 47–56.

¹² The full title of the work is *Grub pa'i dbang phyug chen po lcag zam pa thang stong rgyal po'i rnam par thar pa kun gsal sgron me bdud rtsi phreng ba mthong bas yid 'brog*, as can be ascertained from a manuscript copy in the collection of the National Archives, Kathmandu (NGMPP reel no. AT 85/11); see Tashi Tsiring 2001: 42 and Tashi Tsiring 2007: 268–269, n. 3. For the hagiographies written by Shes rab dpal ldan and Kun dga' bSod nams grags pa dpal bzang, along with an edition and translation of the work dealing with the final phase in the life of Thang stong rgyal po, consult Stearns 2007: 7–8 & 441–463.

blon) Zhang pa bSam grub rdo rje together with his wife rGyal le Kun dga' bu khrid and other members of his family. Its purpose was to overcome obstacles to the long life of one A lce Sangs rgyas skyabs ma and to fulfil the final wishes of the deceased lay official Zhang Rig 'dzin bzang po and his wife, and those of A lce dPal le and her daughter rDo rje mtsho, all members of the mentioned family. It is further stated that the work was completed in the year 1532 at Sa le, a village located in La [l]de[bs], another valley in the southern borderland of Mang yul Gung thang regarded as a hidden sanctuary; the blocks were kept afterward in Yol mo Gangs [kyi] rwa [ba], the "Hidden Valley, the great sacred site" (*sbas yul gnas chen*).

The Buddhist artists and craftsmen involved in this printing project are in some cases known from the xylograph of the pilgrimage guidebook to the Ārya Wa ti bzang po shrine, though additional named but otherwise unknown persons were also engaged. The information is provided that the two main scribes were [Khyo bo] Tshe ring[s] (now identified as a native of the valley of La [l]de[bs]) and the royal scribe from Gung thang; among the carvers one finds the same three craftsmen as in the previous project. The person responsible for the final correcting and editing of the xylograph was an artist by the name of lHa mdun mkhas pa dGe slong Seng ge [bzang po], who was thus from the village of [Nub ris] lHa mdun; he is known from printing projects conducted on earlier occasions to have been an expert craftsman. The king, whose subjects had collected the funds for the print, is simply called the "ruler, the great sovereign" (*mnga' bdag gong ma chen po*); one can assume that this epithet refers once again to Kun bzang Nyi zla grags pa, although his name is not specified.¹³

¹³ For the first part of the printing colophon and the details concerning the main donors and the Buddhist artists and craftsmen, see *Grub thob chen po lcags zams* (sic) *pa thang stong rgyal po'i rnam thar*, fols. 111a1–112a7, and the edition and translation in Everding 2015: 47–48 & 51–52. There are two marginal notes documenting the names of the craftsmen and their work; see ibid., fols. 100b7 & 109b7. The scribe already known for having served the royal court is here called Gung thang dKon skyabs, and the three carvers are called rTogs ldan 'Od zer, Gro thang dPal 'byor and lHa mdun Rab ldan/brtan; for these persons see note 8. dGe slong seng ge [bzang po] from [Nub ris] lHa mdun is already known as a carver belonging to the workshop of the Bo dong pa school active in the period from 1514 to 1521; see Ehrhard 2000c: XV and Ehrhard 2013: 155, n. 24. He is also mentioned among the religious dignitaries present during the consecration of the

A special feature of the following part of the printing colophon of the biography of Thang stong rgyal po is the presentation of the individual local donors according to their places of residence in the La [l]de[bs] valley. The toponyms are arranged in the following order: Lan de yul smad Ko, Lan de yul snang (= nang) Sa le, Lan de yul stod mKhar spangs (= bangs), Lan de yul stod 'Brog, Lan de yul stod Long skyong, Lan de yul stod Gog le, Lan de yul stod Khyim khyengs, and Lan de yul smad sKyangs yul. The register can be regarded as a kind of local gazetteer, providing as it does the names of the village leaders and some members of the common population of this valley within the wider sKyid grong region. This list of individual donors is introduced by three persons who seem to have been the main religious authorities in La [l]de[bs] at the time; they bear the following names: mKhas grub chen po Rin chen bshes gnyen, Drung pa dBang phyug, uncle [and] nephew (*khu dbon*), and mDo chen bla ma dKon mchog rdo rje. While there is no information available on the first mentioned teacher, it is known that dBang phyug [phun tshogs] and his nephew Grags pa rgyal mtshan belonged to the 'Jam dpal gling pa (or 'Dzam gling pa) family and that dKon mchog rdo rje followed the Gur rigs mdo chen tradition, a minor 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud school, whose main seat in the La [l]de[bs] valley he held.¹⁴

renovation of the 'Phags pa lha khang undertaken by dPon zhang bSam grub rdo rje in the years 1519 to 1523; see Ehrhard 2004: 370, n. 95.

¹⁴ For the second part of the printing colophon with the extensive list of the local donors, see the biography of Thang stong rgyal po (as in note 13), fols. 112b1–113b4, and the edition and translation in Everding 2015: 48–54. At the end of the list one also finds the name of the craftsman rTogs Idan 'Od zer, and there it is stated that his place of origin is gTsang stod sPang, a hamlet in the upper part of the village of gTsang in Gung thang. The valley of La [l]de[bs] was considered to be a hidden sanctuary prophesied by Padmasambhava and was accordingly a fixture in the religious geography of Mang yul Gung thang; see the references to the individual sacred sites in the relevant pilgrimage guidebooks in Ehrhard 2004: 289–290. For the early history of the 'Jam dpal gling pa family and their settlement in the sKyid grong region, see Vitali 2007: 295–300; compare the short biographical sketches of dBang phyug phun tshogs and Grags pa rgyal mtshan, who had both studied in the Sa skya pa monastery of 'Bras yul sKyed mo tshal in Central Tibet, in Blo gros chos 'phel (1665–1728): *rTen gsum gyi dkar chags*, fols. 5b4–6a3. Concerning dKon mchog rdo rje as an important exponent of the Gur rigs mDo chen tradition and the main lineage holder of



Fig. 3: 1532 print of the *Thang stong rgyal po'i rnam thar*

In contrast to the pilgrimage guidebook to the Ārya Wa ti bzang po shrine—and as usual for the block prints from Mang yul Gung thang—the xylograph of the life of the Iron Bridge Builder contains illustrations on both the introductory and closing folios. They show Buddha Śākyamuni, Avalokiteśvara, Padmasambhava, Thang stong rgyal po, and Zhang bSam grub rdo rje; the portrayal of the last of these on the left side of the closing folio depicts the minister in the iconographical fashion of Padmasambhava. The illustration on the right side of the same folio is of the four-armed Mahākāla, while a second protector, Gur gyi mgon po (Pañjaranātha), is placed in the middle of the page; the latter illustration seems to have been added during the final stage of printing. The style of carving of the two

the religious institutions in the southern regions of Mang yul Gung thang, consult Ehrhard 2008a: 72.

xylographs from the year 1532 is similar, and both bear the marginal syllable *ka* (see fig. 3).

5. The *bKa' thang gser phreng* from the Royal Temple

It was not unusual during this period of Buddhist block printing in Tibet to include the idealised portraits of persons involved in financing specific texts and editing them into the final products of individual workshops. Similar depictions are known, for example, from the hagiography devoted to the life of gTsang smyon Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan (1452–1507), executed as a print around the same time as the xylographs from Mang yul Gung thang. The depiction of dPon zhang bSam grub rdo rje in the garb of Padmasambhava obviously accentuates his status as a disciple of treasure discoverers like Rig 'dzin mChog ldan mgon po, the First Yol mo ba sPrul sku Śākyā bzang po and Rig 'dzin bsTan gnyis gling pa (1480–1535). It is known that the minister had been personally involved in inviting the last of these masters to the kingdom, signing as he did the invitation letter and also heading the reception committee; this invitation extended to Rig 'dzin bsTan gnyis gling pa and the arrival of the treasure discoverer likely fell in the year 1533, shortly after the two mentioned printing projects.¹⁵

A further xylograph carved in Mang yul Gung thang demonstrates the strong engagement of dPon zhang bSam grub rdo rje with the teachings of the rNying ma pa school, for it was at his initiative that an early xylograph of the so-called *bKa' thang gser phreng*, the hagiography of Padmasambhava discovered by Rig 'dzin Sangs rgyas gling pa (1340–1396), was printed in the royal domain. This project was executed at the temple of Byams pa sprin in Mang yul, one of the *vihāras* ascribed to the first Buddhist king Srong btsan sgam po, and it can be dated to the year 1535. The first part of the printing colophon reads as follows:

¹⁵ Idealised portraits of Kun tu bzang mo (15th/16th cent.), the spiritual partner of gTsang smyon Heruka, and rGod tshang ras chen (1482–1559), the latter styled as a Buddhist *mahāsiddha*, can be found in the hagiography of the master printed by two of his more prominent disciples; see Ehrhard 2010: 157–158. For details of the life of Rig 'dzin bsTan gnyis gling pa and the invitation to visit Mang yul Gung thang, see Everding 2000: 272–284 and Everding 2004: 272–284; consult Achard 2004: 58–65, for a biographical sketch and a list of the disciples of the treasure discoverer, including especially members of the Gur rigs mDo chen tradition and a person called gSang sngags rdo rje; concerning the latter, see note 17.

Here in Mang yul Gung thang, [in Tibet,] the glacier [land]
of Jambhudvīpa,
[the lineage] of Mahāsammata, [that of] the prince Ikṣvāku,
[of] Śākyamuni, [of] the three [dynastic kings], [their]
ancestors [and] successors, the protectors of the world—
[he who holds this] profound family line:
the highest among the Jinas, bDud 'dul mgon po lde [or]
Kun bzang Nyi zla grags pa [by name],
[and] the latter's minister, [he who holds] the lineage of
[Zhang pa], Phyag na rdo rje, together with his queen
Kun dga' bu khrid, husband [and] wife,
in the Wood Female-Sheep year called Manmatha [= 1535],
in order to fulfil the final intentions of the teacher, to spread
the Buddhist doctrine,
so that the power of the superior ruler will be high and
flourish,
to turn back all the forces of the armies [attacking] the
borders, and
after thinking about the kindness of the sovereign Shes rab
dpal bzang, husband [and] wife, and of
Zhang blon Rig 'dzin bzang po, husband [and] wife, [and] in
order that they might progress on the path of liberation,
[I] have acted as donor to [the task of] bringing completion
to an all-encompassing print.¹⁶

As in the printing project at Kun gsal sgang po che one year
before, in 1534, the main donor is the young king, referred to by his

¹⁶ For the first part of the printing colophon of the *bKa' thang gser phreng*, see *O rgyan chen po'i rnam thar rgyas pa | yid bzhin nor bu | dgos mdod (= 'dod) kun byung | mthong ba kun grol | pod dmar ma chen mo | mang ngag bdud rtsti'i chu rgyun*, fol. 377a1–5 [= Appendix III/1]. The existence of this manuscript copy of the xylograph of the work of Rig 'dzin Sangs rgyas gling pa was first signalled in Ehrhard 2000a: 16. It was microfilmed by the NGMPP under reel no. E 1755/3; see Doney (forthcoming). This prose version of the narratives of Padmasambhava's life is generally known under the title *O rgyan gu ru padma 'byung gnas kyi rnam thar rgyas pa gser gyi phreng ba thar lam gsal byed*; for a first evaluation of this treasure work, see Vostrikov 1970: 46–49, and for its relation to the *Zangs gling ma* of Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124–1192) consult Doney 2014: 32–33. See also van der Kuijp 2013: 138, n. 3 for the xylograph edition of this work produced by the dGa' ldan pho brang government in Lhasa based on the Bhutanese sPung thang xylograph edition. The *bKa' thang gser phreng* from Mang yul Gung thang seems to be the earliest print of this treasure work.

names Kun bzang Nyi zla grags pa and bDud 'dul mgon po lde, and this time also described as the proper heir of the lineage of rulers of Mang yul Gung thang. His name is followed by that of dPon zhang bSam grub rdo rje and the latter's wife, who here bears the title of "queen" (*rgyal mo*). The "all-encompassing print" (*kun khyab par*) was executed once again in commemoration of the family of the royal minister, and especially Rig 'dzin bzang po himself and his wife, as in the previous colophon. It is also noteworthy that the deceased ruler Gong ma Shes rab dpal bzang, known to have died an unnatural death, is mentioned. The list of the persons on whose behalf the *bKa' thang gser phreng* had been produced begins with an unspecified teacher. This seems to have been Che mchog rdo rje of the Gur rigs mdo chen tradition, who had been nominated by Rig 'dzin mChog ldan mgon po as overseer of the temple of Byams pa sprin and who had passed away in 1535 in the course of a treasure expedition to Ri bo dpal 'bar, an important treasure site in the sKyid grong region. His death prompted the production of further xylographs that very same year.¹⁷

The workshop of Buddhist craftsmen engaged for the ambitious task of transforming the voluminous narrative of the life of Padmasambhava into a printed edition—the available manuscript made from the original xylograph covers 378 folios—includes most of the scribes and carvers already known from the two previous projects, with the addition of further persons. One finds again [Gung thang dKon] skyabs and 'Dzem pa Tshe ring as the main scribes, the former having also been responsible for drawing the main

¹⁷ For the murder of Gong ma Shes rab dpal bzang during a revolt by a minister called dPon btsun Grub pa, see Everding 2000: 552–553 and Ehrhard 2004: 259. The nomination of Che mchog rdo rje as overseer of the royal temple occurred at the same time as that of dPon zhang bSam grub rdo rje, holder of a *vihāra* in Yol mo; see note 10. The royal minister was also among the persons who took part in the treasure expedition headed by Rig 'dzin bsTan gnyis gling pa; see Everding 2004: 275. The family chronicle of the Gur rigs mdo chen tradition provides a full biographical sketch of Che mchog rdo rje; see Ehrhard 2008a: 68–70. For an early block print of the *Mani bka' 'bum* of the treasure discoverer Guru Chos kyi dbang phyug (1212–1270), again produced in 1535 in Mang yul Gung thang and commemorating the death of Che mchog rdo rje, consult Ehrhard 2013: 156–159. This xylograph contains a portrait of gSang sngags rdo rje (15th/16th cent.), who was responsible for the print and was counted among the preceptors of the royal court at rDzong dkar; he, too, is shown in the garb of Padmasambhava.

illustrations, with the artist [rDor mgon] Dri med taking care of those at the end of the volume. Three of the carvers are known from the two printing projects of the year 1532, but for the carving of the hagiographical account of Padmasambhava four additional craftsmen were recruited. They bear the names dPon btsun Padma skyabs, Dar 'bum, mKha' 'gro, and Rin chen bzang po, and at least two of them are known to have been engaged in other printing projects.¹⁸

The following section of the printing colophon describes the different stages of the project, with once again the calming of the fear of armies attacking the borders of the kingdom being highlighted. It is further stated that this particular endeavour was blessed by [sNgags 'chang] Śākyā bzang po, Rig 'dzin bsTan gnyis gling pa and one mNgon dga' chos rje; the latter epithet refers to Chos rje dKon mchog rgyal mtshan, the abbot of the Bo dong pa monastery of mNgon dga', located to the south-east of rDzong dkar. The ritual of consecrating the finished printing blocks was performed by sNgags 'chang Śākyā bzang po, for which purpose he was not actually present at the *vihāra* in person, performing the ceremony rather at his residence located at the great sacred site in Yol mo Gangs [kyi] r[w]a [ba]. A *mandala* of the Thugs sgrub cycle of the tradition of the Northern Treasures (*byang gter*) was produced for that occasion in Byams pa sprin by Zhang blon bSam grub rdo rje, and the actual consecration was in the hands of dBang phyug phun tshogs of the 'Jam dpal gling pa family; this religious authority of the La [l]de[bs] valley is described as a scholar and a keeper of the three Buddhist vows. The final section of the printing colophon contains verses of bSam grub rdo rje, whence it can be speculated that the minister is the author of the complete register at the end of the xylograph.¹⁹

¹⁸ The second part of the printing colophon can be found in the *bKa' thang gser phreng* (as in note 16), fol. 377a5–b1 [= Appendix III/2]. The carver [dGe slong] mKha' 'gro [dpal bzang] is a well-known member of the workshop of Kun gsAl sGang po che and another native of the village of gTsang; see Ehrhard 2000a: 71–76. For the carver dPon btsun Padma, also hailing from gTsang, see Clemente 2007: 132 & 151 and Sernes 2011: 195–196. Two of the additional carvers came from sPang zhing and Rus/Rud, two villages in the regions of sKyid grong and Nub ris.

¹⁹ For the third and fourth sections of the printing colophon, see the *bKa' thang gser phreng* (as in note 16), fols. 377b1–378a7 [= Appendix III/3–4]. The Bo dong pa monastery of mNgon dga' has to be seen as an important factor in the development of the block-print culture in Mang yul Gung thang; for a list of some of its abbots, see Ehrhard 2000a: 13–16. According

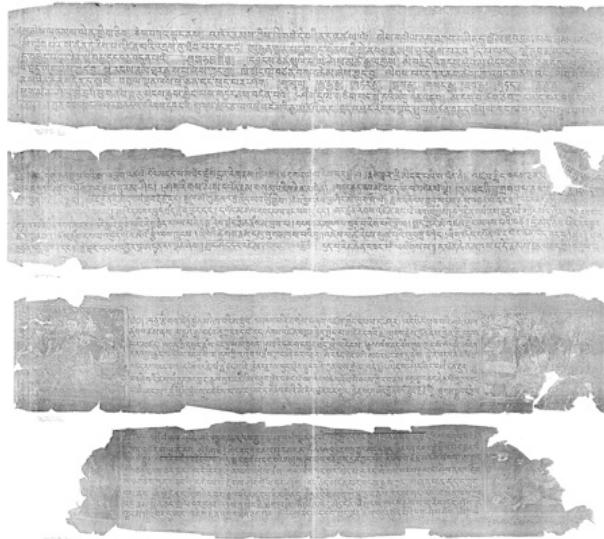


Fig. 4: Manuscript copy of the 1535 print of the *bKa' thang gser 'phreng*

The printing blocks have not survived the perils of time; not a single copy of this print is available today, only a damaged manuscript that was prepared on its basis. This written version mirrors the page lay-out but not the style of carving of the original xylograph. The illustrations of this print from the temple of Byams pa sprin are not recognisable any more; they may again have included a portrait of dPon zhang bSam grub rdo rje (see fig. 4).

6. *bKa' brgyud pa* Prints in the Hidden Valleys

Further Buddhist hagiographies executed as prints in the southern borderlands of Mang yul Gung thang and supported by the royal minister included those of Vajradhara, the primordial Buddha, and of sGam po pa bSod nams rin chen (1079–1153), the founding father of the Dwags po bKa' brgyud pa school. These works were printed in Glang 'phrang, present-day Langthang to the north of Kathmandu, another Hidden Valley associated with the prophecies of Padmasambhava. It is situated between La [l]de[bs] and Yol mo Gangs [kyi] r[w]a [ba], to the north of the latter valley. The carving

to the pilgrimage guidebook to the Ārya Wa ti bzang po shrine, the abbot dKon mchog rgyal mshan also took part in the final consecration of the renovation of the 'Phags pa lha khang conducted by dPon zhang bSam grub rdo rje; see note 13. sNgags 'chang Śākyā bzang po was present in person for the event.

of the blocks was completed in a Dragon year (*'brug lo*), corresponding to the year 1544.

It is known that a first printed edition of the collected writings of sGam po pa bSod nams rin chen had been produced in Dwags la sgam po in south-eastern Tibet some years earlier, in 1520, under the supervision of the abbot bSod nams lhun grub (1488–1552), who had also composed the mentioned hagiography (generally transmitted together with the three volumes of the collected writings). It was thus xylographs from Dwags la sgam po that served as the master copies for the prints from Glang 'phrang.²⁰

The first part of the printing colophon of the work devoted to the life of sGam po pa bSod nams rin chen presents the topography of the Hidden Valley as lying to the north of 'Phags pa shing kun (i.e. the Mahācaitya of Svayambhunāth in Nepal) and to the east of the *vihāra* of the “self-arisen” (*rang byon*) statue of [Ārya] Wa ti bzang po. At the centre of the sacred site rises a mountain known as the residence of one dGe bsnyen Gle ru (or Sle ru), a local deity familiar from treasure works of the Northern Treasures tradition. The following two parts contain a eulogy of the bKa' brgyud pa school and state that thanks to great efforts made in Dwags la sgam po the original biography of the founder of the Dwags po bKa' brgyud pa together with the *rDo rje 'chang rnam thar*, could be tacked on as a supplement (*kha skong*) to a series of hagiographical writings known as the Golden Rosary (*gser phreng*) texts. The person especially responsible for this was dPon chen Chos skyong dpal bzang of Zur tsho in La stod lHo, who traced his lineage back to sPang Lo tsā ba (1276–1342, Lo chen Byang chub rtse mo (1315–1380) and Lo chen Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1352–1405), all three hailing from the

²⁰ The region of Glang 'phrang is mentioned in the pilgrimage guidebooks to Mang yul gung thang as a Hidden Valley, and from the 17th century onwards it was known under the name Zla gam gnam sgo; see Ehrhard 2004: 290 & 444, n. 241. The two mentioned prints bear the titles *rDo rje 'chang rnam thar* (4 fols.) and *Chos kyi rje dpal ldan sgam po pa chen po'i rnam par thar pa yid bzhin kyi nor bu rin po che kun khyab snyan pa'i ba dan thar pa'i rgyan gyi mchog* (68 fols.); these two texts were microfilmed under NGMPP reel nos. L 803/5 and L 803/6–804/1. The author of the first work is the Third Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje (1284–1339). For the biography of sGam po pa, its author and its sources, see Trungram Gyatrul Rinpoche Sherpa 2004: 32–33; consult Kragh 2013: 373–376 and Sernes 2013: 194–196 for the compilation of the so-called *Dwags po bka' 'bum* and the first print of the collection at Dwags la sgam po in 1520.

mentioned region and belonging to a family called Wa. Having abandoned his secular duties, this local ruler was responsible for the actual printing, which he undertook on behalf of, among others, his parents gNyer chen Rin chen dpal bzang and A ma Byang chub dpal mo.²¹

The fourth part of the printing colophon provides details concerning the Buddhist artists and craftsmen engaged for the print, and in a prose section of it it is noted that this register at the end of the xylograph was composed by a person from a sacred site known as a former residence of rJe btsun Mi la ras pa; his name is La phyi ba Nam mkha' 'od zer. The craftsmen are described in the following way:²²

As for the main scribe of the original (i.e. the printing sheets):

²¹ The local deity dGe bsnyen Gle ru (or Sle ru) is mentioned in treasure works of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 'phru can (1337–1406) as residing in Padma tshal, an alternative designation of the Hidden Valley of Glang 'phrang; for the location of this mountain and the relevant treasure work, see Childs 1993: 31–33 and Childs 1999: 130–131. Concerning the lives of sPang Lo tsā ba and his successors Lo chen Byang chub rtse mo and Lo chen Grags pa rgyal mtshan (the succeeding abbots of the Bo dong tradition) according to the religious chronicle of Shel dkar chos sde, see Wangdu & Diemberger 1996: 62–76. For the first two parts of the printing colophon of the biography of sGam po pa, see the text (as in note 20), fols. 66a7–67a6 [= Appendix IV/1–2]. The short printing colophon of the *rDo rje 'chang rnam thar* contains the same information; see the text (as in note 20), fol. 4a5–6 (*chos sku rdo rje 'chang chen po'i rnam thar gyi spar mchog 'di ni | rje btsun dwags po'i rnam thar gyi spar dang lhan gcig tu | bas mtha'i sprang po zur gtso (= tsho) dpon po chos skyong dpal bzang gi (= gis) | gnyer chen rin chen dpal bzang sangs rgyas thob par byas phyir brtson 'grus drag pos bsgrubs*).

²² For the third part of the printing colophon and its closing prose section see the biography of sGam po pa (as in note 20), fol. 67a7–b3 [= Appendix IV/4]. The scribe from the royal court, known as sKyabs pa or Gung thang dKon skyabs, had already been engaged together with rTogs ldan 'Od zer in the two printing projects of the year 1532; see notes 8 and 13. La phyi ba Nam mkha' 'od zer not only wrote out the verses of the three sections of the printing colophon, but had also acted as editor of the two bKa' brgyud pa prints. He obviously belonged to the teaching lineage of La phyi ba Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan (1372–1437) and La phyi ba Nam mkha' bSam grub rgyal mtshan (1408–1482); on these two masters, see Pahlke 2012: 7–9.

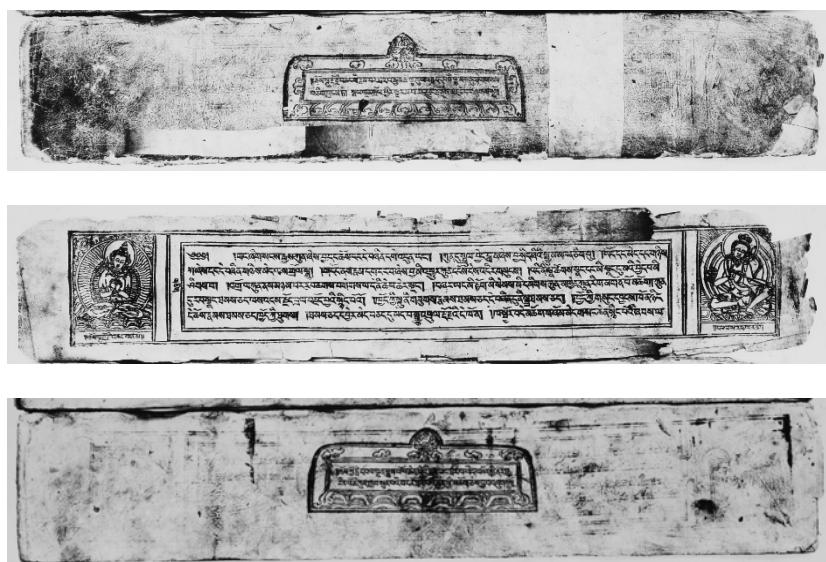
dKon skyabs, the scribe, [who is] a lay official and has acted
on behalf of
the ruler—the lord among men, the cakravartin,
[whose] lineage descends from the gods of clear light [and
is] immaculate,
[and who] has become [as splendid, as] the sun and moon
(i.e. Kun bzang Nyi zla grags pa) [in that] he removes the
misery of sentient beings—
[and] who is an expert in clarifying the incomparable
Doctrine and is matchless in drawing illustrations [which
provoke] understanding, has designed the letters here;
further, the one called rTogs ldan 'Od zer, who has
manifested the state of a great carefree [*yogin*], carved
them.

In the fourth part of the printing colophon, the sponsors of this printing project are listed and lauded for their special devotion to the doctrines of the bKa' brgyud pa school. The first place is taken by Zhang blon bSam grub rdo rje, now called “lord among men” (*mi dbang*), an epithet generally referring to secular rulers. Like his ancestor bTsan thog ['bum], he is idealised as an emanation of Vajrapāṇi. This seems to imply that his position in the southern borderlands of Mang yul Gung thang was undisputed and had not been affected by changes in the royal succession. The remaining supporters of the two bKa' brgyud pa prints came from the three Hidden Valleys of Glang 'phrang, Yol mo Gangs [kyi] r[w]a [ba] and La [l]de[bs], a hamlet in the upper region of Ko being especially highlighted in the last of these. The final prayer is devoted to the spread of the teaching tradition of sGam po pa bSod nams rin chen, La phyi ba Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, and the Eighth Kar ma pa Mi bskyod rdo rje (1507–1554).²³

Reprinting hagiographies—and spiritual songs—of the bKa' brgyud pa school was quite common in the south of Mang yul Gung thang during this period, one special case being a xylograph of the *Mi la ras pa'i rnam mgur* executed between the years 1538 and 1540, shortly prior to the *rDo rje 'chang rnam thar* and the biography of sGam po pa bSod nams rin chen. This project had originally been enjoined by King Kun bzang Nyi zla grags pa, and one finds among the main donors such religious masters as lHa btsun Rin chen (1437–

²³ The fourth part of the printing colophon can be found in the biography of sGam po pa (as in note 20), fols. 67b4–68a5 [= Appendix IV/4].

1557) and the latter's disciple gNas Rab 'byams pa Byams pa phun tshogs (1503–1581), both known for their contribution to Buddhist printing in Mang yul Gung thang. As the *mgur 'bum* collection was undertaken in the valley of La [l]de[bs], it is not surprising that one encounters among the religious authorities who acted as donors of this particular printing project Grags pa rgyal mtshan of the 'Jam dpal gling pa family and dKon mchog rdo rje of the Gur rigs mdo chen tradition, both supporters of the printing of the biography of the Iron Bridge Builder. Scribes and carvers, too, are known from earlier projects, namely once again the team of Drung yig dKon skyabs and rTogs Idan 'Od zer, which pair had also been recruited for the reprint of the *Mi la ras pa'i rnam mgur*.²⁴



²⁴ This reprint of the hagiography and spiritual songs of rJe btsun Mi la ras pa was executed by rTogs Idan Chos kyi rgya mtsho, a disciple of gTsang smyon Heruka, at two different sacred sites: the hagiography at 'Od gsal phug, a former residence of the great *yogin* and of gTsang smyon Heruka, and at Glang phug, an early meditation site of the 'Bri gung bKa' brgyud pa school in the La [l]de[bs] valley. See Sernesi 2011: 191–197, for a description of these two printing projects (only copies of the first xylograph are available); consult Everding 2015: 14–29, for an edition and translation of the printing colophon.

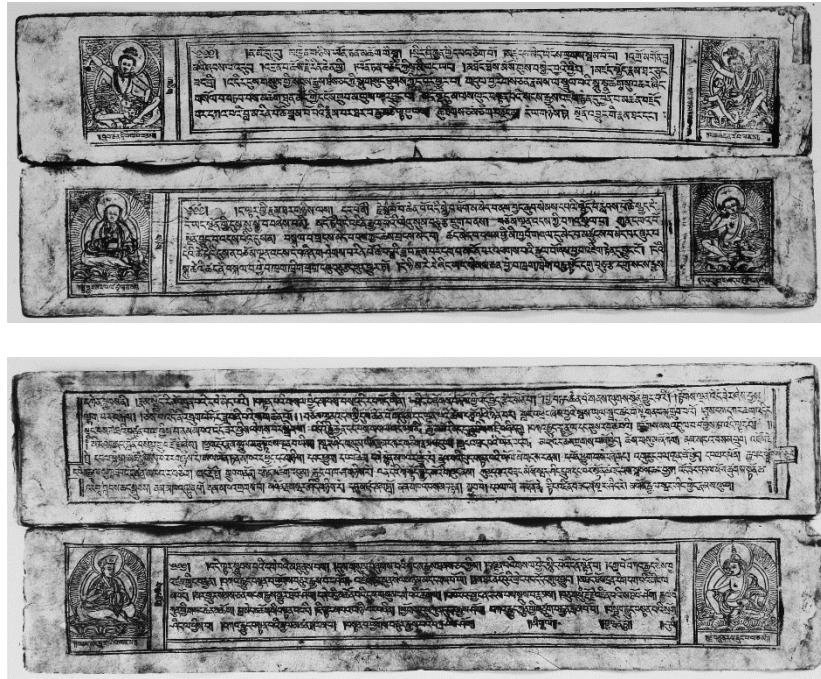


Fig. 5: 1544 print of the *rDo rje 'chang nām thar* and the *sGam po pa mām thar*

The two texts of the *rDo rje 'chang nām thar* and hagiography of the founder of the Dwags po bKa' brgyud pa which came from Glang 'phrang, include a complete iconographic programme, for they depict the bKa' brgyud pa teaching lineage from the primordial Buddha Vajradhara down to sGam po pa and Ras chung pa, the two main disciples of rJe btsun Mi la ras pa. Both prints exhibit the lotus motif on their cover pages, which is characteristic of the xylographs of Mang yul Gung thang, even if they may also be left out, as seen in a number of previous cases (see fig. 5).

7. Conclusion

The different printing projects bearing the name of dPon zhang bSam grub rdo rje have shown that in the 16th century the region of sKyid grong with its two Buddhist *vihāras*, the 'Phags pa lha khang and the Byams sprin lha khang, were under the political control of the kings of Mang yul Gung thang, whose support of the religious and cultural projects of the representatives of the rNying ma pa and bKa' brgyud pa schools included the carving of Buddhist block prints, comprising pilgrimage guidebooks, recently composed hagiographical accounts and voluminous treasure texts. Reprints were undertaken as well, and

all these endeavours took place in the southern borderlands of Yol mo Gangs [kyi] r[w]a [ba], Glang 'phrang and La [l]de[bs], described as Hidden Valleys in the respective printing colophons.

It was especially the third region that became a centre of block printing during this period. A further printing project in the year 1545 concerned once again the *rnam mgur* collection of sPrul sku Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan. This xylograph was executed one year after the bKa' brgyud pa prints from Glang 'phrang, and the person in charge of this undertaking was Nam mkha' rdo rje, the 'Ba' ra ba bKa' brgyud pa *yogin*. Like the Bo dong pa monk Chos dbang rgyal mtshan, he maintained close ties to the court of Mang yul Gung thang, and like dPon zhang bSam grub rdo rje, he reached the Hidden Valley at a time when the southern borderlands promised refuge and the prophecies of Padmasambhava applied to current political realities.²⁵

If we look at these different samples of the block-print culture from Mang yul Gung thang in regional and chronological terms, we can identify specific traits of the cover folio, the layout, signature characteristics, and woodcut illustrations of these xylographs produced over a time span of twelve years. The Buddhist craftsmen involved worked as a closely knit group, partly known already from printeries like those located at Kun gsal sGang po che or Brag dkar rta so. We do, to be sure, encounter variations in regard to the execution of the cover folio, the quality of the calligraphic script and the illustrations; this suggests a process of proofreading and revising of the final products on the part of individual editors. With regard to the material aspect of these xylographs, it should be noted that the valley of La [l]de[bs], known to have been an active centre of

²⁵ A biographical sketch of Nam mkha' rdo rje can be found in Ehrhard 2000a: 55–66. He is known as one of the teachers of Kun bzang Nyi zla grags pa and by 1540 had already printed, at a site to the north of rDzong dkar, a *rnam mgur* collection of 'Ba' ra ba rGyal mtshan dpal bzang po under the supervision of Chos dbang rgyal mtshan of Kun gsal sgang po che. For the printing colophon of this xylograph and that of the works of sPrul sku Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, produced five years later in La [l]de[bs], see Ehrhard 2000a: 130–147. The carvers for this project included dGe slong mKha' 'gro and dPon btsun Padma, who are known from other printing projects; see note 18. It should be noted that Nam mkha' rdo rje served as *rdor 'dzin* at the sacred site of La phyi during the three-year period from 1543 to 1546; this could explain the presence of the teaching tradition of La phyi ba Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan in the Glang 'phrang valley.

printing during this decade, provided the wood and paper necessary for the different printing projects throughout the kingdom.²⁶

As could be seen in the case of printing projects executed with the support of the royal minister, the actual printing blocks were stored in the Hidden Valleys—obviously in the temples there—following moves to the southern borderlands. The fact that blocks were executed under royal patronage also meant that they could be stored in the main *vihāra* in the capital of rDzong dkar, and this one can observe specifically in the case of xylographs carved under the supervision of the Bo dong pa monk and the 'Ba' ra ba *yogin*. They were still in existence at the beginning of the 19th century, when the physical state of the wood was still of such a good quality that they could be used once again for fresh prints of individual texts.²⁷

²⁶ For woodblock printing and the criteria relating to cover folio, layout, signature characteristics, orthographic peculiarities, and woodcut illustrations, see Clemente 2011: 55–57; concerning the material analysis of Buddhist xylographs and papermaking methods in Tibet, consult Helman-Wazny & van Schaik 2013: 2–5. On the valley of La [l]de[bs] as a region from where paper was exported and wood processed for xylographs produced in Mang yul Gung thang, see Ehrhard 2000a: 75.

²⁷ The existence of a great number of printing blocks in the rDzong dkar chos sde is recorded in the autobiography of Brag dkar rta so sPrul sku Chos kyi dbang phyug (1775–1837), who in the year 1806 used the blocks of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa's *Theg mchog rin po che'i mdzod*, for a fresh print; see Ehrhard 2004: 97–98. The other works included most of the products from the printery of Kun gsal sGang po che and the *rnam mgurs* of 'Ba' ra ba rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po and sPrul sku Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan. Chos kyi dbang phyug notes specifically that the blocks of the so-called Royal Print of the *Mani bka' 'bum* produced by the Bo dong pa school were among the collection; concerning this print, see note 2.

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Appendix

I

dPal ldan bla ma dam pa | sprul pa'i skyes mchog | nam mkha' rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rnam par thar pa | skal ldan dga' ba bskyed pa'i pad dkar yid kyi 'dod 'jo, 58 fols., vol. kha (xylograph). Collection University of Hamburg.

Printing colophon, fols. 56a4–58a6

[1]

Namo ratna guru bye |
sku yi gsang bas brtan g.yo kun la khyab |
gsung gi gsang bas zab mo'i rgyun kun gsung |
thugs kyi gsang bas 'gro kun bu ltar gzigs |
chos kun bdag po rdo rje 'chang la 'dud |

mkha' khyab mtha' bral bdal ba chen po las |
rang byung thugs rje 'gro la brtse gdongs la | [56b]
thub chen lung ltar snying po'i bstan pa 'dzin |
sa ra ha dpal zhabs kyi pad mor 'dud |

gang de'i sprul par zhang dang yang dgon pa |
rgyal mtshan dpal bzang la sogs thugs bskyed kyis |
snyigs dus 'gro ba skyab phyir yang sprul pa'i |
nam mkha' rgyal mtshan zhabs la snying nas 'dud |

[2]

khyod kyi gsung rab bdud rtsi'i chu rgyun gyi |
drang nges ston pa'i mgur 'bum legs bshad la |
gsung ngag las byung rnam thar che lung brgyan |
bcos bslad med cing dag par byas pa dang |
rje nyid gsung gis gab sbas mdzad pa yi |
gang gi mdzad pa ngo mtshar rgya mtsho las |
chu thigs tsam zhig brjod pa'i rnam thar dang |
chos skyong gtor ma ras chung tshe khrid sogs |
mtshan ldan bla ma'i thugs dgongs rdzogs pa dang |
ma rgan skal ldan chos 'dzom thog drangs pa'i |
bzang ngan 'brel thogs mkha' mnyam sems can kun |
gnas skabs bde zhing 'gal rkyen zhi ba dang |
mthar thug rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas thob pa'i phyir |

dus mtha'i bya bral chos kyi grags pa yis |
 mi zad par du bsgrub pa'i [57a] bsam sbyor gyis |
 sgo gsum don ldan dal ba kyang bsang nas |
 chos ldan grogs po bcu phrag gcig dang bcas |
 rgyal bas lung bstan mang yul gung thang la |
rgyal ba'i sras po bdud 'dul mngon po lde'am |
 mtshan gzhan kun bzang nyi zla grags pa'i |
 mtshan nyid kun tshang chos rgyal rgyal po mchog |
 mchog de dge la rab phyogs phyogs med du |
 dus gsum dus med rab dges dges pa'i rnnga |
 rnnga chen g.yang skyes gsang mtho mthor bsgrags pa'i |
 phyags der mi phyed dad pa'i gtsug phud can |
 rna ba'i bcud len yid kyi dga' ston mchog |
 ring nas thob pa'i zhabs drung tshegs kyis snyags |
 lha dbang gzhal med nyi la 'phros 'dra ba'i |
 rgyal po'i pho brang khyung rdzong dkar por sleb |
 lugs gnyis 'dod dgu'i 'byung gnas dam pa der |
 sprul pa'i chos rgyal yab yum sras bcas mjial |
 sngon tshe chos rgyal mes dbon rnam thar bzhin |
 zag med dga' bdes sgo gsum rtsol med khyab |
 gsal bya zhu byed dngos 'byor yid sprul pa'i |
 mchod pas rab mchod 'dod [57b] don gsol btab tshe |
 rgyal bu 'jig rten dbang phyug lo rgyus ltar |
 dge ba'i rnam 'gyur tshangs pa'i gsung nyid kyis |
 ji ltar 'dod bzhin smon pa'i re ba 'grub |

[3]

de'i mod la yig mkhan par mkhan sog |
 'thun (= mthun) rkyen gang dgos 'bad rtsol med pa la |
 gsol ja gsar phogs gnang sbyin bzang po yis |
 bka' yi chabs 'og rtsa ba'i mi sde bzhi'i |
 ya gyal nang tshar brgya 'og gtsang gi cha'i |
 kun gsal sgang chen dben pa'i ri khrod du |
 rtsa rgyud (= brgyud) bla ma rnams kyi thugs rje dang |
 chos rgyal bka' drin can gyi bka' drin las |
 gzo rig par la mkhas pa rnams drug gis |
 shing pho rta lo [= 1534] 'bru bcud smin dus kyi |
 zla ba gnyis la legs par rab tu grub |
yig mkhan snyings pa thugs rje skyabs pas bris |
 shing gzhogs dang ldan rong pa rnam rgyal yin |
 par shing 'jam dar nyer mkho'i lag g.yog sog |
dge bshes rnam grags dge sbyong mgon ne'o |

le lha'i rig byed *mkhas pa dri med do* |
zhus dag do dam *dge slong chos seng dang* |
bya bral chos kyi grags pa rang nyid do |

[4]

thog mtha' bar du ltas bzang dang bcas pa'i |
zhing bsam dngos dag mchod sbyin par mchog 'di |
bsgrubs pa'i yul dus gnas skabs thams cad du'ang |
sa phyogs byin brlabs dge [58a] shing bkra shis zhes |
yon mchod thams cad dga' mgu yi rang nas |
mi dbang bka' bsgrub dge ba'i zla thebs la |
drung pa grub pa bcu dpon 'phags pa sogs |
gtsang pa'i 'byor ldan drag rigs thams cad dang |
dge slong chos seng dpon slob 'khor bcas kyis |
ston mo la sogs gang dgos 'thun (= mthun) rkyen sgrubs (= bsgrubs) |
thugs sras bu chen *drung pa rnam rdor gyis* |
kha twam legs dang lcags nyeg gnyer brgyad phul |
rtogs pa'i dbang phyug yon tan rgyal mtshan dang |
rdo rje 'dzin pa dge slong rnam rgyal gyis |
tshogs 'khor g.yu dang ras dkar yu (= g.yu) gnyis phul |
bla ma rgyal mtshan dpal bzang ras 'ga' gcig |
a ne bde chen lcags sna rnam gsum phul |

[5]

'dis bsgrubs dge bas mar gyur 'gro kun gyis |
mtshan ldan bla ma dam pa mnyes byas nas |
gdod ma nyid nas lhun grub chos kyi sku |
rang rig bde ba chen po mngon 'gyur (= gyur) shog |

dge legs 'phel lo ||

II

*'Phags mchog spyan ras gzigs dbang phyug wa ti bzang po'i rnam
thar nam mkha'i nor bu ma rig mun sel*, 25 fols. (xylograph).
NGMPP reel no. L 686/16

Printing colophon, fol. 25a7–b7.

[1]

om̄ swasti ||
'jig rten mgon po rang byon spyan ras gzigs |
'phags mchog wa ti bzang por yongs grags pa | [25b]
'gro drug bde la 'khod mdzad thugs rje can |
'di'i rnam thar nam mkha' nor bu 'di |
chos rgyal zhang pa phyag na rdo rje'i rgyud (= brgyud) |
chos skyong rgyal po yab yum sku mched kyis |
sangs rgyas bstan dang 'gro rnams bde 'khod cing |
yab kyis mdzad pa bsal (= gsal) zhing bstan pa'i phuir |
dga' ba zhes bya chu pho 'brug gi lo [= 1532] |
sbas yul mchog gyur yol mo gangs ra (= rwa) ru |
dad dang brtson 'grus ser sna rab spangs nas |
mi zad par du sgrub pa'i sbyin bdag mdzad |

[2]

lha rigs rnams ni gangs can mkhas pa che |
chos rgyal bla (= lha) bzo' (= bzo) skyab pas stod rnams bris |
mkhas pa chos dpal bsham gyi (= gyis) ri mo dang |
gro thang dpal 'byor lha skos (= rkos) byas pa lags |
yi ge'i 'du byed 'dzem pa tshe rings (= ring) dang |
smon lam mkhas pa rtogs ldan 'od zer ba |
gro thang dpal 'byor lha bdun rab ldan gyis |
mkhas pa'i brtags (= rtags) bzhag so mo'i rtse las 'khrungs |

[3]

'di ltar grub pa'i dge ba dpag med 'thus (= mthus) |
shag (= shāk) thub bstan pa phyogs bcur rgyas pa dang |
bstan 'dzin skyes bu sku tshe ring zhing brtan |
'chad rtsod rtsoms dang sgom sgrub mthar phyin shog |
gzhan yang 'dzam gling 'di dang rgyal khams su |
rgyal po blon po btsun mo 'khor 'bangs kun |
rang rang rdzas dang longs spyod mn̄ga' thang rgyas |
mtho 'khur sma bskyod rtsod pa rab zhi shog |

de'i rgyu byas 'jig rten kun du yang |
nad mtshon (= tsha) mu ge'i 'jigs pa kun dang bral |
rgyu 'bras blang dor shes shing dge la spyod |
'di phyi don chen 'grub pa'i mthu ldan shog |

III

*O rgyan chen po'i rnam thar rgyas pa | yid bzhin nor bu | dgos mdod
(= 'dod) kun byung | mthong ba kun grol | pod dmar ma chen mo man
ngag bdud rtsi'i chu rgyun,* 378 fols. (manuscript made from the
original xylograph). Private collection.

Printing colophon, fols. 376b7–378b8

[1]

kun bzang snang mtha' spyan ras gzigs dbang gi |
thugs rje rtsal 'phros ngo ma'i rgya mtsho'i nang |
thod 'phreng rigs Inga de sprul mtshan brgyad sogs |
gang la gang 'dul sprul pas 'gro don [377a] mdzad |
u rgyan sprul pa'i sku la 'phyag 'tshal lo |

de'i mdzad pa mthong thos dran reg rnam (= rnams) |
smin grol thar pa'i lam la nges par sgrol |
rnam thar dri med dad pa'i sa bon ni |
'dzam gling gangs can mang yul gung thang 'dir |
mang bkur 'khor los sgyur rgyal bu ram shing |
shag (= shāk) rigs mes dbon rnam gsum 'jig rten mgon |
gdung rgyud (= brgyud) zab mo bdud 'dul mgon po lde |
kun bzang nyi zla grags pa rgyal ba'i mchog |
de nyid bka' blon phyag na rdo rje rgyud (= brgyud) |
zhang blon dri med bsam grub rdo rje dang |
rgyal mo kun dga' bu khrid yab yum gyis |
nyos byed ces bya shing mo lug gi lo [= 1535] |
bla ma dgongs grub sangs rgyas bstan pa dar |
mi dbang gong ma'i mnga' thang tho (= mtho) zhing rgyas |
mtha'i dmag dpung thams cad zlog phyir dang |
dgong (= gong) ma shes rab dpal bzang yab yum dang |
zhang blon rigs (= rig) 'dzin bzang po yab yum gyis |
bka' 'drin bsam (= bsams) nas thar lam bgrod pa'i phyir |
kun khyab par du grub pa'i sbyin bdag mdzad |

[2]

'di ltar grub pa'i rig byed mkhas pa ni |
 lha ris stod kyi cha rnames ma lus pa |
 gangs can *mkhas pa skyab pa'i rig pa'i rtsal* |
 smad kyi ri mo 'dzam gling *mkhas pa'i btso* (= gtso) |
dri med rig pa'i gar gyur rtag (= rtags) su bzhag |
 rkos rnames dpal 'byor sor mo'i rtse las khrungs (= 'khrungs)
 yi ge'i tshogs rnam (= rnames) dmu lugs *mkhas pa'i bu* |
'dzes (= 'dzem) *pa tshe rings* (= ring) sum pa'i lugs su bkod |
 yig brkos dpon po *dpon chen 'od zer ba* |
 sar tso *dpon btsun padma skyabs pa dang* |
'gro thang dpal 'byor lha bdun rab ldan zhes |
spang zhing dar 'dzoms rtsa pa mkha 'gro ni |
rus pa rin chen bzang po la sogs pa |
 dpon chen *mkhas pa de rnames thams cad kyi* |
 'bul ba [377b] bcu tshigs skon (= skong) *skyon mnyes pa'i mthus* |
mkhas pa'i rtags bzhag 'dzam gling dpal du shar |

[3]

'di nyid sgrub pa'i mgo rnames tshugs tsam nas |
padma'i rgyal tshab shākyā bzang po dang |
rigs (= rig) *'dzin bstan gnyis gling pa mn̄gon dga'i rje* |
 thugs rjes byon nas byin gyi brlabs par mdzad |
 bdud kyi dpung rnames rab tu pham byed te |
 mtha'i dmag dpung thams cad phyi la dengs |
 rgyal khams nad rims kun kyang so sor zhi |
'jig rten 'bru bcud la sogs rab tu 'phel |
 dus kyi 'khrug pa rnames kyang zhi bar gyur |
 mi dbang gong ma'i mn̄ga' thang rab tu rgyas |
 sbyin bdag chen po sku bsod rab 'bar bas |
 dngos dang rmi lam bla ma gong ma yi |
 byin brlabs lung ston (= bstan) snyung bzhi (=gzhi) kun las grol |
 bde stong yid la shar zhing bsam don grub |
 zla ba bzhi pa'i tshes sum (= gsum) rlung nad phrad |
 rgyal phur 'dzom pa'i 'grub sbyor bzang po la |
 gnas chen yol mo gangs kyi ra (= rwa) ba nas |
bsngags (= sngags) *'chang chen po shākyā bzang po yi* (= yis) |
 mang yul byams srin (= sprin) phyogs su dgongs pa gtad |
 rab tu gnas pa'i me tog thor bar snang |
 sbyin bdag *zhang blon bsam grub rdo rje yis* |
 thugs sgrub dkyil [378a] 'khor gsum pa zhal ras che |
mdo sngags mkhas grub sdom gsum ldan pa yi |

'dzam gling dbang phyug phun tshogs de nyid kyis |
dgyes pa rdo rje'i dkyil 'khor zhal che (= phye) nas |
me tog gtor zhing rab tu gnas pa mdzad |
ngo mtshar che ba'i rtags kyang mang du byung |

[4]

sbyin bdag dga' spro skyes pa'i smon lam ni |
na mo ghu (= gu) ru |
bdag ni bsam grub rdo rje yis |
'di ltar grub pa dge ba'i mthus |
pha mes gtso byas drin kyang (= bskyangs) pa'i |
dpal le rdo rje mtsho mo sogz |
ma gyur sems can thams cad dang |
'di phyir rgyu rkyen las 'brel rnamz |
gzhi lam bka' (= dka') spyad med pa ru |
rang sems sangs rgyas ngo shes nas |
thig le nyag gcig kun bzang gi |
dgongs pa rtogs shing grol bar shog |
rang nyid mngon par sangs rgyas kyang |
gzhan phan dang du blang byas nas |
zhi sde (= bde) don du mi gnyer bar |
rgyal ba'i mdzad pa ji bzhin du |
snying rje'i sems kyi rgyu byas nas |
gang la gang 'dul 'phrin las kyis |
'gro rnamz smin cing grol bar byas |
'bras bu snying rje theg pa yi |
nye lam 'khor med don la sbyangs |
sangs rgyas sa la rab khod (= 'khod) shog |
de ltar ma thob bar du yang |
'jig rten 'gro ba thams cad kun |
tshe rings (= ring) nad med bde skyid ldan |
chos 'thun (= mthun) spyod pa'i bkra shis shog ||

mangalam |

IV

*Chos rje dpal ldan sgam po pa chen po'i rnam par thar pa yid bzhin
gyi nor bu rin po che kun khyab snyan po'i ba dan thar pa'i rgyan
gyi mchog*, 68 fols. (xylograph). NGMPP reel no. L 803/6–804/1

Printing colophon, fols. 66a5–68a5

[1]

e ma ho |
lha mi'i mchod gnas rang byung sprul pa'i sku |
'phags pa shing kun zhes bya'i byang gi phyogs |
rang byon wa ti bzang po bzhugs pa'i shar |
lha'i dge snyen (= bsnyen) gle ru zhes bya'i mgul |
u rgyan lung bstan sbas yul 'bur du dod |
glang 'phrang [66b] zhes bya'i skyed tshal gzhung 'di ru |
gangs ri phreng mdzes yid 'ong legs par bskor |
rdo rje'i brag dang gser g.yu'i g.ya' spang can |
ri chen sman sogs ljon pa'i nags gseb na |
yan lag brgyad ldan chu bo dbang lan 'bab |
me tog rgyan pa shong bud rgyang gru len |
rin chen sna Inga'i gter dang sa zhag bcud |
ma smos lo tog 'dod dgu char ltar 'bab |
sa bcud ldan pas 'bru bcud dus su smin |
dge bcu 'dzom pa'i gsang ba skyid ba phug |
pho skyes pha bos cha byad bgo la 'joms |
mo skyes mkha' 'gro'i cha byad zas bcud ldan |
yul lugs dge bcu'i khrims rnams legs par bskrun |

[2]

e ma |
bskal bzang sgron ma bstan pa shar ba'i tshe |
sangs rgyas stong gi 'phrin las pad tshal rgyan |
zas gtsang sras kyi bstan pa rin po che |
lung rtogs bshad sgrub bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan btsugs |
bstan 'dzin zhabs la gus pa'i gtsug gis 'dud |

'das pa'i sangs rgyas me tog zla mdzes zhes |
ma 'ongs sangs rgyas nam mkha' dri ma med |
da lta'i sangs rgyas zla 'od gzhon nu zhes |
gangs can khrod du dwags po lha rje byon |
rnying pa'i (= snying po'i) don rgyud spel la gus pas 'dud |

gangs can khrod 'dir theg chen 'brug sgra sgrogs |
 stong nyid seng ge'i na ro phyogs bcur khyab |
 lhun grub rmad byung rang grol phyag rgya che |
 skal ldan snod ldan 'bras bu mchog la 'god |
 'dzam gling grags pa'i zhabs la gus pas 'dud |

 zla ba gsum rgyan sdom gsum rin chen bkras |
 ngur smig rgyal mtshan bstan 'dzin gtsug na mdzes |
 bka' rgyud (= brgyud) bstan pa'i srog shing rin po che |
 rgyal ba'i bstan 'dzin mchog la gus pas 'dud |

 nam mkha' zad nas 'dab chags 'dog par mi 'gyur te |
 rang du (= mthu) zad nas slar yang ldog par 'gyur ba bzhin |
 bla ma'i yon tan dus gsum rgyal ba kun gyis kyang | [67a]
 bskal par brjod kyang zad par 'gyur ba med pa ste |
 rgyud (= brgyud) 'dzin gdul bya'i snang ngor zur tsam brjod |

[3]

'brug mtshal (= tshal) 'bri stag skar (= kar) ma la sags (= sogs) kyi |
 bstan 'dzin rnams la rnam thar sna tshogs snang |
 de'i nang nas ma phyi'i khungs btsun pa |
 sgam po'i gdung rgyud (= brgyud) 'dzin pa'i gcung po ni |
 tshul khriims snying po phag mo gru pa dang |
 dus gsum mkhyen pa skar (= kar) ma 'sbag zhi' (= pak shi) dang |
 bsgom pa legs mdzes sogs kyis gang bsgrigs pa'i |
 chos sku rdo rje 'chang gi ma phyi dang |
 lhan geig tu ni dvags lha (= la) sgam po nas |
 lus ngag dal ba khyad gsad spyan drangs te |
 bstan pa spel dang gser 'phreng kha skong phyir |
 spang lo byad (= byang) rtse grags pa rgyal mtshan sogs |
 bstan pa'i gsal byed lo pañ mkhas pa'i rgyud (= brgyud) |
 gdung rus dri med rigs rus khungs btsun pa |
 dkon mchog mchod cing dpon gyi zhabs tog brtson |
 thad kha'i 'gros lam g.yog gi skyong bran mkhas |
 dbul 'phongs rnams la lhag par snying rje che |
 gnyer chen rin chen dpal bzang zhes bya dang |
 a ma byang chub dpal mo la sogs 'gro rnams kyis (= kyi) |
 shes rgyud sgrib pa rnams gnyis dag phyir dang |
 bsod nams ye shes tshogs gnyis rab rdzogs nas |
 rnam mkhyen rgyal ba'i go 'phangs thob phyir dang |
 longs spyod g.yo ba snying po med gzigs nas |
 sgyu ma'i nor la snying po blang ba'i phyir |

*wa'i rgyud 'dzin zur gtso (= tsho) dpon chen ni |
chas (= chos) skyong dpal bzang zhes byas par 'di bsgrubs |*

[4]

yang rdzogs dka' rgya dbus tha bar gsum dang |
ston mo bcu gzigs (= tshigs) sogs kyi (= kyis) mnyes par byas |
ma phyi yi ge brkos mkhan gtso bo ni |
mnga' bdag mi dbang 'khor los bsgyur ba'i bdag |
'od gsal lha babs dri ma med pa'i gdung |
nyi zla lta bur 'gro ba'i sdug bsngal sel |
de'i las 'dzin drung yig [67b] dkon skyabs ni |
rnam spyod (= dpyod) ri mo 'dran pa'i (= 'dren pa'i) dpe med pa'i |
bstan pa'i gsal byed mkhas pas 'dir bkod yin |
bya btang chen po gnas lugs sngon (= mngon) gyur pa'i |
rto gs ldan 'od zer zhes byas lhag par brkos |

ces pa 'di ni 'brug lo [= 1544] hor zla bzhi pa'i | bcom ldan 'das kyi
dus chen po gsum dang ldan pa tshes bcwo lnga'i nyin par | glang
'phrang zhes bya'i sbas yul sbrang tshang gi sti (= bsti) gnas su grub
pa'o |
zhus dag dkar chag 'dir snang bas mtha'i btsun pa *la phyis pa* (= *la phyi ba*) nam mkha' 'od zer gyis legs par bsgrigs ||

[5]

'di'i rgyu rkyen dad pas gsal 'debs ni |
rgya mtsho ri nang du chu thigs ji bzhin du |
bka' rgyud (= brgyud) stan (= bstan) la dad gus rab che ba'i |
phyogs nas 'bul ba bgyis pa 'di ltar ro |
mi dbang zhang blon bsam grub rdo rje zhes |
phyag rdor rnam sprul mthu stobs ldan pa yis |
spar shing gsum yon rnam dkar gcig rnames phul |

glang 'phrang pa'i yon bdag | mgo'ang *chos grags* pa zho phyed |
tshes gsum zho kog | *nam mkha' bsam grub* | 'dzom rdo rje | *dpal skyes* | *mtsho skye* | mkha (= kha) ra gnyis re | *a la yon tan mkha* (= kha) ra phye dang gnyis | *dbang phyug dpal chen* | *dge snyen* (= *bsnyen*) mkha' (= kha) ra phye re |

'rgyal ba'i (= rgyal bas) lung bstan pa'i yol mo gangs ra nas | *dpon phyug* gser zho gang | 'gu (= gu) ru *dpal ldan* zho phyed | *dpal dpon* | *rgyal dpon* | sha ru re | *dpon rgyal lcags zab* 'od chen mkha' ra gcig |

zhang rdo rje | grub gnon | dkon mchog 'bum | 'rgyud pa (= *brgyud pas*) kha sha gnyis re|

lan de'i ko stod skyid mo'i gzhung nas | *kun dga' bzang mos* spar shing drug dang bar ston che 'debs skabs chang byas | 'od zer *dpal mos tshugs* ston che 'debs skabs chang sgrubs (= bsgrubs) | *nam mkha' lhun po* | *nam mkha' grags pa* | *mgon rnam* spar shing gnyis re | *dbu mdzad nam blo* | *nam mkha' bsam brtan* (= *gtan*) | *sgrub de* | *dpal le* | *mgon ne* | *rting* (= *ting*) | *'dzin bzang* mo spar shing re | *mngon rgyal* spar shing phyed rnames phul [68a]

[6]

'di ltar sgrubs (= bsgrubs) pa'i dge ba'i mthu nus pas |
dus gsum bzhugs pa'i sangs rgyas thams cad kyis |
bstan pa'i gsal byed snying po'i don ston pa |
dwags po bka' rgyud (= brgyud) zhes bya 'dzam gling brgyan |
bka' rgyud (= brgyud) bstan pa phyogs bcur rgyas par shog |

'jig rten mun sel mnyam med dwags po yi |
rnam thar nor bu'i phreng ba 'dod dgu byung |
mthong thos dran reg dag pa'i zhing la mkhod (= 'khod) |
mar gyur sems can sangs rgyas myur thob shog |

dge 'dis mtshon pa'i dus gsum dge ba'i tshogs |
'khor dang mya ngan 'das pas sdud (= bsdus) pa rnames |
bcu gsum rdo rje 'dzin pa'i sa thob shog |

rgyal ba kun gyi gsang chen mchog |
bla med mchog gi bstan pa 'di |
ji ltar mkha' la nyi shar bzhin |
phyogs dus kun du (= tu) dar rgyas shog |

bka' rgyud (= brgyud) kun gyi gtsug brgyan rgam (= sgam) po pa |
bsgrub rgyud (= brgyud) bstan pa'i srog shing 'la phyir pa' (= la phyi ba) |
bka' rgyud (= brgyud) bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan skar (= kar) ma pa |
bstan pa phyogs bcur rgyas pa'i bkra shis shog ||

mangalam | bhawantu | shubham ||

Overview of Tibetan Paper and Papermaking: History, Raw Materials, Techniques and Fibre Analysis

Agnieszka Helman-Ważny (Hamburg)

1. Study of Tibetan Paper and Papermaking

The specificity of Tibetan papermaking lies in the properties of native plants, the living conditions of peoples dwelling on the world's highest plateau, and aspects of Tibetan culture that together create a distinctive craft. Tibetan papermaking has traditionally been rural and regional. It has made use of abundant local plant and fibre resources. Papermakers developed methods that reflected the unique qualities of their raw materials, which resulted in paper products used as writing supports for Tibetan books with distinctive properties and features sometimes traceable to their place of origin when compared with the distribution of papermaking plants growing in the Himalayas and Central Asia.

Despite the increased attention that has been recently devoted to book technology worldwide, the study of Tibetan paper is still in a very pioneering phase. There are only a few publications which consider paper made in the Himalayan region. The most important work on Nepali paper is Jasper Trier's book *Ancient Paper of Nepal. Result of Ethno-technological Fieldwork on its Manufacture, Uses and History – with Technical Analyses of Bast, Paper and Manuscripts*, published in 1972.¹ This comprehensive study lists papermaking workshops involved in the production of traditional *lokta* paper visited by Trier in 1970, describes the local fibres and technology used, and provides the unique account of living papermaking craft in Nepal at that time. But there is no such similar study of Tibetan paper. Trier's work is invaluable to papermaking scholars; however, some of his ideas considering how the techniques of papermaking were transferred to Nepal around 1000 C.E., and the origins of raw materials, deserve to be reviewed and reconsidered in the light of more recent research.

¹ Trier 1972.

Scarce Tibetan sources, such as Jampa Tsundru's book *Preservation and Development of the Manufacturing Technology of Traditional Tibetan Paper* published in 2010, mention types of paper in relation to area of provenance, colour, thickness, or other subjective features.² It is very rare to find information about precise ingredients and production processes, and thus it is difficult to merge such information and use it according to the western standards of historical paper research.

On the other hand a number of reports on papermaking methods in the Himalayas written by western scholars or travellers are available.³ The recently reported large centres of papermaking in central Tibet were near Dakpo, bordering on Kongpo, in the district of Nyemo west of Lhasa, and near Gyantse. In eastern Tibet they were originally in Kham, specifically near Derge, Pelyül and Kandze, in Pemakö near Loyül and Metok, in Dagyab near Chamdo, and in the Kongpo.⁴ Such reports are very informative concerning the general methods and technological stages of papermaking, as those have not changed since the beginning of papermaking to such a great degree as, for example, in Europe or in China. Perhaps the earliest is the account by the British official Samuel Turner of papermaking in Bhutan in the mid-18th century.⁵ In fact methods of papermaking in Nepal, Tibet, Bhutan, and even India are very similar.⁶ Again, the best chance of differentiating among those papers is by the systematic study of the local tools that may leave specific marks on final paper produced, the plants used for their production, along with other features useful for typology. Such knowledge about the details of production and raw materials used would possibly allow us to see regional differences between local workshops.

Additionally, there exist very few historical documents—which have, moreover, not been explored with respect to papermaking—that could support the study of papermaking and book production in the Himalayas. However, there is evidence for one case. As Holmberg and March argue, in the 18th century, the villagers of Bomthang, Nepal, had an obligation to supply paper to

² Tsundru 2010.

³ Tschudin 1958, Sandermann 1968, Hunter 1978, Koretsky 1986, Helman-Ważny 2001, Richel 2004.

⁴ Weber 2007: 111.

⁵ Turner 1800: 99–100; Schaeffer 2009: 8.

⁶ Imaeda 1989, Premchand 1995, Soteriou 1999.

the government administration offices of the Ranas in Kathmandu.⁷ The village archive contains information about the areas for gathering raw materials, an activity that was authorised officially every few years depending on harvesting needs. This, like many other papermaking reports, shows that paper could be traded over long distances, but harvested raw materials have always been exploited locally. This is why the best way to settle a paper (and thus possibly a book) in its place of origin is to link it to local plant resources.

2. History

The historical origins of Tibetan papermaking are difficult to determine. Our knowledge about the invention and transmission of paper in Central Asia and Tibet in the first millennium is selective and fragmentary. There is a suggestion by a contemporary Tibetan scholar that paper was already available in what is referred to as the Shangshung kingdom (i.e. prior to the formation of the Tibetan empire) and that the invitation letters to the Chinese imperial princess were already written on paper.⁸ The *Tang Annals* mention a date, 648 CE, in the report of the Tibetan emperor Songtsen Gampo's request of paper, ink, and other writing utensils from the Chinese emperor. Yet, until the middle of the 8th century, most Tibetan official documents were written on wood. The entry for the years 744–745 in the *Old Tibetan Annals* records the transfer of official documents from wooden 'tallies' (*khram*) to paper.⁹ Thus, it appears that by the time writing appeared in Tibet, the technology of papermaking was already known not only in the Far East but also in Central Asia.

The invention of paper is traced back to China. The year 105 CE is often cited as the date for the inception of paper technology, when the technique of making paper was reported to the Eastern Han Emperor Ho-di by Marquis Cai, an official of the Imperial Court. However, archaeological records contradict this claim, suggesting rather that paper had already been known in China in the 2nd century BCE. The westward spread of papermaking through Chinese Turkestan along the Silk Road has been widely investigated, but its migration south—to India via the Himalayas including Tibet and Nepal—remains unexplored.

⁷ Holmberg & March 1999.

⁸ Tsundru 2010.

⁹ Uebach 2008: 57–69; Dotson 2009: 52–53, 124.

Thousands of manuscripts written in Tibetan language from before the 10th century have been discovered in Dunhuang in the Gansu province.¹⁰ Most estimates date these manuscripts to the time of the Tibetan occupation of Dunhuang that occurred in ca. 781–848 CE, but recent research by Géza Uray, Tsuguhiro Takeuchi, and Sam van Schaik has dated a large portion of these manuscripts to the post imperial period (the 10th century).¹¹

3. Raw Materials

The most important source material for papermaking in Tibet were (and continue to be) the various plants of the Thymelaeaceae botanical family. Thymelaeaceae is a family of dicotyledonous flowering plants with 898 species in 50 genera. The phloem contains very strong fibres, which make the bark of many species of this family very suitable for the manufacture of high-quality paper such as that used for bank notes and writing supports. These fibres are long and narrow, and supportive cells provide tensile strength without limiting flexibility. These characteristics render the bark a valuable material for papermaking. Most species are poisonous and some are important medicinally. This quality makes them a good source material for papermaking, since such paper can resist insect infestation and therefore be more durable and long-lasting. The species are small trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants. Paper plants belonging to the Thymelaeaceae family according to western plant taxonomy are well known by Tibetans in rural areas where they go by local names.¹² The papermaking plants are generally named in Tibetan *shog gu me tog* ('paper flower'), *shog shing* ('paper tree'), and *shog ldum* ('paper plant').¹³

The species used for making paper in Tibet and the Himalayas confirmed by accounts from travelers, explorers and missionaries, data from botanical studies, and interviews with Tibetan craftsmen include: *Daphne* sp. (*D. papyracea*, *D. bholua*, *D. aurantiaca*, *D. cannabina*, *D. retusa*, *D. sureil*, *D. involucrata*), *Edgeworthia gardneri*, *Wikstroemia canescens*, *Aquilaria agallocha*, and *Stellera*

¹⁰ For more on the history of this finds and number of Tibetan manuscripts discovered see van Schaik 2002: 129–139.

¹¹ Uray 1988: 515–528, Takeuchi 2004: 345, Takeuchi 2012, van Schaik 2013: 125–127.

¹² For more on the Tibetan knowledge about plants, see Boesi 2005: 33–48.

¹³ Boesi 2014: 96.

chamaejasme. These plants grow in most of the areas inhabited by Tibetan people, and can be easily collected. The high altitude of the Tibetan Plateau and the extremes of its climate make the vegetation distinctive from all other areas of Asia. Examining the distribution of the *Daphne*, *Edgeworthia* and *Wikstroemia* spp. over the Tibetan plateau, one notices that the majority thrive in the southern and eastern regions in what could be called “*rong* areas.”¹⁴ The *rong* areas are characterised by land of deep valleys cut by strong rivers, hosting lush forests and milder temperatures and land that is suitable for agriculture. These areas roughly corresponds to the southern regions of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), northwest Yunnan, and western Sichuan provinces.¹⁵

The genus *Daphne* contains up to 95 species growing in Asia and Europe, from which 52 species can be found (41 endemic) in China. Those most often used for papermaking are *Daphne bholua* and *Daphne papyracea*. These species grow wild, but many others from this genus have been cultivated since species of *Daphne* have long been valued by gardeners for their fragrant flowers. The bark contains a large amount of hemicelluloses which makes it valuable in the manufacture of paper. Thus *Daphnes* are the base plants for making paper at the foot of the Himalayas. All parts of the plant are said to be poisonous; however, the roots and bark are often used in the traditional Tibetan and Nepalese medicine for the treatment of fevers.¹⁶ The bark has a high content of diterpene esters of the tigliane daphnane type.¹⁷

Daphne bholua is a species of flowering shrub that grows at altitudes of 1700–3500 m in the Himalayas and neighbouring mountain ranges, from Nepal to southern China. *D. bholua* grows well in the Himalayas and adjoining ranges, from Nepal through Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Myanmar and Vietnam, into Sichuan, Xizang (Tibet), and northwest Yunnan. At lower altitudes it is found as an evergreen in thickets and forest margins; at higher altitudes, it is deciduous and is found in pastures and grassy glades. It usually reaches a height of about 2.5 m, though some specimens reach 4 m or more. This species has leathery leaves and deep pink flowers with a

¹⁴ Boesi 2014.

¹⁵ Strachey 1854.

¹⁶ Dawa 1999.

¹⁷ Retrieved on July 4, 2015 from http://khartasia-crcc.mnhn.fr/en/common_names_en/winter-daphne.

powerful fragrance, and a number of named cultivars have been bred and are grown as garden plants in Europe and North America. In Nepal, the *D. bholua* plant's common name is *lokta*; in Tibet it is *stag bu chung* and *stag chung ba*.¹⁸ Together with other *Daphne* species (*D. cannabina*, and *D. involucrata*) this plant was also used in Nepal for papermaking where it was possibly known under the local names *baruwa* and *kāgate*.¹⁹

Daphne papyracea grows in the forests, on the shrubby and herbaceous slopes at 700–3100 m in China (Guangdong, Guangxi, Guizhou, Hubei, Hunan, Sichuan, and Yunnan provinces), India, and Nepal. The separation of the varieties of *D. papyracea* from the following three species, *D. feddei*, *D. longituba*, and *D. kusei*, is difficult, and it is very possible that all are used for making paper depending on availability.

Other species nearly endemic to Tibetan cultural regions are *Daphne aurantiaca*, *D. tenuiflora*, *D. purpurascens*, *D. taylorii*, and *D. yunnanensis*. These can be found in forests, on the shrubby slopes, among herbaceous plants at an elevation of 2600–3500 m. These species all have highly poisonous properties and were used in folk medicine; however, they may be too small to be a practical component for papermaking on a large scale.

The genus *Edgeworthia*, published first around 1840, contains five species growing in Asia, among which four species are found (three endemic) in China. The one most commonly used for papermaking is *Edgeworthia chrysanthra* (synonymous with *Edgeworthia papyrifera*) growing in forests and on shrubby slopes from 300–1600 m in its natural habitat in the Chinese provinces of Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi, Guizhou, Henan, Hunan, Jiangxi, Yunnan, and Zhejiang. It grows wild, but has also been cultivated in China, Korea, Georgia, and Japan (where it is naturalised).

However, the species of *Edgeworthia* used for papermaking in the Himalayas is *E. gardneri* which grows in moist places in the forests of Tibetan cultural areas (E Xizang, NW Yunnan), Bhutan, India, North Myanmar, and Nepal at an elevation of 1000–2500(3500) m (fig. 1). Other species of this genus possibly used are *E. eriosolenoides* growing in SE Yunnan (Xichou), and *E. albiflora* growing in the forests and valleys at 1000–1200 m in southwestern Sichuan (Huili, Miyi).

¹⁸ gSung-rtén, svv. (records for *Daphne tangutica* Maxim)

¹⁹ Trier 1972: 50–59; Holmberg & March 1999: 47.

Dard Hunter in his book *Papermaking: The History and Technique of an Ancient Craft* mentions that the origins of using *Edgeworthia* as a raw material are uncertain. He references a record stating that in the year 1597 a family of papermakers was granted the privilege of gathering *Edgeworthia papyrifera (mitsumata)* bast in a certain place in Japan, and he suggests that this is the earliest record. This genus is supposed to symbolise the Chinese character “yellow lucky fragrance” (Hunter 1978: 57). Unfortunately, the plants of this genus have thus far not been recognised as papermaking material in earlier Tibetan or other written sources from the Himalayan region, and fibre analysis cannot clearly distinguish *Edgeworthia* from *Daphne* or *Wikstroemia* in paper of early Tibetan books. Thus we do not have evidence for using *Edgeworthia* in Tibet and the Himalayas before the 16th century. However, nowadays *Edgeworthia gardneri* is often mentioned as the main papermaking material together with *Daphne* in Nepal, and it is very possible that it was indeed used in the early days of paper history in both Tibet and Nepal.

The genus *Wikstroemia* has about 70 species and is widely distributed in eastern Asia, Malesia, and the islands in the Pacific. In China, the genus is represented by 49 species (43 endemic) and is found mainly in southern China, especially in the Hengduan Mountains.²⁰ *Wikstroemia* is considered to be closely related to *Daphne* and also used for papermaking in Tibet. It grows at 1200–2500 m.

It should be noted that only *Stellera chamaejasme* thrives at high altitudes, and in some regions of Tibet it has been used as the main raw material for papermaking (figs. 2 & 3). *Stellera* is a small genus of less than 10 species found growing in comparatively dry conditions in areas such as Central Asia, and parts of China, Tibet, Bhutan, Mongolia, Nepal, and Russia.²¹ It is widely distributed along the Himalayan range where it is found on sunny, dry slopes and sandy places at altitudes of 2600 to 4500 m. This plant was recorded first by Nikolai Przhevalsky in 1873, and subsequently by Hossie in 1910, along with some other ‘plant hunters,’ botanists and

²⁰ Qi & Wang 2004: 324–326.

²¹ Gansu, Hebei, Heilongjiang, Henan, Jilin, Liaoning, Nei Mongol, Ningxia, Qinghai, Shaanxi, Shanxi, Sichuan, Xinjiang, Xizang, Yunnan. See <http://flora.huh.harvard.edu/china/mss/volume13/Thymelaeaceae.pdf>, retrieved on July 1, 2015.

geographers.²² It is a pest plant which successfully competes with other species and quickly colonises degraded pasturelands. From the 1960s onwards, pasture over-exploitation has been a widespread phenomenon all over the Tibetan plateau and *Stellera* has been increasingly significant. This implies that, when considering the amount of source material for papermaking that was available in the past, we cannot rely on the present abundance and distribution for this species.²³ On the other hand it is the only papermaking species that grows at over 3500 m above sea level.

Thus the production of paper from these *Stellera* roots is practiced in the highest places in the world, where practically nothing else grows.²⁴ These root bast fibres create a very specific soft type of paper that is considered to be of lower quality than bark paper made of *Daphne*, *Edgeworthia*, or *Wikstroemia* spp. The roots are especially difficult to harvest, which places a serious limitation on the quantity of paper that can be produced. They additionally require a longer time for processing. Thus in general they are only used in papermaking when other sources are not available. On the other hand, the poisonous properties of these plants make the paper resistant to damage caused by insects, meaning that it may ultimately be more durable than other types of paper.



Figs. 1–3 (from left to right): *Edgeworthia gardneri* in Khumbu region, Nepal; *Stellera chamaejasme* found in southwestern Tibet; Root of *Stellera* used for making paper

²² The samples of *Stellera chamaejasme* and its descriptions are available in the collection of the Bailey Hortorium Herbarium, Cornell University.

²³ Boesi 2014.

²⁴ Koretsky 1986.

Species of *Oxytropis* (*dug srad*²⁵) from the Leguminosae family were also used as an addition to making paper in some regions of Tibet. However, its anatomical features in paper have not yet been described. Much more rare is paper made of eaglewood bark *Aquilaria agallocha* (*a ga ru*²⁶), also from the Thymelaeaceae family, which produces paper considered to be of medium quality. The main feature of the paper made of agalloch eaglewood bark is its thickness, which is said to be the best for traditional Tibetan books. *A. agallocha* is very rare and primarily native to the mountains in Silhet and some eastern provinces of Bengal, but it later spread to other parts of Asia, such as Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, Laos, Indonesia, and India. The bark of this tree was also used in unprocessed form, similar to palm leaves. Jute (*Cotchorus* sp.) was also used in Nepal; however, as a raw material for papermaking, it is most typical of India where sunn hemp (*Crotalaria juncea*), roselle (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*), and ramie (*Boehmeria nivea*) were also used.²⁷

4. Fibre Analysis

Fibre analysis informs us what papers are made of, since the primary feature of paper is the type of raw material used for its production. Within the Thymeleaceae family of plants, *Stellera chamaejasme* fibres are distinctive in the examination of historic papers, and can be clearly differentiated from *Daphne*, *Edgeworthia*, and *Wikstroemia* despite the fact that all plants belong to the Thymelaeaceae family. The latter three, however, are still not fully referenced and cannot be easily distinguished from each other. However, differences between the above Thymeleaceae family plants and other plant species are obvious, so it is possible to distinguish particular types of raw materials.

This ability to distinguish separate species in paper fibre is why fibre analysis, if and when applicable, is helpful for locating regional origin and sometimes for dating, especially when using a method that entails overlapping typologies. When comparing the results of fibre analysis of manuscripts with the distribution of the same plant, we can obtain information about the possible region of a book's origin. The area suggested by plant distribution can be critically compared to other sources of information, such as textual content and manuscript

²⁵ Yonten Gyatso 1998, s.v. *srad ma*.

²⁶ Yonten Gyatso 1998, s.v. *a ga ru*.

²⁷ Premchand 1995, Soteriou 1999.

format. In this way, we can learn whether all features originate from the same area (understood as a cultural context, country, or region) or not. These results then help in answering some questions about trade and import of paper and manuscripts in the Himalayas and Central Asia, even though much more research needs to be done to achieve higher precision for regional attribution.

The summary of my results of the fibre analyses performed on Tibetan books and documents confirms that besides Thymeleaceae family plants, *Broussonetia* and *Morus* spp. (paper mulberry and mulberry), rags-derived fibres, and many other components were used for paper production.²⁸ In fact, there may have been any number of local fibrous materials added in various different quantities to paper, which may indicate local procedures of making paper or creating specifically local properties.

Fibre analysis of paper in Tibetan books and documents confirms that Tibetan paper in the past was made mainly from the phloem of shrubs belonging to the *Daphne* and *Edgeworthia* species (collectively referred to in Tibetan as *shog shing*)—which still provides the basic materials for paper made in the Himalayan region—at least by the 9th century, and from the roots of the *Stellera chamaejasme* species (*re lcag pa*) at least by the 10th century in Central Tibet.²⁹ The present author's preliminary research shows that *Stellera* root fibres are the dominant component mostly in early manuscripts from both Central and Western Tibet, but the printing technology required usage of *Daphne/Edgeworthia* paper.

Interestingly, together with Sam van Schaik I have confirmed the paper of Tibetan manuscripts dated as early as the 9th century to be composed of *Daphne/Edgeworthia*.³⁰ One of these manuscripts contains clear textual evidence of having been made in Central Tibet during the Tibetan imperial period (IOL Tib J 1459). Another letter, found in Miran (Or.15000/513), was also found to be composed of *Daphne/Edgeworthia* fibres, this time mixed with paper mulberry fibres. This letter may well have come from Central Tibet, as it contains a seal identified by Sam van Schaik which is partly effaced but contains the word ‘palace’ (*pho brang*), an imperial administrative centre of which none are known to have existed in Central Asia. In addition, the three 12th–13th century manuscripts

²⁸ Helman-Ważny & van Schaik 2013, Helman-Ważny 2014.

²⁹ Helman-Ważny 2014.

³⁰ Helman-Ważny & van Schaik 2013.

from Khara-khoto are also of *Daphne/Edgeworthia*, and may have been brought to Khara-khoto by Tibetan monks, who are known to have been active at the Tangut court. Conversely, the paper of none of the Tibetan manuscripts known to be produced in Dunhuang was made from Thymelaeaceae fibres.

My research suggests that usage of particular raw materials is strongly tied to geographical regions. This is supported by the fact that the altitude range of *Daphne* sp. reaches 3500 m above sea level, and *Stellera* sp. is widely distributed along the Himalayan range at altitudes of 2600 to 4500 m, and that *Daphne* plants need much more moisture than *Stellera*. All this adds up to the fact that these two species very rarely grow in the same habitat.

5. Tools and Technique of Papermaking

5.1. Collecting Raw Materials

Traditionally, the production of paper took place in particular villages and involved most of their inhabitants in the harvesting of the raw materials, which was the first step of the production. Since the trees were not cultivated in the Himalayas, harvesting might require workers to travel sometimes even for days in search of proper plants. Ideal plants were typically two to three years old and measured at least one meter in height. The longest branches were cut at about 10 cm above the ground so that the plant could regenerate.³¹ Depending on area and local climate, the bark of *Daphne*, *Edgeworthia* and *Wikstroemia* spp. was usually harvested from October to May (with a break during the cold winter months). The best time of bark collection is late spring after the full leaf develops, when phloem is easier to separate from the stem and the outer bark is easier to remove. The root of *Stellera chamaejasme* is usually harvested in the fall (fig. 4).

³¹ Trier 1972: 70.



Fig. 4: The *Stellera chamaejasme* plant being dug out in Central Tibet

5.2. Preparing Raw Materials

The strip of phloem that was separated from the wood included a thin layer of bark, which was removed at the initial stage. This step had to be done when the bast was still fresh, as the task becomes harder as the material dries. Sometimes, the collected *Daphne/Edgeworthia* tree strips of phloem were dried and stored for a period of time and later washed and rinsed in running water; in this process, the outer bark would be removed and the inner bark would be scraped out in the workshop. The higher the bark content of the wood, the darker the paper and the weaker its strength. The content of a little amount of outer bark particles, however, has become one of Tibetan paper's most recognisable features and holds a significant value in the perception of paper aesthetic.

In order to obtain the right substance for paper manufactured from root material, the lignified root of the *Stellera chamaejasme*³² must be dug out, and the outer bark and the kernels of the roots removed. The upper part of the plant is cut off, and the root is stripped of its outermost layer. Only the middle layer of the root, which resembles tendon, is useful for papermaking (fig. 5 a, b, c, d).

³² The paper made of *Stellera* sp. was sieved on the river Nanjoon, using a form floating on the surface of the water. The prepared pulp would scatter over the surface of the water and then settle on the fabric as the form was lifted off the surface of the water. This is described in Koretsky 1986: 3.



Fig. 5: Different stages of preparation of the *Stellera* root. a (top left): root being separated from plant; b (top right): separation of the outer part of the root from the core root; c (bottom left): separation of the outer bark from the inner bark; d (bottom right): soaked phloem strips, ready for further boiling and beating stages

5.3. Boiling

Before starting the preparation of fibre pulp, the phloem was soaked for several hours in order to separate the fibres from the surrounding tissues. Sometimes the bark was left to soak in water for two hours; sometimes it was left to soak overnight. The soaked fibres swell and their structure loosens up, which results in a higher degree of fibre separation. For a better result, the material prepared in this way was usually cooked for six to eight hours in water filtered through ashes from a fire.³³ Boiling performs two functions: it removes the interconnections between fibre bundles and it neutralises the poisonous substances present in the plants (especially *Stellera*). Unless the bast of the paper tree is boiled well, it is difficult to soften.

The strips of the inner bark of the paper tree would be boiled in the liquid of mixed *acacia catechu* with ice-cold water, after it had been cleared of all the sediment. The material for paper was also sometimes prepared by boiling in a solution of roasted barley flour

³³ Rischel 1985: 15–16. According to Trier 1972: 69–92, the cooking stage took two to six hours (on the base of reports from five different Nepalese papermaking places) depending on ash or chemicals used during the process.

(*thal chu*³⁴). The middle layer of the *Stellera chamaejasme* was boiled additionally in the *thel chin* until it became as soft and loose as wool. Since this layer of the root contains hard poison, it is necessary to add one dose of myrobalan (*Terminalia chebula*) to the mixture to neutralise the toxic substances.³⁵

5.4. Beating and Preparing the Paper Pulp

At this stage of paper-pulp preparation it was necessary to separate individual fibres. In the early periods of the papermaking craft, fibres were separated manually. The bark strips were beaten on a stone mortar until they were transformed into pulp similar to dough. This was done by beating the materials upon a stone with a wooden mallet or stone, by the use of simple mortar and pestle equipment, or by the employment of animal used to continuously pull a stone wheel through a circular stone trough (fig. 6). The employment of animals, however, has been recorded more in Central Asia and China than in Tibet. Other forms of fibre separation, like retting and fermentation, are sometimes used in place of or as a supplement to beating. Cooking material, especially raw fibre, before beating also helps accelerate the process of separation.

The beaten raw materials are mixed with water, yielding a pulp, which is then poured on the mould in measured quantities. The paper would never become smooth if it was not beaten well. If the stone mortar was not placed firmly or cleaned properly, the colour of the paper could be affected.

³⁴ gSung-rten, s.v. *thal chu*.

³⁵ Myrobalan, the so called ‘Buddha’s herb,’ is known also as *Fructus chebulae* (pharmaceutical name) or *Terminalia chebula* Retz. (botanical name). The fruit from this herb is among the *triphalā* (i.e. a combination of three herbs) of Ayurveda. It is reported to be useful in treating asthma, sore throat, vomiting, eye diseases, heart diseases, hiccup, etc.



Fig. 6: Beating tools, such as mallet (*gtung brdung*³⁶) and stone used to beat the mashed bark of plants for making paper

These were techniques used by the earliest papermakers. More advanced technology for beating material for papermaking came with the introduction of stampers, which range from foot-powered adaptations of the mortar and pestle design to elaborate mechanical devices, with stamper heads of different degrees of coarseness in adjacent troughs for processing the material in consecutive stages.

Nowadays, traditional papermaking workshops in Tibet and the Himalayas use a mixer of the Hollander type to crush fibres drawn from water (fig. 7).³⁷ These beaters usually consist of an oblong trough with rounded ends in which water and the material being beaten circulate; a rotating cylinder with dull metal blades (known as the roll); and a bedplate of raised dull metal blades in the bottom of the trough, underneath the roll. The roll turns in close proximity to the bedplate and the material being beaten is forced between the blades, through the circular movement of the water. Either the bedplate or the roll are adjustable and one of them is sometimes moveable; these features allow for variations in the thickness and toughness of the material being processed.

³⁶ gSung-rten, s.v.

³⁷ In the late 17th century, the Dutch invented a mechanical device known as the Hollander beater. This device is still used by hand papermakers today, although the machine-made paper industry has generally switched to more chemical ways of breaking down material for papermaking. See Hunter 1978, and *Hand Papermaking Newsletter* 33 (January 1996).



Fig. 7: A mixer of the Hollander beater type to crush fibres drawn from water to prepare paper pulp in Nyemo papermaking workshop

The paper pulp prepared in the way described above is mixed with a measured amount of water with a simple stirrer, and poured on the papermaking mould directly from a jug or, originally, with a wooden ladle (figs. 8 & 9).



Fig. 8 (left): Stirrer (mixer) used to stir the pulp (mashed bark with water) before pouring it into the frame. Tool used by Tenzin Wangmo from Karki village for making paper in Western Tibet; Fig. 9 (right): Stirrer and jug used for stirring the pulp in the papermaking workshop in Lhasa

5.5. Forming the Sheet of Paper (Moulding)

Adding water to fibres that have been separated by hand or with the use of a Hollander beater produces a fibre pulp that is ready for paper moulding. The paper-pulp stock (the measured quantity of fibre pulp) is poured into a flat mould floating on the surface of a stream, puddle, pond, lake or, in some cases, a vat.³⁸ The papermaker moves

³⁸ Tsundru 2010.

the frame with fixed textile sieve in the water until the pulp entirely and equally covers the surface of the mould; he then tilts the frame until the water drains off (fig. 10 a, b, c, d). The process of shaping the paper sheet using this method requires meticulous adherence to technicalities. The thickness of the paper could vary if the papermaking mould (*shog bre*³⁹) is turned in one direction only while stirring the water. Even if the paper pulp is stirred very conscientiously and the mould is taken out of the water with care, the paper could still tear very easily because it is very fragile until it dries.



Fig. 10 a (top left), b (top right), c (bottom left), d (bottom right): The consecutive stages of forming the paper sheet on textile mould in the papermaking workshop in Nyemo

Allowing the sheets of paper to dry on moulds would not only prolong the already very time-consuming papermaking process but also limit the size of the production because the number of sheets of paper a papermaker can produce is determined by how many moulds he owns (fig. 11). This limitation encouraged the popularity of the alternative method of both the ‘dipping’ or ‘floating’ type of mould but with movable bamboo sieve that is used in China, Bhutan and East Asia (but not in Tibet), which is thought to have developed subsequent to the floating mould with fixed sieve. The mould with movable sieve allows faster paper production because it is possible to

³⁹ gSung-rten, s.v.

remove a wet sheet of paper from the sieve just after its shaping. This means that papermakers do not need to wait until the paper has dried before re-using the mould to produce the next sheet. The size of paper is still conditioned by the size of paper frame/mould.



Fig. 11: The woven papermaking moulds from Nyemo papermaking workshop in Tibet

5.6. Drying

The papermaking moulds with newly made sheets of paper are left undisturbed until the sheets are dry. The mould with the damp layer of pulp is then propped up diagonally until the pulp dries and can be peeled off as a sheet of paper (fig. 12 a, b).



Fig. 12 a, b: The mould with the damp layer of pulp propped up diagonally (left) and then peeled off as a sheet of paper (right)

5.7. Finishing and Polishing

The dried sheets of paper require further processing: the edges of the sheets have to be evened out and cleaned, then polished and

smoothed. Prior to removing stains and cleaning the paper, tiny hairs and other impurities are carefully removed from the surface (fig. 13).

Finally, the process of polishing is applied to make the paper surface even and slightly glossy, which is the surface most conducive for writing. To make paper smooth, it is placed on a hard, even stone without cracks. The paper is then beaten with a piece of wood. For the best result, the paper should not be entirely dry during the process. The tools used for smoothing paper are a conch shell, horn, agate stone (*mchong*), or even a bronze or iron tool. The best smoothing stone is yellow Zi (*gzi*).



Fig. 13: The finishing process of the paper sheets in the papermaking workshop in Lhasa (June 2013)

6. Identification of Tool Marks and Papermaking Technology in Historic Papers

Besides fibre analysis informing us about raw materials, it also enables us to create a typology of the technological features of paper. This needs to be built via the examination of paper sheets on a light box for determining the type of the papermaking sieve print. Independent of the techniques of sheet formation, any papermaking sieve makes an impression that is specific to the construction of the mould and sieve. This impression, or print, is unaffected by most aging processes, and can be read centuries later. The main difference between the two main types of mould is in their construction. The floating mould is made of a wooden frame with a woven textile attached to it (which results in a ‘woven’ type of paper). With the dipping mould, on the other hand, a movable sieve made from bamboo, reed or another kind of grass is attached to the wooden frame, and the resulting paper type is classified as ‘laid’ based on its sieve print. Modifications to this latter technology have been

reported, including a floating mould resembling a wooden box with a movable screen, which means that papermakers would not need to wait until the paper has dried before re-using the mould to begin with the next sheet.

The print of a textile sieve made of cotton, hemp, or flax (woven) differs clearly from one made of bamboo (laid regular), reed, or other grasses (laid irregular). When sealed in the paper structure, these differences allows us to distinguish handmade woven paper and handmade laid paper characterised by the particular number of laid lines in 3 cm. These can be categorised as: ‘laid regular’ where there is unequivocal clear evidence; ‘laid irregular’ where the pattern is not regular; and ‘laid, patchy’ where the pattern can be seen only in patches of the paper but could not have been made by anything else other than the sieve. This effect—observed, for example, in early Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang—comes from using a doubled sieve, when there is cloth over bamboo, reed or grass sieve attached. The laid type of mould/sieve is also sometimes characterised by chain lines, which are the vertical lines from the screen on which the paper was manufactured. The sequence of measurements of the interval between two (or more) chain lines are an important detail to be recorded where chain lines are clearly visible. These intervals often vary within one paper sheet, and in such case, the sequences of span values should be given.

However, this information alone cannot be used for the identification of paper origin, nor for dating. According to Dard Hunter, the floating mould was most often used in the southwestern regions of China and in the Himalayas, whereas the dipping mould with bamboo sieve was developed in the eastern direction.⁴⁰ However, both types of mould were used simultaneously through time, and we have to take into consideration that the same papermaking workshop could use both types of mould at the same time.⁴¹

Also, from the even or uneven distribution of the fibres, one can determine whether the fibres were poured into the floating mould and spread by hand or scooped by the mould from a vat, and how quickly drainage of the pulp took place. The presence of uneven pulp thickenings distributed and visible within a sheet of paper—sometimes along the chain and laid lines, sometimes evenly along

⁴⁰ Hunter 1978: 84, Schaeffer 2009: 8.

⁴¹ Helman-Ważny & van Schaik 2013.

one edge—also helps describe the type of raw material and methods of its pulping.

The relative shortness of the fibres observed during the microscopic examination can be an indication that they were ground to a great extent. On this basis, one might surmise that a grinding mill was used for making the paper; this would suggest that the paper was produced in a fairly recent period. This also raises questions about the precise time when grinding mills replaced simple hand-maceration in the Himalayan region.

The type of paper made of Thymelaeaceae-family plants was usually made with the use of a woven papermaking mould. The leaves of the examined books usually comprised three to five layers of thin-woven paper with a rough surface adhered together to make thicker sheets. In Tibet, the woven type of floating mould was used since the beginning of papermaking. Bhutanese papers were produced from the same plants, but mostly with the use of moulds with a bamboo sieve, which leaves a print of 12 laid lines in 3 cm.⁴² However, as Elaine Koretsky observed during her extensive papermaking fieldwork in Asia, in addition to the dipping mould, the floating mould with a movable bamboo sieve was also used in some regions of Tibet. The sieve print of the floating mould on the paper (the water marking on the paper's surface) is impossible to distinguish from the print left by the sieve of the dipping mould. Thus, all we can do is characterise the sieve types. It is likely that papermaking with the floating mould and the pulp pouring method had been introduced into Bhutan from Tibet and that the dipping mould, on the other hand, might have come from China. Papers of this type are characterised by distances between chain and laid lines.

Yet the dipping mould technique with movable bamboo sieve, when characterised by more than 20 laid lines in 3 cm, could also suggest that the paper comes from China, where both dipping and floating moulds were invented and used. Examples of laid papers of Chinese origin can be found in various editions of the Tibetan Buddhist canon produced in China, such as the paper used for the Yongle folio from Michigan characterised by 27–30 laid lines in 3 cm, and the Wanli volumes in the Jagiellonian Library in Cracow along with the Wanli supplement volumes in the Harvard-Yenching Library, both of which are characterised by 15–18 or 24 laid lines in

⁴² Imaeda 1989: 409–414.

3 cm.⁴³ As a rule, the leaves made of this type of paper have a minimum of six layers, since the paper is very thin. This laid type of paper was traditionally composed of various kinds of fibres, which also allows for a further classification into papers of Bhutanese, Tibetan or Chinese origin. The papers dated to recent period with the characteristic chain and laid lines were usually glued to at least two layers of paper and were made of many different components, such as straw, bamboo, softwood, hardwood and wooden pulp. Such a fibre composition definitely date those papers for not earlier than the end of the 19th century.

⁴³ For the paper analyses of the mentioned examples, see Mejor, Helman-Ważny & Chashab 2010.

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A Collection of Miscellaneous Kanjur Folios including Four Illustrated Pages from a rNying ma Tantra *in statu nascendi*

Matthew T. Kapstein

1. Introduction to the Collection

Shortly after a talk on Tibetan manuscripts that I gave in Berkeley in early 2012, Ms. Vicki Shiba, a California-based collector of Asian Art who had attended, kindly sent to me the photographs of several hundred Tibetan manuscript pages that she had acquired as a single lot.¹ The majority of these are Kanjur folios evidently culled from several different sets of the canon dating from as early as the 11th or 12th century and as late as perhaps the 16th. With the prominent exception of a large number of pages from a single copy of the *brGyad stong pa* (the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, though not the same ms. as in fig. 1), the pages are illustrated, which no doubt explains why they were bundled together for sale. Many are very severely damaged and may have been found among trash left after the destruction wrought by the Cultural Revolution.



Fig. 1: folio from an *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript. 12th cent. (?)

¹ I thank Ms. Vicki Shiba for graciously making available the documents studied in the present article and Dr. Bruce Gordon for his attention to the photographic images. With the exception of fig. 11, rights to all illustrations in the present article belong to the Vicki Shiba Collection. I am grateful, too, to Amy Heller for thoughtful comments on points of iconography and their implications for dating, helping to improve this essay throughout.



Fig. 2: illustrated fragment of the *Buddhadāvatamsaka*. 12th cent. (?)



Figs. 3–5: Three fragments of about the 13th cent. The elaborate throne (top) merits comparison with several of the Nesar (Dolpo) manuscripts studied in Heller 2009 (cf. figs. 81 & 84), though in the present case the realisation is notably less refined. The sheet is also of interest for the *dbu med* annotations in the last three lines, which record the results of an inventory of the collection of which it was part. The three-quarter profiles of the *arhat* (lower left) and teacher (right) perhaps reflect Pāla influence, as does the architectural structure surrounding the *arhat*.



Figs. 6 & 7: Fragment of an *Abhisamayālamkāra* commentary by an unidentified disciple of Nyang 'Jam dbyangs (perhaps Nyang stod 'Jam dbyangs mgon po, early 13th cent.²). The calligraphy is notably similar to that found in many of the early scholastic manuscripts, presumably originating at gSang phu, that have been published in the *bKa' gdams phyogs bsgrigs* series.³ The miniature, depicting a so-far unidentified *mkhan po* (one reads *khan po ba phyog...*), closely resembles 13th century portraits of teachers known above all from the central Tibetan *bKa' gdams* and *bKa' brgyud* lineages.⁴

The miniatures adorning many of the items in the collection display considerable variation in terms of style, quality of execution, and probable dating, as the examples shown here will suffice to make clear. The collection includes, moreover, a number of sheets that do

² bSod nams rgya mtsho & Nor bu sgrol dkar 2000: 201, gives the birth of this figure in the Fire Dragon year (= 1196), but the *Blue Annals*, p. 676, gives Earth Dragon (= 1208). Though primarily affiliated with the Lower 'Brug pa (*smad 'brug*) Tantric tradition, Nyang stod 'Jam dbyangs mgon po seems also to have had some scholastic background, including studies with scholars connected with gSang phu (*Blue Annals*, p. 678), so it is not implausible that he might be the figure mentioned as "Nyang 'Jam dbyangs" in our fragment.

³ This is most evident in the treatment of the *ya-btags* and the considerable elongation of the final stroke of *ga*, *na*, *sha*, etc. An example of the calligraphic style to which I refer is seen in the manuscript of the *Grub mtha' chen mo* of Bya 'Chad kha ba Ye shes rdo rje (1101–1175), given in *bKa' gdams phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 11, and studied briefly in Kapstein 2009, though there are many other instances throughout that collection.

⁴ For pertinent examples, refer to Jackson et al. 2011.

not derive from Kanjur volumes at all, such as the four folios that will be my major topic later in this essay. Among these heterogeneous sheets, we also find a 15th century (?) illustrated xylographic page that I have described at length elsewhere,⁵ a charred fragment of what appears to have been a very beautiful copy of an otherwise unknown commentary on the *Abhisamayālamkārasāstra*, and an annotated page from the *Hevajratantra*. The provenance of these materials is of course unknown. Although many of the canonical folios in the collection likely stem from West Tibet or adjacent regions of Nepal, the printed page is almost certainly Central Tibetan, and so too the burnt page of commentary.

Among the leaves in the collection that seem most pleasing aesthetically are the several derived from a single manuscript on blue-black tinted paper, with alternating lines in gold and silver and finely drawn miniatures accentuated by the use of flashy red pigments contrasting sharply with the dark ground. The text appears to be an anthology of *dhāraṇīsūtras* and other short, possibly apotropaic scriptures, genres often seen in gold-on-black manuscripts. Of particular interest in the present case is the sometimes asymmetrical placement of miniatures on the page, a feature that perhaps suggests close collaboration between artist and scribe. The unusual, almost playful depiction of the standing Buddha attended by a disciple—perhaps the “Śākyā youth” bZhin rab gsal (*Prasannamukha or *Prasannavadana), mentioned in the text—is particularly suggestive of the Newari style that characterises the painting of all of the surviving folios of this manuscript, which may be assigned to about the 14th century. Given the strongly Newari-influenced stylistic register, the question of provenance is somewhat clouded. West Tibet or western Nepal are, of course, among the possibilities, but, given the broad diffusion of the Newari style from the Yuan-period on, other regions should perhaps not be excluded.⁶

⁵ Kapstein 2013. Although I was somewhat hesitant in my estimation of the dating of the printed sheet studied there, the materials reproduced in dPal brtsegs bod yig dpe rnying zhib 'jug khang 2013 and its accompanying DVD convince me that it is indeed a Central Tibetan print of the 15th century, though the exact provenance remains uncertain. In any case, the letterforms appear to merit close comparison with those of the mChing ru gnam mdun edition of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, dated 1422 (dPal brtsegs 2013: 12–14).

⁶ As Jackson 2010 shows, the Newari style (*bal ris*) embraces a widely diffused and highly varied family of stylistic registers. Be this as it may, the



Figs. 8–10: Three leaves from a collection of *dhāraṇīs* and short canonical texts (from top to bottom): a part of the *Uṣṇīśavijayadhāraṇī* illustrated with the goddess Uṣṇīśavijayā; the conclusion of the *Ekagāthādhāraṇī* and the beginning of the *Gāthādvayadhāraṇī*, marked by the smaller Buddha image to the lower left; a folio from the *Ārya-daśadigandhakāravidhvāṇa-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra*

2. Four Folios from the *Dri med bshags rgyud*

In an article published a few years ago, I sought to show that one of the prominent ritual cycles belonging to the *rNying ma bka' ma* traditions, the *Na rak dong sprugs*, or *Churner of the Depths of Hell*, was beginning to develop during the 10th century, as was

figures of the standing Buddha and his disciple in the last folio strike me as exemplary: cf. the 1367 *Prajñāpāramitā* from Nepal, now in the Indian Museum, Kolkata, illustrated in Pal & Meech-Pekarik 1988: 107.

demonstrated by Dunhuang documents either clearly belonging to that cycle or bearing an evident affinity to it.⁷ The surest indication of this was found in a document from the Stein collection in London, IOL Tib J 584, which could be firmly identified with certain passages from the main *tantra* of the *Na rak* cycle, the *Dri med bshags rgyud*, the *Tantra of Taintless Contrition*. My hypothesis was that, although this *tantra* was probably not yet in existence in anything closely resembling its present form, the confessional liturgies that would later be incorporated within it had certainly begun to take shape, as was proven by the Dunhuang manuscript in question. Moreover, as the editors' colophons of both the *Dri med bshags rgyud* and one of the major rites of the *Na rak* cycle plainly state, the relevant texts that were available to them were in a state of disorder, so that we can conclude that the *Na rak* cycle as known at present is at least in part the product of editorial interventions, some as recent as the 18th century.⁸

⁷ Kapstein 2010.

⁸ The colophon of Lo chen Dharmasrī's edition of the *Khrom dkrugs cho ga* is given with translation in Kapstein 2010: 171–172, n. 7. The colophon of the *Dri med bshags rgyud* is also given there, p. 206, but as that transcription contains one small but significant typographical error and was left untranslated, I take the opportunity to provide a corrected version with translation here:

The Indian *upādhyāya* Vimalamitra and the Tibetan translator gNyags Jñānakumāra translated, corrected, and definitely established [the text]. At a later time, because the transmission of the text was corrupted, the *bhikṣu* mTsho skyes bzhad pa—who had compared the errors with ancient, reliable exemplars, and had examined, without personal contrivance, the oral transmissions of the forebears and the meaning of the text—thoroughly corrected word and convention and so has promulgated a reliable model. May it be virtuous and auspicious!

Thereafter, because the textual transmission that had earlier been distributed in the regions of Khams and Tibet had omissions or interpolations of some words or syllables, the venerable dGe [rtse] Paṇḍita, on the occasion of the printing of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum*, carefully corrected it, made it fit to be relied upon, and then had it copied. *Siddhir astu!*

rgya gar gyi mkhan po bi ma la mi tra dang| bod kyi lo tsā ba gnyags jñā na
ku mā ras bsgyur cing zhus te gtan la phab pa'o|| || dus phyis yi ge
rgyun 'phyugs pas ma dag rnams snigar gyi dpe rnying khungs thub dag la
gtugs shing gong ma'i gsung rgyun dang| gzhung don la dpyad de rang bzos
ma bslad par dge slong mtsho skyes bzhad pas brda tshig gnyis ka dpyis

It is with this background in mind that four leaves found among the collection introduced here are of particular interest, for, like IOL Tib J 584, they are distinctly related to the text of the *Dri med bshags rgyud*, but, although they represent a much fuller version of the work than we find in Dunhuang, they are not quite identical to the *tantra* in its current form either. Very likely, they may be taken as exemplifying the sort of manuscript that may have troubled the *tantra*'s editors, the otherwise unknown and undated dGe slong mTsho skyes bzhad pa, and the famous master of Kah thog monastery, dGe rtse Panḍita 'Gyur med tshe dbang mchog grub (1761–1829).⁹ Before considering the text's contents, however, several of the formal features of the manuscript merit comment.

The four folios at our disposal are numbered 29 (*nyre [= nyer] rgu [= dgu]*), 32 (*so gnyis*), 33 (*so gsum*), and 42 (*zhe gnyis*). Although there are some apparent section breaks (at fols. 29a4; 32a1; 33b1; 42b3), as indicated by the repetition of the *nyis shad* (double *shad*) with an intervening space, there are no chapter titles in these pages, nor do we have a title page or final colophon.¹⁰ Despite the evident congruence with the *Dri med bshags rgyud*, therefore, we cannot say whether the manuscript bore any such title. However, the frequent use of the expression *na rak dong sprugs*, and, indeed, an explicit reference (at 33a1) to the main ritual of that cycle, the *Na rak dong sprugs spyi khrus*, the *General Cleansing to Churn the Depths of Hell*,¹¹ confirms beyond reasonable doubt that the work belonged to a version of the *Na rak dong sprugs* cycle, as does the *Dri med bshags*

*phyin par zhus dag par bgyis te yid brtan du rung ba'i phyi mor bsngags pa
dge zhing bkra shis par gyur cig|| ||*

*slar yang khams dang bod phyogs su sngar nas yig rgyun so sor gyes pas
tshig 'bru 'ga' re chad lhag 'dug pa rnams dge pañ zhabs nas rnying rgyud
spar gyi skabs zhib par bcos te yid brtan du rung bar mdzad pa las zhal
bshus pa siddhi ra stu||*

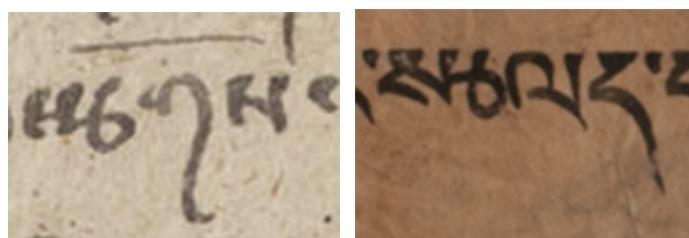
⁹ It should be emphasised that other versions of the *Dri med bshags rgyud* are preserved as well. The Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu manuscript of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* preserved in the British Library, for instance, conserves two versions in vol. *dza*, one of which was corrected by the Fifth Dalai Lama.

¹⁰ None of the chapter breaks of the present edition of the *Dri med bshags rgyud* fall within the parts of the text preserved in the manuscript; the contents of all four folios of the latter are found in the *tantra*'s third chapter, titled *Nyams chag dang rtog sgrib sbyong ba'i bshags pa*.

¹¹ Refer to Kapstein 2010: 175, n. 14.

rgyud today. The fact that the text contained at least 43 folios suggests that it was not less than about half the length of the current edition of the *Dri med bshags rgyud* as given in the *rNying ma bka' ma rgyas pa*, where it covers 61 folios.¹²

The text is written in neat, well-proportioned *dbu can* characters, with very few departures from standard forms. The most notable exception to this occurs in the stacked consonant clusters *rts* and *sts*, where the cluster resembles the form it takes in some 10th century Dunhuang manuscripts written in what we might term a ‘semi-cursive’ script (figs. 11 & 12).



Figs. 11 & 12: left: the syllable *stsogs*, from the 10th century Dunhuang manuscript IOL J Tib 318, from folio 1b3; right: the syllable *stsald*, from folio 32b2 of the *Na rak dong sprugs* manuscript

The ductus of the cluster in these cases is remarkably similar, with the key difference being that in the *Na rak* manuscript the *dbu can* form of the *sa* is retained. Though it is not yet quite certain that the manner of writing these particular clusters can be taken to be an archaicism, I suspect that indeed it is. For the modern forms in both *dbu can* and *dbu med* scripts are altogether distinct in their treatment of the element *-tsa*, which here appears almost as the ‘Arabic’ numeral 6 written with a single clockwise stroke beginning from centre left.

Orthographically, the text is remarkable for its close adherence to the norms of what we now think of as Classical Tibetan. The notable variants are, as is common in West Tibetan canonical manuscripts, the retention of the *da drag* (e.g., *'dzind*, *'byord*, *stsald*, *stond*, *bstand*) and the addition of the *ya btags* to *ma* when the vowels used are *i* or *e* (*myi*, *myed*). On a small number of occasions the *'a* is used as a final in syllables ending with a vowel, for example, *dpe'* (33b3).

¹² Here, one must take into account that, in the *rNying ma bka' ma rgyas pa*, there are about 180 syllables per folio side, whereas the manuscript has not more than 120 syllables per folio side.

Where Classical Tibetan uses *la sog pa* (“et cetera”), we find instead *las stsogs pa* (33b4), as we do throughout the Dunhuang manuscripts. There is also at least one clear instance of the reversed *gi gu* (*kyI*, at 33b3). For the ‘genitive’ and ‘ergative’ particles, *gi(s)* may be used following all final consonants; *kyi* and *gyi* seldom occur, though *gyis* is sometimes given as the ‘ergative’ following final *-l* and *-m*, and once erroneously after *-s* (33b5). None of these features seems clearly indicative of the dating of the manuscript, though they cohere well with the archaic features of handwriting noted earlier. On one occasion (29a5) *skras* is given where the reading should clearly be *sras*, together with a small number of other errors or orthographical peculiarities: *ljag* for *ljang* (29a2), *'tshul* for *tshul* (29a5, 29b1), *sta* for *rta* (29b5), etc.

A relatively early date is suggested, too, by the illustrations decorating each folio. On folio 29 this is placed on the recto, but in the remaining three instances it is on the verso. It is peculiar, too, that in text surrounding the miniatures syllables have been sometimes split, rather than leaving a space between syllables, in order to accommodate the paintings. Thus, on 32b3–4 we find *'gyu_r* and *rig_s*, on 33b4 *gzung_s*, and on 42b3 *bsha_gs*.

The four miniatures depict four deities presumably associated with the *zhi khro maṇḍala* of the *Na rak dong sprugs* cycle, though their exact identification in all but one case remains uncertain.¹³ Folio 29a is adorned with one of the twenty-eight theriomorphic goddesses of the *zhi khro* pantheon, possibly Doghead (*khyi mgo can*), who would have been mentioned on the preceding page.¹⁴ (She should, however, be holding a child’s corpse (*byis bam*) in her right hand, instead of the *vajra* that appears here.) The reverse side of folio 32 depicts a red *yakṣa*-like figure offering a skull-cup, and so is perhaps representative of the *gying pa* (= *ging*; *kimkara*) mentioned on the recto of the same folio (32a2). On 33b we have, in close connection with the content of the text at this point, an iconographically unambiguous representation of the “lord of the clan” (*rigs bdag*) of the *zhi khro maṇḍala*, Vajrasattva (*rDo rje sems dpa'*), surrounded by a rainbow aureole typical of West Tibetan manuscript illuminations

¹³ The pantheon of the *Na rak dong sprugs maṇḍala* is summarised in Kapstein 2010: 178.

¹⁴ In the edition of the *tantra* I am consulting, she is honoured at folio 22b2, just four lines before the beginning of the fragment represented by folio 29 of the manuscript.

of about the 12th–13th centuries. (Fig. 1 above offers a less colourful example.) Finally, our last available folio is graced by a notably voluptuous goddess. Although, on first glance, she might be thought to resemble some images of Tārā, the fact that she is sitting upon a corpse is suggestive, rather, of Vajrayoginī. Perhaps, in the present context, she may be identified with Vajradhātvīśvarī, the consort of Vajrasattva. As such, she would at the same time be identified with the *yoginis* among the votaries of the *mandala*, who are referred to repeatedly throughout the texts of the *Na rak dong sprugs* cycle. Her features, in any case, offer some points of comparison with West Tibetan representations of goddesses dating to as early as the 11th century.¹⁵

In the light of the palaeographic, orthographic and artistic features noted, it is plausible to assign the manuscript to a period not later than the 12th century, though some caution about this is necessary. Given the tendencies of small, regional traditions sometimes to conserve apparently archaic elements, whether of script, spelling, or artwork, the possibility that it dates to a century or so later than estimated cannot be categorically excluded.

Turning now to the content of the text, with few variants all of the present fragments may be identified with passages in the published edition of the *Dri med bshags rgyud* to which I refer here, where they occur in precisely the same order. It may appear, at first glance, that there is somewhat more intervening space between the fragmentary passages of the manuscript and the corresponding passages of the *tantra*. This, however, may be explained not by supposing the manuscript to have contained substantial additional text, but by considering, as mentioned earlier (n. 12), that there are many more syllables per folio in the published edition of the *tantra* than there are in the manuscript. Assuming, too, that some of the missing leaves of the manuscript were also illustrated, the resulting differences in the amount of text given on any page would be sufficient to account for the disparities in foliation. In short, our manuscript fragments may be taken to be none other than part of the *Dri med bshags rgyud*, whether or not the entire content of the present edition of that work was included, and whether or not that title had yet been assigned.

¹⁵ Amy Heller comments: “The purely oval facial shape—with no delineation of cheekbones—is also found in W. Tibetan sculptures influenced by earlier Kashmiri statues.” Correspondence, 13 June 2014.

In the detailed presentation that follows, I treat separately each of the three continuous portions of the text available in the manuscript, labelling them as fragments 1–3. Under the heading of each fragment, the pages in question are reproduced, with a line-by-line transcription followed by the transcription of the same passage from the *Dri med bshags rgyud* as given in the *rNying ma bka' ma rgyas pa* and observations (referring to the manuscript by folio and line number) regarding important differences between the two.¹⁶ I have not generally commented on small matters of orthography or other minor differences, which will be evident to all readers on comparison of the texts. Many of the minor changes involving the addition or subtraction of one or two syllables, it may be noted, are clearly due to the effort on the part of the editors of the *tantra* to achieve metrical regularity, for example, by removing the syllable *rtsa* from the number *nyi shu rtsa brgyad* in order to reduce the line within which it occurs from eight syllables to the seven required by the meter.

In Fragment 3, square brackets in the corresponding passage from the *Dri med bshags rgyud* enclose text that is not at all represented in the manuscript. It is of some interest that all of these enlargements of the text serve to add greater specificity to the description of the misdeeds—mostly violations of *dam tshig* (*samaya*), the Tantric vows—in connection with which contrition is required. If it is indeed the case that our manuscript leaves represent, as I think they do, a relatively early phase in the history of the *Dri med bshags rgyud*, then the tendency of the *tantra* to become increasingly precise in the course of its development conforms well with the observations of Sam van Schaik in regard to the relatively unstable formulations of

¹⁶ I must emphasise that, as the *Dri med bshags rgyud* has not yet been critically edited, and given that prints and manuscripts of this work are plentiful, the present exercise cannot pretend to shed more than a small ray of light on the history of this interesting *tantra*. Because the text as found in the *rNying ma bka' ma rgyas pa* may be taken to be a more or less standard edition of the *tantra* in current circulation, it provides just a first point of departure for comparison. But as this is the sole comparandum consulted so far, one must remain circumspect in regard to conclusions. The particular difficulties involved in critically editing *rNying ma* Tantric literature, as well as the promise of such investigations, have been very richly explored in the contributions of Cantwell and Mayer (2007, 2008, 2012) to the study of Vajrakīla *tantras* and the Mahāyoga *Thabs kyi zhags pa* (which, it may be noted in passing, is closely contiguous to the *Dri med bshags rgyud* in several *rNying ma rgyud 'bums*, and is similarly attributed to the translation activity of Vimalamitra and gNyags Jñānakumāra as well).

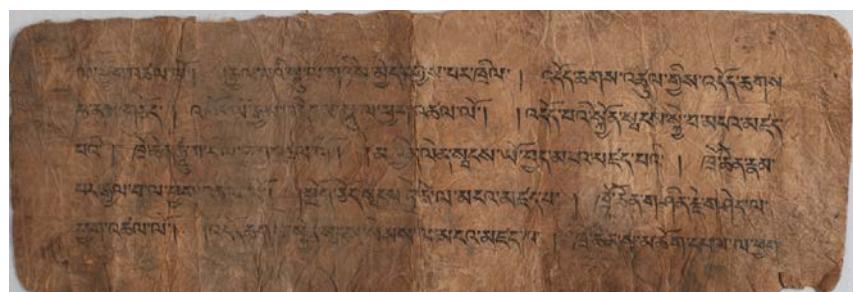
the Mahāyoga *samayas* as known in the Dunhuang documents.¹⁷ It appears that the Tantric vows were at first strictly connected with the specificities of initiation into a given ritual tradition, and only gradually generalised to create an overarching set of Tantric vows. (And, indeed, the precise tie between vows and specific initiations was never altogether forgotten.)



Figs. 13 & 14: Vajrasattva and consort (?).

¹⁷ See van Schaik 2010.

Fragment 1



Figs. 15 & 16, folio 29

Folio 29a

- (1) @@| |ra'i 'go la phyag 'tshal lo| |rnal 'byord dmar mo lcags sgrog 'dzind | spre'u 'i 'go la
- (2) phyag 'tshal lo| |rnal 'byord ljag [= ljang?] nag ____ dril bu 'dzind | skye ka'i 'go la phyag 'tshal
- (3) lo| |dpal gi 'khor tshogs badzra a ra ____ li | mkha' la shugs 'gro ma tshogs dbang
- (4) phyug ma | rnal 'byord ma dbang phyug ma ____ nyi shu rtsa brgyad la phyag 'tshal lo||rgyal
- (5) ba yab yum gnyis myed thugs kyi skras | zhe sdang 'tshul gyis zhe sdang rtsa nas bcod | rdo rje gzhon nu'i sku

29b

- (1) la phyag 'tshal lo| |rgyal ba'i sku la gnyis myed dgyes par khri'l | 'dod chags 'tshul gyis 'dod chags
- (2) rtsa nas gcod | 'khor lo rgyas 'debs sku la phyag 'tshal lo| |'dod pa'i skyon spangs skye ba mnga' mdzad
- (3) pa'i | khro chen hūm ka ra phyag 'tshal lo| |ma byin len spangs yo byad mnga' mdzad pa'i | khro chen rnam

(4) par rgyal ba la phyag 'tshal lo| |srog cod spangs te tshe la mn̄ga'
mdzad pa | khro chen gshin rje gshed la

(5) phyag 'tshal lo| |'dod chags skyon spangs sems la mn̄ga' mdzad
pa | khro chen sta mchog dpal la phyag

Dri med bshags rgyud, 22b6–23a5

ra mgo can la phyag 'tshal lo| |rnal 'byor dmar mo lcags sgrog
(23a) bsnams| seng mgo can la phyag 'tshal lo| |rnal 'byor ljang nag
dril bu 'dzin| skyā ka'i mgo la phyag 'tshal lo| |dpal gi 'khor tshogs
badzra a ra li| |mkha' la shugs 'gro ma tshogs dbang phyug ma|
|rnal 'byor nyi shu brgyad la phyag 'tshal lo| |zhe sdang 'tshul gyis
zhe sdang 'joms mdzad pa| |rdo rje gzhon nu'i sku la phyag 'tshal lo|
rgyal ba'i sku la gnyis med dgyes par khril | |'dod chags 'tshul
gyis 'dod chags 'joms mdzad pa| |'khor lo rgyas 'debs yum la
phyag 'tshal lo| |'dod pa'i skyon spangs skye la mn̄ga' mdzad pa|
khro chen hūm ka ra phyag 'tshal lo| |ma byin len spangs yo byad
dbang mdzad pa| |khro chen rnam par rgyal la phyag 'tshal lo| |srog
geod skyon spangs tshe la dbang mdzad pa| |khro chen gshin rje'i
gshed la phyag 'tshal lo| |phra ma'i skyon spangs sems la dbang
mdzad pa| khro chen rta mchog dpal la phyag

Observations

29a2–4: The place of *yoginī* Apehead (*spre'u'i 'go*) of the manuscript is taken by Lionhead (*seng mgo can*) in the *tantra*.

29a4: *rnal 'byord ma dbang phyug ma*. Here *dbang phyug ma* is perhaps an instance of contextual repetition, given its occurrence just above. It is omitted in the parallel line from the *tantra*.

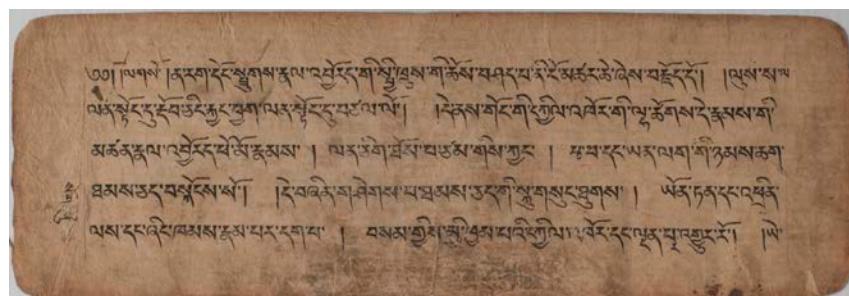
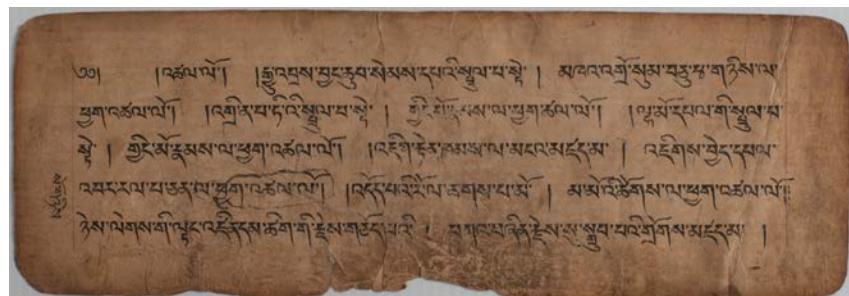
29a4–5: *rgyal ba yab yum gnyis myed thugs kyi skras* (= *sras*). This line is altogether missing from the *tantra*, though it is an appropriate description of rDo rje gzhon nu (Vajrakumāra, i.e. Vajrakīla), to whom it applies in the present context.

29b3: Although Sanskrit usage in the ms. is by no means consistent, it is of interest to note here the syllable *hūm*, demonstrating that the conventions for representing Sanskrit long vowels and nasalisation were known (which was by no means typically the case), even if not in all instances correctly applied.

One may also note a number of regular differences of wording: where the ms. uses *rtsa nas gcod*, the *tantra* prefers *'joms mdzad pa*.

For *mnga' mdzad pa* in the ms., we find *dbang mdzad pa* in the *tantra*.

Fragment 2



Figs. 17–20, fol. 32–33

Folio 32a

- (1) @@| 'tshal lo| rgyu 'bras byang chub sems dpa'i sprul pa ste | mkha' 'gro sum beu rtsa gnyis la
- (2) phyag 'tshal lo| 'gri na pa ti 'i sprul pa ste | gying pa rnams la phyag 'tshal lo| lha mo dpal gi sprul pa
- (3) ste | gying mo rnams la phyag 'tshal lo| 'jig rten khams la mnga' mdzad ma | 'jigs byed dpal
- (4) 'bar ral pa can la phyag 'tshal lo| 'dod pa'i ro la chags pa mo | ma mo'i tshogs la phyag 'tshal lo|
- (5) nyes legs gi ltang 'dzin dam tshig gi rjes gcod pa'i | bka' bzhin rjes su sgrub pa'i grogs mdzad ma|

32b

- (1) dam can rgya mtsho'i tshogs la phyag 'tshal lo|| ||bcom ldan 'das dpal kun tu bzang po la phyag 'tshal
- (2) lo| de skad ces bka' stsald pa dang | ____ gang gis sgyu 'phrul zhi khro 'i lha tshogs la phyag
- (3) btsal na | nyams chags kun kyang byang 'gyu ____ r te | mtshams myed [erasure] Inga' 'i [erasure] sdig kyang
- (4) byang [erasure] | na rag dong sprugs te | rig ____ s 'dzind rgyal ba'i zhing du grags | de skad ces
- (5) bka' stsald pa dang| rnal 'byord pho mo rnams gis | a la la ho | stond pa kun tu bzang po ngo mtshar

33a

- (1) @@| lagso | na rag dong sprugs rnal 'byord gi spyi khrus kyi chos bshad pa ni ngo mtshar che zhes brjod do| lus sa la
- (2) lan stong du rdob cing rkyang phyag lan stong du btsal lo| |de nas gong gi dkyil 'khor gi lha tshogs de rnams gi
- (3) mtshan rnal 'byord pho mo rnams | lan cig thos pa tsam gis kyang | rtsa ba dang yan lag gi nyams chag
- (4) thams cad bskongs so| |de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad gi sku gsung thugs | yon tan dang 'phrin
- (5) las dang zhing khams rnam par dag pa | bsam gyis myi khyab pa'i dkyil 'khor dang ldn pa 'gyur ro| |ye

33b

- (1) ge 'khor lo tshogs chen gi sa la lhun gis gnas par 'gyur ro|| | ||de nas dus der dpal rdo rje sems dpa'
- (2) zhes bya ba | dus gsum gi de bzhin ____ gshegs pa thams cad gi ye shes las sprul pa |

- (3) sku mtshan gi me tog las dpe' bzang po ____ brgyad bcus brgyan pa | sangs rgyas kyI che ba'i yon tan dang |
- (4) stobs dang myi 'jigs pa dang | gzung ____ s dang ting nge 'dzind las stsgos pa | gzhan yang
- (5) rigs lInga'i sangs rgyas gyis dbang skur ba | dar kar dang po ti dang | rin po che'i rgyan rnam pa sna tshogs gis

Dri med bshags rgyud, 24a5–25a4

'tshal lo| rgyu 'bras byang chub sems kyi sprul pa ste | mkha' 'gro sum cu gnyis la phyag 'tshal lo| ga na pa ti 'i sprul pa ste | king ka ra la phyag 'tshal lo| lha mo dpal mo'i sprul pa ste | king ka ri la phyag 'tshal lo| 'jig rten khams la dbang
 [24b] mdzad ma| 'jigs byed dpal 'bar ral pa can| ||'dod pa'i ro la chags pa mo| ma mo'i tshogs la phyag 'tshal lo| nyes legs ltangs 'dzin dam tshig rjes gcod cing| bka' bzhin rjes su sgrub pa'i grogs mdzad ma| dam can rgya mtsho'i tshogs la phyag 'tshal lo| ston pa kun tu bzang po yis| de skad ces ni bka' stsal pa| gang gis sgyu 'phrul khro bo yi| dkyil 'khor lha la phyag 'tshal na| nyams chags kun kyang dag 'gyur te| mtshams med lInga yi sdig kyang 'byang| na rag gnas kyang dong sprugs te| rigs 'dzin rgyal ba'i zhing du grags| zhes bka' stsal pa dang| phyogs bcu nas lhags pa'i rnal 'byor pho mo rnams kyis | a la la ho| bcom ldan 'das kyis rnal 'byor gyi spyi khrus kyi chos bshad pa ngo mtshar che'o| zhes brjod de| lus sa la brdeb cing brkyang phyag lan stong du btsal lo| de nas dkyil 'khor gi lha de rnams kyi mtshan rnal 'byor pho mo rnams kyis thos pa tsam gis rtsa ba dang yan lag gi dam tshig nyams chag thams cad bskangs te| de bzhin
 [25a] gshegs pa thams cad gi sku dang| gsung dang| thugs dang| yon tan dang| phrin las bsam gyis mi khyab pa dang ldn par gyur te| yi ge 'khor lo tshogs chen gi sa la lhun gis grub par 'gyur to| | de nas dus der dpal rdo rje sems dpa' zhes bya ba dus gsum gi de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi thugs rje'i ye shes kyi bdag nyid | sku mtshan gyi me tog las dpe byad bzang po'i 'bras bus brgyan pa| sangs rgyas kyi che ba'i yon tan stobs dang| mi 'jigs pa dang| gzungs dang| ting nge 'dzin la sogs pa mnga' ba| gzhan yang dbu la rigs lInga'i sangs rgyas gyis dbang skur ba| dar dkar dang| pa ti dang | rin po che dang rgyan rnam pa sna tshogs kyi

Observations

32a1: Where the ms. has the doctrinally problematic reading *rgyu 'bras byang chub sems dpa'i sprul pa ste* ("cause and fruition are the *bodhisattvas'* emanations"), the *tantra* offers the more

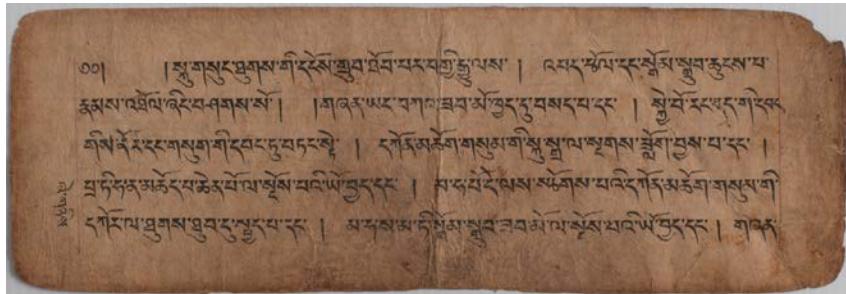
acceptable *rgyu 'bras byang chub sems kyi sprul pa ste* (“cause and fruition are the emanations of *bodhicitta*”).

32a2–3: Where the ms. reads *'gri na pa ti, gying pa*, and *ging mo*, the *tantra* is notably sanskritising in adopting *ganapati, king ka ra* (= *kimkara*), and *king ka rī* (= *kimkari*).

32a3–4: For the hypermetrical *'jigs byed dpal 'bar ral pa can la phyag 'tshal lo* of the ms., the *tantra* treats *'jigs byed dpal 'bar ral pa can* as the second line in a quatrain in homage to the *ma mo*.

32b1 et seq.: This section covers a major transition within the text. Following Buddha Samantabhadra’s teaching of contrition through salutation (*phyag 'tshal ba, namana*) of the deities of the *mandala*, concluding with *dam can rgya mtsho'i tshogs la phyag 'tshal lo*, the benefits of this practice are extolled by the assembled divinities (32b1–33b1), setting the stage for the arrival of Buddha Vajrasattva (33b1–5). In the *tantra*, this section then continues with the teaching of the purifying hundred-syllable of Vajrasattva, its practice and benefits. Though the portion of this preserved in our ms. corresponds fairly closely with the text of the present edition of the *tantra*, one notes many small, but telling, differences nevertheless. For instance, at 32b1, the ms. transitions to prose, while the *tantra* continues in verse. Here the use in the ms. of the formula *phyag 'tshal lo* addressed to Buddha Samantabhadra (Kun tu bzang po) is syntactically awkward (perhaps another instance of contextual repetition). At 32b4, the brief line *na rag dong sprugs te* is perhaps defective; the corresponding line in the *tantra*, *na rag gnas kyang dong sprugs te*, is certainly clearer. In the description of the entry of Vajrasattva (ms. 33b1 et seq.), the *tantra* regularly expands slightly. Where the ms. (33b5) enumerates one of his attributes as *po ti* (“books”), which cannot be correct in this context, the *tantra* reads *pa ti* (“lord, master”), which is no better. The intended Sanskrit is no doubt *pāṭa*, here in the sense of “fine cloth.”

Fragment 3



Figs. 21 & 22, fol. 42

Folio 42a

- (1) @@| sku gsung thugs gi dngos grub thob par bgyi rgyu las | 'bad rtsol dang sgom sgrub chungs pa
- (2) rnams 'thol zhing bshags so| gzhan yang bka' zab mo khyad tu bsad pa dang | skye bo rang thad¹⁸ gi dbang
- (3) gis nor dang gsug gi dbang tu btang ste | dkon mchog gsum gi sku sgra la sngags zlog byas pa dang |
- (4) pra ti ha na mchod pa chen po la sngos pa'i yo byad dang | ma ha bo de las stsogs pa'i dkon mchog gsum gi
- (5) dkor la thugs thub du spyad pa dang | ma ha sa ma ti sgom sgrub zab mo la sngos pa'i yo byad dang | gzhan

42b

- (1) yang tshod yod bgyis nas dngos su spyad pa dang | phri gzhog bgyis te na rag ngan pa'i rgyu bstags pa rnams

¹⁸ There appears to have been a correction here and the reading is somewhat uncertain, though it seems confirmed by the *tantra*. One discerns what appears to be the lower section of a *da*, partially erased, beneath which is a mark resembling a caret (^).

- (2) 'thol zhing bshags so| nya stong dus ____ drug dang dus bzhi'i
las stsags pa rnames thugs
- (3) dam du bcas pa rnames 'thol zhing bsha ____ gs so|| ||sgyu 'phrul
ye shes rang snang gi
- (4) lha la rtog .. pa myi mnga yang | de'i ____ khor du rtogs pa'i ye
shes las grub pa'i | nyes
- (5) legs gi ltang 'dzind cing dam tshig gi rjes gcod pa rnames bstand
pa gnyan po srung ba dang | chos khor gnyan

Dri med bshags rgyud, 29a2, 29a6–30a3

- (29a2) sku gsung thugs gi dngos grub thob par bgyid rgyu las| 'bad
rtsol dang brtson 'grus chung ba mthol zhing bshags so| [gzhan yang
sgrub pa khyad par gyi dam tshig nyi shu dang| spyod pa rgyun gyi
dam tshig bzhi dang| rang bzhin lta ba'i dam tshig bzhi dang| gal
mdo nges pa'i dam tshig gsum la sogs te nang pa thabs kyi rgyud
gzhung las byung ba'i dam tshig rnames kyi bsrung mtshams mi shes
shing| gzhung dang 'gal ba ci bgyis pa thams cad mthol zhing bshags
so|]
- (29a6) gzhan yang bka' zab mo khyad du bsad de| skye bo rang thad
kyi dbang gis nor dang gsug gi dbang tu btang ste| dkon mchog gsum
gi
- (29b) sku dgra la sngags zlog byas pa dang |pra ti ha na dus kyi
mchod pa chen po la sngos pa dang| ma ha bo de la sogs pa dkon
mchog gsum gyi dkor la thug thub bgyis nas spyad pa dang | sgom
sgrub zab mo la bsngos pa la sogs pa| mchod pa'i yo byad thams cad
la tshod yod bgyis te dngos su spyad pa dang | dbri gzhog bgyis te
ngan song gi rgyu bsags pa mthol zhing bshags so| | [gzhan yang
yan lag gi dam tshig stong rtsa brgyad las 'das te| ngan song 'khor
ba'i rgyu bsags pa thams cad mthol zhing bshags so| [gzhan yang
gsang sngags kyi sgor zhugs so 'tshal gyis| ma rig pa'i dbang gis dam
tshig ngo ma 'tshal te| dam tshig nyams pa dang| las ngan sna tshogs
spyad pas| sdug bsngal sna tshogs kyi rgyu bsags pa mthol zhing
bshags so| | nya stong dang| dus drug dang| dus bzhi la sogs pa dus
dam du bcas pa las 'das te| dus las g.yal ba'i nyams chag thams cad
mthol zhing bshags so| | [gzhan yang chos spyod bcu'i sgo nas| dge
ba'i phyogs]
- (30a) [bgyid par dam bcas pa las rngo ma thogs pa dang sdig pa mi
dge ba'i las ci mchis pa thams cad mthol zhing bshags so]
sgyu 'phrul ye shes rang snang gi lha la rtog pa mi mnga' yang |
de'i 'khor du gtogs pa'i ye shes dang| las las grub pa'i nyes legs gi
ltangs 'dzin cing dam tshig gi rjes gcod pa'i bstan pa gnyan po srung
ba dang | chos skyong ba

Observations

As has been remarked earlier, the most interesting variant we find in this section involves the several expansions of the text of the *tantra*, relative to our ms., and all involving the addition of some degree of specificity to the description of the acts for which contrition is practiced. A few additional points deserve some attention:

42a5: The ms. specifies that the object of “meditation and attainment” (*sgom sgrub*) is *ma ha sa ma ti*, presumably *mahāsamādhi*, which is dropped in the *tantra*. It seems at least plausible that this expression, *ma ha sa ma ti*, is the basis for later rNying ma explanations of the term *rdzogs chen* as a rendering of *mahāsandhi*, a phrase not, to my knowledge, attested in the Indian literature.

42b5: *ltang 'dzind*. The *tantra* conserves the orthography as *ltangs 'dzin*, whereas contemporary Tibetan orthography prefers *stangs 'dzin*.

3. To Conclude

It is always frustrating and sad to encounter a collection of torn and otherwise damaged manuscript folios, dispersed apart from the complete volumes that once contained them. One can only imagine how these lost books appeared when they were whole, and such ruminations inevitably bring forth a measure of longing and a sense of loss. Books have been damaged and scattered by fire and flood, revolution and war, or have crumbled in neglect without particular violence. All of this must be accepted as part of the ebb and flow of the life of the book, as of other conditioned things. What is more difficult to comprehend is the gratuitous dismemberment of the book, not owing to religious frenzy or political extremism, but solely to serve the market for decorative objects. This is, of course, a very widespread problem and by no means limited to the trade in Asian art. In New York City in the 80s and 90s, for example, I recall that antique print shops in lower Manhattan routinely augmented their stock with pages torn from the rare book collection of the New York Public Library.

There is some real value, therefore, when we find, as we do here, not just the few choice leaves, but an entire lot of manuscript folios. Though this is of course no substitute for the original books, we are sometimes nevertheless able to identify within such bundles several

parts of a single work, or patterns somehow linking diverse elements in the collection into larger coherent groupings. In this way, even a miscellaneous assortment of leaves may contribute to the growth of our historical knowledge of the Tibetan book. And when we are lucky, as was the case here, we may even find some folios that help to fill out our understanding of the development of a particular textual tradition.

As my earlier essay on the *Na rak* cycle indicated, there is some reason to believe that the cycle was codified within the Zur lineage during the 11th century. And in another study, concerning the corpus of rDzogs chen tantras to which the title *Bai ro rgyud 'bum* has been assigned, I suggested that it may have also had as its basis an earlier compilation transmitted through the Zur lineage in West Tibet.¹⁹ Taken together, these offer hints of the role of the Zur tradition during the early second millennium in the elaboration of the corpus that later came to constitute the *rNying ma bka' ma*, together with the corresponding portions of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum*. To clarify this still all too sketchy picture, however, a great deal more material relating to the early Zur lineages will need to be located. Perhaps the manuscripts and manuscript fragments from West Tibet and adjacent regions that have come to light in recent years will yield further evidence if examined critically with this in mind.



Fig. 23: Kimpaka (?), fol. 32b

¹⁹ Kapstein 2008: 10.

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The Uses of Implements are Different: Reflections on the Functions of Tibetan Manuscripts

Sam van Schaik (London)

A battering ram may be used against the wall of a city, but it cannot be employed to stop up a hole – the uses of implements are different.

Zhuangzi, ‘Autumn Floods’¹

1. Introduction

This paper is a somewhat experimental attempt to approach a group of Tibetan manuscripts, the collections derived from the ‘library cave’ in Dunhuang, in terms of their functions, that is, the roles they played in the society in which they were used. The manuscripts from the Dunhuang library cave are particularly well suited to this kind of enquiry. We know tantalisingly little about the cave: neither why it was filled with manuscripts, nor why it was sealed in the early 11th century. In fact, the word ‘library’ is misleading, for if one thing is clear, it is that this cache of manuscripts does not form any kind of coherent library collection. Alongside Buddhist scriptures and treatises are notebooks, shopping lists, writing exercises, letters, contracts, sketches and scurrilous off-the-cuff verses.²

So, rather than the orderly and carefully selected contents of a library, what was put into the cave was a jumble of material from the everyday life of this town and its monasteries. For many scholars who have studied texts from the cave over the past century, this has seemed an obstacle: manuscripts are often extracted from this jumble and studied in isolation. But if we are interested in understanding how manuscripts once functioned, the nature of the library cave collections is an advantage. In the study of Tibetan Buddhism we have a canon, the *bKa*’gyur and *bsTan*’gyur, containing over a

¹ Translation from Legge 1891: 381.

² The research discussed here was made possible by grants from the Leverhulme Trust and the European Research Council. I would also like to acknowledge the importance of many conversations over the years with Imre Galambos about manuscript cultures in general and the Dunhuang manuscripts in particular.

hundred volumes of scriptures, commentaries and treatises; yet a canon does not tell us very much about the day-to-day practice of a religious tradition. A canon is mediated by the priorities and biases of editors and patrons, many of whose decisions about what to include and what to leave out will have been guided by the politics of canonisation, one of the more powerful ways in which a tradition can define itself. Even those texts chosen for inclusion in the canon are grouped into rubrics determined by the editors, rubrics that stratify texts which, outside of the canon, are found among quite different, perhaps not so respectable, companions.

This is the advantage of the cache of manuscripts from the cave in Dunhuang: they were not carefully selected and ordered to present an idealised image of a tradition. In this disorderly jumble, texts rub up against each other in a way that would never be allowed in a canonical collection. We can ask, and perhaps answer, the question of what people did with these texts.

When we study ancient manuscripts we are faced with the material remains of a social group. Instead of mining this material for interesting texts, and stripping out the material context, we could use all of the context we can get our hands on to reconstruct the patterns of behaviour, the forms of life, of which these objects were once an integral part. This can be formulated as a series of simple questions, which despite their simplicity are not always asked about manuscripts: how was it made? Who brought it here? Who read it, and for what purposes? And as they do for archaeologists, these would become questions about wider patterns of behaviour. Over time, by studying significant numbers of objects from a complex of sites and placing them in relation to each other, we could hope to discern these patterns. This would allow us to consider not just the meaning of the text, but its use, the practice in which it was embedded.³

But can we really get from objects like this to the everyday practices of which they were a part? This question has been central to recent developments in anthropology and sociology brought together under the name of ‘practice theory’.⁴ The definition of a practice

³ I have discussed these questions at more length in van Schaik 2015: 1–8.

⁴ Among the many publications dealing with practice theory, Sherry Ortner’s *High Religion* (1988) is notable for dealing with religious practices among Sherpa Buddhists. Reckwitz 2002 is a good overview of the sources and variations of practice theory. Thus far there has been no sustained

differs from one writer to another, but it is usually understood as a socially recognised activity of some complexity, which is learned through teaching and repetition. Practices involve both the body and the mind, in that they involve physical movements (sometimes but not always including speaking) and the knowledge (or know-how) to carry out these movements. This know-how or knowledge is not merely individual, but social; it must be taught and is subject to the judgments of others. Moreover, practices usually involve objects, and in this sense objects are part of the know-how of a practice. Objects shape and make possible practices that could not happen in the same way without them.⁵

The usefulness of practice theory to manuscript studies is that it allows us to consider manuscripts primarily as objects that were once an integral part of the activities of everyday life. The mutual dependence of humans and objects in patterns of activity was nicely summarised by Jean Baudrillard:

Moreover any object immediately becomes the foundation of a network of habits, the focus of a set of behavioural routines. Conversely, there is probably no habit that does not centre on an object. In everyday existence the two are inextricably bound up with each other.⁶

One might not agree that Baudrillard's statement applies to 'any object,' but since our societies are always collectives of people and objects, there are countless objects that function in everyday life and are bound up in people's patterns of behaviour. When we turn to the study of the distant past, the people are obviously long gone, yet we still have some of their objects. The question then becomes whether we can glimpse patterns of behaviour based on the objects alone. In this paper I will take a few examples of religious texts from

attempt, as far as I know, to apply practice theory to the study of manuscripts and printed books.

⁵ Discussion of the role of social knowledge in practices owes a great deal to the later writings of Ludwig Wittgenstein (as does indeed practice theory in general). See especially the remarks on rule-following in *Philosophical Investigations* §§138–242. It is interesting to note that the two language games Wittgenstein introduces in §1 and §2 both involve objects and indeed are impossible to conceive without their objects.

⁶ Baudrillard 2005: 100 n. 23. Baudrillard's choice of example to illustrate this point is the wristwatch.

Dunhuang and look at what can be gained from trying to get a sense of the practices in which they once participated.⁷

2. The Uses of Manuscripts

It may be obvious enough to say that manuscripts can be used in a variety of ways. However, as far as I am aware, there has been no attempt thus far to enumerate this variety of uses in the Tibetan Dunhuang manuscripts (or Tibetan manuscripts in general). Below I discuss eight different uses of manuscripts, each use based on one or more representative examples. Use is, of course, only one aspect of the manuscripts' social existence. Clive Gamble suggests six key terms via which to examine material culture: *production, function, context, exchange, consumption, and transformation*.⁸ Here I will be concentrating on the second term in Gamble's list, function, combining a functional approach to the physical objects with close attention to the texts (and in some cases images) inscribed upon them.

(i) A Handbook for Funerals

The small stitched booklet Pelliot tibétain 37 (fig. 1) was featured in the facsimile publication *Choix du documents tibétaines conservés à la Bibliothèque nationale*, perhaps because of the sketches of various demonic figures that adorn the last few pages. It is no longer complete—the cover and early pages being missing—and the ink and grease stains on many pages indicate that it was well used before it ended up in the Dunhuang cave. The writing style throughout is of poor quality, and the booklet was either written by more than one person or by the same person at various stages and with different pens. I have written elsewhere about this kind of poor-quality handwriting in the Dunhuang manuscripts, suggesting that such examples may have been written at speed in the course of taking down oral teachings, or that they were done by writers without formal training in the Tibetan alphabet.⁹

⁷ While the question of the use of the Tibetan Dunhuang manuscripts has not been previously addressed in a sustained way, this is not the case with the Chinese manuscripts; the work of Victor Mair has been particularly influential here (see Mair 1981).

⁸ Gamble 2004: 115. See also the diagram in Sillar & Tite 2000.

⁹ van Schaik 2007; see also van Schaik and Galambos 2012: 32–34.

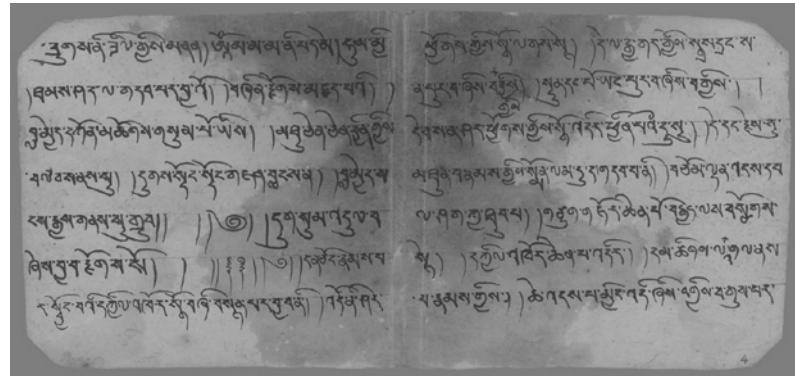


Fig. 1: Pelliot tibétain 37 (© Bibliothèque nationale de France)

For our present aim of trying to understand the function of this booklet, it is probably sufficient to say that the poor quality of the writing suggests that it was put together for some practical purpose that did not require it to be beautifully executed. We should also consider whether that purpose is related to the form of the manuscript, a small (13.5 x 15 cm) booklet that would have been easier to carry on the person than the more common *pecha* form. I have deliberately left discussion of the texts in the manuscript until after we have examined its form and style of writing; when we do look at the texts, it is important to examine them as a piece. A large proportion of the Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang (and indeed Tibetan manuscripts and printed volumes in general) are compendia, containing a series of related texts. The original rationale for gathering the texts together in one manuscript is surely directly linked to the manuscript's function.

The first text represented in Pelliot tibétain 37 (pp. 1–6; since the beginning is lost we cannot tell if there were originally texts preceding it) is the *Dug gsum 'dul ba* (*Overcoming the Three Poisons*), a text which, as Yoshiro Imaeda has shown, contains an early instance of the mantra *om mani padme hum* in Tibetan Buddhism. This is a text about the post-death state, written in idiomatic versified Tibetan, which (as Imaeda has also pointed out) bear comparison with the later *Bar do thos grol* literature.¹⁰ This is followed (pp. 7–40) by longer prayer, based on the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana tantra*, a *tantra* which is itself directly concerned with the fate of the deceased. In the next text (pp. 42–49),

¹⁰ Imaeda 1979, 2010. See also Cuevas 2008 on the culture of death and rebirth in Tibet.

the name of the deceased is to be directly inserted into the prayer, as indicated by the first line *tshe 'das pa mying 'di bzhis [= bzhes] bgyi ba'i don du*. Finally (pp. 50–51), there are the first lines of a popular instructional text on the basic principles of Buddhism: the effects of actions, rebirth, and so on.

Under the last lines of text is a sketch of a meditating monk, and this is followed by ten pages of sketches of various demonic figures, some of which are recognisably spirits of the *the'u rang* class. All are similar to sets of demons on illustrated cards (*tsakali*) still used in rituals in Tibet and Mongolia. The link between these demons and the texts that precede them seems clear, though nobody has previously noted it; in general the need to deal with these harmful spirits occurs at times of sickness and death, and the association of the rituals in Pelliot tibétain 37 and death should be clear by now. The function I would suggest for Pelliot tibétain 37 is that of a manual used by a monk or lay ritualist visiting the homes of the dead and dying.¹¹

There are over twenty other Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang in booklet format; many of these are compendia of prayers, mantras and brief instructional texts, and these were probably used in a similar way to Pelliot tibétain 37, though perhaps not compiled specifically for use in funerary circumstances. IOL Tib J 401, a collection of short rituals which are mainly medical in nature, has the owner's name written in large letters across the front: Big kru Prad nya pra ba (Bhikṣu Prajñāprabhā). So in this case we know that the owner was a monk, or at least somebody who identified himself as such. The codex form is not attested before the 10th century, so these Dunhuang booklets probably date from no earlier than that. The use of this format for collections of ritual texts continued in Tibet through the following centuries; another example from the British Library collections is the 18th–19th century manuscript Or.15193.

(ii) A Sermon Book

IOL Tib J 687, a slight *pothi* manuscript of merely three folios, appears to have come from the milieu, and possibly even the pen, of the translator 'Go Chos grub, who flourished in the mid-9th century. The folios are of a common size for Dunhuang manuscripts, 45x9 cm, with red margins and a red circle around a central string hole. The manuscript contains a single text titled *A Collection of Sūtra*,

¹¹ I previously suggested this in van Schaik 2006: 63.

Śāstra and Vinaya (mDo sde dang 'dul ba dang bstan bcos rnams las btus), written in a highly cursive style, clearly very quickly by a practised hand. This style is mainly seen in the manuscripts associated with Chos grub, and elsewhere I have categorised it as the ‘monastic style’, one of the styles that can be dated within, or not long after, the Tibetan imperial period (ending in Dunhuang in 848).¹² Daishun Ueyama suggested that some of these manuscripts, including IOL Tib J 687 (fig. 2), were written by Chos grub himself, though it may be safer to say that they derive from his lifetime, and probably his own *atelier*.¹³ In any case, turning to the function of the manuscript IOL Tib J 687, we have some help from Chos grub’s colophon:

Due to the great kindness of the divine son, this service (*cho ga*), to be bestowed upon householders, was composed as a mere drop taken from the expansive ocean of the Sage’s teachings. If those who oppose the Buddha’s teachings feel ashamed and confess their wrongs to the noble ones and the learned saints, may they be granted forgiveness by the noble ones and the wise.¹⁴

This colophon tells us several things. The text was composed under the patronage of the Tibetan emperor (the *lhas sras* or ‘divine son’), probably Khri gtsug lde btsan (r. 815–841). It was written to be performed as a *cho ga*, which I have translated here as ‘service’. And its intended audience was householders, that is non-monastics, who have not as yet been converted to Buddhism. The description here of the text as a *cho ga* alerts us to its performative function. It is brief enough that it could be read aloud in a few minutes, but that was probably not the intended use; it is more likely that the collected snippets from various sources would be worked into a sermon.

¹² van Schaik 2013: 124–125.

¹³ Ueyama 1990: 93–94. The manuscripts that Ueyama identifies as possibly being in Chos grub’s own handwriting are: IOL Tib J 686, 687, 217, 218, and Pelliot tibétain 2205 (= Pelliot chinois 2035).

¹⁴ IOL Tib J 687, f.3v: @|:lha sras kyi rje bka' drin bstabs pa'i phyir|| thub pa'i gsung rab rgya mtsho rab 'byams pas|| khyims bslabs pa sbyin pa'i cho ga 'di|| thigs pa 'ga' zhig blangs te brtsams pa la|| thog du ma phebs bka' dang 'gal ba rnams|| 'phags pa dang nI skye bo'i mkhas rnams la|| shin tu ngo tsha gnong bkur 'thol gnas(?) na|| 'phags pa dag dang mkyen rnams bzod pa gsol|| ||rdzogs so||.

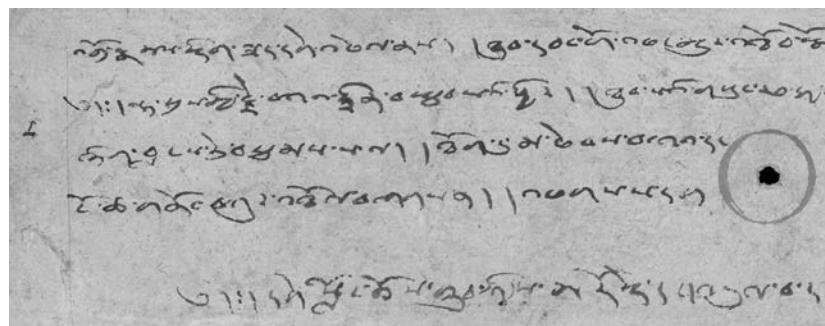


Fig. 2: IOL Tib J 687 (© The British Library)

Little work has been done on the practice of sermons or lectures in Tibetan Buddhism, though the subject is well-known in the study of East Asian and Southeast Asian Buddhism.¹⁵ At Dunhuang, sermons were often large-scale events, funded by donors as an exercise in creating merit for their families and larger social groups. They were also linked to funerary culture, being part of the rituals that took place in the period between death and rebirth. The cave temples of Dunhuang may have been a setting for some of these sermons, as Neil Schmidt (2006) has argued. Schmidt has also written with regard to Chinese sermons in Dunhuang:

In their creation of meritorious karmic bonds, or affinities (*jieyuan* 結緣), such ceremonies and their efficacies united all involved: clergy, donors and dedicatees, as well as the devotional figure in the form of a painting or statue. In their ability to establish relations across time and space, these rituals became powerful tools in expediting a variety of socio-religious agendas.¹⁶

In this context, the role of IOL Tib J 687 would be to support the practice of giving a sermon, providing a solid scriptural basis for a discursive lecture. This hypothesis is supported by the existence of several other similar manuscript compendia of scriptural sources, such as the text titled *Drawn from Eighty Sūtras* (*mDo sde bryad bcu khungs*), and many similar texts from the Tibetan Chan tradition.¹⁷ Of course, sermons would often be incorporated into larger rituals, such

¹⁵ See, for example, Poceski 2008 on sermons in Chinese Chan, and Langer 2013 on sermons in Sri Lanka.

¹⁶ Schmidt 2006: 177.

¹⁷ On these texts, see van Schaik 2015.

as the initiatory rites of Chan and Tantric Buddhism; I will discuss the manuscripts involved in these rituals next.

(iii) A Manual for an Initiation Ceremony

One of the most studied Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang, Pelliot tibétain 116, is a large concertina manuscript with 124 panels, each of approximately 7x30 cm. Jean-Pierre Drège identified 263 concertina manuscripts from the two major collections of Dunhuang manuscripts: the British Library and the Bibliothèque national de France. Although the majority of the manuscripts in these collections are in Chinese, Drège found that the vast majority of the concertinas (around 90%) are in the Tibetan language, and all can be dated from the mid-9th to the end of the 10th century.¹⁸ Recent studies have shown that this book form was chosen for complex sequences of ritual practices.¹⁹ There is a logic to this choice: while loose-leaf *pothi* pages can get mixed up, a concertina keeps the pages, and the texts, in the right order. Even if you are extracting or summarising from your materials, it is important to know exactly where in the ritual you are.

As I have discussed in detail elsewhere, the sequence of texts in Pelliot tibétain 116 mirror the themes of Chan initiation sermons like the one in the *Platform Sūtra*: bestowing the precepts of a *bodhisattva*, expounding emptiness, introducing the immanence of the enlightened state in an ordinary person, followed by instructions on meditation, and ending with an inspiring song. Some of the texts, including an extensive question-and-answer text quoting from *sūtras*, seem to be source material to be drawn upon in lectures, similar to the manuscript discussed in the previous section. Thus the boundary between ceremonial rituals and sermons is a blurry one, as the latter are often an integral part of the former. Chan initiation ceremonies were given to lay people would be the central ritual of an event that was often planned well in advance, giving monastics and lay people time to travel to the site of the ceremony, and could last over several days or weeks, the transmission of the precepts being followed by a meditation retreat.²⁰

¹⁸ Drège 1984.

¹⁹ See, for example, the *mahāyoga* ritual manuscript discussed in Dalton 2012: 79–94, and the Chan manuscript discussed in van Schaik 2015: 4–7, 25–41.

²⁰ Adamek 2007: 197–204.

That Pelliot tibétain 116 was made for such ceremonies is suggested by its textual content; that it was also used is indicated by its physical state: the manuscript is well worn and was repaired in several places, perhaps more than once. At some point, somebody undertook a major repair by replacing the first and last panels. These two panels are visually different from the rest of the manuscript, being composed of different paper and containing text written in a different hand from all of the other panels.²¹

Other concertina manuscripts from Dunhuang show the close link between this book form and the arrangement of text sequences for ritual ceremonies. Several concertinas contain sequences of prayers and *dhāraṇī* texts, often starting with an invitation to the gods and *nāgas* to come and listen to the recitation. They too usually show signs of heavy use. One large concertina manuscript was clearly created for a major Tantric initiation. This manuscript is currently in three parts (Pelliot tibétain 36 / IOL Tib J 419 (fig. 3) / Pelliot tibétain 42) but was originally a single complete manuscript. It contains eighteen different texts (with some additional notes at the end), beginning with a *gtor ma* offering and ending with the purificatory 100-syllable mantra of Vajrasattva. The heart of the ceremony seems to be the ritual of “union and liberation,” which has been translated and discussed by Jacob Dalton (2012). This is accompanied by texts on the narrative behind the ritual and—as in the Chan initiation manuscript—a question-and-answer text; so it seems that here, too, we have material for a sermon that is an integral part of the initiation. This fits with what we know of later initiation texts translated in the *phyi dar*, which often include a brief expository section on the lineage of the practice.

When we consider the role of manuscripts such as these, we should also look at non-textual material when we have it. The Dunhuang cave collections include paintings of *mandalas* and other material associated with Tantric traditions. For instance, IOL Tib J 1364 is a small octagonal piece of paper mounted on a wooden stick with an image of Vajrasattva painted on it, an item that is very similar to some forms of the *tsakali*, cards used in initiation ceremonies. There is also Pelliot chinois 4518(7), a well preserved crown painted with the images of the five *buddhas* that is very similar to crowns still used in initiations in the present day. These items—coming from the same milieu and surely made to be used in

²¹ The textual content and physical state of the manuscript are discussed at length in van Schaik 2015.

Tantric ritual practices—support our approach to the manuscripts as agents in these same practices.

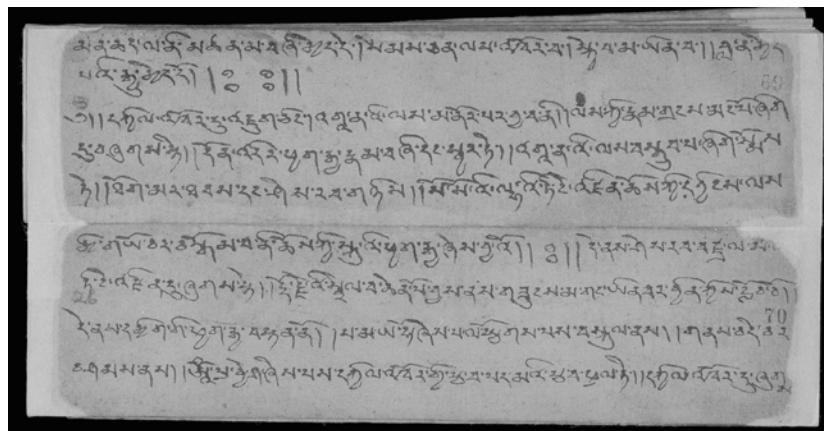


Fig. 3: IOL Tib J 419 (© The British Library)

(iv) A Students' Notebook

So far we have looked at manuscripts as agents in a performance of one kind or another. Another aspect of the use of manuscripts is receptive—the taking down of texts and notes. Due to the expense of paper production, which meant that books would in general only be produced when funded by a sponsor, one would not expect to find many notebooks created specifically for this purpose. What we do find, is recycled manuscripts, often scrolls where the blank verso was used for taking notes. An example of such scroll is Or.8210/S.95. This scroll is particularly useful because we have an exact date for the text on the recto, which is a Chinese almanac created for the year 956. This is a prime example of a disposable text: at the end of the year, the almanac has no further use.

The verso of Or.8210/S.95 (fig. 4), and indeed some parts of the recto as well, are filled with pen-tests, a draft letter, brief prayer, and notes on Tantric practice. The texts and text fragments on the verso are written sequentially, but often in different handwritings, which may be different styles of a single scribe. The sixth text on the verso, written in a hasty hand with poorly formed letters, appears to be notes from a lecture on Tantric practice. The notes start with a discussion of the simultaneous (*cig car*) perfection of the *mandala*. This is followed by a mantra, and then a description of Vairocana and his consort Samantabhadri, and the aspiration to be born in the realm

of Akaniṣṭha. These notes are followed by a copy of a more formal text on themes in Mahāyoga, written in a more careful handwriting.²²

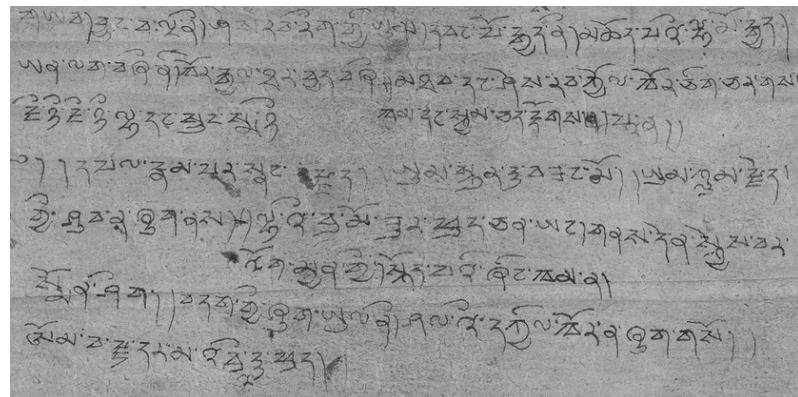


Fig. 4: Or.8210/S.95 (© The British Library)

The manuscript Or.8210/S.95 is not an isolated case. Another example is IOL Tib J 754 containing Tibetan notes—on the verso of a scroll with part of a Chinese *sūtra*, the *Baoenjing*—which show the same alternation between carefully written texts and hastily, poorly formed writing. This scroll suggests that incomplete *sūtra* texts were apparently disposable (or at least re-usable) in the same way as an out-of-date almanac. The notes on the verso of this *Baoenjing* scroll do not seem to be by the scribe who wrote the text on the recto, and indeed probably came to Dunhuang from further east, along with a pilgrim’s letters of passage in the 960s. These Tibetan notes comprise short Tantric *sādhanas*, discussions of how to practice, and brief medical rituals.²³

There are many other examples of Chinese scrolls re-used to write down various short Tibetan texts.²⁴ The best-known example of note-taking, on the other hand, is Pelliot tibétain 849, which was written on a dedicated (i.e. not re-used) scroll. The scroll contains a series of

²² Elsewhere (van Schaik & Galambos 2012: 32–34) I have argued that some of these manuscripts are in a poor quality handwriting because they were written by non-Tibetans without formal training in the Tibetan alphabet. However, in the case of manuscripts like Or.8210/S.95, we can see both the fair and rough writings of the same scribe, showing that some texts were written carefully and others in haste, the latter probably in a teaching situation.

²³ See the detailed discussion in van Schaik & Galambos 2012: 127–146.

²⁴ Other examples include Pelliot tibétain 39 and Or.8210/S.421.

notes on various topics including the names of *tantras* in Tibetan and Sanskrit, the names of the kings of Tibet, and a description of the travels of an Indic teacher called Devaputra. The scroll is signed by a scribe named 'Bro dKon mchog dpal. Regarding this manuscript Matthew Kapstein has written:

In sum, it seems plausible to take PT 849 not as a straightforward record of Devaputra's teaching, but rather as a product of his interaction with his Tibetan disciples. PT 849 may thus be seen not precisely as a glossary, but rather as something resembling a dharma-student's notebook, containing elements of a lexicon, but also lists of teachings and texts, historical notes, and so on.²⁵

Unlike the other, re-used scrolls, the handwriting on Pelliot tibétain 849 is good and fairly consistent. Thus this scroll may well be a fair copy of rough notes, perhaps collected together from more than one manuscript, no longer extant, that would have been in a more rough-and-ready handwriting like those in Or.8210/S.95 and IOL Tib J 754. It was probably due to the support of a patron, or the means of the scribe 'Bro dKon mchog dpal himself, that a fair copy was made. The lexicographical aspect of Pelliot tibétain 849 should alert us to the fact that while students' notes may be receptive in one sense, their function does not end with the act of recording a text or teaching; they may play a part in further practices. The Dunhuang collections contain other multilingual glossaries that would have facilitated interactions between students and teachers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.²⁶

(v) A Bilingual Glossary and Phrasebook

The manuscripts we have looked at so far all functioned in the context of human interactions. In a multicultural and multilingual society such as the one that flourished in Dunhuang and the surrounding region, differences in spoken language were potentially a serious barrier to these exchanges. Several glossaries and phrasebooks found among the Dunhuang manuscripts attest both to the frequency of inter-cultural exchange and to the means by which linguistic barriers were overcome. One of these is the Tibeto-Chinese glossary and phrasebook found in two manuscripts: Or.8210/S.1000

²⁵ Kapstein 2006: 23

²⁶ Many examples of students' notes in Chinese are discussed in Mair 1981.

and S.2736 (fig. 5).²⁷ The text has been copied on the blank verso of a Chinese scroll; unlike the manuscripts discussed in the previous section, this one probably dates to the period of Tibetan occupation of Dunhuang or the decades immediately following the end of that occupation (i.e. the mid to late 9th century).²⁸ In any case, the text, which includes words for the Tibetan *btsan po* and imperial posts, such as *stong dpon* and *khri dpon*, probably dates from the imperial period.

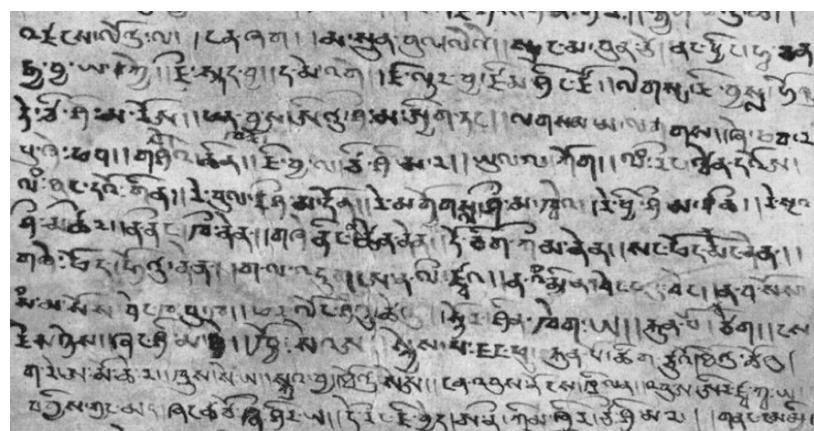


Fig. 5: Or.8210/S.2376 (© The British Library)

The phrasebook gives the Tibetan word, followed by its Chinese equivalent, all in Tibetan script. Thus it was clearly written for, and used by, those familiar with the Tibetan language and script, but not with the Chinese. Phrases like “how do you say...” (*ji skad bya*) make it clear that the phrasebook was made for practical use rather than as a teacher’s aid. As far as the practices that this glossary and phrasebook facilitated can be reconstructed, they mainly concern trade. The names of goods—including food, clothes, tools, weapons and armour—predominate. Phrases concerning buying and selling are also found—including “last price” (*gong sngon*) and “thanks for letting me look” (*kho bar spyan ras kyis btsas gtang rang ’tshal*).

Also included are words and phrases helpful to visitors to a strange town looking for food and a bed for night and moving on to

²⁷ These two manuscripts were discussed and transcribed in Thomas & Giles 1948.

²⁸ This assessment is on the basis of the writing style that falls into the category of ‘square style’ discussed in van Schaik 2013.

the next destination. The phrasebook also comes to the aid of travellers who encounter problems, such as illness, being robbed, or being accused of being a thief, allowing them to invoke the authority of the Tibetan emperor or a local official, or seek the help of a ritual specialist (*bon po*). Though the phrasebook was compiled to be used by travelling merchants, it could certainly also have been used by monks, who also had to deal with the business of buying and selling, and with possible cross-cultural misunderstandings. A monastic shopping list, written in Khotanese with Tibetan notes, is evidence of that.²⁹ Some of the other Tibeto-Chinese glossaries deal with purely religious matters, including doctrinal terminology and the names of monasteries.³⁰

(vi) A ‘Receipt’ for Merit Received

The manuscripts that we have looked at so far have been active participants in various kinds of practice. Some manuscripts, indeed perhaps the majority of the religious manuscripts from the Dunhuang cave, may not have been used in this way. These are the manuscripts of popular scriptural texts copied in order to generate merit. After they had been completed, the function of these manuscripts was simply to act as a reminder or guarantee of the merit generated by those created them and sponsored their production. In the words of John Kieschnick, “these are ‘receipts’ for merit-giving transactions, rather than scriptures that were read.”³¹

The most numerous of this kind of manuscript in the Tibetan Dunhuang collections are the multiple copies of the *Śatasahāsrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* and the *Aparimitāyurnāma-sūtra* produced in the first half of the 9th century (fig. 6), though some of these are discards rather than successfully completed copies. There is ample evidence of the sophisticated social apparatus that supported the activity of *sūtra* copying, including scribes, editors, senior editors, and supervisors.³²

²⁹ The shopping list is IOL Khot 140; see also the Khotanese–Sanskrit phrasebook Pelliot chinois 5538, discussed in van Schaik & Galambos 2012: 140–143.

³⁰ Other Buddhist glossaries are Pelliot tibétain 1257, 1261, and Pelliot chinois 2053. Other glossaries which are not specifically on Buddhist themes are Pelliot tibétain 1260 and 1263 (= Pelliot chinois 2762).

³¹ Keischnick 2003: 170.

³² See Iwao 2012 & Dotson 2015.

Here the most significant practices are those carried out in the process of creating the manuscript; afterwards, their function was largely passive, as guarantees of the merit gained through their creation. More prosaically, their existence also proved that the order of the emperor had been carried out. These *sūtras* in Dunhuang (as well as additional copies that have been more recently discovered in Central Tibet) are the earliest extant examples of a practice that continues through to the present day, when we also find the presence of such manuscripts (typically multi-volume collections of the *bKa'* *'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur*) in monasteries, primarily as physical representations of the Buddha's speech.³³

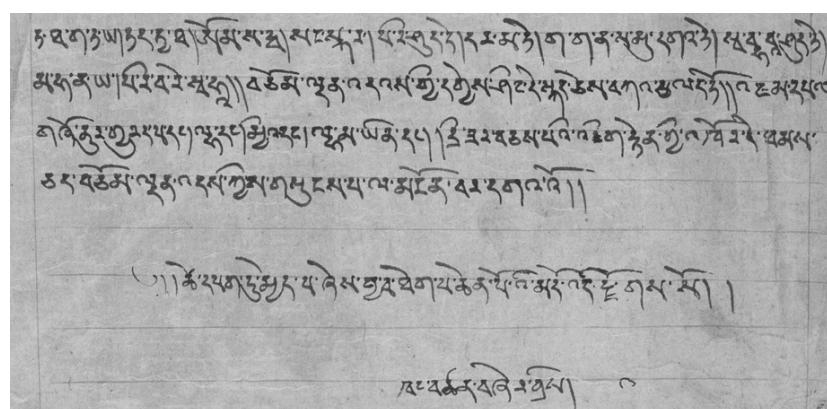


Fig. 6: IOL Tib J 310.1210 (© The British Library)

(vii) An Amulet

Related in their function to *sūtra* collections that perform their role by simply sitting on a shelf are the smaller and more humble manuscripts that I will refer to here as *amulets*.³⁴ Under this term I include those single sheets of paper inscribed with a prayer or *dhāraṇī*, possibly also with an image of the associated deity, as well as smaller items that might have been carried on the person, inserted into a statue or placed on a shrine. In the Dunhuang collections, the prayer or *dhāraṇī* sheets are found mainly in Chinese, and most of

³³ For an overview of major manuscript copying and printing project in Tibet, see Schaeffer 2009.

³⁴ A common definition has *amulet* referring only to objects that offer protection, and *talisman* referring to objects that bring luck; here I use *amulet* to refer to any manuscript or woodblock print with either protective or luck-bringing functions.

these are printed rather than written by hand (a fact that should be taken into account when considering the early development and spread of print technology).

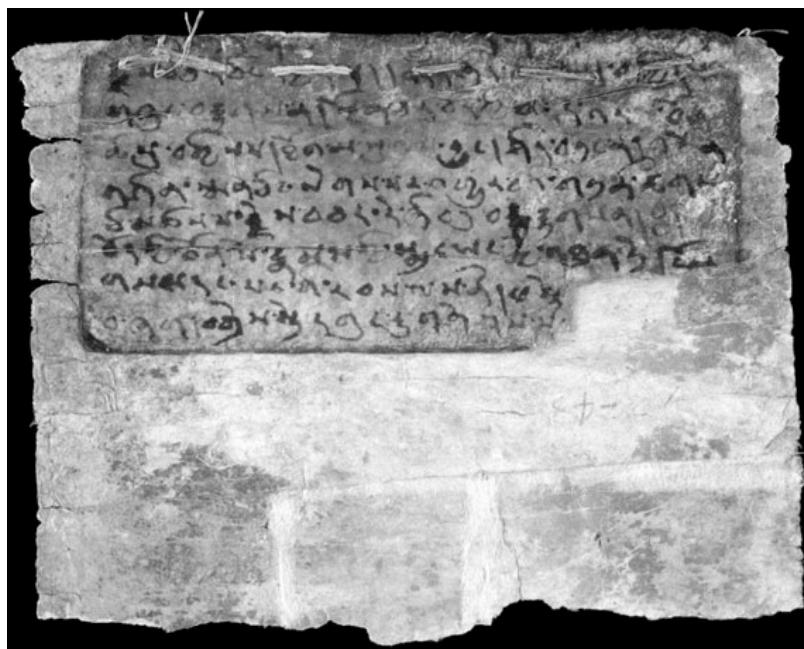


Fig. 7: Or.8210/S.12243 (© The British Library)

Among the Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang, examples of these amulet-type manuscripts include a tiny scroll (4.4 cm wide), with prayers inscribed in a 10th century handwriting (IOL Tib J 457), which may have been intended to be placed in a statue, a practice common in later Tibetan Buddhism. The later tradition of the ‘prayer wheel’ is a variation on the use of this kind of scroll manuscript. Another example from Dunhuang that prefigures what we see in the later Tibetan tradition is Pelliot tibétain 858, a single sheet of paper with a *dhāraṇī* from the *Mahāpratisarāvidyārājñī* written in the shape of a *stūpa*. The sheet has been folded many times into a small triangular shape, which could have been placed in a locket (Tib. *ga'u*), stitched into clothing, or simply carried. Paper amulets could also be fashioned in a more makeshift way: for example, Or.8210/S.12243 (fig. 7) is formed of two different pages, containing fragments of texts written in different hands, stitched together at one side. As there is no evident use for the texts, the purpose of stitching

these two manuscripts together may have been to create an amulet, its efficacy based on the presence of sacred text.³⁵

3. Conclusion

At the beginning of this paper I put forward a theoretical position informed by archaeology and practice theory. However, as long as we remain in the realm of theory, one approach might seem as valid as any other. It is only in empirical work, whether with people or things, that one approach will prove more productive and interesting than another. An example often used by historians of science is the vacuum pump invented in the 17th century and used by Robert Boyle in experiments with the creation of a vacuum. Clearly the vacuum pump is more than a carrier of symbolic meanings, or an aspect of discourse. The pump is an active part, one might even say an agent, in the development of scientific and technological knowledge in Europe.³⁶

I have tried to approach the Dunhuang manuscripts as objects in the same category as Boyle's vacuum pump, objects which were integral to particular cultural practices, practices that could not proceed in the same way without their objects. Of course, unlike the vacuum pump, manuscripts and printed books are carriers of text, and in the assessment of the social uses of the manuscripts discussed above I have paid attention to their texts as much as to their physical forms, writing styles, and social contexts. I have deliberately chosen to cover a broad range of practices without privileging the scholarly use of books for personal reading and study, partly because I suspect that we have a tendency (perhaps unconscious) to see the primary function of a book as a source of knowledge, which we imbibe through the practice of private reading. Instead, we should be open to a wide range of practices, in which private reading, if it does figure, is not privileged above other practices. This list of the uses of manuscripts from Dunhuang is by no means exhaustive, and I hope

³⁵ This manuscript might have been repurposed for a more prosaic function; many manuscripts were cut into pieces in order to patch other manuscripts; the Princeton East Asian Library has several examples of manuscripts that were repurposed as shoe soles (Peald 7, 11). Tsuguhiro Takeuchi (2004) has written about the re-use of military wooden slips as tools of various kinds. This kind of recycling should certainly also be considered among the functions of manuscripts.

³⁶ Latour 1993. Latour's source for this example is Schapin & Schaffer 1985.

readers will think of more, whether in relation to the Dunhuang manuscripts or other miscellaneous manuscript collections.

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Some Palaeographic Observations on Tibetan Legal Documents

Peter Schwieger (Bonn)

1. Introduction

Since more than three decades we have been studying Tibetan legal and social documents at Bonn University. Especially thanks to the comprehensive microfilming and digitalisation of Tibetan archival material from Lhasa, Dharamsala, Ladakh and elsewhere we have now a comparatively large pool of some thousand documents at hand that allow representative studies on a larger scale. Currently we analyse the material especially as a source for Tibet's social and political history. In the course of our research, questions about identifying regional and periodical characteristics of various manuscripts have been raised every now and then. Except for Tibetan seals,¹ there are until now no larger studies that analyse such characteristics systematically on the basis of Tibetan archival material. I would therefore like to take the opportunity to present some preliminary palaeographic observations as a first step to outline the historical development of Tibetan handwriting used to pen Tibetan legal documents and archive material.

Reading Tibetan documents and archive material, one finds quite a few striking differences with regard to the writing styles. Nevertheless, the major and at once striking differences are, in particular, depending on the purpose the respective document is written for: whether being a draft, a copy for the sender's archive, a letter sent to a highly respected person, a ruler's decree, a simple file note, *et cetera*. To identify characteristics typical for a specific area, chancellery, or period, one has first and foremost to look for characteristics within and not between various classes of Tibetan handwriting created for various purposes. That is to say, one has to develop a sensibility for the minor, but nevertheless salient differences within what might be classified as one and the same type of Tibetan calligraphy. To distinguish various writing styles the

¹ Schuh 1981.

Tibetans themselves have their own nomenclature to offer. Terminology and illustrations describing these various styles can be found in numerous contemporary Tibetan manuals. However, when taking a closer look, it is obviously not always easy to define the features that together constitute a specific writing style.

2. Scripts with Long Descenders

As a first category of scripts eligible for comparison within Tibetan legal documents, those scripts that catch our eyes by long descenders may be distinguished. Such scripts were in particular used to write down charters or ruler's decrees of highest significance. As such they appear in documents from the 13th up to the 20th century. The upright, slim and elegant script with its vertically elongated letters and a consequently large interlinear spacing involuntary slightly reminds us of the diplomatic minuscule of medieval Europe used to pen charters from the 9th to the 12th century, though in the former case the elongation is created by long descenders, while in the latter the same effect is rather caused by long ascenders. Such scripts certainly aimed to evoke the impression of significance and authority.

Names of scribes are nowhere handed down to us. It goes without saying that the issuer of the respective decree is not identical with the scribe. The style of the script often resembles the '*bru tsha*' script, distinguished as a specific style in Tibetan calligraphy manuals. In this script, ideally, the body of the letters should resemble the shape of a grain,² that is to say, that it should taper to a point like triangle. Moreover, it has long descenders, mostly having a length twice that of the body's height. According to Dung dkar rin po che, this was a typical script used to write down edicts (*bka' rgya*) of the government, ordinances (*rtsa tshig*), and law texts (*khrims yig*).³ However, taking a closer look, one becomes aware that the label '*bru tsha*' should not be taken too narrow, because we very often find single letters that according to these Tibetan classification schemes would indicate another type of style, often one of the *sug ring*, or *tshugs ring*, type.⁴ Also among the many contemporary manuals

² See dPa' ris sangs rgyas 1997: 89.

³ Dung dkar 2002: 1568.

⁴ Compare, for example, the specimens for the *sug ring* script presented by dPa' ris sangs rgyas 1997: 70f, 83–85. The terms *sug ring* and *tshugs ring* seem to be used as synonyms. Compare for instance the specimens of *sug ring* contained in Tshe ring don grub 2004: 42ff, with the specimens of

teaching Tibetan calligraphy one will find some that include other varieties of single letters in what they classify as '*'bru tsha*' style. The following examples (fig. 1) illustrate the great variety found in modern Tibetan calligraphy manuals for the style labelled as '*'bru tsha*'.

kh							
g							
ph							

tshugs ring contained in rNga ba Blo bzang 'jam dpal 2005: 6ff. Slightly deviant is the *tshugs ring* style presented in 'Jang Shes rab rnam dag 2002: 25ff.

⁵ Go ba dbyig & Hri zhod lis 1990: 114.

⁶ Ibid. 67.

⁷ rDo rje tshe ring 1998: 1.

⁸ Kun dga' bzang po 1997: 29 (2nd pagination).

⁹ bSod nams rgya mtsho 1986: 18.

¹⁰ 'Jang Shes rab rnam dag 2002: 11.

¹¹ Mi rnam sprul ming pa 2002: 23.

¹² Go ba dbyig & Hri zhod lis 1990: 67.

¹³ 'Jang Shes rab rnam dag 2002: 11.

¹⁴ rDo rje tshe ring 1998: 1.

¹⁵ Kun dga' bzang po 1997: 29 (2nd pagination).

¹⁶ Mi rnam sprul ming pa 2002: 23.

¹⁷ lHag pa tshe ring 1991: 3.

¹⁸ Go ba dbyig & Hri zhod lis 1990: 114.

¹⁹ Ibid. 67.

²⁰ rDo rje tshe ring 1998: 1.

tsh							
zh							
ky							

Fig. 1: Selected examples of '*'bru tsha*' script

²¹ Kun dga' bzang po 1997: 29 (2nd pagination).

²² bSod nams rgya mtsho 1986: 18.

²³ 'Jang Shes rab rnam dag 2002: 11.

²⁴ Mi rnam sprul ming pa 2002: 23.

²⁵ Go ba dbyig & Hri zhod lis 1990: 114.

²⁶ Ibid. 67.

²⁷ rDo rje tshe ring 1998: 1.

²⁸ Kun dga' bzang po 1997: 29 (2nd pagination).

²⁹ bSod nams rgya mtsho 1986: 18.

³⁰ 'Jang Shes rab rnam dag 2002: 11.

³¹ Mi rnam sprul ming pa 2002: 23.

³² Go ba dbyig & Hri zhod lis 1990: 115.

³³ Ibid. 67.

³⁴ rDo rje tshe ring 1998: 1.

³⁵ Kun dga' bzang po 1997: 29 (2nd pagination).

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³⁷ 'Jang Shes rab rnam dag 2002: 11.

³⁸ Mi rnam sprul ming pa 2002: 23.

³⁹ Go ba dbyig & Hri zhod lis 1990: 69.

⁴⁰ rDo rje tshe ring 1998: 3.

⁴¹ Kun dga' bzang po 1997: 32 (2nd pagination).

⁴² 'Jang Shes rab rnam dag 2002: 12.

These examples illustrate the nowadays' *'bru tsha* script. There have also been published three historical varieties of the *'bru tsha* script by copying them as facsimile from unspecified old block prints showing different Tibetan scripts.⁴³ They are completely identical with the three varieties presented in a book authored by Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, preserved in the Tibetan Archives in Lhasa and recently made available through facsimile:⁴⁴ a *'bru chen* script⁴⁵ “in the style of lDan ma rTse mangs,”⁴⁶ a *'bru chung* script “in the style of lDan ma rTse mangs,” also known as “the lDan script of the presence” (*deng sang ldan yig*), that is, the time of Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, and a third variety described as the *'bru tsha* script of the presence (*deng sang 'bru tsha*), that is, likewise the time of Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (fig. 2). The *'bru chung* script is only presented there by a selection of sixteen letters.

k			
kh			
g			
ph			
tsh			
zh			

Fig. 2: Selected examples of *'bru tsha* script varieties provided by Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho

⁴³ Go ba dbyig & Hri zhod lis 1990: 13–17; Tshe ring don grub 2004: 55–59.

⁴⁴ Cüppers et al. 2012: pl. 270, 272.

⁴⁵ According to the *Tshig mdzod chen mo* (Zhang Yisun et al. 1998: 1998: s.v.), this is a variety written with a broad pen and thus having thick strokes. Judging from the examples presented by Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, the difference between the *'bru chen* and the *'bru chung* script is not very large.

⁴⁶ lDan ma rTse mangs/mang is a famous scribe who shall have lived during the time of king Khri strong lde btsan. His specific style of handwriting is said to have been transmitted and exercised up to the present day (Dung dkar 2002: 1170).

Since it seems difficult to exactly define the features that distinguish what is called '*bru tsha*' script and then relate this label to specimens of historical handwritings, I prefer in this context not to use the term '*bru tsha*' to classify the handwriting style of specific documents. Instead, I simply single out those scripts in decrees by Tibetan rulers that are distinguished by their long descenders.

Not all decrees by Tibetan rulers are written in this most prestigious style. Many decrees, especially from the period of the dGa' Idan pho brang government, that show another script and a less elegant style are preserved. Nevertheless, also in that period of Tibetan history for the most significant decrees scripts with long descenders were preferred. In the decrees issued by Tibetan clerics appointed during the Yuan Dynasty as *guoshi*, National Preceptor, or *dishi*, Imperial Preceptor, the length of the descenders extends up to about ten times beyond the letters' body. All descenders result at the lower ends in thin tails. The "legs" are not straight, but swing either to the left or to the right. Some of the "legs" show a slight tendency to form a bow opening to the left. As is evident from the following example this is the case with the "legs" of *ny*, *t*, *d*, *n* and *zh*, but not those of *k*, *g* and *sh*. By contrast, these three letters show at their bottom even a very slight turn to the right, thus shaping the exit stroke as a hook serif. Furthermore, *r* has in this manuscript no long "leg" at all. This observation is confirmed by quite a few documents issued by different *dishi* (see, e.g. fig. 3).

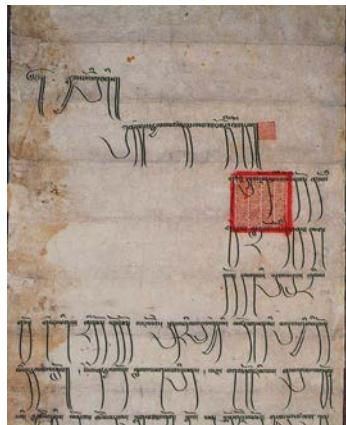


Fig.3: Excerpt from a document issued in 1335 or 1347 by the Imperial Preceptor Kun dga' rgyal mtshan⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Namgyal et al. 2001: 35.

That the features described here for the *ductus* of single letters could have been more emphasised already very early is demonstrated by two examples. One is a decree issued by 'Phags pa in 1267 in favour of a monastery located in sKyid grong.⁴⁸ In this document the left-handed twist of the long "legs" is more accentuated. This strong accentuation of the curvature opening to the left can also be seen in a not precisely dated decree issued by the head of the Pacification Commissioners' Office (*xuanweisi*, 宣慰司) (fig. 4).

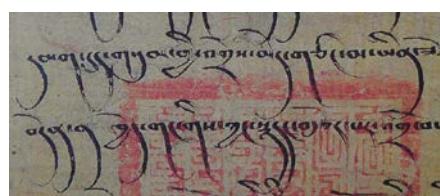


Fig.4: Excerpt from Sgrolkar et al. 1995: no. 15

There are also other features that already vary between different decrees issued in that period and written more or less in the same style. Among the diacritics used to indicate a vowel it is especially the *na ro*, the diacritic to indicate the vowel o, that varies (figs. 5 & 6).

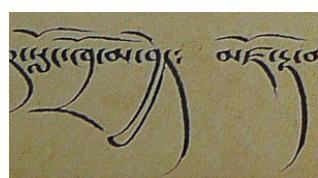


Fig.5: Excerpt from Sgrolkar et al. 1995: no. 8



Fig.6: Excerpts from Sgrolkar et al. 1995: no. 15

Occasionally both varieties occur in one and the same document or even in one and the same phrase (fig. 7).

⁴⁸ Schuh 1981: no. XXXVII.



Fig. 7: Excerpt from a document issued in 1335 or 1347 by the Imperial Preceptor Kun dga' rgyal mtshan⁴⁹

Notably, both varieties of the *na ro* have been listed by Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho under the label of the '*bru tsha* script.⁵⁰

According to the few documents known to me, the Phag mo gru pa inherited the calligraphic style of the Yuan–Sa skya chancellery without introducing major differences, except perhaps that the descenders became a little shorter in relation to the letters' "body" (fig. 8).

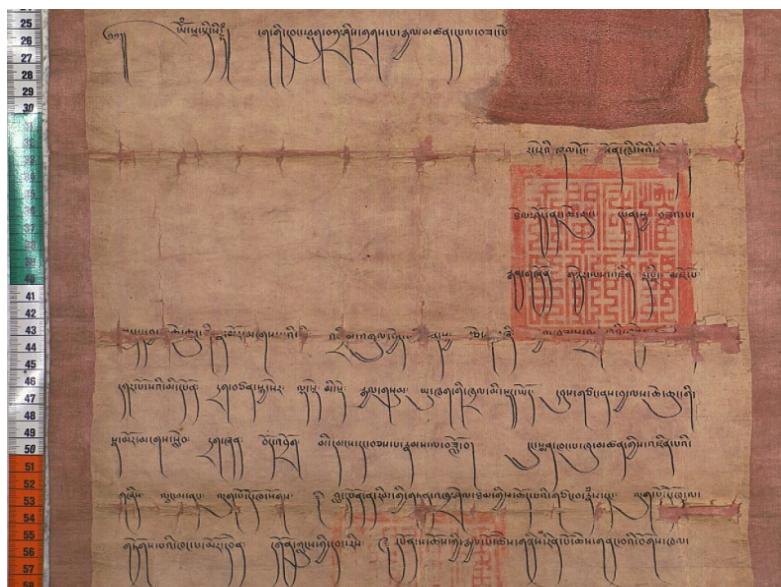


Fig. 8: Excerpt from a document issued in 1508 by Ngag dbang bkra shis grags pa⁵¹

⁴⁹ See note 47.

⁵⁰ Cüppers et al. 2012: pl. 270.

⁵¹ See Schwieger 2010: 320, 324; KDL 989.

As can easily be demonstrated by numerous examples, the style of the decrees from the Yuan–Sa skya period was in principle also continued by the scribes who wrote the Tibetan texts of imperial decrees issued for Tibetan addressees during the Ming Dynasty. As differences, I would mark that now the descendents became significantly shorter in relation to the letters’ “body,” extending now between four and five times beyond it. Moreover, in some, though not in all, of the Ming documents the *r* gets a bit longer “leg” (fig. 9).

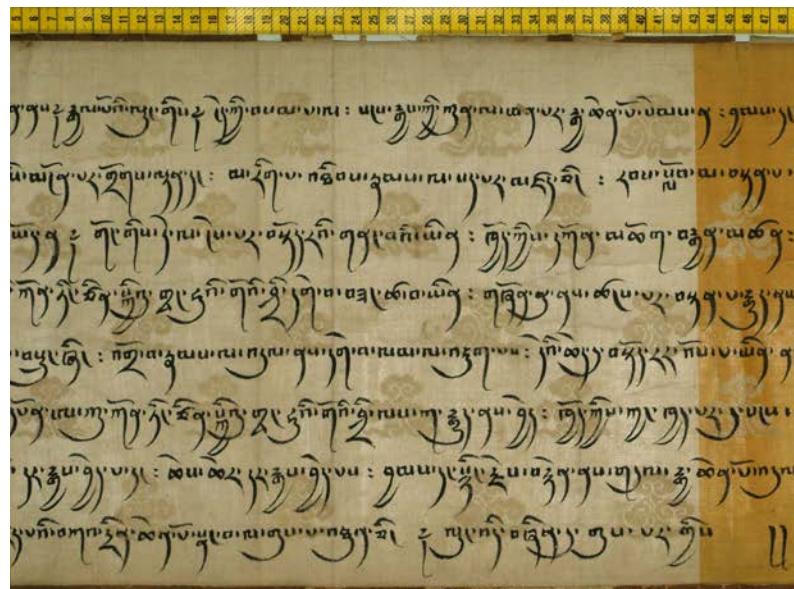


Fig. 9: Excerpt from a document issued in 1555 by the Jiajing emperor (r. 1522–1567)⁵²

Beginning with the early dGa' ldan pho brang period of the 17th century, especially the bending of the “legs” showing a turn to the right (*k*, *g* and *sh*) became weaker or the “legs” became even straight. Thus, the impression of the script is more a stiff one. Various specimens from the entire dGa' ldan pho brang period testify a great variety with regard to the length of the descendents (fig. 10).

⁵² See Schwieger 2007: 209–226.

Tibetan Manuscript and Xylograph Traditions



Fig. 10: Document issued by the Fifth Dalai Lama in 1670 (KDL 1109)⁵³

Decrees of the Fifth Dalai Lama are, by the way, the first documents known to me that were written merely on yellow silk.

The following extract (fig. 11) is from a decree issued by Pho lha nas in 1735 and once more confirmed by an additional remark in 1745. The script especially differs by its short descenders.⁵⁴

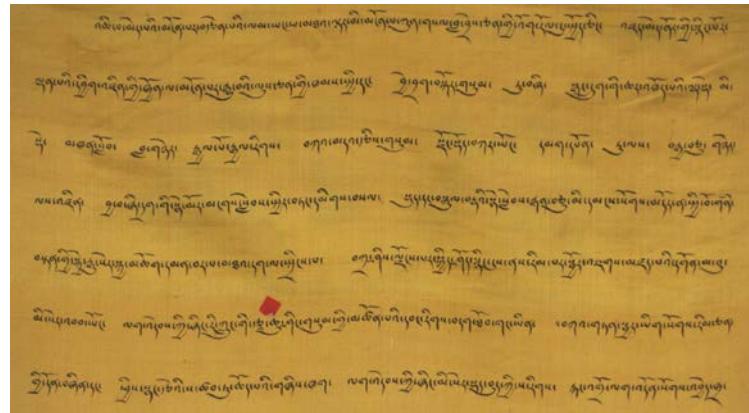


Fig. 11: Decree by Pho lha nas from 1735

However, it is not possible to generalise this observation even for the most precious charters of Pho lha nas, which are written on silk:

⁵³ See Schwieger 2015: 59.

⁵⁴ KDL 1122.

in another example issued in 1744 the descenders extend beyond the letters' "body," again about four times.⁵⁵

Then, in the decrees of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama the descenders are again longer (fig. 12).⁵⁶

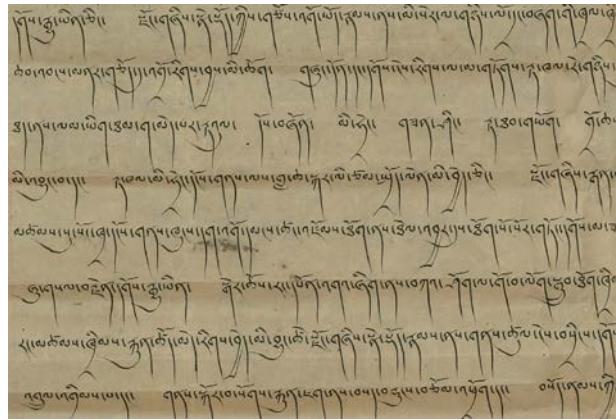


Fig. 12: Decree issued by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama in January 1902

Below I pick out ten specimens of handwriting from rulers' decrees and summarise their major differences by presenting eleven key letters and the subscribed *y* (*ya btags*) in a simple chart (fig. 13). Listing the examples under the names of specific issuers does of course not rule out that other scribes of the same issuers may have preferred another *ductus*. Beginning from the left, the specimens are taken from the following documents: document issued in a Pig year (either 1335 or 1347) by the Imperial Preceptor Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1310–1358) (A),⁵⁷ document issued in 1508 by Ngag dbang bkra shis grags pa (B),⁵⁸ document issued by the Ming emperor Jiajing (reign 1522–1567) in the year 1555 (C),⁵⁹ document issued by the Fifth Dalai Lama in 1670 (D),⁶⁰ document issued by the Sixth Dalai in 1698 (E),⁶¹ document issued by the Seventh Dalai in 1748

⁵⁵ See Schuh 1981: no. IX.

⁵⁶ LTWA 958.

⁵⁷ See note 47.

⁵⁸ See note 51.

⁵⁹ See note 52.

⁶⁰ KDL 1109.

⁶¹ Schuh 1981: no. XXXIV.

(F),⁶² certified copy of a document issued by the Kangxi emperor in favour of the Fifth Panchen Lama in 1713 (G),⁶³ document issued by Pho lha nas in 1735 (H),⁶⁴ document issued by Pho lha nas in 1744 (I),⁶⁵ document issued by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama in 1902 (J).⁶⁶

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
k										
g										
sh										
t										
d										

⁶² Ibid. no. XXXV.

⁶³ Sgrolkar et al. 1995: no. 36. See also Schwieger 2009: 366–368.

⁶⁴ KDL 1122.

⁶⁵ Schuh 1981: no. IX.

⁶⁶ LTWA 958.

n										
zh										
kh										
ph										
tsh										
r										
ya btags										

Fig. 13: Specimens from rulers' decrees

In particular the “bodies” of the letters in the columns B, E, F, G and H come close to the “ideal” ’bru tsha style, that is, a shape tapering to a point like triangle. This feature, however, does not correlate with a possible curved shape of the descenders.

Beginning with the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama, a tendency towards more stiff descenders as well as to an angular ya btags marks perhaps the most significant change that could be regarded as characteristic for the whole dGa’ ldan pho brang period. Nevertheless, a slight difference between descenders bending to the left and descenders bending to the right remains. Sangs rgyas rgya

mtsho confirmed this difference of the bending in his book on iconometry by consciously presenting exaggerated depictions as templates (fig. 14).⁶⁷

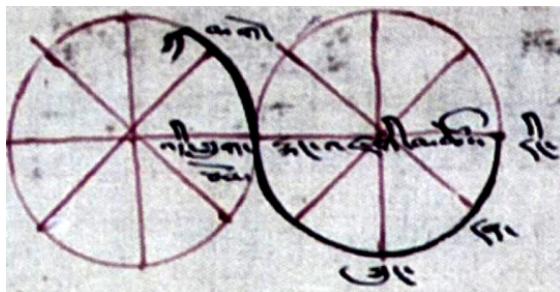


Fig. 14: Depiction of a descender bending to the right by Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho

With regard to the length of the descenders, there is no clear development. Although there are occasionally specimens with comparatively short descenders, specimens with rather long descenders appear until the 20th century.

A brief comment on the use of punctuation marks: When writing Tibetan texts, Tibetan scribes used for several centuries a double *tsheg*, a punctuation mark looking like a colon. During the time of the Tibetan Empire the double *tsheg* indicated the end of a single morpheme or rather a short speech pause, similar to the single *tsheg* used in later Tibetan texts.⁶⁸ In this function, the double *tsheg* afterwards disappeared from Tibetan writing. Instead, during the Yuan–Sa skya period, the double *tsheg* appears in some, but not in all, legal documents to mark a longer speech pause, just as the single *shad*, or *tsheg ring*, known from the bulk of classical Tibetan texts (fig. 15).⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Cüppers et al. 2012: pl. 271.

⁶⁸ See Dotson 2007: 19.

⁶⁹ See, for example, Sgroikar et al. 1995: nos. 8, 9, 11, 15. In Tibetan manuscripts that were presented as alleged relics of Tibet's royal past we see as a mark indicating a longer break, instead of a "colon" two little circles drawn one above the other—similar to the *gter tsheg*, but without the horizontal line separating in most *gter ma* texts the two circles. See, for example, Kulturstiftung Ruhr Essen 2006: 59 (explanation p. 58); 'Jam dbyangs et al. 2000: 128–131.

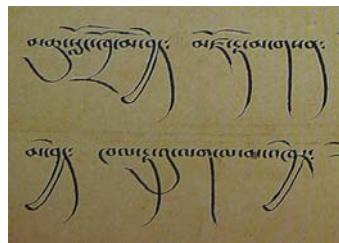


Fig. 15: Excerpt from Sgrolkar et al. 1995: no. 8⁷⁰

Occasionally this mark appears also in the shape of a vertical stroke above one or two dots or even in the shape of three dots, one beneath the other.⁷¹ And finally this punctuation mark may take the shape of two short vertical strokes, one above the other, the lower one having a slight bend opening to the left (figs. 16 & 17).



Fig. 16: Excerpt from Sgrolkar et al. 1995: no. 8⁷²

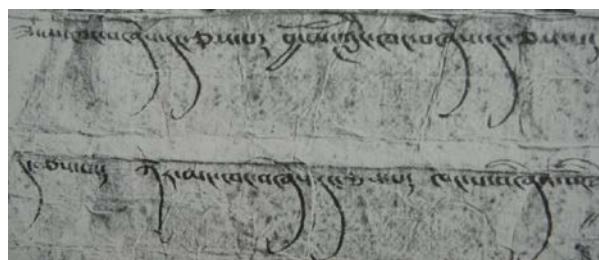


Fig. 17: Excerpt from a document issued by 'Phags pa in 1267⁷³

⁷⁰ See also ibid. nos. 9, 11, 15.

⁷¹ See, for example, Sgrolkar et al. 1995: no. 12; Namgyal et al. 2001: 35.

⁷² See also ibid. no 12.

⁷³ Schuh 1981: no. XXXVII.

After the end of the Yuan-Sa skya rule in Tibet, legal documents known to me so far still represent the long break by a “colon.” An early example is a legal document issued by the king of Gung thang towards the end of the 15th century.⁷⁴ Further examples are found in documents issued by the Phag mo gru pa rulers.

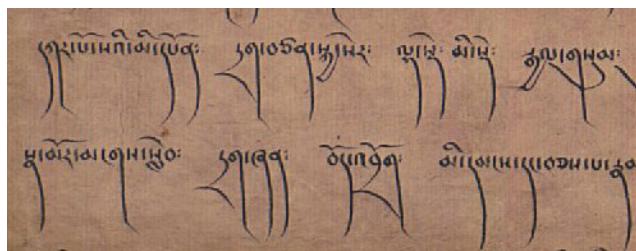


Fig. 18: Excerpt from a document issued in 1508 by Ngag dbang bkra shis grags pa⁷⁵

This use of the “colon” applies also to imperial decrees issued for Tibetan addressees during the Ming Dynasty (fig. 19).



Fig. 19: Excerpt from Sgrolkar et al. 1995: no. 29⁷⁶

Also in the Ming documents the shape of the double *tsheg* could vary between a “colon” and a short vertical stroke having below a dot (fig. 20).

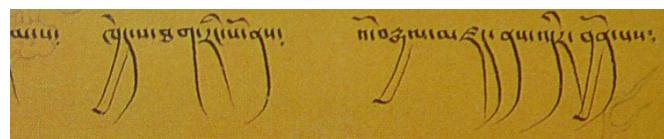


Fig. 20: Excerpt from Sgrolkar et al. 1995: no. 24

⁷⁴ Schuh 1981: no. XXXIX.

⁷⁵ See note 51.

⁷⁶ See also ibid. nos. 25–28, 30.

Finally, with the rise of the dGa' ldan pho brang rule in Tibet the double *tsheg* disappears completely from Tibetan legal documents.

2. Cursive Styles

Above I have already referred to two examples from the Yuan–Sa skya period in which the descenders of certain letters show a significant stronger accentuation of the curvature opening to the left. This leads us to another type of Tibetan script where we find even more striking examples for this feature. The relevant script is classified by Tibetan calligraphy manuals as '*khyug yig*' or '*rgyug yig*',⁷⁷ running writing or cursive, though we cannot call this style—as well as its forerunners among the “headless” Dunhuang styles⁷⁸—a fully cursive script, because we do hardly see a tendency to connect single letters. As illustrated by the following excerpts from an undated document of the 19th century, such a tendency can be observed later, but also then the '*khyug yig*' will always combine joins and pen lifts (figs. 21 & 22).

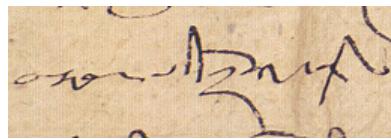


Fig. 21: *bstan pa'i srog shing* (KDL 530)

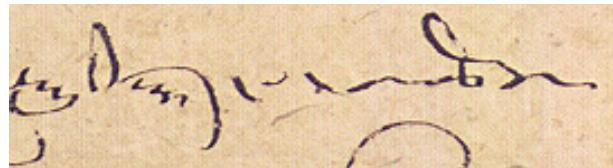


Fig. 22: *sku'i skod pa mchog* (KDL 530)

The cursive is very much a script that turns rule into administration. Though abstaining from features that obstruct the

⁷⁷ For the most part both terms are used as synonyms. Thus, also in the *Tshig mdzod chen mo* the term *rgyug yig* is explained as a synonym for '*khyug yig*' (Zhang Yisun et al. 1998: 572). Some modern calligraphy manuals nevertheless present them as two different forms of cursive script. See, for example, Mi rnam sprul ming pa 2002 and Tshe ring don grub 2004. The distinctions made by those manuals have, however, no practical value when trying to describe and classify specimens of handwritings.

⁷⁸ See van Schaik 2013: 124.

great speed of the running handwriting, it does not in each and every case reduce the letters to the essential characteristics that are indispensable for recognising and differentiating the letters. In some varieties the dynamic of such a script even resulted in a tendency to add new playful embellishments emphasising the impression of an effortless fluid writing style.

In the documents in question some letters show a significant curvature of their descenders with the opening to the left side. These letters are *j*, *ny*, *t*, *d*, *n*, *dz*, *zh* and *r*. The degree of the curvature varies. In some documents the curvature rather resembles a short hook below the letter (figs. 23–26).

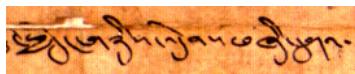


Fig. 23: *phyed gnyis 'debs bzhi dga'* (KDL 1044)



Fig. 24: *(khal lto)⁷⁹ rjes 'brang* (KDL 1044)



Fig. 25: *'dod mthun'* (KDL 1044)



Fig. 26: *na gong gyi zhing rin 'dab sprod par* (KDL 1017)

In other documents the curvature is longer and has a more elegant swing (fig. 27).

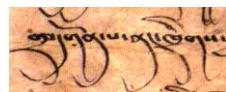


Fig. 27: *gra dgon pa nang khrigs* (KDL 1022)

In yet other documents the curvature turns into a large open hook overhanging far to the left (figs. 28–30).

⁷⁹ The braces () mark the expansion of contractions in the Tibetan text.



Fig. 28: *dpal chen* (KDL 1039)



Fig. 29: *dad pa spus gyur* (KDL 1039)

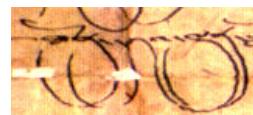


Fig. 30: *thon dga' ldan* (KDL 1007)

This variety is also documented in Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's handbook of Tibetan iconometry (fig. 31).⁸⁰

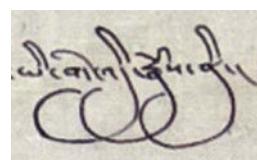


Fig. 31: *yi ge 'di rnams ni*

Finally, there are those documents where the curvature nearly becomes a full circle curlicue, either having a smaller or a larger diameter. The curlicue differs from the *zhabs kyu* in that the latter is less roundish and more flat and squat. Thus, confusion can be usually ruled out (figs. 32–38).

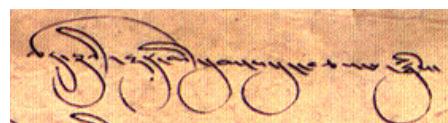


Fig. 32: *tshar sna'i rgan mi dmangs dang bcas pa rnams* (KDL 1038)

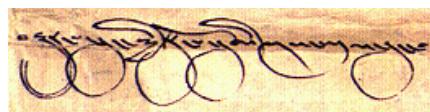


Fig. 33: *brtan pa dang shyin po dmigs yul dang* (KDL 1038)

⁸⁰ Cüppers et al. 2012: pl. 273.



Fig. 34: *'don bdag rkyen las* (KDL 1045)⁸¹

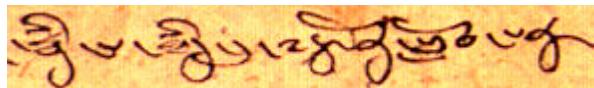


Fig. 35: *rnam pa (thams cad)*⁸² du *Zdpon slob pan* (KDL 1045)



Fig. 36: *drag rang gnang rogs rgyu'i don* (KDL 1045)

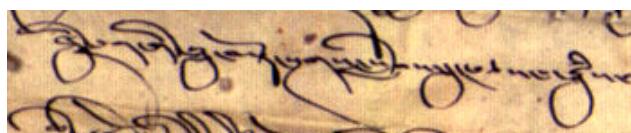


Fig. 37: *zhing drag gi sna mor sngags slebs dang bcas pa rnams* (KDL 1001)

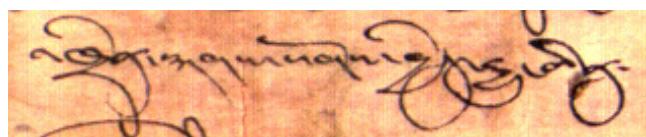


Fig. 38: *'khren skags sogs byed rgyu min* (KDL 1014)

The distinctly pronounced curlicues reflect a development in writing within Tibetan administration that is testified from the second half of the 15th century onwards.⁸³ Not all official documents written during that period show these characteristics. There are also quite a few that do not. And in a few cases it is just the scribe of the confirmation remark at the bottom of a document who apparently preferred to write in this salient style (figs. 39–40).

⁸¹ See Schwieger 2013: 95, 196f.

⁸² The braces () mark the expansion of contractions in the Tibetan text.

⁸³ Among the relevant documents the oldest one that can be reliably dated is KDL 1038. It was issued in an Iron Tiger year. Since the text mentions Kun dga' rnam rgyal (1432–1496) from the monastery rDo rje gdan (in Gong dkar), the Iron Tiger year must correspond to the year 1470. On Kun dga' rnam rgyal, see Fermer 2009.

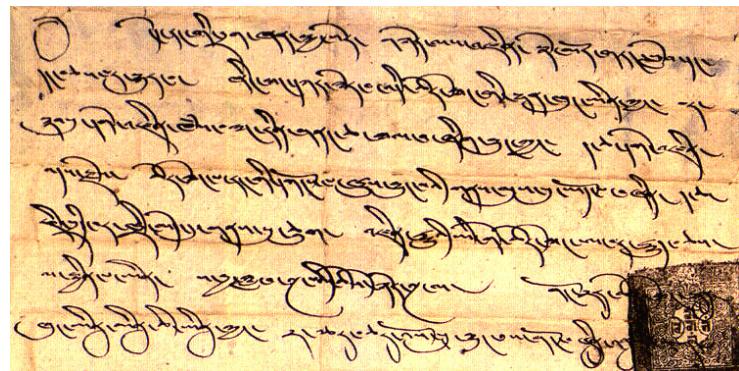


Fig. 39: KDL 1029

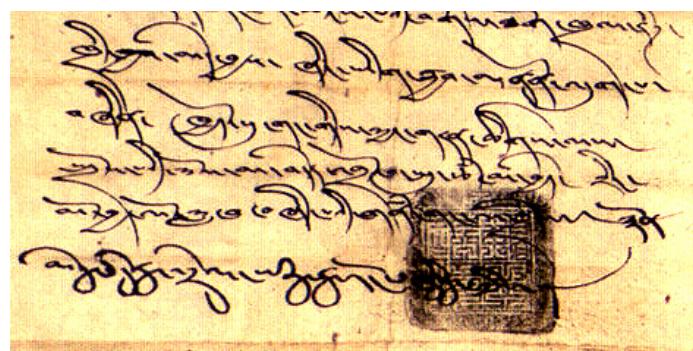


Fig. 40: KDL 1041

With the establishment of the dGa' ldan pho brang this embellishment seems to have fallen more or less into disuse. So far, I know only of one later piece of handwriting that shows this specific style.⁸⁴

Abbreviations

KDL: Digitised Tibetan Archives Material at Bonn University:
Documents of Kündeling Monastery in Tibet

LTWA: Digitised Tibetan Archives Material at Bonn University:
Tibetan Documents and Letters. Section B: Library of Tibetan
Works and Archives (LTWA), Dharamsala, India

⁸⁴ See Schuh 1976: 13, 106 (document no. XXXIX). The document was issued in an unspecified Ox year and addressed to the officials and subjects of bKra shis rdzong, a district under the rule of the dGa' ldan pho brang government.

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Reprinting the Buddhist Classics: On the Production and Circulation of Blockprints

Marta Sernesi (London)¹

1. Introductory Remarks

The history of the book in Tibet as a discipline is still in its infancy. Notwithstanding many new discoveries and insights, aspects of the processes of book production, use, and circulation, are still obscure. In particular, recently it has been argued that “[t]he phenomenology of Tibetan book culture and the modes and speed with which knowledge and texts were or could potentially be disseminated in traditional, pre-1959 Tibet are still by and large uncharted areas of research.”² Indeed, we are far from having access to enough data to venture into quantitative analysis, which proved so fruitful, for example, for the study of the inception and development of printing in Europe.³ Regarding early book printing in Tibet, we lack relevant data about the total of titles printed, the number of copies produced for each title, and how much the enterprises costed. Information about literacy, reading practices, access to the books, and diffusion of works is sadly scanty. While the picture of the extent, composition, and accessibility of monastic or private book holdings at the time concerned is very hazy, it is well known that not all books owned were necessarily read, as multiple functions may indeed be performed by a volume of Buddhist scriptures in Tibet.⁴

¹ This paper stems from research conducted at the LMU Munich with support from the DFG. I am grateful to Franz-Karl Ehrhard for his suggestions and his comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

² van der Kuijp 2013: 115.

³ See e.g. Chartier & Roche 1974.

⁴ The classic work on the history of reading practices in the West is Cavallo & Chartier 1995. For a learned discussion of “reading and writing in China, and xylography,” see Drège 1991. Some preliminary observations on reading practices in Tibet are offered in Klein 1994. On Tibetan book holdings, see Martin 2010, Almogi 2012.

Given these premises, a discussion about the production and circulation of early blockprinted books in Tibet is necessarily tentative, and one can only legitimately aspire at contributing few pieces to the reconstruction of the greater puzzle. What will follow is precisely such an attempt: I will present a detailed study of recently discovered textual materials, attesting to how certain works and collections were printed multiple times starting from the 16th century, and show what kind of relationship may be established among the existing prints. I will suggest that following the trajectory of these ‘Buddhist Classics’ we may learn a great deal about practices and motives of Tibetan book production and diffusion at the time, thereby contributing to the bulk of knowledge necessary for a wider enquiry.

2. Printing and Reprinting

By the 16th century woodblock bookprinting was a widespread technology in Tibet, and all the major religious schools were well underway of producing printed versions of their most important texts. However, in no way it superseded manuscript culture, which remained the main medium of book production. Hence, the reciprocal relationship between manuscript and blockprint cultures at the time needs close investigation, and it is often very difficult to assess what determined the realisation of a book through a given medium.

The cases studied below show how the motivations for printing texts explicitly stated in the sources are often linked to the concern with a wide diffusion of the Doctrine. Therefore, the xylographic medium was recognised as able to greatly disseminate a given text, to the extent that prints are often described as ‘inexhaustible’ (*mi zad par*). It seems that this potential was also understood as able to allow specific teachings, scriptures, and versions of texts to prevail over ‘inferior,’ ‘common,’ or ‘wrong’ views and discourses. However, how much these pious wishes expressed by the donors and project leaders of the printing enterprises correspond to the actual motives for their actions, and how much they correspond to the actual power of the medium, must be closely scrutinised. The following case studies will show how the idea that printing was able to ensure wider diffusion of the works and greater textual stability is confirmed, but also nuanced by the available data. For example, editorial efforts aimed at establishing the text of important scriptures and treatises were not halted by the appearance of their first printed edition, but the latter were examined and assessed in order to prepare successive

revised editions.⁵ How many copies of the works would effectively be printed and disseminated at a given time is not known: dozens, hundreds, more? So the effective spread of printed books in the plateau, and the impact on the literary field of specific works by virtue of their impression must be evaluated case by case.

The choice of the works to be printed was determined by specific local concerns: those of the sponsoring ruling house—with its agenda in terms of religious and political discourse—or those of a religious community intending to systematise and make available the bulk of its received knowledge and texts of reference. Notwithstanding this local significance of the choice of texts, the volumes were intentionally diffused far and wide. We have evidence showing that the first printed copies (*par phud*) were often offered as gifts to patrons, influential noblemen, religious hierarchs, or monastic institutions, also located in far-away regions. They were considered objects of value and prestige in an overall economic system based on barter and gift exchange, perhaps also beyond their specific textual contents. Disregarding the frequent military clashes among the local overlords, during the 15th and 16th centuries people travelled widely, and with them objects and ideas. Hence, it may also be noticed that, as portable art objects, books may have facilitated the diffusion of formal themes and trends, and constitute datable and localisable examples of artwork.⁶

In what follows, I will study the relationship among known printed copies of a given work comparing codicological aspects of the volumes, inspecting their internal organisation, and analysing their printing colophons. In so doing, I will summarise the early ‘life’ of specific textual collections that were popular enough to become the object of multiple printed editions between the 15th and the 18th century: the *Life and Songs of Mi la ras pa*, the *Mani bka’ bum*, the *Jātakamālā*, and the *Dwags po bka’ bum*. The editorial history of these works suggests different patterns of book production and circulation.

⁵ Much study has been done on the editorial efforts related to the production of the successive editions of the canon, but also extra canonical scriptures could be the object of such endeavours; see e.g. van der Kuijp 2010, and below on sGam po pa’s treatises.

⁶ See e.g. Jackson 1996: 122–131, 301–314, 375–377. For a discussion of this issue, with reference also to some of the works discussed below, see Sernesi 2016.

3. The *Life and Songs of Mi la ras pa*

gTsang smyon Heruka's (1452–1507) print of his version of the *Life and Songs of Mi la ras pa*⁷ was realised over the extensive period of two years, that is, ca. from 1488, when he completed the composition of the work, to 1490. The process is recounted in detail in the master's life-stories, and we learn that it was achieved among many difficulties of funding. The offerings were gathered by the Madman's disciples in successive alms-rounds, and the realisation was eventually sponsored by members of the ruling family of Mang yul Gung thang, and local chiefs from La stod. The blocks were carved at an isolated hermitage in upper gNya' nang, called Na 'dum Shel phug, out of wood fetched from the forests in the South of the region, and chiselled by artisans from the neighboring sMan khabs and Zur tsho areas. Afterwards, thanks to local generosity, a house for the storage of the blocks was built nearby, in gNya' nang Grod phug, and land was allocated for its maintenance.⁸

A famous passage from gTsang smyon's biographies suggests that the adoption of blockprinting aimed at a wide diffusion of the work that would benefit beings of all spiritual qualities, inspiring them to

⁷ gTsang smyon Heruka, *rNal 'byor gyi dbang phyug chen po rje btsun mi la ras pa'i rnam thar thar pa dang thams cad mkhyen pa'i lam ston* and *rJe btsun mi la ras pa'i rnam thar rgyas par phye ba mgur 'bum*. The *rnam thar* has been critically edited in De Jong 1959.

⁸ The block-carving of the works is recounted in all the life stories of the master, which also mention a time span of two years for the duration of the enterprise: see dNgos grub dpal 'bar, *rJe btsun gtsang pa he ru ka'i thun mong gi rnam thar yon tan gyi gangs ril dad pa'i seng ge rnam par rtse ba*, NGMPP Reel no. L 834/2 and TBRC W2CZ6647, fols. 16a–17a (16b); rGod tshang ras chen, *gTsang smyon he ru ka phyogs thams cad las rnams par rgyal ba'i rnam thar rdo rje theg pa'i gsal byed nyi ma'i snying po*, published by L. Chandra as *The Life of the Saint of gTsang by rGod tshang ras pa sNa tshogs rang grol*, New Delhi, 1969, pp. 137–153 (148); lHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal, *Grub thob gtsang pa smyon pa'i rnam thar dad pa'i spu slong g.yo' ba*, published in *bDe mchog mkha' 'gro snyan brgyud (Ras chung snyan brgyud)*. Two Manuscript Collections of Texts from the yig cha of gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka. Reproduced from 16th and 17th century manuscripts belonging to the Venerable Dookpa Thoosay Rimpoche, Leh, S.W. Tashigangpa, 1971, vol. 1., pp. 96–99 (98); see M. Stearns 1985: 66–96, Quintman 2013: 125–134, Schaeffer 2009: 54–55, Sernesi 2011: 184–185, 217–218. Na 'dum is also spelled Na zlum or Nas lung. For its identification with the village in Old Dingri now called Nailongxiang, see Dawa 2016: 206–207.

develop faith in the teachings and cast away sense pleasures, distractions and doubts: the most capable individuals would attain liberation in this lifetime or in the intermediate state, people of intermediate qualities would make pure aspirations and reach liberation in a future lifetime, while even people of lesser capabilities would abandon wrong views and develop the pure faith that they would eventually attain liberation.⁹ Accordingly, the master instructed his disciples to diffuse the work, bringing copies to patrons and masters throughout western and central Tibet, in dBuS gTsang, mNga' ris, La stod lHo, and La stod Byang. Exemplars accompanied by letters were also sent to the great hierarchs of the time such as the Fourth Zhwa dmar Chos grags ye shes (1453–1524). As may be seen, gTsang smyon's main concern in adopting the printing technology was the wide distribution of his work.

At the same time, there is evidence that the text was not conceived only as a volume to be read. The story was also represented in painted *thang kas*, which in some cases were sent to accompany the books, while a prayer (*gsol 'debs*) to Mi la ras pa was also printed together with the volumes. This points to the devotional practice of invoking the saint by remembering his deeds, conjuring his presence to petition him. Moreover, these volumes were conceived as beneficial beyond the commemorative function. The life-story, with its material support, was in fact conceived as a sacred object bringing benefit to whoever “sees, hears, remembers, or touches” (*mthong thos dran reg*): this notion is found in the colophon of the work composed by gTsang smyon Heruka, and it is repeated in the printing colophons of the subsequent editions of the *Life and Songs of Mi la ras pa* prepared by his pupils, as well as in the printing colophons of other works of the school. The formula equates in function the book, the support of speech, with the bodily relics of the saint. In adopting the printed medium, able to reproduce many identical exemplars of the text, it may be argued that gTsang smyon was not only spreading a literary work—conveying his own version of the life story impregnated with his religious ideals—but was trying to establish a new ‘cult of the book’ centred on Mi la ras pa’s life-story, as part of

⁹ This verbalisation of gTsang smyon's motives is found in dNgos grub dpal 'bar, *Dad pa'i seng ge* (as in note 8), fols. 16a–16b, in lHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal, *rNam thar dad pa'i spu slong g.yo' ba* (as in note 8), pp. 97–98, and in rGod tshang ras chen, *Nyi ma'i snying po* (as in note 8), pp. 137–138. The passage as found in the latter source is translated in full in Quintman 2013: 128–129; see also Schaeffer 2009: 57.

the wider devotional cult of the bKa' brgyud ancestor that he was promoting.¹⁰

Notwithstanding the deliberate effort in diffusing the works, no copy of the original printed edition has so far surfaced, and we have no evidence of the number of copies effectively printed. In any case, due to their sustained use, the blocks carved by gTsang smyon deteriorated quickly, so much that they needed restoration and substitution within only 50 years from their production. Indeed, the life-stories of the master's disciple lHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal (1473–1557) mention the renovation (*gsos*) of one hundred and twenty blocks,¹¹ while the life story of the master's consort Kun tu bzang mo describes the new carving of one hundred and eight blocks. The artisans were once again summoned from the regions of sMan khabs and Zur tsho, and the consecrated blocks were stored alongside the earlier ones in gNya' nang Grod phug.¹²

¹⁰ I argue this point more profusely in Sernesí (forthcoming).

¹¹ The restoration of the blocks of the *Life and Songs of Mi la ras pa* is mentioned in the *smon lam* prayer composed by lHa bstun Rin chen rnam rgyal in occasion of the renovation of the paintings at the Wa ti bzang po temple, and embedded in his *rnam mgur*; see *dPal ldan bla ma dam pa mkhas grub lha btsun chos kyi rgyal po'i rnam mgur blo 'das chos sku'i rang gdangs*, in *Rare dKar-brgyud-pa Texts from Himachal Pradesh. A collection of bibliographical works and philosophical treatises. Reproduced from prints from ancient western Tibetan blocks by Urgyan Dorje*, New Delhi, 1976, pp. 273–379: *rje btsun mi la'i rnam mgur par gsos* (fol. 8b). In the master's *rnam thar* (fol. 52b) the number of the blocks is specified: *dpal bzhad pa rdo rje'i mgur 'bum rnying ba nas par shing brgya nyi shu*; see *rNal byor dbang phyug lha btsun chos kyi rgyal po'i rnam thar gyi smad cha*, IsIAO Tucci Collection no. 657(6). Although on the basis of these sources the restoration may only be dated as prior to 1546, that is, the date of the *smon lam*, I assume that it occurred before the new edition of 1538/40 to which lHa btsun contributed, and which made the restoration redundant.

¹² The enterprise is narrated in the *Dus gsum rgyal ba ma lus pa bskyed pa'i yum chen kun tu bzang mo'i rnam par thar pa zab don gter mdzod mthong ba don ldan* (fols. 29a–b). I thank H. Diemberger for providing me with a copy of this text. The event is unfortunately undated, but follows shortly after the account of the demise of gTsang smyon and the ensuing commemorative activities, so it was possibly realised already during the 1510s. A translation of the passage may be found in Diemberger 2016: 290–292. Here, however, the enterprise is interpreted as a complete re-carving of the blocks for the whole of the *Songs*, while the use of the term *bsos*, and also the relatively small number of blocks carved (108), point to a partial substitution of the

However, soon enough this was deemed still insufficient, and the Madman's disciples produced new printed editions:¹³

- s.d. Realised by bSod nams blo gros (ca. 1460–1541) in La stod lHo.¹⁴
- 1538/40. Realised by rTogs ldan Chos kyi rgya mtsho.¹⁵
- 1555. Realised by lHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal.¹⁶

In the colophons of these editions, explicit mention is made of the wearing down of the original blocks, which were now producing unclear exemplars. rTogs ldan Chos kyi rgya mtsho states that the original blocks of the life-story had become “a little unclear due to [their] greatly benefiting beings” (*'gro don ches pas cung zad mi gsal ba*), and that the blocks of the collected songs were “unable to benefit beings any longer for being too old” (*yun rings song nas 'gro don mi*

blocks. An example of this procedure may be recognised in one early copy of the *Songs* (Van Manen Collection, Leiden, 2740/H566, i.e. De Jong 1959 exemplar C): in this copy fols. 45, 101–102, 140–204, 240 are evidently printed from newer, different, blocks. However, in the lack of comparative data, it is impossible to verify if this is indeed a copy printed from these early 16th century blocks after their renovation.

¹³ I have treated in detail the following early editions of the *Life and Songs of Mi la ras pa* in Sernesi 2011.

¹⁴ No copies are known. See *mKhas grub rdo rje chang bsod nams blo gros kyi rnam thar*, NGMPP Reel no. L 833/3 (fols. 42a–43a), in Sernesi 2011: 215–216. Offerings came from patrons in areas of Southern La stod, such as Pha drug, gTing khebs, Chus 'dus, Ko chag, Nyi shar. On this edition, see Schaeffer 2009: 63; Sernesi 2011: 188–189.

¹⁵ The life story was printed in 1538 at 'Od gsal phug in Gung thang, while the *Collected Songs* were realised in 1540 at Glang phug in the Lan de/(dhe/ldebs) valley, southeast of sKyid grong. Financial support came from the royal house, from disciples of gTsang smyon such as lHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal, and from other individual donors; see Sernesi 2011: 191–197. When writing the latter article, the *rnam thar* edition was known to me only from a manuscript copy that conserved the printing colophon, but now a blockprinted copy has surfaced in the National Library of Berlin, no. Hs. Or. 1633; for its description, and the edition and a German translation of the colophon, see Everding 2015: 14–29. On the *mgur 'bum* edition, see also Eimer 1996 (edition W); Eimer & Tsiring 1990: 77–82 (edition S); Ehrhard 2000a: 17.

¹⁶ Of this edition only copies of the *mgur 'bum* have survived; see Sernesi 2011: 200, 225–226; Eimer 2010: 58–61.

nus tshe), while lHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal writes that “due to [their] greatly benefiting beings, the letters of the printing blocks [of the *Collected Songs* prepared by gTsang smyon Heruka] were worn out” (*'gro don ches pas par kha [ph]yid pa la*). At the same time, in these same colophons, mention is also made of the ‘inexhaustible print’ (*mi zad par*) by gTsang smyon Heruka, evidently not alluding to the duration in time of the actual woodblocks prepared by the Madman, but to the ideal function of the print as such, as a medium able to ensure inexhaustible reproduction of the text: by their renovations and new editions, the master’s successors were thus ensuring that the function be fulfilled and the intents of gTsang smyon thoroughly realised.

These early reprints were all produced in south western Tibet, but circulated outside their region of production: for example, witnesses may be found to the South in the Himalayan valleys,¹⁷ and the colophon of the 1550 reprint of the *Life* by lHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal is included in the 18th century Beijing edition supervised by lCang skyā Rol pa'i rdo rje (1717–1786).¹⁸

The blocks produced in the mid-16th century by lHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal became in turn worn out by use and in need of substitution, as stated in the colophon of the print prepared a century later in Mang yul, in an ongoing upkeep of the reproducibility of the text:

His (i.e. Mi la ras pa's) complete liberation (story)—the supreme jewel exhausting desires, which destroys cyclic existence by [merely] seeing, hearing, or remembering it—was realised as an inexhaustible print by the Venerable

¹⁷ A manuscript copy bearing the printing colophon of the 1538 edition by rTsogs ldan chos kyi rgya mtsho is extant in Zangs dkar. See the *bKa' brgyud gser 'phren rgyas pa. A Reproduction of an incomplete manuscript of a collection of the lives of the successive masters of the 'Brug-pa Dkar-brgyud-pa tradition reflecting the tradition of Rdzoñ-khul in Zañs-dkar established by Grub-dbañ Ngag-dbañ-tshe-rii. Reproduced from a manuscript preserved in Zañs-dkar*, Darjeeling: Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1982, vol. 1, pp. 369–583.

¹⁸ This Peking reprint was “produced under the patronage of Harchin E-phu (Quarčin Efū) Blo bzang don grub (fl. 1743–1756); the *par byang* was composed by lCang skyā Rol pa'i rdo rje (1717–1786). This edition repeats the printer’s colophon to the 16th century Brag dkar rta so upon which it is based” (Smith 1969: 19). For the colophon of this edition, see Taube 1966: 1001, no. 2741 (Tib. Bl. 868. DSB Berlin).

gTsang pa [Heruka]. Because it greatly benefitted beings (i.e. it was printed frequently), it became a little bit unclear, and lHa btsun Chos kyi rgyal po realised [another] print[ed edition]. Since that too became a little unclear for greatly benefiting beings, I, the man speaking nonsense named Ratna, have realised a new [printed edition]. [Here is] the register of the virtuous [offerings] aroused to that end: [the master] called sGrub chen Ngag dbang chos 'phel, who attained the uttermost realisation of the perfectly pure intention, offered one hundred 'bre of butter, thirty-two Nepalese [silver] coins (*bal tang*), and seventy-three 'bris and yaks....¹⁹

The new edition was realised at the initiative of a master named Ratna, and the generous sponsorship of a master named sGrub chen Ngag dbang chos 'phel and of a host of individual donors coming from the Tibetan-Nepalese Himalayan range. The blocks were intended to substitute those carved only a century earlier by lHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal. On the other hand, in 1816 these 17th century blocks were still stored at the hermitage of Brag dkar rta so. Indeed, the hermitage's abbot Brag dkar rta so sprul sku Chos kyi dbang phyug (1775–1837) proudly claimed that all the later editions of the *Life and Songs of Mi la ras pa* derived from this print.²⁰ Therefore, whatever the technical reasons for this—the quality of the wood, the treatments employed, the conditions of storage?—it seems that the blocks produced during the 15th and 16th centuries were short-

¹⁹ See NGMPP Reel no. 250/7 (fols. 111a–b): *mthong thos dran pas srid pa'i mtha' 'jig pa'i | gang gi rnam thar bsam 'phel rin chen mchog| rje btsun gtsang pas mi zad sngar [= spar] du sgrubs| 'gro don ches pas cung zad mi gsal ba| lha btsun chos kyi rgyal pos par du bsgrubs| de yang 'gro don ches pas mi gsal ba| ratna'i ming 'dzin mu cen [= cor] smra ba yis| gsar sgrub bya phyir dge bskul tho bkod pa| lhag bsam rnam dag grub pa'i mchog brnyes pa| sgrub chen ngag dbang chos 'phel zhes bya yis| mar bre brgya dang bal tang sum tsu [= cu] gnyis| 'bri g.yag bdun cu gsum rnames legs par gnang|*. On this edition and its individual donors, many bKa' brgyud masters active in Mang yul and the Nepalese valleys, see Sernesi 2011: 202–205; for the transliteration of the full printing colophon, see ibid.: 227–230.

²⁰ Although it may not be demonstrated that all later prints derive from the edition prepared by the master named Ratna, as Chos kyi dbang phyug maintains, the idea is that they necessarily descend from one of the early Western Tibetan editions. On the master's claim, see Schaeffer 2009: 59, Sernesi 2011: 182–184.

lived, becoming quickly too worn out to be employed. This was coupled with the continuous warfare that affected Tibet, threatening monasteries and their storage rooms, together with the continuous peril of fire.

Indeed, one significant case of destruction of printing blocks by fire involved precisely blocks of the *Life and Songs of Mi la ras pa*. Reportedly, the blocks of one early Bhutanese edition burnt together with those of many other bKa' brgyud works during the “Second Great Fire of sPungs thang” (1796).²¹ I was able to identify a copy of this early edition from Punakha (see fig. 1). In fact, we have three distinct Bhutanese printed exemplars of the *Life*, two of which are almost identical, while one belongs to a new edition:

A1. NGMPP Reel no. L 354/2, 144 fols.

A2. NGMPP Reel no. E 693/2, 144 fols.

B. Van Manen Collection (Leiden) 2740/H579, 107 fols.: new edition realised after the ‘great fire’ by the sDe srid 'Brug rNam rgyal (r. 1799–1803).²²

Exemplars A1 and A2 consist of the same number of folios, show a very similar page layout, and bear the same colophon. However, at folios 1b–2a they display a different number of syllables per line (with exemplar A2 having 2 more syllables, i.e. *ba de*, in fol. 1b), and different illustrations, although definitely inspired one by the other in

²¹ See Smith 1969: 18: “I have never seen a print from this edition. The blocks were destroyed in the Second Great Fire of Spuñs-thañ (1796). Also destroyed were an edition of the *Gsuri bum* of Padma-dkar-po in 10 volumes, the *Dkar brgyud gser phren*, and biographies of Dwags po lha rje by Sgam-po pañ-chen sprul-sku Nor-bu-rgyan-pa, Zhabs-druñ Nag-dbañ-rnam-rgyal by Gtsañ Mkhan-chen, and Mar-pa by Gtsañ-smyon. These were replaced during the time of 'Brug-rnam-rgyal.”

²² This edition is the one referred to as exemplar “A” in De Jong’s critical edition; see De Jong 1959: 8, 210. The accompanying *gSung bum* is Van Manen Collection 2740/H190; see De Jong 1959: 8, 212–214, and Eimer & Tséring 1990: 60–63. The identification and dating of 'Brug rNam rgyal were provided in Smith 1969: 19: “This edition was prepared at the order of 'Brug-rnam-rgyal, the 22nd Sde-srid of Bhutan (*regn.* 1799–1803), to replace the blocks of an older edition destroyed in the Second Great Fire of Punakha (1796)”; 'Brug rNam rgyal is actually counted as the 21st *sde srid* in the list provided in Aris 1979: 271.

subject and composition;²³ moreover, even though in most part of the text the distribution of the syllables on the page may seem identical, the differences in the treatment of some ligatures show that at least some blocks were re-carved. Hence, these two Bhutanese prints were derived one from the other, and are so intimately related that at the moment it is impossible to determine which was the first one. It is probable that all or part of the blocks of the first edition had to be substituted (perhaps after a fire), and were thus re-carved closely following the model provided by a print from the lost blocks, resulting in what Eimer has termed ‘technical identity.’²⁴ As may be gleaned from the colophon (for which see Appendix I), these copies reflect the earliest Bhutanese print, realised at sPungs thang at the time of the Fourth sDe srid bsTan 'dzin rab rgyas (1638–1698, r. 1680–1695). This powerful hierarch, who held both temporal and spiritual authority, is known for his dedication to the construction and restoration of religious buildings. Apparently, the production of blockprints was also undertaken at the time. Indeed, as shown below, also a copy of the *Mani bka' 'bum* was realised following a request to the sDe srid by the above mentioned sGrub chen Ngag dbang chos 'phel, that is, the sponsor of the edition of the *Mi la'i rnam thar* prepared by the master named Ratna.²⁵ After that the 17th century set of blocks of the *Life of Mi la ras pa* (copies A1 and A2) was definitely lost in the great fire of sPungs thang, a new edition was prepared at the time of 'Brug rNam rgyal (copy B), this time anew, that is, preparing a new handwritten model for the carvers.

All these examples from the editorial history of the *Life and Songs of Mi la ras pa* show how the long-time survival of the woodblocks was not granted, as they could become worn out, or be damaged by flood, fire, or warfare. This might account, at least in part, for the

²³ The illustrations portray Mar pa (fol. 1b, left), bZhad pa rdo rje (fol. 1b, right), Zla 'od gzhon nu (2a, left), and Ras chung rdo rje grags pa (2a, right).

²⁴ In these cases, a one-sided printed copy of the text is employed as a “printing sheet,” that is, it is glued to the new blocks to guide the carvers. The new blocks produce prints that are almost identical to the model employed. See Eimer 1992: 155, 191–202.

²⁵ bsTan 'dzin rab rgyas was installed as the first *rgyal tshab* and was the powerful successor of Zhabs drung Ngag dbang rnam rgyal (1594–1651) as the head of Bhutan; see Aris 1979: 243–254. On his activities for the foundation and renovation of Buddhist temples, see Ardussi 1999, 2008. For the Bhutanese print of the *Mani bka' 'bum*, see below.

fact that prints could also be rarities.²⁶ Hence, although the blockprinting technology seemed to promise from its inception great potential in spreading a text, in fact for a print to truly become ‘inexhaustible,’ sustained effort over time in the conservation, reparation, and eventual substitution of the blocks was indispensable.

4. The *Mani bka' bum*

A telling example of ‘royal print’ is the *Mani bka' bum*, a bulky collection of ‘treasure texts’ (*gter ma*) ascribed to King Srong btsan sgam po. Indeed, it was first printed in Mang yul Gung thang in an exquisite, extensively illustrated edition, prepared in 1521 at the kingdom’s capital rDzong dkar by initiative of the ruling family. The enterprise was carried out together with the erection of ‘triple supports’ in occasion of the funerary rituals performed at the death of the Bo dong master bTsun pa Chos legs (1437–1521), an influential teacher closely linked with the royal family. In 1512 he had transmitted the *Mani bka' bum* teachings to King Khri Kun dga' rnam rgyal lde (d. 1524), and on multiple occasions he had received the support of the royal family for the production of manuscript copies of Buddhist scriptures, including one of the *bKa' gyur*.²⁷ However, the printing enterprise did not solely have a ritual function

²⁶ “[T]here are many examples of the fact that ... prints could also be rarities” (van der Kuijp 2013: 126). The *tho yig* registering rare books compiled by A khu rin po che Shes rab rgya mtsho (1803–1875) also features prints; see L. Chandra (ed.) *Materials for a History of Tibetan Literature*, part 3, New Delhi 1963.

²⁷ On the transmission of the *Mani bka' bum* teachings in Mang yul Gung thang, see Ehrhard 2000b, who first mentioned that the earliest printed edition of the collection was produced at rDzong dkar in 1521. During my stay in Kathmandu in 2010 I could identify one copy of this royal print within the texts filmed by the NGMPP, Reel nos. E 2933/5, E 2934/1, E 2934/3, E 2945/1. The British Library has a copy of the first section of the second volume, that is, the *Chos skyong ba'i rgyal po bsrong btsan rgam po'i bka' bum las smad kyi cha zhal gdams kyi bskor* (KHA, fols. 1a–319a); see Tib I 18 KHA (volume KA under the same shelf mark belongs to another edition, see below). In the meanwhile, another copy of the royal edition has surfaced in the Cambridge University Library, no. Tibetan 149 (the first five folios are replaced by handwritten ones). For a detailed study of the print, its transmission history, and the full colophon transcription, see Ehrhard 2013. On the preparation of the *Collected Works* of bTsun pa Chos legs, see Ehrhard 2016.

within the master's funerary rites, but may be seen as an expression of the ideology of the royal family.

The succession lineage of transmission of the collection is praised in the 'supplicatory prayers' (*gsol 'debs*) opening the work, starting from Srong btsan sgam po and Padmasambhava, passing through the treasure discoverers Grub thob dNgos grub (12th cent.), Nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer (12th cent.), and Shākyā bzang po (13th cent.), and through lHa rje dGe ba 'bum (13th cent.), lCam mo Ye shes mchog (13th cent.), Grub thob Chu sgom pa (13th cent.), mTha' bzhi Bya bral ba (13th–14th cent.), 'Jam dbyangs bSod nams seng ge (14th cent.), and Bla ma bKra shis rgyal mtshan (14th cent.), reaching the dike builder Blo gros rgyal mtshan (14th cent.), and his disciple 'Phags mchog Nor bu bzang po (14th cent.), who transmitted the teachings to the first master of the Western Tibetan Bo dong lineage, that is, Chos rje bZang po rgyal mtshan (14th–15th cent.). The transmission passed then through mKhas grub dPal ldan sangs rgyas (1391–1455), mKhas btsun bSam grub dpal (d. 1498), and finally reached bTsun pa Chos legs, who, as mentioned above, instructed the Gong ma Chos kyi rgyal po Khri Kun dga' rnam rgyal lde. The twenty-four illustrations enriching the volumes represent this whole lineage down to bTsun pa Chos legs, plus, at the very end (vol. KHA, fol. 370b), his disciples rJe Rab 'byams pa Nor bu phun tshogs (1450–1521) and rJe Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (15th–16th cent.), and hence they place the object within its specific religious and political context of production, mirroring its initial section and its closing colophon.²⁸ The context of the book's production is unambiguously the royal court of Gung thang, presented as the heir of Tibet's imperial line, together with its local Bo dong lineage of masters acting as court preceptors. It must be emphasised how the colophon goes at great length in praising the *dharmarājas*, protectors of the earth (*bhūmipāla*) of the kingdom, portraying the ruling family of Mang yul Gung thang in a genealogical and ideal continuity with the dynasty of Srong btsan sgam po. After the *encomium*, a passage relates the motives for the print as they are explicitly verbalised by the royal family itself, which is presented as carrying responsibility for the well being of the

²⁸ *Bla ma brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs lo rgyus dkar chag*, vol. Ka, fols. 1b–5a. On this *dkar chag*, see Ehrhard 2013. Other noticeable examples of this dynamic of mutual dialogue and reinforcement between text and images in block printed books are discussed in Sernesi 2010, 2015b. For the master Dri med, who worked at the realisation of the images, see Sernesi 2016.

people and the upkeep of the Buddhist Doctrine in a period of decline:

It is said in the Buddhist *sūtras* and *tantras* that “to write, read, offer (i.e. make offerings to), or remember even a sole verse of profound meaning bears immeasurable merit.” Hence, shouldn’t this supreme *Maṇi bka’ ’bum*—an essential summary of the *sūtras*, *tantras*, *sāstras* and instructions, spoken by Srong btsan sgam po, who is the emanation of *paramārya* Avalokiteśvara, the sole God of Tibet—be printed for the sake of diffusing the teachings of definitive meaning and establishing in happiness all beings?²⁹

As may be seen, the enterprise is presented as the fulfilment of the duties of the royal family, which is expected to take care of its subjects and of the flourishing of the Buddhist Doctrine, and in so doing reinforces its claim of identification with the idealised kings of the past. The printing of Buddhist texts is an activity that fulfils this aim as it is correlated with the function of accumulating merit. In this light, the choice of the collection attributed to Srong btsan sgam po—to be printed in commemoration of an important master of the kingdom and royal preceptor holder of that particular lineage of instructions—seems particularly apt as the output of a royal enterprise, reinforcing in both its contents and its prestigious formal aspects the moral leadership of the ruling class.

(1) The royal print of the *Maṇi bka’ ’bum* is made of two volumes, numbered KA and KHA (see fig. 2, top). Each volume is in turn divided into two sections of miscellaneous texts, and each of these sections bears its own title page, and beginning and end illustrations. The first volume has a total of 327 folios, but the folio numbers 8, 10,

²⁹ Vol. KHA (fol. 369a): *de yang zab don tshigs bcad ni | gcig tsam bris klags mchod bzung ba’i | bsod nams tshad bzung med do zhes | rgyal ba’i mdo rgyud rnams las gsungs | des na bod kyi lha gcig bu | phags mchog spyan ras gzigs dbang gi | sprul sku strong btsan rgam po’i gsung | mdo rgyud bstan bcos mang ngag gi | bcud bsdus ma ni bka’ ’bum mchog | nges don bstan pa rgyas phyir dang | ’gro kun bde la khod phyir du | par du grub na ci ma rung*. For the full passage, see Ehrhard 2013, Appendix I/5. On the literary topos of the great merit to be acquired from the ‘cult’ of Buddhist books, see the classic study by Schopen from 1975, and, more recently, Schopen 2010.

and 14 occur twice (*gong / 'og*), so that the folios are numbered from 1 to 324; the second volume has 371 folios:³⁰

KA (1): *chos skyong ba'i rgyal po bsrong btsan rgan po'i bka' bum las stod kyi cha thog mar bla ma rgyud pa'i gsol 'debs lo rgyus sogs bzhugs sho*|| (fols. 1a–217a)

KA (2): *Chos skyong ba'i rgyal po bsrong btsan rgam pos mdzad pa'i thugs rje chen po'i sgrub thabs kyi chos skor bzhugs sho*|| (fols. 218a–324a)

KHA (1): *Chos skyong ba'i rgyal po bsrong btsan rgam po'i bka' bum las smad kyi cha zhal gdams kyi bskor bzhugs sho*|| (fols. 1a–319b)

KHA (2): *Chos skyong ba'i rgyal po bsrong btsan rgam po'i zhal gdams| 'phags pa nam mkha'i rgyal po'i mngon rtogs sogs phran 'ga' bzhugs <s>ho*|| (fol. 320a–371a)

(2) Another copy of the first volume of the *Mani bka' bum* has its folios numbered from 1 to 324, with the same folio numbers 8, 10, and 14 occurring twice. However, it is not a copy of the royal print (see fig. 2, middle). Indeed, the number of syllables in each line do not always match, and the double folios are numbered differently, for instance, *brgyad / brgyad 'og* instead of *brgyad gong / brgyad 'og*. However, in this version they did not correct the page numbering, and copied closely the formal aspects such as the sectioning of the text, and the succession and composition of the illustrations. The signatures of the carvers found throughout the royal edition have been omitted or substituted, except for one instance, when a carver's note found at the end of a section, within the text, has been mistakenly copied and then wiped out from the blocks.³¹ Although the second volume, and hence the printing colophon, is missing, we may safely locate this print in Mang yul Gung thang. In fact, the scribe signs as one Rin chen from the area of sNyings, probably the same that contributed to the 1533 print of the *Theg mchog mdzod* executed by Chos dbang rgyal mtshan (1484–1549) at Kun gsal gang po che with royal sponsorship. Among the carvers who signed the

³⁰ The titles are transcribed as they are provided in the respective title pages. The symbols <> indicate orthographical abbreviations.

³¹ See NGMPP reel no. L 118/2, fol. 97b; the note in the royal print reads: ||'di nas lo rgyus bcu bzhi'i bar|| brkos kyi rig byed mthar song pa| |gnas brtan dge slong seng ge dang| |mkhas pa chos skyabs dpal bzang dang| chos skyong gsum gyis legs par brkos||.

sparse ‘name plates’ (*ming thang*) of the *Mani bka’ bum*, is found a mGon rgyal who also worked in the region, and a Chos skyong who might be the Chos skyong rdo rje who already worked at the royal print. So this is certainly a mid 16th century Mang yul Gung thang reprint.³²

(3) Still another print was realised in the 16th century in Mang yul Gung thang (see fig. 2, bottom). This edition straightens the folio numbers of the first volume, which are thus numbered from 1 to 327. This shows that this edition must post date the previous one (of copy no. 2). In general, it keeps the overall organisation of the text, including the page setting, distribution of the text per page, and illustrations.³³ Hence, text KA(1) runs from folio 1a to 220a, and text KA(2) is found at folios 221a–327a, while in the second volume text KHA(1) runs through folios 1a–319b, and KHA(2) through folios 320a–381a. The final images, portraying the masters rJe Rab ’byams pa Nor bu phun tshogs and rJe Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan, and the deities Mahākāla and Vaiśravana are located respectively at folios 370b and 371a following the model, thus preceding the supplementary printing colophon of the new edition. This edition appears to be very widespread, as partial copies exist within the NGMPP collection, the British Library, the Bodleian Library, the Seattle University Library, and the Berlin State Library.³⁴ The latter copy is complete, bearing

³² See fol. 324a: *yi ge pa ni snying pa rin chen yin| le la lha dpar brkos byed mgon brygal yin||*. For the artisans working at the Mang yul Gung thang printed edition of the *Theg mchog mdzod* of Klong chen Rab ’byams pa (1308–1364), see Ehrhard 2000a: 38, 75 and Sernes 2016: 346–347, 360. On mGon po rgyal mtshan, see Sernes 2011: 196, 201.

³³ Except for one case: the caption of the illustration at fol. 320b (right) identifies the portrayed master as Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan instead of mKhas grub Chos kyi legs pa (i.e. bTsun pa Chos legs). This is probably a mistake, rather than an intended change of the iconographic program, since the illustration is modelled after the portrait of Chos kyi legs pa in the previous editions, and the master Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan is also represented, as in the model, at fol. 370b (right). Reproductions of this edition’s illustrations are published in Ehrhard 2000b.

³⁴ NGMPP Reel no. AT 167/4–167/5 (kept at the National Archives, Kathmandu); British Library 19999b_16; Oxford Bodleian Library Tib. blockbooks a.24. I thank R. Carkeek and T. Lenz for providing me access to the volume in the Seattle University Library (no shelfmark). The copy kept at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Hs. Or 1639, is described in Everding 2015: 250–285, which also provides the transcription and German translation of the colophon.

the full printing colophon, and allows us finally to safely attribute the edition to the initiative of the master gNas Rab 'byams pa Byams pa phun tshogs (1503–1581), and to date it to 1566. The colophon starts with a section praising the ruling house and presenting the motives for producing the print, which is copied from the colophon of the royal edition, and than breaks off and adds its own information at the end, in a section devoted to the artisans involved.

(4) Apart from these Western prints, at least one more printed edition of the *Mani bka' bum* was produced at the time. Although I could not examine it in detail, a preliminary analysis locates the edition in Central Tibet, in the middle of the 16th century.³⁵ The initial supplicatory prayer (*gsol 'debs*) devoted to the transmission lineage of the teachings branches off after Grub thob Chu sgom pa and includes seven names following it: dGe 'dun dpal bzang, Sang rgyas seng ge, Tshul khrims rgyal mtshan, Sangs rgyas brtson 'grus, Sangs rgyas bde chen, Rin chen dpal 'byor, Padma sangs rgyas, plus an unnamed 'root master.' In the *gsan yig* of the Fifth Dalai Lama the same lineage continues after Padma sangs rgyas with Rig 'dzin chen po Nyi zla sangs rgyas and rDo rje 'chang pha bong kha pa, that is, 'Khon ston dPal 'byor lhun grub (1561–1637).³⁶ Moreover, Sangs rgyas brtson 'grus and the following Sangs rgyas bde chen are qualified as *rtsa 'bor sprul sku*, a reincarnation lineage whose first masters are all natives of dBuS (IHun rtse, gNyal, Lo ro, Dwags po): Sangs rgyas bde chen is the second incarnation, and, counting back the life-spans from the ninth in the line—that is, Bla ma Ngag dbang, whose dates are known (1756–1812)—he may be dated

³⁵ British Library Tib I 18, vol. KA, fols. 1–186. Volume KHA under the same shelf mark belongs to the 1521 royal print. I thank B. Quessel for his assistance in accessing this text. For the *gsol 'debs*, see fols. 1b–3a.

³⁶ See Ngag dbang Blo bzang rgya mtsho, *Zab pa dang rgya che ba'i dam pa'i chos kyi thob yig gangga'i chu rgyun*, in *The Collected Works (gSung-'bum) of the Vth Dalai Lama Ngag-dbang Blo-bzang rgya-mtsho*, Sikkim, Sikkim Research Institute of Tibetology, 1991–1995, vol. 3, fol. 77a. Sangs rgyas brtson 'grus also figures in the *thob yig* as the teacher of one Pad ma sangs rgyas (who is possibly identical with the last master named in the *gsol 'debs*), within the transmission lineage of the Byang gter teachings of Thang stong rgyal po (ibid., fol. 126a). On the life and reincarnation lineage of 'Khon ston dPal 'byor lhun grub, see Cabezon 2010, who also mentions Nyi zla sangs rgyas, describing him as a master of the Byang gter tradition (ibid.: 214, n. 20).

approximately to 1460–1515.³⁷ Hence, the succession lineage of the *gsol 'debs* points to the middle of the 16th century, a dating which is supported by the overall formal aspects of the text, close to Central Tibetan blockprints of the time; the page setting, foliation, and iconographical scheme do not rely on the *Mang yul Gung thang* edition.

As may be seen, in the case of the *Mani bka' 'bum* we have a regional tradition of transmission of the text in *Mang yul Gung thang*, where the earliest printed edition was realised in 1521 sponsored by the royal house, and two reprints relying on it were produced within 45 years. In the same period, also an independent Central Tibetan edition was realised. However, it is the first Western Tibetan edition that became widespread and proved to be extremely influential in shaping later versions. Indeed, the Fifth Dalai Lama explicitly states that he had a copy from *rDzong dkar*, that is, of the royal printed edition, and quotes from its *dkar chags*. Furthermore, the 'Bras spungs edition of the collection kept the original *gsol 'debs* at the beginning of the collection's register, praising the Western Tibetan transmission lineage down to *bTsun pa Chos legs*, while the actual Central Tibetan lineage, stemming after 'Phags mchog Nor bu bzang po and running through *sNyug la pañ chen Ngag dbang grags pa*, is provided only at the end of the *dkar chags*.³⁸

Moreover, the Bhutanese edition of the collection, produced in Punakha in the 17th century, is also based on the edition from *Gung thang*, and although it edits the initial *gsol 'debs*, substituting the verses dedicated to the Bo dong masters with those in praise of the 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud transmission lineage, it retains the glosses of the Western Tibetan edition throughout the collection.³⁹ This edition was realised at the time of the *rgyal tshab bsTan 'dzin rab rgyas*, who is portrayed in an illustration at the end of the second volume. As mentioned above, during his reign the first Bhutanese edition of *The*

³⁷ See the *Bod dang| bar khams| rgya sog bcas kyi bla sprul rnames kyi skye phreng deb gzhung*, in *Bod kyi gal che'i lo rgyus yig cha bdams bsgrigs*, Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 1991, pp. 281–369 (314–315).

³⁸ The reference to the *rdzong kha'i par ma* is found in the Fifth Dalai Lama's *thob yig* (as in note 36), fol. 70a; see Ehrhard 2013: 148, n. 11. On the 'Bras spungs edition and the lineage of succession mentioned therein, see ibid.: 151.

³⁹ On the Bhutanese edition of the collection, see Ehrhard 2013: 150, and Kapstein 1992: 163–164, n. 1.

Life and Songs of Mi la ras pa was also realised, and at least one artisan worked at both printing enterprises, which were both executed at Punakha, that is, the carver A'u bkra shis.⁴⁰ In this regard, it is interesting to note that the master who requested the carving of the blocks of the *Mani bka' bum* is mNga' ris sgrub chen Ngag dbang chos 'phel, who was the main sponsor of the 17th century edition of the *Life of Mi la ras pa* prepared in Mang yul under the supervision of the master named Ratna. It may be posited that Ngag dbang chos 'phel carried copies of Western Tibetan prints to the Bhutanese court, inspiring the local printing enterprises. Hence, it seems that individual agency in diffusing, editing, and reprinting texts could be crucial in determining the editorial history of specific works, as may be shown in the case of gNas Rab 'byams pa Byams pa phun tshogs, the master already mentioned as responsible for the 1566 print of the *Mani bka' bum*.

gNas Rab 'byams pa Byams pa phun tshogs (1503–1581) was a Sa skya monk also trained in bKa' brgyud practices, who had received the transmission of gTsang smyon's lineage. A native of the village of gNas in Mang yul, he stemmed from the local Khang pa family, and was the nephew of Rab 'byams pa Nor bu phun tshogs (1450–1521), who, as pointed out earlier, is portrayed at the end of the royal edition of the *Mani bka' bum*. Indeed this master of high rank was among the preceptors of King Khri rNam rgyal lde (1422–1502) and Khri Kun dga' rnam rgyal lde (d. 1524), and served as the abbot of the Sa skya monastery of sGo mangs in rDzong dkar. A disciple of Byams chen Rab 'byams pa Sangs rgyas dpal (1411–1485), Nor bu phun tshogs was the third in succession to ascend the seat of the prestigious 'Bras yul sKyed mo[s] tshal in Rong chung (gTsang).⁴¹ In fact, it was at this same institution that Byams pa phun tshogs received ordination and was trained. He also travelled repeatedly in Central Tibet, visiting the Yar lungs valley and reaching Tsa ri.

⁴⁰ Compare NGMPP Reel no. E 693/2, fol. 143b (see below, Appendix I), and the *Mani bka' bum: A Collection of Rediscovered Teachings Focussing upon the Tutelary Deity Avalokiteśvara (Mahākaruṇika)*. Reproduced from a print of the no longer extant Spu's-thān (Punakha) blocks by Trayang and Jamyang Samten, New Delhi, 1975, vol. 1 (E), p. 625.

⁴¹ A brief account of the genealogy of the Khang pa family is provided in the *Byams pa phun tshogs kyi rnam thar* (as in note 42), fols. 2a–11b; see Ehrhard 2012: 150–152. On Byams chen Rab byams pa Sangs rgyas phel, and the succession of the seat of sKyed mo tshal, see van der Kuijp 1983: 120–122.

During these trips, he received training in different religious traditions, although he eventually committed himself to the practice of the Aural Transmission of Ras chung pa (*Ras chung snyan brgyud*) and the Sa skya Path and Fruit (*Sa skya lam 'bras*). During these travels, he also collected texts to bring back to Western Tibet, where he realised printed editions of both bKa' brgyud and Sa skya works in the period between 1555 and 1580.⁴² It may be observed that in several occasions he chose to prepare a new edition of a work or collection that had already been printed in a workshop in Central Tibet, using the previously printed copy as the model. As will be discussed below, this is also true, for example, for the *Jātakamālā* and the *Dwags po bka' 'bum*.

It has already been observed how this master's printed editions testify to a later phase of printing in Western Tibet. Indeed, some of his works bear no printing colophon, or, even when they do, "there is generally no great attention paid to the circumstances of the actual production of the xylographs or the names of the scribes and carvers involved in the different projects." The name plates (*ming thang*), that is the carver's signatures at the bottom of the pages, gradually disappear. This is a significant difference from the Western Tibetan prints of the early 16th century, and is a sign that "the trade had already been professionalised to such a degree" that there was no "need to give credit to the individual artists and craftsmen" anymore.⁴³ Moreover, now we know that many of the printing projects of Byams pa phun tshogs were in fact new editions of works that had already been printed. Therefore, the practice of reprinting popular and cherished texts to make them available to the religious communities of different areas—which we have seen at work in 17th century Bhutan—was already carried out in the previous century.

⁴² The life story of Byams pa phun tshogs is titled *mKhas grub chen po byams pa phun tshogs kyi rnam thar ngo mtshar snang ba'i nyin byed yid bzxin nor bu dgos 'dod kun 'byung dad pa'i gsol 'debs*, xylograph, 93 fols., vol. no. KA; see NGMPP Reel no. L 783/3; TBRC W 25576. A study of this source, including a discussion of the master's printing projects, is provided in Ehrhard 2012. An updated survey of the printing projects by Byams pa phun tshogs is now provided in Sernes (forthcoming), chap. 6. The life story is accompanied by a volume of collected songs titled *Mkhas grub rab 'byams chos rje'i mgur 'bum*, xylograph, 24 fols., vol. no. KHA; see NGMPP Reel no. L 567/1.

⁴³ See Ehrhard 2012: 168.

5. The *Jātakamālā*

The *Jātakamālā* (*sKyes pa'i rabs kyi rgyud*) by Āryaśūra ('Phags pa dpa' bo) may be rightfully considered a 'Buddhist classic,' a popular work praised for its exquisite literary qualities. Introduced in Tibet during the imperial period, the work opens the *skyes rabs* section of the bsTan 'gyur, where it is found in a Tibetan translation attributed to Vidyākarasimha and Mañjuśrīvarman.⁴⁴ In the extra-canonical editions of the text, the thirty-four stories are often accompanied by supplementary sixty-seven stories compiled by the Third Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje (1284–1339). This is the case already with an early 15th century printed edition realised in Beijing in two volumes numbered KA and KHA, carrying images portraying Śākyamuni and Āryaśūra (KA, 1b), and Śākyamuni and Rang byung rdo rje (KHA, 1b).⁴⁵

A central Tibetan print of this collection is dated 1542 and was realised at the palace of Gong dkar by the Phag mo gru prince 'Gro ba'i mgon po (1508–1548), who resided at the fortress since 1524 (see fig. 3). Previously the site had been under the control of the Yar rgyab family, whose members, in the 15th century, had sponsored the so-called Gong dkar xylographs.⁴⁶ The print comprises a single

⁴⁴ Tōh. no. 4150. For an introduction to the work, see Hanisch 2005: xiii–xxiii. On the Tibetan translation and reception, see ibid.: lxiii–lxxxiii. To my knowledge, the extra-canonical Tibetan editions that I will present below are so far unstudied, besides the references in Tropper 2005: 108–117.

⁴⁵ A copy of this edition is found in the Laufer Collection of the Chicago Field Museum. I thank M. Kapstein for pointing it out to me and for providing me with some pictures: "The blocks were carved in 1430 (5th reign year of Xuande) at ta'i lung shen, which I think is probably Dalongshan huguo si—the Great Dragon Mountain Temple for the Protection of the State—in Beijing." (personal communication, 25/01/2014). This must be the "print of 1430" referred to in Laufer 1914: 52, n. 1, quoted in Tropper 2005: 117. The folios bear seven lines per page (except folios KA 1b, four lines, KA 2a, five lines, and KHA 1b, six lines), framed by two vertical lines on each side; Tibetan foliation is marked on the left margins, and Chinese foliation on the right margins; the folio numbering starts anew in the second volume; the images are stylistically close, as may be expected, to those of the Yongle bKa' 'gyur. The collection is introduced by a preface, also numbered KA, which has a separate foliation running from 1–24 (not seen).

⁴⁶ 'Gro ba'i mgon po (1508–1548) was the elder son of the Phag mo gru gong ma sde srid Ngag dbang bkra shis grags pa (1488–1563/4). In 1524, he "took (or was obliged to take) the estate of Gong dkar as his residence"; see

volume of 422 folios numbered KA (and thus possibly part of a wider printing project), titled *The Garland of Rebirths of the All-knowing Buddha: The thirty-four [stories] by Āryaśūra later completed to around one hundred by means of the sixty-seven [stories] by Rang byung rdo rje*. The first section runs until folio 138 recto, and is concluded by a short colophon mentioning the translators, while the second part by Rang byung rdo rje starts on the verso of the same folio. The book is illustrated by images of the Buddha Śākyamuni (fol. 1b, left), Nāgārjuna (fol. 1b, right), Āryaśūra (fol. 2a, left), and the Third Karma pa (fol. 2a, right) (see fig. 3).⁴⁷ In order to supervise the realisation of the printed edition, the artisan rDo rje tshe dbang was summoned at the palace. He was an experienced craftsman from rNyis in gNyal, who also worked in nearby Dwags la sgam po.⁴⁸ The long versified colophon of the work praises the expressive and literary qualities of the composition, and the skill of the Third Karma pa who was able to expand it (see Appendix II.A, part 1). In the dedication of the merits of the enterprise we find similar concerns to the *Mani bka' 'bum* example: the spread of the Buddhist Doctrine and the prosperity of the realm, which obviously strengthen each other according to the royal

Czaja 2013: 256, and n. 44. Interestingly enough, in the colophon the prince is qualified as the sovereign (*gangs can skye bo'i gtsug rgyan lha gzigs rigs | phyogs las rnam par rgyal ba'i nor 'dzin bdag | gong ma chen po 'gro ba'i mgon po zhes*), and the site is called “the second palace of the royal domain” (*ma mthus phyogs las rgyal ba'i rgyal sa che | pho brang gnyis pa dpal kyi gong dkar*); see Appendix II.A, part 2. On the early Gong dkar editions, see Jackson 1983: 8–16, and Jackson 1989: 10–17.

⁴⁷ NGMPP Reel no. L 528/2: *ston pa thams cad mkhyen pa'i skyes rabs phreng || bcu phrag gsum dang bzhi ni dpa' bo'i ste || phyi nas rang byung rdo rjes bdun lcag pa'i || drung bcus brgya rtsa rdzogs par mdzad pa bzhugs ||*. Digital images of a copy are also included in *Bod kyi shing spar lag rtsal gyi byung rim mdor bsdus*, Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 2014, DVD 2, vol. no. 38. The full colophon is provided below in Appendix II.A. The images are reproduced and discussed in Sernes 2016. The NGMPP copy has been employed by Tropper 2005, listed Z₁; see ibid.: 108–109.

⁴⁸ Indeed, we find him mentioned working as a scribe at Dwags la sgam po under the tenure of Dwags po bKra shis rnam rgyal (1513–1587) for the print of both the *mNyam med dwags po'i chos bzhir grags pa'i gzhung gi 'grel pa snying po gsal ba'i rgyan* by La yag pa Byang chub dngos grub and the *gSang sngags rdo rje theg pa'i spyi don mdor bsdus pa legs bshad nor bu'i 'od zer* by bKra shis rnam rgyal; see Sernes 2013: 199, 201.

ideology of virtuous government (see Appendix II.A, part 3). The *Jātakamālā* is praised as able to generate confidence in the law of karmic retribution, and to inspire love and compassion for other human beings. Then, the prince calls for protection and prosperity. In particular, he states:

In all circumstances, may harmful factors, external or internal, never arise, and may all wishes spontaneously [be fulfilled]! May the policy of the royal family lineage, and [its members'] life-span and glory prosper in every way! May everyone in the wide world live happily, rich in abundant nourishment [like] a divine rain, play songs and music of auspiciousness and joy, and may the virtuous deeds rule!⁴⁹

It is difficult not to spot in the background of this prayer awareness of the painful consequences of the terrible warfare that had affected central Tibet for a century, and of the efforts of the Phag mo gru family lineage to regain, strengthen, and proclaim their political power.

A copy from the Gong dkar edition constituted the model employed by Byams pa phun tshogs to realise his edition of the *Jātakamālā* in 1574 or 1575, which was executed at his home village gNas in Mang yul Gung thang (see fig. 4).⁵⁰ Although it is not clear

⁴⁹ See fol. 422a: | gnas skabs kun du'ang phyi nang nyer 'tshe'i chos || nam yang mi 'byung bzhed dgu lhun gyis grub || mi dbang chen po'i rigs rgyud srid byus dang || sku tshe dpal 'byor kun nas rgyas gyur cig | yangs pa'i 'jig rten kun kyang bde bas 'tsho || | lha yis char 'bebs rtsi bcud 'byor pas phyug | bkra shis dga' ba'i glu dang gar gyis rtse || rnam dkar dge ba'i las la dbang byed shog|.

⁵⁰ NGMPP Reel no. L 568/9–569/1; NGMPP Reel no. L 961/3–962/1: ston pa thams cad mkhyan pa'i skyes rabs phreng || bcu phrag gsum dang bzhi ni dpa' bo'i ste || phyi nas rang byung rdo rjes bdun lcag pa'i | drung bcus brgya rtsa rdzogs par mdzad pa bzhugs. On the execution of this printing project, see *Byams pa phun tshogs rnam thar* (as in note 42), fol. 91a, which is, however, unclear regarding the date. Indeed, it mentions a Dog year (1574) in which the master would have been 69 according to Tibetan reckoning, and states that the prints were prepared when he was 70, therefore in the following year (1575). However, the given age of the master does not fit with his birth-date 1503. Moreover, the *Ri khrod skal ldan sgron me*, which was printed together with the *Dwags po bka' 'bum* and the *Jātakamālā*, is dated 1574 in its colophon. Perhaps the whole printing project took a couple of years to be completed. See Ehrhard 2012: 166–167,

where and how the master obtained the copy, the model is indisputably identifiable: the new edition bears the same title, number of folios (422), and choice of illustrations as in the earlier printed edition. Although the two editions have the same number of lines per page (seven), the distribution of the syllables on the page is not identical, showing that the master copy was rewritten by hand copying the earlier print. The Mang yul Gung thang edition also copies the first part of the earlier printing colophon, having the care of substituting the lines recording the ruler, the place, and date of composition, with lines reporting information about the new edition (see Appendix II.B, part 1 & 2). Afterwards, Byams pa phun tshogs adds his own final dedication (see Appendix II.B, part 3): in this case the merit is dedicated to the wish to be reborn in the pure land of Amitābha, that is, Sukhāvatī (bDe ba can), and from there, be able to assist sentient beings by means of compassionate emanations. Hence, the *Jātakamālā* may be read as teachings on the law of *karman* and rebirth, and consequently inspire the wish of collecting merits in order to avoid rebirth in the hells, gain a high rebirth, and progress spiritually life after life. At the same time, as suggested in the colophon of the Gong dkar print, it may be read as a sort of didactic text, providing examples of virtuous deeds to inspire conduct in this very life. The final section of the colophon recording the names of the artisans at work is missing, which, as already noted above, is a common feature of the prints by Byams pa phun tshogs.

Interestingly, Byams pa phun tshogs's master lHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal had already printed a collection of stories of previous births of the Buddha (see fig. 5). The text comprises 170 folios and is titled *The Eighty Rebirth Stories of the Buddha by Ācārya Śūra* (*sTon pa sangs rgyas kyi skye rabs brgyad bcu pa slob dpon dpa' bos mdzad pa*).⁵¹ Indeed, it comprises eighty *jātaka* stories: the first thirty-four stories are those by Āryaśūra, but the wording of the narrative differs

173–174. The copy of this edition filmed as NGMPP Reel no. L 961/3–962/1 is briefly discussed in Tropper 2005: 114–115, n. 34.

⁵¹ IsIAO Tucci Tibetan Collection no. 707; see De Rossi Filibeck 2003: 341 (s.v.); I am grateful to M. Clemente for providing me images of the volume. The volume bears two illustrations, portraying Buddha Śākyamuni (1b, left) and a *buddha* named mThong ba don Idan (1b, right). For the colophon, see Appendix II.C. This text is referred to in Clemente 2011: 60–61, where, however, it is mistakenly identified as the *Buddhacarita* by Aśvaghoṣa; the main part of the colophon is also provided there in transliteration along with a very problematic translation.

from the widely known translation; at the end of “the 34th [story], the *jātaka* of the woodpecker” (*Bya shing rta mo'i skyes pa'i rabs te so bzhi pa'o*), there is a gloss stating “until here, [these] are the eighty *jātaka* stories by Ācārya Śūra” (*'di yan slob dpon dpa' bos mdzad pa'i skye rabs brgya bcu pa yin*, fol. 100b), which is nonsensical and should rather read “until here, [these] are the thirty-four *jātaka* stories by Ācārya Śūra”; the work continues with the next story (called at its end “the thirty-fifth [story], the *jātaka* of King Ga la shi na ba li,” fol. 105a), and so on until the end of the eightieth. Some of the supplemented forty-six stories seem to coincide with those included in the collection by Rang byung rdo rje, but recounted in different wording and different order, and no indication is provided about the identity of their compiler. The colophon states that “this activity of issuing [it] as an inexhaustible print” (*mi zad par du spel ba'i 'phrin las 'di*) was performed by lHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal at his hermitage-cum-printing house of Brag dkar rta so in a Ox year, which is most probably 1553 (see Appendix II.C).⁵² The ensuing merit is dedicated especially to the long life of the rulers and the prosperity of the kingdom, not an unusual dedication in the master’s printing colophons, since he was himself stemming from the royal family.

Hence, when Byams pa phun tshogs prepared his own edition of the *Jātakamālā* he had at his disposal his master’s printed collection as a potential model, but chose instead to rely on the central Tibetan edition of the version supplemented by Rang byung rdo rje. The copy by Byams pa phun tshogs itself must have circulated widely, and was perhaps sent by the master, as was his habit, to the Sa skya and bKa’ brgyud monasteries in gTsang. Indeed, we have at least two printed

⁵² lHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal mentions his printing activities in the *smon lam* composed in occasion of the 1546 restoration of the wall paintings of the Wati bzang po temple and included in the *dPal ldan bla ma dam pa mkhas grub lha btsun chos kyi rgyal po'i rnam mgur blo 'das chos sku'i rang gdangs*; see above note 11, and Sernesi (forthcoming), chap. 4. Since the collection is not mentioned in this list, I deduce that the Ox year in question must postdate it and hence corresponds to 1553. The artisans mentioned in the colophon are well-known as individuals who worked in Mang yul Gung thang in a number of printing projects: the scribe Badzra dho dza and the carvers dPon btsun Padma, bCu dpon rDo rje rgyal mtshan, mGon po rgyal mtshan, and dGe 'dun; see Ehrhard 2000a: 73–79, Clemente 2007, Sernesi 2011.

copies of the collection that depend on it:⁵³

(1) One copy is almost identical with copies of Byams pa phun tshogs's edition, including the full colophon. However, the first pages (fol. 1b–2a) lack the illustrations, and the text shows a syllable moved up from the second to the first line of folio 1b. At a close look, in some instances also the shape of the letters differs. Hence, either the blocks were restored, replacing the blocks of the first pages with newly carved ones when they became too worn out, or a new set of blocks was produced employing a copy from the Mang yul Gung thang edition as printing sheets, in an undetermined place and date.⁵⁴

(2) The other closely related copy is unknown to me in its original features. It constituted the model for a modern typeset publication, which only reproduces from this copy the second part of the collection, that is, Rang byung rdo rje's work.⁵⁵ After the colophon by Byams pa phun tshogs, which is quoted in full, we find the following statement: "It was printed at the great college called dGa' ldan chos 'khor gling, copying it from a model [whose origin] is as

⁵³ Moreover, one manuscript copied from the Byams pa phun tshogs print, bearing its full colophon, made its way to Ladakh. It was published as *The Tibetan Rendering of the Jātakamālā of Āryaśūra. Supplemented with 67 additional Jātaka stories by The Third Karma-pa Raṅ-byui-rdo-rje. Reproduced photographically from a rare manuscript preserved in the library of the Stog Rgyal-po of Ladakh*, Darjeeling, Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1974, 2 vols.; see TBRC W1KG4477. The voluminous manuscript consists of 617 folios with five lines per page in *dbu can*. Note that in this case the two parts of the collection are copied one after the other without any significant break: the translator's colophon closing the stories composed by Āryaśūra is followed by a *mgo yig* and the beginning of the second part, on the same line at the bottom of the page (fol. 229a.5); see vol. 1, p. 459. Byams pa phun tshogs's printing colophon may be found at fol. 615a–617a; see vol. 2, pp. 621–625; the manuscript bears at the end the note: "revised once against the model" (*ma phyi bzhin gcig zhu*).

⁵⁴ This is IsIAO Tucci Tibetan Collection no. 669; see De Rossi Filibeck 2003: 333 (s.v.); I am grateful to M. Clemente for providing me images of the volume. On 'technical identity,' see above note 24.

⁵⁵ See the *sKyes rabs brgya ba*, in *bCom ldan 'das ston pa shākyā thub pa'i rnam thar bzhang so*, mTsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1997, pp. 205–506. The number of *jātakas* included there is in fact the expected sixty-seven, as the title originally designates the full collection including the work by Āryaśūra and totalling one hundred and one tales.

[stated in] the [above] printing colophon.”⁵⁶ As may be seen, the modern publication is based on an exemplar executed from a set of blocks realised at a place called dGa’ ldan chos ’khor gling, on the basis of the print by Byams pa phun tshogs. This college must be A mchog dgon dGa’ ldan chos ’khor gling in Amdo, which was established in the 1760s as a branch monastery of Bla brang bKra shis ’khyil by the Second ’Jam dbyangs bzhad pa dKon mchog ’Jigs med dbang po (1728–1791), who is also remembered as a collector of rare volumes.⁵⁷ The monastery’s printing house is indeed known for having reprinted such works as the *Blue Annals* and the *Jātakamālā*, and the latter is mentioned in the relevant register (*par tho*) with the title corresponding to the full collection of one hundred and one *jātakas*.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Ibid. (p. 506): *ces pa’i par byang ’di bzhin du || yod pa’i phyi mo las bshus te || dga’ ldan chos ’khor gling zhes pa’i || chos grwa chen por par du bkod ||*. This is followed by the *ye dharma* formula, and eight lines of *bkra shis shog* invocation, which ends: *dge ’dis khyab bdag ’jigs med dbang po’i sde’i || sprul pa’i sku mchog nam mkha’i nor bu yi || gzhan phan ’phrin las dge legs ’od snang gis || phyogs bcu’i zhing kun khyab pa’i bkra shis shog |*. I was not able to identify this Nam mkha’i nor bu, but he is qualified as a reincarnation of ’Jigs med dbang po, which sustains my identification of the printing house.

⁵⁷ See Yonten Gyatso 1988: 360–361: this source states, perhaps hyperbolically, that ’Jigs med dbang po collected about 20,000 volumes. See also the biographical sketch in *Gangs can mkhas grub rim byon ming mdzod*, Kan su’u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1992, pp. 40–42, reporting that during the master’s trip to dBus at the age of fifty-seven (i.e. in 1784), he collected over 3,000 old books: *dgung lo nga bdun par slar yang dbus su phebs nas sngon byon mkhas pa’i phyag dpe rnying ba po ti sum stong lhag tsam phyag tu chud |* (ibid., p. 42).

⁵⁸ For a brief history of the monastery, see the *A mchog dgon dga’ ldan chos ’khor gling*, in *Kan lho’i bod brgyud nang bstan dgon sde so so’i lo rgyus mdor bsdus* (*Khan lho’i lo rgyus dpyad gzhi’i yig rigs*, vol. 11), 1995 (TBRC W1GS50020), pp. 8–11. This source lists the following works produced by the printing house (p. 4): *par shing la deb sngon dang mdo smad chos ’byung | nyi snang | rgyan snang | bslab btus | dpe chos rtsa ’grel | gtam rgyud rin chen phreng ba | rgyud stod tīka | lam rim mchan gcig ma | dpal mang dkon mchog rgyal mtshan pa’i gsung ’bum kha tshang | dag yig shes bya rab gsal la sogs cung mang | dgon par sngon chad chag ’jig chen po thengs gnyis byung |*. The three-volume *Ocean Annals of Amdo* (*mDo smad chos ’byung*) by dKon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas has been reproduced in the Šata-Pitaka Series, vol. 226, New Delhi, 1975–1977. The *par tho* of the printing house was published by Meisezahl 1986: the *Jātakamālā* is found in

Therefore, the print of the *Jātakamālā* by Āryaśūra complemented by the sixty-seven tales by Rang byung rdo rje which was produced at Gong dkar in 1542 travelled from dBus to Mang yul Gung thang, where it became the model for the printed edition realised in about 1574 by Byams pa phun tshogs. Copies of the latter made their way back through central Tibet to the eastern regions, in order to serve as the basis of a new reprinted edition in Amdo, sometime between the late 18th and the early 20th century.

6. The *Collected Works of sGam po pa*

The *Collected Works of sGam po pa* (*Dwags po bka' 'bum*) were arranged and printed for the first time in 1520 at Ri bo shan ti, alias the monastery of Dwags la sgam po, by its abbot bSod nams lhun grub zla 'od rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po (1488–1552).⁵⁹ The local monastic history states: “Concerned with the continuity of the teachings, in order to spread the precious *Collected Works* of the Incomparable Dwags po, [he] printed [them] in 700 printing sheets(?) with many initial illustrations.”⁶⁰ In this case, the main motivation prompting the printed edition seems to be to ensure greater availability and diffusion of the school’s specific teachings, together with a preoccupation with their preservation (*bstan pa'i rgyun la dgongs te*). This is mirrored in the printing colophon of the collection, which is found at the end of the *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, and which also states that the print was realised “in order to incalculably spread the complete *Collected Works*” (*bka' 'bum*

the register as entry no. 4–5 (ibid.: 312): *slob dpon dpa' bob mdzad pa'i skyes rabs so bzhi pa dang de'i kha skong karma rang byung rdo rjes mdzad pa dang bcas pa'i skyes rabs brgya pa la* 464 |. Note that the number of folios given (464) does not correspond to the number of folios of the edition by Byams pa phun tshogs (422). Unfortunately without the original it is impossible to compare the material aspect of the volumes.

⁵⁹ For copies of this edition, see NGMPP Reel nos. L 594/1–595/1–596/1, L 109/13; *Bod kyi shing spar lag rtsal gyi byung rim mdor bsdus*, Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 2014, DVD 2, vol. no. 46. On the illustrations of this collection, see Sernes 2016: 338.

⁶⁰ *Dwags lha sgam po khri 'dzin*, fol. 72a6, in Sørensen 2007, text F, p. 224: *bstan pa'i rgyun la dgongs te mynyam med dwags po'i bka' 'bum rin po che rgya cher spel ba'i phyir bar [= par] byang bdun brgya dbu lha mang po dang bcas par du bsgrubs*. I tentatively take here *par* *byang* to mean “printing sheet,” although its usual meaning is “printing colophon,” because the edition of the *Dwags po bka' 'bum* is made of 722 folios.

*yongs rdzogs grangs med pa spel ba'i phyir du) and “for the sake of the spread of the bKa' brgyud teachings” (*bka' brgyud kyi bstan pa spel ba'i slang du*).⁶¹ Hence, the main concern appears to be the dissemination of an accessible edition of the teachings of the school's founder. The extensive editorial work that the collection of teachings of sGam po pa underwent on this occasion may be also understood in this perspective. Indeed, it has been shown that the master's teachings were circulating also in bulky volumes without any major breaks, while in order to be printed they were re-ordered, grouped, and codified into different independent works, each with its own title, title-page, independent page numbering, and short colophon; the volumes were in turn numbered in a thematic succession to compose a coherent collection, which is more practical to handle, index, or quote.⁶² However, it must be noted that not all 16th century printed editions of a master's *Collected Works* underwent such an editing, and some other printed collections could read as a continuous ensemble without any significant breaks, while manuscript collections could show a more rigorous ordering. Hence, even though*

⁶¹ For the full colophon, see Appendix III.A. Parts 1–3 of the colophon may be found already in Sernesi 2013: 194, but unfortunately the NGMPP copy of the text available to me at the time lacked its final folio, comprising the *bkra shis shog* prayer (i.e. part 4). For the translation of part 1, see Kragh 2013: 274. For comments on part 2, concerning the editorial problems involved in the edition of the *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, see Kragh 2013: 390, Sernesi 2013: 197–198, Sernesi 2015a: 488–489. Part 3 has been erroneously translated in Kragh 2013: 375.

⁶² For a comparison with a manuscript copy of the *Dwags po bka' 'bum* which contains much the same textual material as the print, see Kragh 2013. This contribution, however, is in certain aspects problematic; see Sernesi 2015a: 482–489. For example, the article claims that the print made the collection available to a wider audience, leading to “new trends in citation practices” (Kragh 2013: 399). However, the only provided example of a work conspicuously quoting the *Dwags po bka' 'bum* is the *Phyag chen zla ba'i 'od zer* by Dwags po bKra shis rnam rgyal (1512–1587), and at the same time it is noted how other contemporary or later works make “very few references to or quotations from bSod nams rin chen” (*ibid.*). The citation practice by Dwags po bKra shis rnam rgyal needs not to be explained by the availability of the printed version of sGam po pa's *Collected Works*, but it is more probably due to bKra shis rnam rgyal's status as the forefather's reincarnation and as the seat holder of Dwags la sgam po, combined with his personal involvement with sGam po pa's oeuvre (see note 63 below).

it is tempting to speculate the opposite, the medium of production of a text does not necessarily determine a specific editorial process or a user friendly arrangement. Moreover, it is interesting to consider that the effort in editing sGam po pa's lore was not completed with the first printed edition of the *Collected Works*. For example, the colophon of the *Jewel Ornament of Liberation* printed in 1520 states that the printed editions of the work that already exist are not based on a reliable master copy, and that therefore the transmitted text may be fraught with alterations (see Appendix III.A, section 2). Accordingly, a new printed edition of the *Jewel Ornament of Liberation* was produced at Dwags la sgam po by the following abbot Dwags po bKra shis rnam rgyal (1512–1587). This shows how the printing of a text, especially when of great relevance for a religious community, did not necessarily put an end to its appraisal in terms of textual scholarship by the most learned Tibetan masters.⁶³

The 1520 Dwags po rgyal edition of the *Collected Works of sGam po pa* comprises thirty-eight works, starting from the life stories of Tilopa and Nāropa (KA), Mar pa and Mi la ras pa (KHA), and sGam po pa (GA), continuing with the bulk of the collection, that is, thirty-three texts of instruction numbered NGA to CHI, and ending with the *Jewel Ornament of Liberation* (*Dam chos yid bzhin nor bu thar pa rin po che'i rgyan*) and the *Sunbeams of Scriptures and Treatises* (*bsTan chos lung gi nyi 'od*), numbered respectively E and WAM. Although this editorial effort proved successful, and this arrangement was mirrored in the later editions as well, the collection was not closed to further minor interventions. In particular, brief eulogies were added to the collection, printed in a similar format, but lacking a volume number. One copy of the collection includes a prayer to sGam po pa

⁶³ On the impact of xylography on Tibetan textual criticism, and the illusory nature of the assumption that blockprinting determined textual stability, see van der Kuijp 2010, and especially pp. 445–446, where it is reported how the Fourth Zhwa dmar Chos grags ye shes (1453–1524) commented upon what in his view were problematic readings in a recent printed edition of the works of 'Jig rten mgon po. On Dwags po bKra shis rnam rgyal's revised edition of the *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, and also of the *Commentary to the Four Doctrines* (*mNyam med dwags po'i chos bzhir grags pa'i gzhung gi 'grel pa snying po gsal ba'i rgyan*) by La yag pa Byang chub dngos grub, which was previously printed by the Fourth Zhwa dmar pa, see Sernesi 2013: 196–199, 2015a: 488–489. The *Jewel Ornament of Liberation* would deserve renewed philological attention in the light of this data; for a previous assessment, see Almogi 2009: 352, 463.

attributed to Phag mo gru pa called [A Prayer Starting with the Word] *Shes bya* (*Shes bya ma*), and the *Eulogy to the Three Lords, Uncle and Nephews, called A Bouquet of Fresh Utpala [Flowers]* (*rJe khu dbon rnam gsum la bstod pa utpala gzhon nu'i chun po*) written by sGam po pa Mang ga la alias Dwags po bKra shis rnam rgyal. They are found inserted at the end of the instructional texts, between volume CHI (the *Lam mchog rin po che'i phreng ba*) and the *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*.⁶⁴ Another copy of the collection of the same edition presents instead a *Eulogy to Ri bo shan ti* (*Ri bo shan ti'i gnas bstod*), at the very end of the *bKa' bum*, after the *Sunbeams of Scriptures and Treatises*.⁶⁵

These additions were realised shortly after the original print of the collection, most probably at Dwags la sgam po under the tenure of Dwags po bKra shis rnam rgyal (i.e. 1532–1543, 1563/4–1587), since two of the eulogies found their way in the Western Tibetan print of the collection.⁶⁶ In fact, also this collection was reprinted in Mang yul Gung thang by Byams pa phun tshogs in 1574 or 1575 (see fig. 6).⁶⁷

⁶⁴ See NGMPP Reel no. 595/1. At the end of the *Shes bya ma* a very short colophon is found, which is partly illegible: 'di'i [sbyin bdag rje bla ma (?)] bo [dī dp]on po a po rgya mtshos gung lo [bd]un pa'i dus su || lha ri sgam por par du sgrubs pa'o || chos dang bkra shis 'phel bar mdzad du gsol ||. The proper names mentioned here are unknown to me, and hence I am unable to determine the text's printing date, but the place of printing is indeed Dwags la sgam po.

⁶⁵ See the *Dwags po bka' bum* in the *Bod kyi shing spar lag rtsal gyi byung rim m dor bsdus*, as quoted in note 59.

⁶⁶ For the succession to the abbatial seat of Dwags la sgam po, see Sørensen 2007: 45–50; for the tenure of bKra shis rnam rgyal, see ibid., Text F, fols. 74a–84b. For the printed edition of the master's works, see Sernes 2013: 199–202. Note that now the master's collected discourses and songs (text III.2 in Sernes 2013: 202) have been published in a modern typeset edition together with bKra shis rnam rgyal's life-story titled *sGam po pa mangga la'i mtshan can gyi rnam thar snying po bsdus pa*, which, according to its colophon, was executed in print by the same artisans; see the *dPal sgam po pa kun mkhyen bkra shis rnam rgyal chos kyi dpal bzang po'i rnam thar dang rtogs mgur thos grol chen mo bzhugs so*, Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 2013.

⁶⁷ On the date of the print, see above, note 50; indeed, the collection was printed at the same time as the *Jātakamālā*. Kragh (2013: 373) dates the project to 1575, but does not specify the source. Two incomplete sets of the collection have been filmed by the NGMPP, Reel no. L 118/3–119/1, and Reel no. E 1991/10–1992/27. A number of single texts from this edition are

The colophon of the *Jewel Ornament of Liberation* keeps the first part of the printing colophon of the 1520 edition: breaking off before the name of the former editor, it states that it was “copied/duplicated from the print realised in Dwags la sgam po on the 15th day of the 9th month of an Iron Dragon year (1520), in order to incalculably spread the complete *Collected Works*.⁶⁸ In this way, Byams pa phun tshogs acknowledges the model employed, evidently considering it authoritative since it was produced at the Dwags la sgam po monastic seat, and claims a strict adherence to it, to the point of effacing the local circumstances of its reproduction. Indeed, after this passage of the colophon, there is no specific printing colophon by Byams pa phun tshogs, and we may determine that he is the project-leader responsible for the printed edition only from the information provided in his life story, and through an evaluation of the formal features of the edition (compare, for example, the title pages in fig. 6 and in fig. 4).

As may be expected, the Gung thang edition follows closely the first print, including the same texts, in the same order, each printed in

also extant: in particular, for the *Dwags po thar rgyan* (vol. no. E), see NGMPP Reel no. 136/7, and for the *bsTan chos lung gi nyi 'od* (vol. no. WAM), see IsIAO Tucci Collection vol. no. 1355 (fol. 2 missing). Kragh (2013: 370, n. 25) posits “a later reprint of the Mang yul gung thang xylograph, the date and origin of which are unknown, available on NGMPP microfilm reel no. L247/4”: the mentioned microfilm comprises in fact seven volumes of the edition by Byams pa phun tshogs (i.e. vols. GA, NGA, CHA, JA, WA, 'A, and OM).

⁶⁸ See Appendix III.B.1.: *lcags pho 'brug gi lo || dbyug pa zla ba'i tshes bcwo lnga la | bka' 'bum yongs rdzogs grangs med pa spel ba'i phyir du || dags lha sgam por bsgrubs pa'i par las zhal zhush pa'o ||*. Here *zhal zhush* stands for *zhal bshus*, honorific form of *ngo bshus*, with the meaning of “copying, transcribing, duplicating”; see Goldstein, *The New Tibetan-English Dictionary of Modern Tibetan*, University of California Press, 2001: 307 (s.v.), and the *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1985, p. 2383 (s.v.). The verb *bshus* is employed also in the colophon of the dGa' ldan chos 'khor gling edition of the *Jātakamālā* to indicate that it relies on the print by Byams pa phun tshogs; see note 56 above. Note that the colophon of the new edition of the *Dwags po bka' 'bum* quotes verbatim also part 2 (on the editorial history of the *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*) and part 4 (the *bkra shis shog* prayer) of the original colophon, omitting the section on the artisans involved in the preparation of the printed edition (part 3). Again, Byams pa phun tshogs does not mention the workers employed in his printing project.

the same number of folios. In this edition the *Shes bya ma* prayer is absent, while we find both the *Eulogy to the Three Lords* and the *Eulogy to Ri bo Shan ti*. To these two eulogies is added a further text, a prayer in two folios composed by the Seventh Karma pa Chos grags rgya mtsho (1454–1506) titled *rJe zla 'od gzhon nu la bka' babs pa'i shing rta gnyis kyi lam rim gsol 'debs*. At the moment, it is still impossible to tell if this was also an appendix already printed in Dwags la sgam po, or if it constitutes a local addendum. The *Eulogy to the Three Lords* is given the volume number OM, the *gsol 'debs* is numbered ĀH, while the *Eulogy to Ri bo Shan ti* is numbered HUM. Thus the new edition follows closely its model in the internal organisation and folio numbering of the individual volumes, but includes and arranges the three final short texts. They are not illustrated, unlike the volumes that mark the original beginning (vol. KA) and end (vol. E and WAM) of the collection: therefore, the insertion is supposed to fit before the latter two volumes, resulting in the following ordering of the concluding volumes: OM, ĀH, HUM, E, WAM.⁶⁹

As may be seen, this is a further instance of a Central Tibetan print, reputed as a prestigious and reliable edition of a coveted collection, which was brought back to Mang yul Gung thang by Byams pa phun tshogs to serve as the model for his own printed edition, which was realised 50 years later than the original set. In the meanwhile, a few short texts had been printed in Dwags la sgam po and loosely appended to the collection: accordingly, they were reproduced in the new edition, smoothly arranged within the printed set.

7. Concluding Remarks

As may be seen, the close study of the above examples, reconstructing the editorial history of popular Buddhist texts and textual collections, is able to provide data, although fragmentary, about the production and circulation of printed texts in pre-modern Tibet.

⁶⁹ The three added texts have been microfilmed by the NGMPP, Reel nos. E 1992/25, E 1992/26, E 1992/27, respectively. Note that the volume numbered HUM was written by a scribe from Lan 'de: *spar yig 'di ni lan 'de smad kyi cha| ga pa bkra shis sor mo'i rtse la dkrum| dge bas 'gro kun sangs rgyas myur thob shog* (fol. 2a).

Printing enterprises could be initiated by individual masters personally leading all the phases of the work, from fundraising to execution. An exemplary case is gTsang smyon Heruka, who was eager to spread his version of the life of Mi la ras pa, a text described as benefitting whoever “sees, hears, remembers, or touches it.” The Madman’s own life story and songs were printed by his disciples one year after his passing away as a collective enterprise. Indeed, during the 16th century, printing the life stories and songs of a revered master after his death became a widespread practice to be duly fulfilled by the community of his followers. In these enterprises we may see at work the idea of the book as relic, that is, as a powerful cultic object, source of blessing, ‘support of [the master’s] speech’ (*gsung rten*), apt to be reproduced and spread.⁷⁰ The use of the xylographic medium of book production ensured the multiplication of identical objects to be distributed to the faithful. At the same time, printed books could also be realised in the institutional setting of a monastery such as Dwags la sgam po, employing its financial resources. In this case the enterprise is part of an ongoing effort aimed at establishing and preserving the text of the forefathers’ teachings, within a context of competition among religious traditions and their most prestigious monastic seats. Finally, prints may be produced at the request and with the sponsorship of a noble house, inscribed within a range of activities intended to enact, show, and promote its just rule and moral qualities, and to assert its conformity to the ideal of Dharma-kingship: to spread the Doctrine pertains to the duties of the ruler who looks after the well being of the subjects.

The choice of texts that are printed in each case is coherent with the corresponding religious and political motives, and with the local textual traditions. Nevertheless, they were certainly appealing to

⁷⁰ On Mi la ras pa’s life story as a substitute for his bodily relics, see Schaeffer 2007: 213–218, 225–226. For a general treatment of books as ritual objects, see Diemberger 2012. On the earliest version of the life and songs of gTsang smyon Heruka, see Ehrhard 2010: 154–158, Sernes 2011: 186–188, Larsson 2012: 42–47. Among the prints surveyed in Ehrhard 2000a are the life and songs of bTsun pa Chos legs (1437–1521), Rig ’dzin mChog ldan mgon po (1497–1531), sPrul sku bsTan gnyis gling pa (1480–1535), ’Ba’ ra ba rGyal mtshan dpal bzang po (1310–1391), sPrul sku Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan (1475–1530), Chos dbang rgyal mtshan (1484–1549), and Nam mkha’ rdo rje (1486–1553). For an overview of the available life stories of members of gTsang smyon’s school, see Sernes (forthcoming), catalogue section M.

wider religious communities and gained wide popularity, since we have observed how some collections, or single texts drawn from them, were printed more than once between the 16th and the 18th centuries. While there are instances of independent initiatives, apparently unrelated, in many cases the original model for the new printing project was a previous print. This would occur essentially for two different reasons:

(1) When the original wooden blocks were worn out and the resulting printed exemplars had become unclear or unreadable, new blocks became necessary to substitute the older ones. This is the case of the early reprints of the *Mi la'i rnam mgur* and probably of the *Mani bka' bum*, produced within a restricted geographical range and time span. Moreover, the blocks could be damaged by flood, warfare, or fire, as in the case of the 'great fire of Punakha,' which destroyed the blocks of the early Bhutanese editions of many bKa' brgyud works, including the *Life and Songs of Mi la ras pa*. This shows how the potential for wide diffusion, which is in theory ensured by the printing medium, was in practice attenuated by the perishability of the wooden blocks, which had to be preserved, restored and eventually substituted.

(2) To make the text available in another Tibetan-speaking region, a new printed edition would be prepared at a distant location on the basis of an authoritative model, often sought in an earlier printed version. In the cases surveyed, personal initiative seems to have played a major role. Indeed, the Bhutanese print of the *Mani bka' bum* produced at the time of rGyal tshab bsTan 'dzin rab rgyas was prompted by one *sgrub chen* from Western Tibet, Ngag dbang chos 'phel, who was possibly also involved in the contemporary Bhutanese print of the *Life and Songs of Mi la ras pa*, figuring as the main sponsor of another edition of that text. Moreover, the case of gNas Rab 'byams pa Byams pa phun tshogs, who prepared new editions in Mang yul Gung thang of the *Jātakamālā* and the *Dwags po bka' bum*, is exemplary in this regard.

These new prints circulated and over time could themselves serve as the basis for later new printed editions. Therefore, only by bringing together textual studies, close examinations of the formal aspect of the prints, and the study of the history of the transmission and reception of the works, it is possible to understand the genesis and the role of each exemplar within the wider editorial history of given works. In this way, we may document at first a transfer of knowledge from central Tibet (dBus gTsang) to the western regions

of Mang yul Gung thang. There, in the 16th century, skilled specialised artisanal figures and artists were able to produce beautiful and readable volumes, such that this thriving printing trade was sought after even from gTsang.⁷¹ Afterwards, there was evidently a further re-distribution of the Western Tibetan printed texts towards the Southern Himalayan regions and central Tibet, because books would be sent as prestigious gifts to hierarchs, monasteries and patrons. Indeed, the editions from Mang yul Gung thang were later found in the libraries of dignitaries, such as the Fifth Dalai Lama, or were employed as models for later printed editions as far as Bhutan and Amdo. In this regard, among the examples surveyed above, note the 18th century printed edition from Beijing of the *Mi la'i rnam thar* bearing lHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal's colophon, and the 'Bras spungs and Bhutanese editions of the *Mani bka' bum*, which were both based on the Mang yul Gung thang edition. Also the editorial history of the *bKa' gdams glegs bam* shows a similar trajectory: its first printed edition was realised in Mang yul Gung thang on the basis of a manuscript master copy from dBus, and it, in turn, was employed as the model for the late 17th century Old Zhol edition.⁷² During the 18th century, the Second 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa dKon mchog 'Jigs med dbang po is known to have collected volumes in Central Tibet, and to have founded a printing house in Amdo, the A mchog dgon dGa' ldan chos 'khor gling, where texts were printed and also reprinted employing previous editions as their model, as in the case of the *Jātakamālā* based on the edition by Byams pa phun tshogs.

Hence, the editorial history of these 'Buddhist classics' suggests a widespread pattern of textual reproduction and testifies to the wide scope of circulation of books in pre-modern Tibet.

⁷¹ On the Mang yul Gung thang print of the life story and collected songs of sPrul sku Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan (1475–1530) upon the request of an official from Chu shul lhun po rtse, see Ehrhard 2000a: 39; for more on this episode and the ensuing printed work, see the contribution by Ehrhard in the present volume.

⁷² See Ehrhard 2000a: 42–44, 74–75, Sernes 2015b.

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Appendix I

Mi la ras pa'i rnam thar, Punakha edition

rNal 'byor gyi dbang phyug chen po rje btsun mi la ras pa'i rnam

thar thar pa dang thams cad mkyen pa'i lam ston

NGMPP Reel no. E 693/2. Printing Colophon: fols. 142a.6–144a.4.

|| na ma shshwe tta ntra gu ru pā dā ya | rab 'byams zhing khams
tshangs pa'i gnas nas (142b) gdul bya skal ldan shing rta yi || ngal ba
don ldan byer la spro bas rdor 'chang gangā'i dag byed gzugs || srid
par nyul de drang strong till'i ral pa'i klung du 'khyil ba gang || slar
yang dka' bas drangs nas mchog bsil grub mdzad nā ro ta par 'dud ||
de gsung snyan rgyud yan lag brgyad pa'i rgyun || gangs can ma dros
glong du 'dren pa'i mthus || sgrub rgyud bstan pa'i rgya mtsho che
spel ba'i || chos kyi blo gros yangs pos 'dir skyong zhig | sngar byas
las kyi skom pas cher gdungs nas || snga 'gyur chu phran 'thungs pas
ma ngoms par || snyan rgyud rgya mtsho'ang lhag med mdzas de'i
mtshan || mi la ā gasta zhes grags pas srungs || tshul de dngos dang
dngos min gdul bya'i rigs || nyon mongs rang dga'i tsha ba de skyob
phyir || nyams bzhes gdams pa'i bcud mchog slar skyugs snyam ||
dka' thub lhun po'i rtse mor nye bar phyin || de yang gangs ri dur
khrod chu klung sogs || gnas yul kun tu yang dag 'jog pa'i sgor || rtse
gcig gzhol tshe lha mi 'byung po'i sdes || gus dang mtho 'tshams
bgyid pa'ang snying rje'i blos || lan du rgyu 'bras chos kyis 'khor
ba'i yid || ldog nas thar pa'i sa bon 'debs mdzad pa'i || rnam par thar
pa gser gyi me tog la || mtshog [= mchog] dman su zhig dga' ba'i yid
mi (143a) g.yo || grangs med la sogs bskal pas mi thogs par || tshe
gcig rdo rje 'chang dang mnyam gyur phyir || sems dpa' gzhan las
'phags zhes mi bskyod bka' || mnong dgar gleng ba thugs sras gtso
bos thos || lung de'i sos kas bskul ba'i rdo rje grags || nags su mi
smra'i brtl zhugs las ldang nas || rnam thar dpyid kyi dpal zhig
zhu'o zhes || snyan pa'i dbyangs kyis thugs sras gzhan la'ang sbron ||
e ma sngo bsangs ral pa'i cod pan can || skyil krung g.yo med gsang
sngags chos kun ston || rigs brgya'i khyab bdag rje btsun 'di yod
bzhin || 'og min ston par sems pa ci ste shor || zhes snyam ras kyi
'dab gshog bskyod byed cing || rkang drug sor mo snying khar
spungs nas ni || zhal ras padma bzhad pa'i rdo rje'i mdun || gsol btab
dbyangs su 'tsher bas yang yang 'khor || ltar snang dga' dang ngu ba
rgod bro'i tshul || ston kyang don la byang chub sems dpa'i rigs ||
bye ba phrag brgya'i mdzad tshul rnam thar kun || mtshon pa'i bka'
srol bsung zhim 'di spros so || 'di nyid rgyud pa'i mes chen nā ro ta |

| rang rgyud 'dzin du slar yang gangs can pa'i || 'gro ba'i ngor
 'khrungs dpal ldan 'brug pa che|| (143b) ngag gi dbang po rnam par
 rgyal ba'i bka' || gtsug tu 'kur nas lugs gnyis chos kyi srol || yangs
 pa'i sa la phyogs med spel ba'i dbang || dpal ldan 'brug srid rab tu
 rgyas pa'i sde || rtse shod rim pa'i thugs bskyed nor bu'i mdzod ||
 chen po las thon brkos kyi nam mkha'i ngos || gsal bar 'char ba'i
 rnam 'phrul 'gyed pa'i gnas || srid zhi'i bde legs ma lus nyin bzhin
 du || spungs pa'i thang chen mi 'gyur tshal du bskrun || glegs bu'i do
 rar yi ge'i zlos gar mkhan || rnam par rgyal ba'i blo ldan brkos
 mkhas kyang || a'u bkra shis mched Ingas {gloss: bkra shis | 'brug
 mgo legs | bzod pa bstan 'dzin | ngag dbang 'phrin las |} gus bcas par
 || rig pa'i mnga' des nor 'khyogs med par 'phangs || 'di bsgrubs dge
 ba'i sprin 'pheng nam mkha'i mtha'i || phyogs su g.yo bas dpal ldan
 'brug brgya pa'i || rang lugs kun bzod brlan pa'i char 'bebs te || bstan
 'dzin myu gu'i sde tshogs rgyas par smon || lhag par bstan pa'i lugs
 zung gdugs dkar po || srid pa'i khams su ris med bla nas blar || 'dags
 mdzad skyes mchog me gha swa ra'i sde || mi mthun phyogs las
 rnam par rgyal gyur cig | yang (144a) | sgos dpal ldan 'brug pa'i chos
 srid kyi || bstan pa'i yal 'dab phyogs bcur khyab pa'i gnyen || skyes
 mchog dzambu bri kṣa'i 'phreng ba 'di || lho gling dga' ba'i tshal du
 brtan gyur cig | rnam bzhi'i 'phrin las 'bras bu'i tshogs kyis kyang ||
 skal bzang don gnyer du ma'i yid sim ste || mngon mtho'i grib bsil
 yangs po'i 'jug dogs su || nges par legs pa'i bsti ba ldan par shog |
 thos pa gang la phyir mi ldog pa yi || dga' ba ster mdzad rnam thar
 nor bu'i mthu || 'dis kyang srid pa'i re ba yongs 'gengs nas || rdzogs
 byang 'bras bu'i bde ba thob par shog | bi ku ḥda la dza yantu ||

Appendix II

A. *Jātakamālā*, Gong dkar edition

*Ston pa thams cad mkhyen pa'i skyes rabs phreng| | bcu phrag gsum
dang bzhi ni dpa' bo'i ste| | phyi nas rang byung rdo rjes bdun lcag
pa'i| drung bcus brgya rtsa rdzogs par mdzad pa bzhugs*

NGMPP Reel no. L 528/2. *Bod kyi shing spar lag rtsal gyi byung rim
mdor bsdus.* Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang,
2014, DVD 2, text no. 38. Printing Colophon: fols. 421a.2–422b.2.

(1) || swasti | gang gis grangs med bskal par snying stobs kyi || rtse
mor son pa'i spyod pa rlabs po ches || byang chub chen po'i go
'phang brnyes mdzad pa || rgyal dbang nyi ma'i gnyen der bdag
phyag 'tshal || lhar bcas 'gro ba'i ston pa mi bslu ba || tshad mar gyur
pa thub dbang kho na zhes || nges pa'i shes pa snying la gang 'god
pa'i || skye bo de yang phyag gi gnas yin no |

| 'di na rang rang bla mar khas 'che ba'i || skye bo'i rnam thar nyi
tshar chags pa dag || blo gros ngal ba tsam gyi rgyur mthong nas ||
rlabs chen rgyal ba'i mdzad pa snying la dran || de tshe rgyal bas
lung bstan paṇḍī ta || snyan ngag byed po kun gyi ral pa'i rtser ||
zhabs sen 'od ris 'god pa dpa' bo yis || rtogs pa brjod pa sum bcu
bzhi pa mdzad || de ni 'phags pa'i yul kyi grong bas kyang || sa steng
rin chen gsum zhes glur len na || gangs can skye bos rnyed dka'i rin
chen ltar || spyi bor len la rings pa smos ci 'tshal || de lta'ang brgya
phrag yong [= yongs] su ma rdzogs pa || 'phags deng bod kyi mkhas
rlom ma lus pas || mkhas pa'i legs bshad do zlar 'jigs pa yis || kun
gyis rtsom pa'i khur las byol bar gyur || skabs der rgyal ba'i mthu yis
karma pa || rang byung rdo rje zhes bya gsung rab kun || cig car
gzigs pa'i spyan ras chen po pa || sa gsum 'gran zla bral ba'i smra
mkhas byung || de yis bgrang yas mdo sde las 'byung ba'i || rgyal
ba'i (421b) mdzad pa bcu phrag drug dang bdun || rang gi bskal ba'i
cha shes gyur to zhes || rtogs pa brjod pa lhag ma skyong byed gyur |
| de nas mdzad pa yongs su rdzogs pa'i gtam || dpyod ldan snying la
sngon med dga' ston gyi || legs bshad rin chen gsar pa 'di stsal bas ||
snyan ngag gzhan la gus pa lhod par byas |

(2) | 'on kyang glegs bam mchod sbyin ma nyams pas || phyogs bcur
khyab pa'i ngo mtshar ma spel na || zab mo'i gter gyi nor bu ji lta bar
|| kun gyi bsod nams 'gron du ga la 'char || de slad yi ge'i zla 'od
'bum phrag kyang || cig car 'char ba'i rdzu 'phrul mngon gsum pa ||
par ces glegs mar bkod pa rgya mtsho ltar || bsod nams nor bu'i

'byung gnas 'di dag kyang || **gangs can skye bo'i gtsug rgyan lha gzigs rigs** || phyogs las rnam par rgyal ba'i nor 'dzin bdag || gong ma chen po 'gro ba'i mgon po zhes || snyan grags rda chen srid rtser bsgrags pa de'i || btsun mo dam pa tshangs pa'i bu mo bzhin | | ma lus shes bya gzigs pa'i spyam mnga' zhing || bstan dang de 'dzin gus pas mchod mdzad pa || chab srid kun la byams pa'i **phyag rkyong bas** || mkhas pa'i snying la legs bshad bdud rtsi'i char || blun la'ang dad pa'i spu long skyed byed phyir || rgyal ba'i rtogs brjod nor bu'i phreng ba 'di || gtan pa med pa'i chos kyi sbyin pa'i phyir || phun tshogs 'dod dgu'i dpal rnames nyer 'du zhing || **mi mthus phyogs las rgyal ba'i rgyal sa che** || **pho brang gnyis pa dpal kyi gong dkar du** || dge byed ces pa chu pho stag la bsgrubs |

(3) | de byung dge legs pad rtsa ltar dkar ba || 'di yis mtshon nas byas dad byed 'gyur dang || yod pas bs[du]s pa ji snyed mchis pa yis || rgyal ba'i bstan pa ma nyams ma spags pa || 'khrul med phyogs bcu kun tu rgyas pa dang || (422a) | bstan la gnod pa'i smra ngan log pa'i gtam || 'gro kun bslu ba'i chos ltar snang ba kun || ma lus ming tsam med par 'gog gyur c[i]l | khyad par rgyal ba'i mdzad pa rlabs po che'i || tshig don ma lus ji bzhin khong chung nas | rgyu 'bras snying nas nges pa rnyed pa'i mthus || 'gro kun pha mar shes pa'i byams pa dang || bdag pas gzhan la gces pa'i snying rje dang || chos kun sgyu mar rtogs pa'i shes rab kyis || thub pa'i dbang po'i mdzad pa lhur blangs nas || stobs bcu mnga' pa'i go 'phang thob par shog | gnas skabs kun du'ang phyi nang nyer 'tshe'i chos || nam yang mi 'byung bzhed dgu lhun gyis grub || mi dbang chen po'i rigs rgyud srid byus dang || sku tshe dpal 'byor kun nas rgyas gyur cig | yangs pa'i 'jig rten kun kyang bde bas 'tsho || lha yis char 'bebs rtsi bcud 'byor pas phyug | bkra shis dga' ba'i glu dang gar gyis rtse || rnam dkar dge ba'i las la dbang byed shog |

(4) || kwa le | rgyal ba'i mdzad pa'i rmad byung ngo mtshar gzugs || dad ldan skye bo'i snying gi me long du || mngon sum 'char byed grangs med glegs bam rgyun || mngon sum skrun pa'i skal bzang 'jug dogs <s>u || phul byung glegs bu'i mkha' dbyings dag pa la || rab bkra yig 'bru'i dbyar skyes 'dus pa las || mi zad chos kyi char pa rtag 'bab cing || snyan grags dbyar rnya phyogs bcur bsgrags pa 'di || yi ge'i slob dpon kun gyi bshes gnyen gyi || ring lugs 'dzin pa kun gyi rtser son pa || tshe dbang rdo rje zhes pa'i lag sor las || ji ltar skrun pa'i sgyu 'phrul ji bzhin du || brkos kyi 'du byed rig gnas kun gyi phul || lho rgyud yangs pa'i rgyal khams bya yul ba || rdo rje tshe dbang la sogs mkhas pa'i mchog | bcu phrag gcig gis lhag bsam dag

pa yis || yid gzhungs brtson pa'i dad pa lhur blangs nas || lag pad nye
bar bskyod pa'i ngo mtshar yin || de las byung ba'i rnam dkar gang
des yang || (422b) kun mkhyen rgyal ba'i go 'phang myur thob cing |
| gnas skabs su yang mi mthun rgyud pa'i tshogs || nye bar zhi nas
dge ba'i bsam pa bzhin || tshe dang bsod nams phun sum tshogs pa
dang || rnam dkar bkra shis dge mtshan ma lus pa || dbyar dus chu bo
bzhin du rgyas gyur cig | || shu bham [a]stu sar[w]a dza ga tām ||
|| manggalambhawantu ||

B. *Jātakamālā*, Byams pa phun tshogs edition

*Ston pa thams cad mkhyen pa'i skyes rabs phreng| | bcu phrag gsum
dang bzhi ni dpa' bo'i ste| | phyi nas rang byung rdo rjes bdun lcag
pa'i| drung bcus brgya rtsa rdzogs par mdzad pa bzhugs*

NGMPP Reel no. L 568/9–569/1; NGMPP Reel no. L 961/3–962/1.

Printing Colophon: fols. 421a.2–422a.6.

(1 = II.A.1)

(2: cf. II.A.2 with changes marked in bold) | par ces glegs mar bkod
pa rgya mtsho ltar || bsod nams nor bu'i 'byung gnas 'di dag kyang ||
gang gis rigs las skyes pa'i snyom las pa || byams pa phun tshogs
zhes bya ser rdzus pas || dang por thos pa'i don la bag tsam
sbyangs || bar du bskal ldan gdul bya 'ga' re skyangs || mtha' mar
'chi la nye bar gyur pa'i tshe || mkhas pa'i snying la legs bshad bdud
brtsi'i 'char || blun la dad pa'i spu long bskyed byed phyir || rgyal
ba'i rtogs rjod nor bu'i 'phreng ba 'di || bstan pa med pa'i **mchod**
sbyin bgyis nas kyang || rang gzhan rnams la 'brel bzang bzhag
pa'i phyir || dgos 'dod kun 'byung spar mchog dam pa 'di || phun
tshogs 'dod rgu'i dpal rnams nyer 'du zhing || rgyal dang de sras
rnams kyis lung bstan pa || khyad par mang yul 'phags pa bzhugs
pa yis [= yi] || byang shar nags 'dab gnas zhes bya bar bsgrub |

(3) | de las byung ba'i dge ba 'dis mtshon nas || bdag gzhan dus gsum
tshogs gnyis dpal gyis mthus || dam pa rnams kyi thugs dgongs
rdzogs pa dang || dkar nag 'brel ldan rkang gnyis (422a) mchog thob
cing || bstan pa dar rgyas 'gro la bde skyid shog || khyad par 'chi ba'i
dus byed gyur pa na || 'khor tshogs rgya mtshos bskor ba'i 'od dpag
med || mig gis yul du gsal bar mthong gyur nas || dad tshogs snying
rjes bdag brgyud gang bar shog || bar do'i snang ba shar bar gyur ma
thag || rgyal sras khyed kyi ma nor lam bston cing || bde ba can du

skyes nas sprul pa yis || ma dag zhing gi 'gro ba 'dren gyur cig || mi
 gtsang lus 'di bor bar gyur ma thag || bde ba can du rdzus te skye bar
 shog| X⁷³ rnam dkar dge ba ji snyed bsags pa'i mthus || dpal ldan bla
 ma rtag tu snyes byed cing || thos bsam sgom pa'i bya ba mthar
 phyin nas || lung rtogs bstan pa phyogs bcur brgyas byed shog || byin
 brlabs rtsa ba rtsa brgyud bla ma dang || dngos grub mchog brnyes
 yid dam lha'i tshogs || 'phrin las bsgrub mdzad ma sring mkha' 'gro
 dang || dam can rgya mtsho rnames kyi bkra shis shog ||
 | om na mo ratna tra yā ya | ye dharma he tu pra bha wa | he tunte
 śaṇā tāṭhā ga ta he wa dād : teśhanytsa yo ni ro dha e wāṃ bā ti
 mahā shra ma na ye swa hā || om su pra ti shwa badzra ye swa hā ||
 manghalam || bhawantu | | X skyes ma thag tu sa bcu rab sgrod
 nas || sprul pas phyogs bcur gzhan don byed par shog |

(4: missing)

**C. The Eighty rebirth stories of the Buddha, lHa btsun Rin chen
 rnam rgyal edition**

Ton pa sangs rgyas kyi skye rabs brgyad bcu pa
 IsIAO Tucci Tibetan Collection, no. 707. Colophon: fol. 169b6–
 170a.

|| thub pa'i skye rabs lha lam mngon mtho bar || brlabs chen pha rol
 phyin bcu'i tsha zer rgyas || gdul bya'i ma rig mun pa rab bsal nas ||
 skal ldan blo gros pad tshal phyogs bcur bskyed || dpa' bo'i legs
 bshad yid 'od lo 'dab rgyas || gzhan yang skye rabs du ma'i ze 'bru
 rgod || blo gsal bung ba'i dga' ston sbrang rtsi'i rgyun || mi zad par
 du spel ba'i (170a) | 'phrin las 'di || lha btsun rin chen rnam par rgyal
 ba yis || bzhad pa rdo rje mngon par sangs rgyas shing || rtogs pa'i
 chos 'khor bskor ba'i bsti gnas mchog || gnas chen brag dkar rta sor
 glang lo sgrubs || rnam dkar dge ba gang de'i mthu nus kyis || mi
 dbang rnames kyis sku tshe rab brtan cing || chab srid dar rgyas chos
 la spyod pa dang || pha mas thog drangs 'gro drug sems can tsho'i ||
 rten thob bstan mjāl bshes kyis rjes bzung ste || gnas lugs don la
 yengs med goms pa'i mthus || gdod na gnas pa'i sku gsum mngon
 gyur shog || yig ge'i 'du byed badzra dho dzas bris || par brkos

⁷³ Here a symbol points the reader to two lines of verse added at the end of the folio, where they are introduced by a corresponding symbol. Evidently this addition needs to be inserted at this point of the text.

mkhas pa dpon btsun padma dang || bcu dpon rdor rgyal mgon po
rgyal mtshan dang || dge 'dun la sogs mkhas pa rnams kyis brkos ||
rang rang sug rjes rang rang thang na gsal || stod kyi brgya dang
nyeg ma lnga nyid kyi || yig gzugs par yig kun dga' rgyal pos bris ||

Appendix III

A. *Dwags po bka' 'bum, Dwags la sgam po edition*

Dam chos yid bzhin nor bu thar pa rin po che'i rgyan zhes bya ba bka' phyag chu bo gnyis kyi theg pa chen po'i lam rim gyi bshad pa (vol. E)

NGMPP Reel no. 595/1–596/1. *Bod kyi shing spar lag rtsal gyi byung rim mdor bsdu*s. Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 2014, DVD 2, text no. 46. Colophon: fols. 131a5–*132a7 (final folio not numbered).

(1) bka' 'bum yongs rdzogs thar rgyan dang bcas pa 'di ni | ston pa thub pa'i dbang po mya ngan las 'das nas | nyis stong gsum brgya go brgyad dang | mgon po 'di nyid bltams nas | bzhi brgya zhe gnyis lon | chos kyi dbyings su zhugs nas | gsum brgya re bdun rdzogs pa'i | lcags pho 'brug gi lo | dbyug pa zla ba'i tshes bcwa lnga la | bka' 'bum yongs rdzogs grangs med pa spel ba'i phyir du | rje nyid kyi dbon po spyan snga §⁷⁴ chos kyi rje bsod nams lhun grub zla 'od rgyal mtshan dpal bzang pos | bka' brgyud kyi bstan pa spel ba'i slang du ri bo shanti yi mgul | bsgom (131b) sde chos 'khor bde chen gyi gtsug lag khang du par du bgyis pa'o |

(2) | thar rgyan gyi par 'ga' zhig las | yid brtan gyi phyi mo ma rnyed zer nas | rtsom par dam bca'i skabs dang par rnams <s>u yang | mi la yab sras kyi bzhed pa dang | mar pa yab sras kyi bzhed pas | dmigs rims spo ba la sogs dang | khyad par du bsam gtan gyi le'u dang | shes rab kyi le'u | sa lam gyi le'u la sogs pa rnams su | bcug pa dang gton pa la sogs pa'i bsre slad mang du byas na'ang | lugs de la bden pa yin mod | 'on kyang bka' 'bum yong rdzogs thar rgyan dang bcas pa 'di rnams | bka' phyag chu bo gnyis kyi lam rim du mgo ba'i gtam mo ||

(3) || zhu dag legs pas 'khrul pa'i skyon sel ba'i || rig pa'i ral gri g.yul las rgyal ba yi || the tshom dra ba mtha' dag gsal ba 'di || shākyā'i dge slong ye shes dbang phyug yin ||
|| yi ge pa ni kun dga' rin chen yin || ||
|| rig byed brkos la mkhas pa sprul skur byon || dpal 'byor dar rgyas dpon bsam pa dang ni || bi shwa karma'i rnam par sprul pa yi || mkhas par btus pa bcu phrag gsum gyis brkos || shes bya brkos la 'dran zla cang mchis sam ||

⁷⁴ This symbol marks a *sbrul shad* in the original.

(4) || chos dbyings lhun gyis grub pa la || dbyer med 'khor 'das yongs su rdzogs || dus gsum sangs rgyas bskyed pa'i yum (*132a) | chos sku mchog gi bkra shis shog || rnam snang ye shes gangs chen mtsho || mi 'khrugs rgyal po la sogs pa || rgyal ba sras bcas 'khor gyis bskor || longs spyod rdzogs pa'i bkra shis shog || thub chen rgyal ba gser mdog can || bskal bzangs sangs rgyas stong gi dbus || rnam 'phrul bsam gyis mi khyab pa || sprul sku mchog gi bkra shis shog || sku gsum lhun grub yongs rdzogs shing || ye shes dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor du || ngo bo nyid kyis thams cad mkhyen || sku bzhi yongs rdzogs bkra shis shog || dags po lha rje 'gro ba'i mgon || yid bzhin nor bu rnyed pa ltar || bdag gzhan yongs kyi dbul ba sel || dgos 'dod 'byung ba'i bkra shis shog || byang chub sems kyi phrin las kyi || thugs rje'i 'od zer phyogs med 'phro || bcwa Inga'i zla ba nya rgyas ltar || 'dzam gling 'jig rten bkra shis shog || || bkra shis dpal 'bar 'dzam gling rgyan du shog || manggalambhawantu || shu bham || ||

B. Dwags po bka' 'bum, Byams pa phun tshogs edition

Dam chos yid bzhin nor bu thar pa rin po che'i rgyan zhes bya ba bka' phyag chu bo gnyis kyi theg pa chen po'i lam rim gyi bshad pa (vol. E).

NGMPP no. Reel L 136/7. Colophon: fols. 131a5–132a5

(1) bka' 'bum yongs rdzogs thar rgyan dang bcas pa 'di ni || ston pa thub pa'i dbang po mya ngan las 'das nas | nyis stong sum brgya go brgyad dang | mgon po 'di nyid bltams nas | bzhi brgya zhe gnyis lon | chos kyi dbyings su zhugs nas | gsum brgya re bdun rdzogs pa yi | lcags pho 'brug gi lo || dbyug pa zla ba'i tshes bcwo Inga la | bka' 'bum yongs rdzogs grangs med pa spel ba'i phyir du || **dags lha sgam por bsgrubs pa'i par las zhal zhus pa'o** ||

(2 = III.A.2)

(3: missing)

(4 = III.A.4)

Appendix IV: Figures

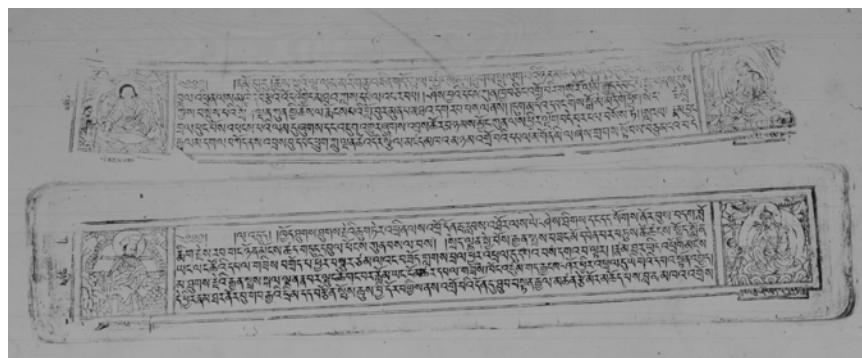


Fig. 1: *Mi la ras pa'i rnam thar*, 17th cent. Bhutanese edition, NGMPP Reel no. E 693/2, fols. 1b–2a



Fig. 2: *Mani bKa' 'bum*, fol. 2a, from top to bottom: (1) the 1521 royal print from rDzong dkar, NGMPP Reel no. E 2933/5; (2) undated Mang yul Gung thang edition, NGMPP Reel no. L 118/2; (3) the 1566 edition by Byams pa phun tshogs, NGMPP Reel no. AT 167/4

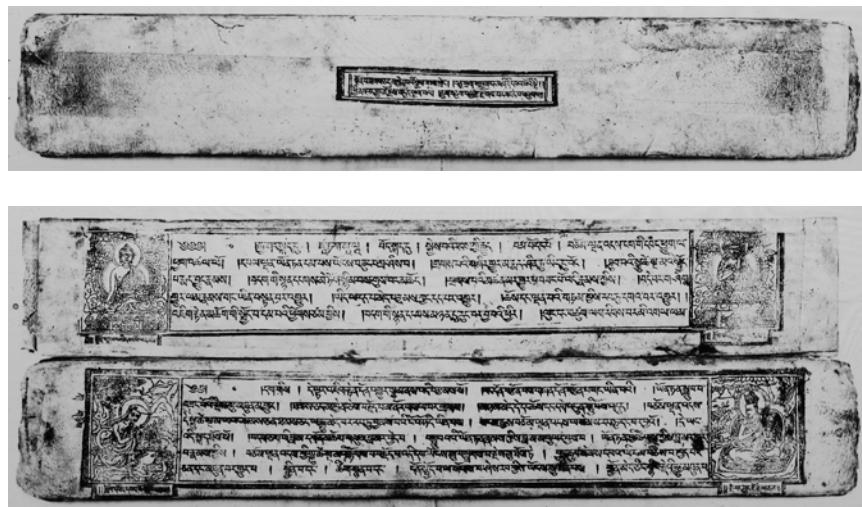


Fig. 3: *Jātakamālā*, the 1542 edition from Gong dkar ba, NGMPP Reel no. L 528/2, fols. 1a–2a

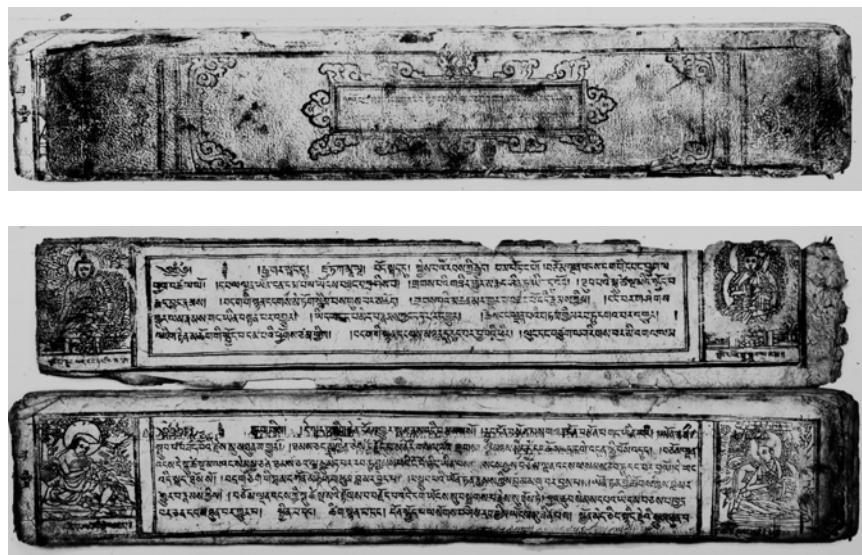


Fig. 4: *Jātakamālā*, the 1574/5 edition by Byams pa phun tshogs, NGMPP Reel no. L 568/9, fols. 1a–2a

Tibetan Manuscript and Xylograph Traditions

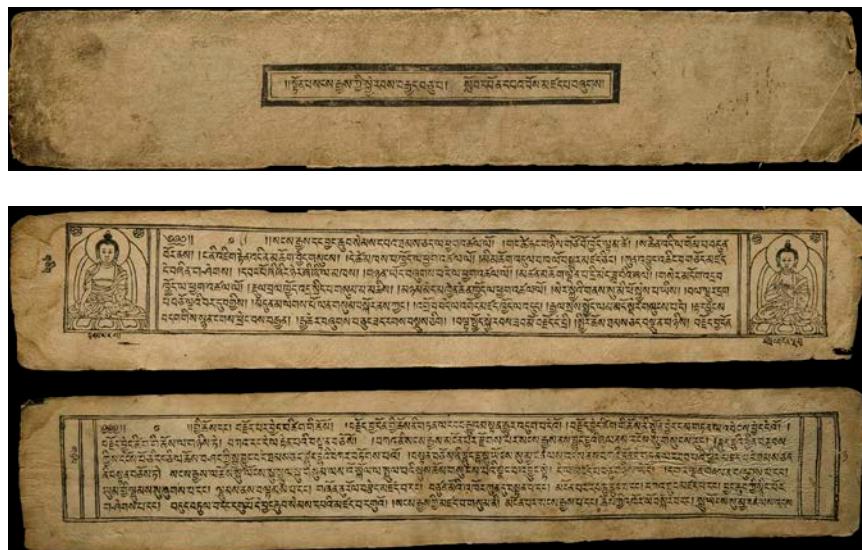


Fig. 5: *sTon pa sangs rgyas kyi skye rabs brygad bcu pa*, the edition by IHa btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal, IsIAO Tucci Tibetan Collection no. 707, fols. 1a–2a

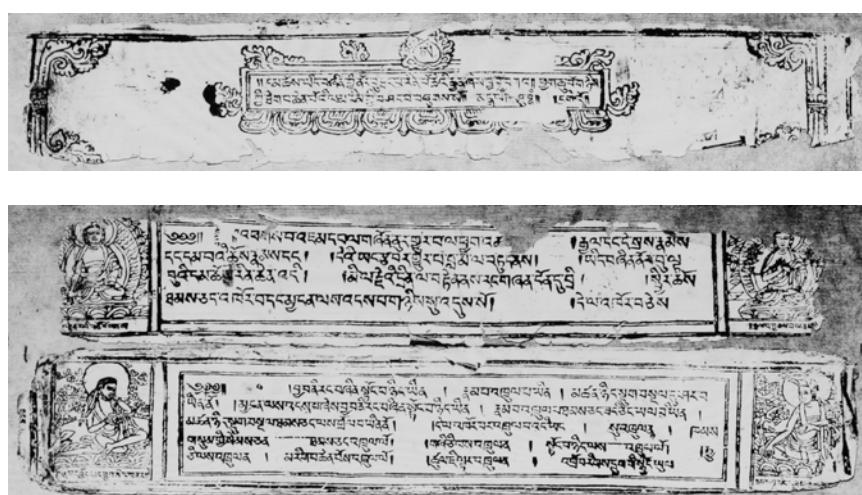


Fig. 6: *Dwags po bKa' 'bum*, vol. E, *Dam chos yid bzhin nor bu thar pa rin po che'i rgyan*, the 1574/5 edition by Byams pa phun tshogs, NGMPP Reel no. L 136/7, fols. 1a–2a

Varieties of Tibetan Texts from Khara-khoto and Etsin-gol: An Introductory Remark

Tsuguhiro Takeuchi (Kobe) & Maho Iuchi (Kobe)

1. Introduction

In the early twentieth century, a large number of manuscripts and wood-block prints written in various languages were discovered at the ruins of Khara-khoto and Etsin-gol in the Etsin-gol delta of Inner Mongolia in China, on the route connecting the Gansu Corridor and Mongolia.

Khara-khoto was a fortified town of the Tangut state (1038–1227), known in Tibetan as Mi nyag and in Chinese as Xi xia (西夏). The unearthed texts include, in addition to those written in Chinese, Uighur, Mongol and Tibetan, numerous Tangut manuscripts and prints. They attracted the attention of scholars as the most important source for deciphering the Tangut script and for uncovering the history of the Tangut state together with contemporaneous Chinese texts.¹ Subsequently, there appeared numerous studies of the Tangut and Chinese texts from Khara-khoto.²

In contrast, the Tibetan texts from Khara-khoto and Etsin-gol have not been paid due attention and remain unrecognised except for a few publications.³ They are also less utilised and poorly studied compared

¹ Among the Chinese texts, the dated administrative documents are also considered to be important historical sources for the 12th century Song Dynasty (e.g., cf. Ito 2012).

² To list only the facsimile editions of the texts: The Chinese and Tangut texts in Russia, Kozlov Collection, have been published in *Russia K.K. MSS* (for more details on this and other bibliographical abbreviations, see the Abbreviations and Bibliography); the Tangut texts in the British Library, Stein Collection, have been published in *BL K.K. MSS*; the Tangut texts collected in China have been published in *China Tangut MSS.*; the Chinese texts in China have been published in *China Chinese MSS 1* and *China Chinese MSS 2*.

³ Photos of several texts were published by Stein in *Innermost Asia* (Stein IA: CXXXI–CXXXVII). Recent studies are Takeuchi (1998, 2002, 2004, 2007), Kano (2008), Iuchi (2011), and Shirai (2004).

to other Tibetan texts unearthed from other ruined sites in Central Asia, for example, Dunhuang, Mīrān, and Mazār Tāgh. Nevertheless, these Tibetan texts from Khara-khoto and Etsin-gol are unique in that they are extremely rich in variety. Their dates range from the late 11th to the 20th centuries. Some are written in the Old Tibetan style, some in the Classical Tibetan style, some include Mongolian texts, and some are prints. Their formats also vary, including *pothi*, scroll, concertina, and codex. Thus, they provide evidence for various stages of the development of Tibetan writing styles and book cultures during that 1000-year period.

In what follows, we would like to give an overview of the Tibetan texts from Khara-khoto and Etsin-gol and discuss their significance in the historical development of the Tibetan literary tradition and Tibetan Buddhism in Central Asia.

2. Expeditions and Collections

The two major collections in Europe and the collections in China (Inner Mongolia) are as follows:

- A) The Stein Collection in the British Library
 - Stein's third expedition (1913–1915)
 - 1061 items (285 from K.K.; 776 from E.G.)
- B) The Kozlov Collection in the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg
 - Kozlov expedition (1907–1909)
 - 81 + α items
- C) Collections in China⁴
 - Inner Mongolia Institute of Archaeology – 41 items⁵ (1983–1984)
 - Inner Mongolia Etsina Archives – 38 items⁶

A) The Stein Collection

The Khara-khoto and Etsin-gol texts in the Stein Collection were found and acquired by Stein's third expedition. The majority of the

⁴ Beside these three expeditions, several Chinese archaeological expeditions were sent to the Khara-khoto sites in 1927, 1962–63, 1976, and 1979. They acquired a number of texts, but whether they found any Tibetan texts or not remains unclear.

⁵ Published partly in Takeuchi 2008 and later in full in *China Miscell. MSS.*

⁶ Maho Iuchi visited the Archives in 2005 and examined 38 Tibetan texts (Iuchi 2011: 36).

Tibetan texts were originally stored at the India Office Library (IOL).

When Takeuchi first searched for these texts in IOL in 1990, they were bound in seven volumes together with two Tangut texts. In addition, a considerable number of texts were placed in one box with the title “Stein 3rd Expedition.” A few more texts were also found in the IOL storeroom. All of them have since been conserved in new boxes.⁷ They retain the old requisition number “IOL Tib M.”⁸ Also, Takeuchi found one text with a site number “K.K.” in the Or. 8212 sequence.⁹ In our new catalogue¹⁰ we count a total of 1061 texts.

In addition to the requisition numbers, the texts in the Stein collection bear site numbers beginning with K.K. (= Khara-khoto) or E.G. (= Etsin-gol) assigned by Stein himself, as we will see in the next section.

B) The Kozlov Collection

Peter Kuz'mych Kozlov made the first scientific excavation of the Khara-khoto sites in 1908 and 1909. Kozlov made a second visit to Khara-khoto in 1926. During the expeditions Kozlov acquired vast amount of texts and artefacts, which were sent to and kept in St. Petersburg.¹¹

The Tibetan texts are kept at the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences. However, they have not been clearly sorted and arranged: most of the Tibetan texts had originally been included in the fund of Chinese texts from Dunhuang and Tangut texts from Khara-khoto. Tibetan texts were found and taken out while sorting these funds of texts but it is not clear whether they are from Dunhuang or from Khara-khoto.¹² The

⁷ With the stack location numbers “IOL Tib M Box 01–12.”

⁸ Takeuchi *OTM*: xix–xxi. IOL joined the Oriental Collections in 1991 to form the Oriental and India Office Collections, which later changed into Asian and African Studies, the British Library.

⁹ K.K. II. 0279. sss. = Or. 8212/ 1914 = Text 674 in Takeuchi *OTM*.

¹⁰ T. Takeuchi & M. Iuchi, *Tibetan Texts from Khara-khoto in the Stein Collection of the British Library*. Studia Tibetica No.48, Tokyo: Toyo Bunko (in press).

¹¹ Details of the Kozlov expeditions are described in Kozlov 1923 and Kozlov’s diary (Дневник Монголо-Сычуаньского путешествия, 1907–1909). They are informatively summarised in Kychanov 1996.

¹² “Only a small part of [the] Tibetan fragments extracted from the bindings of Tangut manuscripts can be identified exactly as once belonging to the Big

following groups of Tibetan texts are considered to have been brought from Khara-khoto.¹³

1) The texts referred to under the code XT, which is the abbreviation for the Russian “Хара-хото, Тибетский” (“Khara-khoto, Tibetan”). This label, given only in 1967,¹⁴ led to the misunderstanding that all the texts with “XT” numbers came from Khara-khoto. In fact, although the majority are from Khara-khoto, several texts that apparently stem from Dunhuang were also included, for example: XT 2 and XT 31, Buddhist texts written in Old Tibetan;¹⁵ XT 4, a contract (published in Takeuchi 1995 and OTC); and XT 56, a *glegs tshas* document.¹⁶ These Old Tibetan texts were most probably brought back from Dunhuang by the Oldenburg expedition.¹⁷

Originally there were 70 XT fragments (XT 1–XT 70). Then, 16 texts were found while sorting the Tangut texts (XT 71–XT 78). In addition, XT 87 and 88 are Tibetan–Tangut bilingual texts.¹⁸ So far five XT texts were presented in *Lost Empire*, but the overall view has remained unknown.

2) About 10 folios of the *Prajñāparāmitā sūtra* taken out of the bindings of Tangut manuscripts. Until recently they had no inventory numbers.¹⁹

3) Another group of Tibetan fragments taken out of the bindings were presented to the Asiatic Museum by Kozlov himself in 1915. They are glued on 11 big folios of white paper and marked as “Supplement 2.” “There are 15 fragments in cursive script (Koz. 1–Koz. 5) and 16 fragments in formal *dbu can* (Koz. 6–Koz. 11).”²⁰

Mound hoard [in Khara-khoto].” Vorobyova-D. 1995: 46.

¹³ Vorobyova-D. 1995: 47.

¹⁴ The labels were given in a handwritten inventory by A. S. Martynov (cf. Vorobyova-D. 1995: 47).

¹⁵ XT 11–15 may be from Dunhuang as well.

¹⁶ Takeuchi 2013.

¹⁷ Takeuchi 1995: 52, fn. 5.

¹⁸ Takeuchi 2004: 345.

¹⁹ Vorobyova-D. 1995: 47.

²⁰ Vorobyova-D. 1995: 47.

C) Collections in China

After Kozlov and Stein, the Sino-Swedish Northwestern Scientific Expedition, headed by Sven Hedin and Xu Bingchang (徐炳昶), went to investigate the lower reaches of the Edzina River centred on Khara-khoto, where Huang Wenbi (黃文弼) excavated several hundred documents.²¹

After 1949, Edzina Banner (or E ji na qi 領濟納旗), including Khara-khoto, was placed first under the administration of Gansu Province and then the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region. The Inner Mongolian Cultural Relics Preservation Team made archaeological investigations twice in the Khara-khoto ruins in 1962 and 1963.²² Then, the Gansu Province Cultural Relics Preservation Team made archaeological investigations in 1976 and 1979.²³

More extensive expeditions were conducted in 1983 and 1984 by the Inner Mongolian Institute of Archaeological Studies and the Alashan Center of Cultural Relics Protection.²⁴ Through extensive excavations, over 3,000 documents were found. They are now kept in the Institute of Relics and Archaeological Studies (Nei menggu kaogu yanjiusuo 内蒙古自治区文物考古研究所) at Huhhot, in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region.

Among the finds acquired by these Chinese expeditions, 41 Tibetan texts were recently published in 2013 in *China Miscell. MSS*, together with texts in other languages (Uighur, Mongolian, Arabic, Persian, Syriac and Sanskrit).

Another collection is in the Inner Mongolia Etsina Archives (Nei menggu Ejina qi wenwu guanlisuo 内蒙古額濟納旗文物管理所) at Ejina, which houses 39 Tibetan texts. They are considered to be from the Khara-khoto area, but no data is available concerning their place of excavation. Judging from their appearance, they look relatively new and resemble the texts from Etsin-gol in the Stein Collection.

²¹ Preface by Shi jinbo (史金波) to *Russia K.K. MSS* and *China Miscell. MSS* (p. 2). These documents are now kept at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Institute of Archaeology (中国社会科学院考古研究所), but we have no detailed information about them.

²² A small number of documents found by the expeditions are kept at the Museum of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region (内蒙古自治区博物馆). Cf. *China Miscell. MSS*: 2.

²³ A small number of documents found by the expeditions are kept at the Museum of Gansu Province (甘肃省博物馆). *China Miscell. MSS*: 2.

²⁴ See the excavation report in Neimenggu 1987.

Thus, they are more likely not to have been found in the Khara-khoto sites but were acquired near Khara-khoto and Etsin-gol (cf. §3). They remain unpublished.

Summarising previous studies on the Tibetan texts from the Khara-khoto and Etsin-gol area kept in the major collections, half of those in Chinese collections were recently published, but the majority of the texts both in the Stein Collection and in the Kozlov Collection remain unpublished.

3. Provenance: Khara-khoto and Etsin-gol

3.1. Khara-khoto

Khara-khoto is located in Ejinaqi (額濟納旗) of Alashanmeng (阿拉善盟) in Inner Mongolia, to the northeast of Jiuquan city (酒泉市). Stein made excavations at six sites in and around the Khara-khoto town and numbered them from K.K. I. to K.K. VI. The site K.K. I. (= Khara-khoto site 1) refers to the ruined town of Khara-khoto. The sites K.K. II. to K.K. VI. are outside the town. Tibetan texts were found from K.K. I., K.K. II., K.K. III., and K.K. V. (See Plan 1 and Plan 2 in the Appendix).

As regards K.K. I., there were many excavation points within the town. Major ruins are designated by adding Roman l.c. numbers from i. to ix. (K.K. I. i.–K.K. I. ix.).²⁵ A few Tibetan texts were found at K.K. I. ii. and K.K. I. ix.²⁶ In addition, about twenty small fragments containing both Tibetan and Tangut writing were found within the town. They are collectively designated K.K. 0121.

K.K. II. is situated to the west of the town and close to the western river-bed. From K.K. II. a relatively small number of Tibetan texts were found, among which a well-known Tangut-Tibetan bilingual text fragment (K.K. II. 0234: Stein IA, Pl. CXXIV).²⁷ The K.K. II. site is identical with the Kozlov's famous "Suburgan" from where Kozlov acquired numerous valuable finds.²⁸

²⁵ See Plan 2. However, there seems to be some confusion in the numbering system: for example, K.K. i. and K.K. ii. coexist with K.K. I. i. and K.K. I. ii. within the town. The latter seems to refer to more clearly preserved buildings or *stūpas*.

²⁶ Cf. Stein IA: 444.

²⁷ Stein IA: 449: "The great rarity of Tibetan texts from K.K. II – only thirteen complete folia are recorded in the inventory – is also of interest, when compared with the large number of Tibetan materials from K.K. V."

²⁸ Stein IA: 447–448.

K.K. III. is a collapsed *stūpa* situated less than a hundred yards (ca. 91 m) from the northeastern corner of the town walls. Five Tibetan manuscripts were found here, one of them with a Tangut writing on it.²⁹

K.K. V. is near the northwestern corner of the town, where there were two groups of *stūpas*, designated K.K. V. a. and K.K. V. b. The majority (253 out of 285) of the Tibetan manuscripts from Khara-khoto were taken from the latter site.³⁰

3.2. Etsin-gol

The name “Etsin-gol” originally refers to the Etsin-gol river and the area along the river, the Etsin-gol delta. Stein, however, gave the name to another ruined site near Khara-khoto. The Etsin-gol site is a ruined town resembling Khara-khoto but smaller in size, located “about 25 miles NNW. of Khara-khoto,”³¹ from where numerous leaves of Tibetan and Mongolian manuscripts and prints were excavated. Unfortunately, however, the Etsin-gol site was not visited and excavated by Stein himself, but was found and excavated by Stein’s head camel-man Hasan Ākhūn. This is the reason why the finds from the Etsin-gol site lack the detailed site numbers designating the points from which texts and artefacts were excavated within the site (only E.G. + number: e.g., E.G. 01).³² There is also no sketch plan of the site. This situation makes the character of the E.G. Tibetan texts vague, insofar as it is unclear if they were actually excavated at the site or acquired somewhere nearby.

With respect to the Kozlov Collection, due to the excavators’ lack of archaeological background, the finds were not located and described systematically.³³ The majority of the texts, especially the Tibetan manuscripts found together with Tangut manuscripts, obviously came from Khara-khoto.³⁴ However, several Tibetan

²⁹ Stein states: “Tibetan writing was here rare [sic] and was found almost exclusively on the reverse of Hsi-hsia and Chinese papers.” (Stein IA: 446).

³⁰ Stein IA: 446.

³¹ Stein IA: 461.

³² The texts and objects found from the Etsin-Gol site bear the site numbers E.G.01– E.G.024. (cf. Stein IA: 504–506 and A List of Tibetan Texts from Etsin-gol’ in Takeuchi & Iuchi (in press) (see note 10).

³³ Kychanov 1995: 40; Kychanov 1996.

³⁴ Most probably from the famous “Suburgan,” which is identical with Stein’s K.K. II.

manuscripts and block prints look considerably newer and similar to those from the Etsin-gol site in the Stein Collection. According to Vorobyova-D. 1995 (p. 46), “[the] Kozlov [expedition] brought back not only fragments found in the Khara-khoto suburgan, but collected in the vicinity of these sites as well.”

The collections in China kept at the Inner Mongolia Institute of Archaeology are no doubt from Khara-khoto, while the provenance of those kept at the Inner Mongolia Etsina Archives remains unclear.

4. Dates of the Texts

If we compare the texts excavated from the Khara-khoto sites and those acquired from Etsin-gol and environs, we notice distinct chronological differences. Namely, the former are clearly older than the latter: Those from the former site date to from the late 11th to 15th centuries, while those from the latter sites date to from the 16th to the early 20th centuries. In addition, the material from the former consists only of manuscripts, while the latter includes both manuscripts and prints. Tibetan texts from Khara-khoto were found together with Tangut texts, while the material from the latter sites includes Tibetan and Mongolian bilingual texts but no Tangut texts.³⁵ These may be summarised as follows.

Khara-khoto: ca. 11th cent.–15th cent.

- a) relatively old
- b) only manuscripts
- c) with Tangut texts

Etsin-gol: ca. 16th cent.–20th cent.

- a) relatively new
- b) manuscripts and prints
- c) Tibetan–Mongolian

A closer look at the dates reveals that the earliest texts from Khara-khoto date to the late 11th to 12th centuries, so that they are either contemporary with or earlier than the Tangut period. They retain Old Tibetan palaeographic traits and resemble the 9th–10th century Buddhist texts from Dunhuang. For example, a *Prajñāparamitā sūtra* in Tibetan translation written on large *pothi*, found in the Kozlov Collection, bears a Tangut text on the verso (fig.

³⁵ Stein states: “the total absence of His-hsia texts among the written or printed remains from this source is certainly significant, and suggests that the deposit from which they were obtained is of considerably later date than the similar deposits found by us at Khara-khoto.” (Stein IA: 462).

1).³⁶ Apparently, the Tangut side was written later, but the time interval cannot have been very long. In the Stein Collection several Tibetan texts with Old Tibetan palaeographic features were found together with a previously unnoticed Tangut text (fig. 2).³⁷ The most probable date for these Tibetan texts appears to be the late 11th to 12th centuries.



Fig. 1: Kozlov XT 87: Tibetan and Tangut

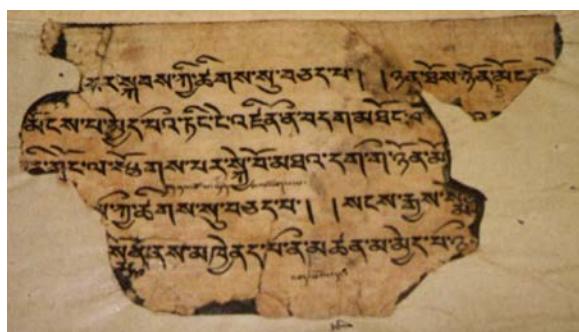


Fig. 2: K.K.V.b.011.m

³⁶ Numbered XT 87. Originally two sheets of paper were glued together to form a single two-layered sheet on both sides of which was written the *sūtra* in Tibetan translation. The two original sheets were later separated, and the Tangut texts were written on their blank back sides. The Tangut text written in verse has not been identified. See Takeuchi 2004.

³⁷ The Tangut text is numbered K.K. II. 0303.a.

Among the texts from Khara-khoto, the Buddhist texts belonging to the Kadam (*bka' gdam*) school may date to the 13th to 15th centuries, as we discuss in more detail below (§6.2). They are written in a cursive *dbu med* style clearly distinct from the above-mentioned older texts (fig. 3).



Fig. 3: K.K.V.b.021.c

We also find another group of texts which may be dated to a time between the above two groups, namely the 12th to 13th centuries, according to their writing style, forms of the *shad*, and the like. As for the transitional processes of palaeography and writing style, we hope to discuss this in more detail in a separate paper.

Thus, we might provisionally propose three time periods for the Tibetan texts from Khara-khoto: (1) early period: late 11th to 12th centuries. (2) middle period: late 12th to 13th centuries. (3) late period: late 13th to 15th centuries. The shift from Old Tibetan to Classical Tibetan occurred in the middle period, while the establishment of the Classical Tibetan style occurred in the late period.

As regards the Tibetan texts from Etsin-gol, no texts written in Old Tibetan style were found. All are written in more recent styles; some are in running hand (*skyug yig*);³⁸ some are Tibetan and Mongolian bilingual texts.³⁹ They all seem to date to after the 16th century.

Among them, the following texts are dated to as late as the 19th to early 20th centuries:

- a) *rJe btsun sgrol ma'i gsang mchod* (E.G.023.ff: fig. 4) by Blo bzang tshul khrim rgya mtsho (1845–1915)⁴⁰
- b) *sGrol ma manḍa la bzhi pa'i cho ga bya tshul* (E.G.023.v) by Ngag dbang mkhyen rab bstan pa'i dbang phyug (19th cent.)

³⁸ For example, a letter: E.G.018.a. (fig. 6).

³⁹ E.G.013.a.xvi., E.G.014.rr. Poppe 1959 contains several Mongol and Tibetan–Mongol fragments.

⁴⁰ The person might be gSer thog No min han, who was the 63rd sKu 'bum khri chen.

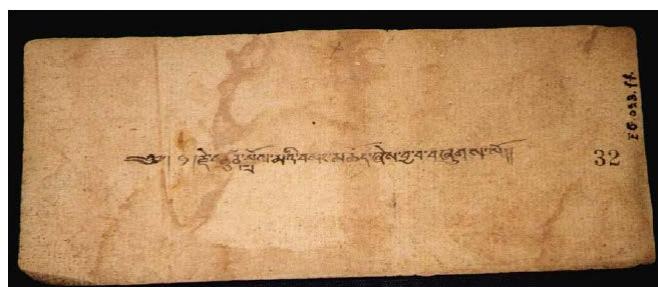


Fig. 4: E.G.023.ff

It is surprising to find such modern texts. Especially, the former is nearly contemporary to the time of the Kozlov and Stein expeditions. Thus, it is not likely that they were excavated from the old ruins but were possibly still in use among local Mongolian Tibetan Buddhists and were acquired from them.

5. Varieties of Texts

As we mentioned in the Introduction, the Tibetan texts from Khara-khoto and Etsin-gol are extremely variegated in terms of dates, forms, writing style and contents. There are about 700 manuscripts and 400 printed texts. The majority of the printed texts are xylographs, but there is a stamp and a print from wooden movable type.⁴¹ Their forms also vary, including single leaf, *pothi*, scroll, concertina and codex.

As for the writing style, some are written in an Old Tibetan style similar to the 9th to 10th centuries texts. Some are written in a later cursive *dbu med* style, and some are in running hand, or *skyug yig*, style. These varieties provide evidence for stages of the development of Tibetan writing styles.

Regarding their contents, Buddhist texts are by far the most numerous, but there are other kinds of texts, including divinational, calendrical, and medical texts, and Tibetan–Tangut and Tibetan–Mongolian bilingual texts of varying content (fig. 5). In the next section we will look at some characteristics of Buddhist texts.

⁴¹ Shi 2005.

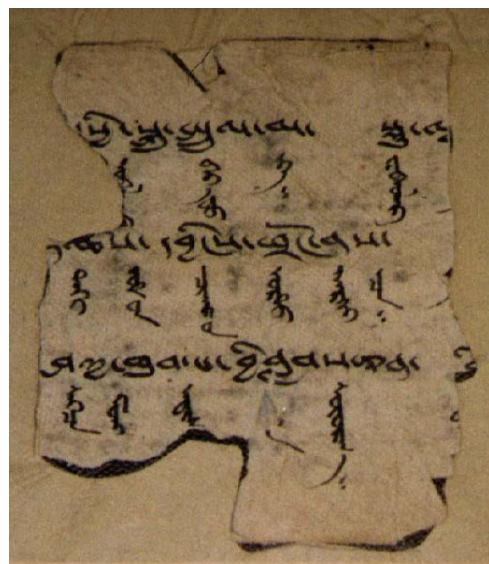


Fig. 5: E.G.014.r

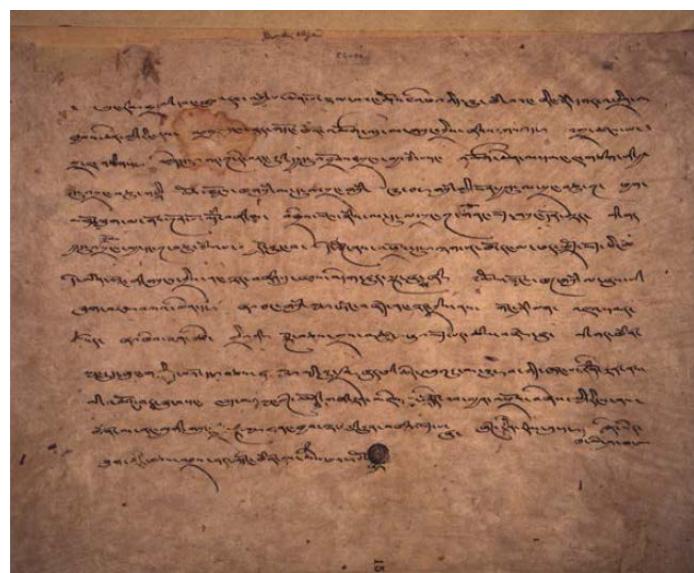


Fig. 6: E.G.018.a

6. Buddhist Texts: Tantric Texts and the Kadam (*bka' gdams*) School Texts

Various kinds of Buddhist texts were found in Khara-khoto and Etsin-gol. Of these, we wish to take up two groups of texts: namely, Tantric texts and the Kadam school texts, which represent two trends of Tibetan Buddhism in the Tangut state and the Gansu area.

5.1. Tantric Buddhist Texts

It has been argued by Nishida and Kychanov from examination of Tangut texts that Tangut Buddhism was heavily influenced by Tibetan Buddhism.⁴² Several Tangut Buddhist texts are regarded as having been translated from Tibetan.⁴³ Shen Weirong, having examined the Khara-khoto Chinese texts, has shown that many Chinese Buddhist texts are translations of Tibetan Tantric texts as well. Shen has further compared these Chinese texts with the Uighur Buddhist texts from Turfan and the Tangut texts from Khara-khoto and Ningxia. He concludes that the Chinese, Uighur, and Tangut Buddhist texts all go back to the same origin, namely, Tibetan Tantric texts.⁴⁴

Many of the Tantric texts are continuations from the 10th century texts found in Dunhuang, that is, before the *phyi dar* or “second diffusion.” But there also exist Tantric texts which belong to the Kagyu (*bka' brgyud*) school. In both cases they were translated into Chinese, Tangut and Uighur. In this sense, the Tibetan Tantric texts from Khara-khoto need to be sorted out and further identified in comparison with the 10th century Dunhuang texts and the texts in other languages.

6.2. The Kadam (*bka' gdams*) School Texts

Two texts have been identified as belonging to the Tibetan Buddhist Kadam school. Both were found from the site K.K. V. b. One, numbered K.K. V. b. 035.b., has been identified by Kazuo Kano as the topical outline or synopsis of the *rGyud bla ma'i bsdus don* written by the well-known translator rNgog Blo ldan shes rab (1059–1109).⁴⁵

⁴² Nishida 1975 and Kychanov 1978.

⁴³ For the Tangut Buddhist texts translated from Tibetan, see Nishida 1975: 8–14; 1997: 455–468.

⁴⁴ Shen 2010.

⁴⁵ Kano 2008: 134–136. The text has a colophon, which reads: *rGyud bla ma'i bsdus don lo tsa ba dge slong blo ldan shes rab kyis shyar pa*|| “Topical outline of the *Uttaratantra* composed by the monk Blo ldan shes rab, the

The other consists of five *pothi* leaf fragments,⁴⁶ which are likely to belong to one text. Since both the cover page and colophon are lacking, the title of the text and the author remain unidentified. However, as Maho Iuchi pointed out,⁴⁷ the names of Kadampa masters—such as dGe bshes sTon pa ('Brom ston pa rGyal ba'i 'byung gnas, 1005–1064), Pu to ba (Po to ba Rin chen gsal, 1027–1105), Bya yul ba (Bya yul ba gZhon nu 'od, 1075–1138) and sNe'u zur ba (sNe'u zur pa Ye shes 'bar, 1042–1118)—appear frequently in this text, where the words of these Kadampa masters are quoted as follows:

bya yul ba'i zhal nas mi mu stegs can bya ba rang gyi bla ma'i lta spyod sun byin pa de la zer de dang rnam pa thams cad du mi 'grogs gsung || (K.K. V. b.021.c.: ka, 49a7–8) “Bya yul ba says: A heretic is a person who criticises the views and practices of his own Lama. Hence, it is not advisable to be on good terms with such a person.”

bya yul ba'i zhal nas zla gzas 'dzin pa'i dus su dus gzhan las khri 'gyur gyis bsod nams che ba yin | (K.K. V. b. 021.c.: ka, 49b8–9) “Bya yul ba says: The merits [acquired] during the lunar eclipse are ten thousand times greater than at other times.”

dge bshes ston pa'i zhal nas skyabs 'gro shor na sdom pa gzhan rnams mi 'chor sbang ro bzhin du nus med du 'gro ba yin skyabs 'gro sor chud na sdom pa gzhan rnams kyang sor chud pa yin | (K.K.V. b. 011.c.: ka, 3a1–2) “dGe bshes sTon pa ('Brom ston pa) says: If [one] loses the vow of taking refuge [in the Buddha and the *sangha*], other *vinaya* vows are not lost but become useless, just like a drained malt. If the vow of taking refuge is recovered, other *vinaya* vows are also recovered.”

The quotations of these Kadampa masters, who belong to the early phase of the *phyi dar* and the foundation of the Kadam school in the middle of the 11th century, clearly indicate that the text belongs to the Kadam Buddhist School. The content of the text is similar to the so-called *bKa' gdams gsung thor bu*, a collection of quotations from the Kadampa masters, which started to be compiled from the 12th–13th

translator.”

⁴⁶ They were all found from the same site, K.K. V. b. They are numbered: K.K. V. b. 021. c., K.K. V. b. 011.c., K.K. V. b. 034.b., K.K. V. b. 09.f., and K.K. V. b. 09. n.

⁴⁷ Iuchi 2011.

centuries onward.⁴⁸

7. Texts to Be Compared

In order to further understand the nature of the Khara-khoto and Etsin-gol Tibetan texts, we should compare them with other groups of texts which may possibly belong to the same or similar period of time. The importance of the Tibetan texts from the Tabo Monastery in Western Tibet has been well recognised.⁴⁹ These texts, written in Old Tibetan writing style, resemble the early period Khara-khoto texts.

Also no less important are the texts found from the Northern Grottoes of Magaoku (Mogao Cave) in Dunhuang, where a considerable number of Tibetan Buddhist manuscripts were found together with Chinese, Tangut, Uighur, Mongol, Sanskrit, and Syriac ones. Many of them are considered to date to the Tangut and Mongol periods, namely the 13th to 15th centuries. In this sense, they may be contemporary with the middle and late periods of Tibetan texts from Khara-khoto.⁵⁰

Among the 139 Tibetan texts in the German Turfan Collection published by Taube, the majority belong to the Tibetan imperial period, but 14 texts definitely belong to the post-imperial period or even later,⁵¹ and further 12 may also belong to the same periods.⁵² They are most likely to have been produced by Uighur Buddhists in Turfan, as we will discuss in §8.

The Tibetan texts from Etsin-gol, which date to the 16th to 20th

⁴⁸ Regarding the relationship between Rwa sgreng monastery, the mother monastery of the Kadam school, and the Xixia court, see Iuchi 2012. Kirill Solonin of Renmin University (Beijing, PRC) discusses a Tangut version of a work by Atiśa from Khara-khoto in his forthcoming article “Dīpaṃkara in Tangut Context: An Inquiry into Systematic Nature of Tibetan Buddhism in Xixia.”

⁴⁹ For the Tabo texts, see *East and West* 44/1 (1994, Rome: IsMEO), Scherrer-Schaub & Steinkellner 1999, and Petech & Luczanits 1999.

⁵⁰ There are several other groups of texts which may be compared with them:

- The *Phu ri'i yig tshangs* from gNya' lam rdzong
- The *Bon gyi gna' dpe* from dGa' thang
- The texts preserved in Liangzhou Prefecture
- The *Bla 'bum* at Gro mkhar dgon in gNyal yul.

⁵¹ Taube 1980: Texts 26, 49, 50, 52–56, 69, 102, 107, 109, 120 and 127.

⁵² Taube 1980: Texts 19, 25, 36, 47, 48, 51, 71, 103, 104, 111, 115 and 117.

centuries, written mainly by Mongol Buddhists, may be better compared with the Tibetan texts brought from Mongolia to Russia and Hungary and now preserved in St. Petersburg Academy of Science and Hungarian Academy of Science.⁵³ They reflect the activities of Mongolian Buddhists.

8. Historical Background of the Tibetan Texts from Khara-khoto and Etsin-gol

In what historical, social and sociolinguistic backgrounds were these Tibetan texts produced in or brought into Khara-khoto and Etsin-gol after the 12th century, where there was almost no Tibetan population? Let us look at the preceding periods.

The Tibetan Empire occupied vast areas of Central Asia, including the Gansu Corridor, until the mid-9th century. In that time, the Tibetan language prevailed among the various ethnic groups under Tibetan rule.⁵⁴ It has been recently recognised that Tibetan continued to be used by non-Tibetan peoples in Central Asia as an international *lingua franca* even after the end of the Tibetan domination.⁵⁵

Recent researches further revealed that Tibetan Buddhism also continued to be revered by local inhabitants, and that an increasing number of Tibetan Buddhist texts, especially Tantric texts, were produced in the 10th century, as attested by numerous newly identified Tibetan texts from the Dunhuang cave.⁵⁶ Chinese, Khotanese and Uighurs copied Tibetan Buddhist texts and donated them to temples in Dunhuang.⁵⁷

Tibetan Buddhism continued to flourish among local peoples in Central Asia in the 11th to 13th centuries. The activities of Uighur Buddhists were particularly conspicuous. Uighur monk pilgrims visited the Dunhuang and Yulin caves and left graffiti of their names on the cave walls.⁵⁸ These Uighur pilgrims were from Turfan and

⁵³ Takeuchi had the opportunity to examine these texts when he visited the institutes, but we have no information about whether they have been published.

⁵⁴ Takeuchi *OTC*: 133.

⁵⁵ Takeuchi 2004, 2012.

⁵⁶ Takeuchi 2012.

⁵⁷ For example, Tibetan Buddhist texts with page numbers in Khotanese (e.g., IOL Tib J 423) were apparently copied and donated by Khotanese pilgrims (Takeuchi 2012).

⁵⁸ They wrote their names in Tibetan: *se chu stong brtsan* ‘Tong brtsan from

Hami. The aforementioned (cf. §7) post-imperial period Tibetan texts in the German Collections from Turfan are most likely to have been produced by these Uighur Buddhists in the Turfan area.

The presence of Uighur Tibetan monks in Khara-khoto is attested by Uighur texts from Khara-khoto.⁵⁹ There was a wide range of activities by Uighur Buddhists connecting Turfan, Hami, Dunhuang and Khara-khoto. They must have been instrumental in bringing Tibetan Buddhism into the Tangut state.

In this way, after the collapse of the Tibetan Empire Tibetan Buddhism continued to flourish in Central Asia from the 10th to 14th centuries, namely, the Tangut and Mongol periods. Tibetan Buddhism played a key role in the Tangut state and continued to do so in the Mongol period.⁶⁰ Numerous Tibetan Tantric texts from Khara-khoto were most probably produced in this context.

This Central Asiatic view of Tibetan Buddhism is in sharp contrast to the traditional Tibetan view that the age after the collapse of the empire, that is, the late 9th to early 11th centuries, is seen as dark and fragmented, with no prominent Buddhist activities until the so-called “later diffusion” or *phyi dar*, after which new Buddhist schools, such as the Kagyu and Kadam, emerged. Interestingly, Tibetan texts which belong to the Kagyupa and Kadampa traditions were also found in Khara-khoto.⁶¹

Thus, the Tibetan Buddhist texts from Khara-khoto, in other words, Tibetan Buddhism in the Tangut state, seem to have two trends or origins: one is a continuation of Tibetan Tantric Buddhism that flourished in Central Asia and was maintained largely by non-Tibetans, and the other is the newly emergent Buddhist traditions, Kagyupa and Kadampa, supported mainly by Tibetans. Both trends

Turfan,’ ^yi cu chos sprin ‘Chos sprin from Hami,’ ^yi cu pa btsun pa sar pa ‘novice bTsun pa from Hami.’ The last one also wrote his name in Uighur script: *yang'i tsunpa*. See Iwao 2012. They also wrote their Tibetan Buddhist names in Uighur script: čospal < chos dpal, ṭorčipal < rdo rje dpal. See Matsui 2008a, 2008b.

⁵⁹ Matsui 2008a: 39.

⁶⁰ On the world-historical role of the continued influence of the Tibetan Empire after its fall, via Tibetan Buddhism, see Beckwith 1987.

⁶¹ As a Kagyupa text, K.K. V. b. 011. c. (= Catalogue No. 102) mentions Marpa and Naropa. Both Chinese texts and Tangut texts concerning *The Six Doctrines of Nāropa* (*Nā ro chos drug*) also attest the presence of Kagyupa teachings in the Tangut state (Shen 2010: 348; Nishida 1999: XL). For Kadampa texts, see §6.2.

flowed into the Tangut state and became sources for Tangut, Chinese and Uighur translations.

After the town of Khara-khoto was completely abandoned, Tibetan Buddhism still continued to be venerated, mainly by local Mongols; they also produced calendars, and medical and divinational texts in Tibetan, as attested by various Tibetan texts from Etsin-gol.

Thus, the Tibetan texts from Khara-khoto and Etsin-gol are valuable evidence for the continuous presence of Tibetan Buddhism and the Tibetan literary tradition in Central Asia (Gansu to Mongolia) for over ten centuries (10th to 20th cent.).

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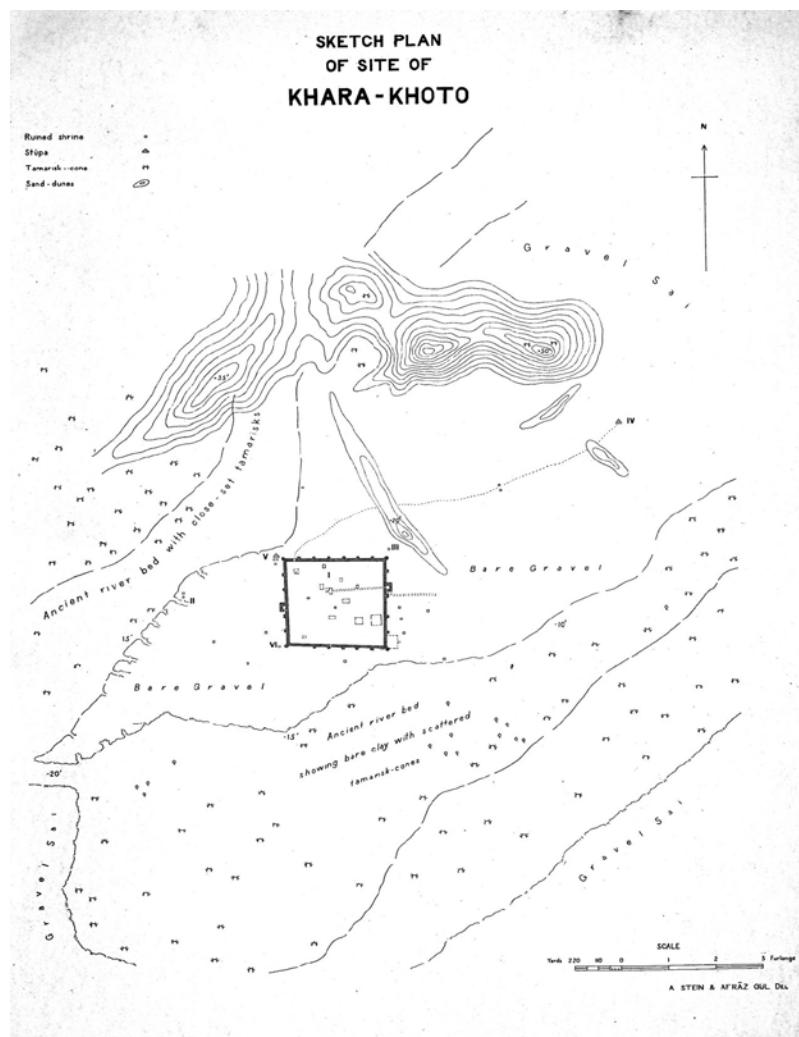
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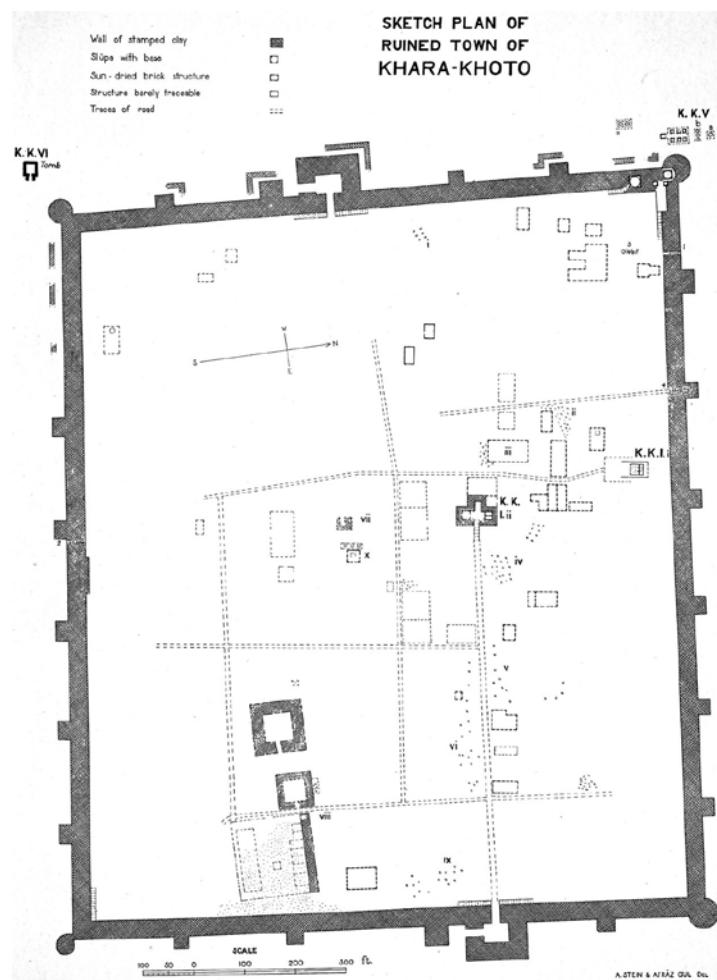
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Appendix

Plan 1: Stein IA: Plate 17



Plan 2: Stein IA: Plate 18



Remarks on the Tibetan Language Manuscripts and Xylographs in Mongolia and on the Technology of Their Production

Vesna A. Wallace (Santa Barbara)

1. Tibetan Manuscripts and Xylographs in Mongolian Libraries

The first known library in Mongolia that contains a large collection of Tibetan xylographs and manuscripts belonged to the First Bogd Jebtsundamba (rJe btsun dam pa), Öndör Gegeen Zanabazar (1635–1723). The library was consecutively handed down to his later incarnations, who further expanded its holdings. In 1924, following the death of the Eighth Bogd Jebtsundamba (1870–1924) and the formation of the Mongolian People's Government, the Bogd Gegeen's private library was moved to the State National Library in Ulaanbaatar. According to Serjee Jambaldorjiin, who served as the Director of the library from 1993 until 2005, among the four million books and periodicals housed in the library, there are approximately one million and six hundred thousand manuscripts and xylographs written in classical Tibetan, Mongolian, and Manchu.¹ Until now, the librarians' attention has been directed primarily to archiving the material written by Mongolian authors in the Tibetan and Mongolian languages; considerably less has been given to cataloguing Tibetan authors' manuscripts and xylographs. Hence at this time, the exact or even approximate number of original Tibetan works included in those one million and six hundred thousands manuscripts and xylographs remains unknown.

Considering the fact that Mongolian Buddhism was predominantly dGe lugs pa, it is not surprising that among the works of Tibetan authors that have been indexed thus far, the most copious are those of dGe lugs pa scholars. The same can be said for the archived works of Mongolian scholars who wrote in the Tibetan language. These cover a wider range of genres and topics, including liturgies, devotional poetry, ritual texts, histories, biographies, dramatic works, commentaries on Indian canonical and non-canonical literature, and

¹ Jambaldorjiin 2012: 151, 158. See also Jambaldorjiin 2001: 8–9.

on Tibetan scholastic treatises. A considerable number of the works written in the Tibetan language that have been catalogued so far are manuscript editions. The catalogued xylographic editions of the Tibetan and Mongolian authors who wrote in the Tibetan language range from woodblock printed editions, which seem to be most numerous, to copper, lead, and stoneblock printed editions.²

Another unique and impressively large collection of original Tibetan writings and Mongolian works composed in Tibetan is housed in the library of Gandantegchenling Monastery in Ulaanbaatar. The size of the monastery's collection is estimated at more than one million books, many of which are the last surviving copies.³ Since the collection has not yet been catalogued, the number of original Tibetan works held in the library is still unknown. In 2006, with the assistance of UNESCO, digitalisation of the imperilled texts began. Reportedly, by 2008, twenty-three volumes, containing 540 texts and 8,508 pages, were scanned.⁴ After several years of interruption in scanning the material, further digitalisation is planned to resume in the foreseeable future.

In addition to the aforementioned library holdings, modest collections of Tibetan texts held in the libraries of the individual monastic colleges of Gandantegchenling Monastery are nowadays partially comprised of new xylographic editions of the collected works (*sumbum*; *gsung 'bum*) of Tibetan dGe lugs pa authors published in Tibet and India. One reason for this is that many older editions perished in the destruction of the colleges' buildings during the communist purge of Buddhism in the 1930s. The contents of the collections kept in the monastic schools of Gandantegchenling correspond to their curricula of study and practice, reflecting the historically close ties between the philosophical colleges of Gandantegchenling Monastery and those of Drepung and Sera Je

² See Batmönkhiin et al. 2011: 243–292. In 1959, the Mongolian scholar lama, *gavj* (*dka' bcu*) S. Gombojav recorded the names of 208 Mongolian Buddhist scholars who wrote in the Tibetan language and the number of volumes they wrote. Today, the number of Mongolian authors who wrote in Tibetan has been estimated to 500.

³ This information is based on private correspondence with Ven. Munkhbaatar Batchuluun on April 25, 2013.

⁴ “UNESCO saves rare archives in Mongolia,” in UNESCO’s News Archives, 2008, published on the website http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php?URL_ID=26295&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.

monasteries in Lhasa. For example, the collected works of Kun mkhyen 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa (1648–1721), which were studied at Gomang (sGo mang grwa tshang) monastic college of Drepung (dPal dan 'bras spungs) Monastery in Lhasa, form the core of the collection in Dashchoimbel monastic school in Gandantegchenling Monastery. The library of Gungaachoilin College is furnished with the commentarial works of Pañ chen bSod nams grags pa (1478–1554) and other related texts, which were studied at Loseling (Blo gsal gling grwa tshang) monastic college of Drepung Monastery. The scholastic dependence of other monastic colleges in Gandantegchenling monastery, such as Idgaachoinzilin *datsan* (Yid dga' chos 'dzin gling), Lamrim *datsan*, and Badma Yoga *datsan*, on the curricula at Sera Je monastery in Lhasa is also reflected in their library collections, which are dominated by the works of Ser gyi rje btsun Chos kyi rgyal mtshan (1469–1546), as well as the explanatory works on Tsong kha pa's *Lam rim chen mo* and the Tantric and ritual writings studied at Sera Je.

Moreover, an extensive collection of some sixty thousand Tibetan xylographs and manuscripts that belonged to Buddhist monastic libraries in Buryatia and that survived the destruction of Buddhist monastic institutions during the communist purge reveals the former dependence of Buddhist monastic education in Buryatia on the monastic printing houses in Tibet, especially on those in Bla brang bKra shis 'khyil. The surviving collection is now in the possession of the Center of Oriental Manuscripts and Xylographs of the Institute of Mongolian, Tibetan, and Buddhist Studies in Ulan Ude. In 2008, a catalogue indexing just 3,158 works from this large collection was published in Ulaanbaatar; it classifies the indexed works into two main categories: the works of non-dGe lugs authors and the works of early dGe lugs pa scholars.⁵ It shows that texts printed in Bla brang bKra shis 'khyil occupy a significantly larger percentage of the catalogued collection than those printed in sKu 'bum Byams pa gling, bKra shis lhun po (bKra shis sgo 'phar lhun grub chen po), sDe dge, and lHa sa Zhol par khang.⁶ In addition to acquiring xylographic

⁵ Bazarov et al. 2008.

⁶ Section 1 of the catalogue contains the following works:

- a) Forty-five texts of the *Sa skyā bka' bum*, written by Sa skyā patriarchs such as 'Phags pa bla ma Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1235–1280), Sa chen Kun dga' snyin po (1092–1158), bSod nams rtse mo (1141–1182), Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1147–1216), and Sa pañ Kun dga' rgyal mtsan (1182–1251), and published in sDe dge monastery,

editions from Tibet, Buryats themselves produced a large number of woodblock printed texts, which were also brought to Mongolia and preserved in the State National Library.

Although Mongols became acquainted with Chinese xylographic printing in the latter part of the 13th century, woodblock printing of Buddhist texts among Mongols began in the early 14th century.⁷ The method of woodblock printing was the same as that used in early 15th century Europe. Woodblocks were often made from birch, pear, apple, and other hard woods. Printing ink was most commonly black ink made from soot that was filtered and boiled until it reached a paste-like consistency. Some xylographs were printed with multicoloured ink as early as the latter part of the 17th and the early part of the 18th centuries, usually with each folio having one colour.⁸

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- b) rJe btsun Mi la ras pa's (1052–1135) *mGur 'bum*—the bsTan rgyas gling edition,
 - c) Sixty-four works of Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290–1364)—six belong to the Urga edition, and the rest were published in sKyid grong bkra shis bsam gtan gling,
 - d) Seven works of the early bKa' gdams masters (11th century) published in dGa' ldan phun tshogs gling,
 - e) 671 texts attributed to rJe btsun Tārānātha Kun dga' snying po (1575–1634), all belonging to the edition of rGyal po'i pho brang bsam 'grub rtse.

Section 2 includes the following works:

- a) 1,601 works of rJe Tsong kha pa Blo bzang grags pa'i dpal (1357–1419), published in Bla brang bkra shis 'khyil, lHa sa zhol par khang, bKra shis sgo 'phar lhun grub chen po, and sKu 'bum byams pa gling,
- b) 199 works of rGyal tshab Dar ma rin chen (1364–1432), published in Bla brang bkra shis 'khyil, bKra shis sgo 'phar lhun grub chen po, lHa sa zhol par khang, and sKu 'bum byams pa gling,
- c) 557 works of mKhas grub rje dGe legs dpal bzang po (1385–1438), published in Bla brang bKra shi 'khyil, bKra shis sgo 'phar lhun grub chen po, lHa sa Zhol par khang and sKu 'bum Byams pa gling.

⁷ The first woodblock printed text was Choiji Odser's (*Chos kyi 'od ser*, 1307–1321) commentary on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, composed in the Mongolian language and printed in Daidu (Beijing) in 1,000 copies.

⁸ Kara 2005: 223–224.

Printing from copper plates was quite common as well, particularly in the early 20th century. Two different methods were used in the preparation of copper plates in Mongolia: the method of embossing letters on thin copper plates and the method of engraving letters onto thick copper plates. A text was first written on thin paper and then placed on a copper plate. When engraving the text, the prepared copper plate was fixed onto a wooden railing that had wax made of mixed ashes, sand, and the resin of a tree; then the plate, mounted on wood, was engraved. Various book illustrations were engraved in the same manner. Among the texts engraved on copper plates in this way, one worth mentioning is a copy of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra* in Tibetan consisting of 1,494 pages measuring 1.5x63.5 cm.⁹

The paper used for xylographic printing ranged from different types of Chinese paper, such as the thick, coarse *matuu* paper of greyish colour, which would eventually turn brownish in Mongolia's dry climate, and Chinese yellow paper; from the 17th century, imported Russian paper also came into usage. Some xylographs and manuscripts were also printed on composite paper, and at times, due to the high cost of paper, Chinese wrapping paper used in packing Chinese tea was used for smaller, individual manuscript editions.

From the latter part of the 17th century until the early 20th century, there were about seven hundred printing houses (*barkhan*; *par khang*) in Khalkha Mongolia. More than six hundred of them printed books in the Tibetan language.¹⁰ Printing houses in larger monastic centres also functioned as reading libraries and storehouses of printing blocks. Both recently carved blocks and the stocks of old blocks were labelled, wrapped in a cotton cloth, tied with a narrow felt, and stored. In Khalkha, the larger printing houses were in Ikh Khüree, Zayin Khüree, Üzen Vangiin Khiid, Mankhani Khüree, Choirin Khiid, Möröngiin Khiid, Ölgiin Khiid, Khalkhin Süm, and many other places. In Inner Mongolia such places were Shireet Zuu in Khökhhot, Shar Süm in Khölönbuir, Tsagaan Uul Süm, Tsagaan Suvarg, Alashaagiin Süm, and others; and in Buryatia, well known publishing houses were in Agin Datsan, Onon Tsüügel Datsan, Khölüngiin Datsan, Sartuulin Khiid, and so on. In Ikh Khüree alone there were several printing houses. One of them was Danjuurin Süm (Danjuur's Temple), where large numbers of Tibetan books were

⁹ Jambaldorjiin 2001: 34.

¹⁰ Jigdenbombyn 1999: 154.

printed. The other large printing house was Ekhiin Sumbum of Züün Khüree, where more than one thousand books were published. Ekh Dagnin Aimgiin Süm (Temple of Ekh Dagini's Aimag) of Ikh Khüree also printed and stored many Tibetan and Mongolian books. In addition to these printing houses, the western and eastern monastic colleges in Ikh Khüree—namely, Dashchoinpel Datsan (*bKra shis chos 'phel grwa tshang*), or Eastern *datsan* (*grwa tshang*), and Gungaachoilin Datsan (*Kun dga' chos gling grwa tshang*), or Western *datsan*—printed their own textbooks.¹¹ In addition to larger monastic centres, smaller monasteries and monastic colleges in Khalkha Mongolia had their own printing houses and reading libraries.

In Inner Mongolia, Tsagaan Uul's Süm had a temple called “Buddha’s Temple” (Burkhany Dugan), which was used exclusively for storing woodblocks and moulds for texts and images, not all of which for religious services though. Similarly, the previously mentioned Shar Zuu's Süm, built in the 18th century by the first incarnation Chin Süjigt Nomun Khan (1701–1768), had a library with thousands of Tibetan and Mongolian books.

The establishment of sedentary monasteries and temples in the 18th century under the patronage of the Qing dynasty facilitated the development of settled locations for storing books, especially the large-size editions that had to be transported in trunks. By the beginning of the 20th century there were many libraries holding collections of large-format xylographs. In addition to the previously mentioned vast library of the Bogd Jebtsundamba Khutukhtus, other renowned Mongolian Buddhist figures also amassed their private libraries. Books that belonged to a private collection were often stamped with a seal on the front page to indicate the owner. While some seals bore the initial letter of the owner's name or a symbol of the clan to which the owner belonged—such as *soëmbo*, white conch, *vajra*, wheel, moon, or sun—other seals had engraved benedictory statements (either in Tibetan or in Mongolian), the name of the author of the text, an image of landscape, a flower, or some other symbol. The shape of the seals ranged from circular and square to octangular.

¹¹ Jigdenbombyn 1999: 154–156.

2. Tibetan Versions of the *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur* in Mongolia

Since the time of the Mongol Yuan emperor Ayurbarwada (titled Renzong, r. 1312–1321), whose Tibetan chaplain 'Jam dbyangs Bagshi facilitated the production of the first edition of the Tibetan canon at sNar thang Monastery, Mongols' contributions to the reproduction and promotion of the Tibetan *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur* were by no means insignificant. Although Mongolian translations of the Tibetan *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur* were block printed and distributed in Mongolia in the 18th century with the support of the Qing emperor Kangxi, they were more difficult to acquire than the Tibetan copies that he had distributed in Tibet, Mongolia, and China. The famous multilingual Mongolian Ganjurchins (*bka' 'gyur pa*)—such as Zaya bandida Luvsanprinlei (Ja ya paṇḍita Blo bzang 'phrin las, 1642–1715), Chakhar Gevsh Luvsantsültim (Blo bzang tshul khrims, 1740–1810), Sodnombaldan (bSod nams dpal ldan, 1670–1750), known also as Gombojav (mGon po skaybs), and many others—resorted primarily to Tibetan versions of the *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur* for their study. However, many among them did more than merely rely on Tibetan editions of the canon—they also recorded mistakes and incongruities among different versions and made revisions. One such editor was the *agramba* (*sngags rim pa*) Shadavdandar (bShad grub bstan dar, 1835–1915) from Tüsheet Khan aimag, who was a teacher to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama during the latter's year and a half-long stay in Mongolia. Shadavdandar examined and compared all the existing manuscript and xylographic editions of the Tibetan *bKa' 'gyur* that were produced from the 14th to the early 20th century—namely, sDe ge, sNar thang, Co ne, Li thang, Them spang ma, the old Chinese xylographic edition (*rgya nag par rnying*), Yongle, and others. He corrected many errors that he found in about seventy volumes out of 108, ranging from missing or added words and sentences to the numbers of chapters, pages, lines, and the like. His compiled corrections were included in the third volume of section Ga of his collected works—as *mDo mang gi zhus dag* (“Correction of the Sūtra Collection”), *Sher phyin gyi zhus dag* (“Correction of the Prajñāpāramita”), *Phal chen gyi zhus dag* (“Correction of the Avataṃsaka”), *dKon brtsegs kyi zhus dag* (“Correction of the Ratnakūṭa”), and *'Dul ba'i zhus dag* (“Correction of the Vinaya”)—and were block printed in Daichi vang's monastery (in modern

Bulgan *aimag*).¹² This volume proved to be a valuable resource for the study of the various editions of the Tibetan *bKa' 'gyur* and was acknowledged as such by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama.¹³ Another Mongolian scholar of the early 20th century, *gavj* (*dka' bcu*) Damdinsüren Dandar (1854–1943), who belonged to the Bizayigiin section (*aimag*) of Ikh Khüree, compared the sNar thang xylographic edition with others and corrected many small errors that he found in other xylographic editions of the Tibetan *bKa' 'gyur*. He compiled his revision in a work titled *An Appendix—which is Indispensable at the Time of Giving an Oral Transmission of the Precious bKa' 'gyur*—[Containing] the Page Numbers [in Which] Additions of Missing [Text] and Omissions of Superfluous [Text Are to be Made] (*bKa' 'gyur rin po che'i bklags lung gnang skabs su nye bar mkho ba'i kha skong chad pa bsno [= smon] pa lhag pa bri [= dbri] ba sog s kyi shog grangs*). In the beginning of the 19th century, Chakhar Gevsh Tsorj (*dGe bshes chos rje*) Luvsandash compared xylographic editions of the sNar thang *bKa' 'gyur*, the first and later Chinese cinnabar editions, Co ne, sDe dge, Li thang, and volumes of old manuscript editions of the *bKa' 'gyur*. His work brought to light many discrepancies, omissions, and obscurities, and he orally transmitted his corrections of these discovered mistakes to his disciple Luvsanjigmed (*Blo bzang 'jigs med*), who wrote them down in a text titled *That Which Clarifies Obscurities of the Precious bKa' 'gyur*.¹⁴

In the biography of the First Bogd, Öndör Gegeen Zanabazar, written by the Mongolian author Zawa Damdin (*Blo bzang rta dbyangs*, 1867–1937), it is said that in 1680, Öndör Gegeen Zanabazar had the *'jang khro spar ma'i bka' 'gyur* brought from dBus gTsang to Mongolia. He reproduced it twice in his palace in manuscript form, and he also had it revised for the purpose of having it later translated into the Mongolian language. In his *Golden Book* (*gSer gyi deb ther*), Zawa Damdin further informs us that a copy of the *bsTan 'gyur* that was produced by sDe srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653–1705), with the goal of prolonging the life of the Fifth

¹² *bShad grub bstan dar gyi gsung 'bum*, vol. 3 (Ga), Tibetan holdings of the Mongolian State National Library. See also Lkhamsürengiin 2002: 76–77, 85.

¹³ Lkhamsürengiin 2002: 77.

¹⁴ The text is mentioned in Lkhamsürengiin 2002: 77, where its title is translated into modern Mongolian as *Ganjur Erdenii Sejigleeg Todruulagch*.

Dalai Lama, was also brought to Mongolia.¹⁵ During that period in Ikh Khüree, these copies of the *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur* were reproduced in large numbers. In 1686, Öndör Gegeen Zanabazar invited the interpreters from the four eastern banners to his palace to translate the *Dag yig za ma tog* and other works into Mongolian, but due to the political unrest of that time, this objective was not accomplished.¹⁶ The early sDe dge edition of the *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur* came to Mongolia later in the 18th century.

*Tibetan Versions of the bKa' 'gyur and bsTan 'gyur
Currently Housed in the Two Libraries of Ulaanbaatar*

Xylographic Editions of the <i>bKa' 'gyur</i>	Manuscript Editions of the <i>bKa' 'gyur</i>
sNar thang edition – 102 vols. (1730–1732)	rGyal rtse'i them spang ma – 111 vols. (1431)
sDe dge edition – 200 vols. (completed in 1733)	Seven-Precious-Substances Edition written on black paper (<i>rin chen sna bdun gyi bka' 'gyur</i>) – 108 vols.
Urga (Khüre) edition – 105 vols. (1908–1910, commissioned by the Eight Bogd Gegeen Jebstundamba and is based on the sDe dge edition)	Golden edition (<i>gser tsos kyi bka' 'gyur</i>) – 101 vols.
Yongle, cinnabar edition of the <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> – 106 vols. (1410), commissioned by the Ming Emperor Yongle (r. 1402–1424) and published in Beijing (or in Nanjing)	

¹⁵ Blo bzang rta mgrin 1975, vol. 2 (Kha), p. 85a.

¹⁶ Khyab bdag 'khor lo mgon po rje btsun blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtsan dpal bzang po'i nmam thar, pp. 41b, 72a–b, 44a–b; rTsa ba rta mgrin & Blo bzang rta dbyangs 1975, vol. 2 (Kha), p. 85a.

Xylographic Editions of the <i>bsTan 'gyur</i>	Manuscript Editions of the <i>bsTan 'gyur</i>
sNar thang edition – 225 vols.	Golden edition – 192 (212) vols.
sDe dge edition – 212 vols.	

The Yongle edition of the *bKa' 'gyur* is housed in the library of Gandantengchinleng monastery. The fact that its arrangement is similar to that of the xylographic edition of the Mongolian Ganjur—which was commissioned by Ligdan Khan in 1628 and then block printed as a cinnabar edition in Beijing in 1717–1720 under the auspices of the Qing emperor Kangxi—suggests that it could have served as a principal source for the formation of the Mongolian Ganjur, since the production of the Co ne *bKa' 'gyur*, whose arrangement corresponds to the Yongle edition, began a year after the publication of the Mongolian Ganjur and was completed ten years later, in 1731.¹⁷ The manuscript edition of the rGyal rtse'i them spang ma *bKa' gyur* was brought to Khalkha Mongolia in 1671 at the request of the First Bogd Öndör Gegeen Zanabazar. The copy housed in the State National Library measures 70.5x25.0 cm.

The Seven-Precious-Substances *bKa' 'gyur* is held in the National State Library in Ulaanbaatar. The written area measures 12x50 cm, while the size of the pages is 16.5x70.5 cm. The number of lines per page alternates between seven and eight, while the lines are written with ink made of seven or eight precious substances, such as silver, turquoise, coral, pearl, seashell, gold, copper, and lapis lazuli.¹⁸ The arrangements of the 108 volumes of the Seven-Precious-Substances *bKa' 'gyur* follow the standard scheme, with the exception of the 10th volume:¹⁹

'Dul ba (Vinaya) – 13 vols. (Ka–Pa)
Sher phyin (Prajñāpāramitā):

¹⁷ The arrangements in both xylographic editions, in the Yongle *bKa' 'gyur* and in the Mongolian Ganjur, begins with the Tantra section and ends with the Vinaya section.

¹⁸ Lkhamsürengiin 2002: 79–80. Serjee Jambaldorjiin's (2001: 49) account of this copy of the *bKa' 'gyur* differs. According to Jambaldorjiin, it is written with ink made of nine precious substances.

¹⁹ Lhamsürengiin 2002: 83–84.

Sher phyin 'bum – 16 vols. (Ka–Ma)
Nyi khri – 4 vols. (Ka–Nga)
Khri pa – 1 vol. (Ka)
brGyad stong pa – 2 vols. (Ka–Kha)
Shes rab sna tshogs – 2 vols. (Ka–Kha)
Phal po che (Avataṃsaka) – 6 vols. (Ka–Cha)
dKon brtsegs (Ratnakūṭa) – 6 vols. (Ka–Cha)
mDo sde (Sūtra) – 31 vols. (Ka–A, the no. A is assigned twice?)
rGyud 'bum (Tantra) – 22 vols. (Ka–Za)
Myang 'das (Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtras) – 2 vols. (Ka–Kha)

According to a text titled *A Kinnara Melody: A Garland of Teachings Related to the Origins of the Monastic Seat of the Ikh Khüree's Monastic College* (*gDan sa khural chen mo'i chos grwa nub ma'i 'byung khungs dang 'brel ba'i gtam gyi phreng ba kinna ra'i glu dbyangs*), written by the previously mentioned Mongolian Buddhist scholar and historian of Buddhism Zawa Damdin, this unique copy of the *bKa' 'gyur* was given to the Fifth Bogd Jebtsundamba (rJe btsun dam pa Blo bzang tshul khrim 'Jigs med bstan pa'i rgyal msthan, 1815–1841) by the Tenth Dalai Lama. In Zawa Damdin's account, when the Fifth Bogd Jebtsundamba saw that the two monastic schools that he reestablished in Ikh Khüree in 1837—Dashchoinpel *datsan* (bKra shis chos 'phel grwa tshang), or Eastern *datsan*, and Gungaachoilin *datsan* (Kun dga' chos gling grwa tshang), or Western *datsan*—maintained a rigorous course of study despite obstacles caused by the lack of donations from patrons, he donated this copy of the *bKa' 'gyur* to Dashchoinpel *datsan*.²⁰ In the same year, the Fifth Bogd Jebtsundamba gave the Golden *bKa' 'gyur*, which he commissioned and kept in his private library, to Gungaachoilin *datsan*. The copy of the Golden *bKa' 'gyur* is now kept in the library of Gandantegchenling Monastery. It was written with gold letters on composite²¹ blue paper of the size of 64x21 cm; it is decorated with embossed golden images of the Buddha, measuring 16.5x9 cm in width and length and 1.8 cm in height. A single page consists of nine lines, and the letters of the inner pages measure 4x4.5 cm.

²⁰ *rJe btsun blo bzang rta dbyangs kyi gsung 'bum*, vol. 1 (Ka), 1062–4 [520]. Also cited in Lkhamsürengiin 2002: 80.

²¹ A composite paper was made by pasting together several layers of a thin paper glued together with flour paste and juice of plants from the orchid family.

The manuscript edition of the Golden *bsTan 'gyur*, which is housed in the National State Library, was also written on composite paper measuring 64x21 cm. Except for the initial two pages of each text, all other pages contain nine lines, and the letters of the first page of each text measure 55x15 cm. The Golden *bsTan 'gyur* contains 212 volumes, divided into the following fifteen sections:²²

- bsTod tshogs (Stotra-gaṇa) – 1 vol. (Ka)
- rGyud (Tantra) – 78 vols. (30 vols. Ka–A; 31 vols. Ki–I; 17 vols. Ku–Tsu)
- Sher phyin (Prajñāpāramitā) – 16 vols. (Ka–Ma)
- dBu ma (Madhyamaka) – 18 vols. (Tsa–Ngi)
- mDo sde (Sūtra) – 9 vols. (Ci–Pi)
- Sems tsam (Cittamātra) – 16 vols. (Phi–Hi)
- mNgon pa (Abhidharma) – 11 vols. (I–Thu)
- 'Dul ba (Vinaya) – 18 vols. (Du–Su)
- Khri shing – (Bodhisattvāvadāna-kalpalatā) - 2 vols. (Ke–Khe)
- Skyes rabs (Jātaka) – 2 vols. (Hu–U, Ge)
- sPring yig (Lekhā) – 1 vol. (Nge)
- Tshad ma (Pramāṇa) – 20 vols. (Ce–Ye)
- sGra mdo (Śabda-sūtra) – 4 vols. (Re–Se)
- gSo ba rig pa (Cikitsā-vidyā) – 5 vols. (He, E, Ko, Go)
- sNa tshogs (Vividha) – 10 vols. (Ngo–Po)

3. Rare Copies of Xylographs and Manuscripts of Tibetan Language Books in Mongolia

According to the well-known official history of the Yuan dynasty, the *Yuan Shi* (*The History of Yuan*), commissioned by the Ming court and written in 1370, writing Buddhist texts with gold letters was already in practice in China in the 13th and 14th centuries, indicating that Mongols were aware of such practice already at that period. The Tibetan *bKa' 'gyur* written in gold letters is mentioned in the 30th chapter of the *Yuan Shi*; the 35th chapter mentions one thousand texts related to the longevity Buddha (Āyuh Buddha) written in Uighur script with golden ink and a vast collection of other Buddhist texts written with powdered gold.²³ The practice of writing sacred scriptures with gold leaf on a black background was in use in Inner Asia from the early 9th to the 11th centuries, as attested by the illuminated Manichean manuscripts discovered in Eastern Central

²² Lkhamsürengiin 2002: 85.

²³ Jambaldorjiin 2001: 46.

Asia and dating to that period. Such a practice among Uighur Buddhists and Manicheans in Central Asia most likely emerged under the influence of Arabs and Ottoman Turks who began to produce golden Qur'ans and blue and gold calligraphic illustrations of the Qur'an and prayer books in the 8th and 9th centuries. The tradition of writing with gold letters was reintroduced to Mongolia in the 17th century.²⁴ A considerable number of individual Buddhist texts written in Tibetan with gold letters on black composite paper and dating to the 17th and 18th centuries have been preserved to this day. Most distinctive among them are different manuscript editions of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* written in Tibetan. One of them is comprised of 350 pages measuring 17x53.5 cm. Another one consists of 355 pages measuring 21x75 cm. Both of these elegant golden editions are decorated with illustrations of Buddhist deities and are embellished by ornamental, geometrical borders. The latter one consists of letters and illustrations produced in relief; its salutary page is covered by silken curtain of the five basic colours and various patterns.

The ornamentation of costly books with designs or letters in relief was made with a thick paste produced by mixing and kneading pulverised porcelain, marble (or other stone powder), sand, sugar, and water containing glue. Letting the paste drip from a tube with a narrow tip along the drawing, and allowing the dripped paste to dry, the calligrapher separated the background with red, yellow, blue, and black colours and painted the raised letters and images with gold. In other similar instances, the paste for coloured relief images and letters was produced through the process of mixing quartz, porcelain, and pulverised marble with paint. Ornamenting a book had in general an important place in Mongolian book culture, as it was seen as a type of meritorious deed. In the interior of the book, the framing lines, table of contents, the beginning, and the colophon of the book were embellished with various symbols, images, and ornamental decorations. The practice of decorating books became popular especially during the 18th and 19th centuries.

In addition to these golden editions of a Tibetan version of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*, a manuscript copy of the same text written with ink said to be made of the nine precious substances²⁵ and

²⁴ Kara 2005: 215.

²⁵ The nine precious substances are said to be silver, gold, coral, pearl, turquoise, lapis lazuli, mother-of-pearl, copper, and steel.

dated to the period of the emperor Kangxi's rule (1678–1697) is also preserved. It most likely belonged to the private library of the First Bogd Öndör Gegeen Zanabazar. Before it was transferred to the Mongolian State National Library in 1924, it had been kept in the private library of the Eighth Bogd Jebtsundamba (1870–1924). The manuscript was written in four volumes on black paper measuring 32x91 cm on the initial page measure 21x71 cm), making it today the largest manuscript in Mongolia

A considerable number of Buddhist texts written in Tibetan on black paper in gold, or with inks said to be made of seven, eight, or nine precious substances, and dating to the 18th and early 19th centuries have also been preserved to this day. Among such texts, the most common are shorter *mahāyāna sūtras*—such as the *Vajracchedikā* and *Āyuh-sūtra*—the abbreviated *Guhyasamājatantra*, and other, similar texts that were very popular along the Central Asian Silk routes and worshipped among Mongols as repositories of power. Written on paper of a relatively smaller size, they were easy to transport by Mongolian migrating pastoralists.

Rare embossed and embroidered copies of texts written in Tibetan and dating to the 19th century can also be found. The Mongolian State National Library holds copies of the *Vajracchedikā* and the *Guhyasamājatantra*²⁶ made by the embossing of golden letters on pages made of flat-hammered pure silver, illustrated by embossed images of Buddhist deities. Moreover, in addition to some xylographs of Tibetan texts that only have the title pages or the pages with the table of contents embroidered with silken thread, there is also a preserved copy of a short refuge text written in Tibetan, simply titled *sKyabs 'gro*, which was reportedly embroidered by a woman called Doljin from Tüsheet Khan *aimag* in the late 19th century and presented by her as a gift to the Eighth Bogd Jebtsundamba.²⁷

These are only some of the examples showing that—due to the Mongols' close cultural relations with Tibet and their appropriation of Tibetan as the language of Mongolian Buddhist scholasticism and liturgy—Khalkha Mongols, whether learned lamas or illiterate nomads, venerated books written in the Tibetan language and engaged in the meritorious work of printing, writing, and decorating them.

²⁶ For the description of the embossed *Guhyasamājatantra*, see Wallace 2009: 86.

²⁷ Jigdenbombyn 1999: 52.

Among Mongolian publications of books written in Tibetan, one finds those in which the Tibetan and Mongolian versions of the text run in parallel on the same page, as, for example, in a short text titled *gSol 'debs ngag gi dbang phyugs ma*, or *Jalbariya kelen-ü erke bayaliy kemegdekü orusibai* (*A Prayer [Starting with the Words] ngag gi dbang phyug*),²⁸ and Tsong kha pa's *Byang chub lam gyi rim pa'i nyams len gyi rnam bzhag mdor bsdus*, or *Bodi mör-ün jerge angqaran abqu-yi tobIlilan quriyaysan orusibai* (*A Brief Presentation of the Practice of the Gradual Path to Awakening*).²⁹ In some other Tibetan texts, as in one of various versions of the *guru-yoga* of Tsong kha pa, *Bla ma rnal 'byor dga' ldan lha brgya ma* (*Guru Yoga [Starting with the Words] dga' ldan lha brgya*), produced by a certain Blo bzang bsam gtan,³⁰ each line of the entire text is written in a corrupted Sanskrit, followed by a Tibetan version, as if its author wanted us to think of the possible Indic origin of the text or to demonstrate his reverence for the Sanskrit Buddhist tradition. While it was common in Tibet to also give a Sanskrit title to an original Tibetan work, it was not the case with writing the entire text in both languages. At times, the author of our Sanskrit version follows the rules of the Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit grammar;³¹ at other times, he omits any Sanskrit rules of declension and conjugation. A comparison of the Sanskrit and Tibetan texts shows that the Sanskrit verses are based on the Tibetan, although in some instances they deviate from it. At times, the author of the Sanskrit version employs

²⁸ This xylographic edition consists of five pages, including the title page, and it is printed on Chinese paper, measuring 11x60 cm.

²⁹ According to the colophon to this text, the Mongolian version written beneath the Tibetan text was produced by certain “erudite monk” (*mang du thos pa'i dge stong*) named sBong ba pa.

³⁰ I have been unable to determine who, exactly, the Blo bzang bsam gtan mentioned in the colophon as a producer of this text is, whether he is the Tibetan Blo bzang bsam gtan (1687–1749), who established dGa' ldan byang chub chos 'phel gling and was a student of the Seventh Dalai Lama bsKal bzang rgya mtsho (1708–1757), or some other Tibetan by that name, or else a Mongolian person.

³¹ See, for example, the declension of the word “*guru*” in the genitive singular (*gurusya*), which is in agreement with the declension of nominal stems ending in “*u*” in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit; or the ablative singular of *hṛdaya* as *hṛdayāt*; genitive singular (*śraddhasya*) of *śraddhā*; the genitive singular for *kīrtti* as *kīrttisya*; the instrumental plural (*jñānebhīḥ*) of *jñānaiḥ*, etc.

Sanskrit terms that appear only in lexicons and are not found in existing Sanskrit texts; and at other times, he creates his own abbreviations of Sanskrit words.³² This xylographic edition printed on Chinese *matuu* paper and measuring 7.5x18 cm, consists of thirteen pages, including the title page and three pages containing only illustrations. Here is the text, each verse with its corrupt Sanskrit as found in the manuscript, followed first by my own Sanskrit edition and then by its Tibetan version.³³

Gurusya yoga| tuṣita-bahu-devādi viharati sma
Guror yogah | tuṣite bahudevādi viharati sma
 Bla ma rnal 'byor dga' ldan lha brgya ma bzhugs

Verse 1:

tuṣitā-rājasya nāthasya hṛdayad | [2b]
 pāṇḍara-dādhī-vajāladhī-śeṣaramm |
 dharma-rāṭsarvajñā sumatikīrtti śrīhīḥ ||
 sahica-putari ihāsthām ayantu ||

tuṣita-rājasya nāthasya hṛdayāt |
pāṇḍara-dadhi-vaj jaladhi-śikharam |
dharma-rāj sarvajñā-sumatikīrttilhśrihīḥ |
sāhitya-putri ihāsthām āyātu ||

dga' ldan lha brgya'i mgon gyi thugs ka nas |
 rab dkar zho gsar spungs 'dra'i chu 'dzin tser |
 chos kyi rgyal bo kun mkhyen blo bzang grags |
 sras dang bcas pa gnas 'dir gshegs su gsol ||

Verse 2:

dakṣiṇa-parmendu-simhasanākāśam |
 rāmīṇaṇlasīta-bhāraṭāke guruḥ | [2b]
 māyadhī-śraddhasya punye grabeśayam |
 śsāsana-puṣāya kalpa-stham tiṣṭhatu || [3a]

³² For example, *smṛ̤t̤* for *smṛ̤ti*, *maṇ̤m* for *manas*, etc.

³³ The edited version is given in italics.

*dakṣiṇa-padmendu-siṁhāśānākāśe |
rāmaṇe lasito bhaṭṭārako guruḥḥ |
mayāādhī-śraddhāyāḥā puṇye 'graviṣaye |
śāsana-puṣāya kalpa-sthaṇm tiṣṭhatu ||*

mdun gyi nam mkhar seng khri pad zla'i steng |
rje btsun bla ma dgyes pa'i 'dzum dkar can |
bdag blo dang ba'i bsod nams zhing mchog tu |
bstan pa rgyas phyir bskal brgyar bzhugs su gsol ||

Verse 3:

*jñeya-stha-jñānebhīr pipula-cittikā |
subhāga-karṇālāmī subhāśitām vācam |
kīrtti-śrī-vidyutī-rūcir-abhā-kāya |
namāmi darśana-śruti-smṛti-sampanām || [3a]*

*jñeya-stha-jñānair vipula-cittikamā |
subhāga-karṇālāmī[-kāram] subhāśitām vācam |
kīrtti-śrī-vidyutī-rūcir-abhā-kāyam |
namāmi darśana-śruti-smṛti-sampannam ||*

shes bya'i khyon kun mjal ba'i blo grogs thugs |
skal bzang rna ba'i rgyan gyur legs bshad gsung |
grags pa'i dpal gyis lham mer mdzes pa'i sku |
mthong thos dran pa don ldan la phyag 'tshal ||

Verse 4:

*mānoramarghādi-nānādhipuṣpa ca |
sorabhi-dhupa ca pradīpa sugandhi |
prajñāpta-nirmita idam pūjā-megha |
kṣemala paramāḥḥ pūjāya dadami || [3b]*

*manoramārghādīnānānātipuspam ca |
saurabhya-dhūpanī ca pradīpa-sugandham |
prajñāpta-nirmitam idam pūjā-megham |
kṣeme paramamī[tvat-]pūjāyai dadāmi ||*

yid 'od mchod yon sna tshogs me tog dang |
dri zhim bdrug spos snang sal dri chab sogs |
dngos bshams yid sprul mchod sprin rgya mtso 'di |
bsod nams zhing mchog khyed la mchod par bul ||

Verse 5:

yadi punaḥ kale vāpramala yaś ca |
 nādi-kāya-vad-mam̄ bahu-samucaya | [3b]
 śeṣa-trisam̄bara-pratikula sarvam̄|
 tīprānutapena pratideśayami ||

*yat punaḥ kāla eva 'prame yaś ca |
 anādi-kāya-vad-man[o]-bahu-samuccayah |
 śeṣa-trisam̄vara-pratikulam̄ sarvam̄ |
 tīvrānutāpena pratideśayāmi ||*

gang zhig thog³⁴ med dus nas bsags pa yi |
 lus ngag yid kyis mi dge ci gyis dang |
 khyad par sdom pa gsum gyi mi mthun phyogs |
 snying nas 'gyod pa drag po so sor bshags ||

Verse 6:

kāṣa-kale bahuśrutam udyogana | [4a]
 aṣṭa-dharma-barja-kṣaṇāmoghasaddhi |
 sukarma-sampanna tava mahācaryam̄|
 aham api harṣair anumodayami ||

*kaṣāya-kāle bahuśrutam udyogam |
 aṣṭa-dharma-varja-kṣaṇāmoghasiddham |
 sukarma-sampannām tava mahācaryām |
 aham api harṣair anumodayāmi ||*

snyigs ma'i dus 'dir mang thos sgrub la brtson |
 chos brgyad spangs pa'i dal 'byor don yod byed |
 mgon po khyod kyi rlabs chen mdzad pa la |
 bdag cag bsam pa thag pas yi rang ngo ||

Verse 7:

sadguru yuṣmabhir nabho sannibhati | [4b]
 jñānadāyavanta dharma-kṣaya-ghanah |
 yathāveśa varṣa-dharami-vakrame |
 nirbhoga-saddharma-cakkrām̄ vartaya mam̄ ||

*sadguru yuṣmābhir nabhas saṃnibhāti |
 [tvam] jñāna-dayavān dharma-kāya-ghanah |*

³⁴ The xylograph erroneously reads *thogs*.

*yathāvaśam dharma-varśo 'vakrāmet |
nirbhoga-saddharma-cakram vartaya tam ||*

rje btsun³⁵ bla ma dam pa khyed rnam kyis |
chos sku'i mkha' la mkhyen pa rtse'i chu 'dzin³⁶ 'khrig nas |
ji ltar 'tshams pa'i gdul bya'i 'dzin ma la |
lhun grub chos kyi char pa dbab du gsol ||

Verse 8:

*mama gati-sañcaya-kuśala-mūlam | [4b]
śāsu-gati sarveṣu suhita laccha |
viśaṣatam ārya-sumatikīrttisya |
śāsana-garbha hi cirastha bhavatu ||*

*mama gati-saṁcaya-kuśala-mūlam | [4b]
śśāsu-gati-sarveṣu suhito yaś ca |
višeṣatas ārya-sumatikīrttisya³⁷ | [5a]
śāsana-garbo hi cirastho bhavatu ||*

bdag gis ji snyed pa'i sags pa'i dge ba 'dis |
bstan dang 'gro ba kun la gang phan dang |
khyad par rje btsun³⁸ blo bzang grags pa yi |
bstan pa'i snying po ring du gsal byed shog ||

Verse 9:

*alambha-kṛpasya bhūni avaloki | [5a]
amala-jñānasya indra mañjughoṣa |
ūmārāśeṣa darati guhyasya pati |
himavam-padusya cūḍālam tsoṇm kha pa ||*

*nirālamba-kṛpāyā (bhū-)ni[dhir] avalokin |
amala-jñānasya indra mañjughoṣa |
mārān aśeṣam daraya guhyasya pate |
himavat-paṭusya cūḍālam[kāra] tsonkhapa ||*

³⁵ The xylograph erroneously reads *tsun*.

³⁶ Note that other versions of the text read *mkhyen brtse'i sprin*, which, as in the other verse lines, yields nine syllables altogether.

³⁷ I have retained here the original Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit form for genitive singular, in order to keep the twelve syllables in the line.

³⁸ The xylograph erroneously reads *tsun*.

dmigs med brtse ba'i gter chen spyan ras gzigs |
 dri med mkhyen pa'i dbang po 'jam pa'i dbyangs |
 bdud dpung ma lus 'joms mdzad gsang ba'i bdag |
 gangs can mkhas pa'i gtsug rgyan tsong kha pa ||

Verse 10:

sumatikīrttisya padam adhyeṣayāmi | [5b]
 śrīmān guru-ratnottama-mū bhava |
 mayā hṛdi padmāsanām pratipannāḥāḥ |
 mahā-prasādenam anugrāhāyā māmām ||

*sumatikīrtteḥ padam adhyeṣayāmi |
 śśrīman guru ratnottama mūlo bhava |
 mama hṛdi padmāsanām pratipannaḥ |
 mahā-prasādena 'nugrāhaya mām ||*

blo bzang grags pa'i zhabs la gsol ba'debs |
 dpal ldan rtsa ba'i bla ma rin po che |
 bdag gi snying khar padma'i gdan bzhugs la |
 bka' drin chen po'i sgo nas rjes bzung ste ||

Verse 11:

kāya-vad-mam-siddhim dāyayaccha nityam | [5b]
 sarva-janma-jaya-lanārka-mukhasya |
 yānottama-mitrābhikṛta-balena | [6a]
 jayena pañasya-sumargatvad ayam ||

*kāya-vad-man-siddhim dadāyāc ca nityam |
 sarva-janma-jaya-latārka-mukhasya |
 yānottama-mitrābhikṛta-balena |
 jayena pañasya-sumārgatvād ayam ||*

sku gsung thugs kyi dngos grub stsal du gsol |
 tshe rabs kun tu rgyal ba'i tsong kha pas |
 theg mchog bshes gnyen dngos su mdzad pa'i mthus |
 rgyal bas bsngags pa'i lam bzang 'di nyid las ||

Verse 12:

kṣaṇa-māṭrañ ca viparitābhūyātām | [6a]
 dharma-rāja tsom kha pasya |
 dharma-mata-pravarddhaye|

vighna-nimitta-śāntitvā ||

kṣaṇa-māṭraṇm ca vīparitā [na] bhūyatām |
dharma-rāja-tsonkhaspasya |
dharma-mata-pravarddhaye |
vighna-nimitta-śāntitvā ||

skad cig tsam yang ldog bar ma gyur cig |
chos kyi rgyal po tsong kha pa'i |
chos tshul rnam par 'phel ba la |
bgegs kyi mtshan ma zhi ba dang |

Benediction:

śeṣa-hetu-sampurnastu | [6b]
sarva-kāle śreya bhavatu |
om svasti ||

śeṣa-hetuḥ sampūrṇo 'stu |
sarva-kāleśśreyo bhavatu |
om svasti ||

mthun rkyen ma lus tshang bar shog |
dus thams cad du dge legs su gyur cig ||

Colophon:

bla ma yo ga'i par 'di rnam dpyod ldan |
dge slong Blo bzang bsam gtan bskrun pa'i mthus |
tshe 'di'i pha ma 'brel thog 'gro ba kun |
'jam mgon bla mas skye kun rjes 'dzin shog ||³⁹

Below (fig. 1) are sample pages of the text, containing the first two and the last two pages.

³⁹ “Through the publication of this xylograph of the *guru-yoga* by the discerning monk Blo bzang bsam gtan, may all beings, [who are] in the parental relationship, in this life be accepted in all lifetimes by the guru, the Mañjunātha!”

Tibetan Manuscript and Xylograph Traditions



Fig. 1: *Bla ma rnal 'byor dga' ldan lha brgya ma*, fols. 1a, 2a, 6a, 7a

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Sacred Words, Precious Materials: On Tibetan Deluxe Editions of Buddhist Scriptures and Treatises

Dorji Wangchuk (Hamburg)

1. Prologue

What is referred to here as Tibetan ‘deluxe editions’ of Buddhist scriptures and treatises can be perhaps seen as the centrepieces of the Tibetan expression of aesthetics and craftsmanship; pomposity and exclusivity; social-economic power and prestige; and piety and religiosity. The tradition of producing exquisite editions of those scriptures and treatises—associated with great sanctity (*rtsa chen po*) and hence highly cherished—by using precious materials, such as gold ink and dark-blue paper, is the culmination of cultivating what Tibetan Buddhists refer to as the ‘receptacle of Speech’ (*gsung rten*), which includes not only texts as intangible entities but also manuscripts, xylographs, and books as tangible realities, both of which are the main objects of research of all among us who are interested in gaining a nuanced and reliable understanding of the Tibetan intellectual world (*Geisteswelt*).¹ A thorough and detailed study of the phenomenon of Tibetan deluxe editions of Buddhist scriptures and treatises—which, by the way, was already noted by the Jesuite missionary Ippolito Desideri (1684–1733)²—seems worth attempting. In the present contribution, however, I seek to briefly discuss eight points that pertain to deluxe editions, namely, (1) Tibetan terms that express what I call ‘deluxe edition,’ (2) the nature and types of deluxe editions, (3) legendary accounts of deluxe editions of scriptures written with lapis ink on golden plates or tablets, (4) scriptures and treatises considered worthy of such exquisite editions, (5) reports on some deluxe editions of the *bKa' 'gyur* and

¹ The concept and practice of commissioning such deluxe editions is widely known also in other Buddhist traditions, including the Sino-Japanese, Mongolian, and South and South-East Asian Buddhist traditions.

² de Fillippi 2005: 278: “All these [i.e. the *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur*] at great expenses the King got from Hindustan, had them translated into the Thibettan language and copied in large script; the principal ones have gold letters and are richly adorned.” See also Bell 1931: 197–199.

bsTan 'gyur produced within the Tibetan cultural sphere, (6) possible motives or objectives for producing them, (7) the social, religious, or intellectual standing of the persons who commissioned them, and (8) some remarks regarding the tools and techniques of producing deluxe editions. What I will not attempt here is to trace, document, and describe all possible accounts or reports of such editions made within the Tibetan cultural sphere, which, if at all possible, would be an enormous task that would overextend the scope of this article.

2. A Terminological Delimitation

Most of the deluxe editions produced within the Tibetan cultural sphere are either physically inaccessible or no longer extant. One of the first steps towards the study of the phenomenon of deluxe editions is the gathering of as much information as possible from diverse written sources. One of the challenges that one faces in this regard is the terseness of language and the terminological ambiguity of the written sources. In particular, it seems necessary to determine the meaning of several key disyllabic words in which the first syllable stands for a precious metal or material, such as *gser* (“gold”), and the second being either (1) *chos*, (2) *yig*, (3) *bris*, or (4) *pod*. The ambiguity of the second component is often a cause of misinterpretation. (1) The term *gser chos* seems to be employed at least in two senses, namely, (a) in its literal sense of scriptures written with gold (or golden) ink, and (b) in a metaphorical (or an ornamental) sense, as in the case of the *gser chos* known in the Shangs pa bka' brgyud and Sa skya schools. Both are lexically attested.³ Similarly, the terms *sngo chos* (“dark-blue scriptures/treatises”) and *skya chos* (“white scriptures/treatises”) have also been employed to refer to texts on the basis of the paper used, that is, blue

³ For a recent discussion of the term *gser chos*, see Hufn 2010: 112–117. See also the *Tshig mdzod chen mo* (s.v. *gser bris*) & *Dung dkar tshig mdzod* (s.v. *gser chos*): *mthing shog gi ngos su gser zhun gyis bris pa'i dpe chos*. See also Yul shul bsTan 'dzin dar rgyas, *Lam 'bras tshig mdzod* (p. 470) for *gser chos* and *gser chos bcu gsum*. The expression *gser chos bcu gsum* is recorded in the *Tshig mdzod chen mo* (s.v.): *tshar lugs las lcags ri'i phyi rol tu mi 'da' ba'i chos te | mkha' spyod skor gsum | dmar chen skor gsum | dmar chung skor gsum | 'chi med rdo rje lha mo | dzam dmar | seng gdong ma | 'jam dpal nag po ste bcu gsum*. See also Yul shul bsTan 'dzin dar rgyas, *Lam 'bras tshig mdzod* (p. 433), where the thirteen are listed under *sa skya'i gser chos bcu gsum*. This expression is, however, not recorded in Nor brang's *Chos rnam kun btus*.

and white paper respectively.⁴ To be noted is that *sngo chos* is not semantically coextensive with ‘golden manuscript’ (*gser bris*)⁵ inasmuch as the former can be a scripture/treatise written either in gold or silver, or any other colourful precious substance.

(2) The term *gser yig* seems to have at least three levels or layers of meaning or usage. (a) The primary (‘literal’) meaning of the term seems to be “an inscription/letter/document/scripture/treatise written with gold,”⁶ and hence should be understood in concrete terms. (b) Obviously, *gser yig* in the sense of ‘an imperial letter/decree’ is secondary in meaning,⁷ and ‘gold’ in this case is to be understood figuratively.⁸ It is, however, possible that royal decrees or letters of grave importance were written with gold, as the legend of Srong btsan sgam po’s wooing the Chinese princess as his bride suggests. The Tibetan emperor is said to have sent a letter threatening the Chinese emperor, which is described as “a letter in Chinese characters written with gold on blue paper” (*rgya nag stong khun gyi yi ge mthing shog la gser gyis bris pa*) placed in a “casket of the royal

⁴ For the occurrence of the terms *sngo chos* and *skya chos*, see Vitali 1999: 67, 73, 75, 158, 165, 169.

⁵ *Tshig mdzod chen mo* (s.v. *gser bris*): *gser chus bris pa'i chos dpe* (“scriptures written with golden water”). The example provided there is *rdo rje gcod pa gser bris ma* (“The golden manuscript edition of the *Vajracchedikā*”).

⁶ The first meaning of *gser yig* in Brag g.yab’s *Bod brda'i tshig mdzod* (s.v. *gser yig*) is *gser gyis bris pa* (“[something] written with gold”). This primary meaning has been presupposed in bTsan lha’s *gSer gyi me long* (s.v. *gser gyi yi ge*), which states: *gser gyi byang bu'i thog tu go gnas sog sogs bkod pa'i yi ge zhig gi ming* (“a designation for an inscription on a golden writing support on which rank-title and the like have been written”). Interestingly, this meaning does not seem to be recorded in the *Tshig mdzod chen mo*.

⁷ *Tshig mdzod chen mo* (s.v. *gser bris*): *gong mas btang ba'i bka' yig* (“letter/decree sent by the emperor”). See also the *Dung dkar tshig mdzod* (s.v. *gser yig pa*). The second meaning given by Brag g.yab in his *Bod brda'i tshig mdzod* (s.v. *gser yig*) is *yi ge'i zhe sa* (“honorific for letter”).

⁸ The figurative use is made explicit in the *Dung dkar tshig mdzod* (s.v. *gser yig pa*): *rgyal pos btang ba'i bka' yig la gser yig zer zhing gser dang 'dra bar rin thang che zhing dkon pa yin pa'i don* (“a letter sent by a king is called a ‘golden letter’ and it has the connotation of being precious and rare like gold”).

command” (*bka' shog sgrom bu*).⁹ (c) Another secondary meaning of the term *gser yig* (or *gser gyi yi ge*) seems to be ‘first (class) award certificate (*yig tshangs*)¹⁰ or ministerial rank,’ said to have been bestowed during the imperial period in Tibet.¹¹ Such a ministerial rank was called *gser yig* obviously because the minister received from the emperor a kind of a certificate or decree made of gold (or gilded) plate upon which the rank was inscribed. It is said that during the time of the Tibetan king Srong btsan sgam po, ministerial ranks were classified hierarchically into three groups: first class (*rab*), consisting of *g.yu yig* (“turquoise certificate”) and *gser yig* (“gold certificate”); second class (*'bring*), consisting of *dngul yig* (“silver certificate”) and *phra men gyi yi ge* (perhaps “manganese certificate”);¹² and third class, consisting of *zangs kyi yi ge* (“copper

⁹ For the content of the letter, see, for example, the *Nyang ral chos 'byung* (pp. 210.16–211.1). Cf. *dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba, mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (p. 109.23).

¹⁰ *Tshig mdzod chen mo* (s.v. *yig tshangs*): *sngar chos rgyal srong btsan gyis blon po rnams la bya dga' gnang ba'i yig lam* (“award certificate bestowed upon ministers by the Dharma King Srong btsan [sgam po].” See also *ibid.* (s.v. *yig tshangs drug*). See also *bTsan lha, gSer gyi me long* (s.v. *yig tshangs*). See *Jo sras* or *mKhas pa lDe'u, lDe'u chos 'byung* (pp. 255.21–256.4): *na drug* (*yi ge che ba drug* = *g.yu gser phra men che chung gnyis re byas pas drug*) and *ne drug* (*yi ge chung ba drug* = *dngul, ra gan, 'khar ba, zangs, dpal lcags, shing sky chu ris*); *ibid.* (p. 263.12–21): (1) *dgung blon chen po* = *yig tshang g.yu'i yi ge che ba*, (2) *dgung blon 'bring po* = *yig tshang g.yu'i yi ge chung ba*, (3) *dgung blon chung ba* = *yig tshang gser gyi yi ge chen po*; (4) *nang blon tha chung dang yo 'gal 'chos pa 'bring po* = *yig tshang gser yig chung ba*, (5) *yo 'gal 'chos pa chung ba* = *yig tshang 'phra men gyi yi ge mtho (ba)*; *ibid.* (pp. 266.15–267.11): *che drug chung drug*; *ibid.* (p. 270.13–14): *yig tshang drug*. Dunhuang manuscripts also mention terms such as *tha shing sky chu rus kyi yi ge, ke ke ru'i yi ge*, and *ra gan gyi yi ge*. See the annotation in *bSod nams skyid & dBang rgyal, Tun hong shog dril* (p. 52, n. 2). The note also quotes the relevant passage from the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (*dBang gyal & bSod nams skyid, Tun hong yig cha*, p. 79, n. 117). These are found also in *Pelliot tibétain 1071* (online) and reproduced in *Tun hong shog dril* (pp. 12–51); *Tun hong yig cha* (p. 79, n. 124); *bTsan lha, gSer gyi me long* (s.v. *gser gyi yi ge*).

¹¹ *bTsan lha, gSer gyi me long* (s.v. *gser gyi yi ge*): *gser gyi byang bu'i thog tu go gnas sogz bkod pa'i yi ge zhig gi ming*.

¹² The term *phra men* poses a challenge. Giuseppe Tucci has identified *phra men* as “Silver inlaid,” for which, see Tucci 1956: 88 and Ehrhard 1990: 103, n. 71. It may also be noted that *phra men* is a gender-unspecific Tibetan rendering of the Sanskrit *dāka* or *dākinī*. A gender-specific translation of

certificate”) and *lcags kyi yi ge* (“iron certificate”). sBa gSal snang, for instance, is said to have been awarded the “Grand Gold Certificate” (*gser gyi yi ge chen po*) by Khri strong lde btsan.¹³

In addition to the actual *document/certificate* inscribed in gold and the highest ministerial *rank*, the term *gser yig* also refers to the *person* who is directly associated with it. The term is unambiguous if it is employed in its nominalised form *gser yig pa* (or *gser gyi yi ge pa*). But even when this is not the case, it is clear from the context when *gser yig* has been employed as a possessive (*bahuvrīhi*) compound, namely, as meaning ‘one who bears or is associated with a *gser yig*.’ Thus, *gser yig (pa)* or *gser gyi yi ge pa* refer to three kinds of persons, namely, (a) a minister who holds a gold insignia or certificate,¹⁴ (b) a messenger who bears a royal letter or decree,¹⁵ and (c) a clerk or calligraphist who prepares such a letter or certificate.¹⁶

The terms which concern us the most for our purpose are *gser bris (ma)* and *dngul bris (ma)*, which are fortunately quite unambiguous and can be understood as either ‘gold or silver manuscripts’ or ‘texts written with gold or silver ink.’ They can also be employed as possessive compounds as in the case of *bka' gyur gser bris ma* (“a corpus of scriptures in [Tibetan] translation written in gold”) or *bstan gyur gser bris ma* (“a corpus of treatises in [Tibetan] translation written in gold”). Some sources, however, while

ḍāka is *phra men pha*, and of *ḍākinī*, *phra men ma*. See, for examples, Negi’s *Bod legs tshig mdzod* (s.vv. *phra men*, *phra men pha* & *phra men ma*), which provides the *Lankāvatārasūtra* as a source. Cf. Jäschke 1881: (s.v. *phra men*) “sorcery, witchcraft.”

¹³ Ko zhul, *mKhas grub ming mdzod* (p. 1258.10–12).

¹⁴ This meaning is not mentioned in the *Dung dkar tshig mdzod* (s.v. *gser yig pa*) and *Tshig mdzod chen mo* (s.v. *gser yig pa*), but the expression *gser gyi yi ge pa* referring to a minister (*zhang blon*) is attested in Dunhuang materials (e.g. Pelliot tibétain 1071).

¹⁵ *Dung dkar tshig mdzod* (s.v. *gser yig pa*): *bka' yig khyer ba'i mi de la gser yig pa zer* (“a person who bears a royal decree is called a *gser yig pa*”). See also the *Tshig mdzod chen mo* (s.v. *gser yig pa*): *gong ma'i bka' yig skyel mi bang chen* (“an envoy bearing a letter (or decree) of the emperor”).

¹⁶ *Dung dkar tshig mdzod* (s.v. *gser yig pa*): *skabs re rgyal po'i mdun gyi drung yig la'ang gser yig pa zhes 'bod gsol yod pa skabs dang sbyar shes pa dgos so* (“One should know according to the context that occasionally there is also the custom of referring to a clerk in the presence of the king as *gser yig pa*”). See also the *Tshig mdzod chen mo* (s.v. *gser yig pa*): *gong ma'i drung yig* (“emperor’s clerk”).

specifying deluxe editions as golden, do not specify the titles of scriptures and merely mention “scriptures written in gold” (*gsung rab gser bris*).¹⁷

Additionally, it may be stated that the term ‘deluxe edition’ employed here is not to be taken as semantically co-extensive with ‘illuminated edition,’ inasmuch as the former excludes manuscript editions with illuminations if no precious materials such as gold and silver ink have been used.¹⁸

3. The Nature and Types of Deluxe Editions

The nature or constitution of a deluxe edition can be defined by several factors. (a) The primary factor seems to be the kind of material used, particularly, the kind of precious ink and the type of paper, although it is self-evident that the selection of the type and texture of paper will partly depend on the kind of ink to be used. When talking about *gser bris*, for example, we shall have to bear in mind factors such as the genuineness, purity, and density of gold. Leaving aside the possibility of fraud, it seems to have been taken for granted that if one could not afford genuine gold, one could use “gold-like” (*gser ’dra*) ink.¹⁹ The 101-volume *bKa’ ’gyur* kept in the Rig ’dzin lha khang of the Potala Palace, for example, is reportedly “written in liquid brass” (*rag zhun mas bris pa*).²⁰ Consequently, not all editions that glitter as ‘golden editions’ may be written with gold.

¹⁷ rNga rgod Blo bzang byams pa rab rgyas (1781–1849) is said to have produced scriptures in gold (*gsung rab gser bris*), but it is not clear which ones and how many. See Ko zhul, *mKhas grub ming mdzod* (p. 464.10–13): *dgung lo sum cu par gdan sa bkra shis bshad sgrub gling du phyir phebs nas gtsug lag khang dang | rten dang rten [= brten] pa | gsung rab gser bris bcas gsar bzhangs mdzad nas rnam dkar gyi phrin las rgya chen spel*.

¹⁸ For sample images from an ‘illuminated edition’ of some Buddhist scriptures in Tibetan translation, see Lunardo 2014: 138. Note, however, that the identification of the scriptures in the description and the titles found in the sample pages do not agree.

¹⁹ See, for example, Mi pham, *bZo gnas nyer kho* (pp. 430.21–431.7), where a recipe for making “gold-like” (*gser ’dra*) ink can be found. It has been shown in Almogi, Kindzorra, Hahn, Rabin 2015—which contains a report of the results of an analysis of the golden ink used in the *rNying rgyud ’bum* stored in the National Archives in Kathmandu—that the quality of golden ink could range from pure gold to having no gold at all.

²⁰ U yon lhan khang, *Po ta la’i lo rgyus* (p. 84.6–9). The 101-volume brass *bKa’ ’gyur* is said to be based on the Tshal pa edition of the *bKa’ ’gyur*.

mDo mkhar ba Tshe ring dbang rgyal (1697–1763), for example, reports that during the production of a gold edition of the *bKa' 'gyur*, Pho lha ba bSod nams stobs rgyas (1689–1747), the royal commissioner of the project, would chastise those scribes who used “thin liquid gold” (*gser zhun sla ba*) and praise and reward those who used “thick liquid gold” (*gser zhun gar po*).²¹ Even in the same set, therefore, one is bound to find variation in the quality caused by different factors. (b) In terms of the size of folios and script, the maxim seems to be the bigger the better. Among the various kinds of Tibetan scripts, dBu can seem to be preferred for deluxe edition, although we do have examples of gold manuscripts written in some elegant variants of dBu med script as well.²² (c) The exquisiteness of a deluxe edition would be defined by the quality of its calligraphy. (d) In addition, decorations and accessories, particularly on the front and back folios and the covers, would enhance the value of a deluxe edition. (e) Importantly, as is the case with any manuscript edition, we are always dealing with a unique copy. (f) Although gold and silver editions are by definition manuscript editions (*bris ma*),²³ we do have cases in which the first one or two folios of a xylographic edition would be replaced by handwritten folios executed in gold (or any other precious materials) and further decorated with painted illustrations and silken curtains mounted on the verso of the first folio.²⁴ To an extent, such cases present a conflation of a manuscript and a xylographic edition, and an overhasty inspection may lead one

²¹ mDo mkhar ba, *Mi dbang rtogs brjod* (p. 823.4–14).

²² See, for example, the stunningly exquisite golden edition of the Fifth Dalai Lama's (1617–1682) *gSang ba rgya can*, which is written in a type of dBu med script called 'Bru tsha. For images of the opening leaves of the golden manuscript and more details about it, see Karmay 1998.

²³ In general, there seems to be a need for generating greater awareness among cataloguers of Tibetan literary collections working within the Tibetan cultural sphere of the importance of recording whether the catalogued item is a manuscript, or what one may perhaps call ‘manu-graphic,’ edition (*bris ma*) or a xylographic, or ‘xyloscript,’ edition (*par ma = shing par*). The scholarly value of the *gSung rten gyi tho* published by the National Library of Bhutan, for example, has been diminished because the cataloguers did not always specify whether the item catalogued by them is a manuscript or xylograph.

²⁴ For an example of a xylographic edition having front folios (*dbu shog*) that are handwritten with gold, one may mention the xylographic edition of the *sNar thang bka' 'gyur* kept in Chos 'khor lhun grub chos ldan temple in Bumthang (rGyal yongs dpe mdzod, *gSung rten gyi tho*, p. 343, no. 3686).

to wrongly take the entire volume or collection to be a manuscript edition.

The types of deluxe editions can also be determined in terms of (a) the kind of precious materials and (b) the extent to which they have been used. We have seen that the types of precious material such as turquoise, gold, silver, (perhaps) manganese, copper, and iron symbolised the different types and hierarchy of certificate and ministerial rank. Similarly, one could define the types of deluxe edition according to the kinds of precious materials used and the degree of exquisiteness. Following the legendary accounts of deluxe editions of scriptures, to which we shall return, Tibetans seem to have cherished the notion of scriptures written with lapis-ink on golden plates as the most exquisite form of deluxe edition. Indeed we are told that in general deep blue ink made from finely crushed lapis lazuli (a deep blue copper-bearing mineral) is more valuable than gold and silver inks, and that it was also favoured by Byzantine illuminators. When juxtaposed to gold or silver in illuminations the results are said to be stunning. In fact, manuscripts with such beautiful bright glowing illumination are said to constitute some of the best-quality Byzantine manuscripts. Four types of ink came to be most popular in later Tibetan manuscript culture, namely, ink made of gold powder (*gser 'dul*), silver powder (*dngul 'dul*), vermillion (*mtshal*), and soot. Occasionally, however, inks made of other precious materials are also reported to have been used. Most deluxe editions are thus either (a) gold editions (*gser bris*), (b) silver editions (*dngul bris*), or (c) hybrid gold-and-silver (*gser dngul ra ma lug / gser dngul khra can / gser dngul spel ma*) editions,²⁵ which are manuscripts in which the lines are written alternately with gold and silver. The deluxe edition of the *bsTan 'gyur* commissioned by the Third Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje (1284–1339) mentioned below, for example, is said to be such a hybrid edition.

It is doubtful whether and to what extent other precious materials such as turquoise were actually used for writing, but we do have accounts of deluxe editions of certain scriptural corpora that are said to have been written with various kinds of precious materials. One form of such deluxe editions is what is referred to as a seven-

²⁵ The term *gser dngul ra ma lug* occurs frequently in the writings of the Fifth Dalai Lama. The terms *gser dngul khra can* and *gser dngul spel ma* have been used in the sense of *gser dngul ra ma lug* by 'Bri gung dKon mchog rgya mtsho in his *'Bri gung chos 'byung* (pp. 444.21, 490.26).

precious-material (*rin chen sna bdun*) edition. bKra shis don drub in his *mThing shog bzo rim*, for example, notes that each line in such editions, for which blue paper was used, was written with a different ink: the first line in gold, the second in turquoise, the third in silver, the fourth in coral, the fifth in iron, the sixth in copper, and the seventh in conch-shell ink.²⁶ One could, however, also employ fewer types of ink in such variegated manuscripts or employ different ink for each volume or a corpus of texts rather than on every page. Drung chen mkha' spyod pa Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan (1370–1433), for example, is said to have commissioned deluxe editions of the large, medium, and small Prajñāpāramitā scriptures in turquoise, gold, and silver, respectively.²⁷ It is said, again, that the Bi ma snying thig cycle of the sNying thig strand of the rDzogs chen system contains what is designated as “extremely profound [texts] in four volumes” (*shin tu zab pa'i po ti bzhi*), which include “five [corpora of] texts [written] in precious materials” (*rin po che'i yi ge lnga*), namely, (1) a “[corpus] written in gold” (*gser yig can*), (2) a “[corpus] written in turquoise” (*g.yu yig can*), (3) a “[corpus] written in copper” (*zangs yig can*), (4) a “[corpus] written in conch-shell” (*dung yig can*), and (5) a “[corpus] written in (perhaps) manganese” (*phra yig can*).²⁸ According to Klong chen pa, the first corpus written in gold consists of “nine primary and secondary [texts]” (*ma bu dgu*),²⁹ the second corpus written in turquoise and the third written in copper consist of

²⁶ bKra shis don drub, *mThing shog bzo rim* (p. 120.8–13): *shog bu de'i steng du gna' bo'i dus nas bzung 'gro stangs ltar snag tsha rin chen sna bdun gyis yi ge 'bri srol 'dug | de'i go rim ni | [1] yig 'phreng dang po | gser | [2] yig 'phreng gnyis pa | g.yu | [3] yig 'phreng gsum pa | dngul | [4] yig 'phreng bzhi pa | byu ru | [5] yig 'phreng lnga pa | lcags | [6] yig 'phreng drug pa | zangs | [7] yig 'phreng bdun pa | dung bcas go rim gral ltar bsgrigs yod pa red |.*

²⁷ Ko zhul, *mKhas grub ming mdzod* (p. 893.15–16): *g.yu dang | gser dang | dngul gyis yum rgyas 'bring bsdus gsum tshar re re bzhengs |.*

²⁸ In secondary literature, these terms have been translated as ‘Golden Letters’ and so forth. See, for example, Reynold 1996, which bears the title “The Golden Letters,” a translaison of the Tibetan *gser yig can*. Compare Ehrhard 1990: 22, where these titles have been rendered “ein (Band) der mit den Goldlettern,” and so on.

²⁹ In general “mother” (*ma*) has been understood to be the actual Tantric scripture (commonly referred to as the “root” or “basic” text (*rtsa ba*)), and the “child” (*bu*) a commentary on it by a specific Vidyādhara. See Klong chen pa, *Grub mtha' mdzod* (p. 330.5–7): *rtsa ba ma rnams ni rgyud dngos yin la | bu rnams ni rig 'dzin so sos mdzad pa'i bshad tig [= tīk?] yin te |.*

eighteen texts each, the fourth corpus written in conch-shell consists of three texts, and the fifth corpus written in (perhaps) manganese consists of five secondary texts related to the corpus of texts written in copper. It is said that these scriptural corpora were concealed by Vimalamitra at bSam yas mChims phu and were not revealed even to the King (Khri strong lde btsan) let alone his subjects.³⁰ Klong chen pa does not tell us why these textual corpora were titled such but perhaps he considered it self-evident: that it was because they were written with five kinds of precious materials. In a colophon ascribed to Vimalamitra, we find an explanation.³¹ But only four volumes are mentioned there,³² each written with ink made of one of the following four precious materials: (1) melted white conch (*dkar po dung bzhus*), (2) melted copper (*zangs bzhus*), (3) refined blue turquoise (*sngon po g.yu sbyangs*), and (4) red-blue (perhaps) manganese (*phra men*). The gold ink is missing here.

The fascinating accounts of the transmission of the Prajñāpāramitā scriptures in Tibet (as, for instance, found in sDe srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho'i *Bai dūrya'i g.ya' sel*) also disclose information about the kinds of material used for producing deluxe editions.³³ Khri strong lde btsan for one is said to have commissioned a deluxe edition of the Prajñāpāramitā scriptures translated into Tibetan by Rlangs Khams pa go cha from the original text he had memorised (and is thus called Rlang kyi thugs 'gyur ma) written with ink made from a mixture of his own blood (*mtshal khrag*), the blood of his deceased queen, and the milk of a white goat (*ra dkar gyi 'o ma*) in commemoration of the queen. There is also said to be an edition of the largest

³⁰ Klong chen pa, *Grub mtha' mdzod* (pp. 330.10–331.5).

³¹ This has already been pointed out in Ehrhard 1990: 103, n. 71.

³² Evidently, for Klong chen pa, the five textual corpora arranged according to the type of precious ink do not make up five separate volumes but merely four. See his *Grub mtha' mdzod* (p. 330.1–3): ... *shin tu zab pa'i po ti bzhi rin po che'i yi ge lnga bsdus...*; ibid. (pp. 331.1): *de'ang po ti bzhi la | rin po che'i yi ge lnga zhes bya'o || de'ang gser yig can | g.yu yig can | dung yig can gsum la re re | zangs yig can dang 'phra yig can bsdoms pas gcig te bzhi gter nas byon pa'o ||*. See also the *Klong chen chos 'byung* (p. 350.12–16), for an identification of the *zab pa'i po ti bzhi* and *thun mong gi po ti bzhi*.

³³ For a description of the various versions and Tibetan translations of Prajñāpāramitā scriptures, see sDe srid, *g.Ya' sel* (pp. 940.4–942.3) and mKhyen brtse'i dbang po, *Zin bris sna tshogs* (pp. 181.6–182.3). Titles such as *Klu 'bum skya bo*, *Bla 'bum smug po*, *'Bum nag*, and *'Bum dmar* also occur in the *Nyang ral chos 'byung* (p. 394.17–19).

Prajñāpāramitā scripture called the ’Bum dmar (“Red [Prajñāpāramitā in] 100,000 [Lines]”) written with the “nose-blood” (*shangs mtshal*) of Śāntarakṣita, Padmasambhava, and Khri srong lde btsan. There is said to be another special edition of a Prajñāpāramitā scripture written with special ink made from Khri srong lde btsan’s singed hair (*dbu skra’i gzhobs*)³⁴ and indigo (*rams*),³⁵ using the milk of a white goat (*ra dkar gyi ’o ma*) as the binder.

Often only the first one or two folios of a volume are in a deluxe execution, while the rest are ordinary ‘white,’ as is the case with many large collections, for example, most *rNying ma rgyud ’bum* sets, and some canonical collections such as the two sets of the *bsTan ’gyur* preserved in the bKa’ ’gyur lha khang in Potala Palace.³⁶ Similarly, in some cases only the first volume in a collection is in a deluxe execution, while the rest of the volumes are simple. For example, the first volume (i.e. vol. Ka) of the works of rGya gar Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1436–1494), the ninth throne-holder of Sa skyā monastery, is said to be written in gold.³⁷

4. Legendary Accounts of Deluxe Editions

Of the legendary accounts surrounding the origination and transmission of some famous Buddhist scriptures, the accounts of scriptures written on golden plates or tablets (*gser gyi glegs bu/bam: suvarṇapatra*) with liquid lapis lazuli (*bai dūrya yi zhun ma*) seem to be the most intriguing ones. It has possibly inspired wealthy and influential people in Tibet and elsewhere to commission their own

³⁴ Jäschke: s.v. *gzhob*.

³⁵ Jäschke: s.v. *rams*.

³⁶ U yon lhan khang, *Po ta la’i lo rgyus* (p. 60.11–17). Two sets of the *bsTan ’gyur* are mentioned here. The beginning folios (*dbu shog*) of the first *bsTan ’gyur* set of 224 volumes are said to be of gold (*gser ma*), while the rest are excuted as a “white edition” (*skyā bris can*). Similarly, it seems that only the beginning folios of the second *bsTan ’gyur* set of 94 volumes are in gold. Again, the beginning folios (*dbu shog*) of the manuscript edition of the *bKa’ ’gyur* in sMin grol gling monastery in Tibet, which is, however, called the ’Brum nag bka’ ’gyur—named thus because it was made in a year in which an epidemic (i.e. *lha ’brum nad yams*) broke out—are said to be in gold (*gser bris ma*). See *bsTan pa’i sgron me*, *sMin gling dkar chag* (p. 93.9–11).

³⁷ Ko zhul, *mKhas grub ming mdzod* (p. 363.11–13): *khong gi gsung rtsom ni po ti ka pa gser bris can gcig da lta pe cin mi rigs rig gnas pho brang du bzhugs so* ||. It is kept today in the Mi rigs rig gnas pho brang (in Beijing).

deluxe editions of scriptures to which great sanctity has been attributed. The deluxe edition of the best kind in Tibet was, however, apparently the reverse of these (partly mythical) ones, inasmuch as manuscripts written with gold ink on dark blue paper came to be the product of choice rather than ones written with lapis lazuli ink on golden paper (or tablet). It has been already pointed out that Tibetans were well aware of lapis lazuli as a semi-precious stone but normally did not use it as a pigment (for painting), as claimed, for example, by Giuseppe Tucci.³⁸ Regardless of whether lapis lazuli ink was used by Tibetans for making deluxe editions of scriptures, the legendary accounts of golden scriptures written with lapis lazuli ink—associated with the origin of several scriptures—seem to be as old as Tibetan Buddhism itself.

To begin with, the legend of gold manuscript written with lapis lazuli ink has been brought into connection with the transmission of a rDzogs chen scripture titled *rDzogs pa chen po ye shes gsang ba'i rgyud* (in its colophon).³⁹ One suspects that this association is rather late. One of the legendary accounts of texts or manuscript written with precious materials is connected with the legends surrounding the origin and transmission of Tantric scriptures of the Mahāyoga system of the rNying ma school of Tibetan Buddhism, including the famous **Guhagarbhatantra*. Obviously, not only do the various versions of the legend differ in their detail but also in the manner the legend has been employed to explain the origin and transmission of Tantric scriptures of the rNying ma school. The existence of various interpretations seems to have evoked Mi pham rNam rgyal rgya mtsho (1846–1912) to write a small work devoted to the “removal of doubt” (*dogs sel*) regarding the origin of rNying ma Tantric scriptures.⁴⁰

³⁸ Jackson & Jackson 1988: 79, 88, n. 10; Jackson & Jackson 1976: 276–278.

³⁹ See the colophon of the *rDzogs pa chen po ye shes gsang ba'i rgyud* (Cantwell, Mayer, Kowalewski, Achard 2006: 22): *rgya gar dga' rab rdo rjes | bram ze bde mchog la | bde ldan gyi yang thog tu rin po che gser gyi glegs bam la bai dūrya zhun mas bris pa'i bla dpe gnang ste | gdung rabs lñgar bla dpe las mi bzhugs so || rdzogs pa chen po ye shes gsang ba'i rgyud rdzogs so ||*.

⁴⁰ Mi pham's *rGyud byung dogs sel* (pp. 241.5–244.6), though very brief, addresses some interesting controversies about the origin of Tantric scriptures including the idea of Tantric texts being written on golden [sheets] with lapis lazuli ink (p. 244.1), and it is concluded with a *ha ha!*

According to Rog Shes rab 'od (1166–1244),⁴¹ Tantric doctrines (of the rNying ma school) were taught by the Buddha in the Realm of the Great Akaniṣṭha ('og min chen po'i gnas) and in the various locations within the celestial realm (*lha'i gnas*), human realm (*mi'i gnas*), and non-human realm (*mi ma yin pa'i gnas*). Then Vajrapāṇi, who is known as the codifier of all esoteric Buddhist doctrines, codified them, wrote them on golden sheets (*gser gyi glegs bam*) with liquid lapis lazuli (*bai dūrya'i zhun ma*), and concealed them in space.⁴² King Jah, as a result of seven dreams that he had and his subsequent practices, managed to cause the Tantric scriptures to (re)appear in the human realm. Tantric scriptures of the Kriyā, Yoga, Mahāyoga, Anuyoga, and Atiyoga classes are all said to have descended (*babs*) in various places, and notably the Mahāyoga Tantric scriptures on the roof of King Jah's palace. Rog also notes that all except the Atiyoga scriptures are said to have descended in the form of real books (*po ti*). A noteworthy fact, according to Rog, is that not merely the Mahāyoga scriptures were written on golden paper with liquid lapis lazuli, but indeed all Tantric scriptures of the rNying ma school that were codified and concealed by Vajrapāṇi. Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124–1192),⁴³ too, in the context of explaining the “making of the first scriptures of the Buddha” (*sangs rgyas kyi gsung rab bzhengs par snga ba*), alludes to the idea of Tantric scriptures being written in the celestial realm on golden sheets (*gser gyi glegs bam*) with liquid lapis lazuli (*bai dūrya'i zhun ma*). According to Nyang ral,⁴⁴ it was twenty years after the *parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha in a place south-east of Buddhagayā that King Jah had his seven dreams. The fifth [dream] was as follows: “[King Jah] dreamt that [multi-colored] rays of various precious gems were shining from the solar disc amidst clouds. In the middle of [these rays] was a mystical knot (*dpal be'u: śrīvatsa*) made of a

⁴¹ Rog, *Grub mtha' bstan sgron* (pp. 24.3–27.3). For an English translation of the passage and some notes and references, see Cabezón 2013: 84–87.

⁴² Rog, *Grub mtha' bstan sgron* (p. 24.3–5); Cabezón 2013: 84.

⁴³ Nyang ral *chos 'byung* (p. 72.6–8): *gsang sngags rnams lha gnas su | rdo rje 'dzin don sdud pa po rnams kyis rin po che gser gyi glegs bam la bai dūrya zhun mas bris pa dang |*.

⁴⁴ Nyang ral (revealed), *gSang sngags bka'i lde mig* (pp. 283.6–284.2): *ngas mi rtag pa'i tshul bstan nas lo brgyad [= brgya?] dang bcu lon te ! nga 'dzam bu gling gyi mi rnams la 'bras bu'i chos 'di gser gyi gleg bam la ! bai dūrya rtsa ba rang gnas su bris la ! thugs rje mthun pa'i byin brlabs kyis ! rgyal po dzah'i khang thog gu rang babs su mthong bar 'gyur ! zhes bskul bas !*

purple-brown precious stone that was endowed with light from fire and was totally transparent. Within it was a golden book written with liquid lapis lazuli.” King Jaḥ dreamt that books rained on the roof of his palace like the falling of shooting stars on the ground. “Those books that appeared in his dream appeared in his hands.”⁴⁵ The Tantric scriptures of the Sādhana Section (sGrub sde) of Mahāyoga as represented by Nyang ral’s *bKa’ bryad bde bshegs ’dus pa* cycle, too, are said to have been codified by Vajradharma (rDo rje chos) and put by *vidyādhara*s into writing on golden sheets (*gser gyi glegs bam*) with liquid lapis lazuli (*baidūrya’i zhun ma*).⁴⁶

We all know the legendary account of the appearance of the first signs of Buddhism in Tibet during the reign of the twenty-eighth Tibetan ruler lHa Tho tho ri, which has been narrated repeatedly by Tibetan authors in its various versions and with varying details. Among the objects that fell from heaven on the roof of the king’s palace, the Yum bu bla sgang, Nyang ral, for example, mentions a scripture which he describes as “a golden book [stamped] with the sign of a seal [and] placed in a casket made of precious materials” (*rin po che’i za ma tog gi nang du gser gyi glegs bam mu tra’i [= drā’i] phyag rgya dang bcas pa zhig*), and which “appeared from heaven accompanied by sunrays while [gliding] on top of rays of five colors” (*nam mkha’ nas tshur la nyi ma’i ’od zer dang ’gros nas ’od zer sna Inga’i sna la*).⁴⁷ According to some Tibetan sources, such as the *Mani’i bka’ bum*, the scriptures that fell on the roof of the Yum bu bla sgang palace was “written in Tibetan script with liquid lapis lazuli on gold plates” (*gser gyi glegs bu la bai dūrya zhun mas bod yig tu bris pa*).⁴⁸ As one would perhaps anticipate, some Tibetan

⁴⁵ Nyang ral chos ’byung (pp. 90.21–91.5): *Inga pa la ni ...rmis so* ||; ibid. (p. 92.13–14): *rmi lam du byung ba’i glegs bam rnam phyag tu byung ngo* ||.

⁴⁶ See, for example, Nyang ral (revealed), *bDe ’dus byung tshul* (p. 238.1–2): *rdo rje chos zhes kyang bya ba des bsdus nas ! bar der rig ’dzin rnams kyis gser gyi glegs bam la baidūrya zhun mas bris te ! bde bshegs ’dus pa ’di la rnam pa Ingar phye !*.

⁴⁷ Nyang ral chos ’byung (pp. 164.4–165.14).

⁴⁸ Grub thob dNgos grub, Nyang ral Nyi ma ’od zer & Shākyā ’od or Shākyā bzang po (revealed), *Mani bka’ ’bum* (vol. 1 (E), p. 200.3–4): *gser gyi glegs bam la bai dūrya zhun mas bod yig tu bris pa’i mdo sde za ma tog bkod pa dang | pang kong phyag rgya pa dang | rten ’brel bcu gnyis kyi mdo dang | dge ba bcu’i mdo dang bcas pa bcug nas nyi ma’i ’od zer dang ’gros te pho brang gi steng du babs pa dang |*; Tshe tan zhabs drung, *Tshe rdo’i dri lan* (pp. 103.5–104.22). It is suggested therein that the *rGyal po bka’ ’bum* (i.e.

scholars have connected King Jah's story with that of lHa Tho tho ri's, stating that when the scriptures descended on the roof of the palace of King Jah, some scriptures were swept away by a wind and landed on the roof of the palace of lHa Tho tho ri.⁴⁹

A question that poses itself is what could be the source of the myth of scriptures written with lapis ink on gold tablets. The myth of golden scriptures written with lapis ink is mentioned also in an Indian commentary (*vṛtti*) on the smaller *Cakrasaṃvaratantra* by one Indrabodhi.⁵⁰ At the end of the verses containing the legend, the commentator states: “[This is] the meaning (or content) of what has been taught in the *Yoginīsaratantra*” (...*zhes rnal 'byor ma'i snying po'i rgyud las gsungs pa'i don to*). According to Tibetan sources, some of “the first books of Buddhist scriptures, the receptacle of the Buddha’s speech” (*gsung rten glegs bam gyi thog ma*), are the golden books containing the scriptures of the Intermediate Promulgation

Mani bka' 'bum) alludes to the expression. See also sTag lung Ngag dbang rnam rgyal, *sTag lung chos 'byung* (p. 101.14–15): *nam mkha' nas gser gyi shog bu la baidū ryas bris pa'i spang kong <skong> phyag rgya pa | mdo sde za ma tog*. See also the following statements from the *Mani bka' 'bum* (vol. 1 (E), p. 191.4–6): *rgyal po mngon par shes pa mnga' bas lo tstshā ba rnams la bka' chems btad nas nga yi bshad pa'i chos 'di rnams dpe gnyis su gyis la | gcig chu dar sngon po la gser dngul gyis bris la phra [= khra] 'brug dkor mdzod du | rgyal po'i bla gter du sbos | gcig rgya shog la shog dril du bris la | thugs rje chen po'i lha khang gi rta mgin gyi zhabs 'og tu sbos | gsang sngags kyi grub pa thob pa'i gang zag cig [= gcig] gis rnyed nas rang gi gdul bya'i chos su 'gyur ro ||*.

⁴⁹ lNga pa chen po, *rTen gsum dkar chag* (p. 268.15–21); sDe srid, *g.Ya' sel* (p. 896.2); Zhwa sgab pa, *Srid don rgyal rabs* (vol. 1, p. 146.1–4); Tshe tan zhabs drung, *Tshe rdo'i dri lan* (p. 104.4–5). The Fifth Dalai Lama does not indicate that the position is his, for it is reported by enclosing it with the word *zer*.

⁵⁰ Indrabodhi, *Cakrasaṃvaratantravṛtti* (P, fol. 5b3–6; D, fol. 4b4–6; B, vol. 9, p. 1148.2–9): *rgyal po indra bo dhi 'khor bcas la || dbang bskur byin brlabs [rlabs P] gsang chen bla med chos || lkog gyur dag tu rdo rje theg mchog gi || chos kyi 'khor lo bskor bar mdzad pa'o [pa'i P] || phyi dus rim par lung bstan sdud pa [ba P] pos || ri bo mchog rab byang shar lha gnas mchog || lcang lo can gyi pho brang chen por ni || rgyud rnams ma lus sems dpa' chen po'i tshogs || bye ba phrag ni dgu bcu rtsa drug sogs || 'dus te rje btsun gsang ba'i bdag po la || gsol ba btab tshe 'di skad bdag thos zhes || rab tu gsungs pa gser gyi shog bu la || bai dürya yi zhun mas yi ger bkod ||.*

written in lapis lazuli ink by the god Śakra or Indra.⁵¹ With “the scriptures of the Intermediate Promulgation” Kong sprul meant none other than the Prajñāpāramitā scriptures. Indeed, the myth is found in the 24th chapter of the *Pañcavimśatisāhasrikā* (i.e. *Nyi khri*), a chapter devoted to the Bodhisattva Sadāprarudita (rTag tu ngu / rTag par rab tu ngu ba). Sadāprarudita, accompanied by five hundred damsels, go to Bodhisattva Dharmodgata (Chos ’phags) to listen to his teachings. In the meantime, Dharmodgata has commissioned a shrine (*khang bu brtsegs pa: kūṭāgāra*) for the Prajñāpāramitā made of seven kinds of precious stones, decorated with red sandalwood, and bedecked with string nets strung with pearls. In the four corners of the shrine, he had jewels hung so that they functioned as lamps. He also had silver stands for incense hung on all four sides, in which incense was offered to the Prajñāpāramitā. “In the center of the shrine, he installed four thrones made of seven kinds of precious stones upon which he placed four treasure chests made of precious materials. In these, he placed the Prajñāpāramitā [scriptures] written on gold plates with liquid lapis lazuli. The shrine itself was adorned with hanging bunches of silk scarves of various kinds and forms.”⁵² Sadāprarudita and five hundred damsels witness Śakra and several thousands of other celestial beings making offerings and paying homage to the shrine. Being asked about it, Śakra tells Sadāprarudita about the Prajñāpāramitā. He states, however, that it would be difficult for him to show Sadāprarudita and the damsels the Prajñāpāramitā

⁵¹ See, for example, dPa’ bo, *mKhas pa’i dga’ ston* (p. 43.6–18): *gsung rten thog ma ’khor lo bar pa’i tshe || brgya byin gyis ni gser gyi glegs bu la || baiḍūrya sngon bzhus pas sher phyin bris || lha yi gnas su mchod cing bkur bar gsungs ||*; Kong sprul, *Shes bya mdzod* (p. 290.3–8), particularly (p. 290.3–4): *gsung rten glegs bam gyi thog ma ni | ’khor lo bar pa brgya byin gyis gser gyi glegs bu la bai ḍūrya’i zhun mas bris pa dang |*.

⁵² *Pañcavimśatisāhasrikā* (T, vol. Nga, fols. 377b6–378a1; B, vol. 28, p. 816.8–10): *brtsegs [rtseg B] khang de’i nang na rin po che sna bdun las byas pa’i khri bzhag ste | de’i steng du rin po che’i sgrom bzhi bzhag go || de’i nang na shes rab kyi pha rol tu [du B] phyin pa gser gyi glegs bam la bai ḍurya mthing ga [ka B] zhun mas bris pa bzhugs so ||*. See also the *Saddharmaṇḍarīkasūtra* cited by J. S. Negi *et al.* in the *Bod legs tshig mdzod* (s.v. *gser gyi skud pa: vaiḍūryam suvarṇasūtrāṣṭāpadanibaddham: gzhi bai ḍurya la gser gyi skud pas ming mangs ris su bris pa*).

[scriptures] written on gold plates with liquid lapis lazuli, for Bodhisattva Dharmodgata had sealed it with seven seals.⁵³

5. Scriptures and Treatises Worthy of Deluxe Editions

It is clear that because of the enormous cost, effort, time, and logistics involved in producing deluxe editions, those who commissioned them had to set priorities in the selection of texts. Naturally, the degree of sanctity ascribed to a text in a given period, place, and tradition or school has obviously been the most important criterion. The next important criterion has been the size of the text. The shorter and the more sacred scriptures are, the more likely they are to have undergone deluxe editions. Of all Buddhist scriptures those of the Prajñāpāramitā seem to have the largest number of deluxe editions to their name, and among them the *Vajracchedikā* (*rDo rje gcod pa*), *Āśṭasāhasrikā* (*brGyad stong pa*), and *Śatasāhasrikā* ('Bum) appear to have been the most popular.⁵⁴ We shall, however, perhaps never come to know the total number of deluxe editions of these scriptures made throughout history within the Tibetan cultural sphere. Apart from single volumes of Prajñāpāramitā scriptures, there are also reports of deluxe golden editions of basic and explanatory Tantric scriptures, including the *Guhyasamājatantra*, *Cakrasaṃvara-tantra*, and *Kālacakratantra* (*gsang 'dus dus gsum*) in their Tibetan translation.⁵⁵ We also have

⁵³ Interestingly, it has been reported that according to what is probably a 9th-century Zoroastrian book, Zoroaster ‘brought the religion’ and engraved the twelve hundred chapters of it on tablets of gold. See Smith 1993: 48–49.

⁵⁴ *Tshe tan zhabs drung*, *Bya khyung gdan rabs* (p. 141.11–13) reports golden and silver editions of the *Śatasāhasrikā* and *Pañcavimśatisāhasrikā*. See also, for example, *Kah thog rig 'dzin*, *Gung thang gdung rabs* (pp. 106.16–107.4), which reports that mNga' bdag / Khri rgyal 'Bum lde mgon (1253–1280), the ruler of Mang yul gung thang, commissioned an exquisite (*lta bas chog mi shes pa*) golden edition of the 16-volume *Śatasāhasrikā* (in Tibetan translation). See also Nor brang, *Shel dkar phreng ba* (p. 184.10–13). See also Gu ge Tshe ring rgyal po, *mNga' ris skor gsum* (pp. 16.22–17.1): *da dung khong gis yum chen pu ti rgyas 'bring bsdus gsum mthing shog la gser chus bris pa dang* |. Cf. rTson sgrig lhan tshogs, *sDe dge rdzong dgon pa'i lo rgyus* (p. 7.22–23): *sher phyin rgyas 'bring bsdus gsum gser bris su byas pa sogs gser dngul gyis bris pa'i glegs bam mang po dang* |.

⁵⁵ Klong rdol Ngag dbang blo bzang (1719–1794) wrote a kind of table of contents (*kha byang*) and verses of aspiration (*smon tshig*) for these deluxe editions. See the *Klong rdol gsung 'bum* (vol. 2, pp. 750.19–752.14).

reports of gold manuscripts of the Tibetan translations of the *Vajrasikharatantra*, *Durgatipariśodhanatantra*, and a certain corpus of Tantric Scriptures (*rGyud 'bum*).⁵⁶ One also encounters references to some deluxe editions of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* such as those commissioned by (a) mNga' bdag 'Gro mgon dpal, the son of Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer, as a memorial (*dgongs rdzogs*) for his father who died in the year 1192 ('Gro mgon dpal is also said to have commissioned 113 volumes of golden editions of various scriptures (*gser chos kho na pusti brgya dang bcu gsum*), which included the largest version of the Prajñāpāramitā scripture, “anthology of [short] sūtras” (*mdo mang*) and of *dhāranīs* (*gzungs 'dus*)),⁵⁷ (b) Ratna gling pa (1403–1479,⁵⁸ and (c) gTer bdag gling pa (1646–1714).⁵⁹ Works by indigenous Tibetan scholars have also been deemed sacred enough by some to deserve deluxe editions. Examples include deluxe editions of mKhas grub dGe legs dpal bzang's exposition of the *utpattikrama* practice of the *Guhyasamājatantra* and Tsong kha pa's explanation of the *utpannakrama* practice of the same tantra.⁶⁰ Similarly, a deluxe edition of Tsong kha pa's *Byang chub gzhung lam*, a work on *bodhisattva* precepts, has also been reported.⁶¹ Deluxe

⁵⁶ Chab spel & Nor brang, *g.Yu yi phreng ba* (vol. 1, p. 542.17–20): *de'i sras lha rgyal | rgyal po 'dis gser bzhun gyi khu bas rdo rje rtse mo dang | ngan song sbyong rgyud | rgyud 'bum cha tshang bcas bskrun*; Anonymous, *La dwags rgyal rabs* (p. 44.3–5).

⁵⁷ Thub bstan chos dar, *rNying rgyud dkar chag* (pp. 6.22–7.21); Karma bde legs, *rGyud 'bum phyogs sgrig dkar chag* (p. 22.9–17).

⁵⁸ Karma bde legs, *rGyud 'bum phyogs sgrig dkar chag* (pp. 24.7–25.7).

⁵⁹ bsTan pa'i sgron me, *sMin gling dkar chag* (p. 94.7–8): *gser bris kyi rnying ma rgyud 'bum cha tshang bcas bzhugs*. The deluxe edition of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* is reportedly housed in a temple in sMin grol gling monastery called the bDe chen yang rtse. For some additional information on this edition, see Karma bde legs, *rGyud 'bum phyogs sgrig dkar chag* (p. 25.14–20).

⁶⁰ As examples, deluxe manuscript editions (in golden and silver ink on blue-black paper coloured with indigo and soot) of mKhas grub dGe legs dpal bzang's work on the *utpattikrama* of the *Guhyasamājatantra* and Tsong kha pa Blo bzang grags pa's work on the *utpannakrama* of the same Tantric tradition kept in the Cambridge University Library (CUL Add. 1666) may be mentioned. For a description and images of two sample pages, see Lunardo & Clemente 2014: 106–107.

⁶¹ For a description and sample images of the deluxe edition of Tsong kha pa's *Byang chub gzhung lam*, see Lunardo 2014: 137. The title and description of the deluxe edition takes it for granted that it comprises Tsong

golden editions of some collected writings (*gsung/bka' bum*) of Tibetan scholars have not been rare either.⁶² Occasionally, even biographies of masters of a certain school, such as the *bKa' brgyud gser phreng*, have been produced as deluxe editions.⁶³ Among the large collections, the *bKa' gyur* has probably the highest number of deluxe editions, in the first place, mainly because it is revered by Tibetan Buddhists as the Words of the Buddha but also because of the feasibility of such an undertaking compared to other canonical collections such as the *bsTan gyur*, which is much larger.

6. Some Deluxe Editions of the *bKa' gyur* and *bsTan gyur*

As mentioned above, it is beyond the scope of this contribution to trace, document, and describe all possible accounts or reports of deluxe editions made in the Tibetan cultural sphere. Nonetheless,

kha pa's commentaries on the *Yogācārabhūmi*. The sample pages indicate that the work is the *Byang chub gzhung lam*, and it may be considered related to the *Śilapaṭala* of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, a part of the *Yogācārabhūmi* in the widest sense.

⁶² The collected writings of the Sa skya patriarchs, for example, are said to have been published as golden edition (Kah thog rig 'dzin, *Gung thang gdung rabs*, p. 133.16–19; cf. Jackson 1991). See also Ko zhul, *mKhas grub ming mdzod* (p. 363.11–13), which states that the National Cultural Palace (Mi rigs rig gnas pho brang) in Beijing still holds the golden manuscript (*gser bris can*) of the one-volume collected writings (*gsung rtsom*) of rGya gar Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1436–1494), the nineteenth throne-holder (*khri rabs bcu dgu pa*) of Sa skya monastery. Similarly, the Nationalities Library (Mi rigs dpe mdzod khang) in Beijing is said to hold the golden edition of the 14-volume collected writings of the Fourth Zhwa mar pa Chos grags ye shes (1453–1524). See Mi nyag mgon po, *mKhas dbang rnam thar* (p. 217.5–6): *gsung bum ni mi rigs dpe mdzod khang du mthing shog la gser zhun gyis bris pa'i pod chen bcu bzhi bzhugs so* ||.

⁶³ See, for example, the *La dwags rgyal rabs* (pp. 51.10–52.1). The manuscript edition of the *bKa' brgyud gser phreng* is said to have been produced in gold, silver, and copper. It is not clear if three separate sets were made, namely, one in gold, one in silver, and one in copper, or whether only one “hybrid” (*ra ma lug*) set was made. Also, the commissioner is not quite clear. If I interpret the passage correctly, it was commissioned by the two princes of the La dwags king 'Jam dbyangs rnam rgyal (r.? 1595–1616), that is, Ngag dbang rnam rgyal and bsTan 'dzin rnam rgyal, born to his queen Tshe ring rgyal mo. The La dwags king Seng ge rnam rgyal (r. 1616–1642), too, seems to have commissioned deluxe editions of some scriptures and biographies (*La dwags rgyal rabs*, p. 55.11–14).

without trying to be exhaustive, and far from trying to be complete, I shall list in the following examples of some well-known and less-known deluxe editions of the *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur*, which may or may not have survived into the present.

(i) Some Deluxe Editions of the *bKa' 'gyur*

At this point, it is impossible to estimate the exact number of deluxe *bKa' 'gyur* editions that ever existed. Kāḥ thog si tu Chos kyi rgya mtsho's recording of several golden *bKa' 'gyur* (and *bsTan 'gyur*) sets in his travelogue has been reported by Orna Almogi.⁶⁴ Here, a few further examples that could be traced in some random Tibetan sources may be mentioned.

(1)	Several deluxe editions of the <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> in gold and silver commissioned by rJe btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1147–1216) (along with some editions written with copper, vermillion, and black ink). ⁶⁵
(2)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by Bla ma Rin chen bzang po (1243–1319), a master of the Yang dgon sgom sde of Tshal pa. ⁶⁶
(3)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by sKu zhang Grags pa rgyal mtshan (13 th cent.). ⁶⁷
(4)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by 'Phags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1235–1280). ⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Almogi 2012.

⁶⁵ bDud 'joms, *rGyal rabs 'phrul me* (p. 244.12–14): *rgyal ba'i bka' 'gyur ro cog gi glegs bam gser | dngul | zangs | mtshal | snag rnams kyis bris pa bcas snga phyi bsdoms glegs bam stong phrag brgal ba bzhengs |*.

⁶⁶ 'Gos lo, *Deb sngon* (vol. 1, p. 495.13–14): *gser gyi bka' 'gyur bzhengs*; Roerich 1976: 410 (noted also in Schaeffer 2009: 206, n. 3).

⁶⁷ Roerich 1976: 408; Schaeffer 2009: 206, n. 3. sKal bzang & rGyal po, *Zhwa lu'i dkar chag* (pp. 19.20–21.2): *'dzam bu chu gser gyis bris pa'i bka' 'gyur dang brgyad stong pa rtsa brgyad rnams bzhengs*. It seems that one more golden *bKa' 'gyur* was commissioned by him later. See ibid. (p. 21.7–8): *rin chen dang po las grub pa'i bka' 'gyur sogs gsung rab tshan chen po dang |*.

⁶⁸ bDud 'joms, *rGyal rabs 'phrul me* (p. 251.16–17): *rgyal ba'i bka' 'gyur ro cog thams cad gser gyis bris pa sogs glegs bam nyis brgya lhag tsam bzhengs*; Rag ra, *mKhas pa'i mgul rgyan* (p. 212.1–2): *rgyal ba'i bka' dpe nyis brgya lhag tsam gser gyis bzhengs*. Note that in the latter the term *bka' 'gyur* has not been employed.

(5)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by rNgog Rin chen bzang po (1243–1319). ⁶⁹
(6)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by Ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan (1302–1364). ⁷⁰
(7)	The hybrid gold-and-silver edition of the <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by Tshal pa si tu Kun dga' rdo rje (1309–1364). ⁷¹
(8)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by Chos skyong rgyal mo, the queen of mNga' bdag / Khri rgyal bSod nams lde (1371–1404). ⁷²
(9)	Two sets of gold and one hybrid gold-and-silver edition of the <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by the Phag gru ruler Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1374–1432). ⁷³
(10)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by the Sixth Pha gru sde srid Grags pa 'byung gnas (1414–1446). ⁷⁴

⁶⁹ See Ko zhul, *mKhas grub ming mdzod* (p. 475.4): *gser gyi bka' 'gyur bzhengs* |.

⁷⁰ bDud 'joms, *rGyal rabs 'phrul me* (p. 288.10): *gser gyis [= gyi] bka' 'gyur ro cog bzhengs*; Zhwa sgab pa, *Srid don rgyal rabs* (vol. 1, p. 333.19); Rag ra, *mKhas pa'i mgul rgyan* (p. 234.8): *gser gyi bka' 'gyur <bzhengs>*. See van der Kuijp 1994: 140–142, where Ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan's commissioning of a *bsTan 'gyur* set is discussed but without reference to any deluxe edition of either the *bKa' 'gyur* or *bsTan 'gyur*.

⁷¹ Ko zhul, *mKhas grub ming mdzod* (p. 1380.8–9): *de gser dngul 'dres ma'i bka' 'gyur nyis brgya drug cu bzhengs par tshal pa bka' 'gyur zhes 'bod*.

⁷² Kah thog rig 'dzin, *Gung thang gdung rabs* (pp. 121.19–122.6); Nor brang O rgyan, *Shel dkar phreng ba* (p. 194.19–20): *gser chos bka' 'gyur dang | bstam 'gyur cha tshang bzhengs*. The *bKa' 'gyur* set commissioned by the queen Chos skyong rgyal mo is explicitly said to be in gold, having been made in commemoration (*dgongs rdzogs*) of her late husband, but the *bsTan 'gyur* commissioned by her was perhaps an ordinary set made with the encouragement of the Sa skyia scholar Red mda' ba gZhon nu blo gros (1349–1412). Exceptionally small numbers of golden manuscripts (*gser yig*) are said to be found in Tabo (Steinkellner 2000: 324), but they may possibly be connected with this set.

⁷³ Rag ra, *mKhas pa'i mgul rgyan* (p. 235.17–19): *gser gyi bka' 'gyur tshar gnyis | gser dngul 'dres ma gcig | skyia spod <pod> tshar gsum dang | de rnams kyang phyi mor pher ba'i bris dag sogs shin tu spus gtsang bzhengs* |.

⁷⁴ bDud 'joms, *rGyal rabs 'phrul me* (p. 292.12–13): *gser gyi bka' 'gyur bzhengs pa sogs gong ma na rim gyi mdzad srol bzang po ma nyams par bzung*; Zhwa sgab pa, *Srid don rgyal rabs* (vol. 1, p. 345.10–11); 'Gos lo, *Deb snigon* (vol. 2, p. 1262.5): *gser gyi bka' 'gyur bzhengs*; Roerich 1976:

(11)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by the Sixth Karma pa mThong ba don ldan (1416–1453). ⁷⁵
(12)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by Khri rNam rgyal lde (1422–1503). ⁷⁶
(13)	The hybrid gold-and-silver <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by Chos rje rNam rgyal grags pa dpal bzang (1469–1530), the Thirteenth Throne-holder of sTag lung monastery. ⁷⁷
(14)	The hybrid gold-and-silver <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by 'Bri gung Kun dga' rin chen (1475–1527). ⁷⁸
(15)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by the Pha gru ruler Ngag dbang bkra shis grags pa rgyal mtshan (1480–1564). ⁷⁹
(16)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by Kun bzang nyi zla grags (1514–1560). ⁸⁰
(17)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by Khri Kun bzang nyi zla grags pa bzang po'i lde (1519–1560). ⁸¹
(18)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by a certain sDe pa 'Ol kha pa/ba (once a governor in the Pha gru hegemony who later became a fully ordained monk). ⁸²

1084 (referred to in Schaeffer 2009: 206–207, n. 3, which, however, simply states that a set of golden *bKa' 'gyur* was placed in rTse thang monastery in the 1440s).

⁷⁵ Ko zhul, *mKhas grub ming mdzod* (p. 19.11–12): *lho rong du bstan 'gyur gos dar thum can bzhengs | dza landha rar gser gyi bka' 'gyur glegs shing can bcas bzhengs*.

⁷⁶ Kah thog rig 'dzin, *Gung thang gdung rabs* (p. 127.19–21): *rdzong dkar lha khang dmar po ru rgyud sde lha tshogs rab 'byams kyi sku brnyan dang bka' 'gyur gser rkyang gyis sgrub pa <dang> skya bris bcas tshar gnyis |*; Nor brang O rgyan, *Shel dkar phreng ba* (p. 197.14–15): *gser bris bka' 'gyur cha tshang gcig dang | skya bris tshar gnyis*.

⁷⁷ sTag lung Ngag dbang rnam rgyal, *sTag lung chos 'byung* (p. 482.8–11).

⁷⁸ See below, note 117.

⁷⁹ Rag ra, *mKhas pa'i mgul rgyan* (p. 239.18–19): *'dis gser gyi bka' 'gyur dang gos sku sogz bzhengs*.

⁸⁰ Nor brang O rgyan, *Shel dkar phreng ba* (pp. 201.21–202.2): *gser chos bka' 'gyur dang | skya bris bstan 'gyur cha tshang bcas bzhengs pa |*.

⁸¹ Kah thog rig 'dzin, *Gung thang gdung rabs* (p. 136.11–12): *rgyal ba'i bka' 'gyur ro cog glegs bam gser rkyang gis bsgrubs pa | skya bris kyi bstan 'gyur tshang ma*; Nor brang O rgyan, *Shel dkar phreng ba* (pp. 201.21–202.2).

(19)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by Chos rje la sngon pa bsTan 'dzin 'brug sgra (tenure: 1655–1667, d. 1667), the Second sDe srid of Bhutan. ⁸³
(20)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by Drung chen Ngag dbang tshe ring (tenure: 1701–1704), the Sixth sDe srid of Bhutan. ⁸⁴
(21)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by Ngag dbang rgyal mtshan (tenure: 1739–1744), the Twelfth sDe srid of Bhutan. ⁸⁵
(22)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by bsTan 'dzin bsod nams bzang mo, the mother of Kun dga' bsod nams aka A myes zhabs. ⁸⁶
(23)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by gTer bdag gling pa aka gTer chen 'Gyur med rdo rje (1646–1714). ⁸⁷
(24)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by Pho lha ba/nas bSod nams stobs rgyas (1689–1747). ⁸⁸

⁸² Rag ra, *mKhas pa'i mgul rgyan* (p. 246.10–11): *gser gyi bka' 'gyur bzhengs*.

⁸³ rJe dGe 'dun rin chen, *Zhabs drung rnam thar* (p. 305.7); Drag shos Phun tshogs dbang 'dus, *'Brug chos srid kyi rabs* (p. 111.6): *rgyal ba'i bka' 'gyur gser las bzhengs pa sogs*.

⁸⁴ rJe dGe 'dun rin chen, *Zhabs drung rnam thar* (p. 306.1). mKhan po Phun tshogs bkra shis, *bZo rigs bcu gsum* (p. 168.7–17). The author points out that among the several sets of golden *bKa' 'gyur* made in Bhutan, the best is the one commissioned by Ngag dbang tshe ring, the Sixth sDe srid of Bhutan. In addition, he states that only 58 volumes of this set (now kept) in bKra shis chos rdzong in Thimphu, survived a fire disaster. See *ibid.* (p. 168.7–10): *'brug lu bka' 'gyur gser bris ma le sha yod pa'i gral las legs shos rang sngon sde srid drug pa sa'i brgya sbiyin ngag dbang tshe ring gi skabs bris pa'i bka' 'gyur gser bris ma de tsho in mas*]. See also Drag shos Phun tshogs dbang 'dus, *'Brug chos srid kyi rabs* (p. 134.6–7).

⁸⁵ rJe dGe 'dun rin chen, *Zhabs drung rnam thar* (p. 307.11).

⁸⁶ Pad ma bkra shis provides some detailed information about the *bKa' 'gyur*, which is called the *bKa' 'gyur bstan 'gro'i dpal mgon* (“Corpus of the [Buddha's] Word in [Tibetan] Translation, Which Is the Glorious Protector of the Doctrine and Sentient Beings”). For details, see Pad ma bkra shis, *gNa' dpe'i rnam bshad* (pp. 59.12–62.9; 119.9–120.16).

⁸⁷ sTag sgang mkhas mchog, *Gur bkra'i chos byung* (p. 705.23–24): *gser dngul gyi bka' 'gyur gyis mtshon glegs bam lnga brgya skor dang*].

⁸⁸ Rag ra, *mKhas pa'i mgul rgyan* (p. 320.3–4): *gser gyi bka' 'gyur dang rin po che rnam lnga'i bkar [= bka'] 'gyur khyad 'phags*; Zhwa sgab pa, *Srid*

(25)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by Grub chen Thang stong rgyal po (1361/65–1486). ⁸⁹
(26)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> preserved in dPal yul monastery. ⁹⁰
(27)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> of sDe dge. ⁹¹
(28)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by the king of La dwags Seng ge rnam rgyal (c. 1570–1642). ⁹²
(29)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> that served as the reverential object of the Eighth Karma pa Mi bskyod rdo rje (1507–1554). ⁹³
(30)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by the Fourteenth Throne-holder of 'Bri gung monastery Chos rgyal rin chen (1421–1479). ⁹⁴
(31)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by the Fifteenth Throne-holder of 'Bri gung monastery Rin chen rnam rgyal chos kyi grags pa rgyal mtshan (1519–1576). ⁹⁵
(32)	The hybrid gold-and-silver edition of the <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by the Twenty-fifth Throne-holder of 'Bri gung monastery Rig 'dzin chos kyi grags pa (1595–1659). ⁹⁶
(33)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> of Mustang. ⁹⁷
(34)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by rGyas sras

don rgyal rabs (vol. 1, p. 554.5–7): *dga' ldan du rgyal ba'i bka' 'gyur rin po che gser bris ma 'dzam gling g.yas bzhag sogs bzhengs par mdzad pa dang* |.

⁸⁹ Cha ris, *Dris lan brgya pa* (p. 133.3–5): *gsung rten la rgyu gser las grub pa'i bka' 'gyur zhig gis mgo byas bka' 'gyur bco brgyad | bstan 'gyur bco lnga*. It is not clear if the 18 sets of *bKa' 'gyur* and 15 sets of *bstan 'gyur* that he is said to have commissioned were manuscript editions or merely xylographic prints.

⁹⁰ Mu po, *dPal yul gdan rabs* (p. 346.2–3): *rgyu rin chen dang po las bris pa'i rgyal ba'i bka' 'gyur rin po che dang* |. No details could be found on this golden *bKa' 'gyur*.

⁹¹ Ngag dbang nor bu, *bstan 'gyur gi byung ba* (p. 12.6–17); *Gur bkra'i chos 'byung* (p. 928.21); cf. rTson sgrig lhan tshogs, *sDe dge rdzong dgon pa'i lo rgyus* (p. 7.21): *gsung rten gser bris bka' 'gyur tshar gnyis*.

⁹² Anonymous, *La dwags rgyal rabs* (p. 54.13–14).

⁹³ Rin chen dpal bzang, *mTshur phu'i dkar chag* (p. 120.18–19): *rjes mi skyod zhabs kyis thugs dam du bzhengs pa'i rgyal ba'i bka' 'gyur gser bris ma....*

⁹⁴ 'Bri gung dKon mchog rgya mtsho, *'Bri gung chos 'byung* (p. 401.11–14).

⁹⁵ 'Bri gung dKon mchog rgya mtsho, *'Bri gung chos 'byung* (p. 444.19–30).

⁹⁶ 'Bri gung dKon mchog rgya mtsho, *'Bri gung chos 'byung* (p. 490.24–27).

⁹⁷ For a report on the golden Mustang *bKa' 'gyur*, see Mathes 1997.

	bsTan 'dzin rab rgyas (1638–1696), the Fourth sDe srid of Bhutan. ⁹⁸
(35)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by sDe srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653–1705). ⁹⁹
(36)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by Chos rgyal Shes rab dbang phyug, the Thirteenth sDe srid of Bhutan. ¹⁰⁰
(37)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> commissioned by the Eighth Dalai Lama 'Jam dpal rgya mtsho (1758–1804). ¹⁰¹
(38)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> preserved in the <i>bKa' 'gyur lha khang</i> in the Potala Palace. ¹⁰²
(39)	The silver <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> preserved in the <i>bKa' 'gyur lha khang</i> in the Potala Palace. ¹⁰³
(40)	The golden <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> preserved in the Rig 'dzin lha khang in the Potala Palace. ¹⁰⁴
(41)	The silver <i>bKa' 'gyur</i> preserved in the Rig 'dzin lha khang in the Potala Palace. ¹⁰⁵

⁹⁸ rJe Ngag dbang lhun grub, *bsTan rab rnam thar* (pp. 228.1–229.1); Drag shos Phun tshogs dbang 'dus, *'Brug chos srid kyi rabs* (p. 107.7); *bka' 'gyur gser bris ma*; mKhan po Phun tshogs bkra shis, *bZo rigs bcu gsum* (p. 165.8–14).

⁹⁹ U yon lhan khang, *Po ta la'i lo rgyus* (p. 79.8–10). The 114-volume golden *bKa' 'gyur* is said to have been produced in Shel dkar rdzong and is now kept in the 'Khrungs rabs lha khang in the Potala Palace.

¹⁰⁰ Drag shos Phun tshogs dbang 'dus, *'Brug chos srid kyi rabs* (p. 167.3); *rgyal ba'i bka' 'gyur gser ma*.

¹⁰¹ U yon lhan khang, *Po ta la'i lo rgyus* (p. 52.5–7). The 116-volume golden *bKa' 'gyur* is kept in the dGa' ldan phun tshogs 'khyil aka Byams khang in the Potala Palace.

¹⁰² U yon lhan khang, *Po ta la'i lo rgyus* (p. 56.7–18). The 114-volume golden *bKa' 'gyur* is said there to be based on the rGyal rtse them spang ma edition of the *bKa' 'gyur* and to “include the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum*” (i.e. probably the rNying rgyud section).

¹⁰³ U yon lhan khang, *Po ta la'i lo rgyus* (pp. 56.19–57.8). The 114-volume silver *bKa' 'gyur* is said to have been produced in bZhad mThon smon gzhis ka, a place in gZhish ka rtse region.

¹⁰⁴ U yon lhan khang, *Po ta la'i lo rgyus* (p. 84.9–13). The 114-volume golden *bKa' 'gyur* is said to be based on the rGyal rtse them spang ma edition.

¹⁰⁵ U yon lhan khang, *Po ta la'i lo rgyus* (p. 84.14–16). The 114-volume silver *bKa' 'gyur* (based on the rGyal rtse them spang ma edition) is said to

(42)	The golden <i>bKa' gyur</i> (partial set) commissioned by the third king of Bhutan 'Jigs med rdo rje dbang phyug (1928–1972). ¹⁰⁶
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As mentioned above, this is merely a list of some deluxe editions of the *bKa' gyur* that may or may not be extant today. It may also be mentioned that in tracking these records, I have not followed any systematic method but have made efforts to gather relevant information from as many sources as possible. In cases where deluxe editions of both the *bKa' gyur* and *bsTan gyur* are reported together, it has been sometimes difficult to determine whether certain information (e.g. regarding the person who commissioned the edition, the ink used, and the like) refers to both sets or only to one of them.

(ii) Some Deluxe Editions of the *bsTan gyur*

As for the *bsTan gyur*, even simple editions of it are rarer when compared to the *bKa' gyur*, let alone deluxe editions. One of the obvious reasons is that in terms of accruing merit, its production is not as ‘lucrative’ as that of the *bKa' gyur*, particularly in proportion to the work and cost involved. In the following, I list twelve deluxe editions of the *bsTan gyur* mentioned in different Tibetan historical sources, which is, needless to say, far from being exhaustive.

(1)	The golden <i>bsTan gyur</i> reportedly commissioned by 'Bum lde mgon nag po kept at Shel dkar and later transferred to Southern La stod. ¹⁰⁷
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have been produced in bZhad mThon smon gzhis ka. Obviously this is one of the sets of the silver *bKa' gyur* produced in the gZhis ka rtse region.

¹⁰⁶ According to Ura 1995: 250, 52 (but according to another datum on the same page, 51) volumes of the golden *bKa' gyur* were produced in order to supplement the missing 52 volumes of an 18th-century *bKa' gyur* set (belonging to the Central Monk Body of Bhutan) that was destroyed in a fire. Some 67 calligraphers were engaged for two years (1966–1967) in writing these 52 volumes. See also mKhan po Phun tshogs bkra shis's *bZo rigs bsum gsum* (p. 168.7–17), which makes clear that the 58 volumes of the golden *bKa' gyur*—commissioned by Ngag dbang tshe ring, the Sixth sDe srid of Bhutan—that survived the fire together with the newly produced additional volumes (number not specified by him) commissioned by King 'Jigs med rdo rje dbang phyug make up the golden *bKa' gyur* set kept today in bKra shis chos rdzong. rJe dGe 'dun rin chen in his *lHo 'brug chos 'byung* (p. 438.9) makes a brief reference to this golden *bKa' gyur*.

(2)	The hybrid gold-and-silver edition of the <i>bsTan 'gyur</i> commissioned by the Third Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje (1284–1339). ¹⁰⁸
(3)	The golden <i>bsTan 'gyur</i> commissioned by Khri bKra shis sde (d. 1365). ¹⁰⁹
(4)	The golden <i>bsTan 'gyur</i> commissioned by bKra shis dpal 'bar. ¹¹⁰
(5)	The golden <i>bsTan 'gyur</i> commissioned by Chos skyong rgyal mo, the queen of mNga' bdag / Khri rgyal bSod nams lde

¹⁰⁷ See Diemberger, Elliot, Clemente 2014: 47. The information there is based on the biography of the 15th-century princess Chos kyi sgron ma from Lower mNga' ris.

¹⁰⁸ Ngag dbang nor bu, *bsTan 'gyur gi byung ba* (pp. 4.19–5.2): *kar ma pa rang byung rdo rje gser dngul bris pa'i bstan 'gyur | snar thang gyi bstan 'gyur la phyi mo byas nas spyi lo 1334 yas mas la karma pa rang byung rdo rje (spyi lo 1284–1339) shyin bdag byas nas gser dngul gyi bstan 'gyur pod drug cu yod pa bzhengs | 'di ni gser dngul gyi bris pa'i bstan 'gyur thog ma'o ||*; Ko zhul, *mKhas grub ming mdzod* (p. 31.15–16): *gser dngul zhun mas bstan 'gyur po ti bryga dang drug cu bzhengs. 'Gos lo gZhon nu dpal (Deb sngon, vol. 1, p. 584.12–15; Roerich 1976: 492; Schaeffer 2009: 206, n. 3) does mention Rang byung rdo rje's commissioning a set of the *bsTan 'gyur* (in addition to the *bKa' 'gyur*) in bSam yas, but he does not specify it as a deluxe edition.*

¹⁰⁹ Kah thog rig 'dzin in his *Gung thang gdung rabs* (pp. 115.5–117.9) reports that during the reign of Khri bKra shis sde, the ruler of Mang yul gung thang, a gold mine (*gser khung*) was discovered on the eastern side of Mount Ti se and thus gold was abundant, and that the ruler commissioned a set of golden *bsTan 'gyur*. The ruler is also said to have commissioned “wooden slabs smeared with gold water” (*gser chu byug pa'i glegs shing*) to be used as book covers. As soon as this project was successfully completed, the king launched a new project of making a set of the *bKa' 'gyur*, presumably also golden. Unfortunately, after the acquisition of the necessary paper from sKyid rong was complete, the king passed away, and the project could not be realised. See also Nor brang O rgyan, *Shel dkar phreng ba* (pp. 190.8–191.10); Ko zhul, *mKhas grub ming mdzod* (p. 169.16–19): *bstan 'gyur yang gser gyi yang zhun gyis bzhengs te rab byung drug pa'i chu mo yos lo te spyi lo 1363 lor lo chen byang chub rtse mo sog s kyis zhus dang rab gnas legs par mdzad do ||*.

¹¹⁰ As one of the legacies of bKra shis dpal 'bar, who succeeded his father Khri rgyal bSam grub lde (b. 1371), Kah thog Tshe dbang nor bu mentions bKra shis dpal 'bar's commissioning of a *bsTan 'gyur* written with pure gold. See Kah thog rig 'dzin, *Gung thang gdung rabs* (p. 139.6): *bstan 'gyur gser rkyang las bzhengs pa*; Nor brang O rgyan, *Shel dkar phreng ba* (p. 203.5–7).

	(1371–1404). ¹¹¹
(6)	The golden <i>bsTan 'gyur</i> kept in the Potala Palace. ¹¹²
(7)	The golden <i>bsTan 'gyur</i> commissioned by Pho lha ba/nas bSod nams stobs rgyas (1689–1747). ¹¹³
(8)	The silver <i>bsTan 'gyur</i> of sDe dge commissioned by Chos rgyal bsTan pa tshe ring (1678–1739). ¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Nor brang O rgyan, *Shel dkar phreng ba* (p. 194.19–20): *gser chos bka' 'gyur dang | bstan 'gyur cha tshang bzhengs*. It seems that the *bsTan 'gyur*, too, was a golden edition. Kah thog rig 'dzin, *Gung thang gdung rabs* (pp. 121.19–122.6).

¹¹² The golden *bsTan 'gyur* is said to have been given by the Chinese emperor Ch'ien lung Ti (乾隆帝) (1711–1799) to the Seventh Dalai Lama b/sKal bzang rgya mtsho (1708–1757). It is reportedly still kept in the Potala Palace. Ngag dbang nor bu, *bsTan 'gyur gi byung ba* (p. 10.10–13); *pho brang po ta la'i gser bris bstan 'gyur bris ma | spyi lo dus rabs bcu bdun par rgya nag gong ma ching yung ting gis rgyal dbang sku phreng bdun pa skal bzang rgya mtsho la gnang ba'i gser bris bstan 'gyur | da lta po ta lar bzhugs |*. The *Po ta la'i lo rgyus*, compiled by the Bod rang skyong Ijongs rig dngos do dam u yon lhan khang, does not seem to mention this golden *bsTan 'gyur*. On the date of this golden *bsTan 'gyur*, see Miyake 1995, and for a brief guide to it, see Skilling 1991. A ccomparative table of the golden *bsTan 'gyur* with the Peking edition of the *bsTan 'gyur* can be found in Miyake 2000.

¹¹³ Ngag dbang nor bu in *bsTan 'gyur gi byung ba* (pp. 18.5–20.7), an introduction to his *gSer bris bstan dkar*, provides several details about Pho lha ba's golden *bsTan 'gyur*. Ngag dbang nor bu explains the reasons for composing a new catalogue of the *bsTan 'gyur gser bris ma*. The *Rin chen phra tshoms*—a traditional catalogue of the *bsTan 'gyur gser bris ma* by 'Jam dbyangs bde be'i rdo rje (1682–1741)—which is, by the way, in verse, provides only short titles of the texts, and it lacks serial (or identification) numbers of texts and folio or page numbers. Pho lha ba's *bsTan 'gyur gser bris ma* was kept in the Palace of Nationalities (Mi rigs pho brang) in Beijing during the period between 1959 and 1988. Ngag dbang nor bu, while preparing his *gSer bris bstan dkar*, had physical access to the golden manuscript. The 225-volume *bsTan 'gyur gser bris ma* is currently kept at dGa' ldan monastery in Lhasa. mDo mkhar ba Tshe ring dbang rgyal (1697–1763) in his *Mi dbang rtogs brjod* (pp. 820.15–827.9)—which according to the colophon (p. 860.16) was completed in the year 1733 (Chu mo glang)—does describe the making of the golden *bKa' 'gyur* but not of the golden *bsTan 'gyur*. For some additional references and information, see Schaefer 2009: 205, n. 59.

(9)	The hybrid gold-and-silver edition of the <i>bsTan 'gyur</i> commissioned by the Nineteenth Throne-holder of 'Bri gung monastery Rin chen rnam rgyal chos kyi grags pa rgyal mtshan (1519–1576). ¹¹⁵
(10)	The golden <i>bsTan 'gyur</i> commissioned by 'Jigs med rdo rje dbang phyug (1928–1972), the third king of Bhutan. ¹¹⁶
(11)	The hybrid gold-and-silver edition of the <i>bsTan 'gyur</i> commissioned by 'Bri gung Kun dga' rin chen (1475–1527). ¹¹⁷
(12)	The deluxe edition of the <i>bsTan 'gyur</i> commissioned by the Eighth Dalai Lama 'Jam dpal rgya mtsho (1758–1804). ¹¹⁸

7. Why Were Deluxe Editions Made?

Behind the individual motives of the production of deluxe editions seem to lie at least three related Buddhist doctrinal assumptions: (a) through the act of writing down and venerating Buddhist scriptures one accrues immense merit, as many Mahāyāna scriptures repeatedly

¹¹⁴ Ngag dbang nor bu, *bsTan 'gyur gi byung ba* (p. 12.6–17); *Gur bkra'i chos 'byung* (p. 928.22); cf. rTson sgrig lhan tshogs, *sDe dge rdzong dgon pa'i lo rgyus* (p. 7.21–22): *dngul bris kyi bstan 'gyur tshar gcig*.

¹¹⁵ 'Bri gung dKon mchog rgya mtsho, *'Bri gung chos 'byung* (p. 444.19–30).

¹¹⁶ The golden *bsTan 'gyur* is kept in bKra shis chos rdzong in Thimphu (Bhutan) and was completed in 1968 (Ura 1995: 250). According to this source, the golden *bsTan 'gyur* consists of 200 volumes. In 2012, I was able to take a brief look at two volumes of the *bsTan 'gyur*, which is kept in pigeonhole-style traditional book shelves jumbled together with the volumes of the *bKa' 'gyur*. No one seems to be aware of the existence or whereabouts of a catalogue.

¹¹⁷ Note that gold-and-silver deluxe editions of both the *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur* were made. 'Bri gung Kun dga' rin chen, *Log rtog kun sel* (p. 520.2–5): *bka' 'gyur sngon po gser dngul gyis brgyan par byas pa po ti brgya dang | sngags 'bum po ti gcig dang brgya rtsa gcig legs par grub cing | glegs shing sku rags na bza'i bye brag tshang ba | bstan 'gyur nyid kyang sngon po gser dngul gyis brgyan par byas te | po ti gril pod chen mo brgya dang bdun | lañtsa po ti gcig dang brgya dang brgyad do || de dag gi'ang glegs shing sku rags na bza'i bye brag rnams legs par grub pa'o || rgyas par dkar chag chen mor blta bar bya'o ||*

¹¹⁸ Dung dkar, *dPe rnying par skrun* (p. 426.15–19). Dung dkar Blo bzang 'phrin las mentions here the Eighth Dalai Lama's commissioning of the *Rin chen sna bdun gyi bstan 'gyur* in the context of assessing the costs of such projects.

profess,¹¹⁹ (b) the degree of merit that one accrues from these deeds depends on the scale of the work and quality of the edition as well as on the type and sanctity of the scriptures, and (c) the merit accumulated by these deeds always redounds to the good of the living and the dead to whom they are dedicated. Some of the concrete and immediate purposes may be mentioned: (a) One of the common motives is accruing merit for the deceased (*shi ba'i dge ba*), as in the case of Khri strong lde btsan, who commissioned an exclusive edition of the Prajñāpāramitā scriptures for his deceased queen, or as in the case of mNga' bdag 'Gro mgon dpal, who commissioned a golden edition of the Corpus of Tantric Scriptures in memory (*dgongs rdzogs*) of his father. As seen above, Chos skyong rgyal mo, the queen of mNga' bdag bSod nams lde, also commissioned a set of golden *bKa' 'gyur* in memory of her late husband.¹²⁰ (b) Another purpose of creating a deluxe edition of a Buddhist corpus is that it can be used by an important person as a support for his or her "personal practice" (*thugs dam*). For example, the gold-and-silver *bsTan 'gyur* commissioned by the Third Karma pa is said to have been meant for such a purpose. Conceivably, what is called *rgyal po'i bla dpe*—which may be rendered as "king's life copies" or "copies in the royal custody/archive" and which were copies of important scriptures kept at the royal treasury during the imperial period—were often special editions and had similar functions.¹²¹ (c) Occasionally, deluxe editions of certain scriptures were made so that they could be placed as contents into *stūpas*. Kah thog Tshe dbang nor bu reports that mNga' bdag / Khri rgyal 'Bum lde mgon (1253–1280), the ruler of Mang yul gung thang in Lower mNga' ris, commissioned a *stūpa*—resembling what is called a bKra shis sgo mang (perhaps lit. "Multiple Doors of Auspiciousness") at Rin chen sgang in Sa skyā—for which purpose he employed eight Nepalese craftsmen, and mentions several items that were placed in the *stūpa*. One of these is said to have been "a book of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* written with gold ink on blue paper, a support of Ārya Nāgārjuna's

¹¹⁹ See, for example, Zhu chen, *sDe dge bstan dkar* (pp. 864.4–875.9).

¹²⁰ See Kah thog rig 'dzin, *Gung thang gdung rabs* (pp. 121.19–122.6); Chab spel & Nor brang, *g.Yu yi phreng ba* (vol. 1, p. 514.16–18).

¹²¹ Jäschke 1881 does not mention *rgyal po'i bla dpe* but it does mention similar terms such as *rgyal po'i bla g.yu* and also *bla shing* ("a tree of fate") and *bla dar* ("a little flag on the top of the house, on which benedictions are written") (p. 383). Cf. Jäschke 1881: s.v. *bla* (II.3) "an object with which a person's life is ominously connected."

personal practice having [re-]emerged (in Tibet) during the reign of Chos rgyal Khri strong lde btsan.”¹²² (d) Deluxe editions have also been commissioned as a token of gratitude, for example, to one’s parents (*yab yum gyi bka’ drin bsab pa’i ched du*).¹²³ (e) It is also possible that some deluxe editions were commissioned as a token of repentance for one’s past unwholesome deeds. (f) Deluxe editions of Buddhist scriptures may also be made for installation in important complexes as representations of the Buddha’s Speech (*gsung rten*) or as permanent objects of veneration, such as the golden deluxe editions of *bKa’ gyur* and *bsTan gyur* commissioned by the third king of Bhutan, which were installed in the bKra shis chos rdzong in Thimphu. In short, the entire project of creating deluxe editions of Buddhist scriptures or scriptural corpora can be seen as an enormous and expensive merit-accruing undertaking. These editions are meant as personal or public objects of worship rather than as objects of daily use and could be dedicated to the living or the dead.

8. Who Commissioned Deluxe Editions?

Because of the immense costs and status involved in projects devoted to making deluxe editions, only individuals or institutions of immense influence and affluence could afford to successfully launch and complete such projects. Thus those who commissioned such projects were commonly kings, queens, ministers, and often feudal lords with economic resources and political influence. In fact, it was often a governmental undertaking. As this is clearly demonstrated by the above lists of deluxe editions of the *bKa’ gyur* and *bsTan gyur*, in which often the commissioners are mentioned, there is no need to provide additional examples.

9. Writing Materials Used for Deluxe Editions

It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the personal, professional, technical, material, social, economic, and logistical

¹²² Kah thog rig ’dzin, *Gung thang gdung rabs* (p. 106.8–11): *de bzhin ’phags pa klu sgrub kyi thugs dam gyi rten mthing shog la dzam bu gser gyis bris pa’i sher phyin brgyad stong pa’i glegs bam chos rgyal khri strong lde btsan gyi skabs su byung ba dang*.

¹²³ According to Kah thog rig ’dzin’s *Gung thang gdung rabs* (pp. 106.16–107.4), mNga’ bdag / Khri rgyal ’Bum lde mgon commissioned the golden edition of a 16-volume *Śatasāhasrikā* (in Tibetan translation) in order to repay a debt of kindness owed to his parents.

aspects of producing deluxe editions of scriptures and treatises in the Tibetan cultural domain. Nonetheless, three brief remarks may be made in this connection. First, the most likely sources for finding such information would be the traditional catalogues (*dkar chag*) and colophons of the deluxe editions themselves, biographies of persons involved in the projects, and the like. As an example, I may mention here 'Jam dbyangs bde be'i rdo rje's (1682–1741) catalogue of the golden *bsTan 'gyur*—commissioned by Pho lha ba/nas bSod nams stobs rgyas (1689–1747)—which provides some information about the production.¹²⁴ Second, because ink made of precious materials such as gold and silver is one of the fundamental characteristics of a deluxe edition, it would be desirable—as a starting point for further investigation—to gather as many primary and secondary sources as possible that contain information on the processes of making gold and silver ink.¹²⁵ The types, forms, and methods of using gold in Tibetan painting have already been discussed on several occasions,¹²⁶ and conceivably, most of the pigments, such as of gold or lapis lazuli,¹²⁷ used for painting are also applicable for writing. Moreover, recently material analysis of the inks and pigments used in Tibet for the production of deluxe editions has been undertaken on several occasions.¹²⁸ Third, deluxe editions written with precious ink are commonly written on black or dark blue paper (*mthing shog*).

¹²⁴ 'Jam dbyangs bde be'i rdo rje, *Rin chen phra tshoms* (fols. 184a2–199a); Ngag dbang nor bu, *bsTan 'gyur gi byung ba* (pp. 18.5–20.7). mDo mkhar zhabs drung Tshe ring dbang rgyal in his *Mi dbang rtogs brjod* (pp. 820.15–827.9) also provides information on the making of a golden *bKa' 'gyur*.

¹²⁵ The *bZo rig gi lag len ratna pa tra* (ascribed to various authors such as Padmasambhava and Nāgārjuna) contains a number of practical art and craft manuals that include a few passages on making golden and silver ink. See the *bZo rig lag len* (pp. 549.12–550.2).

¹²⁶ Jackson & Jackson 1976: 281–285. See also Jäschke 1881, which identifies *dul ma* as “a kind of water-colour made of pulverised gold and silver, for painting and writing.”

¹²⁷ Jackson & Jackson 1976: 276–277. See also brTson 'grus rab rgyas & rDo rje rin chen, *Ri mo'i rnam gzhag* (pp. 417.13–418.22); Mi pham, *bZo gnas nyer kho* (pp. 430.1–431.7); Ngag dbang bstan nyi chos 'byung, *bZo rig pa tra* (pp. 477.5–478.6), where methods of preparing *gser 'dul*, *dngul 'dul*, *zangs 'dul*, *rag 'dul*, and *mtshal 'dul* are described.

¹²⁸ See, for example, Almogi, Kindzorra, Hahn, Rabin 2015, which describes the material analysis (including inks and paper) undertaken with the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* set stored at the National Archives in Kathmandu.

Information on how to make dark blue paper, however, seems to be rare in Tibetan sources. Thus far I have been able to trace only five brief works in Tibetan. The first one is an article devoted exclusively to the topic of making *mthing shog* by bKra shis don grub, a modern Tibetan author who describes five steps.¹²⁹ He adds that a special kind of pen called the *brda rdo'i smyu gu* is required for drawing lines on *mthing shog*. The second Tibetan source is the *bZo rig lag len*, compiled by an anonymous author and containing extracts of diverse sources ascribed to figures such as Padmasambhava. This work includes two passages that are relevant here, namely, a passage dealing with “how to make dark blue paper” (*mthing shog bya thabs*) and another on “how to make golden and silver manuscripts” (*gser dngul gyi yi ge bya thabs*).¹³⁰ The third Tibetan source is a small passage from Brang ti dPal ldan rgyal mtshan’s *gSer bre dngul bre*, a medicinal work that contains various prescriptions and remedies. A small passage is devoted to “procedures for obtaining (lit. ‘the origination of’) dark blue paper and a manuscript [written on] dark blue [paper]” (*mthing shog mthing yig 'byung thabs*), and also “procedures for obtaining a manuscript [written with] turquoise-based [ink]” (*g.yu yig 'byung thabs*).¹³¹ The fourth is a small passage with the title *mThing shog bzo ba'i lag shes* included in a two-volume book on Tibetan handicraft.¹³² The fifth is a contribution by rGyal mo 'brug pa of the China Tibetology Research Center, who discusses not only the history of paper-making in Tibet but also the art of making paper of various colours including dark-blue and black paper.¹³³ As a secondary source on the making of dark blue paper, a recent article by James Canary could be mentioned.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ bKra shis don grub, *mThing shog bzo rim*.

¹³⁰ Anonymous, *bZo rig lag len* (pp. 549.12–550.17).

¹³¹ Brang ti dPal ldan rgyal mtshan, *gSer bre dngul bre* (p. 43.1–9).

¹³² dKon mchog bstan 'dzin et al., *Lag shes kun 'dus* (vol. 1, pp. 245.11–246.5). It also includes sample images of deep blue paper.

¹³³ rGyal mo 'brug pa in his *Shog bzo'i lag rtsal* discusses at some length the practice of paper-making in Tibet. See particularly the *Shog bzo'i lag rtsal* (pp. 173.15–182.9), where he provides some details of making “red paper” (*shog dmar*), “yellow paper” (*shog ser*), “blue paper” (*shog sngon* or *mthing shog*), “green paper” (*shog ljang*), “black paper” (*shog nag*), and so forth.

¹³⁴ Canary 2014. In addition to recording various kinds of paper or writing material known to Tibetans—such as “Chinese paper” (*rgya shog*), “Tibetan paper” (*bod shog*), “silk sheets” (*dar shog*), “cotton sheets” (*ras shog*), “bast paper” (*shing shog*), and “parchment” (*pags shog*)—Jäschke 1881 (s.v. *shog*

10. Epilogue

A study of Tibetan deluxe editions of Buddhist scriptures and treatises has highlighted a fascinating aspect of both the tangible and intangible culture of regions impregnated with Tibetan Buddhism, and revealed in the process Tibetans' passion for and expression of aesthetic appeal and craftsmanship; pomposity and exclusivity; social-economic power and prestige; and piety and religiosity. While Tibetan deluxe editions of Buddhist scriptures and treatises are not indispensable for studying the content of the texts that they contain, their breath-taking beauty alone—that is, their aesthetic value, as epitomised by the golden manuscripts of the Fifth Dalai Lama's *gSang ba rgya can*—should be reason enough to further their appreciation and preservation through proper study.

bu) also mentions “dark-blue paper” (*mthing shog*) and “black paper” (*nag shog*) “for writing on in gold and silver.”

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