

Studies in the Life and Thought of Mkhas grub rje II: Notes on Poetry, Poetics and Other Things in Mkhas grub rje's Oeuvre*

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Abstract The poetic oeuvre of many Tibetan writers still remains relatively unexplored. The present essay deals with several pertinent aspects of the poetic oeuvre of Mkhas grub Dge legs dpal bzang po (1385–1438). It focuses *inter alia* on an ode (*bstod*) he had written to his teacher Tsong kha pa on which the early nineteenth century Mongol scholar Ngag dbang bstan dar [or Bstan dar Lha rams pa] of A la sha had written a commentary. Apart from a segue into Mkhas grub's whereabouts from 1407 to 1431 and his troubled relations with the ruling house of Rgyal mkhar rtse, the essay points out that while there is plenty of evidence in his poetic oeuvre that Mkhas grub had studied the Tibetan translation of Daṇḍin's *Kāvyaḍarśa* / *Snyan ngag me long*, the fundamental treatise for Tibetan poetics and poetic theory, no mention of this is made in his extant biographies, short as they are. It closes with remarks on Ngag dbang bstan dar's contributions to poetry and poetics.

/ blo bzang mkhyen pa'i gting mtha' mi mngon zhing /
/ grags pa'i rlabs phreng rol pa'i 'jug ngogs las /
/ dpal ldan yon tan chu yi thigs pa zbig /
/ gzung phyir 'di ni dad pa'i 'bab stegs lags /¹

The depth and extent of a **good mind's** understanding is not visible,
from the shore of the rolling waves of **fame**;
so as to take a drop of water having a **brilliant** quality,
this work is a mooring for confidence.

* With this essay, I happily return to my studies of Mkhas grub rje that have laid dormant, albeit not altogether abandoned, for so many years, the first installment of which was published in van der Kuijp 1985.

1. Mkhas grub 1980–1982[a], 472.

Embedding names of individuals in verses that play on their meaning is an old Indo-Tibetan tradition that was codified most notably for the Tibetan intellectual in the Tibetan translations of Daṇḍin's (7th–8th c.) *Kāvyaḍarśa*, the *Snyan ngag me long*, possibly under the rubric of the paranomasia (Tib. *sbyar ba'i dpe*, Skt. *śleṣopamā*).² And we thus see Khedrup Gelek Pal Sangpo (Mkhas grub Dge legs dpal bzang po 1385–1438) composing an obvious *sbyar ba'i dpe* in this second verse of his ode (*bstod pa*) in which he joined the name in religion of his beloved master Tsongkhapa (Tsong kha pa), Losang Drakpai Pal (Blo bzang grags pa'i dpal, 1359–1417), to the meaning of its component parts.³ In this verse, he sets forth the aim and purpose (*rtsom pa dam bca' ba*) of this little, undated poetic work. Its imposing title is *Rgyal ba thams cad kyi mkhyen brtse gcig tu bsdus pa'i jo bo rje btsun bla ma chos kyi rgyal po tsong kha pa chen po'i yon tan rmad du byung ba la mdor bsdus par bstod pa'i rab tu byed pa dad pa'i rol mtsho*. But the short title of this tract (*rab tu byed pa*), a *summa* of Tsongkhapa's marvelous qualities, is thus *Dad pa'i rol mtsho* or *The Groundswell of Faith*, which is by no means an uncommon title. A typical Tibetan trope, we encounter the expression *rol mtsho* in many other Tibetan literary sources and, as a matter of fact, the use of aquatic terminology is common in Tibetan poetry, and one might argue that it is a tad tedious precisely because of its ubiquity. Samsara is likened to a sea/ocean (*rgya mtsho*) and it is not an accident that many monasteries and individuals, especially treasure-teachers (*gter ston*), have “isle” (*gling [pa]*) in their names, suggesting that these and they are places of repose, places where or in whom one can take refuge from samsara's chaotic turbulence. We thus have the following aquatic terms in this verse of the *Ode*:

1. *gting mtha'*.....depth and extent
2. *rlabs phreng rol pa*.....rolling waves
3. *'jug ngogs*.....*gru gzings gtong sa*, place from where a boat departs.
4. *yon tan*.....implied is *chu yon tan brgyad*, eight qualities of water
5. *chu yi thigs pa*.....drop of water
6. *'bab stegs*.....*rkang pa mar 'bab pa dang yar stegs pa*, mooring.

Khedrup informs us in his colophon that he had written the *Ode* at the behest of Shar Gyalmo Rongpa Lama Tsakhowa Palden Chökyi Drakpa (Shar Rgyal mo rong pa Bla ma Tsha kho/go ba Dpal ldan chos kyi grags pa) while he resided in Lhenjeling (Lhan bye gling) Monastery, an insti-

2. Dimitrov 2002 easily supersedes all previous studies of the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions of the *Kāvyaḍarśa*, *Mirror of Poetry-Poetics*, in general, and of its first chapter. For the *sbyar ba'i dpe* poetic figure, see Gerow 1971, 166 *ad Kāvyaḍarśa* II: 28. For the *Kāvyaḍarśa*, I use the bilingual edition that is listed in the bibliography under Daṇḍin and / or Dimitrov 2002 and 2011.

3. The identification of a name buried in a work's introductory verses can lead, with careful sleuthing, to the identification of the author of a work whose authorship was unclear. See in this connection Stoltz 2020, 59–60.

tution that I am unable to locate but which should most probably be found somewhere in Central Tibet. This Palden Chökyi Drakpa is of course not identical to Domepa Tsago Bönpo Ngawang Drakpa (Mdo smad pa Tsha go/kho *dbon po* Ngag dbang grags pa), who headed a party of some four monks when they requested Khedrup for teachings anent the deity Yamāntaka / Vajrabhairava.⁴ I do not know whose nephew (*dbon po*) this Ngawang Drakpa may have been. The colophon of the undated little work that Khedrup wrote in response to their request also mentions that this man was indebted to Tsongkhapa for this instruction and that Khedrup had composed it in Drangsong Sinpo Ri (Drang srong srin po ri) Monastery, which is located to the southwest of Lhasa. To be sure, a certain Tsakhowa Ngawang Drakpa is known as one of Tsongkhapa's earliest disciples. The A la[gs] shan (< Ch. 阿拉善) Sog po-Mongol scholar Ngawang Tendar (Ngag dbang bstan dar, 1759–after August 1, 1840)⁵ surmises (*yin 'dra snyam!*) in his 1808 commentary to Khedrup's *Ode* that Palden Chökyi Drakpa might be identified as *his* nephew (*tsha bo*)⁶ — I will briefly return to Ngawang Tendar's commentary below. At the request of his nephew Palden Chökyi Drakpa, Khedrup also wrote an ode to Ngawang Drakpa while in Ganden (Dga' ldan), the monastery Tsongkhapa had founded in 1409.⁷ Ngawang Drakpa appears to have been quite influential in Kham (Khams) where, so we are told, he built some five monasteries.

Of course, it goes without saying that Tibetan poetry has a very long and varied history. We have a limited dossier of poems that are autochthonous, and the few that have come down to us are found in the Tibetan Dunhuang documents that predate the beginning of the eleventh century. There is also the enormous variety of poetic forms that are based on Indic *kāvya/snyan ngag/dngags*⁸ models, all of which we encounter in the roughly ninth to eleventh century translations of Buddhist sutras and treatises that were ultimately deposited in collections known as the Kangyur and Tengyur. The indigenous poetry is written in a rather free and breezy style and is relatively easily understandable. It is different with those of *kāvya*-Indic origin. These are often dressed in the purple cloth of the *purpureus pannus* variety, are highly ornate and turgid, and almost invari-

4. Mkhas grub 1980–1982[b], 8* and a different version of the first in 1980–1982c, 28*. Both texts were added to the Lhasa Zhol edition from the Bkra shis lhun po xylograph of his collected works.

5. For him, see his biographical sketch in Powers and Thakchoe 2013 and the remarks in van der Kuijp 2019. For the full dates that occur in this essay, I am indebted to the *Tabellen* of Schuh 1973.

6. Ngag dbang bstan dar 1971[a], 59; 2008[[a], 483. Tibetan *tsha bo* and *dbon po* are often used interchangeably; see Benedict 1942, 321–22, 330. I owe the lexicographic notes on the above verse to his explanation in Ngag dbang bstan dar 1971[b], 13; 2008[b], 455. Not surprisingly, this Ngag dbang grags pa is mentioned *inter alia* in what is arguably the best study of Tsong kha pa's life that was written by 'Brug Rgyal dbang Chos kyi rje Blo bzang 'phrin las rnam rgyal (19th c.) in 1845; see 'Brug Rgyal dbang 1981, 616 — the xylograph for this work is found in vol. 1 of bdrc no. W3CN22297. For a Chinese translation, see Guo 1988, 492.

7. Mkhas grub 1980–82[d].

8. The expression *snyan dngags* seems to be an older form for *snyan ngag*. Unless *snyan dngags* occurs in quotations, I will henceforth use *snyan ngag*.

ably make use of a precious vocabulary of synonyms (*abhidhāna*, *mngon brjod*) that limits the uninitiated ready access to what is intended. To be a poet of this genre or to be a connoisseur who can appreciate this kind of poetry one must foremost be steeped in the lexicography of synonyms and the various nuances of the terms in question, a formidable task if there ever was one.⁹ This is indeed one of the prerequisites of becoming a poet (*kavi*, *snyan ngag mkhan*)! But this is only one aspect of learning for one to be called a poet! In Tibet, so much of *snyan ngag* is inspired by typically Indic motifs and Indic flora and fauna rather than by their Tibetan counterparts. Hence, another ingredient that goes into the making of a *snyan ngag mkhan* is that he or she should not be averse to being inspired by a healthy dose of exoticism. Indeed, so very much of *snyan ngag* deals with a subject matter about which the *snyan ngag mkhan* would never have been in the position to have had first-hand knowledge. Just think of elephant herds and mango groves! Maybe this was never seen as an issue since the “inculturation” of the Indic had penetrated so deeply into the Tibetan psyche that so much of it had become second nature. In his valuable survey of “the Indian Literary Identity in Tibet”, M. Kapstein has written at length about the “Indianness” of much of Tibetan *belles lettres*, without losing sight of the fact that a good deal of Tibetan writing does not betray any Indian influence and must to all intents and purposes be considered as indigenous literary productions.¹⁰

It is now a truism that the second half of the thirteenth century was a major inflection point in the development of Tibetan poetry and poetics for the Tibetan intellectual who began to take the Indic *Kāvyaḍarśa* as his point of departure. From this point on, the translations of the *Snyan ngag me long* by Shongton Lotsawa Dorjé Gyaltzen (Shong ston Lo tsā ba Rdo rje rgyal mtshan, ca.1225–ca.1280) and Pang Lotsawa Lodrö Tenpa (Dpang Lo tsā ba Blo gros brtan pa, 1276–1342) began to exert a major influence on Tibetan poetry, poetics and even on the ways in which Tibetans wrote and titled their treatises. The *Kāvyaḍarśa* is a work on the characteristics of two main Indic schools of poetics and poetic diction and includes a detailed calculus of a large variety of poetic figures (*alamkāra*, *rgyan*) that are classified into those that primarily operate on a semantic level (*arthālamkāra*, *don rgyan*) — these are dealt with in its second chapter — and those that are primarily based on the phonology of the words used (*śabdālamkāra*, *sgra rgyan*) — these are discussed in its third chapter. For example, the simile (*upamālamkāra*, *dpe rgyan*) and the metaphor (*rūpālamkāra*, *gzugs kyi rgyan*) are *don rgyan*, but different kinds of alliteration (*yamaka*, *zung ldan*) are classified under *sgra rgyan*. The Tibetan translation of the *Kāvyaḍarśa* was at first a significant object of study on the part of members of the Sakyapa (Sa skya pa) school, but its importance was quickly recognized so that it soon spread to the institutions of other Tibetan Buddhist schools. Among fourteenth-century writers who belonged to these other schools, we

9. An indispensable dictionary of the *mngon brjod* genre is Dpa' ris Sangs rgyas and Nor bu kun grub 2010.

10. Kapstein 2003.

have the third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorjé (Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje, 1284–1339) and Longchen Rabjampa (Klong chen Rab ’byams pa, 1309–64) both of whom composed a good number of poetic works that followed patterns that were established by the *Snyan ngag me long*. But we must single out once again their junior contemporary the second Shamar Khachö Wangpo (Zhwa dmar Mkha’ spyod dbang po, 1350–1405), whose large body of various kinds of poetic compositions still cry out for close study and appreciation. The earliest of the numerous Tibetan imitations of the poetic figures in the sequence of the *Snyan ngag me long*’s second chapter may have been the work by the elusive Sanskritist-translator (*lo tsā ba*) with the surprising name Chokden Lekpai Lodrö Pungyen Dzepai Metok (Mchog ldan legs pa’i blo gros dpung rgyan mdzes pa’i me tog, ca. 1255–ca. 1310), a manuscript of which I saw in the early 1990s while working in the Nationalities Library of the Cultural Palace of Nationalities in Beijing.¹¹ To be sure, it goes without saying that the most obvious places for the use of poetry and poetic imagery are the countless odes, reverential petitions, and salutations that we find scattered in the collected writings of so many earlier and later Tibetan intellectuals and spiritual leaders that are sometimes consciously based on the poetic figures of the *Snyan ngag me long* and sometimes not. It is well to bear in mind that the meaning of *kāvya/snyan ngag* is not solely confined to what we might generally understand by poetry as a text set in verse. Speaking of the form or body (*śarīra, lus*) in which it can appear, *Kāvyaḍarśa* I: 10–11 has it that *kāvya* can indicate poetry as in a text set in verse (*padya, tshigs bcad*), prose (*gadya, lhug pa*), as well to a literary composition in which both are mixed (*miśra, spel ma*).¹²

Druk Gyalwang (’Brug Rgyal dbang) reports that in late 1380 or early 1381, Tsongkhapa had worked through Daṇḍin’s work with Redawa Shonu Lodrö (Red mda’ ba Gzhon nu blo gros, 1349–1413) and the Sanskrit scholar Lotsāwa Namkha Sangpopa (Lo tsā ba Nam mkha’ bzang po, 14th–?15th c.) while in Bodong E (Bo dong E) Monastery.¹³ He then suggests that the dossier on Tsongkhapa’s life offers several different scenarios for his subsequent studies of that work with the Lo tsā ba in conjunction with his studies of Sanskrit. It appears that this may have taken place as late as 1385 when his erstwhile teacher, the precocious Chenga Drakpa Jangchup Pal Sangpo (Spyan snga Grags pa byang chub dpal bzang po, 1356–86)¹⁴ had invited them to Densa Thil (Gdan

11. Dpang Lo tsā ba, the great Sanskrit scholar and influential commentator of the *Snyan ngag me long*, pays his respects to this man in the colophon of his commentary and acknowledges his great debt to him for his own understanding of the language arts (*tha snyad kyi gtsug lag rnams*); see Dpang Lo tsā ba 1981, 501 and No date, 286[[pdf](#)]; cf. also Dimitrov 2011, 453. He characterizes him as the best intimate disciple (*thugs kyi sras mchog*) of Shong ston Lo tsā ba. That said, he only acknowledges the latter in the opening verse of his commentary in the sense of having been the *Kāvyaḍarśa*’s translator. A curiosity is that the manuscript of Dpang Lo tsā ba’s work, marked here as “No date,” is unpaginated! This manuscript was not available to Dimitrov when he wrote his brilliant studies of the first and third chapters of Daṇḍin’s work.

12. See also Khams sprul IV Bstan ’dzin chos kyi nyi ma (1730–79) who offers a discussion of the body in Khams sprul IV 1976, 71 ff.

13. For what follows, see ’Brug Rgyal dbang 1981, 148 and 163–64; see also Guo 1988, 135, 148–49.

14. Tsong kha pa 1978–79[a], 447 and 474 dates him 1356 to 1386.

sa mthil) Monastery. Of course, Tsongkhapa's deep appreciation of the *Snyan ngag me long's* poetics is obvious at almost every turn in his oeuvre, especially when we take note of his countless odes, etc., as well as his poetic narratives (*avadāna, rtogs pa brjod pa*) of the life of the Chenga, which he completed at the behest of the Pakmodru (Phag mo gru) ruler Drakpa Gyaltsen (Grag pa rgyal mtshan, 1374–1432), and of the phantastic life of the bodhisattva Taktu Nguwa (Rtag tu rngu ba [Sadaparudita]).¹⁵ Two verses towards the end of the former were evidently written by a very satisfied Tsongkhapa who does not hesitate to compare himself to Dpa' bo —here probably Āryaśūra or even Aśvaghōṣa—and call himself “the unique poet of the range of snowy mountains” (*gangs ri'i khrod kyī snyan dngags mkhan gcig po*).¹⁶ And at the very end, he underscores that he is “the poet who was born at the outer marches of the snowy land” (*yul gangs can phyi mthar skyes pa'i snyan dngags mkhan*), which is an apt description of the Tsongkha area.¹⁷

Tsongkhapa's formal instruction in the poetics of the *Snyan ngag me long*, and in Sanskrit, stands in sharp contrast with his major disciple Khedrup. None of the early or later biographical sketches of Khedrup's life with which I am familiar, nor his record of teachings received relate any information from whom he may have learned the poetics of the *Snyan ngag me long*. One therefore comes away with the impression that he was an autodidact in this area.

The particulars of Khedrup's life and aspects of his oeuvre have been sketched in several places and thus need not detain us very much in this relatively short essay.¹⁸ Yet, I think it useful to add a few considerations that I believe deserve further reflection. To be sure, central to his intellectual and spiritual life was his first encounter with Tsongkhapa which took place during the summer retreat (*dbyar gnas, vārṣika*) of 1407, when he was in his early twenties.¹⁹ It was no doubt a trans-

15. Tsong kha pa 1978–79[a] and [b]. He calls the scribe of the second, Tsha kha [= Tsha kho ba] Ngag dbang grags pa, a poet (*snyan dngags mkhan*). This work was translated in Gyatso and Bailey 2008. English renditions of several poetic pieces by Tsong kha pa are contained in Kilty 2001.

16. Tsong kha pa 1978–79[a], 482. Tsong kha pa 1978–79[c] and [d] are additional poetic pieces dedicated to the Spyan snga. The latter is a type of acrostic poem with additional flourishes which, as he writes in an allusion to *Kāvyaḍarśa* III: 3c, is a difficult composition (*bya dka', duṣkara*) — see also below.

17. Of his numerous odes, Tsong kha pa 2010 contains his so-called “four great odes” (*bstod chen bzhi*), that is, [1] his philosophical ode to dependent co-arising with Lcang skya III Rol pa'i rdo rje's (1717–86) commentary, [2] his ode to Maitreya with Zhang ston Bstan pa rgya mtsho's (1825–97) commentary, [3] his ode to Mañjuḥoṣa with Dalai Lama VII Bskal bzang rgya mtsho's (1708–57) commentary — the Dalai Lama's poetic name was 'Jam dbyangs sgeg pa'i lang tsho dbyangs can dgyes pa'i rdo rje, and [4] his ode to Uṣṇiṣavijaya with Co ne Grags pa shes sgrub's (1675–1748) commentary.

18. Ary 2015, 39–66, 107–49, and the literature cited therein, and most recently Sha bo Klu rgyal and Dpa' Mkhar skyid, 2021, which is deeply annotated translation of his biography that Yongs 'dzin Ye shes rgyal mtshan (1713–93) compiled for his study of the biographies of the main protagonists of the “stages of the path” (*lam rim*) tradition; see Yongs 'dzin 2011a, 365–405. Not disputed by the translators is the Yongs 'dzin's wrong presumption that Mkhas grub had studied with Bla ma dam Bsod nams rgyal mtshan (1312–75) which is of course not possible.

19. Curiously, Mkhas grub's undated biography of Tsong kha pa is all but silent about this ever so fateful event; see Mkhas grub 1978–79, 90–2. The same holds for his brief work on the visionary experiences of his master, for which see Mkhas

formative event as far as the precocious and exceptionally gifted Khedrup was concerned and, indeed, this meeting ultimately had a ripple effect in the world of Tibetan Buddhism that can still be detected to this day. In sum, Khedrup is unthinkable without Tsongkhapa. Their first meeting took place in Sera Chöding (Se ra chos sdings), a locale that is not far from what is now Sera Monastery, where young Khedrup had traveled from Tsang, probably from Jangam Ling (Byang Ngam ring [? Dga' ldan byams pa gling]) Monastery, to continue his *grwa skor* “examinations” in Ü (Dbus) with the aim of receiving the scholarly accolade of *dka'* [or: *bka'*] *bcu pa*.²⁰ It was not long after this meeting that he became one of Tsongkhapa's most trusted disciples and interpreters of his ideas. Oddly, we do not know how long he stayed with the master. His undated biography of Tsongkhapa, perhaps the very first in a long sequence of such studies, tells us naught about when or where they may have met again (and again). Since the voluminous literature on Tsongkhapa's life informs us that he did not venture beyond Ü from 1407 to his passing on 1419, we must surmise that Khedrup had made repeated visits to him in Ü during those twelve years. Khedrup's writings are almost as a rule not dated, but some help is afforded by their colophons since many do relate *where* they were written. For example, the colophon of his Tsongkhapa biography states that he had written it in Nyangtö (Nyang stod) in Tsang at a “place that is a source of knowledge” (*gtsang nyang stod rig pa'i 'byung gnas kyi sa'i cha*). The latter description is identical to the one he had given elsewhere for his monastery of Changra Pembar Lekshé Ddrokpé Tsel (Lcang ra Dpal 'bar legs bshad sgrog pa'i tshal) as well as for Gyalkhar Tsé's (Rgyal mkhar rtse) monumental Palkhor Dechen (Dpal 'khor sde chen)—see below. Since the biography mentions Tsongkhapa's passing in 1419, it means that he must have written it after that time. His collected oeuvre also contains several notes (*zin bris*) and memoranda (*brjed byang*) of Tsongkhapa's lectures on Puṇḍarīka's (early 11th c.) *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Laghukālacakratantra* and the chapter on perception of Dharmakīrti's (7th c.) *Pramāṇavārttika*, but none of these shed light on when or where he was holding up. But he does sign himself as a *dka'bcu pa* in one of these.²¹

All that having been said, we do know that during these twelve years, from 1407 to 1419, Khedrup was also busy making a career for himself in Tsang. For example, we learn from the anonymous biography of Situ (< Ch. *situ* 司徒) Rabten Kunsang Phak (Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags, 1389–1442) that, in 1413, he had invited him—Khedrup is here called “Dge legs dpal ba”—from Jangam Ring Monastery to become the main instructor (*chos dpon*) of the monastery that this ruler of Gyalkhar Tsé and its landed interests had newly built in Jangra.²² The biography also tells

grub 1980–82[e]. There the meeting is briefly mentioned where, however, the author also signals the dream Mkhas grub had of Tsong kha pa just prior to their meeting; see 'Brug Rgyal dbang 1981, 290–94 and Guo 1988, 251–54.

20. For this degree, see Jackson 2007, 346–350.

21. Mkhas grub 1980–82[f], 793.

22. Anonymous 1978, 77 and Anonymous 1987, 46–7; the corresponding passage in Anonymous No date, 23b is not entirely illegible. Lcang ra is located not far from Rgyal mkhar rtse. The author states that his main teacher was 'Jam dbyangs

us that Khedrup [or Si tu?] apparently claimed (*bzbed*) that he [or Khedrup?] was the re-embodiment (*sku'i skye ba*) of the great Khedrup Lhai Wangpo (Mkhas grub Lha'i dbang po). Who was this man? I think the answer *may* be found in Khedrup's record of teachings received, his *gsan yig*, where he notes a Khedrup Lha Wangpo (Mkhas grub Lha dbang blo < Lha'i dbang po blo gros) as one of Buddhaśīrī's (1339–1419) mentors.²³ The latter was in turn one of his teachers of the Sakya school's take on the *Hevajratāntra* and the lamdré (lam 'bras) precepts, as he wrote in his highly spirited response to a letter addressed to him by “the great see's overall great spiritual friend, the Empowering National Preceptor (< Ch. *guanding guoshi* 灌顶国师)”.²⁴ The great see (*gdan sa chen po*) in question was most probably Sakya Monastery, but the identity of this National Preceptor is not entirely clear. The *Guanding guoshi* had apparently taken him to task for having criticized Ngorchen Kunga Sangpo (Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po, 1382–1456). Undated, we learn that he had sent the letter to Gyalkhar Ttsé, which *in theory* could mean that it was sent sometime between 1413 and 1430. Khedrup nowhere hints at his name in this important document in which he highlights intra-Sakyapa school debates about many doctrinal issues, including the part he played in them. Long ago, I suggested that Thekchen Chökyi Gyalpo Kunga Tashi (Theg chen Chos kyi rgyal po Kun dga' bkra shis, 1340–1425) of Sakya's Lhakhang (Lha khang) Residence might have been the sender because he would have been among the most prominent of the see's overall great spiritual friends.²⁵ But, of course, he was never her abbot and there was no record of him ever having received the *guanding guoshi* title, and, indeed, I no longer believe this to have been the case. The abbots of Sakya during this time were Lodrö Gyaltsen (Blo gros rgyal mtshan, 1366–1420) and Jamyang Namkha Gyaltsen ('Jam dbyangs Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, 1398–1472).

Dkon mchog bzang po (1398–1475) who was the author of the biography of Grub chen Kun dga' blo gros rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po (1365–1443), While anonymous, I suspect the biography was written by Dkon mchog [gsum gyi] 'bangs, alias Gzhon nu rgyal mchog, the great commentator on Atiśa's (982–1054) *Bodhipathapradīpa*.

23. Mkhas grub 1980–82[g], 59. Anonymous 1987, 33

24. Mkhas grub 1980–82[h], 803–4, where we read that he counted four Sa skya pa masters as his main sources of inspiration as far as the Sa skya pa's path-and-result (*lam 'bras*) precepts were concerned; these are, with the epithets he prefixed to their names: Rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug chen po Lam 'bras pa Ye shes dpal ba, Mnyam med Rje btsun Red mda' pa chen po [Gzhon nu blo gros], Dpal ldan bla ma Bud dha shī, and Rdo rje 'dzin pa chen po Kun dga' rgyal mtshan from whom he learned all the slightly different claims of Nam za pa [= ? Ri khrod pa Blo gros brtan pa (1316–58)], Dpal ldan bla ma dam pa [Bsod nams rgyal mtshan], Gzungs pa [= Gzungs kyi dpal ba (1306–89)], and Bla ma dam pa Dpal ldan tshul khriims (1333–99). In a reply to Sangs rgyas rin chen, Mkhas grub acknowledges that he had more than fifty teachers, but that three were his most important ones; these were: Rin po che 'Jam dpal rdo rje snying po with whom he studied for thirteen years when he was a very young man, Lam 'bras pa Ye shes dpal, and Red mda' pa; see Mkhas grub[i], 122–24. Since Tsong kha pa is not mentioned anywhere in this work, it was evidently composed before he began to occupy a dominant place in Mkhas grub's spiritual life. Lastly, the dates often given for Ye shes dpal ba, 1281–1365, can obviously not be correct. Mkhas grub's *Gsan yig* reports that one of Ye shes dpal ba's teachers was Na bza' ba [Brag phug pa Bsod nams dpal (1277–1346)], so that his dates may have been roughly 1329–1413; see Mkhas grub 1980–82[g], 109–10, 117.

25. Van der Kuijp 1985, 34.

Without giving his source, E. Ary simply stated that the *guangding guoshi* was Namkha Sangpo, whereas J. Heimbel specified that he was Namkha Sangpo of Sakya's Nyidé (Nyi lde/sde) Residence (*bla brang*).²⁶ As Heimbel noted, the identification of Namkha Sangpo as the author of a document that had called Khedrup to task is found in the much later history of Buddhism in Amdo by Drakgön Shapdrung Könchok Tenpa Rapgyé (Brag dgon Zhabs drung Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, 1801–after 1867), where he is called *kwan ting ku sbri* (= *guanding guoshi*) Namkha Sangpo.²⁷ At the same time, Drakgön Shapdrung appears to distinguish him from the Chöjé Nyidewa (Chos rje Nyi lde ba) who was the author of a study of Sakya's ruling family.

Now the extremely valuable history of Sakya's ruling families and of the see itself that Musepa (Mus srad pa) or Tsangpa Jampa Dorjé Gyaltzan (Gtsang pa Byams pa rdo rje rgyal mtshan, 1424–98) completed in 1475 contains what is to date a unique genealogy of the male members of the Nyi lde/sde Residence. And the following genealogy can be distilled from it²⁸:

Dkon mchog 'byung gnas [student of Sa skya Paṇḍita (1182–1251)]

[two nephews by his sister (*snag dbon*)]

Gug shrī (< Ch. *guoshi*) Shes rab dpal (ca. 1300)
Bla ma Rin chen 'od

[His/their nephews by his/their sister]

Kun spangs Kun dga' rgyal mtshan

Kun spangs Chos skyong dpal

Gug shrī Nam mkha' seng ge – [note in ms.: he founded the Nyi sde Residence]

Gug shrī Tshul khrims grub

Layman 1 (*mi skya*); son[s] of the oldest *mi skya*:

Here the manuscript has:

26. Ary 2015, 128 and Heimbel 2017, 229–39, n. 328 and 232, n. 95. A slight correction: Ary took the phrase *...bka' bum na gsal* in the relevant passage of Se ra Rje btsun Chos kyi rgyal mtshan's (1469–1544) undated "secret biography" of Mkhas grub to be a reference to Tsong kha pa's collected writings (see Se ra Rje btsun 1980–82, 434), and Dachille 2015, 12 rightly noted that she found nothing in the latter. Indeed, the *bka' bum* in question is that of Mkhas grub.

27. Brag dgon Zhabs drung 1982, 6.

28. Mus srad pa No date, 67a and 2017, 96. I examine this work's rather original history of the Mongol imperial family in a forthcoming study.

Bsod nams seng ge
Ngag dbang bzang po [his son:]

Kun dga' dpal, also called Nyi bde/lde Rgyal po [his sons:]

Kun ting gug shri Nam mkha' bzang po [his son:]

Ngag dbang grags pa
Nam mkha' grags pa

Ta'i dbyen ju (< Ch. *dayuan* 大元?) Bsod nams rgyal mtshan

Layman 2 (*mi skya*)

The printed text has:

Layman 1 [his son:]

Ngag dbang bzang po [his son:]

Kun dga' dpal, also called Nyi lde Rgyal po [his sons:]

Kun ting gu shri Nam mkha' dpal bzang po [his sons?^a]

Ngag dbang grags pa

Nam mkha' grags pa

Ta'i dben ju Bsod nams rgyal mtshan

^a The text has: Nam mkha' bzang po!

The fact that several members of this family had been awarded the National Preceptor title suggests that they had close connections with the Mongol court in China, and this was evidently the case with Shes rab dpal who visited the court and was apparently a friend of Imperial Preceptor (*ti shri* < Ch. *dishi* 帝师) Grags pa 'od zer (r. 1291–1303). The genealogy would then have the *Guan-ding guoshi* roughly flourish around the year 1420. A mes zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga' bsod nams

(1597–1659) cites a Nyi lde ba, a Nyi lde ba Nam mkha' bzang po, and a Chos rje Nyi lde ba—these appear to refer to the same person—as an author of a history of Sakya's ruling family several times in his 1629 history of Sakya and its affiliated families. In the records of teachings received by Amezhap (A mes zhabs) and fifth Dalai Lama Ngawang Losang Gyatso (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, 1617–82), a *guoshi* or a *guanding guoshi* Nam mkha' bzang po often occurs as having received teachings from Thekchen Chöjé (Theg chen Chos rje) and having transmitted these either directly to Gyakar Sherap Gyaltsan (Rgya dkar Shes rab rgyal mtshan, 1436–94) of the Rin chen sgang Residence or to him via Nyidewa Ngawang Drakpa (Nyi lde ba Ngag dbang grags pa). Given this, we might roughly date *guanding guoshi* Nam mkha' bzang po from 1390 to 1450.

Much later in the Situ's biography an interlinear gloss informs the reader in staccato fashion of the following sequence of events that pertain to Khedrup's life²⁹:

[chos] rje mkhas grub pa / lcang ra chos sder chu mo [pho] sbrul la phebs nas lcags
 pho byi lo phan lo brgyad / lcags mo glang gi dgun chos thog[s] nas bzung / lo drug
 chos sde 'di'i mkhan thog tu bzhugs / de nas lo bzhi'i [460] bar rdo rje gdan sogs ci
 bder bzhugs rjes / lcags pho khyi lo dpyid chos rjes la dge ldan gyi gdan sa la thegs
 [thags] par 'dug.

The religious lord Khedrup pa went to the religious institution of Lcang ra in 1413; the year 1420, eight years of benefit; began the winter teaching session of 1421; occupied the abbacy of this religious institution for six years; then, he stayed as he liked up to four years in Rdo rje gdan etc.; in the spring of 1430 the Chos rje left for the Dge ldan [= Dga' ldan] see.

It thus appears that Khedrup was associated with the great monastery of Palkhor Chödé from 1420 to 1426. It is at this monastery, also characterized by him like he did with Changra, as a *gtsang nyang stod rig pa'i 'byung gnas kyi sa'i cha* and a *legs bshad sgrog pa'i tshal*, where he had written his long study of the *bskyed rim* practice of the *Guhyasamājantra* according to the Phakpa ('Phags pa) [the pseudo-Nāgārjuna] tradition. Due to a serious fall-out with the Situ, Khedrup was dismissed from his official post, stayed in various places such as Ri bo mdangs can and Rdo rje gdan, ultimately to land on his feet when, in 1431, he was appointed abbot of Ganden Monastery at the instigation of his senior colleague and teacher Gyaltsap Darma Rinchen (Rgyal tshab Dar

29. Anonymous 1978, 459–60 and Anonymous 1987, 226; the corresponding passage in Anonymous No date, 101b is mostly illegible. The text goes on to state that a certain Blo gros rgya mtsho was appointed abbot of Dpal 'khor chos sde during the eighth month of the pig-year, which must be 1431. Blo gros rgya mtsho is mentioned as Mkhas grub's successor in Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's (1653-1705) 1698 chronicle of the Dge lugs pa school and its monasteries; see Sde srid 1989, 247.

ma rin chen, 1364–1432), who was himself also a close disciple of Tsongkhapa and the monastery's second abbot from 1419 to 1431. It transpires that Khedrup and Ngorchen were both hotheads and did not pull punches when confronted with ideas with which they disagreed, and neither were they particularly disinclined to call their exponents unpleasant names with Khedrup perhaps more so than Ngorchen.³⁰ This is readily apparent in his reply to the Guanding guoshi and later in his impatient response to Ngorchen's earlier biting critique of 1426 of the position he had taken.³¹ Dachille's, Heimbel's and Bentor's exemplary analyses of what was at stake should be consulted here.³² Khedrup's rencounters with the young Chökyi Gyaltzen (Chos kyi rgyal mtshan, 1375–1451) in 1400 in Jangam Ring (Byang Ngam ring) Monastery³³—Chökyi gyaltzen became better known as Bodong Panchen Choklé Namgyal (Bo dong Paṅ chen Phyogs las rnam rgyal)—in which he defended Sakya Paṅḍita's *Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter* against Chökyi Gyaltzen's criticism, and Ngorchen are well-documented. Less known so far are the series of doctrinal disagreements he had with Jangdak Namgyal Draksang (Byang bdag Rnam rgyal grags bzang, 1395–1475) of Jangam Ring. Their polemic exchanges focused primarily on the interpretation of the *Kālacakra* corpus, and I intend to return to this on another occasion.³⁴

Going through his oeuvre, many of his writings do make it plain that he was an accomplished *nyen-ngakhen*, a poet of ornate poetry, even if he nowhere hints in his writing that he ever explicitly wrote on the *Snyan ngag me long per se*.

I noted above that very, very few of his writings have dates or can be dated with any precision, even if most of them can be basically dated to before and after his ascent to the abbatial throne of Ganden in 1431. How fortunate it is that what is perhaps his earliest foray into the poetic, maybe even his earliest extant piece of writing *überhaupt*, is dated! This is his ode to Jamyang Mawai Sengé ('Jam dbyangs smra ba'i seng ge), that is, Vādisiṃha Mañjuḥoṣa, which, the colophon relates, he

30. Ngor chen's first polemical treatise dates from 1404, which he wrote in Sa skya; see Ngor chen 2010.

31. Mkhas grub 1980–82[j].

32. We learn this from his extremely interesting defense of his polemic exchange with Ngor chen a propos of the Hevajra body-mandala, for which see Dachille 2015, Heimbel 2017, 231 ff., Bentor 2017, and now also Dachille 2022, which I have not seen. Like Mkhas grub, Ngor chen had also studied under Buddhaśrī, for which see Heimbel 2017, 155–74.

33. He details this in the letter he addressed to the aforementioned *guanding guoshi* for which see Mkhas grub 1980–82[h], 795.

34. Mkhas grub 1980–82[k] and 1980–82[l], 159, 231, 239, etc. The latter references still need to be verified, since they are based on annotations *ngam* [= Byang Ngam ring] in the xylograph and do not occur in the text itself. He wrote the first in his see of Ri bo mdangs can, which means that it was at least written prior to his shift to Dga' ldan Monastery; the second is dated 1434 and was indeed composed while he resided in Dga' ldan. Blondeau 1997 studied a work, Mkhas grub 1980–82[m], that was allegedly written by Mkhas grub in reply to queries raised by Byang bdag. It now turns out that it was wrongly placed in a series of his miscellaneous writings that we find in all the available printed editions of his oeuvre. The text cites Gser mdog Paṅ chen Shākya mchog ldan (1428–1507) and Padma gling pa (1450–1521), so that Mkhas grub could not have written it.

wrote in Tsang Bulong (Gtsang Bu long Monastery) at the age of 17/18.³⁵ The ode consists of nine syllables per line in verses of four lines each in consideration of the explicit presence of a finite verb at the very end of the fourth line and has one verse in eight lines. It is a very personal document, full of admonitions to himself. He revisited the deity together with its mandala in an ode he had written in Nyang stod Rin chen sngang, perhaps with the inspiration of his erstwhile teacher 'Jam dpal rdo rje snying po [= ?Tsongkhapa].³⁶ This time the poem has a much more complicated structure, for each line has no less than thirty-one syllables! Even more forbidding are the two stanzas with thirty-five syllables per line that he wrote as part of his “statement of intent” to write what turned out to be his capacious and undated, pre-Ganden period study of the *Pramāṇavārttika* that is subtitled “Ocean of Reasoning” (*rigs pa'i rgya mtsho*). A very detailed and indispensable commentary on these verses was written by the Yongzin (Yongs 'dzin).³⁷

Khedrup's poetry is generally recognized by the tradition as being particularly difficult and cerebral. This seems to be indicated by several pieces whose petitioners requested that he write them in such a way that they are easily understood and not constrained by him using [difficult] poetic diction (*snyan dngags kyi brdas ma bcings pa'i go bde ba*). Examples for this are his versified, capsule biography of Tsongkhapa which he wrote at the behest of a Nyima Nyingpo (Nyi ma snying po) and his *Ode* to Sherap Pal Sangpo (Shes rab dpal bzang po) in which, while residing in Riwo Gephel (Ri bo dge 'phel) Monastery in Zhangdo (Shangs mdo), he made good a request by Neten Tsultrim Pal Sangpo (Gnas brtan Tshul khriims dpal bzang po), Minyak Tsultrim sang po (Mi nyag Tshul khriims bzang po), and Palden Gönpö (Dpal ldan mgon po) who was Sherap Pal Sangpo's attendant.³⁸ This famous work is known under the title of the [*Dpal ldan*] *sa gsum ma*, which consists of the first four syllables of its first stanza to which the nominal suffix *ma* is affixed. Ngawang Tendar cites a passage from it and the commentary on them by the fourth Pañchen Lama Losang Chökyi Gyaltzen (Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan, 1570–1662).³⁹ In his somewhat sycophantic series of verses that Khedrup addressed to Gyaltzap, he also states that he has avoided

35. Mkhas grub 1980–82[n]. I cannot place this monastery.

36. Mkhas grub 1980–82[o].

37. Yongs 'dzin 2011[c], 104–26. The Yongs 'dzin began writing his treatise in which he studied these and other opening verses of the *Rigs pa'i rgya mtsho* in Bkra shis lhun po Monastery but completed it in 1777 in his home monastery of Bkra shis bsam gtan gling that was and still is located, in his words, on the Nepal-Tibet border (*bal bod mtshams*). It falls into three main parts; a discussion of Mkhas grub's verses of homage, of the verses of the intent and the need for this work, and these are followed by the Yongs 'dzin's rather derivative appraisal of the role played by logic and epistemology in Buddhism; see Yongs 'dzin 2011[c], 3–79, 79–141, and 141–72.

38. Mkhas grub 1980–82[p], 482 and 1980–82[q], 494.

39. See, respectively, Ngag dbang bstan dar 1971[a], 49; 2008[a], 476, 477. Ngag dbang bstan dar cites the passage in Pañchen Lama IV 2009, 514, which comments on Mkhas grub 1980–82[p], 480.

rhetorical form (*tshig sbyor*) when he wrote this work even while he acknowledges that he is “an expert in framing the pace of words” (*tshig gi gom pa ’god mkhas*).⁴⁰

Now long ago and thus rather dated, I published a small study of a “minor” work of Khedrup in which he ventured to weed out coarse and uneducated expressions—in his words, expressions belonging to the “village/uncouth words of the ignoramus” (*blun po’i grong tshig*)—from intellectual discourse.⁴¹ Though he does not hint at this, I suspect that he may at least have had in mind one or the other treasure text (*gter ma*), for, when unedited, texts belonging to this genre are not always free from “unrefined” colloquial speech. Towards the very end of this little tract we learn that even if a piece of writing has all the trimmings of what goes into a fine composition (*sdeb legs*), one blemish, however slight, in the form of a “village/uncouth words” (*grong tshig*) and its appeal is fully destroyed.⁴² Aside from the intrinsic interest of this little work, it ends just prior to a peroration in which he appears to tell his audience what in his opinion goes into the making of a poet. He relates there that he:

/ brda dang tha snyad ming gi rnam dbye dang /
/ sdeb sbyor snyan dngags mngon brjod gtsug lag gzhung /
/ shes bya’i gnas kun rig pa...

...is cognizant of all the domains of what is to be known:
terminology, expressions, nominal cases,
the analytic treatises on prosody, poetry/poetics, and lexicography.

It is thus quasi autobiographical. Considerably more autobiographical is the narrative that he wrote about himself while in Riwo Mangchen (Ri bo mdangs can), that is, his *Rang gi rtogs pa gtam du bsnyad pa*.⁴³ Having presumably been written when he was in exile from Gyalkhar Tsé, this work requires careful study.

He crafted, and I purposively use this term, one composition in the so-called *bya dka’i rgyan* (*duṣkarālaṃkāra*) style, that is by making use of complex poetic figures that are based on phonology. The term *bya dka’/duṣkara* first occurs in *Kāvyaḍarśa* III: 3c, and it is explained and illustrated in *Kāvyaḍarśa* III: 78 and 83–85.⁴⁴ Khedrup’s creative piece begins with a series of stanzas where every syllable only has the vowel [a] and then transitions to stanzas where every syllable has

40. Mkhas grub 1980–82[r], 490; the verse in which this phrase occurs is also cited in Yongs ’dzin 2011[c], 12.

41. Mkhas grub 1980–82[s] and van der Kuijp 1986.

42. The nod to *Kāvyaḍarśa* I: 7 is unmistakable; see also Dimitrov 2002, 157 and 215; see also *Kāvyaḍarśa* II: 54c–56.

43. Mkhas grub 1980–82[t]. This work is cited at length in Yongs ’dzin 2011[c], and once in Ngag dbang bstan dar 1971[a], 58; 2008[a], 482.

44. Dimitrov 2011, 181, 186, 263–64 and Gerow 1971, 183–84.

the vowels [e], [u], [i], and [o].⁴⁵ In its afterword, he unabashedly calls himself “the crest jewel of poets of the range of snowy mountains” (*gangs ri'i khrod kyī snyan dngags mkhan rnams kyī gtsug gi nor bu*) and says that he wrote this piece for aspiring poets.

The *Ode to Tsongkhapa* was not Khedrup's sole composition that caught the attention of his readers. One of these was an easily understandable (*go bde ba*), untitled prayer-in-verse to Tsongkhapa that he had written at the behest of the official (*drung*) Namkha Paljor (Nam mkha' dpal 'byor). This prayer is usually referred to as the *Rnam dag gangs ri ma*. Bearing neither a date nor an indication of where it was composed, it is so titled by using the first four syllables of its opening line, / *rnam dag gangs ri'i phreng bas yongs bskor ba'i / phyogs 'dir...* (“...in this area that is fully encircled by a garland of pure snowy mountains”), to which is affixed the nominal particle *ma*. The fourth Gungthang Könchok Tenpai Grönma (Gung thang IV Dkon mchog bstan pa'i sgron ma, 1764–1823) wrote his commentary on this work while residing in Labrang Tashikhyil (Bla brang bkra shis 'khyil) Monastery.⁴⁶ The commentary itself is a bit disappointing. Gungthang IV simply unpacks the meaning of the verses, adding some biographical data, and does not engage in the least in its literary qualities. Maybe he felt that it had none to speak of and that its merit solely resided in the fact that its contents provided a skeleton around which he could revel in writing a biography of Tsongkhapa.

Let us now circle back to Ngawang Tendar, the *sog po*-Mongol scholar whom I mentioned in the beginning of this essay. He should not really be a stranger to the readers of this journal for he is well-known for his writings on such language arts as lexicography, grammar, orthography, and poetics, and on a host of other subjects. He relates that he wrote his detailed study of Khedrup's *Ode to Tsongkhapa* at the behest of a certain Arik Gendun Jigme (A rig Dge 'dun 'jigs med) while he resided in the Left Monastery (*gyon dgon*) of Mipham Chöling (Mi pham chos gling) which is also known as Gedrupling (Dge sgrub gling), that is located in Alakzha (A lag sha). The approach he has taken to one of the *Ode's* stanzas is vintage Ngawang Tendar. There he combined his subtle interpretive skills with a sensitivity to potential or actual orthographic-orthotactic problems. A verse with specific text-critical problems reads⁴⁷:

/ 'jig rten kun na mgon khyod dang /
/ phyogs gcig mtshungs pa 'ang rnyed dka' nas /

45. Mkhas grub 1980-82[u]. Compare this work with a similar one by Tsong kha pa which, however, is much longer and only uses the vowel [a] in Tsong kha pa 1978-79[e]. The latter is sometimes titled *Bshes gnyen sba ba la gdams pa bya dka' ba a'i dbyangs la nges pa*.

46. Gung thang 2003.

47. Mkhas grub 1980-82[a], 476 and Ngag dbang bstan dar 1971[a], 40–41; 2008[a], 471–72. For another philological problem anent two verses in Mkhas grub 1980–82[a], see Ngag dbang bstan dar 1971[a], 37–38; 2008[a], 479–70.

/ de phyir bdag gis khyod kyi dper /
/ rgyal ba kho na yang yang bsgrin /

Owing to the difficulty of finding a single position
in the entire world that is even similar to you protector,
I will therefore, following your example,
repeatedly strive/contend for only the Victorious One.

All the versions of the *Ode* have *sgrin* instead of *bsgrin* as the last word of this stanza. After giving an explanatory prose version of this verse, Ngawang Tendar adds the following philological note in which he argues for reading *bsgrin* rather than *sgrin*:

*rtsa bar sgrin zhes byung yang de lta bu'i sgrin ni dag yig ngag sgron ltar na mkhas
pa dang spro ba la 'jug / lam rim chen mo ltar na [472] 'bad pa la 'jug pa'i skabs
yod kyang bsgrun pa dang bsgrin mi phod pa lta bu'i bsgrin ni 'gran pa'i don yin pas
skabs 'dir sngon 'jug pa yig chad dam snyam /*

Though *sgrin* occurred in the basic verse-text,⁴⁸ such a *sgrin* is rendered as “learned” (*mkhas pa*) and “joyful” (*spro ba*) according to the *Dag yig ngag sgron*.⁴⁹ Though according to the *Lam rim chen mo* there was an occasion for it to render “strive for” (*'bad pa*), insofar as *bsgrin* as in *bsgrun pa* and *bsgrin mi phod pa* involves the sense of *'gran pa*,⁵⁰ I think that on this occasion [in Khedrup's text] the prescript (/b/) had been elided.

It is perhaps fitting that we conclude this part of the essay that deals with Khedrup's poetic

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48. We do not know what kind of a text of Mkhas grub's *Ode* was available to him. Suffice it to say here that all the xylograph versions of the *Ode* have *sgrin*. This means that the editors of Ngag dbang bstan dar's commentary corrected his text of the *Ode* in accordance with his comments.
49. This refers to the famous versified work on correct orthography (*dag yig*) that Dpal khang Lo tsā ba Ngag dbang chos kyi rgya mtsho (16th c.), alias Dbyangs can snyems pa'i sde, wrote in 1538. While Dpal khang Lo tsā ba 2014, 7 does contain the terms *sgrin po* and *bsgrin pa*, it does not have the explanations cited by Ngag dbang bstan dar.
50. Ngag dbang bstan dar 1971[b], 326; 2008[b], 631–32 study of “old words” (*brda' rnying*) and their updates (*brda' gsar*) contains the following entry: “*sgrun* and *sgrin po* mean a learned (*mkhas pa*) or an energetic one (*brtson pa can*); *bsgrin* means contender/competitor (*'gran pa*); *bsgrin mi phod pa* means unable to contest/compete (*sgrun dang sgrin po ni mkhas pa'am brtson pa can / bsgrin ni 'gran pa / bsgrin mi phod pa ni* [632] *'gran mi nus pa /*). His contemporary A kya Yongs 'dzin Blo bzang don grub (1740–1827) was the author of word studies of several treatises, and we come across the following gloss of the word *sgrun pa* in Tsong kha pa's *Lam rim chen mo*: “Since *sgrun pa* is an old word for contender/competitor, the fact that it is not a wrongly spelled word is essential” (*sgrun pa ni 'gran pa'i brda rnying yin pas yi ge ma nor ba gces /*); see A kya Yongs 'dzin 1971, 126.

oeuvre with the penultimate stanza that occurs just prior to the *Ode*'s peroration which is a dedication of the wholesomeness of having composed it (*brtsams pa'i dge ba sngo tshul*). The stanza in question aims to show how the *Ode* came to be written (*ji ltar brtsams pa'i tshul*); it reads⁵¹:

/ *dpal ldan sa yi mgon po bshes gnyen gyi* /
 / *yon tan dri bzhon ma la ya yi rlung* /
 / *snying la reg pas dad pa'i yid gyos te* /
 / *mdor bsdus bstod pa'i tshig 'di gtam du byas* /

The Ma la ya breeze that carries the fragrance of the qualities
 of the lustrous protector of the world, the spiritual friend,
 has touched the heart and thus having stirred my faith,
 this summary words of praise were written as a message.

But now a few more remarks are called for. Most of the commentarial work done on Tibetan poems of whatever stripe consists of expanding the verses into prose and filling out the case-endings that Tibetan versification allows authors to omit. Ngawang Tendar indicates that *ma la ya yi rlung* refers to the breeze that comes from the Malaya, the mountain range where one finds, according to tradition, the most precious kind of sandalwood that is called *sbrul gyi snying po* in Tibetan; it is called *uragasāra* in Sanskrit. In his remarks on this verse, he gives two quotations from the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*, once for the expression *tsan dan sbrul gyi snying po* and once for *tsan dan kha ba can*, that is, sandalwood of the snowy region, and he wonders whether these refer to the same thing.⁵² They do not. He fancifully writes apropos of the term *sbrul gyi snying po* that the origin for this expression must be sought in the fact that snakes coil around such cooling trees to shelter from the Indian heat. Daṇḍin himself is quite clear in *Kāvyaḍarśa* II: 171 that the Malaya is for him in “the South” and we can be more specific, it is found in the northeastern part of Odisha State as well as, especially, in the Western Ghats of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala. The poetic figure of invested with double entendre (*sbyar ba can*, *śleṣāviddha*), the third subtype of the so-called introduction of another matter (*don gzhan bkod pa*, *arthāntaranyāsa*), reads⁵³:

51. Mkhas grub 1980–82[a], 476 and, for the verse and his remarks, see Ngag dbang bstan dar 1971[a], 54–59; 2008[a], 480–82.

52. For the first, see Roberts 2022, 54.250 and for “Himalayan sandalwood” (*kha ba'i tsan dan* not *tsan dan kha ba can*), see Roberts 2022, 27.10, 54.210, 54.251. The sūtra does mention a kind of “sandalwood called *gośirṣa* that comes from the Malaya mountains”; see Roberts 2022, 24.9.

53. For this poetic figure and its subtypes, see Gerow 1971, 118–22; Gerow 1971, 121–22 discusses this subtype and the English translation of the Sanskrit verse that follows is his.

*utpādayati lokasya prītiṃ malayamārutah /
nanu dākṣiṇyā sampannah sarvasya bhavati priyah //*

The wind from the southern mountains arouses joy amongst men;
indeed one born in the South is everybody's friend.

*/ ma la ya yi rlung gis ni /
/ 'jig rten dga' ba skyed par byed /
/ dā kṣi ṇya dang yang dag ldan /
/ kun gyi snying sdug ma yin nam /*

The Malaya wind
produces well-being in the world.
Is not one truly endowed with southern gentility
the friend of all?

The point here is that *dākṣiṇya* was wisely left untranslated and can mean something in the order of “southern,” “polite,” and “pious”, and we should add that Dpang Lo tsā ba was all too aware of its multivalence.⁵⁴

Ngawang Tendar then pivots to the question of the meaning of the third line and finds *yid* in the phrase *dad pa'i yid* particularly problematic and capable of many different interpretations. This may have led him abruptly to end the discussion and he concludes his comment on this verse by playing the ethnic card⁵⁵:

*... sog po'i rigs su skyes pa'i gos ngan hrul po gyon mkhan gyi bdag lta bu'i tshig la su
zbig gis yid rton par byed snyam nas de tsam las spros ma 'dod do //*

Thinking who would rely on the word of someone like me who wears the rags
of one born in the Sog po ethnic group, I do not wish to elaborate further apart
from just what I have written.

In addition to turning the verses of a poem into prose and identifying the more obscure words or unusual turns of phrase, the traditional commentator also draws attention to the specific poetic figures that lie embedded in the verses, and Ngawang Tendar has done so on several occasions.⁵⁶

54. Dpang Lo tsā ba 1981, 369 and No date, 112[pdf].

55. Ngag dbang bstan dar 1971[a], 57; 2008[a], 482.

56. Ngag dbang bstan dar 1971[a], 41, 46; 2008[a], 472, 475. Respectively, these identify the use of the figures of ascription

Striking is that other than this approach to Tibetan poetry, members of the tradition seldom if ever seem to be inclined to critique a poem in terms of its structure or diction or its success, or lack thereof, as a literary creation. We do find this in the competing commentaries on the *Snyan ngag me long*, but by and large not in comments on short ephemeral poetic pieces such as the innumerable odes, reverential petitions (*gsol 'debs*), prayers (*smon lam*), etc. that came from the pens of the Tibetan intellectual elite. It is also not insignificant to point out that Ngawang Tendar does not hesitate to point out some problems he had with ideas that had hardened in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. For example, he writes that he has a slight problem (*cung zbig dogs pa*) with how Nāgārjuna might have received teachings from Mañjuśrī and he cites a long passage from the fifth Dalai Lama's commentary on *Dmigs brtse ma*, a short prayer first by and then to Tsongkhapa, with which he takes profound issue.⁵⁷

We should also not neglect to mention that Ngawang Tendar himself wrote a work of illustrative verses anent the relevant poetic figures of each of the *Snyan ngag me long's* three chapters and two separate pieces on the second chapter.⁵⁸ In the colophon of the first, he waxes singularly autobiographical⁵⁹ and he begins by saying that although he was by nature inclined to compose verses, he initially despaired because he did not know *snyan ngag*. And what must have added to his despondence was his inability to find a good teacher in Kumbum (Sku 'bum) and Gönlung (Dgon lung) monasteries. We do not know when he was looking for someone in these institutions who could teach him the *Snyan ngag me long* and it is almost counterintuitive that he was unable to find anyone there with sufficient expertise in this text. After all such *snyan ngag mkhan* as Sumpa Khenpo Yeshé Paljor (Sum pa Mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, 1704–88) and Third Thuken Losang Chökyi Nyima (Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, 1737–1802) and others were active at these monasteries for good parts of their lives. It is equally peculiar that he did not learn *snyan ngag* when he was studying in Central Tibet under Yongzin Yeshé Gyaltzen (Yongs 'dzin Ye shes rgyal mtshan) or Longdöl Lama Ngawang Losang (Klong rdol Lama Ngag dbang blo bzang, 1719–94).⁶⁰ In any event, fearful that the transmission of *snyan ngag* had been interrupted, he left

(*rab rtog, utprekṣā*) and deceptive praise (*zol gyis bstod pa, vyājastuti*) that are found in *Kāvyaḍarśa* II: 218–30, 340; see the varieties of the former Gerow 1971, 131–38, and Gerow 1971, 286, for the latter.

57. Ngag dbang bstan dar 1971[a], 31, 37–38; 2008[a], 466, 477–78; and see also Dalai Lama V 1990a, 363–64.

58. Ngag dbang bstan dar 1971[c, d, e]; 2008[c, d, e]. In addition, echoing the structure of Sa skya Paṇḍita's famous *Mkhas 'jug*, Ngag dbang bstan dar also wrote a treatise on the triad of exegesis (*'chad*), debate (*rtsod*), and composition (*rtsom*). L. Cook's translation of his musings on the latter in Ngag dbang bstan dar 1971[f], 143–54; 2008[f], 531–37 is found in <https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/ngawang-tendar/on-literary-composition>. The latter suggests that he had “compiled” this work “during Great Prayer Festival”, but this ignores the appositional character of the nominal phrase *lha ldan smon lam chen mo'i grwa skor ba* which means that Ngag dbang bstan dar was one who had done his examinations during the Lhasa Great Prayer Festival, and not that he had written this work on that occasion.

59. Ngag dbang bstan dar 1971[c], 476; 2008[c], 723

60. Ngag dbang bstan dar 1971[d, e]; 2008[d, e].

for Labrang Tashikhyil Monastery when he was some fifty years old and there he met Dorampa Lhashé (Rdo rams pa Lha zhe) who had been in Palpung (Dpal spungs) / Sde dge— this was evidently the place where *snyan ngag* was actively taught— and it was from him that he received classes in the *Snyan ngag me long* from *Kāvyaḍarśa* I: 13 [simple prose, *grol ba*, *muktaka*] to III: 124 [riddles, *gab tshig*, *prahelikā*]⁶¹ together with the fifth Dalai Lama’s study of the *Snyan ngag me long*, the *Dbyangs can dgyes glu*.⁶² The first two lines of his illustrative stanza of the eighth type of the introduction of another matter figure of *Kāvyaḍarśa* II: 176, affirm the difficulty of the latter in no uncertain terms⁶³:

/ *dbyangs can dgyes pa’i glu dbyangs go dka’ na* /
/ *rtsa ba rgya gzhung me long smos ci dgos* /

If the *Dbyangs can dgyes pa’i glu dbyangs* is difficult to understand,
what is the need to mention the basic text, the Indian treatise, the *Mirror*?

The text occasionally cites or refers to such earlier *Snyan ngag me long* commentators as Pang Lotsawa (Dpang Lo tsā ba), Narthan Lotsawa Gendun Pal (Snar thang Lo tsā ba Dge ’dun dpal), alias Sangha Shri, (ca.1370–after 1439),⁶⁴ Rinpungpa Ngawang Jikten Wangchuk (Rin spungs pa Ngag dbang ’jig rten dbang phyug, 1523–97), Bö Khepa Gelek Namgyal (Bod mkhas pa Dge legs rnam rgyal, 1618–85) and, of course, the fifth Dalai Lama. Both editions of his oeuvre do so by using smaller characters, as they also do when they mention the names of the poetic figures on which basis Ngawang Tendar composed his own illustrative stanzas, and when he is making text-critical comments. It is not clear whether Ngawang Tendar was their author or whether these were inserted by a later reader/editor of the manuscripts that were ultimately used for the xylograph edition. Daṇḍin signals the counterpart simile (*prativastūpamā/zla bo dngos po’i dpe*) and its

61. Gerow 1971, 210–217 discusses the *prahelikā* and the sixteen types Daṇḍin enumerated in *Kāvyaḍarśa* III: 96–124; see also Dimitrov 2011, 7–9, 192–209, 265–70.

62. Dalai Lama V completed this work in 1647 but made the final corrections in 1656. In addition to providing important information in his unusually long afterword and colophon of how his treatise came to be, it also contains much autobiographical detail of how the Dalai Lama understood himself as a scholar and thus begs to be studied in detail; see Dalai Lama V 2009, 387–98.

63. Ngag dbang bstan dar 1971[c], 436; 2008[c], 695. The tenth-century Sinhalese commentator Ratnaśrījñāna called this this type of an *arthāntaranyāsa* a *viparyayo yuktāyukta*; see Ratnaśrījñāna, 1957, 121. The Tibetans call it “having the reversal, what is unsuitable and suitable” (*ldog pa can*) *mi ’os shing ’os pa*), which explicitly refers to the opposite of the preceding figure in *Kāvyaḍarśa* II: 175 as *’os shing mi ’os pa (yuktāyukta)*. Gerow 1971, 119–20 describes the *viparyaya* and concludes “The term ‘reversal’ is probably to be taken as a reversal of *yuktāyukta*, where an otherwise appropriate situation is deemed in some respect inappropriate. Here the inconsistency is accepted.” We can safely elide “probably” in his first sentence.

64. For his works on the language arts, see van der Kuijp Forthcoming.

illustration in *Kāvyaḍarśa* II: 46–47, and Ngawang Tendar offers a rather uninspiring illustration of it⁶⁵:

/ mkhas pa mang yang lcang skya thams cad mkhyen /
/ rol pa'i rdo rje 'dra ba gcig kyang med /
/ rgyu skar grangs med shar ba de'i dbus su /
/ pa sangs gnyis pa nges par yod ma yin /

Though the learned are many,
there is no one like Rol pa'i rdo rje, the all-knowing Lcang skya.
Among the countless shining constellations
Venus is certainly second to none.

The Tibetan translation of Daṇḍin's illustrative verse reads⁶⁶:

/ rgyal po rnam ni skyes gyur kyang /
/ da lta khyod 'dra gcig kyang med /
/ yongs 'du dag gi rkang 'thung ni /
/ gnyis pa nges par yod ma yin /

Though kings have been born,
at present, there is not even one like you.
The coral tree,
is certainly second to none.

Note that the Tibetan translators rendered *jāyamāneṣu rājasu* by */ rgyal po rnam ni skyes gyur kyang /*, where *skyes gyur* renders *jāyamāna*, “being born.” Ngawang Tendar's text then has the following gloss anent the last two lines, one that is absent in the fifth Dalai Lama's *Snyan ngag me long* commentary⁶⁷:

de'i rtsa ba'i tshig la sanggā shris /

65. Ngag dbang bstan dar 1971[c], 425–26; 2008[c], 689.

66. See Gerow 1971, 160. *Kāvyaḍarśa* II: 47 reads: *naiko'pi tvādr̥śō'dyāpi jāyamāneṣu rājasu / nanu dviṭīyo nasty eva pārijātasya pādapaḥ //*, which Gerow renders “There is not even one who resembles you among victorious kings; but then, the coral tree has no imitator either.”

67. Dalai Lama V 2009, 253.

/ *rkang 'thung dag la yongs 'du ni* /
/ *gnyis pa nges par yod ma yin* /

zhes 'gyur bcos mdzad kyang rin spungs pas de mi 'thad gsungs /

As for the wording of its basic text, Sanggā shri [= Snar thang Lo tsā ba] emended the translation:

The coral tree among the trees,
there is certainly second to none.

But Rin spungs pa said it was incorrect.⁶⁸

Rinlungpa actually wrote that it is obvious that Narthang Lotsawa's emendation (*bcos mdzad*) did not fit (*'grig par ma mngon*) because the lines primarily involve a grove of coral trees and not of wishfulfilling trees (*lha yi dpag bsam gyi shing*). There are other places where Narthang Lotsawa sometimes explicitly states that he emended the earlier translation[s] of the *Kāvyaḍarśa*,⁶⁹ but he does not write here that he slightly changed the earlier translation of the third line and thus simply read it / *rkang 'thung dag la yongs 'du ni* /.⁷⁰ On the other hand, both Pang Lotsawa's and Jamyang Khaché's ('Jam dbyangs Kha che) commentaries

68. See, respectively, Snar thang Lo tsā ba 1976, I, 276 and Rin spungs pa No date, 57a–b. Snar thang Lo tsā ba's work was written in Snar thang at the behest of Rong ston Shāya rgyal mtshan (1367–1449) and Bzad ston Blo gros rgya mtsho. It is dated *sa mo bya'i lō'i ston zla tha chung smin drug gi zla ba'i rgyal gyi nyin par gnas lnga*, “the fifth place in the *rgyal* day of the final autumn-month, the month *smin drug* (*kārttika*), of the earth-female-hen year,” that is, on 20 November, 1429, and is posterior to those of Bde ba'i blo gros and 'Jam dbyangs Kha che [?Bsod nams dpal], as he cites them; see Snar thang Lo tsā ba 1976, I, 79, 215. Rin spungs pa's work stands out because it quotes from a large variety of different sources, Indic and Tibetan to supplement Daṇḍin's illustrative verses. It is dated *mi zad pa'am / me pho khyi'i lo smin drug gi nya ba glu dbyangs kyi zla ba yar gyi ngor 'char ba*, “the *mi zad pa* (*avyaya*) or the fire-male-dog year, dawning of the first half, the month of song, the full-moon day of the month *smin drug*,” that is, 26 November, 1586. Note here the apposite use of the *mngon brjod* term for the month, *glu dbyangs kyi zla ba*, “the month of song.” The equivalence of the month *smin drug* and *glu dbyangs kyi zla ba* is given by Rin spungs pa in his *mngon brjod* lexicon of 1581, where it is glossed by “the tenth Mongol-month”; see Rin spungs pa 1985, 39. In the useful dictionary of astral terminology, Bsam grub rgya mtsho and Huang Mingxin 1985, 162, no. 682, state that this month is the equivalent of the ninth Mongol-month, but that is due to the fact that the dictionary is based on the Phug pa calendar, whereas Rin spungs pa evidently followed the one used by the Sa skya pa school. Note further that the new month begins on the full-moon day.

69. He did not do so for his version of *Kāvyaḍarśa* I: 1, and there are not a few instances where his readings of the text are at variance with the other. See, for example, Snar thang Lo tsā ba 1976, I, 49–50 comments on Dpang Lo tsā ba's remarks anent *Kāvyaḍarśa* I: 3.

70. This was already noticed in Dimitrov 2002, 51, where his “eigenständige Fassung der tibetischen Übersetzung” is noted. For the Tibetan text of his commentary, see Snar thang Lo tsā ba 1976, I, 276–277.

indicate that they read the line as / *yongs 'du dag la rkang 'thung ni* /.⁷¹ This is curious in light of the fact that Ratnaśrījñāna, a prominent tenth-century Sinhalese commentator of the *Kāvyaḍarśa*, explicitly has *pārijātasya divyavr̥kṣaviśeṣasya...*,⁷² where *divyavr̥kṣa* is of course the equivalent of Tibetan *lha'i ljon pa* and *lha'i ljon shing*. Later, the fourth Khamtrul Tenzin Chökyi Nyima (Khams sprul IV Bstan 'dzin chos kyi nyi ma, 1730–79) dryly remarks in his marvelous *Snyan ngag me long* commentary of 1770–72 that the difference between these two, *gi* and *la*, is not altogether material, but that the Sanskrit text has the sixth case ending, the genitive case ending—*pārijātasya!*—, so that he [and his mentor Si tu Paṅ chen Chos kyi 'byung gnas (1699–1774)] read the line in question as⁷³:

/ *yong[s] 'du dag gi rkang 'thung ba ni* /

And he adds that it really should be read this way.

Let us now briefly turn our attention to Ngawang Tendar's interesting afterword.⁷⁴ There he writes that generally a work of poetry (*snyan ngag gis bstan bcos*) is a work that non-Buddhists and Buddhists have in common in terms of the way it comports to a domain of knowledge (*rig gnas*). Given that the majority of Indian and Tibetan [Buddhist] texts are “decorated” with poetry, it is suitable for those who are motivated and intelligent to study the subject. However, there are some who find some of the wording in the *Snyan ngag me long* offensive and ugly (*tshig rtsog*), and should therefore not be studied and others who, more specifically, found its study unsuited for clerics of the Gelukpa school. It is well to recall here that in opposition of the other schools, all the clerics of the Gelukpa are in theory celibate monks, whereas not all clerics of the other Tibetan Buddhist schools necessarily are monks and are thus not bound by the commitment of leading a celibate life. And indeed there is a lot in *kāvya* / *snyan ngag* that might give offense to the celibate sensibilities of the men of the cloth who were the translators of much of it and one can certainly understand how a celibate monk of any stripe might find some disturbing discomfort when reading a bit of erotic poetry like *Kāvyaḍarśa* II: 214, which illustrates the third subtype – the conclusion (*nirṇaya/nges pa*)—of the expression involving exaggeration figure (*atisayokti/phul du byung bar brjod pa*)⁷⁵:

71. Dpang Lo tsā ba 1981, 342: No date, 78[pdf], and 'Jam dbyangs Kha che 1985, 29. His work is not dated, but we read in the colophon that he was requested to write it by Mi dbang Chos kyi rgyal po Ta wen (< Ch. Dayuan 大元) Nam mkha' bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po, that he wrote it in the monastery of Bzang ldan. For the Mi dbang Chos kyi rgyal po, see the notes in van der Kuijp 2018, 43–45.

72. Ratnaśrījñāna 1957, 82.

73. Khams sprul IV 1976, 232.

74. Ngag dbang bstan dar 1971[c], 472–76; 2008[c], 721–22.

75. For this figure, see Gerow 1971, 97–101.

/ dga' ma khyod kyi nu ma dang /
/ dbyi yi bar na sked pa ni /
/ yod dang med ces bdag gi ni /
/ the tshom da dung [b]zlog ma gyur /

Lovely! Whether or not there is
a waist between your
breasts and hip,
my doubt has not been resolved.

And many other such poems are found in the *Snyan ngag me long*. But Ngawang Tendar avers that this is based on a misunderstanding. For example, *Kāvyaḍarśa* II: 15a–b states:

/ mdzes ma khyod kyi lag mthil ni /
/ chu skyes bzhin du cung zad dmar /

Beauty! The palm of your hand,
slightly red like the water-born lotus.⁷⁶

And this can be so easily changed into lines that are in a religious register:

/ 'jam dbyangs khyod kyi bzhin ras ni /
/ gser bzang bzhin du kun tu ser /

'Jam dbyangs! Your countenance,
everywhere yellow, like pure gold.

Here, we should not lose sight of the fact that “Jam dbyangs” [*Mañjuḥoṣa] has at least three registers during Ngawang Tendar’s lifetime. First, it can refer directly to the bodhisattva; second, it can point to Tsongkhapa; and third, it can indicate the Manchu emperor. Further, Ngawang Tendar points out that *snyan ngag* received the imprimatur of and the intellectual support by the much-revered Tsongkhapa, the very founder of the Gelukpa school, and he quotes a pertinent stanza from the latter’s poetic narrative of the Chenga’s life that I mentioned earlier⁷⁷:

76. This is an allusion to a custom found in the Indian subcontinent where women apply the red alta-dye to the palms of their hands and the soles of their feet on festive occasions.

77. Tsong kha pa 1978–79[a], 445—as can be easily checked, the same reading of this verse is also found in the Sku ’bum monastery recension of Tsong kha pa’s works.

/ de dag mkhas pa'i dga' ston mchog /
/ snyan dngags^a dag gi yon tan^b yin /
/ de phyir snyan dngags^a sbrang rtsi'i ros /
/ blo gsal bung ba'i^c dga' ston bya /

^aNgag dbang bstan dar 1971[c], 2008[c]: *ngag*.

^bNgag dbang bstan dar 1971[c], 2008[c]: *phan yon*.

^cNgag dbang bstan dar 1971[c], 2008[c]: *bas*.

Those are the qualities of *snyan ngag*,
the supreme feast of the learned.
Therefore, *snyan ngag*, with its taste of honey,
should be a feast of the bees,⁷⁸ the lucid-minded.

And he comments that this allows him to guarantee that poetry is not something that the Gelukpa should shun. He also comments to this effect on a verse from Tsongkhapa's famous *Rin chen gsum gyi gtam du sbyor ba*:⁷⁹

/ rigs lam phra mo phyed pa'i rnam dpyod dang /
/ gzhung lugs gdams par shar ba'i nyams len dang /
/ tshig sbyor tshul la mkhas pa'i ngag gi dpal /
/ sa steng 'di na rin chen rnam gsum snang /

Ngag dbang bstan dar 1971, 2008: 'byed.

An intellect that has analyzed the subtle path of logic and,
spiritual practice that is manifested in the instructions of
textual traditions and,
the vocal luster of one learned in the ways of literary composition,
in this world, three jewels shine.

Finally, the introductory part of Narthang Lotsawa's commentary contains a short section on the

78. Dalai Lama V 2009, 398 speaks of himself and others as the "bees of the domains of knowledge" (*bdag sogs rig gnas pa'i bung rnams*)!

79. Tsong kha pa 1978–79[f], 313. Commenting on the third line, this little work makes later an even stronger case for the study of literary composition and poetry.

place *snyan ngag* has in the Buddhist experience and a longer one on the Buddhist tenor of the *Snyan ngag me long*.⁸⁰

Connected to the *Snyan ngag me long*'s second chapter, two shorter works by Ngawang Tendar are related to the Longdöl (Klong rdol) Lama.⁸¹ The first of these is undated and involves an ode to his mentor with the title [*Snyan ngag dpe rgyan so gnyis kyi sgo nas*] *bstod pa yon tan rgya mtshor gzhol ba'i dad pa'i chu bo* and uses the thirty-two different kinds of similes (*dpe*, *upamā*) as enumerated by Daṇḍin.⁸² He calls himself "the poet of Mongolia" (*sog yul gyi snyan ngag mkhan*). Titled [*Snyan ngag me long gi le'u gnyis pa'i mtshungs pa gsal byed kyi sgra'i sgo nas*] *rang gi bla ma la bstod pa byin rlabs 'bod pa'i dbyangs snyan rol mo*, the second is a longer ode to the Longdöl Lama in which he uses the sixty-three types of words that indicate "likeness" (*mtshungs pa*) listed by the *Snyan ngag me long*⁸³ to which he added eleven additional ones as argued for by the elusive Ngawang Drakpa (Ngag dbang grags pa) [*Vāgīśvarakīrti].⁸⁴ It bears the precise date of the thirteenth day of the second fortnight of the tenth Mongol-month of the iron-tiger year, that is, December 12, 1830, and Ngawang Tendar's scribe was a certain Kushri Gelong Drakpa Sherap (Ku shri Dge slong Grags pa shes rab).

In the circles of the educated elite, lay and clerical, poetic improvisation was a favorite pastime. The ability to write in the ornate idiom of *snyan ngag* was not merely a sign of having been privy to a very decent education. It was much more than that. It was a mark of cultivation and of having what in German is called *Bildung*, a word that does not let itself be easily translated and involves the idea of character formation through education and cultivation. There is ample evidence for this among the laity in the writings of such members of the social elite as Rinpungpa, Dokharwa Tsering Wangyal (Mdo mkhar ba Tshe ring dbang rgyal, 1697–1763), Ga Shipa Tenzin Paljor (Dga' bzhi pa Bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor, 1761–after 1810), to name but a few. The same holds for such as Bara Gyaltzen Pal Sangpo ('Ba' ra Rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po, 1310–91) and, once again, the second Shamar, to name but a few. The inability to do so or to allow something unsophisticated and impolite to enter one's composition was not the mark of a cultivated lay or clerical gentleman, and the writer would be subject to censure. In that sense, the following verse by Khedrup provides a fitting conclusion to this essay⁸⁵:

80. Snar thang Lo tsā ba 1976, I, 11–18, 24–45.

81. Ngag dbang bstan dar 1971[d, e]; 2008[d, e].

82. *Kāvyaḍarśa* II: 15–50; see also Gerow 1971, 140–170.

83. *Kāvyaḍarśa* II: 56c–65.

84. Ngag dbang bstan dar's source was most likely Dalai Lama V 1990, 255. Snar thang Lo tsā ba 1976, I, 292 counts sixty-five such types and explains these by dividing them into four rubrics. He also writes that Shong ston Lo tsā ba had left the terms in Sanskrit and that he rendered them in Tibetan to facilitate understanding the text. He makes no mention of *Vāgīśvarakīrti.

85. Mkhas grub 1981–82[s], 535.

*/ sdeb legs tshig sbyor snyan dngags lus mdzes ma⁸⁶ /
/ rgyan mangs mdangs kyis rnam par bkra na yang /
/ grong tshig gcig gis snyan dngags skal ngan byed /
/ rgyan mang na chung sna bcad ji bzhin no //*

The beautiful [female] body of a poem, a composition that is well-ordered, even if it were beautified with the glow of numerous poetic figures, the poem is turned from worthy to bad with one single uncouth expression, just like having cut the nose of a well-bedecked young woman.⁸⁷

86. Thu'u bkwan III's biography of Lcang skya II Rol pa'i rdo rje (1717–86) cites this verse but has the feminine ending *ma* instead of *la*; see Thu'u bkwan III 1969, 816 and 1989, 760–61.

87. Compare here *Kāvyaśāstra* I: 65a–b: *śabde 'pi grāmyatāsty eva sā sabhyetarakīrtanam /; / sgra la'ang grong pa nyid yod de / de ni legs pa'i cig shos grags /*.

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