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## Wind Horse: Proceedings of the North American Tibetological Society

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# THE NOR-PA TRADITION\*

*Ronald M. Davidson*

Although the circumstances surrounding the genesis of different monastic traditions is complex, allowing for individual variation the founders might still be considered according to the type of values and goals which they embraced. In Tibet we should examine full-fledged mystics of the order of Dus-gsum-mkhyen-pa (1110–1193), the first Karma-pa, who believed their purpose to be the spread of that vision inherited from their teachers and developed themselves through long years of practice. Or we may reflect on another group of teachers who, upon analyzing the tradition received, wished to cleanse from it elements which appeared to them as doubtful and unwarranted. Perhaps the most famous lama of this variety is rJe Tsoñ-kha-pa who initially envisioned his movement as the bKa'-gdams-gsar-ma, the new bKa'-gdams-pa. Of a similar conviction was Ñor-chen Kun-dga'-bzañ-po—the founder of Ñor E-Waṃ chos-ldan—for Ñor-chen had reservations, not only about certain elements within the Sa-skya tradition as he knew it, but about the direction of Tibetan Buddhism as a whole. Let us for a moment examine the tradition that Kun-dga'-bzañ-po received and its main vicissitudes by his time in the late 14th and early 15th centuries.

Even though the teachings of the Lam-'bras, which were primarily based on the *Hevajra Tantra*, entered Tibet with the return of 'Brog-mi lo-tsä-ba (993–1050) from his studies in India, the Sa-skya sect as known in Tibet was really a product of the 'Khon family. This illustrious house traces its lineage back to the royal dynastic era, but it was 'Khon dKon-mchog-rgyal-po (1034–1102) who founded the monastic center of Sa-skya in 1073. Until this time the 'Khon had been traditionally practitioners of the rÑiñ-ma-pa systems, but, according to the *Ñor chos 'byuñ*, 'Khon dKon-mchog-rgyal-po witnessed a spectacle which radically changed his perception of the older tradition. In the

midst of a secular festival, he observed *mantrins* dressed in masks and ornaments of the twenty-eight *Iśvari* and dancing in the manner of Ma-mo ral-pa-can. Shocked by this public display of matters which more properly should have been kept hidden, 'Khon dKon-mchog-rgyal-po inquired of his older brother, Śes-rab-tshul-khrims, who responded that this represents the confusion within the rÑiñ-ma and that hereafter it would be impossible to obtain *siddhi* based on the rÑiñ-ma system.<sup>1</sup> This stigma against the rÑiñ-ma, later amplified by Sa-skya Paṇḍita, is still felt and one can find Sa-skya lamas who yet maintain that it is impossible to obtain realization through the rÑiñ-ma-pa teaching as the *adhiṣṭhāna* has been destroyed by the public display and confusion within the tradition.

At his brother's behest, 'Khon dKon-mchog-rgyal-po then took all the rÑiñ-ma images, books, and ritual implements and, erecting three large *caityas* in Bra-mo-luñ, he sealed up in them all of the rÑiñ-ma materials in the possession of the 'Khon. At that moment, however, there appeared to 'Khon dKon-mchog-rgyal-po a *dharmapāla* who instructed him to retain the teachings and certain of the implements connected with the Vajrakīla cycle. The retention of this material represents the origins of the 'Khon system of Vajrakīla, practiced by the members of the 'Khon family down to the present.

Certainly the subsequent developments of the Sa-skya tradition, the five Goñ-ma, and the success of Sa-skya Paṇḍita and Chos-rgyal-'phags-pa in the Mongol court are all fairly well known and need not be discussed at length,<sup>2</sup> but the literary and religious position of one of the Sa-skya Goñ-ma in particular, Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan (1147–1216), needs some clarification. For the later Sa-skya tradition, especially those who were concerned with the esoteric instruction of the Lam-'bras, Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan was perhaps the leading literary figure among the Sa-skya Goñ-ma. Three works were of special concern to the Lam-'bras yogins: the *Pod ser*, the *rGyud kyi mÑon par rtogs pa Rin po che'i ljon sin*, and Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan's commentary on

the *Hevajra Tantra*.

Probably the *Pod ser* stands out as the most esoteric of these works.<sup>3</sup> Sa-chen Kun-dga'-sñiñ-po (1092–1158) had written fully eleven commentaries on the *rDo rje tshig rkañ* (To. 2284)—Virüpa's statement of the essential principles of the *Hevajra Tantra* and the basic text of the Lam-'bras system.<sup>4</sup> The *Pod ser* is Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan's compilation of specific instructions supplementary to the above commentaries. These instructions are in the form of short treatises written primarily by Sa-chen and Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan with occasional discussions by bSod-nams-rtse-mo (1142–1182), Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan's elder brother.

The *Rin po che'i ljon śiñ* is structured quite differently.<sup>5</sup> Previously, bSon-nams-rtse-mo had begun writing his general discussion of the *tantra piñaka* entitled the *rGyud sde spyi'i rnam par gžag pa*.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, though, he passed away before he could complete the work, having finished only three of the four topics initially presented. Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan therefore undertook completion of bSod-nams-rtse-mo's work, but, under the guise of composing the section on the process of realization (*mñon-rtogs: abhisamaya*), he compiled a lengthy work on the *rgyud-gsum*—the triple stream of starting point, path, and fruition. Moreover, in his introduction to his commentary on the *Hevajra Tantra*, Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan explicitly states that he considers the *rGyud sde spyi'i rnam par gžag pa*, the *Rin po che'i ljon śiñ*, and his commentary on the *Hevajra Tantra* as the basic and complementary introductions to the Lam-'bras system as a whole.<sup>7</sup>

In the years following Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan, other Sa-skya masters continued to make their contributions to the Sa-skya Lam-'bras and shaped the system toward the changing needs of the area. Sa-skya Pañḍita (1181–1251), Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan's nephew, was the next Sa-skya Goñ-ma and it was primarily due to Sa-skya Pañḍita that the *trisaṃvara*—the triple vow of the Vinaya, the Bodhisattva and the Vajrasamaya—became such an honored religious structure. With the composition of the *sDom*

*gsum rab dbye*,<sup>8</sup> Sa-skya Paṇḍita established in detail the inter-relation and complementary nature of the *trisaṃvara* as well as refuting the views of certain other Tibetan teachers, views which he considered unwarranted accretions onto the basic Indian model of Buddhism. Explicit in Sa-skya Paṇḍita's denunciation of other systems is the orthodox *gsar-ma* position: any view which is untraceable to specifically Indian texts is unacceptable. Indeed, doubts voiced by other *gsar-ma* teachers concerning the 'Khon-lugs of Vajrakila were not quieted until Sa-skya Paṇḍita located the Indic manuscript of the *Vajrakīlaya-mulatantrakhanda* (To. 438) and translated it into Tibetan.<sup>9</sup>

Although the political fortunes of the Sa-skya were severely curtailed in the final consolidation of power by the Phag-mo-grupa Tā'i-si-tu in 1359, the same cannot be said for their spiritual and literary growth. The fourteenth century was marked by great strides in every field of religious endeavor in all the sects. Among the rÑiñ-ma were bKa'-ma masters of the order of g'Yuñ-ston rDo-rje-dpal (1284–1365) and g'Ter-stons such as Sañs-rgyas-gliñ-pa (1340–1396) and g'Ter-chen U-rgyan-gliñ-pa (b. 1323), not to mention the great kLoñ-chen rab-'byams-pa (1308–1363). Equally renown in the other traditions were the third Karma-pa Rañ-'byuñ-rdo-rje (1284–1339), Bu-ston Rin-chen-grub (1290–1364), Dol-bu-pa Śes-rab-rgyal-mtshan (1292–1361), Red-mdā'-ba (1349–1412), Tsoñ-kha-pa (1357–1419), rGyal-sras Thog-med-bzañ-po-dpal (1295–1369), and g'Yag-ston Sañs-rgyas-dpal (b. 1348), to mention only a few. This was a century of an enormous amount of discussion and inquiry, a century in which the unorthodox positions were codified and substantiated while the orthodox masters provided refutations and re-examined their own view points with heightened intellectual and spiritual insight.

Into this electric atmosphere of religious examination, in the year 1382, was born Ñor-chen Kun-dga'-bzañ-po.<sup>10</sup> Apparently the illegitimate son of the Sa-skya-bdag-chen b'Zi-(var. g'Zi) thog-pa Kun-dga'-rin-chen in union with bSod-nams-dpal-'dran,

Kun-dga'-bzañ-po was born in the principality of Sa-skya to the 'Khon lineage amid various indications that this would be an unusual child. At the age of five the b'Zi-thog-pa entrusted Kun-dga'-bzañ-po's care to one of the most famous lamas of Sa-skya at that time, Śar-chen Ye-śes-rgyal-mtshan.<sup>11</sup> Thus entrusted, Ye-śes-rgyal-mtshan sent Kun-dga'-bzañ-po to learn the basics of grammar and the Tibetan language with various other lamas then living in Sa-skya. As he displayed an aptitude for the life of a monk, Kun-dga'-bzañ-po was given the first two ordinations at the age of eight in 1390. From then until he was 24, he primarily studied with Ye-śes-rgyal-mtshan, mastering both the basic texts and the more advanced studies which constituted the repertoire of a well educated Sa-skya lama of the day. Sometime between becoming a full *bhikṣu* at the age of 19 and the passing of Ye-śes-rgyal-mtshan, Ņor-chen became consumed with the desire to learn as much as possible about the earlier Sa-skya tradition and in particular about the five Goñ-ma. Having exhausted the library in the Śar-pa bla-brañ, Kun-dga'-bzañ-po applied for permission to read through the volumes stored in the sGo-rum—the oldest building in Sa-skya, having been built by 'Khon dKon-mchog-rgyal-po himself.<sup>12</sup> The sGo-rum was especially dedicated to the storage of materials relating to the Sa-skya Goñ-ma, and for three years Ņor-chen applied himself to reading the three thousand volumes retained therein.

In 1406 Śar-chen Ye-śes-rgyal-mtshan passed away, and although Kun-dga'-bzañ-po had already established a reputation for learning and saintly character, he wished to continue his studies, particularly in the area of Lam-'bras. Ye-śes-rgyal-mtshan had already instructed Ņor-chen in the study of the three major *tantras* of the Sa-skya—the *Hevajra*; the *Samputa*; and the *Vajrapañjara*—as well as in the father *tantras* additionally studied by the Sa-skya, the *Raktayamāri*, the *Guhyasamāja*, etc., including their various *sādhana*s and associated rituals. Nonetheless, Kun-dga'-bzañ-po had not received the complete Lam-'bras teachings stemming from Virūpa and other teachers of

this lineage.

To this end Kun-dga'-bzañ-po sought out an *acarya* and completed his studies with the renown Lam-'bras scholar and visionary Grub-chen Buddhaśrī (1339–1420).<sup>13</sup> During the years 1408–1409 in Źi-dgon and for the better part of 1410 in both Sa-skya and Sa-bzañ, Kun-dga'-bzañ-po studied and finally completed his studies in the Lam-'bras. Then for about nine months, to the middle of 1411, Ņor-chen practiced these teachings and the signs of advancement along the path clearly appeared. Buddhaśrī then for another 11 months instructed him further in those cycles which Kun-dga'-bzañ-po as yet needed guidance. With this Buddhaśrī finished his transmission to Kun-dga'-bzañ-po and once more sent him to meditate. Six months later, at the close of 1412, Ņor-chen obtained the vision of the *sambhogakāya* and clear perception of the external and internal *maṇḍalas*.

Having substantially completed his studies with some of the greatest exponents of the Sa-skya then alive and having obtained a high degree of awakening, Kun-dga'-bzañ-po was definitely at a turning point in his life. He decided to make a pilgrimage to Central Tibet to pay homage to the Jo-bo and also to visit the famed Tsoñ-kha-pa in dGa'-ldan, which had been founded in 1409. Ņor-chen wished to develop an idea that he had had for some time—the revitalization of the *kriyā* and *carya-tantra* systems, and for this he wished to enlist Tsoñ-kha-pa's support.

Ņor-chen's motivation for attempting to resurrect these cycles of Vajrayāna is fairly clear and stems to some degree from the problems encountered by fully ordained monks when attempting the difficult meditational practices involved in the *anuttarayoga-tantras*.<sup>14</sup> Ever since the origin of these texts, Buddhist monks have felt called on to comment on the bizarre activity enjoined therein. Apparently representing fissiparous tendencies within the later Mahāyāna tradition, the *anuttarayoga-tantras*—particularly the *yogini-tantras*—would appear, if taken literally, to be impossible to be practiced by Buddhist *bhikṣus*. Certainly this appearance is strengthened by the Indian hagiographies which are in almost

total accord in maintaining that the first masters of this class of literature were not monks but yogins. Although it is true that by the time the *gsar-ma-pa* were obtaining these texts they had already become accommodated to the monastic structure through the use of ingenious devices of hermenutics, nonetheless the potential for literal interpretation remained. Atiśa, according to legend, was restrained by 'Brom-ston from giving the *Dohās* of Saraha a literal interpretation for fear of injuring the morals of Tibetans. Furthermore, even with the advantage of symbolic interpretation or visualized ritual, the explicit and highly charged sexual imagery, coupled with the potential for self-aggrandizement through meditation on oneself as the deity, made the use of the *anuttarayoga-tantras* a difficult and even dangerous undertaking for the average *bhikṣu*.

Another consideration was Kun-dga'-bzañ-po's feeling that, for whatever reason, with the translation of these works into Tibetan, the Tibetans themselves had effectively ignored the lesser three *tantric* systems, *kriyā*, *caryā* and *yoga*.<sup>15</sup> Here we may wish to question his basic assumption—that at the time of the later translations (*phyi-dar*) these three systems were as popular in India as the *anuttarayoga-tantras*. Every indication is that they were not and the 'higher' system was studied by the *lo-tśā-bas* since it was precisely this material which was considered best, highest, and most efficacious, thereby becoming most popular.

Kun-dga'-bzañ-po's attempt to revive the neglected *guhya-mantra* systems proceeded in two directions. First, he attempted to solicit assistance from the most famous teacher of the early 14th century—Tsoñ-kha-pa. dGa'-ldan was therefore an important stop on his pilgrimage undertaken in 1413 at the age of thirty-one. Tsoñ-kha-pa, however, was not cooperative in this endeavor. In response to Kun-dga'-bzañ-po's question concerning a revival of the *kriyā* and *caryā* classes, Tsoñ-kha-pa maintained that, since it appears that the benefit derived from the *anuttarayoga-tantras* is the greatest and highest, it was tantamount to folly to avoid this the most direct path. Understandably disappointed with Tsoñ-



kha-pa's answer, Kun-dga'-bzañ-po yet remained in Central Tibet in the district of sKyid-sog for three and a half years, finally returning to gTsañ and Sa-skya which became his principle residence until the year 1429.

It was at Sa-skya that Ñor-chen exercised his other option, and in 1420 he composed his famous general introductions to the *kriyā* and *caryā-tantras*.<sup>16</sup> Buston had already done this for the *yoga-tantras* (To. 5104) in an attempted revitalization of this class and Kun-dga'-bzañ-po's two introductions were patterned after Bu-ston's introductory manual. Apparently Ñor-chen considered that the *kriyā* and *caryā* systems counteract many of the tendencies of the *anuttarayoga*. Since the deities merely laugh (*kriyā*) or look at each other (*caryā*) there is no explicit sexual symbolism. Additionally, the emphasis on personal purification, ritual endeavor, and devotion make the activity of these systems in accord with the seven branches of practice of the Mahayana as exemplified, for example, in the *Bhadracaripranīdhānaraḥa-sūtra* (vv. 1–12). Such an emphasis was also extremely compatible with institutional life as seen in Buddhist monasteries, and in this regard Kun-dga'-bzañ-po's personal dedication to the ideal of the *trisaṃvara* is well evinced. Finally, Ñor-chen maintained that generation of oneself into the deity (*bdag-bskyed*) can only be understood in the *caryā-tantras* as the cause of maintaining strict discipline. At the same time self-generation has no place in the *kriyā-tantras*, the lack of this generation being the major characteristic distinguishing the *kriyā* from the other kinds of *tantra*. The arguments on this last point are well worked out and apparently Kun-dga'-bzañ-po and mKhas-grub-rje exchanged polemics on this issue, the official dGe-lugs-pa position being that *bdag-bskyed* is inherent in the *kriyā* class.<sup>17</sup>

In 1429, at the age of 47, wishing to have his own private retreat away from the bustle of Sa-skya and receiving some land which he found especially pleasant, Ñor-chen founded to the south of gZis-kha-rtse the monastery of Ñor E-Waṃ chos-ldan.<sup>18</sup>

Having discussed something of the administration and policies

of Nör with the Nör Thar-rtse mKhan-po during my studies of the Sa-skyapa, I became convinced that Nör-chen had, by the time of his death, put an enormous amount of thought and consideration into the development of Nör. Some of the policies evidently developed in direct reaction to those found at Sa-skyapa. High ecclesiastic officials in Sa-skyapa were almost exclusively chosen from monks coming from the principality of Sa-skyapa itself, due to the close interrelation seen between the fortunes of the religious and political sectors within Sa-skyapa. In Nör the reverse was the case. Of the eight officials who were in charge of the daily activities of the monks, all were required to be drawn from the areas outside of dbUs-gTsañ, while monks from such diverse areas as Ladhak and China were often given quite powerful positions. Consequently, Nör came to have quite an international reputation and this was strengthened by Nör-chen's frequent travels to outlying areas to establish monasteries and give instruction.<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, Kun-dga'-bzañ-po envisioned his new monastery as the environment to maintain perfectly the triple vow (*trisaṃvara*) and establish a strong Vajrayāna tradition in addition to a pure *bhikṣu-saṃgha*. Again we notice the difference from Sa-skyapa where Vajrayāna studies tended to be localized in the North Monastery while the South Monastery was considered to have maintained a stronger monastic tradition.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, many large monasteries established separate schools for the study of the *sāstras*, the *bśad-grwa*, and the *tantras*, the *sgrub-grwa*. In Nör, although there was eventually a *bśad-grwa*, there was never a separate *sgrub-grwa* since the entire monastery was seen as a Vajrayāna center.

Other policies in effect in Nör may be seen as a continuation of the general Sa-skyapa tendencies. Outside of the hereditary head of the 'Khon family, who was considered the incarnation of Mañjuśrī, the formal office of *sprul-sku* appears to be foreign to the Sa-skyapa, as opposed to the other sects. Nör, too, kept its distance from this uniquely Tibetan institution until about the turn of the twentieth century. The result of these and other

policies was the avoidance of the inbreeding and excesses at times associated with the succession of *sprul-skus* in other monasteries, as well as insuring promotion based primarily on merit.

By the time Ānor-chen passed away in 1456 he had come to be considered an emanation of Sa-skyā Paṇḍita, and certainly his concern for the *trisaṃvara* had much to do with this ascription. But, should we compare their respective literary productions, we find that Ānor-chen was exclusively concerned with materials bearing on *mantrayāna*. His collected works constituting four volumes, he authored discussions of material presented in the three *tantras* basic to the Sa-skyā and also seems to have had a fascination for the *Ḍākārṇavamahāyogintantra*.<sup>21</sup> Ānor-chen did, however, compose a certain number of texts which show a great similarity in method with the *sDom gsum rab dbye* in that they explicate topics pertinent to the *guhyanmantrayana* primarily through the examination and refutation of opposing views. His *rGyud gsum gnod 'joms* is exclusively concerned with refuting the position that the three basic *tantras* of the Sa-skyā propound the viewpoint of the Yogācāra.<sup>22</sup> Ānor-chen's *dPal kyai rdo rje'i lus kyi dkyil 'khor la rtsod pa spoñ ba lta ba nan sel* is primarily aimed at clarifying misconceptions about the internal *maṇḍala*,<sup>23</sup> while the *Zuñ 'jug rdo rje 'chan chen po'i sa mtshams rnam par bsad pa log rtog nan sel* set about to examine certain views concerning the position of Mahāvajradhara on the thirteenth *bhūmi*, ultimately rejecting them in favor of his own position.<sup>24</sup> Without a doubt the most extensive of this kind of work, though, is Kun-dga'-bzañ-po's monumental exposition of the developing stage (*utpattikrama*) of the Hevajra system primarily through an exhaustive discussion of the *Ṣaḍaṅgasādhana* (To. 1239) of \*Durjayacandra and its place in the differing Hevajra *sādhana* traditions.<sup>25</sup> \*Durjayacandra's *sādhana* is the one with which the Sa-skyā Lam-'bras is most concerned since he is usually believed closest in spirit and lineage to Virūpa.<sup>26</sup>

Ānor-chen's hagiography gives some indication of the energy and vitality associated with Ānor in the early days, for this was the first wholly new kind of Lam-'bras convent to be established

since the founding of Sa-skya. Consequently, Ņor attracted the best minds that the Sa-skya sect could offer, both from Sa-skya itself and later from Nalendra monastery which was founded in 1436 by Roñ-ston Śes-bya-kun-rig (1367–1449).<sup>27</sup> Kun-dga'-bzañ-po's personal disciples, moreover, proved to be some of the greatest figures to have ever represented the Sa-skya tradition.

In the field of Lam-'bras, for example, Mus-chen sems-dpa'-chen-po dKon-mchog-rgyal-mtshan (1388–1469)—Ņor-chen's immediate successor and the first rGyal-tshab of Ņor E-Wam chos-ldan—was, according to the tradition received by Ņor Thar-rtse mKhan Rin-po-che, responsible for the formal division of material into *Lam-'bras slob bśad* and *Lam-'bras tshogs bśad*.<sup>28</sup> This division actually reflects the natural separation of teaching given by Kun-dga'-bzañ-po, the *sLob-bśad* having been given to a few close disciples while the *Tshogs-bśad* was delivered to the assemblage of students gathered each year to hear the Sa-skya doctrine from the head of Ņor. Meanwhile, Kun-dga'-bzañ-po's nephew—the fourth mKhan-po, rGyal-tshab-dam-pa Kun-dga'-dbañ-phyug—collected together various short texts written by different Sa-skya lamas after Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan. This collection was entitled the *Pod dmar* and was a supplement to the earlier *Pod ser*.<sup>29</sup>

Two other disciples of Ņor-chen's provided the impetus for the study of the *sutras* and *śāstras*, Kun-mkhyen Go-ram bSod-nams-señ-ge (1429–1489) and gSer-mdog Pañ-chen Śākya-mchog-ldan. The latter, however, never became the mKhan-po of Ņor, perhaps due to the heretical nature of his views, and we must defer consideration of this fascinating figure.<sup>30</sup> It was Go-ram bSod-nams-señ-ge who became the model for later Ņor-pa scholarship.<sup>31</sup> Originally from Khams, Go-ram-pa was born into the Go-bo lineage, and he began his studies at the age of nine when he received his initial vows from Kun-dga'-'bum in 1438. It seems that friction with other students arose, however, and Go-ram-pa proceeded to Cental Tibet in 1447 where he studied with Roñ-ston Śes-bya-kun-rig in Nalendra until the latter's death in 1449.

In 1453 Go-ram-pa traveled to Ānor where he met and became the student of the aged Ānor-chen, with whom he studied for three and a half years until Ānor-chen's passing in 1456. Residing at Ānor off and on, Go-ram-pa continued his studies with Mus-chen until Mus-chen's death in 1469. Then, in the area of rTa-nag, in the year 1473, Go-ram-pa founded the monastery of rTa-nag Thub-bstan-rnam-rgyal in which he apparently wished to nurture the scholastic tradition for which he had found such an affinity.<sup>32</sup> Go-ram-pa, however, was called on to serve as the sixth mKhan-po of Ānor from 1483–1486, which he did with some reticence, finally turning over the office to Yoñs-'dzin dKon-mchog-dpal and returning to his beloved Thub-bstan-rnam-rgyal.

Go-ram bSod-nams-señ-ge, among the many topics he treats in his thirteen volume bKa'-'bum, particularly promoted the study of the Mādhyamika tradition. Red-mda'-ba gZon-nu blo-gros (1349–1412) and Tsoñ-kha-pa had already revived the study of the Prāsaṅgika, but Go-ram-pa wished to bring this viewpoint back into the Sa-skya. Red-mda'-ba had few famous Sa-skya students, having become a recluse in his maturity, while one of the most famous Sa-skya scholars of the day, Roñ-ston, did not appear to care for the extreme negative position.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, Go-ram-pa had grave reservations about the philosophical positions taken by Tsoñ-kha-pa on one extreme and his associate Śākya-mchog-ldan on the other. Go-ram-pa therefore authored both a general introduction to the study of the *madhyamā pratīpad*<sup>34</sup> as well as a short and concise outline of his views.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, he was as dedicated to the preservation of the *trisaṃvara* ideal as had been Ānor-chen and was, as far as I can detect, one of the first to compose a full commentary to Sa-skya Paṇḍita's *sDom gsum rab dbye*.<sup>36</sup>

Other mKhan-pos followed in Go-ram-pa's footsteps, but dKon-mchog-lhun grub (1497–1557), the 10th Ānor mKhan-po, was the first litterateur among the Ānor-pa who was not a personal disciple of Kun-dga'-bzañ-po's.<sup>37</sup> Like Ānor-chen, dKon-mchog-lhun-grub was very concerned with the practice of the Lam-

'bras, and to that end he composed many improved versions of the basic *sādhanas* used at Ñor, the most noteworthy being his *mÑon-rtogs yan lag drug pa'i mdzes rgyan*<sup>38</sup> and *Lus dkyil mdzes rgyan*.<sup>39</sup> These became the standard manuals for meditation in Ñor until 1959. Moreover, dKon-mchog-lhun-grub wrote an extensive commentary on Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan's *Rin po che'i ljon śin*<sup>40</sup> and produced what were to become the basic introductions to the Nor-pa system as a whole, his *rGyud gsum mdzes rgyan*<sup>41</sup> and *sNañ gsum mdzes rgyan*.<sup>42</sup> The former is a masterful outline of the Vajrayana approach according to the Lam-'bras and is based squarely on the *Rin po che'i ljon śin*, while the *sNañ gsum mdzes rgyan* treats much the same material as the standard *lam-rim* works in other sects. Also noteworthy is the *Ñor chos 'byuñ* which dKon-mchog-lhun-grub left unfinished, being completed finally by the 25th mKhan-po, Sañs-rgyas-phun-tshogs (b. 1649).<sup>43</sup> dKon-mchog-lhun-grub appears to have been the last Nor mKhan-po to have written major original treatises. To properly assess the significance of this fact we should compare the spirit of the Ñor-pa to that of the final subject to form within the Sa-skya—the Tshar-pa, an offshoot of the Ñor tradition.

Tshar-chen bLo-gsal-rgya-mtsho (1502–1566) was the recipient of Ñor-chen's *Lam 'bras slob bsad* teaching through rDo-riñ-pa Kun-spañ-kun-bzañ-chos-kyi-ñi-ma (1449–1524).<sup>44</sup> Eventually founding the monastery of Groñ-mo-che, Tshar-chen initially appeared to embody the spirit of the Ñor-pa. Two circumstances, however, were to set the Tshar-pa apart from the parent tradition. First, Tshar-chen became involved in a feud between his patrons, the house of 'Dar, and the gDoñ-dga', the family of the wife of the Sa-skya hierarch sÑags-'chañ Kun-dga'-rin-chen (1517–1584).<sup>45</sup> These mutual tensions created discord between the Tshar-pa and the other branches of the Sa-skya. Still more fissiparous was the eclectic orientation of Tshar-chen and his foremost disciple, gNas-gsar 'Jam-dbyañs mKhyen-brtse'i-dbañ-phyug (b. 1525).<sup>46</sup> Ever since the rejection of the rÑiñ-ma-pa systems at the time of 'Khon dKon-mchog-rgyal-po, the Sa-

skya kept their distance from the older tradition and this attitude was reinforced by Sa-skya Paṇḍita's denunciation of rDzogs-chen in the *sDom gsum rab dbye*. Ņor-chen merely took the final logical step when he totally ignored the 'Khon cycle of Vajrakila, leaving it no place in his system, and focused solely on the Indic materials obtained during the later translation period.

Tshar-chen, though, was from the Mañ-mkhar valley, a place with strong connections with the early translation period, and furthermore he spent quite a bit of his time in the monastery of bKra-sis-chos-sde in the Yar-luñ valley, the ancient center of the royal dynastic period. It therefore follows that there are points of contact between the Tshar-pa and the worship of Padma-sambhava, possibly stretching as far back as Tshar-chen himself. Certainly this is the case for 'Jam-dbyaṅs mKhyen-brtse'i-dbañ-phyug who became the first and perhaps only gTer-ston from the Sa-skya.

Although the Tshar-pa, with their virtual monopoly on the *Lam-'bras slob bśad*, continued their literary production almost down to the present, they had a difficult time in maintaining a stable monastic environment as a home for the *sLob-bśad* teachings. The fortunes of both Groñ-mo-che and gNas-gsar declined over the centuries and the *sLob-bśad* lineage migrated all over Tibet, even coming back to Ņor for a short period during the time of Ņor Thar-rtse mKhan-po Byams-pa-nam-mkha'-'chi-med and Byams-pa Kun-dga'-bstan-pa'i-rgyal-mtshan (1829–1870). A comparison with the Ņor-based *Lam-'bras tshogs bśad* is striking, since the latter did not effectively leave its point of origin—Ņor E-Waṃ chos-ldan. Given their differences in orientation, we are tempted to suggest that the eclecticism of the Tshar-pa was instrumental both in developing the continuing creative literary tradition as well as its monastic instability. Since the avoidance of both instability and eclecticism was the goal of the Ņor-pa it appears that this more conservative tradition was willing to sacrifice extended literary flair for a stable religious environment. Indeed, Ņor maintained a virtually immutable monastic tradition for

530 years and this is precisely the object of Kun-dga'-bzañ-po's policies. In this respect, through historical hindsight, Ñor-chen's attempted revival of the *kriyā* and *caryā-tantras* appears superfluous, a stable tradition being possible utilizing fully the *anut-tarayoga-tantras*. Moreover, such an attempt seems to have been doomed from the beginning since the teacher himself was primarily concerned with the Lam-'bras.

By any standard Kun-dga'-bzañ-po appears as a towering figure in Tibetan intellectual and religious history, but I cannot help but feel that his most valuable contribution to Tibetan Buddhism as a whole was his willingness to attempt a modification of monastic policy, based on observation and brought about through careful planning. The success of his contribution is apparent when we review the quantity of stable Ñor-pa monasteries and the quality of the monastic experience found therein. We should recall that some of the leading monasteries of the 20th century, rDzoñ-gsar, Lhun-grub-steñ, and rTa-nag among them, belonged to the Ñor-pa tradition.

#### Notes

\* The source and impetus for much of the material in this paper stems from bSod-nams rgya-mtsho (Hiroshi Sonami), the previous Ñor-mkhan-po, with whom I have worked on Sa-skyā and Ñor-pa material for the last few years. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to him for his continued patience in the face of relentless questioning. His enthusiasm for the Ñor-pa tradition in general and Kun-dga'-bzañ-po in particular is truly infectious. I have also received valuable assistance and suggestions for corrections of errors from my friends David Jackson of the Univ. of Washington and Leonard van der Kuijp of the Nepal German Manuscript Preservation Project. I wish to express my thanks for their aid.

1. *Dam pa'i chos kyi byuñ tshul legs par bśad pa bstan pa rgya mtshor 'jug pa'i gru chen* [commonly known as the *Ñor chos 'byuñ*] (New Delhi: Ngawang Topgay, 1973), p. 301. 6. See also C. W. Cassinelli and Robert B. Ekvall, *A Tibetan Principality: The Political System of Sa sKya* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), p. 11. The authors seem to have only partially grasped the point of 'Khon dKon-mchog-rgyal-po's reaction against the older system; they did not realize that



the loss of secrecy was the key element.

2. *A Tibetan Principality*, pp. 11–16; Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa, *Tibet—A Political History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967), pp. 61–72; Giuseppe Tucci, *Deb T'er Dmar Po Gsar Ma—Tibetan Chronicles by bSod nams grags pa*, Serie Orientale Roma 29 (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1971), pp. 181–188; *Idem*, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1949), vol. 1, pp. 1–17, 99–102; Inaba Shoju, “The Lineage of the Sa skya pa, A chapter of the Red Annals,” *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* 22 (1963): 106–123; *Idem*, “An Introductory Study of the Degeneration of Lamas,” *A Study of Kleśa*, edited by Genjun H. Sasaki, (Tokyo: Shimizukobundo Ltd., 1975), pp. 553–516.

3. The *Pod ser* was included in both the *Lam 'bras tshogs bśad* and *Lam 'bras slob bśad* collections but there are modern prints from only the latter collection. It does not, however, appear that the *Lam 'bras slob bśad* has been printed in its entirety in India, though there are rumors that the present Sa-skya Khri-'dzin intends to do so. I have seen four separate volumes of the *Lam 'bras slob bśad* in a modern offset edition. One of the volumes of this edition is the *Pod ser* and is marked in the margin as being volume 9 (*ta*) of the *sLob bśad*. The colophon mentions that the print was made in Bir in the temple (*sgrub khañ*) of Thub-bstan-rnam-rgyal-lha-rtse. (Univ. of Calif. East Asiatic Lib. Tib 261/1).

4. *Pod ser dkar chag* (= *Pod ser* introduction) f. 2a<sup>3</sup>.

5. bSod nams rgya mtsho, ed., *The Complete Works of the Great Masters of the Sa Skya Sect of the Tibetan Buddhism* (Tokyo: Toyo Bunko, 1968), vol. 3, pp. 1.1.1–70.1.6. For something of the content of this work please see Wayne Verrill's contribution to this volume and *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, vol. 1, p. 101.

6. bSod nams rgya mtsho, *Complete Works*, vol. 2, pp. 1.1.1–37.3.6.

7. bSod nams rgya mtsho, *Complete Works*, vol. 3, pp. 97.1.2–97.1.5.

8. bSod nams rgya mtsho, *Complete Works*, vol. 5, pp. 297.1.1–320.4.5.

9. The vicissitudes of the Phur-pa cycles represent one of the most intriguing problems of Tibetan religious history. Unfortunately there is no good discussion of the history of the 'Khon-lugs that I am aware of. Sog-bzlog-pa Blo-gros-mtshan in his otherwise quite interesting *dPal rdo rje phur pa'i lo rgyus* only mentions the 'Khon-lugs in passing. See Sanje Dorji, ed., *Collected Writings of Sog-bzlog-pa bLo-gros-rgyal mtshan* (New Delhi: Sanje Dorji, 1975), p. 145.1. For more information on the controversies see Gene Smith's discussion in L. Chandra, ed., *Kongtrul's Encyclopedia of Indo-Tibetan Culture, Parts I-III* (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1970), pp. 7–8; and Samten G. Karmay, “A General Introduction to the History and Doctrines of Bon,” *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko* 33 (1975): 198–200.

10. Information for the life of Kun-dga'-bzañ-po was drawn from three

sources: the *Nor chos 'byuñ* p. 339.6 ff., Nor-pa oral traditions received by Nor Thar-rtse-mkhan Rin-po-che, and Kun-dga'-bzañ-po's biography entitled *rGyal ba rdo rje 'chan Kun dga' bzañ po'i rnam par thar pa legs bśad chu bo 'dus pa'i rgya mtsho yon tan yid bzin nor bu'i 'byuñ gnas* which was compiled from various sources by Sañs-rgyas-phun-tshogs. The *rnam thar* was edited, together with a famous *bskyed rim* text of the Tshar-pa tradition, by Trayang and Jamyang Samten (New Delhi: Trayang and Jamyang Samten, 1976), but the published manuscript is rife with orthographic errors. I compared it with an incomplete copy of the edition retained in volume 2 (*kha*) of the *Lam 'bras slob bśad* in the possession of Thar-rtse-mkhan Rin-po-che. We should note that this latter collection abounds with historical source material for the Sa-skya tradition and the publication of the *Lam 'bras slob bśad in toto* is certainly an important goal.

11. I have not been able to locate a *rnam-thar* for this famous representative of the Śar-pa bLa-brañ in Sa-skya.
12. For the sGo-rum see A. Ferrari, *Mk'yen Brtse's Guide to the Holy Places of Central Tibet*, Serie Orientale Roma vol. 16 (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1958), p. 148, n. 486-87.
13. Kun-dga'-bzañ-po wrote a biography of Buddhaśri entitled *bLa ma dam pa grub chen Buddhaśri'i rnam thar* in bSod nams rgya mtsho, *Complete Works*, vol. 9, pp. 36.3.6-42.3.1.
14. Explicit reference to this was given to me by Thar-rtse-mkhan Rin-po-che and is supported by general discussion in the *rNam thar* that the emphasis on the *anuttarayoga-tantras* is at fault by ignoring the basics of the lower *tantras*. See *rNam-thar* pp. 211.5-213.6.
15. *rNam-thar*, p. 212.2.
16. bSod nams rgya mtsho, *Complete Works*, vol. 10, nos. 134-5.
17. bSod nams rgya mtsho, *Complete Works*, vol. 10, pp. 249.4.4, 251.1.4, 267.4.6; cf. F.D. Lessing and Alex Waynam, trans., *Mkhas Grub Rje's Fundamentals of the Buddhist Tantras, Indo-Iranian Monographs Vol. 3* (The Hague: Mouton, 1968), pp. 163-171.
18. Ferrari, *Mk'yen Brtse's Guide*, pp. 62-63, 146-47 and map.
19. The eight officials were the main chanting leader (*dbu mdzad chen mo*), the assistant chanting leader who recites the office at the time of the morning tea, etc. (*dus ja dbu mdzad*), the two officials in charge of discipline (*chos khrims pa*), their two helpers (*chos g'yog*), the chief conch player (*duñ pa*), and his assistant (*dun g'yog*). The mKhan-pos, the heads of the four major and one minor bLa-brañ, and the *mchod-dpons* were all, of course, chosen without regard to their areas of origin. Please see G. Tucci, *Preliminary Report on Two Scientific Expeditions in Nepal*, Serie Orientale Roma Vol. 10 (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1956), pp. 16-17 for the work of Kun-dga'-bzañ-

po in Nepal and we should notice that it was the Nor-pa tradition that was responsible for much of the monastic activity in Western Tibet as, for example, recorded in D. L. Snellgrove, *Four Lamas of Dolpo* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), vol. 1, p. 11. We see that dKon-mchog lhun-grub, the 10th mKhan-po, plays a part in the biographies of the bla-mas bSod-nams blo-gros and dPal-ldan blo-gros, *ibid* pp. 86–87, 191, 234 n.2.

20. Cassinelli and Ekvall, *A Tibetan Principality*; all of Chapter 11 is an outstanding and fascinating discussion of the relationship between the political and religious spheres in Sa-skya. Unfortunately the authors have not explored the world of the complex monastic sociology. Concerning the stronger monastic position of the South Monastery, see p. 294.

21. bSod nams rgya mtsho, *Complete Works*, vol. 10, nos. 90–94.

22. bSod nams rgya mtsho, *Complete Works*, vol. 9, nos. 51–2. Perhaps this view was suggested to the antagonists of the Sa-skya tradition by the strongly worded statement in the first chapter of the *Vajrapañjara-tantra*, which maintains that everything springs from *cittavajra* and if the method for obtaining emancipation were *śūnyatā* then no one would be emancipated. This is, of course, close to the standard Yogācāra position. See *Peking Tibetan Tripitika*, vol. 1, p. 223.4.3–7.

23. bSod nams rgya mtsho, *Complete Works*, vol. 9, nos. 49–50. These two are very closely allied in structure and content.

24. bSod nams rgya mtsho, *Complete Works*, vol. 9, no. 53.

25. *dPal kyai rdo rje'i sgrub thabs kyi rgya cher bśad pa bsk'yed rim gnad kyi zla zer*, bSod nams rgya mtsho, *Complete Works*, vol. 9, no. 55. Go-ram bSod-nams señ-ge wrote a refutation against opponents objecting to the *gNad kyi zla zer*, vol. 15, no. 108, as well as writing his own treatise on *bskyed-rim* called the *dPal kyai rdo rje'i man nag lugs kyi bskyed pa'i rim pa gsal bar bśad pa*, vol. 15, no. 109. We should note, though, that the text which was to become the most popular discussion of *bskyed-rim* belonged to the Tshar-pa tradition, the *dPal kye rdo rje'i phyi nañ bskyed rim nams len gnad kyi gsal byed śnan brgyud bstan pa rgyas pa'i nin byed* (New Delhi: Trayang and Jamyang Samten, 1976) written by the sDe-dge Yab-chen who was known by his monastic name of Byains-pa kundga' bstan-pa'i rgyal-mtshan.

26. See *gNad kyi zla zer*, bSod nams rgya mtsho, *Complete Works*, vol. 9, p. 175.1.3–2.2.

27. Nor-chen had many students come with him when he moved permanently from Sa-skya while both Go-ram-pa and Pañ-chen Śakya mchog-ldan had studied with Roñ-ston.

28. There is a biography of Mus-chen by Go-ram-pa retained in bSod nams rgya mtsho, *Complete Works*, vol. 11, no. 6. Much of the material from the *Lam 'bras tshogs bśad* was included in the larger *rgyud sde kun blus* by 'Jam-dbyaṅs blo-gter dbaṅ-po.

29. I have seen two Indian editions of the *Pod dmar*, one in *pothi* form reproducing the pagination of the *Lam 'bras slob bśad* vol. 11 (*da*) and apparently the companion of the *Pod ser* edition mentioned above, but the *Pod dmar* lacks a colophon. The other edition is a *dbu-med* manuscript reproduction under the title *Lam 'Bras Pod Dmar* (Dolanji: Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Center, 1974).
30. Śākya mchog-ldan's hagiography is retained in vol. 16 of the recently published *The Complete Works of gSer-mdog Pañ-chen Śākya-mChog-ldan* (Thimphu [Bhutan]: Kunzang Tobgey, 1975). The introduction to the series maintains that the works of Śākya mchog-ldan were suppressed along with the works of the Jo-nañ-pas. According to mKhan Rin-po-che, this would not seem to be the case. He has informed me that he first became acquainted with Śākya mchog-ldan through the copies of his works retained in the libraries of Ņor and rŅa-nag Thub-bstan rnam-rgyal, although there was very little general interest in Śākya mchog-ldan and his treatises were not studied.
31. The following information is taken from Go-ram-pa's biography written by Koñ-ston dBañ-phyug grub-pa, *The Biography of Go-Ram bSod-nams Señ-ge* (Delhi: T. G. Dhongthog, 1973).
32. Ferrari, *Mk'yen Britse's Guide*, pp. 68, 158 n. 587-8.
33. See, for example, Roñ-ston's commentary on the *Madhyamakāvātāra* in *Two Controversial Mādhyamika Treatises* (New Delhi: Trayang and Jamyang Samten, 1974).
34. *rGyal ba thams cad kyi thugs kyi dgoñs pa zab mo dbu ma'i de kho na ñid spyi'i ñag gis ston pa ñes don rab gsal* in bSod nams rgya mtsho, *Complete Works*, vol. 12, no. 46.
46. I wish to thank my good friend Matthew Kapstein for drawing my attention to this work.
35. *lTa ba śan 'byed*, bSod nams rgya mtsho, *Complete Works*, vol. 13, no. 47.
36. Go-ram-pa wrote several works on the *sdom-gsum*, bSod nams rgya mtsho, vol. 14, nos. 57-62. No. 57 is his extensive commentary on Sa-skya Pañđita's text written in 1463 while no. 58 is his general introduction to the *sDom gsum rab dbye* as a whole. Śākya mchog-ldan was also quite concerned with the *sdom-gsum* and similarly wrote a commentary on the text which is retained in his *Complete Works of gSer-mdod Pañ-chen*, vol. 6, pp. 285-416. This commentary has no date in the colophon, but describes the author as residing at gSer-mdog-can monastery and according to T. G. Dhongthog Rinpoche's *Important Events in Tibetan History* (Delhi: T.G. Dhongthog Rinpoche, 1968), p. 126 (the dates in this section apply to the entry below—a difficult arrangement), Śākya mchog-ldan did not take residence at gSer-mdog-can until 1469.
37. dKon-mchog lhun-grub's biography does not appear to have come to light in India, and although his collected works is usually said to be four volumes, a complete copy of it has yet to be published.
38. This is the commonly used title, the full title being *dPal kye rdo rje'i mñon*

*par rtogs pa 'briñ du bya ba yan lag drug pa'i mdzes rgyan*, *Rgyud Sde Kun Btus* (Delhi: N. Lungtok and N. Gyaltzan, 1971), vol. 18, no. 1. This is an improved version of \*Durjayacandra's *Ṣaḍaṅgasādhana* (To. 1239) mentioned above.

39. Full title *dPal kye rdo rje'i lus dkyil mdzes rgyan*, *ibid* no. 2.

40. *rGyud kyi mñon par rtogs pa'i gsal byed legs par bsad pa goñ ma'i dgoñs rgyan*, *Rgyud Sde Kun Btus* vol. 28, no. 2.

41. There is a modern Indian edition which gives the full title as *Lam 'bras bu dañ bcas pa'i gdams ñag gi gžuñ ji lta ba bžin bkri ba'i lam gyi dños gži'i khrid yig rgyud gsum mdzes par byed pa'i rgyan* (Delhi: 'Jam-dbyañ kun-bzañ, N.D.).

42. The full title in the modern edition is *Lam 'bras bu dañ bcas pa'i gdams ñag gi gžuñ śin rgyas pa gžuñ ji lta ba bžin bkri ba'i lam gyi sñon 'gro'i khrid yig snañ gsum mdzes par byed pa'i rgyan* (Delhi: 'Jam-dbyañ kun-bzañ, n.d.).

43. See above note 1. The *Nor chos 'byuñ*, unfortunately, contains very little material about *Ñor* or even about the Sa-skya sect as a whole. A short summary of its contents is given in Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, vol. 1, p. 145. Material concerning these monastic traditions must be coaxed from the available biographical material of the principal figures involved.

44. *Nor chos 'byuñ*, p. 357.4. Unfortunately the very extensive *rnam-thar* is in the unpublished section of the *Lam 'bras slob bsad*.

45. Gene Smith's "Introduction," *Kongtrul's Encyclopedia*, p. 15.

46. Like Tshar-chen's biography, 'Jam-dbyañs mKhyen-brtse'i dbañ-phyug's biography is also in the unpublished *Lam 'bras slob bsad*. See Gene Smith's "Introduction," *Kongtrul's Encyclopedia*, p. 44 n. 75.