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ON THE *SGRA PA SHES RAB RIN CHEN PA'I RTSOD LAN* OF PAṆ CHEN BLO BZANG CHOS RGYAN[1]

José Ignacio Cabezón, Denver

> But the most important thing about society is that it is a totality, with all the parts interacting, and unintelligible in isolation... To see things in isolation is to distort them, in the interest of obfuscation and befuddlement, reinforcing the acceptance of the status quo which is the central sin of current thought.
>
> Ernest Gellner[2]

Introduction

With these words, drawn from a recent issue of the *Times Literary Supplement*, Ernest GELLNER characterizes one of the major contributions of the Frankfurt School to current theory: its insistence that society must be viewed as a totality, that is, holistically. It is of interest to consider GELLNER's words in light of the current state of affairs in Tibetan Buddhist philosophical studies. In the interest of accuracy – and perhaps equally out of fear of the reviewer's pen – those of us engaged in the study of Tibetan philosophical texts have tended to carve out niches for ourselves, isolated safe-havens where we can live without threat to our intellectual existence. Of course, there are exceptions, but I think many of us (and I do not spare myself here) have tended to over-specialize, dedicating ourselves to isolated areas of research – too narrowly enclosed from the viewpoint of history, geographical area, textual genre, philosophical subject matter and school. There are of course unquestionable intellectual advantages to specialization. Pedagogically speaking, it is good to have a strong foundation in a specific

1 This paper was written during the tenure of an Alexander von Humboldt Fellowship at the Institut für Kultur und Geschichte Indiens und Tibets, Universität Hamburg (1994-5). I would like to take this opportunity to thank the A. v. Humboldt Stiftung (Bonn) and my colleagues in Hamburg for their support and hospitality during my very pleasant and productive stay in Germany. I would especially like to express my thanks to Prof. David JACKSON for his valuable help on key points.

2 "The Last Marxists", *Times Literary Supplement*, no. 4773, September 23, 1994, p.3.

research area; and given the vast quantity of textual material that still remains to be analyzed in the field of Tibetan Studies, this might be all that we can hope for as scholars in this day and age. And yet, as I look to the future – of the study of Tibetan Buddhist philosophy as a subspeciality of Buddhist Studies, and of my own research – I cannot help but feel that I (we) must begin to set our sights on a broader goal. If HORKHEIMER, ADORNO, MARCUSE, HABERMAS and their heirs are right, then that course must somehow culminate in a more holistic vision of Tibetan philosophy.[3] But to reach that goal in the future – and I am all too aware of the fact that that future is far away indeed – is it not necessary to establish the groundwork in the present? If our end goal is the understanding of Tibetan philosophy in its totality, are there steps that we can take, even during this period of intellectual isolationism, that will keep us directed toward that goal?

The first step, of course, is to better understand the goal itself. What *is* the broader picture that we are seeking to paint? Though including many ancillary areas, such as the relationship of philosophy to art and architecture, it seems to me that at its core that broader picture must take into account – and itself account for – not only the meanings of philosophical ideas derived from texts (the task of philology), but also (1) the historicity of those ideas, by which I mean especially their emergence in specific historical settings and their subsequent diachronic development; (2) their geographical distribution, given that the spatial divide is as important as the temporal one; (3) the sociological maintenance of ideas in specific institutional contexts that make their preservation and dissemination possible; (4) the uses and implications of ideas in the broader society, and especially their contextualization vis-à-vis the political climate of their age; and, finally, (5) their truth or falsity, or, if this is too difficult for the more postmodern and positivist[4] among us to swallow, the evaluation of the arguments for their

3 In fact, such a goal may be unattainable in language, which is of course the only means available to us as scholars. If Dharmakīrti was right, and language is by nature a means of communication that operates through exclusion and isolation, then the goal of achieving a picture of anything in its totality may be unrealistic. Nonetheless, the goal may be approachable asymptotically, even if never attainable in practice. That in itself is sufficient for it to be a goal.

4 Many postmodernists cast aside questions of truth on relativistic grounds: the truth of a doctrine/proposition is something that makes sense only in its own specific socio-cultural context; hence, there is no evaluating the truth of specific philosophical

truth of falsity, or, to dilute the notion even further, the rhetoric of those arguments.

Keeping this broader picture in the back of our minds, it seems to me, can act as a corrective to the airiness to which philosophers[5] are prone. Ideas, after all, do occur in time, space, and in social institutions; cultures put them to political uses, and yes, ideas – especially ones that have withstood the test of time – *pace* the positivists and postmodernists – are usually either true or false. But more than keeping philosophers anchored to the world, that holistic ideal that belongs to the future has the capacity to direct us in the present: to focus our research in ways that are consonant with the vision of philosophy as a totality, and to save us from isolationism, "the central sin of current thought."

Whether or not the goal I have just described is attainable, even in principle, is really not the issue, for even heuristically it serves a useful function. Any incremental progress we make toward such a goal – even a fictitious goal – represents progress in scholarship. And progress is indeed incremental. As much as we may wish to do so, it is impossible to simply pull ourselves into the broader picture by our bootstraps. Where then to begin?

My own research in the field of Tibetan Madhyamaka in the past several years has been in large part motivated by the desire to go beyond an isolated and compartmentalized view of this field. One of the most common manifestations of over-specialization consists of the recapitulation of Tibetan sectarianism in the academic work we do. Hence, many of us tend to specialize in the works of a single author or school. There are of course reasons for this. It is by now a fairly well-established principle in the field that the scholarly understanding of Tibetan philosophical literature requires – or at the very least benefits from – contact with the living tradition[s]. As a by-product of such contact, however, the sectarian nature of the tradition often gets recapitulated (whether consciously or not) in academic scholarship.

claims across cultures. Positivists bring truth into question on linguistic grounds: religious claims are propositions that, being neither true nor false, are meaningless.

5 I consider the descriptive work we do – the historical, sociological and cultural contextualization of ideas – as much a part of philosophy as the normative task of evaluating the truth and falsity of philosophical claims; as much a part of philosophy as the more speculative task of molding our own normative theories from those ideas we consider to be true.

There are other factors that act as obstacles to the full appreciation of philosophical diversity of Tibetan culture. In the interest of harmony – something that is especially important in the case of a religious tradition in exile – many native scholars tend to downplay the diversity that exists in different exegetical sub-traditions. Thus, one is left with the impression of homogeneity and uniformity to the Tibetan worldview. My own experience suggests that this can be overcome, as the traditional scholar who is one's conversation partner gains a sense of one's level of seriousness. In any case, the scholar who is intent on crossing sectarian lines must maintain a critical attitude, vigilant of this tendency to downplay differences.

Despite such obstacles, I have found the investigation of intersectarian polemics to be a particularly fruitful antidote to isolationism. Ideas exist, are maintained and transmitted not only in given sectarian contexts, but also across them, and the move toward a more holistic vision of Tibetan philosophy involves understanding the intersectarian conversation in which ideas are debated. Polemical and apologetic literature has the capacity to give us insight into issues in a way other more irenic philosophical writing does not. This is not to say that the polemical trail is not fraught with perils, for there are disadvantages to the study of this literature as well. Let us consider some of the pros and cons.

Disadvantages

1. Polemicists often tend to mischaracterize the positions of their opponents in the intrests of painting the best possible picture of their own positions. This can take the form of the out and out misrepresentation – or, perhaps more subtle, of the exaggeration – of an adversary's views.

2. Often polemicists will not identify their opponents, making it difficult for the scholar to ascertain whether the views being criticized are those of a real or imagined adversary. This is a fairly well known rhetorical strategy. To cite opponents by name is to grant them an offical status as someone worthy of response, something that polemicists – especially those who represent traditions in power – are often loathe to do.

3. Especially in a Tibetan context, we also see the tendency in polemical literature to conflate the views of opponents, making it seem as though the opposition is a single monothetic whole. The polemicist has of course much to gain by such a move. If the different opponents' positions [or, from the polemicists' viewpoint, the different strands of a single opponent's position]

are indeed intertwined and mutually implicative, then an argument against a particular school or tenet appears as an assault against the opposition as a uniform whole, one that brings into question the entire philosophical system of the opponent. But such a rhetorical strategy on the part of the polemicist creates *for the academic* a problem, that of having to disentagle the different strands of thought attributed to a mythical uniform opponent: of having to properly differentate between the philosophical views of the historically distinct systems that are being portrayed as one.

4. It is not unusual to find polemicists offering poor or uninteresting arguments. We must remember that polemical texts are often aimed only rhetorically at the hostile audience of the opponent's camp. More often than not they are intended for consumption among the more amicable and sympathetic assembly of the polemicist's own school. When this is so, arguments often tend to presume positions that, though familiar and acceptable to the polemicist's sympathizers, will be rejected by opponents. The validity of a polemicist's arguments, therefore, cannot be taken for granted; and in evaluating the latter – which is surely part of our task – the scholar must point out those instances in which the polemicist's presuppositions would invalidate the argument in the sight of his opponent.

Advantages

1. There is, of course, a tendency on the part of hegemonic philosophical tradiions – traditions in power[6] – to portray their own views not only as if they were normative, but as if they were the sole possible view. Such traditions often utilize a rhetorical strategy that "insinuates its own validity by pretending that no other position exists or is possible. It obscures the alternatives to the status quo, it pretends that there are none and could be none."[7] Even when the identity of opponents are concealed (expunged) by treating them anonymously, and even when they are misrepresented, a polemical work nonetheless permits us (at the very least) a view of the fact of philo-

6 Of course, power can be held in one of two ways: either because the current philosophical tide is in one's favor, or because the philosophical view one represents has been wedded to politically dominant forces. dGe lugs pa and Catholic scholasticism have both been in this position at different points in their history.

7 Ernest GELLNER, "The Last Marxists", p.3. I have changed the tenses of the citation to fit the context.

sophical otherness, the existence of opinions that run counter to those of the hegemony. This, of course, is an advantage of this type of literature that is not always found in other works. In polemical text we are constantly being reminded of the fact that *there are* other views, and therefore that there is an other, no matter how much that other may be concealed.

2. Polemical texts also give us key historical clues to the intellectual climate of the times. They allow us a glimpse of movements and ideas that were prevalent in a particular age. If we operate under the assumption that polemicists do not respond to movements and ideas that are no longer in circulation (that are no longer a threat) – not altogether an unwarranted presupposition on the scholar's part – then polemics often represent for us unique windows into history, allowing us access both to the fact of the existence of minoritarian intellectual movements, and to the nature of their views.

3. Not only do polemical texts tell us about opponents, they also speak eloquently about the polemicist's own intellectual concerns. In choosing which of the opponent's views will be responded to, an author gives us clues as to (a) which of those views he considered most threatening, and (b) which of his own doctrines are important enough to be worth defending. In this sense, a polemicist's choices translate for us into at least a partial prioritization of a particular field of knowledge. Given the vastness of subject areas like Madhyamaka, such a prioritization can be useful indeed.

4. Finally, if Dharmakīrti was right, and conceptual knowledge – our mode of knowledge as scholars working in the medium of language – operates through the exclusion of what is other, then is it not fair to say that polemics is the most natural and honest rhetorical mode, especially in the hyperconceptualist task of philosophy. It is often only by the rejection of another opinion that we come to grasp an author's own position, and its implications. In this sense, argumentation that is explicitly combative can provide us with *gestalts* that are not forthcoming from other more irenic prose. This, at least, is my experience.

With this discussion of polemical literature by way of preamble, let us now turn to the text that is the main subject of this essay. The remarks that follow are meant as an initial (and therefore incomplete) report of research on a late 16th/early 17th century Madhyamaka polemical text, the first Paṇ chen bla ma's response to sTag tshang lo tsā ba.

The Author[8]

Paṇ chen bLo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan (or chos rgyan) was born in the Lhan valley in the gTsang rong region of Western Tibet (*gTsang stod lhan grug brgya pa'i spe'u zhes pa'i yul*) on the 15th day of the fourth Tibetan

8 Several biographies of the first Paṇ chen bla ma exist. His autobiography, is to be found in his collected works, published from tracings of the sKra shis lhun po edition of the latter by Mongolian Lama Guru Deva (Delhi: nd). It is also found as a separate work published on the basis of two xylographs of the sKra shis lhun po blocks by Ngawang Gelek Demo, *The Autobiography of the First Panchen Lama Blo-bzang-chos-kyi rgyal mtshan* (with an introduction by E. Gene SMITH), Gedan Sungrab Minyam Gyunphel Series, no. 12 (New Delhi: 1969). The work was not finished at the time of the Paṇ chen's death and was completed by his next incarnation, the second Paṇ chen bla ma, bLo bzang ye shes (1663-1737). For this reason it is also contained in the latter's collected works, *Chos smra ba'i dge slong bLo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan gyi spyod tshul gsal bar ston pa nor bu'i phreng ba*, published as part of the Collected Works of the latter in an Indian edition, *Collected Works (gSung 'bum) of the Second Pan-chen bLo-bzang ye-shes*, from the bKra shis lhun po blocks (N. Delhi: bTra sis luhn po (sic) Monastery, 1981), and in a contemporary Tibetan one (mTsho sngon: Bod ljong mi dmangs dpe skrung gang, 1990); on this work and its value for the art historian see also TUCCI, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, p.133. A relatively shorter biography is found in Yong 'dzin ye shes rgyal mtshan, *Lam rim bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar* (mTsho sngon: Bod ljong mi dmangs dpe skrung gang, 1990), pp.488-560. Contemporary works include a short biography contained in Don rdor and bsTan 'dzin chos grags, compilers, *Gangs ljongs lo rgyus thog gi grags can mi sna* (mTsho sngon: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang: 1993), pp.625-630; Yahan Krang, *Paṇ chen sku phreng rim byon gyi dzad rnam*, Tib. trans. by bLo bzang phun tshogs and rTa mgrin 'brug grags (mTsho sngon: Bod ljong mi dmangs dpe skrung gang, 1990), pp.25-105, though fairly extensive, is less reliable. A still shorter work on the first Paṇ chen bla ma is to be found in Khetsun Sangpo, *Biographical Dictionary of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism*, vol. 5 (The BKA'-GDAMS-PA Tradition) (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1973), pp.465-494. A brief biographical note is also to be found at the end of a catalogue of his collected works in *gSung 'bum dkar chag* (mTsho sngon: Bod ljong mi dmangs dpe skrung gang, 1990), pp.98-99. In the secondary literature, the life of the first Paṇ chen bla ma is discussed in E. Gene SMITH's Introduction to Ngawang Gelek Demo, *Autobiography* (see above). Less reliable are Toni SCHMID's remarks in *Saviors of Mankind II: Panchen Lamas and Former Incarnations of Amitayus* (Stockholm: Statens Etnografiska Museum, 1964). An interesting, though often naive, treatment is found in YA Hanzhang, *The Biographies of the Dalai Lamas*, Wang Wenjiong, trans., (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1991), pp.27 passim.

month in the the year 1570 (*lcags rta*).[9] Tibetans consider him the first Paṇ chen bla ma,[10] the eleventh incarnation in a lineage that includes the Buddha's disciple Subhūti, Sa skya paṇḍita (1182-1251), and Tsong kha pa's disciple mKhas grub dGe legs dpal bzang (1385-1438). At an early age he was recognized as the incarnation the great dBen sa pa bLo bzang don grub (1505-1566). He lived at the latter's monastery (dBen gdon gyi chos gra) until the age of 13, and began his initial philosophical studies there. His principal teacher was the famed mKhas grub Sangs rgyas ye shes (1525-1590/91), one of the chief students of dBen sa pa, from whom he received his novice vows and the name bLo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan.[11] At the age of 14 he travelled to bKra shis lhun po for higher philosophical studies. He received full ordination (*bsnyen rdzogs kyi sdom pa*) from Paṇ chen Dam chos yar 'phel[12] at age 22. In the year 1594 he was made abbot of Chos grva Gangs can chos 'phel, a monastery in gTsang; he assumed the abbotship of bKra shis lhun po, becoming the sixteenth throne holder, at the

9 There is some question as to the date of the Paṇ chen's birth. The Western sources favor the year 1567 (*me yos*), while the Tibetan secondary sources favor 1570 (*lcags rta*). I follow the latter here, but remain uncommitted as to the correct date, realizing that this is a complex issue that can only be settled after further investigation. E. Gene SMITH gives the date as 1567 in the Introduction to Ngawang Gelek Demo's edition of the *Autobiography* (see previous note); as does TUCCI, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, p.73. Khetsun Sangpo, *Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 5, p.494, gives the date of his birth as 1570; as does Yahan Krang, *Paṇ chen sku phreng*, p.25 and note 1. The date is also given as 1570 in Krang dbyi sun et. al., *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* (Mi rigs dpe skrun khang: 1993), p.3259, and in *Gangs ljongs lo rgyus thog gi grags can mi sna* (p.625). Toni SCHMID, *Saviors of Mankind II*, p.45, gives the date as 1569.

10 From the viewpoint of his incarnation lineage (*sku phreng*), he is the eleneventh, and several Chinese sources, who begin the reckoning from mKhas grub dGe legs dpal bzang, consider him the fourth. But see TUCCI, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, p.73, for the system of reckoning that places him as the first Paṇ chen.

11 See, in the *gSung thor bu* section of Collected Works, vol. *kha*, *rJe btsun 'jam dpal dbyangs dang / rJe Tsong kha pa / rtsa ba'i bla ma mKhas grub Sang rgyas ye shes rnam gsum la gsol 'debs bla ma'i rnal 'byor*; and in vol. *ca*, *rJe bla ma Sang rgyas ye shes la bstod pa dngos grub kyi 'byung gnas*. A complete list of his teachers is to be found in his autobiography, but see also *Shākya'i dge slong bLo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan gyis dge ba'i bshes gnyen ji ltar bsten tshul rim pa gsal byed nor bu'i me long*, in Collected Works, vol. *kha*.

12 The 14th holder of the throne of bKra shis lhun po monastery. See E. Gene SMITH's Introduction to Ngawang Gelek Demo's edition of the autobiography, op.cit., p.13; and *Gangs ljongs lo rgyus*, p.626.

age of 32, in 1601. He also assumed the abbotship of dGe 'phel monastery when he was 39, and that of Zha lu in 1642 at age 72.[13] The first Paṇ chen bla ma was resposible for the erection of some of the most important architectural and artistic monuments of western and central Tibet. These included the dByen zlum *stūpa* (1608), the golden roof over the Maitreya statue (1612) and 15 temples at sKra shis lhun po with their corresponding works of religious art (ca. 1615). He was also responsible for the building of the sNgags grva temple at sKra shis lhun po and the "golden roof of dGa' ldan" (1629). At the age of forty he founded the Tantric College (rGyud pa grva tshang) at bKra shis lhun po. He was the head convener (*tshogs dbu*) of the Great Prayer Festival in Lhasa for six consecutive years, beginning in 1613. He ascended to the thrones of Se ra and 'Bras spungs, honorary posts, at the age of 48.

The period from the 1610's to the 1640's was one of tremendous strife and bloodshed in Central and Western Tibet. On more than one occasion the Paṇ chen bla ma was forced to flee sKra shis lhun po to avoid being taken prisoner by one of the factions hostile to the dGe lugs pa school. It seems that the Paṇ chen bla ma often used these periods of forced exile from his native gTsang as opportunities for retreat. But we know from the historical sources that Paṇ chen bLo bzang chos rgyan did not remain aloof from the events taking place around him, and that he had a hand in many of the political events of his day, acting on more than one occasion as a peace-maker. For example, during one of his periods of reatreat at 'Bras spungs in 1621, hearing that thousands had been killed in the war between the Mongol supporters of the dGe lugs pas and the king of gTsang, he approached the Tumet Mongolian chieftain Lha btsun (bLo bzang bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho), and his intercession is said to have spared the life of thousands.[14] After the final conquests of Gushri khan in 1642, which left large portions of Tibet under the political domination of the dGe lugs pa school, the Paṇ chen bla ma spent the remaining years of his life principally in gTsang, and when necessary continued to play the role of intermediary between the different political factions.[15] He died in bKra shis lhun po in 1662, at the age of 92, and his body was entombed in a silver reliquary there.

13 *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, p.3263.

14 See TUCCI, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, p.58.

15 See, e.g., TUCCI, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, p.72, where his attempts to resolve the rift between the sDe pa Nor bu and the Fifth Dalai Lama are recounted.

The tutor to two Dalai Lamas – Yon tan rgya mtsho (1589-1617), the fourth, and Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617-1682), the fifth – he was also the spiritual master to many of the Mongol princes. Achieving fame already by the beginning of the 17th century, he played an active role in what was one of Tibet's most interesting and turbulent periods, and was to see in his own lifetime the establishment of the dGa' ldan pho phrang as the principal seat of Tibetan political power.

His renown as a scholar was well deserved, as witnessed by the five volumes of his Collected Works,[16] which show his expertise in *sūtra*, but especially in *tantra*. Among his more famous works are his *Mahāmudrā* root text and commentary written from the viewpoint of the dGe ldan pa (= dGe lugs pa) oral lineage, his *Lam rim bde lam*, considered one of the eight great teachings on *lam rim* (*lam rim khrid chen brgyad*),[17] his commentary on the *Vimalaprabhā*,[18] and a number of liturgical works, of which the most famous is probably the *bLa ma mchod pa*.[19]

Gene SMITH says of the Paṇ chen bla ma, "He was completely free of the sectarian rivalries and hatreds that so marrred his time,"[20] and he cites as evidence of this the following verse:

> The mother amulet box, the simultaneous practice,[21]
> The fivefold,[22] the equality of taste, the four letters,
> The action of pacification, the object of cutting,[23] and the great perfection,[24]

16 Tracings of the sKra shis lhun po edition of these works have been published in India by Mongolian Lama Guru Deva.

17 Both this work, and the previous one are found in Collected Works, vol. *nga*.

18 Collected Works, vol. *kha*.

19 Collected Works, vol. *ka*.

20 Ngawang Gelek Demo, *Autobiography*, p.7.

21 On this practice see David JACKSON, *Enlightenment by a Single Means: Tibetan Controversies on the "Self-Sufficient White Remedy"* (Wien: Verlag der osterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1994), Beiträge zur Kultur-und Geistesgeschichte Asiens, no. 12, p.11 passim.

22 Phag mo gru pa's system of Mahāmudrā practice; see JACKSON, *Enlightenment by a Single Means*, p.77.

23 The *zhi byed* ("pacification") and *gcod* ("cutting") practices derive, of course, from Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas (d. 1117), on which see TUCCI, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, p.92.

24 The well-known practice of the rNying ma school. See, for example, Samten G.

The teachings of the Madhyamaka view[25] and so forth:
The definitive meaning goes under many different names,
But when it is explained by those
Who have skill in its scriptures and reasoning,
And by the yogis who experience it, they end up at the same point.[26]

It is true that Paṇ chen bLo bzang chos rgyan travelled widely, establishing contacts with members of many of the rival schools of his day; his esteem for earlier figures in Tibetan religious history is also well known.[27] All of this certainly points to the fact that he was one of the most liberal and open-minded figures of his generation. At the same time, it is clear from his writings, and especially from the text being considered in this essay, that he was unequivocal in his commitment to the teachings of Tsong kha pa (1357-1419) as the highest of philosophical views. For the Paṇ chen bla ma, all of the teachings do "end up at a single point," but this is none other that the view of Tsong kha pa. Those who come to a different conclusion have, by definition, no skill in scripture and reasoning, no experience as yogis. Paṇ chen bLo bzang chos rgyan's response to sTag tshang lo tsā ba makes this more than clear.

KARMAY, *The Great Perfection (rDzogs Chen): A Philosophical and Meditative teaching in Tibetan Buddhism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988).

25 The *dbu ma'i lta khrid* refers to the genre of short handbooks of the dGe lugs pa school on the practice of emptiness, of which the one by Tsong kha pa is the earliest, acting as the model for later works.

26 *lhan cig skyes sbyor ga'u ma / lnga ldan ro snyoms yi ge bzhi / zhi byed gcod yul rdzogs chen dang / dbu ma'i lta khrid la sogs pa / so sor ming 'dogs mang na yang / nges don lung rigs la mkhas shing / nyams mnyong can gyi rnal 'byor pas / dpyad na dgongs pa gcig tu 'bab / Autobiography*, Introduction, p.7. SMITH does not mention the source of the verse. The translation is my own. The verse is also important because it is evidence of the major "Madhyamaka" or related trends popular Tibet in the early 17th century.

27 See his *Grub pa'i dbang phyug mid* (sic) *la la brten pa'i rnal 'byor dang / mgur 'ga' zhig*, and his *Thams cad mkhyen pa Bu ston chos rje la brten pa'i bla ma'i rnal 'byor dang 'pho ba bsdus pa*, both contained in Collected Works, vol. *ka*; see also *Bu ston thams cad mkhyen pa'i gdung thal*, in vol. *kha*.

The Opponent[28]

Less is known about the Paṇ chen bla ma's opponent, sTag tshang lo tsā ba Shes rab rin chen of sGra. The disciple of sNar thang lo tsā ba Saṃghaśrī,[29] he was born in Yar 'brog stag lung in 1405, and is said to have been gifted in the literary sciences from an early age. Avoiding ordination in his youth so as to engage in "consort practice," he finally took *rab byung* ordination from Seng ge rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po[30] at the age of twenty. At this

28 The most extensive account of the life of sTag tshang lo tsā ba that I have been able to find is contained in the *Gangs ljongs lo ryus thog gi grags can mi sna*, pp.510-513, which, unfortunately, does not mention its sources. This serves as the main source of most of the remarks that follow. TUCCI, discussing the sTag tshang pa School, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, p.92, identifies the date of the birth of its founder as 1405, but seems to be confused about the sectarian affiliation of sTag tshang lo tsā ba. His remarks seem to be based on the passing reference to this school in the work of the eighteenth century historian, Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor; see Sarat Chandra Das, ed., *Pag sam jon zang by Sumpa khan-po yeçe paljor* (Calcutta: Presidency Jail Press, 1908), Part II, p.197. There, the sTag tshang pas are classified, together with the Jo nang pas as a heretical school: *rGya Bod kyi nang pa'i mkhas pa gang gi lugs dang mi mthun pa'i lta ba zhig rang bzos bzhag sogs dag mi dag ci rigs byung ngo*. Without further corroboration it is of course premature to consider this school as one founded by sTag tshang lo tsā ba. If it does have its source in the teachings of sTag tshang lo tsā ba, however, this brief passage conveys to us a great deal of information. It tells us, for example, that his views were institutionalized; that sTag tshang pa's was a marginal school, not representative of the Sa skya mainstream; that his views were considered by at least one later figure to be as far from the mainstream Buddhist fold as those of the Jo nang pas; and that, like those of the Jo nang pas, they may have been suppressed, which may go a long way to explaining why the texts of the great *lo tsā ba* are as scarce as they are today. It is interesting that the later contemporary of Sum pa mkhan po, Thu'u bkvan bLo bzang chos kyi nyi ma (1737-1802), while mentioning the Jo nang pas at length, and while treating other minor Tibetan schools (those of Bo dong, Bu ston and Lho brag grub chen Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan), does not discuss the "sTag tshang pas" as a separate school; see *Thu'u bkvan grub mtha'* (Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1989), pp.212-235.

29 See TUCCI, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, p.135, where he states that he was one of the more important commentators on Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa*. That sNar thang was an important center for the study of the literary sciences is witnessed by the comments of, for example, the 16th century hisotrian dPa' bo gtsug lag; see Lokesh Chandra, ed., *mKhas-pahi-dgah-ston of dPah-bo-gtsug-lag* (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1961), Indo-Asian Literatures, vol. 9 (part 3), p.853.

30 This figure is difficult to identify. A monk by this name is mentioned in the "Chro-

time he studied and composed commentaries on several *sūtra* works (*Ko* [=*Ka*?] *ri ka lnga bcu pa sogs*), and continued his *sūtra* studies under Chos 'khor ba[31] and his disciples; then, turning his attention to the *tantras*, he began writing critical works evaluating previous scholarship on this subject. At the dNgul 'Bras spungs monastery, he continued *sūtra* studies under 'Jam dbyangs bkra shis dpal ldan, and it appears that it is during this period that he began to make his rounds of leading monastic centers to engage in scholarly disputations with his peers (*grva skor*), thereby demonstrating his ability "in regard to many texts" and collecting many disciples.

He studied the *lam 'bras*, Kālacakra and other esoteric traditions under Yar res rJe Byang sems pa; and under "Sems dpa' chen po skad gnyis smra ba Thugs rje dpal bzang po," he learned the *Kalāpa* and *Candrapa* (sic) *śāstras*. These he is said to have found extremely difficult to comprehend, but persisting, he finally become a master of this tradition. sTag tshang lo tsā ba received the complete tradition of the five conventional sciences (*tha snyad rigs gnas lnga*) from the great translator Chos 'khor, and then continued his studies, also turning to the practice of meditation, at the monastery of Bo dong Paṇ chen Phyogs las rnam rgyal (1375-1451).

He founded the Sa skya monastery of Thar gling chos sde, an institution with four *bla brang* and a monastic population of approximately 1000 monks.[32] His chief disciples included 'Ug tshang rin po che, 'Dul 'dzin

nicles of the Fifth Dalai Lama", see TUCCI trans, in *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, p.638, but he is too early to be sTag tshang's teacher. The former is called "great abbot," in an episode in which he meets and gives a prophecy as to the future success of the young Chos bzhi pa, the future abbot of sNeu gdon, and one of Tsong kha pa's teachers. Another figure by the same name, (kLog skya bka' bzhi pa) Seng ge rgyal mtshan, is mentioned in the *Blue Annals*, p.518, as a disciple of Rang byung rdo rje (b. 1454), but is too late to be sTag sthang pa's teacher. The Seng rgyal ba mentioned in *Blue Annals*, p.310, is perhaps more likely, a teacher of Don grub dpal (b. 1365); although the one mentioned on p.584, the abbot of bCu gnyis gsar ma (b. 1310), is, once again, too early.

31 I have been unable to identify this figure. Because of dates it is almost certainly not Chos 'khor sgangs pa, student of the translator and propagator of the Kālacakra system, bSod nams rgya mtsho (1424-1482), mentioned in the *Blue Annals*, p.830 ff.

32 This is related in Byams pa phrin las, *Gangs ljongs gso rig bstan pa'i nyin byed rim byon gyi rnam thar phyogs bsgrigs* (mTsho sngon: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1990), p.198. Byams pa phrin las also states that this monastery was sTag tshang lo tsā ba's principal residence (*bzhugs gnas gtso bo*), and that there is a tradition of a hermitage

sngon mo, rTa nag Rab 'byams pa Shes rab chos 'byor, the master of ten-treatises Kun dga' rgyal mtshan,[33] Byams chen pa Sangs rgyas 'phel (1411-1485),[34] Se ra ba bLo gros seng ge,[35] Zha lu Lo chen Chos skyong bzang po (1441-1527),[36] Dvags po bLo gros mtha' yas, and Kun dga' 'od zer.

cave used by sTag tshang for practice at that site. The author states that he has seen no biography of sTag tshang lo tsā ba, but states that he has consulted the records of the Thar gling chos sde monastery, upon which he bases his remarks. He gives no date for the census on which the figure for the monastic population was based.

33 Possibly the author of the *bKa' gdams chos 'byung* (dated 1494) and the "*Subhāṣita-ratnanidhi*", on which see Rudolf KASCHEWSKY, *Das Leben des Lamaistischen Heiligen Tsongkhapa blo-bzang-grags-pa (1357-1419) dargestellt und erläutert anhand seiner Vita "Quellort allen Glückes"* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1971), pp.22; see also TUCCI, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, pp.145, 159. That this is the same Kun dga' rgyal mtshan who was abbot of sNar thang and teacher of Tsong kha pa in the field of Madhyamaka (Kaschewksy, *Das Leben*, p.87) seems doubtful.

34 Byams chen rab 'byams pa Sangs rgyas 'phel, also a student of Rong ston Shes bya kun rig (1367-1449), and the principal teacher of Go ram pa bSod nams sen ge (1429-1489). See *Thu'u bkvan grub mtha'*, pp.187-188; see also L. W. J. VAN DER KUIJP, "Notes on the Transmission of Nāgārjuna's Ratnāvalī in Tibet," *Tibet Journal*, vol. 10, no. 2, p.6. If Byams chen pa was in fact the student of sTag tshang lo tsā ba, then it is clear that the former at some point broke away from the latter's tradition of Madhyamaka exegesis, since it is clear that they diverge on several points (if we can take Go ram pa as being representative of Byams chen pa's views).

35 Though strange, given his strong dGe lugs pa ties, perhaps Kun mkhyen bLo gros rin chen seng ge, founder of the Byes College of Se ra (dates unknown). See *Gangs ljong lo rgyus thog gi grags can mi sna*, pp.489-490, for a brief biography of Kun mkhyen pa.

36 In the brief biography of sTag tshang lo tsā ba in the *Gangs ljongs lo rgyus*, p.511, we find listed a certain Zha lu ba bLo gros seng ge after Se ra ba bLo gros seng ge. The former is probably a misprint, and the figure probably being referred to is most likely Chos skyong bzang po (*Gangs ljongs lo rgyus*, pp.551-556), a great translator and an expert in the literary sciences, he was a student of sTag tsang lo tsā ba's (ibid., p.553), from whom he is said to have receive the latter's entire oral and exegetical transmission (*bstan bcos mtha' dag gi bshad lung yongs su rdzogs pa*). It is interesting that in this context, the *Gangs ljongs lo rgyus* (p.553) mentions other works of sTag tshang lo tsā ba not mentioned in his own biography, namely: (1) *Ka lā pa'i spyi ṭīkā*, (2) *Nyer mgo'i mdo so so 'grel pa dang bcas pa*, and (3) *Rigs gnas phyi ma bzhi'i zab bshad*. The Fifth Dalai Lama's Chronicles, translated by TUCCI (*Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, see p.647) mentions Chos skyong bzang po of Zha lu as the author of the grammatical work *Za ma tog*, and eulogizes him as "the lotsava and corrector who has no rival in the knowledge of the divine language, rightly used in the land of snows"; TUCCI (notes 422, 586) mentions an extant biography.

The date of his death is not known, though from the colophonic evidence, we know that it must have been after 1463, the year that he composed the *Grub mtha' kun shes*. Like the Paṇ chen bla ma, sTag tshang lo tsā ba lived in a period of great political turmoil that saw the downfall of Phag mo gru pa rule and the rise of the Rin spungs princes as the rulers of gTsang.

Although the author of several medical treatises,[37] and apparently renowned as having an encyclopedic knowledge – a great master of the literary and many other sciences – he is perhaps better known today for his famous "*siddhānta*" text the *Grub mtha' kun shes*,[38] and for his work on the Tibetan cultural sciences, the *Rigs gnas kun shes*, both of which survive.[39] His commentaries on the Kālacakra[40] and Cakrasaṃvara[41] tantric cycles are also extant. In addition, Tucci mentions that a work of his on the Vinaya, the *'Dul ba'i snying po rab tu gsal ba'i gzhi smad kyi rnam bshad*, a text no

37 The medical treatises attributed to him are listed by Byams pa phrin las, *Gangs ljongs gso rig bstan pa'i nyin byed*, p.197: (1) *gSo dpyad byung tshul gyi lo rgyus sman gyi spyi don dang bcas pa mkhas pa'i yid 'phrog*, (2) *sMan gyi lag len gces bsdus le'u bcu pa reg pas nad sel*, (3) *gSo rig ming tshig 'ga' zhig don gyi bzhin ras ston pa'i me long*, and of course (4) the *Rig gnas kun shes*, that deals in part with medicine.

38 *Grub mtha' kun shes nas mtha' bral sgrub pa*, Indian reprint with no bibliographical information, containing the verse text and commentary, *Grub mtha' kun shes nas mtha' bral grub (sic) pa zhes bya ba'i bstan bcos rnam par bshad pa legs bshad kyi rgya mtsho*. According to the colophon of the root text, the work was completed at dGe 'phel chos 'khor sgang in the year 1463, and was printed at dGa ldan phun tshogs gling. Hamburg, library of the Institut für Kultur und Geschichte Indien and Tibets, catalogue no. MIV 309/1.

39 *Rig gnas kun shes nas bdag med grub pa zhes bya ba'i bstan bcos*. The root text of this work survives in the Patna collection, as do the last three folios of the commentary. See D.P. JACKSON, *The 'Miscellaneous Series' of Tibetan texts in the Bihar Research Society, Patna: A Handlist*, Tibet and Indo-Tibetan Studies 2 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiebaden GMbH, 1989), no. 955 (B. no. 246), and no. 999-2 (B. no. 257), respectively. Portions of the *Rig gnas kun shes* are also cited in the Paṇ chen bla ma's text. I have been informed that the full commentary to the *Rigs gnas kun shes* exists in the Tohoku collection of Tibetan manuscripts, and that it and its root text are currently being studied by Profs. K. MIMAKI and H. KRASSER.

40 Preserved in the PL 480 collection of Tibetan manuscripts. According to the *Gangs ljongs lo rgyus thog gi grags can mi sna*, p.511, this work was composed in 1455.

41 *'Khor lo sdom pa'i dkyil chog mkhas rmongs kun dga'*, listed in Grags pa, *Bod kyi bstan bcos khag cig gi mtshan byan dri med shel dkar phreng ba* (mTsho sngon: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1985), p.650.

longer extant, is extensively quoted by the Fifth Dalai Lama.[42] We also know from the present text of the Paṇ chen bla ma's that he composed a polemical work (with commentary) directed against Tsong kha pa's Madhyamaka and Pramāṇika synthesis, which Paṇ chen bLo bzang chos rgyan cites simply as the *rTsod yig* (lit. Record of Arguments). It is one of the virtues of the Paṇ chen's text that it preserves for us several passages from the latter work. Especially important in this regard are the so called "18 Great Burdens of Contradiction" (*'gal khur chen po bco rgyad*), a list of philosophical points in regard to which Tsong kha pa is alleged to have seriously erred,[43] cited verbatim by the Paṇ chen from sTag tshang pa's *rTsod yig*. Several portions of his commentary to the verses are also cited, and several other sections paraphrased, making the Paṇ chen's text an invaluable source for gleaning something of sTag tshang pa's lost text.

The rTsod lan

1. General Remarks

The Paṇ chen bla ma's work, the *sGra pa Shes rab rin chen pa'i rtsod lan lung rig seng ge'i nga ro* (The Roar of the Lion of Scripture and Reasoning: A Response to the Polemics of sGra pa Shes rab rin chen pa), is to be found as the fifteenth work in the fourth volume (*nga*) of the latter's Collected Works.[44] This initial report of the text is based on a 1979 reprint of the text by Tobden Tsering from the rDzang la mkhar manuscript collection. The text is 89 folio sides in length (including title page), 6 lines per folio side.

42 That the Fifth Dalai Lama had great respect for the works of sTag tshang lo tsā ba is also evidenced by the fact that he was responsible for the recarving of the blocks to his *Grub mtha' kun shes* and *Rigs gnas kun shes*; see above. See Giuseppe TUCCI, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* (Kyoto: Rinsen, 1980; reprint of the 1949 ed.), pp.134, and 260, n.226.

43 I have translated these as Appendix 2 to my *A Dose of Emptiness: An Annotated Translation of the* sTong thun chen mo *of mKhas grub dGe legs dpal bzang* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992); see also below.

44 There are available two Indian reprints of the work, one in the Collected Works edited by Mongolian Lama Guru Deva, reproduction of sKra shis lhun po xylographs; and the other published by Tobden Tsering, Gemur Monastery (H.P.India) in *Miscellaneous Works of the First Panchen Lama*, based on the rDzang la mkhar manuscript collection, pp.373-462. Unfortunately, at the time of the writing of this article, the first of these is still unavailable to me.

The edition at my disposal, either copied or traced from another source, is filled with scribal errors, though most of these can be easily corrected from context. No date for the composition is given. The colophon[45] states that it was composed in the temple of bKra shis lhun po at the insistence of senior monks, and especially at the request of the then abbot of Ngam ring Monastery, Tshe brtan rgyal mtshan. The initial scribe was sNying stobs rgya mtsho. The colophon then states, "Afterwards, some scriptures and reasoning were inserted, and the complete text [written by] the scribe rJe drung bLo bzang dbang rgyal, a Śākya monk of excellent analytical [abilities]." We might surmise from this that the text was first delivered as a set of public oral teachings and written down by the first scribe, apparently a senior student of the Paṇ chen bla ma's. Afterwards, it was edited and additional material added (it is unclear by whom) and then re-written by the second scribe.

In this context, it is interesting to ask ourselves the extent to which Tibetan literary production proceeded along the lines I have just described.[46]

45 The text of the colophon reads:(p.461) *sGra pa Shes rab rin chen pa'i rtsod lan lung rigs seng ge'i nga ro zhes bya ba 'di yang / chos grva chen po'i slob dpon rnam pa sogs / bstan pa'i rtsa lag sde snod 'dzin pa 'chad nyan gyi go sar bzhugs pa mang po dang / khyad par mdo sngags rab 'byams skad gnyis smra ba / Ngam ring mkhan chen Tshe brtan rgyal mtshan gyis yang yang bskul ba la brten nas / Shā kya'i dge slong rigs pa smra ba bLo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan gyis / Chos grva chen po bKra shis lhun po'i gtsug lag khang du gyar khral du 'tshal ba'i yi ge pa ni / bslab gsum sde gnod 'dzin pa'i dka' bcu pa sNying stobs rgya mtsho dang / slad nas mtshams rnams su lung rigs 'ga' zhig 'jugs pa sogs / yongs su rdzogs pa'i yi ge pa ni / rnam dpyod phun sum tshogs pa'i Shā kya'i dge tshul rJe drung bLo bzang dbang rgyal lo //* Translation: "This *Lion's Roar of Scripture and Reasoning: A Response to the Arguments of sGra pa Shes rab rin chen pa* [was composed] in the temple of the great Dharma College of bKra shis lhun po by the Buddhist monk, the advocate of reasoning, bLo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan. [I compose it as if it were] a tax [placed on me] as a result of the insistent requests of the various scholars of the great Dharma College, the foundations of the teachings, the many holders of the *piṭaka*, who have attained the accomplishments of study and explanation; and in particular, [by the insistent requests of] the very learned one who speaks the two languages of *sūtra* and *tantra*, the great abbot of Ngam ring, Tshe brtan rgyal mtshan. The scribe was the master of the ten difficult treatises, the holder of the *pitaka* and the three trainings, sNying stobs rgya mtsho. Afterwards, some scriptures and reasoning were inserted in the interstices, and the complete text [written by] the scribe rJe drung bLo bzang dbang rgyal, a Śākya novice monk of excellent analytical [abilities]."

46 I have discussed this theme in a recent, and as yet unpublished, paper, "On the Notion of Authorship and Literary Production in Classical Tibet," presented at the Universities of Freiburg and Lausanne.

Of course, we have accounts of scholars actually sitting down to write texts in isolation, but it might also be the case that many of the written texts available to us today were never written down (and perhaps not even dictated) by the authors to whom they are attributed, and that instead they represent compilations based on oral teachings that were then edited by their "authors," or perhaps by senior students.[47] Further investigation, especially of colophonic material, will, I believe, be the key to determining what is actually involved in the act of literary production. It would be hasty, however, to assume that Tibetans, especially those removed from us by several centuries, had the same sense of authorial composition that we have today.

2. The Structure and Style of the Text

The structure of the Paṇ chen bla ma's text is itself further evidence for the fact that it was a compilation based on his oral lectures. Of course, there are clearly chirographic features to the text, that is, features that were not originally spoken, but written. These include the four initial and eleven final verses found at the beginning and end of the text, and a few "verses of intermission" (*bar skabs kyi tshigs su bcad pa*) scattered throughout the work; as well as, of course, a good deal of the scriptural material, some of which, as we have seen, seems to have been added after the initial compilation. But apart from these formal chirographic elements, the work evinces many characteristics reminiscent of literature that has oral origins. There is, for example, a certain thematic disorganization to the work. On the one hand we find that the text is divided into three distinct sections, each with a certain independence, the one from the other. These are as follows:

Part I (pp. 376-407), a general critique of what we might call "logical-epistemological skepticism," that he says is "the basis of a faulty refutation [of Tsong kha pa] on the part of other opponents." This is a critique of the view that valid cognitions (*tshad ma*) have no place in Madhymaka philosophy.

47 Of course, we know this to be be the case explicitly in regard to certain texts, for example, the *Lam rim rNam grol lag byang* is a series of notes taken by Khri byang rin po che based on the teachings of Pha bong kha bDe chen snying po. The point here is that such a process may be more widely representative of authorial composition than previously supposed, and that texts that do not explicitly identify themselves as such compilations may nonetheless be so, a fact that might be gleaned from careful investigation of the colophon.

Part II (pp. 407-443), his actual response to each of the eighteen contradictions urged by sTag tshang lo tsā ba's against Tsong kha pa.

Part III (pp. 443-459), called "related topics" (*zhar byung*) is almost entirely a response to sTag tshang pa's claim in the *Rigs gnas kun shes* that the texts of the Pramāṇika tradition of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti do not belong to the inner (Buddhist) science (*nang don rigs pa*), but are instead works that belong to a science (*rigs gnas*) that is common to both Buddhists and non-Buddhists.

The relative independence of these three sections gives one the feeling that what organization there is to the work is imposed on the text after the fact of composition rather than emerging naturally from the text itself, the latter being a feature of literature having more systematic, chirographic origins. If we are correct in assuming that the work represents a compilation of the Pan chen bla ma's lectures, then it is possible that each of the three sections corresponds to notes taken in three distinct lectures, or series of lectures.

Stylistically, the work is not unlike the genre known as *mtha' dpyod* (Determinations), and as such consists of series of arguments in relatively formal syllogistic format (with subjects, predicates and reasons) reminiscent of that found in oral monastic debates. Most of the Paṇ chen's arguments (especially in Part I) are of the *reductio ad absurdum* form, a construction that is appropriate for two reasons. (1) In a polemical context it makes sense to attempt to show the abusrdity in an opponent's position, and (2) the Paṇ chen bla ma is of course operating from what he considers to be the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka framework (with its penchant for *reductio* arguments). Extensive use is made of scriptural material in order to show how sTag tshang lo tsā ba's views contradict the Indian sources. Finally, as we have mentioned, the work is interspersed with "verses of intermission" (*bar skabs kyi tshig su bcad pa*), which serve not only to summarize arguments, but as a way of breaking up the text as it moves from one topic to the next. The style of the work itself also points to oral origins. There is, *within* each of the three sections, a certain disorganization that is reminiscent of oral philosophical teachings or exchanges, as arguments are given, one after another, with little regard for thematic continuity.

3. Summary of the Work

Thematically, the main goal of the work is to defend Tsong kha pa's innovative synthesis of the Madhyamaka and Pramāṇika traditions against the attacks of sTag tshang lo tsā ba and other opponents. Tsong kha pa of course believed that the logical-epistemological speculation of the Pramāṇika tradition of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti could, albeit with some modification, be reconciled with the philosophy of emptiness as systematized by Nāgārjuna, especially as interpreted by Candrakīrti. He believed not only that the two traditions were compatible, but that they served to reinforce one another, like two lions, who, back to back (*dBu Tshad seng ge rgyab 'phrod*), are completely impervious to any attack. It is precisely this that sTag tshang pa considers to be the source of the contradictions in Tsong kha pa's system:

> You give [this view] the poetical name of "the Madhyamaka and Pramāṇika Systems like lions with their necks intertwined" (*dBu Tshad seng ge mjing ba snol*). But when this is boiled down [to its essentials], it is [nothing but] a collection of a multitude of contradictions.[48]

sTag tshang pa believes that the Madhyamaka repudiation of the validity of our apprehension of the world vitiates its accepting the validity of *pramāṇas*. Hence, he maintains that these so called "valid cognitions" are in error even in regard the truths of the conventional world. For sTag tshang pa, the dGe lugs pa claim that there is a correct way of perceiving the conventional world –through the use of conventional valid cognitions (*tha snyad pa'i tshad ma*) – and that ordinary beings' perception of the world through such valid cognitions corresponds to the way the Buddhas perceive it, borders on blasphemy. For him, the claims of the Madhyamaka, and especially the critiques of the notion of "valid cognition" found in Madhyamaka sources, makes this system incompatible with the Pramāṇika tradition. Logic is, for sTag tshang pa, a worldly, and not a Buddhist science, and any attempt to elevate it to the status of a religious method or practice, as Tsong kha pa indeed does, is, he believes, doomed to failure. For many Tibetan Mādhyamikas outside of the tradition of Tsong kha pa, there is no reconciling the logical-epistemological traditions of Indian Buddhism with that of the Madhyamaka. Though perhaps useful pedagogically at early stages, the

48 The Pan chen bla ma is here citing sTag tshang, *rTsod lan*, p.431.

doctrines and methods of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti contradict the philosophy of emptiness, and therefore have no place in a view that aims at the definitive nature of reality (*nges don gyi lta ba*).

In the three main sections of the work, Paṇ chen bLo bzang chos rgyan criticizes the views of sTang tshang pa and his other adversaries (mostly unnamed) on a number of different points. Of course, it is beyond the scope of the present paper to go into detail in regard to these arguments. Moreover, the varied nature of the arguments themselves makes a general summary impossible. Suffice it, then, to present one portion of each from the three sections as a way of conveying both the style and the contents of the three parts of the work.

3.1. Part I: A General Critique of Epistemological Skepticism

Paṇ chen bLo bzang chos rgyan believes that sTag tshang pa's major philosophical error lies in his repudiation of the possibility of validly cognizing the conventional world. The Paṇ chen bla ma portrays the position of sTag tshang lo tsā ba as follows: ordinary beings cannot validly understand conventional truths because they apprehend them through the filter of their ignorance. To claim that the cognitions of ordinary beings are valid is to grant validity to their mode of apprehension of things as truly existing. Buddhas, moreover, do not perceive conventional truths because they perceive no conventional phenomena whatsoever. Hence, there is no such thing as a valid understanding of the conventional world. Error is, as it were, built in to the very nature of the cognition of the conventional world. Whether or not this is actually the position of sTag tshang lo tsā ba remains to be seen.[49] Be that as it may, it is clear that this is one of the most crucial issue that the Paṇ chen bla ma feels he must address.

> [p. 399] The Dharma lord Sa pan, states, in a similar vein, "The definition of an object is 'that which is cognized by thought'."
> Therefore, your accepting as you do [that the Buddha's gnosis has no objects] is related to your error of accepting that being validly established (*tshad grub*) is synonymous to being truly established (*bden grub*). How so? Let us take the object of the Buddha's gnosis as our subject. It follows, [for you] absurdly, that it

49 It involves, for example, checking the positions attributed to him in the Paṇ chen's text against his known surviving philosophical texts, especially the *Grub mtha' kun shes*. This will constitute the next part of my research on this text.

is established by the Buddha's gnosis, because it is its object. If you accept the premise, then it follows, [for you] absurdly, that it is established by a valid conition (*tshad mas grub pa*), because that is what you have accepted. If you accept [*that* premise], then let us take [the same] subject [again]. It follows, absurdly, [from your position] that it is truly established because it is established by a valid cognition. This turns you immediately into one of us.

And so I offer this verse of intermission:
The prejudiced waters of evil philosophical positions
Have become intermingled with the 100,000 clouds
of wrong explanations.
So long as they remain polluted, [shall we suffer]
From this interminable filthy rain of contradiction.

3.2. Part II. In the second part of the work, Paṇ chen bLo bzang chos rgyan cites portions of verses from sTag tshang lo tsa's *rTsod yig*, and then responds to each of the eighteen contradictions[50] that the latter sees as endemic to Tsong kha pa's version of the Madhyamaka. The following excerpt, the Paṇ chen bla ma's response to the fifth contradiction, is interesting in that it leads the author to a discussion of the compatibility of Tsong kha pa's system with that of masters in sTag tshang lo tsā ba's own lineage, namely the Sa skya. It is by now a well known fact that Tsong kha pa believes that Prāsaṅgikas posit the existence of external objects. sTag tshang lo tsā ba claims that if this is true, then they must also accept the existence of partless particles, something that is anathema to Tsong kha pa.

[From p. 417] You [sTag tshang lo tsā ba] say:

The fact that external objects are established by a valid cognition contradicts the fact that particles have parts. (*phyi don tshad grub rdul 'phren cha bcas 'gal*)

50 I have listed and translated these 18 contradictions in Appendix 2 to my *A Dose of Emptiness: An Annotated Translation of the sTong thun chen mo of mKhas grub dGe legs dpal bzang* (Albany: SUNY press, 1992), pp.391-392. I take this opportunity to correct and improve on two elements of that list now. Number 12 should better read: "The fact that the advocates of autonomous [syllogisms] advocate essentialism contradicts the fact that the thought that [things are] essenceless is itself established in that way [that is, by means of a syllogism]." Number 15, the first two words should read *mi rtags*, rather than *mi rtogs*, and hence the translation should read, "The fact that the understanding of impermanence etc. is [a form of] yogic direct perception contradicts the fact that [those who attain this] do not reach the realization of their own [vehicle's] path of preparation."

To which [I reply:]

> The claim that [the existence of] external objects contradicts the fact that particles have parts
> Is the speech of someone whose will has been purloined by the waters of insanity,
> For in the *Madhyamakāvatāra*, in the section refuting the Cittamātra,
> It states, more than just a single time, that [there are] external objects
> And that all phenomena have parts.
> Our belief in external objects is like that of the Vaibhāṣikas and Sautrāntikas,
> But if this entails that we must definitely believe, as they do,
> In the partless particles that they write about,
> Then, since we also share with them the belief in the two truths,
> We should also believe that the two truths are as [they describe them]...

[p. 418] It follows, [for you] absurdly, that the gross object that is the accumulation of particles exists, because it has parts. [The latter is true] because all Buddhists accept it as having parts. [You are enmeshed in] the three cycles.

It follows, [for you] absurdly, that particles exist because the *Laghutantra* of the *Kālacakra* says they exist. [The latter is true] because [that text] states, for example, "Eight of the subtlemost [particles make up] one subtle one, and eight subtle ones [make up an aggregate the size of] the tip of a [strand of] hair."

To summarize, you slander the Lord [Tsong kha pa] by claiming that in his earlier [period] he states that when the great translator sKyabs mchog dpal bzang and the Lord Red mda' ba, the father, and his [spiritual] sons, entered into the great Madhyamaka, their rational object of refutation (*rtags kyi dgag bya*) was too broad, causing them to fall into the extreme of nihilism; and that deriving from this polluted writing, that is a great heap of poisonous thorns, the folios [of Tsong kha pa's writings] come to be infiltrated throughout by a net of blackness. [p. 419] You consider the Great Translator, the father and his [spiritual] sons, to be support for these mistaken philosophical tenets to which you adhere. But as Ne ring bsGrub pa dpal says to the omniscient mKhas grub in response to a question:

> The lord Red mda' ba and the Lord Master [Tsong kha pa], the father, and his [spiritual] sons, except for some trifling [differences] in the way they express themselves in words, have exactly the same purport.

And this is true. The Lord, the great Red mda' ba, says, in response to a question of bLa ma 'Od zer rgyal mtshan:

When one has fathomed the inseperability
Of trust in the inevitability of causality
And of the wisdom that understands that what is interdependent is empty,
Then one has entered the path of the Madhyamaka free from proliferations.

The light of pure scripture and reasoning clears away
The darkness of the reifications (*kun brtags*) imputed by Buddhist and non-Buddhist philosophical schools
In regard to entities that are acceptable [simply] as they appear,
[As well as the darkness of the tendency] of the innate mind (*lhan skyes yid*) to grasp things [as real].

One has understood the purport of the Victor
When one finds certainty in the method of uniting [these two principles]:
That when [things] appear, they are to be understood as empty,
And that when they are understood as empty, their appearance [should] not be negated.

[This passage shows] that [Red mda' ba] has the same ultimate purport as the Lord [Tsong kha pa], the father, and his spiritual sons. Is it then that you are unaware of the fact that passages such as this – passages that contradict [your position] – exist, or, *being* aware [of their existence], are you so unstable as to think that [you must take advantage of this opportunity to slander the Lord Tsong kha pa now, given that] in the future [the possibiity of stirring up] such a problem may not arise again? In this way, to claim that true existence can mean nothing more than being established by a valid cognition and being nonmistaken, [p. 420] and to offer as the support for this [view] the followers of the Great Lord [Red mda' ba] and their writings, is something that [causes] laughter in scholars.

3.3. Part III. As mentioned above, the third part of the Paṇ chen bla ma's work is devoted primarily to a critique of sTag tshang lo tsā ba's claim that logic is not a religious (that is, an inner or Buddhist) science, but a general worldly science common to both Buddhists and non-Buddhists.[51] In the passage that follows, sTag tshang lo tsā ba argues that the subject matter of

51 Giuseppe TUCCI, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* (Kyoto: Rinsen, 1980; reprint of the 1949 ed.), pp.120, and 260 n.209, already mentions the controversy. It is treated more extensively in a recent article by David JACKSON in the Seyfort RUEGG Festschrift, who actually uses the Paṇ chen bla ma's text in his discussion; as of the writing of this paper, however, I have not seen JACKSON's article.

logic, like that of grammar and the other sciences of language, and like that of medicine, is essentially secular; and in his response, the Paṇ chen bla ma attempts to show that whereas grammar is concerned with the secular structure of the scriptures, namely, letters, words and their proper conjunction, the texts of logic are concerned with something that is intimately religious, namely, the purport of the scriptures. Grammar, poetics, medicine and so forth do indeed shed their own light on the world, he maintains, but it is not the golden light shed by the logic contained in the works of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti.

[From p. 448] After that, the polemical text [of sTag tshang lo tsā ba] states:

> To say, "because those [Pramāṇika texts] are general
> commentaries on the purport of the scriptures,"
> Means that all of the *sūtras* on grammar also become
> this, (p. 449)
> Since they comment on the purport of the words of
> all of the scriptures.

[Response:] The claim that the process of merely correcting words (*tshig dag byed tsam*) [which is the function of grammatical works,] is [the same as that of] commenting on their purport is a faulty refutation [of Tsong kha pa's position that derives from] a lack of analysis [of the issue]. Were this so, it would mean having to accept that those who corrected (*zhus dag byed pa po*) the three Mother [Perfection of Wisdom *Sūtras*] when they were first printed are the original commentators on the purport of the words of those [*sūtras*]. What more surprising [a claim] is there than this? It also follows, [for you] absurdly, that the Pramāṇika treatises are commentaries on the purport of the scriptures, because they correct portions of the meanings of the scriptures. [You are enmeshed in] the three cycles...

[Now you admit that the Pramāṇika texts] teach that, because [the Teacher is trustworthy], his teachings are the nonmistaken source for those who desire liberation. But even though [these texts] extensively explain these [points], they do not [according to you] teach the path [that leads to enlightenment]. This is because were they to teach [that path], [p. 450] it would mean that there would be no way of avoiding the absurdity that the *Eight Branches of Medical Analysis* (*sMan dpyad yan lag brgyad pa*), the *Ka*[*lāpa*], *Can*[*dra*], [Śāntipa's] *Chandoratnākara* (*sDeb sbyor rin chen 'byung gnas*), and so forth would be [treatises] of the inner science.

This refutation [of yours] is like saying that if gold dust (*gser phye*) emits golden light, there is no way to avoid the absurdity that iron dust (*lcag phye*) must also emit golden light. It is a source of laughter for scholars.

Conclusion

That sTag tshang lo tsā ba's views continued to be a source of concern for dGe lugs pa scholars even after the first Paṇ chen bla ma is witnessed by the fact that the great 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa Ngag dbang brtson 'grus (1648-1742) devoted considerable energy to their refutation[52]; and almost three centuries after sTag tshang pa was active, we find dGe lugs pa scholars the likes of Phur bu lcog Ngag dbang byams pa (1682-1762) still responding to his critique of Tsong kha pa. Phur lcog's polemical treatise is of particular interest not only because it is modelled after the Paṇ chen bla ma's text, but also because it contains, by way of an appendix, a series of verses attributed to sTag tshang pa which portray him as recanting his previous views in regard to Tsong kha pa's doctrines![53]

Viewed in historical context, the importance of the first Paṇ chen bla ma's text – the focus of this essay – derives from the fact that it is the first direct response to sTag tshang lo tsā ba available to us: the first in what was to be a series of dGe lugs pa polemical works directed at the views of the great "Sa skya pa" translator. There is no question that the prose of Paṇ chen bLo bzang chos rgyan's work is terse, that the arguments are intricate, convoluted, and sometimes even circular. And like most of the great philosophers of Tibet – especially mKhas grub dGe legs dpal bzang, one of his predecessors in the Paṇ chen incarnation lineage – the Paṇ chen bla ma is a master of philosophical insult. These combined factors at times cause the reader to view the text as if it were distant, removed form the main concerns of *real* philosophy: as if it were the private game of exotic, scholastic *enfants terribles* who never matured beyond name-calling. And yet beneath the polemical rhetoric, there is substance. At issue in this text – and indeed in most other philosophical polemical works of Tibet's great scholarly tradition –

52 See David Seyfort RUEGG, "On Thesis and Assertion in the Madhyamaka/dBu ma," in E. Steinkellner and H. Tauscher, *Contributions on Tibetan and Buddhist Religion and Philosophy*, Proceedings of the Csoma de Kórös Symposium, vol. 2 (Wien: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien Universität Wien, 1983), p.228 and note 63. Several of the writings (or portions of the writings) of 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa are now to be found in English translation.

53 *sTag tshang lo tstsha (sic) ba'i brgal lan rdo rje'i gzegs ma*, in *Collected Works (gSung 'bum) of Phur-bu-lcog Nag-dbang-byams-pa reproduced from a set of tracings from prints from the Phur-bu-lcog Hermitage blocks* (New Delhi: Ngawang Sopa, 1973), vol. I, pp.272-353. This text is the subject of a forthcoming paper.

are some of the most profound questions in the history or the philosophy of religion: Is our knowledge of the world *real* knowledge? Does rationality give us access to reality? Does it have a role to play in the spiritual transformation of human beings? Does logic lie within or outside of the religious sphere?

Whatever may be said about their methods, let it never be said that the scholars of Tibet were only quibbling over insignificant points of doctrine.