East India to Kashmir via Ten Years in Tibet: A Look at the Sense of Kha chen paṇ chen's Lengthy Endeavour on the Plateau

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Guntram's work stands out for his knack of combining historical and legendary traces to forward the knowledge of the topics of his concern, so that his output enlightens obscurities hardly negotiated by anyone else. His search for ancient sites by territorial reconnaissance and on maps has shown locations of these places that time and fury have wiped out.

The ten years spent by Kha che paṇ chen in Tibet are a typical case of micro-history with events happening so close to one another that his biographies compact them with little solution of continuity. The game assigned to a researcher to work on those years is not to depend too closely from this mass of contiguous events hardly classifiable in sequence but to trace in their unfolding the significance of a life partially spent on the highlands. Those ten years were engaging and controversial given the vibrant religious atmosphere on the plateau, far from the turmoil in the south. The congestion of facts witnessed by Kha che paṇ chen still lets a reading whereby major directions taken by the *paṇ chen* in his contributions mark the sense of his long sojourn on the plateau.

The traditional account of the long time spent by Kha che paṇ chen in Tibet in the best-known historical sources suffer from schematism. His spell in Tibet, classified in various *chos 'byung*, is summarised as four years in gTsang, four years in dBus and two years in sTod. *rNam thar bka' rgya ma* is exemplary in this respect.[1]

[1] *rNam thar bka' rgya ma* in van der Kuijp (1994: 614,4-5) reads: "[Kha che paṇ chen] stayed four years in gTsang, four years in dBus and two years in mNga' ris for a total of ten".
Yar lung Jo bo chos 'byung (p. 178,7-p. 179,4) assesses the matter otherwise with some interesting details such as that, when in 1204 dGa' ldan *gtsug lag khang* meant to house the Byams chen statue was founded, a minor disease hit the fields. The text says that *paṇ chen* was one year in gTsang, one year in dBus and two in mNga' ris but concludes that he spent ten years (sic) in Tibet.

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A reading of the extensive biographical material dedicated to him, bSod nams dpal bzang po's *Sa'i steng na 'gran zla dang bral ba Kha che paṇḍi ta Shākya shrī badra'i rnam thar* transcribed by David Jackson in Patna (henceforth *Kha che paṇ chen gyi rnam thar*) and the dPal brtsegs edition of bSod nams rgyal ba's *Bla ma mnyam med Khro phu lo tsa ba chen po'i rnam par thar pa* (henceforth *Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar*), draws a different picture. He did not stay continuously for all those years in gTsang and equally in dBus but passed from region to region with great mobility in his endeavours on the plateau while the traditional sources are right in saying that he spent two years in mNga' ris stod owing to the itinerary he chose to reach Kha che.[2]

More than the tradition's rigid assessment of Kha che paṇ chen's years in Tibet, a fundamental reason to take the conceptual path adopted in this piece is that the *rnam thar*—mainly alternatives of the same narrative but congested to the extent of little clarity concerning Kha che paṇ chen's life activity in the highlands—do not provide a thorough chronological treatment of the events. The reliable dates are too few to attempt the reconstruction of an arrangement of his deeds in this way. They are:

— his departure from East India in wood rat 1204;
— his calculation of the *parinirvāṇa* in fire hare 1207 during his repeated sojourn at Sol nag Thang po che;
— the vow given to Sa skya *paṇḍi ta* in earth dragon 1208;
— his *rab gnas* of the Byams chen statue inside Khro phu dGa' ldan pho brang in water monkey 1212;
— followed by his departure to the west presumably in 1212;
— the journey from Pu hrang to Kashmir in late water bird 1213 after his two years sojourn at the court of the local *jo bo*.[3]

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[2] Other well-known stereotypes about Kha chen paṇ chen in Tibet are the emphasis on the vow given to Sa paṇ to stress the *paṇ chen*'s concern with *sdom pa* correctness; the focus on the realisation of the Byams pa statue at Khro phu or the creation of the four *tshogs* to give continuity to his preaching.

[3] Given the nature of his *bsTan rtsis gsal ba'i nyin byed* (p. 155,13-p. 157,16), Mang thos lHun grub rgya mtsho proposes dates of Kha che paṇ chen's ten years in Tibet, based on the sequence of the various *dbyar gnas* he held annually, some of which raise a doubt. His sequence of dates is:
dbyar gnas at Khro phu (1204), at Slas mo che (1205),
at Srin po ri (1206);
calculation of the *nirvāṇa* at Sol nag Thang po che (1207);
bsnyen rdzogs bestowed to Sa paṇ (1208);
dbyar gnas at Rin chen sgang (1209),
at Shangs Lu gdong (1210),
at Khro phu (1211);
rab gnas of Byams chen at Khro phu (1212);
in Pu rangs 1212-1213);
in Kha che (1214).

Rather than to follow the biographical structure of his biographies that a reader can peruse, I have opted for a thematic approach to look at the sense of Kha che paṇ chen's lengthy endeavour on the plateau.

The Noble Religion in Tibet at the beginning of the 13th century

A great season of scholasticism—a productive period that flourished in the 12th century after the no less germinal *bstan pa phyi dar smad lugs* in dBus gTsang—was characterised by the contributions of great indigenous masters who left an exegetical mark that remained seminal in the history of the religion in Tibet. They created autochthonous conditions that secured a local flourishing in various disciplines.

The 12th century led to a codification of the systems conceived in the previous one hundred years. Scholasticism had taken a twofold direction in Tibet during the 12th century. Great individuals left a deep religious mark themselves. Institutional doctrinal formulations by established schools put solid roots at the same time. The four disciples of sPa tshab Nyi ma grags, the transmission holders of rNgog Blo ldan shes rab's *Tshad ma gsar ma*, i.e. Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge, Khyung tshang pa Rin chen grags, 'Bre Shes rab 'bar, rGya dmar ba, the *bsnyung gnas* Byang sems Zla ba rgyal mtshan and Nyi phu pa as well as reputed *'Dul ba* masters existed side by side with the doctrinal elaborations of the religious schools.

This was the religious situation that Kha che paṇ chen faced upon his arrival in Tibet in the early 13th century.

Henceforth, I seek the conceptual dimension of Kha che paṇ chen's ten years on the plateau and the ripples that his activity—the way he conceived it—testify to the scholasticism prevailing in Tibet that he, himself, had to confront.

Safe haven in the north

The literature stereotypically asserts that no other destination than Tibet, untouched by war, secured to Kha che paṇ chen a safe return home. The Gar log troops had attacked U rgyan, Kha che and Bal yul (*Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* p. 287,6-7) before advancing as far as Ma ga dha, but no external evidence exists that the Kathmandu Valley was raided by Muslims in those years.

Two events or better two localities on the way to Tibet provided a distinctive step forward in Kha che paṇ chen reaching safety. He obviously avoided to take refuge in the hills and mountains of Mon

yul unlike dignitaries who fled Gangetic India found shelter from the brutality of Muslim destruction.[4] Mon yul was not the highlands. They did not guarantee safe transit and Tibet was the solution to the Kashmiri *paṇḍi ta*'s mobility.

Be hur was the locality in the higher lands of East India where he realised that he was truly out of Muslim threat and heading to Tibet. This meant that he had left behind the plains and deep distress.
Dza ga dha la in the same sector of East India was a step forward. Tibet as destination was beyond doubt at Dza ga dha la and the initial convincement of a plan that summed up his vision of a Buddhist future took shape there.

The thought of the statue

The first great convincement of a productive life in Tibet, after much indecision about the path to follow (*Deb ther sngon po*, p. 1241,19-p. 1242,5), came to him at Dza ga dha la not far from the Tibetan border. In a local temple, he had the inspiration that, by going to Tibet as the safest way to Kashmir, the conditions on the plateau, untouched by war, were conducive to the making of a colossal statue of Byams pa. A celebration of the Future Buddha was a prognostic for the resurgence of the Noble Religion from the dire consequences inflicted upon it.

A source of encouragement to give course to his brainchild materialised at this locality. Signs in favour of its making manifested while he still was on the fringes of East India, which proves that the Byams chen statue was Kha che paṇ chen's own conception rather than Khro phu lo tsa ba's. It was in the temple at Dza ga dha la that three immanent gods representing the *dkon mchog gsum* manifested to him. They made a rain of three flowers fall in his hands. One of the deities spoke to him (*Kha che paṇ chen gyi rnam thar*, p. 27,7-14). The deity talked about the possibility to have a Byams chen statue made in Tibet, a land with a profound practice of Buddhism. The biography (*ibid*., p. 27,14-23) reads:

> "It is believed that [Kha che paṇ chen] was told: 'The Land of Snows in the north is a country where Chos is held with a happy disposition. Also, people are skilled to make a statue of rgyal ba Byams pa'. Since

[4] *Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* (p. 287,1-2): "Since the Gar log came to the land [that corresponded to] the localities in the rGya gar (Gangetic) plain, distinguished people having taken shelter within the mountains which belonged to Mon, they dwelled in the secure localities, taking residence in areas which bordered on rGya gar".

> he asked what kind of Byams pa statue [could be made], [the deity] said: 'A statue with the exterior of clay, its manufacture would be completed in this way with two legs and arms. It will be emitting a beautiful light whereby many kinds of people will come to [see it] and by attending upon it much positive karmic links will be produced. Enlightenment will be quickly attained. By means of the doctrine of rje btsun Byams pa, karma will be liberated from samsaric conditions'. 'If so, since I pray to rje btsun Byams pa, I think I should go [for it]'. [Kha che paṇ chen] turned out to consider that prospect".

Consequent to his decision to have the statue made in Tibet, Kha chen paṇ chen spoke to Khro phu lo tsa ba of his convincement. The invitation of Khro phu lo tsa ba to his monastery led to the opportunity to make all arrangements to fulfil the plan of the Byams chen statue, as prophesied to Kha che paṇ chen at Dza ga dha la.

Khro phu lo'i rnam thar (p. 274,2-3) dates his request to proceed to Khro phu:

> "When [Khro phu lo tsa ba] reached thirty-six years of age (in 1204), he invited chos rje Shakyā shri who was in East India".

The passage refers to the invitation to Khro phu, founded by Phag mo gru pa rDo rje rgyal po's disciple rGyal rtsa Kun dga' shes rab in 1171, as a successive step to the convincement of Kha che paṇ chen to cross Tibet and reach Kha che. In the verses of invitation there is no reference to the making of Byams chen statue (*Kha che paṇ chen gyi rnam thar*, p. 28,11-p. 29,8). 1204 was therefore when an agreement had already been reached about the making of the Byams chen statue at Khro phu. In a dialogue with Khro phu lo tsa ba, Kha che paṇ chen made sure that his Tibetan disciple was going to take charge of its making at his monastery. *Kho phu lo'i ram thar* (p. 298,1-3) reads:

> "Having overcome various obstructions, the *lo tsa ba* arrived at Ba ne sha ra the day before the *chos rje* reached [in turn] during the daytime [of the next one]. After [Khro phu lo tsa ba] performed circumambulations, prostrations and gave gifts, the *chos rje* asked: 'The maker of the great statue of Byams pa will it be your brother or one from [your] older generation, or else will it be you?'. He said: 'None of my relatives. I will make it'."

In reply to Khro phu lo tsa ba's intention to take the responsibility to make the Byams chen statue, Kha che paṇ chen affirmed (*Kha che paṇ chen gyi rnam thar* p. 33,6-7):

> "'I am grateful that the idea of making a statue of the great god was born in you'."

This shows that Khro phu lo tsa ba acknowledged the wish of the great *paṇḍi ta*.

A coalescence of prospects about the making of a statue of Byams pa concerned all three Indian masters—Mi tra dzo ki, Buddha shri and Kha che paṇ chen—invited by Khro phu lo tsa ba to Tibet, which is an indication of a prevailing priority among the Indian savants. The shared perspective of calling the Buddha of the Future to come by making a statue of the deity was a common thought of Indian masters from territories where Muslim iconoclasm had subverted the existence of the Noble Religion. It meant to bring back the doctrine where it had been wiped out.

At Gong thang gSer khang in Bal po, Mi tra dzo ki advised Khro phu lo tsa ba to make a statue of the deity (*lHo rong chos 'byung*, p. 331,12-13); at sKyid grong, Buddha shri even sketched the head of the deity that was to be made locally (*Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar*, p. 261,3-4; *lHo rong chos 'byung*, p. 331,21-p. 332,1). However, none of these enterprises had a relation with the Byams chen at Khro phu. Kha che paṇ chen envisaged its making at Dza ga dha la before meeting the new Tibetan disciple; Khro phu lo tsa ba, already acquainted with the concepts passed to him by the two predecessors of Kha che paṇ chen, took charge of the endeavour.

Kha che paṇ chen's discovery of a role for his teachings in Tibet

In the confrontational atmosphere among masters and schools concerning the various doctrinal stances that the Kashmiri master found in Tibet after entering the plateau, he was almost instantly touched by the sheer devotion and selfless dedication that the local people had for Buddhism. The Tibetans were delighted by his presence. Involved in the thriving atmosphere that prevailed among the Tibetans, he realised that he had a mission on the plateau.

The idea that he had an endeavour to pursue in Tibet was almost coeval with his entrance on the plateau, his proposition to travel to his native land was postponed in favour of his Buddhist mission in the highlands. This was his primary concern in Tibet, the collateral goal was the Byams chen statue.

First steps in Tibet

In view of the forthcoming work on the statue, the route taken by Kha che paṇ chen and his retinue was the straightest to reach Khro phu. He first reached Gro mo and Phag ri. Both practitioners and non-

practitioners from Bod kyi Kha bzhi (i.e. lHo Kha bzhi, later known as Bhutan?) gathered at Phag ri to see him and to whom he gave religious instructions. After touching rGyang ro (*ibid*., p. 302,3-p. 304,2-3), he proceeded west across 'Bring mtshams and then north into Myang smad to reach Tshong dus 'gur mo (*ibid*., p. 303,6). The major trade mart of Myang smad, mGur mo was a great centre of the lCe clan since the reign of Khri srong lde btsan whose minister lCe lHa bzang grags pa built Tshong 'dus mgur mo'i lha khang.

Rab kha of Tshong 'dus mgur mo was the birth place of Lo ston rDo rje dbang phyug. Frequented from *phyi dar* onwards by important personalities such as A ti sha, it had passed in early 11th century under the dPyal who had come to control nearby sMan lung *dgon pa*. It was here, while support was coming from every side—many holy receptacles were brought from Gangetic India to be installed in the *chos khang* of Khro phu (*ibid*., p. 306,3)—that Kha che paṇ chen had a first, superficial meeting with the affiliates to the dPyal. Their member Chos kyi bzang po had been his principal Tibetan disciple in India where the dPyal *lo tsa ba* spent ten years and received the *dge tshul* vow from him (*Bu ston chos 'byung*, p. 205,1), but the Kashmiri master did not stay at sMan lung.

Kha che paṇ chen and dPyal lo tsa ba in the biographical material on the great paṇḍi ta

A caveat about the biographies of Kha che paṇ chen is that they reflect the perspective of Khro phu lo tsa ba about Kha che paṇ chen's deeds in Tibet and neglect that of dPyal Chos kyi bzang po. The dPyal documents, not monographically dedicated to Kha che paṇ chen, deny the statements of Khro phu lo tsa ba, since a different vision of events during the master's ten-year sojourn in Tibet is outlined.[5] But Chos [kyi] bzang [po]'s biography of the *paṇ chen* is unavailable.

The interaction on the highlands between Kha che paṇ chen and dPyal Chos bzang was consumed in five acts, four from the biographies of the master, one from a dPyal source:

— The postponement of a visit the Kashmiri *paṇḍi ta* paid to dPyal Chos bzang. Upon his arrival in Myang smad, at Tshong 'dus mgur mo, Kha che paṇ chen deferred to spend time with dPyal lo tsa ba promising to return the next year (*Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* p. 304,3-4). Busy as he was to move to Khro phu for

[5] See my "The Manjūśri mountain and the Buddha tree: a history of the dPyal clan (7th-14th century)" in Vitali 2024b.

the Byams chen project, priorities were evident and past interaction secondary to the purpose of the statue. It is not clear whether he went back to the dPyal clan's premises with punctuality.

— Return to Tshong 'dus mgur mo. Kha che paṇ chen kept his word, for he was back to Tshong 'dus mgur mo, held by the dPyal clan of his disciple Chos bzang, to impart *Chos spyod* (*Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar che mo*, p. 307,1-2), teachings on meaningful action—ethics as the basis of Buddhist behaviour—that were part of the instructions he gave to his Indian *paṇ chung* disciples who formed his retinue. He said they were indispensable to listening, teaching and meditating. He replicated these teachings on a wider scale at Glas mo che (*ibid*., p. 307,2)—aka lHas mo che—a site in the area of Chu mig ring mo, where he received patronage from many sides (*ibid*., p. 306,2-3).

— Postponement of translation work. Supposing that the account in consideration is reliable, another episode documents the little consideration that Kha che paṇ chen would have had for dPyal Chos bzang according to the version of his life not derived from the *rnam thar* by Chos [kyi] bzang [po]. While Kha che paṇ chen was in dBus and thus away from the dPyal clan's territory, Kha che paṇ chen disregarded the invitation of dPyal lo tsa ba to undertake the translation of Nā ro pa's commentary on Kye rdor (*Kha che paṇ chen gyi rnam thar*, p. 38,25-28), adducing that there was plenty of time to tackle it later on—the *paṇ chen* abruptly said: 'We will not be dead next year'.

— The translation of Nā ro pa's commentary on Kye rdor. It eventually happened but not at sMan lung, instead at Khro phu where dPyal Chos bzang proceeded for the work with the Kashmiri *paṇḍi ta*.[6] Was not Kha che paṇ chen able to leave Khro phu given his engagement in the making of the Byams pa statue and dGa' ldan pho brang? The all-important translation of *Nā ro Kye rdor 'grel chen* by the Kashmiri *paṇḍi ta* and the dPyal master had never been done in Tibet before.[7] Kha che paṇ chen gave dPyal Chos bzang *sByor ba yan lag drug*.[8]

— Thar pa gling. The name of this monastery built by dPyal Chos bzang at that time—a twin institution to sMan lung—was given

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[6] *Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* (p. 304,3-4): "A request was made which invited [Kha che paṇ chen] to sMan lung since he was similar to A rya Māi tri. It is said that he promised [to go there] the next year. Thereafter, bla ma Thar pa gling pa (i.e. dPyal lo tsa ba) went to Khro phu in person and the commentary to dpal Kye rdor, said to have been composed by Na ro pa, was translated by them together".

[7] *Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar*, p. 304,4-5.

[8] *Deb ther sngon po*, p. 933,6-8.

> by the *paṇ chen* who must have consecrated it, an omission that may depend on the pro-Khro phu lo tsa ba treatment of the latter master's biography.[9]

The *rnam thar* of Khro phu lo tsa ba treats dPyal Chos [kyi] bzang [po] in derisive terms as a person disinformed of the events despite wrongly thinking to be updated about them. It hints at a miser spirit proper of this master,[10] a sign in written form of the jealousy Khro phu lo tsa ba proved for him and the hostility in their relation. It was a grudge between disciples with the purpose to ingratiate the favour of the master. The interaction between Kha che paṇ chen and dPyal Chos bzang is reduced to a minimum in the non-dPyal pa biographies.

Earliest signs of Kha che paṇ chen's religious inclination on the plateau

A first phase of his interaction with local scholasticism was eclectic. It was not negative towards the bKa' brgyud pa especially in view of the Khro phu enterprise. He accepted gifts from the 'Bri gung pa; the Tshal pa monks rendered service to Kha che paṇ chen during the tenancy of Byang chub ye shes (1208-1210).[11] But a sign of difficult

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[9] See *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* and my "The Manjūśri mountain and the Buddha tree: a history of the dPyal clan (7th-14th century)" in Vitali 2024b.

[10] *Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* (p. 303,7-p. 304,2): "Bla ma dPyal lo Thar pa gling pa said: 'My bla ma Kha che bsod snyoms pa may not come to Tibet. Or else, were he coming to Tibet, it is obvious that he would have sent a message since no other than me is his [Tibetan] disciple. (p. 304) Something like a concrete sign bearing the excellent quality of a refined standard would come'. People said he uttered so. It is believed that he added: 'To realise whether it is true, some four monks will convey a message together with a robe'. To understand whether it was true, four monks conveyed a message together with [gifts] such as a robe and an image [with the purpose of] finding out [matters]. It is understood that they were not wealthy articles".
However, in my "The Manjūśri mountain and the Buddha tree: a history of the dPyal clan (7th-14th century)" (see Vitali 2024b), I refer to dPyal lo tsa ba's concept that, in the case he would have come to Tibet, Kha che paṇ chen would receive a donation of gold like Indian masters were traditionally given. Indians expected gold from their Tibetan disciples. A case of collection of gold to be brought to India is recorded in the literature about a mature gNyos lo tsa ba Yon tan grags and a young lHo brag Mar pa who got the precious metal from the great mine Gu lang gser kha (*Nyang ral chos 'byung*, p. 477,3; *Kha rag gNyos kyi gdung rabs*, f. 2b,2-3).
Kha che paṇ chen received a great number of donations during his ten years in Tibet. On the way to Kashmir, he was attacked by bandits but had no worldly possessions, so that the brigands did not harm him (*Khro phu lo tsa b'i rnam thar*, p. 340,2-3).

[11] Sørensen and Hazod 2007: 97; *Kha che paṇ chen gyi rnam thar*, p. 67.

relation was his refusal to stay at sMan lung, the monastery of his historical disciple dPyal Chos kyi bzang po.

A first scholastic engagement conditioned the activity of Kha che paṇ chen. Rather than to proceed immediately to Khro phu after postponing his stay at sMan lung, he had a sojourn at Chu mig ring mo, the great centre of *Vinaya* and a holy place of bKa' gdams pa inclination, founded by Glag Byang chub rgyal mtshan as the monastic division (*tsho*) of the Glag (*Bu ston chos 'byung*, p. 196,15-16; *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, p. 478,3-4). In the earlier *sNgon gyi gtam me tog phreng ba* (p. 40,14-15), Ne'u pandi ta says that Chu mig was ruled by Zhu ston gZhon nu brtson 'grus by establishing the Zhu *tsho*.

At Chu mig, a huge assembly of trained monks gathered to pay homage to Kha che paṇ chen (*ibid*., p. 37,7-12) including two *dge bshes* who requested him to teach *dBu m*a (*Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar*, p. 307,4), an indication that this holy place had already achieved a major status in gTsang. Chu mig stood in the direction of the Shab valley, west of sNar thang, where he did not stop despite being the foremost bKa' gdams *dgon pa* of the region.

Kha che paṇ chen said that books in the tradition of Kashmir (Kha che *lugs*) which received special honours and also devotional objects were carried from the eastern Gangetic plain as a consequence of his migration north, so that some of them remained for a while in dBus (*ibid*., p. 305,7-p. 306,2). As soon as *rGyal sras lam rim bsdus pa chung ngu* (a "small size *rGyal sras lam* rim in abridged version") arrived from the southern gate (of rDo rje gdan?), rGyang ro Sal mar dge bshes wrote on the text at rKyang po'i lha khang. Kha che paṇ chen said that it was to be expanded a little and, therefore, was made remarkably more extensive at Glas mo che (*ibid*., p. 306,7-p. 307,1; *Kha che paṇ chen gyi rnam thar*, p. 38,15).

Heritage of his past: 'Dul ba *and ancient Indian manuscripts*

Still in terms of priorities, the observance of *'Dul ba* that characterised his engagement was a foremost concern of his. The literature records his commitment in *dbyar gnas* practice during summers (see n. 3). He even performed two at Khro phu owing to his commitments, although this bKa' brgyud pa *dgon pa* did not specialise in the observance of *Vinaya*.

Since his stay at Chu mig and then at Khro phu, focused on *'Dul ba* observance, led him to answer to invitations he received from different territories of the plateau, inclusive of a donation by 'Jig rten mgon po who asked him to come to 'Bri gung but he did not go there (*Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar*, p. 304-5).

The intensity of his activity grew in that period.[12] Besides imparting *Sa sde* and *Tshad ma sde mdun* to his nine *paṇ chung*, he received an invitation to Drang srong Srin po ri (*ibid*., p. 307,4). In the long run, the invitation proved to be of factive importance in his approach towards different doctrinal positions in Tibet. However, before moving to gZad at the confluence of the sKyid chu and the gTsang po where Srin po ri was located,[13] Kha che paṇ chen was at mTshur phu and lHa sa, where he went in the presence of the two great Jo bo.[14]

At Srin po ri during one more *dbyar gnas*, he translated *mNgon pa kun las btus kyi rnam bshad* by slob dpon Ye shes bshes gnyen that was not available in Tibetan (*Kha che paṇ chen gyi rnam thar*, p. 39,15-23; *Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar*, p. 308,3-4).[15] He also gave teachings on *Byams pa'i chos lnga* and *dBu ma rigs pa*. Upon a personal request of the Srin po ri *gdan sa pa*, he gave him *Byams chos rnams kyi khrid skor, Rigs tshogs kyi khrid skor* and *sPyod phyogs kyi khrid skor* (*Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar*, p. 308,3-6).

Kha che paṇ chen performed a *rab gnas* at a temple of Srin po ri during which he had the visions of 'Jam dpal, Thugs rje chen po and Byams pa (*Kha che paṇ chen gyi rnam thar*, p. 39,24). The biography does not say what the consecration concerned, so whether it was a temple is not given to be known.

A new step in his stay in the highlands was that he proceeded to the heart of *bstan pa snga dar* Tibet, for he was invited to bSam yas by lha Zhi ba 'od who headed a *chos 'khor* in which the great *paṇḍi ta* participated in concomitance with the funerary rites of the eminent

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[12] *Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* (p. 307,2-7): "He gave many teachings to the group of *paṇ chung* such as the *Sa sde* and the *Tshad ma sde bdun*. During the *dbyar gnas* (of which year?) he incidentally preached the *ti ka* of *'Dul ba mDo sde* composed by slob dpon Shag kya 'od and *dGe slong gi Tshig* made into one chapter by 'Phags pa Sam gha lha. Having performed *dGag dbye* (the "ceremony to relinquish the summer retreat rules") since a request came from the *dge bshes* at Chu mig ring mo and many *gnas brtan*, he offered a religious ceremony to those two [named] Shakya while on the way from mTshur phu to sTod lungs (spelled so). The Tshal pa monks offered him a great service and, in stages, from sKyi shod down to Srin po ri he worked with people who had to be trained, which could not happen before. After he reached Srin po ri, many mTshur phu mDo' ba horsemen who had to accompany him asked for blessings and he took the way back [to mTshur phu]".

[13] Sørensen and Hazod 2007: 418.

[14] *Kha che paṇ chen gyi rnam thar* (p. 39,1-5): "From the interior of Zhu sNye mo he went on, and from mTshur phu across sTod lungs and from there he offered his worship to the two lHa Shākya,[…]. He gave great teachings at Srin po ri that had not taken place before".

[15] Additionally, *Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* (p. 309,4-5) says: "At that time, *chos rje paṇ chen* [and] the *lo tsa ba* went to Drang srong Srin po ri and preached the various *mDo'* of the *lung bstan* of chos rgyal Myang na med (spelled so). They translated long and short texts such as the commentary to *Chos mNgon pa kun las btus pa* and many *man ngag*".

woman ma gcig Yum bu.[16] He then was at mChims phu while at bSam yas he manifested a keen interest in its ancient Indian manuscripts, where he found a *gSang ba snying po* (*Deb ther sngon po*, p. 136,2-5).[17]

The twofold sense of Kha che paṇ chen's mission in the highlands

Next, an important phase in the mission of Kha che paṇ chen on the plateau was conditioned by the direction that local scholasticism led him to take. One specific doctrinal approach shaped his activity in Tibet. At the outset of this new phase in Tibet, Kha che paṇ chen's presence at Drang srong Srin po ri led his mission to take a distinctive orientation among the doctrinal systems popular on the plateau in those days. He showed a penchant for the bKa' gdams pa.

Having taken for himself the Buddhist mission to propagate further teachings on the plateau, the way Kha che paṇ chen handled his mission was to give priority to the purity of the vow, so that he realised that he had to walk in the footsteps of Jo bo rje A ti sha. His mission came to take inspiration from the 11th century work of the great Bengali master, who was a predecessor to him in establishing proper religious doctrine in Tibet, as is well known.

They both stayed on in Tibet for years leaving aside their plans—A ti sha had promised sGrol ma to go back to India, Kha che paṇ chen's ultimate aim was to work the last years of his life in his land—with the difference that Jo bo rje died in Tibet; Kha chen paṇ chen did not. The Kashmiri master took over the task of bringing Indian Buddhism

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[16] *Kha che paṇ chen gyi rnam thar* (p. 40,21-24) and *Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* (p. 312,7 - p. 313,1) read: "After electing his base at Srin po ri, many invitations [came] from the east, west, south and north [where] he gave various teachings, but I do not write about them. Also, at bSam yas, the lord of the *chos 'khor*, lha Zhi ba 'od, invited him to the funerary rites for the death of ma gcig Yum bu. After he consulted *bSam yas rnam thar*, he excellently wiped the deities and the [many] *lha khang*. Therefore, he gave an outstanding service".

[17] *Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* (p. 313,5): "A few days later, when the *chos rje* was invited to mChims phu above bSam yas, gNyal pa Zhang lo [tsa ba] organised a gathering of commoners. [Kha che paṇ chen] sat on a throne with a fabric cover and spoke a few words of religion".
Ibid., p. 314,1-2: "Later, there were rumours about circumstances whereby gNyal pa Zhang lo would have a short life. The *chos rje* said: 'Your retinue having investigated the amount of Indian manuscripts that are there, I ask to show them to me'. It happened likewise. He received the manuscripts of *gSang ba'i snying po* of *sNgags rnying ma*, its root text and two extensive commentaries in Indian language. Since he uttered that he had to learn from those of the rNying ma [tradition], gNyal pa Zhang lo provided him with two extensive commentaries". *Kha che paṇ chen gyi rnam thar* (p. 41,5-p. 42,1) says that he searched for ancient manuscripts at bSam yas and helped with Indian texts.

to Tibet once again over 150 years after his predecessor and other Indian masters during *bstan pa phyi dar smad lugs*.

Kha chen paṇ chen's mission had a dual value. He knew he could plant a seed of Indian Buddhism in the plateau like had happened during *bstan pa phyi dar* in a way similar to other masters of the Noble Land, who had contributed to a religious import to Tibet. The other motivation was that he felt the urgency of his mission given the conditions of Buddhism in India. Unlike the Indian masters who had given their share of teachings earlier, his insemination also was a means to preserve Indian Buddhism which was wiped out in his days by Muslim invaders in the Gangetic plain, destroying the universities and hindering seriously the lives of the practitioners of the Noble Religion.

Kha che paṇ chen's ideal association with A ti sha explains why the great *paṇḍi ta* mainly worked at bKa' gdams *dgon pa*-s, as his biographies tell.

Doctrinal divergences on the plateau and Kha che paṇ chen's religious consistency

Given the preeminence he received in Tibet, the master had to come to terms and overcome the jealousy/rivalry of exponents of different schools. Invitations flocked from all sides of the religious spectrum and he had to grace them irrespective of their provenance but with some distinctions.

A famous grudge erupted in front of him owing to the little consideration that bKa' gdams pa practitioners nurtured for bKa' brgyud pa exponents. These disagreements went back to earlier decades when Khams pa masters *in fieri* studied the bKa' gdams doctrines in the school's institutions but eventually went for a bKa' brgyud affiliation under Dwags po lHa rje sGam po pa (1079-1153).

This historical resentment is hardly mentioned in the sources but a sign of this disliking dates to as early as dpal chen rGa lo (b. before 1096-d. before 1184). The great maverick, whose training was not bKa' gdams pa but took place in Gangetic India, had to give proof of his spiritual achievement to convince bKa' gdams detractors, who did not have faith in him, of his spiritual attainments by means of his trademark miracle of levitating over water at Kyu ru g.Yu 'brang of dBu ru (*dPal gyi rnam thar*, p. 383,2-4). Incidentally, he also lifted his body on one thumb at gNam mtsho Se mo do (*Deb ther sngon po* p. 548,19). Those bKa' gdams practitioners saw him part of bKa' brgyud activities at large. dPal chen rGa lo had a close interaction with sGam po pa and was a teacher of Phag mo gru pa rDo rje rgyal po (1110-1170).

The dispute erupted in front of Kha che paṇ chen at Drang srong Srin po ri. The contention concerned the correct practice of *Phyag rgya chen po*. Delegations from Rin chen sgang and 'Bri gung who had come to invite him to their respective monasteries, met with a heated debate among the Kashmiri *paṇḍi ta*'s group of *paṇ chung*. Taking the side of the bKa' gdams pa, paṇ chung Bi bhu ti tsandra is attributed a scathing assertion that acknowledged the opulence of 'Bri gung but stressed their poor religious practice (*Kha che paṇ chen gyi rnam thar*, p. 42,12-17). That 'Bri gung was a wealthy *dgon pa* is out of question,[18] but his crude taking the side of A ti sha's school in rejecting the practice of 'Bri gung pa *Phyag rgya chen po* provoked the reaction of Kha chen paṇ chen, who reminded him of a correct Buddhist approach.[19]

This leads me to introduce my view of the controversy but, more significantly than its topical aspects, to focus on the ongoing stance of the Kashmiri *paṇ chen* in matters of religion. Whether paṇ chung Bi bhu ti tsandra's dismissive judgement of 'Bri gung pa practice should be considered an interpolation (Jackson 1990: 20, n. 10) is irrelevant in view of the doctrinal approach Kha che paṇ chen kept pursuing. His religious position continued unabated:

— He said that he had many bKa' gdams pa and gDan gcig pa exponents in his entourage (*Kha che paṇ chen gyi rnam thar*, p. 43,1-7), a clear enough sign where his leaning stood. This was the justification he adduced for not sharing time with the 'Bri gung pa (*Kha che paṇ chen gyi rnam thar*, p. 43,1-7).
— He showed impartiality in those circumstances since he refused both invitations. But eventually accepted the one of the Rin chen sgang pa to go to their monastery,[20] which was in the bKa'

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[18] See Vitali 2024a.

[19] *Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* (p. 315,6): "Bla ma Bi bhu ta tsan dra said: 'The 'Bri gung pa have many possessions but those *Phyag brgya chen po* practitioners of theirs are grossly false'. Kha che paṇ chen asked him do adopt a more Buddhist attitude. He uttered: 'Bud dha Bud dha'."
There was a follow-up to the *paṇ chung*'s rejection of the 'Bri gung pa. *Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* (p. 316,4-6) reads: "[Kha che paṇ chen] said: 'It is our intention to build a *lha khang* whatsoever'. At that time bla ma Bi bhu ta went to 'Bri gung and made a request to the *rin po che* in person (i.e. 'Jig rten mgon po) that he wished to remove defilements. Later, a *lha khang* was built at Srin po ri". Originally, Srin po ri was 'Bri gung pa but under the tenure of the anonymous *gdan sa pa*, a *lha khang* was built in its premises. This was the outcome of paṇ chung Bi bhu ti tsandra's atonement. Was the making of a *lha khang* at Srin po ri a sign of a change of religious affiliation?

[20] He said that while he circumambulated Di paṃ ka ra's *lha khang* at Rwa sgreng, the Rin chen sgang pa gave farewell gifts and earlier, when he was at bSam yas for the funeral rites of the bSam yas *btsan po*'s wife, he had a pleasant dream, at that time the Rin chen sgang pa had come to see him. He had further favourable

gdams orbit since its establishment in earth pig 1119 by gZhon nu 'byung gnas, a disciple of sNe'u zur pa. Around that time, he again refused the invitation to 'Bri gung.[21]

— Owing to his cultural provenance, facts prove that he favoured the bKa' gdams pa. In general, Kha che paṇ chen kept prioritising those bKa' gdams pa from then on, since he concentrated his presence mostly at monasteries associated with the school, but he did not drop his impartial approach, inclined to revere and consider various forms of the Tibetan religious system. Despite the doctrinal preclusion induced by the *paṇ chung* disciples,[22] he showed a remarkable openness to impart teachings upon practitioners of various schools, typical of a Buddhist master, including bKa' brgyud pa exponents (see n. 27).

Among all holy places in Tibet, Kha che paṇ chen's utmost concern was to see Di pa ṃ ka ra shri dznya na'i lha khang at Rwa sgreng. He went to the *dgon pa* founded by 'Brom ston to pay homage to the remains of Jo bo rje housed in that *lha khang* and express his reverence to the Bengali master (*Kha che paṇ chen gyi rnam thar*, p. 43,8-9), which confirms the devoutness that Kha che paṇ chen nurtured for Jo bo rje and the inspiration he derived from him.

Kha che paṇ chen's third calculation of the Buddhanirvāṇa

Kha che paṇ chen gyi rnam thar (p. 44,22-26) says that the Kashmiri master was at Pu gu do (see Sørensen and Hazod 2005: 316-17, fn 23). But he especially spent time at Sol nag Thang po che in lower 'Phyong po on several occasions (Sørensen and Hazod 2005). The predilection he had for Sol nag Thang po che made this monastery, associated with A ti sha's tradition as a major centre of the school born from him, a

signs. The invitation to rGya ma Rin chen sgang was extended twice. He thus accepted it (*Kha che paṇ chen gyi rnam thar*, p. 43,22-p. 44,19).

[21] Anyhow, he praised 'Jig rten mgon po, for he was the rebirth of 'Phags pa Klu sgrub but, being an Indian, he forgot to say that he also was a reincarnation of Ral pa can, the *btsan po* of the *chos rgyal mes dbon rnam gsum* who sacrificed his life for the sake of Buddhism ('Bri gung gling pa Shes rab 'byung gnas, *'Jig rten gsum gyi mgon po'i rnam thar*, p. 112,7-p. 113,3). Kha che paṇ chen ignored the 'Bri gung pa, despite his main interlocutor in view of making the Byams chen statue was Khro phu lo tsa ba, a master close to 'Jig rten mgon po.

[22] *Kha che paṇ chen gyi rnam thar* (p. 48,9-11) says: "On the way down [from Rwa sgreng], rje 'Bri gung pa made preparation for a great arrangement to welcome [Kha che paṇ chen]. He invited him to a [sit] on a throne and allowed bKa' gdams pa monks to see him many times". Once again, gDan gcig pa and bKa' gdams pa monks blocked him.

focal site of his activity like Khro phu and Srin po ri. Thang po che surged to new importance, this time secular, during the Yuan/Sa skya dominance,[23] since it was one of the Phag mo gru pa *stong skor*.

At Sol nag Thang po che, Kha chen paṇ chen issued the most famous and most conclusive of his three calculations of the year of the *Buddhanirvāṇa*.[24] He held that the *parinirvāṇa* occurred 1,750 years before fire hare 1207 when he calculated his *bstan rtsis* (*mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, p. 1238,2-6).[25] This comes to 544 before the Common Era. Kha che paṇ chen's 544 BCE falls within the paradigm of the Indian calculations of the *nirvāṇa*, while those Tibetan are remote. It is unexpected that the *paṇ chen*'s *bstan rtsis* is neglected in the biographies of the Kashmiri master.

Disciples: the paṇ chung *group and the Tibetans*

Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar records the names of the various *paṇ chung*, Kha che paṇ chen's Indian disciples who went to Tibet with him. They are reckoned as nine (*ibid*., p. 299,2-7):

Su ga ta shri, master of *dBu ma* and *Phar phyin*;
Dza ya dad ta, master of *sNgags* and *'Dul ba*;
Bi bhu ti tsan dra, master of *sGra* and *mNgon pa*;
Da na shi la, master of *Tshad ma rgyan* and *Chos mchog*;
Sam gha shri, master of *sGra Tshan dra ba and mNgon pa mdzod*;
Su ma ti sā ga ra, master of *mNgon pa gong 'og*;
Kā la tsa kri, master of *Dus 'khor*;
Dzi na gup ta, master of *Byams chos*; and
Ma hā bo dhi ya, master *of Phar phyin* and *sPyod phyogs*.

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[23] In the neighbourhood of Thang po che, g.Ya bzang Chos kyi smon lam aka gNubs 'Dul 'dzin (1169-1233) founded g.Ya bzang *dgon pa* and the bKa' brgyud pa school of the same name in 1206 (Tsering Gyalpo, Hazod and Sørensen 2000), which took place during the ten-year stay of Kha che paṇ chen in Tibet. It is conspicuous that the Kashmiri *paṇḍi ta*, who was at Sol nag Thang po che in 1207 for the calculation of the *parinirvāṇa*, did not visit the new institution. This is another sign that he had a propensity to neglect the bKa' brgyud establishments.

[24] Paṇ chung Da na shi la translated *Nispannayogāvalī* under the supervision of Kha che paṇ chen at Sol nag Thang po che perhaps in 1207 when the Kashmiri *pan chen* issued his calculation of the *Buddhanirvāṇa*.

[25] Zhang zhung dPal 'byor bzang po, *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i yid 'phrog* (p. 241,6-9) records that, according to the reckoning of Kha che paṇ chen, Shakya Thub pa was born in a fire bird year and died in a fire snake year, 2,073 years elapsed from the *nirvāṇa* to iron tiger 1530 which comes to 544 BCE. The calculation dPal 'byor bzang po cites is not linked to 1207 when the Kashmiri master was at Sol nag Thang po che and issued this reckoning but 544 BCE stands as the definitive of his three calculations of the *Buddhanirvāṇa*. Also see Vitali 2012: 73-74.

Cited in the biography (*Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar*, e.g. p. 287,3-4) and *Deb ther sngon po* (p. 1243,9-13), Dza ya shri, a fellow Kashmiri, ideally was a tenth *paṇ chung*. He had no minor importance, for he advised Kha che paṇ chen on various occasions. For instance, he convinced him to take the road across the Tibetan plateau to reach Kashmir.

On the highlands, Kha che paṇ chen adopted a similar teaching method he had used for his *paṇ chung* group of followers.[26] He chose instructions for his Tibetan disciples on the basis of their past experiences and religious inclinations.[27]

— He gave Sa paṇ quite a few *man ngag*—*Dus 'khor*, *'Dul b*a, *sGra*, *sNyan ngag*, *Tshad ma* and *mNgon pa*—at Sa skya, besides working at translations together (*Kha che paṇ chen gyi rnam thar*, p. 46,10-14). Sa paṇ acted as *lo tsa ba* and they undertook a new translation of *Tshad ma rnam 'grel* and other works.
— At that time, as is well known, he imparted him the vows. Sa paṇ (b. 1182) was a *dge gnyen* until twenty-seven when he received the *rab tu byung* and *bsnyen rdzogs* from Kha che paṇ chen in 1208 and the name Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (*Nyi lde ba'i gdung rabs*, p. 116,1-3).[28] The interaction between the two is

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[26] *Myang chos 'byung* (p. 40,1-4): "[note: "As for the profound teachings of Kha che paṇ chen, the attainment of excellence is based on bDe mchog dkar po, the attainment of wisdom is based on 'Jam dbyangs dkar po, the ability to be a *ras* [*pa*] is based on Yang dag ma gcig lha gcig and the attainment of wealth is based on Dzam bha la nag po"]".

[27] His concern for masters who came to ask for teachings and other contributions, besides the four mentioned in the next lines of my text, is recorded in *Deb ther sngon po*.
Among the bKa' gdams pa, he had Seng ge zil gnon, Shangs pa Jo stan (*ibid*., p. 112,1-4) and Se sPyil bu pa (*ibid*., p. 338,19) for disciples.
Kha chen paṇ chen taught *Byams chos lnga* at Srin po ri (*ibid*., p. 424,18-19). He chose Sa paṇ as next lineage holder of *Tshad ma rnam 'grel* (*ibid*., p. 421,9).
Several bKa' brgyud pa including a 'Bri gung pa—dpal chen Chos yes (*ibid*., p. 710,13-14)—were his followers: Gangs pa Rin chen 'od zer, disciple of Dus mkhyen (*ibid*., p. 614,11-12) and gZi brjid Rin chen (*ibid*., p. 715,1-3).
Major personalities interacted with him. Chag dGra bcom pa and dPyal lo tsa ba (*ibid*., p. 532,10-11) were his disciples (*ibid*., p. 1228,1-5).
Zhang lo tsa ba received the vows from him; Rong pa rGa lo rNam rgyal rdo rje (1203-1282) met him in his childhood (*ibid*., p. 925,10-12). The Kashmiri master issued a prophecy in Sanskrit about the child's forthcoming greatness ('Khon ston dPal 'byor lhun grub's *gShin rje'i gshed chos 'byung* p. 64,1-3).

[28] Still in the realm of vow bestowal, *Kha che pan chen gyi rnam thar* (p. 46,18-20) records that the Gung thang king mGon po dpal (i.e. mGon po lde) became disillusioned with fighting and took the *rab tu byung* vow in front of Kha che paṇ chen and Khro phu lo tsa ba in water monkey 1212.

confirmed in that year since the *paṇ chen* sojourned in the lands south of the Brahmaputra,[29] that culminated with the 1207 calculation of the *parinirvāṇa*.

— He imparted oral instructions to Khro phu lo tsa ba Byams pa'i dpal while both engaged in the making of dGa' ldan *gtsug lag khang*, Byams pa *pho brang* and the Byams chen statue.

— Perhaps aware of their past interaction in India, he bestowed Tantric teachings to dPyal lo tsa ba Chos [kyi] bzang [po] that culminated in a translation of *Nā ro Kye rdor 'grel chen*, accomplished together.

— He assigned to gTsang so ba Tshul khrims mdzes the upkeep of a pure monastic observance that eventually gave course to the creation of the four Tshogs pa *dgon pa*. gTsang so ba Tshul khrims mdzes, the principal *'Dul ba* disciple of Kha chen paṇ chen in Tibet, took responsibility of the Tshogs pa communities after the departure of the *paṇ chen* (*Blue Annals*, p. 727).[30]

He should not be confused with gTsang so ba aka gTsang pa bKra shis, a disciple of Dus gsum mkhyen pa, sent to Byang Mi nyag by the first Karma pa soon after earth bird 1189. He remained in Byang Mi

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A correct sequence of these events must be reconstructed. The defeat he suffered by Ya rtse troops and his assassination at the rDzong dkar castle show that mGon po lde must have become a monk before being attacked and killed in his territory. This interpretation is confirmed by the tentative date of the first Gung thang-Ya rtse war marked by his reverse, which took place between 1235 and 1239 (Vitali 1996: n.748), way after Kha che paṇ chen's death in 1225 following his return to Kashmir. *Gung thang gdung rabs* (lHa sa ed., p. 93,11-14) reads: "During the life of this king (mGon po lde), sPang zhod Chos grags brought Mon troops from the land of Ye tsho (i.e. Ya rtse). As they fought, [mGon po lde] could not defeat them. The *mnga' bdag* (i.e. mGon po lde) fled towards sKyid grong but was captured at the border and executed in the open space in front of the castle of the Khab [pa] (i.e. the Gung thang king in rDzong dkar)".

[29] *bsTan rtsis gsal ba'i nyin byed* (p. 157,8-9), followed in this by van der Kuijp (1994: 612b), says that the bestowal of the vows to Sa paṇ occurred at rGyang gong.

[30] *Yar lung Jo bo chos 'byung* (p. 179,15-p. 180,8): "When the *pan chen* went to dBus, at Chu shul Krog ma (aka sBrog ma) dgon pa, among eleven individuals who attended upon him there were mkhan po rDo rje dpal and Byang chub dpal, two in all, (p. 180) who requested [Kha che paṇ chen] to accompany him as assistants. At Zhul phu, having asked to wear the robe, he said: 'May you listen to *'Dul ba*!'. They went to Zhul phu to learn *'Dul ba*. The *pan chen*'s *bla mchod* (i.e. his resident monk whom he considered to be a major presence for him in Tibet) Jo dan gTsang po ba (i.e. gTsang so ba) was there and later stayed on. When the *pan chen* went to rGya gar (actually to Kha che), the disciple requested him to be his assistant but [the *pan chen* said that gTsang so ba] would not stand the heat of rGya gar. [Kha che paṇ chen] imparted *'Dul ba* to Jo dan gTsang po ba who was in attendance. [gTsang so ba] spoke [*'Dul ba*] to each one of the four communities indifferently. This is how he did. After the passing of gTsang po ba, students took charge of [the schools] individually and [therefore] the four Jo dan communities were born".

nyag until his death in earth tiger 1218 (*lHo rong chos 'byung*, p. 273,9). Hence, he was far from Tibet in the Tangut kingdom for all the years Kha che paṇ chen was on the plateau and did not meet him.

Kha che paṇ chen in the lands first in the south and then in the north

After one of his visits at Pu gu do and Sol nag Thang po che in Yar lung, the great master extended the radius of his mission to benefit sentient beings. He was in lHo brag, gNyal and Lo ro—a centre of teachings since *phyi dar*—up to rTse dkar (*Kha che paṇ chen gyi rnam thar*, p. 44,20-22), where gifts to support the making of the Byams chen statue were given in abundance.

These territories in the south were still under the Phag mo gru pa before they were curtailed from their dominions by the g.Ya bzang pa and the people of gNyal and E yul, as lamented by the *ta'i si tu* in his *bKa' chems*.

A new phase of his quest in the opposite direction led him first towards 'Bring mtshams, then to *dgon pa*-s in gTsang also across the gTsang po. In gTsang he had his productive time at Sa skya but also stayed at Grom pa rGyang, a stronghold of the latter school since the meeting of 'Brog mi lo tsa ba with Ga ya dha ra (*gTsang stod rgyl po'i rnam thar dang rgyal rabs*, p. 122,6-8). This is perhaps when Kha che paṇ chen gave the vows to Sa paṇ and worked at translations together. His relentless mission brought him to Shangs, 'U yug, rTsang rid, Nya ri that engendered the bestowal of massive donations.[31]

[31] *Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* (p. 325,1-3): "He then went to gTsang and proceeded to 'Bring mtshams, Grom pa and Sa skya in the south as well as Shangs, 'U yug, rTsang rid, Nya ri in the north. [Gifts] increased in volume. After that of a *Yum*; gold, turquoise, copper, armours, [several] *mdzo*, horses, fine silk, woollen cloths and needle works [were given] that mind cannot even imagine".
Sørensen and Hazod (2005: 29) hold it that in 1211 he was at in Yar lung Pu gu do, Thang po che and neighbouring bKa' gdams sites in gNyal, rGya ma etc. This must have been a novel travel south after he was at localities north of the Brahmaputra that led Kha che paṇ chen to stay in Shangs, 'U yug, rTsang rid and Nya ri. Therefore, he was in lHo brag, gNyal and Lo ro, all happening in 1211, while activities carried on at Khro phu that culminated the next year in the consecration of the Byams chen statue. During the same period spent north of the Brahmaputra, Phyug po 'Bum grags invited him to Shangs Lu gu gdong where he stayed for a long time (*Kha che pan chen gyi rnam thar*, p. 46,15-20). He made rain fall there, which led to apologies of the *klu* (*ibid*., p. 47,8-10).

The Byams chen complex

After the summer of 1206, Khro phu went through constructional advancements to dGa' ldan *gtsug lag khang* that had to house the Byams chen statue in Byams pa *pho brang*. The architect was *zhing bzo ba dpon* Seng ge grags (*Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* p. 330,4-6).[32] Several people who were outsiders to Khro phu contributed to its manufacture. To proceed with work, wood was advised to be fetched from Mon yul, as commonly done. Surprisingly, wood was given by ma gcig Blon rgyan from La stod sTag sde,[33] an area rather desertic with an oasis. It must have had a zone forested enough in those days to provide wood for the Khro phu temple.

The supply of wood must have initiated the second building phase of the *gtsug lag khang*; the first implied the foundation and the erection of the walls that was going to be completed while wood was supplied. Wood work was a crucial phase in the Tibetan architectural tradition since it defined the structural shape of the temple.

Additional unidentified support was provided by a monk, 'A zha Jo sras from Yar lungs 'Phyos,[34] a nobleman of the tribe which played an important role in the history of Tibet especially during the imperial period.

In the course of the work, difficulties were encountered that led detractors to affirm that the project would never be as planned (*Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* p. 325,4-5), another sign that all relations during those years were not always smooth.

A next phase, probably preceded by unidentified others, concerned the collection of more wood for the windows, accomplished by 'Phyos kyi mNgon dga',[35] another individual from the same locality of the 'A zha monk. The wood must have been different from the one used for

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[32] A *zhing bzo ba dpon* [*mo che*] is the architect of a building (personal communication with Josayma Tashi Tsering).

[33] *Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* (p. 308,7-p. 309,2): "At that time, at Shab smad Khro phu *pho brang* in the land of gTsang, the great dGa' ldan (p. 309) *gtsug lag khang* was been built and the preliminaries were made such as the wood had to be brought from lHo Mon yul (i.e. lHo Kha bzhi?) which was [already] there. At that time, La stod sTag sde's ma gcig Blon rgyan, reputed to be a *mkha' 'gro ma*, together with her retinue rendered service such as that she brought the wood for the *pho brang* after felling it". *Ibid*., p. 312,5: "After the wood was transferred [to Khro phu], various *man ngag* for the prosperity of the Noble Religion, concerning dGa' ldan [*gtsug lag khang*], came in succession to his (Khro phu lo tsa ba's) own locality".

[34] *Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* (p. 309,2-3): "[Still] at that time, one monk, 'A zha Jo sras from Yar lungs 'Phyos, rendered service such as he helped [in the work] of the *lha khang*".

[35] *Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* (p. 312,6): "'Phyos kyi Ngon (spelled so for mNgon) dga' fetched the material for the windows and also made receptacles of body, speech and mind for the *pho brang*".

the structural parts of the *gtsug lag khang*. Taking an active part in the construction of Byams chen *pho brang*, 'Phyos kyi mNgon dga' provided support to bring to completion the palace that was meant to house the Byams chen statue. He also took charge of the creation of religious receptacles.[36]

Eventually, with care and participation from every side,[37] Kha che paṇ chen performed the consecration of the Byams chen statue from the eighth of *bre zla ba* of water male monkey 1212 (*Kha che paṇ chen gyi rnam thar*, p. 47,21-22). It was concluded on the thirteenth of the same month (*ibid*., p. 48,18). As a final act, he managed to bring a conspicuous number of texts to Khro phu (*Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar*, p. 327,6-7), the collection of books being a primary concern of the *paṇ chen* in the course of his years in Tibet.

Pu hrang: the last step of Kha che paṇ chen's mission

His departure to Kashmir just after the completion of the work on the statue could convey that Byams chen was his primary pursuit that kept him so long on the plateau.[38] But the teachings he gave in Pu hrang show that he was still moved by the mission to diffuse Indian Buddhism in a land different from dBus gTsang.

The two years he spent in mNga' ris stod—an obvious step on the way to Kashmir—that echoed A ti sha's three years sojourn at the

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[36] *Khro phu lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* (p. 312,6): "dGe bshes Ngon (spelled so) dga' from 'Phyos, who had received implements of brGya byin, made receptacles of body, speech and mind as well as the *pho brang*".

[37] *Kha che paṇ chen gyi rnam thar* (p. 45,14-29) records the circumstances that marked the *rab gnas* of the colossal statue. The Kashmiri *paṇḍi ta* performed the consecration of the Byams chen among extraordinary phenomena such as music, scent of incense, rain of flowers, luminosity etc., the customary wonders that accompany special events. People from g.Yo gang bar, gNyal, Lo ro, lHo brag, g.Yo and dBu ru came for the occasion. Also, from Yar 'brog people came negotiating the ascent of the difficult pass gTam shul gyi lha chen po. They contributed to the Byams chen of dGa' ldan. From lHo brag, too, people came traveling passes on the way. They brought requisites for the consecration. People from 'Bring mtshams, Grom pa and Sa skya in the south and Shangs, 'U yug and gTsang Srid nya ri in the north provided gold, turquoise, copper, armours, several *mdzo*, horses, fine silk, woollen cloth.

[38] Prayers asking him to remain in Tibet were disattended by him who said that a great task was expecting him in Kashmir (*Kha che pan chen gyi rnam thar*, p. 48,19-22). Khro phu lo accompanied him from Gung thang up to Glo bo. Kha che paṇ chen told his Khro phu disciple to turn back. The *pan chen* gave him gold and other precious metals. This was a wise decision so that he avoided being harassed and looted by bandits on the way to Kashmir (*ibid*., p. 49,13-25). Noteworthy is that there are no details of Kha che paṇ che's long sojourn in Pu hrang as the *bla ma* of sTag tsha Khri 'bar in *Kha che paṇ chen gyi rnam thar*.

court of Byang chub ʼod from 1042 to 1044/1045 was Kha che paṇ chen's final exertion on the plateau in the footsteps of Jo bo rje. The *paṇ chen* was in Pu hrang rather than Gu ge where Jo bo rje mainly resided, although the supreme Bengali master was active in the former region, too.

Pu hrang experienced a religious resurgence in those years owing to the local *jo bo*, sTag tsha Khri ʼbar, who had opened his land to a fertile Buddhist season, known for having received the ʼBri gung pa expeditions in 1191 and 1208.

The Pu hrang mission of Kha che paṇ chen led to crucial developments in Upper West Tibet. ʼJig rten mgon po's previous expeditions of the ʼBri gung pa *ri pa*-s failed to establish a steady religious connection locally. Especially the ʼBri gung pa expedition of 1208—thus during Kha che paṇ chen's years in Central Tibet—was unsuccessful to set stable relations with the Upper West Tibetan's potentates. This happened after Kha chen paṇ chen's sojourn of 1212-1213 as the *mchod gnas* of sTag tsha Khri ʼbar. In the aftermath of his religious work in Pu hrang, the ʼBri gung pa established a continuative presence in sTod.

With his preaching, Kha che paṇ chen created the conditions that led sTag tsha Khri ʼbar and his sons to accept a religious presence on a stable basis provided by the ʼBri gung pa hermits in his land and eventually in Gu ge, too. The religious mark he left on sTag tsha Khri ʼbar was conducive to a prolonged phase of religious fertility in Pu hrang for the Noble Religion. This was one more, strong association of Kha che paṇ chen's mission with the work of Jo bo rje in the regions of Upper West Tibet.

Kha che paṇ chen's remains brought to Tibet after cremation

Remains of Kha che paṇ chen, whose rebirth was Chos sku ʼod zer (*Myang chos ʼbyung*, p. 70,15), were brought by two *paṇ chung* to Tibet and given to Khro phu lo tsa ba. *Myang chos ʼbyung* says that the *lo tsa ba* brought some of them to Myang stod Nyan tsho. As in several cases of remains, they multiplied with the passing of time.[39]

[39] *Myang chos ʼbyung* (p. 19,15-19): "During Khro lo Byams pa dpal's stay at Myang stod Nyan tsho for some months, as established personally by Kha che paṇ chen, two *pan chung* brought from rGya gar and Kha che to Tibet all remains of his head and three [additional] relics. They multiplied into thirty-three relics that the *lo tsa ba* installed with his hands in Myang stod Nyan tsho, which was a most distinguished accomplishment".

A *mchod rten* was made with Kha che paṇ chen's solid remains at Rwa lung.[40]

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[40] *Myang chos 'byung* (p. 20,14-16): "A *mchod rten* is placed in the rDo rje rnal 'byor ma temple [of Rwa lung] that came from paṇ chen Shākya shri's solidified remains".

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