

## MISCELLANEA TO A RECENT CONTRIBUTION ON/TO THE BSAM-YAS DEBATE\*

Leonard W.J. van der Kuijp  
*Department of Indology*  
*Hamburg University*

A volume on the eighth-century disputes among the Indian, Tibetan, and Chinese Buddhists in Tibet is an ambitious undertaking for any Tibetanist. The present work on this subject by G.W. Houston, to which I shall devote a few remarks, was originally submitted as a Ph.D. dissertation, and was completed in Kokomo, Indiana, U.S.A., in October of 1978.<sup>1</sup> The two main Western sources on these disputes, by the late P. Démieville and G. Tucci in particular, are well-known, and Houston places his monograph on an equal footing with these: "The three works form a triad". (p. 1). But he adds the proviso that his "work is perhaps more limited in nature than these other two works". (p. 1). Since Houston's sources are exclusively Tibetan, it is only natural that he derives his interpretations of several difficult passages from Tucci. The latter has principally analyzed the Tibetan dossier on the rather opaque course of events that led to the disputes and their aftermath. Houston suggests that: "Demiéville presents evidence and texts concerning the *Bsam-yas* debate from the Chinese perspective". (p. 1). This is not precise. Demiéville's work is entitled *La Concile de Lhasa* (Paris, 1952), meaning that,

1. See G.W. Houston, *Sources for a History of the bSam-yas Debate*, Monumenta Tibetica Historica, Abteilung I, Band 2, Sankt Augustin: VGH Wissenschaftsverlag, 1980. Only one brief review of Houston's book has come to my attention; R. Thurman (1981: 107-109) which, while noting some "flaws", concludes with the statement that it is a "welcome addition to Bsam-yas debate studies".

at least at the time of his writing, Demiéville was of the opinion that the disputes took place in Lhasa and not Bsam-yas. This position was, however, rendered untenable by Tucci (1958: 32 ff.). Among other recent sources on/to the Bsam-yas debate-- again, in Western languages -- there is the important article by Imaeda (1975), whose findings were partly corrected by Kimura (1981). Despite these corrections, Imaeda's thesis still stands unscathed, namely, that the Bsam-yas debate may have never taken place at all and that, by implication, the later Tibetan historians were unwitting victims of a corrupt tradition.<sup>2</sup> Houston mentions Imaeda's paper in passing, and regrettably fails to take issue with its findings. He is convinced that: "...there was a debate of some sort that was a historical event". (p. 9), the reason being that: "It is recorded in too many native sources not to have actually occurred". (p. 9). A careful sifting and analysis of all the available sources -- and not only the Tibetan ones -- must surely be a prerequisite for the type of conclusion Houston has arrived at. The present volume does not bear witness that he has done so. It may very well be that his deduction was shaped by his view of Tibetan historiography. Houston suggests namely that the Bsam-yas debate was: "... recorded in the memories of the particular Tibetan historians". (p. 1). Had he only analysed his sources, he would have been able to quickly point out their obvious interdependence. Some four-fifths of the account in the *PT*, for instance, is based on quotations from different versions of the *Sba-bzhed*, possibly the *Dgongs-pa*

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2. It should also be pointed out that Bsod-nams rtse-mo's (1142-1182) *Chos-la 'jug-pa'i-sgo*, *SSBBZ*, p. 343/1/2-3/2, which deals with the early, pre-Glang-dar-ma history of Buddhism in Tibet, is silent on this debate. Vostrikov (1970: 140) has perceptively noted that this passage as well as the passages on pp. 342/3/1-343/1/2 and pp. 343/3/2-344/2/6 may be considered as forerunners of the later histories of Buddhism.

*rab-gsal*, and *Bu-ston*.<sup>3</sup> The *Sba-bzhed* is undoubtedly one of the oldest sources for this period of Tibetan history; unfortunately, it has been considerably tampered with over time, making it quite difficult, if not impossible, to determine what it may have originally looked like.<sup>4</sup> The *Dgongs-pa rab-gsal* and *Bu-ston* are probably in large measure indebted to this work for their accounts of the disputes.

In any event, the most fundamental tools for anyone who wants to do history are written documents. However, these are not objective facts. They have their own history, meaning that they were written for a specific purpose which, more often than not, is far from transparent to their subsequent users. To

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3. The structure of the *PT* is as follows:

- (a) A programmatic preamble and summary in verse and prose: fols. 113a/4-114a/2.
- (b) Quotation from the *Rba-bzhed*: fols. 114a/2-119b/5.
- (c) Quotation from *Bu-ston*: fol. 119/5 = *Bu-ston* p. 890/6.
- (d) Brief discussion on the nature of Buddhism: fols. 119b/5-120a/5.
- (e) Different versions of the *Rba-bzhed* cited and put into the context of b.; these include passages that are also found in the *Dgongs-pa rab-gsal* (see *Appendix*): fol. 120a/5-120b/7.
- (f) Discussion as to which position is ultimately correct: fols. 120b/7-122b/1.
- (g) Quotation from the *Rba-bzhed* on the aftermath of the debate: fol. 122b/1-7.

A study of especially sections d-f should include a comparison with the observations made by his teacher, the eighth Rgyal-dbang Karma-pa Mi-bskyod rdo-rje (1507-1554) in his *Ho-shang dang 'dres-pa'i don-'jug-gtsugs-su bstan-pa* contained in the *Rnal-'byor rgyud-kyi rnam-bshad sogs*, Vol 3, Thimphu, 1979, pp.419-436.

4. See *Appendix*.

determine this purpose, or at least to make an attempt at this, is by no means an easy undertaking and requires, among a host of other things, a great deal of textual criticism. The uncovering of implicit cross-references, wholly identical or wholly different readings when compared with cognate documents, obvious interpolations or deletions -- all of these may render it possible to come closer to the historical event in question. Particularly in Tibet, however, one cannot discount the high probability of certain oral traditions as sources for historical statements. And this makes everything hopelessly complicated, since these are, to be sure, of a private nature. It is thus hardly conceivable that Bu-ston Rin-chep-grub (1290-1364) or Dpa'-bo gtsug-lag rin-chen phreng-ba (1504-1566) remembered what had transpired in Tibet during the second half of the eighth century, as Houston would have one believe. They used written sources, probably some oral traditions, and added a modicum of their own sensibility to what they wrote.

Houston's volume can be divided into two main sections. The first of these is a brief introduction (pp. 1-13), and the second consists of editions and translations of, and annotations to, passages from the following Tibetan texts:

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| 1. | <i>Mkhas-pa'i dga'-ston</i> (hereafter <i>PT</i> )       | pp. 14-56 |
| 2. | <i>Sba-bzhed</i> (hereafter <i>BZ</i> )                  | 57-87     |
| 3. | <i>Bu-ston chos-'byung</i> (hereafter <i>Bu-ston</i> )   | 88-98     |
| 4. | <i>Deb-ther dmar-po gsar-ma</i>                          | 99-100    |
| 5. | <i>Bod-kyi deb-ther dpyid-kyi rgyal-mo'i glu-dbyangs</i> | 101-103   |
| 6. | <i>Rgyal-rabs gsal-ba'i me-long</i>                      | 104-109   |

In addition, it contains a list of bibliographical abbreviations (pp. ix-x) and a bibliography and indices (pp. 110-122).

Given the extremely high costs for printing anything these days, one must question why no. 6 was included in this volume,

since Houston had already published an article on the relevant passage from this book (see his "The Bsam-yas Debate: According to the *Rgyal-rabs gsal-ba'i me-long*", *Central Asiatic Journal* 14 (1974), 209-216). Presumably, the reason for its inclusion was to bring all the sources together in one volume, since Houston implies that his monograph is a "source book" (pp. 1 and 10) in that it: "presents all the major texts that treat a particular problem in (sic !) critical edition and translation with clarifying notes". (p. 1).

Now, as for the corpus of literature devoted to the Bsam-yas debate that Houston has made use of -- and throughout I shall proceed under the supposition that something of a debate or a series of debates did in fact take place -- it is clear that he has only utilized the most obvious sources, and some of these are barely relevant. Those listed under nos. 4 and 5 are quite insignificant in themselves and deserve little more than a footnote or two. No. 3 has already been translated by Obermiller, but Houston: "... decided to render it anew with some corrections". (p. 3). Although the translation of Obermiller is not without its problems, it still is by far preferable over the 'corrected' version of Houston; however, once again, the relevant passage could very easily have been treated in the form of some brief footnotes. Nos. 1 and 2 have to some extent been analysed by Tucci (1958: 8 ff.), but a great deal more work needs to be done, particularly in respect to philological analyses. However, it is useful to have their Tibetan texts in one single volume, provided that these are correctly edited and properly transcribed. As shall be shown, this is not the case.

Some of the sources which Houston might have used, and which have been around for a fairly long time, would be the following:

1. Gnubs Sangs-rgyas ye-shes (772-?)  
*Sgom-gyi-gnad gsal-bar phye-ba bsam-gtan mig-sgron*, Leh:  
 Smarntsis Shesrig Spendzod, Vol. 74, pp. 65-186.<sup>5</sup>
  2. Sa-skyā Paṇḍita Kun-dga' rgyal-mtshan (1182-1251)
    - a. *Sdom-gsum rab-tu dbye-ba* p. 309/2/5-3/5
    - b. *Dgongs-pa rab-gsal*<sup>6</sup> pp. 24/4/5-25/4/2
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5. The passages of the *Bka'-thang sde-lnga* cited in Tucci (1958: 68-81) have their parallels in this text, which can only mean one of two things. Either both derive their information from a common source, or one has borrowed from the other. In view of the relative brevity of the passages in the *Bka'-thang sde-lnga*, I would be tentatively inclined to hold that the latter is based on Gnubs' text. The dates for Gnubs are problematic; the *Introduction* to the text gives 772 as his year of birth on the basis of the notice given in Bdud-'joms Rin-po-che's *History of the Rnying-ma-pa School*. Karmay (1980: 24, note 93) is inclined to place his floruit around the turn of the tenth century.
  6. This passage has been translated with a commentary by Jackson (1982: 89-99). Although the translation is on the whole satisfactory -- '*Ba'-bzhed*, occurring on p. 25/4/2 of the text, has been overlooked -- some of his statements in the commentary need to be somewhat corrected. In the first place, the *Dgongs-pa rab-gsal* is not "possibly the oldest Tibetan history of Buddhism" (p. 93). Rather, it is a work on Buddhist *Mahāyāna* theory and practice which, in its own words (p. 1/4/2-4), takes the *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra* as its foundation, and explicates the stages on the Bodhisattva path (p. 50/1/5). The passage in question occurs in the context of Sa-skyā Paṇḍita's explication of discriminative awareness (*shes-rab, prajñā*), the sixth *pāramitā*. Furthermore, Jackson concludes on p. 94 that "...it is safest to assume that the speech attributed to Kamalāśīla by Sa-skyā Paṇḍita reflects more closely what a Buddhist logician (like Śa-skyā Paṇḍita; Lvdk) would like the *ācārya* to have said than what he actually said". This conclusion is difficult to maintain in the light of two facts. Firstly, the speech is also found in the recently published manuscript of the *Sba-bzhed* -- see Mgon-po rgyal-mtshan (1980: 72-75) -- and, on the basis of the observations made in the *Appendix* to this paper, it is *unlikely* that Sa-skyā Paṇḍita had simply made this up. The same holds also for Jackson's assertion on p. 98 that, while Houston failed to mention this, the *Dgongs-pa rab-gsal* is cited in the *PT*. This cannot be conclusively proven or dis-

- c. *Skyes-bu dam-pa* pp. 331/4/6-332/1/5  
 d. *Glo-bo* p. 414/3/5-6
3. *Go-rams-pa Bsod-nams seng-ge* (1429-1489)  
*Go-rams-pa*<sup>7</sup> pp. 171/2/1-173/4/6
4. *Rig-'dzin Tshe-dbang nor-bu* (1698-1755)  
*Rgya-nag hwa-shang-gi 'byung-tshul*<sup>8</sup>
5. *Ldan-ma Blo-bzang rdo-rje* (20th cent.)  
*Skyabs-rje pha-bong-kha-pa chab-mdor bzhugs-skabs snyansgron-du*  
*gsol-zer-ba'i yig-rdzus-kyi dpyad-don mehan-bus bkrol-ba dpyod-ldan*  
*bzhin-'dzum dgos-pa'i tha-skad rnga-chen bskul-ba'i dbyu-gu, in*  
*Three Texts Reflecting the Views of Pha-bong-kha-pa Bde-chen snying-po*

proven, but there is strong evidence that the citations of the *PT* and the *Spos-khang-pa* p. 295/1-3 are based on manuscript traditions of the *Sba-bzhed* that have not yet come to light. Secondly, Kamalaśīla was indeed one of the finest post-Dharmakīrti Buddhist logicians as is evinced by his *pañjikā* to Sāntirakṣita's *Tattvasaṅgraha* and his *Madhyamakāloka*. Moreover, although Jackson suggests on p. 98, note 10, that he was unable to locate the expression *dkar-po cig* (var.: *geig*) *thub-pa* in the collected works of Zhang G. yu-brag-pa Brtson-'grus grags-pa (1123-1193), it can be found mentioned in the chapter on commitment (*dam-tshig, samaya*) of his provocative *Phyag-rgya chen-po'i lam-mchog mthar-thug*, contained in the *Gdams-ngag-mdzod*, Vol. V, Delhi, 1971, p. 769/7. I owe this reference to Gene Smith. The same expression, which is also used to refer to a medicinal herb, can be found in Sgam-po-pa Bsod-nams rin-chen's (1079-1153) *Rje phag-mo-gru(b)-pa'i dris-lan* -- see the *Collected Works of Sgam-po-pa Bsod-nams rin-chen*, Vol. I, Delhi, 1975, p. 472/3.

7. The passage in question is a longish commentary to the above mentioned *Sdom-gsum rab-tu dbye-ba* reference. Much of it is based on the *Spos-khang-pa* pp. 273/3-316/4, written by *Spos-khang-pa Rin-chen rgyal-mtshan* who had been a disciple of *Bla-ma dam-pa Bsod-nams rgyal-mtshan* (1312-1375).
8. The *Rgya-nag hwa-shang-gi byung-tshul*, the full title of which is *Rgya-nag hwa-shang-gi byung-tshul grub-mtha'i phyogs-snga-beas sa-bon-tsam smos-pa yid-kyi dri-ma dag-byed dge-ba'i chu-rgyun*, should be of considerable interest to the historian of Tibetan Buddhism, as well as to those involved in the study of the Tibetan perceptions of the possible connections between Tibetan and Chinese Buddhism. The following notes are designed principally to call attention to this fascinating work, and make no pretense to an exhaustive study of it. *Tshe-dbang nor-bu*'s little text is found as no. 158 in *The Collected Works*

(*gsung-'bum*) of *Kaḥ-thog rig-'dzin chen-po Tshe-dbang nor-bu*, Vol. V, Dalhousie, 1977, pp. 420-450. The manuscript is unfortunately incomplete; folio 13 (pp. 443-444) is missing. It was written or completed by Tshe-dbang nor-bu on the twenty-second of June, 1744 (*ston-gyi zla-ba'i dkar-phyogs-kyi rgyal-ba gsum-pa* of the wood -- male-mouse year) -- as calculated for the new *phug-pa* calendar according to the tables found in Schuh (1973) -- in the Ljon-pa valley of Kong-po. For much of the information about Chinese Buddhism, Tshe-dbang nor-bu apparently relied on the history of Buddhism in China, that had been written some eight years before in 1736 (?) by Mgon-po-skyabs in China. The latter had sent this important work to Si-tu Pan-chen Chos-kyi 'byung-gnas (1699/1700-1774) and Tshe-dbang nor-bu for their comments and suggestions. And the latter cites him on p. 431/3 according to the Sanskrit equivalent of his name "Nāthasaraṇa", pre-fixed by *Ching-gir-gung*, indicative that Mgon-po-skyabs belonged to the highest of Mongol nobility. His work is entitled the *Rgya-nag-gi yul-du dam-pa'i-chos dar-tshul gtso-bor bshad-pa blo-gsal kun-tu dge-ba'i rna-rgyan*, and was edited and published by the late Namgyal Dorji Dalama as *The Penetration and Spread of Buddhism in China*, Berkeley, 1969. Three years after the completion of the *Rgya-nag hwa-shang-gi byung-tshul*, Tshe-dbang nor-bu sent a letter to Mgon-po-skyabs in China with questions relating to this work -- see *Rgya-nag-tu gung mgon-po-skyabs-la dri-ba mdzad-pa*, in *The Selected Works of Kaḥ-thog rig-'dzin Tshe-dbang nor-bu*, Vol. I, Darjeeling, 1973, pp. 723-732. Moreover, the *Rgya-nag hwa-shang-gi byung-tshul* cites two passages from the *Bka'-thang sde-lnga* -- see Tucci (1958: 68-69) plus the three lines immediately preceding Tucci's text -- and refers twice to Gnubs Sangs-rgyas ye-shes' *Bsam-gtan mig-gi bsam-gtan-'grel* (pp. 434/3 and 445/5), which is probably identical with our first additional source on/to the Bsam-yas debate that figures above (see also note 5). The motive that underlies the composition of the *Rgya-nag hwa-shang-gi byung-tshul* is transparent from the text itself. Conceived as a rejoinder to statements made by those Tibetans who had levelled accusations against certain forms of Rnying-ma-pa and Bka'-brgyud-pa doctrines, to the effect of these having been contaminated by the early Chinese Buddhists in Tibet. Tshe-dbang nor-bu tries not to disprove those claims. Instead, he calmly assesses the merits of Chinese Buddhism by pointing out that its principal traditions can be traced back to the historical Buddha himself. Having laid the historical foundations, he then embarks on a theoretical evaluation of the Chinese Buddhist doctrines that left their mark in Tibet, and shows to what extent these are different from, and similar to, some of the Rnying-ma-pa and Bka'-brgyud-pa teachings. Thus, he isolates three



on the Questions of Heresies and Intersectarian Relations in Tibet,  
New Delhi, 1977, pp. 108-128.<sup>9</sup>

It should perhaps be emphasized here that this listing is by no means exhaustive, in that it represents only those pertinent texts that are directly available to me.

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principal lines of transmission of Chinese Buddhism:

1. Chinese *madhyamaka* -- *zab-mo lta-ba (b)rgyud-pa* pp.423-425
2. Chinese *yogācāra* -- *rgya-chen spyod-pa'i srol-'dzin* pp.425-427
3. Chinese *chan* \* -- *nyams-len bsgom-pa'i (b)rgyud* pp.426-431

In the latter passage, he gives a brief biography of Bodhidharmottara (Byang-chub chos-kyi bla-ma) who, of course, is identical to Bodhidharma, the founder of *chan* Buddhism. Tshe-dbang nor-bu holds him to be equivalent to the Dharmottara of the *Bka'-thang sde-lnga* passage -- see Tucci (1958: 68), and he explicitly states that the line that descended from him was neither impaired (*ma-nyams*), nor interrupted at any time (*bar-ma-cha'd*), and that, moreover, of the other manifestations of Chinese Buddhism, it is the most sublime (*mchog*) and excellent (*phul-du gyur-pa*). He also is not adverse to drawing parallels between the "seven-fold Indian line of transmission" and the "seven-fold Chinese line of transmission" of teachings that functioned as sources for some of the "oral instruction" (*man-ngag*) of the Rnying-ma-pa -- see p. 432/2-3. Citing the *Bka'thang sde-lnga* and elaborating on the historicity of Chinese teachers in Tibet, he then commences his theoretical discussion which, for obvious reasons, I will not try to summarize. One further point should be noted, however, in the context of the occurrence of Hva-shang Mahāyāna in the *Bka'-thang sde-lnga*. Hva-shang Mahāyāna is referred to in the section of the "Gradualists" as well as in that of the "Instantianialists". Gnubs Sangs-rgyas ye-shes, on the other hand, only cites him in his discussion of the "Instantianialists"; see his work, pp. 122/3, 130/1, 145/5 -- citing the *Bsgom-lung* written by Hva-shang Mahāyāna, 146/4 -- citing a text (*mdo?*) of (Hva-shang) Mahāyān !, 150/2, 164/6, 173/5 -- citing a *Bsam-gtan rgya-lung chen-po* of (Hva-shang) Mahayan ! -- this work is cited also on pp. 177/5 and, possibly, on p. 179/1.

9. This work cites, in addition to the texts included in number 2, several Dge-lugs-pa works that have gone unnoticed by Houston, including the relevant passages from the chapter on the Rnying-ma-pa of the famous *Grub-mtha' shel-gyi me-long*

While Houston repeatedly admonishes his fellow Tibetanists to engage in "comparative studies" (pp. 1 and 10) and to advance the "field by comparing different texts" (p. 10), he himself does not quite live up to this in the present volume. His study evinces little of the kind of analysis and comparison of texts that one can now come to expect in this field. Indeed, in-depth analyses of the sources used by him would, to some extent, have warranted their reproduction, but the only attempt at some sort of a critical inquiry, aside from the summary of the sequence of events (pp. 5-8), is found on p. 10 where Houston writes:

"However, we can see items reflected in the individual historians' accounts. (I am not sure what Houston means by this statement; LvdK). One instance that I observed (see note 12, BZ section) is that the compiler of the *Sba-bzhed* demonstrated his own particular bias. The *Sba* chronicler tells us that the Tibetans learned the Hva-shang's system by degree (sic !), but the other historians tell us that the Tibetan (sic!) learned it straight away, or quickly (*PT* 155a. 1 ff.; *Bu-ston* 887.2)".

Apart from some conceptual problems with this statement, it is clear that Houston's argument, at least initially, stands or falls with the interpretation of *thal-gyis* and *bslabsas* as these occur in the *PT* fol. 115a/1-2: *bod-kyi ban-dhe ril-po thal-gyis kho'i chos-la bslabs ste....* Although Houston does not mention this, the passage of the *PT* is in fact found in the first long citation

by Thu'u-bkvan Blo-bzang chos-kyi nyi-ma. On p. 114/3 it mistakenly attributes the section of the *Dgongs-pa rab-gsal* to Sa-skya Pandita's *Mkhas-pa-la 'jug-pa'i-sgo*, and also cites an interesting portion of a reply of Bu-ston Rin-chen-grub to a question of a certain Dge-bshes Nyi-ma. I have not been able to find this text in Bu-ston's collected works, the most likely candidate for its occurrence being in the collection of letters and replies to doctrinal questions -- see *Thams-cad mkhyen-pa'i bu-ston rin-po-che'i gsung-thor-bu*, Collected Works, Vol. 26, Delhi, 1971.

of a version of the *Sba-bzhed*, or, more precisely, the *Rba-bzhed*, since this is the orthography employed in the edition Houston had at his disposal; *Sba* and *Rba* are, of course, homophonous, and Houston's *Sba-bzhed* on p. 48 is probably due to an oversight. The reading of the *BZ*, on the other hand, is not identical with that of the *PT*, for it clearly states that: Tibet(ans) gradually studied his doctrine". (*bod rim-gyis kho'i-chos-la slob/*; *BZ* p. 54/7-8). The exact same phrase also occurs in *Go-rams-pa* p. 172/3/4 and the *Spos-khang-pa* p. 289/6 where, of course, *ril-gyis* should be emended to *rim-gyis*. One could surmise that the reading of the latter had originally been *ril-po thal-gyis*, whereby the contraction to *ril-gyis* was effected by a careless scribe. The reading of *Go-rams-pa*, however, does not support such a conjecture. Moreover, *Bu-ston* p. 887/2 neither asserts anything about the speed with which Hva-shang's teachings spread in Tibet, nor does it have anything to say about the rate at which the Tibetans learned and, hence, became proficient in these. It suggests rather that: "The greater part of Tibet (or: The majority of Tibetans), delighting in that (meditation), studied its method (or: studied his method)". (*bod phal-cher de-la dga' ste de'i-lugs slob/*). Houston's translation: "Tibet for the most part enjoyed and learned (the Chinese) method". (p. 92), is not sufficiently accurate and fails to adequately accommodate the syntactic, 'gerundizing' function of *ste* and the referents of *de-la* and *de'i*. None of the remaining sources used by Houston have anything to say about this matter.

Thus, contrary to Houston's analysis, the issue is not between the *Sba-bzhed* as in *BZ*, on the one hand, and the *PT* and *Bu-ston* on the other, but rather between two different versions of the former. But do these really say different things? I do not believe they do, for the main problem with Houston's remarks are that they are based on a certain semantic insensitivity towards the Tibetan verb *slob-pa*, which can be glossed either as 'to learn' or 'to study'. It is clear that Houston

has taken its perfect form of *bslabs* to signify 'learned', in the sense of having attained proficiency in or having mastered something, and that the Tibetans did so straight away or quickly (*thal-gyis*). But these two expressions admit of another interpretation, which to my mind would be more in consonance with the context. If we translate *bslabs* by 'studied' as an ongoing learning process, and *thal-gyis* by 'unhesitatingly', then the *PT* fol. 115a/1-2 states: "All the Tibetan *bandhe*-s unhesitatingly studied his doctrine". Indeed, it is hardly likely that in the relatively short interval between Hva-shang's arrival in Tibet and the preparations for the debates, the Tibetans could really have mastered the meditational techniques he had been teaching them. It surely takes longer than a couple of years to become a *sgom-chen*! Thus, if, in particular, *balabs* is read in this way, there would be no conflict between these two passages. Apart from this reinterpretation of the *PT*, one should also take exception to Houston's formulation on conceptual grounds. Surely, there are no real grounds for assuming that a composite text like the *Sba-bzhed* has one author. (see note 4). Moreover, if we take Houston's remark at face value, it is difficult to imagine how the author of the *Sba-bzhed* could demonstrate his particular bias vis-a-vis *subsequent* historians.

Houston's statement (p. 52, note 41): "Since the Gradualists are the good guys, not many are needed to defeat all (sic !) the Chinese party", is puzzling. The texts stress over and over again that the system of the Chinese found widespread appeal and support in Tibet, and it is therefore hardly surprising that the 'Gradualists' should find themselves to be numerically at quite a disadvantage. Had Houston analyzed his sources, he would not have made such a remark. This fact and the fact that the 'Gradualists' won out over the other party should really make one ponder as to the why of it all. Houston's Carteresque appeal that King Khri-srong lde-btsan had the 'Gradualists' win because "Hva-shang Mahāyāna was not interested in ethics" (p. 9) and that

"he wanted to raise the ethical standards of his country" (p. 9), is rather unconvincing.

Houston's editions and transcriptions of his sources are only reliable to a point; hence they need to be rechecked against the originals every time one wishes to make use of them. Unfortunately the same must be said of his translations, which bear the marks of a first draft. Frequently, Tibetan grammatical relations are ignored and while most, but not all, of the Tibetan is stylistically smooth, the originals are transposed into a straight jacket of prose that is often inelegant and occasionally ungrammatical. The following three passages have been taken at random to illustrate my point.

I. PT fol.121b/1-3

....mkhan po bo dhi sa tva ni 'phags pa klu sgrub kyi lugs 'dzin pa yin  
la des ni dbu ma rtsa bar/rgyal ba rnams kyi stong pa nyid//lta kun nges  
par 'byin par gsungs//ces stong nyid ni lba ba'i rnyigs ma sel ba'i bkru  
sman lta bur gsungs cing/rgyan stug po bkod pa'i mdo las kyang/lus can  
rnams la yod pa yi//lta ba rnam par spang ba'i phyir//stong pa nyid  
kyi tshul bstan to//ces bshad do//

Houston renders it as follows (p. 45):

"The abbot *Śāntrakṣita* (sic !) held to the method of *ārya Nāgārjuna*. Concerning *Nāgārjuna*, it is said in the *Mūlamādhyamika-karikā* (sic): "All *jīnas* (=Buddhas) have pronounced that *śūnyatā* is conducive to deliverance with respect to all doctrines. *Śūnyatā* is said to be a cleansing medicine which removes degeneration (sic) of the doctrine".

From the *Ghanavyūhasūtra*: "In order to completely renounce the doctrine which is in the possession of all living beings (*sarīrin*), (the Buddha) has shown the method of *śūnyatā*". Thus, it is preached".

While Houston did not verify this, the *PT* is quoting the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* XIII: 8a-b for which the Sanskrit reads: *sūnyatā sarvadṛṣṭināṃ proktā niḥsaraṇaṃ jinaiḥ*.<sup>10</sup> This means that *rgyal-ba rnams-kyi* should be corrected to *rgyal-ba rnams-kyis* to conform with the plural instrumental *jinaiḥ*, which Houston evidently translated. The version of the *PT* available to me, published in India with no date or place of publication, reads (fol. 161b/1) *rgyal-ba rnams-kyis*. If he had checked the Sanskrit text of Nāgārjuna -- a greater familiarity with Tibetan would also be sufficient -- Houston would have realised that the passage from *des* to *gsungs* should be put in indirect discourse and recognized that it involves a comment allegedly made by Śāntirakṣita on the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* XIII: 8a-b. I have, however, not been able to locate such a passage in Śāntirakṣita's oeuvre to which Dpa'-bo gtsug-lag seems to refer. Houston has also misunderstood the syntactic function of *la* in the quotation from the *Ghanavyūhasūtra*; this, moreover, should be read in conjunction with (*cing* !) the foregoing. Hence, a more apt translation would read something like this:

"While the abbot, bodhisattva (Śāntirakṣita) was a follower of the position of the holy Nāgārjuna, he has said that (the statement) in the *Mūlamadhyamaka (kārika)*: "*Sūnyata* has been stated by the Victorious Ones for dispensing with all opinions", (suggests) *sūnyatā* to be like a cleansing medicine that removes the degeneration of opinion(s), and also the *Ghanavyūhasūtra* has stated: "The mode of *sūnyatā* has been taught in view of thoroughly removing the view of existence (that is present) in embodied beings".

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10. See de Jong (1977: 18) and the references to Indian texts in which the entire verse is cited in Ehrhard (1982: 85).

II. PT fol. 121b/3-6<sup>11</sup>

- 'phags pa klu'i rjes su 'brang ba rgyal sras zhi ba'i lhas kyang /  
 rmongs pa sdug sngal can don du // (53a)  
 'khor bar gnas pa 'grub 'gyur ba // (53c)  
 'di ni stong nyid 'bras bu yin // (53d)  
 de bas stong pa nyid phyogs la // (54a)  
 sun 'byin pa ni 'thad ma yin // (54b)  
 des na the tshom mi za bar // (54c)  
 stong pa nyid ni bsgom par bya // (54d)  
 nyon mongs shes bya'i sgrib pa yi // (55a)  
 mun pa'i gnyen po stong pa nyid // (55b)  
 myur du thams cad mkhyen 'dod pas // (55c)  
 de ni ji ltar sgom mi byed // (55d)  
 dngos gang sdug bsngal skyed byed pa // (56a)  
 de la skrag pa skye 'gyur mod // (56b)  
 stong nyid sdug sngal zhi byed pa // (56c)  
 de la 'jigs pa ji ltar skye // (56d)  
 ces bzhed pa yin la slob dpon ka ma la shī la'i sgom rim gsum dang  
 dbu ma snang bar stong pa nyid lta ba'i rnyigs ma yin no zhes bris  
 pa 'dug gam ltos cig /

Houston (p. 45) translates:

"The follower of the exalted *Nāgārjuna*, the prince *Śāntideva*, (says:) "For the sake of (all) who are obscured and afflicted, who have become perfected while remaining in *samsāra*, this is the result ('bras-bu) of voidness. Therefore, those who defame the adherents of the *śūnyatā* (doctrine) are not acceptable. Thus, one should meditate upon *śūnyatā* without doubt. Although there is obscuration

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11. The division of the Tibetan is mine.

of knowledge (*shes-bya*) by *kleśas*, *śūnyatā* is the antidote of darkness. Since you desire omniscience quickly, why do you not meditate (upon *śūnyatā*)? What occurrence (sic!) produces misery? Fear will indeed arise from that (thought). *Śūnyatā* calms suffering. How can there be fear concerning that?" While the (aforementioned) has been accepted, in the teacher Kamalaśīla's three *Bhāvanākramas* and his *Dbu-ma snang-ba (Mādhyamakāloka)* (sic!) there is no degeneration of the doctrine of *śūnyatā*. Thus, it has been described, look (into his books)!"

The Tibetan text of the *PT* has a number of philological problems which Houston chose to overlook. The passage from Sāntideva's *Bodhicāryāvatāra* IX: 53-56<sup>12</sup> -- not identified as such by Houston -- is particularly corrupt. Such obvious scribal errors as *sdug-sngal* for *sdug-bsngal* (53a, 56a, 56c) have not been properly corrected. Houston has also not noticed that the quoted passage omits line 53b: *chags dang 'jigs mtha' las grol-ba //* without which the meaning of verse 53 would be somewhat unintelligible as Houston's translation bears out. Moreover, *rmongs-pa* (53a) is not corrected to *rmongs-pas*, which corresponds to the Sanskrit *mohena*. *Sgrib-pa-yi* (55a) has been wrongly emended by Houston to *sgrib-pa-yis* which is not supported by the Sanskrit, in addition to which Houston has failed to identify the basic Buddhist conception of the two types of obscurations, namely, that of the conflicting emotions and that of the knowable. And, finally, Houston has not corrected *skye-'gyur-mod* (56b) to *skye-'gyur-na* (Sanskrit: *prajāyatām*). He also appears to be unaware of the fact that *rgyal-sras* (*jinaputra*) is a common synonym for *bodhisattva* (see also p. 83, note 31). Lastly, Houston has misinterpreted *rnyigs-ma yin* which, to be sure, does not involve a negation of sorts.

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12. The bilingual edition I used is Bhattacharya (1960).



A correct translation of this passage would read:

"While the Son of the Victorious One (, *bodhisattva*) Śāntideva, who is a follower of the holy Nāgārjuna, has also claimed that:

"To remain and accomplish in samsara,  
For the sake of those who suffer through being deluded,  
(Their liberation from the extremes of desire and fear (53b)  
This is the result of *śūnyatā*.

Thus, to reject the domain of *śūnyatā*,  
Is not correct.

Hence. (you) should undoubtedly  
Meditate on *śūnyatā*.

The antidote to the darkness of,  
The obscuration of the conflicting emotions and the knowable,  
Is *śūnyatā*; since (you) quickly wish for omniscience,  
Why do (you) not meditate on *śūnyatā* ?

If fear arises regarding that entity which  
Brings forth suffering,  
*Śūnyatā* demobilizes suffering.

(So) why (should there) arise fear of that (*śūnyatā*) ?",

has it been written in the three *Bhāvanākrama*-s and the *Madhyamakāloka*<sup>13</sup> of the teacher Kamalaśīla that (the doctrine of *śūnyatā* is a degeneration of (philosophical) opinion ? Look (into these)!"

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13. The authorship of this work is somewhat controversial in Tibet. Whereas most scholars subscribe to the (canonical) view that Kamalaśīla was its author. Klong-chen Rab-'byams-pa Dri-med 'od-zer (1308-1363) opined at least at one stage of his career, that it was composed by Śāntiraksita -- see his *Ngal-gso skor-gsum-gyi spyi-don legs-bshad rgya-mtsho*. Gangtok, no date, p. 45/5. In the *Snga-gyur rnying-ma-la rgol-ngan log-rtoḡ bstan-bcos*, Leh, 1977,

The next passage that I shall briefly consider occurs in the *BZ* and has a parallel in the first lengthy citation of a version of this text in the *PT*. The Tibetan in brackets reproduces those words in Houston's transcription of the *BZ* that are not found in this text.

III. *BZ* p. 63/5-8 (more or less equivalent to *PT* 119b/2-3)

*slob dpon ka ma la śi la la chos thams cad thos bsam gyis bdag med par  
gtan la phob pa'i chos de ji ltar lags pa cig yi ger bkod pa zhus pas/  
sgom rim dang po brtsams nas btsan po la gnang / btsan pos (po) gzigs  
(bzigs) pas don dgongs nas dges te / de'i don gtan geig gi thog tu  
bsgom ji ltar sgom zhus pas / sgom rim bar pa brtsams (brtsoms) nas  
gnang /*

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attributed to Klong-chen-pa, the *Madhyamakāloka* is unequivocally stated to have been written by Kamalasila -- see p. 110/4. The attribution of this defense of Rnying-ma-pa teaching to Klong-chen-pa, however, is rendered problematic by its citation of several names. On pp. 149/1 ff., this work provides some biographical details surrounding the life of the fourth Rgyal-dbang Karma-pa Rol-pa'i rdo-rje (1340-1383), including his trip to China which took place towards the end of 1358, and his activities there. Rol-pa'i rdo-rje returned to Tibet in 1362. In addition, it also mentions the name Ma-ti Pan-chen on p. 161/5. As far as I am aware, there is only one Tibetan scholar who has been referred to by this name. This is the famous Sa-bzang Ma-ti Paṅ-chen Gzhon-nu blo-gros whose dates are 1358-1424. The numerous other fourteenth century Tibetans who this text refers to, renders it in my opinion very unlikely that Klong-chen-pa was the author of the text as it stands. The colophon states on p. 224/5-6 that it was written by Klong-chen Rab-'byams-pa in *dpyid-zla-ra-ba'i bcom-ldan-'das-kyis tshe-'phrul chen-pos mu-stegs-pa-rnams pham-par mdzad-pa'i dus-kyi zla-ba'i dkar-phyogs-kyi tshes-bcu'i nyin-pa*. I do not know which date is being referred to by this expression, but the *Klong-chen Rab-'byams-pa* could very well indicate a subsequent 'embodiment' of Dri-med 'od-zer.

Houston translates (p. 75):

"(The emperor) requested *Kamalaśīla* to reduce all religious books to the *anātma* system (which includes) learning (*thos*), reflecting (*bsam*), (and meditating *sgom*). (The emperor asked: "What is the doctrine? Establish it in writing!" (Because he asked that, *Kamalaśīla*) composed the First *Bhāvanākrama*, and gave it to the emperor. The emperor was very happy after he had examined (this first book), but he asked: "If I am to meditate upon a unique systematic meaning, how should I (perform this) meditation?" (Then *Kamalaśīla*) composed the Middle *Bhāvanākrama*, and gave it (to the emperor)".

Again, the problems with Houston's translation are numerous, and are demonstrative that he is not sufficiently familiar with the fundamentals of Tibetan grammar. Moreover, Houston has been misled by the paraphrases of this passage in Tucci (1958: 41). Houston evidently decided to include *sgom* in the first Tibetan sentence on the basis of the only major variant for this passage found in the *PT* fol. 119b/2: *thos bsam sgom gsum*. To adopt this reading, which is a *lectio facillior*, is problematic in the light of the *Go-rams-pa* p. 173/3/2 and the *Spos-khang-pa* p. 299/3, both of which support the reading of the *BZ*. He has also followed Tucci in reading *gtan*, which has its phonetic equivalent of *stan* in the *PT* fol. 119b/3; the latter is, I believe, wrongly corrected by him to *gtan* (p. 27, note 65). The reading of *stan*, meaning a cushion or pillow, that is, something to sit on while meditating, is attested to in the *Go-rams-pa* p. 173/3/2 and the *Spos-khang-pa* p. 299/5. *Stan* is no doubt contextually preferable to *gtan* which is quite meaningless here. A more adequate translation would therefore be:

"Since (the King) asked the teacher *Kamalaśīla* to lay down in writing what (the essence) of that doctrine (*chos*), which has been analytically clarified (I read *phab*, *PT* fol. 119b/2)

all phenomena (*chos*) as non-ontological through study and reflection, is, (Kamalśīla,) having composed the First *Bhāvanākrama*, gave (it) to the King. The King reading (it) was happy after he had thought about the intent, (but) since (he) asked (Kamalśīla) how to meditate (on) its meaning (when) meditating on top of a cushion, (the latter) having composed the Second *Bhāvanākrama*, gave (it to the King)".

A few last words are in order concerning the Tibetological and Buddhological impressions made by Houston's work. Again, only a few instances that immediately drew my attention, will be noted here. On the whole, these are rather poor. For one, the introduction (pp. 1-5) brings absolutely nothing new to bear on the sources Houston has used, and, relying on dated secondary sources, contains a number of wrong or misleading statements. The date for *Bu-ston* is given as 1347 (p. 2), whereas it was in fact written in 1322. Houston also suggests that one of the teachers of the fifth Dalai Lama was "probably....*Pad ma gling pa*..." (p. 3). This, of course, is not the case. *Padma-gling-pa*'s dates are 1346 to 1405. The disciple and teacher of the fifth Dalai Lama was *Gter-bdag gling-pa* (1634/46-1714).

Moreover, he prefers to denote *Pañ-chen Bsod-nams grags-pa*'s (1478-1554) *Deb-ther dmar-po gsar-ma* -- the *New Red Annals*-- by the *Red Annals*.<sup>14</sup> In terms of its contents, this work is essentially an update of *Tshal-pa Kun-dga' rdo-rje*'s (1309-1364) *Deb-ther dmar-po* -- the *Red Annals*<sup>15</sup> -- whereby, however, the latter's religious

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14. The precedent for this is the wrong titling of this text of a manuscript published by L. Chandra -- see Houston p. 115.

15. An improvement over the text published by the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok, 1961, is the recently published edition of the People's Publishing House, Beijing, 1981, which includes extensive annotations (*mchan-'grel*) by *Dung-dkar Blo-bzang 'phrin-las*.

history of the different Tibetan Buddhist schools is virtually ignored. Instead, Bsod-nams grags-pa concentrates on the political fortunes of Central Tibet's ruling classes, making his work the first fullledged political history in Tibetan literature. But, of course, contrary to Tucci (1971: xiii), who is cited by Houston (pp. 4-5), the *New Red Annals* hardly deals with the main events of Central Tibetan history up to the time of the fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682). Bsod-nams grags-pa makes it quite clear on several occasions, that his work was written in 1538 -- Tucci (1971: 174, 180, etc) -- that is, some eighty years prior to the birth of the Great Fifth.

Houston (p. 5) states that the books attributed to Hva-shang Mahāyāna by, for instance, *Bu-ston* p. 887/5-7 and the *PT* fol. 116a/1-2, "are not known to present Tibetan scholarship". And this has been repeated in Jackson (1982: 98, note 6). Karmay (1975: 153), which appears in Houston's bibliography (p. 112), has pointed out, that the list of books which Bu-ston, among others, have attributed to Hva-shang Mahāyāna, can be found in Sa-skyā Paṇḍita's *Skyes-bu dam-pa* p. 332/1/1-2. It appears that Houston was unaware of this, and Kimura (1981: 185) has also persisted in speaking of "...la liste d'ouvrages que Bu-ston attribue au maitre chinois". Bu-ston's description of these -- this has been completely misunderstood by Houston on p. 93 (see also p. 34) -- corresponds quite closely to that given by Sa-skyā Paṇḍita, and suggests a borrowing of sorts. The relevant passage of the *Skyes-bu dam-pa* states:

*rgya nag mkhan po...bsam gtan nyal ba'i 'khor lo / de'i gnad ston pa  
bsam gtan gyi lon / de'i gegs sel ba bsam gtan gyi yang lon / de'i  
gdams ngag rigs pas sgrub pa la lta ba'i rgyab sha / de lung gis  
sgrub pa la mdo sde brgyud cu khungs zhes bya ba bstan beos lnga  
byas /*

"The Chinese abbot...composed five treatises: (a) *Bsam-gtan nyal-ba'i 'khor'lo*, (b) *Bsam-gran-gyi-lon*, showing its essence, (c) *Bsam-gtan-gyi yang-lon*, eliminating objections regarding that (work =a), (d) *Lta-ba'i rgyab-sha* to establish its oral instructions by reasoning, and (e) *Mdo-sde brgyad-cu khungs* to establish it through scriptural authority".

The first of these, *a*, seems to be a name of a Chan master -- Wolun chanshi -- whose work is preserved in Stein chinois 1494 -- Kimura (1981: 185-186). Karmay (1975: 153) has pointed out that Pélliot tibétain 811 also refers to this man and his work. Texts *b* and *e* correspond to Pélliot tibétain 117 and 996, and Kimura (1981: 186-187) has convincingly shown that *e* is closely related to the so-called *Zhujing yaochao* (*Taishō*, Vol. 85, no. 2819).

The explicit attribution of these texts to Hva-shang Mahāyāna starts with Bu-ston, but his reasons for this are not clear. Contrary to Karmay (1975: 152-153), Sa-skya Paṇḍita does not provide any names for the author of these texts. In the parallel passage of the *Dgongs-pa rab-gsal*, in which these texts are also enumerated, Sa-skya Paṇḍita suggests these to have been composed by a Chinese monk (*rgya-nag-gi dge-slong*) (p. 24/4/5-6); the absence of names holds for all the references to Chinese Buddhism or Buddhists found in his works.<sup>16</sup>

16. The following references to Chinese Buddhism can be found in Sa-skya Paṇḍita's writings:

a. Chinese monk

<i>Dgongs-pa rab-gsal</i> p. 24/1/5	( <i>rgya-nag-gi dge-slong</i> )
25/3/6	( <i>ha-shang</i> )
25/3/6	( <i>rgya-nag (na-re)</i> )
<i>Glo-bo</i> p. 414/3/5	( <i>rgya-nag ha-shang</i> )
<i>Sdom-gsum rab-dbye</i> p. 309/3/2	( <i>rgya-nag dge-slong</i> )

b. Chinese abbot

<i>Dgongs-pa rab-gsal</i> pp. 25/1/4, 25/2/1, 25/3/2, 25/3/4, 25/3/5,	
25/4/1	( <i>rgya-nag mkhan-po</i> )
<i>Sdom-gsum rab-dbye</i> p. 309/3/4	( <i>rgya-nag mkhan-po</i> )
<i>Skyes-bu dam-pa</i> p. 331/4/6	( <i>rgya-nag mkhan-po</i> )

This may also be the appropriate place to briefly comment on Karmay's suggestion -- Karmay (1975: 152) -- that, in the passage of the *Sdom-gsum rab-tu dbye-ba* cited above as an early source on/to the Bsam-yas debate, Sa-skyā Paṇḍita was criticizing the *rdzogs-chen* teachings of the Rnying-ma-pa and the Bon-po. This has been recently more or less repeated by Jackson (1982: 95). While such an interpretation of what Sa-skyā Paṇḍita had said in this text -- see also the parallel in the *Dgongs-pa rab-gsal* passage -- was current especially among the Dge-ldan-pa or Dge-lugs-pa, the subsequent Sa-skyā-pa scholar-commentators who, after all, stood in the tradition of this work, make absolutely no mention of either the Rnying-ma-pa or Bon-po in connection with their comments on this passage. The *Sdom-gsum rab-tu dbye-ba* p. 309/2/5-6 states:

"As for present-day *māhamudrā* and the *rdzogs-chen* of the Chinese position, except for having changed the names of 'descending from above' and 'ascending from below'<sup>17</sup> to 'gradualist' and 'instantanealist', there is no particular difference in the intent".

Sa-skyā Paṇḍita continues a little further down by saying that some of the writings of the Chinese were recovered from their place of confinement after the collapse of the Tibetan Kingdom. The names for the doctrines and practices contained in these texts, were then changed to *mahāmudrā* (*phyag-rgya chen-po*) and under

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c. *Chinese Buddhism*

*Sdom-gsum rab-dbye* p.309/3/4-5 (rgya-nag chos-lugs)

d. *Chinese rdzogs-chen*

*Sdom-gsum rab-dbye* p.309/2/6 (rgya-nag lugs-kyi rdzogs-chen)

17. For parallel passages, see the *Dgongs-pa rab-gsal* 25/2/2 f. A very brief account relating the debate to *mahāmudrā* tenets can also be found in Grags-pa smon-lam blo-gros, alias Ne'u Paṇḍita, *Sngon-gyi-gtam me-tog phreng-ba* in *Rare Tibetan Historical and Literary Texts from the Library of Tsepon W.D. Shakabpa, Series I*, New Delhi, 1974, pp. 100/4-101/3.

such guise were propagated in Tibet. In his perception, the majority of the *mahāmudrā* teachings of the various Bka'-brgyud-pa traditions had been contaminated in this way. And he is emphatic in stating that these cannot find sanction in the writings of Nāropa of Maitrīpa. From the context and content of this passage, it is rather clear that to allege that Sa-skya Paṇḍita was criticizing the Rnying-ma-pa, is way off the mark.

The *PT* (fol. 113b/6) mentions that, after the defeat of the Chinese party, Padmasambhava initiated the King and his retinue into the *maṇḍala* for the spiritual realisation of the *Eight Pronouncements* (*bka'-brgyad*), and instructed them in the *rdzogs-chen* teachings of the *Man-ngag lta-ba'i phreng-ba*. Houston's rendition of this passage (p. 29) shows that he did not understand what he was translating. He is unaware that the *bka'-brgyad* refers to a special set of Rnying-ma-pa teachings which, together with the 'treasures' (*gter-ma-s*) and the teachings derived from 'pure vision' (*dag-snang*), make up the three principal doctrinal entities of this school. Houston also did not realise that the *Man-ngag lta-ba'i phreng-ba*<sup>18</sup> is a book, for he translates: "spiritual advices (*upadeśa*) which are called: 'The Great Perfection Garland School'."

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18. It would also appear that Dagay (1979: 29 ff.) has misread the title as *Man-ngag lta-bu'i phreng-ba*, and that, what she misread, she mistranslated as "the line similar to the one of instruction". A few bibliographical remarks concerning this text would thus not be out of place. This little work, attributed to Padmasambhava, is cited or referred to by Gnubs Sangs-rgyas ye-shes (see note 5) some four times; see pp. 192, 196-197, 207, and 238, leaving thereby little doubt as to its age. Dealing with the non-Buddhist and Buddhist approaches to spiritual realisation from the *mahāyoga* perspective of the thirteenth chapter of the *Guhyagarbhatantra* in particular, the earliest commentary on it was written by the eleventh century scholar Rong-zom Chos-kyi bzang-po; see the *Man-ngag lta-ba'i phreng-ba zhes-bya-ba'i 'grel-pa*, Leh: Smarntsis Shesrig Spendzod, Vol. 74, 1974, pp. 19-124 (the basic text is reproduced on pp. 1-18 of this volume, and an updated version, in terms of its spellings, is contained



Another instance of Houston's lack of basic Tibetological skills is his note 50 on p.53. There he says: "*Blo-sbyong* is a technical term employed by the *Dge-lugs-pa*. It is used by *Tsong-kha-pa* in the *Lam-rim chen-po* (sic!), for example. There is a *Bka-gdams-pa* (sic!) work entitled *Blo-sbyong glegs-bam*". In the first place, '*blo-sbyong*' is not the prerogative of only the *Dge-lugs-pa*

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in *Kong-sprul Blo-gros mtha'-yas'* (1913-1899), ed., *Gdams-ngag-mdzod*, Vol. Ka, Paro, 1979, pp. 17-27). The *Grub-mtha' so-so'i bzhed-tshul gzhung gsal-bar ston-pa chos-'byung grub-mtha' chen-po bstan-pa'i sgron-ma*, Nemo Leh, 1977, by the rather elusive Rog Bande Shes-rab-'od (twelfth cent.), also suggests a distinctive indebtedness to Padmasambhava's work on pp.89-90, 94, and 124 ff. It became severely criticized sometime during the fourteenth century by "Bri-gung Dpal-'dzin, whose name appears to occur for the first time in the defense of Rnying-ma-pa teachings attributed to Klong-chen Pab-'byams-pa (see note 13). Dpal-'dzin's treatise was directed against what he considered to be spurious, and hence counter-productive, spiritual and literary traditions, and is entitled *Chos dang chos ma-yin-pa rnam-par dbye-ba'i rab-tu byed-pa*. It is partly cited in Gser-mdog Pan-chen Sākya-mchog-ldan's (1428-1507) *Sdom-pa gsum-gyi rab-tu dbye-ba'i bstan-bcos-kyi 'bel-gtam rnam-par nges-pa legs-bshad gser-gyi thur-ma - le'u -gsum-pa rig-'dzin sdom-pa'i skabs-kyi 'bel-gtam rnam-par nges-pa*, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7, Thimphu, 1975, pp. 211 ff., and it is completely reproduced in the *Nges-don 'brug-sgra*. Both of these make it quite clear that, according to Dpal-'dzin, the *Man-ngag lta-ba'i phreng-ba* was contaminated ('*dres*) with the teachings of Chinese Buddhism -- see Gser-mdog Pan-chen p. 211/5 and the *Nges-don 'brug-sgra* fols. 23/5 ff. No doubt, such an accusation should be considered against the background of the problems surrounding the authenticity of the *Guhya-garbhatastra*, which showed their face from the eleventh century onward. Two other commentaries to the *Man-ngag lta-ba'i phreng-ba* have been published to date. The first of these is Kong-sprul's *Man-ngag lta-ba'i phreng-ba'i tshig-don-gyi 'grel-zin mdor-bsdus-pa zab-don pad-tshal 'byed-pa'i nyi-'od*, *Gdams-ngag-mdzod*, Vol. Ka, Paro, 1979, pp. 29-84. Pp. 46/7, 47/2, and 52/6 cite an additional commentary by a certain Gtsangston, which has not yet surfaced. The other comment on the text is the one by Mi-pham rgya-mtsho (1846-1912), the *Slob-dpon chen-po padma-'byung-gnas-kyis mdzad-pa'i man-ngag lta-ba'i phreng-ba'i mehan-'grel nor-bu'i bank-mdzod* in *The Collected Works of 'Jam-mgon 'Ju Mi-pham rgya-mtsho*, Vol. 12, Gangtok, 1976, pp. 417-463. This work was only posthumously edited (and published) by Kun-bzang dpal-ldan in 1919.

or the Bka'-gdams-pa. If it were, one could justifiably query why it would occur in the *Sba-bzhed* cited by a Karma Bka'-brgyud-pa monk. The so-called *blo-sbyong* teachings were transmitted by Gser-gling-pa to Atiśa and form the 'oral instructions' (*gdams-ngag*) of the Bka'-gdams-pa. These teachings penetrated the Bka'-brgyud-pa schools via Sgam-po-pa. The Sa-skyapa also have this Mahāyāna practice, which is usually referred to as the *Blo-sbyong zhen-bzhi bral-ba*. This set of teachings was revealed to the young-Sa-chen Kun-dga' snying-po (1092-1158) by the red-coloured Manjuśrī Arapacana at the age of eleven. The Jo-nang-pa received both transmissions *via* the great Kun-dga' grol-mchog (1507-1566), and became henceforth incorporated in the so-called "hundred Instructions" (*khrid-brgya*) of this school. But then, it seems rather unlikely that *blo-sbyong* in this passage is used in the context of any of these possible permutations.

From the foregoing observations (to which a great deal more could be added), it is clear that Houston's book is exceedingly unreliable from most points of view. The vast majority of the translations are either completely wrong or inaccurate; the editions and transcriptions of the Tibetan texts are also rather unsatisfactory. One should question why such a book was ever published, and, moreover, why Houston's supervisor apparently accepted it as a dissertation, for Houston is not the only one to be blamed for its appearance in book-form. Nivison's (1980: 120) perceptive statement comes to mind: "Bad publications make it more difficult, and so, even more expensive to get really good books printed". One can only feel depressed at the thought of not only what the misinformation contained in Houston's volume will do to the unsuspecting reader, but also at the probability that a really good book dealing with the Tibetan perceptions of this debate will be long in forthcoming. Houston has promised to bring out a philosophical study of Hva-shang Mahāyāna's

position (p. 10). Let us hope that by then he will have a sufficient knowledge of Tibetan and Tibetan intellectual history, as well as a thorough grounding in Chinese and Chan Buddhism, to make him equal to the task.

## APPENDIX

In his posthumously published work, Vostrikov (1970: 24-26) was the first non-Tibetan scholar to have dealt with the text historical problems that surround the *Sba-bzhed*, on the basis of several Tibetan sources in which this text, as well as its cognates, the *Rgyal-bzhed* and the '*Bangs-bzhed*', are mentioned. To my knowledge, the earliest references to all three are contained in Sa-skya Paṇḍita's *Skyes-bu dam-pa* p. 132/1/4 -- there, one reads *Dpa'-bzhed* for *Sba-bzhed* -- and in his *Dgongs-pa rab-gsal* p. 25/4/1-2 -- here, one reads *Dbal'-bzhed* for *Sba-bzhed* and '*Ba'-bzhed* for '*Bangs-bzhed*. Richardson (1952: 4, note 2) suggested, independently of Vostrikov, that the *Sba-bzhed* dates from the fourteenth century. This opinion was probably based on the text of the *Sba-bzhed* which he had prepared in Lhasa, and which was subsequently published by Stein (BZ). In his introduction to the BZ, Stein mentions that G. Roerich considered to *Sba-bzhed* to have been written in the twelfth or thirteenth century by a Bka'-gdams-pa monk. Finally, Tucci (1958: 7, note 1) noted that three different versions of unequal length existed of the *Sbz-bzhed*. But, like Richardson and Roerich, he does not give any sources for his opinion.

Tāranātha (1575-?) has given a brief analysis of the different versions of the *Sba-bzhed* in his important inquiry into the biography of Padmasambhava, the *Slob-dpon chen-po padma 'byung-gnas-kyi rnam-par thar-pa gsal-bar byed-pa'i yi-ge yid-ches gsum-ldan*, also known as the *Slob-dpon padma'i rnam-thar rgya-gar-lugs*, contained in *Five Historical Works of Tāranātha*, Arunchal Pradesh: Tibetan Nyingmapa Monastery, camp 5, 1974, p. 515/3-6 (this work was written when he was thirty-five). Tāranātha suggests that there was an actual, authentic (*dnegos*) *Sba-bzhed* (as with the *PT*,

Tāranātha's texts also reads *Rba-bzhed* instead of *Sba-bzhed*; this variant can be either traced back to their phonetic equivalence, or to the fact that in cursive *dbu-med*, the superscribed *sa* and *ra* are virtually indistinguishable) which existed in three versions -- one for the use of the King, one for the ministers, and one for the Buddhist community -- and an enlarged version which, obviously later onwards, was supplemented by an adherent of the Bka'-gdams-pa school of Tibetan Buddhism. Perhaps referring to Sa-skya Paṇḍita's readings, Tāranātha also states that the text known as the *Dbā'-bzhed* is identical with the *Sba-bzhed*, and that he has not himself seen the so-called '*Ba'-bzhed*. He suspects, however, that '*Ba'-bzhed* could possibly be a corruption of *Sba-bzhed*.

The notice of the *Sba-bzhed* given by Sde-srid Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho (1653-1705) in his *Bstan-bcos bai-dūr dkar-po-las dris-lan 'khrul-snang g.ya'-sel don-gyi bzhin-ras ston-byed*, Vol. 1, Dehra Dun, 1976, p. 148/1-3 occurs in a chronological inquiry into the times of King Khri-srong lde-btsan, citing a number of pertinent *gter-ma-s* (a close study of this inquiry may reveal that it is largely founded on Tāranātha's text). Sde-srid states that the *Sbz-bzhed* was written by Sba Gsal-snang, Sba Sang-shi, and others. Tucci (1958: 18 ff.) discusses these names at length without reaching satisfactory conclusions as to their identity. Some Tibetan sources take these names to refer to one and the same individual, whereas others regards these to stand for different persons. According to Mgon-po rgyal-mtshan (1980: 59), Sba Gsal-snang was the lay-name of Sba Dpal-dbyangs, otherwise known under his Chinese name of Sang-shi-ta. When he became ordained by Sānti-rakṣita, he was given the clerical name of Ye-shes dbang-po. Sde-srid continues by saying that at first three versions were placed in the hands of the King, the ministers, and the Buddhist community, after which extraneous matters were included in the original text. This resulted in the *Rgyal-bzhed*, *Sba-bzhed*, and *Bla-bzhed*.

The *BZ* published by Stein is the so-called *Sba-bzhed zhabs-btags-ma*, that is, a version of the *Sba-bzhed* with a supplement dealing with the main events of Tibetan Buddhism from the Bsam-yas debate to the persecution initiated by Glang-dar-ma (841), all the way up to the invitation of Atisa to Central Tibet. According to the colophon of the text, *BZ* p. xii, the *Sba-bzhed* only dealt with the events up to the proclamation of the edict by King-Khri srong lde-btsan. A *dbu-med* manuscript belonging to Tucci was collated with Richardson's text to produce the *BZ*. As far as one can tell from Stein's edition, no major differences existed between these two.

In 1980, an excellent edition of a *Sba-bzhed* text was published in Beijing (Mgon-po rgyal-mtshan (1980)). This text, written in *dbu-med*, but published in *dbu-can*, undoubtedly belongs to a different manuscript tradition than the *BZ*, and should therefore be used in any future study involving the *Sba-bzhed*. Mgon-po rgyal-mtshan has also inserted several interlinear notes -- these are marked off from the text by parentheses -- in which he elaborates on personal names and other versions of the *Sba-bzhed* which he presumably had at his disposal. Thus, he mentions a *Sba-bzhed* of intermediate length (*bzhed 'bring-po*) on p. 59, and a largest version (*bzhed rgyas-shos*) on p. 61, forming a gloss on the basic text's "According to a tradition" (*lugs gcig-la*). The latter clearly implies that Mgon-po rgyal-mtshan's text is a composite work and that, like the *BZ*, it cannot be considered to be *the Sba-bzhed*. Following a *lugs gcig-la*, the Beijing text (pp. 72-75) contains an account of the debate which corresponds almost exactly to the one given by Sa-skya Paṇḍita in his *Dgongs-pa rab-gsal* pp. 24/4/5-25/3/6. Now the Sde-dge edition of the latter -- the only edition that is available at present -- does not indicate that this passage was taken from the *Sba-bzhed*. However, as I have shown elsewhere (see my *Marginalia to Sa-skya Paṇḍita's Oeuvre*, forthcoming in the *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, Madison and van der Kuijp (1983)), the Sde-dge edition of his collected works is far

from satisfactory. What, to my mind, does strongly suggest that this account was taken from an early source is that Sa-skya Paṇḍita states immediately thereafter, "According to another text of the royal testament..." (*bka'-chems-kyi yi-ge gzhan-zhig-las...*). Although it is rather too premature to draw conclusions on the basis of stylistic variations as far as Tibetan literature is concerned, I would be inclined to hold that the syntactical constructions used in the *Dgongs-pa rabgsal*'s account of the debate, do not reflect those customarily employed by Sa-skya Paṇḍita. On the other hand, the contents of the other text of the royal testament only deals with the aftermath of the debate, and not with the debate itself. But there is more evidence which would corroborate that the *Dgongs-pa rab-gsal* account is based on a version of the *Sba-bzhed* that has not yet been published. Both the *Spos-khang-pa* p. 295/1-3 and the *PT* fols. 120a/5 ff. contain summaries of the contents of the former which, however, they explicitly state to have been taken from another version of the *Sba-bzhed*.

Mgon-po rgyal-mtshan (1980: 76) also confirms the corrections I suggested should be made in the *BZ* passage that was analysed above. It does not, however, include the *zhabs-btags-ma*. The concluding remarks state that three versions were prepared at the behest of the King; one was sent to Lhasa, one to Khams, and one remained in his own keeping. These three copies of what in fact was a royal edict, became shortly thereafter emended to the effect that the version claimed by Sba Gsal-s nang to be the 'correct one' (*bzhed-lugs*), came to be called the *Sba-bzhed*. Others derive the title from Sba Sang-shi, underscoring the fact that these two names may very well refer to two different persons. It is also known as the *Bsam-yas bka'-thang*. The scribe of the present version was the Lord of Snyas, Ldum-bu maṇi arga sedhi (=Nor-bu don-grub?); it was completed in an iron-hare year.

The upshot of all this is that one cannot speak of *the Sba-bzhed*, the versions of this text that are presently available being

all quite corrupt. Philological weeding thus becomes an essential precondition for any justified use of the '*Sba-bzhed*' as a reliable historical source. After the first lengthy quotation of a *Sba-bzhed*, Dpa'o gtsug-lag rin-chen phreng-ba states (PT fol. 119b/5): "(The account) is written exactly the way it is stated by the authoritative *Rba-bzhed*". (*zhes rba bzhed khungs thub las byung ba ji lta ba bkod pa'o //*). There are numerous passages in this section that cannot be found in either the *BZ*, nor in the Beijing text and vice versa. A great deal more preliminary work needs to be done before use can be made of *the Sba-bzhed*, and before one can start talking about *its* author.



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