

The Tibetan Translation of the Indian Buddhist Epistemological Corpus

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As Buddhism was transmitted to Tibet, a huge number of texts were translated from Sanskrit, Chinese and other Asian languages into Tibetan. Epistemological treatises composed by Indian Buddhist scholars – works focusing on the nature of »valid cognition« and exploring peripheral issues of philosophy of mind, logic, and language – were, from the very beginning, part of the translated corpus, and had a profound impact on Tibetan intellectual history. This paper looks into the progression of the translation of such works in the two phases of the diffusion of Buddhism to Tibet – the early phase in the seventh to the ninth centuries and the later phase starting in the late tenth century – on the basis of lists of translated works in various catalogues compiled in these two phases and the contents of the section »epistemology« of canonical collections (Tenjur). The paper inquires into the prerogatives that directed the choice of works that were translated, the broader or narrower diffusion of existing translations, and also highlights preferences regarding which works were studied in particular contexts. I consider in particular the contribution of the famous »Great translator«, Ngok Loden Shérap (*rngog blo ldan shes rab*, 1059-1109), who was also a pioneer exegete, and discuss some of the practicalities and methodology in the translation process, touching on the question of terminology and translation style. The paper also reflects on the status of translated works as authentic sources by proxy, and correlatively, on the impact of mistaken translations and the strategies developed to avoid them.

Keywords: translation; Tibetan; Buddhism; epistemology; literature; canon

Introduction

The translation of Buddhist texts into Tibetan was concomitant, from the very beginning, with the transmission of Buddhism to Tibet. Tönmi Sambhota (*thon mi sambho ʼta*) the minister of the emperor who was responsible for the adoption of Buddhism in Tibet, Songtsen Gampo (*srong btsan sgam po*, who reigned from c. 618 CE until 649 CE), is not only credited with the invention of the Tibetan script, but also with the translation of more than twenty works.¹ Translation efforts continued to be carried out under imperial sponsorship during the first half of the eighth century and intensified during the reign of the emperor Trisong Detsen (*khri srong lde btsan*, r. 755-797). Among three early catalogues of this period, the

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1 See Skilling, From bKa' bstan bcos, 87-89. The dates indicated in this paper for the reign of the emperors follow Kollmar-Paulenz, *Kleine Geschichte Tibets*.

Lenkar catalogue, dating to the beginning of the ninth century, shortly after the reign of Trisong Detsen, already lists 736 Buddhist works kept in the palace of Lenkar (*lhan kar/ldan dkar*), translated into Tibetan from Sanskrit as well as from Chinese and other Asian languages.² After the collapse of the Tibetan Empire in the middle of the ninth century and the ensuing era of political fragmentation, the spread of Buddhism was resumed on a broader scale from the middle of the tenth century. In this period, known in Tibetan religious history as the »Later Diffusion of the Doctrine«, groups of Tibetan students were sent to Indian regions to learn Sanskrit and acquire Buddhist teachings, and Indian masters were invited to Tibet. These cross-cultural exchanges resulted in the translation (and retranslation) of huge numbers of texts, and set in motion an autochthonous tradition of interpretation that shaped the development of Tibetan Buddhism. The translated Buddhist works were later regrouped and organized into the twofold collection often referred to in the West as the »Buddhist canon«, consisting of the Kanjur (*bka' gyur*) – lit. »translation of the Buddha's words« – and the Tenjur (*bstan gyur*) – lit. »translation of teachings«, namely of treatises composed by (mainly) Indian scholars who commented or expanded on the Buddha's words.³ While the *Lenkar catalogue* counted 736 works, the number of translated works in the Dergé recension of the Buddhist canon compiled in the eighteenth century is over 5000.⁴

This paper focuses on the translation of a specific range of texts within the Indian Buddhist corpus, logico-epistemological treatises, with the aim of facilitating comparison with translation pertaining to other fields of Buddhist learning and with other cultures of translation. The textual tradition under consideration in this paper is termed *pramāṇa* in Sanskrit (translated as *tshad ma* in Tibetan), after the technical term for »valid cognition«, one of the key notions discussed in this literature. Epistemological treatises focus on the issue of the number of the sources of knowledge, their definition and objects, and also deal with philosophy of mind, logic, argumentation, language, etc. There was no »epistemological school« properly speaking, but individual Buddhist scholars who shared an interest in these issues and wrote treatises on these topics, or commented on other thinkers' treatises. In their survey of the literature of the Indian Buddhist epistemological tradition, Steinkellner and Much identify 45 authors of epistemological treatises whose dates range from the sixth to the thirteenth centuries, and 152 titles of epistemological works composed in Sanskrit.⁵ However,

2 See Lalou, *Textes bouddhiques*, and Herrmann-Pfandt, *Lhan Kar Ma*. On the other two catalogues, the *Pangtang-ma* (*Phang thang ma*) and the *Chimpuma* (*mChims phu ma*), see Herrmann-Pfandt, *Lhan Kar Ma*, xvi-xxvii.

3 For an introduction to the complex history of the constitution of the Kanjur and Tenjur collections see Skilling, *From bKa' bstan bcos*, as well as (for the Kanjur) Harrison, *Brief history and Eimer*, *Note on the history*.

4 The Dergé canon is one of the many Kanjur and Tenjur collections that are extant today, and is often referred to as print copies are easily accessible and it has been fully digitally inputted by the Asian Classics Input Project (www.asianclassics.org). The website Resources for Kanjur and Tanjur Studies at the University of Vienna (www.istb.univie.ac.at/kanjur) holds digitized pages of more than 50 Kanjur collections, and a selected bibliography on Kanjur-related research.

5 See Steinkellner and Much, *Texte der erkenntnistheoretischen Schule*. Many of the works in this list are actually lost, or only accessible via their Tibetan translation or, for some, their Chinese version. Some additional names and titles that were not included in the main list are mentioned in the introduction and in the appendices.

not all of these works were translated into Tibetan. In what follows, I consider first the progression of the translation of epistemological works and the prerogatives in the prioritization of texts to be translated. I then discuss practicalities of the translation process, presenting examples from a »Great Translator« who made a major contribution to the translation of epistemological works in the eleventh century. Further, I investigate some aspects of the destiny of the translated logico-epistemological corpus.

The Indian Buddhist Epistemological Corpus in Tibetan Translation

Ancient and Modern Surveys

The development of Tibetan epistemology was for the most part dependent on the availability of translated works, even if some Tibetan scholars also consulted Sanskrit versions and oral transmission of the contents of untranslated works played some role. The existence of some ancient catalogues and surveys allows us to trace the progression of the translation of the Indian Buddhist epistemological corpus into Tibetan, and thereby to assess the textual background available to Tibetan logicians (at least potentially) at specific points in time. Such catalogues compensate for the lack of information in the colophons of the works preserved in the canonical collections, which commonly do not attach a date to the names of the translator(s) (when they are mentioned), and do not systematically refer to the existence of previous translations that were subsequently revised. These catalogues also provide evidence for translated works that became unavailable at a later date.

In this section, I will consider five sources: the early ninth-century *Lenkar catalogue* mentioned in the introduction, a thirteenth-century survey by Chomden Reldri (*bcom ldan ral gri*, 1227-1305), a catalogue compiled by his disciple Ūpa Losel Tsöpé Senggé (*dbus pa blo gsal rtsod pa'i seng ge*, c. 1270-1355), a subsequent catalogue by Butön Rinchendrup (*bu ston rin chen grub*, 1290-1364), and the section »epistemology« in the Dergé Tenjur.⁶

In spite of their technical and not obviously religious nature, logico-epistemological treatises were considered an important part of the Indian corpus to be translated from early on in the course of the diffusion of Buddhism to Tibet, and had a significant impact on Tibet's intellectual history.⁷ The imperial-era *Lenkar catalogue* lists for Buddhist texts in the category »logic« (for which it uses the Sanskrit term *tarka*) 30 works that had already been translated at the end of the eighth century. Four more entries are listed in the category »translations in progress«.⁸ One may surmise that the Buddhist master Śāntarakṣita and his disciple Kamalaśīla (c. 740-795), both experts in the field of logic, who had been successively invited to Tibet by the emperor Trisong Detsen, may have played a part in this early interest. Śāntarakṣita's main epistemological work (the *Tattvasaṃgraha*) and Kamalaśīla's commentary

6 In what follows, the reference numbers provided by the editors of the respective sources are prefixed by »L« for the *Lenkar catalogue*, by »C« for Chomden's list, by »B« for Butön's catalogue, and by »D« for the Dergé Tenjur. A summarizing table is provided in the Appendix.

7 For an overview, see Steinkellner, Buddhist tradition of epistemology. On some main figures of the early epistemological tradition, see van der Kuijp, *Contributions*.

8 Lalou, Textes bouddhiques, section 28, L695-722 (see Appendix, I, III, IV) and section 30, L733-736 for the »translations in progress« (*bstan bcos sgyur 'phro*) (see Appendix, II). For the identification of these texts, see Frauwallner, Zu den buddhistischen Texten, and Herrmann-Pfandt, *Lhan Kar Ma*, 388-401 and 408-411. The latter also provides corresponding numbers in another early catalogue, the *Pangtangma*, in the Dergé Tibetan canonical collection, the Chinese Buddhist canon, and in Butön's catalogue (on which see below).

are listed among the works whose translation is »in progress« in the *Lenkar catalogue* (L736). Apart from the entries in the *Lenkar catalogue*, only a few other epistemological works are known to have been translated during the imperial period.⁹

Indications about the considerable growth of the translated corpus at the time of the Later Diffusion of the Doctrine can be gathered from the proto-canon catalogue compiled in 1270 by Chomden Reldri, the *Sunbeam-ornament of the Spread of the Teaching* (*bstan pa rgyas pa rgyan gyi nyi 'od*), which was recently edited on the basis of two unpublished manuscripts.¹⁰ According to a post-colophonic note, the catalogue lists more than 2079 titles of Indian Buddhist texts translated into Tibetan (against 736 in the *Lenkar catalogue*). Epistemological works are listed in two places. First, in the category »logic« (Tib. *rtog ge*, Skt. **tarka*) of his catalogue – a subcategory of the »external domains of knowledge« – Chomden Reldri lists 36 titles that were translated at the time of the Earlier Diffusion.¹¹ The texts listed here mostly correspond to the entries of the *Lenkar catalogue*, including also the entries from the *Lenkar* list of »translations in progress«.¹² Three entries present in the *Lenkar catalogue* are missing in Chomden's list (L700, L716 and L717). On the other hand, three entries that were not listed in the *Lenkar catalogue* appear in Chomden's list.¹³

Additional epistemological treatises, translated or retranslated after the time of emperor Trisong Detsen, are listed in subsequent sections of Chomden's catalogue, where they are grouped according to the identity of the translator. The main contributions are six translations by Ma Gewé Lodrö (*rma dge ba'i blo gros*), a student of Rinchen Zangpo (*rin chen bzang po*, 958-1055),¹⁴ and 14 translations by the »Great translator«, Ngok Loden Shéráp (*rngog blo ldan shes rab*, 1059-1109), about whom more will be said in the next section.¹⁵ Other scholars each translated one or two epistemological treatises among their other contributions.¹⁶

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- 9 See Appendix, V. For four of them, which are preserved in the Dergé Tenjur (D4209, D4233, D4242, D4253, this can be assessed in view of the identity of the translator. The other two are works listed by Chomden Reldri together with pre-imperial translations (see below).
- 10 Schaeffer and van der Kuijp, *Early Tibetan Survey*. This publication also provides cross-references to the *Lenkar catalogue*, Butön's catalogue (on which see below), and the Dergé canonical collection.
- 11 Schaeffer and van der Kuijp, *Early Tibetan Survey*, 189-191, C19.1-C19.36.
- 12 See Appendix, II. In addition to including these titles in the category »logic«, Chomden reports their being listed as »in progress« after enumerating partial and unrevised translations (Schaeffer and van der Kuijp, *Early Tibetan Survey*, 193).
- 13 See Appendix, V.
- 14 C23.17, C23.18, C23.19 (retranslation), C23.22, C23.25, C23.26 (Schaeffer and van der Kuijp, *Early Tibetan Survey*, 209-210, section 23).
- 15 Fourteen titles are listed in the group »logic and epistemology« (*tshad ma*) of Ngok's translations (C27.66-27.79). Two additional entries, C27.89-27.90, appear in the next group, »revisions« (*'gyur chos*) (Schaeffer and van der Kuijp, *Early Tibetan Survey*, 240-241).
- 16 Lha Lama Zhiwaö (*lha bla ma zhi ba 'od*): C23.50; Drom Sengkar Shakya Ö (*'brom seng dkar shakya 'od*): C25.99, C25.104; Zhangzhunggi Mangor Jangchub Shéráp (*zhang zhung gi mang 'or byang chub shes rab*): C25.133, C25.134; Manang Drakjor Shéráp (*ma snang grags 'byor shes rab*): C25.128; Laching Tönbar (*la chings ston 'bar*): C26.130; Majo Zhangmö Mangpo Gényen Senggyel (*ma jo zhang mo'i mang po dge gnyen seng rgyal*): C26.167; Zangkar Pakpa Shéráp (*zangs skar 'phags pa shes rab*): C27.5; Nyen Darmadrak (*gnyan dar ma grags*): C27.18, C27.21; Zugawa Dorjé (*zu dga' ba rdo rje*): C27.94.

The number of translated epistemological treatises in Chomden's list totals 59, almost twice as many as in the *Lenkar catalogue*. The translation of all the works whose translation was »in progress« in the imperial period was completed by Chomden's time, and Chomden's list includes 23 works that were translated for the first time in the post-imperial period.¹⁷ Some imperial-era translations, however, were no longer available to Chomden; as mentioned, his list does not include three texts that were listed in the *Lenkar catalogue*. Some recent post-imperial translations also did not find their way into Chomden's list. Notably absent is a work by Jitāri (c. 940-980), the *Bālāvatāratarka*, which had already been translated in the first half of the twelfth century and was (at least partially) known among twelfth- and thirteenth-century Tibetan scholars. This could hint at a slow process in the circulation of »minor« translated works.¹⁸

There is some doubt as to the exact nature of Chomden Reldri's list. According to Schaeffer and van der Kuijp, it is probably not strictly speaking the catalogue of an existing collection in the monastery where he was residing, i.e., Narthang (*snar thang*), although a large portion of the works listed were possibly part of his monastery's library. It is, rather, a type of survey of Indian treatises translated into Tibetan, known to him from various lists and catalogues, as well as manuscript collections.¹⁹ Such a list, however, must be distinguished from the enumeration Chomden provides in his survey of Indian epistemological literature (Buddhist and non-Buddhist), a short work that recently surfaced as part of a vast collection of texts preserved at Drepung (*'bras spungs*) monastery.²⁰ The purpose of the latter is to review the works of epistemology that were composed in India and in Kashmir, regardless of their current availability in Sanskrit or Tibetan. It is organized based on authors. A distinction is made between the commentaries they composed and their own treatises, which are often not listed exhaustively. This panoramic survey mentions a number of works that were never translated into Tibetan, works that might already have been lost in Chomden's time or the existence of which is questionable (for instance, subcommentaries on Dharmottara's *Pramāṇaviniś-cayaṭīkā* by Yamāri and Jayanta), and works Chomden probably did not himself have access to, as he does not list them in his catalogue (e.g., works by Jitāri and Jinendrabuddhi).

17 See Appendix, VI.

18 Jitāri's work is mentioned in the catalogue of Chomden's disciple Ūpa Losel, on whom see below (van der Kuijp, Tibetan cultural history IV, 391). The name of Jitāri appears in Chomden's panorama of Indian epistemological literature mentioned below (f. 3b2).

19 Schaeffer and van der Kuijp, *Early Tibetan Survey*, 53-54, 57 and 60. Chomden Reldri had consulted the *Lenkar catalogue* as well as the *Pangtangma*, and catalogues from the time of the Later Diffusion compiled by Rinchen Zangpo, Naktso Lotsawa Tsültrim Gyelwa (*nag tsho lo tsā ba tshul khrims rgyal ba*, 1011-1064) and Ngok.

20 The manuscript from Drepung (*Drepung catalogue* No 017772, signature: phyi, ra, 199) was published in the *Collected Works of the Kadampas*, vol. 69, 775-780. Colophon title: *gtan tshigs rig pa tshad ma'i bstan bcos kyi byung tshul* »How epistemological works of logic (lit. »science of evidence«) arose«; incipit title: *phyi nang gi rtog ge tshad ma'i bstan bcos ji ltar byung ba'i tshul* »How epistemological works of Buddhist and non-Buddhist logic arose.«

Further evidence of the state of the translated corpus that shortly post-dates Chomden's list is a catalogue of the Narthang Tenjur compiled by Chomden Reldri's disciple Üpa Losel, who acknowledges his reliance on his teacher's catalogue.²¹ There are some fluctuations from Chomden's list, for instance, three works by Śubhagupta and a work by Dharmottara, the translation of which dates to the imperial period, are not listed by Üpa.²² Üpa's list shows another layer of development in the translation of the epistemological corpus with the inclusion of six further works not listed by Chomden, such as the above-mentioned work by Jitāri, Dignāga's main work, the *Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti*, and works by Mutik Bumpa (*bram ze mu tig bum pa*, Skt. *Muktākalaśa) and by the thirteenth-century scholar Ratnavajra (Tib. Rinchen Dorjé [*rin chen rdo rje*]).²³

The Narthang Tenjur was the point of departure of a collection of manuscripts that formed the Zhalu (*zhwa lu*) Tenjur. The latter was catalogued in 1335 by Butön Rinchendrup, who appended the list to his *History of the Buddhist Doctrine*.²⁴ Butön's catalogue, post-dating Chomden's list by 65 years, shows further progression in the translation of Buddhist works (now reaching 2898 items in total). The list of epistemological works in Butön's catalogue numbers 71 entries (B996-B1067) representing 70 works,²⁵ the last 10 of which are works »to be searched for« (*btsal bar bya*) which never found their way into Tenjur collections.²⁶ Butön knows of several works translated at the time of the Earlier Diffusion which Chomden did not include in his list,²⁷ but, conversely, does not mention some works referred to by Chomden among the imperial-era translations (C19.35 and C19.36) and among translations from the time of the Later Diffusion (C27.76, C25.134, C26.130). As for the »novelties«, Butön's list contains five works translated at the time of the Later Diffusion that were not mentioned by Chomden and Üpa.²⁸ This notably includes Jinendrabuddhi's commentary on Dignāga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya* that had been translated at the beginning of the fourteenth century by Pang Lotsawa Lodrö Tenpa (*dpang lo tsā ba blo gros brtan pa*, 1276-1342) (B1057). On the other hand, he does not list the *Tarkabhāṣā* of Mokṣākaragupta (between 1050 and 1292), also translated by Pang Lotsawa.

Only three works that were not listed by Butön – the *Tarkabhāṣā* and two others – were later added to the corpus and are included in the Dergé Tenjur.²⁹

21 See van der Kuijp, *Tibetan cultural history IV*, 388-393, and 390-392 for the edition of the section on epistemological works in a 59-folio manuscript preserved at the Tibetan library of the Cultural Palace of Nationalities (fols. 45a-47a). Schaeffer and van der Kuijp, *Early Tibetan Survey*, 10 refers to an 81-folio manuscript of this work with the catalogue no. 002376(1) in the Cultural Palace of Nationalities, in which the section on logico-epistemological works is on fols. 55b3-58a1. Üpa's catalogue lists 2350 titles (*ibid.*, 75), 51 of which for epistemological works.

22 See Appendix, III and IV.

23 See Appendix, VII.

24 Schaeffer and van der Kuijp, *Early Tibetan Survey*, 9-10 and the outline in Appendix 2. For a full list of the works see Nishioka, Index to the catalogue section of Bu-ston's »History of Buddhism«.

25 B1016 and B1017 – commentaries on two chapters of the same work – are considered as distinct entries.

26 Nishioka, Index to the catalogue section 2/5, 67-69. See Appendix, I.

27 See Appendix, I and V.

28 See Appendix, VIII.

29 See Appendix, IX.

While Steinkellner and Much's survey of Indian epistemological works numbered 152 titles by 45 authors, the eighteenth-century Dergé recension of the Tenjur lists 64 texts by 29 authors in the section »epistemology« (*tshad ma*).³⁰ Some additional texts may have been translated, but were not disseminated beyond the close circle of their translator, and were not included in Tenjur collections.³¹

Translation Priorities

What are the prerogatives that led to the translation of this portion of the corpus, and not of other works? The *Lenkar catalogue* gives us some sense of the priorities and hindrances in the initial phase of translation: the list suggests an attempt to include the works of a major thinker, Dharmakīrti (c. 600-660),³² supplemented by selected commentaries, notably by Vinītadeva. Five works by another author, Śubhagupta (c. 720-780), are not directly part of this scheme. It was suggested that they may have been brought to Tibet together with the works of thinkers that the tradition holds to have been Śubhagupta's students in Kashmir, namely, Dharmottara and Arcaṭa, who had authored commentaries and subcommentaries on Dharmakīrti's works.³³ The opus magnum on logic and epistemology of Dharmakīrti's predecessor Dignāga (c. 480-540) (of which one of Dharmakīrti's main works is a commentary), the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, is absent from this list and was not translated until the end of the eleventh century. Instead, listed in the *Lenkar catalogue* are a work with auto-commentary by Dignāga on Buddhist idealism (L705 and L706, with a commentary by Vinītadeva, L707). In Tibet, Dignāga and Dharmakīrti are often referred to as a pair when mentioning the »founding fathers« of the Indian logico-epistemological tradition. But in view of the *Lenkar catalogue*, the place of leading figure was obviously ascribed to Dharmakīrti. Still, by the ninth century only four of Dharmakīrti's works out of the seven known to us had been translated. The priority here appears to have been given to size: the shortest works were translated, probably because they required less time than the longer and more complex works, an idea confirmed by the fact that Dharmakīrti's major work, the *Pramāṇavārttika*, and a commentary on this text are listed among the works whose translation is »in progress« in the *Lenkar catalogue* (L733 and L734).

30 This section includes 66 items (D4203 to D4268), but in two cases text chapters have been considered as individual entries (D4227/D4229 and D4224/D4225). Another canonical blockprint edition, the Peking Tenjur features the same 64 works in the section »epistemology«, which counts 68 items (5700-5766, with 5717 divided into 5717a and 5717b). Two works appear in different translations in the respective collections (D4203; P5700). The Peking Tenjur has an additional translation for two texts – D4208/P5707 (the only text in this collection translated from a Chinese version); P5706 (translated from the Sanskrit) and D4204/P5701; P5702 (different translators) – and includes two similar versions for the same work (D4239/P5725/P5738). The text chapters corresponding to D4224/D4225 have also been included as distinct entries, i.e., P5726/5722. A work entitled *bKa' yang dag pa'i tshad ma* ascribed to Trisong Detsen, included in the section »epistemology« by Chomden (C19.29) and Üpa, but not by Butön, found its way in the Dergé canon in the section »diverse« (*sna tshogs*) (D4352).

31 For instance, Chomden notes that Sakya Pandita (*sa skya paṇḍita kun dga' rgyal mtshan*, 1182-1251) translated Manorathanandin's *Pramāṇavārttikavṛtti*, a commentary on Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika*, in addition to revising the translation of the latter (Schaeffer and van der Kuijp, *Early Tibetan Survey*, 58-59).

32 See Tillemans, Dharmakīrti.

33 Frauwallner, *Zu den buddhistischen Texten*, 102.

The translations made at the beginning of the Later Diffusion fill in the gaps in the »priority list« of the imperial period by completing the translation of the core texts – Dharmakīrti's seven works – and enhancing the list of related commentaries. Some already translated works were also subjected to revisions.

Looking at the contribution of the »Great translator« Ngok Loden Shérab (about whom more will also be said in the section »Translators and Translations«), who was responsible for the translation (in some cases, the revision) of 15 epistemological works, 14 of which are preserved in the Tenjur,³⁴ we see the priority being given to three works by Dharmakīrti which, in Tibetan classifications, are considered to be his main works (the *Pramāṇavārttika*, *Pramāṇaviniścaya*, and *Nyāyabindu*); for each of these, one commentary is also translated, and in one case a subcommentary. This principle is carried over to Ngok's exegetical contributions: the three works of Dharmakīrti he comments are discussed together with a commentary that Ngok also translated.³⁵ Beside the works of Dharmakīrti and their commentaries, Ngok translated independent treatises by the scholars whose commentary on Dharmakīrti's works Ngok also translated, namely Dharmottara and Śāṅkaranandana – two authors historically linked with Kashmir.³⁶

Epistemology seems to have been a topic of predilection for Ngok, and to some extent a priority in his translation agenda. The works of logic and epistemology he translated represent about a third of his translation achievements. According to some accounts, Ngok was sent to Kashmir precisely in order to translate epistemological works at the request of the king of Guge.³⁷ Ngok's success in fulfilling this agenda was a matter of his finding the right teacher(s). An anecdote in Ngok's biography anent his arrival in Kashmir relates that he was told that all the learned pandits had gone to Tibet and only the ordinary ones were left.³⁸ This anecdote may be taken with a grain of salt, as Ngok's Kashmiri masters – in particular Parahitabhadra and Bhavyarāja – appear to have been more than »ordinary pandits«. However, this gives an additional perspective to the prerogatives of translation: which Indian texts could be learned and translated now largely depended on which texts could actually be obtained in physical form or via oral teaching, and therefore on which teachers were available and what their area and scope of expertise was. Time and money stand out as additional factors, as travel was expensive, just as teachings could be.

34 See Kramer, *Great Tibetan Translator*, 61-69 and Hugon, Tracing the early developments, 199. Chomden's list has 16 entries for Ngok's translations (see n. 15), as it distinguishes the verses and the commentary for one work (C27.77, C27.78). Kramer adds, as an uncertain case, the translation of Ravigupta's *Pramāṇavārttikavṛtti* (D4224+D4225), which is ascribed to Ngok by Butön, but which Chomden seems to ascribe to Ma Gewé Lodrö (C23.26).

35 Cf. Hugon, Tracing the early developments, 199-200.

36 Dharmottara came to Kashmir in the second half or last quarter of the eighth century (Krasser, Relationship), while Śāṅkaranandana was himself Kashmiri (Eltschinger, Oeuvres de Śāṅkaranandana, 83-84).

37 Van der Kuijp, *Contributions*, 32 n. 89, and see below »Methodology«.

38 Kano, *Buddha-Nature*, 199.

Preservation and Prolongation

The Buddhist logico-epistemological tradition survived in the Indian subcontinent at least up to the middle of the fifteenth century in spite of the demise of Buddhism.³⁹ Indian, Kashmiri, and Nepalese Buddhist teachers still made their way into Tibet in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and Tibetans kept travelling south to become translators and obtain teaching, but none of them appear to have had a significant impact in the logico-epistemological domain.⁴⁰ The latest record in Steinkellner and Much's survey is from the thirteenth century: the marginal annotations by Vibhūticandra to a manuscript of a commentary by Manorathanandin to a work by Dharmakīrti. Vibhūticandra⁴¹ was among the Indian pandits who travelled to Tibet in the thirteenth century and were active in teaching and translating, sometimes also in writing. While none of these Indian pandits is credited with any formal compositions in the domain of epistemology, their interpretations are sometimes quoted in works by their Tibetan students.⁴² These pandits contributed to the diffusion of India's intellectual heritage in the form of teachings, but also in a material form, as they brought with them palm-leaf manuscripts of numerous works.⁴³ Tibetans were actors in the preservation of the Indian tradition through the safeguarding of these material traces and via the translation of Indian works. In addition, they prolonged this tradition by their exegeses, but also transformed and integrated it within the autochthonous tradition that developed from the spread of Buddhist teachings in Tibet, a tradition that is still alive today.

Translators and Translations

Teams

Ngok's travel to Kashmir to receive instruction from Buddhist masters followed a religious council organized in 1076 by the king of Guge, Tsédé (*rtse lde*, reigned 1057-1088), in Tholing (*tho ling*) in Western Tibet at the time of the revival of Buddhist culture in Tibet. This council, which brought together religious scholars from all parts of Tibet, had been summoned for revising old translations and translating new texts. But the results of the meeting were unsatisfactory and it was decided that a group of monk-scholars were to be sent to study with pandits in Indian regions. Ngok left with five others, with funding from Wangdé (*dbang lde*, who was to succeed to Tsédé on the throne), whom he later solicited again for a prolongation of his stay in Kashmir, and once more after returning to Western Tibet to continue his translation work.⁴⁴ Ngok was one of the very few scholars to earn the title »Great translator« (borne before him by Rinchen Zangpo). The biography of Ngok by his disciple

39 Van der Kuijp, *Tibetan cultural history* VI, 935.

40 Van der Kuijp (*Tibetan cultural history* VI, 935) notes, as a possible exception, Pang Lotsawa. He also mentions that the Indian Buddhist monk Lokottara is reported to have travelled to Central Tibet in the mid-1460s, carrying with him a portable library of Sanskrit manuscripts containing, among other things, Buddhist works of epistemology.

41 On whom, see Stearns, *Life and Tibetan legacy*.

42 For instance, in his epistemological work, the *Treasure of Reasoning*, Sakya Pandita refers to the account of Śāṅkaranandana's intention by one of his main teachers, the Indian pandit Śākyaśrībhadrā (referred to as »my abbot«, Tib. *kho bo'i mkhan po*) (van der Kuijp, *Contributions*, 5-6).

43 See Steinkellner, *Tale of leaves*.

44 Kramer, *Great Tibetan Translator*, 37-42.

Drolungpa Lodrö Jungné (*gro lung pa blo gros 'byung gnas*, 1040s-1120s) as well as the colophons of the translated works in the Kanjur provide us with a pool of names of pandits of various nationalities Ngok worked with: Kashmiri, Indian, and Nepalese. The wording of these colophons hints at the works having been translated by teams constituted by, at least, a Tibetan scholar and a pandit proficient in Sanskrit (and, one can surmise, expert in the text/topic considered).⁴⁵ This model appears to have been in place already in the imperial period, as the colophons of works translated in this period often indicate two names for the translators, an Indic name and a Tibetan one. In the works Ngok translated, the expression »etc.« (Tib. *la sogs pa*) is frequently appended to the pandit's name, indicating that the two were not alone. But the exact number of other members on the team and their role in the translation process are unknown. Were they providing expertise? Comparing various manuscripts of the Sanskrit text? Writing down the translation? Proofreading? Helping the pandit and his Tibetan interlocutor to communicate? How such bilingual teams worked is indeed in question. The chief Tibetan member would have been fluent in the target language, Tibetan, and proficient to some degree in the source language of the texts to be translated, Sanskrit (it was after all to learn Sanskrit that young Tibetans were sent abroad), and likely possessed knowledge of an Indic language for communication, unless Sanskrit was used as the *lingua franca*.⁴⁶ The chief pandit would have been proficient in the source language (as a written language), but their proficiency in Tibetan was unlikely in the case of pandits who resided in Indian regions. The situation would have been different for translating teams constituted by a Tibetan scholar and a pandit having travelled to Tibet. Some of the latter indeed became capable in Tibetan to the point of translating their own works themselves – examples of such cases include Vibhūticandra, Jayānanda, and Smṛtijñānakīrti.⁴⁷ When working with a home-based pandit, it would have been up to the Tibetan side of the translators' team to generate the Tibetan translation. The pandit's effective participation in the translation process itself could thus have been limited. He remained instrumental due to his ownership of a manuscript of the text and/or his having memorized the text, his expertise in the topic in general, and his capacity to explain the text in particular. The translation process may have been preceded by some kind of introductory teaching in the topic, or such teaching could have been precisely given on the basis of the text being simultaneously translated.

The efficiency of these teams is impressive. During his stay in Kashmir, which lasted close to 18 years,⁴⁸ Ngok translated 15 works for the domain of logic and epistemology alone. Many of these works are still awaiting a translation in a modern language. In the course of his whole career, Ngok translated (in some cases revised) at least 54 works altogether – three of which are preserved in the Kanjur and 51 in the Tenjur.⁴⁹ According to the account of the size

45 An exception could be the two *Prāmānyaparikṣā* of Dharmottara, for which Ngok is the only translator mentioned in the colophon, but Kramer (*Great Tibetan Translator*, 46) suspects that Ngok was nevertheless assisted.

46 Kramer, *Great Tibetan Translator*, 46.

47 Kramer, *Great Tibetan Translator*, 46 n. 8.

48 Ngok left Tibet in 1076 and returned in 1092, but his stay abroad included studies in Magadha (northeast of India), a pilgrimage to Bodhgayā, and a stay in Nepal (Kramer, *Great Tibetan Translator*, 41-42).

49 The list may extend to 58 with the uncertain cases. See Kramer, *Great Tibetan Translator*, 53-67. Chomden's catalogue lists 69 titles he translated (C27.22-27.79) and revised (27.80-27.90).

of the corpus Ngok translated that is provided in *śloka* units by his biographer Drolungpa, the 15 works on logic and epistemology represent nearly half of the total (i.e., 72,000 *śloka* out of 137,000).⁵⁰ Yet Ngok did not surpass Rinchen Zangpo, to whom Chomden ascribes 213 translations.⁵¹ In addition to these 54 translations, Ngok also authored 52 works, 16 of which are epistemological treatises.⁵² In the years following his return to Tibet (1092, until his passing in 1109), during which he continued his work of translation, he was also active as a teacher in Central Tibet, and was in charge of the abbatial seat of Sangpu (*gsang phu*) monastery, which became a major centre for scholastic studies.

In view of this full agenda, the translation of texts may have been an activity more comparable to the work of an interpreter carrying out a simultaneous translation of an oral teaching than to the minute work of translation commonly undertaken by modern academics. Supporting this idea of fast, but nonetheless careful work, are documents that indirectly attest to Ngok's activities as a reviser. They are two ancient incomplete manuscripts of a Tibetan translation of the *Nyāyabinduṭīkā* (a commentary by Dharmottara on the *Nyāyabindu* of Dharmakīrti) that have been found in Tabo monastery.⁵³ Lasic identifies the Tabo fragments as remainders of an earlier translation of the text by Dharmāloka with the help of Jñānagarbha in c. 800. Having compared this version with the canonical translation (which has numerous problematic readings), Lasic explains the manner in which the revised translation must have been produced by Ngok as follows:

I can say with great certainty that Blo ldan śes rab {=Ngok} wrote his revisions of Dharmāloka's translation directly into a manuscript of that very translation. The scribe who was in charge of preparing a clean copy from the resulting text, however, was evidently not able to interpret Blo ldan śes rab's notes in every case. He often did not understand which parts of the sentences in the old translation were to be replaced by Blo ldan śes rab's changes. As a result, the scribe inserted the reworded phrases, but did not leave out those parts of the older translation which were meant to be deleted. Accordingly, the newly prepared copy of such sentences contained the original sentence combined with Blo ldan śes rab's corrections.⁵⁴

The scribe also apparently did not understand that Ngok intended to replace some technical terms used by Dharmāloka throughout the text, and only replaced them at their first occurrence.⁵⁵ This rare but illuminating case-study shows the expert translator using short-cuts (the implicit equivalent of the »replace all« command), not being overly precise in marking the revisions to be carried out (or trusting too much the scribe's intellectual abilities), and, especially, not taking the time to check the finished product.

50 The rest are 48,000 for the Perfection of Wisdom, 8,400 for miscellaneous treatises, and 8,000 for tantras, bringing the total to 136,400 (Kramer, *Great Tibetan Translator*, 103-106).

51 Schaeffer and van der Kuijp, *Early Tibetan Survey*, 197-208. Tucci (*Indo-Tibetica II*, 40-49) identifies 158 works translated by Rinchen Zangpo in the Kanjur and Tenjur.

52 Kano, *Buddha-Nature*, 204-207.

53 Lasic, Fragments of *Pramāṇa* texts.

54 Lasic, Placing the Tabo *tshad ma* materials, 484-485. See also Lasic, Fragments of *Pramāṇa* texts, 74.

55 Lasic, Fragments of *Pramāṇa* texts, 76.

If the resulting Tibetan version of the *Nyāyabinduṭīkā* preserved in the Tenjur is problematic, overall, the quality achieved by Ngok and his team was high enough for these translations to become the original by proxy for generations of Tibetan scholars. Modern scholars as well were able to study, on the basis of the Tibetan, those texts whose Sanskrit original did not survive, or was not available until recent years.

Methodology

While the mode of operation of translating teams remains in question, one aspect of the methodology of translation can be uncovered when studying closely Ngok's translation of a text and of its commentary, namely, Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇaviniścaya* and Dharmottara's commentary on this work, the *Pramāṇaviniścayaṭīkā*, which were translated by the same team.⁵⁶

The translation of the commentary presupposed an established translation of the base text. This is because the commentary typically refers to lemmas of the base text. These lemmas are integrated in sentences of the commentary rephrasing the base text with the addition of synonyms, glosses, explanations, etc. It is necessary, for the commentary to make sense as a commentary, that these Sanskrit words are rendered by the same Tibetan expression in the translation of the base text and in the translation of the commentary. A particular case of reference to the base text in the commentary are references to the first words of a paragraph to indicate where the passage being commented starts. Here also, in the Tibetan translation of the commentary, the first words mentioned must be the first words in the Tibetan translation of this paragraph in the base text (these might not translate the first words of the paragraph in Sanskrit when the structure of the sentence changes in the translation process).⁵⁷

Conversely, the translation of the base text is frequently informed by the commentary. A typical case is when the base text contains an unfamiliar term. The translation of the synonym provided in the commentary is then used to translate the term in the base text.⁵⁸ In other cases, the Tibetan translation of the base text reflects an interpretative stance or a specification from the commentary.⁵⁹

The two factors mentioned above – need of an established translation of the base text to translate the commentary, and the commentary informing the translation of the base text – indicates that the translation of the base text was made conjointly with the study of the commentary. The words of the commentary that informed the translation of the base text were translated at this point, and a complete translation of the commentary either occurred conjointly to this process, or subsequently, based on the established translation of the base text. What informed the translation of the commentary? Did Ngok and his team have access to a subcommentary of the *Pramāṇaviniścayaṭīkā*, which could account for the unexpected translation for some terms and expressions? No such subcommentary is currently extant.

56 See Hugon, Sanskrit and Tibetan versions.

57 Hugon, Sanskrit and Tibetan versions, 71.

58 Adopting this method could lead to complicated situations when the commentary repeated the lemma from the base text and added a synonym. See Hugon, Sanskrit and Tibetan versions, 91.

59 For instance, the answer to an opponent's objection reading simply »No« (in Sanskrit: *na*) appears as »It is not the same« in Tibetan (*mi mtshungs te*), under the influence of the commentary (Sanskrit: *na samānam*). See Hugon, Sanskrit and Tibetan versions, 93-94.

Chomden referred to two of them in his panoramic survey of Indian epistemology (see above), but did not list them in his catalogue. Ngok himself does not refer to such a subcommentary in his exegesis of the *Pramānaviniścaya*. One can thus rather derive the hypothesis that the translation of difficult expressions in the commentary relied on the explanations of the pandit, i.e., the equivalent of an oral subcommentary.

The link between »translation« and »exegesis« deserves to be explored further. Not all translators were also commentators or authors of independent treatises. But this is a distinctive feature of Ngok's contribution, that he is credited with exegetical works on most of the Indian epistemological treatises he translated. In these exegeses, Ngok does not merely explain the words and meaning of the base texts. He also structures their contents. One way he does so is by imposing a structural hierarchy upon the base texts, with sections and subsections, whereas the base texts are mostly linear (at most divided into chapters). This structural hierarchy is reflected in works presenting only a »synoptic outline« of the base text (a kind of hyper-developed table of contents, with interlinear references to lemmas in the base text playing the role of page numbers), and in »concise guides« – works that combine the synoptic outline with an explanation of each part of the base text referred to. They follow the base text paragraph by paragraph (sometimes smaller units), referring to the base text by quoting the first words in the Tibetan translation, and giving a summarized explanation of the paragraph in question.⁶⁰

A second way of structuring the contents of the base text is by using as tools, chiefly, (i) definition (identifying the definiens for key notions and their instances), (ii) division (distinguishing between various types and identifying their respective definiens and their instances), and (iii) discussion (examination of other views and of potential or actual objections against one's own view). The typologies established through (ii) sometimes reflect divisions in the base texts, but a number of typologies are an exegetical tool for organizing cases and examples discussed in the base text individually.⁶¹ Whether such organizational devices, as well as interpretative comments, represent Ngok's inventiveness, or are grounded in the teachings he received in Kashmir is an open question.

Ngok's »concise guides« definitely stand out as a by-product of the translation process. Whether composed simultaneously or subsequently to the translation of the base text, they guaranteed that comprehension of the meaning was transmitted alongside the text itself, thus ensuring that the translated treatises could be read and understood by Tibetans.

60 See also the discussion of these genres in Kano, *Buddha-Nature*, 234-238.

61 A famous example is the »typology of invalid cognitions« found in Ngok's works, which builds on cases exemplifying cognitions that fail to be valid in two epistemological works of Dharmottara (see Hugon, *Tracing the early developments*).

Terminology and Translation Style

Tibetan translations are characterized by the use of the so-called »religious language« (*chos skad*), a somewhat artificial adaptation of Tibetan, which is not obviously comprehensible to Tibetan speakers without specific training. This artificial language permeated autochthonous compositions in such a way that it is not always easy to decide whether a text is a Tibetan translation or a work originally written in Tibetan.⁶² Integrated in this language is the specific terminology used in Indian Buddhist texts. The absence of philosophical literature in Tibet prior to the diffusion of Buddhism required the creation of numerous new terms in Tibetan. Epistemological texts contain their share of technical terms.⁶³

A bilingual glossary was created for translation work at the time of the Earlier Diffusion of Buddhism to Tibet: the *Mahāvvyutpatti*, containing close to 10,000 entries, and the *Madhyavyutpatti*, a work explaining selected entries of the former and introducing the principles of translating Indian Buddhist texts. Both were compiled on the orders of the emperor Trisong Detsen and completed under the reign of Tride Songtsen (*khri lde srong bstan*, reigned c. 799-815), and their application was promulgated by imperial decree.⁶⁴ Previous translations were revised according to the new official standards of grammar and terminology and new translations were made in the following years, under the reign of Trisuk Detsen (*khri gtsug lde btsan*, reigned c. 815-836).

The *Mahāvvyutpatti* glossary is not alphabetical but organized around specific topics. The section devoted to terms related to logic and epistemology (*pramāṇa-tarka-nirgatārthāḥ* starting with item No. 4404 in Sasaki's edition) has 119 entries. One of them (No. 4432) strikes one as the relic of »calque expressions«: the prescribed translation for the Sanskrit *hetvābhāsa* (a term that refers to incorrect logical reasons in inferential reasoning, commonly translated as »pseudo-logical reason« in English), is *rgyu ltar snang ba*. Here, »*rgyu*« mirrors the Sanskrit »*hetu*«, whose first meaning is »cause.« The logical reason is indeed a »cause« or »motive« for inferring a property to be proven. This prescribed translation, *rgyu ltar snang ba*, is, however, not found anywhere in the Tenjur. The Sanskrit *hetvābhāsa* is seen, instead, to be translated as *gtan tshigs ltar snang* and, more generally, the Sanskrit *hetu* used in the sense of »logical reason« is translated as *gtan tshigs* – a translation actually also attested in the *Mahāvvyutpatti*, for instance, in the case of *hetuvidyā* (»the science of logic«, item No. 1556), for which the Tibetan *gtan tshigs kyi rig pa* is prescribed.⁶⁵

Like »calque translation« of individual words, mechanical principles of translation for sentences tend to yield as a result a text that is completely unreadable in Tibetan, at best suggesting the Sanskrit original. Ngok, in contrast, was translating with the aim of producing a resulting text that was readable and made sense (admittedly for an audience of specialists) in the target language, Tibetan. This is notably observable in the translation of long and

62 For examples, see Ruegg, *Indian and the Indic*.

63 On the translation of Indian Buddhist technical terminology, see Ruegg, *Traduction de la terminologie*.

64 Herrmann-Pfandt, *Lhan Kar Ma*, xi.

65 The term *gtan tshigs* itself existed in Tibetan beforehand, but is attested in contexts not related to logical argumentation – rather in the legal context – in several old Tibetan documents (cf. https://otdo.aa-ken.jp/archives.cgi?p=Pt_0999,Pt_1084,Or_15000_0467).

complex sentences, where he does not hesitate to switch the parts around, to repeat some expressions, and to make explicit relations between words and between sentences in a way the Sanskrit original does not, here also involving his interpretation of the base text. This style of translation is both a blessing and a curse because the translator makes a decision on behalf of the reader – a decision that the reader would have to make themselves if reading the Sanskrit version. Translators, in Ngok's time, did not write footnotes spelling out various possible interpretations of the Sanskrit version of the base text in the margins of their translation. They might, however, address such issues in commentaries they composed.

Tibetan translators translated *everything* in the base text into Tibetan. There are rare exceptions where sentences of base texts appear to have been left out. For instance, in his translation of Dharmottara's *Pramāṇaviniścayaṭīkā*, Ngok's Tibetan translation lacks an equivalent for sentences that are, in Sanskrit, etymological and grammatical explanations. This is not to say that such sentences *cannot* be translated. Simply, the result in Tibetan makes no sense unless one knows something about compounds in Sanskrit.

The emperor's edict prohibited the use of Sanskrit loan terms in translations. In their own compositions, early Tibetan scholars appear to have been less strict and frequently used Sanskrit loan words rather than the prescribed Tibetan equivalent or a calque. For instance, early Tibetan works of epistemology use *hetu* for »logical reason« instead of the usual Tibetan translation *gtan tshigs* (or *rgyu*), and write *buta* for Buddha. This was maybe a reflex of the language used by teachers who were using Sanskrit as a *lingua franca*, as scholars of Buddhist studies nowadays still often do. Some of the Sanskrit loan words are transcribed in Tibetan in a way that suggests a Kashmiri pronunciation (e.g., *bodhe* for *bodhi*, *ede* for *ādi*).

Revisions

Some texts were translated several times independently by different scholars, some were translated once, then later retranslated or revised (with varying numbers of changes), because the existing translation was judged inadequate, or because a new manuscript source was consulted that provided better readings. Which texts were retranslated may be indicative of a specific interest for important works and authors.⁶⁶ One such case is the *Pramāṇavārttika* of Dharmakīrti, which underwent three successive revisions.⁶⁷

Many – more or less subtle – changes could have taken place until a translated text was included in a canonical collection. For instance, my comparison of the lemmas of the *Pramāṇaviniścaya* cited by Ngok (who translated the work) in his own commentary on this treatise with lemmas cited in other Tibetan *Pramāṇaviniścaya*-commentaries and with the canonical translation shows that revisions were carried out over time, although on a small

66 The Dergé Tenjur includes 17 epistemological works translated during the imperial period, the translation of which was not revised at the time of the Later Diffusion. The 7 works that were revised are by the founding fathers Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, and by Dharmottara. See Appendix, III and IV.

67 See Franco, Tibetan translations of the *Pramāṇavārttika* and Kramer, *Great Tibetan Translator*, 61-62. Listed as »translation in progress« in the *Lenkar catalogue*, this work was translated in the middle of the eleventh century, then slightly corrected and newly translated by Ngok and Bhavyarāja in Kashmir under the order of King Wangdé. This translation was revised in the thirteenth century by Sakya Pandita and Śākyaśrībhadrā. This is, to my knowledge, the only work translated by Ngok containing in its colophon mention of having been revised extensively.

scale. Changes could be made to the translation by the translator himself or through the agency of other scholars involved in the transmission of the translated text. Some changes were voluntary, genuine revisions (meant to improve the original translation), others are due to forgetfulness or scribal errors.⁶⁸ What each text in the Tenjur represents is actually an edited version based on manuscript sources that are (with few exceptions) not available to us. Some of these sources were probably already revised versions of the »original translation« (whether this was acknowledged explicitly or not in their colophon). As time went by and more versions were in circulation, the text having been copied and recopied multiple times, while being revised in the process, giving rise to a multitude of more or less diverging witnesses, it becomes difficult to say which version of the translation (if only one) Tibetan commentators were aware of and relied on. In fact, we can only establish which version of the translation they chose.

The Destiny of the Translated Corpus

Available Translations, Known Translations, Studied Translations

The importance of translation for the development of a particular domain of Buddhist learning can be read into the periodization of Tibetan epistemology proposed by van der Kuijp.⁶⁹ In the case of the three major works of Dharmakīrti, the shorter of them, the *Nyāyabindu*, which had already been translated at the time of the Earlier Diffusion, is attested in numerous copies all the way to Dunhuang (which, one may assume, testifies to its popularity). But it seems that as soon as the *Pramāṇaviniścaya* (the treatise of middle size) was translated by Ngok in the eleventh century, it took over and interest in the *Nyāyabindu* drastically declined. The eleventh to thirteenth centuries (the »pre-classical period« in van der Kuijp's periodization) are characterized by almost exclusive reliance on the *Pramāṇaviniścaya*. As bibliographical lists, records of teaching and the extant material attest to, authors typically composed pairs of treatises: a commentary on the *Pramāṇaviniścaya* and an epistemological summary. Such epistemological summaries typically claim to explain »Dharmakīrti's seven works« but actually mainly rely on the *Pramāṇaviniścaya*. There are no Tibetan commentaries on the *Nyāyabindu* until Gyeltsap Darmarinchen's (*rgyal tshab dar ma rin chen*, 1364-1432) »revival« of this text in the fourteenth century, even if the *Nyāyabindu* and Indian commentaries on the text were available in Tibetan, and a »concise guide« had been composed by Ngok on the *Nyāyabinduṭīkā*, Dharmottara's commentary on the *Nyāyabindu*. I suggested that Ngok's writing a concise guide was less a vestige of the interest in the *Nyāyabindu* than a sign of Ngok's interest in Dharmottara's thinking.⁷⁰

In turn, Sakya Pandita's revision of the translation of the *Pramāṇavārttika* in the thirteenth century and the switch of basis of reliance he advocates from the *Pramāṇaviniścaya* to the *Pramāṇavārttika* marks the beginning of the classical period of Tibetan epistemology. Nonetheless, the *Pramāṇavārttika* was available in translation significantly earlier (see n. 67), but, apart from Ngok's (no longer extant) concise guide on the *Pramāṇavārttika* and

68 Hugon, Sanskrit and Tibetan versions.

69 Van der Kuijp, Introduction to Gtsang-nag-pa.

70 Hugon, Tracing the early developments, 204-205.

its commentary by Prajñākaragupta, the *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra* (the translation of which Ngok was also involved in⁷¹), the *Pramāṇavārttika* had not been the object of a commentary in Tibet until the thirteenth century. I leave to another occasion the discussion of the awareness of this work by Ngok's successors. In a general way, one must distinguish the question of whether a text was extant in translation from the question of whether scholars studied this text (and not merely knew it to exist) and cared to make it the object of a commentary. Tibetan scholars before the thirteenth century certainly demonstrate an awareness of an Indian epistemological lineage and associated works, but usually only include the main figures.⁷² Chomden Reldri, the compiler of the proto-canon catalogue and the panoramic survey mentioned above in »Ancient and modern surveys«, who was actively involved in collecting and organizing translations, shows a broader awareness both of the Indian epistemological landscape and of existing translations. He himself authored commentaries on several of Dharmakīrti's works and on Dignāga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya*. The investigation of individual Tibetan epistemological treatises shows that following the rise of interest in the *Pramāṇavārttika* in the thirteenth century, commentaries and subcommentaries on this work also start being studied more thoroughly and are more frequently referred to by Tibetan scholars. Still, the number of Indian epistemological works that had a significant impact remains a fraction of the corpus that was available in translation. This is observable both in the restricted range of works that were the objects of commentaries in Tibet, and in the references to Indian epistemological works found in autochthonous literature.

Tibetan Translations as Authentic Sources by Proxy

For followers of the Great Vehicle (*mahāyāna*), that the religious corpus should and could be translated appears to have been an unchallenged idea. The activity of translation (even in vernacular languages) could even be considered to have been authorized by the Buddha himself in view of the famous statement according to which the doctrine should be taught in the language of the addressee.⁷³ Sakya Pandita considered that the doctrine could be transmitted without any »loss in translation«, provided Tibetan translators and interpreters had sufficient expertise, in particular expertise in the Sanskrit language.⁷⁴ Some Tibetan scholars did have an in-depth knowledge of Sanskrit: for instance, those who had spent time in Indian regions, or studied extensively with Indian pandits or expert Tibetan translators in Tibet. We thus do find evidence of early philological work in commentaries discussing some choice of translation or a particular Sanskrit reading. This is not to be confused with the mention of Sanskrit terms for the sake of explaining their etymology (terms that any scholar in the field would have known in Sanskrit), a Tibetan author giving a Sanskrit title to his work or using a Sanskrit retro-translation of his name. Such practices demonstrate an attitude of respect towards Sanskrit but not necessarily proficiency. Experts in Sanskrit would have been few in number. As a fact, Sanskrit studies were never implemented in the monastic curriculum.

71 See Kramer, *Great Tibetan Translator*, 63-66 and n. 71.

72 They typically follow, as a model, the lineage proposed in Kamalaśīla's *Tattvasaṅgrahapañjikā*.

73 See Ruegg, *Some reflections*, 379-380.

74 Gold, *Dharma's Gatekeepers*, 35-39.

Unlike Christian monks in Medieval Europe, for whom Latin was the linguistic medium, Tibetan Buddhist monks would not have known Sanskrit. For the majority of the Buddhist community, the lack of material sources (paucity of manuscripts of Sanskrit texts) and/or lack of expertise (no knowledge of Sanskrit and/or of Indic scripts) would have prevented first-hand access to the Indian corpus in the original. Translated works, on the other hand, could be deciphered and their language understood (subject to some training). Translated works thus became source texts by proxy. Studying the Indian sources remained prominent in the monastic curriculum in spite of the growth of autochthonous literature and teaching manuals, but the study of these sources was based on translation. Commentaries and commentarial works such as »topical outlines« and »concise guides« also follow the translated version of the base text.

Tibetan translations also played the role of »original source« by proxy when the Tenjur was translated into Mongolian in the eighteenth century. A more modern example can be found in the project »84,000 – Translating the Words of the Buddha«⁷⁵, in which Buddhist works are translated into English from the Tibetan version preserved in the Kanjur and Tenjur.

The Impact of Mistaken Translations

Translators were an instrumental interface between the Indian world and the Tibetan world. At the time of the Later Diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet, a period of Buddhist revival referred to in modern scholarship as the »Buddhist Renaissance period«, the association of India with the source of authentic teaching par excellence developed, further enhancing the religious and social prestige of translators.⁷⁶ The programme of scholarship set out by Sakya Pandita in the thirteenth century, which was to ensure transmission of the doctrine without loss in translation, set the bar very high, requesting of Tibetan scholars that they became the equal of Indian scholars through a mastery of Indian scholarship as well as Sanskrit. This only, affirmed Sakya Pandita, would guard the Tibetan tradition from mistaken translations and wrong interpretations owing to lack of grammatical expertise, or not enough knowledge of the Indian context.⁷⁷ Readers who relied on translations prepared by others were dependent on the translator's input, i.e., of the interpretative choices that guided the translation. Should there be a mistake in the translation, it would impact the reader's comprehension of the text accordingly, sometimes with an enduring impact. In his critique of »unlearned scholars« Sakya Pandita deals with numerous difficulties in translation, not specific to any particular domain of learning. One of them is translation mistakes resulting from a wrong decoding of the source text, such as mistaking homonyms, or splitting words incorrectly.⁷⁸ Such mistakes could only be detected by expert readers with a good command of Sanskrit (those who could reconstruct what the original Sanskrit read) and an understanding of the most common translation mistakes. A typical case involving the translator's choice – and which could result in a mistake – results from the application of *sandhi*, a feature of the Sanskrit language according to which the final sound of a word is

75 Cf. <https://84000.co>.

76 Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance*.

77 Gold, *Dharma's Gatekeepers*, chap. 2.

78 Gold, *Dharma's Gatekeepers*, 31. For instance, as Sanskrit is written without a space between the words, one could understand a word finishing in »ena« not to represent the instrumental form, but the locative form ending in -e followed by a negation (*na*).

transformed according to the initial letter of the following word. In the case of a word ending in *-ā*, the presence or absence of an initial *a-* in the next word is concealed by the *sandhi* phenomenon. The presence/absence of an initial *a-*, however, makes a crucial difference as this *a-* performs the role of negation (just like the English prefixes »un-« and »in-«).⁷⁹

If unskilled translators could thus present a threat and experts were called upon to safeguard the doctrine, even based on a correct translation, exegetes had enough leeway to develop any interpretation they chose, even one in apparent contradiction with the words of the base text. A good translation is thus not all that it takes.

Conclusion

The Indian epistemological corpus available in the Tibetan language did not grow regularly over the course of the transmission of Buddhism. The leap from the 30 items at the beginning of the ninth century to the 59 titles listed in Chomden's 1270 catalogue was the result of an intensive effort, mostly condensed in the eleventh century. Subsequent contributions were limited in number and by the fourteenth century the translated corpus had reached its greatest extent, reflected in the 64 works preserved in the Tenjur. The story of the Indian epistemological corpus in Tibet does not end here. Palm leaf manuscripts did not survive well in India – much less so Buddhist manuscripts, for which there was no ongoing tradition that would have preserved them or made new copies on the subcontinent. But manuscripts that had been brought to Tibet by Indian scholars or by Tibetan students returning home benefited from the dry and cold climate of the Highlands. Scholars working on the Indian epistemological tradition have benefited in recent years from the surfacing of numerous works whose Sanskrit original had been considered lost, and even of works that had previously not been known at all, thus enhancing further Steinkellner and Much's 1995 survey. A highlight has been the surfacing of the Sanskrit version of Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇaviniścaya* and Dharmottara's *Pramāṇaviniścayaṭīkā*, and of Jinendrabuddhi's commentary on Dignāga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya*,⁸⁰ as well as hitherto unknown works by Jitāri.⁸¹ That the surfacing of works previously available in Tibetan translation has not, so far, led to a complete reconsideration of the understanding of Buddhist epistemology obtained on the basis of Tibetan translations speaks in favour of the high quality of the latter. Nonetheless, having access to the original formulation, with its ambiguities and problems that the Tibetan translators struggled with before us, frees us from the interpretation they imposed through their translation. Besides, the Sanskrit material provides further opportunity to investigate translation techniques and, indirectly to reflect on our own translation practices.

79 Due to *sandhi* and the absence of separation between words in writing, both xxxā+x and xxxā+ax end up being written: xxxāx. This case is illustrated in a passage of Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇaviniścaya* that reads *ghaṭasyātmanā tadbhāvārthāntarabhāvavirodhāt*. The words in this expression can be split in two different ways:

a) *ghaṭasyātmanā+atadbhāvārthāntarabhāvavirodhāt*

b) *ghaṭasyātmanā+tadbhāvārthāntarabhāvavirodhāt*

Dharmottara's commentary on this passage shows that he adopted interpretation (b). The canonical translation of the *Pramāṇaviniścaya*, however, reflected interpretation (a) by the use in Tibetan of a negative particle.

80 See Steinkellner, Tale of leaves and Franco, New era. These newly available Sanskrit texts are being edited and published in the framework of an agreement between the Institute for the Cultural and Intellectual History of Asia of the Austrian Academy of Sciences and the China Tibetology Research Center (<https://www.oew.ac.at/research-areas/sanskrit-texts-from-tibet>).

81 See Chu and Franco, Rare manuscripts.

Appendix: Summarizing Table⁸²**Abbreviations**L = *Lenkar catalogue*

C = Chomden's catalogue

U = Ūpa's catalogue

B = Butön's catalogue

D = Dergé Tenjur collection, *Tshad ma* section

◊ indicates that the work is mentioned, but no catalogue number is available

* indicates a Sanskrit name or title reconstructed on the basis of the Tibetan

[] indicate works whose translation is listed as being »in progress«

<> indicate works referred to as »to be searched for«

(I) Works listed in L, lost by the 14th.

Author	Title	L	C	U	B	D
	*Karmaphalasambandhaparīkṣā	695	19.20		<1058>	
	*Karmaphalasambandhaparīkṣāṭīkā	696	19.21		<1059>	
	*Tathāgataparīkṣāsiddhi	718	19.24		<1064>	
	*Madhyamakaparīkṣā	721	19.27		<1067>	
	*Sāmānyābhedapraṭiṣedha	719	19.31		<1065>	
	*Sāmānyābhedapraṭiṣedha	720	19.32		<1066>	
	*Nairātmāsiddhi	712	19.34		<1062>	
Kamalaśīla	*Nyāyabindupūrvapakṣa	700			<1060>	
	*Paralokasiddhiṭīkā	716			<1063>	
	*Sarvajñasiddhi	717			<1061>	

(II) Works listed in L whose translation is in progress in the imperial period

Author	Title	L	C	U	B	D
Dharmakīrti	Pramāṇavārttikakārikā	[733A]	[◊], 19.1, 27.67	◊	1003	4210
Dharmakīrti	Pramāṇavārttikavṛtti	[733B]	23.17	◊	1010	4216
Dharmakīrti	Vādanyāya	[735]	[◊], 19.7, 23.22, 27.21	◊	1009	4218
Śāṅkaranandana	Pramāṇavārttikaṭīkā	[734]	[◊], 19.2?, 27.75	◊	1018	4223
Śāntarakṣita	Tattvasaṃgrahakārikā	[736A]	[◊], 19.18, 23.50	◊	1055	4266
Kamalaśīla	Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā	[736B]	[◊], 19.19, 25.104	◊	1056	4267

82 For more details pertaining to the identification of translators (resp. revisors), date of translation, Tibetan titles of the works, catalogue numbers in the *Pangtangma* catalogue and the Peking Tenjur, and remarks on potential alternative identification of the catalogue entries, see the table available for download at www.oeaw.ac.at/ikga/forschung/tibetologie/materialien. In the table below, I have exchanged the place of the references B1023 and B1060 under the hypothesis that Butön might have confused L700 (not extant) with L701 (extant). I have paired the reference B1061 with L717 (not extant) and B1036 with L711 (extant) under the hypothesis of a confusion, by Butön, about the respective length indicated in his catalogue, which suggests the opposite. I tentatively associated C19.2 with Śāṅkaranandana's *Pramāṇavārttikaṭīkā*, considering the phrasing of the entry (*shakya blo gros ti ka'i stod*, referring to Śākyabuddhi's commentary) to be a mistake. B997 appears in parentheses, as Butön specifically lists the translation by Dépe Shérap (*dad pa'i shes rab*), which is preserved in the Peking Tenjur (P5702) but not in the Dergé Tenjur.

(III) Works listed in L, not revised during the Later Diffusion

Author	Title	L	C	U	B	D
Dharmakīrti	Hetubindu	702	19.8	◇	1006	4213
Dharmakīrti	Santānāntarasiddhi	708	19.10	◇	1008	4219
Dharmakīrti	Sambandhaparīkṣāvṛtti	704B	19.13	◇	1026	4215
Vinītaḍeva	Nyāyabinduṭīkā	699	19.5	◇	1022	4230
Vinītaḍeva	Hetubinduṭīkā	703	19.9	◇	1024	4234
Vinītaḍeva	Santānāntarasiddhiṭīkā	709	19.11	◇	1028	4238
Vinītaḍeva	Sambandhaparīkṣāṭīkā	704C	19.14	◇	1027	4236
Vinītaḍeva	Ālambanaparīkṣāṭīkā	707	19.17	◇	1031	4241
Kamalaśīla	Nyāyabindupūrvapakṣasaṃkṣipta	701	19.6	◇	1023	4232
Śubhagupta	Sarvajñasiddhikārikā	711	19.23	◇	1036	4243
Śubhagupta	Bāhyārthasiddhikārikā	713	19.22	◇	1035	4244
Śubhagupta	Śrutiparīkṣākārikā	722?	19.28		1050	4245
Śubhagupta	Anyāpohavicāra-kārikā	710	19.33		1051	4246
Śubhagupta	Īsvara-bhaṅgakārikā	714?	19.30		1052	4247

(IV) Works listed in L revised at the time of the Later Diffusion

Author	Title	L	C	U	B	D
Dignāga	Ālambanaparīkṣā	705	19.15	◇	998	4205
Dignāga	Ālambanaparīkṣāvṛtti	706	19.16	◇	999	4206
Dharmakīrti	Nyāyabindu	697	19.3, 27.89	◇	1005	4212
Dharmakīrti	Sambandhaparīkṣāprakaraṇa	704A	19.12	◇	1007	4214
Dharmottara	Nyāyabinduṭīkā	698	19.4, 27.90	◇	1021	4231
Dharmottara	Paralokasiddhi	715	19.25		1042	4251

(V) Works translated during the imperial period not listed in L

Author	Title	L	C	U	B	D
	Tib.: sgra la dgag pa bsdus pa (rtsa)		19.35			
	Tib.: sgra la dgag pa bsdus pa ('grel)		19.36			
Dharmottara	Kṣaṇabhaṅgasiddhi		19.26, 25.128, 27.74	◇	1037	4253
Candragomin	Nyāyasiddhyāloka			◇	1045	4242
Dignāga	Hetucakraḍamaru				1002	4209
Jinamitra	Nyāyabindupiṅḍārtha				1049	4233

(VI) Works translated during the Later Diffusion listed in C

Author	Title	L	C	U	B	D
Dignāga	Pramāṇasamuccaya		26.167	◊	996	4203
Dharmakīrti	Pramāṇaviniścaya		27.66	◊	1004	4211
Śākyabuddhi	Pramāṇavārttikaṭikā		23.19	◊	1012	4220
Ravigupta	Pramāṇavārttikavṛtti		23.26	◊ ◊	1016 +1017	4224 +4225
Devendrabuddhi	Pramāṇavārttikapañjikā		23.18	◊	1011	4217
Prajñākaragupta	Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra		27.68	◊	1013	4221
Jayanta/Jina	Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāraṭikā		25.133	◊	1014	4222
Yamāri	Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāraṭikā supariśuddhā		27.69	◊	1015	4226
Arcaṭa	Hetubinduivaraṇa		23.25	◊	1025	4235
Jñānaśrībhadra	Pramāṇaviniścayaṭikā		23.54	◊	1020	4228
Ratnākaraśānti	Antarvyāptisamarthana		25.99	◊	1043	4260
Jñānaśrimitra	Kāryakāraṇabhāvasiddhi		27.18	◊	1044	4258
Śāntarakṣita	Vādanyāyavṛttivipaṅcītārtha		27.5	◊	1030	4239
Dharmottara	Pramāṇaviniścayaṭikā		27.70	◊	1019	4227 +4229
Dharmottara	Bṛhatprāmāṇyaparikṣā		27.71	◊	1032	4248
Dharmottara	Laghupramāṇyaparikṣā		27.72	◊	1033	4249
Dharmottara	Apohaprakaraṇa		27.73	◊	1038	4250
Śāṅkaranandana	Anyāpohasiddhikārikā		27.77, 27.78	◊	1040	4256
Śāṅkaranandana	Pratibandhasiddhikārikā		27.79	◊	1041	4257
Śāṅkaranandana	Sambandhaparikṣānusāra		27.94	◊	1034	4237
Śāṅkaranandana	Madhyaprāmāṇyaparikṣā		27.76			
	Tib.: stong phrag bcwa brgyad ba		25.134 ⁸³			
	Tib.: ye shes dpal gyi tshad ma bsdus pa		26.130			

83 The length indicated by the descriptive title (18,000 *śloka*) corresponds to that of Prajñākaragupta's *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra*, or to Kamalaśīla's *Tattvasaṃgrahaṇāṅjikā*.

(VII) Later Diffusion translations listed in U but not in C

Author	Title	L	C	U	B	D
Dignāga	Pramāṇasamuccayaṽṛtti			◇	(997)	4204
Vinītadeva	Vādanyāyaṭikā			◇	1029	4240
*Muktākalaśa	Kṣaṇabaṅghasiddhivivaraṇa			◇	1039	4254
Jitāri	Bālāvātāratarka			◇	1046	4263
*Ratnavajra	Yuktiprayoga			◇	1053	4265
Ratnākaraśānti	Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi				1054	4259

(VIII) Later Diffusion translations listed in B but not in C or U

Author	Title	L	C	U	B	D
Śankarasvāmin	*Nyāyapraveśa				1000	4208
Dignāga	Trikālaparikṣā				1001	4207
Jitāri	Dharmadharmiviniścaya				1047	4262
Jitāri	Hetutattvopadeśa				1048	4261
Jinendrabuddhi	Pramāṇasamuccayaṭikā				1057	4268

(IX) Works in D not listed in L, C, U or B

Author	Title	L	C	U	B	D
Dānaśīla	Pustakapaṭhopāya					4252
Prajñākaragupta	Sahopalambhaniyamasiddhi					4255
Mokṣākaragupta	Tarkabhāṣā					4264

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