Current Issues and Progress in Tibetan Studies

Proceedings of the Third International Seminar of Young Tibetologists, Kobe 2012

Edited by
Tsuguhito Takeuchi
Kazushi Iwao
Ai Nishida
Seiji Kumagai
Meishi Yamamoto

Research Institute of Foreign Studies
Kobe City University of Foreign Studies

2013
Cover: The drawing of the union of Lion and Garuda is the logo of ISYT drawn by Robert Beer.
CONTENTS

Preface
Tsuguhito Takeuchi ................................................................. i

The Future of Young Tibetologists
Charles Ramble ........................................................................ iii

Christopher Bell
The Ritual Evolution of the Nechung Protector Deities ...................... 1

Yusuke Bessho
Competition for the Mountain Landscape: the Ritual Territories of feng shui
and the yul lha Cult in the East Frontier Region of Amdo .......... 27

Nyima Woser Choekhortshang
A Chinese Imperial Decree and the Yangton Lama of Dolpo ............ 53

Lewis Doney
Emperor, Dharmaraja, Bodhisattva? Inscriptions from the Reign of
Khri Srong lde brtsan ................................................................. 63

Shiho Ebihara
The Inclusive-Exclusive Distinction in Spoken and Written Tibetan .... 85

Franz Xaver Erhard
Remembering History in Amdo: Three Literary Accounts for the Years
from 1956 to 1976 .................................................................. 103

Kalsang Norbu Gurung
Unsolved ‘bon’ Puzzle: The Classical Definitions of Bon ................ 125

Berthe Jansen
Selection at the Gate: Access to the Monkhood and Social Mobility in
Traditional Tibet ....................................................................... 137
Hanung Kim
Sum-pa Ye-shes-dpal-’byor and the Civil War of Eighteenth Century Tibet:
A Preliminary Essay on Ye-shes-dpal-’byor’s Many Roles in
Tibetan Civilization ........................................... 165

Ryosuke Kobayashi
An Analytical Study of the Tibetan Record of the Simla Conference (1913–1914):
Shing stag rgya gar ’phags pa’i yul du dbyin bod rgya gsum chings mo mtha’ lugs kun gsal me long .................................................. 183

Yuri Komatsubara
The Political Relationship between Tibet and the Qing Dynasty in the Latter Half of
the Eighteenth Century and the Nineteenth Century: An Analysis of How bka’-blon
was Chosen .................................................. 201

Kengo Konishi
Between Indigenous Religion and Religious Minorities:
Bonpos’ Attempts to Continue Tradition in Contemporary China .................. 219

Lhundrup Dorje ཀྲུུ་དུྨ་རོ་རེ
གཿང་གི་ཐུན་ཚེ་རི་འབྱུང་ཟུུ་གི་འཕྲུལ་བོར་བོ་འབྲུག་མི་འུ་ ཁྱིལ་འཚོལ། ........................................... 237

Cuilan Liu
Reciters and Chanters: Monastic Musicians in Buddhist Law Texts .................. 255

Yu-Shan Liu
Rethinking the Recently ‘Discovered’ Bon/Zangzhung Traditions: the Case of
Yungdrung Shon Dance (g.yung drung shon rtse) ........................................... 271

Thupten Gawa Matsushita
The Three objects of Buddhist Epistemology ........................................... 291
Hiroshi Nemoto

Compositional Styles in Classical Tibetan Literature: The Poetic Verse of `Jam dbyangs bzhad pa ngag dbang brtson `grus ........................................ 303

Ai Nishida

Bird Divination in Old Tibetan Texts .................................................. 317

Fumihito Nishizawa

gSang phu ne’u thog— Its Contribution to the Re-establishment and Development of Tibetan Buddhism in the Later Diffusion (phyi dar) Period — ............... 343

Emi Oba

Tibetan Rgyal chen bzhi Iconography: Comparing the Representation of Asian Buddhist Deities .................................................. 367

Kensaku Okawa

Land-centered Perspective: A New Way of Looking at Tibetan Traditional Society .................................................. 391

Valentina Punzi

Narrating the Land: Preliminary Thoughts on Polysemic Space in Amdo Oral Tradition .................................................. 407

Reb gong ba Sha bo rta mgrin རེ་བ་བཞི་བ་བཞི་ ལྗོང་སུ་བཞི་ རྒྱུ་བའི་ལུས་ཀྱི་ གཙང་པོ་བཞི་འབྲི་སོགས་ པའི་བོད་པ་ ལེགས་ དཔེར་བྱོས་ མདོག་ ནགས་ བྱ་བྱ་ ཤུགས་ ཕྱོགས་ 421

Jonathan Samuels

An Avuncular Profile: An Examination of the Maternal Uncle (Azhang) and his Significance in Tibetan Culture .................................................. 435

Rolf Scheuermann

When Buddhist Teachings Meet – Preliminary Remarks on the Relationship between the Four Dharmas of Sgam po pa and Kun dga’ snying po’s Parting from the Four Attachments .................................................. 465
Camille Simon
Pha-dam-pa Sangs-rgyas in Tangut Xia: Notes on Khara-khoto Chinese
Manuscript TK329 ................................................................. 489

Penghao Sun
On the Unknown History of a Himalayan Buddhist Enclave:
Spiti Valley before the 10th Century ....................................... 505

Tashi Tsering
Performing Text as Practice: Rdza Dpal sprul’s Practice Manual on the
Bodhi(sattva)caryāvatāra .......................................................... 523

Markus Viehebeck
Nyang-ral Nyi-ma ‘od-zer’s Theory of the Three Vehicles .......... 553

Akinori Yasuda
When Buddhist Teachings Meet –
Preliminary Remarks on the Relationship Between the Four
Dharms of Sgam po pa and Kun dga’ snying po’s Parting from
the Four Attachments

Rolf Scheuermann
University of Vienna

1. Introduction
In the early phase of reception during the second spread of Buddhism in Tibet, distinct Tibetan religious schools had not yet formed. Still, the later Bka’ brgyud tradition generally considers the translator Mar pa chos kyi blo gros (11th century), the yogi Mi la ras pa (1040/52–1123/35), and the monk Sgam po pa bsod nams rin chen (1079–1153) as their three founding fathers. While they are all revered very much by the tradition, it is particularly Sgam po pa, also called Dvags po rin po che, who played a unique role in shaping the tradition. The tradition’s first monastic seat was founded by him in the region Dvags po on the Sgam po mountain, and soon more monasteries were established by his disciples and their followers. These monasteries were the bases for several sub-schools that came to be known as the four great and eight minor Bka’ brgyud traditions (bka’ brgyud che bzhi chung brgyud), collectively referred to by the generic name Dvags po bka’ brgyud. Not only did Sgam po pa directly influence the organizational structure of these various schools, but he also left a significant impact on their doctrinal level, and even on that of Buddhism in Tibet as a whole. In his research on the three vows in Tibetan Buddhism, Jan-Ulrich Sobisch stated that “the earliest Tibetan doctrinal formulations on the three vows” that he was able to locate were those found in Sgam po pa’s collected works.\footnote{Western and Tibetan scholars alike observed that a degree of uncertainty remains as to the authorship of many of the texts in the collected works, several of which seem to be disciples’ notes. (cf. Sobisch 2002, 180f.) The first xylographic print version of the collected works is the 1520 Dvags lha sgam po edition compiled by a distant relative of Sgam po pa, Sgam po pa bsod nams lhun grub (1488–1552). The Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project (NGMPP) microfilmed a copy of this print in 1995 (DKB-Dvags). I will mostly rely on said edition for this paper.}

\footnote{This paper is largely based on the preliminary work for my forthcoming dissertation When Sūtra Meets Tantra. Sgam po pa’s Four Dharma Doctrine as an Example for his Synthesis of the Bka’ gdams and Mahāmudrā Systems.}

\footnote{This dko graphical classification follows Tauscher 1995: 10.}

\footnote{Sobisch 2002: 177.}
Sgam po pa was the first yogi who was also a monk of the Tibetan Bka’ brgyud tradition. He is further credited for combining two of the most prevalent traditions during the second spread of Buddhism in Tibet, the Bka’ gdamgs system of the Indian Buddhist master Atiśa Dīpankāra Śrīnāna (980–1054) and the mahāmudrā system brought to Tibet by Mar pa the translator. The system set down in his works which forms the doctrinal ground for all of the later Bka’ brgyud traditions was therefore characterized as the “unity of Bka’ gdamgs and mahāmudrā” (bka’ phyag zung ’brel). His most elaborate presentation of the system and also his most famous work is certainly the influential Jewel Ornament of Liberation, the Wish-Fulfilling Gem of the Noble Dharma (Dam chos yid bzhin gyi nor bu thar pa rin po che’i rgyan).

The Four Dharmas of Sgam po pa (Dvags po chos bzhi) represents the most condensed presentation of his doctrinal system, and consists of no more than four short formulations. It is said to summarize the intent of all the Buddha’s teachings of sūtra and mantra alike. The later Bka’ brgyud tradition produced a great variety of commentaries on this subject. The following presentation of the four dharmas can be found in the Excellent Synopsis of the Four Dharmas contained in the collected works of Sgam po pa:

[It] says that one needs:

[1.] A dharma that turns towards the dharma
[2.] A dharma that turns towards the path,
[3.] A path that dispels delusion,
[4.] And delusion that appears as gnosis.9

---

5 See bibliography: DTG.
8 While generally following the custom of differentiating between capitalized ‘Dharma’ when the term refers to the teachings of the Buddha and lowercasing it as ‘dharma’ in all other instances, I do not follow this approach here in relation to the formulations of the four dharmas where it will generally occur in lowercase and italicized to identify the Tibetan chos as equivalent for the Sanskrit term dharma. A variety of interpretations of this phrase can be found in different commentaries that define the meaning of chos as referring either to the path, mental objects, merit and sacred words, probably on the basis of Vasubandhu’s tenfold definition for the term dharmā from the Vyākhyāyuktī (Vsan bsad rig pa):
[The term] dharmā refers to knowable objects, path, nirvāṇa, mental objects, merit, circumstances of life, sacred words, the future, certainty, and law. (V, 21,5–8: chos ni sīs bya lam dan mi | nyan ’gan ldus dan yid kyi yul | bsood nams the dan gsal rab dan | tsho ’gan bya [40b3] hes dan chos lugs labj)]
For a discussion of the interpretative model applied in the Excellent Synopsis of the Four Dharmas of DKB, see Scheemann 2014.
9 DKB-Dvags, NGMPP reel no. L. 0595/01, fol. 401a, 6: chos chos su ’gro ba | chos lam du ’gro ba | lam ’khirul pa sel ba | ’khirul pa ye shes su ’char ba cig dgos gsung).
Another influential doctrine that also consists of four short formulations is the *Parting from the Four Attachments* of Sa chen kun dga’ snying po (1092–1158). Sa skya rje btsun grags pa rgyal mtshan (1147–1246) explained that Kun dga’ snying po received this fourfold *ropos* at the age of twelve in a direct vision from the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī after spending half a year in retreat under the guidance of Ba ri lo tsā ba (1040–1112). The four formulations include:

1. If one clings to this life, one isn’t a Dharma practitioner (*tshe’ di la zhen na chos pa min*)

2. If one clings to the three realms, it is not renunciation (*khams gsum la zhen na nges ‘byung min*)

3. If one clings to one’s own benefit, it is not bodhicitta (*bzad gon don la zhen na byang sems min*)

4. If grasping occurs, it is not the view (*’dzin pa byung na lta ba min*)

To this day, a great number of authors in the Sa skya tradition uphold the view that the two doctrines of the *Parting from the Four Attachments* and the *Four Dharmas of Sgam po pa* are closely connected. Those who advocate such a view combine the two doctrines in the following way: each of the four dharmas is said to describe the result that...

---

Most if not all of the existent translations of these four short formulations, including my own (cf. Scheuermann 2014), seem to have treated these as if they were sentences. This ignores the fact that each of the Tibetan formulations ends with a nominal particle *ba*.

Even if one were to ignore the nominal particle, the third formulation poses a particular problem for reading the formulations as sentences since it lacks the grammatically needed particle between *lam* and *’khrid pa* (either the agitative particle *gyis* or the genitive particle *gyi*) which would allow to read the construction as “The path (*lam gyis*) dispels the delusion (*’khrid pa sel*)” or “The delusion(s) of the path (*lam gyi ’khrid pa*) are dispelled (sel’).” Since the formulations are in prose, it is also impossible to argue that the particle was omitted for metrical reasons. Furthermore, in the above quoted passage, the infinite article *’cig* is applied after the last formulation which is also suggestive that the formulations grammatically need to be understood as a noun phrase.

Each of the formulations further shows a similar structure: noun + noun phrase (head noun + nominalized verb). The head noun of each noun phrase occurs as first noun in the subsequent formulation. This gives the strong impression that the focus of each formulation is placed on the first noun which is then further qualified by the noun phrase that follows after.

Below, a few possibilities are listed to exemplify the grammatically possible ways for interpreting the construction. The first formulation is used here as an example, but the following applies of course also to the other three formulations:

1) “The dharma that turns towards the dharma” or “The towards-the-dharma-turning dharma”: interprets chos su ’gro ba as being a verbal adjective qualifying chos

2) “The dharma, i.e., that which turns towards the dharma”: interprets chos su ’gro ba as a verbal noun in non-restrictive apposition to chos.

3) “The turning towards the dharma with respect to the dharma”: interprets chos su ’gro ba as a nominalized verbal adjective in an accusative relationship with chos.

---

9 SKB, vol.9: 638, 1–3: bla ma sa skya pa chen po dgyung lo bce bynis bzhes pa’i tshe’ phags pa ’jam pa’i dbyangs kyi bsgnyur pa zla ba drug mzaod pas; dus gnic gi tshe’ od tshogs kyi dbyus na rin po che’i khris cig gi steng na rje btsun ’jam dbyangs dmar ser chos ’chad kyi phyag rgya can’ bzhang po’i stabs kyi bsngags pa ’khor byang chub sems dpa’ bynis g.yes g.yon du gnas pa mngon gsum gugs te gtso bo’i zhal nas.

is achieved by successfully applying the remedy for each of the four attachments, respectively. By examining the processes of cultural and religious exchange surrounding these two doctrines, this paper will explore whether such a straightforward equation can indeed be justified. It will further propose a hypothesis to explain their existing commonalities.

2. Body
2.1 The Relationship Between the Parting from the Four Attachments and the Four Dharmas of Sgam po pa
2.1.1 Nub pa rig ’dzin grags pa

Probably the first author of the Sa skya tradition to directly suggest such a connection between the two doctrines was Nub pa rig ’dzin grags pa (13th century) in his commentary on Sa chen kun dga’ snying po’s Parting from the Four Attachments, commonly known by the straightforward title Parting from the Four Attachments by Nub pa rig ’dzin grags (Nub pa rig ’dzin grags kyi medzad pa’i zhen pa bzhi bral). The following introductory paragraph of said commentary aims at demonstrating the connection between the two doctrines which is then fully developed in the remaining part of the work where each attachment is discussed along with its corresponding remedy and result:

The four attachments are: (1) attachment to this life, (2) attachment to samsāra, the three realms, (3) attachment to one’s own benefit and (4) attachment to things and characteristic signs (nimittas, mtshan ma). Their remedies are also four: The remedy for the first attachment is the (1) meditation on death and impermanence. The remedy for the second is to (2) recollect the shortcomings of samsāra. The

---

12 Peter Burke suggests using the term cultural translation to substitute cultural transfer and cultural exchange. He considers the term transfer to be too linear, since in “an encounter between two cultures, information usually flows in both directions, even if in unequal amounts.” (Burke 2009: 70) He also voices the following reservations against using the term exchange: “Like the old term ‘tradition’, it implies handing over something that remains more or less unchanged. However, it has become increasingly apparent in the last generation, in studies ranging from sociology to literature, that ‘reception’ is not passive but active.” (Burke 2009: 70) Even though the term exchange may indeed be understood in such a restrictive sense, it can also imply an active exchange of ideas or discourse involving a process of transformation, and will hence be used in this sense throughout this paper.


14 Mathes 2005 discusses characteristic signs (nimittas, mtshan ma) in the context of ‘Gos lo t’ai bu Gzhon nu dpal’s commentary on the Dharmaśāstra chapter of the Dharmaśāstraṭīkā which gives a list of four characteristic signs: “The relevant passage in the Dharmaśāstraṭīkā (171–179) is as follows: The abandonment of nimittas is also comprehended under four points, because one abandons the nimittas of what is opposed [to liberation], the remedy, suchness and the phenomenon of realization. Therefore the coarse, average, subtle and long-lasting nimittas are abandoned in corresponding order.” (Mathes 2005: 11–12)
remedy for the third is to (3) recollect [relative] bodhicitta. The remedy for the fourth is to (4) recollect that all phenomena are selfless, like a dream or an illusion. Four effects result from having recollected and accustomed oneself like that: (1) the dharma that turns towards the dharma, (2) the dharma that turns towards the path, (3) the path that dispels the delusion, (4) and the result of that kind of knowledge and habituation, i.e., a transformation of deluded appearances comes about, Buddhahood, which is perfectly complete gnosis.\(^\text{15}\)

2.1.2 Four Obstacles to Attaining Awakening

A doctrine that closely resembles the Parting from the Four Attachments can in fact be found in Sgam po pa’s Jewel Ornament of Liberation. In the beginning of the chapter on impermanence, Sgam po pa explains the four obstacles to attaining awakening (sangs rgyas mi thob pa’i lngos bzhi):

(1) attachment to this life’s activities (tshe ’di ’i spyod yul la chags pa)
(2) attachment to well-being within cyclic existences (srid pa’i bde ba la chags pa)
(3) attachment to the well-being of the peace [of nirvāna] (zhi ba’i bde ba la chags pa)
(4) not knowing the means for attaining awakening (sangs rgyas sgrub pa’i thabs mi shes pa)\(^\text{16}\)

As we can see here, the wording, apart from the fourth, is very similar to the formulations of the four attachments, except that instead of the term zhen pa or ‘attachment’, its synonym chags pa is used. Sgam po pa further lists the individual remedies to counter each of the four obstacles to attaining awakening:

(1) cultivating an understanding of impermanence (mi rtog sgom pa)
(2) cultivating an understanding of the shortcomings of samsāra along with the law of karma (’khor ba’i nyes dngogs las ’bras dang bcas pa sgom)
(3) cultivating loving kindness and compassion (byams pa dang snying rje sgom pa)
(4) generating supreme bodhicitta (byang chub mchog tu sems bskyed pa)\(^\text{17}\)

\(^{15}\) DND, vol.6 (cha): 315, 2–5: zhen pa bzhi n’i ts’en ’di la zhen pa| khangs gsum ’khor ba la zhen pa| bdag gi don zhen pa| dngos po dang mitsan ma la zhen pa’o| de’i gnyen po’ang bzhi ste| zhen pa dang po’i gnyen por ’chi ba mi rtog par bsgom pa| gnyis pa’i gnyen por ’khor ba’i nyes dngogs dran pa| gsum pa’i gnyen por byang chub kyi sams dran pa| bzhi pa'i gnyen por chos khangs cad mi lam sgyu ma la bur bdog med pa dran pa'o| de ldan dran zhin goms par byas pa’i ’bras bu bzhi byang sti| chos chos su ’gro ba| chos lam du ’gro ba| lam ’khrul ba sel ba| de ldan shes shing goms pa’i ’bras bu’ ’khrul snang gnas guyur ye shes phun sum tshogs pa’i sungs rgyas ’byung ngo|.

\(^{16}\) Cf. DTG, fol. 580b, 2–3.

\(^{17}\) Cf. DTG, fol. 580b, 4–6.
The direct correspondence of these explanations and the passage from Nub pa rig ’dzin grags pa’s commentary on the Parting from the Four Attachments discussed above is apparent. Sgam po pa’s four obstacles to attaining awakening vary slightly in wording. Even though the fourth formulation of the obstacles is termed differently, its remedy, “generating supreme bodhicitta”, matches exactly with the fourth remedy in Nub pa rig ’dzin’s explanations, i.e., “to recollect that all phenomena are selfless.” Still, the Jewel Ornament of Liberation does not associate this fourfold topos with the four dharmanas and there are also further passages in the collected works where a similar presentation occurs independently from the Four Dharmanas of Sgam po pa.\footnote{18}

2.1.3 Phag mo gru pa

Before we turn towards various presentations of the four dharmanas in the collected works of Sgam po pa, let us first have a look at Phag mo gru pa rdo rje rgyal po’s (1110–1170) commentary on the four dharmanas called A Presentation of the Four Mental Reversions for the Three Types of Beings (Skyes bu gsum gyi blo idog bzhi bstan pa).\footnote{19} Being a direct disciple of Sgam po pa, Phag mo gru pa was an influential master in the Bka’ brgyud tradition and the so-called eight ‘minor’ Bka’ brgyud sub-schools trace themselves back to him. From the perspective of these traditions, he is thus considered to be an early authoritative doctrinal source. His presentation of the four dharmanas is very similar to the effects described in Nub pa rig ’dzin grags pa’s commentary on the Parting from the Four Attachments quoted above. Looking at the following excerpt, we can understand that S skya scholars like Nub pa rig ’dzin grags pa who came in contact with Phag mo gru pa’s explanatory model for the four dharmanas must have had all reason to believe that the two doctrines of the Four Dharmanas of Sgam po pa and the Parting from the Four Attachments were identical:

\footnote{18} An example for such an occurrence of this fourfold topos is found in the Teaching to the Assembly, A Pearl Necklace (Tshogs chos mun tig phreng ba). An English translation of this passage can be found in Roberts 2011: 31–32. “First, turn your mind away from this life by meditating on impermanence. Then meditate on the faults of samsara. The purpose of meditation on the faults of samsara is to turn the mind away from the entirety of samsara. When your mind has turned away from samsara, meditate on bodhicitta. First there is meditation on relative bodhicitta-wishing, from the depths of your heart, that all beings will have happiness, freedom from suffering, and complete buddhahood. Then view everything you do as being for the welfare of all beings. Have no concern for your own desires but develop an aspiration with the Mahayana perspective of benefiting others as your goal. That is how you meditate on relative bodhicitta. Meditation on ultimate bodhicitta is simply remaining in the mind as it naturally is, a state in which all thoughts of perceiver and perceived, self and other, are intrinsically devoid of reality. Practicing in that way during each of the four kinds of behavior is what is called meditation on ultimate bodhicitta. Practicing in that way brings the realization and attainment of ultimate bodhicitta. There is no Dharma other than this.” (Cf. TCMP, NGMPP reel no. L 0594/01, fol. 289a, 4–289b, 5).

\footnote{19} PGSB, vol. 7: 23, 1–44, 1.
Furthermore, by cultivating [an understanding of] death and impermanence, mind turns away from [the concerns for] this life and so the dharma turns towards the dharma. By cultivating [an understanding of] the defects of samsāra and karma, cause and effect, mind turns away from samsāra altogether and so the dharma turns towards the path. By cultivating loving kindness and compassion, bodhicitta, the delusion of the path is dispelled. By cultivating [an understanding of] emptiness, mahāmudrā, delusion appears as gnosis.²⁰

2.1.4 Sgam po pa's Excellent Synopsis of the Four Dharmas

It becomes clear that things are not so simple when comparing the presentations of the four dharmas found in such works as the Excellent Synopsis of the Four Dharmas (Chos bzhi mdor bs dus pa legs)²¹ contained in the collected works of Sgam po pa (see table 1) with Nub pa rig ’dzin grags pa’s presentation (see table 2) or that of Phag mo gru pa rdo rje rgyal po.²²

Table 1: Sgam po pa’s presentation of the four dharmas in the Excellent Synopsis of the Four Dharmas (Chos bzhi mdor bs dus pa legs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dharma</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. dharma: the dharma that turns towards the dharma</td>
<td>Meditation on (1) impermanence, and (2) karma, cause and result, and (3) the shortcomings of samsāra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. dharma: the dharma that turns towards the path</td>
<td>(1) Developing loving kindness and compassion (relative bodhicitta) as well as (2) an understanding of the illusory nature of phenomena (absolute bodhicitta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. dharma: the path that dispels the delusion</td>
<td>Each delusion is remedied with its specific antidote along the path in a gradual process from coarse to subtle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. dharma: delusion that appears as gnosis</td>
<td>As a result of this process, a direct understanding of emptiness happens</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

²⁰ PGSB, vol.7, 25.1–26.1: de yang ’chi ba dang mi rtag pa bs goms pas | tsho ’di las blo log pas chos chos su ’groj ’khor ba ’i nyes dmigs dang las rgyu ’bras bs goms pas ’khor ba ntha’ dag las blo log pas chos lam du ’groj byams pa dang snying rje byang chub kyi sams bs goms pas lam gvi ’khrid pa sel stong pa nyal phyag rgya chen po bs goms pas ’khrid pa ye shes su ’char ro.
²² The presentations of Nub pa rig ’dzin grags pa and Phag mo gru pa rdo rje rgyal po in the above mentioned commentaries resemble each other, except for Phag mo gru pa adding the further remedy “cultivating [an understanding of] karma, cause and effect” for the second attachment.
Table 2: The occurrence of the four dharmas in Nub pa rig ’dzin grags pa’s
categorizing from the Four Attachments (Zhen pa bzhi bral)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attachment</th>
<th>Remedy</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Attachment to this life</td>
<td>Meditation on death and impermanence</td>
<td>The dharma that turns towards the dharma (1st dharma)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Attachment to samsāra</td>
<td>Recollecting the shortcomings of samsāra</td>
<td>The dharma that turns towards the path (2nd dharma)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Attachment to one’s own benefit</td>
<td>Recollecting bodhicitta</td>
<td>The path that dispels the delusion (3rd dharma)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Attachment to things and characteristic signs</td>
<td>Recollecting the selflessness of phenomena</td>
<td>A transformation of deluded appearance, gnosis, comes about (4th dharma)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the case of Phag mo gru pa’s works discussing the Four Dharmas of Sgam po pa such as the Presentation of the Four Mental Reversions for the Three Types of Beings (skYes bu gsam gyi blo ldog bzhi bstan pa), as well as the commentaries on the Parting from the Four Attachments of Nub pa rig ’dzin grags pa, one finds a straightforward allocation of four attachments that hinder awakening, their respective remedies and the result that comes about once the attachments have been overcome. Thus, by meditating on impermanence and death one, for example, overcomes the attachment to this life. This is said to have the effect that the dharma turns towards the dharma, i.e., that merit (dharma) becomes one’s primary mental object (dharma), which means that one becomes a truly religious person. The same applies also for the other three attachments, remedies and results, respectively.

But in the presentations of the four dharmas found in Sgam po pa’s collected works such as the Excellent Synopsis of the Four Dharmas, the case is quite different. In addition to meditation on impermanence, the presentation of the first dharma also includes the meditation on karma and the shortcomings of samsāra. The presentation of the second dharma then encompasses the remedies for the remaining two attachments, cultivating loving kindness and compassion, i.e., relative bodhicitta, and the understanding of the illusory nature of phenomena, i.e., absolute bodhicitta.
If compared with Atiśa’s presentation of three types of persons (skyes bu gsum), the explanations of the first dharma in the Excellent Synopsis of the Four Dharmas corresponds with both the paths of beings with lesser and with middling capacities, while the explanations of the second dharma would conform with the path of beings with higher capacities. This varies clearly from Phag mo grub pa rdo rje rgyal po’s or Nub pa rgyal ’dzin grags pa’s approach where the first attachment, remedy and result correspond to the path of beings with lesser capacities, the second to the path of beings with middling capacities and the third and fourth to the path of beings with higher capacities.

The presentation of the third dharma in the Excellent Synopsis of the Four Dharmas continues with an explanation of how the gradual path functions, i.e., how each delusion or obstacle is treated by its respective remedy in a sequence from coarse to subtle. The path of beings with lesser capacities is thus considered to involve coarse methods for coarse obstacles, while the path of beings with higher capacities is said to involve the most subtle methods meant to counter the most subtle obstacles.

The Tibetan formulation for the third dharma, “the path that dispels delusion” or “the delusion-dispelling path” (lam ’khrul pa sel ba) lacks a grammatical particle between path (lam) and delusion (’khrul pa) which leaves it open to different interpretations. The following two different ways of interpreting the phrase can be witnessed in later commentaries on the four dharmas:

1. By adding a genitive particle (’brel sgra) gyi between “path” (lam) and “delusion” (’khrul pa), the phrase is transformed into a sentence with the meaning “The delusion of the path is dispelled.” (lam gyi ’khrul pa sel ba),

2. By adding an agentive particle (byed sgra) gyi between “path” (lam) and “delusion” (’khrul pa), the phrase is transformed into a sentence with the meaning “The path dispels the delusion(s).”

Different commentaries to the four dharmas found in the collected works of Sgam po pa support both interpretations in a non-exclusive way. The following explanation found in

---

23 In the Bodhipathapradipa, Atiśa gives an explanation of three types of beings (skyes bu gsum), i.e., beings of lesser, middling and higher capacities. Beings of lesser capacity are said to strive for worldly pleasures, corresponding to a mundane path. Beings of middling capacity are said to strive for their own liberation, which encompasses both the practice of the Srāvaka- and the Pratyekabuddhayāna. Beings of higher capacity are consequently defined as striving to eliminate the sufferings of others, which corresponds to the Mahāyāna. Cf. Eimer 1978: 104–107.
24 Cf. the short passage discussing the four dharmas in Phag mo grub pa’s Great Teaching to Assembly in Twelve Parts (Phag mo grub pa i tshogs chos chen mo dum bu beu gnyis ma), PGSB, vol.5: 642, 3-643, 1.
25 Cf. La yag pa’s CZGZ, 8, 4.
26 Short presentations of the Four Dharmas of Sgam po pa are contained in the following works from among the collected works of Sgam po pa: Tshogs chos yon tan phun tshogs (TCYP), Tshogs chos chen mo (TCC), Dus
the Excellent Synopsis of the Four Dharmas introduces the topic by stating that it is the path (lam gyis) which should dispel delusions, followed by a presentation of several delusions that are to be dispelled by the path:

[3.] Having understood it like that, the path is what should dispel delusions.27

First, one dispels the delusion of attachment to this life by familiarizing oneself with impermanence. One dispels the delusion of bad views by familiarizing oneself with karma and effect. One dispels the delusion of clinging to samsāra by familiarizing oneself with the shortcomings of samsāra. One dispels the delusion of the Hinayāna by familiarizing oneself with loving kindness and compassion. One dispels the delusion of holding on to existing things by familiarizing oneself with [them being] dream-like illusions. In general, it is said that by means of ever higher practices, the ever further delusions are dispelled.28

Interpreting the third dharma as “delusion of the path”, Phag mo gru pa rdo rje rgyal po limits the scope of the phrase in a way where it pertains no longer to the entire path which would include also the paths of beings of lower and middling capacities, but to a single delusion. As can be seen in the following passage from Phag mo gru pa’s Great Teaching to the Assembly in Twelve Parts (Phag mo gru pa ’i tshogs chos chen mo dam bu bceu gnyis ma), he considers this phrase to refer to the foremost obstacle of the Mahāyāna, i.e., the concern for one’s own benefit, the third of the four attachments:

Due to having turned away the mind from the Śrāvak- and pratyekabuddhayāna by training in loving kindness and compassion, the delusion of the path is dispelled.29

Similarly, Nub pa rig ’dzin grags pa seems to particularly associate the formulation of the third dharma with the path of beings of higher capacities and its main delusion to be countered. In his explanations on the third dharma, he explains that the phrase of the third dharma refers to “the first delusion of the path, clinging to one’s own benefit.”30 Still, in

---

27 DKB-Drags de ltar go nas lam gyi ’khrul pa sel bya ba yin te : DKB-Bkra de ltar go nas lam gyi ’khrul pa sel bya ba yin te.
28 CZDD, NGMP, reel no. L 059/01, fol. 402b, 6–403a, 1: de ltar go nas lam gvis ’khrul pa sel bya ba yin te dang po mi rtag pa bsogs pas ishe ’di la zhen pa i ’khrul pa sel ’las ’bras bsogs pas ’las ba ngan pa ’i ’khrul pa sel ’khor ba i myes dmigs bsogs pas ’khrul pa sel ’khor ba la chags pa i ’khrul pa sel ’byams snying rje bsogs pas theg man gvi ’khrul pa sel mri lam sgyu ma lia bur bsogs pas dangos por ’dzin pa ’i ’khrul pa sel lar na gong ma gong mas ’og ma og ma i ’khrul pa sel gsum.
29 PGSE, vol. 5: 642, 5: byams pa dang snying rje la bslabs pas nyan rang las blo ldog pas lam gyi ’khrul pa sel.
his introduction to the explanations of the fourth attachment, he also refers to “the second delusion of the path, clinging to things and characteristic signs.”

In the presentations of the four dharmas found in the collected works of Sgam po pa, the fourth dharma describes fruition, i.e., the direct understanding of emptiness, as a result of gradually overcoming the various delusions as laid out in the explanations of the third dharma. Thus, this specific outline does not correspond with the allocation of obstacle, remedy and result along a horizontal axis for each of the four dharmas, as is the case in the presentations of Nub pa rig grags pa and Phag mo gru pa. Instead, we find a vertical axis of methods, obstacle and result stretching from the first to the fourth dharma. While the first two dharmas thus present the different methods, the third explains how they gradually function as remedies for ever more subtle obstacles, and the fourth discusses the final result that can be attained (see table 3).

Table 3: Horizontal and vertical axis

**Horizontal axis (Nub pa rig ’dzin /Phag mo gru pa)**

For each of the four dharmas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attachment</th>
<th>Remedy</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e.g. to one’s own benefit</td>
<td>e.g. recollecting bodhicitta</td>
<td>e.g. the path that dispels the delusion (3rd dharma)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Vertical axis (Sgam po pa)**

- Method
  - first and second Dharma

- Function
  - third Dharma

- Result
  - fourth Dharma

---

31 GDKT, vol. 23: 726,2: lam gyi ’khrul pa gnyis pa dang po dang mtshan mar zhen pa sel ba].
2.1.5 The presentation of the Third Dharma in the Teaching to the Assembly, an Abundance of Qualities

A presentation where each of the four dharmas is allocated to one of the four attachments or obstacles as applied by Phag mo gru pa rdo rje rgyal po and Nub pa ríg 'dzin grags pa, does not seem to correspond very well with the presentations of the four dharmas found in the collected works of Sgam po pa. The discrepancy between such an approach that advocates an allocation of obstacle, remedy and result along a horizontal axis for each of the four dharmas becomes particularly obvious when considering the following presentation of the third dharma found in the Teaching to the Assembly, an Abundance of Qualities (Tshogs chos yon tan phun tshogs):

[Third dharma:] “The path that dispels delusion” refers to the stages of the doctrine. How are [they] dispelled? They are dispelled consecutively: the mind-set which clings to the permanence of this life is delusion. For, by cultivating [an understanding of] death and impermanence as its remedy, a mind-set of total non-occupation arises, delusion is dispelled by that path. The mind-set that sees well-being and happiness in this samsāra is delusion. By cultivating [an understanding of] the shortcomings of samsāra as its remedy, a mind-set that there is nothing whatsoever one could cling to or be attached to arises. Therefore, delusion is dispelled by that path. The mind-set that desires the liberation of peace and well-being for oneself alone is delusion. If, by cultivating loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta as its remedy, a mind-set that desires to cherish others more than oneself also occurs, delusion is dispelled by that path. The mind-set that grasps onto things and characteristic signs is delusion. By cultivating emptiness, the mode of being of all phenomena, as its remedy, one realizes that all phenomena are empty and void of a self like the center of the sky. Therefore, delusion is dispelled by that path.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{32} DKB-Dvags L. 0594-01, 263a,7–263b,3: lam gyi 'khrul pa sel ba ni bstun pa'i rim pa yin te j i btar sel na 'khrul pa thams cad thad la s.tha kar sel te tshe 'di la rtug par 'dzin pa'i blo stey 'khrul pa yin de'i gruyen po 'chi ba mi rtug pa bsgom[s] pas| cis kyang byar med kyi blo cig sbyes na lam des 'khrul pa sel| 'khor ba 'di la bde zhing skyid par mthong ba'i blo de 'khrul pa yin de'i gruyen por 'khor ba'i nyes dmigs bsgoms pas| gang la yang ma zhen cing ma chags pa'i blo cig sbyes pas lam des 'khrul pa sel| rang geig pa zhi bde thar pa 'dod pa'i blo de 'khrul pa yin de'i gruyen por byams pa dang snying rje byang chub kyi sems bsgoms pas| rang las gzhon gees par 'dod pa'i blo 'byang bas| lam des 'khrul pa sel| dang po dang mthun mar 'dzin pa'i blo de 'khrul pa yin de'i gruyen por chos thams cad kyi guas lugs stong pa nyid bsgoms pas| chos thams cad stong zhing bkag med pa nam mikh'a'i dkyil la bur rtogs pas| lam des 'khrul pa sel ba yin no.
Even though a close connection of this passage with the fourfold *topos* of the *Parting from the Four Attachments* or the *Four Obstacles to Attaining Awakening* (sangs rgyas mi thob pa’i gongs bzhi) in Sgam po pa’s *Jewel Ornament of Liberation* cannot be denied, this presentation is not related to the four dharmas as a whole, but pertains exclusively to the third dharma. It thus clearly rules out the allocation as carried out by Phag mo grub pa. The commentary of the latter seems to follow an approach of harmonizing the two doctrines in a way not reflected in Sgam po pa’s collected works or other early commentaries following a similar structure such as that of Sgam po pa’s disciple La yag pa Byang chub dngos ’grub (12th century).33

Phag mo grub pa had been a disciple of Sa chen kun dga’ syning po before meeting Sgam po pa. It is said that he stayed at Sa skyā from around 1138 to 1150 and was one of Kun dga’ syning po’s closest disciples, receiving directly from him the entirety of secret teachings belonging to the *Path and Result* (lam ’bras) system. It is thus very likely that he was also familiar with the doctrine of the *Parting from the Four Attachments*.34

Phag mo grub pa’s commentarial approach seems to have strongly influenced the majority of commentaries found in the so-called eight ‘minor’ Bka’ brgyud traditions, which all claim to trace their lineages back to him. The large majority of texts observed35 from the ’Bri gung and ’Brug pa sub-schools follow the same approach of discussing each individual dharma in terms of the respective obstacle, remedy and result. If scholars of both the Sa skyā and Bka’ brgyud traditions viewed the four dharmas through the lens of such commentaries, it is not surprising that they regarded the two doctrines to be identical in nature.

2.2 The Question of Origin

Even though a direct correlation between the *Four Dharmas of Sgam po pa* and the *Parting from the Four Attachments* cannot be justified on the basis of the works contained in the collected works of Sgam po pa, a close connection between the two doctrines cannot be ruled out. As can be shown through Sgam po pa’s presentation of the third dharma in the *Teaching to the Assembly, an Abundance of Qualities and the Four Obstacles to Attaining Awakening* in the *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, a four-themed doctrine whose

33 He authored the *Chos bzhi grags pa’i gzhiung* and its auto-commentary. The colophon of its root text claims that it was composed in the presence of Sgam po pa. See C2GZ, 9, 2.
35 There is a large variety of presentations that are present in these two traditions. One of the most famous and extensive texts (205 fols.) is the *Dogs po’i chos bzhi’i rnam bshad skyes bu gsun gyi lam nyin mor byed pa* (CZKSLN) by Kun mkhyen padma dkar po, ’Brug chen IV; (1527–1592).
content and formulation closely resembles that of the *Parting from the Four Attachments* must have been known to Sgam po pa. This fourfold topos forms an integral part of both texts, and the *Four Dharmas of Sgam po pa* may have even been developed on the basis of this topos. The third dharma plays a crucial role in most explanations of the four dharmas, defining the relationship of the other dharmas to one another, and the *Four Obstacles to Attaining Awakening* play an equally important role in the *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*. They introduce the whole section of the work which introduces the methods of the spiritual friend, the central part of the work, and function as their lay-out.\(^{36}\)

Such a close resemblance is more than surprising for two doctrines that are considered to have arisen independently from one another around the same time. Therefore, leaving aside this unlikely possibility generally accepted by the tradition, the possibility that they are directly related needs to be considered. Unfortunately, traditional accounts of the creation of the two doctrines don’t shed much light on this question. Neither of the commentaries in both traditions questions their doctrine’s origin. Quite surprisingly, the early commentaries on the *Four Dharmas of Sgam po pa* do not give us any information about the circumstances of the doctrine’s origin. In the case of the *Parting from the Four Attachments*, as mentioned above, it is already Kun dga’ snying po’s son Sa skya rje btsun grags pa rgyal mtshan who begins his commentary with a mystical account of how his father received the four lines directly in a vision from the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī.\(^{37}\) Such origin myths are quite common in Tibetan Buddhist traditions, often probably applied in order to defend doctrinal innovators against the accusation of propagating self-made (*rang bzo*) teachings, as described by David Seyfort Ruegg:

This theme of a visionary encounter with, and of inspiration received from, a great bodhisattva is reminiscent of the role attributed to the bodhisattva Maitreya(nātha) in the traditional *Vita* of Asaṅga at a time when this Indian master too was meeting with difficulties in understanding and interpretation. The topos of visionary encounter and teaching may perhaps be understood as implicitly alluding, in India as well as in Tibet, to a felt need for both conservative traditionalism and restorative or renovative interpretation.\(^{38}\)

---

\(^{36}\) Cf. DTG, fol. 580b, 2–6.


\(^{38}\) Ruegg 2004: 381–382.
That the *topos* of a visionary encounter with the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī is brought up to explain the origin of the *Parting From the Four Attachments* may thus indicate that Grags pa rgyal mtshan considered this doctrine to be an innovation of his father. Nevertheless, other reasons for employing this *topos* may be equally thinkable, such as applying the metaphor of the bodhisattva of wisdom to express respect for the profundity of the formulation\(^{30}\) or to glorify an important founding father of one’s own lineage.\(^{30}\) Thus, this account might tell us more about the tradition and its view on Grags pa rgyal mtshan than about the actual origination of the *Parting From the Four Attachments*.

Leaving aside this generally accepted view of the tradition that the two doctrines have arisen separately from one another around the same time, it is of course thinkable that one of them served as a direct forerunner for the other. While no evidence suggests so far that any of the doctrines directly influenced or caused the formation of the other, further research would be required to fully rule out this possibility.

### 2.3 A Possible Bka’ g HMS pa Forerunner?

Another likely explanation for their similarity is that both of them trace their doctrine back to a common forerunner. A preliminary assessment of potential forerunners in the canonical sources\(^ {41}\) did not give any clear indication pointing towards an Indian predecessor,\(^ {42}\) but this can hardly be ruled out without further research. Still, it might be possible to trace a process of cultural exchange by investigating texts from the Bka’ g HMS tradition that traces back to the Indian master Atiśa, who influenced both the Sa skya pa and Bka’ brgyud pa’s doctrinal system.

A connection between the *Four Dharmas of Sgam po pa* and the Bka’ g HMS tradition is suggested since Sgam po pa’s system, as mentioned above, is generally characterized by the tradition itself as the union of Bka’ g HMS and mahāmudrā. Kun dga’ snying po’s visionary encounter with the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī is also said to have taken place after conducting a retreat under the guidance of Ba ri lo tsā ba rin chen grags (1040–1112) who had an upbringing in the Bka’ g HMS tradition and is said to have met Atiśa,

---

\(^{30}\) During two fieldwork trips in India in 2011 and 2012, as well as further interviews conducted in Europe, different Tibetan scholars expressed varying opinions on the meaning of the origination myth for the *Parting from the Four Attachments*. While some considered this to be an account of a true event, others stated that the association with the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī could rather be understood to imply that the formulation of the *Parting from the Four Attachments* was a stroke of genius by Kun dga’ snying po.

\(^{40}\) For a detailed examination of such a shift that occurred in the Dge lugs tradition’s interpretation of the relationship between Tsong kha pa and Mañjuśrī, see Any 2007.

\(^{41}\) This was mostly done with the help of search engines, most importantly RK&TS.

\(^{42}\) Even though the individual topics addressed in the two doctrines are fundamental Buddhist teachings and are of course addressed in many Indian *sūtras* and *sāstras*, I wasn’t able to identify any text where they occur as a set.
even though this is not very likely.\footnote{Davidson is certainly right in stating that such an encounter “is impossible given the chronology.” (Davidson 2005, 297, he explains the reasons in 434, fn. 72).} Such a Bka’ gdams connection is even more probable if one takes into account that both the Parting from the Four Attachments and the Four Dharmas of Sgam po pa are considered to be a teaching belonging to the gradual path system, and, according to the Tibetan tradition, this “genre is primarily associated with Atiśa Dipaṃkararājñāna (ca. 982-1054) and the followers of his Bka’ gdams order.”\footnote{Jackson 1996: 229–330.} Furthermore, within the gradual path system, the Parting from the Four Attachments is sometimes classified as belonging to the system of mind training (blo syong) which is generally agreed to have originated with Atiśa.\footnote{See for example Sweet 1996: 252: “The mental purification literature is a native Tibetan practical synthesis of Buddhist doctrine which had its origin in the teachings of Atiśa, his disciples, and earlier Indian works.”}

Still, in accordance with the view of the Sa skya tradition, the Parting from the Four Attachments is considered to form an independent branch of mind training instructions. In the introduction to his translation of Go rams pa bsod nams seng ge’s (1429–1489) influential commentary on the Parting from the Four Attachments, Bsod nams rgya mtsho explains:

Within the bLo sbyon tradition, two main branches are in evidence; the Bka’-gdams-pa and the Sa-skya. The former stems from Atiśa’s sojourn to Tibet in 1042 A.D. and was continued by ’Brom ston, eventually becoming standard material for all of the great lineages in Tibet. … The other branch of bLo sbyon is the Žen pa bži bral, or Separation from the Four Attachments, and is peculiar to the Sa-skya pa.\footnote{Rgya mtsho 1981: 23–24.}

The theory of a possible common forerunner for both the Parting from the Four Attachments and the Four Dharmas of Sgam po pa is also supported by textual evidence in Bka’ gdams literature. Substantial evidence is found in a short instruction by Dge bshes phu chung (1031–1106), recorded in the Bka’ gdams kyi skyes bu dam pa mnams kyi gsung bygros thob bu ba mnams. He is considered to be a direct disciple of both Atiśa and ’Brom ston pa (1004/5–1064).\footnote{Cf. Roerich 1949: 263.} This work is an anthology that contains short instructions of Bka’ gdams masters, and was compiled by Lee sgom shes rab rdo rje (late 12\textsuperscript{th} to early 13\textsuperscript{th}}
The wording of this passage resembles the formulations of the *Parting from the Four Attachments* in every respect, except for the use of the term *chags pa* or ‘attachment’ instead of its synonym *zhen pa*.

Well then, what is it that puts us onto a wrong path? It is the desire for this life that puts us onto a wrong path. Therefore, by constantly thinking about death and recollecting death, we should have detachment from this life. By cultivating the shortcomings of the entirety of samsāra and recollecting weariness, we should have detachment from the entirety of samsāra. By cultivating loving kindness, compassion and *bodhicitta*, and recollecting sentient beings, we should have detachment from self-benefit. By cultivating [an understanding of] emptiness, the reality of phenomena, and recollecting the absence of a self, we [should have] detachment from things and characteristic signs.

Though Sgam po pa may not have had direct contact with Phu chung ba, quotations of the latter can be found in a few places throughout the collected works of Sgam po pa. Among these are two occurrences in the *Introduction to Conceptualization [as] the Dharmakāya* (*Rdo rnam riog don dam gvi ngo sprod*), of which there exists a diplomatic edition and translation by Gyaltrul Rinpoche Sherpa. Spyan snga ba tshul khrims ’bar (1039–1115), together with Phu chung ba another of the “three brothers” (*sku mched gsam*), i.e., the main disciples of ’Brom ston pa, was the teacher of Bya yul ba gzhon nu ’od (1075-1138). The latter was one of Sgam po pa’s Bka’ gdam pa teachers whom he relied on before meeting with Mi la ras pa.

---


49 Having shown this passage to several Tibetan scholars of both the Skya and Bka’ bryuyd traditions without identifying its source, they all identified it as a text which probably belongs either to the *Parting from the Four Attachments* or the *Four Dharmas of Sgam po pa* system.

50 KDST, 34, 1–4: ’o na lam log tu gong gis beng na tshe ’di i ’dod pas lam log tu beng pas ’de bas na riog tu ’chi ba bsams la ’chi ba rjes su dran pas tsho ’di la ma chags pa cig dgos ’khor ba ntha’ dag gi nyes dnigs bsgoms la skyo ba rjes su dran pas ’khor ba ntha’ dag la ma chags pa cig dgos byams snying rje byang chub kyi sams bsgoms la sams can rjes su dran pas rang don la ma chags pa cig dgos chos rams kyi guas lugs stong pa nyid bsgoms lai bdag med rjes su dran pas dgos po dang mthun ma la ma chags pa cig dgos gsungs]. Cf. the translation of Jinpa 2008, 587. Note that the line expounding the third of the four perspectives is missing in his translation.

50 Cf. NGMPP reed no. L 0595/01, fol. 197b,6–198a,1 and fol. 198a,1–2. For an English translation of it see Sherpa 2004: 208–213.


3. Conclusion

Even though the above stated evidence from the Bka’ gdamgs literature does not undoubtedly prove that both doctrines derived from a common forerunner, it strongly supports this hypothesis. Both Kun dga snying po and Sgam po pa have had contact with Bka’ gdamgs pa teachers and a fourfold topos that may have existed already in the early Bka’ gdamgs tradition, and which is similar to both the Parting from the Four Attachments and the Four Dharmas of Sgam po pa. While the formulation of the Parting from the Four Attachments would directly correspond to the fourfold topos, the Four Dharmas of Sgam po pa would constitute a modified version that blends the Bka’ gdamgs scheme with the mahāmudrā system of Mar pa.⁵⁴

Still, further investigation that incorporates the available Bka’ gdamgs literature will be necessary to ascertain the validity of this hypothesis. If my hypothesis is correct, it would follow that the influence of the Bka’ gdamgs tradition on the other Tibetan traditions might have been even more far-reaching than generally accepted. If it were to pertain even to core teachings of these traditions that have been regarded as having originated from their respective founding masters, the border-line between doctrinal assertions begin to appear blurred and entangled, thus challenging the traditional frameworks for defining distinct schools of thought and practice in Tibet.

Furthermore, as was shown by the example of Phag mo gru pa’s interpretation of the Four Dharmas of Sgam po pa and the commentary on the Parting from the Four Attachments by Nub pa rig ’dzin grags, there have been most likely continued doctrinal entanglements occurring throughout their history of reception. The boundaries between different traditions and their doctrines were not only malleable during their formation periods, but have been subject to a continuous process of exchanged influence and development. Understanding that they were both subjects and objects of cultural exchange processes will help to further deconstruct the common notions of distinct Tibetan Buddhist traditions. By contrast, these were in fact extremely interconnected and intertwined cultural systems, engaged in a constant flux of negotiation to define and redefine their positions.

⁵⁴Specifically the formulation of the fourth dharma resembles formulations found in mahāmudrā works of Mar pa. See MSB₂, vol. 5: 222.8; yang tshogs drug ye shes su ’chad rabs, and MSB₁, vol. 2: 34.4: [snang ba] thams cad ye shes su shar bas.
Bibliography

Primary Sources

Kun mkhyen padma dkar po, 'Brug chen IV. (1527–1592)


Sgam po pa bsod nams rin chen (1079–1153)


DKB-Dvags Dvags po’i bka’ bum. Scans of the Ri bo che-blockprint by the NGMPP. NGMPP reel no. L 594/596.


'Jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha’ yas (1813–1890/99)


'Jam dbyangs blo gter dbang po (1847–1914)


Phag mo gru pa rdo rje rgyal po (1110–1170)

PGSB  Dus gsun sangs rgyas thams cad kyi thugs rje'i rnam rol dpal ldan phag gru rdo rje rgyal po mchog gi gsung 'bum rin po che. Kathmandu: Khenpo Shedrub Tenzin and Lama Thinley Namgyal, 2003. (TBRC W23891, 9 vols)

Bla ma zhang brtson ’grus grags pa (1121/1123–1193)


Mar pa chos kyi blo gros (11th century)

MSB₁  Dpal mnga’ bdag sgra sgyur mar pa lo tsā ba chos kyi blo gros kyi gsung bum. ?: Ser gtsug nang bstan dpe mying ’tshol bsdus phyogs sgrig khang, ? (3 vols.).

MSB₂  Lho brag mar pa lo tsā’i gsung ’bum. Pe cin: Krung go’i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2011 (7 vols.).

La yag pa byang chub dngos grub (12th cent.)

CZGZ  Mnyam med dvags po’i chos bzhiri grags pa’i gzhung gi ’grel pa snying po gsal ba’i rgyan : a detailed study on Sgam po pa’s Chos bzhir presentation of the fundamental principles of Buddhist practice by La yag pa Byang chub dngos grub. Together with two historical works on the lives of masters of the 'Bri gung pa tradition by Ngas don rgya mtsho and the 6th Che tshang bstan ’dzin chos kyi blo gros. Bir: D. Tsondu Senghe, 1978. (TBRC W22712)
Various

KDST  
*Bka’ gdoms kyi skyes bu dam pa mams kyi gsung ngros thar bu ba mams.* New Delhi: Geshe Palden Drakpa, 1983. (W23746)

SKB  
*Sa skya bka’ ’bum.* Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006. (TBRC W00EGS1017151, 15 vols)

Vasubandhu

VY  

Secondary sources

Ary, Elijah Sacvan


Burke, Peter


Cabezón, José Ignacio


Davidson, Ronald M.


Eimer, Helmut

Jackson, David  

Jinpa, Thupten  

Kragh, Ulrich Timme  

Mathes, Klaus-Dieter  

Rgya mtsho, Bsod nams (Sonami, Hiroshi)  

Roberts, Peter A.  

Roerich, George N.  

Roesler, Ulrike  

Ruegg, David Seyfort  
Scheuermann, Rolf

Sherpa, Trunggran Gyaltrul Rinpoche

Sobisch, Jan-Ulrich

Stearns, Cyrus

Sweet, Michael J.

Tauscher, Helmut

Internet
RK&TS Resources for Kanjur & Tanjur Studies:

TBRC The Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center: http://www.tbrc.org (last access: 23.04.2013).

NGMPP Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project (now succeeded by the Nepalese-German Manuscript Cataloguing Project):
http://www.uni-hamburg.de/ngmcp/ngmpp_top_e.html (last access: 23.04.2013).