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THE RELIGIOUS CAREER OF VAIROCANAVAJRA – A
TWELFTH-CENTURY INDIAN BUDDHIST MASTER FROM
DAKṢIṆA KOŚALA*

I. INTRODUCTION

The lives of medieval Indian Buddhist teachers have been notoriously difficult to glimpse due to the severe lack of Buddhist Indic biographical or historical materials devoted to them.¹ What little is known has in great part been gathered from Tibetan historical and hagiographic works, many of which were composed centuries after the lives they sought to portray,² and often so centered on presenting edifying spiritual narratives³ as to be less than satisfying for those of us searching for more historical tales. Tibetan life-stories of the Indian *siddhas*, or spiritual adepts – stories which brim with details of place, time and person – have been the source of much mining for historical information in the past decades of modern scholarship, and yet a thorough search through the vast Tibetan corpus dealing with these figures reveals that for quite a number of them so many variant narrative traditions exist as to make it impossible to deem any one more historically accurate than another. Proper names and chronological sequences are often altered to accommodate the more immediate traditional, historical, or social demands encountered by the creator or re-teller of the narrative, to the extent that one figure can be seen to have two very different lives depending on whether he or she has been heralded as a tantric master or a strict observer of monastic code. Given this, we must also question the very effort to view these narratives in historical terms. It would be well to consider the exhortation of a recent theoretician of religious biography, who warns that it is “impossible to consider hagiography solely in terms of its ‘authenticity’ or ‘historical value’: this would be equivalent to submitting a literary genre to the laws of another genre – historiography – and to dismantling a proper type of discourse only in order to engage its contrary.”⁴

It is thus somewhat unusual to find a firsthand biographical account of an Indian Buddhist teacher which provides details gathered and

reported on during or shortly after his life, the sort of work which on a relative scale should be given more credence on historical grounds than those composed in more distant times and contexts. Granoff has noted a distinction in medieval Jaina biographies between *prabandha* and *paṭṭāvalis* which is helpful in this context: *prabandhas* are collections of dramatic tales of monks or benefactors, characterized by an emphasis on miraculous events and a deemphasis of the itineraries and day-to-day careers. I would liken these works to stories of Buddhist *siddhas* such as the *Tales of the Eighty-Four Adepts*. By contrast, *paṭṭāvalis* center on the legitimation of monastic lineages by detailing the lives of its members, and often include chronicles of where and when central figures performed important acts, such as the consecration of images or pilgrimage.⁵ Granoff's description of *paṭṭāvalis* also portrays quite well the later Tibetan literary types of golden rosaries (*gser phreng*), abbatial successions (*gdan rabs*).⁶ But while the *paṭṭāvalis* may have been a prominent genre among Jainas, one is hard pressed to find such a work among the extant Buddhist literature dealing with Indian medieval masters.

One early example⁷ of such a biography is that of the eleventh/twelfth-century figure Vairocanavajra, alias Vairocanarakṣita. The work issued from the pen of one of Vairocana's Tibetan students, Bla ma Zhang Brtson 'grus grags pa (1123–1193), founder of both Tshal pa and Tshal Gung thang Monasteries in 1175 and 1187, respectively, and the founding figure of the Tshal pa Bka' brgyud school.⁸ Bla ma Zhang's short biography and prose eulogy to his Indian master are contained in several editions of his collected writings which have come to light in the last decade.⁹ This short work is included within a larger section of his collected works devoted to the life stories of early Indian Mahāmudrā masters and the Bka' brgyud pa founders. Although not titled as such, this must certainly be counted as an early example of the *Bka' brgyud gser phreng*, the *Golden Rosaries* of later Bka' brgyud biographers,¹⁰ in which we invariably find the biographies of Nāropa, Mar pa, Mi la ras pa, and Sgam po pa.¹¹

In the following I will present a full translation of this unique religious biography and discuss its two distinct sections. Then I will present what can be gleaned from other available sources regarding both his time as a teacher in Tibet and his efforts as a translator. Finally, with the aid of a comparative edition of the Tibetan texts of the biography, I will demonstrate how 'Gos Lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal (1392–1481) adapted Bla ma Zhang's biography in his massive compendium of religious biographies, *The Blue Annals*.

II. THE CAREER OF VAIROCANAVAJRA

Vairocanavajra was from Dakṣiṇa Kośala, a region south of Magadha – what Bla ma Zhang refers to as the ‘source of learning’ – and comprising much of what is today the modern state of Orissa.¹² He traveled widely from a young age, making Tibet his home in the later part of his life, and it is to his life beyond India – on the high side of the Himalayas – that this short biography owes its existence. It consists of two parts, the first being a summary of Vairocana’s life, and the second a prose eulogy extolling the great merits of his success in living out and promoting Buddhist ideals. Bla ma Zhang was obviously very fond of his teacher, and explicitly endeavored to portray his religious activities accurately, with, as his colophon states, neither “overstatement nor understatement,” so that his memory may live on.

In rhetorical terms, the most interesting feature of the work is the way in which Bla ma Zhang distinguishes what was related directly to him by Vairocanavajra from information gleaned from secondary sources by signaling his master’s words by employing honorific speech markers (*gsung*), and the reports of others with non-honorific markers (*skad*). This at once gives the work a personal, almost autobiographical feeling, while at the same time exposing Bla ma Zhang’s hierarchy of sources and his concern that the reader not conflate Vairocana’s own account of his life with less reliable second-hand additions. This feature also shows that much of the first part of the biography was related by Vairocanavajra himself, and supports by extension the supposition that there was an interest in personal history in later North-Indian Buddhist traditions. Nevertheless, we may also speculate that the impetus to biography was a Tibetan concern, and that it was Bla ma Zhang who urged Vairocana to relate his life-story that it might be put to paper, rather than the other way around.¹³

While this biography may be held as a more accurate picture of one Indian teacher’s activities by virtue both of its being composed during or shortly after his life and by its author’s emphasis on the relative weight that should be given to his sources, it is by no means neutral in what it chooses to highlight. As a portrayal of an Indian teacher to an educated Tibetan audience, it is overwhelmingly concerned with listing the teachings and practices Vairocana had mastered, from whom he had received such teachings, and the Indian centers of Buddhist learning to which he had traveled in order to acquire them. There is in this work no interior biography, no intimation of Vairocana’s personal involvement with his religious activities. Indeed, the first part of the work reads more like a resume than a biography, and may be characterized more as a

portrayal of Vairocana's *career* rather than his *life*, most likely so-styled in part to authenticate Bla ma Zhang's own teaching activities. It is not until the second part of the biography that Bla ma Zhang develops a sort of character portrait for Vairocana, which describes the Indian master as he might have been seen later in life, working as a mentor for Tibetan disciples.

This first section is filled with what might be termed name-dropping, containing a dizzying array of teachings, teachers, deities and practices. Roerich (and Gendun Chopel) have done us a great service by comparing the titles in the *Blue Annals* with those in the catalog to the Sde dge *Bka' 'Gyur* and *Bstan 'gyur*, and I have followed their lead. I would caution, however, that many of the texts in the Tibetan canon underwent hundreds of years of textual transmission even after Vairocana's time, and thus may or may not reflect what he actually received. It is also sometimes unclear whether the title given refers to a specific text or a corpus of related texts and teachings.

Here then, is a translation of the first portion of Bla ma Zhang's *Life of Vairocana*, in which he relates what his Indian teacher has told him about his early education and travels in northern India. The work begins:

Homage to the guru.
Reverence to the holy masters.

The master Vairocana, a great yogi, scholar, and ascetic, was born in Dakṣiṇa Kośala, in the city of Sonapuri,¹⁴ into the family of King Rājasena. [He] did not say what his father's name was, [but] said that his mother was named Subhagā. Their son was Vairo.

[He] related that at age twelve he followed his uncle, a non-Buddhist scholar, to western India, studying there and serving [this uncle] for about a year.

After that, traveling to the central country of Magadha he met a certain yogin, from whom he received the [practice of the deity] *Ekavīramañjuśrī*.¹⁵ He followed that yogin to Vārāṇasī in the west, and in Vārāṇasī the yogin took a wife and remained.

The master [Vairocana] traveled to eastern India and stayed at Nālanda [University], during which time he met Surapāla, a yogin of the Kāyastha scribal caste¹⁶ from Varendra¹⁷ who was well-versed in the language arts, logic and all the treatises, and was quite adept at bringing about an unconscious state in others which lasted as long as his hand was placed upon their heads. [Vairocana] was accepted out of compassion [as a disciple by Surapāla], and spent eight years as his attendant. With nothing left out he heard the *Great Seal Cycle* [of teachings] including the [doctrine of] *Non-mentation*¹⁸ and the *Dohā* songs¹⁹ [which constituted] the teachings of the master Maitripa, [as well as] instruction in the *Glorious Hevajra Tantra*, instruction in alchemy,²⁰ and others.

He said that he thereupon practiced austerities for six years in the west at Jālandhara.²¹

He said that after that he held a tantric gathering in the forest around Nālanda [Monastery] with the yogins Siri, Mathanata, and others.

He related that from the scholar Guṇaraksita of Vikramaśīla [Monastery] he received many teachings on *The Perfection of Wisdom*, the *Madhyamaka* philosophical collection,²² father tantras such as the *Guhyasamāja*, mother tantras, and ritual tantras.

He said that after that he received many [teachings] from Dānarakṣita [including] the *Domain of Practice*,²³ a collection of deity evocations,²⁴ the *Evocation of Simhanāda*²⁵ with its rites, the *Rite of Tarakurukulle*,²⁶ the *Evocation of Khadiravāṇītārā*,²⁷ and the *Evocation of Vajrapāni*.

He then received the *Establishment of Valid Cognition* from Dharmakīrti.²⁸ He said that he then received the [deity evocation practices of the] *Thirteen Saṃvaras*,²⁹ the *Fivefold Vajravarāhis*,³⁰ and *Udḍiyānatārā*³¹ from the scholar Jayākara of eastern Varendra.³²

As an assistant he then received evocations and instructions from the scholar Śaraṇa, the group-leader of the yogins in the eastern town of Somapurī.³³

It is said that he received the *Tantra of Ekavīramañjuśrī*³⁴ from the scholar Sunagupta.³⁵

From Abhayākaragupta³⁶ he received the *Manifestation of [the deity] Heruka*,³⁷ the *Cycle of Eulogies, Commentaries and Evocations for Vajradāka*,³⁸ and evocations including those for self-sanctification.³⁹

In this brief but dense passage, through the outlining of one person's career Bla ma Zhang sketches out a rich early twelfth-century Buddhist culture extending from Varendra in what is now northern Bengal, to Jālandhara, located in the Kangra district of modern day Himachal Pradesh. Vairocana appears to have traversed northern India several times in search of teachers and teachings, spending time in and around the major Buddhist centers of learning such as the monastic university Nālanda, as well as perhaps less urban areas such as the forest-lands around Nālanda. The teachings he received run the gamut from practical instructions for evoking deities during meditation to scholastic treatises on logic and epistemology, to songs celebrating spiritual experience. Particularly interesting here is the fact that Vairocana's teacher in the *dohā* songs, Surapāla, is said to have been of the Kāyastha or scribal caste, most likely of lower status than Vairocana, who was born into a royal family (*rgyal po'i rigs*). This suggests that the anti-caste rhetoric of the *dohās* and related *caryā* songs could have reflected a social reality in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries.

Several of the teachers in this account are also attested in two lists of teachers and teachings received by Bla ma Zhang, *Various Lineages (Rgyud pa sna tshogs)* and *Various Masters (Bla ma sna tshogs)*. In *Various Lineages*, Vairocana is found in four lines of transmission, Surapāla in three, and Abhayākaragupta in one. Equally interesting, however, are the several figures for which we have no other record. As with the biography itself, I think it not unreasonable to attribute the source of these lineages to Vairocana himself. These he would

have communicated to his disciple, Bla ma Zhang, upon conferring the teachings to him. Thus, while I do not believe we should go as far as others have in applying a strict chronology to these Indic spiritual genealogies in their Tibetan form, I take these early Tibetan lists to be further evidence of a concern for personal lineage on the part of Vairocana, and more broadly his late Indian Buddhist milieu. A primary difference between the lineage lists and the biography, however, is that while the biography is concerned solely with Vairocana's direct teachers, the lineage lists invariably transcend the realm of personal history and trace the origins of the teachings back to their respective patron deities, such as Vajradhāra. Thus, while we learn about lineage from both biography and genealogy, this difference is fundamental, for it highlights the primacy of life-history, of personal biography over transcendent origin as a topic of importance in early *rnam thar* such as that of Vairocana.

The first lineage descends from Ba ri Lo tsā ba, whose connection with Vairocana we shall look at in detail below. The second is for the *Dohākoṣa Commentary* of Maitripa: 1. Vajradhāra; 2. Brahmin Saraha; 3. Śabareśvara Saraha; 4. Maitripa; 5. Kāyaṣṭhapāda; 5. Surapāla; 7. Vairocana; 8. Bla ma Zhang.⁴⁰ Surapāla was one of Vairocana's primary teachers, and it is to him that we can probably attribute Vairocana's interest and expertise in the *dohā* literature. Here we can note that while the sequence of Saraha, Śabareśvara, and Maitripa are commonly encountered in *dohā* literature and historiography, Kāyaṣṭhapāda and Surapāla remain unknown beyond Vairocana and Bla ma Zhang's account, and thus represent a hitherto unknown *dohā* lineage. In the following three lineage lists, dedicated respectively to Caṇḍālī, Vajravarāhī, and Hevajra practices,⁴¹ we find a similar pattern, running from a deity to familiar siddhas to one or two unknown teachers, and finally to Vairocanavajra and Bla ma Zhang. Many of these names can be found in the seventh chapter of the *Blue Annals*, dedicated to the new tantras.⁴² The importance of Bla ma Zhang's lists lies in the fact that they predate 'Gos Lo tsā ba's compendium by three hundred years, and that many, if not all of the names were given to him by an Indian master.

Let us return to Bla ma Zhang's biography of his master. Here he leaves his account of Vairocana's discipleship and Indian travels, proceeding to give a very brief summary of his travels at large. He begins with a playful remark on Vairocana's character, and goes on to describe a rather astounding travel itinerary. As this point Bla ma Zhang ceases using the honorific verb *gsung*, "to say, to speak" and

begins to use the informal *skad*, indicating as I have suggested that he did not hear this part of the biography directly from Vairocana vajra. He continues:

In this way, though [Vairocana] had learned many sūtras, tantras and instructions, he hid this and acted for the most part as a small child. He relates that he traveled the roads of the twenty-four countries, with the exception of Oḍḍiyāna. It is said⁴³ that he had thought of going there, and had gone south and engaged in tantric practice, whereupon he was abducted by a non-Buddhist king and cast into a fire, but was unburned. After that he traveled to Tibet, and had counted on going to the Wu t'ai Mountains,⁴⁴ but was appointed priest by a king and could not leave.⁴⁵

When he fell out of favor with one Mu thang bu of Shing kun City (in Xi Xia)⁴⁶ he performed many acts of bodily illusion and was able to conceal [himself]. It is said that then, upon going to China a king attacked him with swords and arrows, but not even the slightest wound appeared on his body. It is said that though he playfully gulped down a full cup of mercury his body was not harmed. He is said to have lived six-hundred years. He traveled two-thirds of the world, and came to Tibet five times.

The extent of Vairocana vajra's travels is quite impressive, stretching across northern India and Tibet to the Inner Asian state of Xi Xia, and in the later part of his life it appears that Tibet itself was his main center of activity. In this section we also see the precursor for Dpa' bo II Gtsug lag phreng ba's (1504–1566) small account of Vairocana. In his *Scholar's Feast* he writes:

Vairocana vajra was adept in mercurial alchemy. When he went to China a king asked him to drink an entire cup of mercury in order to test him. The king, however, was displeased when [Vairocana] passed the test, and [Vairocana] returned to Tibet without having taught [the Dharma in China]. He gave spiritual instruction to Lord Dus gsum and Zhang tshal. He lived in Lower Ngam shod.⁴⁷

III. A PROSE EULOGY TO VAIROCANA VAJRA

In the second part of the biography, which 'Gos Lo tsā ba saw fit to leave out of the *Blue Annals*, Bla ma Zhang praises the life of beneficence led by his Indian teacher. This extended eulogy praises his enlightened activity through that classic Buddhist typology of human life: body, speech, and mind. We are told, for instance, that Vairocana sang a great deal in a beautiful voice, a claim which leads one to wonder if the *dohā* songs may have been sung by the master himself during religious instructions. Also highlighted are Vairocana's perfection of alchemical techniques, his welcoming demeanor, and his abstention from lustful behavior. Bla ma Zhang's homage to his master displays an affection and admiration which is quite touching, and gives the reader a remarkably detailed psychological and social portrait of an ideal Buddhist life in the Twelfth Century. Bla ma Zhang writes:

Even though he was born into a pure royal family in the city of Sonapuri, located in the kingdom of South Kośala, [south] of Vajrāsana, he saw the five aspects of desire to be like mucus and snot, and dispassionately casting them away entered gradually into the appropriate teachings. Finally, on the unexcelled path, with a steadfast attitude and diligent resourcefulness he directly understood the three times to be the same, radiant in nature. Though he saw all things to be illusory and akin to the Isle of the Gandharvas, with an attitude of compassion for all worldlings, in a way that guided them toward non-conceptual reality, he stationed himself unwaveringly in these acts of enlightened body, speech, and mind.

He was not able to be swayed by evil people, with a firm attitude in any and all efforts, be they with details as deep as the sea and as wide in scope as the sky. Because of his steadfast attitude he was never cowardly in any region, and though he was without durable clothing or provisions, he still was not panicked when trifled by such things as vicious poison snakes.

Because he had cultivated compassion throughout many births, he recognized every person as [his] only child. Since his stainless discerning awareness radiated like the sun, it spread light upon all that can be known. Because his life was in accord with the words of the sages, and his acts were joyful, he spoke truly, unsullied with the stains of falsity.

Seeing divisive words as if of poisonous flavor, he was skilled in words which were conciliatory to others. With speech that was in accord with the Buddhist teachings, unadulterated by heedless advice, he brought happiness to lowly beings. Even when someone engaged in sinful acts in a grating manner, he did not preach with the idea of hurting that one with his words. Since he would not interrupt supplicants with harsh language like the cries of the lord of death, he always had a soft and pleasing voice. With a pure and beautiful voice he spread songs of praise through the ten directions.

Through various means he impartially abandoned all material items with no longing for them. Being in accord with the mentality of a disciple and unsullied by unconfessed sins, even if he were offered some small thing he would gladly not eat any. Though some small thing may have been offered to the community which was being taught and to those who were hungry, he would abstain.

Since he had examined [reality] well, he did not accumulate any more sins, and since he lived in a virtuous mental state he would not take one step towards a materialistic attitude. Since he had cast off the crudity of the world he persevered in brahmanical practices, purity and ablutions. Even if someone brought him great harm he would not utter even one fierce word, not to mention not endangering the other's life. Though the enchanting faces of pure young girls dressed in fine clothes and jewelry were always present, he never glanced at them with lusting eyes. Were a desert plain to be filled with horses, elephants and precious things from the belongings of a king, he would not even take a tip of grass.

Seeing no lofty status in those prideful of their generous veneration, their rank or demeanor, he was cheerful and delightful to those of lesser status. Foregoing the conventions of introduction, he was a life-long friend to students whom he had just met. Since people are overcome by crude emotions when they are arguing, he would avoid such people for a short time. Like a master of demons he would through various means discipline those who were continually troublesome, and what's more would quickly aid those who lived recklessly with material goods and religious teachings and then skillfully send them forth so that they would not accumulate any sins. He was pleased to entertain a retinue for a short time if someone came around depressed, because everything was like an illusion. Since he had perfected the powers of alchemy, he was free of all accreted points, was youthful, fair, and an ardent reliant on restoratives. He removed the obstacles of all sentient beings, and believed in much pure virtue for the sake of completing the two accumulations.

Since I [Bla ma Zhang] have understood it as true that such supreme qualities are the work of this great person, may those who have gained faith always remember the qualities of this supreme person. With neither exaggeration nor denigration [I], the Buddhist monk Brtson 'grus grags pa praises the glorious Vairocana, ascetic practitioner, great powerhouse of yogins, born South of the source of learning, Magadha, in the town Sonapuri of the Kosala region.

IV. BLA MA ZHANG'S BIOGRAPHY OF VAIROCANA AND THE *BLUE ANNALS*

Given that we have much to learn about traditional methods of scholarship in Tibetan historical literature, what is perhaps most interesting about this biography from the perspective of literary history is that it is certainly the main source on Vairocanavajra to be used by the famous Tibetan historian 'Gos Lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal (1392–1481) in his great work *The Blue Annals*, which was completed in 1478, some three hundred years after Bla ma Zhang's work.⁴⁸ In fact, 'Gos Lo tsā ba adopted the first part of Bla ma Zhang's biography almost verbatim, with one notable exception; all markers of direct speech, be they honorific or non-honorific, have been omitted from the text, giving the whole of Vairocana's story in *The Blue Annals* a distanced, almost stubbornly incontrovertible tone when contrasted with Bla ma Zhang's work. A close reading of *The Blue Annals* reveals 'Gos Lo tsā ba an honest historian, ready to admit when he lacks the necessary texts at hand to confirm a difficult or controversial point. But here, with the simple omission of direct speech markers, he can be seen to be normalizing Bla ma Zhang's more forthright presentation and obscuring the fact that the original biography was compiled from different sources, one of which was the report of Vairocana himself.

'Gos Lo tsā ba follows up his rephrased version of Bla ma Zhang's work with a quick series of remarks on various aspects of Vairocana's efforts in Tibet. Coming quickly and in staccato fashion, they give the appearance of annotations leftover from his researches into the life and times of Vairocana. These can be divided into five separate notes, two dealing with the places he visited and lived in, one with his translation efforts, one with chronology, and one with his Tibetan disciples. The overarching tone of these notes is one of apology; 'Gos Lo tsā ba was just not able to find out much of anything about Vairocana beyond what was detailed in Bla ma Zhang's work, and twice he admits that he could not provide any more information. In a typical moment of honesty, he tells the reader that he could not find any textual references attesting to Vairocana's students in Tibet. This admission thus reveals

an important methodological principal held by 'Gos Lo tsā ba, for it is clear that his was a textually based form of historical writing, and by extension that orally held lineage lines were given far less credence than those with written witnesses. The passage runs as follows:

Since [Vairocana] traveled extensively in the upper and lower regions of Dbus and Gtsang, [I] am unable to list all [the places he visited]. He did stay in Rgyal of 'Phan yul for a long time.

He also translated *dohās*, and since the *Dohā Trilogy* was his teaching, it appears that the claim that Asu composed the *King* and *Queen Dohās* is untrue.

His students were Sprul sku Zla ba 'od zer in La stod, Rin po chen Rgyal tsha in Gtsang, and Zhang rin po che in Dbus. Since he lived in Tibet for such a long time, he certainly had many disciples. Nevertheless, [I] have not seen any documents [about his students], and thus am unable to list more than these [three].

Skor [Nirūpa] requested spiritual instructions from [Vairocana] in Snye thang before he underwent his transference of consciousness, and thus [Vairocana's] arrival in Tibet preceded Skor Nirūpa.

At last this great adept displayed his passing into nirvana on a ridge in 'On.⁴⁹

From 'Gos Lo tsā ba's brief notes we learn of two more disciples – Rgyal tsha and Zla ba 'od zer. Rgyal tsha is likely the student of Phag mo gru pa Rdo rje rgyal po (1110–1170) who lived from 1118 to 1195,⁵⁰ and incidentally the uncle of Khro phu Lo tsā ba Byams pa'i dpal (b.1172/1173), who was to invite three more Indian masters to Tibet a generation later, namely, Buddhaśrī, Śākyaśrī and Mitrayogin.⁵¹ Of Zla ba 'od zer I have found nothing more.⁵²

The problem of chronology is as slippery for us today as it was for 'Go Lo tsā ba.⁵³ From Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas' (1700–1774) biographical compendium of the Karma bka' brgyud school – which incorporated earlier biographical sources⁵⁴ – we can date Vairocana's sojourn in Tibet from the early 1120's to 1151, during which time he is said to have been the teacher of the First Karma pa Dus gsum mkhyen pa (1110–1190).⁵⁵ Finally, Rta tshag Tshe dbang rgyal's monumental *Religious History from Lho Rong* (written during 1446–1451)⁵⁶ would have Bla ma Zhang meeting Vairocana sometime between the ages of twenty-eight and thirty-five, and thus between the years 1151–1158.⁵⁷ Further, Tshe dbang rgyal tells us that the First Karma pa received teachings from Vairocana sometime during the ages of thirty and fifty, and thus between 1139 and 1159.⁵⁸ These dates all accord reasonably well, and put Vairocana in Tibet squarely in the middle of the Twelfth Century, from the 1140's to the 1150's.

The several accounts of the discipleship of Ba ri Lo tsā ba Dharma grags pa's (1040–1158)⁵⁹ – the translator from Khams variously known as Rin chen grags, Dharma grags, or Chos kyi grags – under Vairocana, however, suggest that he was active as a teacher before this, perhaps

at the very beginning of the Twelfth Century. We find mention of Ba ri and Vairocana's meeting in three separate sources; Bla ma Zhang's *Various Lineages*, the *Blue Annals*,⁶⁰ and the colophon of one canonical translation. In *Various Lineages*⁶¹ Bla ma Zhang tells us that Ba ri was a student of Vairocana in India, and subsequently returned to Tibet and imparted his teachings to 'Ol kha ba Grol sgom chos g.yung (1103–1193), one of Bla ma Zhang's principal teachers.⁶² Given that we have no other evidence on the reasons for Vairocanavajra traveling to Tibet in the first place, we may speculate that Ba ri, as an early Tibetan traveler to India and the earliest attested Tibetan disciple of Vairocanavajra, was instrumental in bringing the Indian master to Tibet. It is also possible that the connection between Ba ri and 'Ol kha ba was important in forging the link between the Indian master and Bla ma Zhang himself.

'Gos Lo tsā ba's comment regarding the relative chronology of Vairocanavajra and Skor Nirūpa, alias Prajñāśrījñānakīrti or simply Prajñākīrti, is problematic. He uses the meeting between Skor – whose dates he gives as 1062 to 1102⁶³ – and Vairocana as a means to date the arrival of Vairocana – whose dates were as unknown to him as they are to us today – in Tibet. If Skor met Vairocana as a youth, the meeting would have taken place according to 'Gos Lo tsā ba's reckoning in the 1070's. However, given that it is reasonably certain that Vairocanavajra taught Bla ma Zhang as late as the 1160's, this leads to the unlikely conclusion that the Indian master was in Tibet for nearly ninety years. Despite the fact that Vairocanavajra was known to be adept in alchemy, based on the direct evidence of Bla ma Zhang's meeting with Vairocana – the biography itself –, as well as the strong attestations of his teaching activities in the mid Twelfth Century, I am inclined to discount 'Gos Lo tsā ba's account of his meeting of Skor.

The question of where Vairocana settled and taught is another matter about which Bla ma Zhang is silent, and thus for which we must look to other sources. From 'Gos Lo tsā ba's notes we learn of two locations for Vairocanavajra's activities in Tibet: 'Phan yul and Snye thang. 'Phan yul, the region lying north of Lhasa, was a center of Bka' gdams pa activity toward the end of the Eleventh Century, as was Snye thang just south of Lhasa. Here it is interesting to note that Vairocanavajra stayed at places so heavily associated with Atiśa and his disciples. Finally, in the biography of Dus gsum mkhyen pa by Kumārabodhi we find a significant remark, stating that the first Karmapa received teachings from one Chos kyī grags pa at "Vairocana's monastery at Lan de, on the Nepal-Tibet border."⁶⁴ This is no doubt a reference to the Lande

Khola, the river separating the Langtang Himalayan range from the Skyid grong district of Tibet to the north. This is the only specific claim that Vairocana himself was the founder of any monastic establishments in Tibet, or anywhere else for that matter.

V. WRITINGS AND TRANSLATIONS OF VAIROCANAVAJRA

Vairocanavajra authored no less than eight works now available to us in Tibetan translation, and translated himself nearly twenty other works.⁶⁵ It is certainly his translation efforts which were to exert a lasting effect on the literary history of Tibetan Buddhism and particularly his translations of *dohā* songs. The assembly of an accurate bibliography of Vairocanavajra's writings and translations is complicated by two factors. First, he worked under at least three different names, namely Vairocana, Vairocanarakṣita, and Vairocanavajra. These in turn were rendered in canonical colophons in both Sanskrit and Tibetan, thus giving a total of six variations under which his works might be listed. Secondly, we must be careful to disentangle his efforts from the work of the better known eighth-century translator of the same name, Vairocana.⁶⁶ I have decided upon difficult points in the following bibliography by comparing the works with the teachings mentioned in Bla ma Zhang's biography of his teacher, and by dating both the translators of Vairocana's writings as well as other translators with whom he worked. Glan/Glang Dar ma blo gros, with whom Vairocana translated some eight *sādhana*s, also worked with Dānaśīla on a translation of *Hevajra Sādhana*, and thus flourished toward the end of the Eleventh Century. Lding ri Chos grags is mentioned by 'Gos Lo tsā ba as one of the many translators of the *Kālacakrantra*,⁶⁷ placing him of course sometime after 1027, when the *Kālacakra* was first translated. As discussed above Ba ri Lo tsā ba Chos kyi grags pa is well attested as a student of Vairocana.

It is without doubt the translations of the *dohā* songs of the great spiritual adepts, the mahāsiddhas of later Indian Buddhism, for which Vairocana is best known. His six translations of *dohās* include the major *Hdoākoṣas* of Tilopa, Kṛṣṇācārya, and Virūpa, as well as Saraha's *Alphabet Dohā* and its autocommentary, the same mahāsiddha's *Great Seal Instruction*, and Virūpa's *Eighty-Four Verses*. His importance as a translator and transmitter of this literature in Tibet did not go unrecognized by his Tibetan religious descendants, and his translation of Kṛṣṇācārya's *Dohākoṣa* was studied in detail centuries later by that eclectic sleuth of Indic lore, Tāranātha (1575–1635).⁶⁸

In conclusion, the importance of biographical accounts of Indian masters was great for Tibetan scholars from at least the Eleventh Century onward. They provided an explicit link with the homeland of the Buddhist teachings and authorized these teachings as they were transmitted to Tibet and within Tibet. They were also occasions for instruction, in which ideal Buddhist lives could be portrayed as both a source of encouragement and exhortation for others. For those of us interested in the history of Indian Buddhist figures, the attention to biography – to religious resumes – on the part of Tibetans displayed in this and other early biographies is quite fortunate. Nevertheless it raises a perplexing literary-historical question—namely, what are the *sources* of this Tibetan interest in biography, when there is so little in the way of extant records of a medieval Buddhist biographical tradition in India itself?

NOTES

* I would like to thank Leonard van der Kuijp and Dan Martin for reading earlier versions of this paper and offering a number of useful suggestions.

¹ One of the few works known, published by Lévi (1931) and Tucci (1971), is really no more than a collection of lineage lists, giving only the name of Indian siddhas and their teachings. Perhaps we can view this collection as a literary precursor for Tibetan *thob yig*, “record of [teachings] received,” *gsan yig* “record of [teachings] heard,” or Bla ma Zhang G.yu brag pa’s (1123–1193) *Rgyud pa sna tshogs*, *Various Lineages*, more on which will be said below.

² For instance, the oft-consulted *Rgya gar chos ’byung*, the *Religious History of India* of Tāranātha (1575–1634).

³ The best known example is of course the *Tales of the Eighty-Four Adepts* (*Grub thob brgyad cu rtsa bzhi’i lo rgyus*, P5091) translated by Robinson (1979) and Downman (1985). Other later examples from the Tibetan canonical collections include five short *ākhyāna* (*gtam rgyud*) and one *pravṛtti* (*lo rgyus*) translated by Vinayaśrī (D4339–4344), and the introductory section of Lakṣmīkāra’s *Commentary on the Attainment of Co-emergence*, (*Lhan cig skyes grub kyi gzhung ’grel*, D2261), in which the author relates stories of the liberation of five female and eight male yogic practitioners in the lineage of *Sahaja* teachings, and the *Four-and-a-half Verses* (*Tshigs su bcad pa phyed dang lnga*, D2278) of Nāgārjunasāra, in which tales of sixteen monks, brahmins, and tantric adepts are told to emphasize various ethical and spiritual themes bridging the sūtras and the tantras.

⁴ de Certeau (1990), p. 270.

⁵ See Granoff and Shinohara (1992), pp. 2–3. This excellent long article by Granoff exemplifies the type of literary sensitivity that should be developed in the field of Tibetan Buddhist biographical studies as well. Examples of *prabandhas* can be found in Granoff (1998): See for instance pp. 61–68.

⁶ See Martin (1997), pp. 13–14 for a typology of Tibetan Buddhist historical genres.

⁷ Other examples are rare indeed. I list three here: The three-part biography of Śākyāśrī, Buddhaśrī, and Mitrayogin by Khro phu Lo tsā ba Byams pa’i dpal (1172–1236), the *Paṅ grub gsum gyi rnam thar dpag bsam ’khri shing* has been mentioned in van der Kuijp (1994), p. 601. As van der Kuijp tells us (p. 602), this work is

more an autobiography of Khro phu Lo tsā ba's apprenticeship under these three Indian masters, all of whom he invited to Tibet. The fourteenth/fifteenth-century Assamese Buddhist master Vanaratna (1384–1468) was the subject of a biography by his Tibetan student 'Gos Lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal. See 'Gos Lo tsā ba (1985). The sixteenth-century yogin Buddhaguptanātha, for whom Templeman (1997, p. 956, n. 2) gives the dates 1514–1610, is known to us from the biography by his student Tāranātha (1575–1635). See Tāranātha (1982–1988).

⁸ On Bla ma Zhang, see Martin (1992) and Jackson (1994), pp. 42–66. Vairocanavajra is counted as one of Bla ma Zhang's six major teachers. Tshal pa Kun dga' rdo rje's *Red Annals (Deb ther dmar po)* provides a convenient list of these masters, several of whose dates we can supply from Rta tshag Tshe dbang rgyal's *Religious History from Lho Rong (Lho rong chos 'byung)* and the *Blue Annals*. See the excerpt of the *Deb ther dmar po [Zhang bka' 'bum (II) v. 5, pp. 575.4–578.4]*;

1. Dpal chen Rgwa lo (Roerich [1988] p. 796; no date).
2. Mal yer pa ba (*Lho rong* pp. 159–164; 1105 [*shing mo bya*]-1170 [*lcags pho stag*]).
3. 'Ol kha ba Grol sgom chos g.yung (Roerich [1988] pp. 468–469; 1103–1199. *Lho rong* p. 223; no date:).
4. Dwags po Sgom tshul Tshul khriims snying po (Roerich [1988] pp. 463–465; 1116–1169, but see *Lho rong* pp. 177–180, where Tshe dbang rgyal gives different – and less satisfactory – dates; 1129 [*sa mo bya*]-1181 [*lcags mo glang*]).
5. Vairocanavajra.
6. Ngams shod Gshen pa Rdo rje dbang phyug (Roerich [1988] p. 565; no date).

The larger biography of Bla ma Zhang by Tshal pa Kun dga' rdo rje, alias Dge ba'i blo gros, mentioned in Jackson (1994), p. 58, n. 128 and Martin (1997), entry 77, is now available in *Zhang bka' 'bum (II)*, v. 5, pp. 532.1–575.4: *Drung chen dge ba'i blo gros kyis mdzad pa'i dgos 'dod re bskong ma'i 'grel pa*. Within this a brief synopsis of Vairocana's career can be found at p. 546.1–6. This is based on the biography written by Bla ma Zhang.

⁹ According to Martin (1997), entry 23, seven collections of Bla ma Zhang's writings are currently available. For the text of Vairocana's biography I have utilized two: one recent photo-offest print in five volumes currently available in China, abbreviated here as *Zhang bka' 'bum (II)*, and one recently filmed by the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project, abbreviated here as *Zhang bka' 'bum (I)*. This biography is not included in *Writings (Bka' thor bu) of Zhang g.yu brag pa Brtson 'grus grags pa*.

¹⁰ As already suggested by Martin (1997), entry 23.

¹¹ *Zhang Bka' 'bum (II) v. 1* contains thirteen separate biographies, beginning with Tilopa and ending with one of Bla ma Zhang's several autobiographies. See *Zhang bka' 'bum (II)* [v. 1 pp. 47–193]: Tilopa [pp. 47.1–49.3]; Nāropa [49.3–60.1]; Mar pa [60.1–64.1]; Mi la ras pa [64.1–71.1]; Dwags po lha rje [71.1–77.5]; Dwags po Sgom tshul [77.5–83.5]; Dpal chen Rgwa lo [83.5–107.3]; Bla ma Gshen pa [107.3–119.4]; Mal yer pa ba [119.4–142.2]; Vairocana [142.2–150.2]; *Brgyud pa sna tshogs* [150.2–158.2]; *Bla ma sna tshogs* [158.2–164.2]; *Nyid kyi nam thar grub pa ma* [164.2–193.5].

¹² See Schwartzburg (1992), p. 137, plate XIII.A.1.

¹³ Later biographies of the famous Atiśa report, for instance, that the master was beseeched by his disciples in Tibet to tell of his life, but he refused. His life story existed as an oral tradition stemming from his closest students for a century after his death before it was committed to writing. See Eimer (1982), p. 41, p. 43.

¹⁴ I have nothing more to add to what Martin (1992), p. 304, n. 48, cautiously suggests about the location of this city. It is possible that Sonapuri is Suvarṇapura of Dakṣiṇa Kośala, which today is called Sonpur. See Schwartzburg (1992), p. 32,

plate IV. 2; and p. 139. The rulers of Dakṣiṇa Kośala at the end of the Eleventh and the beginning of the Twelfth Centuries were the Somavamśīs, but I have been unable to find any reference to a Rājasena.

¹⁵ This presumably refers to a *sādhana*, though there are none to be found in the *Bstan 'gyur* to this manifestation of Mañjuśrī.

¹⁶ See Shastri (1931) on the debates over the historical status of the Kāyasthas.

¹⁷ Varendra was one of the principal regions of Pāla kingdom in northern Bengal. See Huntington (1984), p. 171, and Eaton (1993), pp. 3–4, 11.

¹⁸ This refers to the *Amanasikāra* or Non-mentation teachings, which were systematized by Maitripa, alias Advayavajra, and subsequently codified as the twenty-six texts of the *Amanasikāra Cycle* by the redactors of the Tibetan canons (D2229–2255). Non-mentation is a philosophical/experiential notion which occurs throughout the *Dohā* literature.

¹⁹ This could include the *Dohākośas* by Saraha, Kṛṣṇavajra, and Virūpa, with all of which Vairocana was involved as a translator and a teacher in Tibet, though it most likely refers more specifically to Advayavajra's *Commentary on Difficult Points of the Treasury of Dohā Verses* (*Do ha mdzod kyi dka' 'grel*) which Vairocana translated.

²⁰ Though Bla ma Zhang does not mention receiving any *rasāyana* or alchemical teachings from Vairocana, we do find him mentioned at the end of a brief work attributed to Sgam po pa Bsod nams rin chen [1070–1159] on *rasāyana*, the *Zla 'od gzhon nus mdzad pa'i bcud bsod* (Sgam po pa, *Collected Works* pp. 450–467; see p. 465.1), indicating that he did transmit such teachings to Tibet.

²¹ On the early medieval history of Jālandhara see Hutchison and Vogel (1933), pp. 99–125.

²² *Dbu ma rigs tshogs*. A classification of Madhyamaka works popular in Tibet, consisting of six of Nāgārjuna's works. According to the *Chos 'byung* of Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290–1364), composed in 1322, they are (Obermiller [1931], v. 2, pp. 50–51): 1. *Śūnyatāsaptati*; 2. *Mūlamadhyamakakārika*; 3. *Yuktiśaṣṭikā*; 4. *Vigrahavyāvartanī*; 5. *Vaidalyasūtra*; 6. *Vyahārasiddhi*. Writing some sixty-one years earlier in 1261, Rig pa'i ral gri gives a similar list in his *Thub pa'i bstan pa rgyan gyi me tog* [12a]; *slob dpon klu grub byon nas dbu ma'i bstan bcos mdzad pa ni 'di lta ste / rtsa ba'i shes rab dang / stong nyid bdun bcu pa dang / rigs pa drug bcu pa dang / zhib mo 'thag pa dang / brtsod pa bzlog pa dang / tha snyad bsgrub pa ste rigs pa'i tshogs drug*. The mention of this scheme in Vairocana's biography suggests that these works were already considered as a coherent group in medieval India.

²³ *Spyod phyogs*. This includes the *Bodhicāryāvatāra* and the *Śikṣasammucaya* of Śāntideva.

²⁴ This generic term, *sgrub thabs sdu pa* is reminiscent of the great *sādhana* collection the *Sgrub thabs kun las btus pa* (D 3400; *Sādhanasumuccaya*), otherwise known as the *Sādhanamāla*, in which one *sādhana* is attributed to a Vairocanaṛakṣita. See Tsukamoto et. al. (1989), v. 4, p. 382.

²⁵ This might refer to any one of eight texts of the same name in the *Bstan 'gyur*.

²⁶ See D 437; *'Phags ma sgröl ma ku ru kulle'i rtog pa* (*Ārya Tārākurukullekalpa*).

²⁷ See D 3338; *Seng ldeng nags kyi sgröl ma shes bya ba'i sgrub thabs* (*Khadiravaṇīṭārāsādhana*).

²⁸ *Tshad ma'i gtan tshigs*. I have not been able to determine whether this is a particular text of a corpus of teachings. It is interesting to note that here the teacher's name is Dharmakīrti, a name taken from the famous Indian Buddhist logician.

²⁹ Unidentified.

³⁰ Unidentified.

³¹ See D 1707; *Dpal u rgyan gyi sgrol ma'i mngon par rtogs pa'i rim pa* (*Śrī Uddīyānatārābhisamayakraja*), or D 1708; *U rgyan gyi sgrol ma'i rim pa* (*Uddīyānatārākrama*).

³² Otherwise unknown.

³³ Somapurī, or alternately Somapura is generally known as the name of the largest Buddhist monastery of the Pāla period, and has been located in modern day Pāhārpur, Bengal.

³⁴ See D 544; *Dpa' bo gcig bu grub pa shes bya ba'i rgyud kyi rgyal po* (*Siddhikaviramahātantrārāja*).

³⁵ Otherwise unknown.

³⁶ The relatively well-known Abhayākara Gupta is said by later Tibetan sources to have died in 1125. See Bühnemann and Tachikawa (1991), pp. vii–xxii.

³⁷ D 374; *Dpal khrag 'thung mngon par 'byung ba* (*Śrīherukābhūdaya*).

³⁸ Though I agree with Roerich that this cycle could be related to D 1415, the *Rgyud kyi rgyal po chen po dpal rdo rje mkha' 'gro shes bya ba'i rnam par bshad pa*, this title appears to refer to a corpus of texts.

³⁹ This could refer to any number of self-sanctification practices. Of interest here is the fact that a *sādhana* for Svādhiṣṭhāna-Raktayamāri is attributed to one Vairocana-rakṣita in the *Sāghanamāla*. See Tsukamoto et. al. (1989), p. 475.

⁴⁰ *Rgyud pa sna tshogs* (*Bla ma Zhang gi bka' 'bum* [2], v. 1, pp. 156.5–157.1); *dho ha'i 'grel pa'i dbang du byas na / bcom ldan 'das dpal rdo rje chang chen pos bram ze sa ra ha la bshad / des ri khrod dbang phyug sa ra ha la bshad / des slob dpon mi tri ba la bshad / des sgra mkhan zhabs la bshad / des su ra pa la zhes bya ba la bshad / des rgya gar lho phyogs yul ko sa la'i grong khyer sa na tha pu ra zhes bya bar sku 'khrungs pa'i rnal 'byor gyis dbang phyug brtul zhugs spyod pa shri be ro tsa na bshad / des sprang ban zhang la rgyal gyi lung bur bshad pa'o//*

⁴¹ See *Rgyud pa sna tshogs* (*Bla ma Zhang gi bka' 'bum* [2], v. 1 pp. 157.1–158.2; or *Writings* pp. 442–443).

⁴² Roerich (1988), pp. 351–399.

⁴³ This is the first occurrence of the non-honorific verb *zer* in place of *gsung*, “to say.”

⁴⁴ Mount Wu tai or Wu tai shan is the famous Chinese Buddhist pilgrimage site located in present day Shanxi province.

⁴⁵ It is not at all clear to me to which king is referred, or where this might be.

⁴⁶ This is Lin tao, a town in the southern part of the Xi Xia state, in present-day Gansu Province.

⁴⁷ *Mkhas pa'i dga' ston* [p. 513.6–.10]; *bai ro tsa na badzra 'di dngul chu'i bcud len grub pa yin / rgya nag tu byon pas rgyal pos nyam sad pa'i phyir dngul chu dkar yol gang drangs pa cig car gsol / 'on kyang rgyal pos nyams sad byas pa la ma mnyes nas chos ma bstan par bod du byon te rje dus mkhyen dang Zhang tshal sogs la gdams pa bstan / ngam shod smad du bzhugs so //*

Ngam shod smad or Lower Ngam shod is perhaps a part of the Ngam shod region above Densathil Monastery. See Dorje and Kapstein (1991), map 6, J 16. We also find Ngam shod smad mentioned in the biography of Rta ston Jo yes (1163–1230) (*Blue Annals*, pp. 143, 144). Interestingly enough, during his seven-year stay in Lower Ngam shod Rta ston studied the *Dohā Trilogy*, part of which was translated by Vairocana-vajra.

⁴⁸ See Roerich (1988), pp. 844–847.

⁴⁹ *Deb ther sngon po* [pp. 749–750]; *dbus gtsang gi sa cha stod smad mang por byon pas thams cad bgrang mi nus kyi / 'phan yul gyi rgyal du yun ring par bzhugs / do ha la sogs pa'i 'gyur yang mdzad / do ha skor gsum ga 'di'i chos yin pas / rgyal po dang btsun mo gnyis a sus mdzad par smra ba'ang mi bden par snang ngo // di'i slob ma yang la stod du sprul sku zla ba 'od zer / gtsang du rin*

po che rgyal tsha / dbus su zhang rin po che ste / bod du yun rings bzhugs pas slob ma mang po yod par nges kyang yi ge ma mthong de tsam las bgrang bar mi dpyod do // 'di la grong 'jug ma byas pa'i skor des snye thang du gdams pa zhus pas skor ni rü pa las bod du 'byon pa 'di snga ba yin no // de lta bu'i grub thob chen po de ni mthar 'on gyi sgang khar mya ngan las 'da' ba'i tshul bstan to //

⁵⁰ See Roerich (1988), pp. 705–707, for a brief biography of Rgyal tsha Rin chen mgon po.

⁵¹ See his *Pañ grub gsum gyi rnam thar dpag bsam 'khri shing*, and especially the interlinear note to f.1b.1, where he lists Rgyal tsha as one of his ten teachers.

⁵² It is reasonable to assume that this was not Gyi jo Zla ba 'od zer of *Kālacakra* fame, who would have lived too early if he translated the *Kālacakratāntra* in 1027. Dan Martin (personal communication, October 6, 1999), has suggested that this may be Lha rje Zla ba 'od zer (1123–1182). See Roerich (1988), pp. 229–232.

⁵³ Dan Martin has suggested that Vairocana imparted teachings to Bla ma Zhang in the 1160's. See Martin (1992), p. 254 and Jackson (1994), p. 59 n. 131. Based on the following observations I would place their meeting somewhat earlier.

⁵⁴ Si tu often mentions his sources at the close of each separate biography.

⁵⁵ See Si tu's *Karma kam tshang brgyud pa rin po che'i rnam thar*, p. 5.1 and p. 11.7.

⁵⁶ See Martin (1997), entry 118.

⁵⁷ *Lho rong chos 'byung*, pp. 187–191. The biography of Bla ma Zhang is located on pp. 181–199.

⁵⁸ *Lho rong chos 'byung*, pp. 228–232, and specifically p. 231.

⁵⁹ The dates 1040–1158 are based upon 'Gos Lo tsā ba's *Deb ther sngon po*. See Roerich (1988), p. 73, for his birth date, and p. 211 for the death date. The brief biography in *Gangs can mkhas 'grub rim byon ming mdzod* (pp. 1075–1076) gives the dates 1040–1111.

⁶⁰ See Roerich (1988), p. 1024.

⁶¹ *Rgyud pa sna tshogs (Bla ma Zhang gi Bka' 'bum* [2] v. 1 pp. 154.5–155.3); (*Writings* pp. 439–440).

⁶² 'Ol kha ba's discipleship under Ba ri Lo tsā ba is also attested in the *Lho rong chos 'byung* (p. 223), and the *Deb ther sngon po*. See Roerich (1988), pp. 468–469 for a brief biography of this figure, whom 'Gos Lo tsā ba includes in the chapter on the disciples of Sgam po pa (1079–1153).

⁶³ See Roerich (1988), pp. 849–855 (*Deb ther sngon po* v. 2, pp. 992–1000) for the amazing story of Skor Nirüpa's travels, death, and reembodiment.

⁶⁴ *Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i rnam thar*, p. 117.1–2; *bal bod gnyis kyi mtshams lan de bya ba na bla ma ba'i ro'i dgon pa na rten dge snyen chos kyi grags pa zhes bya ba chos brda'i tshul du gsungs nas sems can gyi don byed /*

⁶⁵ I have found no evidence either to explicitly connect or separate the Vairocanavajra under consideration here with the Vairocanaraksita who is credited with the annotation of several Yogācāra works, on which see Gokhale (1977).

⁶⁶ See the introduction to Hanson-Barber (1984) for a list of the older Vairocana's translation efforts.

⁶⁷ Roerich (1988) p. 837.

⁶⁸ See his *Key to Profundity: A Commentary on Kṛṣṇācārya's Treasury of Dohā Verses (Grub chen nag po spyod pa'i do ha'i 'grel pa zab don lde mig)*, where he uses an Apabhraṃśa manuscript to analyze some four different translations of this *Dohākoṣa*. I hope to come back to this interesting and unique work in a future paper.

⁶⁹ In his biography of Bla ma Zhang written in 1352 – in fact a commentary on one of Bla ma Zhang's autobiographical verse works, the *Dgos 'dod re skong ma –*, Drung chen Dge ba'i blo gros, alias Tshal pa Kun dga' rdo rje, presents a biography

of Vairocanavajra which is based entirely upon Zhang's work. The passage runs; Zhang *bka' 'bum* (II), v. 5 p. 546.1–.6) *bla ma paṇḍita bai ro tsa na'i rnam thar ni / rgya gar lho phyogs ko sa la'i grong khyer so na tha pu ri zhes par / rgyal po rā dza se na'i rigs su 'khrungs / dang por sgra tshad slabs shing mu stegs mdzad / de nas ma ga dhar byon nas 'jam dpal dpa' bo gcig pa gsan / de nas shar phyogs na len drar sa ha ra [sic] nas brgyud pa sgra mkhan zhabs kyi slob ma grub thob sur ra pa la zhes pa dang mjal / lo brgyad bsten nas a ma no si ka ra dang /do ha sogs snying po'i skor / kye'i rdo rje'i dbang dang / rgyud sgrub skor / bcud len / me tri pa nas brgyud pa'i chos thams cad gsan nas / dza la dha rar lo drug dka' thub mdzad / grub thob se ri pa dang / paṇḍita ghu ṅa rakṣita / su na gha pa ta / a bhya ya ka ra rnam la lung man ngag mtha' dag gsan zhing thugs nyams su bzhes pas grub pa brnyes / o rgyan ma gtogs yul nyi shu rtsa bsum du byon zhing spyod pa mdzad / mu stegs kyi rgyal po gcig gis bzung nas / mer sregs pas ma tshig / bod la lam btol nas rtse lnga byon pa'i lam du / shing kun kyi mu thang bu dang 'gras pas rdzu 'phrul du ma bstan nas btul / rgya nag rgyal pos gri mangs ru ba bcug pas sku la ma gnod / dngul chu dkar yol gang gsol bas 'ju / 'dzam gling sum gnyis bskor / bod du lan lnga byon / dgung lo drug brgya thub skad / bla ma de sten tshul ni / bla ma rin po ches bde mchog lha bcu gsum ma'i dbang zhus dus su / dkyil 'khor lha tshogs zhal mngon sum du gzigs / bde dgyes kyi skor dang / do ha mdzod drug sogs lung dang zab mo'i gnad mang du zhus so //*

⁷⁰ P = Peking, D = Sde dge, B = Bu ston's catalogue (Nishioka, 1980–1983). With Nishioka's important index canonical titles, authors, and translators can be verified to within one or two centuries of their transmission to Tibet, as opposed to the five or six centuries afforded by the catalogues of the Sde dge, Peking, Snar thang, etc.

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APPENDIX I: THE TIBETAN TEXTS OF THE *BLA MA BHE RO PA'I RNAM THAR* AND THE *DEB THER SNGON PO*

In the following edition of the first section of the *Bla ma bhe ro pa'i rnam thar*, I have set Bla ma Zhang's work – as preserved in *Zhang bka' 'bum* (I) – and the passage devoted to Vairocana in the *Blue Annals* side-by-side in order to facilitate comparison, and to illustrate both 'Gos Lo tsā ba's reliance upon and his small but significant deviance from his predecessor's work. Words in **bold** are proper personal names, those underlined are place-names, those in *italics* are titles of works. In the first portion of Bla ma Zhang's work the speech markers *gsung* and *skad* are marked in both bold and italic in order to highlight the major rhetorical change made by 'Gos Lo tsā ba.

Bla ma bhe ro pa'i rnam thar

// bla ma **bhe ro pa'i** rnam thar bzhugs
 // na mo gu ru // bla ma dam pa
 rnam la phyag 'tshal lo // bla ma rnal
 'byor pa chen po **bhe ro tsa na** zhes bya
 ba / paṇḍita chen po brtul zhugs spyod
 pa ba / yul lho phyogs ko sa la'i grong
 khyer so na pu ri zhes bya bar rgyal po
ra tsa sa na'i rigs su sku 'khrungs te /
 yab kyi ming ni mi gsung / yum ni **skal**
ba bzang mo bya ba yin gsung / de'i
 sras ni **bhe ro** yin te / lo bcu gnyis su
 zhang mu stegs kyī paṇḍita cig gi
 phyir rgya gar nub phyogs su phyin
 nas lo cig tsam slob gnyer byed cing
 bsdad gsung / de nas yul dbus ma ga
tar phyin pas rnal 'byor pa cig dang
 phrad nas / 'jam dpal dpa' bo cig pa gsan
 / de nas rnal 'byor pa de'i phyir nub
 phyogs ba ra na ser byon / rnal 'byor
 pa des ba ra na ser chung ma blangs
 nas bzhugs / bla mas rgya gar śar
 phyogs su byon nas na len trar bzhugs
 pa'i dus su / **su ra pa la** zhes bya ba /
 yig mkhan gyi rigs yul bha len tra'i rnal
 'byor pa nges gzhan gyi spyi bor [124a]
 phyag bzhag nas ma bteḡ gi bar du mi
 rtog pa rgyud la skye pa'i mkhas pa
 chen po sgra tshad dang / bstan bcos
 thams cad legs par shes pa cig rnal
 'byor la bzhugs nas yod pa dang mjal
 nas thugs rjes bzung nas phyags phyir
 lo brgyad 'grengs te / *a ma na si* dang
mdo ha la sogs pa *ma hā mu tra'i bskor bla*
ma mnga' bdag mi tri pa'i chos dang /
dpal dgyes pa rdo rje'i gdam ngag dang /
bcud len gyi gdam ngag la sogs pa ma lus
 pa gsan nas / nub phyogs dza lan dha
rar lo drug dka' thub mdzad gsung / de
 nas na len tra'i nags gseb tu rnal 'byor
 pa **si ri** dang / rnal 'byor pa **ma tha na**
ta la sogs pa dang / tshogs 'khor lhan
 cig mdzad gsung / bhri ka ma la shi la'i
 paṇḍita **gu na ra kri ta** la *pha rol du*

Deb ther sngon po

de la paṇḍita **bai ro tsa na rakṣi ta** ni /
 yul rgya gar lho phyogs [748] ko sa la'i
 grong khyer so ma pū rir rgyal po **sa**
tsa na'i rigs su 'khrungs /
 yum ni **skal ba bzang mo** zhes bya / lo
 bcu gnyis pa la zhang po mu stegs pa'i
 paṇḍita zhig yong pa de'i phyir 'brangs
 te slob gnyer mdzad cing /
rgya gar nub phyogs su byon nas lo
 gcig tsam bzhugs /
 de nas yul dbus ma ga dhar byon pas
 rnal 'byor pa cig dang mjal nas 'jam dpal
 dpa' bo gcig pa gsan /
 de nas rnal 'byor pa de'i phyir ba ra nā
ser byon / rnal 'byor pa de der chung
 ma blangs nas bzhugs / khong gis
rgya gar shar phyogs su byon nas nā
landa na bzhugs pa'i dus su **su ra pā la**
 zhes bya ba yig mkhan gyi rigs kyī yul
bha rendra'i rnal 'byor pa des gzhan
 gyi spyi bor phyag bzhag nas ma bteḡ
 gi bar du mi rtog pa rgyud la skye pa'i
 mkhas pa chen po zhig 'dug pa dang
 mjal /
 des rjes su gzung nas lo brgyad phyags
 phyir 'brangs te *a ma na sa* dang / *do ha*
 la sogs pa *phyag rgya chen po'i skor mai*
tri pa'i chos skor dang / *dgyes pa rod rje'i*
gdams ngag dang *bcud len gyi man ngag*
 la sogs pa mang du gsan nas /
 nub phyogs dzā landha rar lo drug dka'
 thub mdzad /
 de nas nā landa'i nags bseb tu rnal
 'byor pa **si ti** dang / rnal 'byor pa **ma**
da na la sogs pa dang tshogs 'khor lhan
 cig tu mdzad / bi kra ma shi la'i paṇḍi
 ta **gu na rakṣi ta** la *pha rol tu phyin pa*

*phyin pa dang / dbu ma rigs tshogs dang / pha rgyud gsang ba 'dus pa la sogs pa dang / ma rgyud dang kri ya'i chos mang du gsan **gsung** / de nas **dha na ra kri ta** la spyod phyogs dang / sgrub thabs [124b] **bsdus pa dang / seng ge sgra'i sgrub thab rtog pa dang bcas pa dang / sgrol ma ku ru ku la'i rtog pa dang / seng ldeng nags kyi sgrol ma dang / gtum po'i sgrub thabs** la sogs pa mang du gsan **gsung** / de nas **dharma ghi ti** la tshad ma'i gtan tshigs bya ba gsan / de nas shar phyogs **bha len tra'i paṇḍita dza ya ka ra** la bde mchog lha bcu gsum ma dang / phag mo lha lnga ma dang / jo mo dbu rgyan ma la sogs pa gsan **gsung** / shar phyogs grong khyer **so na pu ri'i** rnal 'byor pa'i tshogs dpon byed pa paṇḍi ta **sa ra na** zhes bya ba la bsgrub thabs dang / gdam ngag kha yar gsan / paṇḍita **su na ghu pa ta** la 'jam dpal dpa' po cig pa'i rgyud gsan skad / **a bhya ka ra ghu pa ta** la he ru ka mngon byung dang / rdo rje mkha' 'gro'i bstod 'grel sgrub skor dang rang byin gyis brlabs pa'i sgrub thabs la sogs pa gsan / de ltar mdo rgyud mang po dang / gdams ngag la sogs pa mang du mkhyen yang gsong zhing khye'u skyung mang du mdzad do // [125a] de nas yul nyi shu rtsa bzhi' lam byon pa **dbu rgyan las med gsung** / der bzhud snyam nas / lho phyogs su byon nas spyod pa mdzad pas / mu stegs kyi rgyal po cig gis bzung nas mer bsregs pas ma tshig **skad** / der **bod** du byon nas **ri bo rtse lnga** la bzhud tshis byas pa la / rgyal pos mchod gnas mdzad nas ma thon / shing kun mkhar gyi **mu thang bu** dang 'bras pa'i dus su / rdzu 'phrul lus kyi bkod pa mang du mdzad par 'dug ste gsang par gda'o // de nas **rgya nag** tu byon pas rgyal pos gri mda'i rug gu byas pas sku la sen shus tsam yang ma byung **skad** / dngul chu dkar yol gang*

*dang dbu ma rigs tshogs dang / pha rgyud gsang 'dus la sogs pa dang / ma rgyud dang kri ya'i chos mang du gsan / de nas **dhā na rakṣi ta** la spyod phyogs dang / sgrub thabs bsdus pa dang / seng ge sgra'i sgrub thabs rtog pa dang bcas pa dang / sgrol ma ku ru ku lle'i rtog pa dang / seng ldeng nags sgrol dang gtum po'i sgrub thabs* la sogs mang du gsan / **dharma kīrti** la tshad ma'i gtan tshigs gsan / de nas shar phyogs **bha re ndra'i paṇḍi ta dza ya ā ka ra** la bde mchog bcu gsum ma dang / phag mo lha [749] lnga dang jo mo u rgyan ma la sogs pa gsan / shar phyogs su grong khyer **so ma pū ri'i** rnal 'byor pa'i tshogs dpon paṇḍi ta **sa ra na** la sgrub thabs dang gdam ngag 'ga' zhig zhus / paṇḍi ta **su dha na gupta** la 'jam dpal dpa' po gcig pa'i rgyud gsan / **a bha yā kar ra gupta** la bde mchog mngon 'byung dang / rdo rje mkha' 'gro'i stong 'grel sgrub skor dang byin gyis brlab pa'i sgrub thabs la sogs gsan / de ltar mang du mkhyen kyang gsang zhing khengs skyung mang du mdzad / yul nyi shu rtsa bzhi las ma byon pa **u rgyan las med** / der bzhung snyam nas lho phyogs su byon nas spyod pa mdzad pas rgyal po gcig gis gzung nas me la bsregs pas ma tshig / de nas **bod** du byon te **ri bo rtse lnga** la bzhung rtsis byas pas rgyal po'i mchod gnas bcol te ma thon / shing kun mkhar gyi **mu thang bu** dang 'gras pa'i dus su rdzu 'phrul mang du mdzad kyang gsang bar gda' / de nas **rgya nag** tu byon pas rgyal pos gri dang mda'i rug bcug kyang shas shus tsam yang ma byung / dngul chu dkar yol gang gsol bas sku la

la khrog rtser mdzad pas sku la ma gnod par ma nus /
 gnod *skad* / sku tshe lo drug brgya dzambu'i gling gi sum gnyis bskor /
 thub *skad* / 'dzam bu'i gling sum gnyis bod du lan lnga byon te
 skor / bod du lan lnga byon no / ⁶⁹

APPENDIX II: WRITINGS AND TRANSLATIONS
 A. WRITINGS

- Alias Vairocanarakṣita/Rnam par snang mdzad srung ba –
- Byang chub sems dpa' spyod pa la 'jug 'grel pa.* P5272. B613.⁷⁰
Shes rab le'u'i dka' 'grel. Prajñāparicchedapañjikā. T. Mi mnyam khol pa,
 Blo ldan shes rab. D3876.
- Slob ma la spring pa'i phrin yig dka' 'grel. Śiṣyalekhaṭṭippana.* T. Sugataśrīmitra,
 Tshul khriims rgyal mtshan. D4191. B818.
- Bslab pa me tog snye ma. Śikṣākusumamañjarī.* T. Sumatikīrti, Zha ma seng rgyal,
 Klog skya gzhon nu 'bar. R. Mar pa chos kyi dbang phyug. D3943. P5339.
 B747.
- Gshin rje gshed dmar po'i sgrub thabs. Raktayamārisādhana.* T. Nyi ma'i dbang
 po'i od zer, Chos rje dpal. D2031.
- Alias Rnam par snang mdzad rdo rje/Vairocanavajra –
- Sbyor ba yan lag drug gi snang ba'i rim pa. Saḍaṅgayogālokakrama.* T. Puṅyaśrī,
 Gyung drung 'od. D1879. P2742. B2039.

B. TRANSLATIONS

- Alias Vairocanarakṣita/Rnam par snang mdzad srung ba –
- Do ha mdzod ces bya ba phyag rgya chen po'i man ngag.*
- Dohākoṣanāmamahāmudropadeśa.* A. Saraha. T. Śrīvairocanarakṣita. D2273.
 P3119.
- Pha rol tu phyin pa bsdu pa. Pāramitāsamāsa.* A. Āryaśūra. T. Vairocanarakṣita.
 D3944. P5340. B763.
- Ma he'i zhal gyi sgrub pa'i thabs. Mahiṣānasādhana.* A. Dpal 'dzin. T. Rnam par
 snang mdzad srung ba, Ba ri Dharmakīrti. D1975. P2838.
- Śes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i snying po'i sgrub thabs.*
Prajñāpāramitāhrdayasādhana. A. Klu sgrub snying po. T. Vairocanarakṣita,
 Glan chung. R. Stag Lo tsā ba. D2640. P3464.
- Alias Vairocanavajra/Rnam par snang mdzad rdo rje –
- Ka kha'i do ha. Kakhadohā.* A. Saraha. T. Śrīvairocanavajra. D2266. P3113. B2756.
Ka kha'i do ha'i bshad pa bris pa. Kakhadohāṭṭippana. A. Saraha. T. Śrīvairocanavajra.
 D2267. P3114. B2757.
- 'Jig rten gsum las rnam par rgyal ba 'phags ma sgrol ma bsgrub pa'i thabs.* P4710.
Do ha mdzod. Dohākoṣa. A. Tillipa. T. Śrīvairocanavajra. D2281. P3128 (T. Rnam
 par snang mdzad). B2793.

- Do ha mdzod. Dohākoṣa.* A. Nag po rdo rje. T. Śrīvairocanavajra. D2301. P3150. B2758.
- Do ha mdzod. Dohākoṣa.* A. Birbapa. T. Śrīvairocanavajra. D2280. P3130 (T. Vairocana). B2816.
- Do ha mdzod kyi dka' 'grel. Dohākoṣapañjikā.* A. Gnyis su med pa'i rdo rje. D2256. T. Śrīvairocanavajra. P3101. B2755.
- Dpal ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyang ba'i rgyud las phyung ba spyang ma'i ngan song sbyon pa'i cho ga. Śrīsarvadurgatipariśodhana tantrādudbhūtalocanādurgatīśodhavidhi.* A. Stong nyid ting nge 'dzin rdo rje. T. Avadhūtivairocanavajra, Lding ri chos kyi grags. D1907. P2771.
- Dpal nag po chen po la bstod pa rkang pa bgyad pa. Śrīmahākālāṣṭamantrastotra.* A. Klu sgrub. T. Śrīvairocanavajra, Ding ri chos grags. D1779.
- Dpal nag po chen po la bstod pa rkang pa bgyad pa. Śrīmahākālāṣṭamantrastotra.* A. Klu sgrub. T. Śrīvairocanavajra, Ding ri chos grags. D1779. P2645.
- Dpal nag po rdo rje zhabs kyi do ha mdzod kyi rgya cher 'grel pa.* D2302 (no translator listed). P3151, B2759.
- Dpal Birba pa'i tshig rkang bgyad cu rtsa bzhi. Śrīvirūpapadacaturaśīti.* A. Virūpa. T. Śrīvairocanavajra. D2283. P3129. B2794.
- Tshigs su bcad pa lnga pa. Pañcagāthā.* A. Nag po. T. Śrīvairocanavajra. D2282. P3127. B2792.
- Seng ldeng nags kyi sgrol ma'i sgrub thabs. Khadiravaṇītārāsādhana.* A. Klu sgrub. T. Rnam par snang mdzad rdo rje. D3664. P4487.

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