Conquering the Conqueror: 
Reassessing the Relationship between 
Qubilai Khan and ’Phags pa Lama

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Statement of Originality

I, the undersigned, Tenzin Choephak Ringpapontsang, declare that this thesis is my own original work; where the work of others is used, I have acknowledged accordingly throughout.

Tenzin Choephak Ringpapontsang
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the long life and fulfilment of all the noble wishes of my root gurus His Holiness the Dalai Lama and His Holiness Sakya Trizin. This year marks the auspicious occasion of His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s eightieth birthday, and it also marks the final year of His Holiness Sakya Trizin’s nearly six glorious decades of leading the Sakya order of Tibetan Buddhism.
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[The image of 'Phags pa Lama is used with permission from the Rubin Museum of Art. It is a 17th Century Tibetan thang kha.]
Abstract

The relationship between Qubilai Khan (1215–1294), the Great Khan of the Mongol Empire, and the Tibetan Buddhist monk ’Phags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1235–1280) during the 13th century is often viewed as emblematic of the nature of Tibet’s relationship with the Mongol Empire. More broadly, this relationship has also come to be construed by some scholars as the dominant model for later mchod yon bonds, commonly translated as “priest-patron” associations, which are perceived as a key framework for Tibetan foreign relations over the following centuries. As such, this relationship has received considerable scholarly attention. Nevertheless, it is a relationship deserving of a reassessment.

The dominant approach among contemporary studies has been to perceive and examine ’Phags pa through the lens of his utility for the Mongol Khan in the pursuit of political and militaristic objectives, only affording ’Phags pa the role of a useful tool for the Mongols. This study demonstrates that these functionalist realpolitik interpretations are incongruent with salient historical accounts that indicate that ’Phags pa was offered extraordinary treatment and wielded influence far out of proportion with what might be expected based solely on these functionalist narratives. Instead, the historical evidence points to a deeper relationship centred on a personal-religious bond. And ’Phags pa’s compositions, particularly Advice to the King—an epistle he composed specifically for Qubilai—offer insights into this bond and the potential of the discourses contained in them to alter the power dynamics of the relationship.

This thesis examines the key themes of Advice to the King and the broader tradition within Buddhism of speaking truth to power to which it belongs, placing the treatise within its literary context and providing a view into the sorts of teachings that have been given by Buddhist advisors to people of power and what sorts of results they may have hoped to achieve. While Advice to the King is, most manifestly, a religious text, this study also presents how it embodies and gives rise to potential power through seeking to shape the constitution of current truths, and therefore, the power relations they carry with them.
While the wars that Qubilai waged and the punishments that he delivered to convicts show that his policies and actions were not always in accordance with 'Phags pa’s teachings, a range of historical accounts do attribute to the Khan characteristics and actions consistent with aspiring to live up to them. These include his generous treatment of subjects, the leniency of the penal system that he oversaw and his apparent reluctance to deliver capital punishment—all facts that stand in contrast to the popular imagery of the ruthlessness of Mongol khans.
The renowned emanation of Samantabhadra,
Known [by all] as omniscient during this age of conflict,
The crowned master of the Buddha’s doctrine in this world,
Chos rgyal ’Phags pa, [I] supplicate at [your] feet.

– Composition attributed to Qubilai Khan
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Introduction

[ʼPhags pa blo gros rgyal mtshan, sat] on a throne decorated by a latticework of precious jewels placed on the back of an Indian elephant. He was welcomed to the palace with great wealth and immeasurable offerings by the Great King, the chief among his sons the bodhisattva Crown Prince Jingim, the Queen, the retinue of his ministers and others holding parasols, victory banners and flags adorned with jewels. A great variety of music accompanied them.¹

Ye shes rgyal mtshan,² c.1283

1. A question deserving a reassessment

This excerpt depicts the warmth and grandeur of the welcome offered to ʼPhags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1235–1280),³ a Buddhist monk from Tibet, on his return from his homeland to the Mongol imperial court at Dadu (Ch. 大都, on the site of present-day Beijing) in 1268. It highlights the esteem in which he was held by Qubilai Khan (1215–1294), the ruler of the world’s mightiest empire of the time, the Mongol Empire. It also marks the heights that Tibetan Buddhism and ʼPhags pa’s Sa skya order had reached as an imperial ideological force on the Eurasian continent,⁴ primarily through the relationship between these two men.

The Qubilai–ʼPhags pa association is often viewed as emblematic of the nature of Tibet’s relationship with the Mongol Empire, and by some, Tibet’s relations with Yuan China.⁵ More broadly, this relationship has also come to be viewed by some scholars as the dominant model for later mchod yon bonds, commonly translated as “priest-patron” associations,⁶ which are perceived as a key framework for Tibetan foreign relations over the following centuries. As such, ʼPhags pa and his relationship with Qubilai have proved to be enduring topics of interest for both traditional Tibetan and contemporary Western scholars. Nevertheless, this relationship is one deserving of a reassessment.

¹ Unless otherwise stated, all translations of Tibetan texts in this thesis are my own.
² Ye shes rgyal mtshan (1983–1985: 328). This excerpt is from ʼPhags pa’s earliest biography by his long-time disciple Ye shes rgyal mtshan, written in the female water sheep year (c.1283).
³ Hereafter in this thesis ʼPhags pa blo gros rgyal mtshan will be referred to as ʼPhags pa.
⁴ Ronald M. Davidson (2005: 6).
⁵ In 1271, Qubilai Khan proclaimed the adoption of a new Chinese dynastic name, the Great Yuan or Dà Yuán. It is considered as both an appendage of the Mongol Empire formed by his grandfather Chinggis Khan and as an imperial Chinese dynasty.
⁶ “Priest-patron” is used here only to provide an initial English rendering of mchod yon. However, as detailed in chapter one, most existing renderings including “priest-patron” are inadequate in capturing the complete meaning of this term within the Tibetan cultural context. Therefore, mchod yon will generally be used throughout the rest of this thesis.
A large majority of contemporary studies have tended to focus on the chronological discourses of 'Phags pa’s life, and particularly his associations with Qubilai and other members of the Mongol royal family, as recorded in court documents compiled by officials of the Ming Chinese dynasty (1368–1644) that unseated the Mongols in China. Perhaps influenced by the ethnocentricity of these Chinese court documents, and guided by the scholars’ own proclivities towards exclusively focusing on temporal power, these studies have tended to perceive and examine 'Phags pa through the lens of his utility for the Mongol Khan in the pursuit of political and militaristic objectives. In assessing the nature of the Qubilai–'Phags pa relationship, these studies have almost entirely overlooked the weight of the religious domain within which 'Phags pa, rather than the Great Khan, reigned. Therefore, these functionalist political interpretations prove incongruent with salient historical evidence that 'Phags pa was offered extraordinary treatment and wielded influence far out of proportion with what might be expected based on these realpolitik narratives.

This study reassesses the nature of the Qubilai–'Phags pa association, presenting a more nuanced approach that accounts for its personal and religious dimensions through which the full range of their interactions, as evidenced by historical records, can be explained. It draws on a broad range of historical sources; in particular, it closely examines 'Phags pa’s writings. In so doing, this study widens the focus from solely the presumed perspective of the advisee, the Khan, to also include the perspective of the advisor, as reflected in 'Phags pa’s own writings. While 'Phags pa’s compositions are religious texts, they are, nevertheless, also historical sources once they are located within the wider historico-political context. They provide us with an additional hitherto largely unexplored vantage point from which to examine the author and his relationship with the Khan, supplementing other historical sources. Importantly, they offer insight into the potential of the discourses embodied in these compositions to alter the power dynamics of the relationship.

2. Principal sources
Ranging from brief annual New Year wishes to lengthy ethical guidelines, 'Phags pa composed a wide range of texts for the Khan and his family. From among all this writing, however, Advice to the King (composed in 1271 at Shing kun, Ch. Xizhou, 7 The shortcomings of these court documents compiled by Ming era officials as well as a review of contemporary studies related to the Qubilai–'Phags pa relationship are further discussed later in this chapter.
modern Lintao)\textsuperscript{8} stands out in its relevance to better understanding the Qubilai–
'Phags pa relationship for a number of reasons. The text is addressed directly to
Qubilai;\textsuperscript{9} indeed, according to its epilogue, it was composed following repeated requests
from the Khan.\textsuperscript{10} Not only is it more comprehensive in its presentation of Buddhist
soteriology than 'Phags pa’s other compositions for members of the royal court, but it
also excels in its philosophical and technical sophistication: Advice to the King is a
skilfully presented Buddhist practice manual, which juxtaposes the effects of views and
actions in accordance with Buddhist discourse against those adverse to it. It is also
significant chronologically because it is the final extensive composition 'Phags pa wrote
for Qubilai before he left the Khan’s service for good. Advice to the King also
encapsulates the core teachings of all the other texts composed for Qubilai by 'Phags pa.
As such, it can be seen as the culmination of the religious discourses between the two.

Supplementing Advice to the King are two additional sources that are
indispensable in understanding it; these are: The Ornament that Elucidates the
Scriptures: A Commentary to Advice to the King (Tib. Rgyal po la dgams pa’i rab tu
byed pa’i rnam bshad gsung rab gsal ba’i rgyan);\textsuperscript{11} and a textual outline, The
Condensed Meaning of Advice to the King (Tib. Rgyal po la gdams pa’i rab tu byed pa’i

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\textsuperscript{8} Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968h: 180–82).
\textsuperscript{9} While Qubilai was the text’s principal audience, he was not its only audience in practice. We know, for
example, that a biography of the second throne holder of Sho Monastery, one of the two principal
monasteries belonging to the Smar pa bka’ brgyud sub-order of Tibetan Buddhism, Dbu rtse bsod nams
ye shes (1243–1303), suggests that he too received Advice to the King as a teaching directly from
'Phags pa. See Karma rdo rje (2006: 188). This record confirms that 'Phags pa imparted the teaching to a
wider audience in Tibet.

\textsuperscript{10} As with all of 'Phags pa’s extant compositions, there does not appear to be any record that 'Phags pa
composed a version of Advice to the King in Mongolian. There is also no evidence that the text was ever
textually translated into Mongolian (or Chinese). A lack of familiarity with the language is unlikely to
have been the reason for the absence of compositions by 'Phags pa in Mongolian. After all, 'Phags pa
spent more of his life among the Mongols than with Tibetans, and even invented the Mongol script in
1269 for use across Qubilai’s realm. One possible reason why 'Phags pa may have chosen not to write his
texts in Mongolian could be because of how well-suited the Tibetan language was to his task of
conveying Buddhist concepts. As a language specifically adapted for the transmission of Buddhist
philosophy, Tibetan may have appeared to 'Phags pa to be the most appropriate medium for the delivery
of his works. Another possible and related reason is that, by 'Phags pa’s times, Tibetan had become the
standard scholastic language of delivery for Vajrayāna Buddhism. Due to Qubilai’s inability to read
Tibetan by himself, the ultimate mode of delivery of 'Phags pa’s text to Qubilai would have been through
translators such as Sanga (?-1291), a Uighur of Tibetan origin who eventually rose to the position of
Qubilai’s Chief Minister. He was also a disciple of 'Phags pa’s. During our discussions, Otgonbaatar
Rinchensambuu of the Institute of Mongolian Language and Literature informed me of evidence that
some of 'Phags pa’s texts were likely translated into Mongolian during the Mongol Empire period.
Specifically, he pointed to fragments of a 'Phags pa script Mongolian translation of Explanation of the
Knowable (Shes bya rab gsal) discovered in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, in the late 2000s. For a discussion
of the knowledge of other languages by Mongolian emperors, including Qubilai, see Herbert Franke

\textsuperscript{11} The text will be referred as The Ornament hereafter. For a complete translation of the work see
Appendix 2.
The Ornament was completed in 1275 under 'Phags pa’s supervision by a student named Shes rab gzhon nu (n.d.), at the temple of Tsom mdo gnas sar in Smar khangs, Tibet. Despite Shes rab gzhon nu’s authorship, the text’s apparent intimacy with 'Phags pa and his oeuvre is such that the later compilers of the The Complete Works of the Great Masters of the Sa skya Sect (Sa skya pa'i bka’ ‘bum) classified it as a text by 'Phags pa and included it among the collection of his works. 'Phags pa’s close involvement in the composition of The Ornament is, furthermore, affirmed in its colophon, which states that it was written “in accordance with the words of the lama ('Phags pa)…” and “edited through repeated consultation [with him]”. Therefore, the commentary is generally approached as an extension of Advice to the King and an indispensable supplementary resource with comparable textual authority and historical weight. The analysis that follows in this thesis also approaches The Ornament as an extension of the root text and draws on it to clarify ambiguities and elaborate on the treatise’s themes.

The Outline is a very condensed text that provides a broad structural overview of Advice to the King. This text was written by 'Phags pa in 1275, the same year in which the commentary was completed by Shes rab gzhon nu, while at Tre hor. The epilogue

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12 The text will be referred as The Outline hereafter. For a complete translation of the work see Appendix 3.
13 Little is known about Shes rab gzhon nu apart from what can be deduced from The Ornament and, particularly, the information provided in its epilogue which refers to him as being “the bearer of the Tripitaka” (the three baskets of the Buddha’s teachings). This suggests that Shes rab gzhon nu was learned in Buddhist teachings and was most likely a monk. This fits well with what we know about the relatively high levels of education that Sa skya monks received during this period and their well-reported skills in scholasticism. The quality of the text’s philosophical exposition and literary expression as well as the author’s evident familiarity with a wide range of authoritative Buddhist literature support the author’s claim of scholarship. The circumstance of the composition suggests Shes rab gzhon nu was a disciple in 'Phags pa’s entourage on the latter’s return from the Mongol court to Tibet. 'Phags pa’s apparent willingness to guide Shes rab gzhon nu through “repeated consultation” indicates a close relationship.

14 For ease of reference, this compilation will henceforth be referred to as The Complete Works.
15 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 90–108). A range of evidence suggests that the inclusion of The Ornament in The Complete Works, representing its formal recognition as a work by 'Phags pa, occurred as late as the eighteenth century. A myes zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga’ bsod nams, who wrote during the seventeenth century, did not list the text among 'Phags pa’s works; see A myes zhabs (2012a: 180).

It is common practice in Tibetan Buddhism for disciples to receive the complete canon of the key texts of their order as an oral transmission (Tib. lung) from their teachers. As such, it is common in the Sa skya tradition for The Complete Works to be transmitted in this manner, and in the case of prominent lamas, for the lists of such teachings received to be recorded. However, The Ornament is also absent from the lists of teachings comprising the versions of The Complete Works that were orally transmitted to a number of prominent lineage masters during the fourteenth to the eighteenth century including: Ngor chan Kun dga’ bzang po (1968: 62); Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (2009a: 102); Rdzong pa Kun dga’ rnam rgyal (2005: 10–22); Gong dkar ’phrin las rnam rgyal (2008: 339); and Tshul khrims rin chen (1970: 454). It is particularly surprising that The Ornament is missing from the list of oral transmissions received by Tshul khrims rin chen because he was the editor of the 1736 (Sde dge) edition of The Complete Works in which the commentary is entered as a work by 'Phags pa. For a detailed account of the evolution of editions of The Complete Works, see David P. Jackson (1983: 3–24).

17 Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968aj: 182–3).
indicates that this textual outline of *Advice to the King* was composed several months before the commentary was completed. This chronology suggests 'Phags pa sought to provide a precise structural guideline to aid his disciple in composing the commentary on his text. In accordance with the importance 'Phags pa appears to have placed on providing the structural outline to assist Shes rab gzhon nu in understanding the root text and guide the commentary, this thesis draws on the outline to help grasp the structural elements of *Advice to the King*.

Other than passing remarks registering their mere existence in the works of a few notable scholars in the field, neither *Advice to the King* nor the supplementary texts have received the academic attention they deserve despite their religious and historical significance for the Qubilai–'Phags pa relationship. In Giuseppe Tucci’s magnum opus, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, he writes: “…he (‘Phags pa) composed, in the form of an epistle in verse, a summary of the Law for Qubilai’s instruction, called *Rgyal po la gdams pai rab byed*, and himself¹⁹ wrote a commentary upon it, in which the subjects outlined in his book are explained in greater detail”.²⁰ Similarly, the texts were only mentioned briefly by János Szerb in his “Glosses on the Oeuvre of bLa-ma Phagpa: III. The ‘Patron-Patronized’ Relationship”. Elaborating on the subject matter of the commentary, Szerb says it “is an extremely complicated, refined and sophisticated discourse concerning the characteristic features of an ideal religious (i.e. Buddhist) king (cakravarti-rāja or dharmarāja). That is to say, this work is an introduction to Buddhism for a ruler”.²¹

While an English translation of *Advice to the King* entitled *The Gift of the Dharma to Kublai Khan* by Acharya Lobsang Jamspal and Acharya Manjusiddhartha²² was available when I began my research, I chose to use my own translation in order to, in my view, more faithfully capture the Tibetan original. My translation of the treatise is provided in appendix 1. I have also drawn on my own translations of the commentary

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¹⁸ Chos rgyal ‘Phags pa (1968: 183). The exact composition date provided was the 24th day of the Hawk month (Tib. Khra) in the Female Wood Pig year. The Hawk month is the second month of the Tibetan calendar.

¹⁹ As we will see, the claim that ’Phags pa composed the commentary to *Advice to the King* is not entirely accurate. The actual author of the commentary was one of his students, Shes rab zhon nu. Refer to the epilogue in Shes rab zhon nu (1968:108, folio. 4).


and the textual outline (provided in appendix 2 and 3), because they were unavailable in any form other than their Tibetan original until recently.23

In terms of material power, in the sense of control over and use of force, 'Phags pa, a monk from a peripheral territory who initially came to the Mongol court under military coercion when he was only a child, was no match for the Great Khan at the zenith of Mongol military dominance in the 13th century world. But, despite this unequal power relationship, 'Phags pa was able to leverage his Buddhist training and the wealth of intellectual tradition that he inherited from his uncle and other preeminent masters of the day24 to create an extraordinary space within which he could operate at the Mongol court through his discourses. And Advice to the King offers the most conclusive view into the potential power that arises from these discourses and the nature of the relationship that they sought to instil and reinforce, and simultaneously reflect.

Advice to the King is a complete handbook for the ideological transformation of the Khan’s role and identity. Through presenting an alternative regime of truth from the ones to which the Mongols were accustomed, it constructs a new realm of discourse within which 'Phags pa’s practices of morality and compassion are more powerful than the hordes of the Khan’s armies. It presents a paradigm that promises Qubilai, the person, escape from his inherently unsatisfactory life with 'Phags pa as his guide. It sets an ideal of “righteous kingship” for Qubilai, a goal of moral legitimacy to rule beyond that provided by mere force. And, in order to bring about this transformation, Qubilai Khan had to rely on 'Phags pa.

3. Examining other sources

Other sources relevant to this study of the relationship between Qubilai and 'Phags pa are twofold. The first set comprise the other primary sources authored by or attributed to 'Phags pa. These sources include texts written both for Qubilai and other members of the extended royal family; the compositions for the other members of the family provide indications of the direction in which 'Phags pa sought to influence Mongol power. The second set of sources are a broad range of historical accounts that directly or indirectly provide information about these two figures and the context in which they operated.

23 In 2015, as I was completing my thesis, Christopher Wilkinson published a collection of translations, Advice to Kublai Khan: Letters by the Tibetan Monk Chogyal Phagpa to Kublai Khan and his court, which includes the commentary and the structural outline. See Christopher Wilkinson (2015).
24 For a list of Buddhist teachings 'Phags pa received from various teachers, see Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968bg: 286–97).
3.1 'Phags pa’s compositions

In addition to Advice to the King, there are a number of other compositions that 'Phags pa explicitly states were written for Qubilai. One such text is a sādhana of Hevajra entitled Hevajra Sādhana and Protection Circle (Kye rdo rje'i sgrubs thabs srung 'khor dang bcas pa). The epilogue to this treatise explicitly states that the composition was presented when the Khan was enthroned in the Male Iron Monkey year (1260) at Kaiping (Tib. Kha yi phing hur; Ch. Kaiping 开平). Another text is a set of verses of praise to Vajra Nairātmyā, the consort of Hevajra, entitled The Rosary of Pure Praises (Bstod pa rnam dag phreng ba). It was composed by 'Phags pa while bestowing the same deity’s empowerment on Qubilai in the Female Water Pig year (1263). A text that was written for both Qubilai and his wife Chabi (1227–1281) is Instructions on the Three Purities (Dag pa gsum gyi khrid yig), a concise but comprehensive manual of Vajrayāna practice. Unfortunately, its epilogue does not include the date or location of its composition. A text that was prepared for and offered to Qubilai personally is Path of the Three Empowerments (Dbang gsum pa’i lam). It is a detailed and highly secretive Vajrayāna practice manual related to the advanced practice of channelling physical energies, belonging to the Hevajra Tantra cycle. These texts not only validate the historicity of Qubilai receiving Vajrayāna teachings, particularly the Hevajra cycle, from the Tibetan monk, they also reveal the level of sophistication of Buddhist teachings Qubilai received from 'Phags pa. Like Instructions on the Three Purities, however, Path of the Three Empowerments does not

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25 A text entitled “Gtor ma’i de nyid bsrgyad pa” is attributed to 'Phags pa in a later compilation of works attributed to the Sa skya founding masters, see Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1999:754–70). The epilogue of the text states that it was composed at the request of the great king in the Female Wood Sheep year (1294–1295) at the great palace of Shangdu (Tib. Shang mdo). The dating is obviously an error because this is more than a decade after 'Phags pa’s death. The text is likely to have been composed after 1263 because it states that it was written at Shangdu, a name that Qubilai gave to his summer palace Kaiping only on 16th June, 1263. See: Rashid al-Dīn (1971: 252). In 1264, the city was renamed Shangdu after Qubilai’s relocation of his capital to Khanbaliq, present-day Beijing. Shangdu is famously known as Xanadu in Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s poem ‘Kubla Khan’.


27 The text reveals that it was composed at the request of one “Rgyal bu gzhon nu”. “Rgyal bu”, meaning “prince”, is a reference 'Phags pa frequently used to address Mongol princes. This is a reference 'Phags pa used to refer to both Qubilai before his enthronement and his son Jingim. The chronological context, perhaps, appears consistent with the text being composed for Qubilai at his enthronement but “gzhon nu” at the same time indicates a prince who is particularly young. Therefore, in this case Jingim appears to be the more likely recipient of this text.

28 Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968ab: 142–43).

29 Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968ad: 143–47).


31 For details on the four types of empowerment and their associated practices, see David L. Snellgrove (1959: 131–33).

32 'Phags pa’s tradition restricts access to detailed instructions such as Dbang gsum pa’i lam to disciples who have already received the major Hevajra empowerment. From this we can infer that the Khan had likely received the Hevajra empowerment before he was given this instruction.
contain any details about the date and place of its composition.\textsuperscript{33} There are a number of other texts that were composed at Qubilai’s palaces, presumably for the Khan. However, given the ambiguity about their precise audience, I have not treated these as resources concerning Qubilai directly.

Apart from these compositions 'Phags pa wrote for Qubilai, there are a number of titles among the 321 in 'Phags pa’s compilation of works in The Complete Works that relate to 'Phags pa’s relationship with other members of the royal court. These include numerous treatises composed for Qubilai’s heir apparent, prince Jingim (1243–1286),\textsuperscript{34} including the much studied text Explanation of the Knowable (Shes bya rab gsal),\textsuperscript{35} which is more widely known as Prince Jiṅ-Gim’s Textbook of Tibetan Buddhism.\textsuperscript{36} This is an epistle that presents a Tibetan Buddhist worldview of the cosmos, sentient beings, the Buddhist path and its result, and unconditioned phenomena. Significantly, it identifies Jingim and his ancestors within the wider context of an Indo-centric Buddhist universe connecting them with the historical Buddhist kings of India and the Tibetan kings of the Pur rgyal dynasty,\textsuperscript{37} who 'Phags pa presents as righteous Buddhist kings (dharmarāja). This alignment with and idealising of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist kings is an active feature found in a number of 'Phags pa’s writings addressed to the members of the imperial family. It serves to not only construct a historical affinity with Buddhism, the faith that was personified by 'Phags pa within the royal court, but it also seeks to detach Qubilai from the Mongol view that Chinggis Khan’s (1162–1227) descendants had a divine right to rule the earth\textsuperscript{38} and the Sino-centric view of a cosmic order where the emperor rules with the mandate of Heaven (Ch. Tian-ming; 天命).\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{33} The epilogue of the text states that it was presented to the great king (Tib. Rgyal po chen po la phul ba’o). Addressing Qubilai by the title “great king” is something 'Phags pa does only after Qubilai’s ascension to the throne of the Great Khan in 1260. So this text is likely to have been composed after Qubilai’s enthronement.

\textsuperscript{34} The sheer number of works composed for prince Jingim suggests that perhaps 'Phags pa was closest to him among members of the royal family.

\textsuperscript{35} Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968bh: 1–18). Facsimile of a Mongolian translation of this text, which once belonged to Prince Yunli (1697–1738), was discovered in the St. Petersburg University Library Collection and published in 2006. See Vladimir Uspensky(2006).

\textsuperscript{36} Constance Hoog (1983).

\textsuperscript{37} The earlier rulers of the Pur rgyal (or Spur rgyal) dynasty were probably local chiefs in the Yarlung Valley; however, the later rulers from the 33rd king, Srong btsan sgam po, to the 42nd, Glang dar ma ('U dum btsan po), ruled over a vast empire that stretched far beyond the Tibetan plateau. From among these rulers, Tibetans idealise Srong btsan sgam po, Khri Srong lde btsan and Khri Ral pa chan in particular; they are collectively known as the Three Dharma Kings.

\textsuperscript{38} Bertold Spuler (1972: 26).

\textsuperscript{39} Shes bya rab gsal and other similar works by 'Phags pa were instrumental in setting what was to become the standard format for later Tibetan and Mongolian chronicle writing. For an important study of the influence of Tibetan Buddhist chronicles on the historiography of the Mongols, see Walther Heissig (1954: 37–44).
In addition to brief compositions written for Qubilai’s sons and grandchildren, more extensive epistles include those written for Qubilai’s third son Mangala (n.d.), *A Letter to Prince Maṅgala* (*Rgyal bu mang ga la la gtam du bya ba*),\(^{40}\) which was composed in the Male Fire Mouse year, 1276, and another for his fourth son Nomoghan (n.d.), *A Letter to Prince Nomoghan* (*Rgyal bu no mo gan la spring ba’i rab byed*),\(^ {41}\) which was composed in the year of the Monkey, 1272. ’Phags pa also wrote an epistle for Temür Buqa (n.d.),\(^ {42}\) a son of Qubilai’s seventh son Oqruch,\(^ {43}\) entitled *Rays of the Moon: Letter to Prince Temür Buqa* (*Rgyal bu de mur bho ga la gdams pa zla ba’i ’od zer*)\(^ {44}\) in 1276 and another for Qubilai’s great-grandson Delger Buqa (n.d.) in the same year, entitled *Advice to Prince Delger Buqa* (*Rgyal bu de gus bho ga la gdams pa*).\(^ {45}\) These compositions are almost identical in their content and all are structured as classical Tibetan Buddhist expositions of practices and attainments of the three vehicles (*theg pa gsum*). Interestingly, these epistles also include brief discussions on law and order, taxation, economics and other administrative topics.

’Phags pa’s epistles and compositions are not restricted to Qubilai’s immediate family. He also wrote a number of works addressed to Köden Khan’s (1206–1251) third son, Jibig Temür (n.d.).\(^ {46}\) ’Phags pa describes Jibig Temür as someone who was especially devoted to him.\(^ {47}\) Works dedicated to Jibig Temür range from short notes to longer epistles, one of the most notable being *Rosary of Precious Jewels: Letter to Prince Jibig Temür* (*Rgyal bu ji big de mur la gtam du bya ba nor bu’i phreng ba*),\(^ {48}\) composed in the Male Earth Tiger year, 1266. It provides a detailed exposition of ethical living, and the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna practices and their results. Similarly, ’Phags pa also wrote a few treatises for Güyük Khan’s third son, Hoqu (n.d.).\(^ {49}\) These

\(^{40}\) Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968o:191–97).

\(^{41}\) Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968m: 197–200).

\(^{42}\) Rashīd al-Dīn (1971: 244). Rashīd al-Dīn writes that “the province of Tibet was given to this Temür Buqa”. According to Morris Rossabi (1988: 222), Temür Bukha led a punitive force to Tibet to crush a ’Bri-gung uprising in 1290 and he was presumably granted nominal jurisdiction over Tibet after this campaign.

\(^{43}\) There are several texts written for this prince, many of which are Tantric sādhanās. See Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968e: 22–3); (1968y: 23–4); (1968b: 180); and (1968bl: 263–64).

\(^{44}\) Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968l: 207).

\(^{45}\) Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968k: 205–07).

\(^{46}\) It may appear surprising that ’Phags pa composed works for a member of the Ögedei branch of the Chinggisid despite their conflict with Qubilai’s Tolui branch. However, unlike the other descendants of Ögedei, Köden and his sons had sided with the Tolui in the struggle for the Great Khan’s throne and maintained cordial, if not close, relations with Qubilai. See Rashīd al-Dīn (1971: 21 and 170).

\(^{47}\) In Tibetan, the verse reads: བདེ་བར་བདག་ལ་རབ་འབོན་པ། འལ་ལོ་ཇི་བིག་དེ་རོ་ོད། See Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968j: 241, folio 4).

\(^{48}\) Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968i: 186–91).

\(^{49}\) Rashīd al-Dīn (1971: 175).
include an epistle entitled Advice to Hoqu (Ho ko la gdam pa),\textsuperscript{50} composed in the year of the Monkey, 1272. This also begins with a presentation of the universe according to Buddhist cosmology and then leads to explanations of Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna practices and description of their resultant states.

Among 'Phags pa’s works, a number are dedicated to the female members of the Mongol imperial family. They include a few compositions dedicated to Qubilai’s wife, Empress Chabi,\textsuperscript{51} several works of sophisticated esoteric Vajrayāna Buddhist practice manuals\textsuperscript{52} for prince Jingim’s wife Kökejin (?–1301),\textsuperscript{53} and a lengthy practice guide for prince Maṅgala’s wife Puṇḍarīka\textsuperscript{54} that was written to help her cope with her husband’s death. There are also two short prayers composed for the good fortune of Jibig Temür’s wife Dugal Durmi.\textsuperscript{55}

3.2 Historical sources

Scholarly research in the broader disciplines of Mongolian and Tibetan historical studies and, more particularly, the Tibetan relationship with the Mongol Empire, understandably tend to focus either on Chinese sources, primarily from the Yuan court annals (Yuan Shi 元史),\textsuperscript{56} or on Tibetan sources—two very polar narratives of the period’s history. The divergence between these two sets of sources, in their intent and style, has intensely affected their depictions of historical events, which has made analysis of this period difficult and a nuanced reading between these two sets of sources almost impossible. Generations of scholars in the field have bemoaned this situation.

In the words of Étienne Balázs, Chinese dynastic histories are written “by officials for officials”,\textsuperscript{57} of whom a large majority were not active Buddhists. The Yuan

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{50} Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968j: 200–05). For other works 'Phags pa dedicated to Hoqu, see Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968q: 260–63) and (1968bk: 242).
\item \textsuperscript{51} Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968f: 69); the work is addressed to a Dpon mo chen mo, which is a title referring to Chabi as the senior wife of Qubilai. See L. Van der Kuijp (1993: 280). ‘Phags pa’s Dag pa gsum gvi khrid yig is addressed to both the “king and the queen”, i.e., Qubilai and Chabi. See Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968ad: 143–47).
\item \textsuperscript{52} The list of compositions written for Kökejin extant in The Complete Works are: Chos rgyal 'Phags pa, (1968bd: 130); (1968aq: 234–39); (1968al: 239–40); (1968ba: 241–42); (1968aw: 242–43); (1968am: 243–46); and (1968e: 273–83).
\item \textsuperscript{53} According to Rashīd al-Dīn, Qubilai favoured Kökejin and did whatever she commanded. See Rashīd al-Dīn (1971: 299). It is she who commissioned the oldest known Mongol xylographic printing of a Tibetan text. See Van der Kuijp (1993: 281).
\item \textsuperscript{54} Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968ap: 207–11). The dating of this composition, the Male Iron Dragon year (1280), accords with the year of Maṅgala’s death quoted in Morris Rossabi (1988: 225). For an English translation of this composition, see Matthew T. Kapstein (2010: 135–43).
\item \textsuperscript{55} For epistles 'Phags pa wrote for the princess, see Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968ao: 241) and (1968ae: 242).
\item \textsuperscript{56} The Yuan Shi was compiled by the Ming dynasty’s History Bureau under the direction of Song Lian (宋濂, 1310–1381).
\item \textsuperscript{57} Étienne Balázs (1943: 135).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Shi was no exception. It was prepared in 1370 in less than a year by court officials of the Ming dynasty, which unseated the Mongol Yuan dynasty in China. Given its numerous factual and textual errors, perhaps partly owing to the degree of haste with which it was compiled, it is generally recognised as one of the worst of the Chinese dynastic histories. Its Chinese authors deliberately play down or even denounce the Tibetan Buddhist and traditional Mongol beliefs prevalent among the Mongolian royals, while exaggerating the extent to which the Mongol emperors adopted Chinese traditions. As China historian Herbert Franke explains, the Yuan Shi “reflects more the Chinese aspects and tends to ignore what was regarded as alien to Chinese traditions, above all Lamaism and Mongol pagan elements”. The annals are also considered to be deficient in their account of Mongol activities in Tibet. But despite its limitations, the Yuan Shi is one of the most cited primary sources from the period, and this thesis will draw on it whenever useful.

The Tibetan sources dealing with this period are also generally riddled with factual and textual errors; however, there are some that are more reliable and useful than others. The authors of these works were mostly scholar monks and their works reflect the otherworldly perspective through which they viewed the world around them. It was with reference to their otherworldly domain that most Tibetans narrated historical events, often overlooking the socio-political aspects that affected the lives of the people of the period. Franke articulately contrasts the Tibetan perspective with the Chinese when he explains, “Activities of Tibetan lamas in Yuan China, which appear to the Chinese as arrogant and insolent and at the best as foreign extravaganzas, may be viewed in Tibetan sources as selfless missionary efforts aimed at influencing Mongol rulers and propagating the doctrine of the Buddha throughout the whole empire”. These Tibetan sources comprise works from a range of genres, including hagiographies of teachers (rnam thar), genealogies (gdung rabs), origins of Buddhism (chos 'byung),

58 Yuan China was an appendage of a larger Mongol Empire and therefore Yuan China under Qubilai did not equate to the Mongol Empire, or even the whole of the East Asian empire under Qubilai’s direct control. The domains of Chinggis Khan’s sons Jochi in South Russia and Chaghadai in Central Asia, and the Il-khan founded by Qubilai’s brother Hülegü were autonomous kingdoms under the umbrella of the larger Mongol Empire. See ‘Aṭā’ Malik Juvaynī (1958: 42–3). Tibetan areas provide an example of a region that was largely a part of Qubilai’s domains but sat outside Yuan China. Herbert Franke (1981: 313) explains this structure by noting that “Tibet was a part of the Mongol empire in a peculiar way. It was definitely not part of China nor one of its provinces. The greater part of Tibet was ruled by indigenous lamas whose government was sanctioned by the imperial court via the Bureau of Buddhist and Tibetan Affairs, but they received little or no interference from the emperors. The Tibetan borderlands were, in name at least, appanages of Mongol imperial princes who exercised only a very loose control through offices and military commands that were established mostly on an ad hoc basis”.

59 Franke (1978: 12–13).
and annals (deb ther), which focus on the history of the propagation of Buddhism, and particularly that of the school to which the authors belong.

One of the main Tibetan sources that is referred to frequently in this thesis is the Treasury of the Amazing Genealogy of Sa skya (Sa skya ’i gdung rabs ngo mtshar bang mdzod) by A myes zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga’ bsod nams (1597–1659/1660). This genealogy of the ’Khon lineage is an indispensable resource for studies related to ’Phags pa’s life. Probably reflecting privileged access to Sa skya records owing to his position as a member of the Sa skya ruling family (the same family lineage as ’Phags pa), A myes zhabs quotes some of the most historically significant edicts and other materials from the Mongol era, most of which cannot be found elsewhere. Details on Sa skya paṇḍita Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan’s (1182–1251) and ’Phags pa’s activities found in his work are unparalleled. Stag tshang rdzong pa Dpal ’byor bzang po’s Chronicle of China and Tibet (Rgya bod yig tshang chen mo), written in 1434, is another principal source for the Sa skya–Mongol era. It contains helpful information on Sa skya–Mongol administrative structures and some exclusive accounts of the Qubilai–’Phags pa relationship. Another, very different Tibetan source that depicts ’Phags pa’s activities is the mural (thang kha) paintings called ’Phags thang at the Great Sa skya Temple (Lha khang chen mo) in Tibet. These paintings, considered to have been created no later than 1478, are a comprehensive illustrated biography of ’Phags pa. As such, they are a rare visual historical chronicle that has survived the rough tides of Tibetan history.

Primary Mongolian works relevant to the period of this research are scarce. Early sources suggest the existence of a Mongolian chronicle called The Golden Annals (Altan Debter) written in Uighur–Mongol script that was only accessible to the members of certain high offices, but this is no longer extant. Most of the available Mongolian historical sources either pre-date Qubilai’s reign or were written centuries after it. For example, the content of the widely cited Mongolian historical work Secret History of the Mongols only covers the period up to Ögedei’s reign (ruled 1229–1241). Meanwhile, later Mongolian chronicles of the 17th century such as The Jewelled

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62 A myes zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga’ bsod nams will henceforth be referred to as A myes zhabs.
63 ’Khon is a name of the ruling familial lineage of the Sa skya order of Tibetan Buddhism. According to traditional beliefs, members of this lineage are descendants of celestial beings. This family has produced many renowned figures of Tibetan Buddhism, initially in the Rnying ma order and subsequently in the Sa skya order of which they are the founders.
64 Henceforth referred to as Sa paṇḍita.
65 Dung dkar Blo bzang ’phrin las in an editorial preface to Rgya bod yig tshang confirmed the year of composition as 1434. See Dpal ’byor bzang po (1985: 1).
“Chronicle (Erden-yin Tobči)”\textsuperscript{68} and “The Golden Chronicle (Altan Tobči)”\textsuperscript{69} are highly influenced by the Tibetan Buddhist narrative of history and, therefore, do not add value beyond what is provided by the Tibetan sources. There is, however, one exception to this general trend: a Mongolian-language history, “The White History of the Ten Virtues (Mong. Arban Buyantu Nom-un Cagan Teuke),” whose authorship is attributed to the Mongol imperial period,\textsuperscript{70} is a source that is suggestive of ‘Phags pa’s influence over Qubilai in shaping his philosophy on statecraft.

Persian sources on the Mongol empire period are highly regarded among scholars. Among these, Rashīd al-Dīn’s “Compendium of Chronicles (Jām‘ī al-Tawārīkh) has been hailed as “undoubtedly the most important single historical source for the Mongol Empire.”\textsuperscript{71} It was commissioned by Ghazan Khan (1271–1304) of the Īlkhānate, who in 1295 at his enthronement declared his conversion to Islam from Buddhism, ordered the razing of Buddhist temples to the ground and gave an ultimatum to Tibetan monks to either leave his khanate or become Muslims.\textsuperscript{72} It is, therefore, understandable that this work, tailored for Ghazan, lacks detailed accounts of Tibetan lamas’ activities at the Mongol court. However, there are a few mentions of Tibetan lamas who, Rashīd al-Dīn reports, wielded great influence during the later stages of Qubilai’s life and during his grandson Temür Öljeytu Khan’s reign.\textsuperscript{73} But, curiously, these do not include accounts of ‘Phags pa. Similarly, ‘Alā al-Dīn ‘Aṭā’ Malik Juvaynī’s “History of the World Conqueror (Tārīkh-i Jahāngushāy)” breaks off after the reign of Mōngke Khan. These accounts are not directly concerned with the primary focus of this study, but they are helpful in providing a general understanding of the operational structure of the Mongol Empire around the time of ‘Phags pa and serve as an alternative source of information to compare with and corroborate the accounts in Chinese and Tibetan works.

\textsuperscript{68} Sayang Sečen, Klaus Sagaster, Elisabetta Chiodo (1996).
\textsuperscript{69} C. R. Bawden (1995).
\textsuperscript{70} For a detailed study and translation of this book in German, see Klaus Sagaster (1976). This study not only attributes the authorship of “The White History” to the Mongol empire period but more specifically suggests the time of authorship as between 1271–1280, placing it during Qubilai’s reign (see p. 59).
\textsuperscript{71} David Morgan (1995: 443).
\textsuperscript{72} David Morgan (1986: 158).
\textsuperscript{73} In particular Rashīd al-Dīn mentions two monks at the Mongol court, Tanba and Kanba, who enjoyed great authority. See Rashīd al-Dīn (1971: 302–03). Of the two monks, the identity of the former can be verified in Tibetan sources as Sga a gnyan dam pa kun dga’ grags, who is also casually known by a part of his name—Dam pa—in ‘Phags pa’s works. His name (Dam pa) appears on two occasions in “Complete Works” in what are two identical compositions included (likely erroneously) as separate entries: Mi nyag mgon po, Ye shes rdo rje, Thub bstan nyi ma, Dpal rdor, and Lha mo skyabs (1996–2000: 93–98).
3.3 Previous Western scholarship

There is extensive research related to the Qubilai—’Phags pa relationship and the much invoked *mchod yon* relationship between the Mongol khans and Tibetan Buddhist prelates and its political ramifications. These studies have contributed significantly to our present understanding of these issues. Tucci’s seminal work, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, not only presents an oeuvre of ’Phags pa’s works but also sketches out details of early Mongol incursions into Tibet, Sa paṇ and ’Phags pa’s contact with the Mongol court, and Qubilai’s religious and political relationship with ’Phags pa and its significance.74

Following in Tucci’s footsteps, Luciano Petech studies the Yuan–Sa skya period in great detail in a series of works, drawing on both Chinese and Tibetan sources, and was influential in shaping popular contemporary interpretations of the period. *Central Tibet and the Mongols: The Yuan–Sa-skya Period of Tibetan History* mainly focuses on the political framework of the Mongol apparatus for the administration of Tibet. His analysis denies the Sa skya pas75 any real power in Tibet and portrays ’Phags pa as a mere tool for Qubilai’s designs for the region, largely discounting the Sa skya monk’s prominence as a religious figure and as a counsellor to Qubilai.76

Turrell V. Wylie’s position on ’Phags pa’s role at the Mongol court in *The First Mongol Conquest of Tibet Reinterpreted* does not depart far from that of Tucci’s and Petech’s assessments; his is a presentation centred almost entirely on a political perspective of Mongol objectives. It also portrays ’Phags pa as an instrument of the Mongol court.77 He discusses neither ’Phags pa’s role in the cultural development of Qubilai’s empire nor ’Phags pa’s influence at the Khan’s court.

Franke’s works concerning ’Phags pa’s relationship with Qubilai mainly draw on Chinese sources. His book *From Tribal Chieftain to Universal Emperor and God: The Legitimation of the Yuan Dynasty*78 and his article “Tibetans in Yuan China”79 both focus on ’Phags pa’s utility to Qubilai in sacralising Mongol rule through legitimising the Mongol Khan as a *cakravartin* or universal monarch. As will be discussed in chapter one, however, this assumption of his is not supported by ’Phags pa’s own writings and the theoretical definition of a *cakravartin* in Buddhism.

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75 In Tibetan, people belonging to the Sa skya school of Tibetan Buddhism are referred to as Sa skya pa.
76 Luciano Petech (1990: 14).
77 Turrell Wylie (1977: 103–33).
78 Franke (1978).
Doctoral dissertations by Luc Kwanten, *Tibetan–Mongol Relations during the Yuan Dynasty, 1207–1368*, and Jiunn Yih Chang, *A Study of the Relationship between the Mongol Yuan Dynasty and the Tibetan Sa-skya Sect*, both assess broader aspects of Tibetan–Mongol relations during the period of Sa skya hegemony in Tibet. A considerable amount of their research concerns 'Phags pa’s relationship with Qubilai. These studies primarily draw on Chinese sources to consider the question of why Qubilai provided such special treatment to 'Phags pa. In line with the other works mentioned above, they also portray 'Phags pa as someone who was useful to Qubilai for political purposes.

Chen Qingying’s *Biography of the Yuan Dynasty’s Imperial Preceptor Drogon 'Phags pa* (Tib. *Yon rgyal rabs kyi ti shri ’gro mgon ’Phags pa’i mdzad rnam*) draws on both Chinese and Tibetan sources to present a more comprehensive discussion of 'Phags pa’s life. Nevertheless, caution is required in drawing on this biography. Perhaps reflecting its publication by a Chinese state-owned entity, it frequently side tracks and seeks to appropriate disparate historical accounts to support China’s present day claim of sovereignty over Tibet.

Ronald Davidson’s *Tibetan Renaissance: Tantric Buddhism in the Rebirth of Tibetan Culture* focuses on the role of esoteric Buddhism in the cultural renaissance of Tibetan civilisation from the tenth to the twelfth century and does not contain extensive analysis of the relationship between Tibetans and the Mongol Empire. Nevertheless, the relatively brief discussion of this period contained in the book stands out because, like the analysis presented in this thesis, it questions whether the functionalist explanations prevalent among contemporary scholarship accurately identifies the role of Tibetans, and 'Phags pa in particular, among the Mongol khans. He astutely observes that “perhaps, instead, the received analysis reflects the predisposition of these authors to assess this role principally through the filters of Chinese political documents and the suppositions of the social sciences and political history”.

4. Chapter overview
Chapter one presents the historical context of the inception of the Sa skya–Mongol partnership and argues that the functionalist political interpretations of the nature of the relationship between Qubilai and 'Phags pa dominant in contemporary scholarship are
incongruous with salient historical evidence. It reassesses the Qubilai–’Phags pa association through an approach that accounts for its personal and religious dimensions. It also examines the historical and semantical context underlying the concept of mchod yon, of which this relationship has come to be viewed as the paradigmatic manifestation. The chapter also explores the institutional and geopolitical implications of the Qubilai–’Phags pa bond during their time and for Tibet’s subsequent relations with the Mongols, Chinese and Manchus.

Chapters two, three and four focus on Advice to the King and the insight that ’Phags pa’s discourse offers into his bond with Qubilai. Chapter two draws out examples of advice from the broader literary tradition within Buddhism of “speaking truth to power” to which the treatise belongs, highlighting the tradition’s common salient themes while tracing its development from its Indian origins to the Tibetan Buddhist world. In so doing, this chapter not only places Advice to the King within its literary context, it also enunciates the nature and intent of such discourses, providing insights regarding the sorts of teachings that have been given by Buddhist advisors to people of power and what sorts of results they may have hoped to achieve.

Chapter three parses Advice to the King and the wealth of Buddhist teachings it encapsulates, systematically tracing its traditional structure. Chapter four draws on the main themes and concepts of the text as presented in chapter three to examine the potential power that is embodied in and arises from its discourse. The chapter argues that this discourse seeks to create new regimes of truth that present an alternate view of the Khan’s identity; it seeks to pivot ’Phags pa to the centre of the universe constructed for Qubilai by that discourse and transform the dynamics of their power relationship. The chapter also assesses how the discourse might be expected to influence Qubilai’s behaviour and practices and whether historical accounts suggest Qubilai sought to live up to the ideals espoused in ’Phags pa’s instructions. A conclusion chapter follows, which recaps the journey through the various components of the thesis and its key contributions to the broader field, and suggests further avenues for future related research.
Chapter One:  
Reassessing the Qubilai–’Phags pa Relationship

In the midst of the busyness of his many tasks,  
His hand holds a rosary,  
His mouth intones mantras,  
And he exerts himself in activities of worship to the Three Jewels.

A description of Qubilai Khan from the Yuan era

1. Introduction
Political interpretations have exerted an undue level of influence over academic narratives regarding the relationship between Qubilai Khan and ’Phags pa. Their overwhelming focus on functionalist explanations based on selective readings of historical sources results in overly simplistic conclusions. The political approach almost entirely neglects the weight of the religious domain within which ’Phags pa was particularly influential at the Mongol court.

This chapter reassesses the nature of the Qubilai–’Phags pa association through a more comprehensive approach that accounts for its personal and religious dimensions. It also examines the historical and semantical context underlying the concept of mchod yon, of which this relationship has come to be viewed as the paradigmatic manifestation. It then explores the institutional and geopolitical implications of the Qubilai–’Phags pa bond during their time and for Tibet’s subsequent relations with the Mongols, Chinese and Manchus.

2. Inception of the Sa skya–Mongol partnership
’Phags pa, his brother Phyag na rdo rje (1239–1267) and their uncle Sa paṇ reached the court of Köden Khan, son of Ögedei Khan (1186–1241), at Byang ngos (Ch. Liangzhou 凉州) in 1246. Sa paṇ had travelled to the prince’s court after receiving an invitation decree that threatened the use of military force unless Sa paṇ accepted. In his Invitation Decree (Ja’ sa gden ’dren ma), Köden had declared that: “Are you not afraid that I might overrun the hinterlands, ordering the great military force to harm sentient beings?

1 Thang khri an (1985: 49). Thang quotes from a Yuan era source known as Yang dag sde snod chen mo.
2 For more on Köden being granted the Byang ngos region as his appanage by his father Ögedei Khan and for details on first contact between borderland Tibetans and Mongols, see Christopher P. Atwood (2014: 21–45).
Therefore, considering the wellbeing of the Buddha’s Dharma and many sentient beings, you should come quickly”.3

Traditional Tibetan depictions of the inception of the Sa skya–Mongol partnership generally ascribe only pious intentions to the Mongols. The threat embedded in this invitation shows how this position is untenable, and highlights the Mongols’ policy of military expansion, which Tibetan historians have too-often actively ignored. This includes Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa’s influential two-volume Political History of Tibet, which ascribes Köden’s summoning of Sa paṇ primarily to a thirst for religious instruction.4 In “inviting” Sa paṇ in 1244, Köden was following a standard practice implemented by Chinggis and his successors of summoning the rulers or other key figures of countries to ensure their acquiescence. A few years earlier, in 1240, Köden had sent a reconnaissance mission to Central Tibet, which found that the region was politically fragmented. It learnt about and reported back on the various centres of power and personalities of influence among the local secular and religious hegemons.5 In such situations, it was common for the Mongols to employ the tactic of exploiting religious leaders at the expense of secular lords in order to subjugate foreign populations.6 Köden’s choice of Sa paṇ appears consistent with this practice.

Around the time of Köden’s reconnaissance mission, word of Sa paṇ’s intellectual brilliance was spreading throughout Tibet after he defeated Harinanda, a non-Buddhist scholar from India, in a debate at Skyid grong.7 With the fame and respect he had earned from this victory and his connections with the hierarchs of major monastic powers in Central Tibet as the head of a major hereditary lineage and the Sa skya order of Tibetan Buddhism, the elderly Sa skya teacher had become the kind of figure the Mongols needed; Sa paṇ was an individual of influence with the potential to persuade Tibetans to accept Mongol overlordship without the Mongols having to deploy their military resources. Some scholars also argue that Sa paṇ may have appeared particularly suitable for the Mongols’ purposes because, unlike other religious

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3 A myes zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga’ bsod nams (2012a: 89–90). It should be noted that the authenticity of this letter has been challenged by Dieter Schuh. He contends that the letter is not only corruptly transmitted but could also be a later forgery. Regardless of whether this specific source is authentic or not, it is clear from a range of sources that there was an element of coercion in compelling Sa paṇ to travel to Köden’s court. For more on Schuh’s analysis, see Dieter Schuh (1977: 41).
4 Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa (2010).
5 Nga dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1980: 90).
hierarchs, he came to his religious position by birth. Among these scholars is Wylie, who proposes that “…the familial control and transmission of Sa-skya-pa ruling power offered the Mongols a tangible means of providing continuity to the submission of Tibet” through the Sa skya hereditary lineage. At the time the throne of the Sa skya pas passed from uncle to nephew. Although this system was later replaced by a system of primogeniture, the tradition of uncles passing their thrones to a nephew continues to this day among the heads of Ngor pa and Tsar pa sub-orders of the Sa skya order.

The motive of controlling Tibet is not likely to have been the only reason that Sa paṇ was invited to court. The Mongols also collected individuals perceived to have special skills and knowledge. They included people known as bakhshi who were perceived to have special powers in healing, prolonging lives and magic. Sa paṇ’s presence at their court would have, therefore, given the Mongols access not only to the interconnected political power networks of Tibet, but also to the best of the knowledge and services that the Tibetan Buddhist world had to offer. Sa paṇ, who was Tibet’s preeminent scholar of the day, was known for his erudition and mastery of the traditional “ten sciences”.

3. Tibet’s acquiescence to avoid Mongol invasion

Sa paṇ’s Letter to the Tibetans is considered the primary evidence marking Tibet’s entry into the Mongol Empire. A less well-known letter by Sa paṇ, this one to Bka’ gdam pa Nam mkha’ ’bum (n.d.), also provides a recorded reference by Sa paṇ mentioning a general acquiescence of Tibet, and this is perhaps the earliest such reference. In response to a request for advice from Bka’ gdam pa Nam mkha’ ’bum about whether he should leave his meditative retreat when Mongol forces arrived, Sa paṇ replies, “If a general acquiescence (ngo blta) of Tibet is secured, it would be

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8 For examples, see Turrell Wylie (1977: 113) and Morris Rossabi (1988: 153–176).
9 Wylie (1977: 113).
11 For more on the knowledge and services Sa paṇ brought to Köden’s court, see Christopher I. Beckwith (1987b: 5–11). Summoning leading scholars and talents of the time to their court was also a common Mongol practice; for more on this, see Michael Burgan (2009: 115–33) and Morris Rossabi (1988: 153–176).
13 Sa paṇ Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan (2006b: 458–64). David P. Jackson cautions that it is not possible to determine the authenticity of the letter in a decisive way; however, I have found its contents to be generally consistent with other sources from the period. For Jackson’s analysis, see David P. Jackson (2013: 241–46).
14 The term “ngo blta” also appears repeatedly in Sa paṇ’s Letter to the Tibetans. Giuseppe Tucci (1999: 11) translated it as “vassal” and “vassalage”, while others have interpreted it as “surrender”. These translations are inaccurate. Instead “acquiescence” or “appeasement” are more correct translations. Ngo lta can also refer to false self abasement. On the contrary, the Tibetan terms for “vassal” and “surrender”
best to remain in solitude. Otherwise, I think it would probably be best to retire to another, safer place and there continue your practice”.

The real and imminent threat of a Mongol invasion and associated destruction should Tibetans fail to submit to Mongol overlordship, as well as Sa pañ’s commitment to averting this danger, are also clear in his correspondences. In the same set of letters, Bka’ gdam pa Nam mkha’ ’bum asks Sa pañ, “Is there any beneficial reason for your going to the Mongols?” The latter responds, “These Mongols have told me that I must definitely come to serve as their mchod gnas and that if I don’t come, an army will arrive. My going is because I feared that harm might befall Tibet if an army were to come. Aside from going in the hope that it will prove to be beneficial for beings, there is no assurance of benefit. Still, I am willing to give up my body and life if that will help beings”.

A similar tone of looming Mongol threat is echoed in Sa pañ’s letter to ’Gro mgon rin chen (1170–1249), the abbot of Sho monastery in Smar kham in eastern Tibet. In the letter, Sa pañ promises the abbot any required assistance in the future if the abbot sends some competent people with gifts with him to Köden’s court, where they will be granted a decree confirming their acquiescence and be spared from possible Mongol aggression. These letters provide examples of how Sa pañ leveraged his influence to help broker a broad Tibetan acquiescence, fulfilling both his apparent intention to avert violence in Tibet and the Mongols’ expansionist objective.

4. Sa pañ in Byang ngos

After accepting the Mongol “invitation”, Sa pañ and his two young nephews took more than two years to reach Köden’s court. One evident reason why Sa pañ and his entourage took an unusually long time on this journey was that Sa pañ visited many powerful monasteries and met numerous leaders along the way, in the process garnering

could be more appropriately rendered as “rgyal phran” and “mgo btags pa” or “mgo sgur pa” respectively.

15 Sa skya Pandita Kunga Gyaltshen and Jared Douglas Rhoton (2002: 268). Jared D. Rhoton translated the statement “Bod spyi'i ngo blta btsan sa cig byung na dben par bzhugs pa ’thad” (བོད་ིས། གོང་བོས་ལྟ་བཙན་ས་ཅིག་བྱུང་ན་དབེན་པར་བཞུགས་པ་འཐད།) as “Consider the general situation in Tibet. I think if there happens to be some remote location in your area, it would be correct for you to remain in solitude there”. My rendering of the two key words in the sentence are: “ngo blta” as “acquiescence” and “btsan sa” in this context as “to secure”.

16 Mchod gnas is often translated as ‘priest’. However, this translation does not fully capture the Tibetan term’s connotations (as discussed later in this chapter). As there is no equivalent to this word in English, in this thesis, I will use the original Tibetan term.


broad support and consensus before he represented Tibetans in showing acquiescence at Köden’s court.\textsuperscript{19} Sa pañ met Köden in 1247 when the Mongol prince returned to his capital after attending the quriltai (a council of the Chinggisid, the descendants of Chinggis Khan) that elected Köden’s brother Güyük Khan (1206–1248) to the Great Khan’s throne.

According to Sa pañ’s \textit{Letter to the Tibetans}, Köden expressed his pleasure at seeing the elderly Sa skya teacher and his two young nephews at his court,\textsuperscript{20} and Tibetan chronicles suggest that Sa pañ became the most senior among the prince’s priests (Tib. \textit{gnam mchod pa’i rgan pa thob}).\textsuperscript{21} Tibetan sources further suggest that Köden and Sa pañ eventually formed a close personal and religious bond. Sa pañ’s mastery over various fields of learning was reportedly personally helpful for Köden, including in the curing of his chronic skin disease.\textsuperscript{22} And according to ‘Phags pa, it was through Sa pañ’s blessings that Köden’s son Jibig Temür was born.\textsuperscript{23} Sa pañ is also said to have impressed the prince with his knowledge and magical performances.\textsuperscript{24} In the process, Sa pañ laid the foundations for the bond between the Sa skya pas and the Mongol imperial family that would last for a century. According to his \textit{Letter to the Tibetans}, Sa pañ also appears to have gained some degree of authority over Tibet and its Buddhist monastics in the later years of his life at Köden’s court.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{19} Mkhan po bsod nams rgya mtsho (2011: 186–92). In Sa pañ (2006b: 461), Sa pañ mentions people from Bi ri being in his company. While Luciano Petech (1990: 13) notes the presence of these people in Sa pañ’s company, he is unable to identify who they are. For the identification of the people of Bi ri, see an article in Tibetan by Be ri dge bshes ’Jigs med dbang rgyal (2008: 61), who is himself a native of Bi ri or Be ri.

\textsuperscript{20} A number of scholarly works, including Tucci’s \textit{Tibetan Painted Scrolls} (1999: 10) indicate that ‘Phags pa and his brother were taken to Köden’s court ahead of Sa pañ as hostages. This assertion is inconsistent with a number of records that indicate otherwise. Tucci’s misunderstanding appears to be due to his mistranslation of the section of Sa pañ’s \textit{Letter to the Tibetans} that reads, “You have come with your entourage including the little ‘Phags pa brothers thinking of me” (འཕགས་པ་�ན་འདི་འབོའི་བ་ནས་�ིད་ནས་འཁོར་དང་བཅས་པ་འོང་བ་དེ་ངེད་ལ་བསམ་པ་ཡིན།). Instead Tucci translates as: “I had thought that aP’ags pa who had taken with him so small brother and his retinue would have been enough”. Köden’s apparent surprise at seeing that Sa pañ was accompanied by his nephews suggests that Köden had not demanded their presence. Confusingly, Tucci suggests the brothers travelled to Köden’s court two years before Sa pañ (around 1244–45) but cites Sum pa mkhan po’s Chronological table, year 1242 as his source. Given the entry under year 1242 in Sum pa Mkhan po’s \textit{Chos ‘byung} records “Nil” (indicating no major events in the year), Tucci most likely meant to refer to 1244. The entry under 1244 states that the brothers proceeded together to Mongolia in that year. See Sum pa mkhan po (1991: 35). For Sa pañ’s \textit{Letter to the Tibetans} and the section Tucci mistranslated, see Sa pañ Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan (2006b: 459). Further, in Smar pa bka’ rgyud records, it is explicitly stated that Sa pañ and his nephews were welcomed grandly in Smar khams, eastern Tibet, in the Wood Dragon year (1244). See Karma rdo rje (2006: 108).

\textsuperscript{21} Dpal ’byor bzang po (1985: 324). Tibetan term \textit{gnam mchod} (sky-worship) is a literal rendering of the ancient Mongol shamanistic worship of the eternal blue sky (\textit{Tengrî}).

\textsuperscript{22} A myes zhabs (2012a: 96–8).

\textsuperscript{23} Chos rgyal ‘Phags pa (1968w: 263, folio 1).

\textsuperscript{24} A myes zhabs (2012a: 103–4).

\textsuperscript{25} Illustrating Sa pañ’s authority in Tibet, the letter instructs the local leaders of Tibetan regions to not make decisions without consulting with Sa skya officials. See A myes zhabs (2012:104–8).
Sa paṇ passed away in Byang ngos in late 1251 at the age of sixty-nine, but before his death he named his sixteen-year-old nephew ’Phags pa as his successor as the head of the Sa skyā order. Indeed, considering Sa paṇ’s already advanced age, the traditional requirement to groom a successor is perhaps the most likely reason that he brought his nephews to Köden’s court in the first instance. Köden probably died around the same time as Sa paṇ, and his Ögedei branch of the Chinggisid also lost power to the Tolui branch when his cousin Möngke Khan (1209–1259) ascended to the throne of the Great Khan, also in 1251. Unlike the other descendants of Ögedei, Köden had sided with Möngke in the struggle for the throne. After his rise, Möngke reciprocated by allowing Köden’s sons to maintain their armies and the Tangut country as their territory.

5. Meeting Qubilai Khan

’Phags pa first came in contact with Prince Qubilai in 1253. At that time, Qubilai’s older brother Möngke Khan ruled as the Great Khan and had recently extended Qubilai’s appanage to include Shensi, a region that Köden had ruled. According to Tshal pa Kun dga’ rdo rje (1309–1364), the author of the influential Red Annals, “’Phags pa was brought to Qubilai’s encampment at Liupan Shan by king [sic.] Mo go du of Byang ngos”. In return, Prince Mo go du (n.d.) received around a hundred

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26 Tibetan sources generally report that Köden died around the same time as Sa paṇ. However, this is at odds with some other sources. For example, citing Yuan Shi, Atwood (2014: 42) suggests that Köden was still alive in the summer of 1252.
27 Möngke Khan was the eldest son of Tolui, the youngest of Chinggis Khan and his empress Börte’s three sons.
28 While Möngke Khan introduced some changes, including implementing an appanage system in Tibet, his ascendency does not appear to have fundamentally altered Mongol policy over Tibet according to ’Phags pa’s writings. For example, ’Phags pa wrote a letter to Tibetans from Byang ngos in 1252 announcing Sa paṇ’s death in which he suggests Möngke Khan was willing to follow a policy similar to Köden’s on Tibet and its monastics. Despite the uncertainties of the time, ’Phags pa assures Tibetans, “…there is no need to be afraid”. The letter also mentions an edict by Möngke Khan announcing that “the Sa skyā pas are in charge of the affairs of monastics”. See Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968: 267, folio 2). For a discussion of the appanage system implemented in Tibet, see Per K. Sørensen and Guntram Hazod (2007: 555–57). For further evidence of the existence of appanages in Tibet, specifically an appanage linked to Hülegü and under the control of the Phag mo grub pa, see a translation of a letter to Qubilai Khan by Thog brdugs pa Grags pa brtson ’grus (1203–1267), head of the Phag mo grub pa, in Jampa Samten and Dan Martin (2015: 322).
31 There are varying opinions in the earlier sources on the date of Qubilai’s first meeting with ’Phags pa. Some suggest that it could have taken place as early as 1251. For more on this see Khrin chin dbyin (2006: 77–80).
33 The Red Annals (Deb ther dmar po) is the earliest extant Tibetan attempt at writing a history of Tibet and the region.
34 Tshal pa Kun dga’ rdo rje (1981: 48). According to Rashīd al-Dīn (1971: 20), Mönggeti was the eldest of Köden’s three sons. Despite the slight variation in phonetical transcriptions, it is most probable that
horsemen from Qubilai. 35 'Phags pa’s transference is commonly interpreted as highlighting that Qubilai was now master of Köden’s former domain in the region and held the symbol of Tibet’s acquiescence.36

Qubilai rose to the throne of the Great Khan in 1260 after Möngke’s death and amid a bloody internecine war of succession between him and his brother Ariq Böke (1219–1266). Qubilai granted 'Phags pa the title of State Preceptor (Tib. Go-shri; Ch. Guόshǐ 国師) on 9th January, 126137 and the title of Imperial Preceptor (Tib. Ti-shri; Ch. Dishį 帝師)38 in 1270.39 The latter was created solely for 'Phags pa with no precedent in the Mongol court.

6. Political interpretations of the Qubilai–'Phags pa relationship

Political interpretations have become the dominant received narratives of the nature of the relationship between Qubilai and 'Phags pa in contemporary scholarship. Among the most influential is Petech’s view that 'Phags pa was “a tool utilised by Qubilai to implement a policy of control without conquest, adopted solely in Tibet”40 In Petech’s view, the main reason for Qubilai’s selection of 'Phags pa to facilitate his designs was because 'Phags pa was “less hesitant to cooperate than other Lamas” and “offered best guarantees of intelligent subservience to the aims of the new ruler (Qubilai)”.41 Petech’s analysis denies the Sa skya pas any real power in Tibet,42 and he also rejects the notion of 'Phags pa being an influential counsellor on political or even religious matters.43

Another influential work concerning the Sa skya–Mongol period is Wylie’s “The First Mongol Conquest of Tibet Reinterpreted”. Wylie’s interpretation of the

Tshal pa Kun dga’ rdo rje was referring to the same person here as Rashįd al-Dīn. It must also be noted that Tshal pa Kun dga’ rdo rje refers to Möngeti as the king of Byang ngos. This reference is generally interpreted to imply that Köden was dead by then and that Möngeti was in charge of the appanages in the region of Byang ngos, former Tangut territories.

37 Song Lian (1976: Ch. 4, 68). Here the title was mistakenly named as Dishi, but Khrin chín dbyin (2006: 148) points out that the title is Go-shri, not Ti-shri. Conferral of the Imperial Preceptor (Ti-shri) title is believed to have taken place in 1270. See A myes zhabs (2012a: 169). Some scholars believe that the title of Ti-shri was awarded posthumously to 'Phags pa, but this assertion is not consistent with the above citation from A myes zhabs’s account or with the Yuan Shi. The Yuan Shi states: “The Ti-shih Pa-hos-su-pa ('Phags pa) returned to Fan-kuo (Tibet) on 24th April, 1274…” See Song Lian (1976: Ch. 8, 154). Further, in a composition by 'Phags pa praising a Chinese monk referred to as Yi gyang Ju of Sichuan for printing Buddhist scriptures, he refers to himself as Ti-shih. See Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968aac: 238, folio 1).
38 For the origins of the positions of State and Imperial Preceptors, see Ruth Dunnel (1992: 85–111).
42 Petech (1990: 16).
43 Petech (1990: 140).
nature of 'Phags pa’s relations with Qubilai is similar to Petech’s—a proposition centred on a primarily political understanding of Mongol objectives. Wylie argues that Qubilai’s association with 'Phags pa reflects the “Mongol predilection for using ecclesiastics to administer subjugated territories” and his desire to implement “a centralised form of hierocratic government in Tibet”.

Based primarily on Chinese historical sources, a number of contemporary Chinese scholars also put forward purely political explanations of 'Phags pa’s utility for Qubilai. These studies follow texts such as Biographies of Buddhists and Taoists (Ch. Shi Lao zhuan 釋老傳) in the Yuan Shi, which states: “Shi Zu [Qubilai Khan] considered the fact that the [Tibetan] land was vast, remote and dangerous, and the people of it were rough and fond of fighting. Therefore, he thought of how to make the best use of the people’s customs to pacify them. He set up the system of prefectures and counties in the land of Tibet and installed officials responsible for different duties under the leadership of the imperial preceptor”. In line with this interpretation in the Yuan Shi, Shen Weirong states that “Yuan policy towards Tibet, a chief characteristic of which was to give most-favoured treatment to Tibetan Lamas” aimed “to control and rule the land of Tibet”. Drawing on János Szerb’s “Glosses on the Oeuvre of Bla-ma 'Phags-pa: III. The ‘Patron-Patronized’ Relationship”, Shen concludes that the nature of Qubilai’s association with 'Phags pa “was no doubt that of lord and subject”.

Franke’s From Tribal Chieftain to Universal Emperor and God: The Legitimation of the Yuan Dynasty and “Tibetans in Yuan China” in China Under Mongol Rule both acknowledge that 'Phags pa was an influential figure. Franke’s focus, however, remains on 'Phags pa’s utility to Qubilai—in particular, 'Phags pa’s supposed usefulness in legitimising his rule over the Mongol Empire. Franke’s

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44 Doctoral dissertations by Luc Kwanten (1972) and Jiunn Yih Chang (1984) both assess broader aspects of Tibetan–Mongol relations during the Sa skya hegemony in Tibet. A considerable amount of their research concerns 'Phags pa’s relationship with Qubilai. They also understand 'Phags pa as someone who was useful to Qubilai for political purposes.
45 Other scholars who follow a line similar to Wylie’s include Luc Kwanten, who asserts that Qubilai’s relationship with 'Phags pa “illustrates how Qubilai, through the careful manipulation of a cleric, was able to control a territory as vast as Tibet…with a minimum of military forces”. See Kwanten (1979: 153).
46 Wylie (1977: 331).
47 Examples include Shen Weirong (2004: 196) and Chen Dezhi (2005: 10–11).
52 Franke (1978).
interpretation is founded on the proposition that Qubilai employed ’Phags pa to sacralise him as a cakravartin, a universal monarch in Buddhist cosmology.

7. Problems with the political interpretations
As Davidson has observed, within the political interpretations of the Qubilai-’Phags pa relationship, “the overwhelming importance placed on exclusively functionalist explanations” essentially results in ’Phags pa being only afforded the role of “a useful cog in the Mongol administration”. 54 These narratives, however, are overly simplistic and are incongruous with salient historical evidence, including the following points.

7.1 Qubilai’s anomalous special treatment of ’Phags pa
If ’Phags pa’s usefulness to Qubilai was primarily as a tool in controlling Tibet as Petech and Wylie assert, then the numerous accounts in both Tibetan and Chinese sources of Qubilai’s exceptional treatment and demonstrations of respect, if not reverence, towards ’Phags pa appear anomalous. For example, the Yuan Shi records:

The court respected and honoured him (i.e., the imperial preceptor) by every conceivable means. Even the emperor, queen, imperial concubine and princess prostrated before him, since they had received initiations from him. During the morning gatherings in the imperial governmental court, hundreds of officials were arranged in a row, but the imperial preceptor had a special seat next to the emperor’s throne. 55

Further to Ye shes rgyal mtshan’s account of the extraordinary respect and grandeur of the welcome that ’Phags pa was afforded on his return from his homeland to the Mongol imperial court at Zhongdu in 1268 presented as the opening excerpt in the introduction chapter, 56 describing the same event the Yuan Shi also reports that:

In order to welcome his arrival, over one hundred horses ridden by great officials from the prime minister down took the postal route out of the capital to receive him. All along the way to the capital he was welcomed and seen off with tribute. As he approached the capital, the Great Inner

54 Davidson (2005: 8).
Palace was ordered to send out half of the emperor’s honour guard to march at the head [of the Imperial Preceptor’s retinue].

In light of these descriptions, Petech’s and Wylie’s belief that ’Phags pa was merely a subordinate who was used for pragmatic ends are problematic. Why would the Great Khan of the Mongol Empire prostrate before a monk—undermining the image of an emperor with no equal in this world as mandated by the Eternal Sky (Tengri) of Mongol belief—who was just a cog in his designs on a peripheral territory? And why was this monk afforded such a grand welcome on his return to Qubilai’s court? None of the pomp and deference shown to ’Phags pa would have been necessary on the instrumentalist view of their relationship.

7.2 “Control without conquest”

If Qubilai’s primary objective regarding Tibet was to “control without conquest” and use ecclesiastics to administer it, holding a broader range of Tibetan religious hierarchs at his court other than just ’Phags pa would seem more efficacious. At the time, Tibet was politically fragmented along sectarian and regional lines with competing religious groups and aristocratic clans vying for power and influence. While Sa paṇ appears to have been able to garner and maintain a broad consensus among Tibetans for a general acquiescence to the Mongols, ’Phags pa, at least initially, lacked the scholastic fame and personal connections of his uncle among the centres of power in Tibet that would have enabled him to perform the same role as Sa paṇ. Therefore, it is difficult to conceive how appeasing ’Phags pa alone would have been the most effective means of maintaining control over the other factions in Tibet. And in light of Mongol power and the potential for patronage they represented, securing other religious leaders would have been relatively easy to accomplish.

58 As late as 1267, during ’Phags pa’s first return to Tibet, there were continuing disputes between the Sa skyas and Phagmodrupas over the ownership of some regions. See: Si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan (1974: 240–241); Karl-Heinz Everding (2002: 109–28). Indeed, even Köden’s reconnaissance mission to Central Tibet in 1240 reported that while Sa paṇ was the most learned prelate, the Bka’ gدام Parsons had the largest number of followers. As such, it would have been more pragmatic for the Mongols to foster relations with the Bka’ gدام Parsons rather than the Sa skyas if they only sought control over Tibet. Instead, Bka’ gدام monasteries were worst affected by the Mongol troops. See Tsepon W.D. Shakabpa (1976: 270) and Sun pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal ‘byor (1992: 310).
59 This is reflected in the public criticisms of ’Phags pa made by Bcom Idan Rig pa’i ral gri, a senior lama of the Bka’ gدام Parsons. See A myes zhabs (2012a: 136–37). It must be noted, however, that Bcom Idan Rig pa’i ral gri later received teachings from ’Phags pa. For details, see Bsam gtun bzang po (2010: 571).
Shen Weirong also makes a similar assertion to those of Petech and Wylie: that Qubilai appeased Tibetan lamas in order to “control and rule the land of Tibet”.\(^{60}\) Shen’s suggestion, common among contemporary Chinese sources,\(^{61}\) that Qubilai took this softer approach because Tibetans were rough and fond of fighting is incongruous with the factual situation in Tibet at the time. The then fragmented Tibet did not have the military strength to resist the powerful Mongol force that created the largest contiguous land empire in the history of the world. Tibetan sources agree that even the small military mission dispatched by Köden and commanded by general Dor-rta (n.d.) in 1240 caused much destruction and a lasting sense of fear among Tibetans. Indeed, Si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan (1302–1364) describes how even “Tibet’s earth and rocks trembled…” in fear of the Mongols.\(^{62}\) Therefore, the claim that appeasement was more effective than force if control was all that the Mongols sought seems unfounded.

There are also technical problems with the premise on which Shen bases his claim that the nature of Qubilai’s association with 'Phags pa “was no doubt that of lord and subject”.\(^{63}\) Szerb’s purported evidence of ‘Phags pa’s acknowledgement of his subject and lord relationship with Qubilai,\(^{64}\) on which the claim is premised, appears to be an exaggerated reading of a letter by 'Phags pa. The passage that Szerb quotes reads: “In particular, [you] have included a lesser individual like me into the inner realm of your heart…”\(^{65}\) This passage does not include any references to the political statuses of lord and subject, or vassalage of any kind. It merely alludes to a warm relationship between the two, expressed with the humility that is simply a stylistic custom of traditional Tibetan letter writing. Further, it is unclear whether the “Bodhisattva Prince” to whom the letter is addressed is actually even Qubilai. 'Phags pa uses this title to refer to Qubilai’s son Jingim\(^{66}\) as well as Qubilai (but only before his enthronement as Great Khan).\(^{67}\)

\(^{60}\) Shen (2004: 196).
\(^{61}\) For another example of a similar assertion, see Tieh-Tseng Li (1960: 21).
\(^{62}\) Si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan (1986: 109); also see Petech (1983: 181).
\(^{63}\) Shen (2004: 194). This same claim is also made by Wang Jiawei and Nyima Gyaincain (1997: 24–30).
\(^{64}\) Szerb (1985: 165).
\(^{65}\) Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968n: 238, folio 3). The Tibetan original reads: བྲུག་བུ་བོད་ཀྱི་བོད་བ་སེམས་དཔའ་ཁམས་བཟང་ཞིང་གི་ལས་ཆེ་བར་བི་གས་པ་ཐོས་པས་ཡིད་དགའ། སུའུ་ཡོན་མཆོད་ཐམས་ཅད་ངེད་བདེ་བར་མཆིས། བེད་ིས་བགས་བེད་བ་ཆེན་པོས་དགོངས་ནས་ལ་ཁམས་དང་། སངས་ས་ི་བན་པ་ལ་ཕན་པར་དགོངས་པའི་མཛད་པ་ཆེན་པོ་དང་། བེ་གོ་བ་བདག་ཅག་འི་དམན་པའང་བེགས་ི་དིལ་འཁོར་ི་ཁོངས་དཔར་མཛད་ནས།

In English, these lines read: I am pleased to hear that you, the bodhisattva prince is healthy and engaged in extensive activities [in serving others]. We von mchod (offering recipients) are all fine. With great kindness, you have performed profound activities for the Empire and for the sake of the Buddha’s doctrine. In particular, [you] have included a lesser individual like me into the inner realm of your heart…

\(^{66}\) For an example in Shes bya rab gsal, see Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968aah:18, folio 1).
\(^{67}\) For example, see Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968ac: 228, folio 3); (1968g: 300, folio 3; 301, folios 1 & 4).
7.3 'Phags pa’s influence

Tibetan and Chinese sources also present compelling accounts that contradict Petech’s assessment that 'Phags pa had little influence as a counsellor to Qubilai. There is overwhelming evidence of 'Phags pa’s influence on Qubilai and his court on religious matters. Not only did Tibetan Buddhism, with a distinctly Sa skya bent, become the main religion of the Mongol court, Qubilai himself received tantric empowerments from 'Phags pa, including the Sa skya Hevajra empowerment in 1253 (Female Water Ox year) as recorded in The Tibetan Script Edict (‘Ja sa bod yig ma). 'Phags pa also composed numerous Buddhist teachings specifically for Qubilai, as discussed in the introductory chapter.

Yar lung Jo bo’s Religious History (Yar lung jo bo’i chos ’byung), written in 1376 by Shākya rin chen sde (14th century), notes that Qubilai “worshipped 'Phags pa, the root and the branch of the Dharma, by every conceivable means. He regarded 'Phags pa as his principal guru. He sought 'Phags pa’s advice on long-term matters to resolve them. He decreed that ‘generation after generation my descendants will take lama 'Phags pa’s descendants as their gurus’…” Consistent with this reported decree attributed to Qubilai, successive Mongol Khans appointed members of 'Phags pa’s 'Khon family as their Imperial Preceptors during the Mongol imperial period.

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68 The historical evidence of 'Phags pa’s influence presented here is in line with Warren W. Smith’s observation that “Tibetan Lamas… established a power position for themselves and for their doctrine far out of proportion to the actual or potential political power of Tibet at the time” (2009: 99–100).
70 For works on Hevajra Tantra in English, see David Snellgrove (1959); Jan-Ulrich Sobisch (2008); and Davidson (2005).
71 A myes zhabs (2012a: 124). The edict does not explicitly refer to the Hevajra empowerment; however, it mentions that after becoming devoted to 'Phags pa, he (Qubilai) received (the) empowerment in the Female Water Ox year when 'Phags pa was nineteen years old. This empowerment could not be just another empowerment but “the” empowerment that is significant enough to be mentioned in the edict. Therefore, it can be inferred that what Qubilai is referring to in the edict is the first Hevajra empowerment he received from 'Phags pa, which established the special Tantric guru–disciple relationship between the two. This edict is also known as The Edict that Empowers the Monastics (Bande shed skyed kyi ’ja’ sa).

In Stag tsang lo tsawa ba shes rab rin chen’s (1405–?) genealogy of the Sa skya masters (Dpal ldan sa skya’i gdung rabs ‘dod dgu’i rgya mtsho), he confirms the year of Qubilai receiving Hevajra empowerment from 'Phags pa as Female Water Ox, when 'Phags pa was nineteen years old. See Shes rab rin chen, Dpal ldan sa skya’i gdung rabs ‘dod dgu’i rgya mtsho, p. 20 a. TBRC W1CZ1883.

The description of a seal that was reportedly offered to 'Phags pa by Qubilai after receiving this empowerment, recorded in Sa skya’i gdung rabs ngo mtshar bang mdzod (p. 124), matches exactly with a picture of a seal that was published by Morning Glory Publishers. See Tibetan Treasures: Selection of Seals of Successive Dynasties (2001: 1).

72 Examples include a sādhana of Hevajra with protection cakra entitled Kye rdo rje’i sgrubs thabs srung ‘khor dang bcas pa, and a set of verses of praise to Vajra Nairātmyā, the consort of Hevajra, entitled Bstod pa rnam dag phreng ba. See the Introduction chapter for a more extensive discussion of these and other compositions.
According to the *Yuan Shi*, it appears to have also become customary for every enthronement of Mongol emperors to include the Sa skya Hevajra empowerment.74

Further evidence of 'Phags pa’s religious influence is presented by the adoption of court rituals associated with Buddhism that were proposed by him.75 Introduced in 1270, annual processions and parades called the “Suppression of Demons and Protection of the State” were held at Qubilai’s court. Another Buddhist ritual was performed on the 14th to the 16th day of the first month of the lunar year. A procession was organised that circumambulated the capital clockwise and was lent dignity by the presence of the Emperor and his family.76

'Phags pa’s authority over the powerful Bureau of Tibetan and Buddhist Affairs (Ch. Xuanzhengyuan 宣政院), a ministry that “remained outside the traditional bureaucratic structures of Yuan China” 77 in many ways, is also suggestive of 'Phags pa’s significant influence over religious matters within Qubilai’s empire. Among other functions, this ministry protected the privileges of Buddhist monastics and facilitated the propagation of their teachings.78 'Phags pa appears to have made the most of the opportunities with which he was presented to propagate his faith throughout Qubilai’s realms. According to Ye shes rgyal mtshan, 'Phags pa “showered teachings of the three vehicles of Buddhism on people of many different languages… He bestowed tantric empowerments on countless disciples. The Great Being ['Phags pa] himself has said that he has bestowed empowerments on people of fourteen languages”.79

While 'Phags pa’s influence was centred on religion, the scope of this influence was not limited to spirituality. Indeed, Qubilai lived in a society in which people depended on religion and related services on an everyday functional basis. Religious belief pervaded most aspects of the lives of people and the state;80 this is a widely different paradigm from what is assumed by most functionalist narratives of 'Phags pa’s relationship with Qubilai. Indeed, even the production of heirs, the long life of rulers, the prosperity of the empire and the fate of military campaigns were perceived to be dependent on religious factors. As such, both Tibetan and Chinese sources present evidence that 'Phags pa influenced Qubilai in affairs of state. Indeed, a title Qubilai conferred on 'Phags pa was “the one who pacified the realm” (rgyal khams ’jags su ’jug

74 Song Lian (1976: Ch. 202, 4521).
76 Franke (1978: 60).
78 For more on this bureau, see David M. Farquhar (1990: 153–7).
80 For a discussion of the place of Tibetan Buddhism in Mongol society, including during the Mongol imperial period, see Walther Heissig (1980: 24–35).
pa po)—a title highly suggestive of 'Phags pa having a significant role in temporal affairs. The term “pacified” in this title is consistent with the Mongolian tūbšidke, derived from tūbši and equivalent to Chinese *ping* (平), which is closely associated with successful statecraft in Mongolian literature of the time.

The broad extent of 'Phags pa’s influence is also described in *A Comprehensive Record of the History of the Buddhas and Patriarchs* (Ch. *Fozu lidai tongzai* 佛祖歷代通載) by Nianchang (Ch. Nian chang 念常, 1282–1344), which includes a facsimile of a tablet inscription at the imperial preceptor’s temple erected during the reign of emperor Sidhibala (Ch. Ying zong 英宗, 1303–1323):

[A man is able to be the preceptor of the ruler of all under heaven] because his knowledge suffices to guide the country, his advice is capable of bringing prosperity to the state, his morality is able to be the model of the world, his principle is capable of imparting heaven and earth and aiding [heaven’s mission] of transformation and generation. It is for these reasons that he is revered and served...

Among Tibetan sources, *The Chronicle of China and Tibet* records a number of instances where 'Phags pa’s influence on imperial decision-making in temporal affairs is evident. It credits 'Phags pa with recommending the appointment of Bayan Baharidai (1236–1295), the general who led the successful conquest of the Southern Song. 'Phags pa is also said to have assisted Bayan in winning the war by invoking the Sa skya protective deity Mahākāla to participate in battles. The same source indicates 'Phags pa’s involvement in helping Qubilai to solve financial difficulties in sustaining his vast military as well.

Thaumaturgy, or at least the perception of it, also appears to have been an element of 'Phags pa’s influence. The Mongols are known to have been particularly fascinated by magic; for example, Flemish Franciscan missionary William of Rubruck observed that “had he been able to work miracles the Qa’an Möngke might have

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81 A myes zhabs (2012a: 169); Khrin chin dbyin (2006: 268). Unlike many of the other appellations and titles used for 'Phags pa, “the one who pacified the realm” is a highly unusual title for a Buddhist prelate. To the best of my knowledge, it is without precedence within Buddhist literature.
82 Franke (1978: 16).
83 For an example of such use of tūbšidke, see Igor de Rachewiltz (1972: 162).
85 Despite Rgya Bod yig tshang’s statement, there is no mention of 'Phags pa’s involvement in these matters in Bayan’s biography in the *Yuan Shi*; see Francis Woodman Cleaves (1956: 185–303).
87 Dpal 'byor bzang po (1985: 279).
humbled himself”. The Mongols widely perceived 'Phags pa and other Tibetan monks as possessing magical powers. Indeed, some accounts attribute the belief that Tibetan monks could control the weather as the reason for the original inception of interactions between Tibetan monks and the Mongols during the period of Chinggis Khan’s reign.

Accounts of Tibetan monks possessing magical powers over weather are also reflected in the tales of Marco Polo and in various Chinese sources.

Tibetan sources suggest that 'Phags pa also displayed magical powers. The most well-known of these report that 'Phags pa divided his body into five parts with a sword in front of Qubilai and his family before transforming the parts into the buddhas of the five families. Despite an initial reluctance to perform magic, 'Phags pa is said to have made this display at Chabi’s insistence after she saw that Qubilai was questioning 'Phags pa’s magical powers compared with those of Karma Pakshi—who was known for his supernatural feats. In addition to this particular magical demonstration by 'Phags pa, A myes zhabs records five other instances of magical displays by him, which he reports are cited from Chinese court documents that are unknown to Tibetans. Despite these accounts of 'Phags pa’s magical powers, the role of magic in his relationship with Qubilai should not be overstated. Not only is the emphasis of 'Phags pa’s compositions for Qubilai squarely on Buddhist philosophy and practice rather than magic, the earlier mentioned tablet inscription at the imperial preceptor’s temple explicitly states that 'Phags pa was not “appointed [the Imperial Preceptor] due to his magical skill” but because of his knowledge, morality and principle.

'Phags pa also appears to have had wide-ranging institutional influence on Qubilai’s empire, helping Qubilai to enrich its cultural sophistication. 'Phags pa brought diverse aspects of Indo-Tibetan culture to the Mongols: philosophy; the

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88 Peter Jackson (2009: IV, 30).
89 Shen (2004: 201).
91 Thomas Wright (1886: 155).
92 The Yuan Shi records that in April 1264, Tibetan monks were sent to make rain in some drought stricken areas under imperial order. See Khrin chin dbiyin (2006). For more such accounts, see Fozu lidai tongzai, Ch. 22, p. 726; Franke (1984: 170–71) and Shen (2004: 200–210).
93 After having heard feats of Karma Pakshi’s miracles, Qublai reportedly once said, “Our great teacher ('Phags pa) is the Buddha Amitābha in human form, but in terms of magical abilities from an ordinary perception, this bearded yogi (Karma Pakshi) appears more powerful”. For details, see A myes zhabs (2012a: 123). The five buddhas are: Vairocana; Akṣobhya; Ratnasambhava; Amitābha; and Amoghasiddhi.
96 Davidson (2005: 9).
97 'Phags pa’s prowess in philosophy and philosophical argument is highlighted by his role in the defeat of the Daoists in a debate during Mongke Khan’s reign in 1258 at Kaiping. After the debate, 'Phags pa
political theories of righteous kingship and the union of religion and the state (Mong. qoyar yosun); medicine; astrology; art and architecture; linguistics; and legal services.

There are, furthermore, clear indications that 'Phags pa was highly influential in framing Qubilai’s policy on Tibet. Importantly, according to The Chronicle of China and Tibet, Qubilai exempted Tibetans from taxes, corvée and military conscriptions due to 'Phags pa’s efforts. This account is consistent with Chinese records, which suggest that the Tibetans contributed very little to the empire’s economy. Indeed, later Chinese and Western historians even accuse Tibetan monks of extracting such significant amounts of wealth from the Mongol state that it led to “the impoverishment of the country and to financial crisis…” While it is difficult to imagine offerings to Tibetan monks, however generous, being significant in the impoverishment of the mighty Mongol Empire, the substantial economic support provided to Tibetan monks when Qubilai’s expanding empire could have used the resources to finance its military campaigns is anomalous from the perspective of the previously mentioned political interpretations. It indicates that Mongol rulers placed particular value on Tibetan

wrote a brief composition dedicating the merits from this victory. See Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968bb: 266, folio 1–2). For an illustrated account of the event, see Tshe don (1987: 84). For a Chinese account of the debate and the study of the event and its origins, see Noritada Kubo (1968:39–61).

Sa paṇ is known for his mastery over traditional Tibetan fields of knowledge, including medicine. Historiographers credit him with curing Köden’s chronic illness. Sa paṇ’s disciple Dam pa Kun dga’ grags (1230–1303) is also famous for his knowledge of medicine. See Rashīd al-Dīn (1971: 302–3); Franke (1984: 157–80).

'Phags pa composed a number of texts related to astrology; for details see Chos rgyal 'Phags pa, (1968r); (1968z); (1968az); (1968ai); (1968ay); (1968ak); (1968bf); and (1968aa). 'Phags pa’s expertise in astrology is noted by Ye Ziqi, a famous Chinese scholar of the late Yuan and early Ming period, who said: “In the Yuan period, a barbarian monk from the Western region, Ba si ma ('Phags pa), had the ability to interpret astrological phenomena. He helped Shi Zu (Qubilai) to pacify the entire world under heaven”. See Shen (2004: 190).

In the field of Yuan art and architecture, Anige (Nep. अरिनको) was highly influential. 'Phags pa brought the Nepalese artisan with him to Qubilai in 1268 after his impressive work in Tibet (there are competing claims regarding the year of Anige’s arrival at Qubilai’s court; however, based on the accounts that assert his inclusion in 'Phags pa’s entourage from Tibet, the most likely year of his arrival at the Mongol court is 1268); see Khrin chin dbyin (2006: 230–2). For more on Anige, see Cheng Jufu, ch. 7; Anning Jing (1989: 4–5).

'Phags pa is famously credited for devising a new script for the Mongol empire. His script has been praised by linguists for its phonetic accuracy and flexibility. For an in-depth study of the script, see Miyoko Nakano (1971).


Dpal 'byor bzang po (1985: 297). The exemption is noteworthy given that taxes, corvée and military conscriptions were generally applied throughout the domains of the Mongol Empire. For more on this, see Schuh (1977).

Herbert Franke quotes from Yuan Shi. For details, see Franke (1981: 301).


Buddhism and sponsored its propagation, even at the expense of military and other state endeavours.

Further, a number of Tibetan sources assert that Qubilai offered authority over the thirteen *khri skor* (myriarchies) of Central Tibet (*Dbus gtsang*) in 1253 in gratitude for 'Phags pa’s first conferring of the Hevajra empowerment. This claim is disputed by Petech,\(^{108}\) who argues plausibly that neither Qubilai nor any other prince had the authority to make such a grant.\(^{109}\) Instead, *Tenets by Thuken* (*Grub mtha’ shel gyi me long*) or more popularly known as the *Thu'u bkwan grub mtha’*) and the Mongolian source *The Jewelled Chronicle* suggest a more likely offering by Qubilai—a town called Li-shim or Silimji and its inhabitants.\(^{110}\) A host of Tibetan sources also agree in their assertion that Qubilai offered 'Phags pa the three regions of Tibet (*chol kha gsum*) as a token of his gratitude after receiving the Hevajra empowerment for the second time.\(^{111}\) In fact, *The Chronicle of China and Tibet* notes that the three provinces of Tibet, “Mdo stod, Mdo smad and Dbus gtsang, are referred to as *chol kha*, (a Tibetan rendering of a Mongolian term *chölge*, meaning a circuit or *lu* in Chinese) because the Mongol king gifted them to the lama as offering for the bestowal of an empowerment”.\(^{112}\)

Irrespective of whether such a grant was actually made, a range of sources agree that 'Phags pa exercised significant authority over Tibet. *The Chronicle of China and Tibet*, for example, suggests that Mongol officials required 'Phags pa’s approval letter along with that of the Khan in order to visit Tibet.\(^{113}\) Similarly, the *Yuan Shi* states: “the order of the Imperial Preceptor was as valid as an imperial edict in the land of the West”.\(^{114}\) In Sa skya, 'Phags pa appointed a chief minister (*dpon chen*) with Qubilai’s endorsement,\(^{115}\) who exercised at least *de jure* control over Central Tibet.\(^{116}\)

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109 Petech also puts forward 1268 as an “acceptable date” for the organisation of Central Tibet into the system of myriarchies, implicitly entailing that any offering of myriarchies before this date is impossible. He seems to offer 1268 as acceptable because a census of Tibet had been conducted in that year. However, there is clear evidence, including in 'Phags pa’s writings, that a census of Tibet was jointly carried out by imperial and Sa skya pa envoys in 1252/53 as part of Möngke’s great census of the empire. Therefore, a compelling reason to prefer 1268 over 1252/53 as the date of introduction for the myriarchies system to Tibet appears lacking. For 'Phags pa’s letter referring to the 1252/53 census, see Chos rgyal 'Phags pa ((1968t: 266–7).

110 In *Thu’u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi ngyi ma* (1984: 451), the town is identified as Li-shim. For an English translation, see Thuken Losang Chökyi Nyima (2009: 374). In Sayang Sečen (1967: 77), the town is referred to as Silimji.


115 For a discussion on the Sa skya chief minister and its authority, primarily based on Chinese sources, see Chen Dezhi (2005: 1–34).

and ’Phags pa appointed the rulers and religious figures of many regions in eastern Tibet. Moreover, ’Phags pa was referred to by the title Chos rgyal, meaning dharmarāja, by his Tibetan contemporaries—a title generally applied to figures wielding both religious and political authority. To this day, this remains the title by which Tibetans know ’Phags pa.

7.4 Qubilai was “like a cakravartin”

Several Western scholars have advanced the claim that one of ’Phags pa’s most important roles from Qubilai’s perspective was to aid his claims to be a cakravartin. One of the most prominent advocates of this theory was Franke, who argued that Qubilai used ’Phags pa to sacralise himself and his grandfather Chinggis Khan as cakravartins, thus legitimising their rule over the Mongol Empire. Franke’s claim has become a standard trope of histories of this period, but the historical and cosmographic evidence stands against it. No detailed reading of ’Phags pa’s relevant compositions, for example, suggests that he understood the Mongol khans to be cakravartins. Furthermore, any suggestion that they were would have been inconsistent with the Abhidharmakośa (Tib. Chos mngon pa’i mdzod) by Vasubandhu (4th century), the text that served as the primary basis of ’Phags pa’s view of Buddhist cosmology, wherein the cakravartin concept is articulated. To promote the khans in this way, in other words, he would have had to undermine the scholarship and cosmography on which his own authority was based.

’Phags pa’s works do not contain any explicit identification of Qubilai as a cakravartin. Franke’s theory is anchored on a reading of a Chinese translation of two

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117 For examples of the appointment of rulers in Mdo kham regions, including that of Sde ge, see Rag ra Ngag dbang bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan (1990: 211); an example from Sdo smad is ’Phags pa’s appointment of the leader in the Tsong kha area; see Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas (1982: 21). Lha rigs rlang s kyi rnam thar suggests a governor-general-like figure (spyi’i bdag po) was appointed for Mdo Khams in or shortly before 1274, but this by Qubilai upon the recommendation of ’Phags pa. See Si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan (1974: 801). For more on this appointment, see Petech (1991: 417–422). ’Phags pa was also requested to appoint the head of the ‘Ba’ rom bka’ brgyud order by its disciples. See Tshang gsar Blo gros rin chen (2005: 227–28). Petech (1990: 17) also agrees that there were Sa skya administrators stationed in each of the three chöl kha.


120 Non-Buddhists’ employment of the term cakravartin and the ideas associated with it preceded the Buddhists. The term was used in the Maitri Upaniṣad by its compilers in late fifth and early fourth centuries B.C. See S. Radhakrishnan (1953: 797).

121 Franke’s cakravartin theory appears to be premised on the mistaken presumption of a synonymy between the terms cakravartin (Tib. ‘khor los sgyur ba) and dharmarāja (Tib. chos kyi rgyal po). While the designation of cakravartin is highly restricted in both temporal and qualitative dimensions, the title of dharmarāja is less restrictive and can refer to a sovereign who rules in accordance with the teachings of
chapters of 'Phags pa’s *Explanation of the Knowable*, a text detailing Buddhist cosmology that was included in *A Comprehensive Record of the History of the Buddhas and Patriarchs*. A close reading of the *Explanation of the Knowable* in Tibetan, however, along with 'Phags pa’s other works, reveals that Franke missed a subtle but very important preposition in these compositions in relating Chinggis and Qubilai Khan to the *cakravartin* concept. By using this preposition, 'Phags pa stopped short of identifying Chinggis Khan as a real *cakravartin*. He wrote: “Beginning from the North, he (Chinggis Khan) brought many countries of different languages and races under his power, and by his might he became like a *cakravartin* (stobs kyis 'khor los sgyur ba lta bur gyur to”). 'Phags pa’s use of the Tibetan word for “like” (*lta bu*) here implies that 'Phags pa does not understand Chinggis Khan to be an actual *cakravartin*. Further reading in 'Phags pa’s oeuvre reinforces the importance of this distinction. In another composition, 'Phags pa compares Qubilai to a *cakravartin*, but here again he is careful to insert the Tibetan word *bzhin*, a synonym for the word *lta bu*. He wrote: “By ruling all the lands, [Qubilai] became like a *cakravartin*”.

In the epilogue of *Explanation of the Knowable*, 'Phags pa clearly notes that his text draws primarily on the *Abhidharmakośa*, generally regarded by Tibetan scholars as the most authoritative text on Buddhist cosmology, and *The Treatise Known as the Sun Essence of Application of Mindfulness* (Skt. *Smṛtyupasthāna sūryagarbha prajñātibhāṣya*, Tib. *Dran pa nyer gzhag nyi ma’i snying po gdags pa’i bstan bcos*). There was no way that he could have argued for Qubilai’s status as a *cakravartin* based on the criteria in the *Abhidharmakośa*. These criteria include the thirty-two major

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122 Shes bya rab gsal was written by 'Phags pa for Qubilai’s heir-apparent, prince Jingim. See Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968bh).
123 *Fozu lidai tongzai*, ch. 1, p. 489.
124 Constance Hoog (1983: 42); Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968bh: 10, folio 2).
125 Franke and others’ overlooking of ‘Phags pa’s careful use of the preposition is particularly surprising as it is not a result of differences between the original Tibetan and Chinese translation of the text. The Chinese translation of *Explanation of the Knowable* in *A Comprehensive Record of the History of the Buddhas and Patriarchs* translated the Tibetan term *lta bu* as *ru* (如), which has connotations such as ‘supposing’, ‘as if’, ‘like’ and ‘as’ in English.
126 In Tibetan it reads: "ས་�མས་�ན་ལ་དབང་བ�ར་བ།
འཁོར་ལོས་�ར་བ་ཉིད་བཞིན་�ར།
" See Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968u: 259, folio 3).
127 Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968bh: 18, folio 1). I have not been able to locate any extant copies of *Dran pa nyer gzhag nyi ma’i snying po gdags pa’i bstan bcos*. Constance Hoog, however, appears to suggest that this text may be the same as the *Lokaprajñāpāti* or *Lokasthiti* (1983: 9).
128 Certainly no historical accounts record Qubilai exhibiting the thirty-two bodily marks of a great man (Skt. *mahāpuruṣa*) which *cakravartins* also possess, or his being endowed with the seven jewels or other emblems of sovereignty attributed to *cakravartins*. For more detail on each of the characteristics of a *cakravartin*, see *The Play in Full* (*Lalitavistara*), Chapter 3, pp. 13–16. http://read.84000.co/old-app/#!ReadingRoom/UT22084-046-001/28 (accessed on 31/10/2015); John S. Strong (1983: 46). For a full list of the thirty-two bodily marks of a great man and their corresponding causes, see: *Dīgha-nikāya*,

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physical characteristics of a “great man” (Skt. mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇa), which are also said to be manifest on the bodies of buddhas, and include webbed fingers and a protrusion at the crown of the head. A cakravartin’s authority is acquired through people naturally offering their submission, recognising the cakravartin’s superior moral qualities. In contrast, Qubilai and his grandfather’s authority was attained through the threat and use of violence and armed conquest. Additionally, according to the Abhidharmakośa, cakravartins only appear during eras when the human lifespan is more than 80,000 years, a notion that ’Phags pa is careful to highlight explicitly in Explanation of the Knowable, rather than during a time when the average human lifespan was less than one hundred years as was the case during Qubilai’s times. ’Phags pa was thoroughly conversant with the cosmology of the Abhidharmakośa, and his carefully nuanced descriptions indicate that he did not depict Qubilai as a cakravartin, a claim that would have been obviously fraudulent in light of Buddhist scholastic lore on this subject.

Given the symbolism of tantric empowerments and their association with cakravartin kingship in ancient India, some have suggested that the empowerments Qubilai received from ’Phags pa were also symbolic acts consecrating him as a universal monarch. This assertion is challenged by the specific circumstances of the empowerments Qubilai received. For example, when Qubilai was granted his first Heyvajra empowerment in 1253, he received it with twenty-four other individuals, including close family members and officials; the bestowing of the empowerment to twenty-five people together is a customary practice of the Sa skya tradition. Therefore, it is difficult to argue that this empowerment somehow consecrates Qubilai as a cakravartin while not doing the same for the twenty-four other people who received the same empowerment at the same time.

Another argument against the cakravartin theory is that the political and social functions attributed to ’Phags pa in legitimising the Mongol emperor’s universal rule appears to have been fulfilled equally well by shamans for Chinggis Khan. Therefore
if Qubilai’s prime objective in associating with ‘Phags pa was ideological and moral justification for his rule, his grandfather’s experience suggests this was unnecessary.

8. The mchod yon relationship
While there was undoubtedly political symbolism in ‘Phags pa’s initial transference from the house of Ögedei to the Tolui, only through a more comprehensive approach that incorporates the personal and religious aspects of the Qubilai–’Phags pa relationship can the anomalies in the functionalist political interpretations be explained.

8.1 The personal-religious bond
There is much evidence to suggest that an important element of the relationship between Qubilai and ‘Phags pa was Qubilai’s interest in Buddhism. Even before he met ‘Phags pa, Qubilai had already begun accruing Buddhist teachers for himself. As early as 1240, Yar lung pa Grags pa seng ge (n.d.), a Tibetan monk of the Tshal pa Bka’ brgyud order, had been serving as tutor to Qubilai’s Tolui branch of the imperial family.135 It was around this time that Qubilai named his first son Rdo rje, a Tibetan Buddhist name.136 After this, for a number of years from 1242, a Chinese Chan Buddhist monk named Haiyun (海雲, 1203–1257) is thought to have worked in Qubilai’s service. In 1252, Qubilai reportedly questioned him about the “ultimate meaning” of Buddhism,137 suggesting both interest in and knowledge of Buddhist philosophy.

It was only after he had been in contact with these Buddhist teachers that Qubilai met ‘Phags pa.138 Later Tibetan records refer to their meeting as the “union of the sun and the moon”,139 which suggests that an instant recognition and bond may have formed between the two men. But other accounts do not support this presentation. They tell how Qubilai, equipped with his prior knowledge of Buddhism, examined ‘Phags pa by posing a number of challenging questions to him. They suggest that ‘Phags pa, who was twenty years younger than Qubilai, impressed the Mongol prince with his dignity.

138 Qubilai is also known to have met Karma Pakshi, the second Karmapa, in 1254. See Gtsug lag ’phreng ba (1986: 893).
and knowledge, but, notably, they also report that Qubilai did not enter into a tantric guru-disciple (Tib. bla slob) relationship with the young monk for some time. His wife Chabi (1227–1281), however, quickly became a disciple and patron of 'Phags pa, and soon received the Sa skya Hevajra esoteric empowerment from him.

According to Tibetan sources, when Qubilai eventually agreed to receive the Sa skya Hevajra empowerment, 'Phags pa refused to confer it on the grounds that Qubilai would not be able to abide by the commitments necessary to maintain a guru-disciple tantric bond. In entering the world of Vajrayāna Buddhism, Qubilai, like any other disciple, would have to take refuge in and become unequivocally subservient to his guru, who would be regarded as the consolidated embodiment of all the fields of Vajrayāna Buddhist refuge (Tib. skyabs gnas kun bsdus bla ma rin po che). Accordingly, ensuring that Qubilai was fully cognisant of the associated commitments, 'Phags pa warned that the vows require “disciples to offer the guru precedence in seating, make prostrations, follow his words and not transgress the lama’s wishes”.

Qubilai confessed that he would not be able to follow such stipulations, but Chabi negotiated a compromise that allowed Qubilai to maintain his precedence at temporal events while 'Phags pa would be in the superior position in private and spiritual gatherings. The arrangement also required Qubilai to accept whatever 'Phags pa advised in relation to Tibetan affairs, and he agreed to not issue decrees relating to Tibet without consulting his guru. This resolution allowed the two parties to forge a bespoke guru-disciple religious relationship. A Comprehensive Record of the History of the Buddhas and Patriarchs describes Qubilai’s efforts to fulfil his responsibilities as a disciple: “Feeling that the Imperial Preceptor 'Phags pa possessed the dao (principle) of a sage, he forgot about imperial dignity and did his utmost to be true to the rite of respecting one’s teacher”.

Qubilai’s special treatment of 'Phags pa and the apparent influence that 'Phags pa came to wield are concordant with the behavioural requirements of a tantric disciple in relation to his lama and the terms of the compromise brokered by Chabi. The

140 A myes zhabs (2012a: 116–7). 'Phags pa’s impressive nature is also documented by Nam mkha’ bum, a monk belonging to the Bka’ gdamgs pa tradition who composed a two-part biography of 'Phags pa, in which he detailed the teachings he received and his observations during his weeklong interaction with 'Phags pa at 'Dams in the northern plains of Tibet in the Female Fire Hare year (1267). For details see A myes zhabs (2012a: 145–6). These accounts are inconsistent with Wylie’s assessment that Qubilai was not “overly impressed with 'Phags-pa” (2003: 325).
reports in both Tibetan and Chinese sources of Qubilai and his family prostrating to 'Phags pa, the grand welcome they gave him on his return from Tibet, and the court’s generous patronage of Tibetan monks, which all appeared anomalous from a political perspective become coherent once this religious aspect is considered. None of these actions would have been necessary for someone in Qubilai’s position if he were only interested in enhancing his personal charisma or exerting control over Tibet. They would in fact have been counterproductive if that were his sole aim because it would have diminished the royal dignity and enhanced the prestige of his purported tool of legitimation. Indeed, the link between Qubilai and 'Phags pa appears to have eventually matured into such a close personal bond that, according to the Yuan Shi, Qubilai treated 'Phags pa as a family member146 and showed him personal respect on a daily basis.147

This close connection suggests that, despite 'Phags pa’s unequal power relationship with Qubilai, he was able to leverage his Buddhist training and the wealth of intellectual tradition that he inherited to create an extraordinary space within which he could operate at the Mongol court. From a Vajrayāna perspective, this was a world with 'Phags pa at its centre and Qubilai in a subordinate position, bound to the Tibetan monk through the guru–disciple relationship, and which Qubilai’s descendant, emperor Sidhibala, appears to recognise in his posthumous conferral of the title: “Under the majestic heaven, the one over the only one (i.e., the emperor)…”148

In later Tibetan and Mongolian sources, the Qubilai–'Phags pa relationship became the paradigmatic manifestation of the mchod yon bond (commonly translated along the lines of “priest-patron”),149 a form of association that has come to be perceived to involve significant political and institutional implications for Tibet’s relations with the Mongols, Chinese and Manchus.150 An examination of the historical and semantic context underlying the mchod yon concept, however, demonstrates that at its conceptual core is a personal–religious relationship, and any geopolitical overlays reflect the dynamic resulting from the specific context of particular relationships between Buddhist preceptors and patron kings.

146 Translation of Yuan Shi according to Luc Kwanten (1972: 108).
147 Zahiruddin Ahmad (2012: 98) and Stag hva Phun tsogs bkra shis (1973: 564).
148 Fozu lidai tongzai, ch. 22, p. 732. According to the Yuan Shi, Qubilai also awarded a similar posthumous title to 'Phags pa: “Above all the people under August Heaven…” For an English translation of the full title, see Ahmad (2012: 99).
149 For an example of the use of this rendering, see Tsepon W.D. Shakabpa (1984: 247).
150 For a detailed study of the term and concept of the mchod yon, see D. Seyfort Ruegg (1991: 441–453).
8.2 Patterns of patronage

The *mchod yon* concept traces its origins to patterns of patronage resulting from the Buddha’s model for the livelihood of Buddhist monks, which requires them to live on alms (Skt. *dāna*). The Buddhist canon narrates many accounts of the Buddha visiting households of every socio-economic status—from kings to common tradesmen—to receive their alms and hospitality. The Buddha received alms ranging from grains from common people to monasteries built within groves from rich merchants and kings. Each of these offerings was personal and religious; there are no records that they were conducted in order to enrich the Buddha’s own political or familial affiliates or that they had implications for the political status of the Buddha’s Śākya kingdom vis-à-vis the kingdoms of his patrons. The range of the Buddha’s patrons also highlights that a position of power or influence was not a precondition for becoming his patron. Indeed, naturally, most of his patrons were the “other” members of society—devout common people of all trades who venerated and made offerings, with each offering forming a patronage interaction.

The practice of patronage of the Buddhist Saṃgha began in Tibet during the Tibetan Empire (7th–9th centuries). The Testament of Sbaṅ (Sba bzhed), a Tibetan source thought to be written by a member of the Tibetan king’s court in the 8th century, provides evidence of this practice. Further, on many occasions the patrons also receive religious and personal services from the Saṃgha—advice and guidance on worldly and otherworldly matters, the reading of sūtras, and in case of Tantric Buddhism, performance of rituals and conferring of empowerments. For further details, see Geoffrey Samuel (1993).

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151 In contrast to other acts of generosity, the Buddhist practice of giving alms to members of the ordained community is traditionally performed in the belief that the patron will be the primary beneficiary, accumulating merit (positive karma) by making such offerings. In fact the Buddha said in *Phags pa yongs su mya ngan las’ das pa chen po’i mdo* (Skt. *Āryamahāparinirvāṇasūtra*) that “making an offering to the Saṃgha is making an offering to the Three Jewels”. See http://tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=kangyur&index=368.01#129B (accessed on 10/04/2015). Also, in a widely recited sūtra, *Dkon mchog rjes dran gyi mdo* (Skt. *Triratnānusmṛtisūtra*), the Saṃgha is praised as the “great field of merit, recipient of offerings, object of generosity and utterly a great object of generosity”. See “Dkon mchog rjes dran gyi mdo” in Gzungs bsdus, http://tbrc.org/link?RID=W1KG12113 (accessed on 10/04/2015). Further, on many occasions the patrons also receive religious and personal services from the Saṃgha—advice and guidance on worldly and otherworldly matters, the reading of sūtras, and in case of Tantric Buddhism, performance of rituals and conferring of empowerments. For further details, see Geoffrey Samuel (1993).

152 The Buddha was offered Jetavana, a monastery in a grove near Sāvatthi by a rich merchant named Anāthapindika. The Buddha reportedly spent 19 rainy seasons there. Heelmuth Hecker, *Anathapindika: The Great Benefactor*, see http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/hecker/wheel334.html#part1 (accessed on 11/04/2015). The Buddha was offered another monastery in a grove by king Bimbisāra near Rājagaha known as Veluvana. For more on Veluvana, see http://www.palikanon.com/english/pali_names/vy/veluvana.htm (accessed on 11/04/2015).

153 For more on Tibetan imperial patronage of monks, see E.K. Dargyay (1991: 111–127). The patronage of prelates by kings appears to already have been an established indigenous practice in Tibet at the time. Tibetan kings are reported to have invited Bon teachers (Tib. *gshen po* or *sku gshen*) to their court and developed strong patronage relationships with them. See Bstan ‘dzin rnam dag (1983: 88); Namkhai Norbu (1989: 21–27) and Nam mkha’i nor bu (1996: 209–20).

154 For a detailed discussion of the different versions of *Sba bzhed zhabs biags ma* and their authenticity, see Matthew T. Kapstein (2000: 212–14).
century,\textsuperscript{155} suggests the catalyst for the Tibetan kings’ decision to introduce Buddhism to their realm was the discovery of a prophesy inscribed on a copper tablet in the treasury of Mchim phu\textsuperscript{156} by a minister of Khri Lde gtsug brtan (704–755). The inscription, apparently by the seventh century Tibetan king Srong btsan sgam po (c. 605–650), prophesised that during the reign of a descendant named “lde”, Buddhism would appear in Tibet. “To gain happiness in this and subsequent lives”, it advised the Tibetan kings to support Buddhist monastics and “hold them as objects of highest veneration” (dbu’i mchod gnas).\textsuperscript{157} The instructions in this prophecy reflected the fundamentally personal and religious nature of the relationship between the lay community, including kings, and the ordained saṃgha in the traditional Tibetan Buddhist world.

Khri Lde gtsug brtan, who reportedly believed that the prophesised king named “lde” was him, built temples and invited Buddhist monks from Li yul (Kotan) and China.\textsuperscript{158} During the reign of Khri Lde gtsug brtan’s son Khri Srong lde btsan (740–798), Śāntarakṣita (725–788), a renowned Buddhist scholar monk, was invited to the royal court from India. With his help, the Tibetan king built Bsam yas (“the inconceivable”), Tibet’s first monastery, and indigenous monks were ordained for the first time. According to Tibetan religious histories, Padmasambhava, a tantric adept, is also believed to have come to Tibet from India at the king’s invitation.\textsuperscript{159} The patronage relations that the Tibetan king fostered with Indian masters, and with the ordained indigenous monks, were also fundamentally personal-religious relationships, although overlaid with the provision by monks and tantrikas of a wide array of religious services in areas ranging from art and architecture to the subduing of spirits, while the king accorded his reverence and gave offerings.\textsuperscript{160} An excerpt from Rosary of Jewels (Bka’ thang zangs gling ma), a treasure text\textsuperscript{161} by Nyang ral Nyi ma ’Od zer (1124–1192?),

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[155]{The original author is thought to have been a prominent member of king Khri Srong lde btsan’s court; however, the earliest extant versions of the text are two manuscript fragments dating to the 9th or 10th century. See Sam van Schaik and Kazushi Iwao (2008: 477–87).}
\footnotetext[156]{Mchim phu is located about eight kilometres northeast of Bsam yas. It is a hermitage with several meditation huts and caves and has been known since the 8th century as a place visited by important figures and used by them as a place of retreat.}
\footnotetext[157]{Sba gsal snang (1982: 1). Understanding certain sections of this citation is made easier by referring to Gtsug lag ’phreng ba (1986: 294).}
\footnotetext[158]{Roerich (1949:40).}
\footnotetext[159]{For example, see Bbud ’joms Ye shes rdo rje (1996: 126–35) and for further background on Padmasambhava and the early development of the Padmasambhava legend in Tibet, see Jacob Dalton (2004: 759–72).}
\footnotetext[160]{On one occasion Khri Srong lde btsan is said to have even offered one of his wives, Ye shes mtsho rgyal, to Padmasambhava as his consort. See Judith Simmer-Brown (2001: 67).}
\footnotetext[161]{Treasure texts refer to texts that are believed to have been concealed in the past in order that they might be preserved and revealed in the future for the benefit of posterity.}
\end{footnotes}
describes these offerings: “The king then made a thanksgiving maṇḍala offering with three bre\(^{162}\) of gold dust, clothes and food to each of the pāṇḍitas invited from India. The translators were also offered gifts for their work of translating the Dharma and were made objects of highest veneration (dbu’i mchod gnas su bton)”.\(^{163}\)

Further, the Testament of Sba\(^{\text{164}}\) states that after the completion of Bsam yas temple and the ordination of indigenous monks, Khri Srong lde btsan made the monks “objects of highest veneration” through promulgating the law of the Dharma and making his ministers vow to venerate the Saṅgha.\(^{165}\) To ensure that the monks were adequately provided for, the king ordered that every three households would support one monk.\(^{166}\) Khri Srong lde btsan’s policy of venerating and supporting monks, including some from beyond Tibet’s borders, continued during his sons’ and his grandson Khri Ral pa chen’s (806–838) reigns.\(^{167}\) Indeed, Khri Ral pa chen is reported to have been a devout Buddhist and to have increased the support to ten households for every monk.\(^{168}\)

### 8.3 Lexical semantics of the term mchod yon

Along with the contextual evidence supplied by the historical patterns of religious relationships between rulers and Buddhist prelates, there is also lexical evidence within the phrase mchod yon that provides clues to the nature of the relationship it designates. The term mchod yon is made up of the determinative compounds mchod gnas and yon bdag. In Tibetan, mchod gnas means an object (animate or inanimate) that is worthy of veneration and offerings; this is in contrast to an object of charity, or someone who requires generosity.\(^{169}\) The term mchod gnas has been in use since at least the Tibetan imperial period.\(^{170}\) In a number of Tibetan sources, mchod gnas is also used as an alternative to the word bla mchod, meaning a guru, especially one who has bestowed tantric teachings. Among Sa paṅ’s works, the term mchod gnas is found in a letter in

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\(^{162}\) Bre is a Tibetan measure of volume equivalent to about one litre or two pints. One bre of gold would weigh about 13 kilos.


\(^{164}\) Laws of the Dharma refer to laws consistent with Buddhist morality. They include the ‘Ten Virtuous Practices’ (Tib. lha chos dge ba bcu) and the ‘Sixteen Worldly Practices’ (Tib. mi chos gtsang ma bcu drug).

\(^{165}\) Sba gsal snang (1982: 60).

\(^{166}\) Sba gsal snang (1982: 63).

\(^{167}\) Khetsun Sangpo (1986: 533).

\(^{168}\) Dung dkar Blo bzang ’phrin las (1983: 37).

\(^{169}\) Members of the Saṅgha may regard themselves as objects of dāna (alms), but from the perspective of lay followers, they should regard the Saṅgha as objects of pājā or arpana (worship, veneration).

\(^{170}\) Sba gsal snang (1982: 1); also in Nyang ral Nyi ma ’od zer (1989: 86).
which he cites the manner in which Prince Köden summoned him to fulfil this role.\textsuperscript{171}

In another letter, this one to the abbot of Sho monastery, 'Gro mgon rin chen (1170–1249), Sa paṇ uses the term bla mchod in reference to himself and his role as a guru.\textsuperscript{172}

The second compound term yon bdag\textsuperscript{173} is comprised of yon, a gift that is offered for a religious service to the person who performs it, and bdag po, which refers to the person who makes the offering.\textsuperscript{174} Like the term mchod gnas, yon bdag also appears to have been in use since the Tibetan imperial period.\textsuperscript{175} It was thereafter in continued use, and in Sa paṇ’s Letter to the Tibetans\textsuperscript{176} he applies it to the relationship between himself and Köden, calling Köden a yon bdag chen po (“great patron”). In tantric relationships between a guru and a disciple (Tib. slob ma), a disciple is also a yon bdag because they are required to make an offering for the teachings received. But this does not necessarily entail that a yon bdag is a tantric disciple, because one can make offerings without entering into such a formal relationship.

In addition to the term mchod yon, mchod gnas and yon bdag can also be arranged to form the alternative copulative compound term yon mchod. Depending on context, mchod yon and yon mchod have various related meanings. When referring to what has been called the “priest-patron” relationship, these two terms are perfect synonyms. Although this use of yon mchod is less common in works from 'Phags pa’s time, prominent examples of this usage can be found in the works of fourteenth century Tibetan chroniclers such as Tshal pa Kun dga’ rdo rje in the Red Annals and 'Gos lo tsā ba in the Blue Annals (Deb ther sngon po).\textsuperscript{177}

In other contexts, however, mchod yon and yon mchod have completely different meanings. For example, The Great Volume of Precise Understanding or Essential Etymology (Skt. Mahāvyutpatti, Tib. Bye brag tu rtogs par byed pa chen po)—a

\textsuperscript{171} Sa paṇ Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan (2006a: 517).
\textsuperscript{172} Sa paṇ Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan (2006c: 169).
\textsuperscript{173} Ruegg (2013: 226).
\textsuperscript{174} The Tibetan term yon bdag has the connotation of someone who makes an offering to a higher object that is worthy of veneration and offering – that is, for example, offerings to gods and the Three Jewels. However, the Sanskrit term dānapati does not seem to have this meaning as the recipient of the offering made by a dānapati need not be an object that is worthy of veneration. Dānapati can be more accurately rendered in Tibetan as sbyin bdag. Ruegg (2004: 9) suggests that yon bdag is “an honorific appellation, applicable to rulers, for the common term sbyin bdag=dānapati”. This is not correct. The term yon is not an honorific appellation applied to rulers or any other giver of offerings. Instead, the honorific appellation yon applies to the object to which the offering is made as a mark of veneration. Anyone, irrespective of their socio-economic background, may be referred to as a yon bdag if the recipient of the offering is the Three Jewels, but the term sbyin bdag has the connotation that the recipient of the offering is someone of equal or lower status than the giver.
\textsuperscript{175} The term yon bdag was inscribed on a large bell installed at Bsam yas during the reign of Khri Srong lde btsan during the 8th century and it referred to the patron who sponsored the bell’s installation. See Bsod nams skyid and Dbang rgyal (1983: 79).
\textsuperscript{176} Sa paṇ Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan (2006b: 458).
\textsuperscript{177} Tshal pa Kun dga’ rdo rje (1981: 48); ’Gos lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal (1984: 696).
dictionary of Sanskrit and Tibetan terms designed to standardise the translation of Buddhist texts into Tibetan compiled in the late eighth to early ninth century—translated mchod yon for the Sanskrit term arghaḥ.\(^{178}\) Arghaḥ refers to the act of respectfully receiving guests. In a number of Tibetan ritual scriptures, we find mchod yon also used to refer to offering objects.\(^{179}\) Relatedly, in everyday Tibetan usage, mchod yon most often refers to the gift that is offered to a monk or a tantrika for performing a religious service, a meaning that is more in line with the Sanskrit term daksinā (religious offering) than arghaḥ. Although a fluid homonym, the term yon mchod does not have any of these meanings in any context. Instead, it can refer to one of several things. It can refer to the recipient of offerings, and an example of this usage is found within 'Phags pa’s Letter to the Prince Bodhisattva (Tib. Rgyal bu byang chub sms dpa’ la gnang ba’i bka’ yig) where he writes, “we yon mchod (offering recipients) are all fine”.\(^{180}\) At other times it means the patron; in the Tantric Feast for the Great Illusion (Tib. Sgyu ma chen mo’i tshogs ’khor), for example, 'Phags pa uses the term yon mchod to refer to prince Hoqu.\(^{181}\)

Interestingly, the use of the term mchod yon to refer to the priest-patron bond cannot be found in any works by Sa paṇ or 'Phags pa. It appears that mchod yon was, therefore, a retrospective neologism applied by later Tibetan historians to refer to the relationship that existed between the Sa skya pas and the Mongols.\(^{182}\) Nevertheless, yon mchod was used in referring to Qubilai and 'Phags pa’s association during their lifetimes, namely in Ye shes rgyal mtshan’s biography of 'Phags pa.\(^{183}\) This, however, was not the first instance of the use of yon mchod in this sense in Tibetan literature. The notion predates Qubilai and 'Phags pa in the Tibetan lexicon. For example, Atiśa Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna (972/982–?), the abbot of Vikramaśīla who was instrumental in introducing the Bka’ gdamspa tradition of Buddhism to Tibet, used the term yon mchod

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\(^{179}\) The eight objects of offering in Buddhist ritual are: mchod yon (water to welcome), zhab bsil (water to wash feet), me tog (flowers), bdu gsp (incense), mar me (lamp), dri chab (water to cleanse stains), zhal bsas (food), and rol mo (music). In some cases mchod yon is used to refer to all eight types of offerings; see Blo gsal rgya mtsho (2007).

\(^{180}\) The quote in Tibetan reads: གཞི་ཡོན་མཆོད་ཐོམས་ཅད་ཡེ་བདེ་བར་མཆིས་ See Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968n: 238, folio 3).

\(^{181}\) Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968q: 263, folio 3).

\(^{182}\) The term mchod yon defines the patron-recipient relationship in the works of later historians such as Gtsug lag ’phreng ba (1986: 962) and Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1980: 96).

in his text *Consecration of the Body, Speech and Mind* (Tib. *Sku dang gsung dang thugs rab tu gnas pa zhes bya ba*).\(^{184}\)

Perhaps in response to this multiplicity of uses, the terms *mchod yon* and *yon mchod* have been translated into English in various ways. For example, Tucci translates the terms as “chaplain-patron”\(^ {185}\) and Szerb as “patron-patronized”.\(^ {186}\) But none of these renderings fully convey the meaning of the Tibetan term or the associations of its Tibetan Buddhist cultural context. As David Seyfort Ruegg rightly points out, “…etymologically and semantically, the terms *mchod gnas* … designating the monk-counsellor and preceptor-officiant as a donee to be honoured are not exactly rendered by our word ‘priest’. Nor in a traditional Buddhist society is the *yon bdag* ‘donor’ (Skt. *dakṣinā-pati = dānapati*) etymologically and lexically equivalent to a ‘patron’”.\(^ {187}\)

Similar shortcomings apply equally to other English renderings of these terms. That being said, Zahiruddin Ahmad’s more verbose phraseology—“the object-of-worship” and “giver-of-religious-offerings”\(^ {188}\)—appears broadly true to the semantics of the original Tibetan terms, but it is difficult to use in readable English.\(^ {189}\)

In the context of the present discussion, it should also be noted that this analysis also reveals that none of the usages of the the terms *mchod yon* and *yon mchod* imply a relative precedence for the individuals involved. They are lexically and etymologically agnostic about the status of the parties. This is consistent with the fact that the parties operate in separate domains.\(^ {190}\) This semantic agnosticism about relative precedence is also in line with the essentially symbiotic nature of the relationship in which both parties are dependent on one another: the religious *mchod gnas* needs material support from the *yon bdag* for their subsistence; and the *yon bdag* requires the services provided by the *mchod gnas* for their religious needs. What binds the two parties and their separate domains is a religious exchange. That said, from the perspective of Buddhism, the lasting religious sustenance provided by the *mchod gnas* is seen as incomparably more valuable than any offering of temporary benefit a *yon bdag* might make. As such, the *mchod gnas* is generally perceived as taking precedence in the relationship.


\(^{185}\) Tucci (1999: 10).

\(^{186}\) Szerb (1985: 165).


\(^{188}\) Ahmad (2012: 8).

\(^{189}\) Although Zahiruddin Ahmad’s renderings appear generally accurate, this thesis uses the original Tibetan term *mchod yon* to avoid their unwieldy wordiness.

\(^{190}\) Thomas Laird (2006: 57).
9. The institutional and political implications for Tibet

Despite the lack of any inherent geopolitical connotations or implications in the concept of mchod yon based on its antecedent history and etymology, what sets the Qubilai–'Phags pa partnership apart from the preceding patterns of patronage is the context in which this association occurred. In particular, 'Phags pa’s symbolism as the perceived inheritor of Sa pañ’s original acquiescence to the Mongols defined the relationship for some later commentators. But between Sa pañ’s arrival at Köden’s court and the maturation of 'Phags pa’s bond with Qubilai, the nature of the relationship between the Sa skya pas and the Mongols had transformed from one of acquiescence to one primarily founded on personal-religious ties. This personal-religious bond between Qubilai and 'Phags pa can be seen as the nexus of many aspects of Tibetan–Mongol relations during their time.

According to 'Phags pa, the Mongol’s establishment of “a wide range of administrative infrastructures in the Land of Snows”, including the appointment of officials, was due to Qubilai’s “devotion to the Buddha-Dharma and his special affection for Tibet”. Further, as Ahmad asserts, even the sporadic Mongol incursions into Tibet during the period can be seen to “fall within the framework of the religious relationship of Giver-of-religious-offerings and Object-of-worship established between the Khan and the Sa skya pa lama”, because the Khan may be interpreted as “merely performing the duty as protector of his Object-of-worship”. Ahmad and other scholars have suggested that the Mongol incursions of 1267–68 and 1290 were targeted at the 'Bri gung Bka’ brgyud, another order of Tibetan Buddhism, because they were challenging Sa skya paramountcy, while the Mongol force of 1277 came to pacify the Nyal region on behalf of the Sa skya pas. The incursion of 1281 was to punish Kun

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191 The centrality of the religious dimension to the Qubilai–'Phags pa relationship has also been recognised by Shakabpa. However, Shakabpa does not reflect on the political connotations to the relationship despite the context in which it was formed and, as has previously been noted, he even ascribes pious intentions to Köden’s summoning of Sa pañ. In supporting his emphasis of the religious nature of the Qubilai–'Phags pa association, Shakabpa cites two edicts that he claims are “copies from originals in a Sakya sealed document” and they “mainly agree” with A myes zhabs’s Sa skya’i gdung rabs ngo mtshar bang mdzod. See Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa (2010: 222); for the original Tibetan version, see Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa (1976: 289).

192 The original Tibetan reads: ས་བདག་དེ་ནི་བོད་ཁམས་དག་ལ་མོང་བའི་བོད་པ་མ་ཐོབ་པ་རང་མཛད། See Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968c: 264, folio 3). Consistent with this statement, the Mongols did put in place significant administrative infrastructure in Tibet. Indeed, according to Dawa Norbu, the power that the Mongols exercised in Tibet was “neither purely political nor military; it was fundamentally structural”. He goes on to explain that he uses the term “structural” in two senses, institutionally and organisationally. For more, see Dawa Norbu (1985: 176–95).

193 Ahmad (2012: 8–10); this theory is also echoed in a voluminous work on Mdo smad by Hor gtsang jigs med (2009: 440–41).


195 Ahmad (2012: 9).
dga’ bzang po (?–1281), a former Sa skya chief minister, who was accused of poisoning ’Phags pa. It should be noted, however, that other scholars including Karl-Heinz Everding interpret these incursions—or at the least the incursions of 1267–68 and 1290—as having more to do with safeguarding Qubilai’s interests than the interests of his guru. They contend that these incursions were a part of a broader proxy war between Qubilai and the Stod Hor Mongols, played out on the ground between the Sa skya pas and the ’Bri gung Bka’ brgyud for control over some regions of Central Tibet. Given the available evidence, however, it is difficult to conclude whether the incursions were indeed part of a proxy war between Mongols as suggested by these scholars or whether they were triggered by a conflict among Tibetans in the first instance that then drew in their religious patrons.

9.1 Later emulations and political claims

The Qubilai—’Phags pa mchod yon relationship, with its perceived context of political symbolism and its central role in the Tibetans’ most important external relation at the time—that with the Mongols—has come to be viewed as the dominant model for later mchod yon bonds. In the main, these interpretations have often ignored the personal-religious bond at the centre of this form of relationship; instead they focus on its political implications, drawing on them to make inferences about the nature of Tibet’s subsequent relationships with its neighbours. This view may reflect, at least in part, the fact that the Mongol princes, and the rulers of Ming China and the Manchu Empire who later emulated the mchod yon bond with various Tibetan Buddhist prelates, appear to have found this form of relationship politically expedient.

The first prominent emulation of the mchod yon relationship after the collapse of the Mongol empire in East Asia in 1368 was entered into by the Mongol prince Altan Khan (1507–1582) and the third Dalai Lama, Bsod nams rgya mtsho (1543–1588). Later, Güshri Khan (1582–1655) and the fifth Dalai Lama, Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682), also perpetuated this model. While their respective motives for entering into mchod yon ties were likely complex and multifaceted, enacting the

197 Everding (2002: 109–28). As Everding explains, it is not possible to define whether Stod Hor refers to the Mongols of the Il-Khanate or those of the Chagatai Khanate. For a detailed analysis of this difficulty, see Elliot Sperling (1990:153–56).
198 Altan Khan was the leader of the Tümed Mongols and a descendant of Qubilai Khan. Altan Khan conferred the title “Dalai Lama” in 1578. For more on Altan Khan and his interactions with the Third Dalai Lama, see Ahmad (1970: 93–9).
199 Güshri Khan was the leader of the Qoshot Mongols. His forces overthrew the last king of Gtsang in Tibet and installed the fifth Dalai Lama as ruler of Tibet in 1642. For more on Güshri Khan’s emulation of Qubilai’s mchod yon relationship with ’Phags pa, see Kurtis R. Schaeffer (2013: 350–52).
Qubilai–’Phags pa bond can be seen as enabling the princes to claim a connection to the legitimacy of rulership that they perceived in Qubilai Khan. Indeed, a seventeenth century Mongolian source even portrays Altan Khan and the third Dalai Lama as reincarnations of Qubilai and ’Phags pa.200

The ethnically Chinese Ming (1368–1644) and the ethnically Manchu Qing (1644–1912) dynasties that succeeded the Mongol Yuan in China appear to have viewed the concept of mchod yon as a useful tool for exerting influence in Tibet and reducing Mongol threats to China.201 The Ming court exchanged gifts and presented elaborate titles to Tibetan religious hierarchs such as the fifth Karmapa, Bde bzhin gshegs pa (1384–1415), and various lamas of the Sa skya and Dge lugs orders,202 which some historians (particularly in the People’s Republic of China) have interpreted as signifying this dynasty’s authority over Tibet.203

During the Qing period, successive Manchu emperors sought to portray themselves as patrons of Buddhism and as incarnations of Mañjuśrī, and some tried to re-enact Qubilai’s relationship with ’Phags pa by forging mchod yon ties with a number of prominent hierarchs of various Tibetan Buddhist orders.204 However, their patronage and promotion of Tibetan Buddhism appears to also have had primarily political motives, particularly the pacification of the Mongols.205 Even Qianlong (1711–1799), who is sometimes portrayed as the most enthusiastic of the Manchu rulers in his patronage of Buddhism, openly declared on a stele inscription at the Lama Temple in Beijing: “The Yellow Religion of the interior and the outside was generally governed by these two persons, the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Erdeni. All the Mongolian tribes whole-heartedly submit themselves [to them]. The development of the Yellow Religion is intended to pacify the Mongols” .206

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200 Sayang Sečen, Erden-yin-tobči, Urga text. 76 r.
201 Smith (2008: 7).
203 For examples, see Tieh-Tseng Li (1960: 28, 32) and Hengtse Tu (1971: 6). These interactions, however, were largely symbolic, and as Elliot Sperling argues, “one cannot extrapolate from the simple presentation of these titles a basis for claiming Ming sovereignty over Tibet”. Contemporary PRC scholars commonly overlook the fact that Tibetan lamas also conferred similarly grandiose titles on their patrons; this was an aspect of standard protocol for such interactions. See Anne-Marie Blondeau and Katia Buffetrille (2008: 20). For more on exchanges of tributes between Tibetan lamas and the Ming court, see Wylie (2003: 335–340).
Among the varying assertions by some historians of Ming Chinese and Manchu authority over Tibet are claims founded on conjectures that the Ming (and in turn, the Manchu) inherited the Mongol relationship with Tibet and the associated symbolisms of mchod yon bonds with Tibetan lamas. These claims are not only inconsistent with the fundamentally personal-religious nature of mchod yon bonds; they are also incompatible with historical accounts. As Hidehiro Okada argues persuasively, the Ming and Manchu dynasties were successors to the Yuan Dynasty established in China by the Mongols, rather than the Great Khanate, Qubilai’s broader East Asian Empire, which included Tibet.

Moreover, the political acquiescence that Sa paṇ acceded to Köden in 1247 and the mchod yon relationships that Sa paṇ and ’Phags pa forged with Köden and Qubilai respectively predate the establishment of the Yuan dynasty in China in 1271. It is clear that Sa paṇ and ’Phags pa saw the mchod yon relations they forged as being with the Mongols and their empire, not with China. Indeed, it is clear from ’Phags pa’s letters and compositions that he identifies Qubilai as the great fifth ruler of the Mongol Empire, never as the ruler of a Chinese state. An example of such works is Praises to the Praiseworthy (Bsngags ’os la bsngags pa’i rab byed), a note to Qubilai that ’Phags pa wrote in 1275, well after the establishment of the Yuan dynasty, to congratulate him on a victory over the Manzi (Southern Song).

These historians furthermore assert that the exercise of power in Tibet by the Bureau of General Governance for Buddhist Religion (Ch. Zhongzhiyuan 总制院)—later renamed the Bureau of Tibetan and Buddhist Affairs—was evidence of China’s control over Tibet. This assertion is also questionable. The bureau was established as early as 1264, well before the establishment of the Yuan dynasty, implying that it existed as a Mongol imperial body rather than an entity of Yuan China. Moreover, during his time, this bureau was under ’Phags pa’s direct control as State and later Imperial Preceptor; as such, its influence over Tibet can be seen as being more a mark of ’Phags pa’s power over Tibet than Yuan China’s.

Inheritance by the Ming of authority over Tibet from the Mongols is also inconsistent with the chronology of the loss of Mongol dominance over Tibet. By the middle of the 14th century, Si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan had already overthrown the

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207 For an example, see Tieh-Tseng Li (1960).
208 For a discussion of whether Ming China is the successor state to the Mongol empire, see Hidehiro Okada (1999: 260–72).
209 Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968s: 285, folio 4).
210 Chen Dezhi (2005: 11).
Sa skya pas and founded the Phag mo grub pa dynasty (1354–1618) in Tibet. In the process, the region had already become effectively independent of Mongol dependency before the Ming dynasty had even been established in China.²¹²

Further, the Yuan Shi excludes Tibet in its detailing of the geography of the Yuan realms indicating that Ming Chinese officials saw Tibet as politically separate from Yuan China.²¹³ The separateness of Tibet and China within Qubilai’s domains is also reflected in ’Phags pa’s writings; for example, in a text composed in 1274, he explicitly identifies Shing kun²¹⁴ as being on the border between Tibet and China,²¹⁵ implying the existence of such a geographical demarcation at the time. Similarly, Franke notes: “The fact that licensed border markets existed for trade with Tibet is a certain indication that Tibet was treated by the Sino–Mongol government as a foreign country because no such markets existed within China proper”.²¹⁶

10. Conclusion

Political interpretations, which have become the dominant narratives of the nature of the relationship between Qubilai and ’Phags pa in contemporary scholarship, are over-simplistic and are incongruous with salient historical evidence. Only through a more nuanced approach that accounts for the personal-religious aspects of the Qubilai–’Phags pa association can the full range of their interactions, as evidenced by historical records, be explained.

The Qubilai–’Phags pa bond has come to be viewed as the paradigmatic manifestation of mchod yon, a form of relationship that some commentators perceive as having significant political and institutional implications for Tibet’s relations with the Mongols, Chinese and Manchus. While ’Phags pa’s initial transference to Qubilai’s court may be seen as politically symbolic of the transferral of Sa paṇ’s original acquiescence to the Mongols to the Tolui, an examination of the historical and semantic context underlying the mchod yon concept shows that it is devoid of any inherent political connotations, including a predetermined notion of the relative precedence of the parties involved. What remains, as the core of the concept, is primarily a personal-religious interaction. Moreover, between Sa paṇ’s arrival at Köden’s court and the

²¹⁴ To locate Shing kun, see: Bianca Horlemann (2012: 142); Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas (1982: 688); Dung dkar Blo bzang ’phrin las (2002: 1992); and Roerich (1979: 501, in their annotations, Shing kun is identified as Liangchou).
²¹⁵ Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968b: 264, folio 1).
maturation of the Qubilai–’Phags pa bond, the nature of the ties between the Sa skya pas and the Mongols had indeed evolved from acquiescence to an arrangement founded on a personal-religious connection that came to underlie many aspects of Tibetan–Mongol relations at the time.

Among the varying assertions by some historians of Ming Chinese and Manchu authority over Tibet are claims founded on conjectures that the Ming (and in turn, the Manchu) inherited the Mongol relationship with Tibet and that the mchod yon bonds they formed with Tibetan lamas inherently entail political implications for the parties involved. These claims are not only inconsistent with the fundamentally personal-religious nature of the mchod yon concept, they are also incompatible with historical evidence.
Chapter Two:
The Buddhist Tradition of Advising the Powerful

If one possesses an abundance of worldly riches,
But does not possess the riches of the Dharma,
It is like having a feast mixed with poison
And brings only suffering.

'Phags pa, Rosary of Precious Jewels

1. Introduction: speaking truth to power

According to the Buddha, human suffering is primarily caused by unwholesome actions driven by ignorance. This basic principle governs the fortunes of all sentient beings, including humans, and even the most powerful of humans. Further, unlike the powerless, these powerful individuals possess a unique ability to affect the wellbeing of others—their ignorance not only affects themselves, it undermines the wellbeing of everyone who is subject to them. According to Buddhist cosmology, they must have accumulated much merit to attain that position of power, but their situation is also tenuous. Their actions could have immense positive benefit for others, or they could inflict much misery on others and result in negative karmic consequences for themselves in the future. Perhaps, it is in part for these reasons that leading Buddhist prelates have a long history of association with kings and other people of power, challenging their prevailing worldview and presenting an alternative Buddhist regime of truth. This is the tradition in which 'Phags pa’s relationship with Qubilai was situated and, therefore, in order to understand the full context of their relationship, it is important to understand this tradition.

The English term “speaking truth to power” may have first been coined by anti-war Quakers in the mid-twentieth century, but it has many precedents in a variety of cultures. The fundamentals of these precedents are all similar. In them, people who are understood to be possessed of a greater truth than the functioning of political and martial power are called upon to contextualise the actions of the powerful in relation to this greater truth. They are asked to contextualise the power of the powerful and reframe

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1 Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968ii: 186, folio 2).
2 Indeed, from an ethically radical perspective, there is no viable way of combining religious practice and statecraft given that rulership inevitably involves compromising the Buddhist ideal of non-violence. For a discussion of this and other perspectives on the karmic implications of the kings’ participation in punishment, see Michael Zimmermann (2006: 213–42).
it within a larger—either temporal or geographical—cosmography that pays attention to those more powerful than the powerful, like God or gods, for example, and those much less powerful than they, like their subjects.

As would be expected given that the beliefs and practices of Buddhism include both a vast cosmography, in which earthly kings play an important but not central role, and a focus on the morality of everyday actions, a tradition of speaking truth to power can be found in Buddhism. This tradition traces its root to the historical Buddha, and during the past two millennia many leading Buddhist prelates have participated in it. What is more, their thoughts and activities have been recorded repeatedly in the religion’s literature, such that later speakers of truth can find many precedents for their actions within the canons of Buddhism, and within other forms of Buddhist literature.

The literary genres in which this tradition have been preserved are manifold; they include texts dedicated specifically to providing advice to kings, for example, in the form of an epistle, and other instances where such advice was proffered in a more general setting, such as in a sermon. But all these works are united by the common central theme of “speaking truth to power”. 'Phags pa’s Advice to the King is one such text; its central theme and organising principle can be seen as the speaking of truth to power.

This corpus predominantly presents only the voices of Buddhist prelates and not the voices of kings, meaning that, considered on their own, little can be inferred about how these texts were received and what impact they may have had on their recipients. Nevertheless, these texts do enunciate the nature and intent of the discourses and they provide insights regarding the sorts of teachings that have been given by Buddhist advisors and what sorts of results they may have hoped to achieve.

In these works, Buddhist prelates consistently assert the theory of no-self (Skt. anātman; Tib. bdag med), the lack of a personal and phenomenal “self” (Skt. ātman; Tib. bdag); and karma, the principle that one must face an outcome determined by past actions. Through elucidating the lack of essence and intrinsic existence of all phenomena including the false concept of “self”, they devalue the power and possessions that accompany kingship and seek to dislodge their audiences from their materialistic and self-centred beliefs. And through their exposition of the law of karma, they underscore that even kings cannot escape the consequences of their actions but that

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4 While not all schools of thought in Buddhism accept the lack of a phenomenal self, the focus of this chapter is primarily on the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition, which does posit the lack of both a personal and phenomenal “self”. This is also known as the theory of “emptiness”.

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through the prelates and their teachings rescue is possible—a power that is otherwise beyond the kings’ reach.

It is a discourse that invites the kings to adopt the Buddhist faith and submit to the Three Jewels: the Buddha, Dharma and Saṃgha. Concurrently, this discourse sets an ideal of dharmarāja or righteous kingship—rulership in accordance with the precepts of the Dharma—towards which the kings would have to strive in order to fulfil the faith’s requirements of them. Hence, to the extent that they sought to live up to this ideal, these kings who were above the law can be viewed as effectively becoming bound by the rules of the Dharma and its principles.

This chapter draws out examples of advice from the tradition of speaking truth to power, highlighting these common salient themes while tracing the development of the tradition from its Indian origins to the Tibetan Buddhist world. It also discusses 'Phags pa’s contribution to the tradition.

2. Sūtras of advice
The roots of the Buddhist tradition of speaking truth to power can be traced to sermons attributed to the Buddha, who regularly engaged with the rājas or kings of northern India. Knowledge of these texts would have been part of 'Phags pa’s education, and the norms they portray had been, in the main, adopted by Tibetan Buddhist practitioners.

Kingship in ancient India was characterised by its absolute power, and the wellbeing of the subjects of the kingdoms, including the Buddha’s ordained disciples, was intimately affected by the policies and attitudes of kings. Therefore, during his lifetime, the Buddha regularly associated with monarchs through accepting their hospitality and imparting teachings and advice, setting a precedent that later Buddhist

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5 In the Jātaka, the ten duties of a dharmarāja are listed as: generosity; ethics; self-sacrifice; integrity; gentleness; self-discipline; non-enmity; non-harm; patience; and non-opposition to the popular will. For more on these ten duties, see Walpola Rahula (1978: 84–5). For an example of 'Phags pa’s writings regarding statecraft in accordance with the precepts of the Dharma (Tib. rgyal srid chos bzhin skyong ba), see Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968i: 186–88). For a study on Buddhist kingship and its development in India and Tibet, see Georgios T. Halkias (2013).

6 Nirmal C. Sinha (1992: 8).

7 There are some discrepancies between the Sanskrit and Pāli sūtras. This chapter primarily draws on the narratives in the Tibetan Buddhist canon derived from the Sanskrit tradition of Buddhism in India. I focus on the Tibetan Buddhist canon because it is what 'Phags pa would have been familiar with, and the stories of relations between prelates and kings presented in this canon is the tradition that he would have seen himself as following.

8 Buddhism’s intimate association with kings and kingship began even before the birth of the Buddha. According to the traditional account of the Buddha’s life, before taking birth in the human realm, he sought five requisites for his birth, one of which was the family lineage of kings. It is thus believed that the Buddha was born as a prince in the royal family of the Śākyas. It is plausible that the Buddha had cordial relations with rulers, in part because of his royal affinity. With his dual identities as a prince of the Śākyas and the “Enlightened One”, the Buddha was in an ideal position to be able to speak to the monarchs of India.
prelates would follow. Both the Pāli and Mahāyāna canons⁹ offer numerous accounts of the Buddha speaking his truth to the kings of northern India, including some discourses that contained unwelcome advice. Although the time, place and the audiences of these discourses vary, the general context, themes and reported results of these dialogues are essentially comparable.

The Buddha’s interactions with Udayana, the king of Vatsala exemplify these discourses.¹⁰ One sūtra from among those that record these interactions provides an account of how the Buddha along with his retinue of monks stood in Udayana’s path as he led an army on the way to attack the city of Kānaka. While the king was initially offended by this group blocking his march, he later became a disciple to whom the Buddha bestowed several teachings. The Buddha gave the first of these sermons on the day of their meeting, beginning with the following exchange.

The Buddha said: O great king! Why do you always fight and quarrel? It exhausts you in this life and makes you take rebirth in the lower realms in the next.
The king replied: Gautama, I like war and fighting because I have not been defeated by anyone and have always been victorious.
The Buddha said: O great king! Those [whom you have defeated] are only minor enemies. O king, there is another greater enemy than these.
The king asked: What is that enemy?
The Buddha said: There is a great enemy known as afflictions—grasping [at the notion] of a self.¹¹

In this exchange, the Buddha encourages Udayana to turn his focus inwards, to subdue afflictions such as desire, hatred and ignorance, which result from the misconception of grasping at the notion of a self. Indeed, from a Buddhist perspective, outer enemies can only do harm in this life; in contrast, the enemy of afflictions leads to the accumulation of negative karma that causes a constant cycle of suffering across countless lives. This exchange provides an example of how Buddhist discourse often presents the worldly position and achievements of kings as largely meaningless while highlighting the significance of practicing the Dharma.

The Buddha’s close association with Bimbisāra (543–491 BC), the king of Magadha, and accounts of the king’s patronage of the Buddha and his followers are

⁹ A sūtra that is exclusive to the Mahāyāna tradition is 'Phags pa gser 'od dam pa'i mdo (Skt. Ārya suvarnaprabhāsottama sūtrendrāj ju nāma mahāyāna sūtra). This text contains a number of lengthy sections of advice to kings. See: http://tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=kangyur&index=514 (accessed on 18/03/2015).
recounted in both the Pāli and Mahāyāna canons. The Buddha spent a number of rainy seasons at Veṇuvana, a grove at Rājagṛha that Bimbisāra offered to the Buddha. One story, which is only reported in the Mahāyāna canon, describes Bimbisāra’s encounter with the Buddha and the king’s reformation. It repeats the pattern from the former story of Buddha’s conversion of king Udayana. According to this narrative, while the king was initially antagonistic towards the Buddha, he later became a devoted disciple and friend, praised by the Buddha as “a righteous man” and “a righteous king”. Among the Buddha’s sermons for Bimbisāra is the Mahāyāna Sūtra of Advice to the King (Skt. Rājādeśanāma Mahāyānasūtra, Tib. Rgyal po la gdam pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po ’i mdo) in which he explains the law of karma and the importance of engaging in virtuous action:

For your long-term benefit, accumulate merit;  
There is no companion [enduring across lifetimes] other than your virtuous and non-virtuous karma.  
While the virtuous karma causes higher rebirths and liberation,  
The non-virtuous karma causes lower rebirths and suffering.

In the same text the Buddha also describes the concept of Buddhist liberation as a state free from grasping at the concept of a self:

Nirvana is the best of peace and happiness,  
It is devoid of afflictions and conceptualisation that grasps at a self.

Another notable account of a king subdued by the teachings of the Buddha is that of Ajātaśatru (ruled 492–460 BC), the notorious but later reformed son of...

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12 Pāli literature provides a completely different story about the first meeting between the two men from the one recorded in the Tibetan Bka’ ’gyur. The Pāli source suggests that the Buddha and Bimbisāra knew one another since their youth owing to the friendship between their fathers. Soon after the Buddha had renounced his princehood and was living as an ascetic, he wandered near Bimbisāra’s palace. Upon seeing the young ascetic, Bimbisāra offered him a place in his court although he did not recognise the Buddha. While the Buddha refused the offer, Bimbisāra received assurance that he would return once he had attained awakening. The Buddha kept his promise and visited Bimbisāra after he had become enlightened. For details see: The Pabbajā Sutta (SN.vs.405ff.) cited in Bimbisāra, http://www.palikanon.com/english/pali_names/b/bimbisara.htm (accessed on 10/04/2015); W. Rockhill (2000: 27).
16 Tshul khrims rin chen (1976–1979c: 415–16). Both this text and the former work involving king Udayana share the same title with ‘Phags pa’s work for Qubilai: “Rgyal po la gdam pa” (Advice to the King). Moreover, this text is explicitly referenced in The Ornament. See Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 107, folio 1).
Bimbisāra, which is a well-travelled tale across the Buddhist world. In his lust for power, Ajātaśatru usurped Bimbisāra’s throne, before imprisoning and killing him while in captivity. In *The Sūtra on Eliminating Ajātaśatru’s Remorse* (Skt. Āryājātaśatru Kauśyavinodanānāma Mahāyānasūtra, Tib. ’Phags pa ma skyes dgra’i ’gyod pa bsal ba’i mdo), Ajātaśatru seeks the Buddha’s guidance in relieving his incessant anxiety from the regret of killing his father and fear of the karmic consequences he would suffer. In this sūtra, the Buddha sees that Ajātaśatru’s doubts cannot be dispelled by anyone other than Mañjuśrī and assigns the bodhisattva to deliver teachings on the Buddhist concept of emptiness. With Mañjuśrī’s help, Ajātaśatru gains insight into the emptiness of phenomena, spontaneously dispelling all doubts and exhausting most of his negative karma.

3. Śāstras of advice

Following the Buddha’s precedent, the pattern of Buddhist prelates speaking their truth to the kings of India continues in the śāstras, treatises that discuss doctrine and philosophical issues. These texts replicate the themes and apparent intended effects on recipients found in the exchanges in the sūtras. However, what changes is the form in which the discourse is transmitted; like ’Phags pa’s *Advice to the King*, the śāstras of advice are presented as written treatises rather than spoken sermons. As such, they involve the encoded assumption that their royal recipients would be able to readily access the teachings whenever required, compared with sermons, which are inherently one-off dialogues.

Nāgārjuna (c.150 CE–c.250 CE), the founder of the Madhyamaka (Middle Way) school, has profoundly influenced the Mahāyāna Buddhist world and particularly the philosophies of all the orders of Tibetan Buddhism. Nāgārjuna is known for a number

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18 Michael Radich (2011: 1).
19 ’Phags pa ma skyes dgra’i ’gyod pa bsal ba zhes bya ba theg pa chen po’i mdo, see: http://tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=kangyur&index=217
20 Siglinde Dietz’s study of the tradition of Buddhist epistles is by far the most detailed examination of the subject. Her work focuses on Buddhist letters in general, including letters to kings. She mentions thirteen letters, and some of those are discussed in this chapter. For more, see Siglinde Dietz (1984).

For another study of Buddhist epistles, focusing on those addressed to kings, see Richard F. Nance (2014: 207–15). Nance observes that these letters could have at least three audiences: “A letter might be written as a direct address to its nominal addressee with no presumption of wider circulation; it might be written as a direct address to its nominal addressee with a presumption of wider circulation; or it might be written as a pseudo-direct address in which the nominal addressee is no more than a rhetorical conceit”.

21 Nāgārjuna is attributed with some of the most influential works in the Tibetan Buddhist world. These include the highly analytical metaphysical and epistemological treatise *Fundamental Stanzas on the Middle Way* (Skt. Mālamadhyamakakārikā, Tib. Dbu ma rtsa ba shes rab) and his letters of advice to kings.
of works composed for lay audiences, including letters of advice to kings. The two most widely studied among these compositions are *Letter to a Friend* (Skt. *Suhṛllekha*, Tib. *Bshes pa’i spring yig*), an epistle thought to have been written to king Surabhibhadra (Tib. *Bde spyod bzang po*)\(^{22}\) of the Sātavāhana dynasty (c.230 BCE–c.220 CE), and the *Precious Garland* (Skt. *Ratnāvalī*, Tib. *Dbu ma rin chen phreng ba*), which was written for a Sātavāhana king, generally believed to also be Surabhibhadra.\(^{23}\)

These works appear to have been influential in defining ’Phags pa’s notions of kingship and righteous rule. These texts served as the blueprint for ’Phags pa’s *Advice to the King*, and *The Ornament* explicitly references both of them.

Echoing themes stressed by the Buddha, both epistles expound the law of karma, warning of the grave consequences of negative actions, and seek to psychologically reorient the king through explaining the principles of no-self. In *Letter to a Friend* Nāgārjuna writes:

> Do not commit evil, not even for the sake of a brahman,  
> A bhikṣu, deity or guest, father or mother,  
> Son, queen, or retinue. They will not share  
> Any part of its infernal fruition.\(^{24}\)

In the above verse Nāgārjuna cautions the king against committing any non-virtuous actions, even for the sake of those dear or important to him. It highlights the implications of the law of karma—that you reap what you sow and no one will help bear the undesirable consequences of such actions. In the same text, he also summarises the human condition, including the ultimate state of no-self, writing:

> Understand being human as being, in actuality, miserable,  
> Impermanent, having no self and impure.\(^{25}\)

In *Precious Garland*, Nāgārjuna highlights the transient nature of kingship and argues that the king had won his position through the force of past virtuous conduct:

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\(^{22}\) The exact identification of the king and “friend” for whom Nāgārjuna composed this epistle is uncertain. Bde spyod bzang po is one of two Tibetan names that appear in different versions of the text. See: Nāgārjuna (2005: 15). For a detailed analysis on the identification of Nāgārjuna’s patron king for whom he wrote *Ratnāvalī*, see Joseph Walser (2013: 61–88).

\(^{23}\) Unfortunately, due to the ambiguity about which Sātavāhana king might have been the addressee of these epistles as well as uncertainty about the exact identity of king Surabhibhadra, it is difficult to assess the impact of these works at the time.


You did not bring your dominion with you from your former life, 
Nor will you take it to the next. 
Since it was gained through virtuous practices,
You would be wrong to act against the practices [in this life].

In a chapter of the text dedicated to discussing the ways of a righteous king, Nāgārjuna also emphasises the need to focus on the propagation of the Buddhist doctrine in setting state policies and in the appointment of government officials. He even asserts that the only purpose for the existence of the king’s polity is to support the practice and propagation of the Doctrine. This is a particularly frank exposition of the place and purpose of a sovereign within the framework of the concept of righteous kingship.

Another letter of advice by a Buddhist prelate to a king of ancient India is Ācārya Mātrce’s (n.d.) Letter to the Great King Kaniṣka (Skt. Kaniṣka Mahārājakaniṣkalekha, Tib. Rgyal po chen po ka nis ka la springs pa’i spring yig). Kaniṣka (?–c.151) was a king of the Kuśana dynasty (c. 2nd century BCE–3rd century CE) reputed for his patronage of Buddhism. Ācārya Mātrce’s epistle is a brief guide to morality that elucidates the distinctions between righteous and wrong moral conduct and their karmic effects. In the letter, the elderly Buddhist monk advises Kaniṣka to follow the example of his ancestors and rule his land in accordance with the Dharma. Ācārya Mātrce also reminds the king that even rulers die and that his virtuous actions and the resulting karma are all that he will be left with:

Driven by new karma that you have created
And drawn by the Lord of Death,
Apart from your virtuous and non-virtuous [karma],
Everything else will withdraw from you,

29 Kaniṣka is credited for convening the Fourth Buddhist Council in Kashmir and is also remembered for accepting Asvaghosa (c.80–c.150), a renowned learned monk from the kingdom of Magadha, which Kaniṣka’s soldiers had besieged, instead of 300,000 pieces of gold, as the price for withdrawing his troops. See Asvaghosa (1900: 11–12).
And nothing will follow you.
Know this and act righteously.32

The same themes run through a much later epistle, Letter to King Candra (Skt. 
Candrarājalekha, Tib. Rgyal po zla ba la spring pa’i springs yig),33 written by the 
Mahāyāna monk Mitrayogin (n.d.), also known as Śrimitrā.34 Archaeological findings 
reveal that king Jaichand (r. 1173–1193), a ruler of the Kannauj kingdom who was the 
addressee of this epistle, venerated the monk as dīkṣaṇaṃgura or tantric empowerment-
giver, and praised him as:

Being free from all desires, yet in [his] compassion, intent on delivering 
the world and endowed with the highest vision, with the achievements of 
the Enlightened One as his highest aim, who guided the rulers of the earth 
addicted to the wrong path…35

Mitrayogin provides an illustrative example of the confidence exhibited by 
Buddhist prelates in these works. In Letter to King Candra, the monk does not steer 
away from speaking about the impermanent nature of the king’s current position and 
possessions, and even touches on the imperfect nature of the queen:36

Though the queen appears like a goddess, 
She is nothing but a coagulation of revolting putridity, 
Dripping filth from the nine orifices [of the body].
Lord, [she] is a befriending zombie.
The one deva,37 however rich you may be, 
When you die and proceed to the next world, 
Like an arhat38 in a desert, 
You are alone, without your son and queen, 
Without your clothes and friends, 
Without your kingdom or your capital.39

32 Ma ti tsi tra, Rgyal po chen po ka nis ka la springs pa’i spring yig, 
33 Tshul khrims rin chen (1982−1985d: 144−8).
34 There is little information about this monk. From his compositions, we can infer that he is a follower 
of the Mahāyāna tradition. For the only other text attributed to this author, see: Mitrayogin, Chos spyod 
24/09/15).
36 While the queen is the ostensive target of the monk’s words here, such reflections on the repulsiveness 
of the human body are classic practices within Buddhism. These practices are aimed at countering lust as 
well as attachment to one’s own body.
37 The one deva refers to the king.
38 The analogy to an arhat is used here to capture the solitary nature of the process of death. The 
reference is to the belief in Buddhism that some arhats known as ‘solitary realisers’ have achieved 
liberation for only their own sake.
The monk then urges the king to choose liberation from this unsatisfactory state by overcoming all attachment, alluding to the Buddhist practice of emptiness:

The happiness of the transitory world is suffering after all;
The happiness of liberation is happiness indeed.
Therefore, if you do not wish suffering,
Why do you not accept liberation?
Liberation is releasing that which is bound,
What binds is [attachment to] possessions, sentient beings and the body.40

These lines present a stark choice to king Jaichand, between the true lasting happiness of liberation from cyclic existence and the temporary perceived happiness of this life which, according to Buddhism, is essentially composed of forms of suffering. Releasing himself from his attachment to his possessions, those around him and his body is presented as the way to the lasting happiness of liberation. And, according to Buddhism, such a release is achieved through realising the lack of intrinsic nature of these phenomena—that things are devoid of the intrinsic existence that we tend to project onto them.

4. Talking to Tibetan kings
Extant texts show that the discourses between Buddhist prelates and Tibetan kings during both the Tibetan imperial period and the “era of fragmentation”41 replicated the themes and apparent intended effects on recipients found in sūtras and śāstras.

In the eighth century Tibet became a major power in Central Asia during the reign of Khri Srong lde btsan.42 While Tibetan troops were expanding their empire’s territory and projecting force in frontier regions (including occupying the Chinese capital Chang’an, the modern city of Xi’an), Khri Srong lde btsan also spent generously from the state coffers to accumulate a wealth of cultural capital for Tibet.43

41 For more than four centuries after the collapse of the Tibetan empire in the ninth century, Tibet had no central ruling authority. This period is referred to by later historians as the “era of fragmentation” (Tib. sil bu’i dus).
42 Sam van Schaik (2011: 40).
44 Khri Srong lde btsan oversaw the wholesale importation of knowledge from India, including an array of fields of learning—from metaphysics and epistemology to poetry and grammar. The program also adopted aspects of other sciences such as medicine, astrology, art and architecture from countries near and far—India, Nepal, China, Persia, East Turkestan and Greece through state-facilitated interactions between scholars. For more on the development of medicine in Tibet, see Desi Sangyê Gyatso (2010: 62)
His reign oversaw the translation of hundreds of volumes of the Buddhist canon from Sanskrit, the beginning of the creation of what has been described as one of “greatest cultural monuments of the medieval world”. 45

Śāntarakṣita is considered to be Khri Srong lde btsan’s first Buddhist preceptor. According to the Testament of Sba, 46 Śāntarakṣita gave teachings on Buddhist fundamentals such as the ten virtues, 47 eighteen constituents 48 and twelve links of dependent origination 49 to the Tibetan king. 50 Nevertheless, there are no extant texts attributed to Śāntarakṣita composed specifically for Khri Srong lde btsan.

The Tibetan Bstan ’gyur collection does, however, contain two epistles addressed to Khri Srong lde btsan. These are Letter Comprising What is Treasured (Gces pa ’i bsdu pa’i phrin yig), 51 written by Dpal dbyang (c. 8th–9th century, one of the first seven ordained monks of Tibet), 52 and Letter Sent to the King, Subjects and Monastics of Tibet (Bod rje ’bangs dang btsun pa mnams la spring yig) 53 by Buddhaguhya (Tib. Sangs rgyas gsang ba, c. 9th century), a Buddhist monk from India. 54 In the first, the Tibetan monk cites various sources, including Nāgārjuna’s Precious Garland, and advises the king to avoid committing non-virtuous actions. He details the resulting unfavourable future consequences and elaborates on the benefits of adopting the Buddhist path in both this life and the hereafter. The text also includes

164). For an overview of the origins of Tibetan astrology, see Dung dkar Blo bzang ’phrin las (2002: 138).
45 Kapstein (2009: 72). The Tibetan king not only oversaw this monumental project but, according to an inscribed edict apparently by Khri Srong lde btsan himself, he studied, practiced and propagated the teachings. For more details, see Hugh Richardson (1980: 71–2).
47 The ten virtues are renunciation of the ten non-virtues. The ten virtues are: not killing; not stealing; refraining from improper sexual practices; not lying; not using abusive language; not slandering others; not indulging in irrelevant talk; not being covetous; not being malicious; and not holding destructive beliefs.
48 The eighteen constituents comprise the six collections of consciousness, the six senses and the six sense objects. These are: the sensory bases of the eye, of form, and the consciousness of the eye; those of the ear, sound and the consciousness of the ear; those of the nose, smell, and the consciousness of the nose; those of the tongue, taste, and the consciousness of the tongue; those of the body, touch, and the consciousness of the body; and those of the intellect, phenomena, and the consciousness of the intellect.
49 The twelve links of dependent origination are ignorance, volitional factors, consciousness, name and form, sense sources, contact, sensation, craving, grasping, becoming, birth, old age, and death.
50 Tibetan sources also suggest that the king studied the Madhyamākalaṃkāra with Śāntarakṣita. The king is even reported to have composed some highly sophisticated doctrinal commentaries himself. See Khetsun Sangpo (1986: 497).
52 It is reported in the Testament of Ba that Dpal dbyangs was one of Khri Srong lde btsan’s ministers but became a monk at the king’s encouragement. According to this record, after becoming ordained he quickly gained spiritual insights and attained supernatural powers. Impressed by this, the Tibetan king reportedly revered his former minister. For more see, Sba gsol snang (1982: 58); also see O rgyan gling pa (1986, 1997: 449) and Snellgrove (2002: 430).
54 Buddhaguhya played a key role in the transmission of the Mahāyoga teachings in India and Tibet. For more, see Dudjom Rinpoche (1991: 464–66).
instructions on statecraft in ruling righteously in accordance with Buddhist principles.\textsuperscript{55} Similarly, the second treatise provides instruction on behaviours consistent with the Buddhist path as well as advice on statecraft, including advice on how to interact with members of the court.\textsuperscript{56}

Traditional histories report that following advice from Śāntarakṣīta, Khri Srong lde btsan invited Padmasambhava to Tibet and that the king later received tantric empowerments from him. According to the earliest extant biography of Padmasambhava (belonging to the treasure text tradition and believed to be discovered by Nyang ral Nyi ma ’od zer), Khri Srong lde btsan received empowerment of the mandala of Bka’ brgyad bde gshegs ’dus pa.\textsuperscript{57} This text reports that Padmasambhava repeatedly referred to Khri Srong lde btsan as a righteous king and dedicates a chapter to how Khri Srong lde btsan ruled in accordance with the Dharma.\textsuperscript{58} Regardless of questions regarding the authenticity of these records, it is important to mention these traditional histories because they represent the communal memory of the relationship between kings and religious prelates inherited by ’Phags pa, and indeed the broader Tibetan Buddhist world.

The archetypal figure of Khri Srong lde btsan as a righteous Tibetan Dharma king was emulated by his sons Mu-ne btsan-po (c.762?-c.799?)\textsuperscript{59} and Khri Lde srong btsan (761–815),\textsuperscript{60} and even more so by his grandson Khri Ral pa can,\textsuperscript{61} the last among the Three Dharma Kings of Tibet. Tibetan accounts suggest that ’Phags pa evoked the Three Dharma Kings and the glory of Tibet during their reign when Qubilai Khan asked him about Tibet’s history.\textsuperscript{62} Moreover, in his writings ’Phags pa repeatedly aligns the Mongol Khans with these Tibetan Dharma kings as well as the Buddhist kings of India and invokes the notion of them as “righteous kings” and patrons of the faith.\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{57} Nyang ral Nyi ma ’od zer (1989: 140–47).
\textsuperscript{58} Nyang ral Nyi ma ’od zer (1989: 85–92).
\textsuperscript{59} Mu ne btsan po is reported to have been a fervent Buddhist. He is said to have been so committed to “righteous kingship” that he reportedly evenly distributed all the land and property in Tibet on three separate occasions. Each time, wealth eventually returned to the wealthy while the destitute remained poor. While it is difficult to assess the historicity of this account, it has served to highlight the force of the law of karma to many generations of Tibetan Buddhists: the wealth of the rich is the consequence of their past generosity and even the king could not alter this fate. See Sa skya pa Bsod nams rgyal mtshan (1981: 224).
\textsuperscript{60} Pillar inscriptions from the time indicate that Khri Lde srong btsan continued his father’s policy of maintaining and supporting the Buddhist faith. See Richardson (1981: 72).
\textsuperscript{61} During Khri Ral pa can’s reign the policy of conquest initiated by his grandfather reached its greatest extent and royal patronage of Buddhism also reached its apogee. See Sa skya pa Bsod nams rgyal mtshan (1981: 227–34).
\textsuperscript{62} A myes zhabs (2012a: 117).
\textsuperscript{63} For an example, see Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968bh: 9, folio 4).
During the era of fragmentation, a descendant of the Three Dharma Kings, Lha btsun Byang chub ’od (984–1078), the king of Gu ge, under the direction of his uncle and former king Lha bla ma Ye shes ’od (959–1040) invited Atiśa, abbot of Vikramaśīla monastic university, to Mnga’ ri, Tibet. In response to the king’s request Atiśa composed treatises commenting on both sūtra and tantra. Among the most well-known of these is Lamp on the Path to Enlightenment (Skt. Bodhipathapradīpa, Tib. Bya chub lam gyi sgron ma). It is a manual that seeks to persuade its audience to renounce corrupted practices and embrace the gradual Mahāyāna path to awakening. It reminds the king and his people of the core principles of Buddhism including the theory of emptiness:

Meditation on no-self is itself
The meditation on wisdom.
Wisdom never views an inherent nature
In any phenomenon;
Meditate on the wisdom that sees the ultimate
Without any conceptual thoughts.
This compulsive existence that arises from conceptual thoughts
Is merely conceptual by nature.
Therefore, abandonment of all these conceptual thoughts without exception,
Is the supreme nirvana.

These words by Atiśa highlight the Madhyamaka view that through meditating on the lack of a self in all phenomena, the wisdom of the ultimate truth, which is free from conceptual thoughts, can be achieved. Another way of seeing this is that the intrinsic existence that we attribute to phenomena is merely conceptualisation. As such, through abandoning all conceptual thoughts, nirvana can be achieved.

64 The importance that these Tibetan kings placed on bringing Atiśa to Tibet is highlighted by a story that Lha bla ma Ye shes ’od gave up his life so that gold collected for his ransom could instead be used to fund Atiśa’s visit. For more details, see Gtsug lag ’phreng ba (1986: 670–76).
65 Ne’u paṇḍita Grags pa smon lam blo gros (1985: 46).
66 A tantric text that Atiśa composed for the Tibetan king is Śrīguhyasamājalokeśvarasādhana-nāma (Tib. Dpal gsang ba ’dus pa ’jig rten dbang phyug gi sgrub pa ’i thabs zhes bya ba), see http://tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=1892#231B (accessed on 07/04/15).
67 While the target audience for this text appears to have been broader, it is likely that the king was a primary recipient of the teachings. Indeed, Atiśa explicitly states in the text that he composed it at the Gu ge king’s request. See Atiśa Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna, Byang chub lam gyi sgron ma, http://tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=3947#241B (accessed on 07/04/15).
5. ’Phags pa’s contribution to the tradition

Likely reflecting his particular situation—as a Buddhist monk who spent most of his life among the Mongol royalty—’Phags pa is one of the foremost among the contributors to this Buddhist tradition of speaking truth to power, both in terms of the volume of his works and the sheer might of the power possessed by those to whom he spoke.69

Much of the large corpus of his collected works consists of discourses delivered to members of the Mongol imperial family including Qubilai. ’Phags pa did not restrict the audience of his works to Qubilai and his immediate family, however, and many of his texts are addressed to the princes and princesses of the other branches of the Chinggisid.

In addition to Advice to the King, other prominent examples of ’Phags pa’s contributions to this genre include: Explanation of the Knowable;70 Letter to Prince Māṅgala;71 Letter to Prince Nomoghan;72 Rays of the Moon: Letter to Prince Temūr Buqa;73 Rosary of Precious Jewels: Letter to Prince Jibig Temūr;74 Advice to Prince Delger Buqa,75 and Advice to Hoqu.76 Consistent with the preceding instances of the tradition, all of these treatises present the Buddhist worldview of the cosmos and sentient beings and contain expositions of the practices and attainments of the Buddhist path, with a focus on the law of karma.77 For example, in Letter to Prince Nomoghan, ’Phags pa writes:

All the grace, glory and wealth you possess,
Are not attained by chance,
Nor have they spontaneously arisen by themselves;
Neither are they caused by the Sky,
Nor by God.

69 Presumably ’Phags pa was informed of the Confucian practice of “remonstrance”—pointing out errant behaviour on the part of emperors, even at the cost of one’s life; however, it is clear that ’Phags pa’s texts follow the Buddhist tradition of advising kings on the path of the Dharma, and there is no evidence that he was influenced by the Confucian practice. For more on the Confucian practice of “remonstrance” see Charles O. Hucker (1959: 182–208).
70 Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968bh: 1–18).
71 Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968o: 191–97).
72 Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968m: 197–200).
73 Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968l: 207).
74 Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968i: 186–191).
75 Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968k: 205–7).
76 Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968bj: 200–5).
77 The law of karma is a common focus of all these texts, and ’Phags pa dedicates the whole of a short composition, Mirror that Vividly Reflects Karma (Las ’bras gsal ba ’i me long, composed in 1258 at the request of prince Jimgim), to the topic. For the full text see Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968be: 185–86).
It is by the force of the virtuous actions
That you have performed in your past lives…  

In these lines, 'Phags pa argues that the prince’s privileges do not arise by chance, without any cause or through the gift of an almighty. Instead he asserts that the prince owes all his privileges to his past positive karma. 'Phags pa rejects any role for a creator God or the Eternal Sky (Tengri) of Mongol shamanism. In so doing, 'Phags pa reframes the source of the Mongols’ power within the Buddhist theory of karma and implicitly rejects any notion of the Chinggisid’s possessing a divine mandate to rule the earth.

Consistent with the preceding instances of the tradition of speaking truth to power, the philosophy of emptiness is another common theme in 'Phags pa’s letters of advice to the Mongol royalty. For example, again in Letter to Prince Nomoghan, 'Phags pa writes:

There are no phenomena that are not dependent on conditioning factors. Because of their dependent nature, things do not exist intrinsically. For that which does not exist intrinsically, What is the difference between arising and ceasing? As such, know that all phenomena are ultimately devoid of conceptual elaborations…

Here, 'Phags pa presents the traditional Madhyamaka exposition of the concept of emptiness. This view argues that all phenomena arise in dependence on conditioning factors; in other words, nothing arises independently on its own. As such, all phenomena are devoid of an intrinsic existence independent of factors external to it. And implicitly, given the absence of intrinsic existence in the first instance, there is no fundamental basis for phenomena to have ever come into being or for them to cease to exist. Therefore, when analysed, all phenomena are devoid of any intrinsic existence, and hence, there is ultimately no basis for any conceptual elaborations such as the designation of an identity for any phenomenon. 'Phags pa’s understanding of the

78 Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968m: 197, folio 2).
79 The source of a prophecy that Chinggis Khan would conquer the world was the Mongolian shaman Teb Tengri, whom Chinggis believed to be the medium through whom the Eternal Sky, the creator of the world, communicated with him. For more, see Paul Ratchnevsky and Thomas Nivison Haining (1991: 96–101). 'Phags pa’s explicit rejection of the Eternal Sky contrasts with the second Karmapa, Karma Pakshi’s interest in what Matthew Kapstein calls “integrating non-Buddhists into the fabric of Buddhist thought”. In Mo gho ding ri’i sgra tshad, Karma Pakshi sought to adopt a Buddhist discourse that defends the concept of the Eternal Sky. For details on this, see Kapstein (2011: 259–315).
80 Bertold Spuler (1972: 26).
81 Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968m: 199, folio 2).
concept of emptiness, as presented in *Advice to the King*, is discussed in detail in chapter three.

**6. Conclusion**

Various leading Buddhist prelates across time sought to present their version of truth to kings and royalty, forming what can be considered collectively as a tradition within Buddhist literature of speaking truth to power. The tradition traces its roots to the Buddha and the *sūtras*, which offer numerous accounts of the Buddha’s interactions with the kings of India. The pattern of Buddhist prelates speaking Buddhist truth to the kings of India continues in the *śāstras*. This tradition was imported into Tibet during the imperial period and continued after the disintegration of the Tibetan Empire. It is a tradition in which ’Phags pa participated. In so doing, he positioned himself as the heir to the Buddha and the leading Buddhist prelates who came after, and indeed, he became one of the tradition’s foremost exemplars.

In all the surviving examples of this tradition, the prelates seek to dislodge their audiences from their prevailing cognitive anchoring through elucidating the Buddhist philosophy of emptiness, which devalues the power and possessions accompanying kingship, and expounding the law of karma, which holds that even kings cannot escape the fate determined by their past actions. The prelates present the powerful with an opportunity of rescue from the karmic consequences of their actions and remind them of the fundamentally unsatisfactory nature of cyclic existence—whose operations they cannot change in spite of their temporal power. To seize this opportunity, however, they were required to submit themselves to the Dharma and become righteous kings—in effect drawing them into a Buddhist universal order wherein the Buddha’s teachings set out the operations of the cosmos and the effects of human actions. The prelates served as spokesmen for this system and also presented themselves as moral examples and as teachers for their royal students with an otherworldly authority to speak truth to power.

Following the precedents and formulas provided by this tradition, relevant texts by ’Phags pa not only seek to attitudinally reorient members of the Chinggisid towards Buddhism but also realign the Mongol khans with the Dharma kings of India and Tibet, shifting their perceptions of their legitimacy for rulership to one based on past virtuous karma and righteous kingship governed by the precepts of Buddhism.

Having presented the broader tradition and having touched on ’Phags pa’s other works of advice in this chapter, the next chapter focuses on *Advice to the King*, presenting a detailed analysis of the contents of the text.
Chapter Three: Parsing the Advice

The powerful in this transient world
Are called “victors over all”.
But this is mere praise made by others.
The status [of Victor] is only apposite to you [the Buddha].

Ācārya Maticitra

1. Introduction

Advice to the King presents a comprehensive guide to Buddhist soteriology, following the traditional structure used in the “Stages of the Path” (Tib. lam rim) class of Tibetan Buddhist texts. Typically, such texts are divided into three main parts: foundation, path and their result. But, as explained in The Outline, ’Phags pa’s text sub-divides the traditional three parts into six: Foundation: (1) the foundation of the path, (2) the preliminaries of the path; Path: (3) the actual path, (4) subsequent acts, (5) sealing the paths; and Result: (6) resultant state of buddhahood. Additionally, Advice to the King includes miscellaneous requests to Qubilai. It urges him to practice the teachings for his own wellbeing and his lineage’s successful continuation; safeguard the welfare of Buddhist monastics; and grant ’Phags pa leave to practice in solitude.

This chapter parses Advice to the King and the wealth of Buddhist teachings it encapsulates, systematically tracing its traditional structure. In so doing, it draws closely on the commentary to Advice to the King, The Ornament, approaching it as an extension of the root text. The Ornament quotes a number of authoritative Buddhist treatises by renowned scholars of ancient India, appealing to tradition to support ’Phags pa’s arguments and to elaborate on his points. This chapter follows the approach in The Ornament, drawing on some of these references to demonstrate their consistency with Advice to the King and how they lend greater authority to ’Phags pa’s text.

2. Ethics – the foundation of the path

Advice to the King presents ethics as the foundation of the Buddhist path. It covers the moral precepts of all the three vehicles of Buddhism, namely the Prātimokṣa, Bodhisattva and Vajrayāna. According to Buddhist practice, each of these three

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precepts involves the taking of corresponding vows. Asserting their importance as the foundation for the generation of all other positive qualities, *Advice to the King* states:

These three vows of the three vehicles
Are the basis upon which your and others’ [virtuous] qualities
Are generated, exist and increase;
Therefore may you stabilise them at the beginning.²

This view is consistent with Nāgārjuna’s *Suhṛllekha*, which states:

Just as the earth is the base of all that is still [and all that] moves,
Know that discipline is the base of all good qualities.³

After having emphasised their importance, ’Phags pa then works through each of these three sets of vows.

### 2.1 Prātimokṣa – taming oneself and others

In discussing ethics as the foundation of all positive qualities, ’Phags pa first presents the code of *Prātimokṣa* or the rules set by the Buddha in the *Vinaya* governing the behaviours of his followers. While the Tibetan tradition regards the *Prātimokṣa* codes as the most basic of the moral codes of the three vehicles of Buddhism, one cannot ascend to higher practices without living these precepts. The *Prātimokṣasūtra* highlights the importance of abiding by these rules in the following verse:

Whomsoever with great conscientiousness
Practises this discipline of the Dharma
They will abandon the cycle of birth
And end suffering.⁴

As elaborated in *The Ornament*, the *Prātimokṣa* precepts are to be received according to one’s ability to observe them. Citing the *Medicine Buddha Sūtra* (Skt. *Bhaiṣajyaguruvaidūryaprabhārāja*), ⁵ *The Ornament* explains that there are five categories of precepts—increasing from the five fundamental precepts of the lay

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² Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968h: 181, folio 2).
⁴ *Bcom ldan ’das ma shes rab kyi phyin pa’i snying po* (Skt. *Bhaiṣajyaguruvaidūryaprabhārāja*), ⁵ The Ornament explains that there are five categories of precepts—increasing from the five fundamental precepts of the lay
practitioner to the hundreds of precepts for fully ordained bhikṣus and bhikṣuṇīs. As a lay practitioner, 'Phags pa would expect Qubilai to heed the first of the five categories, the precepts disciplining the conduct of lay followers. 'Phags pa presents adherence to these precepts as a means for disengaging from afflicting emotions and behaviours through controlling the mind and the sensory doors that are its physical outlets. The Ornament asserts that adhering to moral precepts leads to happiness in this life and forms the basis for achieving buddhahood. It explains that:

This is because a mind that possesses unstained, fundamental precepts is not [plagued by] guilt or regrets. Such a mind at ease generates the profound meditative state of śamatha (mental tranquillity). Consequently, śamatha gives rise to the wisdom of vipaśyanā (insight), and vipaśyanā abandons affictions. By abandoning affictions the suffering of samsara will cease to arise.

This extract highlights how this moral code supports the mental basis for higher cognitive realisations and extinguishment of all suffering. It argues that without the base of ethical conduct the mind is unable to achieve the tranquillity required to concentrate and achieve insight. And without achieving insight, mental affictions cannot be overcome.

2.2 Bodhisattvayāna – king in the service of others
Next, 'Phags pa instructs Qubilai on the practices of bodhicitta. The Ornament of Clear Realisation (Skt. Abhisamayālaṃkāra) defines bodhicitta as “the wish to attain perfect awakening for the benefit of others”. In committing to bodhicitta one is required to take a pledge to work solely for the benefit of others. A form of this pledge is presented in Śāntideva’s (8th century) A Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life (Skt. Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra), which reads:

Just as all the Buddhas of the past
Have brought forth the awakened mind,
And in the precepts of the Bodhisattvas
Step-by-step abode and trained,
Likewise, for the benefit of beings,
I will bring to birth the awakened mind,

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6 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 92–3).
7 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 93, folio 2).
And in those precepts, step-by-step,
I will abide and train myself.10

*Advice to the King* urges Qubilai to steadfastly tread the bodhisattva path, explaining its superiority to other Buddhist paths. 'Phags pa reminds the Mongol Khan that irrespective of where one is born within the cycle of samsara there is no respite from suffering. He explains that one should not even become attached to the state of mere pacification of gross suffering—the state of great bliss attained by the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas. This is because from a Mahāyāna perspective the imprints of afflictions are still existent in these states. Instead 'Phags pa instructs Qubilai to practise the bodhisattva path towards the attainment of perfect buddhahood, presenting it as a state in which one can effortlessly benefit others:

Without suffering, they alleviate all [others’] suffering;
Having attained great happiness, they grant all happiness [to others].11

### 2.3 Vajrayāna – guru as the Buddha

The third set of moral precepts to which 'Phags pa instructs Qubilai to adhere are the Vajrayāna vows (Skt. *samaya*); these are commitments Qubilai would have had to pledge at the time of receiving tantric empowerments. In the process of receiving these empowerments, which was also his entrance into the Vajrayāna, Qubilai would have been instructed to regard his guru as the consolidated embodiment of all the fields of Buddhist refuge and the source of all spiritual accomplishments. Therefore, as 'Phags pa explains in a practice manual for the *Hevajra Tantra*, the principal commitment in Vajrayāna Buddhism is the vow to follow “whatever the lord (guru) commands”.12 In this practice manual, which draws its authority from the larger traditions and practices of the Vajrayāna, 'Phags pa evokes both fear and hope in highlighting the importance of adhering to these vows:

By transgressing [the Vajrayāna vows] you will burn in hell;
By securing them, you will [experience] immediately
The fruit of splendid joy,
So accept *samaya* and secure it as dearly as your life.13

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11 Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968h: 181, folio 2).
12 Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968an: 129, folio 3).
13 Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968h: 181, folio 2).
3. Preliminaries of the path

After presenting ethics as the foundation for Buddhist practices, 'Phags pa advises Qubilai to engage in the preliminary practices of the Buddhist path. These are the cultivation of faith, compassion and aspiration, which 'Phags pa posits as the preconditions for all virtuous actions. Through his description of these preliminary practices, 'Phags pa attempts to instil in Qubilai the importance of these positive emotions, which can be nurtured into the higher qualities of buddhahood.

3.1 Cultivating faith

Among the three preliminary practices, 'Phags pa chooses to first present the cultivation of faith. Before proceeding to other trainings, he explains that it is essential to cultivate faith in the Three Jewels and the guru; however, he argues that faith must be cultivated on the basis of informed knowledge of the qualities of one's object of faith. As such, 'Phags pa explains the qualities of these objects, in effect demonstrating why they are worthy of one’s faith. 'Phags pa first discusses the Dharma, the teachings of the Buddha:

Utterly flawless speech,
Which does not contradict [but rather] entirely conforms with
The two valid cognitions and is virtuous in the beginning, middle and end,
Can be definitively affirmed as the Dharma.16

It is common in Buddhist discourse to align the Three Jewels—the Buddha, Dharma and Samgha—to an enlightened being’s mind, speech and body respectively. This verse follows this approach by presenting the Dharma as “flawless speech”. The Dharma is posited as flawless because it conforms with the two valid cognitions: what is directly and unmistakably perceivable as valid; and what can be established as valid through inference. He goes on to assert that the Dharma is virtuous at every stage of its practice: it is virtuous “in the beginning” because the Dharma causes one to become disenchanted with afflictions when initially heard; it is virtuous in the “middle” because contemplating it supresses afflictions; and it is virtuous in the “end” because cultivating it uproots afflictions altogether.17

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14 Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968h: 181, folio 3).
15 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 95, folio 4).
16 Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968h: 181, folio 2).
17 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 96, folio 1–2).
'Phags pa then shifts from the Dharma to the speaker of that Dharma—the Buddha. 'Phags pa asserts that the Buddha can be regarded as an object of faith because he has unhindered knowledge of the flawless teachings; he is loving towards all beings, teaching everyone without discrimination; has overcome all mental afflictions; and possesses great power—the power to eliminate wrong views:

The speaker [of such a teaching] has unhindered knowledge,
Teaches without closed-fistedness, is loving and—
Has abandoned afflictions counter to [knowledge]—
[The one who] knows the [path] for the attainment of great power is the Buddha.

Following this, 'Phags pa then presents the third of the Three Jewels—the Saṃgha—as an object of faith. Although the term Saṃgha is commonly used to refer to the monastic community, in Mahāyāna Buddhism it more strictly refers to those on the Buddhist path who have at least reached a stage free from the afflictions that bind beings to samsara. 'Phags pa reasons that the Saṃgha is worthy of one’s faith because its members possess qualities that are similar to the Buddha’s, such as the Ten Powers and Four Fearlessnesses. In 'Phags pa’s words:

Because they follow [the Buddha]
[And] their qualities accord with the causes [of the qualities of the Buddha], and because they are [also] congregated,
They are the supreme assembly. [This assembly] shares a common sphere of [Dharma] activity, so
Definitely, they are the supreme field. [They are] the Saṃgha.

Having explained the qualities of the Three Jewels to establish why they are worthy objects of one’s faith, 'Phags pa then explains why the guru is also an object

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18 For an analysis on the conception of power in Buddhism, see Craig J. Reynolds (2005).
19 This line is absent in Advice to the King as presented in Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968h: 181, folio 2). However, it is included in the version of the text presented in The Ornament. See Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 95, folio 4).
20 Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968: 181, folio 2).
21 The Ten Powers (Skt. daśa bala; Tib. stobs bcu) are power over: (1) life; (2) karma; (3) necessities; (4) devotion; (5) aspiration; (6) miraculous abilities; (7) birth; (8) doctrine; (9) mind; and (10) pristine cognition. See Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 98, folio 3).
22 The Four Fearlessnesses (Skt. catvāri vaiśāradyāni; Tib. mi ’jigs pa bzh) are: (1) fearlessness in asserting one’s complete and perfect extinguishment of all negativities for the purpose of oneself; (2) fearlessness in asserting one’s complete and perfect accomplishment of knowledge for the purpose of oneself; (3) fearlessness in revealing the paths of antidotes to afflictions for the purpose of others; and (4) fearlessness in revealing what are the afflictions to be eliminated for the purpose of others. See Tsepak Rzigzin (1997: 204).
23 Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968h: 181, folio 2).
worthy of faith. *The Ornament* explains that the guru possesses the capacity to skilfully introduce the disciple to the Three Jewels and the ability to assist the disciple to embody the qualities of the Three Jewels in themselves. The guru’s qualities are presented as analogous to those of the Three Jewels: their knowledge is like the Buddha’s; their speech is the Dharma; and they are in the physical form of the Saṃgha. In the Vajrayāna tradition, the guru can be viewed as having an even more intimate connection with the disciple in advancing on the Buddhist path than the Buddha. This is because the guru engages directly with the disciple, whereas the Buddha’s engagement is more indirect.\(^{24}\) Sapaṇ encapsulates this view in the following verse from *The Extraordinary Way of Supplicating to the Sublime Guru* (Tib. *Bla ma dam pa la thun mong ma yin pa’i sgo nas gsol ba ’debs pa*):

No matter how hot the sun is
It cannot ignite fire without a magnifying glass;
Likewise, the blessings of the Buddha
Cannot be bestowed without the guru.\(^{25}\)

### 3.2 Cultivating compassion

The cultivation of compassion is considered the most fundamental prerequisite on the Mahāyāna path. Therefore, 'Phags pa advises Qubilai to cultivate compassion as a preliminary requirement that underlies other practices. Emphasising the importance of this practice, *The Ornament* cites the following passage from the *Compendium of Doctrine Sūtra* (Skt. *Dharmasamgītisūtra*):

[Avalokiteśvara said:] Bhagavan, bodhisattvas need not learn too many teachings. Bhagavan, if bodhisattvas hold onto one teaching and realise it, they have all the Bhagavan’s teachings in the palm [of their hand]. What is this teaching? It is great compassion. Bhagavan, great compassion places all the Buddha’s teachings in bodhisattvas’ palms.\(^{26}\)

'Phags pa instructs the Khan to cultivate compassion towards every sentient being. He presents the reasoning that, just as Qubilai himself is constantly tormented by the sufferings of birth, old age, sickness and death and wishes to be free from them, so

\(^{24}\) Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 97, folio 1).


does every other being. As such, sentient beings are worthy objects of compassion, and 'Phags pa advises Qubilai to develop bodhicitta.  

3.3 Cultivating aspiration
Having provided instructions on cultivating faith in the Three Jewels and the guru and cultivating compassion towards fellow sentient beings tormented by constant suffering, 'Phags pa then highlights the importance of aspiration. The approach used to generate the fervent aspiration to motivate the practitioner to exert themselves is reflection on the temporary and ultimate benefits of the practices of cultivating faith and compassion. The temporary benefits include wealth, joy, beautiful physical appearance, and an impressive presence, while the ultimate benefits are the supreme qualities of buddhahood.

4. Meditative practices – the core of the path
'Phags pa presents three meditative practices as his core instructions on traversing the path towards buddhahood. They are designed to follow on from the motivational elements of the text that preceded them and lead Qubilai towards the attainment of the two bodies of buddhahood.

The three practices and their corresponding attainments are:

(1) meditation with an observed object for the attainment of the form body of buddhahood (Tib. gzugs sku; Skt. rūpakāya);

(2) meditation without an observed object for the attainment of the truth body of buddhahood (Tib. chos sku; Skt. dharmaṇkāya); and

(3) meditation on the union of the perceiving awareness and its emptiness and the union of appearances of the perceived objects and their emptiness, also for the attainment of the truth body of buddhahood.

'Phags pa assures Qubilai that if he persistently places his mind in meditative equipoise through these three prescribed practices, he will attain a superior śamatha that cannot be shaken by any conceptions.

27 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 97, folio 2).
28 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 98, folio 1).
29 Śamatha (Tib. zhi gnas) is often translated as calm abiding. It is the Buddhist practice of calming of the mind and its mental formations. This is practised through focusing single-pointedly on a given object. A well-known technique of this practice is single-pointed focus on breathing.
30 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 100, folio 3).
4.1 Meditation with an observed object

Meditation on an observed object involves contemplating the form body of buddhahood and one’s guru and creating merit by making vast offerings to them. ’Phags pa advises that Qubilai should visualise the form body of a buddha as a separate entity, or he could imagine himself as a buddha. This meditative method, which is unique to the two highest classes of Tantra, the yoga tantras and the highest yoga tantras, progressively familiarises the practitioner with the mental and physical attributes of a buddha. As one develops an increasing ability to identify with the meditated buddha, one approximates its awakened attributes, and in so doing one simulates in oneself the qualities that the buddha represents. Along with visualising the form body, ’Phags pa advises Qubilai to visualise the surrounding buddha realm with all the realm’s qualities and its noble inhabitants. This section of Advice to the King reads:

Envision the form body of the Chief Sage
Either in front of you or as your own body.
The place [in which you are sitting] is a buddha realm
And all the beings [in it] are the Victor’s offspring and disciples.
Make offerings to yourself and others. [These offerings should be]
Oceanic, consisting of all the objects the five senses enjoy.

Following these instructions to meditate on the form body of a buddha, ’Phags pa advises Qubilai to meditate on his guru:

Understand that the supreme guru is equal to all the Victors, without exception;
They are equal and non-dual in their aspect, activities and essential natures.
At all times, contemplate [the guru] in front [of you], at [your crown]
Or at the centre of your heart lotus.
Either supplicate [the guru] or meditate on [the guru and the Victor’s] non-duality.

Like the visualisation of oneself as a buddha, meditating on the guru is a practice of Vajrayāna Buddhism that is absent in the sūtra system. In this meditation, ’Phags pa equates himself, as Qubilai’s guru, with all the buddhas in every aspect. His instruction

31 Tantras are divided into four classes: action tantras (Tib. bya rgyud; Skt. kriyā-tantra); performance tantras (Tib. spyod rgyud; Skt. caryā-tantra); yoga tantras (Tib. rnal ’byor rgyud; Skt. yoga-tantra); and highest yoga tantras (Tib. rnal ’byor bla na med kyi rgyud; Skt. anuttara-yoga-tantra). See John Powers and David Templeman (2012: 671–72).
33 Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968h: 181, folio 3).
34 Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968h: 181, folio 3).
to Qubilai to meditate on supplicating the guru or focusing on the inherent unity of the
guru and buddhas at all times is known in the Vajrayāna Buddhist system as guru yoga
(Tib. bla ma'i rnal 'byor). This practice aims to cognitively transform the disciple from
a self-oriented outlook to a world centred on the guru and to gradually approximate the
qualities of the guru’s body, speech and mind, which are perceived as inseparable from
those of the buddhas. But this practice depends on developing a level of respect and
admiration for the guru that transcends all other relationships and personal identities.

4.2 Meditation without an observed object

Following the instructions on the importance of meditation with objects of observation
in the attainment of the form body of buddhahood, 'Phags pa then presents the practice
of meditation without an observed object as the primary cause for the attainment of the
truth body. But before doing so, 'Phags pa highlights the importance of the mind,
presenting the assertion that all phenomena, including even samsara and nirvana, are
nothing but states of mind. Ultimately, according to him, “samsara is conceptualising,
and freedom from conceptualisation is nirvana”.35 In 'Phags pa’s words:

Mind is the root of all phenomena:
Virtue and non-virtue, happiness and suffering,
And samsara and nirvana too.36

After introducing the centrality of the mind, 'Phags pa guides Qubilai through an
examination of the nature of the mind. Because the nature of the mind is fundamentally
beyond conception, this practice requires meditation without a distinct object of
observation:

Examine the mind thoroughly from every aspect:
It has neither colour nor shape,
Nor is it singular or manifold.
It has no essential nature, so it has not arisen,
Neither does it exist, nor cease.
It is devoid of a centre and an edge; therefore
It is free from elaboration, with a space-like nature.37

35 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 99, folio 3).
36 Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968h: 181, folio 3).
37 Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968: 181, folio 3–4).
In explaining this passage, The Ornament cites the following lines from Words that Expound all the Tantras (Skt. Sarvatantranirdeśapada; Tib. Rgyud thams cad bstan pa’i tshig):

The nature of the mind is without root, without existence, without foundation, without character, without shape or colour, beyond sensory faculty. It is not within the experiential domain of any conception.38

4.3 Meditation on union

After implicitly asserting the emptiness of the mind—its lack of inherent existence—in the preceding examination of the nature of the mind, ’Phags pa reconciles this assertion with the everyday experience of the existence of a mind—a cognitive ability that is lucid and aware. Therefore, ’Phags pa defines the nature of the mind as the union of awareness and emptiness:

Nevertheless, awareness does not cease [either], so [Mind’s] nature is a union of awareness and emptiness.39

Elaborating on this explanation, The Ornament paraphrases a passage from the Heart Sūtra (Skt. Prajñāpāramitāhṛdayasūtra):

Consciousness is emptiness;
Emptiness is consciousness;
Consciousness does not differ from emptiness;
Emptiness does not differ from consciousness.40

After presenting the union of awareness and emptiness as the nature of Qubilai’s mind, ’Phags pa reminds the Mongol Khan that all other sentient beings’ minds have an identical nature.41 As such, in terms of the fundamental nature of the mind and its potentiality there is no difference between the Great Khan and the tiniest insect. ’Phags pa then goes on to translate this reasoning to the physical world, telling Qubilai that just as the nature of his mind is a union of awareness and emptiness, all

38 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 100, folio 1).
39 Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968h: 181, folio 4).
40 Bcom ldan’ das ma shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyn pa’i snying po,
http://tibetan.works/etextreader.php?collection=kangyur&index=26 (accessed on 11/06/2015). The actual text in the Heart Sūtra reads: “Form is emptiness, emptiness is from, form does not differ from emptiness, emptiness does not differ from from form”; it then goes on to explain: “In the same way [as form], feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousness are empty”. Therefore, The Ornament draws out the implied extension of this negation to consciousness, another of the five aggregates.
41 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 100, folio 2).
external phenomena are also a union of appearance and emptiness. This is because while they take an appearance with which we can experientially engage, they lack inherent existence. Again, The Ornament cites another passage from the Heart Sūtra:

Form is emptiness;
Emptiness is form;
Form does not differ from emptiness;
Emptiness does not differ from form.

'Phags pa expands on these concepts through the framework of the two truths in the “stamping the seal” section of the text.

5. Subsequent acts
Following these instructions on meditative practices, 'Phags pa guides Qubilai through what he calls “subsequent acts” that complement the primary practices and support speedier progress on the path prescribed by him. These acts are: recollection, dedication and prayers.

5.1 Recollection
'Phags pa advises Qubilai to repeatedly recollect the three sets of instructions given so far: the three precepts of the foundational practices; the three practices of the preliminary stage; and the three meditative practices. He explains that joyfully recollecting such virtuous actions helps to conserve them and further increases their power. Relatedly, recollecting past non-virtuous actions with remorse diminishes their power to deliver unfavourable results. In 'Phags pa’s words:

After completing these [meditations], remember again and again
All of [your and others’] virtuous and non-virtuous actions, with joy [and remorse].
In order to further increase [or diminish] their power,
Remember virtues [and non-virtues]; this increases [and diminishes] them.

'Phags pa then instructs Qubilai to focus on recollecting meditative equipoise in particular. He explains that recollecting the equipoise of meditations on objects such as

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42 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 100, folio 2).
44 Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968h: 181, folio 4).
the form body of a buddha during post-meditative states effectuates the wisdom of *vipaśyanā* or insight into the true nature of reality. This can be done, he explains, through individually examining the observed object—its causes and conditions, and its various aspects; and the observing subject—one’s experience of the object and the causes and conditions due to which the experience arose. As a result, one will develop a detailed understanding of the successive order of the interdependent arising of the observed object and the observing mind. This leads to the development of the insight that ultimately both the observed and the observer are devoid of inherent existence.45

5.2 Dedication

The next method that 'Phags pa prescribes for Qubilai to enhance the power of his virtuous actions is dedication of such actions. He explains the Mahāyāna belief that dedicating one’s virtuous activities for the attainment of ultimate awakening of oneself and all other sentient beings makes the fruits of those actions inexhaustible:

    After performing virtuous actions, use them as tokens
    To compound all virtues into one;
    Dedicate [these virtues] to the attainment of ultimate awakening
    By yourself and all boundless sentient beings.46

*The Ornament* expands on *Advice to the King* and cites the *Aṣayamatinirdeśasūtra* to explain the power of dedication:

    A drop of water poured into the ocean
    Remains as long as the ocean exists.
    Similarly, the virtue that is dedicated to awakening
    Will not be exhausted until awakening is exhausted.47

5.3 Prayers

As the last of the “subsequent acts”, 'Phags pa instructs Qubilai to constantly aspire to perform virtuous actions in the future through prayers. Such aspiration is intended to motivate and set the future course for the practitioner to work to relieve the suffering of oneself and others. According to 'Phags pa, aspiring to perform virtues in the future is effective because it habituates and sets imprints in the mind, and the mind is the principal determiner of action towards virtue. He writes:

45 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 101, folio 1–2).
46 Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968h: 181, folio 4).
47 However, this quote cannot be found in extant versions of the *Aṣayamatinirdeśasūtra*. See: http://tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=kangyur&index=176 (accessed on 15/06/2015).
You may not have performed transformative virtue yet,  
But you can aspire to accomplish this great purpose.  
Prayers said like this will accomplish their aim,  
For the mind itself is the principal.48

The Ornament cites the Heap of Jewels Sūtra (Skt. Ratnakūṭasūtra) in support of this assertion:

Just as every phenomenon is dependent on its supporting conditions,  
So are the achievement of [goals] dependent on their root aspirations.  
Whoever prays for whatever  
Will achieve corresponding results.49

Summarising the benefits of the three “subsequent acts”, The Ornament states:  
“All virtues subsequently ornamented by sublime recollection will increase. All virtues  
subsequently ornamented by sublime dedication will become inexhaustible. And all  
virtues subsequently ornamented by sublime aspiration will become the cause for the  
fulfilment of your own and others’ great goal”.50

The discussion of “subsequent acts” is the last section of Advice to the King that  
provides practical guidance along the path. In the following section on “stamping the  
seal”, ’Phags pa expounds the philosophical framework underlying much of the  
preceding teachings and practices.

6. Stamping the seal

In this section of Advice to the King, ’Phags pa explains to Qubilai how all phenomena  
are to be viewed through two levels of truths: conventional and ultimate. Rather than  
being separate and mutually exclusive, ’Phags pa characterises these truths as a union,  
two sides of the same coin: all outer phenomena are posited as a union of the  
conventional truth of appearance and the ultimate truth of emptiness; and consciousness  
is a union of the conventional truth of awareness and emptiness. The exposition and  
arguments in this section comprise an exploration of one of the primary themes in the  
Buddhist tradition of speaking truth to power: the lack of intrinsic existence of all  
phenomena, including the self.

48 Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968h: 181–2).
49 ’Phags pa ’jam dpal gyi sangs rgyas kyi zhung gi yon tan bkod pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po’i mdo  
50 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 102, folio 1).
6.1 Conventional truth – the dependently originated

'Thags pa argues that all phenomena, including Qubilai himself and his world of power and wealth, lack an identifiable inherent and independent existence because they arise in dependence on a multitude of causes and conditions. Hence, according to 'Thags pa these phenomena are dependently originated and nominally designated on the conventional level. This is a view exclusively asserted by the Madhyamaka School of Buddhism; Āryadeva (3rd century), one of its key proponents, writes in the *Four Hundred Verses* (Skt. *Catuḥśataka*):

That which is dependently originated
Has no independent existence.\(^{51}\)

Likewise, the perception of an individual in the conventional truth as illusory is explained in the following analogy by Dharmakīrti (c. 7th century) in *Commentary on Valid Cognition* (Skt. *Pramāṇavārttikakārikā*; Tib. *Tshad ma rnam 'grel*), which is cited in *The Ornament*:

[This perception is] analogous to an enchanted person
Who looks at a lump of clay,
And despite its lack of form,
Sees it as all sorts of shapes.\(^{52}\)

In *Advice to the King* 'Thags pa compares this illusory appearance to a person who sees a myriad of things in a dream:

Habitual imprints make
The affected mind perceive and experience variety,
But this is not true (epistemically warranted),
Know it as illusion-like, arising from a multitude of conditions;
Like a sleep affected by dreams.\(^{53}\)

So, according to 'Thags pa the myriad of appearances of outer phenomena and inner consciousness all arise due to the habitual imprints that sentient beings have made in their mental continuums since beginningless time. Although such appearances are intrinsically illusory, they still qualify as one of the two truths expounded by the


\(^{53}\) Chos rgyal 'Thags pa (1968h: 182, folio 1).
This is because from Phags pa’s Madhyamaka viewpoint, conventional experiences are a valid reality within the domain of the subjective minds of ordinary beings. Phags pa’s Sa skya position on the conventional truth is explained particularly clearly and succinctly by Rong ston Shes bya kun rig (1367–1449), a Sa skya scholar, who writes, “The conventional truth is truth because it is valid in the perception of ordinary beings.”

Hence, this section of Advice to the King serves as a reminder to Qubilai that while he experiences his power and wealth as reality, they are valid only within the framework of this illusory conventional truth.

Significantly, despite asserting the conventional truth’s lack of an identifiable and independent existence, Phags pa seeks to avoid leading Qubilai to misinterpret this concept as a form of nihilism, which is to say the non-existence of the self and phenomena. Indeed, from a nihilistic perspective, the results of virtuous and non-virtuous acts, happiness and suffering, would not exist, and Qubilai could conclude that there are no consequences to any actions. Instead, Phags pa reasserts the conventional validity of the experiences of beings from their perspective and, consistent with the themes of the Buddhist tradition of speaking truth to power, he emphasises the law of cause and effect in determining the felt experiences of all sentient beings, including Qubilai. In so doing, he cautions the Khan to operate within the confines of this law:

You experience the results of your actions, therefore
The conventional truth of dependently originating cause and effect is indubitable.
Do not disparage the way of cause and effect.

Phags pa then seeks to avoid leading Qubilai to the other extreme of an eternalism that sees phenomena as independent and permanent. He warns Qubilai that the actor bearing the result of one’s actions under the law of cause and effect should not be misinterpreted as a permanent self who is both the actor and bearer of the fruits of those actions. Phags pa refutes the notion of a permanent self as untenable, employing a syllogism. He argues that if the self were permanent then it cannot be affected by


56 Chos rgyal Phags pa (1968h: 182, folio 1).

57 From a Madhyamaka perspective independent and permanent are synonymous because a permanent phenomenon must not be dependent on any other factors. See Jitāri, Sugatamatavibhāṅgabhāṣya (Tib. Bde bar gshegs pa ’i gzhung rnam par ’byed pa ’i bshad pa), http://tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=3900#18A (accessed on 05/01/2016).
external conditions. This claim is premised on the Madhyamaka reasoning that any permanent phenomenon must exist independently; otherwise, if it is dependent on external factors then it will be affected by changes in those factors, meaning that the phenomenon is no longer the same as it was and that its original state was not permanent. Therefore, if the self were permanent, virtuous and non-virtuous actions could not give rise to resultant happiness and sorrow because the self would be unchanging.58

6.2 Ultimate truth – the lack of inherent existence

After proposing a dependently originated self to which we nominally designate an identity, ’Phags pa then embarks on a deconstruction of Qubilai’s perceived notions of himself and the world in which he lives:

No phenomenon lacks place and time;
When dissected by place and time
There is not a single entity anywhere, anytime.
Without a single [entity], from whence do multiple entities arise?
Other than this, there is no existence.
[Any other] existence is mere conceptualisation.59

In this passage, ’Phags pa draws on traditional Madhyamaka arguments against tenet systems that assert true existence of phenomena (dngos por smra ba)60 to deconstruct the preconceived notion of the true existence of Qubilai and his world. Consistent with the broader Madhyamaka literature, ’Phags pa presents the proponents of true existence as generally categorising all phenomena into two classifications: (1) outer objects and; (2) inner consciousness. ’Phags pa argues that outer objects and inner consciousness can be recursively dissected in terms of their space and time dimensions respectively, only within which their existence can be posited, to show that no true existence of an outer object or a consciousness can ever be found.

There is no true existence of objects within space because there is no single truly existing partless particle that cannot in turn be dissected into constituent parts in the

58 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 103, folio 1).
59 Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968h: 182, folio 1).
60 The two schools of thought that assert true existence of phenomena are the Vaibhāṣikas and Sautrāntikas. They generally posit the ultimate existence of a partless particle, the smallest unit of matter. The school of thought that the Madhyamakas accuse of positing a truly existent partless moment of consciousness/mind is the Cittamātra. See: Dngul chu Thogs med bzang po (2007: 110).
different directions. To explain this process, *The Ornament* draws on Vasubandhu’s *Twenty Verses* (Skt. *Viṃśakakārikā*), which states:

If six particles were to attach [to a central partless particle] simultaneously, The partless particle must, therefore, have six [component] parts [in different directions].

Similarly, elaborating on ’Phags pa’s implied argument that there is no truly existent indivisible moment of consciousness, *The Ornament* explains:

If an indivisible moment of consciousness does not consist of arising, existing and ceasing, then it would not be a compounded phenomenon [which is impossible]. Otherwise, every moment has to have these three parts and cannot be a single [indivisible] moment. Consequently, there cannot be multiple moments [of consciousness] because there are no [single moments] that could be joined together.

Therefore, ’Phags pa argues that consciousness (either as a single indivisible moment or as a chain of moments) cannot be found to inherently exist when dissected in relation to its temporal components.

After arguing against the inherent existence of the self and outer phenomena, ’Phags pa also refutes the diametrically opposite view of nihilism:

When existence is intrinsically not established, How can there be natural non-existence? [That would be] like establishing long without short.

Here ’Phags pa reasons that the inherent non-existence of phenomena and the inherent existence of phenomena are mutually relative concepts. Therefore, just as the concept of long cannot be derived without the concept of short, without positing the inherent existence of phenomena the intrinsic non-existence of phenomena cannot be established.

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61 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 103, folio 2–3).
63 According to ’Phags pa, all phenomena including consciousness are compounded phenomena because they arise in dependence on causes and conditions and through designation by the conceptual mind. See Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 102, folio 3–4). Buddhist schools that posit inherent existence of some phenomena accept the existence of the following uncompounded phenomena: space; cessation of karma and afflictions that results from intellectual comprehension; and cessation of karma and afflictions that results from non-intellectual comprehension.
64 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 103, folio 1–2).
65 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 103, folio 3).
Subsequently, 'Phags pa also refutes the two other alternative permutations of the intrinsic-existential status of phenomena: (1) that they simultaneously both inherently exist and do not exist; or (2) that they neither inherently exist nor do not exist. He rules out the first because it is contradicted by the failure to establish the inherent existence of phenomena and the failure to establish the inherent non-existence of phenomena. Following the same line of reasoning used to deduce that the intrinsic non-existence of phenomena cannot be established, 'Phags pa rules out the second alternative because it depends on both concepts of phenomena inherently existing and not existing, relative to which it can be defined. Given the impossibility of establishing either of these, one also cannot establish the conclusion that phenomena neither inherently exist nor do not exist. Taking as a whole, 'Phags pa presents a position that avoids these “four extreme views” according to Madhyamaka philosophy and guides the Khan to a view beyond reification:

- Completely dispel both suppositions [of intrinsic existence and non-existence];
- There is no logical basis or reliability [in either of them].
- There is no phenomenon that is both [existent and non-existent] or neither.
- One with clear intelligence; you must know this.

Following his arguments against the misconceptions of the four extreme views regarding the inherent existential status of outer objects and inner consciousness, 'Phags pa singles out for criticism the view purportedly held by the proponents of the Mind Only school (Skt. Cittamātra) because he sees it as a view that attracted some of Buddhism’s greatest thinkers. 'Phags pa alleges that this view asserts that the present moment of mind ultimately exists. According to him, the proponents of this school posit an ultimately existing mind devoid of form or past and future moments, and therefore free from the previously discussed criticisms based on the spatial and temporal dissection of outer phenomena and consciousness respectively.

'Phags pa challenges this view with the following reasoning:

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66 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 103, folio 4).
67 The attribution of “clear intelligence” to Qubilai in the last line of the verse appears to be an encouragement by 'Phags pa through its implied suggestion that he possesses the ability to comprehend these complex philosophical arguments. This reference to Qubilai is also consistent with a popular appellation for Qubilai—the Wise Khan (Mon. Цэцэн хаан).
68 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 103, folio 4).
69 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 103, folio 4).
If the multitudinous appearances of subjects and objects
Are one, then the mind too will become multiple,
And false.⁷⁰

This reasoning entails that if the variegated experienced appearances of subjects
and objects are the same as the truly existing present indivisible moment of the mind,
then that mind too must be multitudinous because it has the same nature as the
appearances. Otherwise, if the multitudinous appearances of subjects and objects are
independent from the mind then this would entail the impossibility of dualistic
appearances and a number of fundamental Buddhist concepts would become logically
untenable. This is because, as independent and simultaneously existing entities, the
mind and perceived subjects and objects are necessarily unrelated. As such, the mind
would not be able to perceive outer phenomena and experience samsara or develop
insight into their ultimate reality by traversing the Buddhist path. Likewise, it would be
impossible for the mind to affect change in one’s experiences, meaning the exhaustion
of delusions that leads to nirvana is also impossible.⁷¹

Continuing his refutation of the Mind Only view, 'Phags pa explains that
because objects of perception lack inherent existence the perceiving subject
(consciousness) cannot be posited as inherently existing either. This is because the
subject exists only in dependence on the object it perceives, and it can have no inherent
existence when the object lacks inherent existence. 'Phags pa also explains that
proposing the true existence of a mind that is neither an inherently existing subject nor
an object cannot logically be established and is challenged by the earlier analysis that
involved examining whether the mind and its subject-object interactions exist as one
entity or many. He disparages the Mind Only view by comparing it to the ancient Indian
non-Buddhist Sāṃkhya school of philosophy, which proponents of the Middle Way
school present as asserting a distinct self that was separate from its manifestations.⁷²
In 'Phags pa’s words:

Since the object cannot be established inherently,
There is no inherent existence of the subject either.
Therefore, the proposition that lucidity and awareness are truly existent

⁷⁰ Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968h: 182, folio 2).
⁷¹ Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968h: 182, folio 2).
⁷² For more details on the philosophical positions of the Mind Only and the Sāṃkhya schools and
 'Phags pa’s arguments against these positions, see Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 104, folio 2–3).
Is as utterly false as [the Sāṃkhya’s view of] a distinct “self” other than manifestations.73

After refuting the alternative views on the existential status of external phenomena and consciousness, 'Phags pa elaborates on his view of the ultimate truth to the Khan. He reasons that since all phenomena—compounded or uncompounded—are not primordially arisen, they have been produced in dependence upon causes and conditions and, therefore, lack inherent existence. Hence, he asserts that ultimately phenomena including the self are devoid of elaborations and designations such as being existent or non-existent. 'Phags pa advises Qubilai to apply this broad view to his outlook on all phenomena, including himself and his world:

Understand thoroughly that all phenomena have not Arisen primordially; they have no inherent existence, are Utterly free from elaborations by nature, [and are as] Non-referential as space.74

Consistent with instructions earlier in the text, while 'Phags pa asserts that ultimately the self and phenomena lack inherent existence, he urges Qubilai to see the two truths as a union. This is because in his view the lack of inherent existence of all phenomena explains the emptiness of these phenomena, yet at the same time, despite their lack of inherent existence there is an uninterrupted continuity of dependent arising—karma and causes giving rise to their associated results.75 To support 'Phags pa’s assertion, The Ornament draws on Nāgārjuna’s The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way (Skt. Mūlamadhyamakakārikā) in which is written:

Dependent arising itself Is taught as the teaching of emptiness.76

'Phags pa urges Qubilai to see the manifestations of the union of the two truths in every stage of the path to buddhahood. Elaborating on this theme, he reveals the pervasiveness of this union: all external phenomena are a union of appearance and

73 Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968h: 182, folio 2).
74 Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968h: 182, folio 2).
75 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 104, folio 4).
emptiness; the internal mind is a unity of awareness and emptiness; and the path to buddhahood is a unity of method (virtuous actions) and wisdom (emptiness).  

Finally, 'Phags pa concludes the “stamping the seal” section by instructing the Khan to view all phenomena within samsara and nirvana through the prism of this union:

Know that the causation, path and resultant stages of all phenomena 
Are conventional, illusory, interdependently originated and 
Ultimately, naturally emptiness. 
And this is the inseparable union of the two [truths].

Here 'Phags pa explains that while all phenomena are interdependently arising illusions that form the sphere of conventional truth, they are ultimately devoid of true existence. These two aspects of phenomena are not separate: “appearance is devoid of true existence, yet emptiness itself is not total annihilation”.  

'Phags pa’s Sa skya tradition employs the terminology of “the indivisibility of samsara and nirvana” (’khor 'das dbyer med) for this union of the two truths in their Path Including Its Result (Tib. Lam 'bras) exposition, which is a core teaching of this order. It is a terminology with which Qubilai would likely have been familiar given his receipt of the Hevajra empowerment, which culminates in the introduction of this view. This quintessential Sa skya doctrine offers a unique approach on the path towards the Buddhist soteriological goal. It asserts the resultant view—the non-duality of samsara and nirvana—itself as the path. As such, this approach directly challenges the instinctual human proclivity that Qubilai would have shared towards the subjective dualistic construct of viewing things in polarity: self and no-self, virtue and non-virtue, conventional phenomena and emptiness, samsara and nirvana. With this 'Phags pa ends his instructions to Qubilai on the practices of the path to buddhahood, which he asserts “constitute the virtuous path in its entirety”.

7. The benefits
In this section, 'Phags pa seeks to motivate Qubilai to practice his teachings by presenting the resultant temporary and ultimate benefits—rewards that cannot be matched even by the power and riches of the great Mongol Khan. The temporary benefits comprise all the positive results that a practitioner is expected to enjoy along
the path to the attainment of buddhahood. The ultimate benefits are the qualities and attainments of the resultant state of becoming a buddha.

7.1 Temporary benefits

'Phags pa promises a range of increasingly gratifying benefits from following his instructions and putting them into practice. By means of merely practising pure moral ethics, higher rebirths in the realms of gods and humans are achievable. Supernatural powers that enable one to manifest in different forms and exercise control over one’s mind can be attained once Qubilai reaches the Path of Accumulation (tshogs lam). Further on, once he reaches the Path of Connection (shyor lam), Qubilai is promised the vivid experience of meditative tranquillity that abandons conceptual thoughts and “control over faith, effort, memory, meditative tranquillity and wisdom”. 80 Further again, by reaching the Path of Seeing (mthong lam) Qubilai will gain direct insight into the nature of reality; and, as a result, all imputational afflictions (nyon mong s pa kun brtags) and their imprints that entangle him in the cycle of unsatisfactory mundane life will be dispelled and qualities such as the seven auxiliaries of awakening 81 will arise. Then finally, on the Path of Meditation (bsgom lam), ‘Phags pa promises Qubilai qualities such as the Eightfold Noble Path 82 that are obtained after dispelling the nine greatest of the great innate afflictive and objective obscurations. These progressive qualities along the stages of the path are summarised in the following verse in Advice to the King:

Having accumulated the two oceans of merit,
Conjoined them with the noble path through lucid meditative tranquillity,
And augmented them with the wisdom of meditation and practice,
You will reach the furthest end of the path.83

80 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 105, folio 4).
81 The seven auxiliaries of awakening are: (1) perfect mindfulness (d ran pa yang dag byang chub kyi yan lag); (2) perfect discriminating wisdom (chos rab du rnam par ’byed pa yang dag byang chub kyi yan lag); (3) perfect effort (brtson ’grus yang dag byang chub kyi yan lag); (4) perfect joy (dga’ ba yang dag byang chub kyi yan lag); (5) perfect pliancy (shin tu shyangs pa yang dag byang chub kyi yan lag); (6) perfect concentration (ting nge ’dzin yan dag byang chub kyi yan lag); and (7) perfect equanimity (btang snyoms yang dag byang chub kyi yan lag).
82 The Eightfold Noble Path consists of: (1) right view (yang dag pa’i lta ba); (2) right thought (yang dag pa’i rtog pa); (3) right speech (yang dag pa’i ngag); (4) right actions (yang dag pa’i las kyi mtha’); (5) right livelihood (yang dag pa’i ’tsho ba); (6) right effort (yang dag pa’i rtshol ba); (7) right mindfulness (yang dag pa’i dran pa); and (8) right concentration (yang dag pa’i ting nge ’dzin).
83 Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968h: 182, folio 3).
7.2 Ultimate benefits

According to 'Phags pa, beyond all these stages on the path is the attainment of perfect buddhahood: the state of the Victor whose qualities of ultimate goodness are unsurpassable. It is the summit of the hierarchical order of Buddhist cosmology where the forces of karma and ignorance are completely exhausted and one is liberated from their shackles. In explaining the qualities of perfect buddhahood, 'Phags pa first presents the nature body or the truth body from among the three bodies of buddhahood (Tib. *sku gsum*; Skt. *trikāya*) according to Mahāyāna soteriology:

The nature of the mind is primordially pristine;
It has the one taste of the *[dharma]dhātu,* because in it conceptions are pacified.
It is the nature body, the *dharmadhātu* wisdom;
It is excellent abandonment and the knowledge of each [phenomenon] as it is.

This body of a buddha is called the nature body because it is the primordial purity of the mind manifested in its natural mode with all the stains of adventitious conceptions pacified. Describing the nature of this body, *The Ornament* explains: “The mind realising its own nature is like water pouring into water and butter mixing with butter”. It is a state in which one sees one’s own wisdom perfectly; perfectly abandons ignorance and its affiliates; and perfectly knows all phenomena as they are.

Following this, 'Phags pa presents to Qubilai the second body of a buddha—the complete enjoyment body (Tib. *longs spyod rdzogs pa’i sku*; Skt. *sambhogakāya*):

The [ordinary] body becomes the [awakened] body, adorned with marks and signs;
The [ordinary] voice becomes the [awakened] voice, [possessing] sixty characteristics; and
The [ordinary] mind becomes one that knows all of existence’s varieties.
These are the three wisdoms, the transformations of faults;

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84 The three bodies of buddhahood are: the truth body (Tib. *chos sku*; Skt. *dharmakāya*); complete enjoyment body (Tib. *longs spyod rdzogs pa’i sku*; Skt. *sambhogakāya*); and emanation body (Tib. *sprul sku*; Skt. *nirmāṇakāya*). The last two are often presented as sub-aspects of the form body of buddhahood (Tib. *gzugs sku*; Skt. *rūpakāya*) which is why this chapter has also referred to the “two bodies” of buddhahood.

85 *Dharmadhātu* refers to the ultimate reality of all phenomena.

86 Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968h: 182, folio 3).

87 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 106, folio 2).
The limitless qualities of the Victor; [and]
This is the complete enjoyment body itself.88

Despite Qubilai’s life of luxury and affluence, it does not compare with the qualities that ’Phags pa attributes to the complete enjoyment body of a buddha. And in contrast to the transient nature of Qubilai’s position and affluence, ’Phags pa maintains that the extraordinary characteristics of body, speech and mind of the complete enjoyment body are enduring and complete. These characteristics are detailed in The Ornament:

The transformation of the [ordinary] body gives rise to a kāya that is adorned with the thirty-two major marks and eighty minor signs [of a buddha]. [Ordinary] speech is transformed into speech that possesses the sixty melodious characteristics. And the [ordinary] mind comes to possess the three wisdoms: (1) the mirror-like wisdom, in which all uncontaminated phenomena appear as a reflection in a mirror; (2) the wisdom of equality, through which samsara and nirvana are perceived as equal; and (3) discriminating wisdom, which knows all phenomena thoroughly without confusing any of them.89

Lastly, ’Phags pa presents the third body of a buddha—the emanation body (Tib. sprul sku; Skt. nirmāṇakāya):

[Ordinary] actions are transformed into all-accomplishing wisdom, Infinite activities are themselves the emanation bodies; These are the completion of realisations.90

According to the Mahāyāna tradition, ordinary actions are transformed into all-accomplishing wisdom in the state of buddhahood. This wisdom that effortlessly accomplishes the wishes of sentient beings through emanations is known as the emanation body of a buddha. These emanations can take any form from animate manifestations like the historical Śākyamuni Buddha to inanimate objects like bridges that can help beings. Therefore Maitreya’s (270–350 CE) Adornment of Mahāyāna Sūtras (Skt. Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra) explains:

Through its constant manifestations of art, Incarnations, perfect awakening and nirvana,
The emanation bodies of a buddha
Are the great method to liberate [beings].\(^{91}\)

Following this presentation of the three bodies of a buddha, 'Phags pa culminates his presentation of buddha qualities by declaring to Qubilai that buddhas are permanent because they have command over the ten qualities that include life and karma, the principal factors that sustain life. This emphasis on the quality of immortality appears fitting given the obsession for longevity and immortality widely attributed to the Mongol khans.\(^{92}\) This is expressed with the following lines in *Advice to the King*:

Because [buddhas] have command over the [ten qualities],
They are permanent; there is no break in their continuity.\(^{93}\)

Essentially repeating one of his opening verses where he stressed that the sole purpose of all the teachings of the Buddha is for them to be practiced,\(^{94}\) 'Phags pa concludes his advice to Qubilai with a single line that urges him to put the instructions given to him into practice:

O lord of humans! May your deeds also be like this.\(^{95}\)

An implicit message to Qubilai contained in this single line is that he will have to do the hard work and implement these practices if he is to achieve the temporary and ultimate benefits of the path. This important message accords with a well-known proclamation by the Buddha:

Self is the lord of self;
What other lord could there be?
He who has become master of himself
Will find no pain in the midst of sorrow.\(^{96}\)

Following the conclusion of his instructions to Qubilai, 'Phags pa dedicates the virtue of writing the epistle:

\(^{91}\) Byams pa mgon po (n.d.), *Theg pa chen po'i mdo sde'i rgyan*,
\(^{93}\) Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968h: 182, folio 3).
\(^{94}\) Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968h: 181, folio 1).
\(^{95}\) Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968h: 182, folio 3).
\(^{96}\) *Udānavarga*, Chap. 23, verse 22.
By the virtue of offering this gift of Dharma,
This condensed meaning of the profound supreme vehicle,
May all beings, and you in particular, O King,
Attain the highest state of buddhahood.\textsuperscript{97}

This verse of dedication follows the traditional Mahāyāna custom in which the virtue from composing such texts is dedicated to the attainment by all beings of the highest state of buddhahood. However, as the primary audience for this text, 'Phags pa makes a special mention of Qubilai in his dedication. In this verse, with such phrases as “condensed meaning of the profound supreme vehicle” and “attain the highest state of buddhahood”, 'Phags pa reiterates that there is no other vehicle superior to the one he has presented for the journey out of the cycle of suffering to the highest state of buddhahood. Additionally, as pointed out in \textit{The Ornament}, the implicit suggestion that Qubilai has the ability to comprehend the teachings of the “profound supreme vehicle” can be interpreted as another acknowledgement of the Khan’s intelligence. This is in contrast to ordinary beings, śrāvakas and \textit{pratyekabuddhas} who are all said to be incapable of comprehending such teachings.\textsuperscript{98}

\textbf{8. Appended appeals}

After presenting his “gift of Dharma”, 'Phags pa takes the opportunity to append a postscript to the text that includes some short appeals to Qubilai. These consist of counsels for Qubilai’s own and his lineage’s wellbeing, a request for the welfare of Buddhist monastics, and a request for leave for 'Phags pa from Qubilai’s court.

\textbf{8.1 For the wellbeing of the Khan and his lineage}

As the first appeal, 'Phags pa reiterates the need for Qubilai to “work unreservedly” in order to achieve three objectives that the Khan would have desired:

\begin{quote}
Now is the time for you to make an effort:
to lengthen your own life personally;
To secure the glory of your lineage; and
To seek the means to attain liberation.
Work unreservedly.\textsuperscript{99}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{97} Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968h: 182, folio 3).
\textsuperscript{98} Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 107, folio 2–3).
\textsuperscript{99} Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968h: 182, folio 4).
It appears likely that 'Phags pa’s specific mention of these counsels reflects an inside knowledge of the Khan’s primary concerns based on his strong personal-religious bond with Qubilai nurtured over almost two decades. The first among these goals is lengthening Qubilai’s life. As was the case with successive Mongol khans who employed religious people to pray for them, in return exempting them from taxes and corvée, longevity was likely an important concern for Qubilai. Indeed, praying for the long life of the Khan was one of the most important tasks assigned to the monastics of Tibet in 'Phags pa’s official letters and imperial edicts (Tib. ‘ja sa). Apparently aware of the Khan’s desire, 'Phags pa links achievement of a long life with exertion in practicing the teachings he has espoused in Advice to the King and more broadly through the course of their relationship. As discussed in The Ornament, 'Phags pa’s linking of longevity and the practice of teachings in this text is not novel; 'Phags pa’s Letter to Prince Nomugen details the three actions that cause a depleted lifespan and advises him to forsake them. The actions that impede longevity are listed as: killing innocent beings, harming non-human spirits and abandoning periodic rites. Conversely, the actions that increase one’s lifespan are: saving lives, assisting non-human spirits and performing periodic rites.

The second objective that 'Phags pa raises concerns securing the glory of Qubilai’s lineage. As with most rulers of dynasties, the ability of his descendants to maintain the empire and successfully succeed him would likely have been a priority for Qubilai. This would have become an increasingly important concern as Qubilai’s age advanced—he was fifty-six years old when Advice to the King was completed.

100 Mongol khans issued edicts in many different languages containing directives for religious people to pray for their longevity. See Nikolaj Poppe and John Krueger (1957: 65). Chinggis Khan is said to have even summoned a Daoist scholar named Chang Chun in a search for an elixir of immortality. See Leo de Hartog (2004: 124).

Sechin Jagchid asserts that “from the Mongolian point of view these alien religions were only branches of the Mongolian pantheistic teachings, their deities additional to the native gods. If foreign priests, monks or khojas communicated with Heaven and prayed for the Khan, they also would be honoured as bôes, for the more prayers for the life of the Khan and the tranquillity of the people the better”. See Sechin Jagchid (1979: 7–28). However, as noted in chapter one and further discussed in chapter four, such an interpretation of Mongol views of Buddhism does not align with the contents of 'Phags pa’s writings for Qubilai and the members of the imperial family. These texts reveal that 'Phags pa explicitly refuted the existence of an Everlasting Heaven or the Eternal Sky.

101 For an example of an official letter in which 'Phags pa requests the monastics of Central Tibet to pray for Qubilai’s long life, see Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968av: 236, folio 1). Additionally, there are many instances where 'Phags pa dedicates various compositions for the longevity of the Khan and his family.

102 According to Kapstein, the histories of the Rnying ma pa order of Tibetan Buddhism depict Qubilai as being fascinated by “arcane rites of longevity”. See Kapstein (2009: pp. 113–14).

103 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 107, folio 3–4).

104 According to Buddhist beliefs, non-human spirits can harm humans if they are displeased. For example, Tibetan and Mongolian sources attribute Köden Khan’s chronic illness to non-human spirits, and Sa paṇ is thought to have successfully cured the condition by performing rites that pleased them. For details see A myes zhabs (2012a: 96–98).

105 As discussed in chapter one, 'Phags pa introduced some Buddhist periodic rites to Qubilai’s court.
According to *The Ornament*, humane treatment of subjects is the primary means of securing the longevity and success of Qubilai’s lineage. It explains that just as Qubilai wishes to alleviate his own suffering and desires happiness for himself, so do his subjects. On the basis of this equality of desire to be happy, Qubilai should look after his subjects. This view is consistent with 'Phags pa’s advice in *Rosary of Precious Jewels: Letter to Prince Jibig Temüür*, where he presents focusing on the wellbeing of others as the way to gain their love, respect and praise:

Work for others if you want to be loved;
Care for others if you want to be revered;
Commend others if you want to be praised;
This is how things work.\(^\text{108}\)

The third objective that 'Phags pa urges Qubilai to work towards is the attainment of liberation. *The Ornament* highlights the urgency of this appeal by explaining:

You have attained a precious human birth with favourable conditions. You have encountered the Buddha’s teachings and are compassionately cared for by a genuine spiritual teacher. The time to make an effort, to find out how to attain liberation, is now.\(^\text{109}\)

Having presented Qubilai with a complete guide to the attainment of Buddhist liberation, this appeal is essentially a final exhortation to practice these instructions and work conscientiously for his own liberation from the cycle of suffering while he still possesses all the requisites to do so.

### 8.2 For the welfare of Buddhist monastics

In the following verse 'Phags pa appeals to Qubilai to continue his patronage of Buddhism\(^\text{110}\) and to contribute to the welfare of Buddhist monastics:

While the glory of the [sun of] Dharma teachings has not [yet] set, [And] a Dharma king, like you, Lord of Humans, [still] exists;

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\(^{106}\) Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 107, folio 4).
\(^{107}\) Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 97, folio 1–2).
\(^{108}\) Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968i: 187, folio 1).
\(^{109}\) Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 107, folio 4).
How could your heart not ponder
The plight of saffron-robed [Saṃgha]?\textsuperscript{111}

The fervent appeal for the “plight of saffron-robed” appears almost anachronous given that \textit{Advice to the King} was completed at a time when Buddhism and the power and standing of Buddhist monastics were on the ascendency within Qubilai’s empire. As evidenced by Qubilai’s edicts such as \textit{The Tibetan Script Edict} \textsuperscript{112} and \textit{The Pearl Edict},\textsuperscript{113} by that time the Khan had long been a patron of the Dharma and the Saṃgha. Indeed, the Khan’s patronisation of Buddhist monastics was such that Chinese\textsuperscript{114} and Muslim\textsuperscript{115} sources decried their privileged status. Moreover, the promotion of the interests of Buddhist monastics was already institutionalised within the administrative architecture of Qubilai’s empire in the form of the powerful Bureau of Tibetan and Buddhist Affairs, which existed to support the welfare of the clergy, allowing them to handle their own affairs and communicate directly with the emperor under ’Phags pa’s directorship. It was one of the highest-ranking and most important departments in the imperial government.\textsuperscript{116} Nevertheless, with ’Phags pa absent from Qubilai’s court, this appeal appears to be designed to serve as a textual substitute for ’Phags pa’s physical presence and influence over Qubilai’s policies affecting Buddhist monastics. Further, despite their favoured status with the Khan, it appears that there were others in the empire who maligned and harmed Buddhist monastics; \textit{The Ornament} comments: “…lay people still harm those who follow the Teacher (the Buddha), the holders of the saffron banner. How could your heart be unaffected at such times of affliction?”\textsuperscript{117}

’Phags pa complements this appeal with a reference to Qubilai as a \textit{dharmarāja}—a title that carries expectations from the Buddhist community of the Khan to advance the position of the Buddhist faith and the Buddhist monastics within society.

8.3 For ’Phags pa

When ’Phags pa composed \textit{Advice to the King} he was only thirty-six years old. However, as if he could foresee that he would not live long, ’Phags pa asks the Khan for permanent leave from the imperial court in the final verse of the text. He cites a weak

\textsuperscript{111} Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968h: 182, folio 4).
\textsuperscript{112} The edict is also known as \textit{Bande shed bskyed (Edict Empowering Monks)}; see A myes zhabs (2012a: 126–31).
\textsuperscript{113} A myes zhabs (2012a: 125–6).
\textsuperscript{114} Franke (1981: 317).
\textsuperscript{116} Farquhar (1990: 153); Cleaves (1949: 57).
\textsuperscript{117} Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 108, folio 1).
body and a despondent and discouraged heart as his reasons and states that he wishes to focus on his religious practices:

> Although I am not old in years,  
> My body is weak, I am despondent, and my heart is discouraged.  
> I would like to rely upon solitude and search for the Dharma’s meaning.  
> Please kindly allow me to do this.  

**The Ornament** attributes 'Phags pa’s “despondence” and “discouragement” to the plight of Buddhist monastics at the time:

'[Phags pa] is despondent that the plight of the saffron-robed [Samgha] has become such even while the glory of the [sun of] Dharma teachings has not [yet] set and a dharma king like you still lives. The Samgha, the holders of the Buddha’s doctrine, are the root of the Dharma. And if the great king, who holds the Buddha’s doctrine dear and has inconceivable power and strength, does not consider their [plight], how would a lesser powered monk like me aid [the Samgha]; thinking [this, 'Phags pa’s] heart is discouraged and [he] would like to go and live in solitude.'

Despite 'Phags pa’s show of courtesy in requesting leave from Qubilai, it is evident that 'Phags pa had already made up his mind. The Yuan Shi records how “despite the Khan’s requests to stay, 'Phags pa did not listen”.

When 'Phags pa completed *Advice to the King* in 1271, he was already in Shing kun, having left Qubilai’s court in Dadu earlier that year. He remained at Shing kun until 24th April, 1274, when he left for Tibet with crown prince Jingim’s escort.

### 9. Conclusion

This chapter has parsed the contents of *Advice to the King*, tracing the six sub-parts into which the traditional three-part structure used in the Stages of the Path class of Tibetan Buddhist texts has been divided. According to this teaching tradition, adherence to the moral precepts of all the three vehicles of Buddhism is presented as the foundation of the Buddhist path. ’Phags pa also provides instructions on preliminary practices to help

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118 Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968h: 182, folio 4).
122 Song Lian (1976: Ch. 8, 154).
123 For a detailed analysis asserting that Jingim escorted 'Phags pa to Tibet, see Khrin chin dbyin (2006: 319–29). Petech, however, contends that it was prince Auruqchi who accompanied 'Phags pa to his homeland in 1276 (1983: 187–8).
cultivate faith, compassion and aspiration, which are positive emotions that can be nurtured into the higher qualities of buddhahood. As its core instructions *Advice to the King* presents three meditative practices designed to lead Qubilai towards attainment of the two bodies of buddhahood. Then 'Phags pa explains the “subsequent acts” of recollection, dedication, and prayers. These acts increase the power of past virtuous actions, multiply their merits and habituate the mind towards future virtuous actions, leading to speedier progress on the Buddhist path.

'Phags pa then presents a discussion of the two levels of truth perceivable in all phenomena: all outer phenomena as a union of the conventional truth of appearance and the ultimate truth of emptiness; and consciousness as a union of the conventional truth of awareness and emptiness. He urges Qubilai to see the manifestations of the union of the two truths on every stage of the path to buddhahood. 'Phags pa then seeks to motivate Qubilai to practice his teachings by presenting the resultant temporary benefits while progressing along the path to buddhahood and the ultimate benefits of the qualities and attainments achieved once buddhahood is reached. These are rewards that cannot be matched even by the power and riches of the great Mongol Khan.

As discussed in the next chapter, taken together, the complete package of instructions presented in *Advice to the King* seeks to re-conceptualise and reprogram the Khan’s worldview through a process of training and habituation. It represents an alternative discourse that traces its roots in the Buddhist tradition of speaking truth to power and challenges Qubilai’s notions of himself and his world.
Chapter Four:
The Power of ’Phags pa’s Discourse

*If you wish to subdue people before or after me,*

*Having seized the body,*

*Hold the soul,*

*If you hold the soul where could the body go?*

Qubilai Khan

1. Introduction

*Advice to the King* was ’Phags pa’s final extensive composition for Qubilai before he left the Khan’s service. It also encapsulates the core teachings of all the other texts composed for Qubilai by ’Phags pa. As such, it represents the culmination of the religious discourses between the two and offers the most conclusive view into the potential power that arises from ’Phags pa’s discourses and the nature of the relationship that they sought to instil and reinforce, and simultaneously reflect.

The conceptions of power and power relationships by French postmodernist Michel Foucault—power that is diffused and discursive rather than concentrated and exclusively coercive—provide a helpful approach to distilling and comprehending some of the forms of power created and exercised through the discourse embodied in *Advice to the King*. Foucault refers to discourses as “systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of actions, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the words of which they speak”.

Through this process of construction, discourses shape “the constitution of current truths, how they are maintained and what power relations they carry with them”. In so doing, they influence the wider social processes of legitimation and power. Therefore, according to Foucault, discourse can undermine existing power structures, rendering them fragile and possible to thwart, and also transmit and produce new power.

This chapter draws on the main themes and concepts contained in *Advice to the King* as presented in the previous chapter to examine the potential power that is embodied in and arises from the discourse once it is placed in the cultural context in which the treatise was delivered. The discourse embodied in *Advice to the King* creates

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1 Louis Ligeti (1972: 123).
new regimes of truth that present an alternate worldview and sources of power; in
effect, it seeks to reconstruct Qubilai’s being and his world. This discourse is, however,
not only an instrument of power; it also represents the effect of existing power.⁵ Indeed,
without a degree of requisite power in his relationship with Qubilai, ’Phags pa would
not be in a position to provide “advice” to the Great Khan and, moreover, publicise this
advice as he did in the form of the public teachings he subsequently gave on this
composition. This chapter also assesses how the discourse might be expected to
influence Qubilai’s behaviour and practices and whether historical accounts suggest
Qubilai sought to live up to the ideals espoused in ’Phags pa’s instructions.

Before delving into the rest of this chapter, however, it should be made clear at
the outset that a focus on the presence of power associated with his discourse is not
meant to suggest that achieving power per se was ’Phags pa’s intention. Rather, given
that parties to a discourse are necessarily subject to it and discourse is always implicated
in power,⁶ it is the discourse contained in Advice to the King itself that reflects and
creates power. As far as ’Phags pa’s intentions are concerned, it is not possible to
definitively know what they were. Nothing about Advice to the King and the Buddhist
teachings it encapsulates, however, is inconsistent with ’Phags pa’s central motivation
being a desire to fulfil his responsibility as a Buddhist monk to preach his faith and
provide religious guidance to his disciple, the Khan—a process that necessarily involves
seeking to inspire change in Qubilai. Indeed, a personal quest for power would have
contradicted the ethical framework to which he performatively subjected himself and
his vows as a Buddhist monk.⁷

2. A new regime of truth
In his Letter to the Ecclesiastical Community in Central Tibet (Dbus gtsang gi dge ba’i
gshes gnyen rnams la spring ba), composed at Qubilai’s palace at Kaiping on the eighth

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⁵ Foucault (1990: 101).
⁶ Stuart Hall (1996: 204). Foucault offers two meanings of the word subject: “subject to someone else by
control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge”. He explains that
“Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to”. See Foucault (1983:
212). Both meanings are relevant to the subjectification reflected in the discourse contained in Advice to
the King.
⁷ ’Phags pa’s writings make it abundantly clear that he took much pride in his monkhood, frequently
referring to himself as “Buddhist monk ’Phags pa”. For examples, see Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968bh: 18,
folio 1) and (1968o: 197, folio 1). There are, of course, numerous examples of Buddhist monks who
aggressively sought power in spite of their vows, but accounts of ’Phags pa’s life and his writings suggest
that he viewed himself as a religious counsellor to Qubilai and that he worked to improve the situation of
Tibet in the Mongol Empire, but he does not appear to have specifically sought power for himself, nor did
he use his position to enrich himself or acquire the accoutrements of power.
day of the second month of the Water Dog year (1262, a year after his appointment to the influential position of State Preceptor), 'Phags pa wrote:

I have worked to instil an understanding of the workings of the Buddha’s teaching in the Great King, to open his vision so that he may see what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded; that he may see how to become adept in discriminating [true] Dharma from fabrications. [In so doing,] I have caused him to become the patron of the Buddha’s teachings, like the dharmarājas of the past.8

This excerpt provides evidence that 'Phags pa actively deployed Buddhist discourses, seeking to construct and open the Khan’s eyes to a new regime of truth “so that he may see what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded”. Exposing Qubilai to this Buddhist “knowledge” constitutes a kind of power over Qubilai exercised by 'Phags pa’s discourse. Through this knowledge, Qubilai’s self and world become “known” to him in a particular way, and he becomes subject to the altered identity that results from this new knowledge.9 This production of a new reality is another form of power.10 The excerpt also suggests that the Khan was not only exposed to these discourses, he was apparently influenced by them, and 'Phags pa claims that as a result of this Qubilai had become a patron of Buddhism, emulating the dharmarājas of the past. The Pearl Edict, at least in part, corroborates this claim, for in it the Mongol Khan declared:11

For fulfilling the purposes of this life, implementing the systems of Chinggis Khan would have been adequate, but for the next life and thereafter it appears that one must rely on a religious system. Having examined this carefully, I have realised that the path of Buddha Śākyamuni is the correct one. I have found that master 'Phags pa is the one who has realised the path himself and can guide others unerringly on it, and so I have received empowerments from him and appointed him State Preceptor and the head of all monastics.12

8 Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968av: 236, folio 1).
9 This interpretation draws on Foucault (1983: 208–26) and Hall (1996: 205).
11 Bestowing the Pearl Edict later became an important ritual in the enthronement of new emperors. The Yuan Shi states: “…every time a new emperor ascended the throne, he would bestow [on the imperial preceptor] an imperial edict that is stamped with the emperor’s seal and decorated with the pearled net to praise and protect him” (Shen, 2004: 193). For the original Chinese version see Song Lian (1976: Ch. 202, 4520).
Advice to the King stands out among the texts 'Phags pa composed for Qubilai in its ambition, bringing together all the disparate core elements of his various teachings to provide a comprehensive guide to Buddhist soteriology. It espouses the precepts of all three vehicles of Buddhism, provides instruction on meditative practices and presents the philosophical underpinnings of the concepts embodied in those practices, all in verse form. In effect, the text represents a complete handbook for the ideological transformation of the Khan’s role and identity within an alternative universe, “detaching the power of truth”,¹³ to borrow Foucault’s language, from his prevailing worldview, and supplanting it with one founded on Buddhism.

The religious discourse contained in Advice to the King and the power associated with it lend themselves to an assessment through the traditional Buddhist framework of the two truths: the truth of worldly convention and the ultimate truth. This is evocative of the broader tradition within Buddhist literature of speaking truth to power, a tradition to which Advice to the King belongs. The main themes of this tradition—the law of karma and the theory of no-self—correspond to the conventional and ultimate truths respectively.

3. The conventional truth: the law of karma

The conventional truth is the truth that constitutes the world of everyday, unanalysed experience. As explained by Red mda’ ba Gzhon nu blo gros (1349–1412), a prominent Sa skya scholar, “the objects of this false perception consist of the entities of all phenomena from forms and so forth through to omniscient consciousness, which are designated as persons and phenomena by language and conceptuality”.¹⁴ It is within the domain of this truth that diachronic existence of a nominally designated self and phenomena can be posited as the basis for our experiences and the functioning of the law of karma. As they grasp at the perceived reality of the world of conventional truth, all sentient beings are seen as constantly tormented in samsara’s endless cycle of suffering, driven by the force of their past actions.

Despite Qubilai’s preeminent position of power as the Great Khan, ruling during the zenith of Mongol military supremacy in the thirteenth century, within the universe embodied in 'Phags pa’s discourse, Qubilai is just one of an infinite number of beings churned involuntarily in the cycle of samsara. Further, according to the discourse, the only escape from this vicious cycle is through following the guru’s prescribed path.

¹³ Foucault (1991b: 75).
This is particularly the case in Vajrayāna Buddhism, where liberation is only achievable in complete dependence on the guru. ’Phags pa’s discourse promises to lead Qubilai out of samsara, all the way to the attainment of the state of buddhahood, the apogee of ’Phags pa’s alternative universe. Along the way, ’Phags pa offers the possibility of attaining various magical powers such as the ability to manifest in different forms.

What is required from Qubilai is to follow the path prescribed for him by observing a comprehensive range of practices supported by an understanding of their philosophical bases. These practices are also presented as the basis for the achievement of more immediate wishes: Qubilai’s welfare and longevity in this life; and the successful continuation of his lineage.

3.1 Moral precepts to regulate the Khan

Through expounding the moral precepts of all the three vehicles of the Buddhist path, namely the Prātimokṣa, Bodhisattva and Vajrayāna, ’Phags pa implicitly presents himself as someone with ethical authority, setting himself on the moral high ground in the discourse embodied in the text. This is consistent with a number of his other works, wherein ’Phags pa explicitly identifies himself as the possessor of the precepts of the three vehicles. More importantly, this exposition of moral precepts seeks to regulate Qubilai by encouraging him to act according to the law of karma, to restrain him from committing non-virtuous actions and to condition him to perform virtues. Indeed,

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15 Insofar as the stated ultimate purpose of Advice to the King is to lead Qubilai to Buddhist soteriology, aspects of the power embodied in the discourse are analogous to the salvation-oriented historical “pastoral power” of ecclesiastical institutions described by Foucault. For more on pastoral power, see Foucault (1983: 213–15).

16 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 105, folio 4).

17 ’Phags pa’s numerous explicit references to the level of the Prātimokṣa vows he has received suggests these precepts were important to his view of his own identity. In a number of works composed before his full ordination in 1255, ’Phags pa identifies himself as a novice monk (dge tshul), which involves abiding by ten principle vows. For examples, see Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968u: 26, folio 1) and (1968r: 246, folio 1).

Likewise, after 1255 ’Phags pa often refers to himself as a fully ordained monk (dge slong), which involves abiding by 253 vows. For examples, see Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968ah: 259, folio 2) and (1968af: 249, folio 2).

As an indication that he considered himself a tantric practitioner, abiding by Vajrayāna precepts, ’Phags pa proclaims himself a Vajradhara (ro je ’dzin pa) in several of his writings. Vajradhara refers to “the holder of the vajra”, which symbolises entry into the Tantric Buddhist path through receiving an empowerment from a guru. Vajradhara is also used to refer to the tantric guru who is regarded as inseparable from the primordial Buddha, who is also known as Vajradhara. For examples see Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968ax: 31, folio 3) and (1968p: 211, folio 1).

In ’Phags pa’s extant works there are no explicit claims that he possessed the bodhisattva vows or identified himself as a bodhisattva. This is not surprising as making such claims would be uncharacteristic for a monk trained to practise humility. However, his biographies note that ’Phags pa conferred bodhisattva precepts on a number of occasions, requiring that he himself held these vows. A famous instance of a public conferral of bodhisattva vows took place at Chu mig in 1277. See A myes zhaps (2012a: 171).
elsewhere in the text, ’Phags pa explicitly warns Qubilai to “not disparage the way of cause and effect”, in effect cautioning him to operate within the confines of this framework. This is a discourse that reflects an exercise of power in the form of boundaries that seek to constrain possibilities for certain actions while enabling others.18

’Phags pa’s discussion of moral precepts in Advice to the King was not an attempt to convince Qubilai to take them up. Historical evidence suggests the Khan would already have committed to all three precepts and that their inclusion in Advice to the King serves as a reminder to him of his religious obligations. Given their differing required commitments, the three precepts can be seen to represent Qubilai voluntarily conceding increasing degrees of power to ’Phags pa in their relationship and, concurrently, Qubilai gaining increasing degrees of power over himself and legitimacy for rulership within the alternative worldview of ’Phags pa’s discourse.

As detailed in chapter one, Qubilai received the Hevajra empowerment from ’Phags pa as early as 1253. It is a requirement of the Vajrayāna tradition that the initiate pledges to observe a form of the first of the three precepts—the five fundamental precepts of the Prātimokṣa—before receiving the empowerment. These five fundamental precepts are: refraining from taking lives; stealing; false speech; sexual misconduct; and using intoxicants. Adhering to these precepts is not only the basis for higher spiritual realisations, but also the source of power achieved through control over oneself, as well as derivative moral authority in the eyes of others. In Buddhist canonical texts, the Buddha is presented as “the supreme self-conqueror…the one who has tamed himself”19 because of his abandonment of all afflictive thoughts, emotions and actions. Further, Jātaka—stories concerning the previous lives of the Buddha—list the practice of ethics (śīla) as a key requisite among the “ten royal virtues” (Pali dasa-rāja-dhamma) of a righteous ruler.20 Therefore, ethics and self-discipline are a powerful source of legitimacy to rule from the perspective of Buddhism.

It is also overwhelmingly likely that Qubilai had already committed to the second set of precepts—the bodhisattva vows—many years before the composition of Advice to the King. In ’Phags pa’s tradition, it is mandatory for a disciple to make the bodhicitta pledge prior to receiving a Vajrayāna empowerment of the highest class such as the Hevajra empowerment. Moreover, ’Phags pa addresses Qubilai as a “bodhisattva”

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19 Mohan Wijayaratna (1990: 6).
in a number of his works.\textsuperscript{21} While the use of such appellations is interpreted by some scholars as “Buddhist sacralisation of the Chinggiskhanides”,\textsuperscript{22} they in fact simply represent acknowledgement of the status of someone who has made a pledge to the relevant commitments. In the Mahāyāna tradition, any individual can be referred to as “bodhisattva”, “prince of the Victor” or “prince of the Sugata” once they have made the bodhicitta pledge and abide by its precepts. It is thus said in \textit{A Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life} that:

\begin{quote}
The moment an Awakening Mind (\textit{bodhicitta}) arises  
In those fettered and weak in the jail of cyclic existence,  
They will be named “a Son of the Sugatas” (bodhisattvas),  
And will be revered by both men and gods of the world.\textsuperscript{23}
\end{quote}

'Phags pa’s discourse on \textit{bodhicitta}—a compassion that drives the dedication of oneself to attain perfect awakening for the benefit of others\textsuperscript{24}—represents a further source of power in itself. Not only does such compassion hold boundless power in the world constructed by Buddhist discourse, the wielder of universal compassion also commands the trust and admiration of others that compassionate interactions foster. Indeed, it can afford its wielder, perceived or actual, what Franz Michael describes as “the image of an ideal being that personified the noblest concepts of thought and behaviour and that was acting, indeed living, for all beings” and which “moved the deepest human emotions and adoration of people”\textsuperscript{25} in many parts of Asia where Mahāyāna Buddhism spread, including much of Qubilai’s domains. It appears to have been a power that 'Phags pa wielded in his relationships. Describing 'Phags pa, Bka’

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} 'Phags pa explicitly addresses Qubilai as “bodhisattva” (Tib. \textit{byang chub sems dpa’}) on four occasions in his texts. See Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968ac: 228, folio 3) and (1968g: 300, folio 3; p. 301, folios 1 and 4). Additionally, 'Phags pa also composed \textit{Letter to Prince Bodhisattva}, Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968n), which may have been for Qubilai. However, given there is no explicit mention in the letter of precisely whom it was addressed to, it is impossible to be definitive that the “bodhisattva” referred to was indeed Qubilai. It is equally likely that the addressee was Qubilai’s son Jingim whom 'Phags pa also addressed as “bodhisattva” on a number of occasions. It is noteworthy that in all extant works, 'Phags pa only addresses Qubilai as “bodhisattva” before his enthronement as the Great Khan.
\item In the later Yuan period, Qubilai was regarded as an emanation of Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. For details see Farquhar (1978: 12). This appears inconsistent with the nature of 'Phags pa’s interactions with Qubilai. If 'Phags pa regarded Qubilai as an emanation of Mañjuśrī rather than someone who has taken the Bodhisattva vows, it would be senseless for him to teach Buddhist practices to a realised bodhisattva. Further, in a biography of O rgyan pa Rin chen dpal, a Tibetan tantrika who was a contemporary of Qubilai and 'Phags pa, he is reported to have explicitly rejected assertions that Qubilai was an emanation of Mañjuśrī as an unsubstantiated myth. Bsod nams ’od zer (1997: 242).
\item \textsuperscript{22} Franke (1978: 57).
\item \textsuperscript{23} Shantideva (1979: 2).
\item \textsuperscript{25} Franz Michael (1982: 15).
\end{itemize}
As an adherent of esoteric Buddhism, Qubilai had also pledged to the third set of precepts, the *samaya* of a Vajrayāna practitioner. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the terms and conditions that the tradition required of Qubilai as a Vajrayāna disciple were made clear in a text 'Phags pa composed for prince Jingim on the practice of the *Hevajra Tantra*. In this treatise, 'Phags pa explicitly states that the recipient of the empowerment must vow that “I will do whatever the lord (guru) commands” and “From now on I offer myself to you as your servant, so please take me as your disciple.” The tradition also requires the guru ('Phags pa in this case) to proclaim to his disciple: “From now on, for you son (intimate term used for a disciple after having bestowed the empowerment), I am the Śrī Heruka. Whatever I command of you, you should do.”

In *Advice to the King*, 'Phags pa reminds Qubilai of the grave consequences in the afterlife of transgressing the Vajrayāna vows, warning the Khan to guard them as “dearly as your life”. The discourse seeks to pivot 'Phags pa to the centre of the new universe constructed for Qubilai by his words and transform the dynamics of their power relationship.

### 3.2 Cultivating a faithful Khan

'Phags pa’s advice on the preliminaries of the path prescribed in *Advice to the King* seeks to inculcate Qubilai with mental states—positive emotions—that condition him to perform virtuous karma. These preliminary acts are: (1) cultivation of faith in the Three Jewels and the guru; (2) cultivation of compassion towards all sentient beings; and (3) cultivation of the aspiration to achieve temporary and lasting benefits through taking the path prescribed for him by 'Phags pa.

Cultivation of faith in the Three Jewels and the guru is a practice that disrupts the Khan’s view of himself as all-powerful, and it suggests that he is, instead, a being constantly tormented in a cycle of suffering whose only refuge is the Three Jewels. Highlighting the power asymmetry and Qubilai’s position of complete dependence
within this framework, *The Ornament* likens the act of Qubilai taking refuge to “a weak person seeking protection from a more powerful person”.31 After presenting the superior qualities of the Three Jewels, 'Phags pa underlines the pivotal role of the guru—himself in this case—as the intermediary between Qubilai and these objects of refuge. In so doing, he effectively presents the guru as the embodiment of all the Three Jewels:

> The gurus introduce you to the [Three Jewels] [and] bridge the gap [between them and you].
> They also have qualities analogous to the Three [Jewels].
> So reflect on how they kindly protect you;
> Consult them always. You must cultivate unwavering faith!32

The suggestion that the Great Khan of the Mongol Empire should reflect on how he is the object of kind protection may appear absurd; nevertheless, in the otherworldly domain of Buddhist discourse 'Phags pa does not hesitate to present himself, in effect, as the Khan’s protector. Further, through directing Qubilai to “cultivate unwavering faith” in him and always consult him, 'Phags pa’s discourse seeks to translate this otherworldly power into practical influence over Qubilai and his policies.

The two remaining preliminary practices—cultivation of compassion and cultivation of aspiration—also seek to unbind Qubilai from his prevailing points of view and reinforce the perspective presented in 'Phags pa’s discourse. The focus on others reflected in the practice of cultivating compassion sits in contrast with the violence and mercilessness for which the Mongols were renowned.33 It is a practice that represents a reversal of the common human view of one’s relationship with others—from self-centredness to other-centredness—reinforcing the bodhisattva precepts. Likewise, in order to cultivate aspiration, essentially motivating Qubilai to persist with his practices, 'Phags pa highlights the benefits of pursuing the path. These include the ultimate benefit of achieving buddhahood—a reward far greater and more lasting than the worldly pleasures enjoyed by the Khan.34

### 3.3 Meditations and subsequent acts

Of the three main meditative practices that 'Phags pa prescribes in *Advice to the King*, the first one, meditation with an observed object, is a technique that falls primarily within the domain of conventional truth, as it presupposes the existence of the meditator.

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31 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 97, folio 1).
32 Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968h: 181, folio 2–3).
34 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 98, folio 1).
as well as a visualised buddha or guru. The practice of visualising a buddha aims to
gradually diminish Qubilai’s affinity with his old identity and enable him to
approximate a new awakened character. It is also a practice that deeply reinforces his
affinity with Buddhism and its deities. Likewise, the practice of visualising one’s guru
can ingrain within the psyche of the meditator a deep intimacy with and faith in the
guru, who is viewed as inherently unified with the buddhas.

In this section in particular and Advice to the King more broadly, 'Phags pa is
careful in his selection of epithets for the Buddha, choosing ones to which the Mongol
Khan can best relate. 'Phags pa’s application of the epithet “Victor” for the Buddha—
the one who is victorious over afflictions and their imprints—evokes a king who is
triumphant in battle. The use of “chief sage”, as another example, indicates that the
Buddha is superior when compared with others—śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas who
are also known as “sages”. This superiority is attributed to the Buddha’s control over
the Ten Powers: the power over life, karma, necessities, devotion, aspiration,
miraculous abilities, birth, doctrine, mind and pristine cognition.35 Despite being the
most powerful man in the world at the time, Qubilai lacked any control over such
transcendental powers, and the prospect of attaining them would likely have been
attractive to him.

The instructions on subsequent acts—recollection, dedication, and prayers—
refer to practices that reinforce the cognitive transformation that the meditational and
other trainings seek to instil in the Khan by engaging his attention while in post-
meditative states with appropriate thoughts. They are also discourses that focus Qubilai
on accumulating virtuous actions as the basis for his current and future wellbeing. The
framework of the law of karma entails that Qubilai’s status of power and affluence are
the result of his past actions and implicitly rejects any notion of a divine right of
rulership derived from a Creator or mandated by the Eternal Sky;36 this is an assertion
that 'Phags pa makes more directly in Letter to Prince Nomoghan as mentioned in
chapter two.37 Through this alternative discourse, 'Phags pa seeks to shift the Khan’s
view on the basis of his legitimacy from the traditional Mongol belief in a divine right

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35 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 98, folio 3).
36 For more on the Eternal Sky and the Mongol belief that it mandated Chinggis Khan’s domination of the
world, see Paul Ratchnevsky and Thomas Nivison Haining (1991: 96–101). In fact, the Mongols’ view of
their conquests and demands for submission was that these were the outcome of divine will. This is
reflected in a letter Qubilai’s brother Hulegu, the Il-Khan of Iran, sent to King Louis LX of France. The
letter quotes Teb Tengri’s prophecy to Chinggis of his world conquest as their mandate to rule. For
details, see Paul Meyvaert (1980).
37 Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968m: 197, folio 2).
to rule to virtuous karma.\textsuperscript{38} The discourse also encourages Qubilai to act righteously in accordance with Buddhist principles—to fulfil the \textit{dharmarāja} ideals—if he is to preserve the fortunes he enjoys into the future, in this and future lives. This is a starkly contrasting perspective to the view attributed to Qubilai’s grandfather Chinggis, who is reported to have once said, “the greatest pleasure is to vanquish your enemies, to chase them before you, to rob them of their wealth, to see those dear to them bathed in tears, to ride their horses, to clasp to your bosom their wives and daughters”.\textsuperscript{39}

### 3.4 Qubilai: a \textit{dharmarāja}?

In both \textit{Advice to the King} and \textit{The Ornament}, Qubilai is explicitly referred to as a \textit{dharmarāja}. In the former, ‘Phags pa makes the reference when requesting the Khan to consider the plight of Buddhist monastics. \textit{The Ornament} explains the attributes of a \textit{dharmarāja} and suggests that the Mongol Khan possesses such qualities:

Yet, since it can also refer to ordinary kings, to signify [that this king] is superior to other [kings, the author] addresses him as “the sublime [king]”. This sublimeness derives from his possession of the sublime Dharma and the actions he performs in accordance with it. This [possession] also signifies the king is a \textit{dharmarāja}.\textsuperscript{40}

In referring to Qubilai as a \textit{dharmarāja}, ‘Phags pa aligns him with the \textit{dharmarājas} of the past. Indeed, in \textit{Eulogy to the Line of Tibetan Kings} (\textit{Bod kyi rgyal rabs la bsngags pa’i tshigs bcad}), ‘Phags pa explicitly places Qubilai and his forefathers in the line of Buddhist \textit{dharmarājas} following the Mauryan emperor Aśoka (304–232 BCE), the paradigmatic \textit{dharmarāja}, and the Three Dharma Kings of Tibet, who ‘Phags pa suggests are emanations of the Three Lineal Protectors (Tib. \textit{Rigs gsum mgon po}): Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī and Vajrapāṇi.\textsuperscript{41} Further in the same source, ‘Phags pa epitomises his view on the crucial role of the Dharma in statecraft to Qubilai in the following terms:

\begin{quote}
Nurturing the Dharma is nurturing the world; therefore, what other task do you have than this?
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{38} In their interactions with Mongol princes, not all Tibetan prelates were always as direct as ‘Phags pa in countering the traditional Mongol belief. For example, the second Karmapa, Karma Pakshi, who was a contemporary of ‘Phags pa, took a more accommodating approach when he wrote \textit{Mo ghol ding ri’i sgra tshad}. See Karma pakshi (n.d.), \textit{Mo ghol ding ri’i sgra tshad}, http://tbrc.org/link?RID=W22466 (accessed on 24/11/2015). For a detailed study of the text, see Kapstein (2011: 259–315).

\textsuperscript{39} Henry H. Howorth (n.d.: 110).

\textsuperscript{40} Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 91, folio 2–3).

\textsuperscript{41} Chos rgyal ‘Phags pa (1968ar: 286, folio 1–2).
Do I need to tell you that
Securing the Dharma is securing the self, [and]
It is the way of the Dharma that will fulfil your purposes,
Through working for the welfare of others. 42

Through attributing to him the identity of a dharmarāja, 'Phags pa attempts to induce Qubilai to reimagine himself as a righteous king. It provides an alternative source of legitimacy consistent with the broader discourse of the law of karma that frames Qubilai’s status of power and affluence as the result of accumulating virtuous actions. It is an identity that requires from Qubilai behaviour and policies consistent with it.

4. The ultimate truth: an empire of emptiness 43

For the Madhyamaka school to which 'Phags pa adhered, the ultimate truth refers to the theory of emptiness that asserts the lack of intrinsic existence of all phenomena, including the concept of a “self”. According to Candrakīrti (c.600 – c.650), one of the foremost exponents of this school, the ultimate truth is “the object that is revealed through correct perception” as opposed to the conventional truth of “the object that is revealed through incorrect perception”. 44 This is a discourse with the potential to fundamentally undermine the Khan’s perceived notion of himself and his world, including his empire, presenting it all as mere misconceptions. 'Phags pa’s discourse frames itself as providing a range of cognitive restructuring processes that are prescribed specifically as “counteragents” 45 to undo the deeply embedded preconditioning that fosters this misconception. These counteragents, he suggests, will enable Qubilai to progress towards realisation of the ultimate truth.

As the presenter of this truth, 'Phags pa implicitly sets in place what Foucault calls a “system of differentiation” 46 through portraying himself as free from this misconception and as being privy to this truth and the inexhaustible transcendental power that results from it, in contrast with Qubilai, for whom this truth remains presently beyond reach. Relatedly, this presentation also reinforces the perception of 'Phags pa as the wielder of what Max Weber refers to as the power of “charismatic

42 Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968a: 286, folio, 2).
43 I would like to acknowledge that the phrase “empire of emptiness” has been used as a book title by Patricia Berger. See Berger (2003).
authority”. Weber defines this “charisma” as “a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities.”

Central among the counteragents to the preconditioning towards misconceived views are the second and the third primary meditative practices at the core of Advice to the King: meditation without an observed object; and meditation on the union of the perceiving awareness and its emptiness, and the union of appearances of the perceived objects and their emptiness. Through the meditation without an observed object, 'Phags pa seeks to familiarise Qubilai with a realisation that, despite being the principal basis for all perceived dualistic phenomena, when examined, the mind itself is devoid of any intrinsic existence—it is free from elaborations and has a space-like nature. Through the meditation on the union, 'Phags pa seeks to reconcile the posited lack of intrinsic existence of the mind under analysis with the everyday experience of the existence of a mind through presenting the nature of mind as “a union of awareness and emptiness”.

And having argued earlier that the mind is the basis for the perception of all phenomena, 'Phags pa also reasons that all phenomena are nothing but appearance and emptiness in union. In other words, all phenomena are interdependently arising illusions that we perceive and experience, and they are ultimately devoid of inherent existence because they are interdependently arisen.

A corollary of Foucault’s thinking is that to resist a form of power, the form of the rationality underlying it must be questioned. The logical exposition of the concepts and assumptions underlying the meditative practices that 'Phags pa provides in the section on “stamping the seal” does exactly that. It systematically refutes the rationale for the human inclination towards viewing the self and phenomena as inherently existent, complementing and reinforcing the cognitive restructuring in Qubilai that the meditative practices seek to achieve.

The discussion concerning the ultimate truth also reinforces the view that all sentient beings are fundamentally equal. Just as every sentient being has an equal desire...
for happiness—a key reasoning underlying the practice of compassion—so does every being have the same ultimate nature and potential to reach buddhahood regardless of their social background or even form of life. Through asserting the lack of inherent existence of all phenomena, the theory of emptiness also implicitly rejects any supposition of a Creator that exists independently vis-à-vis its creation, complementing the implicit assertion that Qubilai’s current position does not derive from divine appointment.

5. True to the teachings?
As Morris Rossabi explains, “in Mongol eyes, his (Qubilai’s) success as a ruler would be measured at least in part by his ability to add wealth, men, and territory to his domain”.53 Perhaps in part reflecting the inertia of this view so deeply ingrained in his Chinggisid heritage, Qubilai waged a number of brutal military campaigns against neighbouring states. These include the comprehensive invasion of Southern Song territories, three very costly expeditions against Japan, and the conquest of Southeast Asia. Concurrently, as the sovereign, Qubilai also had to be the law-giver who delivered justice and maintained order in society. Records suggest that a wide range of sentences including capital punishment were meted out to convicts during Qubilai’s reign.54 Therefore, historical accounts are unequivocal that Qubilai was responsible for actions that appear, at least at first glance, to be in tension with the teachings, moral precepts and the dharmarāja ideals set out by ’Phags pa in Advice to the King.

It is important to recognise, however, that there is no strict consensus within Buddhist literature that a Dharma-abiding monarch does not have legitimate roles in waging wars and delivering punishments, or on whether they are subject to the eventual karmic consequences of such actions. On the one hand, some who have been called “ethically fundamentalists”55 such as Candrakīrti uncompromisingly assert that a true Buddhist has no role in kingship given its inherent requirement to compromise the precept of ahīṃsā or non-violence and that rulers must face the full negative karmic consequences of the unwholesome actions in which they engage in the process of statecraft. On the other hand, more flexible positions accept a role for rulers in “punishing justly and adequately” and engaging in other ostensibly negative actions as long as they are driven by a compassionate motivation.56

Despite prominent exceptions such as Candrakīrti, this latter view is prevalent in 'Phags pa’s Mahāyāna tradition, and it implies that even the seemingly unwholesome actions of punishment and waging war do not necessarily entail negative karmic fruitions. Mahāyāna sources such as Letter Sent to the King, Subjects and Monastics of Tibet and The Noble Teaching through Manifestations on the Subject of Skilful Means in the Bodhisattva’s Field of Activity (Skt. Ārya Bodhisattva gocara upāyaviśayavikurvaṇa nirdeśa sutra, Tib. Byang sms bsod yul thabs kyi yul la rnam 'phrul bstan pa'i mdo) also provide Buddhist rulers with conceptual resources to support just warfare and harsh punishments. For example, Letter Sent to the King, Subjects and Monastics of Tibet advises that “When it comes to critical matters of state, do not be restrained [by affection], even for your son, nor [by fear of accumulating] non-virtuous karma”.60

In a number of 'Phags pa’s works addressed to Mongol royalty, he does approve of the use of punishment where required, although he strongly rejects capital punishment. For example, in his epistle to prince Jibig Temür, 'Phags pa writes, “It is permissible to repudiate those to be tamed by reprimanding, beating, depriving and disgracing them, but you should not detach them from their lives”. Moreover, agreement that Qubilai would maintain his role as law-giver was explicitly included in the arrangement that Chabi brokered between 'Phags pa and Qubilai.

The ethical framework to which he performatively subjected himself and the associated social constructs and expectations, as well as his vows as a Buddhist monk, suggest that 'Phags pa was unlikely to have unequivocally endorsed, at least in public, the waging of wars; nevertheless, there are accounts that suggest 'Phags pa extended his collaboration in some of Qubilai’s campaigns. Evoking the Mahākāla deity to participate in battles is 'Phags pa’s most prominent reported contribution to Qubilai’s military efforts. Consistent with the Mahāyāna approach, a manual by 'Phags pa for the invocation of Mahākāla explains that the motivation for calling on the deity should

59 For more on Ārya Bodhisattva gocara upāyaviśayavikurvaṇa nirdeśa Sūtra, see Stephen Jenkins (2010: 59–75) and Lozang Jamspal (2010). For a Tibetan version, see 'Phags pa byang chub sms dpal'i spyan yul gyi thabs kyi yul la rnam par 'phrul ba bstan pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo, http://tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=kangyur&index=147 (accessed, 10/02/2016). For broader discussions of warfare and violence in Buddhism, also see the other chapters in Michael Jerryson and Mark Juergensmeyer (2010); and Damien Keown (2015: 470–84).
61 Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968i: 187, folio 3).
be “…compassion towards others”\textsuperscript{63} as a precondition for requesting that Mahākāla “destroy hated enemies, obstacles, demons and the many others that hinder, as if they were shattered into particles”.\textsuperscript{64} As chapter one explained, 'Phags pa was also reported to have been involved in the appointment of General Bayan Baharidai\textsuperscript{65} and in helping Qubilai to resolve difficulties in financing the military.\textsuperscript{66} The \textit{Religious History of the Ngor} (Tib. \textit{Ngor chos 'byung}) further suggests that 'Phags pa’s brother Phyag na rdo rje, who was not a monk, even participated in a battle against the Southern Song.\textsuperscript{67}

Moreover, the fact that Qubilai engaged in actions that were inconsistent with the moral codes and behaviour that 'Phags pa’s discourse sought to inculcate does not mean that the discourse was completely inconsequential. As chapter one also discussed briefly, historical accounts attribute a range of characteristics and actions consistent with aspiring to live up to these teachings.

For example Qubilai is known for his generous treatment of subjects. According to Rossabi, Qubilai “sought to govern, not simply exploit…, he endeavoured to protect the welfare and promote the interests of his diverse subjects in a time when such considerations are rare”.\textsuperscript{68} Moral obligations towards his subjects also appear more frequently in official statements under Qubilai—a development that Sino-centric historians past and present attribute solely to Chinese influence,\textsuperscript{69} completely overlooking 'Phags pa and the range of commitments Qubilai had made to him.

Further, a seventeenth century Mongolian chronicle, \textit{The Precious Summary}, credits Qubilai with conducting a government based on the ten meritorious doctrines and with pacifying the world.\textsuperscript{70} This account is supported by \textit{The White History of the Ten Virtues}. As suggested by its title, this thirteenth century Mongol chronicle believed to be from Qubilai’s period promulgates the Buddhist principles of the ten virtuous codes of conduct, an idealised form of statecraft closely associated with \textit{dharmarāja} rulership in which religion and the state operate in unison.\textsuperscript{71} Aśoka and the Three Dharma Kings of Tibet are all credited with promoting these virtuous codes of conduct.

Another noteworthy example is the leniency of the penal system during Qubilai’s reign, a fact that contradicts the common perception of harshness of Mongol

\textsuperscript{63} Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968d: 138, folio 3).
\textsuperscript{64} Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1968d: 138–40).
\textsuperscript{66} Dpal 'byor bzang po (1985: 279).
\textsuperscript{67} Ngor chen Dkon mchog lhun drub and Ngor chen Sangs rgyas phun tshogs (1973: 328).
\textsuperscript{68} Rossabi (1988: 118, 231).
\textsuperscript{69} For an example, see Franke (1978: 16).
\textsuperscript{70} Sayang Sečen (1967: 77).
\textsuperscript{71} C.Ž. Žamcarano (1955: 51).
rulers against criminal offenders. This leniency was acknowledged and even praised by the Ming officials who compiled the *Yuan Shi*. Paul Heng-chao Ch’en, a contemporary scholar on the legal system during the Yuan era, highlights the surprisingly low numbers of people who were sentenced to death during Qubilai’s reign. Ch’en ascribes this fact to Qubilai’s attitude towards capital punishment, noting that “as early as 1260, Shih-tsu (Qubilai) stressed to his officials that any case involving a capital offense must be thoroughly reviewed before the death penalty was meted out”. Ch’en then explains that “Shih-tsu often personally reviewed cases involving death penalty and acted to spare the criminals’ lives by reducing their sentences”. As one example of such personal involvement by Qubilai, Ch’en points to an extract from the *Yuan Shi*, which explains that in 1287, “when some 190 people were to be put to death, Shih-tsu intervened and said: ‘Prisoners are not a mere flock of sheep. How can they be suddenly executed? It is proper that they be instead enslaved and assigned to pan gold with a sieve’”.

Qubilai and his grandsons were also known for their granting of amnesties to inmates. It is recorded that such grants were made more quickly and favourably if they were at the request of Tibetan monks (possibly ’Phags pa and his successors). Such amnesties provoked criticism from senior Chinese officials who sought to make the penalties more severe. Furthermore, Tibetan sources credit ’Phags pa for successfully persuading Qubilai to renounce the annual drowning of thousands of Chinese, which was a form of population control that the Mongols were reportedly carrying out. Sources also report that Qubilai prohibited the Islamic halal method of slaughtering sheep, which he deemed an inhumane practice.

These accounts suggest that the discourse ’Phags pa created had political and social implications through its influence on Qubilai’s policies, a fact that appears to be

72 Paul Heng-chao Ch’en (1979: 44).
73 Paul Heng-chao Ch’en (1979: 44–5).
74 Paul Heng-chao Ch’en (1979: 46).
75 Paul Heng-chao Ch’en (1979: 46).
76 Paul Heng-chao Ch’en (1979: 44).
78 Qubilai is said to have vowed to stop this practice as an offering to ’Phags pa in gratitude for his bestowal of the Hevajra empowerment for the third time. ’Phags pa composed a dedication prayer that celebrated this change of heart. See A myes zhabs (2012a: 120). The prayer reads: ཕན་བདེའི་འོང་གནས་བོན་པ་སེམས་པའི་ིར། རང་གི་འབོད་པོ་ིེ་ཁྲི་ལེབ་ཁྲི་ཡིས་ི་ཡི་མིན་རིང་གི་སོགས་སོགས་པའི་ིར། བོད་པོ་རྣམ་པ་ེས་ཁེ་ན་ཁེས་ེ་ན་ེ་ན་ེ་ན་ེ་ན་ེ་ན་ེ་ན་ེ་ན་ེ་ན་ེ་ན་ེ་ན
In English, the prayer reads: The colour of the sky has turned blood red. The outer oceans are filled with crushed corpses. I dedicate the virtues of abandoning [actions that caused this], for the fulfilment of wishes of the lord of the supreme knowledge (Sa skya Pāṇḍita), for the spread of the Dharma that is the source of benefit and joy, and for the longevity of the lord of humans (Qubilai Khan).
recognised by Qubilai and his successors. For example, as noted in chapter one, one of the number of titles Qubilai conferred on 'Phags pa was “the one who pacified the realm”, a title highly suggestive of 'Phags pa’s influence on Qubilai over temporal affairs.\(^{80}\) As another indication of the influence of 'Phags pa’s discourse, a eulogy of 'Phags pa from the time of the reign of emperor Sidhibala included in *A Comprehensive Record of the History of the Buddhas and Patriarchs* notes that:

> He (Qubilai) considered that nothing was better than the Buddhist teaching to stop killing and rescue human beings with kindness and longevity. Therefore, he advocated the teaching in order to consolidate the foundation of the transformation.\(^{81}\)

Suggesting 'Phags pa’s influence on Qubilai’s approach to governance, the same eulogy goes on to explain:

> He [Qubilai] consulted with him [‘Phags pa] about the highest dao (principle) and proceeded to practice a benevolent form of government. Thus the morality [of benevolent governance] was added to the four oceans. There was nowhere that was not imbued with his benevolence.\(^{82}\)

### 6. Conclusion

The discourse embodied in *Advice to the King* creates new regimes of truth that present an alternate view of the Khan’s identity and his world. It seeks to pivot 'Phags pa to the centre of a new universe constructed for Qubilai by that discourse and transform the dynamics of their power relationship. Consistent with the tradition within Buddhist literature of speaking truth to power, *Advice to the King* lends itself to assessment through the framework of the Buddhist doctrine of the two truths.

Qubilai’s status of power and affluence is presented as being the result of his past actions rather than a divine right of rulership within the framework of the law of karma, the cornerstone of the conventional truth. Within this framework, Qubilai is made known to himself as just one of countless beings churned involuntarily in the cycle of samsara whose only hope for liberation lies in complete dependence on the guru. Through the moral precepts, preliminary practices and meditation prescribed by 'Phags pa, the discourse presents an opportunity for Qubilai to achieve increasing degrees of power over himself and progress towards the boundless power of

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buddhahood. Concurrently, the discourse effectively seeks to regulate Qubilai to act virtuously in accordance with the law of karma and to require Qubilai to voluntarily concede increasing degrees of power to ’Phags.pa in their relationship. ’Phags.pa’s discourse also attempts to induce Qubilai to reimagine himself as a dharmarāja, providing an alternative source of legitimacy of rulership and requiring from Qubilai behaviour and policies consistent with this identity.

The discourse relating to the ultimate truth seeks to further undermine the Khan’s perceived notion of himself and his world, presenting it all as fundamentally mere misconceptions. It presents a range of cognitive restructuring processes to undo the deeply embedded preconditioning towards this misconception, enticing Qubilai with the possibility of the realisation of a greater truth, while implicitly portraying ’Phags.pa as being privy to this ultimate truth and the transcendental power that results from it. As such, the discourse sets in place what Foucault calls a “system of differentiation” that situates ’Phags.pa in a position of power relative to Qubilai and that reinforces the perception of ’Phags.pa as the wielder of what Max Weber refers to as the power of “charismatic authority”.

As the culmination of the religious discourses between Qubilai and ’Phags.pa, Advice to the King offers a conclusive view into the potential power that arises from ’Phags.pa’s discourses and the nature of the relationship that they sought to instil. The wars that Qubilai waged and the punishments that he delivered to convicts show that his policies and actions did not always appear to be consistent with the teachings, moral precepts and the dharmarāja ideals set out by ’Phags.pa. However, the lack of consensus in Buddhist literature forbidding such practices and evidence that ’Phags.pa approved of or was involved in some cases of such actions suggest that not all such deeds were necessarily in contravention of ’Phags.pa’s advice. Moreover, the characteristics and actions consistent with aspiring to live up to ’Phags.pa’s discourses attributed to Qubilai by a range of historical accounts are also indicative of their power and practical influence.
Conclusion

They swept through the city like hungry falcons attacking a flight of doves, or like raging wolves attacking sheep, with loose reins and shameless faces, murdering and spreading fear... Beds and cushions made of gold and encrusted with jewels were cut to pieces with knives and torn to shreds. Those hidden behind the veils of the great harem were dragged... through the streets and alleys, each of them becoming a plaything in the hands of a Mongol monster.

The aftermath of the fall of Baghdad as described by Abdallah Waṣṣāf (c. 13th–14th century)¹

1. Retracing the thesis and its contributions to the field

This passage from the Persian historian Abdallah Waṣṣāf of the Īlkhānate describes the capacity for ruthlessness of the feared armies of the Mongol Empire. It provides a vivid glimpse of the potential fate that could have befallen Tibetans and was embodied in the threat included in Köden Khan’s invitation decree to Sa paṇ of 1244. Sa paṇ’s correspondences highlight how fear that such “harm mightbefall Tibet” led him to travel to Köden's court with the “hope that it will prove to be beneficial for beings” although there was “no assurance of benefit”,² accompanied by his nephews ’Phags pa and Phyag na rdo rje.

Despite this initial context of imminent danger and uncertainty, Sa paṇ and ’Phags pa, to borrow Davidson’s words, “managed to rein in the destructive potential of the greatest military machine the world had ever seen, so that Central Tibet, in particular, was spared the ravages that other civilisations suffered, sometimes to their annihilation”.³ Building on the groundwork laid by his uncle, a range of historical accounts recording the extraordinarily special treatment that ’Phags pa received from Qubilai Khan, and indicating influence over the Khan, his court and his policies, are testament to the exceptional position of power that the monk was eventually able to achieve.

The dominant approach in contemporary studies has been to perceive and examine ’Phags pa through the lens of his speculated utility for Qubilai, only affording him the role of a useful tool in the pursuit of political and militaristic objectives,

¹ David Nicolle (1990: 132). Although better known as Waṣṣāf, his actual name was Abdallah ibn Fadlallah Sharaf al-Din Shirāzī.
³ Davidson (2005: 7).
whether it be to “control without conquest”\textsuperscript{4} or to legitimise the Khan’s rule. The present study has contended that this approach, based on functionalist explanations and selective readings of historical sources, results in overly simplistic narratives that are incongruous with salient historical evidence that point to a more complex bond.

This thesis has argued that if Qubilai’s primary objective regarding Tibet was to leverage ’Phags pa to control Tibet without conquest, holding a broader range of Tibetan religious hierarchs at his court other than just ’Phags pa would seem more efficacious. Moreover, any notion that Qubilai adopted a policy of appeasement because militarily enforcing control over Tibet would somehow have been too costly is at odds with the factual situation of the fragmented Tibet of the time. This study has also found that the historical and cosmographic evidence stands against a standard trope of histories of this period—that Qubilai used ’Phags pa to sacralise himself and Chinggis Khan as cakravartins, thus legitimising their rule over the Mongol Empire. No detailed reading of ’Phags pa’s relevant compositions suggest that he understood the Mongol khans to be cakravartins. Furthermore, any suggestion that they were would have been inconsistent with the Abhidharmakośa text that served as the primary basis of ’Phags pa’s view of Buddhist cosmology, wherein the cakravartin concept is articulated.

While there was undoubtedly political symbolism in ’Phags pa’s initial transference to Qubilai’s court given his role as the perceived inheritor of Sa pan’s original acquiescence to the Mongols, only through a more nuanced approach that accounts for the personal-religious aspects of the Qubilai–’Phags pa association can the range of historical accounts be cohesively reconciled and explained. This result also serves to highlight a more general point—the need for caution against overreliance on political and militaristic perspectives when studying history, particularly when the key figures of interest lived in societies where religious belief pervaded the lives of people and the state.

The Qubilai–’Phags pa relationship, with its perceived context of political symbolism and its central role in Tibet’s external relations, has come to be viewed by some as defining the nature of the mchod yon bond. In the main, such views have ignored the personal-religious bond at the conceptual core of this form of relations; instead, they focus on its perceived political implications, drawing on them to make inferences about the nature of Tibet’s relationships with Mongol princes, Ming Chinese and Manchus over the following centuries. Through examining the historical and

\textsuperscript{4} Petech (1993: 651).
semantic context underlying the *mchod yon* concept, the present study demonstrated that it is in fact devoid of any inherent political connotations, including a predetermined notion of the relative precedence of the parties involved. Moreover, despite the close association of this concept with the Sa skya–Mongol relationship, interestingly, it appears to be a retrospective neologism applied by later Tibetan historians and the use of the term *mchod yon* to refer to the priest-patron bond cannot be found in any works by Sa pan or 'Phags pa.

This thesis has drawn on the texts 'Phags pa composed for Qubilai and other members of his extended family for insights into the Qubilai–'Phags pa relationship. In particular, as 'Phags pa’s final extensive composition for Qubilai before he left the Khan’s service for good and because it encapsulates the core teachings of all the other texts composed for Qubilai by 'Phags pa, this study has focused on *Advice to the King*. This treatise offers the most conclusive view into the nature of the relationship that 'Phags pa’s discourses sought to instil and reinforce, and simultaneously reflect. As such, through presenting the potential power of these discourses, *Advice to the King* provides insights into how 'Phags pa may have reached his remarkable position of influence.

This approach also demonstrates that Tibetan religious texts, such as *Advice to the King*, are also historical sources once they are located within the wider historico-political context. There is a wealth of historical insights that can be gained directly from such sources as well as indirectly through analysing the discourses embodied in them. This is not to suggest that such sources should somehow replace or take precedence over standard sources as the basis for studies of Tibetan history. Rather, they are supplementary resources that can help to corroborate and complement the prevailing historical sources upon which contemporary studies rely. Such an approach should prove to be beneficial in reaching better-informed and more holistic understandings of the Mongol Empire era and subsequent periods of Tibetan history.

Before examining *Advice to the King*, the thesis traced the broader tradition within Buddhism of speaking truth to power to which it belongs, placing the treatise within its literary context and providing a view into the sorts of teachings that have been given by Buddhist advisors to people of power and what sorts of results they may have hoped to achieve. This tradition derives from a long history of leading Buddhist prelates associating with kings and other people of power, challenging their prevailing worldview and presenting an alternative Buddhist regime of truth.
This thesis examined *Advice to the King* and its key themes, the Madyamaka Buddhist concepts of the conventional and ultimate truths, which correspond with the themes of the law of karma and the theory of emptiness found within the broader tradition of speaking truth to power. This study parsed the key components of the treatise, covering the moral precepts of all the three vehicles of Buddhism, meditative practices designed to lead Qubilai towards attaining the two bodies of buddhahood, as well as discussion of the two levels of truth perceivable in all phenomena. It also covered the addendum to *Advice to the King*—the miscellaneous requests to Qubilai, urging him to practice the teachings for his own wellbeing and his lineage’s successful continuation; support the welfare of Buddhist monastics; and grant ’Phags pa permanent leave from Qubilai’s court to allow him to practice Dharma. The detailed analysis of this important yet under-studied treatise included in the present study, as well as the provision of my own translations of it and its commentary and textual outline, represent a contribution to raising their profile and improving their accessibility so that they may receive the scholarly attention they deserve given their historical and religious significance.

This thesis argued that while *Advice to the King* is, most manifestly, a religious text, it embodies and gives rise to potential power through seeking to shape the constitution of current truths, and therefore, the power relations they carry with them. The treatise emphasises the centrality of the framework of the law of karma that entails that Qubilai’s status of power and affluence are the result of his past actions. It implicitly rejects any notion of a divine right of rulership derived from a Creator or mandated by the Eternal Sky as claimed in Mongol decrees, an assertion that ’Phags pa makes more directly in another of his compositions, *Letter to Prince Nomoghan*. In so doing, ’Phags pa reframes the source of the Mongols’ power within the Buddhist theory of karma and implicitly challenges the idea of the Chinggisid possessing a divine mandate to rule the world.

The treatise makes Qubilai known to himself as just one of infinite beings trapped in the cycle of samsara but presents him with the possibility of escape and the attainment of the boundless and lasting power of buddhahood. In order to achieve this, the text guides the Khan through a process of conquering the afflictive emotions and the misconceived sense of a “self” which, from a Buddhist perspective, have ruled over Qubilai since beginningless time; therefore, in a sense, it empowers Qubilai to conquer his conqueror. However, the only path to achieving this objective is presented as requiring Qubilai to submit himself wholly to his guru; therefore, the discourse can also
be seen to provide 'Phags pa with a means to, in a sense, also conquer the conqueror of his homeland.

While the wars that Qubilai waged and the punishments that he delivered to convicts show that his policies and actions did not always appear to be consistent with the teachings, moral precepts and the dharmarāja ideals set out by 'Phags pa in his discourse, the present study argues that this cannot be taken as evidence that the discourse was completely inconsequential. The lack of consensus in Buddhist literature forbidding such practices and evidence that 'Phags pa may not have strictly disapproved of all cases of such practices suggest that these actions need not have necessarily been in contravention of 'Phags pa’s advice. Furthermore, the characteristics and deeds consistent with efforts to live up to 'Phags pa’s discourses attributed to Qubilai by a range of historical accounts are also indicative of their power and practical influence.

2. Avenues for future research
This study points to some related remaining issues that are beyond the direct scope of this thesis but represent potential avenues for future research. One such avenue is a study of whether the concept of the union of religion and state was indeed implemented as the form of governance in the Mongol Empire as some Mongolian sources suggest, and if so, how it manifested in practice. Indeed, if such a form of governance was implemented, this could significantly raise contemporary perceptions of the centrality of Tibetan Buddhism within Mongol conceptions of statecraft. Relevant Mongolian sources include The White History of the Ten Virtues and The Jewelled Chronicle.

Another potential area for future research relates to the appeals appended to Advice to the King, in particular, the suggestion in The Ornament that 'Phags pa’s appeal to Qubilai to consider the welfare of Buddhist monastics and his request for permanent leave from Qubilai’s court were motivated by the maligning of Buddhist monastics by some factions in the empire. While friction among the different peoples comprising the empire and the competition for influence among those representing their interests at the imperial court is well recognised, these references may allude to a specific escalation in this struggle about which, as yet, nothing appears to be known.

The focus of this thesis has been on better understanding the nature of the Qubilai–’Phags pa relationship and what ’Phags pa’s discourses say about this

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7 Chos rgyal ’Phags pa (1968h: 182, folio 4).
8 Shes rab gzhon nu (1968: 108, folio 1–2).
relationship. Consistent with the emphasis of 'Phags pa’s Sa skya tradition, these discourses are focused on Buddhist philosophy, practice and dialectics, rather than magic. Nevertheless, magic—or, at least perceptions of magic—undoubtedly held significant appeal for the Mongols, and Tibetan Buddhist monks, including 'Phags pa, were widely perceived to possess such abilities. Therefore, a more detailed study of the role of magic in drawing the Mongol khans to Tibetan Buddhism would provide an intriguing area for research. Such a study could also trace the history of the use of magic in interactions between Buddhist prelates and kings, perhaps, all the way back to the sūtras, which include numerous accounts of the display of magical powers by the Buddha.
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Appendix One:  
Advice to the King

The treatise entitled *Advice to the King.*  
Homage to all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

[First, I pay homage to the one] endowed with the glory of a famous name  
And the glory of actual, astounding virtues;  
I pay homage to the Buddha, the perfection of all glories.  
Then, [I] present this [advice] for your glory, sublime king.

You have surely absorbed a multitude of teachings  
On the dual topics of the transient world and the Dharma.  
But just as musicians [repeat] their lyrics and music,  
Why should not a poet discuss these [topics] again?

The innumerable heaps of Dharma  
The Muni spoke for boundless subjects  
Are all solely for practice.  
It is like this, so know this.

A person bound by fear and shame  
Does not violate the king’s law,  
And leads a proper life of non-violence and prosperity,  
Winning praises even from the king.

The Muni, provided the laws of the common yāna  
In order to care for karmically inclined beginners.  
These are to be received from the preceptor as one is able,  
With proper rituals and procedures.

Therefore, just like [the king’s subjects], for great fear of seen and unseen existential suffering,
[Feel] ashamed [to transgress the precepts]; so too should one [feel ashamed before] the mass of Noble Ones
Who can see what is beyond and would thus be disappointed [in one].
[With such thought] if [one] abides by [these precepts] properly,

They become the foundation of existence’s seen and unseen happiness,
And all the virtues of perfect liberation.
[As such, one] will also become an object of veneration for gods and humans,
Winning praises even from the Buddha.

These three worlds of existence are nothing but suffering,
Even nirvāṇa, is mere peace.
Therefore, view those who aspire [to either]
Samsāra or nirvāṇa with compassion.

Without suffering they alleviate all [others’] suffering;
Having attained great happiness, they grant all happiness [to others].
They are none other than the Buddhas,
And they arise out of [beings] like me.
I too can employ their methods
[I too] can pledge that “I must certainly attain Buddhahood”.

Without being disheartened or despondent,
[I will] unwaveringly practise unsurpassed bodhicitta.

By transgressing [the Vajrayāna vows] you will burn in hell;
By securing them, you will [experience] immediately
The fruit of splendid joy,
So accept samaya and secure it as dearly as your life.

These three vows of the three vehicles
Are the basis upon which your and others’ qualities
Are generated, exist and increase;
Therefore may you stabilise them at the beginning.
Utterly flawless speech,
Which does not contradict [but rather] entirely conforms with
The two valid cognitions and is virtuous in the beginning, middle and end,
Can be definitively affirmed as the dharma.

The speaker [of such a teaching] has unhindered knowledge,
Teaches without close-fistedness, is loving and—
Having abandoned affections counter to [knowledge]—¹
[The one who] knows the [path] for the attainment of great power is the Buddha.

Because they follow [the Buddha]
[And] their qualities accord with the causes [of the qualities of the Buddha], and
because they are [also] congregated,
They are the supreme assembly. [This assembly] shares a common sphere of [Dharma]
activity, so
Definitively, they are the supreme field. [They are] the Saṃgha.

The gurus introduce you to the [Three Jewels], [and] bridge the gap [between them and
you]. They also have qualities analogous to the three [jewels].
So reflect on how they kindly protect you;
Consult them always. You must cultivate unwavering faith!

The nature of [suffering’s] causes, character and continuity is such that
[I] wish to alleviate this suffering and its causes, from my continuum.
Likewise, [I] wish all other sentient beings without exception the same.
Cultivate this great compassion that cannot be overwhelmed.

Reflect on the benefits of the highest awakening; [the virtues of] benefiting others and;
The benefits of virtues that can be enjoyed in the short-term
To achieve these [temporary and final benefits],
Commit [yourself] wholly to [achieving them] with fervent aspiration.

Since a mind of faith, compassion and aspiration
Precedes all [virtuous] actions,

¹ This line only appears in the commentary, not in the root text.
Do whatever little acts of virtue you can
With these mental states as your motivation.

Envision the rupakāya of the chief muni
Either in front of you or as your own body.
The place in which you are sitting is a Buddha realm
And all the beings in it are the Victor’s offspring and disciples.
Make offerings to yourself and others. [These offerings should be]
Oceanic, consisting of all the objects the five senses enjoy.

Understand that the supreme guru is equal to all the Victors, without exception;
They are equal and non-dual in their aspects, activities and essential natures.
At all times, contemplate [the guru] in front [of you], at [your crown]
Or at the centre of your heart lotus.
Either supplicate [the guru] or meditate on [the guru and the Victor’s] non-duality.

Mind is the root of all phenomena:
Virtue and non-virtue, happiness and suffering,
And saṃsāra and nirvāna too.

Examine the mind thoroughly from every aspect:
It has neither colour nor shape,
Nor is it singular or manifold.
It has no essential nature, so it has not arisen,
Neither does it exist, nor cease.
It is devoid of a centre and an edge, therefore
It is free from elaboration, with a space-like nature.

Nevertheless, awareness does not cease [either], so
[Mind’s] nature is the union of awareness and emptiness.

The nature of all other sentient beings’ minds
Is the same as your mind’s mode.
Therefore, be certain that all phenomena are
Appearance and emptiness in union, and
Place your mind in an intense, non-grasping meditative equipoise.

Place [your mind] in a meditative equipoise: [focused on] 
The two observable objects; without an object; on the union [of appearance and emptiness].
Through these you will attain the meditative tranquillity of superior śamatha; 
This [śamatha] cannot be shaken by any conceptions.

After completing these [meditations], remember again and again 
All [your and others’] virtuous and non-virtuous actions, with joy [and remorse]. 
In-order to further increase [or diminish] their power, 
Remember virtues [and non-virtues]; this increases [and diminishes] them.

In particular, after placing [your mind] in meditative equipoise 
On any object, examine and investigate individually 
Its observable object, its aspects, 
Your experiences and so on. 
In this way, you will examine [phenomena’s] various 
Interdependent ways; their causes, conditions and so on. 
Then you will [understand] 
The way each and every existent is [ultimately] not observable; 
Having realised this exactly, you must accomplish vipaśyanā.

After performing virtuous actions, use them as tokens 
To compound all virtues into one; 
Dedicate [these virtues] to the attainment of ultimate awakening 
By yourself and all boundless sentient beings.

You may not have performed transformative virtue yet, 
But you can aspire to accomplish this great purpose. 
Prayers said like this will accomplish their aim, 
For the mind itself is the principal.

In this way, recollection, thorough dedication, 
And sublime aspiration ornament all virtues.
[These acts] increase [virtues], making them inexhaustible,
And cause [for the fulfilment] of your own and other’s great goals.

In a similar way, these practices and
All other varieties of compounded phenomena
Have no identifiable nature of their own;
They are all dependent on causes and conditions.

Habitual imprints make
The affected mind perceive and experience variety,
But this is not true (epistemically warranted).
Know it as illusion-like, arising from a multitude of conditions;
Like a sleep affected by dreams.

Uncompounded phenomena are merely designated:
They have no existence, they are just words.
The concept of [an uncompounded phenomenon] is a compounded phenomena;
therefore
To posit the substantial existence of [uncompounded phenomena] is madness.

You experience the results of your actions, therefore
The conventional truth of dependently originating cause and effect is indubitable.
Do not disparage the way of cause and effect.

No phenomenon lacks direction [place] and time;
When dissected by direction and time
There is not a single entity anywhere, anytime.
Without a single [entity], from whence do multiple entities arise?
Other than this, there is no existence.
[Any other] existence is mere conceptualisation.

When existence is intrinsically not established,
How can there be natural non-existence?
[That would be] like establishing long without short.
Completely dispel both suppositions [of intrinsic existence and non-existence];
There is no logical basis or reliability [in either of them].
There is no phenomenon that is both [existent and non-existent] or neither.
One with clear intelligence; you must know this.

If [the Cittamātrins] conceptualise the truth as a singularity
Because the mind has no form, it is directionless.

If the multitudinous appearances of subjects and objects
Are one, then the mind too will become multiple,
And false.
If [subjects and objects] are separate—
How can there be a phenomenon [dharma] and its reality [dharmatā]?
From whence does dual perception arise?
What is nirvāna after delusions are exhausted?

Since the object cannot be established inherently,
There is no inherent existence of the subject either.
Therefore, the proposition that lucidity and awareness are truly existent
Is as utterly false as [the Sāṃkhya’s view of] a distinct “self” other than manifestations.

Understand thoroughly that all phenomena have not
Arisen primordially; they have no inherent existence, are
Utterly free from elaborations by nature,[and are as]
Non-referential as space.

To understand the marvellous nature of
All phenomena, to neither renounce their emptiness
Nor interrupt the continuity of their dependent arising,
Is so much more wondrous than any wonder!

Know that all objects are a union of appearance and emptiness;
The mind is a unity of awareness and emptiness; and
The paths are a unity of method and wisdom.
Then familiarise [yourself with this knowledge] comprehensively.
Know that the causation, path and resultant stages of all phenomena
Are conventional, illusory, interdependently originated and
Ultimately, naturally emptiness.
And this is the inseparable union of the two [truths].

As such, there are five: the foundation, the preliminaries,
Meditative equipoise, subsequent acts and that which seals all.
Each of these is divided into three, which makes fifteen;
These constitute the virtuous path in its entirety.

Those who strive to complete every enumerated virtuous act
[In accordance] with these [elements] of the dharma’s way
Will enjoy all the happiness of a higher rebirth and
Having accumulated the two oceans of merit,
Conjoined them with the noble path through lucid meditative tranquillity,
And augmented them with the wisdom of meditation and practice,
You will reach the furthest end of the path.

The nature of the mind is primordially pristine;
It has the one taste of the [dharma]dhātu, because in it conceptions are pacified.
It is the nature body, the dharmadhātu wisdom;
It is excellent abandonment and the knowledge of each [phenomenon] as it is.

The path totally transforms saṃsāra’s phenomena:
The [ordinary] body becomes the [awakened] body, adorned with marks and signs;
The [ordinary] voice becomes the [awakened] voice, [possessing] sixty characteristics;
and
The [ordinary] mind becomes one that knows all existence’s varieties.
These are the three wisdoms, the transformations of faults;
The limitless qualities of the Victor; [and]
This is the complete enjoyment body (sambhogakāya) itself.

[Ordinary] actions are transformed into all-accomplishing wisdom,
Infinite activities are themselves the emanation bodies (nirmāṇakāya);
These are the completion of realisations.

Because [buddhas] have command over the [ten qualities],
they are permanent; there is no break in their continuity.

O lord of humans! May your deeds also be like this.

By the virtue of offering this gift of Dharma,
This condensed meaning of the profound supreme vehicle,
May all beings, and you in particular, O King,
Attain the highest state of buddhahood.

Having offered this gift of a treatise on Dharma
[My] confidence is further heightened.
O Lord of Beings! Just for a short while
Without being distracted, please heed my few appeals.

Now is the time for you to make an effort: to lengthen your own life personally;
To secure the glory of your lineage; and
To seek the means to attain liberation.
Work unreservedly.

While the glory of the [sun of] Dharma teachings has not [yet] set,
[And] a Dharma king, like you, Lord of Humans, [still] exists;
How could your heart not ponder
The plight of saffron-robed [Samgha]?

Although I am not old in years,
My body is weak, I am despondent, and my heart is discouraged.
I would like to rely upon solitude and search for the Dharma’s meaning.
Please kindly allow me to do this.
This treatise, called *Advice to the King*, was composed by 'Phags pa at Shing kun (Lintao) on the eighth day of the bya sbo’i zla ba (seventh month), of the female sheep year.

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3 Bya sbo is not a common name for the seventh month in Tibetan. It appears that it is the Tibetan translation for the Sanskrit name Śrāvaṇa—July–August. This is made clear in a work by the fifth Dalai Lama; see Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, “Byang chub lam gyi rim pa’i ’khrid yig ’jam pa’i zhal lung” in *Rgyal dbang lnga pa ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho’i gsung ’bum*, Vol. 15, (Pe cin: Krung go’i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2009), p. 145. In its entry for bya sbo, *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* explains that it is the same as skar ma gro bzhin, that is, the seventh month according to standard Tibetan lunar calendar. See Krang dbyi sun, *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* (Pe cin: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1984), p. 1863.
Appendix Two:
Ornament that Elucidates the Scriptures:
A Commentary on the Treatise
Advice to the King

Homage:

Commentary on the treatise Advice to the King called the ornament that elucidates the scriptures. Homage to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Blazing with hundreds of billions of qualities,
You completely crush the dense thicket of faults and
Dispossess beings of their blurry delusions:
With unwavering faith I pay homage to you, the sun [-like] omniscient one.

In accordance with the Victor’s teachings and the guru’s words,
I will expound on the teaching of the Dharmarājā that helps to comprehend quickly
The vast ocean of the Victor’s discourses [all the way to] its shores,
And was said for the lord of humans, the king.

1 This is a translation of the Tibetan title: “Rgyal po la gdam pa’i rab tu byed pa’i rnam par bshad pa gsung rab gsal ba’i rgyan”. In this translation I will refer it as “The Ornament”. The translation is based on the text: Shes rab gzhon nu, “Rgyal po la gdam pa’i rab tu byed pa’i rnam par bshad pa gsung rab gsal ba’i rgyan”, in Sa skya bka’ bum. TBRC W22271 (Dehra dun: sakya center, 1992–1993). Vol. 14 (Retrieved from http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O01CT0026|O01CT002600KG04463$W22271 on 01/04/2014). Page numbers of the original Tibetan text are marked in this translation in square brackets. The treatise to which this work provides a commentary is Advice to the King (Rgyal po la gdam pa’i rab tu byed pa), which I will refer to in this translation as “the root text”. It is available in Chos rgyal ’Phags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan, “Rgyal po la gdam pa’i rab tu byed pa”, Sa skya bka’ bum. TBRC W22271 (Dehra dun: Sakya Center, 1992–1993). Vol. 15 (Retrieved from http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O01CT0026|O01CT002600KG04526$W22271 on 01/04/2014). Note that both these texts are facsimiles of the Sde dge edition.

2 In this translation I will add in pronouns where appropriate throughout the text; there is often very limited use of pronouns in Tibetan texts but they are absolutely necessary to clarify what is meant in English.

3 The Tibetan word dad pa is often translated as “faith”, but its semantic field not only covers the connotation of having complete trust or confidence in someone or something but such trust must be based on informed knowledge of the object’s qualities rather than mere belief. Traditionally there are three types of dad pa: dang ba’i dad pa (admiration), ‘dod pa’i dad pa (longing), and yid ches pa’i dad pa (trust). In this translation, given the lack of an English word that is closer to the Tibetan term, I have used “faith”.

4 Dharmarājā here refers to the author of Advice to the King ’Phags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan who is also known as Chos rgyal ’Phags pa or the Dharmarājā ’Phags pa.
To the best of my ability, here I will expound on the treatise *Advice to the King* in accordance with its words, which came from the sublime teacher himself. It is the essence of all the vast scriptural teachings of the Sugatas. They are gathered together precisely by the words of the sublime [being] to show how they can be swiftly implemented.

[First he] articulates the lines of homage to the teacher [the Buddha].⁵ [He does this] so that: [his] actions accord with those of the sublime [beings]; [he] completes the treatise’s composition; [these actions] generate immense merit in his own and others’ continuums.

**Promise to compose:**

Desiring to compose the treatise, he then makes a promise to explain by saying:

[First, I pay homage to the one] endowed with the glory of a famous name
And the glory of actual, astounding virtues;
I pay homage to the Buddha, the perfection of all glories.
Then, [I] present this [advice] for your glory, sublime king.⁶

“I pay homage” is the foundation [of this verse]. If you were to ask to whom [he is paying homage], [the answer would be, he is paying homage] to the Buddha. [789] [And if you were to ask what] the Buddha is like, [the answer would be that the Buddha] is both the perfection of all glories and superior [to all others]. His glories are said to have two varieties. [The first of these is explained by the following line cited from the *Prātimokṣasūtra:*]⁷

His banner, his fame is renowned in all three worlds.⁸

[The Buddha] is glorious in that his name is widely known. Although the śrāvakas and the pratyekabuddhas do possess qualities such as seeing⁹ and liberation,

⁵ Although the actual word used in *The Ornament* is *ston-pa*, which can mean a teacher, a guide and the one who shows path, its context makes it clear that the reference is more specifically to “the Buddha”.

⁶ The Tibetan term translated here as “king”, *dbang phyug* [Skt. Īśvara] literally means powerful and rich in Tibetan. It is a synonym of the terms “king” and “sovereign”. It is also used as a pseudonym for the Hindu god Śiva. The use of this term will be explained shortly within the body of the text.

⁷ http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=kangyur&index=2#1B (accessed on 03/04/2014). Throughout this translation, I have sought to find and reference the sources cited in *The Ornament*; however, I was unable to find a number of these sources.

⁸ According to Tibetan Buddhist cosmology, the “three worlds” (Tib. *rjig rten gsum*) are the worlds of: gods, humans, and nāgas.

⁹ The Tibetan word is misspelt in the original manuscript as *rigs* (with a post-suffix *sa*) which has a completely different meaning than *rig*. 
they are not as widely known. Yet as Brahmā, Śiva and Viṣṇu are also widely known, and some may doubt, assuming the Buddha’s qualities are therefore nothing extraordinary, [the author] also comments on “the glory of [the Buddha’s] astounding qualities”.

In actuality, [rather than merely in name] only the Buddha possesses the amazing, astounding qualities. [Only the Buddha has] chopped the obscuration of afflictions and the obscuration of knowledge at their roots, along with their imprints. [Only the Buddha has] also gained the knowledge of all knowables; as many as there are and how they are.\(^\text{10}\) If the śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas and bodhisattvas do not have such qualities, how can it be said that worldly teachers like Brahmā have them? As Ācārya Māticītra also said [in Miśrakastotra].\(^\text{11}\)

Only the Omniscient has all the virtues
That does not depreciate.
Only the Protector has neither
Faults nor their imprints.

Hence, venerated and praised by the greatest of the great in the transient-world, the fame of [the Buddha] is limitless.

If you were to ask which individual paid this homage, the answer would be: it is the author of the treatise himself. If you were to ask a further [question], after performing the homage to such an extraordinary object, what does the author do next, [the answer would be that he] presents this treatise of advice to your ear for your glory, the sublime powerful and wealthy one (Tib. dbang phyug). Because kings rule nations and set their policies, kings are called the powerful and wealthy. [790] Yet, since it can also refer to ordinary kings, to signify [that this king] is superior to other [kings, the author] addressed him as “the sublime [king]”. This sublimeness derives from his possession of the sublime Dharma, and the actions he performs in accordance with it. This [possession] also signifies the king is a dharmarāja.

The purpose and connections of this treatise:

Having presented the promise to compose after the homage, the following two verses describe the purpose and relationships of this treatise. [These verses are spoken] to

\(^\text{10}\) These are the two wisdoms of the Buddha. ji rnyed pa mkhyen pa is the wisdom of discriminating all details of phenomena simultaneously without confusion and ji lta ba mkhyen pa is the wisdom of knowing the absolute nature of all.

refute those who think that this treatise of advice has no purpose, because the king has been under the guidance of an excellent spiritual teacher, [the author of the text] himself. [According to this argument, the king] would have heard many deep and profound teachings that informed him about the ways of the transient world and the Dharma [and therefore would not need any more teachings]. [To refute this argument] the following two verses present the purpose and connections of this treatise:

You have surely absorbed a multitude of teachings
On the dual topics of the transient world and the Dharma.
But just as musicians [repeat] their lyrics and music,
Why should not a poet discuss these [topics] again?

The innumerable heaps of Dharma
The Muni spoke for boundless subjects
Are all solely for practice.
It is like this, so know this.

Here the first verse is to dispel misunderstanding [that may cause] doubts. [It explains that] [the king] must have absorbed a multitude of teachings on the dual topics of the transient world and the Dharma. Yet if we listen to and watch musicians sing lyrics and play music every day—like those that we heard earlier—why should not a poet discuss the extremely beneficial ways of the Dharma in poetic words again? [He] should. This is similar to what Ārya [791] Nāgārjuna said in the Letter to King Surabhībhadra [Suhr̥ilekha]:

While you have surely learned and understood
The Mighty Buddha’s many beautiful words,
Is it not so that something made of chalk
Glow even whiter in the moonlight?

The latter verse shows the actual wording of the treatise’s purpose and relationships. The subject of exposition is all the innumerable heaps of Dharma that [the Buddha] taught. The purpose of this treatise is for the [the king] to know [the teachings of the Buddha] and therefore practise according [to them]. As [the text] goes on to explain by saying, “O Lord of humans! May your deeds also be like this”, the final

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12 Dge ba’i bshes gnyen. This is the standard Tibetan translation of the Sanskrit term kalyāṇamitra.
13 I have translated the term gtsug lag gnyis as “the dual topics of the transient world and the Dharma”. This Tibetan term has a wide range of possible interpretations depending on context. For more on this term, see Michael L. Walter, Buddhism and Empire (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 225–240.
The purpose of this exposition is to inspire the king to follow the Muni in accomplishing the wishes of boundless subjects. Since the relationship [between the content, purpose and their final purpose of this treatise] is implicitly understood, it is not explained.

The Buddha is a “competent one” (Skt. muni; Tib. thub pa) because he possessed extraordinary ability over his body, speech and mind. This [Buddha] taught innumerable heaps of dharma according to boundless subjects’ disposition, inclination and latency. Chos is [the Tibetan term for [the Sanskrit word dharma. [The Sanskrit word “dharma”] is a compound of the words dhāra and māna; “dhāra” meaning “to uphold” and “māna” meaning “mind”. Hence, dharma translates as “that which upholds the mind”. Conventionally all phenomena uphold their respective characteristics, but when they are analysed, no phenomena retain their characteristics. When the mind is engaged in this understanding, it has the power to keep one from [immersion in] samsara. Skandha is [the Sanskrit term] for “aggregates”. It is so named because [the heaps of dharma] are an aggregate of letters, words and sentences.

[This may suggest the following questions.] Are not the teachings numbered eighty four thousand? Then how can they be innumerable? The teachings [of the Buddha] are numbered eighty four thousand because this is the number [of teachings] Ānanda heard. Who could count all the innumerable heaps of Dharma that [the Buddha has] taught [in other times and places] [792] for boundless subjects according to their disposition, inclination and latency? Hence, it is said in the Samādhirājasūtra that:

Whosoever measures the Dharma of the Buddha
That person’s mind is utterly unsound;
The immeasurable cannot be measured
The Guide’s qualities are inconceivable.

Thus, all these innumerable heaps of Dharma have not been expressed merely for learning, debating or to avoid non-virtues. They have been [said so that they] can be practiced and [lead to] accomplishments. They have been said because they alone show

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15 A more literal translation of the Tibetan term gdul bya would be tameable being, but for the purpose of maintaining consistency with the root text I have used the term “subject” throughout.
16 Although the term Dharma has multiple contextual meanings, here in its present context it means phenomena.
18 dren pa is a common epithet of a buddha, it has the connotation of the one who raises beings from the cycle of suffering.
[the paths] to benefit and happiness. As Ācārya Maticitra explained [in Miśrakastotra]:

All that is said and done is to benefit [others].
No doubt your teachings are for [others’] benefit.
Even if the top of your head is on fire,
Why shouldn’t you [continue] to practice?

Again, in the Pramāṇavārttika it is said:

The Protector did not speak in expectation of a reward,
And therefore, when speaking of the path he saw, he did not lie.
Because of his compassionate heart,
All his compositions were composed for others.

[As this explains], [the Buddha] did not speak lies [first] because [he] possessed knowledge and [second] because of [his] compassion, which ascertained what he might say to benefit others.

[If someone were to ask], if so, can the bodhisattvas practise the scriptural collections of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas? [The answer would be] yes, they can. [The reason for this is] because the scriptural collections of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas mainly present the disciplining of verbal and physical actions. This practise [of discipline] is not contradictory to the bodhisattva’s [practice]. [Indeed,] with a thought that is entirely fixated on bodhicitta, this [practice] leads on to the path of complete buddhahood. Therefore it is said [in the Bodhipathapradīpa]:

The bodhicitta vow cannot be generated
By any other than those fortunate ones
Who possess other vows from
The seven sets of prātimokṣa vows.

Further, [in the Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra] it is said:

Those who are of the ordained faction
Are endowed with [793] immeasurable qualities.
Therefore, a percept observing layperson
[Must approach the ordained] as being superior to the bodhisattvas.

The precepts of bodhisattvas are primarily to restrain mental wrongdoings. This does not conflict with the precepts of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, [which are concentrated on restraining from verbal and physical wrongdoings]. The goal of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas is not to accomplish vast benefit for other beings, they do not seek to realise the path and aspects as non-arising or to abandon the obscurcation of knowledge. They seek accomplishments for their own benefit, to realise the non-arising of the ground and to abandon the obscurcation of the afflictions; this is also a part of what bodhisattvas seek to attain. Again, to appeal to those subjects who are inclined towards the śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha teachings, their teachings must be given. And it is not enough to merely pronounce these teachings without having practiced them. Hence the Pramāṇavārttika\(^{23}\) says that:

\[
\text{To relieve suffering, the Compassionate One} \\
\text{Thoroughly applied numerous methods.} \\
\text{Yet since the cause of the outcome of the method is concealed,} \\
\text{It is difficult to express.}
\]

The Prajñāpāramitāsūtra also repeatedly speaks [of this necessity]. It says: “bodhisattvas must learn the path of the śrāvakas”. And again it says: “bodhisattvas must learn the path of the pratyekabuddhas”.

The validity of this can be [also] be proven through reasoning, because during their time of learning, the buddhas must study innumerable heaps of Dharma so that at the resultant stage they will know innumerable heaps of Dharma. If all the boundless heaps of Dharma are to be practised, how can one practise them all? As will be explained in the following, there are a few ways of [practising] them: some foundational [794] [practises] are done at the preliminary [level]; some meditative equipoises are practised later; and some [other practices] are to be done with the seal [of correct view].

Main subject: How to practise the actual instructions of Buddhism

Foundational practice:

As such, having presented the foreword of the treatise, [the text] then goes on to present the main subject: How to practise the actual instructions of Buddhism. The first [of these] is the foundational practice:

A person bound by fear and shame
Does not violate the king’s law,
And leads a proper life of nonviolence and prosperity,
Winning praises even from the king.

A person who is bound by fear of the king’s punishment and the shame of being the subject of other’s disdain therefore refrains from violating the king’s law. They lead a life free from the king’s punishments and will also enjoy increases in fortune, both of wealth and family. When [this kind of person] can win words of praise even from the king, it is no wonder that [they will] be praised by ministers and others. This analogy is [then] compared to [the Buddha in the following verses of the root text]:

The Muni provided the laws of the common vehicle (yāna)
In order to care for karmically inclined beginners.
These are to be received from the preceptor as one is able,
With proper rituals and procedures.

Therefore, just like [the king’s subjects], for great fear of seen and unseen existential suffering,
[Feel] ashamed [to transgress the precepts]; so too should one [feel ashamed before] the mass of noble ones
Who can see what is beyond and would thus be disappointed [in one].
[With such thought] if [one] abides by [these precepts] properly,

They become the foundation of existence’s seen and unseen happiness,
And all the virtues of perfect liberation.
[As such, one] will also become an object of veneration for gods and humans,
Winning praises [795] even from the Buddha.

The first [disciples] of the Buddha are those karmically inclined to the [teachings] of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas. Thus it is said that when a number of dreadlocked bodhisattvas from the world of Deva-avalokayati [Tib. lhas bltas] came to this Buddha’s realm they looked thoroughly at the retinues that surrounded the Buddha and they said to the Buddha: “There are numerous śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas in
your retinue”. The Buddha replied: “Those who live in your buddha-world are only youthful bodhisattvas, whereas here in my buddha-world there are many immature beginners, so there are many śrāvakas in my retinue”. Therefore, to uphold those who are inclined to the [teachings] of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, the disapproving, affirmation and exception [teachings]—the laws promulgated from the Vinaya Piṭaka of the common vehicle—were subsequently enforced.

According to one’s ability to observe them, [the precepts] of upavāsa, upāsaka, śrāmaṇera and bhikṣu are to be received from the abbot, the ācārya or the saṃgha with the complete rites of refuge. [This ceremony should include] the four activities because they are the moral precepts of symbolism that are imparted correctly through symbolism. It is also said in the Vinayasūtra that:

If [you] transgress these rites the karma cannot be confessed.

Prescribing the reception of precepts as per one’s ability to observe them, the Sūtra of Bhaiṣajyaguruvaiḍūryaprabhārāja describes [five groups]:

(1) Those who maintain the five [796] fundamental precepts;
(2) Those who maintain the ten fundamental precepts;
(3) Those who maintain the four hundred fundamental precepts;
(4) Those bhikṣus who renounce the householder’s life and maintain the two hundred and fifty fundamental precepts; and
(5) Those bhikṣunīs who maintain the five hundred fundamental precepts.

Again it is said in the same sūtra that:

Whichever devoted sons or daughters of the family maintains upavāsa and maintain the fundamental precepts for a year or three months.

If one receives the precepts without being able to maintain them, it will cause suffering because it is said in the Samādhirājasūtra that:

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24 During the ceremony of receiving a full ordination of a bhikṣu, one requests the bestowal of the vows once and then says the actual vows three times. These combined are called “the four activities”.
Those who adulterate precepts go to lower rebirths;  
Much learning cannot protect them [from this].

If one were to ask what causes [such suffering, the answer would be as follows.]  
These [beings] are utterly tormented by the obvious sufferings of this life and the 
sufferings of the three lower rebirths in the unseen world after this life.  
Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra\textsuperscript{28} reads:

\begin{quote}
The buddhas’ eyes see directly,  
They are the guardians of the teaching.  
Time does not impede their knowledge,  
Thus they cannot be indifferent.  
\end{quote}

The \textit{Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra}\textsuperscript{29} also says:

\begin{quote}
The buddhas and bodhisattvas  
Have unimpeded vision throughout [time and space]  
You are always  
In their presence.  
\end{quote}

[These lines suggest that] we remember that the mass of noble ones can see 
beyond [their immediate surroundings including us] and will thus be disappointed or  
despise [our negative actions]. The desire not to be shamed\textsuperscript{30} in this way should  
generate [in you] the will to guard your sensory doors and abide properly by the  
precepts you have received. [Behaving in this way] will produce evident results in this  
life, such as a long life and increased wealth. It will also produce unseen results in your  
next life, after death, when you will enjoy the pleasures of [797] higher rebirths. This is  
why the [Śīlasaṃyuktā]sūtra\textsuperscript{31} says:

\begin{quote}
Even the vicious great black nāga  
Does not harm those who possess precepts.  
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{28} http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=4020#2A (accessed on 08/04/2014).  
\textsuperscript{30} The Tibetan word \textit{khrel ba} is often translated as “shame”, but as this example indicates, its semantic  
field not only covers the actual feeling of shame, but also the potential for shame. \textit{Khrel ba} includes the  
sense that one would not perform an action as it would result in shame.  
And in the [Prātimokṣasūtra]$^{32}$ it says [abiding by precepts is]:

The dam, the bridge that ensures
You [can] travel to a good destination.

There are also many more such statements. [Abiding by the precepts] not only bestows happiness in this transient world; it can become the basis of all the qualities of peaceful liberation. This occurs because a mind that possesses unstained, fundamental precepts is not [plagued by] guilt or regrets. Such a mind at ease generates the profound meditative state of śamatha. Consequently, śamatha gives rise to the wisdom of vipaśyanā, and vipaśyanā abandons afflictions. By abandoning afflictions the suffering of samsara will cease to arise. This [wisdom] unbinds [the mental continuum] from all shackles. Ācārya Śāntideva affirmed this [in the Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra]:$^{33}$

Having understood that disturbing conceptions are completely overcome
By vipaśyanā that is entirely conjoined with śamatha,
First, one should search for śamatha. [To do this]
Achieve the genuine joy of being unattached to worldly life.

Further, the Trisatakārikā$^{34}$ says that:

The discipline of renunciation abandons suffering.
Destroy the foundations of the demon view$^{35}$ [that looks at] the transitory collection [as self];
Destroy the ground$^{36}$ of wealth. $^{37}$ [Destroy] Māra.$^{38}$

$^{34}$ The full name of this text is Āryamūlasarvāstivādīśrāmaṇerakārikā. See http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=4124#63A (accessed on 10/04/2014).
$^{35}$ The Tibetan term is “rtsa ba” which literally means “root”. Using “root” in this context creates a mixed metaphor. Hence, I have used “foundation” in its place.
$^{36}$ The version of the root text that I have primarily referred to has “dpal ’byor pa”. This appears to be incorrect because the Bstan ’gyur (Dpe bsdur ma) version of the text reads “dpal ’byor sa”, and this makes much more sense in this context. Here “sa” means “the basis” and The Ornament reads, “dpal ’byor sa zhes bya ba ni rten yin te”.
$^{37}$ The “ground of wealth” is a metaphor for rebirth in the higher realms.
$^{38}$ The Tibetan text reads, “me tog mda’ can” (Skt. Puṣpadhanvā), which means “the holder of the flower arrow”. This is one of the many names of Māra but it is also a figure like Cupid who is believed to be the embodiment of beings’ lust and desire. In this sense it’s a name for Kāma, the god of desire.
In [describing] how one becomes an object of veneration for gods and humans, [in Miśrakastotra] Ācārya Maticitra stated that:

You śrāvakas [who listened to the Buddha’s teachings] are free from craving;
You are something astounding.
So the gods pray [to you] with their hands folded,
As [you are] astounding.

Not only the gods and the humans, but [in the Śīlasamyuktasūtra] even the Buddha praised discipline:

Bhikṣus with untainted discipline are radiant;
Those with discipline gain fame and happiness.

With such words [the disciplined] have won praise even from the Buddha. [798]

Having presented the trainings derived from the śrāvaka that primarily highlight the discipline of the body and speech, next there is an explanation of the trainings of bodhicitta, which primarily [focuses] on mental actions that benefit others. [The root text reads:]

These three worlds of existence are nothing but suffering,
Even nirvana is mere peace.
Therefore, view those who aspire [to either]
Samsara or nirvana with compassion.

[The verse above] shows the first cause for generating bodhicitta mind. This is why Maitreyanātha said [in the Mahāyānottaratantrasāstra]:

There is no happiness in the five transmigratory realms;
Filth has no perfume.

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40 The wording of the citation are slightly different in: Dignāga Kumārakalasā, and Bsod nams bzang po, “Spel mar bstod pa”. In Bstan ‘gyur dpe bsdur ma (Pe cin: Kruṅ go’i bod rig pa’i dpe skrun khang, 1994–2008.) Vol. 1: p. 553. Here the verse reads: khyod kyi nyan thos sred brad zhirg. ya mtshan ’dzin pa med rnam la’ng. lha rnam thal shyar smon bygyid cing. ya mtshan che ba lla bur mchod. I have based my translation on this source.
43 The Ornament reads: “’go lnga dag na bde ba med”. This appears to be a printing error. In Tshul khrims rin chen, “Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma’i bstan bcos”, Bstan ’gyur (Sde dge), TBRC W23703
This quote describes those beings who indulge in sensory pleasures in the Desire Realm, living within the causes and results of suffering. [This includes] the beings in the Form Realm who do not indulge in sensory pleasures directly but nonetheless live within the causes of suffering and the beings in the Formless Realm live in suffering alone. In relation to them, Ācārya Maticitra said [in *Varṇāravapṛśṇaḥbhagavit buddhāsya stotrasy*]:

> Those who do not turn towards your teachings  
> Are those people who are blinded by ignorance.  
> Travel to the summit of samsara, and even there  
> [You] will experience the utter suffering of existence.

If someone were to ask: Does this mean there are no pleasurable and neutral sensations? [The answer would be:] Even while experiencing pleasure, there is the prevalent, painful thought that we will be parted from the pleasure. [To say it] another way: Compounded phenomena are impermanent, therefore all phenomena are pervaded by the suffering of all-pervasive conditionality. But this is not evident to common beings. It is said [in an unidentified *sūtra* that]:

> Childlike beings are like the palm of a hand,  
> Exulted beings are like the eye.  
> The suffering of all-pervasive conditionality is like a string of hair,  
> Childlike beings do not see it.

If someone were to ask: Since the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas are also devoid of suffering, should we practise their paths too? [The answer would be:] The nirvana [they achieve] is merely the pacification of gross suffering. They have not realised the state of great bliss because they have not been released from a mind-made bodies and its causes, the imprints of ignorance [799]. [Such a state] is an object for the Mahāyānist’s compassion. As the *Śrīmālādevīśīṃhanādasūtra* explains in detail [in the following passage]:

45 An exact wording of this text cannot be found in the *sūtrās*, but there are several citations in the *Bstan ’gyur* from the *sūtrās* of passages with essentially the same meaning. For example, the wording cited in the *Pañcaskānda vivaraṇa* reads: Byis pa dag ni lag mthil ’dra. ’du byed sdu bsgal spu mi rtogs. ’phags pa mams ni mig par ’dra. de yis shin tu yid kyang ’byung. See [http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=4067#12B](http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=4067#12B) (accessed on 13/04/2014).)
O Bhagavan, the three states of existence arise, conditioned by clinging to existence and by defiled actions. In like manner, O Bhagavan, the three forms of mind-made bodies, those of arhats, pratyekabuddhas, and greatly powerful bodhisattvas are caused by undefiled actions, but are conditioned by the ground of ignorance. O Bhagavan, the three kinds of mind-made bodies occur in the three grounds [of the arhat, pratyekabuddha, and bodhisattva], and they act as the condition for the creation of undefiled actions.

Further, as Maitreyaṇātha said [in the Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra]:

There are those who are potentially great but have abandoned bodhicitta; They think of benefiting others and finding methods [to do this], But when they see the supreme suchness and the great purpose, They forsake that bliss and pass into nirvana.

To stress that instead of enjoying such a nirvana one should cultivate compassion, Maitreya further stated [in the Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra]:

Those engrossed in compassion Cannot abide in peace [nirvana]; How could they then be attached to The pleasures of existence and their own lives?

Moreover, in the same text [Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra], Maitreya said:

The Tathāgata sits there; it is as if he is on a Great mountain, the king of mountains, gazing down on beings. As he feels compassion for those who delight in nirvana, Is there any need to explain [his compassion] for those who delight in existence?

[As this verse explains,] both those who aspire to samsara and nirvana are both viewed [by the Buddha] as objects of compassion. Because [those who aspire to samsara] experience no happiness, only suffering, [800] and those who aspire to nirvana are relieved of gross suffering but do not attain great happiness.

The second cause of generating bodhicitta is explained [in the following manner]:

Without suffering they alleviate all [others’] suffering;
Having attained great happiness, they grant all happiness [to others].
They are none other than the buddhas,
And they arise out of [beings] like me.
I too can employ their methods;
[I too] can pledge that “I must certainly attain buddhahood”.

The one who is without suffering, alleviates other’s suffering, attains great happiness and grants the supreme happiness to others is none other than the Buddha. Hence, [you should] attempt to think that you too will definitely attain buddhahood like [the buddhas]. This description explains how you should make a pledge to a preceptor.\(^{49}\)

You may feel that although attaining buddhahood is of great benefit, a person like you cannot achieve it. [This is incorrect.] The buddha[s] arises from [beings] just like you. They employ methods that accomplish the result, the excellence of abandonment and realisation.

You may question whether you can achieve the excellence of abandonment. [You may suggest] that afflictions are the nature of mind and it is therefore impossible to abandon them. [You may insist] that you do not know how to abandon them. [You may think] that [the afflictions] are like dirt on your body, which comes back [even] after you have gotten rid of it. None of these things [are true]. The nature of the mind is luminous, and therefore the causes [of the afflictions] can be abandoned. The cause of afflictions is ignorance, and its antidote is wisdom; therefore familiarising yourself with wisdom dispenses [the afflictions]. The \textit{Pramāṇavārttika}\(^ {50}\) says:

\begin{quote}
It is a cause, so therefore

Familiarising yourself with its antidote causes it to diminish [801].
Knowing the nature of the cause means
You also know its [antidote] exists.
\end{quote}

\(^{49}\) The actual Tibetan word here is \textit{yul}, which is often translated as “object”. In the present context, however, I feel it is more appropriate to translate as “preceptor”. Nevertheless, it should be noted that a \textit{bodhicitta} pledge can be made in front of a person, objects or visualisations of the three objects of refuge, the Buddha, Dharma and Saṃgha.

The excellence of realisation can also be established. [The reason for this is that] familiarisation with emptiness is not a mental factor. If it were, this familiarisation could be increased beyond measure. [Sa skya Paṇḍita] in the *Tshad ma rigs gter*\(^{51}\) said:

After training well in method and wisdom
The two become each other’s corresponding cause and condition.
[The training] will therefore result in the attainment of [two types of]
Wisdom: to see phenomena as they are and in their multiplicity.

As such, *bodhicitta* must be generated through cultivating two causes: (1) a mind of compassion for sentient beings; and (2) a desire for buddhahood. This has been a description of how to establish *bodhicitta* through exclusionary elimination. Next there is an explanation of [how to establish *bodhicitta*] through negation, through complete exclusion. [The root text reads:]

Without being disheartened or despondent,
[I will] unwaveringly practise unsurpassed *bodhicitta*.

[The term] “disheartened” [refers to] the feeling that even if I strive as prescribed I will only be able to attain liberation and not buddhahood. [This feeling may arise] because [the attainment of buddhahood depends on] the accumulation of merit and wisdom for three incalculable aeons; or because it will require the benefitting of innumerable sentient beings; or for the sake of mastery of unlimited knowledge and encountering austerities such that even for a word of Dharma one must cross a flame the size of three-thousandfold universe.

Yet to counteract [this disheartenment], the *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra*\(^{52}\) says:

Those sentient being in human form
Should not be disheartened
About the attainment of buddhahood;
[Even if] every moment is immeasurably long.

Likewise, [in Śiṣyalekha],\(^{53}\) Ācārya Candragomin said:

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\(^{52}\) Although *The Ornament* attributes this quote to *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra*, this is an error. Apparently this quote is from *Mahāyānasūtrālāṃkāra*, see http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=4020#13A (accessed on 16/04/2014).

Your family and friends are stuck in samsara;
Like something [precious] lost in a great pile.
You do not recognise each other after death and rebirth, [802]
But if you forsake them and seek liberation for yourself alone, you have no shame.

Through performing deeds that benefit innumerable sentient beings, you will swiftly accrue accumulation of merit. This happens because benefiting limitless sentient beings consequentially give rise to limitless roots of virtue. As Ācārya Śāntideva once said [in the Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra]:54

Due to the strength of bodhicitta,
Bodhisattvas consume all previous evils
And harvest oceans of merit.
This is why the bodhisattva is said to excel the śrāvakas.

The three incalculable aeons needed to accumulate merit do not [seem to be] a long time for bodhisattvas who have trained their minds to [be dedicated to] sentient beings. As the Licchavivimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra says:

For those bodhisattvas who tame beings through contraction of Samsara even an eon manifests as a week, and for other Bodhisattvas who tame beings through expansion of samsara a week manifests as an eon.

What is more, [from a bodhisattva’s point of view, I could ask] what is wrong with samsara taking so long? [After a bodhisattva reaches] the greater Path of Accumulation, they summit [samsara] with the four legs of miraculous action. [After reaching] the Path of Connection, there is [no possibility of] falling into lower rebirths. From the Path of Seeing onwards, they cannot revert [to the state of] an ordinary being. Therefore, [bodhisattvas] are pleased by every successive quality [they develop] on the path and [that path] is devoid of suffering. As Ācārya Śāntideva also said [in the Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra]:55

Therefore, once you mount the bodhicitta horse,
A [horse] that dispels all weariness and discouragement,

[And] know [how] this mind travels from joy to joy,  
How will you ever lapse into despondency?

Looking at the buddha fields in the ten directions, those with clear sight see  
inconceivable [numbers of] bodhisattvas who have [all] generated initial bodhicitta and  
perform [bodhisattva] acts. In what way am I inferior [to them]? [803] The  
Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra [explains]:

If they develop the force of effort,  
Even flies, mosquitoes, bees and insects  
Will win the unsurpassable awakening  
That is so hard to find.

As [signs of bodhisattva’s] attainment their deeds include: taking on hardship for  
the dharma; giving away your head and limbs; and relying upon teachers. Performing  
these deeds requires less effort for those who are on the bodhisattva ground; for them it  
would be like giving up a mouthful of food. [While giving up their bodies] they think:  
“I have had lots of bodies [through many rebirths], but none of them have caused  
awakening. If [I give up this body] it will definitely cause awakening]”. As such they  
consider this opportunity as if they have been given the greatest gift. As the  
Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra [describes this state of mind]:

[Think:] “I will not let go of these sentient beings. I will relieve them from  
unfathomable masses of suffering. Even if my body is cut into a hundred  
pieces, I will not generate the tiniest malevolent [thought] towards a  
sentient being]”. This is how bodhisattvas should generate bodhicitta.  
When their minds remain like this, they have no experience of perceiving hardship. [Their minds] do not remain in [a state] in which they perceive hardship.

Śāntideva also said [in the Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra]:

At the beginning, the guide encourages  
Us to give away things such as food.  
Later, when we are accustomed to this,  
We may progressively start to give away even our flesh.

When our mind is developed and
We regard our bodies to be like food [for others],
What hardship is there in
Offering our flesh?

Despondency is a hindrance to practice, to the path. It is the feeling of dejection caused by bad companion and the experience of suffering and such. [In the *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra*,\(^{59}\) Śāntideva said [804]:

If merely for their own livelihood
fishermen, butchers and farmers,
Endure the sufferings of heat and cold,
Why can I not endure [them] for the sake of the world’s joy?

This is the way to dispel despondency. After [developing bodhicitta] in this way, it will remain steady and unmoved by the aforementioned phenomena of existence and nirvana. As the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*\(^{60}\) says:

Stability is unmoved by
Bad companions, suffering or hearing a profound teaching.

Awakening is the wisdom [that arises] from the knowledge that stains were always dispelled as things never arose [in the first place]. As Maitreya explained [in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*]:\(^{61}\)

Awakening is the wisdom that sees
Stains are dispelled and things do not arise.

The *Buddhāvatamsakamahāvaipulyasūtra* says of bodhicitta:

If [you find] aspirational bodhicitta difficult, [know] that it is [even harder] to keep it.

\(^{59}\) There is a slight variation between the wording here and that in 'Btsan ’gyur but the essential purport of the text is consistent. See http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=3871#9B (accessed on 19/04/2014).


This refers to the two [types of bodhicitta]. In relation to this [division] the dharma lord [Sa skya Paṇḍita] said:

The thought “May I attain awakening” is the aspirational mind, and to take a vow from a preceptor [to keep this attitude] is aspirational bodhicitta. The thought “May I engage in the acts of a bodhisattva” is the applied mind, and to take a vow from a preceptor [to act in this way] is to develop applied bodhicitta.\(^62\)

The nature [of such a thought] is the wish to attain awakening for the benefit of other beings. Thus, Maitreya said [in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*]:\(^63\)

Bodhicitta is the wish to attain perfect awakening\(^64\) For the benefit of others.

Since such bodhicitta excels the awakening [arhatship] of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, those who achieve it are called “supreme”. “Lord of the land, you must generate that which is not generated and cultivate that which is generated”.

Having provided an explanation of the practices of a bodhisattva, which he derived from the scriptural collection of the bodhisattvas [805] [Chos rgyal ’Phags pa] then [begins his explanation of] the practices of vows (samaya) of [the Vajrayāna] derived from the scriptural collection of the Vidyādharas. It reads:

By transgressing [the Vajrayāna vows] you will burn in hell;
By securing them, you will [experience] immediately
The fruit of splendid joy,
So accept samaya and secure it as dearly as your life.

This verse explains that after accepting your samaya you must secure it. The [Tibetan] term dam tshig is [equivalent to the Sanskrit term] samaya, which means “time”. This implies that it should not be transgressed from the time it was accepted. If [someone

\(^62\) Although I could not find this exact quote in Sa skya Paṇḍita’s writing, I did, however, find a passage in which he presented these definitions of bodhicitta. See Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan, “Dbu ma lugs kyi sems bskyed kyi cho ga”, in *Gsung ′bum kun dga’ rgyal mtshan* (Lha sa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 1992), Vol. 2. p. 558.


\(^64\) The Sanskrit term here is *Anuttarā samyak sambodhi*, and its Tibetan rendering is *yang dag rdzogs pa’i byang chub*. 
were] to ask: From whom should I receive [this samaya]? [The answer can be found in the] Gurupañcāśikā,65 which explains [the source of the samaya, the guru]:

[A guru:]
Is stable(1), disciplined(2) and wise(3);
Patient(4) and honest(5);
Never conceals shortcomings, nor pretends to have qualities s/he lacks(6);
Knows the applications of mantra and tantra(7);66
Is thoroughly adept in the ten principles
[of the Secret Mantra] (8);67
Is skilled in the drawing of maṇḍalas(9); and
Is utterly serene with fully-disciplined senses(10).

[Samaya] must be accepted from a guru who possesses all ten of these qualities.

If you were to ask how [closely your samaya] needs be secured, [the answer would be:] It has to be secured as [dearly] as your life. Āryadeva explains [in an unidentified source] the reason [samaya needs to be secured by way of the following analogy]:

A king would dare to forsake his kingdom
Before he would dare to lose his head.

This [analogy] reflects [the proposition] that the transgression of [samaya] leads to rebirth in the three lower realms. [It is also worth noting the converse of this:] by securing [samaya] you will achieve [temporary and ultimate results]. Temporarily, you will achieve the eight glories68 and other such results. Ultimately, you will achieve amazing, splendid happiness immediately. [In this case], “immediately” means that the result will be attained either in this life, in the intermediate state [between lives] or within sixteen lifetimes. This signifies its superiority compared to the path of the perfections. Just as the harvests that usually ripen in six months can be ripened in a day

66 The Sde dge edition has sbyor dgos. The last word appears to be a misprint, instead sbyor ba shes is used in ‘Gro mgonchos rgyal ’phags pa, Rgyal po la gdams pa ’i rnam bshad, gsung ’bum Dpe bsdur ma (Pe cin: krun go’i bod rig pa dpes krun khang, 2007). Vol. 3, p. 337. This corresponds with bla ma lnga bcu pa text found in Sde dge Bstan ’gyur. See Tshul khrims rin chen, Bla ma lnga bcu pa, Bstan ’gyur (Sde dge), TBRC W23703 (Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Choedhey, Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1982–1985), Vol. 79: p. 21 – 25.
67 The ten principles are threefold: ten required for the vajra master, ten for the ritual and ten for the ultimate reality. For details, see Ngag dbangchos grags, Grags pa rgyal mtshan, “Bla ma lnga bcu pa’i ’grel pa dngos grub rin po che’i sgo ”byed”, in Shangs pa bka’ brgyud sog sogs pa’i sna tshogs glegs bam, TBRC W1KG4284 (Kathmandu: Sa skya rgyal yongs gsung rab slob gnyer khang, 2007), Vol. 2: p. 535.
68 Also known as the eight qualities of celestial dweller (mkha’ spyod chen po ’i yon tan brgyad), these are: subtle body, light body, pervasive body, attainment of qualities that are similar to the Buddha, seeing clear visions of wisdom, gaining mental stability, becoming a person of authority and having all one’s wishes fulfilled.
by [empowered] substances and mantras, the attainment of buddhahood that usually requires three incalculable aeons of accumulated merit can be achieved through a combination of special methods [806] in this life. As the *A Clear Differentiation of the Three Codes*\(^{69}\) says:

> Just as crops gradually ripen  
> As [farmers] till them correctly,  
> [Bodhisattvas] attain full awakening in three incalculable aeons  
> If they set out on the path of the perfections.

> Just as seeds planted with mantras  
> Ripen to harvest within a single day,  
> Those who know Vajrayāna techniques  
> Attain buddhahood in this very lifetime.

The [root text’s] summary [of the three vows follows]:

> These three vows of the three vehicles  
> Are the basis upon which your and others’ qualities  
> Are generated, exist and increase;  
> Therefore may you stabilise them at the beginning.

As discussed above, from the very beginning those entering the [path] should accept and rely\(^{70}\) upon the three vows of the three vehicles: the śrāvaka vehicle, the bodhisattva vehicle and the secret mantra vehicle. If you were to ask what is the purpose of [this reliance and acceptance], the answer would be: These [vows] are the basis upon which all the qualities you and others [possess] in this transient world and beyond are first generated, then sustained and finally increased. As the *Śīlasamyuktasūtra*\(^{71}\) explains:

> Just as a fine vase is the container for precious gems,  
> So is discipline [the container] for all other dharmas.

And as the *Samādhīrījasūtra*\(^{72}\) says:

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\(^{69}\) *Sa skya paṇḍita kun dga’ rgyal mtshan, Sdom pa gsum gyi rab tu dbyer ba* (Kathamandu: Sa skya rgyal yongs gsum rab slob gnyer khang, 2007), p.34

\(^{70}\) *The Ornament* reads: *bstan par*, meaning “to show” or “to teach”, which does not make sense in this context. The alternative *bsten par* with an added ‘greng bu* has a much more coherent meaning.


This meditation, the king of concentration, emptiness
Rests on the heads of those who maintain pure discipline.
Childish beings, prisoners of ignorance, do not know
That dharmas are always naturally in equipoise.

Again in the *Vajraśekharatantra* it says:

To possess the three vows
Is espoused as the first cleansing. [807]

[In *Sūhṛlekha*],73 Ācārya Nāgārjuna said:

Just as the earth is the base of all that is still [and all that] moves,
Know that discipline is the base of all good qualities.

**Practice of preliminaries:**

Having explained the practice of foundational discipline, [Chos rgyal ’Phags pa then
goes on to explain] the practice of preliminaries. This [section is divided into] three
[sub-sections]. The first of these [is described in the following verse]:

Utterly flawless speech,
Which does not contradict [but rather] entirely conforms with
The two valid cognitions and is virtuous in the beginning, middle and end,
Can be definitively affirmed as the Dharma.

The speaker [of such a teaching] has unhindered knowledge,
Teaches without closed-fistedness, is loving and—
Having abandoned afflictions counter to [knowledge]—
[The one who] knows the [path] for the attainment of great power is the
Buddha.74

The phrase “cultivate faith” occurs in the following verse. If you were to ask,
“Toward whom should I cultivate faith”, [the answer would be:] toward the Three
Jewels and the guru. As the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*75 explains:

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74 There is a slight variation in the wording of this quote between the root text and this commentary. *The Root Text* (page 295) reads: *mthu chen brnyes par mkhyen nas sangs rgyas dang*. *The Ornament* (page 807) reads: *mthu chen brnyes par mkhyen pa sangs rgyas dang*. This translation follows *The Ornament*.
75 There is no such citation from *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, it appears to be from two different sources. The first half appears to be from the *Udānavarga*, see http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=kangyur&index=330#361A (accessed on 24/04/2014). The source of the latter half cannot be determined.
Terrified people
Mostly take refuge in
Mountains, forests,
Temple priests and trees.

These are not primary refuges;
They are not refuges worthy of worship.
You cannot be liberated from any [form of] suffering
By relying on these [forms of] refuge.

The Buddha, the Dharma and the Saṃgha
Are refuges for those who wish for liberation.
They are the primary refuge,
They are worthy of worship.

Relying on these you can be
Freed from the great river of suffering.

[In an unidentified source], Ācārya Śāntipa [also known as Ratnākaraśānti] also said:

The primary enemy is a lack of faith; [and]
Too much faith is also subjected to excess and deviation.
Omniscience cannot be established through faith,
Because omniscience is a valid cognition.

Therefore, [as this verse explains] you should develop a stable, lasting faith that
is not affected by other conditions. [But this faith] should be cultivated through
informed knowledge of your object [of faith’s] qualities. [808] As the
Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra76 explains:

Bodhisattvas desire pure, utterly matured awakening, so
They want to know quality, [generate] an unwavering mind,
Swiftly attain concentration, taste the fruit, and

You may ask how these qualities can be known? [They can be known] by
definitely and particularly establishing a dharma as the Dharma. We can prove the
Buddha’s existence because we encounter the teachings he gave; this is analogous to
recognising the [existence of a] sender when you encounter a letter. It is the
establishment of the Buddha’s existence based upon the reasoning of results. You may

76 http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=4020#7B (accessed on
27/04/2014).
also ask: How we can prove the Buddha’s superiority to others? [The answer is that we can prove this] through examining the uniqueness of the [Buddha’s] following words: ⁷⁷

O bhikṣus and wise men!
Just as a goldsmith tests gold
By burning, cutting, and rubbing it,
So you must examine my words. Accept them,
But not merely out of reverence for me.

From [this and other examples of] his speech we can establish [that the Buddha possessed exalted qualities]. The contents of his speech prove [his possession of exalted knowledge]. They are free from faults like babbling. His objects of speech [include]: “All that is suitable to be form is demonstrably existent”. This and other similar [objects of speech] do not contradict those objects that are comprehended by direct valid cognition. [They] can be established. [His objects of speech also include:] “All composite phenomena are impermanent”. This and other similar [objects of speech] do not contradict those hidden objects that can be comprehended by inferential valid cognition. These [objects of speech too] can be seen to be established.

Dharma such as this is virtuous when heard initially, as it rebuts afflictions. [It is virtuous] in the middle when you contemplate it as it supresses afflictions. And [it is virtuous] in the end when you cultivate it as it uproots afflictions. Ācārya Maticitra explained this [in Miśrakastotra]⁷⁸ when he said:

When first heard, your words
Steal listeners’ hearts.
When minds contemplate them later [809]
They also dispel desire and ignorance.

[In Vaṇāravarneḥbhadagavatobuddhasyastotre],⁷⁹ he also said:

Your words are virtuous
In the beginning, middle and end.
They are nectar for those who
Study, contemplate, meditate and cultivate.

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⁷⁷ This verse cannot be found in ‘Bka’ ’gyur among the Buddha’s words; instead, it appears in Aryadeva’s Gyanasarasamuccaya. See http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=3851#27B (accessed on 27/04/2014).
This [quote] also identifies [the Buddha’s words] as “the Dharma Jewel”, because that which is virtuous in the beginning, middle and end is the teaching on the [the noble truths] of cessation and the path.

The remaining two and half verses [of the root text] identify the Buddha’s spoken Dharma. [By establishing that the] speeches [the Buddha] gave were flawless, that their contents can be affirmed by valid cognition and that all he taught remains virtuous in all three times, these verses establish that the Buddha comprehends all knowable phenomena. This [also] establishes [the Buddha’s] exalted knowledge. As the Dharma Lord [Sa skya Paṇḍita] said [in an unidentified source]:

My teacher is the one who sees all knowable things.

[The Buddha’s teachings also prove the existence of his compassion.] If a person has wisdom but lacks love it is not certain that person will impart his or her knowledge. It was therefore out of love that the Buddha gave deep and profound teachings; without closed-fistedness and in accordance with [his students’] mental dispositions. This is why [the Buddha] is the greatly compassionate one. As Udbhataśiddhisvāmin said:

Guide, out of compassion
You even teach Dharma to butchers;
As you explained, you would even mature a dog’s [mind]
If it was the right vessel for the pristine [teachings].

The Dharma Lord [Sa skya Paṇḍita] expressed [a similar sentiment in an unidentified source]:

I pay homage to the one who sees beings in samsara.

Although you may have both exalted knowledge and love, if you lack great power you will be overwhelmed by antithetical forces. [As he is not overwhelmed in this way, the Buddha] must therefore possess great power: [the power] to eliminate wrong views. This is why Maitreyanātha said [in the Mahāyānottaratantraśāstra]:

81 The Tibetan term “mus pa” (Skt. śakti) also covers the semantic range of the English word “ability” and “potential”.
Being uncompounded and spontaneously present,
Is not a realisation that occurs due to extraneous conditions.
Buddhahood is possessed of two aims [to help self and others].
[It is also possessed of]: exalted knowledge [810], love and power.

The fact that this verse only mentions three [characteristics] that aid others, which is [to say] the [buddhas’] subjects, does not mean that [the buddhas’ qualities] are restricted to these three [characteristics] and their purpose is to only [help others]. The presentation of these three characteristics also implies that the [buddhas’] self-[focused] aims have been fulfilled.

Similarly, for ease of explanation, the Buddha and Dharma Jewels, both objects of faith, are also simultaneously presented together in the above.

And the explanation on the Saṃgha Jewel [in the following verses] is:

Because they follow [the Buddha]
[And] their qualities accord with the causes [of the qualities of the Buddha], and because they are [also] congregated,
They are the supreme assembly. [This assembly] shares a common sphere of [Dharma] activity, so
Definitely, they are the supreme field. [They are] the Saṃgha.

The particular characteristic associated with the Saṃgha is to uphold [virtue]. As Ācārya Asaṅga said [in Mahāyānottaratantraśāstraavyākhyā]:


The unsurpassable Tathāgata attained [realisation akin to] the waxing moon. "This analogy suggests that the Tathāgata’s realisation increased gradually, like the waxing moon that increases from nothing to a full sphere.


[This implies] that they do not follow the likes of Brahmā and Viṣṇu but the Buddha, the truly and perfectly awakened one.

On the distinctiveness of qualities, Maitreya said [in Mahāyānottaratantraśāstra]:


In the post-meditative phase, in the world,
When it comes to the proper liberation of beings,
The activities of the bodhisattvas
Equal those of the tathāgatas.
[In the Dharmadhātustava], 86 Ārya Nāgārjuna also said:

Filled by the ten powers,
Quenched by fearlessness,
The inconceivable Buddha and Dharma
Do not degenerate for those who realise the unfabricated.

[As this verse explains], [Sāṃgha members] have similitudes of buddha qualities, such as the [Ten] Powers and [Four] Fearlessnesses. Another way [to explain this would be] to say that the members of the Sāṃgha possess a cause concordant with [buddhahood]. This cause is [buddha] nature (Tib. rigs, gotra [in Sanskrit]. The first part of this [Sanskrit] word, [the syllable] go consists of the sound “o”. [The “o”] sound is the [combination] of the sounds “a” and “u”. The sound “a” is made silent [811] by the addition of the sound “u” to [the sound “ga”], which becomes “gu”. [The sound] “gu” is also conditioned by the [the sound] “n” to [create the syllable] “gun”, which means “quality”. The [second syllable] “tra” is made of [the two sounds] “ta” and “ra”. It means: “to liberate”. It is not therefore contradictory to speak [of the Sāṃgha] as: those with a lineage concordant with liberation from samsara who depend on the good qualities [they accrue] on the path. Yet those who possess such qualities are not merely single individuals: they are an assembly. To distinguish this assembly from ordinary and Śrāvakayāna assemblies, it is called the supreme assembly. [In the Mahāyānottaratantraśāstra], 87 Maitreyanātha described [the supreme Sāṃgha in this way]:

Their wisdom sees clearly
All that is and the way they are, so
They are the assembly of wise nonreturners
Whose qualities are unsurpassable.

Further, this assembly is the best friend you have that [still] enjoys a common sphere of activities with you. [In Mahāsāhasrapramardanasūtra] 88 also says of it:

The Sāṃgha Jewel is said to be the best [field for accumulating merit]; [Directing action toward it] is like planting a seed in the most fertile of fields. 89

It is most certainly an excellent field [for the accumulation of merit]. This is why it is appropriate to evoke [the phrase] “have unwavering faith” [in relation to the Samgha Jewel].

Having identified the Three Jewels as objects of faith, Chos rgyal ’Phags pa then [describes] faith in the guru [in the following verse]:

The gurus introduce you to the [Three Jewels] [and] bridge the gap [between them and you].
They also have qualities analogous to the Three [Jewels].
So reflect on how they kindly protect you;
Consult them always. You must cultivate unwavering faith!

[This verse says:] “You must cultivate [unwavering] faith!” Toward whom must you [cultivate unwavering faith]? You must [cultivate it] toward your guru. When should you do this? Always. How [do you do this]? You do it by understanding their positive qualities. By [understanding what these positive qualities are], you will develop faith that is stable and unwavering.

If [you were] to ask, “What are their good qualities”, [the answer would be]: [The gurus] are those who show how intimate you are with the Three Jewels. They show you how the Buddha is your teacher, the Dharma is your path and the Samgha are your friends. To extend on this, [the guru] shows you how intimate you are with Buddha by demonstrating how practising the path leads to buddhahood. Similarly, [the guru] shows you how intimate you are with the Dharma [by example] as they have realised the essence, the [noble truths] of cessation and the path. [812] [They also] show you the scriptures that articulate these subjects. [The gurus] show you how intimate you are with the Samgha by setting you off on the Mahāyāna path of no return. [On this path] you are befriended by the best of friends, [other] disciples who practise the path.

In relation to this [topic], on [the subject of refuge], [it should be added that] we take refuge in the Three Jewels in order to ensure sanctuary from the torment of suffering and its causes. [In return for this act of refuge seeking], the Three Jewels provide us with refuge and bestow blessings on us. This is similar to a weak person seeking protection from a more powerful person.90

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90 The Tibetan term used in The Ornament is kha drag po, which could also be translated as “powerful speaker”—someone who’s utterances are followed. This essentially means someone who is powerful as they are the ones whose views must be followed, and this is why I have used the word “powerful” as the translation. Moreover, in English it doesn’t make much sense to seek protection from a powerful speaker.
[The gurus’] qualities are analogous to those of the Three Jewels: [the gurus’] knowledge is equivalent to the Buddha’s knowledge; the clarity of their speech matches the Dharma; and their bodies match the Sangha’s bodies. Yet, while the Buddha benefits you indirectly, the gurus’ benevolence benefits you directly. Having thought about the exceedingly kind protection he offers you, Lord of the Land: you must cultivate faith in your guru. The *Buddhāvataṃsakamahāvaipulyasūtra*\(^91\) comments on this:

The boy Śrīśamabhava and the girl Śrīmatī spoke in this way: You should generate the attitude that you are a patient, the spiritual teacher is your doctor and the practice of Dharma is taking medication.

Having presented the topic of faith towards superior objects, [Chos rgyal ’Phags pa] then describes [how to] cultivate compassion for inferior objects. The [root text] reads:

The nature of [suffering’s] causes, character and continuity is such that [I] wish to alleviate this suffering and its causes from my continuum. Likewise, [I] wish all other sentient beings without exception the same. Cultivate this great compassion that cannot be overwhelmed. [813]

[Sentient beings] are subjected to the causes of suffering because they engage in non-virtuous activities. [Human conditions] such as birth, old age and death are all suffering by nature. See how you are being tormented by these sufferings, not occasionally but constantly. And just as you wish to separate from this suffering, know that others too are suffering. Make a wish that all beings will be free from suffering, without any being left behind. Do not despair that you live in samsara. Look at how you and others are equal in wishing for happiness and wanting to avoid suffering, and [seeing this] cultivate great compassion. [Cultivate the kind of great compassion] that antagonistic forces such as samsara’s suffering cannot steal. As the *Sūtra Piṭaka*\(^92\) says:

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\(^91\) I could not find such a quote among the six volumes of *Phal chen* texts of the *Lha sa bkā’ gyur* within the www.tibetan.works/etext collection. This suggests that the citation of this source may be inaccurate. In *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, Sāntideva quotes these same words but cites *Āryagandhayāvāhasūtra*. See http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=3940#25B (accessed on 05/05/2014).

\(^92\) The *Ornament* has *mdo sde*, which generally means *Sūtra Piṭaka*, but this quote is apparently from *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* by Maitreyanātha. A possibility here is that the author chose to shorten the title by quoting just a part of it rather than including the full title—*Theg pa chen po mdo sde’i rgyan*. For details of this quote in *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*, see http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=4020#5B (accessed on 05/05/2014).
When you uncover the attitude of equality between self and others
Or [the attitude of] caring for others more than yourself,
You learn that others’ goals are more important than yours.
[When you have this attitude], what is individualism and what is altruism?

For the sake of others, compassionate beings inflict
Unbearable suffering upon themselves.
As merciless as they may be, worldly people
Do not [necessarily] inflict torment upon others.

Again the Sāgarmatiparipṛcchāsūtra\(^{93}\) says:

Sāgarmati, why do bodhisattvas take rebirth in existence after freeing themselves completely from all the [causes and conditions] that connect them to [samsara]? The [reason] is great compassion. Their skilful methods and their wisdom ensure that affliction do not harm them. Free from all the afflictions’ bondages, they [are able to] teach Dharma to sentient beings.

Similarly, the Dharmasamgūtisūtra\(^{94}\) reads: [814]

[Avalokiteśvara said:] Bhagavan, bodhisattvas need not learn too many teachings. Bhagavan, if bodhisattvas hold onto one teaching and realise it, they have all the Bhagavan’s teachings in the palm [of their hand]. What is this teaching? It is great compassion. Bhagavan, great compassion places all the Buddha’s teachings in bodhisattvas’ palms.

Again the same sūtra\(^{95}\) said:

Bhagavan, where there is life-faculty, there are the other faculties.
Similarly, where there is great compassion, the other requisites for awakening will arise.

Such compassion takes as its object sentient beings and is characterised by the wish to relieve their suffering. There are three types of compassion: (1) [compassion] that observes individual [beings]; (2) [compassion] that observes phenomena; and (3) non-referential [compassion]. Due to their lack of engagement, the compassion of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas cannot vastly benefit sentient beings. The bodhisattvas,

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93 I could not find this quote in the Sāgarmatiparipṛcchāsūtra; see http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=kangyur&index=153 (accessed on 06/05/2014).
however, are engaged, and therefore their [compassion] can vastly benefit sentient beings. The Sāgarmatipariprecchāsūtrā⁹⁶ says that:

Sāgarmati, [here is] an analogy: There is a merchant or a family man who only has one son. The son is adorable, beautiful, beloved, attractive and [everyone who] sees him finds him pleasing. Only a child, he falls into a pit of filth while he dances. When the boy’s mother and relatives see him fall into the pit, they wail and grieve, but none of them get into the pit [⁸¹⁵] to pull the boy out. The boy’s father arrives at the scene and sees his only son has fallen into the pit of filth. He wants to rescue his son, so without any feeling of disgust he quickly plunges into the pit and gets him.

Sāgarmati, I use this analogy so that you may understand its meaning. What is this meaning that you should understand?

Sāgarmati, the pit of filth is analogous to the three worlds of existence [samsara]. The only son is analogous to sentient beings; bodhisattvas consider sentient beings as their only son. The boy’s mother and relatives are analogous to the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas. They see sentient beings falling into samsara, they wail and grieve for them, but they do not have the ability to rescue them. The merchant [the boy’s father] is analogous to the bodhisattvas: those who have clean, stainless and stain-free minds. [These bodhisattvas] directly realise the uncompounded ultimate reality, and to ripen sentient beings they intentionally [re-]join the three worlds of existence.

The reason compassion is discussed here as well as earlier—when it was discussed in relation to the generation of bodhicitta—is to highlight its role at every stage of the path. This is also why the Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra⁹⁷ says:

The great compassion tree
 Begins with a root and ends with superior fruit.

Ācārya Candrakīrti expressed [a similar sentiment] in the [Madhyamakāvatāra].⁹⁸

Know that the seed for buddhahood’s abundant harvest
 is compassion.
[It is also] the water for its growth [⁸¹⁶] and finally,

That which matures as lasting enjoyment.
This is why I praise compassion first.

Having explained how [to generate] faith for superior objects and cultivate compassion for inferiors, [Chos rgyal ’Phags pa] then describes how to cultivate enthusiastic effort through aspiration. As the Aksayamatinirdeśasūtra\textsuperscript{99} says:

Whatever phenomenon is the focus of faith’s acumen is accomplished correctly by effort’s acumen.

Here [the root text] reads:

Reflect on the benefits of the highest awakening; [the virtues of] benefiting others and; The benefits of virtues that can be enjoyed in the short-term To achieve these [temporary and final benefits], Commit [yourself] wholly to [achieving them] with fervent aspiration.

As [the Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra]\textsuperscript{100} says:

Highest awakening is the [attainment] of the three bodies.

The highest awakening is the qualities included within the three bodies and their activities. As the Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra\textsuperscript{101} states:

Your qualities include: delighting in benefitting beings; Intentionally taking rebirth; magically manifesting; Taking great delight in adornments and feasts. No one other than you can have [these qualities], compassionate one.

[The highest awakening] has the characteristic of benefiting others. As the Ratnāvali\textsuperscript{102} reads:

Giving causes wealth; disciple [causes] joy; Patience [creates] a beautiful body; effort [creates] an overwhelming

\textsuperscript{100} http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=4020#38B (accessed on 10/05/2014).
\textsuperscript{101} http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=4020#5B  (accessed on 11/05/2014).
\textsuperscript{102} http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=4158#123B  (accessed on 11/05/2014).
A loving heart accomplishes every goal.

If you remember virtue’s temporary benefits, you will engage in it to achieve these [results] [and you will do it] with fervent aspiration.

Next [Chos rgyal 'Phags pa] provides a summary of what he has discussed above in greater detail.

Since a mind of faith, compassion and aspiration
Precedes all [virtuous] actions,
Do whatever little acts of virtue [you] can
With these [mental states as your] motivation. [817]

As this quote suggests, faith, compassion and aspiration precede all virtuous actions.

Describing the [necessary] precedent of faith, the Buddhāvatsakamahāvaipulyasūtra says:

Faith is like the driver [of your vehicle].

What is more, the [Āryaratnolkānāmadhāraṇīmahāyānasūtra]103 says that:

Faith draws you forward; like the mother who birthed you,
It protects all the other qualities and increases them.

Ācārya Nāgārjuna said [something similar in the Ratnāvalī]:104

Wisdom is the principle of the two;105
And faith is its preliminary.

The Aksayamatinirdeśasūtra106 cites compassion as a precedent [for achievement]:

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105 The wording of this quote does not conform to the version that is found in Tshul khrims rin chen’s text “Rgyal po la gtam bya ba rin po che’i phreng ba”, in Bstan ’gyur (Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Choedhey Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1982–1985), Vol. 172: p.215. This text reads: ‘Di gnyis gtso bo shes rab ste. de yi sngon ’gro dad pa yin. The Ornament reads: ’Di yi gtso bo shes rab ste. de yi sngon ’dren dad pa yin. The translation of the quote presented here follows the former.
Venerable Śāriputra, look at it [through] this analogy: Exhaling and inhaling breath are precedents for a person’s capacity to live. Likewise, compassion [is a necessary precedent] for a practising Mahāyāna bodhisattva.

In [the Śikṣāsamuccaya]107 Ācārya Śāntideva also says:

Place compassion at the forefront,
Then persistently increase virtue.

[There are also quotes that emphasise the importance] of aspiration as a precedent [for spiritual development]. The Ratnakūṭasūtra108 stresses its importance [when] it says:

Just as conditions to every phenomena
So are [goals] depended on the aspirational roots.

Also Maitreyanātha said in the Mahāyānasūtrālāṃkāra:109

Where you aspire [to be] is where you go.

This is why the bodhicitta generated in conjunction with aspiration is the first of the twenty two types of bodhicitta.

As all three of these [faith, compassion and aspiration] are precedents [for attainment], they should motivate all minor virtuous acts such as giving.

**Actual path: Meditative practices**

This is why Ācārya Nāgārjuna [in the Ratnāvalī]110 [first] presented the preliminary practices, the precedents, and then [began] his presentation of the actual [path] by saying:

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109 However, the corresponding text in the Mahāyānasūtrālāṃkāra in the Bstan ’gyur is slightly different. It reads: “gong du ’dun pa ’gro ba ste” which means “Aspiration is the forerunner”. See http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=4020#4B (accessed on 14/05/2014).
The form body of the buddhas
Arises from the accumulation of merit.

[This path involves a two-fold meditation practice: with and without an observed object.] The practice of meditation with an observed object [818], which is the cause of attaining the form body, is explained [in the following verses of the root text]:

Envision the form body of the chief sage
Either in front of you or as your own body.
The place [in which you are sitting] is a buddha realm
And all the beings [in it] are the Victor’s offspring and disciples.
Make offerings to yourself and others. [These offerings should be]
Oceanic, consisting of all the objects the five senses enjoy.

[You] must observe and meditate! The way to meditate [on an object] is [also] two-fold: [either place the object of your] meditation in front of you or focus on your own body.
[The object of] this meditation is the chief sage’s form body. [The Buddha] is referred to as the “chief” sage to signify his extraordinariness, as both śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas can also be referred to as “sage”. The reason for [the Buddha’s extraordinariness] is that [buddhas] control the ten powers\(^{111}\) such as life and karma. [This is why the Buddha] presides over a retinue of śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas and bodhisattvas, acting as their chief or principal.

[The buddha who presides over such retinue] is the one who has the two bodies of form bodies and truth body. The truth body cannot be observed or viewed by other people. As the Mahāyānottaratantraśāstra\(^{112}\) says:

Your one-sided intelligence is like the sun behind a clouded sky;
Even those with the eyes of clear intelligence cannot see it fully.
Bhagavan, [only] those with boundless intelligence that pervades the sky,
[Those with] limitless objects of knowledge can see your form body completely.

Describing how the form body can [by contrast] be observed, that Samādhīrājasūtra\(^{113}\) says:

\(^{111}\) The Tibetan term dbang is also often translated as power. The Ten Powers (stobs bcu) in this context are power over: life, karma, necessities, devotion, aspiration, miraculous abilities, birth, doctrine, mind and pristine cognition.

\(^{112}\) This verse is not findable in the actual text of Mahāyānottaratantraśāstra but it is found in its commentary Mahāyānottaratantraśāstravyākhyā, see http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=4025#114B (accessed on 15/05/2014).
The body’s [complexion] resembles gold;  
The lord of the universe is beautiful from every aspect.  
Whoever sets their mind on this object,  
That bodhisattva will be in meditative equipoise.

The *Ratnakūṭasūtra* [819] describes this subject [in this way]:

Now meditate on the Buddha. His complexion is gold-like, radiating with all the major and minor marks.¹¹⁴ Light and light rays shine out from [his body]. One should [meditate on this image] for a while, get acquainted [with it] and meditate on it again for a longer while. After meditating [on this image] for a day, a week or even a very long time, you will [experience] the Buddha’s appearance lucidly. You will even have visions of the Buddha giving teachings and so forth. When you have lucid appearances like this, they must be analysed. From where did the Buddha come? Where does [the Buddha] reside? And from where does he depart? After analysing [his image] in this way, you will understand that the Buddha came from nowhere, resides nowhere and departs to nowhere. This understanding will then induce the knowledge that all phenomena are like [the Buddha].

The *Samādhirājasūtra*¹¹⁵ says something similar:

After completely deconstructing discrimination,  
If you remain [in a state] free from characteristics,  
You will truly understand that all phenomena are empty.  
Whoever remains in [meditation on the] truth body,  
Knows all substantial entities are non-substantial.  
After deconstructing the perception of substantial entities,  
You will not observe the form body of the great sage.  
These instructions are for you, so take them to heart.  
When you perceive a crowd of people,  
It is easiest to just let your perception rest¹¹⁶ on it;  
Likewise, just let your mind flow toward emptiness.

In addition to this meditation on the Buddha, one must also visualise the site in which you reside as consisting of precious gems. The ground [should be visualised to be] as level as the palm of your hand; when it is squashed it softly compresses, and

¹¹⁴ The buddhas are said to have thirty two major and eighty minor physical marks of excellence.
¹¹⁶ This is not a direct translation of the Tibetan word *gnas*, which means something more like “abide”. However, using the term “abide” would indicate an intensity that is not conveyed by the Tibetan expression.
when released it bounces back. All beings in it must be visualised as the Victor, his sons and disciples [śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas]. A more [820] extensive explanation on this is found in the Buddhāvatamsakamgocarapariśuddhi. It reads, for example:

When you see people garlanded by ornaments, view them as bodhisattvas garlanded by qualities. Conversely, view those without ornaments as those without garlands of qualities.

The Buddha is “the victor” because like a king who is victorious in battle he has destroyed all antagonistic forces [or] that which needs to be abandoned. Another way to look at this is that [the Buddha] is the victor because he has accumulated inconceivable wisdom, he has acquired the antidote, and in this is just like someone who has a large share of wealth. The Buddha’s offspring, the bodhisattvas, are like princes because they are able to uphold the Buddha family linage. The disciples are śrāvakas because they listen to [the Buddha’s teachings] and train. They are a like a princess, for although they train accordingly they become disassociated—[the princesses become disassociated from the king’s household and the śrāvakas] from special methods—and cannot therefore uphold the Buddha’s lineage.

[After visualising the Buddha, his entourage and environment in this way [visualise] clouds of pleasing forms, sounds, smells, tastes and other things that please you and others through the five senses, such that [your offering] is similar to Samantabhadra’s offerings. Then, O Lord of Humans, make this offering to yourself re-imagined as the Buddha, and to others reimagined as buddhas, the Buddha’s sons and so forth.

As well as visualising and making offerings to the buddhas, you are also instructed to meditate on and make offerings to your spiritual teacher. The text reads:

Understand that the supreme guru is equal to all the victors, without exception;
They are equal and non-dual in their aspects, activities and essential natures.
At all times, contemplate [the guru] in front [of you], at [your crown]
Or at the centre of your heart lotus.
Either supplicate [the guru] or meditate on [the guru and the Victor’s] non-duality.

The [Tibetan translation] of the term “guru” [bla ma] connotes eminence. [The qualifier] “supreme” [821] is attached to [this word] to signify [the guru’s]
qualifications. These qualifications are described by Maitreyanātha [in the Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra in the following verse]:

One should rely on a spiritual teacher who is disciplined, tranquil, Serene, outstanding for their good qualities, enthusiastic, Rich in [knowledge of the scriptures], who has realised reality, is eloquent, Compassionate and indefatigable.

A supreme [spiritual teacher] must have these [qualifications]: A guru with these qualities is one of, or equal in aspect with, the victors of the ten directions. [This guru is ultimately equal to the buddhas] in that they appear yet lack an intrinsic nature. [Relatively they are also equal in that] their bodies are impeccable, their speech does not babble and their mind does not conceptualise. [A guru] is also equal to [the Buddha] in their benefit to fortunate disciples.

[In the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā], Ārya Nāgārjuna said that:

Whatever is the nature of the Tathāgata, That is the nature of these beings. The Tathāgata has no nature; These beings have no nature.

This is why it must be understood that from the beginning the ultimate nature is clear and nondual. [After reflecting on this], imagine [the guru] is either in front of you or at the centre of your lotus heart. Your activity should then be to relieve all the shortcomings of both samsara and nirvana. And in order to attain all worldly and non-worldly privileges without exception, either supplicate [your guru] or meditate on the indivisibility of you and [your guru].

The Adhyāśayacodanamsūtra advises us to regard our guru as the Buddha [in the following passage]:

Maitreya, you should develop confidence in the Buddha’s words through the four causes [of confidence]. What are the four causes? Maitreya, have confidence [the Buddha’s words] are meaningful because they are not without meaning. They are virtuous because they are not without virtue. They diminish afflictions because [822] they do not increase afflictions.

They demonstrate the qualities and benefits of nirvana because they do not demonstrate the qualities and benefits of samsara. These are the four [causes].

Maitreya, those of you who wish to [become] sons and daughters of the [buddha] family should know that whomever is confident because of these four causes should be perceived as the Buddha. [When] they receive teachings from them, they should regard them as the Buddha. Why? Maitreya, you should do this because whatever is well-spoken, however brief, is spoken by the Buddha.

Earlier on [in this text, Chos rgyal ’Phags pa] advised [the king] to meditate and make offerings to the Buddha and his offspring, but he does not suggest supplication. In this [section], he advises [the king] to meditate on the guru and make supplications, but he does not mention offerings. It is written this way [to facilitate] the easy flow of the treatise, but you should understand that what [the two verses] indicate is connected.

[In the Ratnāvalī], Ārya Nāgārjuna describes [meditation without an observed object that results in the attainment of the truth body in the following way]:

O king, briefly speaking,
The truth body is the product of the accumulation of wisdom.

[Chos rgyal ’Phags pa’s] presentation of the meditation without an observed object for the attainment of truth body is [as follows]:

Mind is the root of all phenomena:
Virtue and nonvirtue, happiness and suffering,
And samsara and nirvana too.

The [Sanskrit term] for virtue [Tib. dge ba] is kuśala: “ku” means negativity and “śala” means to discard or abandon. The compound meaning of these words is therefore: “to discard negativities”. [Negativities are actions such as] killing and stealing. These [actions themselves], killing and so forth, are non-virtuous. Samsara is conceptualising, and freedom from [conceptualisation] is nirvana. In reference to this, Ācārya Dignāga said [in the Āryamañjughoṣastotra].

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Nothing else is called samsara
Apart from conceptualisation. [823]
When you are parted from conceptualisation
You are in nirvana, always.

The mind is the root of all this; when it abandons misdeeds it is said to be
virtuous, and when it does not abandon [misdeeds] it is [said to be] non-virtuous.
Similarly, when the mind’s reality is known that is nirvana, and when it is not known
that is samsara. As the Āryakarmāvaraṇaviśuddhīnāmamahāyānasūtra\textsuperscript{121} explains:

Bhikṣu, when their minds are defiled, sentient beings are defiled. When
their minds are utterly clear, then sentient beings are utterly clear.

Also, the Mahāvairocanaabhisambodhitantra\textsuperscript{122} says that:

Awakening is: the completely correct knowledge of your mind.

Likewise, Ārya Nāgārjuna also said:\textsuperscript{123}

These are nothing but mind only:
[They] appear as magical manifestations
That are virtuous and non-virtuous, [but they]
Determine higher or lower rebirths.

[The question may then arise:] If all phenomena within samsara and nirvana are
mind, is that [mind] a substantial entity? [The answer to that is found in the next section
of the root text:]

Examine the mind thoroughly from every aspect:
It has neither colour nor shape,
Nor is it singular or manifold.
It has no essential nature, so it has not arisen,
Neither does it exist, nor cease.
It is devoid of a centre and an edge, therefore
It is free from elaboration, with a space-like nature.

\textsuperscript{121} http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=kangyur&index=219#441A (accessed on
19/05/2014).
\textsuperscript{122} http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=kangyur&index=462#179A (accessed on
20/05/2014).
\textsuperscript{123} Although this quote cannot be found in extant texts attributed to Nāgārjuna, it is quoted in
Caryāmelāpakapradīpa by Āryadeva. See http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=1803#84A (accessed on
20/05/2014).
The *Tasyāṃkṣepatantra*\(^\text{124}\) says:

Kulaputra, through meditative equipoise you must individually understand your mind.

After the mind is [first] thoroughly examined through study and contemplation, and then completely analysed through meditation, it is established to have a space-like nature, free from elaborations. [824] If [the mind] were inherently existent, it would be made up of colours and shapes, but this is not so.

[As] the *Sarvatranirdeśapada*\(^\text{125}\) says:

The nature of the mind is without root, without existence, without foundation, without character, without shape or colour, beyond sensorial faculty. It is not within the experiential domain of any conception.

If you are to ask whether [mind] is inherently existent, [whether it exists] as anything other than form, [the answer would be] no. If something is inherently existent it should undoubtedly exist as a single entity or as multiple [entities]. Yet the mind is neither. Since there is more such [analysis] to come [at a later point in the text], it is not discussed any further here [in the root text].

[Here is an additional, brief analysis.] In order to exist as a single entity or as multiple entities, [a phenomenon] must have inherent existence in the first place. If it has no inherent existence, it has not arisen. If it did arise, [the question becomes]: did it arise from a cause or without a cause? It cannot arise from a cause as the cause and result [operate] in separate moments and hence do not encounter [each other]. If [the cause and the result] were to encounter each other, they would occur simultaneously. If they exist simultaneously, [how can] one be called the cause and one be called the result. [What is more,] mind cannot arise without a cause. [This possibility] has been refuted using the following reasoning, [which is found in the Dharmakīrti’s *Pramāṇavārttikakārika*].\(^\text{126}\)

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\(^{124}\) *De nyid bsdus pa’i rgyud*. The quote cannot be found in the *Bka’ gyur* or *Bstan ‘gyur* available on www.tibetan.works/etext.

\(^{125}\) *Sarvatranirdeśapada* (Tib. *Rgyud thams cad bstan pa’i tshig*) cannot be found in the *Bka’ gyur* or *Bstan ‘gyur* available on www.tibetan.works/etext. However, this passage is quoted in *Caryāmelāpakapradīpa* by Āryadeva. See http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=1803#75A (accessed on 21/05/2014).

Because it does not depend on others, [which is to say other causes and conditions].
That without a cause should be either permanently existent or permanently non-existent.

Further, it is not tenable for something existent to arise if it is already existent. Neither is it tenable for something non-existent to arise as the functioning of a non-existent cause is implausible. Ārya Nāgārjuna spoke of this [in the Śūnyatāsaptati]:

Existent [phenomena] do not arise because they are existent;
Neither do non-existent [phenomena] not arise because they are non-existent.

If something has not arisen, it does not exist. And because it does not exist, it will not cease. It is therefore free from arising at the beginning, existing in the middle and ceasing at the end. As the Bhagavan [Buddha] also said in the [Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya] sūtra:

All phenomena are empty of characteristics. They are nonarising, nonceasing.

If you were to ask: What is this mind like, this [phenomenon] that is not truly existent yet [is still] lucid and aware? The [root] text says:

Nevertheless, awareness does not cease [either], so [Mind's] nature is a union of awareness and emptiness.

Although the mind does not truly exist, [we do] experience awareness. Yet [that which experiences] awareness is itself devoid of true existence. [This consciousness] is emptiness; it is aware and lucid, a union of awareness and emptiness. The Victor also affirmed this when, [in the Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya] sūtra, he said:

Consciousness is emptiness;
Emptiness is consciousness;
Consciousness does not differ from emptiness;
Emptiness does not differ from consciousness.

127 Although the wording is different, lines with similar meaning are found the version of Śūnyatāsaptati available at: http://tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=3827 (accessed on 22/05/2014). This text reads: “yod phyir yod pa skye min te. med phyir med pa skye ma yin”.

205
Having described how your own mind is aware[ness] and empti[ness] united, Chos rgyal ’Phags pa then explains how this [is true] of others’ minds too. He says:

The nature of all [other] sentient beings’ minds
Is the same as your mind’s mode.
Therefore, be certain that all phenomena are
Appearance and emptiness in union, and
Place your mind in an intense, nongrasping meditative equipoise.

The minds of all other sentient beings are the same as yours: a union of awareness and emptiness. There is no difference between their natures. This [assertion] also proves that not only the mind, but also all outer phenomena such as forms, are a union of appearance and emptiness. It proves this because, as the [Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā] Prajñāpāramitā 128 says:

If [you] know consciousness’ suchness, you will know the long and the short of all phenomena. [826]

In the Prajñāpāramitāsañcayagāthā 129 it says:

Know that all sentient beings are like you;
Know that all phenomena are in the same mode as sentient beings.

Again, the Prajñāpāramitāḥṛdaya[sūtra] 130 says:

Form is emptiness;
Emptiness is form;
Form does not differ from emptiness;
Emptiness does not differ from form.

Therefore, through study and contemplation you must gain total certainty that all phenomena are an indivisible union of appearance and emptiness. [Then], through meditation you must [place your mind] in an intense meditative equipoise that does not characterise [phenomena] as existent or non-existent.

Having described extensively the processes of meditative equipoise, in order to summarise and present the purpose of meditative equipoise [Chos rgyal 'Phags pa] then says:

Place [your mind] in a meditative equipoise: [focused on] The two observable objects; without an object; on the union. Through these you will attain the meditative tranquillity of superior śamatha; This [śamatha] cannot be shaken by any conceptions.

The above describes [a process in which you] place your mind: (1) in a meditative equipoise [focused] on the two observable objects, the deity 131 and the spiritual guru; (2) in a meditative equipoise without an observable object, a meditative tranquillity free from conceptualisations; and (3) the union [of appearance and emptiness]. [It describes] the result of this practice as the attainment of a meditative tranquillity that is the superior śamatha. If you were to ask what this meditative tranquillity is like, [the answer would be] that it is a meditative tranquillity that cannot be moved by any conceptions. As the Samādhirājasūtra132 says:

The power of this śamatha means [the mind] cannot be moved; [Combined] with vipaśyanā it becomes like a mountain. As [this mountain-like state] cannot be disturbed by any sentient beings, It is called the dual forbearance.

There may be a challenge to this. It may [be argued that] although it is correct to say that a meditative tranquillity that is free of conceptualisation and has no observable object stands in opposition to the conceptualisation [827] [of the observed object meditations]. But [it is contended] that the two observable objects are [perceived through] conceptions, and it is not logical to counter conceptualisation through meditating upon conceptual [objects]. This assertion is [partly] true because holding an observable object and conceptualisation do not directly counter one another; we too do not assert that they directly oppose one another. But this does not entail that the two do not oppose one another indirectly. This is because [the realisation] without an

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131 The Tibetan word found in The Ornament is lha (deity), but earlier in The Ornament and in the textual outline of Advice to the King there is no mention of a deity; instead they refer to the form body of the Buddha.

observable object is generated by the one with an observable object. As the Ratnakūṭasūtra says:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Just as the air that rubbed two pieces of wood together} \\
\text{Ignites the fire that burns the wood itself away;} \\
\text{So generating the capacity for wisdom} \\
\text{Burns away the generated [conception] itself.}
\end{align*}
\]

Maitreyanātha also spoke [about this in the Madhyāntavibhāga]:\(^{133}\)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Through relying on observable objects,} \\
\text{That which is not observable arises completely;} \\
\text{Through relying on the non-observable,} \\
\text{That which is not observable arises completely.}
\end{align*}
\]

The Dharma Lord [Sa skya Paṇḍita] also said [in an unidentified source]:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Focus your mind on the observable object alone} \\
\text{And the mind will attain tranquillity.} \\
\text{If your observation is done correctly,} \\
\text{You will stop grasping at the observed.}
\end{align*}
\]

**Subsequent acts:**

After giving a refined description of the processes of meditative equipoise, [Chos rgyal 'Phags pa] then goes on to describe the subsequent acts [in which you should engage]. [In this section he follows the] Akṣayamatinirdeśasūtra,\(^{134}\) which says:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{The practices in which you have become accomplished through your} \\
\text{capacity for effort will not be wasted because you have the capacity for} \\
\text{reollection.}
\end{align*}
\]

[Chos rgyal 'Phags pa also] emphasises how recollection increases and conserves virtue when he says:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{After completing these [meditations], remember again and again} \\
\text{All of [your and others’] virtuous and non-virtuous actions, with joy [and} \\
\text{remorse].}
\end{align*}
\]


In order to further increase [or diminish] their power,
Remember virtues [and non-virtues]; this increases [and diminishes] them.

Virtues are to be recollected with joy. [828] Why? Generally [speaking], repeatedly recollecting a performed virtuous or non-virtuous action with joy [or remorse] increases [or decreases] this action’s power. Hence, in order to further increase [the power of a] virtuous action you must recollect it with joy. [Although this verse overtly concentrates on the recollection of virtues, this passage also contains] an implicit [instruction on the recollection of non-virtuous activity, which the following verse describes]:

After completing these virtuous\textsuperscript{135} and non-virtuous actions,
Repeatedly recollect them with remorse.
In order to further diminish their power,
Remember non-virtues with remorse; this diminishes them.

This is not said explicitly [in the root verses] because it is a deviation from the discussion of acts subsequent to virtuous actions.

The instructions on the [recolletion of virtue in the root text] state generally that you should recollect every virtuous action and particularly [that you should recollect] meditative equipoise. Its description [reads]:

In particular, after placing [your mind] in meditative equipoise
On any object, examine and investigate individually
Its observable object, its aspects,
Your experiences and so on.
In this way, you will examine [phenomena’s] various
Interdependent ways: their causes, conditions and so on.
Then you will [understand]
The way each and every existent is [ultimately] not observable;
Having realised this exactly, you must accomplish vipaśyanā.

Generally speaking, you should recollect all virtuous actions, but the current topic of discussion is those acts [performed] subsequent to meditative equipoise, and in particular [the root text is discussing acts performed subsequent to] meditative equipoise on objects such as the body of a buddha. [In the post-meditative state], individually examine and thoroughly investigate the observed object, the mental aspect of it, its causes and conditions, its [own] aspects, [your] experience [of the object], and the

\textsuperscript{135} Although this verse overtly concentrates on the recollection of non-virtues and recollecting them with remorse, to stress the implicit instruction on the recollection of virtuous activity. It appears that the word “virtuous” forced its place in this verse making the read more difficult.
causes and conditions [of your experience]. [When you examine the object in this way],
you will understand the successive order of interdependent arising. [You will
understand] the causes and conditions of the object’s conventional reality; you will see
what caused what.

Conversely, [829] you will [also] understand the reverse order of interdependent
arising; you will see how that does not exist because this does not exist. By
investigating these intricacies [of interdependent arising], you will effectuate the
wisdom of vipaśyanā. You will know [phenomena] as objects and that their aspects are
from the beginning devoid of apprehension. This is why the Ratnameghasūtra\textsuperscript{136} says:

While śamatha supress afflictions,
Vipaśyanā uproots it.

Maitreyanātha also said [in the Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra]:\textsuperscript{137}

Stable śamatha and vipaśyanā
Will lead the yogi along all stages [of the path];
It will accomplish all.

Why are they called śamatha and vipaśyanā? Maitreyanātha answered [this
question in the Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra]:\textsuperscript{138}

When you position mind on mind,
By [keeping your mind] abiding correctly, and
Fully discern all phenomena,
These are called [respectively] śamatha and vipaśyanā.

This has been the instruction on how to conserve and increase virtues through
recollection. [Next] is the instruction on how [virtues] can be made inexhaustible by
dedicating them in totality. [The verse from the root text reads:]

After performing virtuous actions, use them as tokens
To compound all virtues into one;

\textsuperscript{136} This quote cannot be found in Ratnameghasūtra, see
\textsuperscript{137} http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=4020#31A (accessed on
26/05/2014).
\textsuperscript{138} http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=4020#31A (accessed on
26/05/2014).
Dedicate [these virtues] to the attainment of ultimate awakening
By yourself and all boundless sentient beings.\textsuperscript{139}

You must dedicate all [your virtues] and [in so doing] multiply them. 
\textit{Buddhāvatamsakamahāvaipulyasūtra}\textsuperscript{140} describes what should be dedicated:

\begin{quote}
All sentient beings’ virtues
That have, are and will be performed.
\end{quote}

Take whatever virtue you may have performed now as a token [of all performed virtue] and compound it with all the virtue of the three times. [830] Then dedicate it instantly, as soon as you have performed a [virtuous] act. [There is no point dedicating virtue] if you have not performed a virtuous act, as you have nothing to dedicate. And, if you wait too long after performing a virtuous act, various conditions may arise that dissipate [the virtue]. As [the \textit{Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra}]\textsuperscript{141} says:

\begin{quote}
All the acts like giving or making offerings to the buddhas
That [you] have performed over a thousand aeons,
All those good deeds will be destroyed
By a single moment of anger.
\end{quote}

To whom should the dedication be made? The \textit{Prajñāpāramitā [sūtra]}\textsuperscript{142} explains that [it should be made]:

\begin{quote}
Collectively with all sentient beings.
\end{quote}

By doing this, [all virtue] is dedicated both to yourself and to all other sentient beings. But [you should] also make sure that [it is dedicated to the attainment of ultimate awakening, for as the \textit{Prajñāpāramitā [sūtra]}\textsuperscript{143} says:

\begin{quote}
You are not advised to dedicate [your virtue] to the attainment of either \textit{śrāvaka} or \textit{pratyekabuddha} status, but to complete awakening.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{139} This verse is slightly different to the corresponding verse in the root text. The verse in the root text explicitly mentions non-virtuous actions and the need to recollect them with remorse in order to diminish their power.
\textsuperscript{141} http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=3871#14B (accessed on 27/05/2014).
\textsuperscript{142} www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=kangyur&index=9#134A (accessed on 28/05/2014).
\textsuperscript{143} http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=kangyur&index=9#351A (accessed on 28/05/2014).
What is the function of this dedication? As the summary stated, it makes your virtue inexhaustible. Describing how the dedication of virtues to the ultimate awakening makes [these virtues] inexhaustible, the *Akṣayatimirdesāsūtra*\(^{144}\) says:

A drop of water poured into the ocean  
Remains as long as the ocean exists.  
Similarly, the virtue that is dedicated to awakening  
Will not be exhausted until awakening is exhausted.

[This process] is also transformative. Natural law ensures that a person accrues wealth and attains a higher rebirth as a result of activities such as giving and morality. These actions do not have to be dedicated [in order to deliver results]. [And conversely] after committing non-virtuous actions, there is no need to dedicate your actions to hell: [these actions] will ensure that you are born there naturally. But dedicating activities such as giving [to awakening] not only delivers temporary fruits [to those who perform them] but also transforms these actions into the final attainment, awakening. This is like using a piece of unformed gold \(^{831}\) to create scriptures. As Ācārya Haribhadra said [in the *Abhisamayālanākanāmaprajñāpāramitopadeśāstravṛtti*]:\(^{145}\)

Deliberating dedications mentally is like a jeweller turning gold into ornaments;  
The [dedication] transforms [your virtue] into a prerequisite for ultimate awakening.

It also multiplies [your virtue], as the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā* explains:

Śāriputra, when bodhisattvas give a small amount to all sentient beings, they use a skilful method to dedicate this virtue to complete awakening. This multiplies the [virtue] inconceivably. Therefore, one should train in the perfection of wisdom.

Having given instruction on how to dedicate [virtue] so that it becomes inexhaustible, [Chos rgyal ’Phags pa] then [gives instruction] on how to aspire to perform future [virtues]:

\(^{144}\) This quote is not found in the *Akṣayatimirdesāsūtra*, see http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=kangyur&index=176 (accessed on 28/05/2014).  
You may not have performed transformative virtue yet,
But you can aspire to accomplish this great purpose.
Prayers said like this will accomplish their aim,
For the mind itself is the principal.

Even though you have not performed transformative virtuous acts yet, you can still aspire to accomplish great temporary deeds and the ultimate goal. If you articulate this wish, you will achieve your goal in accordance with your wish. Why? Because the mind is the principal of all phenomena: virtue and non-virtue, samsara and nirvana. As the Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodana [sūtra]\(^{146}\) says:

Prayers [can] transform [the results of your actions] completely.

The Ratnakūṭa [sūtra]\(^{147}\) that:

Just as every phenomenon is dependent on its supporting conditions
So are the achievement of [goals] dependent on their root aspirations.
Whoever prays for whatever,
Will achieve corresponding results.

[One may argue that] If one performs a transformative virtue [832] and at the same time says [a prayer], this is a dedication, not an aspiration. [For example the following lines] from the Bhadracaryāpranidhānarāja:\(^{148}\)

I make this offering to all the buddhas of the past
And those presently living in [various] worlds in the ten directions.

[These lines] will also not become aspiration because these words are preceded by six limb prayers. [The reply to that is:] This should not matter because these words are not said to transform the earlier virtues. The last limb [seventh limb], the dedication limb, had already dedicated early virtues [before the above words]. This also shows that it is not just that those [words] are not preceded with virtues: even if those that are preceded by virtues are intended for transformation, [those words] will become aspirations.

\(^{146}\) Such a quote is not found in the Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodana, see http://www.tibetan.works/etextreader.php?collection=kangyur&index=217 (accessed on 30/05/2014).
\(^{147}\) This citation appears in Aryamañjuśrī buddhakṣetragunavyāhanānamahāyānasūtra among the Ratnakūṭa Sūtra texts. See http://www.tibetan.works/etextreader.php?collection=kangyur&index=59#55A (accessed on 02/06/2014).
\(^{148}\) http://www.tibetan.works/etextreader.php?collection=kangyur&index=94.06#337B (accessed on 02/06/2014).
Following his detailed presentation of the subsequent acts, [Chos rgyal ’Phags pa] then summarises this topic by presenting the purposes [of the subsequent acts in the following verse]:

In this way, recollection, thorough dedication,  
And sublime aspiration ornament all virtues.  
[These acts] increase [virtues], making them inexhaustible,  
And are causes [for the fulfilment] of your own and other’s great goals.

In the manner [that was previously described in detail], all virtues subsequently ornamented by sublime recollection will increase. All virtues subsequently ornamented by sublime dedication will become inexhaustible. And all virtues subsequently ornamented by sublime aspiration will become the cause [for the fulfilment] of your own and other’s great goal. This is why [Chos rgyal ’Phags pa] instructed you to ornament [your virtues] with these three [activities]. He makes this [three-fold] classification because of their prominent purposes. It is not, however, contradictory to say that the purpose of all three [activities] is the same, as each of them increases [virtue], makes it inexhaustible and [focuses it on] the fulfilment of the great goal. All three purposes are attached [with the qualifier] “sublime” because it excludes [negative versions of this activity, like] remorseful recollection, perverted dedication and malevolent aspirations.

**The process of sealing all paths:**

After describing the subsequent acts’ processes, [833] [Chos rgyal ’Phags pa] then describes the process of sealing them. This begins by establishing that conventional [truth] is illusory. [The text reads:]

In a similar way, these practices and  
All other varieties of compounded phenomena  
Have no identifiable nature of their own;  
They are all dependent on causes and conditions.

All [phenomena] that depend on causes and conditions do not have their own identifiable nature; they are like the reflection of the moon in water. [This includes] the

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149 This is a reference to the preceding detailed explanation of the dedication process in the root text.

150 Although “sealing” does not fully cover the semantic of the word “rgyas gdab” in Tibetan, it is probably the closest possible translation in English. It also appears to be the more popular rendering of this Tibetan term by translators.
twelve practices, which are also dependent on causes and conditions. Moreover, [by this reasoning] all other compounded phenomena also lack identifiable nature. This is why the Anavataptanāgarājaparipṛcchā [sūtra]\textsuperscript{151} says that:

- All [phenomena] that arise through conditioning do not rise;
- They have no arising nature.
- That which is dependent on a condition is said to be empty;
- All who understand emptiness are vigilant.

As [this quote explains], there are no truly existent phenomena. But in order to explain that [mere] appearance is not being refuted, [Chos rgyal ’Phags pa goes on to say]:

- Habitual imprints make
- The affected mind perceive and experience variety,
- But this is not true (epistemically warranted).
- Know it as illusion-like, arising from a multitude of conditions;
- Like a sleep affected by dreams.

[No phenomena] is truly existent, but numerous habitual imprints [that have been in our continuum] since beginningless time cause our minds to perceive outer phenomena and an inner consciousness. The consciousness [then] appropriates phenomena and gets attached to them. This [attachment] then causes outer [phenomena] to appear to our minds as either attractive or unattractive. As a consequence [of this appearance] we then experience pleasure and suffering as inner [consciousness]. But none of this is true. As Ācārya Nāgārjuna explained in the Bodhicittavivarāṇanāma:\textsuperscript{152}

- Conventions arise from karma;
- Karma is produced by the mind:
- Mental karma is accumulated by habitual imprints;
- The exhaustion of habitual imprints is supreme happiness. [834]

\textsuperscript{151} http://tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=kangyur&index=157#349A (accessed on 18/04/2016). The wording of this verse in the cited source differs slightly from what is included in The Ornament. However, the essential meaning of the verse remains consistent in both versions. This source reads: rkyen las skyes pa gang yin de ma skyes. rkyen la skye ban go bon yid kys med. rkyen la rag las gang yin stong par gsungs. stong nyid gang shes de ni bag yod pa’o. The corresponding verse in The Ornament reads: gang zhig rkyen las skyes pa de ma skyes. de la skyes ba’i rang bzhin gang yang med. rkyen la rag las gang de stong par bshad. gang gis stong nyid shes de bag yod yin.

\textsuperscript{152} http://tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=1800#41A (accessed on 02/06/2014).
The various appearances that arise from a multitude of conditions should be understood to be like a magical illusion; they are like horses and elephants made from clay, gravel, monkey’s tails, other substances and special magic spells. As the lord of logic [Dharmakīrti] explained in [the Pramāṇavārttikakārikā]:

[This perception is] analogous to an enchanted person
Who looks at a lump of clay,
And despite its lack of form,
Sees it as all sorts of shapes.

The Samādhirājasūtra\textsuperscript{154} says:

Through magic, an illusionist
Can create myriad illusions—horses, elephants, horse carts—
But there is no truth in their appearance.
Understand that all phenomena are like these [illusions].

A mind adulterated by habitual imprints has various experiences. These are analogous to a mind affected by sleep that experiences dreams. There is no truth in them. As the Samādhirājasūtra\textsuperscript{155} says:

A young women dreams she
Gives birth to a son and is joyous [at first].
But then he dies and she is unhappy;
Understand all phenomena are like this.

You may [still] think that although compounded phenomena have no true existence, uncompounded phenomena such as space and cessation have true existence. The next [section of the root text refutes this:]

Uncompounded phenomena are merely designated: They have no existence, they are just words.
The concept of [an uncompounded phenomenon] is a compounded phenomena; therefore
To posit the substantial existence of [uncompounded phenomena] is madness.

\textsuperscript{155} http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=kangyur&index=129#43A (accessed on 05/06/2014).
Phenomena that are not compounded by causes and conditions—such as space—are merely designated by the conceptual mind. They have no substantial existence. If they were substantially existent phenomena, what [subject] would perceive them? If they were perceived by a sensory direct perception, [835] then these uncompounded phenomena would be an object of the five [senses], an object of form and so forth. If they were perceived by a mental direct perception, if they were established experientially, then they would be a mental [phenomenon]. [This is not the case.] Neither can they be established inferentially as there is no relation between any other objects and uncompounded phenomena. Therefore, the term “uncompounded phenomenon” and the mental perception of such a phenomenon is nothing but a compounded phenomenon. To posit the substantial existence of uncompounded phenomena is therefore to do nothing other than mock reality.

[Another counter-argument to the non-existence of compounded and uncompounded phenomena is as follows.] If compounded and uncompounded phenomena are not true, then the results of virtuous and non-virtuous acts, happiness and suffering do not exist. If this is the case then neither has to be cultivated or avoided. [Chosrgyal ’Phags pa] refutes this adverse conclusion [in the following]:

You experience the results of your actions, therefore
The conventional truth of dependently originating cause and effect is indubitable.
Do not disparage the way of cause and effect.

Ultimately, there is no karma or its apprehendable effects that needs to be cultivated or avoided. But conventionally, in the [mechanism] of indubitable interdependent origination, preceding causes give rise to subsequent effects. Thus, virtuous or non-virtuous karma will bear fruit in the form of happiness and suffering in accordance with your actions. Therefore, no one should disparage cause and effect. As the Sūtra [Vinayavastu]156 says:

Karma will not be exhausted, even in a thousand aeons.
When the right time and conditions arise,

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Its fruits will ripen
For embodied beings.\textsuperscript{157}

As Ārya Nāgārjuna also said [in the Śūnyatāsaptati]:\textsuperscript{158}

The Bhagavan, the Teacher, taught that the objects of [performed] karma,
The nature of karma and their results are inexhaustible [until they bear
fruit].
He has also taught that the results of actions performed by an individual
sentient being
Must be borne by that individual; and that whatever actions are performed
are certain to bear fruit.

Since the actor bears the result of the karma he or she has performed, [836]
[some may] posit an inconceivable permanent self as the actor and recipient of that
actions’ fruits. This is a perverted view. As [Chos rgyal ’Phags pa] said:

It is the way of the eternalists to propose the true existence [of “I”].

The permanently existing self cannot be changed by conditions. This is why virtuous
and non-virtuous actions cannot\textsuperscript{159} give rise to resultant happiness and sorrow. As
Dharmakīrti said [in the Pramāṇavārttikakārikā]:\textsuperscript{160}

The very cause that gives rise to suffering is bondage;
How could a permanent [cause] do so?
The very cause that ceases the arising of suffering is liberation;
How could a permanent [cause] do so?

Therefore to hold such a view is a mere lip service by people claiming the Buddha as
their teacher. In fact they are going against the teachings [of the Buddha] and are far
from the utterly pure view of the Dharma. Thus, they are no different from heretics.

\textsuperscript{157} There wordings of this verse and the ones that is commonly cited from Lung phran tshegs differ
significantly, but there is not much deviation in their essential meaning.
\textsuperscript{158} http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur\&index=3827\#25B (accessed on
06/06/2014).
\textsuperscript{159} The Ornament reads, “sdbus btseg bskyed par ’gyur ro”. Based on the context, however, it is clear
that the line is missing a negation and should actually read: “sdbus btseg mi bskyed par ’gyur ro”. I have
made this change in this translation. The Sa skya’i bka’ ’bum Dpe bsdur ma reads the same as the Sde dge
dition. See Blo gros rgyal mtshan, “Rgyal po la gdams pa’i nams bshad”, in Gsung ’bum dpe bsdur ma
\textsuperscript{160} http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur\&index=4210\#115A (accessed on
07/06/2014).
Having discussed about establishing the conventional as illusory, now the instruction on how to ratify the ultimate [truth] as devoid of self-nature, [Chos rgyal 'Phags pa] said:

No phenomenon lacks place and time;
When dissected by place and time
There is not a single entity anywhere, anytime.
Without a single [entity], from whence do multiple entities arise?
There is no existence other than [objects and consciousness.]
[Any other] existence is mere conceptualisation.

Although there are many tenet systems asserting true existence, the [existents] they assert can be [generally categorised] into two phenomena: [outer] objects and [inner] consciousness. [These are determined by place and time.] It is impossible for an object [to exist] without a place and a consciousness [to exist] outside of time. When place and time are used to deconstruct these views, the view of those who propose ultimately existent, partless particles [becomes untenable]. [837]

According to [the proponents of partless particles], subtle particles form coarse particles when six particles from six directions simultaneously attach themselves to the central partless particle. But if the partless particle in the centre has six directions to which other particles can attach themselves, this implies the central [“partless”] particle has six [directional] parts. [If the central particle did not have six directions to which these particles could be attached, this would imply] all the other five particles could attach at the same place as the particle attached to [the central particle’s] east. If this were the case, all six particles combined would be the same size as the [central], partless particle. This is why there is no forming of coarse particles. Ācārya Vasubandhu explained this [in the Viṃśakakārikā]:^{161}

If six particles were to attach [to a central partless particle]
simultaneously,
The partless particle must, therefore, have six [component] parts [in different directions].
Or, if all six particles fit on one [of the central particle’s] sides,
Then this collection of particles must be same size as the [central] particle.

[The argument] that there is a single [partless] particle therefore becomes untenable when [its use of] direction is deconstructed. And, if there is no [truly existing] single

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particle, there cannot be a collection of such particles. [Through this argument, it is shown that] there cannot be a truly existing outer object.

[When analysed in the following way], the assertion that the indivisible moment of consciousness is the ultimate truth [becomes untenable]. If an indivisible moment of consciousness does not consist of arising, existing and ceasing then it would not be a compounded phenomenon [which is impossible]. Otherwise, every moment has to have these three parts and cannot be a single [indivisible] moment. Consequently, there cannot be multiple moments [of consciousness] because there are no [single moments] that could be joined together. Ārya Nāgārjuna spoke of this in the *Ratnāvali*:\(^{162}\)

A moment has an end, therefore
Its beginning and middle must be analysed.
Since a moment has these three parts,
The world does not abide in moments.

Again, if an earlier indivisible moment were to give rise to a later indivisible moment [the two must connect]; if the two do not connect then the later would [arise] without a cause. If [these moments] were to meet then [each moment] must have two parts: one that is associated with a previous [moment] and another that is associated with the next [moment]. If the same part that was associated with the previous [moment] were simultaneously associated with the next [moment,]\(^{838}\) then the earlier moment would exist as [another] third moment. If [these moments were each] associated with separate moments, then the moment associated with the previous moment would not have ceased at the time it became associated with the next moment, and therefore the middle moment would exist in the second moment. [This argument suggests] a single momentary object is not possible anywhere. And, if there is no single object, how could there be multiple objects?

[As this shows], mind that is divided in relation to time does not inherently exist. There are no other existent [third phenomena] other than the [outer] objects and [inner] consciousness; not even a strand of hair sliced into a hundred parts. Since the [true existence] of objects and consciousness is refuted through reasoning, the conceptualising of their existence [only continues when it] is merely unanalysed. It is pleasing when it is left alone.

After presenting the refutation of the extreme of existence, [Chos rgyal ’Phags pa] then presents the refutation of non-existence:

When existence is intrinsically not established,  
How can there be natural non-existence?  
[That would be] like establishing long without short.

If one were to ask, “Since existence was refuted, are [objects and consciousness], non-existent, [the answer is]: No, because positing non-existence depends on existence. If there is no intrinsic existence, how can non-existence be characterised? Or in another words, how can there be intrinsic non-existence? For example, without reference to [the concept of] long, the [concept of] short does not exist. Moreover, when analysing non-existence, if there is nothing to be analysed, there is nothing that can be non-existent. In relation to this, Ācārya Jñānagarbha said [in the Satyadvayavibhaṅga]:163

Since there is no [true] existence that is to be refuted,  
Ultimately it is clear that there is nothing to be refuted

Ārya Nāgārjuna also said [in the Ratnāvalī]:164

This is why the buddhas said  
The profound teaching is beyond  
Immortality, existence and non-existence.  
This should be known as a special Dharma gift.

[The root text then presents] a refutation to a third argument: [839]

Completely dispel both suppositions [of intrinsic existence and non-existence];  
There is no logical basis or reliability [in either of them].  
There is no phenomenon that is both [existent and non-existent] or neither.  
One with clear intelligence; you must know this.

If you were to ask: Could there be a third alternative? Could [outer objects and inner consciousness] both [truly exist and not exist]? [The answer would be]: No. Logical reasoning has already refuted existence and non-existence. Neither could they be neither [truly existent nor non-existent] as there is no reasoning that could prove this.

Moreover, the assertion that it is neither [existent or non-existent] depends on the existence of both [these categories]. When the objects on which [this assertion] depends are not established, how can there be its reality? In this way when the four extremes are abandoned, [an individual’s perception] becomes free from elaborations. You are a king with clear intelligence; you must know this.

These [reasons] refute all the arguments for true existence. But since even [some of] the greatest among the greats have apparently been attached to the views [espoused by] the Proponents of Mind Only [Cittamātra], 165 [Chos rgyal ’Phags pa goes on to] refute this view:

If [the Cittamātras] conceptualise the truth as a singularity
Because the mind has no form, it is directionless.

These lines are a presentation of their [Cittamātra] view. The Cittamātras claim that because the mind does not have form it is not affected by the reasoning that dissects [phenomena] into six directional parts. And, as the past and future are non-existent it is not affected by the reasoning that dissects [phenomena] into three times. Hence, they conceptualise that the present indivisible moment of mind is the only truth.

[Chos rgyal ’Phags pa’s] objection to this [view] is:

If the multitudinous appearances of subjects and objects
Are one, then the mind too will become multiple,
And false.

This presents the main objection [to the Cittamātra argument]: Are the multitudinous appearances of subjects and objects such as blue and yellow [840] the same as the indivisible singular consciousness, or are they separate? If they are the same, then as they assert that [consciousness] has the same nature as multitudinous [appearances], the True Aspectarian School [of the Cittamātra] would [necessarily] propound multiple consciousnesses. This is how they have to accept [our argument’s] first premise. Its entailment then follows: whatever is the same nature as multiple [objects] is multitudinous. They are separate impermanent objects just like pillars and vases.

This is why the following lines from the Tshad ma rigs pa’i gter emphasise [the distinction between] multitudinous outer appearances and a singular, internal self-cognising consciousness:

165 Henceforth this translation will use the Sanskrit name Cittamātra for the proponents of Mind Only school.
Externally there is a multitude of apprehended objects;  
Internally there is only self-cognising consciousness.\textsuperscript{166}

This statement is directed at the Cittamātras. If it were [presented as a stand-alone statement, rather than being directed at the Cittamātras], it could be refuted [using the following reasoning that focuses on] the cessation of one part of a whole. [Take for example an instance in which] the movement of what appears to be a white [object] and the stableness of what appears to be a yellow [object] are apprehended simultaneously. [In this instance] if it were to have the same nature as the [external] moving [white object], the external apprehended white [object’s] movement should cause the internal self-cognising consciousness to move. [Moreover], as the steady yellow [object] has the same nature as the self-cognising consciousness, it should also cause it to move. If this [situation] were accepted, then how could they oppose the appearance of moving white [objects] becoming stable?

They may then propose that apparently moving and stable [objects] are both mistaken [conceptions]; in reality they are [nothing other than] the mind itself. The mind that actually exists, the established basis [for reality,] must be separated from those [elements of mind] that are stable and those that are not. Yet if consciousness is accepted as either [one of these two elements], then whichever one is accepted will stop the other [element] from being accepted [as consciousness].

According to the False Aspectarian School [of the Cittamātra], the consciousness is untrue because it has the same nature as untrue multitudinous appearances. [Chos rgyal 'Phags pa] refutes these possibilities [in the following lines]:

\begin{quote}
If [subjects and objects] are separate—
How can there be a phenomenon [dharma] and its reality [dharmatā]?
From whence does dual perception arise?
What is nirvana after delusions are exhausted? [841]
\end{quote}

The True Aspectarian School [by contrast] claims that although there are multitudinous [external] appearances, in reality these [phenomena] are [only] “other-powered phenomena” as they are [established by a] self-cognising consciousness. [This position is unacceptable for the following reason.] [First, they propose] a “thoroughly

\textsuperscript{166} Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan, Sa skya bka’ 'bum, vol. 11 (Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006), p. 32. The current version reads: yid kyi mngon sum du ma yang. dbang shes bzhin du rang rig gcig. This wording does not match those cited in The Ornament. The exact quote in The Ornament cannot be found in this version of the Tshad ma rig gter. My translation follows the quote presented in The Ornament.
established true nature” that is [not separated] initially into subjects and objects. Then [they propose] a cognition—self-cognising consciousness—that apprehends a multitude [of objects] and is separate from the phenomena [it apprehends], which are the “other-powered”. Yet if the multitudinous appearances and the consciousness are [completely] separate, dualistic appearances would be impossible. Due to their simultaneity, these separate substances are [necessarily] unrelated.

[As a result of the True Aspectarian School’s assertions], you may think that [this explanation of reality is possible because] dualistic appearances are mistaken; therefore, [ultimately] they are non-existent, but appear due to habitual imprints. [But this still presents a fault in their logic] as [asserting] that appearances do not in reality exist contradicts [their] proposition that [appearances and consciousness] are separate. Appearances are non-existent in reality; therefore they are beyond any attribution of sameness or separateness.

Another [fault in the True Aspectarian’s reasoning is the following]. If you cannot object to multitudinous appearances, it is unacceptable [to hold] that the “thoroughly established” reality negates the completely imputed object of negation, the “other-powered phenomena”. [The consequence of holding this position would be that] when nirvana is attained the exhaustion of illusions would result in cessation of multitudinous appearances. This would [entail] that [those who attain nirvana do not possess] the wisdom that knows all things.

Having presented an extensive refutation of [the Cittamātra] position, [Chosrgyal ’Phags pa] then summarises this refutation:

Since the object cannot be established inherently, 
There is no inherent existence of the subject either. 
Therefore, the proposition that lucidity and awareness are truly existent 
Is as utterly false as [the Sāṃkhya’s view of] a distinct “self” other than manifestations.

In accordance with the earlier presentations of logical reasoning, [this verse also asserts that] because the subject is dependent on the object it can have no inherent existence when the object is not established inherently. There cannot, for example, be a consciousness perceiving white without white. [842]

[Yet] another [fault in the Cittamātras’ reasoning is the following]. Although they object to the [true existence of] subjects and objects, they do assert the true existence of a lucid cognition that is different from [subjects and objects]. This is
untenable [for the following reasons:] (1) there is no valid cognition that can establish [the existence of this lucid cognition]; and (2) [the assertion of its existence] is impaired by other [logical processes] such as [the test to see whether a thing can exist as] one or many. Their proposition is [in fact] similar to the Sāṃkhya’s assertion that a distinct self [exists] separately to the twenty-two manifestations. The Sāṃkhya’s proposition that a permanent [self exists] that is the experiencer or enjoyer of the twenty-four subtle elements [is untenable for the following reasons]: (1) there is no [reasoning] that can prove [the existence of this self]; and (2) [the assertion of its existence] is impaired by other [logical processes] such as the fact that a permanent [self] must be devoid of any systematic or simultaneous actions. [The application of these reasonings to this assertion shows] it to be utterly false.

After refuting the imputations of others, [Chos rgyal ’Phags pa] then presents [his own view] of ultimate reality:

Understand thoroughly that all phenomena have not
Arisen primordially; they have no inherent existence, are
Utterly free from elaborations by nature, [and are as]
Nonreferential as space.

As none of them have arisen primordially, all compounded and uncompounded phenomena lack inherent existence. Understand [therefore] that they are naturally free from all signs of elaboration, such as [being designated] existent or non-existent. And seal them with a non-referential, space-like [view]. [Approaching reality this way] accords with the Prajñāpāramitāśāntayagāthā:167

When your wisdom unties compounded and uncompounded, Virtuous and non-virtuous [phenomena], such that You do not even see [the tiniest] particle [as existent], then, [Although still] in these worlds, you have gone to the city on the other side, to the perfection of wisdom.168

[In the Abhisamayālaṃkāra],169 Maitreyanātha also said:

168 References to a city on the other side of the shore is often used as a metaphor for nirvana in traditional Buddhist literature.
There is nothing to be dispelled,
Nor the slightest thing to be posited.
View perfection perfectly;
Seeing perfection is total liberation.

After explaining how ultimate reality is ratified by the absence of an inherent
nature, [Chos rgyal 'Phags pa] then shows how [the two truths] are ratified by unity.
[843]

To understand the marvellous nature of
All phenomena, to neither renounce their emptiness
Nor interrupt the continuity of their dependent arising,
Is so much more wondrous than any wonder!

When you properly understand that all phenomena within samsara and nirvana lack true
self-existence, then you do not renounce their emptiness. [Yet you should also
understand] that these very same [phenomena] [unfold] as the uninterrupted continuity
of dependent arising; karma and causes give rise to results, and this is conventional
reality. This is the wonderful teaching that unifies the two truths. To realise what these
teachings [explain] is more wondrous than any wonder! Ārya Nāgārjuna [in the
Mūlamadhyamakakārikā]¹⁷⁰ says:

Dependent arising itself
Is taught as the teaching of emptiness.

He also said [in the same text]:¹⁷¹

There are no phenomena
That do not arise dependently;
Therefore there are no phenomena
That are not empty.

If you were to ask, “What is the union [of two truths].” [the next section
answers]:

Know that all objects are a union of appearance and emptiness;
The mind is a unity of awareness and emptiness; and

¹⁷⁰ http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=3824#15A (accessed on
14/06/2014).
¹⁷¹ http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=3824#15A (accessed on
14/06/2014).
The paths are a unity of method and wisdom.  
Then familiarise [yourself with this knowledge] comprehensively.

Despite their appearances, you must understand that forms and all [other] objects are like the reflection of the moon in water; they are devoid of true existence. As the *Samādhirājasūtra*\(^{172}\) says:

When the moon shines in a clear sky,  
Its reflection appears in a clear lake  
Without it changing into water;  
Know that all phenomena [appear] in a similar way.

All mental states like the eye consciousness are lucid and aware yet devoid of true existence. [844] They must be viewed as the experience of a dream consciousness. As the *Prajñāpāramitā*\(^{173}\) says:

Even consciousness is like a dream; like an illusion.

Know that all paths—like *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā*—are a union of method and wisdom; they act like the two wheels of a chariot. If you separate method from [wisdom], you will fall into the extreme of nirvana; if you separate wisdom from [method], you will fall into the extreme of samsara. You will not be able to travel to the city of non-abiding nirvana if [your] chariot does not have either of the two wheels. As the [*Āryavimalakīrtinirdeśanāmamahāyānasūtra*]\(^{174}\) says:

Wisdom separated from method binds you;  
Method separated from wisdom also binds you.

The Great One [’Phags pa blo gros rgyal mtshan] also said [something similar] in an [unidentified] composition:

Wisdom separated from method  
Is the enemy of all good qualities;

The wording of this text differs from those quoted in *The Ornament* but the meaning remains unchanged. In this referenced source, this quote reads: “thabs kyis ma zin pa’i shes rab ni bcings pa’o. thabs kyis zin pa’i shes rab ni grol ba’o. shes rab kyis ma zin pa’i thabs ni bcings pa’o. shes rab kyis zin pa’i thabs ni grol ba’o”.
Method separated from wisdom
Will not liberate you.

Having extensively described how [the two truths are sealed with union], [Chos rgyal ’Phags pa] then summarises these instructions so that they may be mastered.

Know that the causation, path and resultant stages of all phenomena
Are conventional, illusory, interdependently originated and
Ultimately, naturally emptiness.
And this is the inseparable union of the two [truths].

Interdependently arising conventional illusions may appear, but ultimate truth is naturally devoid of true existence. These two are not separate; appearance is devoid of true existence yet emptiness itself is not [total] annihilation. It is a union of appearance and emptiness. Given this, seal [this union] with causation: all phenomena within samsara and nirvana. This is imprinting the essential seal of abiding. With that very seal, [845] familiarise yourself [with the union of appearance and emptiness] through the three-fold non-conceptual purity applied to the six perfections and all such paths. This is imprinting the seal of cultivation and practice. [Imprint] the resultant seal of accomplishment, the results such as the [attainment] of the form body by the truth body of oneself and others.

In this way, [Chos rgyal ’Phags pa] instructed the Lord of the Land to know that this is the way of all phenomena’s causation, path and resultant stages.

Summary that consolidates all the virtuous paths:
After explaining extensively how to practise, [Chos rgyal ’Phags pa] then presents a summary that consolidates all the virtuous paths:

As such, there are five: the foundation, the preliminaries,
Meditative equipoise, subsequent acts and that which seals all.
[Each of these is divided into three, which makes fifteen;]\(^\text{175}\)
These constitute the virtuous path in its entirety.

“The five” are those described earlier: (1) the foundation of the path, pure moral discipline; (2) the preliminaries of the path, motivating thoughts; (3) the actual path, [which includes] the yoga of meditative equipoise and methods to increase the path’s

\(^{175}\) This line is missing in *The Ornement* (p. 845) but is included in the root text (see p. 300).
qualities; (4) [Subsequent acts such as] recollection; and finally (5) sealing the paths and
[all other] phenomena. Each of these five has three sub-divisions, which makes a total
of fifteen. These fifteen include the entirety of all the virtuous paths the Sugata
explained in his scriptures that should be accomplished.

That is why [Chos rgyal 'Phags pa] goes on to explain that any virtuous activity
is completed by these [five practices]:

Those who strive to complete every enumerated virtuous act
[In accordance] with these [elements] of the Dharma’s way

Enumerated virtuous acts—such Dharma acts as the seven-limbed practice and
offerings. Initially, [the seven-limbed practice] must be based upon pure moral
discipline; you must refrain from non-virtuous actions and perform virtuous actions.
Cultivate the wish to make offerings and so forth out of devotion to the Three Jewels.
[Develop this devotion] through knowledge of their qualities. [846] Perform the seven
limbs gradually, with the purpose of developing the qualities of the guru and the Three
Jewels. You must [also] be motivated by compassion. [Compassion is the intention] to
relieve every sentient being—all those who have not attained the qualities of the Three
Jewels including yourself—from suffering. Then, when you analyse the nature of the
offering act and the substances being offered, you will realise that they lack true
existence. [Engage in a] meditative equipoise on their non-existence. Completely
analyse all objects of form [outer phenomena] and the non-conceptuality of the
subjective mind. Then recall all the virtuous acts you have performed earlier and
remember them with joy. You must then dedicate [all] these acts to the attainment of
ultimate awakening; develop the aspiration that they will be of temporary and final
benefit. And [finally], seal all these earlier practices with the [view] that all appearances
are without identifiable nature. This is how one should practise.

Results of the practices:

After explaining how we should practise, [Chos rgyal 'Phags pa] then explains the
results of these practices. [This section has two parts.] The first is the attainment of
higher rebirths. [The root text reads:]

….Will enjoy all the happiness of a higher rebirth and
Those people who merely perform these practices with a pure moral discipline that is adorned with subsequent sublime prayers will attain higher rebirths as gods and humans. But there is also no doubt [of greater results] if one performs the complete set [of these practices].

[Chos rgyal ’Phags pa] explains how this will not only lead not only to the attainment of higher rebirths but also the state of definite goodness:

Having accumulated the two oceans of merit,
Conjoined them with the noble path through lucid meditative tranquillity,
And augmented them with the wisdom of meditation and practice,
You will reach the furthest end of the path.

This verse presents the temporary results. [847] [It refers to] the Path of Accumulation, which occurs due to the accumulation of a vast amount of merit and wisdom. [These accumulations] aid liberation for an aeon; the [mental] continua [of those with these accumulations] are filled with virtue and endowed with the meditative tranquillity of the four applications of mindfulness.176 [Those with a mental continuum like this] are also [able to rely upon] enthusiastic effort, as they possess the four complete abandonments.177 Through the four legs of miraculous activities178 they manifest [in different forms for the sake of other beings]. And their meditative tranquillity, [called] “the stream of doctrine”, makes their minds [completely] serviceable. It enables them to make offerings to inconceivable numbers of buddhas and receive teachings from them.

As the Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra179 says:

[The Path of Accumulation is the result of]
Innumerable aeons of renunciation and
A complete expansion [of the capacity for] admiration.
Like water [massing into an] ocean,
It is the complete collection of virtues.

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176 Tib. dran pa nye bar gzhag pa bzhi. These are mindfulness of body, feelings, mental contents and the mind. Within the Path of Accumulation, there are three levels known as “Lesser”, “Middling” and “Greater” Path of Accumulation. The four applications of mindfulness are perfected at the Lesser Path of Accumulation.

177 Tib. yang dag spong ba bzhi. These are abandonment of non-virtuous actions before they occur; abandonment of non-virtuous actions that occur to the mind; cultivating virtuous actions that have not yet occurred to the mind; and cultivating virtuous actions that have already been developed. These four are perfected at the Middling Path of Accumulation.

178 Tib. rdzu ’phrul gyi rkang pa bzhi. These are: determination, discernment, diligence, and samādhi; these qualities are perfected at the Greater Path of Accumulation.

After the [Path of Accumulation, bodhisattvas] then familiarise themselves with the topics they have understood earlier through listening and contemplation [on the Path of Connection]. Through this process of familiarisation they develop the worldly wisdom of meditative training. Beings [on the Path of Connection] develop a vivid experience of meditative tranquility that is focused on the lack of inherent existence of: (1) the substantive apprehended person; (2) the apprehended being as a sign; and (3) the apprehended and the apprehender. They abandon the thirty-six conceptual thoughts and gain control over faith, effort, memory, meditative tranquillity and wisdom. This empowers them with the power to defeat lack of faith, laziness, forgetfulness, mental distraction and faulty wisdom. This is called the Path of Connection because it connects [the bodhisattva] to the supreme paths of the Āryas. It does this by [granting them] a partial concordance with definite differentiation. This is a precursor to the fire from the wisdom of non-conceptuality; [the bodhisattva] only feels its heat and “heat” is the first stage of the Path of Connection. [The next stage is called] “peak” because it surmounts unstable virtues. [The third stage is called] “forbearance” because [the practice] of this profound Dharma eliminates lower rebirths. [The fourth stage is called] “the supreme” as it is the best [type] of worldly existence. This is as Maitreya explained in the Mahāyānasūtraālaṃkāra: 180

Likewise following this: [848]
[Bodhisattvas] abandon the mental distraction of apprehension,
[And], in an orderly process,
[Experience] “heat” and the rest.

Immediately after this, [bodhisattvas] generate the conceptual wisdom that arises from the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths. Through this, they see the nature of reality as they have never seen it before. [The bodhisattvas’] imputational afflictions and these [afflictions’] imprints are cut out from the roots. [The bodhisattvas] are exalted above ordinary beings and are endowed with the qualities of trans-worldly paths, including the seven factors of awakening. This is the Path of Seeing. In the Mahāyānasūtraālaṃkāra 181 Maitreyanātha says of it:

After this you will attain
The supreme wisdom. It is beyond worldly existence,

Is nonconceptual and stainless.
It is free from the two graspings.

[On the Path of Meditation bodhisattvas] become perfectly familiarised with whatever they see and what they accomplished [during the Path of Seeing]. They are in a state of meditative tranquillity, [experiencing] the wisdom that arises out of transworldly meditation. [They abide in this meditative tranquillity] for two incalculable aeons. [Their perceptions] are without contamination. This [meditation] is [combined] with post-meditational, contaminated activities such as familiarising themselves with admiration, dedication and rejoicing. As they do this, they gradually realise the nine paths of mediation, such as the path of lower meditation. [These paths] dispel in an orderly manner the nine greatest of the great innate afflictive and objective obscurations. [They also develop] qualities, such as the blossoming eightfold noble path. This is the progressive development of the Path of Meditation. At the end of this [path, bodhisattvas attain] perfect buddhahood. This is accomplished through the vajra-like samādhi. The Abhisamayālaṃkāra¹⁸² explains:

On the nine grounds
The path is cleared [849]
By the smallest of the small cleansers
For the greatest of the great stains.

The four [paths] described here are the actual paths [to buddhahood] because they progressively leads towards it. The path of perfection is only designated [as a path]; it is actually the result [or destination]. The [stages of the path] are called the ground because they are the base of all good qualities. The letter, Spring yig nor bu’i phreng ba,¹⁸³ explains this in some detail, so I will not re-explain it here.

After describing the temporary results [of practice, Chos rgyal ’Phags pa] then goes on to describe the ultimate result:

The nature of the mind is primordially pristine;
It has the one taste of the [dharma]dhātu, because in it conceptions are pacified.

It is the nature body, the \textit{dharmadhātu} wisdom;
It is excellent abandonment and the knowledge of each [phenomenon] as it is.

This verse describes the first body (\textit{kāya}). It is not a transformed state because it is the nature body, the nature of the mind. It is the primordial purity that pacifies the stains of adventitious conceptions. The mind realising its own nature is like water pouring into water and butter mixing with butter; we see our own wisdom perfectly. This one taste of the \textit{dhātu} and wisdom is the natural \textit{kaya}, and it is also the \textit{dharmadhātu} wisdom.

[The Indians used the Sanskrit term “buddha” because they said:] \textit{buddhapuruṣanidrāprabuddhahvat} [“a buddha is like a person who has awakened from sleep”]. The [Tibetans] translated the [Sanskrit] term “buddha” as \textit{sangs rgyas}; [the first syllable of this word] \textit{sangs} [meaning “cleansed” or “awakened”] refers to [the way the buddhas] awaken from the sleep of ignorance just as a person awakes from sleep. This suggests the perfection of abandonment. This in itself is the [wisdom] that knows all phenomena as they are. As the \textit{Abhisamayālaṃkāra}\textsuperscript{184} says:

\begin{quote}
The nature body of the Sage 
Has the characteristic of  
Attaining all the uncontaminated knowledge 
And the nature of purity at all times.
\end{quote}

[Chos rgyal ’Phags pa’s] description of the second \textit{kāya} is: [850]

\begin{quote}
The path totally transforms samsara’s phenomena:  
The [ordinary] body becomes the [awakened] body, adorned with marks and signs; 
The [ordinary] voice becomes the [awakened] voice, [possessing] sixty characteristics; and 
The [ordinary] mind becomes one that knows all existence’s varieties. 
These are the three wisdoms, the transformations of faults;  
The limitless qualities of the Victor; [and] 
This is the complete enjoyment body (\textit{sambhogakāya}) itself.
\end{quote}

Just as white cloth is transformed into vivid [coloured] cloth through dyeing, the characteristics of samsaric beings are transformed by the colours of the path into the

wisdom of the buddha-ground. On this ground of buddhahood all knowables [appear] vividly to the completely liberated wisdom. As the Mahāyānasūtrālāṃkāra\(^{185}\) says:

\[
\text{Just as individual knots in cloth} \cr
\text{[Determine] the vividness of its colour,} \cr
\text{Similarly, the power of motivation} \cr
\text{[Determines] the vividness of liberation’s wisdom.}
\]

The transformation of the [ordinary] body gives rise to a kāya that is adorned with the thirty-two major marks and eighty minor signs [of a buddha]. [Ordinary] speech is transformed into speech that possesses the sixty melodious characteristics. And the [ordinary] mind comes to possess the three wisdoms: (1) the mirror-like wisdom, in which all uncontaminated phenomena appear as a reflection in a mirror; (2) the wisdom of equality, through which samsara and nirvana are perceived as equal; and (3) discriminating wisdom, which knows all phenomena thoroughly without confusing any of them. When the faults of ordinary beings are transformed they become the Victor’s limitless qualities. It is known as the complete enjoyment body because it delivers Mahāyāna teachings to a retinue of realised bodhisattvas at all times [851] and [both the Sambhogakāya] and its offspring, [the bodhisattvas] thoroughly enjoy uncontaminated bliss. As the Abhisamayālāṃkāra\(^{186}\) says:

\[
\text{We can accept this is the Sage’s complete enjoyment body} \cr
\text{As it is adorned with thirty-two major marks and} \cr
\text{Eighty minor signs; [gives] Mahāyāna teachings;} \cr
\text{And [thoroughly] enjoys [bliss].}
\]

[Chos rgyal 'Phags pa’s] description of the third kāya is:

\[
\text{[Ordinary] actions are transformed into all-accomplishing wisdom,} \cr
\text{Infinite activities are themselves the emanation bodies (nirmāṇakāya);} \cr
\text{These are the completion of realisations.}
\]


When [ordinary] actions are transformed, they become all-accomplishing wisdom. This wisdom accomplishes the wishes of sentient beings without conceptualising. As the [Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṃkāra]\(^{187}\) says:

> Through its constant manifestations of art, Incarnations, perfect awakening and nirvana, The emanation bodies of a buddha Are the great method to liberate [beings].

In accordance with sentient beings’ preferences, the Buddha’s emanation bodies manifest in any of three forms. These two form bodies (rūpakāya) [of the Buddha are described in Sanskrit as]: buddhaprabuddhāḥtapadmaabuddhavat. This has been translated into [Tibetan] as: “the Buddha’s knowledge of all there is to know blossoms expansively like a lotus”. This [term is represented by the second syllable of the Tibetan word for buddha, “sangs rgyas”, which means “to expand”, and the use of this syllable] signifies the [Buddha’s] perfection of realisation.

[In answer to] the question, “How long does this perfect result last”, [Chos rgyal ’Phags pa] replies:

> Because [buddhas] have command over the [ten qualities], They are permanent; there is no break in their continuity.

The Buddha has command over the ten qualities, which include life and karma. This means that buddhas are permanent and there is no break in the continuity [of their buddhahood]. This is why the Sūvarṇaprabhāsasūtra\(^{188}\) says:

> Buddhas never enter nirvana; and The Dharma never diminishes. In order to assist lazy beings, [852] The [buddhas’] emanation bodies perform the entrance into nirvana.

Another text, [the Mahāyānasamgraha by Asaṅga]\(^{189}\) says:


\(^{189}\) This exact quote is not found in the Bstan ’gyur available at www.tibetan.works/etext. However, Mahāyānasamgraha includes a similar verse. See tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=4048#40A (accessed on 24/06/2014).
Some extinguish like the fire in nirvana;  
Others attain awakening; but the  
Tathāgata, the permanent body,  
Never ceases to exist.

What is more, as the great being ['Phags pa blo gros rgyal mtshan] said in Gsung rab bstod dbyang rgya mtsho:190  
No part of the [buddhas’]  
Ocean of qualities diminishes.  
How then [do they demonstrate] death and transference?  
It is so only for their students;  
Such [perception] is [similar] to the appearance and disappearance of mountains.

**Instructing to accomplish:**

Having finished [his description] of the resultant stage’s perfection, [Chos rgyal ’Phags pa] then instructs [Qubilai Khan] to accomplish it. [This section reads]:

O lord of humans! May your deeds also be like this.

O lord of humans! May you too exert the effort [needed] to accomplish the fifteen topics of practices, the three bodies [of buddhahood], which include its activities. [In this line, Chos rgyal ’Phags pa] addresses the king directly, but indirectly he is also granting the same instruction to other readers. This [format] is similar to the Buddha’s instruction to King Bimbisāra and Ācārya Nāgārjuna’s instruction to King Sātavāhana. As the Ratnāvalī191 says:

This teaching is not exclusively intended  
For the king only;  
It has been presented with the desire to help  
Other sentient, in whatever ways [are applicable to them].

[This ends the texts’] actual discourse.

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Dedication:

Following this, [Chos rgyal 'Phags pa] dedicates [the text].

By the virtue of offering this gift of Dharma, [853]
This condensed meaning of the profound supreme vehicle,
May all beings, and you in particular, O King,
Attain the highest state of buddhahood.

To which state is this dedication [directed]? The state of the highest buddhahood. On behalf of whom does it make it? Principally for the king, but also for all sentient beings. On what does it rely to make [this dedication]? On the virtue of offering this Dharma gift, the condensed meaning of the profound supreme vehicle. The “vehicle” that is described [includes] two vehicles: the causal vehicle, which causes movement; and the resultant vehicle, which reaches [the destination]. It is “supreme” because it is superior to the srāvaka and pratyekabuddha vehicles.

This may suggest the following question[s]. Doesn’t this treatise only present the condensed meaning of the supreme vehicle? How can it then be the condensation of all the Sugata’s teachings? Yet there is no contradiction between [these two claims]. All the Sugata’s scriptures are condensed in the supreme vehicle, [and this teaching is a condensation of that condensation]. As the Mahāmāyājālatantra\(^{192}\) says:

\[
\text{[All] three vehicles [aid] renunciation,}
\text{But only one vehicle abides as the result.}
\]

In another text entitled Rgyal bu mo no gan la springs pa\(^{193}\), written by the great being [Chos rgyal 'Phags pa], he said:

Apart from the Mahāyāna,
There is no way to attain the great liberation.

\(^{192}\) Although The Ornament cites Mahāmāyājālatantra, I have been unable to locate this verse in this text. See http://tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=kangyur&index=431 (accessed on 26/06/2014). However, Śrīguhyagarbhatattvaviniscaya includes a similar verse with slightly different wording; it reads: theg pa bzhi yis nges 'byung la. theg pa gcig gi 'bras bur gnas. See http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=kangyur&index=796#181B (accessed on 28/06/2014).

\(^{193}\) The title of this text is reported as Rgyal bu mo no gan la springs pa in both the Sde dge edition of The Ornament and the Rgyal po la gdam ba'i rnam bshad, Gsung 'bum Dpe bsdur ma (Pe cin: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2007), vol. 3, p. 387. This is an error undetected and replicated in many existing editions; the title should instead be Rgyal bu mo no gan la spring ba'i rab byed (Letter to Prince Nomoghan). See Chos rgyal 'Phags pa, “Rgyal bu mo no gan la spring ba’i rab byed”, in The Complete Works of the Great Masters of the Sa skya Sect of Tibetan Buddhism, vol. 7 (Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, 1968), p. 197.
Therefore set your mind on the Great Vehicle,
For it will carry you.\textsuperscript{194}

It is “profound” because for ordinary beings, for the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, it is difficult to comprehend. [854]. Put simply, this implies that the king is intelligent. This, [along with the fact that] the king’s wealth is comparable to Vaiśravaṇa’s wealth and that even animals can offer material gifts, means that the gift of Dharma is the most appropriate gift for the king.

\textbf{Incidental requests on relevant issues:}

This has been [Chos rgyal ’Phags pa’s] actual presentation on Dharma. Following this he presents requests on [other] relevant issues.

Having offered this gift of a treatise on Dharma,
[My] confidence is further heightened.
O Lord of Beings! Just for a short while
Without being distracted, please heed my few appeals.

This is a request for the king to listen to [Chos rgyal ’Phags pa’s] appeals. [He frames the appeals in this way] as it is not deemed appropriate to make abrupt appeals to the Greatest of the Greats, [the Mongol Emperor]. [Still], you may wonder from whence [Chos rgyal ’Phags pa’s] confidence derived? His heightened confidence came through his offering of a Dharma treatise. This [allowed him] to submit a few appeals for himself and on others’ behalf. He asks [the king] to listen to them without distraction for a while.

\textbf{Requests for king’s own wellbeing:}

After gaining [the king’s] attention, he urges him to take care of his own wellbeing:

\begin{quote}
Now is the time for you to make an effort: to lengthen your own life
personally;
To secure\textsuperscript{195} the glory of your lineage; and
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{194} There is a slight variation in the wording of the fourth line of this verse in this commentary, and the root text, see Chos rgyal ’Phags pa, “Rgyal bu mo no gan la springs pa”, in The Complete Works of the Great Masters of the Sa skya Sect of Tibetan Buddhism, vol. 7 (Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, 1968), p. 198–3. The root text reads: kun nas gzhol zhing goms par mdzod, whereas The Ornament reads: gzhol zhing ‘ba’ ba nyid du mdzod.

\textsuperscript{195} The root text includes the Tibetan word brten in this line, which appears to be the result of a spelling error. Brten (with ’breng bu) means to rely upon something, but the context indicates that the intended
To seek the means to attain liberation.
Work unreservedly.

From this time onward the king is asked to make an effort to lengthen his life. He may ask: What are these [life-lengthening] methods? Rgyal bu no mo gan la spring ba’i rab byed ¹⁹⁶ says:

The three causes of a depleted lifespan are:
- Killing innocent beings;
- Harming nonhumans; and [855]
- Abandoning periodic rites.

Therefore, [the king] should forsake such acts and instead make efforts to save the lives of those beings about to be killed, to perform periodic rites and so forth.

In a similar manner, to secure the glory of his lineage he should make an effort to perform the deeds prescribed in the nītiśāstras. The following verse [from this text] is an example [of their prescriptions on this topic]:

Work for others if you want to be loved;
Care for others if you want to be revered;
Commend others if you want to be praised;
This is how things work. ¹⁹⁷

As [the Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra]¹⁹⁸ says:

With the human vessel you have found,
[You] can cross the great river.
But it is hard to find this vessel again; so
Fool! Do not sleep while [you] have this opportunity.

You have attained a precious human birth with favourable conditions. You have encountered the Buddha’s teachings and are compassionately cared for by a genuine

¹⁹⁷ Apart from a single word variation, the use of brtson rather than brtse, this verse is exactly identical to a verse in ’Phags pa’s instruction to Köden’s son Jibig Temür; see Chos rgyal ’Phags pa, “Rgyal bu ji big de mur la gtim du bya ba nor bu’i phreng ba”, in Sa skya pa’i bka’ ’bum/ The Complete Works of the Great Masters of the Sa kya Sect of the Tibetan Buddhism, vol. 7 (Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, 1968), p. 187, folio 1. Therefore the nītiśāstras (treatises on statecraft) referred to in this section appears to implicitly include this text by ’Phags pa.
spiritual teacher. The time to make an effort, to find out how to attain liberation, is now. In the *Samādhīrajasūtra*,\(^{199}\) two young ordained monks with miraculous powers and clairvoyance gave instructions to great king of the earth:

Listen! Oh king of princely descent.
It is extremely difficult to encounter a buddha,
So, ruler of this land, always be conscientious!
Life does not stand still, it is always moving forward
Quickly; like a river [flowing] down a mountain slope.
When tormented by sickness, grief and old age
There is no other refuge than your virtues. [856]

**Requests for the wellbeing of the Dharma in general:**

[He then asks that the king work for] the wellbeing of the Dharma in general:

While the glory of the [sun of] Dharma teachings has not [yet] set,
[And] a Dharma king, like you, Lord of Humans, [still] exists;
How could your heart not ponder
The plight of saffron-robed [Saṃgha]?

[Chos rgyal 'Phags pa reflects that] even though the glory of the Buddha’s teachings, the Dharma, has not been eclipsed, and you, a living Dharma king, rules in accordance with the Dharma, ordinary people still harm those who follow the Teacher, the holders of the saffron banner. How could your heart be unaffected at such times of affliction?
As the *Mañjuśrīmūlatantra*\(^{200}\) says:

The containers in which
The lamps of the Buddha’s precious teachings sparkle
Are the ascetic, saffron-robed sons of the Śākya:
The bhikṣuṣ.

And, as the aforementioned two young ordained monks instructed the king in the *Samādhīrajasūtra*:\(^{201}\)

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\(^{200}\) This exact quote cannot be found in *Mañjuśrīmūlatantra*. Jhānākara’s *Mantrāvatāra* includes an identical verse and therefore, it may be the actual source. See http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=tengyur&index=3718#196A (accessed on 29/06/2014).

An elephant of a man, fulfil the dharmas and
Secure the teachings that possess the ten powers.
Then, at the time of depletion when you are extremely terrified,
An elephant of a man, you should remain at the Dharma’s side.

This is why it is appropriate to consider [the welfare] of [Buddhist] renunciants, for they are the root of the Buddha’s doctrine.

Requests for himself [the author]:

[Chos rgyal ’Phags pa then makes] a request particularly for himself:

Although I am not old in years,
My body is weak, I am despondent, and my heart is discouraged.
I would like to rely upon solitude and search for the Dharma’s meaning.
[857]
Please kindly allow me to do this.

[This verse speaks] about the person who has given these instructions. As the Prātimokṣasūtra\textsuperscript{202} says:

Those who have heard much and are past youth
[Find] joy living in the forest.

[Chos rgyal ’Phags pa says]: I would like to search for the meaning of the dharmas I have heard in solitude. Please kindly allow me to do so.

[The king might have responded to this request by pointing out] that [Chos rgyal ’Phags pa] might feel he has done much study and transcended the fields of knowledge, but at the time he composed the text he was only close to thirty years old\textsuperscript{203} and still youthful. [Chos rgyal ’Phags pa] was in his prime, and it was not therefore the right time to live in solitude.

[Chos rgyal ’Phags pa] says that he may not be old in years, but he is like an old person in three ways, and it would therefore be appropriate for him to live in solitude. The three ways are: (1) he has a weak body; (2) he is despondent about the plight of the saffron-robed [Saṃgha], who are the root of the [Buddha’s] doctrine. They suffer despite the fact that the Dharma’s glory has not been eclipsed and a Dharma king like

\footnote{\textsuperscript{202}http://www.tibetan.works/etext/reader.php?collection=kangyur\&index=2#3B (accessed on 30/06/2014).}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{203}The author probably meant forty. When ’Phags pa completed the text in Female Iron Sheep year (1271), he was thirty six years old.
you still lives; (3) his heart is discouraged and he would like to go and live in solitude if
the great king, who holds the Buddha’s doctrine dear and has inconceivable power and
strength, does not think about those who uphold the Dharma, how would a lesser
powered bhikṣu like me aid the Samgha in its plight.

He makes these requests for the sake of his disciples, [858] that they may
become enthusiastic about the supreme [Dharma]. [He cannot be directly referring to his
own state of mind] because bodhisattvas [like him] are produced by many hundreds of
meritorious actions, and having studied [the Dharma] in depth they do not feel
despondent or become discouraged while working for others’ welfare. They are happy
to [work for other’s welfare], like swans entering a lotus pond. This is why Śāntideva
said [in the Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra]:

Merit makes their bodies comfortable,
Wisdom makes their minds joyful;
Even though they remain in samsara for the sake of others,
Why would the compassionate ones ever be upset?

Afterword:

In this way: [Standing] on the shore of the Sage’s great ocean of scriptures,
The brightest mind churned them, [extracted] their essence, and formed it well.
Just as I have tasted [this essence] in full,
[May] others also taste this [essence,] perfectly condensed
To nourish all liberating bodies. May all beings consume it.

[Chos rgyal ’Phags pa’s] work is as stainless as the Omniscient’s knowledge;
It is deep and profound, well beyond the mental capacities of ordinary beings.
It is beyond the abilities of a lesser intelligence like me to analyse it;
Great adepts should therefore be patient with my mistakes.

It may be that the unfathomable circumference of this supreme teaching means that it is
not correct to analyse it; but this would mean that
All [ordinary] beings should abandon their effort [to understand] his teachings?
Hence, with the [author’s] permission and by persistently following his directions,
I have written down the sublime one’s words as a reminder.

This treatise is the perfect condensation; [859]
The essence of all scriptures.
[This commentary] that elucidates it, is therefore called:
“The Ornament that Elucidates the Scriptures”.

In response to repeated requests from the Great Lord of the Land, the Lord of Humans, Qubilai, who rules in accordance with the Dharma, this is how [Chos rgyal 'Phags pa] composed [this treatise]. He is our upholder, the perfect spiritual teacher, the Dharma king who rules the great Sage’s Dharma kingdom perfectly. He is endowed with knowledge that cannot be overwhelmed. He has command over a great many of the Sugata’s teachings. He is without desire and hindrances. He possesses great compassion and loves all beings as his only child. He has assiduously worked for a great number of people to reach the supreme state of higher rebirths and definite goodness.

This commentary to the treatise Advice to the King is called The Ornament that Elucidates the Scriptures. It is a presentation of all the Sugata’s teachings condensed in the form of a practice manual. It was composed by the one who has touched the Supreme Guru’s [Chos rgyal 'Phags pa’s] stainless lotus feet and become insatiable after tasting the [guru’s] nectar teachings. [This author] is the bearer of the Tripiṭaka, Shes rab gzhon nu. The text was completed at the temple of Tsom mdo gnas gsar [in Smar khams] in accordance with the guru’s own words on the twenty-eighth day of the middle month of autumn (the ninth month in the Tibetan lunar calendar) in the Female Wood Pig year [1275]. It was corrected following repeated audiences with [Chos rgyal 'Phags pa]. It is complete.
Appendix Three:
Textual Outline of Advice to the King

Homage to the lord of supreme knowledge, Mañjuśrī, the youthful.
The treatise, Advice to the King has two points:
1. Actual advice on Buddhism
2. Incidental requests on relevant issues

1. Actual advice on Buddhism
   1. Foreword – Entrance to the composition
   2. Main Text – What is to be composed
   3. Afterword – Completion of the composition

1.1. Foreword – Entrance to the composition – promise to compose
   1. Actual words of homage to Buddha
   2. Dispelling criticism on being repetitive

1.2. Main Text – What is to be composed
   1. Homage
   2. Advice to practice

1.2.1. Homage
   1. Presenting that the contents of teachings [of the Buddha] on which this [Advice to the King] is based is to be practiced
   2. How it can be practiced
   3. Results of practicing accordingly

1.2.2. Advice to practice
   1. Presenting in detail
   2. How it comprises all virtues; [with a summary] on how it should be fulfilled in every virtues

1.2.2.1. Presenting in detail [on how to practice]
1. The foundation of the path – pure moral discipline
2. The preliminaries of the path – motivating thoughts
3. The actual path – yoga of meditative equipoise
4. Methods to increase the qualities of the path – subsequent acts
5. Sealing the paths and [all other] phenomena

1.2.2.1.1. The foundation of the path – pure moral discipline
   1. Explanation in detail
   2. Summary

1.2.2.1.1.1. Explanation in detail
   1. The prātimokṣa precepts
   2. Generation of Bodhicitta
   3. Samaya of a Vidyādhara:
      a) Disadvantages of not committing [to the samayas]
      b) Taking full advantages of committing [to the samayas]
      c) Receiving them properly
      d) How to observe them

1.2.2.1.1.1. Prātimokṣa precepts
   1. Showing how to receive precepts correctly through example
   2. Ways of how to observe them
   3. Advantages of observing [the precepts]¹

1.2.2.1.1.2. Generation of Bodhicitta
   1. Causes of generating [Bodhicitta] – Compassion, aspiration, ability to accomplish
   2. Receiving it properly
   3. Methods of completing [the generation of Bodhicitta]

1.2.2.1.2. The preliminary of the path – motivating thought
   1. Explanation in detail
   2. Summary

1.2.2.1.2.1. Explanation in detail

¹ The text counts two points, but cites three.
1. Faith – Its causes including the objects towards whom [faith is generated] and ways how it should be cultivated
2. Compassion – Showing examples and how the objects of observation are applied to its meanings
3. Generation of aspiration – Object that aspires and the way it aspires

1.2.2.1.3. The actual path – yoga of meditative equipoise
   1. Explanation in detail
   2. Summary

1.2.2.1.3.1. Explanation in detail
   1. Meditation with an observed object
   2. Meditation without an observed object:
      a) Revealing the mind as the root of saṃsāra and nirvana; explanation on how it is presented
      b) Examining how it is so; and
      c) Placing the examined upon a meditative equipoise
   3. Meditation upon the union:
      a) The nature of the union;
      b) Explaining all phenomena of its nature; and
      c) Ways to place to a meditative equipoise

1.2.2.1.3.1.1. Meditation with an observed object:
   1. Meditation on Buddha:
      a) Primary object [of meditation];
      b) The site and the retinues present; and
      c) Ways of making offerings to it
   2. Meditation on Guru:
      a) Nature of the object [of meditation];
      b) The time – when to meditate;
      c) The site – where to meditate; and
      d) Ways of how to meditate

1.2.2.1.4. Methods to increase the qualities of the path – subsequent acts
1. Explanation in detail
2. Summary

1.2.2.1.4.1. Explanation in detail
1. Recollecting the actual points:
   a) Presenting the general reasons;
   b) Instructing to recollect the virtues after performing them;
   c) Applying of [the practice of recollection] after meditative equipoise; and
   d) Vipaśyanā ensue as a benefit
2. Dedicating the virtues entirely
3. Prayers:
   a) The nature [of the prayer]; and
   b) Its benefit

1.2.2.1.5. Sealing the paths and [all other] phenomena
1. Explanation in detail
2. Summary

1.2.2.1.5.1. Explanation in detail
1. Conventional [truth] as illusory
2. Ultimate [truth] as devoid of self-nature
3. Their nature, the union:
   a) The nature [of the union];
   b) It is a wondrous to understand this;
   c) How to understand; and
   d) Instructing to master it

1.2.2.1.5.1.1. Conventional [truth] as illusory
1. Compounded phenomena
   a) The four distinctions;
   b) The four distinctive phenomena;
   c) Illustrations
2. Uncompounded phenomena
   a) Revealing it as mere designation;
b) Its sound and conceptions are nothing but compounded; and
c) Revealing that, conceptualising it as substantially existent is false

3. Do not disparage the way of karma
4. Revealing points where one may deviate [from the path]

1.2.2.1.5.1.2. Ultimate [truth] as devoid of self-nature

1. Refuting the examining of the false
2. How to place [your mind] in a meditative equipoise that does not characterise [phenomena]

1.2.2.1.5.1.2.1. Refuting the examining of the false

1. Refutation of [the proponents of] outer phenomena
   a) Refutation of one or many refutes existence and non-existence;
   c) Refutation of both (existence and non-existence); and
d) Refutation of neither (neither existence nor non-existence)
2. Refutation of the Cittamātra view

1.2.2.1.5.1.2.1.1. Refutation of [the proponents of] outer phenomena

1. Presentation of the opponents view
2. [And its refutations]:
   a) Examination of one or separate;
b) Without establishing an object, its subject cannot be established;
c) Refuting accepting anything other than these two

1.2.1.3. Results of practicing accordingly

1. Interlude
2. Actual point

1.2.1.3.1. Interlude

1. Higher rebirths
2. Definite goodness (nirvana)

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2 Although the original text cites three points, third point cannot be traced.
3 Refutation of one or many and refutation of existence and non-existence are counted as two separate points, therefore the latter becomes the second point of the four.
1.2.1.3.1.1. Higher rebirths
   1. Temporary results
   2. Ultimate results

1.2.1.3.1.1.1. Temporary results
   1. The path of accumulation and the path of connecting when as a worldly being
   2. The path of seeing and the path of meditation when as an ārya on the path

1.2.1.3.1.1.2. Ultimate results
   1. Revealing that perfected path accomplished [final] results
   2. Actual results of practice:
      a) The natural body;
      b) The complete enjoyment body;
      c) The emanation body; and
      d) Revealing that its continuum does not cease

2. Incidental requests on relevant issues
   1. Interlude
   2. Requesting for attention
   3. Actual point

2.1. Interlude
   1. Requests for king’s own wellbeing:
      a) Requests on prolonging [the king’s] own life;
      b) Requests to secure the glory of [the king’s] lineage; and
      c) Requests to engage in methods to attain liberation
   2. Requests for wellbeing of the Dharma in general
   3. Requests for himself [the author]

Through the composition of this outline
Of the treatise that reveals
The great objective of supreme vehicle
May all beings become Dharmarājas.
The elucidator of the outline of the treatise Advice to the King is composed by the composer of the treatise (ʼPhags pa) himself on 24th of Hawk month (Khra’i zla ba’i) of female Wood Pig year (1275) at the place called Dga’ ldan gnas gsar in Tre land. The text is scripted by A tsa ra.