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## On the Historicity of the Tibetan Folk Tale Hero A khu sTon pa [Version IIa]

As a supplement to the post "Tibet's Nasreddin? Touching on Uncle Tompa's Elusive Historicity" on Dan's Tibeto-Logic Blog from November 04, 2007<sup>1</sup>, I like to give here a rough translation of the article "Initial considerations on the appearance of A khu sTon pa" (*A khu ston pa'i byung bar thog ma'i bsam gzhi*) by the modern 'Bri gung bKa' brygud scholar Ra se dKon mchog rgya mtsho (b. 1968).<sup>2</sup> This is the article mentioned by Dan which he had not "on hand". First I thought to give only a brief summary of this article but shortly after I found myself doing a rough translation (beginning from [2.]). However I faced some problems translating certain passages because they were syntactically and terminologically not quite clear to me (I quoted the corresponding phrases or sentences in the footnotes). I'll appreciate to receive any kind of suggestions or comments. Please let me know when I missed the point.

After the opening verse and the designation of the topic of his article, Ra se dKon mchog rgya mtsho presents his investigation in the historicity of A khu sTon pa under the four following headings:

- [1] A Discussion of Historian's Viewpoints (*lo rgyus smra ba'i lta tshul gleng slong*)
- [2] An Investigative Comparison of the Folk Tales' Viewpoints (*dmangs khrod ngag rgyun gyi lta tshul la dpyad bsdur*)
- [3] The Establishment [of A khu sTon pa's Historicity] by Means of my own Tradition (*rang lugs shes byed kyis gtan la 'bebs pa*)
- [4] The Concluding 'Self-sound' of the Investigative Discussion (*dpyod gleng mjug bsdu'i rang sgra*)

### [1] A Discussion of Historian's Viewpoints

Up to now A khu sTon pa has not been considered a research subject for a detailed examination in his own right or as an additional subject of an investigative discussion focussing on other topics. The viewpoints on A khu sTon pa which are presented separately in a few literary works are the following three:

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<sup>1</sup> See TIBETO-LOGIC at <http://tibeto-logic.blogspot.com/2007/11/tibets-nasreddin-touching-on-uncle.html>.

<sup>2</sup> I would like to thank Dr. Dorji Wangchuck (University of Hamburg) for some translation suggestions. The remaining gaps and translation mistakes are due to my own lack of knowledge.

- There are no means to find the lineage of Nyi chos bzang po or A khu sTon pa and therefore A khu sTon pa is considered a romantic person endowed with a character that corresponds to the ideals of the people.
- A khu sTon pa is not a subject worth for investigation and therefore he is maintained as a person who promotes immoral and bad behaviour like the tricking etc. of ordinary people and so forth.
- A khu sTon pa is postulated as an appearance of a Tibetan intelligent person.

Moreover, though a few narrative accounts have been propagated here and there, it is clear that up to now nobody has put down in writing a synopsis of self-contained literary structure. At present miscellaneous stories of A khu sTon pa are collected in journals, bits of stories are appearing in middle school Chinese textbooks etc., and also some collections of A khu sTon pa stories are appearing. But apart from taking them as being a story, it is not considered to pay some attention to their historical background.

## [2] A Investigative Comparison of the Folk Legend's Viewpoints

### 1

A special characteristic of the A khu sTon pa stories is [that they] have become widespread in the course of time by way of "saying what others have said before" (*pha gtam bu 'jags*) in all areas where Tibetans live [for example] in Eastern Tibet [i.e. A mdo and Khams], in central Tibet [i.e. dBus and gTsang] and in Western Tibet [i.e. mNga' ris] (*mdo dbus stod*), in Bhutan, in Sikkhim and so forth. Though there are many different kind of tales among them, if [one] sums them up by engaging in [their] detailed examination, [they] seem to be comprised out of two groups. The two corpora [of tales] are:

- [One that includes tales] like suppressing the kings, fighting with the landlords, helping the common people, supporting the weak ones, guiding the ignorant, and exposing the kind of false religious [practitioners] and so forth.
- [One that includes tales] like duping and enticing and so forth.

Moreover spread his [A khu sTon pa's] popularity everywhere, and if one were to collect all the A khu sTon pa stories—like those tales in which he educates [his] relative and friend Gru gu tho rdog<sup>3</sup> with great patience—they certainly would make up one volume of a book. The [stories] are narrated all the time by Tibetans of all ages. By reflecting upon these, the fact that one protests against others through means of spreading and elevating one's cleverness and by utilizing those means is confirmed by [our experience] in real life, and hence will not be discussed here. But apart from the single view in the mind of the common people that A khu sTon pa is only a clever and funny person, [I] think that without considerations if he might have been a religious person or not and so forth [the historical background of these stories / the emergence of the A khu sTon pa stories?] will remain concealed.

## 2

In this way, the fictitious folk tales [served] as seeds [for the development of stories about the] creative deeds of the clever A khu sTon pa. [This] consequently had left a certain impact on the common people. On the basis of this, [A khu sTon pa stories] developed gradually by mixing social behaviours with subjective romantic views along with exaggerations and generalizations from the deeds of other [people], and so forth.<sup>4</sup> [I] maintain [that this is how] the current <<A khu sTon pa Stories>> came into being.

The stages of development of these [stories] resemble in certain ways the <<Gling Ge sar Stories>>. Due to that, as one distinguishes between and recognises <<[the person] Gling Ge sar and the Ge sar stories>>, I assert that by separating <<[the person] A khu sTon pa and the A khu sTon pa stories>> as two different things, one should differentiate between them clearly. [If one] does not argue in this way, [one] relies only on a rough [assumption] and therefore [I will] give [here] a synopsis [of my argumentation]. For example [the work] <<*rDo rje'i lus kyi sbas bshad*>>, that is recorded in the contemporary publication <<*gSang chen thabs lam rnal 'byor nyer mkho*>>, was written by 'Bri gung sPyan nga Rin po che<sup>5</sup> and rGyal ba yang dgon pa rGyal mtshan dpal bzang<sup>6</sup>—a direct disciple of rJe rgod tshang mi<sup>7</sup>—

<sup>3</sup> Another spelling of this name appears in BLO BZANG 'JAM DPAL, TSHE RING SGROL MA and MIG DMAR (2002): Gru gu rdog rdog.

<sup>4</sup> The Tibetan reads: ... 'i mthus| de nyid rim gyis spyi tshogs kyi bya 'gyur nang rang snang 'char yan gyi lta tshul dang mnyam bsres thog rdog btags dang gzhan gyi bya bas rgyas 'gebs sogs kyis 'phel rgyas phyin tel (RA SE DKON MCHO G RGYA MTSO, 1996: 93). What is the meaning of *bya 'gyur*? I translated it here in the sense of *bya spyod*. Could it also mean "change in behaviour"? What about *nang*? Could it be an orthographical mistake for *dang*? And what about *rdog btags*? I understood it here in the sense of *sgro btags*.

<sup>5</sup> 'Bri gung sPyan nga Grags pa 'byung gnas (1175-1255). On him see fn. 32.

<sup>6</sup> rGyal mtshan dpal (1213-1258). See TBRC (P5262).

which is also stated in the colophon. But nevertheless, [it] is said that [he] was a Sa skya pa and [it] is written in all [his] biographies that [he] was the 11th 'Bri gung sPyan snga 'Dzam gling Chos kyi rgyal po<sup>8</sup>, a guru of rJe Tsong kha pa. *deng brtsams <<ngo mtshar snang ba>> las chos kyi grags pa zhes bkod pa dang.*<sup>9</sup> Though [the work] <<Chos 'byung ngo mthsar gtam gyi rol mtsho>> was composed by Ngag dbang blo gros<sup>10</sup>, by taking falsely the printer's colophon as the author's colophon, [it] is stated that [the work] was composed by the 6th Nyi sprul [Rin po che Thub bstan 'od gsal bstan pa'i nyi ma].<sup>11</sup> Consequently [it] is just like [in the saying] 'confusion has become the creator' (?)<sup>12</sup>: if [one] brings all the folk tales together [it becomes clear that they] are a heap of contradictions, the reason for that [I] have already shown. Also, if [one] differentiates between [them] roughly, [their] contradictions certainly remain as before without [one] being able to solve [them]. In my own view, [I] think that the folk tales don't manifest the fine characteristics (*bzhin bzang*)<sup>13</sup> of real history.

### [3] The Establishment [of A khu sTon pa's Historicity] by Means of my own Tradition

#### 1

My own point of view is contrary to those already presented before, namely in that [I] consider the widely known A khu sTon pa as a religious person who adhered to the bKa' brgyud tradition—one renowned branch among the four great Tibetan Buddhist traditions. If [you] ask why [I] hold this opinion, [it] is out of the reason that [I] have learned the definite secret (*nges gsang*) [consisting in] authoritative texts from old genuine textual sources among a portion [I] have seen of the collected works of one of [our] previous masters. In fact at the end of the biography of Chos rje 'Bri gung pa ['Jig rten mgon po]<sup>14</sup> that is contained in the first volume *ka* of the collected works of 'Bri gung sPyan snga Grags pa 'byung gnas<sup>15</sup>, who lived in the 13th century, [it] is written like this:

<sup>7</sup> rGod tshang pa mGon po rdo rje (1189-1258). See TBRC (P2090).

<sup>8</sup> Chos kyi rgyal po (1335-1407). See TBRC (P1485).

<sup>9</sup> This seems to be an other well known example for a wrong attribution of authorship. Can anyone identify the work *Ngo mtshar snang ba* and the person Chos kyi grags pa?

<sup>10</sup> Alias Gu ru bKra shis (b. 18th cent.). See TBRC (P1712).

<sup>11</sup> On him see DAN MARTIN (1997: 151, no. 359, D) who also mentions this wrong attribution.

<sup>12</sup> See RA SE DKON MCHO G RGYA MTS HO (1996: 94): ... 'khral 'khrul skyed byed du song ba bzhin ... .

<sup>13</sup> Could *bzhin bzang* be a short form of *rang bzhin bzang po*? Or should one understand it here literally as "beautiful face"?

<sup>14</sup> 'Jig rten mgon po (1143-1217). See TBCR (P16).

<sup>15</sup> See fn. 32.

(*sha 10 ba 3 pha*)<sup>16</sup>: *dad dang thos dang bsags pa yis|*  
*bla ma rin chen mnyes par byas|*  
*phag mo gru yi nags khrod du|*  
*sgrub pa'i rgyal mtshan btsugs gyur pa'i|*  
*a khu ston pa <de nyid kyis>*<sup>17</sup>  
*ldom bu bdag la zhus pa yi|*  
*dge ba dri med zla 'dra 'dis|*  
*'gro rnams byang chub 'thob*<sup>18</sup> *par shog|*

<*phags pa'i dbyangs kyis bstod pa tshigs su bcad pa bdun cu rtsa gsum zhes pa rdzogs so*><sup>19</sup>.

If [one] examines [these lines, it] becomes clear that A khu sTon pa [performed] a great [amount of] virtuous deeds such as the general hearing of and the reflecting on the treatises of Buddhist culture (*nang bstan shes rig gi gzhung*)—that [were composed by] the most outstanding [minds] among the intellectuals of [our] world—and like the paying of respect to [his] teachers and so forth. In addition [to that it] is clear that [his] contribution to spiritual practice still remains in form of the hermitage of 'Jang gDan sa thel, which was founded by rJe rDo rje rgyal po<sup>20</sup>—who was the progenitor of the [eight smaller] bKa' brgyud [schools]—in the tiger year of the third Tibetan 60 year cycle, [i.e.] in the year 1703 after the Buddha's parinirvāṇa and respectively in 1158 according to the western calendar system. Through [these arguments] and by clarifying that the biography of rJe 'Bri gung pa ['Jig rten mgon po] was written at the request of him [A khu sTon pa?], [it] is well established that he was a person who held Buddhism in high esteem.

## 2

Not only that, [we also] have the evidence that will instill the conviction to which bKa' brgyud tradition he [A khu sTon pa] adhered to, on which masters he relied and when he lived, that is, namely, in the above mentioned collected works where [it] is written like this:

<sup>16</sup> In the edition by H.H. DRIKUNG KYABGON CHETSANG (2002) one finds this passage on fol. 11b4 –12a1 / pp. 22.4 – 23.1.

<sup>17</sup> The edition by H.H. DRIKUNG KYABGON CHETSANG (2002: fol. 11b5 / 22.5) reads: *mang kar bas*.

<sup>18</sup> The edition by H.H. DRIKUNG KYABGON CHETSANG (2002: fol. 12a1 / 23.1) reads: *thob*.

<sup>19</sup> The edition by H.H. DRIKUNG KYABGON CHETSANG (2002: fol. 12a1 / 23.1) reads: *'phags pa'i dbyangs kyis bsnyad pa| tshigs su bcad pa bdun cu rtsa gsum pa zhes bya ba rdzogs so|| ||*.

<sup>20</sup> Phag mo gru pa rDo rje rgyal po (1110-1170). See TBRC (P127). On him see SCHILLER (2002).

(sha 272 pa 1 pha)<sup>21</sup>: a khu ston par springs pa<sup>22</sup> <om sva sti><sup>23</sup> dus gsum mgon po phag mo grub pa dang| 'jig rten mgon po chos rje rin chen la| gus pas phyag 'tshal skyabs su nye bar mchi| dpal ldan phag mo <gru yi><sup>24</sup> nags khrod nas| nyid kyi bla mar gyur pa'i bsod snyoms pas| gces pa'i bu sdug a khu ston pa la| <zhu don yi ger><sup>25</sup> springs pa'i don 'di la| khyed kyis gsung rab<sup>26</sup> g.yu rdog la sogs pa| snga phyi kun gyi 'bul ba legs par thengs<sup>27</sup>| da lan ston pa'i pha<sup>28</sup> rgan brdzangs nas mchis|

From these lines [we] can clearly comprehend that A khu sTon pa followed the 'Bri gung bKa' brgyud tradition being a close disciple of Phag mo gru [pa]<sup>29</sup>, the central figure of the Dwags po bKa' brgyud tradition, and [also] because [it] is perfectly shown that his master was 'Bri gung sPyan snga ['Graggs pa 'byung gnas]. rJe sPyan snga was born in the lHa gzigs rLangs lineage in Khams in the wood sheep year of the third 60 year cycle, [i.e.] in 1175. In [his] youth he went to 'Bri gung, and in the earth dragon year of the fourth 60 year cycle [1208] [he] was appointed [as the throne holder] of 'Phag gru. [He] died in the wood rabbit year of this [fourth] 60 year cycle [1255]. He [also] was the 3rd<sup>30</sup> throne holder [of] 'Bri gung [1234-1255] and was a member of the *rJe yab sras gsum*<sup>31, 32</sup>. Moreover this letter clearly shows how

<sup>21</sup> In the edition by H.H. DRIKUNG KYABGON CHETSANG (2002) one finds this whole passage on fol. 284a4 – 284b1 / pp. 567.4 – 568.1.

<sup>22</sup> The full title reads *gCes pa'i bu sdug a khu ston pa la springs pa* (H.H. DRIKUNG KYABGON CHETSANG, 2002: 284a3 – 285a1 / 567.3 – 569.1).

<sup>23</sup> In the edition by H.H. DRIKUNG KYABGON CHETSANG (2002) this phrase is missing.

<sup>24</sup> The edition by H.H. DRIKUNG KYABGON CHETSANG (2002: fol. 284a4 / 567.4) reads: *gru'i*.

<sup>25</sup> The edition by H.H. DRIKUNG KYABGON CHETSANG (2002: fol. 284a5 / 567.5) reads: *zhu yig yi ger*.

<sup>26</sup> The edition by H.H. DRIKUNG KYABGON CHETSANG (2002: fol. 284a5 / 567.5) reads: *rabs*.

<sup>27</sup> The edition by H.H. DRIKUNG KYABGON CHETSANG (2002: fol. 284b1 / 568.1) reads: *things*.

<sup>28</sup> The edition by H.H. DRIKUNG KYABGON CHETSANG (2002: fol. 284b1 / 568.1) reads: *yab*.

<sup>29</sup> Phag mo gru pa rDo rje rgyal po (1110-1170). See TBRC (P127).

<sup>30</sup> SØRENSEN and HAZOD mention that "'Bri-gung sources usually count 39 throne-holders (40 if including the founder himself). The sources however occasionally are at considerable variance what concerns their succession, their personal dates and the length of the tenureship of the distinct throne holders." Ra se dKon mchog rgya mtsho's designation of Grags pa 'byung gnas as the 3rd throne holder seems not to count the founder 'Jig rten mgon po as the 1st throne holder of 'Bri gung., but rather starts with mKhan chen Gu ra ba Tshul khri rdo rje (1154-1220/1222) as the 1st and dBon ston bSod names grags pa (1187-1234-35) as the 2nd throne holder. It's interesting to note that RA SE DKON MCHOG RGYA MTSHO (2004) counts Grags pa 'byung gnas in his *'Bri gung chos 'byung* (that is published under the name 'BRI GUNG DKON MCHOG RGYA MTSHO) as the 4th throne holder. H.H. DRIKUNG KYABGON CHETSANG (2002: II) and TBRC (P132) also count Grags pa 'byung gnas as the 4th throne holder of 'Bri gung..

<sup>31</sup> "The three, [namely] the lord and [his two] sons" (*rje yab sras gsum*) stands here for 'Jig rten mgon po as the lord and 'Graggs pa 'byung gnas as one of 'Jig rten mgon po's chief disciples. But who was the other chief disciple?

<sup>32</sup> A short biography on sPyan snga Grags pa 'byung gnas we find in the amazing work *Rulers on the Celestial Plain* by SØRENSEN and HAZOD in Appendix V.11.1 "The Abbatial Succession of 'Bri-gung dgon-pa" (2007, Vol. 2, pp. 720-21): "sPyan snga rin po che Grags-pa 'byung-gnas (1175-1255 A:D.). Father: Rlangs lHa-gzigs Yon-sgom/Yon-tan rGyal-skyabs. Mother: 'Bro-bza' Khyi-gu-lcam (var. Khu-byug-sman). Tenure: 1234/35-1255. Ordained in 'On in the presence of Zhang Sum-thog-pa and lHa 'Bri-sgang-pa. Age 18 (some sources say in 1189, others, 1192), he met 'Jig-rten mgon-po, remaining at his feet for another 18 years. Took over the see of Phag-gru at the age of 40 (arriving there 1208, but throne-holder from 1214 which he held until 1234) whereafter he ascended the 'Bri-gung throne in 1234. During his tenure the Mongols arrived in Central Tibet, destroyed and

A khu hold [his] master in high esteem and in what way [his] master appraised him. Equally important is that [this letter] is the definite proof that A khu himself was a genuine religious person who lived in the fourth 60 year cycle [1207-1266]. While sPyan snga [Grags pa 'byung gnas] lived in [gDan sa] thel [A khu sTon pa] came to [his] feet.<sup>33</sup> By this [it is] clarified very well that the narrations about duping and enticing among the [A khu sTon pa] folk tales are in no way rooted [in real life].

### 3

[We] have [some textual evidence] that tells [us] that he [A khu sTon pa] had mastered the fields of examination and understanding (*sher rtogs*) of Buddhist teachings, that he was a yogin who had attained a definite level of realisation and [that tells us something] about the place where he was born and [to which] family lineage [he belonged] and so forth. [This information we find] in the above mentioned collected works where it is written like this:

(sha 227 ba 4 pha)<sup>34</sup> a khu ston par gdams pa<sup>35</sup> yon tan rgya mtsho lhun po lta bu'i mi|  
thos bsam sgom gsum shes rab mchog gi<sup>36</sup> brgyan| yon tan rgya mtsho sems nyid rdo rje de|  
ma nor legs par rtogs pa'i rnal 'byor pa| 'jig rten mgon po dpal ldan 'bri gung pa'i| rigs las  
skyes pa'i skye bu dam pa mchog bdag gi bu gcig a khu ston pa la| 'jig rten spong thabs  
mgul du gdags phyir bstan|

By these [lines] written at the end of the teachings [consisting] of elegant sayings on the Middle Way, [i.e.] on dependent origination, the [following matter of facts] become perfectly certain:

- The former phrase "yon tan rgya mtsho" shows that A khu sTon pa [was endued with] a discriminating intellect, being free from pride, which was accustomed for a long time to the Buddhist teachings [on] the general and particular objects of knowledge.

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ransacked the main temple of 'Bri-gung (1240 and again 1251). [...]" Among his pupils SØRENSEN and HAZOD (2007, Vol.2, pp. 721) mention an "A-khu ston-pa". On sPyan snga Grags pa 'byung gnas see also KO ZHUL GRAGS PA 'BYUNG GNAS and RGYAL BA BLO BZANG MKHAS GRUB (1992: 1026-1028), 'BRI GUNG DKON MCHOG RGYA MTSHO (2004: 351-358), CZAJA (2006) and TBRC (P132).

<sup>33</sup> See RA SE DKON MCHOG RGYA MTSHO (1996: 95): *spyän snga thel la bzhugs dus zhabs zin pa gsal yod pa de'i thog nas ...*. What is the meaning of *zhabs zin pa*? Is it similar to *zhabs la gtugs pa*?

<sup>34</sup> In the edition by H.H. DRIKUNG KYABGON CHETSANG (2002) one finds this whole passage on fol. 125b3 – 127b4 / pp. 250.3 – 254.4.

<sup>35</sup> The full title reads *A khu ston pa la gnang ba'i 'khor ba spong ba'i gdams pa* (H.H. DRIKUNG KYABGON CHETSANG, 2002: 125b3 – 127b4 / 250.3 – 254.4).

<sup>36</sup> The edition by H.H. DRIKUNG KYABGON CHETSANG (2002: fol. 127b1 / 254.1) reads: *gis*.

- The latter phrase "yon tan rgya mtsho" clarifies that [A khu sTon pa] had acquired mastery over the real condition [of all phenomena in accord with] the unmistakable view of the 'empty of other' (*gzhan stong*) approach—[i.e.] the Great Middle Way—[of] the cittamātra [system, which is] one among the four proponents of Buddhist tenets.<sup>37</sup> In addition to that, though [it] is difficult to fathom [the level of] realisation he had actualized, [one can say it] was a middle level [one] ...<sup>38</sup>
- It is stated that his family lineage was the same as the lineage of Chos rje 'Bri gung pa—[the name stemming from the fact that] after the monastic seat had been founded at 'Bri gung in the year 1722 after the Buddha's parinirvāṇa, [i.e.] in 1179 according to the western calendar system, the religious tradition was named after the place name [of the monastic seat]. If [one] reflects upon [this, it] is established without [some] false assertion that [A khu sTon pa] was born in the similar family line because [it] is recorded in the histories that after the lord ['Jig rten mgon po] had founded the monastic seat there [in 'Bri gung], some [of his] relatives like sPyan snga 'Bri gung Gling pa<sup>39</sup> and [his] younger brother/s (*gcung*) and nephew/s (*dbon*) shifted [their] residence to 'Bri gung. Thus [we] got a good explanation that his place of birth was 'Bri gung.

[I] think if [one] examines the background of the folk tales [it] is possible to consider [them] in general as a source for seeking advice and as a spiritual friend [and] teacher [both points exemplified by a person] like A khu [sTon pa].

Moreover the remains [of the places where] he stayed studying Buddhist philosophy [still exist at present]:

- Even today obviously remain the vivid ruins of [his] practice place on top of a big, about two storey [high] boulder in [the place] called 'Bri gung gZho stod sPa ra kha [which is situated] in the lower part of the valley close to the monastic seat [of 'Bri gung]. At present [this boulder] is called A khu's boulder (*a khu rdo bong*) (in 'Bri gung dialect [one] says "rdo bong" for "pha bong").

<sup>37</sup> See RA SE DKON MCHOG RGYA MTSO (1996: 95): "yon tan rgya mtsho" *phyi ma des nang bstan grub mtha' smra ba bzhi'i ya gyal rnam rig dbu ma chen po gzhan stong gi lta ba ma nor ba rnal mar dbang 'byor ba gsal bshad byas 'dug*. Means *rnām rig* here *rnām rig pa* and how do you understand the phrase *rnal mar dbang 'byor ba* (Ra se dKon mchog seems to use this phrase in analogy to *rnal ma la 'byor ba*)?

<sup>38</sup> See RA SE DKON MCHOG RGYA MTSO (1996: 95): *de'i thog nas khong gis mngon gyur gnang ba'i mngon rtogs kyi dpogs dka'i dbyings kyi mtsho tshad de grub mtha' smra ba tshos mkhyen pa'i phyir*]. How should one understand the second part of the sentence *grub mtha' smra ba tshos mkhyen pa'i phyir*?

<sup>39</sup> 'Bri gung sPyan snga Shes rab 'byung gnas (1187-1241). See TBRC (P131).

- In rDzing phyi<sup>40</sup>—that is under the jurisdiction of Zangs ri county—A khu [sTon pa], relying on [his] signs of accomplishment, left an imprint of his body on a rock that [one] even can see today.
- The remains of *mkha' spyod la zhag bdun sangs rgyas brtul*<sup>41</sup> are to be seen at present.

Through [putting together these different matter of facts] it becomes well proved that A khu sTon pa was genuine religious person who had mastered Buddhist cultural [teachings] (*nang bstan shes rig*). [I] suppose that the [folk] tales developed out of some of his deeds as [I] have said before.

#### [4] The Concluding 'Self-sound' of the Investigative Discussion

Some might think that whether [one knows] the above mentioned point of views or not, [it] will neither increase nor decrease [the possibility to enter] the gateway [leading to] knowledge about Tibet. But this is nothing more than a common phenomena. In our case, though [we] have not found [some] chronologies or [some] powerful [textual] support, [I] have not explained [my viewpoint] on the basis of [pure] guesses. Consequently [I] hope that future generations will fill up [these gaps]. Nonetheless, it is certain that these old texts have left behind great value for [establishing] the previously non-existent link and for the re-identification of the narrative account of A khu sTon pa, [an undertaking] that in the meantime had been left neglected. This [explanation?] should [be able to] keep away the lapses such as the lack of understanding, misunderstanding and partial understanding and so forth. But [I] think [it also can] be used as a new basis for the benefit that manifests in form of the beautiful face (*bzhin bzang*)<sup>42</sup> of true meaning that [functions as] an eye catcher for everyone and as a basis for a unifying point of view. Recently, regarding the immediate

<sup>40</sup> For the rDzing phyi valley and the rDzing phyi monastery see GYURME DORJE (1999: 219). For the temple of rDzing phyi see the short account by FEDERICA VENTURI on the Homepage of the TIBET HERITAGE FUND at <http://www.tibetheritagefund.org/pages/forum/dzingchi.php>.

<sup>41</sup> What kind of practice is that and out of what could their remains be made of? Dan Martin referred me to an article by JAMYANG NORBU (2005) in which he comments on the story of the "Seven Day Buddha" (*zhag bdun sangs rgyas*): "On a more sinister note there is the story of "Shagdun Sangye" (Seven Day Buddha) of Ghungthang, a religious charlatan and mass murderer who promised people who undertook a seven day retreat under his guidance a complete dissolution of their corporeal self and a direct entry into nirvana. He accomplished this by dropping them into a bottomless pit normally covered by the retractable floor of his meditation cave. He was eventually exposed by the "divine madman" Drukpa Kunleg, who arranged for him to receive a poetic sort of justice." In our context A khu sTon pa seems to have engaged himself in some kind of yogic discipline by what one can attain awakening in only seven days.

<sup>42</sup> Again we encounter the phrase *bzhin bzang*. How should one understand it here? In the sense of *rang bzhin bzang po* or in its literal meaning as "beautiful face"? For *bzhin bzang* see also fn. 11.

results of the competing viewpoints [on the status of A khu sTon pa], in order to comprehend [their] true meaning, I presented [here] in front of the Tibetan proponents of knowledge some immediate results of [my] initial considerations [consisting] of the verifiable support regarding the appearance of the 'Bri gung born A khu sTon pa. [I] pray that by this benefit the real biography of the famous A khu sTon pa will be understood well by all without ever becoming vanished.

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