

Banned Books in the Tibetan Speaking Lands

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Abstract

Most examples of Tibetan banned literature involved controversies in philosophical teachings beginning in the 11th century. Philosophical positions such as the zhentong, (the Void of the Other) became regarded as heretical and many of the greatest masters of the Gelug tradition were branded as proponents and their works set aside and not permitted to be read or copied. Great teachers such as Jamyang Choje, the founder of the famed Gelug monastery of Drepung and Lotro Rinchen Senge, the founder of Sera Je, were banned. The early Gelugpa school slowly calcified and core syllabi replaced honest debate and disputation.

It was, however, only in the 17th and 18th century that there was a wholesale ban placed on the most famous writings of traditions, such as Jonang, Sakya, Kagyu, and Nyingma by the princes of the ruling Gelug tradition.

A survey of the existing blocks in Central Tibet was undertaken by the Tagdra regent in 1956. This notes the existence of printing blocks, many of which were sealed, by order of the Government of the Ganden Podrang. The list of the banned books included the works of such philosophical masters as Dolpopa, Taranatha, the Five Patriarchs of the Sakya, and Karma Mikyo Dorje. Prohibitions against the striking of impressions of the Tagten Puntsoling Monastery of the Jonang was only lifted in the mid-19th century through the efforts of the the scholar Losal Tenkyong.

The ban extended even to the creation of manuscripts. A good example is the sole surviving set of manuscripts of the 24 volume collected works of the controversial scholar Shakya Chogden was allowed only because a Bhutanese Prince Abbot believed himself to be the rebirth of the author and because the Tibetan government was courting the Bhutanese state at this time.

Political prophecies are another genre of literature that often meets with political banning. In the 17th century there appeared numerous prophet visionaries who taught esoteric methods of destruction of invading Mongols. The new Ganden Podrang government early on decided that three Nyingma masters, Gongra Lochen, Sogdogpa Lodro Gyaltsen, and Trengpo Terton Sherab Ozer represented a danger to the harmonious relations between the Gelug masters and the Mongol overlords.

At the beginning of the 21st century we are seeing a revival of the Jonang in Dzamtang and the Kagyu and Nyingma in Kham. The paper discusses reasons for banning and why there is a revival in the late 20th Tibetan cultural area.

藏語地區之禁書

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中文摘要

藏文獻中被禁的書籍大部份都與 11 世紀開始的哲學教義爭議有關，如“他空見”(the Void of the Other)等哲學理論均被視為異端邪說。格魯派(Gelug)許多大師均被貼上異端倡導者的標籤，他們的作品也被束諸高閣，禁止閱讀或謄抄。格魯派大師如哲蚌寺創建者絳央卻傑(Jamyang Choje)和色拉寺(Sera Je)創建者降青曲吉·釋迦益西(Lotro Rinchen Senge)都在被禁者之列。因此，早期格魯派便逐漸衰退，而核心教義宗旨也逐漸取代了坦率的討論和辯論。

然而，唯一大規模查禁的時代反而是 17-18 世紀時的統治者格魯派的王儲對其他著名傳統思想學派作品的集體查禁，被查禁的學派包括覺囊派(Jonang)、釋迦派(Sakya)、噶覺派(Kagyü)、和寧瑪派(Nyingma)。

泰葛拉攝政王(Tagdra regent)於 1956 年在西藏中部針對現存的書版進行了一次調查，發現許多印版都在葛丹頗章(Ganden Podrang)政府的命令下被封存著。被禁書籍的作者包括佛學大師多波帕(Dolpopa)、多羅那它(Taranatha)、釋迦派五長老、和密基歐多傑(Karma Mikyo Dorje)。禁止談論覺囊派 Tagten Puntsoling 寺的禁令直到 19 世紀中葉才在學者拉索坦揚(Losal Tenkyong)的努力下取消。

禁令甚至擴及手抄本。典型的一個例子是：爭議性學者沙克亞查格登(Shakya Chogden)的 24 冊言論集手稿是唯一留存下來的手抄本，而其之所以能夠幸免只不過是因為當時的不丹王子亞伯特(Abbot)相信自己就是作者的轉世，而且當時西藏政府正在向不丹國求和而被特許留下的。

政治預言書是另一類經常遭到政治性查禁的文獻。17 世紀時，西藏出現許多預言家，他們教導民眾一些祕傳的方法來摧毀入侵的蒙古人。新掌權的葛丹頗章政府很早便認定，寧瑪派的三位大師 Gongra Lochen、Sogdogpa Lodro Gyaltzen、和 Trengpo Tertan Sherab Ozer 對於格魯派大師與蒙古封建君主之間的和諧關係是一種威脅。

到了 21 世紀開始時，我們看到覺囊派和寧瑪派分別在丹坦區(Dzamtang)和康區(Kham)復興。本文旨在探討當年的查禁理由，以及相關學派於 20 世紀晚期在西藏文化領域中復興的原因。

BANNED BOOKS IN THE TIBETAN SPEAKING LANDS

Mr. E. Gene Smith

A decade and a half ago the Jonangpa group of monasteries on the border of Sichuan and Qinghai provinces began a remarkable revival of their unique teachings long regarded as heretical. The leader of this renaissance was the abbot of Dzamtang Ngawang Yonten Zangpo. The first publications were poor quality lithograph prints. Later the lamas of the Dzamthang group of monasteries began a spectacular block-carving initiative, bringing master carvers from Derge, the great seat of Tibetan book making, to engrave on to wooden blocks the collected writings of the great masters of the tradition, the Omniscient Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltzen (1292-1361), Jonang Jetsun Kunga Drolchog (1507-1565/1566) and Jetsun Taranatha (1575-1634), Kunga Drolchog's embodiment. The fervor of the supporters of this tradition have now brought the Jonangpa teachings to the United States, to places like a refurbished automotive repair shop in New York and a Dharma center in Atlanta. The Jonang tradition has attracted followers among the Han nationality throughout China. There is now even a journal of Jonang studies in Chinese. This sect, once influential and mainstream, had been banned in Central Tibet in the 1640s and the printing houses for its works had been sealed and the copying of its books prohibited for almost 130 years. Why?

The banning of books and heterodox philosophical discourse is a worldwide phenomenon and has been found in Tibetan cultural life for almost eight hundred years. Books and ideas have been banned on primarily two grounds: religio-philosophical and political.

The proscription of the Jonang teachings is a case of the first type although there were certainly equally political factors involving alliances and patronage. The followers of the Jonangpa tradition emphasized the shentong (Void of Other) outlook and differing practices of the Kalachakra Tantra. Heresies of the same time led to the banning of the writings of the founder of the great Gelug monastery of Drepung, Jamyang Choje Tashi Palden (1379-1449), and those of one of Musepa Lodro Rinchen Sengge, one of the earliest scholastic hierarchs of the the Je College of Sera. Heresy of some sort was at the heart of the early Gelug tradition. The ban of the writings of these great masters was so thorough that we cannot find even a full listing of their compositions. The works of Jamyang Choje were kept on the altar at Drepung but were not permitted to be opened. These two masters were not Jonangpa but it is probable that their teachings were tinged with shentong views.

Jonang Jetsun Taranatha (1575-1634) was born as a religious noble of the ancient house of Ra, a family that is known even to the present day for the proficiency of its members in the practice of destructive magic. Taranatha enjoyed the patronage of the Tsangpa Kings, the most dangerous rivals of the rising Gelug state, the Ganden Podrang. The splendid monastery, which Taranatha established at Tagten Puntsog Ling, was a center for the scholarship par excellence. Indian masters were regular visitors and honored guests at Taranatha's court. Taranatha seems not to have been overly attracted to the celibate life. His great passion focussed on the tantric practice and scholarship. After Taranatha's death in 1634, his disciples at Tagten Puntsog Ling continued the great work of engraving on to woodblocks the writings of the deceased master.

Following the ascension to power of the Ganden Podrang, the Tagten Puntsog Ling monastery was confiscated, the carving of the blocks came to an end, the printing of impressions from the blocks stopped, and the recognition of the re-embodiment of the Jonang Jetsun prohibited. All of the Jonang monasteries and hermitages in central Tibet were seized and an exodus of a few Jonangpa masters to Kham began. Gradually refuge was found in what is now Aba Prefecture in Sichuan County and neighboring areas.

Curiously enough, there was a recognition that Taranatha had been reborn in Khalkha Mongolia as the son of the Tushiyetu Khan, beginning the line of the Khalkha Jetsun Dampa Huthogthu, the paramount temporal and spiritual ruler of Mongolia, which continued until communist revolution came to Mongolia.

In Tibet, Tagten Puntsog Ling monastery became a Gelugpa monastery and underwent a change of name becoming Ganden Puntsog Ling. It enjoyed a direct connection with the 5th Dalai Lama (1617-1682) and his regent Sangye Gyatso (1653-1705). This became one of these two rulers' favorite seats in Tsang. Many of the works of the two were carved on to blocks at this monastery. A few of the ancient rituals continued to be performed but the teaching tradition of Taranatha died in Central Tibet.

The blocks for printing the Jonang books throughout Central Tibet were sealed. Even great masters such as Kathog Tsewang Norbu, diplomat for the Lhasa Government, were denied permission to print works of Taranatha at Ganden Puntsog Ling Monastery. It was not until the 6th decade of the 19th century that printing of some of

the copies was again allowed.

We know something about the banning of block printing because of a remarkable survey of printing blocks in the Tibet Autonomous Region (excluding Chamdo Prefecture) ordered by the Tagdrag Regent. This work (Gangs can gyi ljongs su bka' dang bstan bcos sogs kyi glegs bam spar gzhi ji ltar yod pa rnams nas dkar chag spar thor phyogs tsam du bkod pa phan bde'i pad tshal 'byed pa'i nyin byed) was completed in 1957 and comprises 1373 bibliographic items, and surveys the blocks of 115 printeries, government, monastic, and family. A listing of the banned items includes:

Collected works of Dolpopa -- blocks at Gyantse Fort

Collected works of Taranatha -- blocks at Ganden Puntsog Ling

Various other Jonangpa works -- Jang Ngamring Fort

Sakya Kabum -- blocks at Paldi Fort Writings of Bodong Chogle Namgyal (1376-1475)-- Nakartse Fort

Collected works of Tagtsang Lotsava (b. 1405) -- blocks at the Gelug monastery of Tobgyal Ganden Rabgye

Collected works of the 8th KarmaPa Mikyo Dorje (1507-1554)-- blocks at Ze Chokor Yangtse

The above titles were all blockprints.

Other collection titles, which seem only to have existed in manuscript, were banned from being copied. Examples of this category include:

Collected works of Ziling Panchen Shakya Chogden (1428-1507)

(some of this author had been carved on to blocks but these blocks appear to have been sealed)

Collected works of Rongton Sheja Kunrig (1367-1449)

Collected works of Nangtse Terchen Shigpo Lingpa (1524-1583)

Collected works of Sogdogpa Lotro Gyaltsen (1552-1624)

Collected works of Gongra Lochen Zhenpen Dorje (1594-1654)

The writings of the latter three writers appeared to have been sealed for political reasons in addition to reasons of religious heterodoxy.

THE CASE OF THE JONANG WRITINGS

Even though there existed in Gyantse Fort blocks for printing the works of Dolpopa, copies of the writings of this master and his students were exceptionally rare, even in Dolpopa's homeland in far northern Nepal.

Copies of one volume of his miscellanea and his great philosophical manuscript, the *Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho*, were discovered in Bhutan and reprinted by H.H. Dilgo Kyentse Rinpoche in the 1970s. Prof. Matthew Kapstein in 1997 obtained a copy of the 8-volume collected works in cursive Tibetan script and reprinted this with a brilliant scholarly introduction in Dharamsala. The philosophical writings of the major disciples of Dolpopa are almost unknown. Only the great prajnaparamita commentary of Nyawon Kunga Pal (1345-1439) survives because blocks of it were carved by the more liberal later scholars of Labrang Tashi Kyil. The scholars there argued that it was a forerunner of the *Legs bshad gser phreng*, by Nyawon's student, Tsongkapa, and therefore deserved to be read. A few of the works of Sazang Mati Panchen (1294-1376) survive, a commentary on the *Bodhicaryavatara* and grammatical works, chiefly because they were engraved on blocks at far away Derge.

Taranatha's reputation persisted because of his ever popular history of Buddhism in India (*Rgya gar chos 'byung*) and shorter histories of some of the tantric cycles such as Vajrabhairava and Tara. The blocks for his *sungbum* were completely proscribed from about 1645 until the third half of the 19th century when the charming Shalu scholar, Ribug Losal Tengkyong was successful in gaining permission to open the Tagten Puntsog Ling printery and to rearrange the blocks for printing a limited number of sets. The Tashi Lhunpo official who granted permission was probably the broadminded Sengchen Kyabying. Two sets printed at this time survive in India, those belonging to the Stog Palace in Ladakh and to the late Nenang Pawo Rinpoche, probably now in France. It was on the basis of these two sets that the seventeen-volume edition printed in India was made.

The writings of Jonang masters who predate Dolpopa had been carved on to blocks at both Tagten Puntsog Ling and at Jang Ngamring Dzong. Many of these have never come to light in spite of considerable efforts to trace them. The *Bstan pa spyi'i 'grel pa* of Kunpang Tugche Tsondru (1243-1313) and the commentaries on difficult passages in the *Kalacakra* by Se Dharmeshwara and Jonang Chogle Namgyal (1306-1386) should prove to be of inestimable value when they become available. Some of these old prints are preserved in the National Library of Bhutan.

At Jang Ngamring, the seat of the princes of the Northern Latod myriarchy, there were

once many blocks including the sungbum of the 16th century Jonang master, Kunga Drolchog, the biography of the prince Jangdag Namgyal Dragzang. This has recently been published privately in Amdo. Losang Tengkyong gained permission to bring to Tagten Puntsog Ling all of these printing blocks. In his inventory he noted that many of the blocks for this sungbum were broken or missing.

The blocks for printing the collected writings of great Sakya masters such as the first five patriarchs of the Sakya lineage, Tagtsang Lotsava Sherab Rinchen and Rongton Sheja Kunrig had been carved by wealthy aristocratic patrons. These works did not become available until the 18th and 19th centuries when some of the sets were carved on to blocks at the Derge Gonchen Printing House in Sichuan Province. So thorough was the ban that copies of the Kunga Namgyal (1432-1492) edition were not used when the new Derge blocks of the writings of the first Sakya Patriarchs were carved. Initially this 16th-century edition was known only because the colophon to the printed edition was preserved in certain Bhutanese manuscripts. Later one volume of the works of Lopo Sonam Tsemo turned up in Nepal and has been described by David Jackson.

The writings of famed philosophers such as Shakya Chogden (1428-1507) and Kunkyen Gorampa Sonam Senge (1429-1489) were not widely studied by scholars because of the restriction on the copying of the texts. This had an unfortunate effect in causing the decline of the teaching tradition among the Sakya school.

We only have a set of the writings of Shakya Chogden because the 9th Chief Abbot of Bhutan, Shakya Rinchen (1710-1759), was successful in a petition to the Tibetan Government for permission to obtain a copy of the 24 volumes of the writings of Shakya Chogden. This was made possible only because the abbot was convinced that he was the reemodiment of Shakya Chogden and his government shared this belief.

DANGEROUS PROPHECIES AND RITUAL PRACTICES

Even stronger political reasons for banning books are the presence of new terma revelations and the creation of new rituals not in accord with the policies of state. Many Tibetans in the 16th and 17th centuries loathed the Mongol cavalry that swept through Tibet and pillaged their farms and herds.

Three important Nyingma masters of the 16th and 17th centuries are Nangtse Terchen Shigpo Lingpa, Sogdogpa Lodro Gyaltzen, and Gongra Lochen Zhenpen Dorje. All

three were roundly hated by the 5th Dalai Lama and their writings were proscribed very early.

The first two were certainly involved in ritual performances directed against the Mongols who had come to Tibet, first to bring the 4th Dalai Lama and later against the forces of Gushri Khan who had installed the 5th Dalai Lama on the throne of Tibet. These rituals, openly called the "25 practice" and were clearly Tibetan nationalist in spirit and practice, Sogdogpa claimed success and was widely known throughout Central Tibet as the "Turner Back of the Mongols." One must remember that the 5th Dalai Lama owed his rule over Tibet to Mongol armies.

As the 5th Dalai Lama and Desi Sangye Gyatso solidified his control over Tibet, several terton found prophecies dating from the Guru Padmasambhava, either praising or excoriating the 5th Dalai Lama and later the powerful regent Sangye Gyatso. The Dalai Lama in his autobiography praises the prophecies of Ngari Terton Garwang Dorje (1640-1685) and excoriates the discoveries of Powo Terton Dundul Dorje (1615-1672), which supposedly depict the 5th Dalai Lama and his patrons in a most unfavorable light. The ban on these was not successful because the ancient monastery of Kathog where Dundul Dorje taught was far from the direct control of the Lhasa Government. These prophecies have been published several times and in several different versions since they were revealed.

Many discoverers of revealed teachings, terton, have been used in the political intrigue that prevailed in central Tibet and throughout the Tibetan lands. Many were the prophets who paid with their lives for their political prophecies. Cases like the strangulation of the prophet Rongpa Dudul Lingpa and the execution of Drugdra Dorje are not so rare. The Bhutanese are to this day fascinated with the prophecies of Drugdra Dorje. His spirit is still said to haunt the windy place at Sisinang.

The histories of the Nyingma tradition contain allusions to other visionaries whose politically pointed prophecies were rewarded with honors or death. There are suggestions that some of the earlier masters met their death "at the hands of men". Examples are Chogden Gonpo (1497-1557) and the Nyingtig Terson Ledrel Tsal.

In recent times there came forth prophets like the Reting terton Sangye Wangdu who sang the praises of the Reting regent. Many of the greater masters of the day sought to gain Reting's favor by structuring the rituals of this cycle of teaching. When the Reting regent fell his books did not need to be banned. He and his teachings simply

faded into obscurity.

Prophecies are hard to read. They are filled with riddles and double entendre. An extraordinary collection of historical prophecies appeared in the late sixties from Ladakh. It bore the title: o rgyan chen po'i ma 'ongs lung bstan gar dbang rdo rje dang bya btang gro lod gnyis kyi gter nas spyang drangs pa. This 24-folio collection was distributed fairly widely and seems to have been put together by a monk named Thubten Chogwang of Lukyil Monastery. It is a composite and has been pulled together from a variety of other manuscripts.

One of the most remarkable prophecies is a sort of historical recounting of Guru Padmasambhava's assessment of the "future" history of Tibet. There is little doubt in my mind that it is from the rediscoveries of Ronpa Tertön Dundul Lingpa (17th century). He was a student of Terdag Lingpa Gyurme Dorje (1646-1717). Out of the many volumes of his revelations only his teachings of Tara in the form Jigpa Kunkyob survive because of the efforts of Jamyang Kyentse Wangpo (1820-1892).

Dudul Lingpa, who must have been executed between 1707-1721, ends his long historical prophecy:

de sog spyod ngan rgyal khams 'khengs:
 shing spre bya la bod rje 'khrug:
 bod kyi bde skyid lha sa ru:
 dam srid skyod nas khrims gcod byed:

A rough translation is:

Mongols of wicked conduct will fill the realm,
 In the Wood Monkey/Wood Bird year [1704-1705] the realm will come into
 turmoil. The demons of plague will move to Lhasa, the joy of Tibet, and the rule
 of law will be broken.

I think the term dam srid skyod may also mean the "realm of the nomadic Mongols of the 'Dam pasture lands may" move [into Tibet. The pun is on sri versus si.

This refers to Lha bzang Khan and his invasion of Tibet from the pasture lands to the north. The pillaging of the Mongols displaces the rule of law of the Tibetans.

me khyi phag la du ru khas:
dbus kyi phan yul rgyab nas g.yo:
lha sas byin rlabs buddha khums:
dbus kyi ser po ngur pa la:
du ru kha yis mtshon kha gtod:
phan yul byang khams mtshon gyi non:

In the Fire Dog/Fire Pig year [1706/1707] the Turukha will move from Penpo changing all. The one called Buddha, the blessed of Lhasa, will be killed. The lovely yellow ducks of U Province will be faced with the weapons of the Turukha. The northern valley of Penpo will be suppressed by force of weapons.

The meaning is clear here. "The one called Buddha" is the great regent Desi Sangye Gyatso. He often signs his works Buddha-apti. The force of Lhazang Khan will move on Lhasa and those of his queen will move into Penpo to capture the Desi in his home territory. The expression "lha sas byin rlabs" may be a way of praising the regent-king Sangye Gyatso who was imprisoned and eventually executed by the ambitious queen of Lhazang Khan, Tsewang Gyalmo or Tsering Tashi in spite of the pleas for his life by the hierarchs of the great monasteries of Lhasa. It should be remembered that it was Tsewang Gyalmo who had been courted by the Desi who in turn had spurned her. She had instead become the queen of Lhazang and cherish a powerful hatred against the regent king.

mu ge'i skal ba 'byung nyen che:
gtsang gi tse gdong du ru khas:
gdung la nyams chags byung nyen che:
bod kyi bla mchod chad pas gcod:
dmag skad chu ltar lhang lhang byed:
sems can thams cad 'jig pas skrags:
de tshe nga yi sprul pa gcig:
bdud 'dul gling pa zhes bya ste:...

Famine will spread throughout the realm. In Tsang the Turukha will seize and destroy the bone lineage. The Tibetan lamas and their patrons will be annihilated. The din of the armies will come forth with sound like rushing water. All sentient beings will tremble with terror. At that time, an emanation of myself will come. He will be called Dundul Lingpa.

The destruction of the "gdung" or bone perhaps refers to the last of the Phamodru dynasty who ruled at Tsedong. This needs research. Dundul Lingpa refers to himself as a direct reembodiment of Guru Padmasambhava.

This prophecy represents a Tibetan nationalist account of its history and a polemic against foreigners and Mongols in general. It would appear that the tertön or "finder of hidden teachings" felt that he was destined to lead the resistance against the Mongols. His brave prophecy was met with death at the hands of Lhazang Khan.

The entire terma cycle of this tertön was banned by the Lhasa Government although the little extract from his prophecy survived and was reprinted in Ladakh and circulated in later times with perhaps a different meaning.

In Tibetan studies we are at the very beginning of understanding the complicated picture of the history of Tibetan literature and ultimately the history of ideas. Through the study of what was banned and why, we can gain insights not only into intellectual history but also into political history.