Bibliographic Guides

The Works of Tsongkhapa: English Translations

Eastern Tradition Research Institute
Eastern Tradition Research Institute’s Bibliographic Guides are compiled and annotated by David Reigle, in collaboration with Nancy Reigle, who are solely responsible for their content.

CONTENTS

Introduction .................................................................................................................. 3
1. Early Works ........................................................................................................... 6
2. Lam rim, “Stages of the Path,” Works .............................................................. 7
3. Other Major non-Tantric Works .......................................................................... 11
4. Shorter non-Tantric Works ................................................................................. 13
5. Collections of Shorter Works .............................................................................. 18
6. Tantric Works ....................................................................................................... 21

© 2008 Eastern Tradition Research Institute
Cotopaxi, Colorado, U.S.A.
INTRODUCTION

Tsongkhapa (1357-1419) was the founder of the Gelugpa order of Tibetan Buddhism, which became the dominant order in Tibet, making Tsongkhapa Tibet’s most influential teacher. His collected writings in one Tibetan blockprint edition consist of eighteen volumes. Along with these are the collected works of his two main disciples, mKhas-grub-rje in twelve volumes, and rGyal-tshab-rje in eight volumes. Together these comprise the rje yab sras gsung 'bum, the collected writings of rje Tsongkhapa, father and [spiritual] sons. A twenty-volume Tibetan blockprint edition of Tsongkhapa’s collected writings includes 210 works, ranging from very short to very long. These were reproduced and catalogued in The Tibetan Tripitaka, Peking Edition, edited by Daisetz T. Suzuki, Tokyo-Kyoto: Tibetan Tripitaka Research Institute, 1955-1961, part III: “Extra, Tibetan Works,” vols. 152-161, works numbered 6001-6210.

Tsongkhapa’s most famous work is the Lam rim chen mo, now available in complete English translation in three volumes, The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment, 2000-2004. He also wrote several shorter Lam rim or “graded path” works. Probably the most popular and also the shortest of these is the Lam gyi gtso bo rnam gsum, the “Three Principal Elements of the Path,” of which eight translations are listed below. His Lam rim works, which systematically and comprehensively lay out the graded path to enlightenment, are Tsongkhapa’s major contribution to world religious thought; and it is these that earn him a place among the greatest spiritual teachers of all time.

Tsongkhapa’s life changed dramatically around the age of forty, when he achieved his highest enlightenment experience. Most of his works were written after that, including his Lam rim works, and are regarded by Gelugpa tradition as his “mature” works. His few early works written prior to that are nonetheless regarded as very valuable, showing remarkable scholarship in sorting out and synthesizing their subject matter from the mass of Indian texts translated in the Tibetan Buddhist canon. Just after his highest enlightenment experience, he expressed his
new realization in a hymn or song of praise to the Buddha for teaching dependent origination, the profound teaching of the twelvefold chain of causation. It is called in short, “In Praise of Dependent Origination,” and seven translations of it are listed below. Only very rarely do we have access to the realizations of such an experience recorded immediately after they occurred, and directly by the person who achieved them, the only other such work I know of being Śaṅkarācārya’s Daksināmūrti-stotra.

Tsongkhapa wrote what may be considered a companion volume to his Lam rim chen mo, namely, the sNgags rim chen mo, or “Great Exposition of Tantra.” In this work he systematically and comprehensively laid out the stages of the path following the esoteric teachings of the tantras. The path of tantra requires initiation, and is not for everyone, but many in Tibet followed it. He devoted about half of his writings to tantra. Of his twelve longest works (those over 100 folios), six are on tantra. Besides the sNgags rim chen mo, these include three commentaries on the Guhyasamāja system, and two on the Cakrasaṅvara system. He left the Kālacakra system to be commented on by his disciple mKhas-grub-rje, who did so extensively.

Tsongkhapa’s major non-tantric works include, among his early works, the Legs bshad gser phreng, or “Golden Garland of Eloquence,” which is an extensive commentary on Maitreya’s Abhisamayālaṃkāra, “Ornament for the Clear Realizations,” and thus is also on the Prajñāpāramitā, or “Perfection of Wisdom” teachings. Then among his Lam rim works is, in addition to the Lam rim chen mo, the Lam rim chung ba, “Condensed Exposition of the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment,” written late in his life. Among the other three are, firstly, the Legs bshad snying po, “Essence of Eloquence,” in which he sorts out and determines which teachings are definitive and which are only provisional. The remaining two major non-tantric works are commentaries: the Rigs pa'i rgya mtsho, “Ocean of Reasoning,” on Nāgārjuna’s Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā, “Root Treatise on the Middle Way,” and the dGongs pa rab gsal, “Elucidation of the Intention,” on Candrakīrti’s Madhyamakāvatāra, “Introduction to the Middle Way.” The latter was written one year before his death.
Tsongkhapa’s works are here listed primarily by category. Tibetan texts typically have one or more long title, and one or more abbreviated title. Because the same work goes by two or more titles, usually starting with a different word, to list works by title in alphabetical order does not provide the same degree of usefulness that it does for titles in other languages. In order to provide a level of consistency in the forms of the Tibetan titles and their English translations, I have given them from Thupten Jinpa’s 2002 book, *Self, Reality and Reason in Tibetan Philosophy: Tsongkhapa’s Quest for the Middle Way*, whenever available there. The dates these works were written or completed are given when these can be determined with some degree of reliability. Under each Tibetan title are listed the English translations by date of publication, if more than one is available.
1. Early Works

sDe bdun la 'jug pa'i sgo don gnyer yid kyi mun sel, “Dispelling the Darkness of Mind by Aiming to Understand the Seven Books (of Dharmakirti).”


Legs bshad rgya mtsho, or Yid dang kun gzi'i dka' ba'i gnas rgya cher 'grel pa legs par bshad pa'i rgya mtsho, “Ocean of Eloquence: A Detailed Exposition of the Difficult Points of the Doctrine of Mind [kliśṭa-manas] and Foundational Consciousness [ālaya-vijñāna].”


Zhus lan sman mchog bdud rts'i phreng ba, “A Rosary of Supreme Medicinal Nectar” (written in 1396).

1. Thurman, Robert A. F. “Garland of Supremely Healing Nectars: A Dialogue between Karmavajra, the Nyingma Master Lhobrag Khenchen, and Bodhisattva Vajrapani, in the Presence of Je Tsong Khapa.” In The Life and
The Works of Tsongkhapa


2. Lam rim, “Stages of the Path,” Works

Lam rim chen mo, or Byang chub lam rim chen mo, “Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment” (written in 1402).

Lam gyi gtso bo rnam gsum, “Three Principal Elements of the Path.”
The Works of Tsongkhapa


———This translation (1976 edition) of Tsongkhapa’s text is included “with slight modification” in “The Path to Enlightenment.” In Kindness, Clarity, and Insight, by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, translated and edited by Jeffrey Hopkins. Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications, 1984, pp. 118-156.


8. Sonam, Ruth, trans. The Three Principal Aspects of the Path; An Oral Teaching by Geshe Sonam Rinchen on Tsongkha's
The Works of Tsongkhapa

*Lam gyi gtso bo rnam gsum*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications, 1999 (Tsongkhapa’s text is found interspersed in Geshe Sonam Rinchen’s text, and is also printed separately on pp. 129-131).

*Lam rim bsdus don* or *Lam rim mdor bsdus*, “Abbreviated Stages of the Path.”
1. Lhalungpa, Lobsang. [Title in Tibetan script:] “Byang chub lam gyi rim pa’i nyams len gyi rnam gzhiag mdor bsdus bzhugs so, Translated into English.” *Bulletin of Tibetology*, vol. 5, no. 1, Feb. 1968, pp. 5-21 (includes Tibetan text).
not given separately, but is only given as included in the Third Dalai Lama’s *Essence of Refined Gold*.)

*Lam gyi rim pa mdo tsam du bstan pa*, “A Summary Presentation of the Stages of the Path.”


*Lam rim chung ba/chung ngu* (“shorter”), or *Lam rim ’bring* (“middling”), or *Byang chub lam gyi rim pa chung ba/chung ngu*, “Condensed Exposition of the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment” (written in 1415).


2. [partial, zhi gnas or samatha section only] Wallace, B. Alan. “The Cultivation of Quiescence.” In *The Bridge of
3. Other Major non-Tantric Works

Legs bshad snying po, or Drang ba dang nges pa’i don rnam par ’byed pa’i bstan bcos legs bshad snying po, “Essence of Eloquence: A Treatise Distinguishing between the Provisional and the Definitive Meanings” (written in 1408).


Rigs pa’i rgya mtsho, or rTsa še tīk chen rigs pa’i rgya mtsho, or dBu ma rtṣa ba’i tshig le’ur byas pa shes rab ces bya ba’i rnam bshad rigs pa’i rgya mtsho, “Ocean of Reasoning: A Thorough Exposition of Mūlamadhyamakārikā” (written in 1408).
The Works of Tsongkhapa


Byang chub gzhung lam, or Byang chub sems dpa’i tshul khrims kyi rnam bshad byang chub gzhung lam, “The Basic Path to Awakening,” commentary on the śīla (ethics or morality) chapter of Asanga’s Bodhisattva-bhūmi.

4. Shorter non-Tantric Works

*rten 'brel bstod pa legs bshad snying po*, “In Praise of Dependent Origination,” also called the short *legs bshad snying po*, the short “Essence of Eloquence”; full title: *Sangs rgyas bcom ldan ’das ston pa bla na med pa la zab mo rten cing ’brel bar ’byung gsungs ba’i sgo nas bstod pa legs bshad snying po* (written in 1398, immediately after having his highest enlightenment experience).


Yon tan gzhir gyur ma, “Foundation of All Good Qualities” (written in 1402).


The Works of Tsongkhapa

Thog ma dang bar dang tha mar dge ba’i smon lam, “The Prayer of the Virtuous Beginning, Middle, and End,” or in brief, Thog mtha’ ma.

   ————Revised version (see p. 23): Sherpa Tulku, Khamlung Tulku, Alexander Berzin, and Jonathan Landaw. In The Thirty-seven Practices of All Buddha’s Sons; and, The Prayer of the Virtuous Beginning, Middle and End. Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, 1973, pp. 16-23. [Note that the 1975 reprint of this booklet by Potala Publications, New York, does not include Tsongkhapa’s work.]


mDun legs ma, “Auspicious Preparation,” or Rang nyid kyi rtogs brjod, “Personal Narration,” or Rtogs brjod mdun legs ma.

The Works of Tsongkhapa


*Jam dbyangs bstod sprin rgya mtsho* (written in 1394).

*Byams pa’i bstod chen* (written in 1395).

*bDe ba can du skye ba’i smon lam* (written in 1395).
1. Thurman, Robert A. F. “Prayer for Rebirth in Sukhavati.”
The Works of Tsongkhapa


‘Dul ba rgya mtsho’i snying po, “Essence of the Ocean of Vinaya.”


Bla ma lnga bcu pa’i rnam bshad slob ma’i re ba kun skong, a commentary on Aśvaghoṣa’s Guru-paṇcāśika (“Fifty Verses on Guru Devotion”).


rTsa ba shes rab kyi dka’ gnad chen po brgyad kyi brjed byang, “A Memorandum on Eight Great Difficult Points of Mūlamadhyamakakāriki.”


The Works of Tsongkhapa

dBu ma rgyan gyi zin bris, “Notes on Madhyamakālaṃkāra.”
see. Blumenthal, James. The Ornament of the Middle Way: A Study of the Madhyamaka Thought of Śāntarakṣita, Including Translations of Śāntarakṣita’s Madhyamakālaṃkāra (The Ornament of the Middle Way) and Gyal-tsap’s dbU ma rgyan gyi brjed byang (Remembering “The Ornament of the Middle Way”). Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 2004. (Includes material from Tsongkhapa’s dBu ma rgyan gyi zin bris.)

5. Collections of Shorter Works

1. The Essence of Good Explanation: Praise of Munindra.
2. The Three Principles of the Path.
3. The Concise Meaning of the Stages of the Path.
4. The Foundation of All Excellence.

Thurman, Robert A. F., edited by. The Life and Teachings of Tsong Khapa. Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1982. Includes eleven texts by Tsongkhapa:
1. Destiny Fulfilled.
2. Three Principles of the Path.
3. Lines of Experience.
5. The Prayer of the Virtuous Beginning, Middle and End.
7. The Middle Length Transcendent Insight.
10. Sukhavati Prayer.
1. Reflections on Emptiness (pp. 83-84).
2. A Prayer for the Flourishing of Virtues (pp. 129-133).
   [The first one is actually an extract from a larger text known as *rTag tu ngu'i rtogs brjod*. This is a poetic retelling of the story of the bodhisattva *rTag tu ngu* (*Sadāprarudita*). The second is *Thog mtha’ bar gsum du dge ba’i smon lam*. This short work is known popularly by the name *sMon lam thog mtha’ ma.*—Thupten Jinpa, email reply to my query.]

Includes 21 texts by Tsongkhapa, with the Tibetan texts:

*sKabs gsum pa bzhugs so*
1. Praise of the Buddha: The Unrivaled Lion of the Shakyas

*dByangs can ma sbyan drangs bstod pa bzhugs so*
2. Prayer to Sarasvati

*’Jam dbyangs bstod sprin rgya mtsho bzhugs so*
3. Praise of Manjushri

*mGon po tshe dpag med la bstod pa nyi g’hon ’char ka bzhugs so*
4. Prayer to Amitayus

*mGon po ’od dpag med la bstod pa zhi ngchos sgo ’byed ma bzhugs so*
5. Praise to Amitabha: Gateway to the Highest Buddha Realm

*bDe ba can du skye ba’i smon lam bzhugs so*
6. Prayer for Birth in Sukhavati, Realm of Bliss

*mTshan ma smros pa’i sa skya’i bla ma zhi ng la bstod pa*
7. Praise of an Unnamed Sakya Lama

*bDag gi bkrin can gyi rtsa ba’i bla mar gsol ’debs*
8. A Prayer to My Precious Dharma Master, Dragpa Jangchub
The Works of Tsongkhapa

Byin rlabs nye brgyud kyi bla rnams la gsol 'debs

Byams pa'i bstd chen bzhugs so
10. In Praise of Maitreya, the Crown of Brahma

rje btsun gsang bdag gi bstd pa bzhugs so
11. In Praise of Vajrapani, Keeper of the Secret Mantra

Lhag pa'i lha mi g.yo mgon po la bstd pa
12. In Praise of the Extraordinary Deity Achala

dByangs can shes rab gsal byed ma'i bstd pa
13. In Praise of Vajra Sarasvati, Light of Wisdom

rNam par rgyal ma'i bstd pa sa gsun re skong ma

Thog mtha' ma bzhugs so
15. A Prayer for the Beginning, Middle, and End of Practice

Dal rten la snying po len par bskul ba'i tshigs bcad bzhugs so
16. The Essence of a Human Life: Words of Advice for the Lay Practitioner

rTen 'brel bstd pa bzhugs so
17. Dependent Arising: A Praise of the Buddha

Sher phyin gyi mdo par 'debs kyi smon tshigs

Chos rgyal nang sgrub kyi bstd pa bzhugs so
19. Praise of the Protector Dharmaraja

Phreng ba'i gsol 'debs tshigs bcad nyer geig ma
20. Twenty-one Verse Rosary Prayer

Ji srid thub mechog
21. For As Long As
6. Tantric Works

sNgags rim chen mo, or rGyal ba khyab bdag rdo rje 'chang chen po'i lam gyi rim pa gsang ba kun gyi gnad rnam par phyed pa, “Great Exposition of Tantra” (written in 1405).


Rim pa lnga rab tu gsal ba'i sgron me, or rGyud kyi rgyal po dpal gsang ba 'dus pa'i man nag rim pa lnga rab tu gsal ba'i sgron me, commentary on Nāgārjuna’s Pañcakrama, “The Five Stages,” a work on the Guhyasamāja completion stage.


Zab lam Nā-ro'i chos drug gi sgo nas 'khrid pa'i rim pa yid ches gsum ldan, commentary on the six yogas of Naropa.


The Works of Tsongkhapa

Nā- ro’i chos drug gi dmigs skor lag tu len tshul, on the six yogas of Naropa.


dNgos grub kyi snye ma, or gSang sngags kyi tshul khrims kyi rnam bshad dngos grub kyi snye ma, “Fruit Clusters of Siddhis: An Explanation of Tantric Morality” (written about 1403).