

Bu-ston on the Languages Used by Indian Buddhists at the Schismatic Period

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1.1. In treating an event in the history of Indian Buddhism it is always interesting, and in some cases important, to see if any information in this connection is given by Bu-ston (1290–1364 A.D.) in his work *Bde-bar gśegs-pa'i bstan-pa'i gsal-byed chos-kyi 'byuñ-gnas gsuñ-rab rin-po-che'i mdzod*, or (Bu-ston) *Chos-'byuñ* in short, which is believed to have been written when he was thirty-three in the year of *Chu-pho-khyi*, “Water-male-dog”, i.e. 1322 A.D.¹⁾

1.2. Among the so-called *Chos-'byuñ* literature Bu-ston seems to be the only original author who has told us in detail of the languages used by Indian Buddhists at the time of their schism²⁾. The story starts in the section devoted to the controversial Third Council for the first instance. In the sections on the previous councils no mention is made in regard to the languages³⁾.

¹⁾ For this literature see among others A. I. Vostrikov, *Tibetskaja istoričeskaja literatura*, Moskva 1962 (*Bibliotheca Buddhica* 32), pp. 91 f., 257–261 (notes), also its English version: *Tibetan Historical Literature*, translated by H. C. Gupta, Calcutta 1970 (*Soviet Indology Series* 4), pp. 140–145. The date of composition is given as such in the colophon of Bu-ston's work itself: cf. Vostrikov n. 405 on p. 257 (Russian edition), p. 141 (English ed.). Cf. otherwise D. S. Ruegg, *The Life of Bu ston Rin po che*, Rome 1966 (*Serie Orientale Roma* 34), p. VIII (under BuCh).

²⁾ Padma dkar-po (1527–92 A.D.) may well have borrowed Bu-ston's description in his work *Chos-'byuñ bstan-pa'i padma rgyas-pa'i ñin-byed*, or *'Brug-pa'i Chos-'byuñ* in short (1575 A.D.). Some passages correspond almost verbatim to the Bu-ston *Chos-'byuñ*, without reference to it or to the works quoted by Bu-ston. This rare book has been published in facsimiles: *Tibetan Chronicle of Padma-dkar-po*, edited by Lokesh Chandra, with a foreword by E. Gene Smith, New Delhi 1968 (*Śatapiṭaka Series* 75), 8 columns (Smith), 310 folios in facsimile, numbered 1–619.

³⁾ Incidentally, Gzön-nu dpal (1392–1481 A.D.) has also described the schisms in detail in his well-known work *Bod-kyi yul-du chos dañ chos-smra-ba ji-ltar byuñ-ba'i rim-pa deb-ther sñon-po*, or *Deb-ther sñon-po* in short (1476–78 A.D.), but has made no mention of the languages in question: cf. *The Blue Annals* completed in A.D. 1478 by Hgos-lotsawa Gzhon-nu-dpal (1392–1481), reproduced by Lokesh Chandra from the Collection of Raghu Vira, New Delhi 1971 (*Śatapiṭaka Series* 212), esp. folios 29.2–32.7 (= *Kun-bde-glin Monastery edition*, folios 15a2–16b7); George N. Roerich, *The Blue Annals*, Part I, Calcutta 1949 (*Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal Monograph Series* 7), pp. 27–31 = Ju. N. Rerix, *Izbrannye Trudy*, Moskva 1967, pp. 304–308. For this literature see Vostrikov, op.cit. pp. 92–94 (Russian ed.), pp. 146–148 (English ed.).

1.3. The Tibetan original of Bu-ston Chos-'byun has been known to exist for some time, e.g. in the Libraries of Tōhoku University at Sendai⁴⁾, the Seminar of Indian Philosophy and Literature at the University of Tokyo⁵⁾, and the Tōyō Bunko in Tokyo⁶⁾. A facsimile edition of Bu-ston's collected works has appeared from New Delhi (1965–71), in which is included our text (= Tōhoku 5197)⁷⁾.

1.4. It admits of no doubt that Obermiller's English translation has served as the first aid for those who were unable to consult the original Tibetan text because of its unavailability, and that it "gives an accurate idea of the original text and is a valuable contribution to the study of Tibetan historiography" (Vostrikov-Gupta p. 142f.). In some cases, however, his translation is rather free and misleading, unless the original is referred to⁸⁾.

1.5. The sections concerning the schisms have been translated into Japanese from the Tibetan by Enga Teramoto and appended to his Japanese translation of Tāranātha's history of Buddhism. It is to be regretted, however, that the readers have to face some fatal misprints and mistakes in addition to his somewhat free translation⁹⁾.

1.6. Proper attention has been drawn to Bu-ston's description of the languages at the time of the schisms by L.-K. Lin in his suggestive work. It is a matter for regret, however, that he had to translate it into French from Obermiller's English version¹⁰⁾.

1.7. Under these circumstances it will not be superfluous to present the original Tibetan text with regard to the languages used by Indian Buddhists at the period of earlier schisms, though it has not been

⁴⁾ A Catalogue of the Tohoku University Collection of Tibetan Works on Buddhism, edited by Y. Kanakura, R. Yamada, T. Tada and H. Hadano, Sendai 1953: No. 5197 (Bu-ston's Works, tome 24: YA 1–212).

⁵⁾ A Catalogue of the Tibetan Extra-Canonical Works preserved in the University of Tokyo (A preliminary report), compiled by H. Kitamura, Tokyo 1965: No. 280 (190 folios = No. 345B–2558 of the Tōyō Bunko).

⁶⁾ Catalogue of the Toyo Bunko Collection of Tibetan Works on History, edited by Z. Yamaguchi, Tokyo 1970 (Classified Catalogue of the Toyo Bunko Collection of Tibetan Works 1): No. 345A–2557 (incomplete; written in dbu-med: folios 1–335b, missing 2, 3, 101); No. 345B–2558 (= No. 280 of the University of Tokyo); No. 345C–2559 (folios 1–244a); No. 345D–2560 (folios 1–203a).

⁷⁾ The Collected Works of Bu-ston, Part 24 (YA), edited by Lokesh Chandra from the Collection of Raghu Vira, New Delhi 1971 (Śatapiṭaka Series 64), folios 633–1055 (= YA 1–212a). An exact reprint of the text has separately been made: Bu-ston's History of Buddhism: Tibetan text edited by Lokesh Chandra from the Collection of Raghu Vira, New Delhi 1971.

⁸⁾ E. Obermiller, History of Buddhism (Chos-hbyung) by Bu-ston, Heidelberg 1931–32 (Materialien zur Kunde des Buddhismus 18–19) [repr. Tokyo 1964 (Suzuki Research Foundation Reprint Series 1)]. This is not a complete translation.

⁹⁾ E. Teramoto, Tāranātha Indo Bukkyōshi, Tokyo 1928 (repr. 1974), pp. 395–404.

¹⁰⁾ Lin Li-kouang, L'aide-mémoire de la vraie loi, Paris 1949 (Bibliothèque d'études du Musée Guimet 54), pp. 180–187 (with copious notes and comments).

collated with other editions¹¹). In this short paper it is intended only to give a straightforward translation with some glossarial notes, and by no means to examine its historical background or linguistic evidence. It is my future task to check the obscure readings with the other editions.

2.1. First of all Bu-ston refers to a theory in regard to the languages used at the time of King Aśoka:

kha-cig ston-pa 'das-nas lo brgya-drug-cu-na groñ-khyer me-tog-gis rgyas-pa zes-par rgyal-po mya-nan-med byuñ-ba'i tshe dgra-bcom-pa-rnams legs-par sbyar-ba dañ tha-mal-pa dañ zur-chag dañ śa-za'i skad-kyis ston-pa'i gsuñ-rab 'don-pa-las slob-ma-rnams so-sor byes-pas sde-pa bco-brgyad-du gyur-te ... (folio 88b5–6 = ed. Lokesh Chandra folio 808.5–6)¹²).

“Some [say]:—160 years after the Teacher had passed away, in the city called Kusumita (i.e. Pāṭaliputra) at the time of King Aśoka's appearance the Arhats recited the Scripture of the Teacher in Sanskrit (*legs-par sbyar-ba*, ‘well-prepared’), Prakrit (*tha-mal-pa*, ‘vulgar’)¹³, Apabhraṃśa (*zur-chag*, ‘corrupted’), and Pāṣācī (*śa-za'i skad*, ‘language of the flesh-eaters’)¹⁴. The disciples thus separated. They have thus grown into eighteen schools ...”

3.1. Bu-ston then quotes Śākyaprabha's Prabhāvatī, composed in the eighth century (ed. Sde-dge 4125 ŚU 74a5–162b2; Snar-thaṅ 3618 HU 83a–184a; Peking 5627 HU 79b5–184b3), the autocommentary to his Ārya-mūla-sarvāstivāda-śrāmaṇera-kārikā / 'Phags-pa gzi thams-cad yod-par śmra-ba'i dge-tshul-gyi tshig-le'u byas-pa (Sde-dge 4124, Snar-thaṅ 3617, Peking 5626)¹⁵:

¹¹) For other Tibetan editions see e.g. Shūki Yoshimura, Buton no Chibetto Bukkyōshi, Indo Daijō Bukkyō Shisō Kenkyū (Collected works), Kyoto 1974, p. 548. [This article was originally published in the Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū 6 (1951)].

¹²) Cf. Obermiller II p. 96 (= Lin p. 184), Teramoto p. 400.

¹³) Teramoto's translation of *tha-mal-pa* with “Hendo-go (a language of borderlands)” is misleading, although it seems to be etymologically connected with *tha-ma*, “last”, *tha-ma-la*, “in the last place”, cf. *mtha'-ma*, “end”, *mtha'-mal-pa* (= *tha-°*) (cf. Jäschke's Tibetan-English Dictionary, ss.vv.). Cf. also Mahāvīyut-patti, ed. R. Sakaki: Nos. 4717–4720.

¹⁴) It is to be much regretted that no names of the schools that used these languages are given, and that Bu-ston has not cited the sources of the original materials. As for the language of the Pāṣācas, it may well reflect a theory that the Sthaviravādins have used the Pāṣācī language (cf. otherwise 4.2–4 and 5.1 below). Needless to say, the Sthaviras do not necessarily mean the Pāli Buddhists. One must however bear in mind that the term *Pāli* did not exist as an appellation of the language before the works quoted by Bu-ston had been composed; cf. R. Pischel, Grammatik der Prākṛit-Sprachen, Straßburg 1900 (Grundriß der indoarischen Philologie und Altertumskunde 1.8) [repr. Hildesheim-New York 1973], § 27 end; M. Winternitz, A History of Indian Literature, Vol. II, Calcutta 1933, repr. 1972, p. 226 n. 2; G. K. Nariman, Literary History of Sanskrit Buddhism, Bombay 1920, p. 259; Kōgen Mizuno, Pāri-go Būpō, Tokyo 1955, pp. 1, 5 n., 22f., 26.

¹⁵) Cf. P. Cordier, Catalogue du fonds tibétain de la Bibliothèque Nationale, III^e partie, Paris 1915, p. 410 ad Mdo-'grel LXXXIX 2–3; also É. Lamotte,

'od-ldan-nas / de-nas rgyal-po dharma aśva-ka śi-ba dañ / dgra-bcom-pa-rnams-kyis tha-mal-pa dañ zur-chag-pa dañ bar-mar 'don-pa'i tshig-la mñon-par žen-pa gdul-pa'i dbaṅ-gi phyir rim-gyis gzun gzan dañ gzan-du sbyar-te rgya-chen-po'i skad-du sbyar-ba'i mdo-sde-la sogs-pa lta-bu-ste / bstan-pa rnam-pa bco-brgyad-kyi bar-du gyur-pa yin-no ... (folio 89a1-3 = ed. Lokesh Chandra folio 809.1-3)¹⁶).

"From the Prabhāvatī ('Od-ldan):—Then King Dharma Aśoka died, and the Arhats, in order to subdue adherence to Prakrit (*tha-mal-pa*), Apabhraṃśa (*zur-chag-pa*) and the language of intermediate speech (*bar-mar 'don-pa'i tshig*)¹⁷, have gradually compiled the Scripture severally, (which have become) the sūtras and the like, composed in the language of great extensiveness (*rgya-chen-po'i skad*)¹⁸. The doctrine has after all grown into eighteen kinds ..."

3.2. In regard to the schisms Bu-ston then pays attention to the opinion of the Mūla-sarvāstivādins. As a matter of fact, however, it is an extract from the Prabhāvatī (cf. Obermiller II p. 97 n. 636):

gzi-yod-smra-ba na-re bsdu-ba gñis-pa'i bar-du gzi-thams-cad-yod-smra gcig-bu-las med-pa-la de-rjes-nas skad tha-dad-kyis 'don-pas bcu-bdun-te / ... (folio 89a5-6 = ed. Lokesh Chandra 809.5-6)¹⁹).

"The Mūla-(Sarva)astivādins say:—Until the Second Council there was nothing but only Mūla-Sarvāstivādins. After that (they) recited in different languages, and thus (it has grown) into (another) seventeen (schools) ..."

4.1. Then Bu-ston refers to the Bhikṣu-varṣāgra-pricchā / Dge-sloṅ-gi dañ-po'i lo dri-ba of Padmākaraghoṣa, composed towards the end of

Histoire du bouddhisme indien, Louvain 1958 (Bibliothèque du Muséon 43), p. 604.

¹⁶ Cf. Obermiller II p. 97, Teramoto p. 400. Incidentally, Padma dkar-po describes in the same wording (folio 24a3-4 = ed. Lokesh Chandra folio 47.3-4) as Bu-ston (without reference to the source material). Only a few minor variants are *a-śo-ka* (for *aśva-ka*), *'dul-ba'i* (for *gdul-pa'i*) and *dbaṅ-gis* (for *dbaṅ-gi*).

¹⁷ It is difficult to know the exact meaning of the Tibetan *bar-mar 'don-pa'i tshig*. Obermiller translates it by "a dialect of intermediate character" (II p. 97), and Teramoto by "Chūkan-go (an intermediate language)" (p. 400). However, it is certainly used as synonymous to *skad 'brin-du 'don-pa* or *°-pa'i skad* (cf. 4.4, 5.1 below).

¹⁸ What is the language of great extensiveness? Tibetan *rgya-chen-po'i skad* seems to denote not just a single dialect with a small audience. The nucleus of a dialect, absorbing its neighbouring elements as much as possible, would have attracted a more extensive audience. And this appears to have been a specific character of the languages used by Indian Buddhists. It could not be the Sanskrit language (so Obermiller!). Certainly not "Dai Shina-go (the great Chinese language)" (so Teramoto!). It may well be a language or languages used in the so-called Vaipulyasūtras. It is a matter for regret that the original Indic text is lost. Incidentally, *ryyal-po'i skad-du* (for *rgya-chen-po'i* ...) in the original Tanjur (cf. Obermiller II p. 97 n. 630a) seems to be simply a misprint.

¹⁹ Cf. Obermiller II p. 97f., Teramoto p. 401.

the tenth or at the beginning of the eleventh century (ed. Sde-dge 4133 SU 66a1–70b3; Peking 5649 U 317a1–323a8)²⁰):

lo-dri mkhan-po ltar-na / ... *yod-smra-la bži* ... *ya-rabs-las 'jig-rten-gyi chos lugs 'byuñ-ba bzin-du* / *saṃ-skr-ta'i skad-kyis brjod-ciñ sde-pa gžan-gyi chos lugs 'byuñ-ba'i gži yin-pas gži-thams-cad-yod-smra'o* / *mkhan-po rgyal rigs* ... *sgra-gcan-zin-bzañ-po* / *skad saṃ-skr-ta'i skad* / ... (folios 89b6–90a1 = ed. Lokesh Chandra folios 810.6–811.1)²¹).

“According to the author of the *Bhikṣu-varṣāgra-prcchā*, ... (there were) four (schools) among the (Sarva)astivādins ... Just as the mundane laws and customs derive from the upper classes—speaking in the Sanskrit language, (the Sarvāstivādins) were the root (*gži* = *mūla*) of derivation of the laws and customs of the other schools, and thus (they are) the Mūla-Sarvāstivādins. The master was ... Rāhulabhadra, a Kṣatriya. The language was the Sanskrit language ...”

4.2. ... *dge'dun-phal-chen-pa* / *mkhan-po bram-ze* ... *'od-sruñ-chen-po* / *skad tha-mal-pa'i skad* / ... (folios 90a2–3 = ed. Lokesh Chandra folio 811.2–3)²²).

“... the Mahāsāṃghikas: The master was Mahākāśyapa, a Brahmin ... The language was the Prakrit language ...”²³

4.3. ... *kun-gyis-bkur-ba* / *mkhan-po dman's rigs* ... *ñe-bar-'khor* / *skad zur-chag-pa a-bha-bhram-śi'i skad* / ... (folio 90a3–4 = ed. Lokesh Chandra folio 811.3–4)²⁴).

“... the Sammitīyas: The master was Upāli, a Śūdra ... The language was the corrupted Apabhraṃśa language ...”²⁵

²⁰) Cf. Cordier's Catalogue III p. 416f. ad Mdo'-grel XC-21; also Lamotte, op.cit. p. 603. The reference to the Snar-thaṅ edition made by Mibu seems to be incorrect: A Comparative List of the Tibetan Tripitaka of Narthang Edition (Bstan-hgyur Division) with the Sde-dge Edition, compiled by T. Mibu, Tokyo 1967, p. 98.

²¹) Cf. Obermiller II p. 99f., Teramoto p. 402. Incidentally, Bu-ston's description of the language etc. has been ingeniously incorporated (without referring to the source) by Padma dkar-po in his 'Brug-pa'i Chos-'byuñ (folio 24b5–6 = ed. Lokesh Chandra folio 48.5–6): ... *thams-cad yod-par smra-ba* / *saṃ-skr-ta'i skad-kyis brjod-ciñ sde-pa gžan-gyi chos lugs 'byuñ-ba'i gži yin-pas gži-thams-cad-yod-par-smra-ba'o* // *mkhan-po rgyal rigs* ... *sgra-gcan-'dzin-bzañ-po* ...

²²) Cf. Obermiller II p. 100, Teramoto p. 402.

²³) Teramoto's translation of *tha-mal-pa* with “Bongo (Sanskrit)” is a fatal mistake. The original must have been *tha-mal-pa* (neither *legs-par sbyar-ba* nor *saṃ-skr-ta*): cf. 'Brug-pa'i Chos-'byuñ of Padma dkar-po (folio 25a1–2 = ed. Lokesh Chandra folio 49.1–2): ... *dge'dun-phal-chen-pa* ... // *mkhan-po bram-ze'i rigs* ... *'od-sruñs-chen-po* / *skad tha-mal-pa* / ...

²⁴) Cf. Obermiller II p. 100, Teramoto p. 402. The correct reading for *a-bha-bhram-śi* should be *a-pa-bhram-śa*, equivalent to Tibetan *zur-chag(-pa)*. Teramoto reconstructs it as *Avabhaṣa* (for *Avabhāṣā*?), which is not at all acceptable. Padma dkar-po reads *A-wa-bhram-śa* (i.e. Apabhraṃśa) (cf. n. 25 below).

²⁵) Cf. 'Brug-pa'i Chos-'byuñ of Padma dkar-po (folio 25a2–3 = ed. Lokesh Chandra folio 49.2–3): *skye-bo mañ-pos bkur-ba'i slob-dpon-gyi lugs ston-pas mañ-ba-kur-ba* / *mkhan-po dman's rigs* ... *ñe-bar-'khor* / *skad zur-chag-pa a-wa-bhram-*

4.4. . . . *gnas-brtan-pa / mkhan-po rje rigs . . . ka-tya-na / skad 'brin-du 'don-pa / . . .* (folio 90a4–5 = ed. Lokesh Chandra folio 811.4–5)²⁶).

“ . . . the Sthaviras: The master was Kātyāyana, a Vaiśya . . . (They) pronounced the language intermediately . . . ”

5.1. Then Bu-ston refers to other sources on the Mahāsāṃghikas, Saṃmitīyas and Sthaviras (cf. 4.2–4 above):

kha-cig / phal-chen-pa skad 'brin-du 'don-pa'i skad / kun-gyis-bkur-ba tha-mal-pa'i skad / gnas-brtan-pa zur-chag-tu 'dod-do / . . . (folio 90a5–6 = ed. Lokesh Chandra folio 811.5–6)²⁷).

“Some [say]:—The Mahāsāṃghikas spoke the language, the language (which they) pronounced intermediately, the Saṃmitīyas the Prakrit language, and the Sthaviras in the corrupted (manner) (i.e. Apabhraṃśa) . . . ”

6.1. In regard to the languages used by Indian Buddhists at the time of earlier schisms Bu-ston has after all cited four theories, i.e. I (2.1), II (3.1–2), III (4.1–4), and IV (5.1):

śa . . .: “As (they) show the customs of the teacher honoured by many people, (they are called) ‘the Honoured-by-Many’ (*mañ-ba-(b)kur-ba*, cf. *kun-gyis-bkur-ba*: Skt. *saṃ-man-*, ‘to honour’!). The master was Upāli, a Śūdra . . . The language was the corrupted Apabhraṃśa . . . ”

²⁶) Cf. Obermiller II p. 100, Teramoto p. 402. For *skad 'brin-du 'don-pa* see 5.1 below. *ka-tya-na* is to be emended to *kā-tyā-ya-na*; cf. ‘Brug-pa’i Chos-’byun of Padma dkar-po (folio 25a4 = ed. Lokesh Chandra folio 49.4): . . . *gnas-brtan-pa / mkhan-po rje rigs . . . ka-tya-ya-na* [read *kā-tyā-°*] / *skad 'brin-du 'don-pa / . . .*

²⁷) Cf. Obermiller II p. 100, Teramoto p. 402. *'dod-do* should most probably be emended to *'don-no*. Obermiller translates *skad 'brin-du 'don-pa'i skad* by “the intermediate dialect”, but Teramoto by “Chūgoku (Magada)-go (the language of the middleland, i.e. Māgadhi)”, in which he seems to take *'brin*, “middle”, as meaning “the middleland, i.e. Madhyadeśa”! (cf. Teramoto in 3.1 above). This is by any means impossible and unacceptable. *skad 'brin-du 'don-pa'i skad* is used in the same sense as *bar-mar 'don-pa'i tshig* (3.1) or as *skad 'brin-du 'don-pa* (4.4). Tibetan *'brin* or *bar-ma* must be used for something moderate in regard to the quality and quantity—neither too large or loud (*chen/che*) nor too small or low (*chun*), neither too strong or high (*drag*) nor too weak or low (*zan*). In this case it denotes the language of moderate character with moderate hybridity. At the same time it seems to me that the language also refers to the manner of speech, that is to say, a language which is neither too harsh nor too soft, neither too loud nor too low. By using such a language they must have attracted wider audience. The more active they were in propagation, the more their language must absorb the neighbouring dialectal elements. This is a specific character of the languages used in Indian religious texts, even in the Rgveda; cf. M. B. Emeneau, *The Dialects of Old Indo-Aryan, Ancient Indo-European Dialects*, Berkeley-Los Angeles 1966, p. 131. The most important thing in our text is that the language of moderate character, no matter how one may translate it, refers to a language compared with other dialects synchronically, and never diachronically. That is to say, it denotes by no means the language in the intermediate stage of the Sanskritization process; cf. A. Yuyama, *Butten no Hensan ni Mochiirareta Gengo no Tokushitsu* (A Distinctive Character of the Languages Used by Indian Buddhists in the Formation of the Canon), *Studies in Buddhist Thought* dedicated to J. Okuda, Kyoto 1976, pp. 873–887.

	Aśokan period	Mūla-sarvāstī-vādin	Mahā-sāṃghikas	Saṃmitīyas	Sthaviras
I: One theory	Prakrit Apabhraṃśa Paiśāci				
II: Sākyaprabha	Prakrit Apabhraṃśa Bar-mar 'don- pa'i tshig - - - Rgya-chen- po'i skad				
III: Padmākaraghoṣa		Sanskrit	Prakrit	Apabhraṃśa	Skad 'brīṇ-du 'don-pa
IV: Another theory			Skad 'brīṇ-du 'don-pa	Prakrit	Apabhraṃśa

6.2. At this stage it is not possible to judge if any of the theories transmits the historical truth. In the meantime Bu-ston's work remains important as describing Indian traditions on the topic.