Sum-pa mkhan-po ye-ses dpal-byor was the nephew of bsTan-dzin chos-rgyal. In the account of Er-ti-mthā'i chos-skyod rgya-mtsho yile-tzin, Sum-pa was born in the Wood Monkey year (A.D. 1704) of the 12th Rab-Byag cycle.

Sum-pa read Er-ti-mthā'i 'bras-rdzas me-lon and learned the rules of the religious practice. When he was admitted into the monastery Thar-sul chos-skyod rgya-mtsho yile-tzin was appointed his teacher. Sum-pa acted according to his teacher’s instruction and later became a very kind lama. He was ordained under an initiator lama (of the Thar-sum monastery) in the Iron Tiger year (A.D. 1710). He was admitted into the school of philosophy of the dGon-lug monastery in the Water-Serpent Year (A.D. 1713) and studied there. At the age of 20 years in the Water-Hare year (A.D. 1723) he heard Red-pa rin chos-mdag dbang bka-la-shis. He went to sBrul. Staying in the sGo-ma school of philosophy he heard bRtsi-baṅ-gaṅ from dpain-drel la mo nang-mdag, the first among the eight dGe-bses-śis of Chün-gar. In the winter he began his study on Phar-phyaṅ (Prajñāpāramitā) in the stream of religion klu-bum-pa Mo-khyam jam-dbyangs rgya-mtsho became his teacher. At that time, rTsa-tshag il mthun, Thog-pa sgo-man spu-lugs, rNags-pa spu-lugs and bTsan-po No-mon-han came to the school of philosophy (i.e. they joined the school as teachers). In the Fire-Horse year (A.D. 1726) he obtained the degree of glin-baṅ-chuṅ-bcu.

In bra-spuṅs dge-phel he heard the explanation of the doctrine from bo-kyam mtham-baṅ-pa, mkhar-dao bznīl-pa rgya-mtsho, Tshogs Don-yod mkhas-grub, Chos-miṅ-pa bsa-ma jam-dbyangs-pa, and others. Earlier and later he heard a vast number of things from khyi Nam-mkha’-bzan, Khri Nam-mdag mchog-idan, khyi bka’-gyur-pa chos-n-chen, Shīva-ording ma ba-rab rgya-mtsho, Sen-pa dam-chos who was the teacher of sgo-phant monastic school, and others. He practised all those. He learned sābda-sāstrā (grammar, composition of verse, etc.) under mDzo-nor mkhar-pa sDom lam-thun-grub, the disciple of Pra-če-dge-bses, Sum-bcu-pa (of Thon-mi) under bSams-baṅ-mi-thun of sku’ büm monastery and various arts of writing (chu-can, chu-med, etc.) and geometrical measurement under bTsan-pa mi-thshag chu-grags-thun-grub. He practised two varieties of astrological calculation, one for human benefits and the other for bringing harm.
to the human beings, from Lha-dbañ-pa, who was the district officer of skyor-mo-luñ and also the personal disciple of the regent (of Tibet), and Sog-ram-pa Nag-dbañ rgya-mtsho who was the disciple of Lug-mgo bya-mthun Nang-dbañ, and who used to teach Baidunya dkar-po (an astrological text of sDe-srid Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho).

While out on a pilgrimage in the Fire-Horse year (A.D. 1726) he visited Tsa-ni and Dab-'brel-ba'i rtsa-mchog gron in Tsa-ni bab-skor. In the southern side, in rGya-rin-kyi he visited a very high mountain which was called Sa-mi-svar by the Śākyas and rGya-gar se-gi by the Tibetans.

In the Iron-Pig year (A.D. 1731) he came back to his own country. He got the initiation of Dus-khor (Kālacakra deity) from the great scholar dGe-'dzun don-grub. He received religious instructions from Khris-chen sprul-skru, dKa'-chen smon-lam-pa, Tshis-kas-sgal-prin-pa, etc. in La-mo bde-chens monastery. He inquired about the religious advice on chen-nag, etc. which successively came down to Grol-tshab brag sprul-pa's-skru from Kun-mkhyen goh-ma (Jam-dbyans bshad-pa Nag-dban brtson-'grus). He gave rDo-rje initiation in dGa'-ldan bsdad-sgrub giñ (a monastery) in the Dragon year (A.D. 1736).

In the Fire-Serpent year (A.D. 1737) he went to China and praised the Emperor. In the Earth-Horse year (A.D. 1738), while staying near the river called San-li behind lTsho-bdun temple, he saw that rJe-bsun tham-pa'i sprul-skru who was the son of Hia-ha don-grub irvañ was driven away by the army of Cun-gar.

In the Earth-Sheep year (A.D. 1739) he came back to Tibet. In the Iron-Monkey year (A.D. 1740) he got dGon-luñ ri-khor (a cave monastery), congregation halls of two dDe-skryid sgrub-sde-s of Zva-khoñ and dGon-luñ dGa'-ldan lha-rtsa built. He got Srid-gnon 'bum-pa chen-po and Sum-pa'is zin-yon temple along with dMar -gtsañ temple repaired. He got the huge statue of the Maitreya Buddha, built in the big temple of dGon-luñ. He got small temples and 3 other statues, built at the left and right sides of that temple of Maitreya. He got the great shrines built on the low land just in front of the monastery. In the Water-Dog year (A.D. 1742) he went to Pe-ciñ (capital of the China) and came back in Pig year (A.D. 1743). After five years he got a temple with images etc. built in Bor-sog-thu monastery of Po-khoñ. He became abbot of this monastery in the Fire-Tiger year (A.D. 1746). With this term and two more terms before and later on it became abbott for three times in total. In the Iron-Horse year (A.D. 1750) he went to Ri-po rtsa-pha. He also became abbot of the following monasteries : bKa'-ri cho-szin, Sher-lun, Brug-lun, Dul-ba dgon, dGa'-ldan rin-chen glin, Pho-rod pra-sde'i dgon, etc.

He composed many works, including a history of the doctrine called dpag-bsam jlon-bzhan among the 'Rtsis literature his dGe-ladan rtsis gser is very famous.
It is the previous story that when Pan-chen thams-cad mkhyen-pa stayed in sku-bum monastery, Sum-pa approached him in an auspicious moment and heard many things on medicine, tantra, the properties and various natures of the king, minister and army of the barbarians. At times he heard the nature of birds and animals like tiger etc.

He assembled many disciples as Thru-bkvan-rin-po-che did. When Sum-pa was paying homage to the tomb of rje Nag-dbang chos-kyi rgya-mtsho, a small piece of thread like thumb in size fell inside the tomb. It is said that Sum-pa took that piece of thread into his mouth and as a result of this he got a long life and also became a very rich man. He died at the age of 85 years in the Earth-Monkey year (A.D. 1784). Kun-mhyen Bar-ma worshipped the shrine of his tomb.

Sum-pa had his autobiography. There Sum-pa is generally found to be famous among the names of the eighteen great castles of Tibet. This very Sum-pa also prepared 100 sets of 100-volume Kanjur written in gold by the order of the mother of the King of I.van-li of Chims. At his request to the King the temples were built in a large number in the Amdo country and the zones with their fixed worship places were settled.

Notes:

1. I have used the printed edition of this work entitled Histoire Du Bouddhisme Dans L'Amdo Published by Imprimé Pour L'École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris.

2. In the text the year is clearly mentioned as Water-Monkey i.e. A.D. 1752 but it is absurd. It will be Water-Serpent i.e. A.D. 1713. Sum-pa in his autobiography mentions the 9th year of his age as the year of his admission into dGon-lun.

3. Though in the text the year is clearly mentioned as Earth-Serpent i.e. A.D. 1749 but from the fact that he returned in the Iron Pig year i.e. A.D. 1731 can by no means justify the former year of his pilgrimage. It should be the Fire-Horse Year i.e. A.D. 1726 and also it is justified by the statement in Sum-pa's autobiography, "at the age of 22nd year".

4. Full title of this oft-quoted work is "Phags-yul rgya-nag chen-po bod dan sog-yul du dam-pa'i chos-byun-iphul dpag-bsam ljon-bzan. It is written in 1748 and contains 317 folios of large format. It comprises the first volume of the Complete Works of the author.

From the Indian historical point of view it is an extremely important work yet to be fully deciphered. It recounts the history of Buddhism in India (fols. 41a-95a). It records a detailed history of Tibet (fols.
95a6-287b7). It contains a brief history of China (fols. 288a1-292b6) and of Buddhism in China (fols. 292b7-300b2). It also gives a short account of the history of the Mongols (fols. 300b2-312b2) and of the history of the spread of Buddhism among them (fols. 312b2-316a1).

5. Full title of this work is rTsis-khyi bstan-bcos kun-gsal me-Ioh-gi gshuṅ : zla bsl̄g tshis-ba-yor dge-idan rtṣis gaṅ. It is included in the seventh volume of the Complete Works of the author and consists of 96 folios. The work contains numerous mathematical charts and diagrams.

6. This is the second Panchen Lama Pan-chen blo-bzang ye-ses (1663-1737).