

Ippolito Desideri's Tibetan Works and the Problem of ARSI Goa 74, fols. 47r-92v

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Tibetanists know Ippolito Desideri (1684-1733) chiefly through his *Historical Notices of the Kingdoms of Tibet* (*Notizie istoriche de' Regni del Thibet*), a work often celebrated as the first scientific study of Tibetan religion and culture.¹ The Jesuit's Tibetan works, which were translated into Italian by Giuseppe Toscano, have received less attention.² Even so, most scholars—whether they know it or not—accept Toscano's description and division of Desideri's Tibetan manuscripts. This is nowhere more apparent than in his identification of the manuscripts conserved in Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu [=ARSI] Goa 74, fols. 47r-92v, the *Sems can dang chos la sogs pa rnams kyi 'byung khungs* and an untitled manuscript he called the *Nges legs*.³ These writings, which represent Desideri's most profound engagement with Tibetan Madhyamaka, have received almost no attention from scholars—not least because the facsimiles published by Toscano make Desideri's tiny *dbu med* quite difficult to read. Indeed, the problems surrounding these still-unstudied manuscripts are compounded by the fact that Desideri, who appears to describe the *Sems can dang chos la sogs pa rnams kyi 'byung khungs* in lists of his Tibetan writings—never mentions the existence of a second work on Madhyamaka. In what follows, I hope to explain how this

¹ Petech 1954-1956. For a new translation with expert critical apparatus, see Sweet and Zwilling 2010. I will follow scholarly convention by citing Desideri's account and letters with the abbreviations established by Petech.

² Toscano 1981-1989. Toscano's translations of the *Tho rangs mun sel nyi ma shar ba'i brda* and *Sems can dang chos la sogs pa rnams kyi 'byung khungs* are the only published translations of these works. (Nancy Moore Gettelman translated the first seven chapters of the *Tho rangs mun sel nyi ma shar ba'i brda*, but they remain in manuscript.) Toscano's translation of the *Ke ri se ste an kyi chos lugs kyi snying po* also predated the existing translations of Robson 2014 and Lopez and Jinpa 2017. Toscano's translation of the *Mgo skar bla ma i po li do zhes bya ba yis phul ba'i bod kyi mkhas pa rnams la skye ba snga ma dang stong pa nyid kyi lta ba'i sgo nas zhu ba*, which he hoped to be the fifth volume, remains in manuscript. It is almost complete, lacking some folios in the Jesuit's arguments against karma.

³ Toscano 1984; Toscano 1989.

curious state of affairs came about and to provide a more thorough account of Desideri's Tibetan writings.

1. *The Problem of Desideri's Tibetan Manuscripts*

Desideri left us two principal descriptions of his Tibetan writings, which can appear confusing if not read carefully. The first description is found in the first book of the *Notizie istoriche*, where the Jesuit mentions writing two Tibetan books, a first book he presented to Lha bzang Khan on January 6, 1717, and a second book that he began to compose later that year, shortly before the Dzungar invasion of Lhasa. Of the first book, Desideri says:

The subject matter of this book was primarily to demonstrate that the maxim that circulates among unbelievers that everyone can be saved through his own law is false, and so establish this most important truth, namely, that there is only one law that leads to heaven and conducts one to eternal salvation. In the second place, I described the nature of the true law of salvation, the gifts one ought to find in it, and the necessity for the man who loves truth and who truly desires his own welfare and eternal happiness to take every opportunity to find it. In the third place, I proposed and explained the signs and distinctive characteristics by which a man might easily discern, among the many and contradictory laws of the world, the true from the false.⁴

Of the second book, the Jesuit says:

This book of mine is divided into three tomes. In the first, I refute the errors that make up the most intricate labyrinth of the opinion of metempsychosis according to the particular system of this people. In the second tome, I reject the other principal error of *stong pa nyid*, which, as I have already mentioned, are treatises profuse and

⁴ DR 1.13 (MITN 5: 193): "La materia di questo libro fu primieramente mostrar ch'è falsa la massima che corre tra gl'infedeli che ciascuno nella sua legge possa salvarsi; e perciò doversi stabilire quest'importantissima verità, che una sola è la legge che conduce al cielo e al conseguimento dell'eterna salute. In secondo luogo dichiaravo le qualità e doti che si devono ritrovar nella vera legge di salute, e che qualsivoglia uomo amante della verità e desideroso del vero suo bene e della sua eterna felicità di deve tutto applicare a rintracciarla. In terzo luogo proponevo e spiegavo vari segni e distintivi per i quali l'uomo può facilmente, fra tante, sì diverse, e sì opposte leggi che son al mondo, discernere la vera dalle false." (All translations in this article are my own. When translating Desideri's account, I always consult Sweet and Zwillig 2010, although I sometimes opt for a more literal translation to highlight the terms that have technical scholastic meanings.)

intricate, in which their Lawgiver, with the finest deceit, under the beautiful mask of spiritual elevations, the eradication of all passions, depuration of the soul, and detachment from oneself and all things, guides them to a total *apatheia*, and leads his followers to atheism, wherein the possibility of an uncreated, self-existing being who is the creator of the world is excluded. In the third and shortest tome, with a method and style adapted to a Christian community that is not yet mature and well-schooled in doctrine, but is new and in formation, I propose the very same teachings contained in our Christian doctrines and standard catechisms, in part proving and in part suggesting them with brief reasons.

The first and second tomes are entirely in an argumentative and disputative style, according to the Tibetans' own form and method. As much in the one as in the other, the arguments and reasons, which are quite numerous, are framed in ordinary language, but almost always from the Tibetans' own principles, opinions, and authors, and from the books they hold to be canonical and irrefutable. The third tome is in the form of a dialogue, but still argumentative in the scattered places where it was necessary.⁵

In the fourth book of the *Notizie istoriche*, however, Desideri mentions four compositions:

For the welfare and establishment of the mission I began in Tibet, I had composed in that language, which I still have with me: 1) a small book on the unity of the true law of salvation in which I demonstrate the falsity of the idea that everyone can find salvation in his own law; 2) a copious tome in confutation of the opinion and intricate system of metempsychosis; 3) another tome meant to demonstrate, against

⁵ DR 1.15 (MITN 5: 201-202): "Questo mio libro lo divisi in tre tomi. Nel primo confuto gli errori che compongono l'intricatissimo laberinto dell'opinione della metempsicosi, secondo il sistema particolare di quella nazione. Nel secondo tomo rigetto l'altro principal errore del Tongbà-gnì, che, come di già ho accennato, son trattati copiosi e assai intrigati, in cui con finissimo inganno il loro legislatore sotto la bella maschera d'elevazioni di spirito, di sradicamento di tutte le passioni, di depurazione dell'anima e staccamento da sè stessa e da tutte le cose, guidando a una total apatia, conduce i suoi seguaci all'ateismo, escludendo la possibilità d'un Ente che da sè stesso esista, increato e creator del mondo. Nel terzo e più breve, con metodo e stile adatto no già a una cristianità adulta e ben addottrinata, ma a una cristianità novella e che sta sul formarsi, propongo e in parte provo e con brevi ragioni insinuo que' medesimi insegnamenti che nelle nostre dottrine cristiane e ricevuti catechismi si contengono. Il primo e secondo tomo son tutt'interamente in istile argomentativo e disputativo, secondo la forma e metodo de' medesimi thibetani. Tanto nell'uno quanto nell'altro gli argomenti e ragioni, che sono in molto numero, son presi dal discorso naturale, e quasi sempre da' medesimi principij, opinioni e autori di che essi si servono, e da' libri da loro tenuti per canonici e irrefragabili. Il terzo tomo è in forma di dialogo e in diversi luoghi, dove la necessità lo richiede, è ancora argomentativo.

the opinions of Tibetans, the existence of a being that is 'of itself' and the first principle of all things, using natural reason and arguments derived from their own principles; and 4) finally, a new catechism adapted to the understanding of those who are hearing about the Christian religion for the first time.⁶

We need not be distracted by the Jesuit's somewhat inconsistent use of *libro*, *libretto*, *tomo*, and so forth. The two lists coincide once you look at their books' contents. The first proclaims the one true law of salvation and refutes religious pluralism; the second refutes rebirth; the third demonstrates the existence of God against the opinions of Tibetans on emptiness (*stong pa nyid*); and the fourth is a catechism adapted to the needs of new converts. The chief difference between the first and second lists is that the former groups the final three writings as tomes or volumes of a single book, whereas the latter separates the books into one small book, two tomes that may or may not form a single book, and a catechism.⁷

Scholars have interpreted these descriptions in a variety of ways. In *Early Jesuit Travellers in Central Asia 1603–1721*, the Dutch Jesuit Cornelius Nicolaas Petrus Wessels (1880-1964) identified four Tibetan manuscripts:

- (1) MS. of 54 pp. dated on the first page July 1, 1717, on the last page and June 29, 1721.
- (2) MS. of 117 large oblong pages, bearing as its date on the first page December 8, 1717, on the last page the words: "B. Aloysii Gonzagae festus dies huic tractatui finem imposuit. 1718", (i.e., June 21).
- (3) MS. of 704 oblong pages, 33,5 × 18,5 cm., having 35 lines to the page. Its opening date is June 24, 1718.

⁶ DR 4.19 (MITN 7: 127): "In bene e stabilimento di quella da me cominciata missione de' regni del Thibet, avevo io in quella lingua composti e qui meco conservo ancora: 1- un piccol libretto intorno all'unità della vera legge di salute e in ordine a mostrar esser falso che ognuno nella sua legge possa salvarsi; 2- un copioso tomo in confutazione dell'opinione e intricato sistema della metempsychosi; 3- un altro tomo in ordine a mostrar contro l'opinione de' Thibetani con ragioni naturali e con argomenti dedotti dai loro principij medesimi, l'esistenza d'un ente a sè e primo principio di tutte le cose; 4 finalmente un nuovo catechismo accomodato all'intelligenza di chi per le prime volte senta parlarsi della Religione Cristiana."

⁷ It bears noting that Desideri's description at DR 1.13-15 was written after the description at DR 4.19, since Desideri abandoned the revision of his account at DR 3.3. For a discussion of the various manuscripts and states of what came to be known as the *Notizie istoriche*, see Sweet and Zwilling 2010: 62-101.

- (4) MS. of 128 narrow strips, 33,5 × 13,5 cm., with 7 lines to the page, undated.⁸

Not knowing Tibetan, Wessels was content to remark that the manuscripts “very probably contain Desideri’s refutation of Buddhistic doctrine and his defense of the Catholic Religion, which writings he is known to have carried away with him from Tibet.”⁹ He did, however, publish the title pages of his third and fourth manuscripts, which show them to be the *Mgo skar bla ma i po li do zhes bya ba yis phul ba’i bod kyi mkhas pa rnam la skye ba snga ma dang stong pa nyid kyi lta ba’i sgo nas zhu ba* (ARSI Goa 75, fols. 1r-232v) and the *Tho rangs mun sel nyi ma shar ba’i brda* (ARSI 76, fols. 1-128). Let us abbreviate these henceforth as *I po li do’i zhu ba* and *Tho rangs*. From Wessels’s dates and page counts, we can see that Wessels’s first manuscript is Desideri’s notebook (ARSI Goa 74, fols. 2r-34r). Wessels’s page count for this first manuscript is correct. The discrepancy between his number and the number of folio sides is due to the fact that Desideri left several pages blank, and Wessels counted only those pages upon which Desideri had written. (This will prove to be significant later.) Wessels’s second manuscript consists in the remaining fascicles of ARSI Goa 74, namely, fols. 35r-92v. Wessels dated this manuscript to December 8, 1717 because its first page, the title page of the *Bod kyi chos la mkhas pa rnam la skye ba snga phyi’i sgo nas mgo kar gyis zhu pa*, bears that date. Wessels missed the earlier date of November 28, 1717, found on the title page of the *Sems can dang chos la sogs pa rnam kyi ’byung khungs* (ARSI Goa 74, fol. 47r). Let us abbreviate these as *Mgo kar gyis zhu* and *’Byung khungs*. If we assume that Wessels included the three pages in ARSI Goa 74 upon which Desideri copied various Christian prayers, Wessels’s page count for this manuscript is correct as well.¹⁰ Wessels counted 704 pages in the *I po li do’i zhu ba* (or ARSI Goa 75), although the codex now has only 232 folios, or 464 pages. (This number is also significant.)

The Belgian Jesuit Henri Hosten (1873-1935) provided additional details about the manuscripts on Wessels’s list.¹¹ Hosten, like Wessels, knew no Tibetan. He was, however, an historian with keen insight into the inner workings of the Jesuit missions. Basing himself on Wessels’s description, Desideri’s description in DR 1.15, and his own newly-expanded collection of Desideri’s letters, Hosten tentatively identified the *Tho rangs* with the book Desideri presented to Lha bzang Khan on

⁸ Wessels 1924: 274-275.

⁹ Wessels 1924: 275.

¹⁰ On these three pages, see Toscano 1981: 53-54.

¹¹ Hosten 1938: 657-658.

January 6, 1717. Hosten then identified the *I po li do'i zhu ba* with the book of "three tomes" that Desideri describes in DR 1.15. Hosten showed that Desideri's letters indicate that he wrote two early Italian booklets on the single law of salvation and the problem of metempsychosis between June and August 1716. Hosten also knew that Desideri had completed both booklets by September 8, 1716, and had begun to translate the first into Tibetan.¹² What is more, the Dutch Jesuit knew that Desideri desired to write a dictionary, a grammar, and a catechism.¹³ Assuming the *Tho rangs* to be the Tibetan translation of the first Italian booklet, Hosten guessed that Wessels's first manuscript was either the translation of the second Italian booklet or Desideri's catechism. Although he did not attempt to identify Wessels's second manuscript, Hosten correctly noted that it was begun in Lhasa and completed in Dwags po.

Desideri's Tibetan manuscripts soon came to the attention of Giuseppe Tucci (1894-1984), who expressed his intention in 1943 to publish a large volume of Desideri's written in flawless Tibetan.¹⁴ In 1947, Tucci planned to translate it:

We know that Father Desideri undertook a translation of [Tsongkhapa's *Lam rim chen mo*]: the translation was most probably handed over to the Capuchin Father Felice da Morro, but now seems to be lost. That he knows this famous text and that this was the chief book to which, aware of its importance, he referred, is shown by the refutation which he wrote in Tibetan. This refutation is called *mGo skar bla ma i po li do žes bya ba yis p'ul bai Bod kyi mk'as pa rnam la skye pa sna ma dan ston pa nid kyi lta bai sgo nas žu ba bžugs so* and it is a very bulky work. I possess a copy of this book and intend to publish a translation of it as a striking document of the meeting in the Country of Snows of Lamaic Theology with Saint Thomas.¹⁵

Tucci continued to affirm the importance of the *I po li do'i zhu ba*, but neither translated the manuscript nor published a study of it.¹⁶ The

¹² On Desideri's early works, compare DL 8 (MITN 5: 42), DL 10 (MITN 5: 48), and DL 18 (MITN 5: 83).

¹³ DL 8 (MITN 5: 43), DL 10 (MITN 5: 52). In the latter letter, Desideri indicates his intention to translate the second of his two *libretti* into Tibetan.

¹⁴ Tucci 1943: 226.

¹⁵ Tucci 1947: 248-249.

¹⁶ For later descriptions, see Tucci, 1952: 5: "Alla conoscenza del Tibet gli italiani hanno contribuito in maniera notevole. Odorico da Pordenone e Marco Polo, sebbene non vi siano mai penetrati, sono stati fra i primi a darne notizie. Poi nel XVIII secolo i cappuccini e i gesuiti poterono dimorare nel paese proibito per vari decenni. Durevole ricordo essi hanno di sè lasciato nelle relazioni di viaggio e specialmente nel libro che il gesuita Ippolito Desideri scrisse sulle sue esperienze tibetane e sulla religione tibetana. Egli poi tradusse per la prima volta la *summa*

first real progress on Desideri's Tibetan manuscripts was made by his student Luciano Petech (1914-2010), who critically edited Desideri's letters and the account of his travels in Tibet. Basing himself on DR 4.19, Petech identified Desideri's "small book on the unity of the true law of salvation" with the early work that Desideri presented to Lha bzang Lhan.¹⁷ He identified Desideri's "copious tome in confutation of the opinion and intricate system of metempsychosis" with the *Mgo kar gyis zhu pa* (which he described as "un breve opuscolo") and the *I po li do'i zhu ba*. Petech speculated that the tome in which Desideri attempted to "demonstrate, against the opinions of Tibetans, the existence of a being that is 'of itself' and the first principle of all things," could be (*potrebbe*) the *'Byung khungs* and identified Desideri's "new catechism" with the *Tho rangs*. Petech also noted the correct number of folios in the *I po li do'i zhu ba*, corrected Wessels's dates from ARSI Goa 74, fols. 35r-92v, and distinguished the *Mgo kar gyis zhu pa* and the *'Byung khungs*. He neglected to mention, however, that the *Tho rangs* has none of the defining features of a Christian doctrine or the standard catechisms of Desideri's day. Petech thus eliminated the notes and quotations collected in ARSI Goa 74, fols. 2r-34v from consideration as one of Desideri's books and retained Wessels's second, third, and fourth manuscripts, but—lacking a plausible candidate for the catechism—was forced to distinguish the book Desideri presented to Lha bzang Khan from the *Tho rangs*.

This last problem was solved by Edmond Lamalle (1900-1989), the chief archivist of the Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, who in February 1978 discovered three of Desideri's manuscripts misfiled in the Japonica-Sinica codices.¹⁸ Reclassified as ARSI Goa 76a upon their discovery, the files included a second, rewritten copy of a portion of Desideri's first Italian booklet, which served as the foundation of the first seven chapters of the *Tho rangs* (fols. 1-11), a (nearly completed) copy of the *Ke ri se ste an kyi chos lugs kyi snying po* (fols. 12r-61v), and what appeared to be a *'khyug yig* draft of the same work (fols. 62r-86v).

theologica di un grande pensatore tibetano e quindi la confutò in una vasta opera polemica scritta in tibetano: incontro mirabile avvenuto sul Tetto del mondo della dommatica buddhistica e di S. Tommaso d'Aquino." Compare Tucci 1981: 7: "Il Desideri soprattutto cercò di intendere la dommatica tibetana così contesta di filosofia da renderne qualche volta difficile la comprensione. In tal modo accadde sul Tetto del mondo un fatto mai più rinnovatosi: l'incontro fra San Tommaso e Tsoṅg k'a pa che scrissero, entrambi, una *Summa* delle basi teologiche della propria fede. Infatti il Desideri subito comprese che per svolgere con successo un'opera di valido apostolato del cattolicesimo, occorreva anzitutto che egli studiassero i principi essenziali della dommatica lamaista che non poteva non essere quella della 'setta gialla' al potere in Lhasa."

¹⁷ Petech 1954-1956, 5: xx-xxiv.

¹⁸ On the discovery of these manuscripts, see Toscano 1982: 43-45.

We shall refer to this last work as Desideri's *Chos lugs kyi snying po*. Lamalle's discovery allowed the American Jesuit Richard Sherburne (1926-2013) to argue that Desideri wrote not four, but five, Tibetan manuscripts.¹⁹ According to Sherburne, the first manuscript was "a compilation of quotations from Buddhist logic texts, from Tsong-kha-pa's *Lam rim chen mo*, and from the Mahāyāna *sūtras* ... rough and irregularly written in all three styles of Tibetan script: capitals, cursive, shorthand, which the Jesuit collected at Se ra and carried to Dwags po to write his "masterpiece."²⁰ Sherburne described the second manuscript as "117 oblong pages in a more consistent cursive script (*dbu-med*), which contains the first and second outlines of what was to be his final great work."²¹ We can see in his account of the first two manuscripts that Sherburne followed Wessels, but supplemented him with his own analysis of the manuscripts. Sherburne's identification of ARSI Goa 74, fols. 35r-92v as the "first and second outlines" of the *I po li do'i zhu ba* is unclear. He appears to suggest that one can separate ARSI Goa 74, fols. 35r-92v in light of the *sa bcad* of Desideri's magnum opus, which divides the unfinished text neatly into the views of rebirth and emptiness. In other words, it seems that Sherburne believed the *Mgo kar gyis zhu pa* (fols. 35r-46v) to be an outline of the first section of the *I po li do'i zhu ba* and the *'Byung khungs* (fols. 47r-92v) to be an outline of its second section. He might have thought, however, that the *'Byung khungs* was a revision of the *Mgo kar gyis zhu pa*. At any rate, Sherburne does not appear to have read the manuscripts closely, as he repeats Wessels's mistaken notion that the manuscript was begun in December 1717. If we grant this to be a simple oversight, Sherburne might be read to claim that the *Mgo kar gyis zhu pa* is a revision of the *'Byung khungs*. Whatever the case, ARSI Goa 74, fols. 35r-92v are, for Sherburne, preparatory outlines for the *I po li do'i zhu ba*. Like Petech, Sherburne described the *Tho rangs* as a "catechism" but speculated that it was "perhaps a rough writing" of the book Desideri presented to Lha bzang Khan because of the "beginner's difficulty" with Tibetan.²² The new "fifth" manuscript, consisting of the *Chos lugs kyi snying po* and its *'khyug yig* draft, he argued, "point to it being the material of what would have been the second half of his unfinished masterpiece."²³ Here, Sherburne almost certainly refers to the sections of the *Chos lugs kyi snying po* and its draft on emptiness.

¹⁹ Sherburne 1990: 298-299.

²⁰ Sherburne 1990: 298.

²¹ Sherburne 1990: 298.

²² Sherburne 1990: 298.

²³ Sherburne 1990: 305.

Unbeknownst to Sherburne, the Xaverian priest Giuseppe Toscano (1911-2003) had already proposed a new division of Desideri's Tibetan writings:

- 1) *Tho rangs mun sel nyi ma shar ba'i brda*
- 2) *Mgo skar bla ma i po li do zhes bya ba yis phul ba'i bod kyi mkhas pa rnam la skye ba snga ma dang stong pa nyid kyi lta ba'i sgo nas zhu ba*
- 3) *Sems can dang chos la sogs pa rnam kyi 'byung khungs*
- 4) *Ke ri se ste an kyi chos lugs kyi snying po*
- 5) *Nges legs* (untitled manuscript)
- 6) *Bod kyi chos la mkhas pa rnam la skye ba snga phyi'i sgo nas mgo kar gyis zhu pa*
- 7) Outlines of various works (*abbozzi di varie opere*)
- 8) Logical exercises (*esercitazioni di logica*)
- 9) Christian prayers (*preghiere cristiane*)
- 10) Miscellany of lines copied from Tibetan works (*Zibaldone di brani ricopiati da opere tibetane*)
- 11) Translation of the Letter of Pope Clement XI to Lha bzang Khan
- 12) Various fragments

With Toscano, we see a genuine advance in the division and description of Desideri's Tibetan texts.²⁴ After weighing the merits of Petech's and Lamalle's contributions—and carefully comparing them with Desideri's own descriptions—Toscano identified the books enumerated by Desideri in DR 4.19 as the *Tho rangs*, *I po li do'i zhu ba*, *'Byung khungs*, and *Chos lugs kyi snying po*. Toscano rightly noted that the *Chos lugs kyi snying po*—containing explanations of the sign of the cross, the Creed, the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Ten Commandments, the seven sacraments, and so forth—was a far better candidate for Desideri's "new catechism" than the *Tho rangs*. Freed by Lamalle's discovery, Toscano thus identified the *Tho rangs* with the book Desideri presented to Lha bzang Khan, noting Desideri's difficulty with Tibetan in it as Sherburne was soon to do. Toscano also attempted a far more thorough delineation of ARSI Goa 74 and ARSI Goa 76a. Rightly seeing the notes in ARSI Goa 74, fols. 2r-5v as exercises in *bsdus grwa*, he set them aside as an independent work. Toscano then isolated the material collected in folios ARSI Goa 74, fols. 6r-34v as a miscellany of quotations and annotations, even identifying several quotations that Petech had missed. Toscano also described the relationship between ARSI Goa 76a, fols. 12r-61v and fols. 62r-86v,

²⁴ Toscano 1981: 39-61.

identifying those parts of the elegant *'khyug yig* notes that correspond to the *Chos lugs kyi snying po*, but also noting those portions that did not find their way into the later revision. We need not worry about the prayers, fragments, and Desideri's translation of Clement XI's letter for the purposes of this paper, except to note their identification by Toscano.

Toscano's real contribution to the debate over Desideri's Tibetan writings was his division of the remaining folios of ARSI Goa 74. Following the suggestions of Wessels and Petech, Toscano identified the *Mgo kar gyis zhu pa* (ARSI Goa 74, fols. 35r-46v) as the Tibetan elaboration of his second Italian booklet, which then served as a partial draft for Desideri's larger *I po li do'i zhu ba*.²⁵ What is more important, Toscano divided ARSI Goa 74, fols. 47r-92v into the already-identified *'Byung khungs* (ARSI Goa 74, fols. 47r-67v) and an untitled manuscript he called the *Nges legs* (ARSI Goa 74, fols. 69r-92v), which he translated and published as an entirely separate work. Toscano's primary reason for separating the manuscripts was simple: ARSI Goa 74, fol. 47r is the first page of the *'Byung khungs*, and ARSI Goa 74, fol. 67v is its last. Toscano simply followed the fascicles as he found them in the archives. Toscano had a second reason, too. The colophon of the *'Byung khungs* appears to promise another, second work:

*gnyis pa de'i zhar la bod kyi mkhas pa rnams la rang gi ngo bo dang rang gi mtshan nyid dang rang bzhin gyis grub shing de kho na nyid yin pa'i don mchog dam pa 'gran 'dra dpe zla med par gcig bu rje bod skad du zhes par bya 'os mtshan zhig zhu ba'o!.*²⁶

Here is Toscano's translation:

In una seconda opera, a parte, ai Saggi Tibetani, in lingua tibetana, illustro la dottrina intorno al Signore unico, incomparabile, supremo, degno di ogni rispetto; rivelo il vero significato della sua caratteristica natura propria; spiego in che modo egli esista causato da se stesso e cioè la sua vera condizione.²⁷

We shall return to this colophon in good time; for now, we need only note that Toscano identified the *Nges legs* as this "seconda opera."

No scholar of Desideri has proposed a significant challenge to Toscano's identification and division of Desideri's Tibetan manuscripts in over forty years. Michael Sweet and Leonard Zwilling

²⁵ Toscano 1981: 45-50; Toscano 1984: 49-50; Toscano 1989: 40-41.

²⁶ Toscano 1984: 134.

²⁷ Toscano 1984: 321.

accept it in their monumental translation of Desideri's *Notizie storiche*.²⁸ Donald S. Lopez and Thupten Jinpa hedge their bets, interpreting DR 4.19 so that the first manuscript may or may not be the *Tho rangs*, the second is the *I po li do'i zhu ba*, the third is likely the *'Byung khungs*, and the fourth is clearly the *Chos lugs kyi snying po*. Concerning the *Nges legs*, they say simply, "It is noteworthy that in neither description does Desideri mention his fifth Tibetan work, the unfinished Definite Goodness (*Nges legs*)."²⁹ Assuming with Toscano that the *Nges legs* was an independent work, I myself hazarded the guess that it was more likely a draft of which the *'Byung khungs* was the first revised part.³⁰ I believed the second work described in the colophon of the *'Byung khungs* to be the *I po li do'i zhu ba*, but—truth be told—it is hardly a better candidate for the supposed second work. In fact, given the description in the colophon, it is decidedly inferior. My chief reason for rejecting Toscano's attribution was that there seemed to have been no reason for Desideri to repeat similar arguments in a second treatise so soon after finishing the *'Byung khungs*. That is hardly an argument, however. Untangling the folios of ARSI Goa 74 requires a more thorough textual analysis.

2. Reconstructing the *Sems can dang chos la sogs pa rnams kyi 'byung khungs*

ARSI Goa 74 contains 92 folios. Its manuscripts consist of simple unbound four-page signatures folded together to make fascicles of various lengths. Unlike the *Tho rangs*, *I po li do'i zhu ba*, and *Chos lugs kyi snying po*, the folios of ARSI Goa 74 are unnumbered. Many, though, are dated. The dates found in ARSI Goa 74, fols. 2r-34v allow us to set them aside immediately.³¹ Most of the remaining folios of

²⁸ Sweet and Zwilling 2010: 44-45, 751. In personal conversation (August 18, 2018), Sweet and Zwilling urged caution in too quickly accepting Toscano's revisions of Petech. Whether or not one may identify the *Tho rangs* as the book Desideri presented to Lha bzang Khan, one need not identify it as Desideri's "un piccolo libretto intorno all'unità della vera legge di salute e in ordine a mostrar esser falso che ognuno nella sua legge possa salvarsi." *Un piccolo libretto*, they reason, suggests a pamphlet, not a Tibetan *dpe cha* of 128 pages.

²⁹ Lopez 2017: 18.

³⁰ Pomplun 2011: 398.

³¹ The first folio is not one of Desideri's writings, but rather a single sheet of paper upon which is written "Polemica contra Idolatrij Thibetanij lingua Thibetana conscripta a P. Hippolito Desideri circa ann. 1717-1718." ARSI Goa 74, fols. 2r-5v, which comprise Desideri's exercises in *bsdus grwa*, are a single fascicle formed from two four-page signatures, one folio of which is blank. It is dated July 1, 1717. ARSI Goa 74, fols. 6r-34v are out of order in the archives, but we can see from

ARSI Goa 74 consist of unbound four-page signatures folded together in fours to make fascicles of eight folios, or sixteen pages. The fascicle ARSI Goa 74, fols. 35r-42v, for example, contains sixteen pages of the *Mgo kar gyis zhu pa*, many of whose folios are struck with a vertical mark from top to bottom. We shall return to this presently. Half of the next fascicle, ARSI Goa 74, fols. 43r-50v, contains the remaining eight pages of the *Mgo kar gyis zhu pa*. Let us set aside ARSI Goa 74, fols. 35r-46v in order to concentrate on the remaining folios.

ARSI Goa 74, fols. 47r-50v are the first eight pages of the '*Byung khungs*. ARSI Goa 74, fols. 51r-58v, 59r-66v, 77r-84v, and 85r-92v are four equal length fascicles of eight folios, or sixteen pages each. As outliers, we find a single four-page signature (ARSI Goa 74, fols. 67r-68v), some loose pages that appear to have been separated from their original fascicle (ARSI Goa 74, fols. 69r-70v), and a six-folio fascicle of twelve pages (ARSI Goa 74, fols. 71r-76v). Desideri added catchwords to the bottoms of folios 66v, 69r-69v, 70r-70v, 71r-71v, 72r, 73v, 74v, 75v, and 76v.³² From these we can see that the catchword *khyed cag gi* of ARSI Goa 74, fol. 70v matches the first line of ARSI Goa 74, fol. 71r, which begins "*khyed cag gi gzhung lugs la sangs rgyas dkon mchog ces bya ba gang yang yon tan thams cad ldan pa nyid du grub dgos te.*"³³ ARSI Goa 74, fols. 69r-76v therefore make a fifth fascicle of eight folios like ARSI Goa 74, fols. 51r-58v, 59r-66v, 77r-84v, and 85r-92v. Our remaining outlier is the signature ARSI Goa 74, fols. 67r-68v, the final folio of which is blank.

We can place this signature in its proper place by analyzing the dates of four fascicles. The title page of the manuscript is dated November 28, 1717 (ARSI Goa 74, fol. 47r).³⁴ The first page of the fascicle ARSI Goa 74, fols. 51r-58v, is dated December 8, 1717.³⁵ I think it safe to assume that this second fascicle then follows the first, uniting folios 47r-58v.³⁶ ARSI Goa 74, fol. 66r—the last page of its own

ARSI Goa, fol. 26r that Desideri began a long series of notes on June 6, 1717 (before he took his notes on *bsdus grwa*) and completed them sometime after September 14, 1717. Desideri's record of his expenditures at ARSI Goa 73, fol. 156v indicates that he purchased one book that Fall, which was almost certainly the *Lam rim chen mo*, thereby obviating the need for such notetaking. We can see from ARSI Goa 74, fol. 30v, however, that Desideri used the same notebook again between June 24 and June 29, 1721.

³² Toscano 1984: 131; Toscano 1989: 45, 47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57, 59, 63, 67, 71, 75.

³³ Toscano 1989: 51, 52.

³⁴ Toscano 1984: 52.

³⁵ Toscano 1984: 68.

³⁶ This date also indicates that Desideri worked on the '*Byung khungs* and *Mgo kar gyis zhu pa* simultaneously, as the first page of the fascicle beginning at ARSI Goa 74, fol. 35r has the same date.

fascicle—bears the date June 12, 1718.³⁷ The second page of ARSI Goa 74, fol. 67v—Toscano's final fascicle—is dated to the feast of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, that is, June 21, 1718.³⁸ The proximity of these last two dates give us good reason to connect the fascicles ARSI Goa 74, fols. 59r-66v and ARSI Goa 74, fols. 67r-68v.³⁹ Since these four dates are found in four consecutive fascicles (ARSI Goa 74, fols. 47r-50v, 51r-58v, 59r-66v, and 67r-67v), Toscano quite reasonably concluded that the *'Byung khungs* was complete as he found it.

Toscano therefore believed the subsequent fascicles (ARSI Goa 74, fols. 69r-76v, 77r-84v, and 85r-92v) to be an independent manuscript—the mysterious “fifth” work mentioned by Lopez and Jinpa. None of the fascicles of Toscano's so-called *Nges legs* are dated. The manuscript has neither title page nor conclusion, beginning and ending *in medias res*. The catchword *bltos pa* at the bottom of ARSI Goa 74, fol. 76v—the final page in the first fascicle of Toscano's *Nges legs*—does not anticipate the first word of the second fascicle beginning at ARSI Goa 74, fol. 77r.⁴⁰ It is continued rather by the first word of ARSI Goa 74, fol. 59r—the third fascicle of the *'Byung khungs*.⁴¹ In this case, we do not need to rely on the catchword to establish the link between these two fascicles. ARSI Goa 74, fol. 76v begins a quotation of Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 15.1-2 that is completed on ARSI Goa 74, fol. 59r: “*dbu ma'i rtsa ba las kyang/ rang bzhin rgyu dang rkyen las ni/ 'byung bar rigs pa min no/ rgyu dang rkyen las byung na ni/ rang bzhin byas pa can du 'gyur/ rang bzhin byas pa can zhes bya bar/ ji lta bur na rang bar 'gyur/ rang bzhin dag ni bcos min dang/ gzhan la [new page] bltos pa med pa yin/ zhes gsungs so.*”⁴²

It appears, then, that either the pages or the fascicles of Goa 74 are out of order—or both. We already have good reason to think that the first fascicle of the *'Byung khungs* (ARSI Goa 74, fols. 47r-50v) connects with the second (fols. 51r-58v), just as we have similarly good reasons to think that the third (fols. 59r-66v) connects with the fourth (fols. 67r-68v). If the three fascicles of the so-called *Nges legs* (ARSI Goa 74, fols. 69r-76v, 77r-84v, and 85r-92v) can be integrated into the *'Byung khungs*, they will likely fit between what Toscano believed to be its second and third fascicles. If the first *Nges legs* fascicle (fols. 69r-76v) connects with the third fascicle of the *'Byung khungs* (fols. 59r-66v), we can set aside

³⁷ Toscano 1984: 128.

³⁸ Toscano 1984: 134.

³⁹ Desideri placed a catchword at the bottom of ARSI Goa 74, fol. 66v, but the top left corner of ARSI Goa 74, fol. 67r has been damaged.

⁴⁰ Toscano 1989: 75-76.

⁴¹ Toscano 1984: 100.

⁴² Toscano 1989: 75-Toscano 1984: 100.

ARSI Goa 74, fols. 47r-50v, 51r-58v as the beginning of the 'Byung khungs and group the three fascicles that comprise ARSI Goa 74, fols. 69r-76v, 59r-66v, and 67r-68v as the end of an hypothetically reconstructed text. We exhaust, however, what one can accomplish by matching dates and catchwords: One *Nges legs* fascicle (fols. 69r-76v) appears to fit into the 'Byung khungs, but two fascicles (fols. 77r-84v and 85r-92v) remain to be integrated.

Fortunately, Desideri's 'Byung khungs begins with a *sa bcad*:

skyes pa la sogs pa rnam ki 'byung khungs dang de dag thog ma'i mtha' dang bral ba yin par khyod ki lugs ltar bzhag pa ni 'gal 'du sna tshogs ki sgo nas mi rigs par rags tsam bshad la/ de ltar sems can dang chos la sogs pa rnam ki 'byung khungs ngos dang thog ma'i mtha' ngos bstan pa ni gsum las/ sems can dang chos lhag la sogs pa rnam ki 'byung khungs bstan pa dang/ de dag gi thog ma'i mtha' bstan pa dang/ skyes pa so so'i skye ba'i grangs nges bstan pa'o/ dang po la drug/ sems can dang chos la sogs pa rnam ki 'byung khungs des rgyu rkyen gang la bltos pa min bar bstan pa dang/ de la thog ma'i mtha' dang phyi ma'i mtha' med par bstan pa dang/ de'i mtshan nyid bstan pa dang/ de la dpe zla med par gcig kho na yin par bstan pa dang/ de la dpe zla med par gcig kho na yin kyang gnyis su med pa'i yin lugs gcig kho na'i mtshon bya ni gsum yin par bstan pa dang/ sems can thams cad dang chos lhag la sogs pa rnam ki 'byung khungs de la yongs su rag las par bstan pa'o'.⁴³

If we follow Desideri's *sa bcad*, we find the Jesuits's second section of the first part at ARSI Goa 74, fol. 53r: "gnyis pa rgyu rkyen gang la yang ma bltos ma brten par rang nyid rang grub khyod dang tha dad du yod pa thams cad ki 'byung khungs mchog tu mtho zhing thun mong ba de la thog ma'i mtha' dang phyi ma'i mtha' med par bstan pa."⁴⁴ We find Desideri's third section at ARSI Goa 74, fol. 54v: "gsum pa rgyu rkyen gang la yang ma bltos ma brten cing khyod dang tha dad du yod pa thams cad ki 'byung khungs rab tu mtho zhing thun mong de'i mtshan nyid bstan pa."⁴⁵ The entirety of the treatise will continue under this heading without reaching the fourth section of the first part of the *sa bcad*—to say nothing of the second and third parts. This all-consuming third section, however, is governed by an additional *sa bcad*. At ARSI Goa 74, fol. 54v, Desideri announces that he will engage Tibetans according to their own scholastic method:

bzhed pa dang po de mtha' dpyad pa la/ dgag gzhas spang gsum las/ kha cig/ rang bzhin gyis rang nyid rang grub de'i lta ba la dgag bya med la/

⁴³ Toscano 1984: 52.

⁴⁴ Toscano 1984: 76.

⁴⁵ Toscano 1984: 82.

dgag par byed pa'i don med de/ rang bzhin gyis rang nyid rang grub kyi lta ba des/ khyod dgag yin ba'i phyir/ der thal/ spyir dgag bya la lam gyi dgag bya dang rigs pa'i dgag bya gnyis yod pa'i phyir/ lan gyi dgag bya ni/ dbus mtha' las/ nyon mongs pa yi sgrib pa dang/ shes bya'i sgrib pa nyid du bstan/ der ni sgrib pa thams cad do/ ces gsungs pa ltar nyon mongs pa dang shes bya'i sgrib pa gnyis sol 'di shes byal yod pa'i dgag bya yin no/ rigs pa'i dgag bya ni/ rtsod bzlog las/ yang na kha cig sprul pa yi bud med la ni bud med snyams/ log 'dzin 'byung ba sprul pa yis/ 'gog byed 'di ni de lta yin/ zhes pa'i rang 'grol las/ yang na skyes bu kha cig sprul pa'i bud med rang bzhin gyis stongs pa yin la don dam par bud med do snyam du log par 'dzin par 'gyur ro/ de'i phyir de log par 'dzin pa des 'dod chags bskyed pa la/ des de'i log par pa de zlog par byed do!'⁴⁶

I have provided a longer quotation to show that the *sa bcad* does not follow immediately. There is no *dang po ni* after the *gsum las*, and Desideri begins his argument with a *kha cig*. One can, however, find the *gzhas* and *spong* that follow Desideri's *dgag*. Since we are nearing the end of what Toscano believed to be the second fascicle of the *'Byung khungs* and thus approaching the place where we might be able to integrate one or more *Nges legs* fascicles, let us note how Desideri proceeds with his refutation:

'on kyang dgag bya'i gtso bo ni phyi ma yin tel/ yul can phyin ci log pa la des bzung ba'i yul thog mar dgag dgos pas sol 'di yang rten 'brel gyis gang zag dang chos kyi steng du rang gi ngo bos grub pa'i rang bzhin yod pa 'gog pa lta bu rnams yin no/ de ltar na rang bzhin gyis rang nyid rang grub des kyang/ yul de'i lta ba 'dis rigs pa'i dgag bya yin no/ de'i len du/ yod pa la sogs gcig kyang ma lus par rnams la rang bzhin med pa'i lta ba de rigs pa'i dgag bya ngos 'dzin ha can khyab ches pa'i sgo nas khyod nyid dgag bya yin par bstan pa dang/ rang bzhin gyis rang nyid rang grub kyi lta ba 'di stong pa nyid kyi lta ba log lta ma byed cing gnod ma byed par bstan pa dang/ stong pa nyid kyi lta ba dang rab tu mthun zhing de la je rgyas su btang bar bstan pa'o!'⁴⁷

Desideri's three topics or teaching on emptiness are followed by a *dang po ni*, so we begin another *sa bcad*. We find the second section of Desideri's presentation of emptiness at what is now ARSI Goa 74, fol. 84r: "*gnyis pa rang bzhin gyis rang nyid rang grub kyi lta ba 'di stong pa nyid kyi lta ba log lta ma byed cing gnod ma byed par bstan pa.*"⁴⁸ We find

⁴⁶ Toscano 1984: 82-83. As one sees, Desideri frames his rejection of the Tibetans' Madhyamaka in terms of the object of negation found in Nāgārjuna's *Vigrahavyāvartanīkārikā* (P5228: 14.5.8) and *Vigrahavyāvartanīṭṭi* (P5232: 60.4.1-4.) He has taken the quotations—in fact the *kha cig* itself—from Tsong kha pa 2004: 605-606.

⁴⁷ Toscano 1984: 83.

⁴⁸ Toscano 1989: 105.

the third section of Desideri's presentation of emptiness at ARSI Goa 74, fol. 78v: "*gsum pa rang bzhin khyim par rang nyid rang grub kyi lta ba 'dis stong pa nyid kyi lta ba dang rab tu mthun zhing de la je rgyas su btang bar bstan pa.*"⁴⁹ Note that we find the second and third of Desideri's three teachings on emptiness not in the *'Byung khungs*, but in ARSI Goa 74, fols. 77r-84v, which Toscano believed to be the second *Nges legs* fascicle. Presumably, we can attach this fascicle to the first two *'Byung khungs* fascicles, but the folios of ARSI Goa 74, fols. 77r-84v appear to be out of order. We find the beginning of Desideri's *gzhaḡ* at ARSI Goa 74, fol. 83r: "*gnyis pa rang gi lugs gzhaḡ pa la gnyis/ rang lugs dgag bya ngos bzung ba dang/ rang bzhin yod kyi lta ba gtan la 'bebs pa'i tshul lo.*"⁵⁰ Here we encounter a snag: Desideri's third teaching on emptiness comes before the presentation of his own system, which itself precedes the Jesuit's second teaching on emptiness. This problem is easily solved, however. At some point the simple signature with what are now folios 77r, 77v, 84r, and 84v appears to have been folded wrongly—likely having been dropped and replaced by someone who did not know Tibetan. When folded properly, so that fols. 84r-84v appear at the front of the fascicle and fols. 77r-77v appear at the end, Desideri's proper order is restored. We may now return to Desideri's *sa bcad*.

We find the second part of Desideri's presentation of his own system at ARSI Goa 74, fol. 75v, inside what Toscano believed to be the first *Nges legs* fascicle: "*gnyis pa rang bzhin yod pa yin pa'i lta bar gtan la 'bebs pa'i tshul la bzhi/ rang bzhin yod bzhin du bdag nyid yin pa nyid kyi lta ba'i tshogs bsten pa dang/ lta ba de la 'jug pa'i rin pa dang/ rang bzhin yod bzhin du bdag nyid yin pa de gtan la dbab pa dngos dang/ lta ba de dag goms pas sgrub pa thams cad spong ba'i tshul lo.*"⁵¹ This outline takes us somewhat far afield. We need not follow it in its entirety. As we have already seen, the *Nges legs* fascicle ARSI Goa 74, fols. 69r-76v connects to ARSI Goa 74, fols. 59r-66v, which connects to fols. 67r-68v. We have leapt a whole fascicle! Additional evidence, however, allows us to place fascicle ARSI Goa 74, fols. 85r-92v between ARSI Goa 74, fols. 77r-84v and ARSI Goa 74, fols. 69r-76v. At ARSI, Goa 74, fol. 87v, Desideri announces that he will argue for a Christian conception of the highest good (*nges legs*) in six sections:

gzhan yang byas pa can nam gzhan dbang min zhing rang bzhin yod la de kho na nyid yin pa'i rang dbang 'ga' yang med do snyam du log par 'dzin zhing nges shes kyi yul de la 'khrul pa'i log shes byas pa can nam gzhan

⁴⁹ Toscano 1989: 82.

⁵⁰ Toscano 1989: 100.

⁵¹ Toscano 1989: 70.

*dbang la rang bzhin sgro 'dogs pa'i sgro 'dogs dbang med du 'dren par mthar thug gi 'brel bur gyur pa'i nges legs kyi sgo nas bstan par bya'o/ 'di la drug/ tshul bzhin du byas pa'i dge ba'i las chud mi zos par mthar thug gi 'brel bur gyur pa'i nges legs shig ni dge ba'i las tshul bzhin du byed po dag gis 'thob dgos par bstan pa dang/ de la rab tu shin tu che bar bstan pa dang/ de la brjod las bsam las 'das par tshad mtha' med cing kun tu mchog rab bstan pa dang/ de la dge ba'i las tshul bzhin du byed po dag gi steng du tha dad med cing gnyis su med par gcig kho na yin par bstan pa dang/ de rgyu rkyen gang la yang pa nyid du rag ma las zhing ma bltos ma brten par bstan pa dang/ de yang dag par dang bden par don dam par yod cing de kho na nyid yin par bstan pa'o/.*⁵²

We find Desideri's fourth argument on the final page of the *Nges legs* fascicle ARSI Goa 74, fols. 85r-92v: "bzhi pa de la dge ba rnam dag gi las byed po rnam kyi steng du tha mi dad cing phyogs su med par gcig kho na yin par bstan pa."⁵³ We find the fifth argument at ARSI Goa 74, fol. 72v: "lnga pa ni/ de rgyu rkyen gang la yang ma bltos ma brten par bstan pa."⁵⁴ The sixth we find at ARSI Goa 74, fol. 73v: "drug pa de la don dam par dang bden par dang yang dag par yod cing de kho na nyid yin par bstan pa."⁵⁵ We have now found ourselves in what Toscano believed to be the first *Nges legs* fascicle, ARSI Goa 74, fols. 69r-76v.

Let us look at one final example to complete our journey through the fascicles. At ARSI Goa 74, fol. 76v, Desideri presents yet another outline:

*des na kun gyis rnam par dag par shes par bya ba'i yul mchog dam la rang bzhin med pa'i rgyu mtshan log pa gnyis/ rang bzhin med pa'i rgyu mtshan ngos bzung ba dang/ rgyu mtshan de kun gyis shes par bya ba'i yul mchog dam pa de la gtan nas med par bstan pa'o/ dang po la lnga/ rten cing 'brel par 'byung ba nyid rang bzhin med pa'i rgyu mtshan du bstan pa dang/ rang dbang med pa nyid rang bzhin med pa'i rgyu mtshan du bstan pa dang/ don dam par med cing rigs pas dpyad mi bzod pa nyid rang bzhin med pa'i rgyu mtshan du bstan pa dang/ gcig dang tha dad la sogs pa'i brtag pa byas nas mi rnyed pa ni rang bzhin med pa'i rgyu mstan du bstan pa dang/ mu bzhi'i skye ba gang du yang ma skyes pa nyid rang bzhin med pa'i rgyu mtshan du bstan pa'o/.*⁵⁶

Here we arrive at the final page of the *Nges legs* fascicle ARSI Goa 74, fols. 69r-76v. The discussion continues on ARSI Goa 74, fol. 59r, where we find Desideri's "gnyis pa rang dbang med pa nyid rang bzhin med pa'i

⁵² Toscano 1989: 119.

⁵³ Toscano 1989: 138.

⁵⁴ Toscano 1989: 58.

⁵⁵ Toscano 1989: 63.

⁵⁶ Toscano 1989: 75.

rgyu mtshan du bstan pa" and the following headings.⁵⁷ We have now arrived back in the *'Byung khungs*. Indeed, we find Desideri's *spong* on ARSI Goa 74, fol. 66r, the page dated June 12, 1717: "*gsum pa rtsod pa spong ba la gnyis/ dnod byed brjod pa la sogs sun 'byin mi nus par bstan pa dang/ de'i zhar la bod kyi mkhas pa rnams la bod kyi skad du rang bzhin gyis yod pa dang bdag nyid dang de kho na nyid yin pa'i yul mchog dam pa gcig pu rje de zhes par 'os mtshan zhig zhu ba'o.*"⁵⁸ The remainder of the *'Byung khungs* is devoted to the first demonstration of Desideri's *spong*.

We can now see that Desideri did not complete *'Byung khungs* as planned. In fact, he did not even make it halfway through the first of its three parts. Toscano therefore correctly noted that Desideri had completed only three of the six sections promised in the initial *sa bcad*.⁵⁹ Toscano did not, however, suspect that anything was missing from the *'Byung khungs*. This initial misstep—when combined with his belief that the *Nges legs* was an independent, but incomplete, work—led Toscano to assume that he need not follow *sa bcad* through the *Nges legs*. When faced with the colophon, Toscano thus thought the pronoun *de* in the phrase *gnyis pa de'i zhar la* to be apposite to *gnyis pa*. On Toscano's interpretation, then, *gnyis pa de'i zhar la* meant something like "following that, a second," which he then glossed as "in una seconda opera." When we return the colophon to the *sa bcad*, however, we see that *gnyis pa de'i zhar la* means "second, following that," namely, following the "*dnod byed brjod pa la sogs sun 'byin mi nus par bstan pa*" at ARSI Goa 74, fol. 66r. The *gnyis pa* in the colophon promises no more than the continuation of Desideri's *spong*.

Now that we see that Desideri did not reach the end of his *sa bcad*, we can place the fascicles of ARSI Goa 74 in their proper order: ARSI Goa 74, fols. 47r-50v, 51r-58v, 77r-84v, 85r-92v, 69r-76v, 59r-66v, and 67r-68v (with the proviso that we need to also switch ARSI Goa 74, fols. 77r-77v and 84r-84v). Once placed in this order, the fascicles of ARSI Goa 74, fols. 47r-92v very much appear to be a single work unified by a single *sa bcad*. Once we take into account the size of the writing and the number of lines per page, the *'Byung khungs* so restored is a significant work. It is, in fact, approximately fifty to sixty percent of the size of the *I po li do'i zhu ba*. That said, I offer this reconstruction tentatively. Barring a complete edition—if not translation—of the entire manuscript, one can always argue that the continuity of the *sa bcad* is consistent with two independent works or

⁵⁷ Toscano 1984: 100.

⁵⁸ Toscano 1984: 128.

⁵⁹ Toscano 1984: 139: "Il testo pone la divisione della Prima Parte in sei punti; di fatto ne vengono trattati solo tre. Altri sono trattati quando si presenta l'occasione, ma non come parti a sé stanti."

two drafts of a single work, one or both of which is incomplete. Even the quotation of Nāgārjuna that continues across the two fascicles might be a coincidence. Even so, it appears the evidence is strong enough at present to consider the *'Byung khungs* a complete work. Should this reconstruction prove correct, though, Desideri's "fifth" work will vanish like the reflection of the moon on a lake.

3. *Final Reflections on Desideri's Tibetan Manuscripts*

We are now, I think, in a better position to address the problem of Desideri's description of his manuscripts. We may excuse Petech for resisting Hosten's suggestion that Desideri presented the *Tho rangs* to Lha bzang Khan. Having Desideri's description, but not knowing of the existence of Desideri's *Chos lugs kyi snying po*, Petech simply did not have enough information to arrive at a proper interpretation of DR 4.19. Besides, Petech was not exactly wrong. Although the evidence for identifying the *Tho rangs* with Desideri's first book appears strong, we must remember that Desideri had the manuscript copied, counts its revision among his expenditures, and mentions in several places that Lha bzang Khan read the encomium that began the book he presented. The *Tho rangs* has no such encomium. Besides, one would hardly expect a monarch or a Mongol chieftain to return a gift given in tribute. The truth is found in the middle: Richard Sherburne is almost certainly right that the existing manuscript represents an earlier state of the book presented to Lha bzang Khan.

No one has doubted the identification of Desideri's second book, nor has anyone questioned the identity of the fourth book after the discovery of ARSI Goa 76a. If we identify the third book as the restored *'Byung khungs*, there remains the problem of how Desideri composed his books—and how he conceived them in relation to one another. If one looks more closely at the manuscript evidence, one cannot escape the impression that the Jesuit was an inveterate drafter of manuscripts. In fact, he appears to have followed a rather strict program of writing and revising his manuscripts. As Henri Hosten noted, Desideri began his mission with what Desideri himself describes as two Italian booklets, one on the unity of the true law and another on metempsychosis, which were clearly written in some haste. (Incidentally, these two "booklets" very much appear to be one "book." Their chapters are numbered consecutively.) Desideri then used his first Italian booklet as the basis for a substantially revised Italian text that he copied very neatly, which in turn served as the basis for the first seven chapters of the *Tho rangs*, which itself we know to have been revised, rewritten, and presented to Lha bzang Khan. We know

Desideri's first book, then, to have been revised at least three times, with both the initial Italian and initial Tibetan versions being themselves revised.

The *Tho rangs*, *I po li do'i zhu ba*, and *Chos lugs kyi snying po* were each written in *dbu can*, as are almost all the notes taken by Desideri in the Summer and Fall of 1717. (The lone exception—the collection of the *bsdus grwa* exercises in ARSI Goa 74, fols. 2r-5v—appears to have been written in (perhaps) three different hands, none of which seem the same as the later manuscripts.) When we look at Desideri's later writing, however, especially in the notes in ARSI Goa 74, fols. 30v-34v and the draft and notes for the *Chos lugs kyi snying po* in ARSI Goa 76a, fols. 62r-86v, we can see that he had progressed to the point of writing a fluid *'khyug yig*. In between we have the rough-and-ready *dbu med* of the manuscripts written from late November 1717 to late June 1718, the *'Byung khungs* and *Mgo kar gyis zhu pa*, after which we find the inexplicably polished *dbu can* manuscript of the *I po li do'i zhu ba*, which Desideri began on June 24, 1718—only three days after having completed the *'Byung khungs*. The *I po li do'i zhu ba*, written with thirty-five lines of clean and uniform *dbu can* on each page, makes a decided contrast to the *'Byung khungs*, whose final fascicles fairly burst with ninety, a hundred, and even 110 lines on pages of the same size as his later, polished magnum opus. The *I po li do'i zhu ba*, which appears to have been written in Desideri's own hand, also has very few strikethroughs. With one or two exceptions, its annotations are written in same neat *dbu can* as the body of the text. Upon comparison, the *I po li do'i zhu ba* seems to be related to the *Mgo kar gyis zhu pa* much as Desideri's second Italian booklet on the unity of the true law is related to the first. The *I po li do'i zhu ba* thus appears to be a neatly rewritten and revised version of the *Mgo kar gyis zhu pa*. (Recall that many of the folios in ARSI Goa 74, fols. 35r-46v have been struck through.) Indeed, the *Mgo kar gyis zhu pa* appears to be a reworking of Desideri's second Italian booklet on metempsychosis. We have, then, at least in part, earlier drafts of the *Tho rangs*, the *I po li do'i zhu ba*, and the *Chos lugs kyi snying po*—all of Desideri's *dbu can* manuscripts. If we can trust this pattern, it would appear that the *'Byung khungs*, the only major work for which we have neither a previous draft nor a later revision, is itself the draft of a work Desideri hoped to revise. Looking at Desideri's manuscripts *in toto*—both Italian and Tibetan—it also seems unlikely, if not impossible, that Desideri wrote his magnum opus without a prior draft.

Recall that in both of Desideri's descriptions, he places the tome in which he attempts to refute the intricate labyrinth of metempsychosis before the tome in which he rejects emptiness and attempts to demonstrate the existence of an uncreated being. Recall also that

Desideri's *I po li do'i zhu ba*—as its title indicates—was intended to address emptiness in addition to rebirth. Like the *'Byung khungs*, the *I po li do'i zhu ba* is unfinished. As it so happens, Desideri organized his magnum opus around the same triad that allowed us to restore the complete *'Byung khungs*, the *dgag gzhaḡ spong gsum*. When one traces the *sa bcad* in the *I po li do'i zhu ba*, one sees that Desideri abandoned the revision of his questions about rebirth as he approached the end of his *dgag* and thus did not write the *gzhaḡ* and *spong*. In other words, the Jesuit stopped approximately one third of the way through the first term of the triad. If we assume that Desideri wished to follow the same pattern in his questions about emptiness, once restored, the *'Byung khungs* could very well be the draft of the second part of Desideri's magnum opus. If we take Desideri at his word, either at DR 1.15 or DR 4.19, the *'Byung khungs* would be the second tome or volume of a single book that began with the *I po li do'i zhu ba*. Even though Richard Sherburne provided no evidence to support his claims, it appears the Jesuit's intuitions were spot on.

If the *'Byung khungs* is the draft of the *I po li do'i zhu ba*'s second, unfinished part on emptiness, what became of the folios, beyond the twelve we have of the *Mgo kar gyis zhu pa*, that served as the draft of its first part on rebirth? Let us return to the very discovery of Desideri's Tibetan manuscripts. Given the exactitude we have already seen in his descriptions, it seems unlikely that Cornelius Wessels would have miscounted the number of pages in what he believed to be Desideri's second manuscript. Why might he report that the manuscript had 704 rather than 464 pages? (Recall that Petech reported the correct number of the existing manuscript in 1954.) Might there be 240 pages—fifteen full fascicles—of Desideri's Tibetan manuscripts yet to be discovered in Europe? And, if so, might these fascicles be the missing draft of the *I po li do'i zhu ba* or—a more tantalizing possibility—its promised second half, a polished revision of Desideri's *'Byung khungs*? Given what we know about Desideri's processes of revising and rewriting manuscripts, the number of folios is about right for either possibility. In fact, if the missing folios had thirty-five lines to the page as Wessels reports, they are more likely to be a polished revision, like the *I po li do'i zhu ba*.

Wessels did not look at Desideri's manuscripts in Rome; he looked at them at Exaeten, the House of the German Jesuits in the Netherlands, close to the German border near Roermond. By the time Wessels examined Desideri's manuscripts, the codices of the Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu had not been in Rome for three decades. In fact, they had not been in a single place for almost half a century. After the Piedmontese armies occupied the Gesù and the Jesuit houses of Rome in 1872, the Jesuits hastily moved as many of

the codices as they could, first to the basement of the Palazzo Torlonia and then to the attic of the Collegio Germanico.⁶⁰ The archives of the Procurator General, which dealt chiefly with the Jesuits' relations with the Vatican, were confiscated and transferred to the new State Archives. In their desire to protect the remaining archives, the Jesuits in 1893 mailed the codices, box by box, to Exaeten—among other places, it is rumored, now unknown. Since Wessels completed his monograph in 1924, he would probably have seen Desideri's manuscripts at Exaeten House. The Jesuit residence, however, was ceded to the Franciscans in 1927, and the Roman archives were soon moved to Valkenberg, near Maastricht. As German armies approached in 1939, the Jesuits again moved the codices, this time posting them by sea to Rome. From Amsterdam, the boxes sailed to the Civitavecchia to be deposited finally in 1940 in the new curial headquarters at Borgo Santo Spirito, shortly before Tucci announced his intention to translate the *I po li do'i zhu ba*.

We do not know when the Tibetan manuscripts that became ARSI Goa 76a were misplaced. Since Wessels did not describe them, we may presume they were misplaced earlier. The mere fact that they were misplaced is instructive. The turmoil underwent by the Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was nothing compared to the chaos that followed the suppression of the Society of Jesus in 1773. We know that large numbers of the Japonica-Sinica codices were lost at this time. The manuscripts we now know to be ARSI Goa 76a could have been misplaced any time between the suppression of the Society in 1773 and the Jesuits' first attempts to protect the archives two centuries later. In fact, the disorder in which we find the codices today—with existing signatures folded wrongly, fascicles placed in the wrong order, and everything being mis-numbered during re-cataloguing—strongly suggests that Desideri's Tibetan manuscripts have been disturbed, perhaps more than once, over the years. We do know this: The codices observed by Wessels were moved at least twice—once by land and once by sea—between the time that the Dutch Jesuit examined them and the time that Tucci and Petech described them. If Wessels was not simply wrong, we cannot discount the possibility that additional Desideri manuscripts might yet be discovered in some dusty attic or archive.

⁶⁰ For the following account, see Chan 2002: xiii-xv. The exodus of the archives also explains why Pietro Tacchi Venturi (1861-1956) told Filippo de Filippi (1869-1938) that none of Desideri's manuscripts could be found in the Roman Archives when Filippi contacted him in 1922. On this chapter in the discovery of Desideri's texts, see Bargiacchi 2010.

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