Csoma Körösi’s Guides in Tibetan Learning from Rdzong Khul Dgon Pa, Zangs Dkar, with Special Reference to Tshul khrims rgya mtsho

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Alexander Csoma Körösi (1784?-1842) published in Calcutta An Essay towards a Dictionary Tibetan and English, A Grammar of the Tibetan Language in English and various studies, including abstracts and analyses of the bKa’gyur and bsTan’gyur. Some works of his, like the Sanskrit-Tibetan-English vocabulary being an edition and translation of the Mahāvyutpatti, were printed posthumously as late as the 20th century, while some others, like his ‘catalogue raisonné’ of literature in Tibetan transiting through, or acquired by, the Asiatic Society of Bengal, were not published at all and may no longer be extant. He also made diplomatic translations, was asked at least once to act as an interpreter in an important political mission in Bhutan and gave private lessons. Of all these lesser activities, precious little is known. What is certain is his envied reputation of being the only white man in his time in India to read, write, and speak Tibetan and to be truly knowledgeable of the ways of the ‘Roof of the World’.

Csoma stands critically apart from previous pioneers in Tibetan studies by the fact that, despite his long formal training in Protestant theology culminating at the University of Göttingen, Lower Saxony, he was not a missionary and that the intellectual tools which he forged with stubborn heroism were intended by him for the general public, irrespective of their further use.

He also differed markedly from celebrated contemporary colleagues and rivals like H.H. Wilson and B.H. Hodgson, who took advantage of their

1. For their patience in helping me to understand the Tibetan texts discussed in the paper, I wish to thank four mKhan pos in India, viz., the Reverends Losall Tenzing/Sherabling, Kangra, H.P. [interpreter: Sutram, an English monk]; Lobzang/Tashi Jong, Taragarth, Kangra, H.P. [interpreter: Mr Thupten Jampa, schoolteacher]; Tenzing Phontso (with lama Tshultrim Sangpo)/Karmapa International Buddhist Area, New Delhi-16; and Stanzin Dorjay/Rangdum Monastery, Kargil, J&K [interpreter Mr Sonam Dorjay, tourist officer]. I am also very grateful to Lonpo Sonam Wangchug, Karsha, his

Text C: Stanzin Chozang (bstan ’dzin chos bzang).
overwhelming financial, civil and social superiority over him. Unlike them, he learned in the field thoroughly the language of his speciality and acknowledged publicly his indebtedness to his teachers and helpers. Thus, in the original title of his 'Tibetan-English Dictionary', he specified that his compilation had been:

prepared, with the assistance of Bandé Sangs-Rgyas phun-tshogs, a learned lama of Zangskár, during a residence at Kanam, in the Himalaya Mountains, on the confines of India and Tibet. 1827-1830.

Clearly, he was an 'homme du terrain'. Since then, hagiography has described him as a secluded ascetic, who, however sidetracked, had never given up the fantastic idea of his youth to seek out, somewhere in Central Asia, the ancient homeland of his proudly assumed Siculo-Hungarian stock of Transylvania (now Rumania).

Successors to his researches on the Indian borders of Tibet took a more appropriate view of his personality and achievements. This is particularly true of the ecumenical-minded German Protestant clergymen of the Moravian Church (die Herrnhuter Brüdergemeinde) in their Transhimalayan outposts. A.H. Francke among them had raised the issue in 1926 and went back to it two years later in the Ungarische Jahrbücher in connection with two texts kept at Dzongkhol (rdzong khul) monastery, viz. an alleged diary by a monk mentioning Csoma, and a corpus of answers set out in writing by Kun dga' chos legs rdo rje in Naropa's big cave at Dzongkhol in reply to Alexander from rGYa gar rum yul. Thereby he triggered off a chain reaction in Hungary which led eventually to three publications in 1976, including the Tibetan compendia written for Csoma de Körös by the lamas of Zans-dkar.

eldest son Mr Tondup Namgyal, tourist officer at Padum and Mr Sonam Dorjay, tourist officer, Ladakh Desk, J&K Tourist Office, New Delhi; for their explanations and friendly 'logistic support'. These and other liabilities are also acknowledged in my expose. While I was editing my paper, Professor Peter Schwieger was nice enough to follow up my request and take a look at both Tshul khrims rgya mtsho's colophon in Terjék 1976c and lama Karma's biography in the hardly legible photocopy of previous photocopies with which I had supplied him. As a result, he proposed very important corrections to the translation of the former and provided a page by page summary of the latter which enabled me to revise and complete my own compilation, especially with regard to transliterations and a few details. I am very happy to acknowledge this indebtedness to a valued friend, especially as it may lead to further breakthroughs indicated in the Addendum. My sincere thanks is also extended to Professor Philip Denwood for three decipherments. Of course, all the errors, which may still remain, are mine. The same holds true of the corrections kindly suggested by Dr Henry Osmaston after having oblied me with reading my full text.

Fig. 1. A statue at Dzongkhol monastery said to represent Lama kar ma bstan 'dzin.
This is the authoritative full edition of the so-called ‘Alexander Books’, i.e. MSS answering sets of specific questions put to their authors by Csoma. (Following Francke: ‘...von Alexander Csoma de Kőrösi hervorgerufen tibetische Schrift[en].’) All the contributions were put down in stitched exercise books of the same shape, size (12.5 cm x 25 cm) and quality of paper (English or Kashmiri, quite different from the usual Bhoti type). The notebooks had presumably given to the authors by the Siculo-Hungarian scholar himself. There are altogether eight such booklets devoted to discussions on five subject matters by three lamas. Tshul khrims rgya mtsho.

Let me try now to identify and describe the profile of Tshul khrims rgya mtsho.

The life and songs of Lama Karma bstan ’dzin

Who was Tshul khrims rgya mtsho whom Csoma presented as a celebrated ‘Rab ’byams pa’ (doctor of philosophy) of sixty-five having lived at Lhasa for twenty-five years? During my visit at Dzongkhul monastery in 1993, the caretaking lama (phyag mdzad) identified him without the slightest hesitation as the famous ‘Sultrim yung tang Karma stanging yab’ (sic), in short: lama Karma pa of Kham Province. According to Lonpo Sonam Wangchug (Bsdod nams dbang phyug) from Karsha (dKar sha), he came to Zangskar under the invitation of the yogi, poet and painter, Zadpa Dorje (Bzad pa rdo rje), abbot of Dzongkhul Gonpa, who had died before the arrival of his guest. Around that time Zadpa Dorje’s son, Kun dga’ chos legs, was too young to succeed to the hereditary leadership of his illustrious father at Dzongkhul. Thus, until his coming of age, Karma pa Stanzin became both his guru and the acting head of the monastery. His disciples included Sangs rgyas phun tshogs.

Subsequent to this trip of mine, Lonpo Sonam Wangchug kindly supplied me through Mr Sonam Dorjay, the local tourist officer, photocopies of three documents relating to the subject. The most relevant of them was Bla ma'i rnam thar dang mgur 'bum mkha' sbyor dang bces. So far I have submitted it to four mKhan pos [see credits] from whom I obtained the following intelligence.

The document is written in dbu can letters. It is set out in 73 frames/windows of 5 lines each. It seems to be incomplete for two reasons. First, it does not contain such traditional formal parts as, to begin with, a statement of the motivation for writing (bodhicitta), followed by the taking of refuge, and a dedication to sentient beings at the end. Second, the biography is too short by common standards. As many words are misspelled, the text is probably a dictation put down by a young, insufficiently trained lama. It is made up of two parts: the 7-plus page biography (which ends in the 2nd line of p. 234) and the poems collected by pupils. (The anonymous writer himself said to provide what he could collect). The songs are all teachings which aim at absolute truth. They fall into two categories in a mixed order, viz., poems addressed to disciples and spontaneous songs. Their lengths vary from 1-2 lines to 2-3 pages. Their spirit reflects Mahamudra inspiration. Many of them are dedicated to Kun dga’ chos legs and the younger son of Drang dkar mgon po, but apparently none to Sangs rgyas phun tshogs.

The life story is adventurous, as the following summary shows:

Beggar Karma bstan 'dzin was born at rDe dge (Khams, [Eastern Tibet]) in the powerful Klu dga’ clan. In the 9th year of his life, he travelled to dBus. He went to the 13th Karma pa sDud 'dul rdo rje in sTod lung Tshur bu [sic; the seat of the Karma pa order], where he became a monk receiving bKa’ rgyud teachings, in particular from bKa’ rgyud 'Brug pa Phrin las shing rta. He came subsequently in contact with dGe lugs pa, rNyin ma pa and 'Brug pa teachers in dBus and gTsang and travelled to many holy places in Khams, China, dBus, gTsang, Byar, gDa’ and Kong, Nepal and sTod (including Mount Kailash and lakes Manasarowar and Rakshas Tal). From mNga’ ris Gu she [sic] he went to Gar zha.

Having been attracted by the name, he went to see bla ma bZhad pa rin po che in Zangskar whom he met at a Dharma ceremony at Dzongkhul under very auspicious circumstances. He studied under him for two years, receiving the complete instructions/guidances (khrid), initiations (dbang) and reading transmissions (lung) of the 'Brug pa bKa’ rgyud pa. In the winter he travelled to Jalalanda (Jallandar, Punjab) and he stayed especially for two weeks on the great chanel/cremation ground in rDo bar. Then he returned to Dzongkhul and received again teachings from bZhad pa rin po che, e.g., the bsPhe phno snyan rgyud.

After that he visited teachers in dBus and gTsang, travelled on to bDe chen chos 'khor, where he called on the yongs 'dzin and asked for teachings, then proceeded to Khar chu [sic] in lHo brag. Further he practiced on many cremation grounds in dBus, gTsang, Nepal, mNga’ ris etc.

On his return to Zangskar he met his teacher who died afterwards. As all the monks and disciples and especially A yum tshe ring and Drang dkar mgon po urged him to stay on in Dzongkhul, he did so and gave Mahamudra instructions to A yum tshe ring, Ga ga mgon po [sic], ‘Phrin las kun dga’ chos legs, etc. He spent four years in Dzongkhul and sTod tshog, etc. Under him the younger son of Drang dkar mgon po, i.e., no no Tshe dbang dpal 'byor, became a monk and
received the name Chos dbyings bstan 'dzin rdo rje. That year he stayed in Yang rdzong bDe chen phug and composed the treatise The Invisible of True Truth (phyag rgya chen po bden gnis dbu med kyi bstan bcos). One winter he had gone to Kashmir, visited Phu la ha ri, and stopped for the year in rDo ma 'bar in Purig. Ngul sbyi bka 'blon va zir, etc. offered him his service and became his sponsor/patron. The King of Zangskar, 'Chi med rnam rgyal and his wife, etc., asked him for religious instructions. In the summer he regained Zangskar. As Dharma was flourishing in Naropa’s footsteps, he had many disciples, in particular A yum shakya cho sgron and chos mzd bDe chen skal bzang and also 'Phags pa sangs rgyas phun thogs from Ru sho. His consort was Bunye Dharma. After having worked for many years in Dzongkhul, the residence of Naropa, he died the 7th month of horse year [1834].

This account is confirmed by the mkhas grub chen po dpal bzad pa rdo rje rnam thar mgur 'bum ma rig mun sel dran pa'i klo 'phren produced presumably by the same hand in similar conditions, which was also communicated to me by Lonpo Sonam Wangchug. We have here a learned, mobile and open-minded Karma pa of Khams, who travelled from Central Tibet southwest to Punjab and back, stopping here and there for meditation and receiving teachings. His two-year stay in Zangskar as a disciple of Zadpa Rinpoche of Dzongkhul monastery determined the rest of his life, for he returned there eventually for good, enjoying great popularity (at least among the local elite) and high status.

‘Entering by big ship the ocean of many religious sects’

The outlined text on lama Karma pa fails to mention the work entitled Dris lan: Grub mtha'i rgya mtshar 'jug pa'i gru rdzin (Answers to questions: Entering by big ship the ocean of many religious sects) — apparently in reference to Buddha’s 84,000 teachings.) The colophon of this ‘Alexander book’ of 45 pages explains in flattering terms the nature of Csoma’s request and introduces the author as ‘an expert in the Tripitaka and the four Tantras, who calls himself only gardener’.

In extenso, the colophon is believed to run as follows:

The Rumi Skander bheg, who is like the vast, open skies in his unshakable fortitude and his insight, demonstrated in sciences, undertaking the arduous journey from the large ocean of the Orient to jasmine-covered Upper Tibet, in his search for the Teaching, not for his own selfish purpose but for the salvation of all people, and arriving at Zangla, obtained knowledge, through the power of prayer, of me, and it is from Zangla, the revered seat of the King of Learning, the earthly governor in Man-yul province, he sent his questions about the Buddhist discourses accompanied with humble asking and valuable presents; and beseeching urged me that he needed to know how many years had passed since the Lord of Wisdom, the Omniscient, the Companion of the Sun had departed from earthly suffering to the Empire of Quietude; and since for establishing this one needs to be equipped with familiarity with chronology, which I myself am not trained in, I thoroughly studied the legends, chronicles and other books and after careful calculations I found that from the departure of the Omniscient, the Companion of the Sun from earthly suffering to the Empire of Quietude three thousand & seventy-two years have passed till the present year of the fourteenth era named Saving the Sun, when I, the scholar Tshul-khrims-rgya-mtsho — an expert in the Tripitaka and the four Tantras — I, who call myself only Ldum-mkhan, compiled, in my residence, the Sunlit Earth, under favourable time, the book answering the questions titled ‘The ship penetrating into the sea of learning systems. (Terjék 1976c: 14-15)

Three beacons of knowledge and their 18th century perspective

The outlined guru-disciple affiliation extends over three generations. Its main figures are: the great, very versatile yogi, Bzad pa rdo rje (1745-1816); the learned Kham immigrant, Karma bstan ‘dzin (?-1834), identified at Dzongkhul with Tshul khrims rgya mtsho (1761-?); and finally Kun dga’ chos legs (?-?), who was believed to be the son of, and heir to, the first, and disciple of the second. They are venerated together in Dzongkhul Gonpa where their stately busts were shown to me, aligned one next to the other in a special wing built to their memory by a pious lama in the later 19th century. 4 From Csoma we know that Kun dga’ chos legs was a relative to Sangs rgyas phun tshogs (ca. 1774 - ?), whom our basic texts mentioned as one of Karma bstan ‘dzin’s (other) disciples. As Lonpo Sonam Wangchug pointed us out, he addressed spiritual recommendations to Sangs rgyas phun tshogs despite being younger. According to the caretaking lama at Dzongkhul, Kun dga’ chos legs had married and had several children, but wife and children died of smallpox and the abbot did not remarry despite pressure on him to continue his lineage. 5 This drama of extinction probably coincided with the invasion and annexion of Ladakh by the Dogra (1834-39) which divided deeply the local population. The King of Zangla and the family of Sangs rgyas phun tshogs (at least at sTesta), for instance, sided with the invaders, whereas the king of Padum (dPa gdun), his neighbour, tried to

4. The donor’s smaller bust is the fourth in the row.
5. These points are confirmed by Nawang Tsering Shakspo 1994: 556-57.
resist. It is perhaps this sensitive background which explains the difficulty of Western scholars, including myself, to obtain a copy of Kun dga’ chos legs hrnam thar.

I should like to add emphasis to two pieces of information embedded in my exposé. First, it should be clear that Dzongkhul Gonpa and its monks belong to the ‘Brug pa bKa’ rgyud order. Like the monasteries of Bardan (Bar gDan), Stagrimo (sTag ri mo) and Sa ni, they are affiliated to the Rinpoche of the religious centre of Stagna (sTag sna) in the Indus valley east of Leh. Locals in its neighbourhood (at Ating) would stress that they are Lho Buddhists, i.e. followers of the southern subsect of Bhutanese bKa’ rgyud lamaism. Second, that Karma bstan ’dzin was well received and readily admitted into that institution. Both points deserve some comments.

There has been a misunderstanding about Dzongkhul’s allegiance under Francke’s influence who presumed the monastery he had never visited to be part of the dGe lugs pa network. His mistake was a result of erroneous extrapolation from the involvement of Ridzong Gonpa in the dissemination of copied MSS from Dzongkhul.

This issue is not critical. We have seen that Karma bstan ’dzin had been a Karma pa. Moreover, both knam thar stressed the religious openness of their heros. In this context it is also worth noting that toLonon Sonam Wangchug’s mind, Sangs rgyas phun tshogs had strong rNying ma affinities, an interest unique in his family. I may add that among the four abbots (mkhan po) who helped me with the Bhoti texts discussed, that of the Karma pa’s Sherabling is a Saskya pa and the guru of the Karma pa one at Tashi Dzong had also been a Saskya pa.

Dr. Nawang Tsering provides a valuable perspective on the three abbots portrayed in his Buddhism in Ladakh. This 1979 book is based on the The Life and Works of ‘Khrul Zig Ngag dbang Tshe ring (1717-94), which had been edited by the Mahāsiddha’s disciple, Tṣul khrim ’Byung gnas, alias bZhad pa rDo rje. Starting with the Mahāsiddha, we have thus an uninterrupted lineage of four outstanding figures in the religious and cultural history of Ladakh-Zangskar from the later 18th to the earlier 19th century.

Bibliography


Crook, John and Tsering Shakspo 1994. ‘Monastic Communities in Zangskar: Location, Function and Organisation’. In: Crook and John Osmaston (eds.), Himalayan Buddhist Villages, 559-600.


8. ‘Das gleichzeitige Vorkommen von Ri-rdzong und rDzong-khul in Joseph Gergans Bericht zeigte mir nun, dass es sich bei Csomas Freunden um jene linie von dGelug-pa-Mönchen handelt, welche auch in bZangla beheimatet sind. rDzong-khul ist wahrscheinlich immer nur als Aussenposten von bZangla angesehen worden; und somit ist Dukas Angabe, dass Csoma in bZangla (richtig für Yangla) in Zangskar gelebt habe, nicht ganz zu verwerten’ (Francke 1926: 322).

9. Unlike this ancestor of his, he himself is now a dGe lugs pa lama.

10. The ‘Yogins of rDzong khol’ are also discussed at considerable length by Crook (1994: 455-57, etc.) and Shakspo (1994: 553-58), who also describes their place in the life and works of Csoma Körös.
Addendum

I. One month after this paper had been delivered at Moesgaard, the 35th International Congress of Asian and North African Studies (ICANAS) in Budapest provided opportunities to cross-check its tenets and complete its references with an expert in the field, Dr Géza Bethlenfalvy. His lecture Notes on The Life and Works of Two 18-19 Century Lamas of Zanskar dealt with bZad pa rdo rje and Kun dga’ chos legs. It was derived from a paper, ignored by me, Bla ma Bzad pa and the Rdzong khul Gompa, Acta Orientalia Hungarica, 1980, XXXIV. 1-3: 3-6, and summarised the rnam thar and mgur bum of Kun dga’ chos legs which I have been unable to obtain so far. Discussions with Dr. Bethlenfalvy both prior and subsequent to this talk revealed that the photocopies of the two sets of rnam thar and mgur bum which I had received from Lonpo Sonam Wangchug exist in printed form (produced in 1975?) thanks to Tobdan Tsering (alias Ashok), a Tibetan publisher from Kawring village, Lahul, who is said to keep a restaurant now at Majnu ka Tilla, near the Ladakh Buddha Vihara, on the northern outskirts of Delhi. Other points of interest of the discussions:

1) Dr. Bethlenfalvy never thought of identifying Tshul khrims rgya mtsho with Karma bstan ’dzin but deemed it quite likely that the two names referred to the same person. Of course, one should seek confirmation of the assumption through reliable texts. The colophon in Tshul khrims rgya mtsho’s dris lan for Csoma K6rési states that the text was written at Gzi ni od, which, of course, could be a place near Dzongkhul. Actually, Karma bstan ’dzin’s rnam thar records that the lama lived for four years in Dzongkhul and at sTag tshog, which lies apparently higher up in the valley. It is true that Terjék 1976a: 90 noted in Hungarian that the work had been compiled at Gzi ni od, which the lama author mentioned as the place of his personal residence. But it is also true that he translated the relevant passage in the colophon ‘my residence, the Sunlit Earth’, i.e., in the same way as in his English publications. (Terjék 1976b: 25 and 1976c: 15.) According to one of the mKhan pos who helped me to understand the treatise, the meaning could be simply ‘outdoor’, in the open air.

2) Dr. Bethlenfalvy has visited Dzongkhul monastery twice and was also shown prints and drawings there. Each time, however, the drawings were attributed by his hosts to different lamas. This should be a lesson for other researchers too. The busts of the three lamas photographed by me as those representing bZad pa rdo rje, Karma bstan ’dzin and Kun dga’ chos legs in a row strike one by the alleged absence of the first great head lama of the lineage, Grub chen ngag dbang tshe ring (Khrul rin po che, 1717-93).

II. In his page by page summary of lama Karma bstan ’dzin’s rnam thar (see footnote 1), Professor Peter Schwieger underlined several (probable) mistakes in the Tibetan script, which I marked by [sic]. E.g., sDud = bDud, sTod lung Tshur bu = sTod lung mTshur phyu, Gu she = Gu ge?, Khar chu = mKhar chu, Gg gng po = Drang dkar mgon po? In our correspondence in September 1997, he sheds new light on the colophon in Tshul khrims rgya mtsho’s dris lan as follows: The colophon is full of long attributes (ornaments). The essence and structure of it is the following: Rum pa sKun dher bheg (many attributes) sent me (the author) from bZang la together with a present (as it is always the custom / not ‘various presents’) the questions about essential points of the Buddhist scriptures and urged me to compose this work. (In Tibet an author must always have someone order the composition of a specific religious text.) In response (I) the rab ’byams pa Tshul khrims rgya mtsho (+ attribute), who is called Rang ldum mkhan (Rang Idum is a monastery in Zangs dkar, mkhan po has the meaning ‘abbot’) composed it at an (unspecified) date of the (year called) Nyi sgrol byed (that is the 18th year of the 60 years cycle) in the 14th 60-years cycle (that equals 1824). (The rest is an attribute to the time, nothing else than the very elaborated statement how many years have passed since the Buddha’s parinirvana) in my own place (called) gZhi nyi ’od at an auspicious day.’

These are important points which the scholars writing on the subject have failed to recognise so far. They would amply justify a new cross-check of all that has been published on the ‘Alexander books’ up till now.
Appendix: The ‘Alexander Books’: Annotated Bibliographical References

The concept of ‘Questions by Alexander’ was introduced in a set of two articles by Francke, as already mentioned. Alexander is the German equivalent of Sken dher/Sken dhar, whom Tshul khrims rgya mtsho and Kun dga’ chos legs mentioned in their respective compendia as the bheg/bhiq from Rum/Rgya gar rum yul whose questions they tried to answer. It was this Persian/Arabic/Turkish-like form of his Christian name that Sandor (=Alexander) Csoma Körös (Csoma de Körös) used in his Oriental travels. Francke made quite an exulting case out of it by stressing a legendary precedent in the history of Buddhism: the parallel of the Indo-Greek king of India, Milinda (= King Menander, who ruled from 155 to 130? BC) asking questions on the philosophy, psychology and ethics of Buddhism from a learned monk called Nāgasena. In traditional belief, the result was translated into Pali (probably in the first century BC) and is known as the ‘Milinda Pañha’/‘Questions of Milinda’. Whatever be the origin of the compilation, it covers most of those questions commonly asked by Westerners and therefore is a handy introduction to Buddhism from a Western point of view.

Francke’s publications sparked off consistent research on the matter in Hungary, leading to three basic conclusions, viz.,

1. The Hungarian Academy of Sciences owned a collection of Tibetan blockprints and MSS which Csoma Körös had given to his pupil, the Rev. Solomon Caesar Malan, in 1839 in Calcutta. This lot was donated to the Academy in 1884 through Dr Theodore Duka.

2. The collection seemed to comprise 36 + 2 catalogue references, of which 13 MSS. The latter consists of five MSS written in dbu med characters (nos. 1, 2, 5, 7, 9) and eight in dbu can characters (nos. 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, 32).

3. In 1974, the MSS were supposed to include four ‘Alexander books’ (nos. 3, 4, 6, 8) addressing five subjects as follows: In 44 ten-line stanzas no. 3 by Tshul khrims rgya mtsho provides an overview of the ocean of Buddhah’s teachings. The untitled no. 4 by Kun dga’ chos legs is divided into six numbered chapters on Buddhist cosmology, the three jewels, Buddha’s life, the spread of Buddhist sūtras and tantras in India and Tibet, the gist of lam rim and the eight areas of pratimoksa. It is fairly long (189 stanzas of 7 lines each, spread out in four separate booklets.) The two booklets of no. 6 contain two separate texts by the same author, Sangs rgyas phun tshogs, as attested by the colophon pertaining to both. The first (90 stanzas, 7 lines each) surveys in four parts the eight-branch medical science as set out in the Rgyud bzhis (Amṛtaḥṛdayaśāntanyakusuhpadesāntāntāntrā). The second (26 stanzas, 7 lines each, including the appendix), supplies a summary of Tibetan time-reckoning and astrological systems mainly on the basis of Suresamati’s teachings. no. 8 gives guidelines on 37 pages to Tibetan correct speech, the correct use of names and stylistics. Although it does not spell out the name of its author and its lines show an European pattern (13 lines per page), it is presented in the same form of stitched booklet and on the same quality of non-Tibetan paper as nos. 3, 4 and 6. For this reason and also because it fits one of Csoma’s description of the work done for him by his lama aide, it is also considered as an ‘Alexander book’ and is attributed to Sangs rgyas phun tshogs.

Thus, we have altogether four or five ‘Alexander Books’ recognised as such by the scholars of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the number depending solely on whether we regard no. 6 as one ‘book’ dealing with two quite different subject matters or prefer viewing it as a reference covering two ‘books’ (nos. 6a & 6b, set out in two booklets; no. 6a taking one booklet and a half).

We should be aware of two more conjectures in this area, viz., 1) MS no. 32 of the Csoma Collection under review could also be assumed to be an intellectual tool prepared for Csoma by Sangs rgyas phun tshogs, even if it is set down on Tibetan paper; 2) The collection may well be incomplete.

Two final considerations to wind up the matter. The Collection displays remarkable consistency, as it contains a good number of works recommended or referred to by some others. Scholars have never followed up Francke’s somewhat romantic Milinda comparison. The Hungarian specialists showed how far-fetched it had been by pointing out that the dis lams aiming at teaching or dissuising doubts are common in Tibetan religious writings, that they were usually included in the collected works of their authors and have often provoked consequential commentaries so much so that they make up a literature of their own. Their genre is represented in the Csoma Collection in Budapest by nos. 25, 26 & 27.