In Tibetan studies the field of music and chant of the liturgy has always attracted interest. However, in spite of the progress achieved in other areas of Tibetology, this one has remained somewhat neglected though not for lack of interest. Musicologists who have entered the field without all the tools of the trade (knowledge of the language and the culture, paleographic skills, etc.) have come up against unsurmountable obstacles. The task is certainly a difficult one. The secrecy that traditionally surrounds tantric rituals to which liturgical chant is often associated, the very specialized nature of the work, requiring not only very close contact with qualified informants but also their trust and willingness, are only some of the problems that beset those intent on studying Tibetan religious practices.

The Treatise on Music (Tib. rol-mo’i bstan-bcos, Chin. 樂論) has been the object of much discussion and has been dealt by various authors (Ellingson 1979, Canzio 1979). The Treatise was translated into Chinese by Zhao Khan (趙康1989).

The endeavours of Chinese scholars in the field have been related by Mao Jizeng (毛繼增 1998). In this article he defends the value of the Treatise and says that Tibetans have nowadays started to show their heritage and to modernize and that we should profit from their experience but we should prevent them from either westernizing or sinicizing their culture. He adds that we should learn scientifically and diligently this kind of music. He remarks that undoubtedly this book means a lot for the uplifting of Tibetan culture. Earlier on, Tian Lientao (田聯韜 1989) had presented and discussed Zhao Khan translation.

In any evaluation of the Treatise on Music we have to consider the circumstances in which it was written and its value as a source of concepts for
the analysis and description of Tibetan music. The recent discovery of texts by an author cited as Candragomi in the commentary to Sakya Pandita’s Treatise have changed our evaluation of those circumstances. Since I think that The Treatise on Music is still of interest and relevant to Tibetan musicological studies, I offer here this brief recontextualization of the work.

**Sakya Pandita’s Treatise on Music**

Tibetan manuscripts containing collections of chants and other liturgical musical practices are not uncommon and the texts of the rituals are usually available, but the corpus of literature devoted exclusively to musical theory in Tibetan is not large. The Treatise on Music by the great 13th century scholar Sakya Pandita (1182-1251) is the only full-length Tibetan text dealing with theoretical matters concerning music. Apart from this major work most known documents dealing with this subject are isolated ancillary texts, commonly of a prescriptive character and aimed to the performer who is already familiar with the oral tradition. This lack of sources dealing with theoretical questions has been another serious obstacle in the development of the field because of the absence of an explicit native theory to substantiate our findings.

There is a commentary to the Treatise written by Kunga Sonam in the 17th century and it we find extensive quotations from other texts of an author cited as Candragomi. This author has in the past been taken to be the well known Indian philosopher of the 6th century of the same name. However, the recent the discovery of the original texts quoted by Kunga Sonam have allowed us to identify Candragomi not as the Indian philosopher but as a Tibetan author called Zla-ba dpal-rin. He was born around 1375 and was connected with the gSer-khang monastery in Zhwa-lu country in the Tsang region of Tibet. He has written various texts on the way to play drums and cymbals and on various aspects of the performance of rituals (Tsering 2003). The two texts by Candragomi quoted in Kunga Sonam’s commentary are *The Treatise on Chant* and *The Treatise on Music*. The discovery of these texts has helped to clarify the
The Treatise on Music has been the object of much discussion and has been dealt by various authors (Ellingson 1979, Canzio 1979). It was translated into Chinese by Zhao Khang (1989). The endeavours of Chinese scholars in the field have been related by Mao Jizeng (1998) and will be examined in some detail below. Earlier Tian Lientao (1989) had presented and discussed Zhao Khan translation.

**Chinese scholarship on the Treatise**

The endeavours of Chinese scholars in this field are related in an article by Mao Jizeng (1998). He tells us of the importance of the Treatise. In the summer 1983, he researched Tibetan musical culture in Lhasa. He also went to Sakya monastery. He photographed a manuscript of Sakya Pandita’s Treatise and Kunga Sonam’s commentary to it. The book was translated by a scholar of called Zhao Khang Sonam Tashi (趙康). Zhao Khang based his work on three different Tibetan versions of Sakya Pandita’s Treatise. One version was published in the journal *Music Research* in two parts in 1983. Other was published in book form in Beijing by the Ethnic Press in 1985 and the third one comes from the Collected Works of Sakya Pandita. The translation by Zhao Khang is based on the first two texts mentioned. Mao comments on the difficulties that entail the translation of such a texts written in verse in Classical Tibetan and gives the Chinese translation of the title of Kunga Sonam’s commentary.

So, the first Chinese translation of the *rol-mo'i bstan-bcos* appeared in the mid eighties (Zhao Khang 1985). In 1989 Zhao Khang translated just Sakya Pandita’s text without using the commentary, then Mao realizing the importance of the commentary, invited again Zhao Khang to translate Kunga Sonam’s commentary which was published in *Music Research* in two parts (Zhao Khang 趙康 1990). Later Mao wrote the article under the pen name of Yue Shan (樂山) commenting on the work.
Zhao Kang’s translation is trustworthy; however he was not in a position to interpret rightly some of the ambiguously presented technical matters that plague both the Treatise and its commentary, specially in its first chapter. We find there matters that have not been entirely clarified to this day and the character of text is such that without very specialized help it could not be easily understood. Given the rather confusing way in which matters are presented in the commentary he understandably omitted to translate the colophon which provides interesting matter as to the background for the commentary. That said, Zhao Kang deserves full praise for an honest effort and good scholarship.

**Conclusion**

For a long time it was believed that the Candragomi quoted extensively by Kunga Sonam in his commentary to Sapen’s Treatise was the 6th century Indian philosopher of that name and that what was being quoted was a translation of some Indian work. Indeed a great number of originally Indian texts that were lost in Sanskrit have been preserved in Tibetan translations and it was not unreasonable to suppose that those texts were written by the Indian philosopher. From there all sorts of cultural assumptions would follow as regards the prescriptions for performance found in those texts. One could say for instance that the Treatise on Music was like other Tibetan productions, a mixture of Tibetan notions and an exposition of Indian ideas reinterpreted the Tibetan way and not a pure product of Tibetan thinking. Also that the Treatise seen as a musicological monograph, would reflect the thinking of those who were at this particular time in Tibetan history busy trying to adapt and formalize all newly acquired knowledge from Indian sources.

However with the discovery of the existence of Zla-ba dpal-rin, the Tibetan Candragomi and his texts, one has to re-evaluate the whole way we look at Sapen’s Treatise. We have now a fully Tibetan text that is not an adaptation and elaboration of existing Indian concepts and attitudes as regards the performance, transmission of music (the main subjects dealt with by Candragomi) but in fact a
fully Tibetan text that in a many ways enhances the value of Kunga Sonam’s commentary to Sapen’s *Treatise*.

Although Sakya Pandita’s text is hardly (if at all) read outside the Sakya school of Tibetan Buddhism and Candragomi’s manuscripts have not yet been edited and published we can see that most of the advice given by him is based on common sense and in accordance with the prevalent Buddhist attitudes. So, it would be of great value if musicians of all cultures and persuasions would follow it.

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