

## Foreword

At the heart of this volume is a translation of large portions of the first chapter of the twelfth-century Tibetan Buddhist scholar Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge's most important philosophical contribution, the *Tshad ma yid kyi mun sel*, i.e., "Epistemology—The Dispeller of the Mind's Darkness." Since the discovery of a single manuscript of this treatise at Drepung Monastery in Central Tibet nearly twenty years ago, quite a few scholars—including the two of us—have published numerous articles on the positions espoused by Phya pa within this important text. In so doing, this scholarly work has made it possible to move beyond the various "myths" long associated with this author both in the Tibetan and the Western traditions. Yet, the writing of Phya pa has remained, in an important respect, behind a curtain, as it has been limited to scholars having facility with the Tibetan language. The foremost goal of this book is to begin pulling back the curtain on Phya pa's philosophical contributions so that they can be appreciated by a wider audience.

In this book we offer a translation of a segment of the *Mun sel* that is dedicated to laying out the central features of what can rightly be considered Phya pa's "philosophy of mind and cognition." Our hope is that philosophers without a background in Indian or Buddhist thought will find value in learning more about how this twelfth-century philosopher made sense of the elements and activities of the mind, and that scholars of Indian, Tibetan, and Buddhist studies will gain a deeper appreciation of Phya pa's place within the Buddhist intellectual tradition as well as of the philosophical significance of his ideas. With this hope in mind, our translation of Phya pa's *Mun sel* is supplemented by two introductory essays, one putting Phya pa's text in philosophical context (I.1) and the other in historical context (I.2).

Translation from Tibetan into English is always a difficult task; and it is even more difficult when the text in question is nearly nine hundred years old; and harder still when the text relies upon technical philosophical vocabulary like that used by Phya pa. Nevertheless, because our translation (in chapter II) aims at readability for a wide philosophical audience, we have chosen to keep the English text as 'clean' as possible. Departing from quasi-standard academic translation conventions within Indo-Tibetan philology, we have consciously avoided the use of brackets marking insertions, by the translators, of terms and information not explicitly present in the Tibetan text itself. In this respect, we have taken an

approach similar to that adopted by Parimal Patil in his translation of Ratnakīrti's *Demonstration of Exclusion* (Patil 2011). We believe that this sort of “minimally annotated” translation, unburdened by brackets and references to Tibetan and Sanskrit terms, will provide all readers, and especially those who lack the resources to engage Phya pa's work in the original Tibetan, with a clearer understanding of the author's philosophical views. Yet, for the benefit of scholars who are more philologically-minded, we also include, immediately after the translation, a critical edition of the translated portions of Phya pa's *Mun sel* (cf. III). A lexicon is provided (VII, 4), which lists all the technical terms and important expressions in Tibetan along with the English translation we adopted. Some of our choices of translation stand out as they depart from more conventional translations and are, we anticipate, bound to stir up opposition. When deemed necessary, explanations for our translations have been provided in the introduction and the footnotes to the translation, and the rationale for our translations of the key terms pertaining to episodes of awareness that are not knowledge is given in the supplementary study in chapter IV.

Although the translation is based almost entirely on the first chapter of his *Mun sel*, and, in that regard, constitutes Phya pa's general presentation of awareness, it is abundantly clear that the treatise presupposes a familiarity with many of the philosophical topics that it addresses. Phya pa often cites examples and makes use of terminological conventions for which he provides no background explanation. Phya pa also presupposes, in the first chapter, acquaintance with ideas that are only discussed and clarified in later chapters of the work. Phya pa's treatise is not, in this respect, an introduction for beginners. For this reason, we have included tables (VI), appendices (VII) and supplementary explanations (IV) that help to sort out Phya pa's terminologies and concepts, and that provide additional background information concerning some of the most important matters that he references in this portion of the *Mun sel*.