AN ANALYSIS OF THE POEM
“YOUNG DONDRUP THE COURIER”

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1. A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE AUTHOR OF THE POEM “YOUNG DONDRUP THE COURIER”

The actual title of this poem is as follows: “[I] sent the letter [that contained] suitable conversation to King of Enlightened Siddhas, the Second Buddha, Mañjuśrī, through the assigned courier, young Dondrup” (Tib. Kun mkhyen grub pa’i dbang bo ’Jam mgon sangs rgyas gnyis pa’i sku zhabs su zur gsal ltar gyi zhu ’phrin ’degs pa la ched mngags kyi pho nya ba gzhon nu don rab tu grub pa skabs bab kyi gtm dang bcas pa ’phel). The author of this poem is Blo bzang dpal ’dan, tutor of the 7th Reb gong skyabs mgon. He was born in the Iron Snake year of the fifteenth rab byung (1881) to his mother Sgrol ma and his father Sku dbon chos mdzad of Tsho ’du village, part of the five clans of Rebong, and named Padma bkra shis. In the Iron Tiger year (1890), at the age of ten, he entered the hermitage Sgis steng Dga’ ldan. There he took the vows first of an ordained lay person (Skt. upāsaka), then an ordained monk (Skt. pravrajyā), and finally a novice (Skt. śramanera) from Dge bshes Blo bzang chos grags of Glang gya, and was given the name Blo bzang dpal Idan. In the Iron Rabbit year (1900), he took the vows of a fully ordained monk (bhikṣu) from the great buddhisattva Blo bzang chos grags and became a great upholder of the vinaya.

From his youth, he studied with many teachers of scholastics and siddhi, including Zhwa dmar paṇḍita Dge ’dun ’dzin rgya mtsho, Grub dbang ’Jigs med bsam gtan, Tsho ’du yongs ’dzin Byang chub kun spangs blo bzang bstan pa, and Dus zhabs pa chen po Mtsho byung dgyes pa’i dpal ba, and studied in depth the sutras, tantras, and other traditional sciences (rig gnas), and became a superlative scholar.

1 Translated from the Tibetan by Gedun Rabsal.
As a legacy of his becoming a great scholar, he has a vast number of students—such as Reb gong skyabs mgon, Rje 'Jigs med dam chos rgya mtsho, great lamas, and other holy persons. As for his writings, he composed commentaries on the sutras, tantras, and other traditional sciences, as well as a great many epistolary poems. He was very active in the ‘three-fold wheel’ of study, meditation and service. He passed away in the Wood Monkey year of the sixteenth rab byung (1944).

2. AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE AUTHOR AND THE RECIPIENT OF THE POEM “YOUNGendonrup the Courier”

The tutor, Blo bzang dpal ldan, when he was sixteen years old, listened to many dharma teachings—including empowerment of the One-Hero Yamantaka (Victor over the māras), and preliminary teachings—from the mahāsiddha 'Jigs med bsam gtan, the previous reincarnation of 'Jigs med dam chos rgya mtsho. From his biography (Skt. avadāna) entitled Song of the Miraculous Clouds (Ngo mtshar sprin gyi sgra dbyangs):²

At that time, from the depths of endless compassion,
You manifested in the body of Yamantaka and blessed with vajra-symbols
The crown of Burning Black Poison Mountain, the Lord of Death;
And sent [the Lord of Death] as a companion to accomplish all wishes
When 'Jigs med [dam chos], the young sprout of the wish-fulfilling tree,
Rose with the rains of nectar of good teachings.

Blo bzang dpal ldan received many dharma teachings from ['Jigs med bsam gtan] and gratefully held him as one of his three matchless root lamas. Furthermore, the reincarnation of 'Jigs med bsam gtan, 'Jigs med dam chos rgya mtsho, became the best student of the tutor Blo bzang dpal ldan. In this poem, he writes:

Ten thousand dpag tshad to the north from here,
Is the embodiment of the wisdom of all buddhas ['Jigs med dam chos gya mtsho],
Who is [as dear to me as] the eyes on my face and the heart inside.
His name alone is nectar to my ears.

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² Tib. de'i tshe tshad med snying rje'i dbyings las srid gsum 'jigs par byed pa'i skur / mgon bzengs lha chen ngyi ma'is sras po dug ri nag po cher 'bar ba'i spyi bor bka rtags re djes byin phab 'jigs med dpag bsam myu gu de / legs bshad bded rtsi'i char gyis skyong tshe bzhed dgusgrub pa'i grogs su sbran /