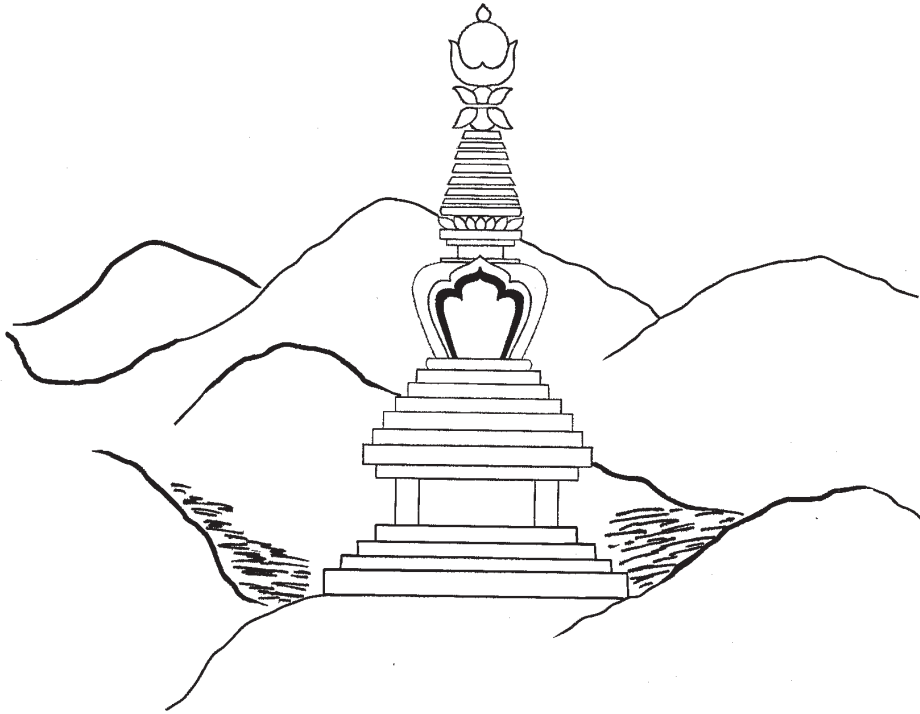




Bulletin of Tibetology



VOLUME 48

No. 2

2012

NAMGYAL INSTITUTE OF TIBETOLOGY
GANGTOK, SIKKIM





Patron

HIS EXCELLENCY SHRI BALMIKI PRASAD SINGH, THE GOVERNOR OF SIKKIM

Advisor

TASHI DENSAPA, DIRECTOR NIT

Editorial Board

FRANZ-KARL EHRHARD

ACHARYA SAMTEN GYATSO

SAUL MULLARD

BRIGITTE STEINMANN

TASHI TSERING

MARK TURIN

ROBERTO VITALI

Editor

ANNA BALIKCI-DENJONGPA

Guest Editor for the Present Issue

ROBERTO VITALI

Assistant Editors

TSULTSEM GYATSO ACHARYA

THUPTEN TENZING

Typesetting:

GYAMTSO (AMI, DHARAMSHALA)

The Bulletin of Tibetology is published bi-annually by the Director, Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok, Sikkim.

Annual subscription rates: South Asia Rs 150, Oversea \$20.

Correspondence concerning Bulletin subscriptions, changes of address, missing issues etc. to: Administrative Officer, Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok 737102, Sikkim, India (directornitsikkim@gmail.com). Editorial correspondence should be sent to the Editor at the same address.

Submission guidelines. We welcome submission of articles on any subject on the religion, history, language, art and culture of the people of the Tibetan cultural area and the Buddhist Himalaya. Articles should be in English or Tibetan, submitted by email or on CD along with a hard copy and should not exceed 5,000 words in length.

The views expressed in the Bulletin of Tibetology are those of the contributors alone and not of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology. An article represents the view of the author and does not reflect those of any office or institution with which the author may be associated.

PRINTED IN INDIA AT ARCHANA ADVERTISING Pvt. Ltd., NEW DELHI





BULLETIN OF TIBETOLOGY

Volume 48 Number 2 2012

CONTENTS

- ROBERTO VITALI: A word from the guest editor 5
- Spirit-mediumship in Upper Tibet
The vocation of one expert practitioner 7
JOHN VINCENT BELLEZZA
Senior Research Fellow, Tibet Center, University of Virginia
- Lamayuru (Ladakh) – Chenrezik Lhakhang 33
The Bar do thos grol Illustrated as a mural painting
KRISTIN BLANCKE
Dharamshala
- An Introduction to *Music to Delight all the Sages*,
the Medical History of Drakkar Taso Trulku Chökyi
Wangchuk (1775-1837) 55
STACEY VAN VLEET
Columbia University
- In Memory of Ellis Gene Smith (1936-2010) 81
TASHI TSERING
Amnye Machen Institute, Dharamshala
- Book Review*
- dGon rabs kun gsal nyi snang, The History of Ladakh Monasteries*
'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan ed. 99
ROBERTO VITALI
Dharamshala







A WORD FROM THE GUEST EDITOR

When in November 2011 I was asked to be guest editor of the *Bulletin of Tibetology*, this was an opportunity for me to continue a work I had happily accepted in the past for other journals from the Himalayan region. I have always been of the opinion that the local journals should play an important role as a source for the study of the cultures they represent. Although important places of learning in the west or other countries of Asia have structures and facilities to do very well, the material coming from the indigenous regions, despite many difficulties, keeps on inspiring research and writing.

To pursue this line of thinking I planned to ask a few authors who hang around the place in the Himalaya where I have been living for a good number of years to take out from their drawers some of their writings and contribute to this issue of the *Bulletin* I was asked to take care of. They are voices of the Himalaya for a Himalayan journal. I am grateful to them for answering to my call for papers. This issue of the *Bulletin of Tibetology* focuses on various topics relevant to Tibetology that somewhat exemplify the spectrum into which the studies are progressively expanding.

Bellezza steps in little known territory, for he sets the performance of a spirit-medium, hitherto unrecorded in anthropological studies, into the context of traditions that go back to time immemorial by finding parallels in documents of remarkable antiquity. He analyses the liturgy of the performance and identifies classes of spirits associated with it.

Blancke's work, besides dealing with the depiction on a wall of a theme that hardly appears elsewhere in murals with similar completeness, is refreshing because it deals with visuals but, for once, not from an art historical perspective. She opts for a study on how the painter has chosen to represent the steps the soul goes through in the Bar do state, in a combination of pictorial solutions and doctrinal requirements.

Stacey Van Vleet provides a preliminary insight into one aspect of Brag dkar rTa so sprul sku Chos kyi dbang phyug (1775-1837)'s multifaceted expertise, the medical one. Her introduction to his work *Drang srong kun tu dgyes pa'i rol mo* is meant to shed light on his personality and studies, the context in which he worked, and to look into some of his main doctrinal points in relation with the scholasticism of earlier periods.

Tashi Tsering pays homage to Gene Smith, the doyen of Tibetan literature. He refrains in the most from recollections of his past interactions with him but focuses on the significance of Gene's life activity and the heritage he has left





for the benefit of the studies. Tashi Tseing's piece is in the best tradition of the Bulletin of Tibetology, where homage has always been paid to great souls from the Tibetan and Himalayan world.

Roberto Vitali
November 2012





SPIRIT-MEDIUMSHIP IN UPPER TIBET

The vocation of one expert practitioner¹

JOHN VINCENT BELLEZZA
*Senior Research Fellow, Tibet Center,
University of Virginia*

INTRODUCTION

This paper introduces a prominent shaman or spirit-medium from Upper Tibet named Lha-pa bSam-gtan (Lhapa Samten).² The standing he enjoys among his peers signals that he is among the most highly respected spirit-mediums in sTod and Byang-thang. Despite facing formidable administrative and legal obstacles, the spirit-mediums of the Tibetan upland are still active today. Known in Tibetan as *lha-pa*, *lha-mo*, *dpa'-bo*, *dpa'-mo*, *klu-mo*, etc., these indomitable men and women are believed to embody various divinities for the benefit of their communities. Many of the deities purported to participate in the trance ceremonies also have their abodes in the vast Tibetan upland, while others are of Indic origin. Spirit-mediumship (*lha-'babs*) constitutes one of the most intriguing and least studied religious phenomena in Tibet. It is predicated on the perceived possession of human beings by spirits as a special method of healing and prognostication, with resonance the world over.³

- 1 The fieldwork upon which this paper is based was generously supported by financial contributions from the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation (New York). The transcription of Lhapa Samten's utterances and its translation into English was made with the assistance of Yungdrung Tenzin, a Tibetan literato from sTeng-chen with whom I have worked for many years.
- 2 To protect the identity of this individual he appears in this paper under an assumed name. The tradition of spirit-mediumship is considered very sensitive and is officially discouraged in the Tibet Autonomous Region.
- 3 In *Calling Down the Gods* (2005: 37), I announce that important spirit-mediums hailing from Upper Tibet not appearing in this work would be given due attention in subsequent publications. In the mid-2000s, I did indeed interview several more eminent practitioners, making audio records of their utterances during trance ceremonies. This paper and one delivered at the International Association of Tibetan Studies conference in Bonn, in 2006 (see Bellezza 2011), initiate the process of presenting this ethnographic and linguistic material. Studies of the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet have also been made by Berglie 1980; 1978; 1976; Diemberger 2005.



The tradition of spirit-mediumship flourished in the Tibetan highlands for untold centuries. It is widely reported that spirit-mediums were active in virtually every corner of this vast region; its pastoral and agrarian settlements supporting many of these esoteric practitioners in the pre-modern period. My fieldwork indicates that nowadays there are only around two dozen senior spirit-mediums left in the entire region, representing a precipitous decline in their numbers over the last fifty years.

Spirit-mediumship in Upper Tibet is characterized by a system of healing and augury heavily dependent on Buddhist philosophy and praxis. Traditionally, the channeling of the gods relied on the sanction and patronage of Lamaist authorities. The most important function attributed to these religious figures was the ability to discern authentic practitioners from charlatans and those considered demonically possessed. This was accomplished through the use of various methods of divination and special powers of insight. Despite coming under the auspices of lamas, in the very sparsely populated Byang-thang, spirit-mediums were able to maintain a high degree of socio-cultural autonomy due to the paucity of major Buddhist and g. Yung-drung (Eternal) Bon monastic centers in the region.

While the doctrinal basis and ritual cast of Upper Tibetan spirit-mediumship is largely Lamaist in nature, non-Buddhist customs and traditions are also quite well conserved.⁴ The role of native mountain and lake deities (*lha-ri*, *lhamtsho*) in possession, the protective cult of warrior gods (*dgra-lha*), the striking zoomorphism of healing spirits, and the use of ritual instruments such as the draped arrow and flat-bell remain conspicuous elements of Upper Tibetan spirit-mediumship that all appear to be of indigenous cultural inspiration. Nevertheless, the native cultural traits in Upper Tibetan spirit-mediumship are difficult to historicize with any certainty. The origins of some of these non-Buddhist features, as part of an archaic cultural substrate, are likely to predate the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet. Although certain older cultural elements may have survived intact as unchanged relics, others were subject to assimilative processes, whereby

For studies of household spirit-mediums from various other Tibetan regions see, for instance, Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956; Havnevik, 2002; Nagano 2000; Tucci 1980; Stein 1972; Balikci 2008.

- 4 The Buddhist tradition has had much more influence in the constitution of a higher status class of spirit-mediums known as *sku-rten*. The ritual paraphernalia and practices of the *sku-rten* oracles exhibit fewer indigenous cultural traits than do the household spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet. Unlike the folk practitioners of upland Tibet, the *sku-rten* tradition developed in an ecclesiastic environment with many of its functionaries being monks. For information on the *sku-rten*, see, for example, Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956; Rock 1935; Kevil 1964; Tibetan Bulletin 1992; Waddell 1895; Prince Peter 1973.



they were revamped or reinvented within the compass of Lamaist thought and endeavor.

Spirit possession is alluded to in Old Tibetan language texts composed during the early historic period (circa 650–1000 CE). While this religious phenomenon does not appear to be explicitly depicted, the non-Buddhist cultural structures that came to surround spirit-mediumship are given much expression in these writings. The utterances or directives of a deity (*lha-bka'*) are noted in the Dunhuang text Pt 126.⁵ Direct communications between the archaic *bon* and *gshen* priests and deities are recorded in Old Tibetan literature as well, presupposing intimate exchanges, which in certain cases may have included actual spirit possession or some other mediumistic activity. In one Old Tibetan manuscript of the dGa'-thang 'bum-pa collection, there is a dialogue between priests and the divine royal progenitor of the sPu-rgyal dynasty Yab-bla bdal-drug. In another ritual narrative of the same manuscript, a *gshen* priest is in direct contact with Lha-bo lha-sras, a god of the afterlife.⁶ These episodes are presented as actual physical encounters between humans and gods, and serve to illustrate the powerful link thought to exist between these two categories of beings a millennium or more ago.

The Dunhuang and dGa'-thang bum-pa texts also document a number of ritual objects and practices still used by Upper Tibetan spirit-mediums. Mention of the flat-bell, draped arrow and turban are particularly noteworthy because they have a very important part to play in the ritual proceedings of today's spirit-mediums. Likewise, spirit-mediums, as well as monks and lay religious practitioners (*sngags-pa*), still carry out ransom rites (*glud*) and rites of propitiation (*gsol-kha*) of the kind first noted in Old Tibetan literature. These ritual performances are decidedly Tibetan in composition and non-Buddhist in orientation. A mountain god exploited by Upper Tibetan spirit-mediums, Thang-lha ya-bzhur, as well as generic classes of environment-bound spirits (*yul-lha*, *sman*, *bdud*, *klu*, *gnyan*, *btsan*, etc.) are also documented in Old Tibetan texts in non-Buddhist or archaic contexts.

While Old Tibetan texts merely hint at spirit-mediums being part of the early historic Tibetan religious arena as part of an indigenous tradition, Eternal Bon literature is unequivocal in this regard. *mDo dri med gzi brjid*, a biography of sTon-pa gshen-rab composed in the 14th century CE, classifies spirit-mediumship in the first vehicle of Eternal Bon teachings known as Phya-gshen. Referred to as

5 See Bellezza 2005, pp.11, 12. For *lha-bka'*, also see Stein 1972, p.232. For references to priestesses (*bon-mo*) that may possibly have been spirit-mediums in Pt 1047, see Macdonald 1971, pp.274, 275, 294, 295. On the *bon-mo*, also see Bellezza forthcoming.

6 For a translation and explication of this dGa'-thang 'bum-pa text, see Bellezza 2010.





Ye-dbang lha yi bka'-babs (Mantic Directives of the Gods of Primordial Power), it is one of four main methods of conducting divinations found in the *Phya-gshen* vehicle.⁷ These teachings are thought to have been introduced into Tibet in remote antiquity by the Eternal Bon founder sTon-pa gshen-rab. Although this *mDo dri med gzi brjid* account is patently mythical in nature, like Old Tibetan literature, it does suggest that spirit-mediumship in an elementary configuration arose in Tibet prior to the spread of Buddhism.

Many elements of Upper Tibetan spirit-mediumship that appear to be non-Buddhist in origin and character have cognate forms in the spirit-mediumship or shamanism of Inner Asia and the Himalayan rimland. This cross-cultural evidence buttresses Tibetan textual sources, which indicate that Buddhist influences on Upper Tibetan spirit-mediumship comprise a superstructure built upon an older cultural foundation.

THE PROFESSIONAL LIFE OF LHAPA SAMTEN,

I interviewed Lhapa Samten on September 23–25, 2005. Lhapa Samten is an affable and prudent family man. He was born in the Rabbit Year (1951) and resides in what is now the southern part of sGer-rtse rdzong (this area is traditionally known as bSe-'khor). His mother belonged to the Hor clan and his father was a member of the Dus-ngas clan, one of the oldest genealogical groupings in bSe-'khor.⁸ Lhapa Samten's mother's sister, a nun named 'Bum-rdzi (sp.?), was also a spirit-medium, as well as a disciple of the celebrated rNying-ma lama Padma bDe-rgyal. Circa 1890, bDe-rgyal rin-po-che was responsible for founding Nam-mkha' khyung-rdzong, a monastery in sPu-rang. Lhapa Samten was a student of Khams-pa'i dpa'-chung (1912–2005), a highly renowned spirit-medium who resided in gZhung-pa ma-tshan.⁹ It was from him, that the much younger *lha-pa* learned how to become a vehicle fit for the gods.

Lhapa Samten first went into trance at the relatively late age of twenty-five, that is, after the end of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. During the extremely trying times of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, many traditional Tibetan practices were proscribed. Spirit-mediums were forced to stop practicing; some never to call upon the gods again even during the period of liberalization in the 1980s. Lhapa Samten states that the primary reason for summoning the deities into his body is to heal diseases afflicting human beings. He does not demand any set payment from those who seek him out, as I observed during one of his trance ceremonies.

7 For further information on spirit-mediumship in the *Phya-gshen* vehicle, see Bellezza 2005, pp.344–355.

8 For a review of the clans of bSe-'khor, see Bellezza 2008, p.268.

9 For an account of this distinguished individual, see Bellezza 2005, pp.85–87.





Lhapa Samten is a medium for the rGya-gar gods, gNyan-chen thang-lha's retinue of spirits, *nor-lha* (wealth gods), and A-stag-klu-mo / dPa'-mo A-stag. His family protective deities (*phugs-lha*) Klu-mtsho sngon-mo and Thang-lha dkar-po also participate in the trance ceremony as personal guardians. Spirit possession is regarded as very serious and potentially dangerous work, which requires divine patrons and defenders of various kinds. The higher gods of Buddhism, which are always invoked at the beginning of the trance ceremony and in whom spiritual refuge is taken, act as the overall guarantors and regulators of the proceedings. The *phugs-lha* Klu-mtsho sngon-mo and Thang-lha dkar-po are prototypic deities of females and males respectively. They belong to an indigenous tradition assimilated into the Buddhist pantheon. Thang-lha dkar-po is the mountain god gNyan-chen thang-lha in his white or pacific form, a very popular household protector and patrilineal god (*pho-lha*) among the shepherds (*'brog-pa*) of Upper Tibet. Klu-mtsho sngon-mo is the goddess of the sparkling blue lakes of the Tibetan upland, the counterpart and consort of mountain gods such as Thang-lha dkar-po.

The rGya-gar (India) group of Lhapa Samten contains a diverse collection of spirits of both Indic and native origins. It includes rGya-gar g.yu-bkra, Lha-chen yab-yum, Lha-chen blon-po 'gros-mthun (sp.?), and Lha yar-rgan tshangs-pa dkar-po. Also known as Lha-rgan dkar-po, this latter figure is the Tibetan form of the god Brahma.¹⁰ According to Lhapa Samten, Lha-rgan dkar-po resides in the *gsum-bcu rtsigs-pa'i zhal-yas* (numinous palace of the walls of thirty). This appears to be a reference to the *sum-bcu rtsa-gsum*, the thirty-three realms of the spirit world, as found in ancient Iranian, Indic and Bodic traditions. It is customary in the Upper Tibetan world of spirit-mediumship for each main god of possession to supervise a circle of healing spirits. It is these helping spirits that actually carry out the hard work of curing the afflicted. This often entails removing gross impurities from the bodies of patients. Lhapa Samten reports that the helping spirits of the rGya-gar gods includes Dung-khyi spun-gsum (Three Conch Dogs Siblings), Gling dkar-po skya-bo mig-bzhi (Light-colored Dog with Four Eyes), Thang-dkar (Lammergeyer), 'U-lu mchu-ring (Long-Beaked Owl), and Glag-mo rked-dkar (Eagle White Medial [Feathers]).

Lhapa Samten is also a medium for the *nor-lha* group of wealth bestowing deities. These figures are of two major kinds: those of native sources and those of Indic persuasion. Arya dzam-bha-la is the famous Indian god of wealth, which became entrenched in Lamaist religions as well. For Tibetans, he is the guardian of all forms of prosperity, a deity serving both individuals and the state. The indigenous *nor-lha* of Lhapa Samten are primarily represented by

10 For a detailed description of this deity, see Nebesky-Wojtkowitz 1956, pp.145–153.





a group known as rGya-gar nor-lha bcu-gsum, but there are other examples as well. According to the spirit-medium, his thirteen rGya-gar nor-lha originated in India with Arya dzam-bha-la. However, this assignment of cultural origins is largely fictive, the unspoken aim of which is to draw native divinities into the fold of Buddhism.

The *nor-lha* controlled or owned (*lha-bdag*) by Lhapa Samten are a big and colorful group of spirits. He explains that a significant number of them are in the form of livestock. The *nor-lha* that appear in the trance ceremony serve as *g.yang-'gugs* (good-fortune summoning) instruments for humans, livestock and the countryside. They are attributed with curing diseases and removing obstacles to well-being. They not only bestow wealth but bring other kinds of good fortune such as good health and long life. Lhapa Samten avers that the *nor-lha* do not appear as individual animals but rather participate in the trance as great herds of zoomorphic spirits overwhelming disease and misfortune. According to him, these *nor-lha* first appeared with the emergence of existence (*srid-pa chags-pa*), a popular cosmogonic theme in Tibet. Two *nor-lha* that typify this focus on the primordial are Srid-pa chags-pa'i lha-lug (Divine Sheep of the Emergence of Existence) and bsKal-pa chags-pa'i lha-lug (Divine Sheep of the Emergence of the [First] Epoch).

Among the *nor-lha* are those connected to Gling ge-sar, Tibet's epic hero. They include rGya-gar lu-gu spun-gsum (Three Indian Lamb Siblings), Dung-dkar-po lu-gu spun-gsum (Three White Conch Lamb Siblings) and Gling ge-sar lha-lug spun-gsum (Three Divine Sheep Siblings of Gling Ge-sar). These three triads of spirits are said to have Lha-chen tshangs-pa dkar-po (the Tibetan form of Brahma) as their father. Another *nor-lha* in King Ge-sar's entourage is rGya-gar nor-lha sngon-bkra (Bright Blue Indian Wealth God), the wealth-summoning spirit of A-ne gung-sman rgyal-mo, the aunt of the epic hero. This zoomorphic spirit is said to have three spots (*thig-ma*) on its back, which function to attract good fortune and long life. Ra yi lha ni tshed-tshed is the divine goat spirit of rGan A-khu, an epic figure who is said to have reared it in the pasturelands of Tibet. This caprine *nor-lha* is specifically used in the trance ceremony for bestowing long life.

Other notable members of Lhapa Samten's *nor-lha* are Dung dkar-po rwa-co 'khyil-rtse (White Conch Spiraling Tips of the Horns), Dung dkar-po 'dra-lug zhis (sp.?) (a conch white sheep with a smooth coat of wool) and Dung gi rnga-ma shang-tse-shang (a sheep with a spreading white tail). The Klu yi lu-gu spun-gsum (Three Lambs of the Water Spirit Siblings) are blue colored except for their legs and bellies, which are white from swimming in a lake of milk. The Srid-pa chags-pa'i btsan-lug are sheep of the *btsan* spirits with a reddish undercoat,





orange wool and the horns of the argali (*gnyan*). The bTsan dmar-po lu-gu spunsum are in the form of red lambs. Lhapa Samten traces the origin of these three supernatural lambs to the mGur-lha, the thirteen royal mountain divinities of the Central Tibetan sPu-rgyal dynasty of ancient times.

gNyan-chen thang-lha is the most powerful mountain god of the eastern third of the Byang-thang, but his spiritual influence is also very much felt in Central Tibet.¹¹ Given his wide geographic purview he is often referred to as a *spyi-lha* (universal god), a distinction bestowed on only the most important divine mountains (*lha-ri*) of Tibet. gNyan-chen thang-lha is a special protector of the Dalai Lamas and there is a chapel dedicated to him in the upper level of the Potala. Besides his household protector, the most important member of gNyan-chen thang-lha's retinue for Lhapa Samten appears to be Lha-g.yag dkar-po, a divine white yak. Lhapa Samten states that Lha-g.yag dkar-po is also found in the circle of Lha-chen tshangs-pa dkar-po. This *nor-lha* is very popular with other spirit-mediums in Upper Tibet as well.¹²

A-stag klu-mo is a major personality in the Gling ge-sar epic and goddess of the trance for Lhapa Samten. She is also a popular possessing goddess among other spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet. A keen huntress and warrior, A-stag klu-mo was befriended by Ge-sar during his campaign against dDud klu-btsan, the ruler of Yar-khams in the eastern Byang-thang. This goddess is particularly active in trance ceremonies as a wrathful figure in charge of exorcistic rites. According to Lhapa Samten, the *nor-lha* helper of A-stag klu mo is in the form of a wild yak (*'brong*) with a white snout, tawny body and the white and brownish horns of the mythical horned eagle of Tibet known as *khyung*.

Lhapa Samten uses a copper alloy circular mirror (*gling*) to direct and shelter the deities during possession. It is thought that the consciousnesses (*rnam-shes*) of the presiding deities cluster around this mirror and are reflected in various directions as per their ritual activities. The *gling* used by Lhapa Samten is divided into three concentric circles, each of which enshrines the consciousness of different types of deities. These three circles symbolize the *srid-pa'i gsum*, the three vertical tiers of existence: upper or celestial (*steng*), middle or terrestrial (*bar*) and lower or telluric (*'og*). The outer circle of the mirror is called *phyi-gling pad-ma dab-brgyad* (eight-petaled lotus of the outer world), the assembly

11 For an in-depth survey of this god, see Bellezza 1997; 2005.

12 According to an Eternal Bon text for summoning good fortune, Lha-g.yag dkar-po is the emblem and protector of the 'Bru / 'Gru Tibetan proto-lineage. Considered a *srid-pa'i sgra-bla*, this ancestral figure appears with three other divine animals as the defining symbols of four main lineages of ancient Tibet. See Bellezza 2005, pp.403, 404.





point of the army of the *lha* (*lha-dmag*). The *lha* are white-colored deities of the heavens and lofty mountains. The *phyi-gling* is also reserved for the higher or otherworldly deities of Buddhism, which are believed to nominally occupy it in the same manner that the Buddha is believed to be present in properly consecrated images. Strictly speaking, the consciousness of the high gods of Buddhism and Eternal Bon is all-pervading and cannot be wholly contained in any object. The *bar-gling* (middle world) is the assembly point for the *btsan* armies. The *btsan* are a common class of fierce warrior gods, typically red in color, which are characteristic of the intermediate world. They are said to inhabit rocky mountains, gorges and boulders, especially those red in color. The *nang-gling* (inner world) is the assembly point of the *klu* and *mkha'-'gro*. The *klu* are water spirits analogous to the *nāga* of Indic tradition, while the *mkha'-'gro* are the sky-treading wisdom goddesses of Vajrayāna Buddhism.

Lhapa Samten states that he offers his heart, lungs and other organs to the mountain gods and other divine protectors before being possessed. This is done to express his absolute devotion and trust in the officiating deities of Buddhism. The radical practice of offering one's body parts is derived from the esoteric *gcod* tradition, which purportedly permits adherents to quickly cut through mental obscurations and other obstacles to higher spiritual realization. In preparation for being overtaken by the gods, Lhapa Samten also invokes the mistress of the subtle energy channels of the body (*rtsa-bdag*). It is through these nerve-like conduits that the consciousness of the deities must pass in order to take hold of the spirit-medium. The *rtsa-bdag* of Lhapa Samten is dMag-zor rgyal-mo, a form of the great Buddhist protectress dPal-ldan lha-mo. She is said to take up residence at the threshold of his subtle channels at the beginning of the trance ceremony. Lhapa Samten believes that dMag-zor rgyal-mo enables the divinities to descend and enter his body. Lhapa Samten holds that at the moment of possession, his consciousness is conveyed into space (*nam-mkha'*), where it comes under the care of the *lha*.

Lhapa Samten, like other spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet, reports that while the deities are present in his body, he as an individual ceases to inhabit that body. When disassociated from his body, Lhapa Samten exists in a state of suspended animation of which nothing is known or recollected. The spirit-medium states that knowledge of what is said and done in trance comes from querying observers. The loss of self in such a pronounced way is a daunting prospect, thus the trance ceremony is not resorted to lightly. There must be real need warns Lhapa Samten, lest he incurs the wrath of the gods and even the prospect of the permanent annihilation of his psyche.



THE LITURGICAL STRUCTURE OF THE TRANCE CEREMONY

The trance ceremony I observed was convened at night in Lhapa Samten's black yak-hair tent. The tent was full of family members and neighbors who had come out of curiosity or to be healed by the power of the gods. An improvised altar for the ceremony was erected in front of the family altar. It was covered copiously in barleycorn upon which a butter lamp, bowl of tea and a few other offering objects were placed. A photograph of the young Karma-pa also graced the altar ad hoc. The *gling* used in trance ceremonies was inserted upright into a bowl of barleycorn.

The preliminary invocations to the deities and other prayers began at 21:35. During these first recitals, Lhapa Samten wore a white cotton kerchief on his head. Called a *ras-thod*, this piece of cloth is said to represent a turban. More elaborate turbans are still used occasionally by Upper Tibetan spirit-mediums. The turban is often considered to be the original headgear of the spirit-mediums of the region, and its use appears to have been widespread in ancient Tibet. This style of head covering is noted in Old Tibetan documents of the early historic period. As regards spirit-mediumship, the turban appears to have been gradually replaced by the five-lobed crown of Vajrayāna known as the *rigs-lnga*. To begin his invocations, Lhapa Samten also wore a brocade mantle over his shoulders, the *stod-khebs*.

The ritual instruments of choice during the ceremony were the hourglass-shaped hand-drum (*da-ma-ru*) and the flat-bell (*gshang*), standard articles used by the spirit-mediums. The *gshang* is mentioned in Old Tibetan documents as one of the archetypal ritual instruments of the legendary priest gShen-rab myi-bo.¹³ As the name indicates, the *da-ma-ru* is of Indic origins. In addition to the *da-ma-ru*, large hanging drums (*rnga-chen*) are also popular in the liturgies of the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet. The *rnga-chen* is cited in Old Tibetan sources describing archaic ritual performances. During the initial prayers, Lhapa Samten also briefly used the Buddhist-style bell (*dril-bu*).

The observed trance ceremony of Lhapa Samten can be divided into three major parts: 1) the pre-possession-state liturgy, 2) the possession-state liturgy and 3) the post-possession-state liturgy.

1. Pre-possession-state liturgy

The pre-possession portion of the trance ceremony was conducted with only a little playing of the drum and Buddhist bell. Usually, most of the preliminary prayers are recited while spirit-mediums sound drums and bells. In this particular case, I had requested Lhapa Samten to limit the initial playing of ritual instruments

¹³ See Pt 1289 (Stein 2003: 599), and the dGa'-thang 'bum-pa *byol-rabs* text (Bellezza 2010).



as much as was possible, in order to obtain a clear audio recording of his words. The cadence of the pre-possession state recitations was rapid and decisive, as is common in these types of liturgies. The words were articulately enunciated, facilitating the production of a reliable transcription. The pre-possession state consisted of the recitative elements as outlined below:

sKyabs-'gro (refuge prayer), duration: 1 minute, 2 seconds

Lhapa Samten began the trance ceremony by taking refuge in the Triple Gems (dKon-mchog gsum) of Buddhism (Sang-rgyas, Chos and dGe-'dun).

gSol-'debs (devotional prayers), duration: 31 seconds

The chanting of prayers primarily to O-rgyan padma 'byung-gnas (Gu-ru rin-po-che). This recitation was slow, deliberate and lyrical, and was accompanied by the playing of the *ḍa-ma-ru* and *dril-bu*.

sPyan-'dren (invitational prayers), duration: 19 seconds

The precious lamas and deities were invited to participate in the trance ceremony. In addition to the lamas with which Lhapa Samten has a bond, the high tutelary gods (*yi-dam*), sky-goers (*mkha'-'gro*), religion protectors (*chos-skyong*), territorial deities (*yul-lha*), and masters and mistresses of places (*gzhi-bdag*), in that order, were invited to the ritual venue.

bSang cho-rabs (origins of incense narrative), duration: 13 seconds

The myth of origins of incense was recited, a prefatory liturgy derived from ancient sources that has been integrated into Lhapa Samten's trance proceedings.

bSangs-gsol (propitiation with incense), duration: 4 minutes, 45 seconds

A large variety of deities were propitiated through the use of incense as a fumigant. This served to call the various participating divinities to the ritual venue, where they were offered purifying aromatic substances and appealing words. The first deities invoked were divine lamas and higher Buddhist gods, as is customary in the Lamaist *bsangs-gsol*. Next, many members of the native pantheon of Tibet, the *yul-lha* and *gzhi-bdag*, were entreated. As part of the fumigation activities, Lhapa Samten requested the deities to provide him with assistance. They were specifically asked to avert the misfortune of the demons and summon the divine qualities of well-being.

Gling ge-sar *sgrung* (ballad of Gling ge-sar) followed by another *gsol-'debs*, duration: 1 minute, 21 seconds





Various figures of the Gling ge-sar epic are invoked and described using richly imaginative language. The warrior spirits known as *dgra-lha* / *dgra-bla* / *sgra-bla* also figure in the invocations.

Slob-bstan (advice) and *smon-'dun* (aspirations), duration: 47 seconds
The advice and aspirations expressed pertained to the Tibetan hearth and home.

Lung-bstan (prophecies) and other enigmatic utterances, duration: 1 minute, 34 seconds

At the beginning of this interval Lhapa Samten picked up his *rigs-lnga* crown. The prophecies were highly allegorical and difficult to understand. That Lhapa Samten made them in a transitional state of consciousness illustrates that he enjoys a considerable degree of moral authority among his peers. In the recitations were lines such as, "You know where both the vulture and I go. The vulture goes into space." This signaled the imminent departure of Lhapa Samten's consciousness from his body and its transport to the heavens.

Bla-ma mchod-pa (litany of lamas and Buddhist prayers), 1 minute, 28 seconds
Lhapa Samten recites the names of many prominent contemporary Tibetan religious figures.

bSangs-mchod (incense offerings), duration: 1 minute, 13 seconds
Incense is offered to indigenous deities, figures in the Gling ge-sar epic, higher Buddhist deities, and the lamas.

2. Possession-state liturgy

The possession state consisted of the following recitative elements:

Announcement of the advent of the deities (*lha-zhal*), duration: 7 minutes, 57 seconds

The various deities of the trance ceremony began to be seen by Lhapa Samten as they took up their customary positions in the *gling* and on his body. At the beginning of this interval Lhapa Samten placed the *rigs-lnga* on his head and tied it firmly. The five diadems of the *rigs-lnga* each contain a different image of the Directional Buddhas (rGyal-ba rigs-lnga). Affixed to each side of the *rigs-lnga* is a rainbow-colored fan-like wing (*gshog-pa*). These large and showy accouterments simulate the consciousnesses of the deities descending upon the spirit-medium. The divine consciousnesses are envisaged as colored light, each color of the rainbow representing a different class of spirit. To begin with, the





chants had a slow and deliberate rhythm and were accompanied by the *da-ma-ru* and *gshang*. The enunciation of the words had a solemn and evocative quality, as befitted a watershed in the mental state of the spirit-medium. The tempo of playing gradually intensified as more and more deities made their appearance known to Lhapa Samten.

The prayers and aspirations of the deities, duration: 2 minutes 10 seconds
The deities make their obeisance to the Buddha and high lamas and through Lhapa Samten announce their willingness to be of service to the proceedings. This interval of the trance ceremony was recited in a more lively fashion and without ritual instruments.

Resumption of the advent of the deities interspersed with their saying Buddhist prayers, duration: 11 minutes, 30 seconds
These recitations were made with the *da-ma-ru* and *gshang* in a tempo that gradually grew in speed and intensity. Lhapa Samten came to his knees from a sitting position. Sometimes he played his ritual instruments in a very vigorous manner with outstretched arms. After three minutes Lhapa Samten jumped to his feet and began dancing around wildly, while he continued to sound his *da-ma-ru* and *gshang*. He returned to his knees before the end of this interval of the trance ceremony. The words of the liturgy were uttered with much gusto as Lhapa Samten's breathing became heavier and his manner more excited. Many lines of the recitations opened with *yā ah ha*, words that poetically express elation and triumph. It is believed that during this interval the spirit-medium is being overwhelmed by the possessing deities and helping spirits that appear before his mind's eye.

Lha-'babs (consciousness of the spirit-medium fully displaced by those of the deities), duration: approximately 20 minutes

Lhapa Samten sprang to his feet again and began making grunting noises, while playing his ritual instruments. This is believed to mark the definitive possession of the spirit-medium by the deities. The speech of Lhapa Samten was forceful and agitated. Lhapa Samten first announced the identity of the god he had become. We learned that the patronizing god belongs to the rGya-gar group. Lha-bSamtan then turned to those in attendance and solicited a response from them. The interlocutor (*bka'-lung*), a neighbor of Lhapa Samten, approached the spirit-medium on behalf of members of my Tibet Upland Expedition, which was then underway. A *bka'-lung* participates in nearly all Upper Tibetan trance ceremonies as an intermediary between spirit-mediums and patients. Due to the unusual





forms of diction employed, the speech of the spirit-mediums can be very difficult to understand, requiring a person who has long acquaintance with his or her utterances to translate them. In some cases, spirit-mediums speak in non-Tibetan languages such as *lha-skad* (language of the gods), requiring the *bka'-lung* to learn a new tongue. The *bka'-lung* is typically also the ritual assistant, conveying *tshogs* (sacred cakes), *khros* (lustral agents) and other offerings to the deities. He or she helps manage the ceremonial affairs as well, indicating when patients may approach the spirit-medium and what they should do.

'Jibs-sbyangs (sucking out of contamination), duration: approximately 7 minutes
'Jibs-sbyangs is a method of healing popularly used by the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet. It entails the drawing out of disease-causing impurities from the bodies of patients. Typically, as in this case, the spirit-medium places one end of a white scarf (*kha-btags*) on the afflicted part of a patient's body and the other end against his *da-ma-ru* and *gshang*. The spirit-medium then sucks on his ritual instruments, making a deep gurgling sound in the process. In the *'jibs-sbyangs* of Lhapa Samten there were four patients all of which were local *drokpas*. The first patient was a man. Lhapa Samten worked on his back several times for a total of three minutes. After each procedure, the spirit-medium displayed a blackish substance on his *da-ma-ru* and *gshang* for all to see. This is understood to be the disease-causing contamination or *grib* that had been removed from the body of patient. These impurities are sometimes envisioned as being in the form of worms. Tibetans believe in many types of *grib*, each causing different kinds of sickness. The second and third patients were children. *'Jibs-sbyangs* was performed on each of them only once and for short duration. The fourth and final patient was a woman clutching a baby. Her procedure was also performed quickly. Perceived as a highly potent treatment, *'jibs-sbyangs* is used judiciously as befits a highly effective tool of healing. The length of time that an individual *'jibs-sbyangs* lasts is a function of the seriousness of the illness and the age of the patient. It is commonly thought that children cannot tolerate this curative technique as well adults can.

The withdrawal of the deities back to their abodes and *lha-gsol* (deity propitiation), duration: approximately 4 minutes

This is the period in which it is believed that the deities return to their own residences, leaving Lhapa Samten's body, *gling* and other ritual objects. During this interval, the spirit-medium resumed chanting and playing his *da-ma-ru* and *gshang*, while the *bka'-lung* tossed spoonfuls of water towards the altar, as part of the *khros*, the propitiation and purification of deities using water. The cadence of





the spirit-medium's playing and speech continued to intensify, culminating in the *rigs-lnga* falling from his head. This marked the decisive end of the possession, the final withdrawal of the patronizing deities to their respective divine abodes.

3. Post-possession-state liturgy

Lhapa Samten went on to intone prayers of thanksgiving for a successful trance ceremony. This transpired as he removed his ceremonial dress and stowed away the ritual paraphernalia of the night. The descent of the deities and their taking possession of Lhapa Samten is viewed as a highly consequential and mysterious event, welcomed only in that it is required to assist those in need. The trance carries no small hazard as the capability of the gods is perceived as being immeasurably beyond that of human beings. The deities are also unpredictable and can direct their ire on patients and spectators in an instant. For these reasons, Lhapa Samten regularly expresses gratitude to his Buddhist protectors and the other deities for keeping him safe and sound, particularly just after being released from the possession state.

SELECTED READINGS FROM THE TRANCE CEREMONY

Lhapa Samten is a speaker of the sTod dialect, as the readings below demonstrate. At the beginning of the trance ceremony, just after taking refuge in the Triple Gems, devotional prayers (*gsol-'debs*) are said to call upon the master of all the worldly deities, O-rgyan padma 'byung-gnas. This great Vajrayāna master of the 8th century CE is beseeched to grant his support to Lhapa Samten, that he may be protected and his work as a vessel of the gods successful:

Please be aware of us precious lamas (*bla-ma rin-po-che mkhyen-no* /)
(2 times).

I pray to O-rgyan rin-po-che (*O-rgyan rin-po-che la gsol-ba 'debs* /).

May negativities, defects and obstacles not appear (*'gal rkyen bar-chad mi tshogs 'byung shog* /).

May I realize my wishes and the things of happiness (*mthun-rkyen bsam-pa 'grub-pa par shog* /).

Please confer special and ordinary attainments (*mchog thun-mong dngos-grub stsal du gsol* /) (2 times).

When you reside in the borrowed body [may] the obstacles of the earth, water, fire and wind elements [not appear] (*sa chu me rlung 'byung-ba'i bar-chad ni / khyod lus g.yar-po khyod ni sdod-pa'i dus* /).

I pray without ambivalence or hesitation (*yid-gnyis the-tshom med par gsol-ba 'debs* /).

Please be aware of me goddesses of the four elements of O-rgyan (*O-rgyan 'byung-ba bzhi yi lha-mo mkhyen* /).





There is no doubt that the elements are pacified (*'byung-ba rang-sar zhi bar the-tshom med /*).

I pray to O-rgyan padma 'byung-gnas.

Please bless me that my wishes are miraculously realized (*bsam-pa lhun gyis 'grub-par byin gyis rlobs /*) (2 times).

After the *gsol-'debs* the next sequence in the trance ceremony is the incense origins tale. This is a kind of *smrang*, a narrative which proclaims the source of an important ritual tradition before its actual execution. Traditionally, the *smrang* were spoken to add weight and legitimacy to both the ritual performances and performers.¹⁴ The *smrang* comprise a crucial component of archaic rituals in Old Tibetan literature. The incense origins tale of Lhapa Samten is a type of *smrang* that came to be known as *cho-rabs* (ritual origins myth) in Eternal Bon and Buddhism.¹⁵

Cho-rabs do not ordinarily occupy as important a position in Lamaist rituals as do the *smrang* in archaic rituals. Broadly speaking, deities of an Indic pedigree supplanted indigenous Tibetan historical accounts as the primary legitimizing instrument of Lamaist rituals. The authenticating function of the *smrang* was derived from them being construed as the historic precedent and ancestral prototype of rituals. In Lamaism, this sanctioning mechanism was largely replaced by the interposition of the so-called otherworldly (*'jig-rten las 'das-pa*) deities. Lamaist ritual performances are said to be carried out under the auspices of the Buddha and other higher gods; those having passed beyond the sphere of worldly existence.

Despite the different doctrinal positions origins myths occupy in the archaic and Lamaist religious traditions, certain grammatical and narrative elements are common to both, having been retained to the present day. In the incense *cho-rabs* of Lhapa Samten, the question and answer format belongs to the corpus of indigenous *smrang*. The most conspicuous ancient etiologic theme in his *chos-rabs* is that of the sky as the ultimate source of sacred phenomena.¹⁶ Another

14 For an explication of the *smrang* and various ritual precedents, see Norbu 1995; Karmay 1998, Bellezza 2005; 2008; 2010; forthcoming.

15 The incense origins myth of Lhapa Samten is reminiscent of *cho-rabs* for incense in Eternal Bon literature. For these *cho-rabs*, see Norbu 1995, pp.109–112; Bellezza 2005, pp.446–450.

16 The cosmogonic aspects of the sky or heavens can be found in various Dunhuang documents. For example, in Pt 1038 the origin of the Tibetan kings (*btsan-po*) is directly connected to the apex of the sky. A similar theme is found in Pt 1134, where the genealogical source of important funerary priests (*dur-gshen*) and other prominent figures is traced to the heavens (*gnam, dgung*). Similarly, the sky as the nexus of origination in Eternal Bon etiologic accounts permeates many vestigial archaic





cosmogonic theme of considerable antiquity found in Lhapa Samten's incense origins myth is that of the sky and earth as the dyadic source of existence and its various aspects.¹⁷ The essential form of his *cho-rabs* appears to have been propagated by successive generations of spirit-mediums over a substantial period of time as an oral tradition, not something borrowed from textual sources. Nonetheless, such longstanding continuity in the absence of independent documentary evidence is extremely difficult to substantiate.

The *cho-rabs* begins with the word *kye*, an exclamation used in the oral and textual traditions to gain the attention of the deities:

Kye, Kye! From where does the substance of incense originate (*bsang gyi rgyu de gang nas byung /*)?

The substance of incense originates in the sky (*bsang gyi rgyu de gnam nas byung /*).

From the sky comes the thunderous sound of the father (*gnam nas yab kyi 'brug cig ldir /*).

From the mother the lightning of the earth strikes (*yum nas sa yi glog cig 'gyu /*).

At the land of rTa-rgo'i gangs-thig it is the bubble of the ocean water (*sa-yul rta-rgo'i gangs thig la / rgya-mtsho chu yi lbu-ba yin /*).¹⁸

It is the potency of the *bzang-drug*¹⁹ medicines (*bzang-drug sman gyi nus-pa yin /*).

I fumigate you with the smoke of fragrant incense (*dri-zhim spos kyi dud-pas bsang /*).

I fumigate you with the blazing golden leaves of birch (*gser-lo 'bar-ba'i stag-pas bsang /*).

I fumigate you with the blazing turquoise leaves of juniper (*g.yu-lo 'bar-ba'i shug-pas bsang /*).

I fumigate you with the blazing conch leaves of Artemisia (*dung-lo 'bar-ba'i mkhan-pas bsang /*).

traditions. A cosmogony centered upon the Queen of the Klu in the text *Klu 'bum khra bo* is among the earliest Eternal Bon sources describing the generative function of the heavens. See Bellezza 2008, pp.278, 344, 346, 384, 511.

17 For numerous examples of this fundamental cosmogonic theme in the oral tradition, Eternal Bon and Old Tibetan documents, see Bellezza 1997; 2005; 2008; forthcoming.

18 rTa-rgo'i gangs-thig refers to the rTa-rgo / rTa-sgo range in the central Byang-thang. Ocean appears to be an allusion to the sacred lake that lies at the foot of the rTa-rgo Range, Dang-ra g.yu-mtsho. According to Eternal Bon sources, Dang-ra is the Zhang Zhung word for ocean.

19 The six superlative medicines: *cu-gang* (bamboo concretion), *gur-gum* (saffron), *dza-ti* (nutmeg), *sug-smel* (cardamom), *li-shi* (clove), *ka-ko-la* (*Amomum subulatum*).



I fumigate you with the blazing copper leaves of rhododendron (*zangs-lo bar-ba'i ba-lus bsang l*).

I fumigate you with the blazing tree leaves (*shing-lo*) of *phur-mong*.²⁰

I fumigate you with the fragrant smoke of *spos-dkar*.²¹

Subsequent to the incense *cho-rabs*, a great many deities are invoked by Lhapa Samten in an incense ritual (*bsangs-gsol*). The trance ceremony had been underway for more than eleven minutes when Lhapa Samten picked up his hand-drum to continue his recitations. The quality of his voice had changed dramatically as had the rhythm of the words spoken. This marked a distinctly different phase of the trance ceremony. Later when analyzing the recording of the proceedings, I realized that this heralded the advent of the deities, a transitional stage on the way to full-blown possession. In a visionary sequence, Lhapa Samten described the various gods that were entering his consciousness. The changes in the spirit-medium's outward behavior were quite subtle at that time, and it was not very apparent that his consciousness was in the process of being displaced by that of the divine, as Tibetans would perceive this ontological transition. In situ, the recitations are hard to hear and understand.

Once Lhapa Samten was fully possessed he first described the three concentric circles of the *gling* or ritual mirror, a ritual representation of the three realms of existence (*srid-pa gsum*). The chief possessing god then disclosed his residence, name and appearance. The god announced that he is sKu-lha dkar-po yang-ger, a member of the rGya-gar group. This deity also made known that he was accompanied by his divine armies of *lha*, *klu* and *btsan*. During the period of possession, Lhapa Samten began many lines with the word *yā* and/or *nga*, exclamations used in Upper Tibetan dialects, which are roughly equivalent to the English 'ah', 'oh' or 'well'. In some instances, it is very difficult to distinguish *yā* from *nga* in the utterances of Lhapa Samten:

Yā, the mandala of the *lha* army of myself (*yā, rang-rang lha-dmag dkyil-'khor red l*).

Nga, [these are] the three realms, the outer realm, inner realm and middle realm (*nga gling phyi gling nang gling bar gling gsum l*).

The realm, the outer realm has an eight-petaled lotus mandala (*gling phyi gling la dkyil-'khor padma 'dab-brgyad yod l*).

The realm, the inner {...}²² mandala.

The *lha* army and *klu* army [and other] assembled armies are the *lha*

20 *Micromeri tarosma?*

21 *Shorea robusta*.

22 This set of brackets designates that one or more words spoken by the *lha-pa* are inaudible in the recording.



and *klu* doctrine protectors of myself (*lha-dmag klu-dmag dmag-tshogs rang-rang la lha klu bstan-srung red /*).

Nga, from the resplendent domain of the mind and joyous *lha* is the uppermost white divine valley in the west (*nga lha dge dang 'o de sems dbyings nas / nup lha lung dkar-po 'i yang gong yin /*).²³

I am the *lha* sKu-*lha* dkar-po yang-ger (*lha sku lha dkar-po 'i yang-ger yin /*),

The white *lha* on the divine horse (*nga lha-rta gong nas lha dkar red /*), *Nga*, the white *lha* with many multi-colored fluttering cloths (*nga lha dkar-po dar-tshon shig-ge red /*).²⁴

There are thronging divine horses with white muzzles (*lha-rta kha-dkar nyig-se red /*).²⁵

{//}

{//}

From the apex of space, the blue *klu* valley in the west (*nup klu-lung sngon-po 'i gong-dbyings nas /*),

Nga, also from the peak of the multicolored *klu* castle (*nga klu-mkhar*

23 The signification of the first clause of this sentence is ambiguous. The reading presented here is only possible if 'o = 'od (resplendent).

24 That the god's cloths are many and in a dynamic state of movement are conveyed by the verb *shig-ge*. *Shig-ge* appears to be an archaic word retained in the sTod dialect, particularly by the spirit-mediums and bards (*sgrung-pa*). The non-lexical form *shigs se shig* appears in Tibetan prosody as a trisyllabic conveyor of movement at the termination of a line of verse. As a kind of *sgra-rgyan* (literally: 'sound ornament'), trisyllabic conveyors are employed as an embellishment, greatly enhancing the vibrancy and impact of verses in a variety of Tibetan literature. For examples of *shigs se shig* in *gsol-kha* texts dedicated to mountain gods, see Bellezza 2005, pp.230, 267, 271. Other examples of what appear to be archaic verbs in the recitations of Lhapa Samten (*nyig-se, nyi-le, kyi-le, dir-re, rong-se, thag-se*) are noted below. The use of such words as predicates is virtually unknown in Classical Tibetan, while the trisyllabic conveyors of color, sound and movement can be traced to Old Tibetan literature where they primarily appear in non-Buddhist ritual contexts. Historically speaking, the use of related verbified forms in sTod ritual speech readily admits of two hypotheses: these predicates either gave rise to the trisyllabic conveyors or were derived from them. A comparative linguistic study of trisyllabic conveyors in song and poetry and related predicates in the oral tradition of Upper Tibet may contribute to a better understanding of the historical development of Bodic verb morphology.

25 *Nyigs-se* is ostensibly an archaic verb conveying that objects are pressing or jostling against one another.

26 This set of brackets designates that an entire line of the recitation is largely inaudible in the recording. This line has something to do with summoning of a type of *lha*.

27 This line has something to do with a division of the *lha*.





khra-mo 'i yang rtse nas /),

Nga, there is a blue *klu* on a blue horse (*rta-sngon gong la klu-sngon zhig /*).

The blue *klu* has many fluttering {shoulder cloths}²⁸ (*klu sngon-mo {dpung-dar} shig-ge yod /*).

Nga, the horses of the *klu* are thronging.²⁹

{A gathering mass of multicolored sparks} ({*me-stag khra yi dpung-tshogs /*}).

Nga, from the apex of space, the red *btsan* valley in the west,

Nga, also from the summit of the multicolored *btsan* house (*nga btsan-khang khra-mo 'i yang steng nas*),

There is a red *btsan* on a red horse (*rta-dmar gong gi btsan-dmar zhig /*).

Nga, a red *btsan* with sparks spreading forth (*nga btsan dmar-po me-stag 'phro-le zhig /*),

His *btsan* horse with a rippling *btsan* banner (*btsan-rta la btsan-dar nyil-le zhig /*).³⁰

Nga, when the *btsan* army of India enters [me], a conflagration of the red *btsan* whirls around (*nga rgya-gar btsan-dmag zhugs yong dus / btsan-dmar-po 'i me-dpung kyi-le zhig /*).³¹

Nga, the *bstan* army with sparks spreading forth.

Nga, the warriors consolidate {the lineage of birth} (*nga rgod-po 'i {skye-rgyud} 'dzoms yong red /*).

Nga, these *lha* {are as much as that} (*nga lha de dag {de tsam yin}*).

Lhapa Samten continued to divulge the identities of the various deities that had possessed him, a colorful procession of mainly indigenous figures. The language employed was direct and lyrical, a vibrant form of poesy largely derived from the native tradition of composition interlarded with materials of Buddhist doctrinal and iconographic inspiration.

After various prophecies were proclaimed by the presiding god sKu-lha dkar-po yang-ger, the spirit-medium prepared for the removal of illness-causing contamination from the bodies of the patients. Before he began the '*jibs-sbyangs*', he announced the arrival of special deities that oversee this ritual technique. By

28 Bracketed words designate uncertain readings.

29 This is the incomplete translation of the line: *nga klu-rta kha {dar} nyig-se zhig /*.

30 The verb *nyi-le* conveys the movement of the banner slapping against itself in a strong wind. This verb is represented in the trisyllabic conveyor *nyi li li*. For the use of *nyi li li* in an Eternal Bon invocation to the *srid-pa 'i sgra-bla*, see Bellezza 2005, p.385.

31 What appears to be another archaic verb, *kyi-le*, is found in the trisyllabic conveyor of circular movement *kyi li li / khyi li li*. For the use of these three syllables in ritual prosody, see Bellezza 2005, pp.266, 320, 459; 2008, pp.333, 432.



the end of this recitation Lhapa Samten was barking like a dog:

Ngā, know (*mkhyan*) the sucker cleanser (*'jib-sbyang*) Pho-gdong ro-gpo (a black wolf).

Come sucker army with the gathering mantle of resplendence (*'jib-dmag 'od-snang thib-se shog /*).³²

I will not do many sucking procedures (*nga mang-po'i 'jib-sbyang las ni min /*).

Ngā, come sucking conduit with the attending *lha* (*ngā 'jib-rkang lha la brten nas shog /*).

Ngā, come sucking conduit with the attending *klu*.

Nga, klu {...}.

Ngā, come *klu* army with a thundering thunderous sound (*ngā klu-dmag 'ur-sgra dir-re shog /*).³³

Ngā, come sucker cleanser red wolf (two times).

Yā, come sucker cleanser red wolf.

The last part of the possession-state was the withdrawal of the deities from Lhapa Samten's mind and body. This occurred right after the *'jibs-sbyangs* was completed. As in other sequences of the trance ceremony, Lhapa Samten, as the mouthpiece of the deities, declaimed precisely what activities were taking place in a divine world invisible to humans. Here he advertised the retreat of the various *lha*, *klu* and *btsan* as they left his body. During these recitations the interlocutor (*bka'-lung*) thanked the deities for their participation. Lhapa Samten's voice trailed off until it was completely inaudible. Presumably, this shift from the articulated to complete silence corresponded to the very last deities of the trance ceremony returning to their divine abodes. The last spirits to leave the ritual venue were the *btsan* army of India. Once all the spirits were gone from his body, it could once again become the vessel of Lhapa Samten's personal consciousness:

Yā, know the *lha* army with the gathering masses of chiefs and retainues (*yā lha-dmag gtso-'khor thib-se mkhyen /*).

{*Yā*}, the *lha* army {of the divine queen snow lion}.

Yā, nga, when the *lha* army of India is moving (*yā nga rgya-gar lha-dmag bskyod dus de /*),

Yā, the superior *lha* are standing erect in rows in the sky (*yā lha gong-*

32 The verb *thib-se* (amassing, thickly gathering; as in clouds or fog) is represented in the trisyllabic conveyor *thibs se thib*. For instances of this non-lexical ornament in Tibetan literature pertaining to deities, see Bellezza 2005, pp.184, 189, 245, 359.

33 *Dir-re* (thundering) is a verb represented in the trisyllabic conveyor *di ri ri*. For examples of this trisyllabic conveyor, see Bellezza 2005, pp.266, 290, 320.



ma gnam la rong-se yod /).³⁴

Yā, nga, there are blue rainbows meandering along the earth (*yā nga 'ja'-tshon sngon-mo sa la 'khyugs /*).

Yā, nga, the *klu* army of India is going (*yā nga rgya-gar klu-dmag phebs-le red /*).

Yā, between both {...} rainbows.

Yā, nga, the *btsan* army of India is going.

Yā, there is a {white *lha*} on a white horse (*yā rta-dkar gong la {lha-dkar} zhig /*).

Yā, the superior *lha* with the rippling banner (*yā lha gong-ma dar-tshon shig-ge red /*).

Yā, there is a blue *klu* on a blue horse.

Yā, the blue *klu* with the shoulder cloth *thibs se thib* (*yā klu sngon-mo dpung-dar thibs se thib /*).³⁵

Yā, nga, there is a red *btsan* on a red horse,

Yā, the red *btsan* with sparks spreading forth (*yā btsan dmar-po me-stag 'phro-le de /*).

{///}

{///}

Yā, the eighty adepts of India (*yā rgya-gar grub-chen brgyad-cu de /*).

Yā, nga, there is the *lha* army with clicking smacks [of the lips] (*yā nga lha-dmag rkan-sgra thags-se yod /*).³⁶

Yā, nga, I call upon the thousands of *lha* armies of India (*yā nga rgya-gar lha-dmag stong la 'bod /*).

{///}

{There are} thousands of divisions of *btsan* armies of India.

CONCLUSION

The spirit-mediumship of Lhapa Samten is a syncretistic affair where traditions of Tibetan and Indic pedigrees mingle freely with one another. Historically speaking, it appears that a body of archaic cultural lore interpenetrated by Buddhist practices and beliefs led to the composite phenomenon of spirit-mediumship we know today in Upper Tibet. The timeline involved in this is mixing and matching of disparate cultural traditions, however, is still hazy. We might hypothesize

34 The verb *rong-se* (placing erect in rows) is represented in *rongs se rong*. For an example of this trisyllabic conveyor, see Bellezza 2008, p.336.

35 *Thibs se thib* conveys that the cloth is a thick fluttering mass.

36 The verb *thag-se* (clicking, snapping, chattering) is represented in the trisyllabic indicator *thags se thag*. For this poetic embellishment, see Bellezza 2005, p.267.



that ancient Tibetan traditions were progressively eroded in favor of those of a Buddhist persuasion, but this is not likely to have been a simple linear process. The give and take of assimilation and retrenchment are liable to have been complex cultural historical themes in the constitution of spirit-mediumship. Sectarian and geographic factors may also have played a part in the loss of Bodic concepts and customs and the adoption of Indic variants over the course of the last millennium.

Whatever its precise origins and development, the spirit-mediumship of Upper Tibet, despite being threatened by a host of legal and social forces, has proven very resilient. The spirit-mediums continue to channel the gods for compelling reasons, for the health and well-being of individuals and communities are thought to hang in the balance. Cultural pride and faith in traditional methods of doing things certainly play a part in the continued existence of spirit-mediums as well. In this regard, they are a bridge between the sureties of the past and the ecological and cultural tumult of the present. As with many other traditions passed on orally from generation to generation in Upper Tibet, be it clan lore, territorial deity cults or local historical accounts, the survival of spirit-mediumship in the region is not assured. Nevertheless, as long as there are brave and able men and women such as Lhapa Samten, we have good reason to be optimistic about the fate of this hoary tradition.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Balikci, A. 2008. *Lamas, Shamans and Ancestors: Village Religion in Sikkim*, vol. 17, Brill's Tibetan Studies Library. Leiden: Brill.
- Bellezza, J. V. Forthcoming. *Death and Beyond in Ancient Tibet: Archaic Concepts and Praxis in a Thousand-year-old Illuminated Funerary Manuscript and Old Tibetan Funerary Documents of Gathang Bumpa and Dunhuang*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- _____. 2011. "The Liturgies and Oracular Utterances of the Spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet. An Introduction to their *bSang* Rituals", in *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 20, pp.5–31. Paris: CNRS.
http://www.himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/ret/pdf/ret_20_01.pdf
- _____. 2010. "gShen-rab Myi-bo: His life and times according to Tibet's earliest literary sources" in *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 19, pp.31–118. Paris: CNRS.
http://www.himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/ret/pdf/ret_19_03.pdf
- _____. 2008. *Zhang Zhung: Foundations of Civilization in Tibet. A Historical and Ethnoarchaeological Study of the Monuments, Rock Art, Texts and Oral Tradition of the Ancient Tibetan Upland*. Philosophisch-Historische Klasse Denkschriften, vol. 368. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- _____. 2005. *Calling Down the Gods: Spirit-mediums, Sacred Mountains and Related Bon Textual Traditions in Upper Tibet*, vol. 8, Brill's Tibetan Studies Library. Leiden: Brill.

- _____. 1997. *Divine Dyads: Ancient Civilization in Tibet*. Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.
- Berglie, P. A. 1980. "Mount Targo and Lake Dangra" in *A Contribution to the Religious Geography of Tibet* in *Tibetan Studies in Honour of Hugh Richardson. Proceedings of the International Seminar of Tibetan Studies, Oxford, 1979* (eds. M. Aris, Aung San Suu Kyi), pp.39–43. Warminster: Aris & Phillips Ltd.
- _____. 1978. "On the Question of Tibetan Shamanism" in *Tibetan studies presented at the Seminar of Young Tibetologists* (eds. M. Brauen and P. Kvaerne), pp.39–51. Zürich: Völkerkundemuseum der Universität Zürich.
- _____. 1976. "Preliminary remarks on some Tibetan "spirit-mediums" in Nepal" in *Kailash: A Journal of Himalayan Studies*, vol. iv, no. 1, pp.85–108. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar.
- Diemberger, H. 2005. "Female Oracles in Modern Tibet" in *Women in Tibet* (eds. J. Gyatso and H. Havnevik), pp.113–168. London: Hurst & Company.
- Ekvall, R. B. 1964. *Religious Observances in Tibet: Patterns and Functions*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Havnevik, H. 2002. "A Tibetan Female State Oracle" in *Religion and Secular Culture in Tibet, Tibet Studies II* (ed. H. Blezer), pp.259–288. Leiden: Brill.
- Norbu, Namkhai. 1995. *Drung, Deu and Bön. Narrations, Symbolic languages and the Bön tradition in Ancient Tibet* (trans. A. Clemente and A. Lukianowicz). Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.
- Macdonald, A. 1971. "Une Lecture des Pelliot Tibétain 1286, 1287, 1038, 1047, et 1290. Essai sur la formation et l'emploi des mythes politiques dans la religion royale de Sron-bcan sgam-po" in *Études Tibétaines dédiées à la mémoire de Marcelle Lalou* (ed. A. Macdonald), pp.190–391. Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve.
- Nagano, S. 2000. "Sacrifice and lha.pa in the glu.rol festival of Reb-skong" in *New Horizons in Bon Studies. Bon Studies 2. Senri Ethnological Reports 15* (eds. S. G. Karmay and Y. Nagano), pp.567–651. Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology.
- Nebesky-Wojkowitz, R. D. 1956. *Oracles and Demons of Tibet. The Cult and Iconography of the Tibetan Protective Deities*. Reprint, Kathmandu: Tiwari's Pilgrims Book House, 1993.
- Norbu, Namkhai. 1995. *Drung, Deu and Bön. Narrations, Symbolic languages and the Bön tradition in Ancient Tibet* (trans. A. Clemente and A. Lukianowicz). Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.
- Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark. 1978. "Tibetan Oracles in Dharamsala" in *Proceedings of the Csoma De Körös Memorial Symposium* (ed. L. Ligeti), pp.327–334. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.
- Rock, J. F. 1935. "Sungmas, the Living Oracles of the Tibetan Church" in *The National Geographic Magazine*, October, 1935, pp.475–486. Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society.
- Stein, R. A. 2003. "The indigenous religion and the *Bon-po* in the Dunhuang Manuscripts" in *The History of Tibet. The Early Period to c. CE 850. The Yarlung Dynasty* (ed. A. McKay), vol. 1, pp.584–618. London: Routledge Curzon.



- _____. 1972. *Tibetan Civilization*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- _____. *Tibetan Bulletin: The Official Journal of the Tibetan Administration*, July/August, 1992, pp.18–29 (*Nechung Marks Padmasambhava's Birth Anniversary, Ne-chung – "The State Oracle", History of Nechung Monastery and Mediums of Nechung*). Dharamsala: Department of Information and International Relations.
- Tucci, G. 1980. *The Religions of Tibet* (trans. G. Samuel). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Waddell, L. A. 1895. *Buddhism and Lamaism of Tibet. With its Mystic Cults, Symbolism and Mythology, and its Relation to Indian Buddhism*. Reprint, Darjeeling: Oxford Book & Stationery Company, 1992.





Lhapa Samten as the chief possessing god sKu-lha dkar-po yang-ger





Lhapa Samten as the red wolf helping spirit of the *'jibs-sbyangs* curative procedure





LAMAYURU (LADAKH) – CHENREZIK LHAKHANG THE BAR DO THOS GROL ILLUSTRATED AS A MURAL PAINTING

KRISTIN BLANCKE

According to a chronicle written by Bakula Rangdröl Nyima Rinpoche (Ba ku la rang grol nyi ma) in 1862,¹ Lamayuru monastery, built after Lotsawa Rinchen Zangpo passed through the region in the 11th century, originally consisted of five temples, one in each of the four directions and one at the centre, with statues and images belonging to the four classes of tantra, and countless paintings. After the Dogra invasions of Ladakh between 1834 and 1842, the original buildings were all but destroyed, and all the artefacts looted or, if impossible to carry away, smashed to pieces. In his chronicle Bakula Rangdröl Nyima describes his anguish and utter incredulity at the destruction of a formerly blessed and thriving monastery; he narrates how he had to go begging to accumulate enough money to rebuild the monastery and re-establish the monastic community.

Here I would like to draw the attention to one rarely visited but very interesting temple in Lamayuru: the Chenrezik Lhakang, rising by the side of a thicket of willows in the northern section of the monastic compound, between the monastery kitchen and the small monks' school.

According to local sources, the location of this hall corresponds to the original site of the northernmost of the five temples.² The reconstruction and decoration of this temple seems to have been a project particularly dear to Rangdröl Nyima. The temple dedicated to Chenrezik (Avalokiteshvara) is used mainly when people congregate there to recite one hundred million Chenrezik mantras,³ especially in the first fifteen days of the Tibetan year and for one week during summer.

- 1 This unpublished chronicle, entitled *g.yung drung dgon dang po ji ltar chags rabs dang da ltar ji ltar gnas tshul gyi rnam dbye bi dza har tisma* is mentioned in Vets & Van Quaille, "Lamayuru, the symbolic architecture of light", p 87. It is being translated by K.H. Everding. Bakula Rangdröl Nyima was the abbot of Lamayuru monastery. The dates of his birth and death are unknown, but he was a contemporary of Tsültrim Nyima (1796-1872) of Rizong monastery, and the two worked closely together.
- 2 Lama Könchok Rigzin of the Central Institute of Buddhist Studies (CIBS) in Choglamsar has provided me with some of the stories related to the Chenrezik Lhakang.
- 3 Ma ni dung sgrub, a collective practice done inside a temple, in which each participant recites the six syllable mantra Om Ma Ni Pad Me Hung from morning till evening for consecutive days; every evening the number of mantras recited by all the people is counted and the practice goes on until one hundred million mantras have been accumulated.





The main feature in the hall is a large eleven-headed and thousand-armed Chenrezik statue. A local informant told me that Bakula Rangdröl Nyima commissioned the paintings in the hall so as to instruct his people about what it takes to become a Buddha (the south-east wall at the sides and above the main entrance is covered with detailed mural paintings of the Jataka tales and the life of the Buddha) and the way to get there through the devotional practice of Avalokiteshvara.⁴ On the north-west wall, on the left near the door to the inner sanctum, there is a beautiful although very damaged painting of Avalokiteshvara, with rays of light emanating from his heart to each of the six realms of samsara in order to eliminate the suffering of all beings. The mural paintings on the right hand side (north-eastern direction), representing the visions one has during the intermediate state (*bar do*) between death and rebirth—which form the subject matter of this paper—follow the same rationale: they show how one can manage not to fall back into one of the six realms after death, and become enlightened instead.

My reasons for writing this paper are twofold: first, these murals depicting the intermediate state between death and rebirth seem to be unique in the Tibetan world. Nowhere else have I seen a complete representation of the imagery related to the *Bar do thos grol* literature, including all the details of the visions experienced by a deceased person before he arrives at the point of choosing his next incarnation. Mural paintings of the peaceful (*zhi*) and wrathful (*khro*) deities, especially of the main *zhi khro* deities, are found in many temples, either as a cycle of independent images, or, as for example in the Lukhang Temple behind the Potala in Lhasa,⁵ in a particular context referring to the *bar do* practice of the inner yogas. Professor

4 From an interview with Lama Könchok Gyatso in Lamayuru (June 2009) I learned that Rangdröl Nyima, while devoting all his efforts to rebuild the entire monastery, was particularly interested in the Chenrezik Temple because he had a very strong personal connection with Avalokiteshvara. From Lama Könchok Rigzin I heard that, while staying at Tritapuri during his pilgrimage to Mount Kailash, Rangdröl Nyima had apparently received an object with the Chenrezik mantra from a naga, and this has been put inside the main statue in the temple.

5 See Winkler, *The rdzogs chen Murals of the Klu Khang in Lhasa*: ‘Dividing the paintings on the northern wall on the second floor of the temple in 5 sections, section 3 is called “Peaceful and Wrathful Deities”. In this section is painted the whole cycle of peaceful and wrathful deities, while one yogin is seen meditating, which would suggest that he is meditating on the *zhi khro* deities as part of the practice on the *bar do* as contained in the *rdzogs chen kun bzang dgongs ’dus* “The Great Perfection, the Gathering of Samantabhadra’s Intention”, a tantra discovered by tertön O rgyan Padma gling pa that seems to be a source for the decoration of the northern section of the kLu khang.” Some of the images in the Lükhang murals may be seen in Baker & Laird, *The Dalai Lama’s Secret Temple*, p.73 and pp.93-94.





Tucci also speaks of one small temple at Chang in Upper Kinnaur, where the cycle of the *naraka*—infernal deities—is painted.⁶ But nowhere have I seen explicit illustrations of the *Bar do thos grol chen mo* ('Great Liberation through Hearing'). That this teaching cycle was known in Ladakh is not surprising considering that by the 18th century the cycle of *Kar gling zhi khro* texts⁷ had spread all over the Tibetan world,⁸ especially in the Nyingma and Kagyü lineages. These teachings were very popular in Bhutan, and we can imagine that from there they could have easily reached Ladakh through the Drukpa Kagyü lineages, or they could have spread from the Drigung Kagyü monasteries in Western Tibet. But the popularity of these teachings is not enough to explain why exactly they have been represented on a wall in Lamayuru. It took a special and unusual teacher such as Bakula Rangdröl Nyima to have them painted as a mural. If it is true that these paintings are unique, they are very precious and well worth illustrating, even if they are relatively recent and not so interesting from an art-historical point of view.

Secondly, the wall paintings are in a bad state of conservation. I must say first of all that the photographs used in this paper are outdated. The overview of the complete painting, as well as many details from Hilde Vets' pictures, was taken in 1995. In the last few years there has been a minimal intervention by the Archaeological Survey of India to secure the building: some earth has been put on the roof to avoid leakage, the walls have been secured, the cracks and holes have been filled with mud. For the time being, the paintings are safe. I hope that an analysis of the significance of these murals, and the originality with which the subject matter has been approached, may eventually encourage a more durable restoration.

Regarding the time of construction and decoration of the temple, from one inscription in the temple we learn that the Chenrezik Lhakhang was built and decorated in the 'year of the horse' a favourable year to go on pilgrimage to Mount Kailash. Most probably this must have been either 1846/1847 or 1858/1859.⁹

6 See Tucci, *The Temples of Western Tibet*, pp.122-140. Tucci (p.136) remarks that in Western Tibet he came across two thangkas depicting this cycle of deities, and he supposes that the fact that the region was under the influence of the Drugpa Kagyü school, in which this cycle of the *narakas* seemed to enjoy special diffusion, may explain its popularity in Western Tibet and Upper Kinnaur. I think that may hold true also for Ladakh.

7 A collection of texts started with a *gter ma* text hidden by Padmasambhava and revealed by the treasure discoverer (*gter ston*) Karma Lingpa in the 14th century, called *Zab chos zhi khro dgongs pa rang grol* (The Peaceful and Wrathful Deities: a profound teaching, natural liberation through [recognition of] enlightened intention).

8 See Cuevas, *The Hidden History of the Tibetan Book of the Dead*, p.24.

9 On the right hand side near the entrance door to the Chenrezik Lhakhang (southeast direction) there is a small image of Mount Kailash, with three lamas admiring the sacred mountain. According to Lama Könchok Gyatso, this picture was made because the caretaker of the temple wanted to on a pilgrimage to the Mount Kailash in the year





As to the painter(s) of the images, we unfortunately have no clues.¹⁰

The Bar do Paintings on the North-east Wall

As mentioned above, the subject matter of the paintings on the northeast wall concerns the experiences that a deceased person goes through during the different

of the horse (most probably either 1846/1847 or 1858/1859), but he did not receive permission to do so because he had to take care of the ongoing decoration works in the temple. As a reward for his efforts he received permission to have an image of the Kailash painted on the wall, as explained in the inscription near the mountain. This reads as follows:

gtsug lag khang 'di'i lha tshogs bzhengs skabs dbyar thog lnga'i ring la bza' btung long spyod kyi bzhes pa'i do(ngo?) 'dzin khur len du seng ge sgangs pa'i tshe ring rgya mtsho bsdad del lhag bsam rnam par dag pa'i sgo nas dge ba'i 'brel bar lus ngag yid gsum bkol ba ni| dal 'byor gyi mi lus la snying po len pas skal pa che| rta lor gangs ti se'i gnas sgo'i mjal kha sleb nas dad ldan pho mo mang po gnas skor du song yang tshe ring rgya mtsho'i rta lo'i chos skal gang ri chen po ti se'i sku'i bkod pa 'di ru bzhengs pa yin| de hi ma la ya zhes yul nyi shu rtsa bshi'i ya gyal dang yang 'khor lo sdom pa'i pho brang rgyal bas lung bstan pa'i yongs grags kyi gnas khyad par can gang gyi rna bar thos tshad ngan song med pa sogs kyi phan yon che ba dang|sku'i bkod pa 'di mig gi mthong tshad gangs ri chen po dngos su mjal ba khyad par med pa mdo nas gsungs so|

While the [images of the] deities in this temple were being created, for the duration of five summers, Tsering Gyatso from Sengé Sgangspé's (Seng ge sgangs pa'i) [family] remained there, taking responsibility as caretaker for providing food and drinks. Engaging body, speech and mind in the practice of virtue in the purest possible way, this gave him the great fortune to use his precious human body with all its possibilities in its most meaningful way. When in the year of the horse the ideal opportunity arose for meeting the holy place of the Tise Snow Mountain, many faithful men and women went on pilgrimage; yet for Tsering Gyatso his portion of Dharma in the year of the horse was seeing to this composition of the image of the great Tise snow mountain right here. It is the foremost of the twenty-four holy places in the so-called Himalayas, and as prophesized by the Buddha it is the palace of Chakrasamvara. Whoever hears about this very special, universally famous holy place will obtain great benefits, such as not taking rebirth in the lower realms. Seeing this image with one's own eyes is no different from actually meeting the great Snow Mountain itself; thus it is said in the sutras (translation by the author).

- 10 Pallis, (*Peaks and Lamas*, p.241.) suggests that the figure compositions are 'probably mostly by Rigzin', a very famous painter from Khalatse identified by Lo Bue ('Lives and Works', pp.354-58) as Tsewang Rindzin (Tshe dbang Rig 'dzin), who was active in Lamayuru between the late 1920s and early 1930s. However, Pallis's and Lo Bue's suggestion that this painter may have been responsible for the decoration in this temple should be discarded on chronological grounds, though Tsewang Rindzin may well have worked in Lamayuru after the decoration of the Avalokiteshvara shrine had been completed.





stages between the moment of death and the start of a new life. From the *Bar do thos grol chen mo*,¹¹ known in the west as ‘The Tibetan Book of the Dead’,¹² one learns that from the moment of death the deceased will have to pass through three intermediate states (*bar do* in Tibetan), during which he will have a series of experiences that will bring him, after forty-nine days, to a new incarnation in one of six possible existences: as a god, a demi-god, a human being, an animal, a hungry ghost, or a hell-being. If a spiritual guide reads the text to the deceased person day by day, pointing out the kinds of visions that he will experience, and if the deceased is able to follow the indications given to him, there is a possibility that during this intermediate period he will be liberated from the cycle of conditioned existence, or that he will be able to choose to reincarnate in a place auspicious for his further progress on the path towards liberation. Hence the second part of the title: *thos grol*, liberation through hearing.

The text describes the three *bar do* states experienced after death: the intermediate state of the moment of death (*'chi kha'i bar do*), which starts at the time of death and ends with the manifestation of the ultimate nature of the mind; the intermediate state of ultimate reality (*chos nyid bar do*), in which the deceased experiences visions of deities, at first peaceful and, as time goes by, more and more wrathful and terrifying; and the intermediate state of becoming (*srid pa bar do*), with visions that will bring him to experience a new incarnation.

On our wall in Lamayuru all three phases are illustrated, and every detail is explained by an appropriate inscription.

Structure of the Mural Painting

The *bar do* mural, which is approximately 12 metres long and one and a half metres high, occupies the upper half of the wall; the lower section is painted in a plain brown colour.

11 The Tibetan title actually means ‘Great Liberation through Hearing in the Intermediate States’; this text is a guidebook for people who are dying.

12 The various Western editions of the so-called ‘Tibetan book of the Dead’ are in fact translations of a few chapters of the *Bar do thos grol chen mo*, which belongs to a greater cycle of texts known as *Zab chos zhi khro dgongspa rang grol*, namely ‘The Peaceful and Wrathful Deities: a profound teaching, natural liberation through [recognition of] enlightened intention’. There have been several editions and partial translations of the *Bar do thos grol chen mo*, but its first complete translation was by Gyurme Dorje (*The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, 2005). There the ‘Great Liberation through Hearing’ corresponds to the eleventh chapter.





Fig.1. Overview of the mural painting. Photo: Kaya Dorjay Angdus

Structurally, the wall painting is divided in two rows: the upper row, starting with the image of Küntuzangpo, shows all the peaceful deities, first one by one, then all together, and finally the five Vidyadharas with their entourage.

The lower row, starting from the left, first shows each of the main wrathful deities, one by one, then the row divides into two. Above, we can see the host of wrathful deities with their entourage and a first image belonging to the *srid pa bar do*, and below various images of the *srid pa bar do*.

Detailed Analysis of the Mural Painting

1. The Intermediate State of the Moment of Death (*'chi kha'i bar do*)¹³



Fig. 2: Küntuzangpo/Samantabhadrā with Küntuzangmo/Samatabhadri.
Photo: Kaya Dorjay Angdus

¹³ In the *Bar do thos grol chen mo* text which I have followed this first couple of deities is included in the *bar do* of the moment of death, and the *chos nyid bar do* starts after the mind regains consciousness (see below). In some Dzogchen lineages the appearance of these two deities is considered already as part of the *chos nyid bar do*; they represent the peaceful manifestation of the indivisibility of space and awareness, whereas Chemchog Heruka and his consort represent the wrathful aspect of the same wisdom (see Dzogchen Ponlop, *Mind Beyond Death*, p.175).



The first image in the upper left corner of the wall painting shows Küntuzangpo/Samantabhadra in sexual union with his consort, Küntuzangmo/Samantabhadri. They symbolize the union of emptiness and luminosity, the characteristics of the nature of mind. According to the *Kar gling zhi khro*, at the moment of death each of the physical elements of the body dissolves into one of the other elements (earth into water, water into fire, fire into air, air into consciousness) and, once this process is completed, a state of pure light, the true nature of mind—the union of emptiness and luminosity symbolized in the image of Samantabhadra and his consort—appears for a very short moment and, if recognized, brings one to liberation. This first image has no inscription.

2. The Intermediate State of Ultimate Reality (*chos nyid bar do*)

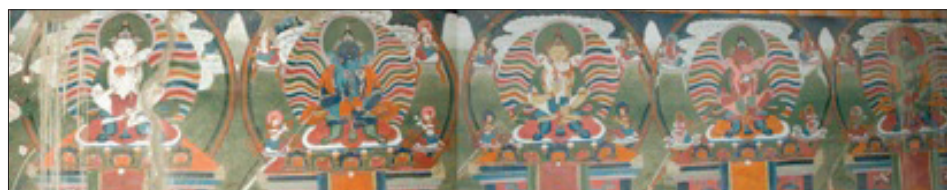


Fig. 3: Main Peaceful Deities: the Tathagatas Vairochana, Akshobya-Vajrasattva, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha, Amoghasiddhi. Photo: Kaya Dorjay Angdus

But this recognition is quite difficult; so, after the moment of clear light experience has passed, if it has not been recognized the deceased falls unconscious for three and a half days. When he regains consciousness he will have to continue and roam in the intermediate state of ultimate reality passing through a series of visual and auditory experiences. In a first phase he will be confronted with peaceful deities: day after day he will meet one of the five peaceful Tathagatas in sexual union with his consort. From the heart of each Tathagata a ray of pure, brilliant, dazzling primordial wisdom-light will reach the heart of the deceased, together with a ray of dull light from one of the six realms. In fact below each of the peaceful and wrathful deities on our mural there is the image of a deceased person confronted with two rays of light, one emanating from the heart of the deity, and the other from one of the six realms.



Figs. 4-5. The inscription below the Vairochana Buddha (appendix, inscription 1) reads, 'On the first day after regaining consciousness, from the central pure land [called] Pervasive Seminal Point appears the Tathagata Vairochana, in yab yum [with his consort].' The inscription for the wisdom light reads: 'light of dharmadhatu wisdom'; the light from the six realms is the 'white light of the god[s] realm'. Photo: Kaya Dorjay Angdus

The inscriptions afford the name of each pure land and of the corresponding Buddha, together with the name of the particular wisdom aspect generating from his heart and the colour of the light of the particular realm of conditioned existence associated with it. In the *Bar do thos grol* text the spiritual guide will read out the characteristics of each deity and encourage the deceased to recognize the vision as an aspect of his own nature. Instead of fleeing from it, he should unite with the light, thus obtaining liberation. If he instead follows the softer and less fearful light of one of the six existences simultaneously manifesting with each of the Peaceful Buddhas, he will end up reincarnating in one of the six conditioned worlds of existence.



Fig. 6. On the sixth day of the *chos nyid bar do* the five peaceful Buddhas appear together, each with his consort. On top: Küntuzangpo with Küntuzangmo and the Buddhas of the six realms; around: four female and four male gatekeepers. Photo: Kaya Dorjay Angdus



However, becoming liberated at this point is not easy, and it is more likely that the deceased will let the opportunities pass without doing anything, thus arriving at the sixth day of the *bar do* of ‘ultimate reality’, in which the five peaceful deities with their consorts appear together, surrounded by male and female guardians, simultaneously with the lights of the six conditioned worlds. If the deceased recognizes these visions as aspects of his own mind and unites with them he will be liberated.

Otherwise, on the seventh day of the *chos nyid bar do* the five Vidyadharas/Awareness-holders—highly realized beings—will manifest, surrounded by yoginis, dakinis and spiritual heroes. If these are recognized by the deceased, he will be liberated.



Fig. 7. The inscription (see Appendix, inscription 4) reads: ‘On the seventh day from the pure land of Khechara, the Vidyadhara deities come to meet [the deceased]. From the Vidyadharas appear the five consorts and around them, a numberless assembly of dakinis appears: those from the cemeteries, those of the four families, those of the three places, those of the twenty-four sacred places, along with male and female

warriors, protectors and guardians.’ Each Vidyadhara is identified by an inscription: rNam par smin pa’i rig ’dzin, Sa la gnas pa’i rig ’dzin, Tshe la dbang ba’i rig ’dzin, Phyag rgya chen po’i rig ’dzin, Lhun gyis grub pa’i rig ’dzin. A five-coloured light of co-emergent pristine cognition (*Lhan cig skyes pa’i ye shes*) emanates from the heart of each Vidyadhara and reaches the heart of the deceased, together with the green dull light of the animal realm (*dud ’gro’i ’od ljang-khu*).

Photo: Kaya Dorjay Angdus

After the visions of these peaceful deities, there follows a series of more terrifying experiences of wrathful deities. On the mural we now have to go to the second row of paintings, starting from the viewer’s left.



Fig.8. Main wrathful deities: Mahottara Heruka, Buddha Heruka, Vajra Heruka, Ratna Heruka, Padma Heruka and Karma Heruka, each with his consort. Photo: Kaya Dorjay Angdus

One after the other, we see the wrathful blood-drinking deities, each united with his mystical consort, and identified by an inscription, with the image of the deceased below each. Surprisingly, by contrast with the text in the *Bar do thos grol*, on this mural there are six deities: the first one representing Mahottara/Chemchok Heruka (Che mchog He –ru ka), the wrathful aspect of Küntuzangpo, is not mentioned in the text. In the *Bar do thos grol* text the visions experienced by the deceased are described as dreadful: very bright lights, very intense rays of light, and violent sounds. But the person guiding him will explain all details of these visions and will encourage the deceased not to be afraid and to become one with the deities. If he recognizes all those appearances as manifestations of his own mind, he will be liberated.



Fig. 9. The assembly of the fifty-eight wrathful deities with their entourage. Photo: Kaya Dorjay Angdus

After five more days the entire mandala of fifty-eight wrathful deities will manifest. Besides the Herukas, the female Gauris/Keurimas and Pishacis/Tramenmas (Phra men ma, with animal heads) now also appear, as well as the four female gatekeepers, and the twenty eight Ishvari goddesses, yoginis of the different directions with animal heads, and female and male guardians of the directions, each deity being identified by an inscription with her/his name (Appendix, inscription 5).





Figs. 10 and 11. Detail of 2 Keurima deities: Tseuri (Tse'u ri) and Tramo Marmo (Pra mo dmar mo); Figure 11: two Ishvari deities, yoginis of the southern direction: Gawa Marser (dGa' ba dmar gser) and Zhiwa Marmo (Zhi ba dmar mo).

Photo: Kaya Dorjay Angdus

3. The Intermediate State of Becoming (*srid pa bar do*)

However, if one is swept away by one's own fearful visions and does not recognize them as aspects of one's own mind, one will have to proceed to the third phase, the intermediate state of becoming. One will have experiences such as being persecuted by the demons of one's own karma, being pushed into a snowstorm or into pitch dark, and one's sole desire will be to flee.

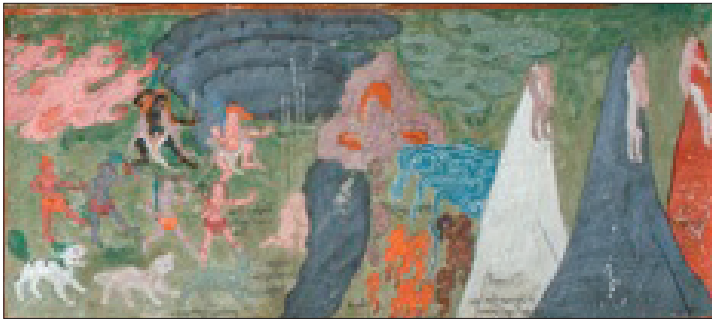


Fig. 12. First image of *srid pa bar do*. The inscriptions read: 'Many particular appearances arise: fierce winds, karmic flesh-eaters and cannibals brandishing many weapons, being followed by wild beast from the back, a very thick darkness in the front, hail storms, mountains collapsing, floods, blizzards, fire spreading, great winds, falling from a white, a black and a red mountain (Appendix, inscription 6). Photo: Kaya Dorjay Angdus

Then one's own visions will assume the appearance of the Dharmaraja Yama, the Lord of Death, flanked by a white god and a black demon, each exposing a heap of small pebbles, white or black according to the good or bad deeds committed by the deceased.





Fig. 13. Inscriptions on the slate of the monkey-headed assistant: ‘letter of white and black deeds’. Below: Yama, ‘the Dharmaraja, Lord of Death, sees the white and black deeds in his mirror’. Below: ‘the inborn god and demon assemble white and black pebbles’ (Appendix, inscription 7).

Photo: Kaya Dorjay Angdus

Looking in his mirror of karma, the Lord of Death will decide where the deceased is to be reborn, and the latter will be dragged there without being able to resist.

After all those terrifying appearances, the deceased will now want to find a place to take rebirth.



Fig. 14. Signs for places where the deceased is to take rebirth: lights of the six realms, and feeling of going up, sliding down or walking flat.

Photo: Kaya Dorjay Angdus

Lights from the six saṃsāric realms will manifest, the brightest one indicating in which realm the karma of the deceased will lead him to reincarnate, and he will have the impression that he has to ascend a mountain (in which case he will take birth in the higher realms) or to descend (in case of rebirth in the lower realms) or else to walk horizontally (in case of rebirth in the human realm). But he is constantly haunted by fearful visions from which he wants to escape. So when he sees a couple making love he will be tempted to enter into the womb of the woman, thus taking rebirth. At that point several instructions from the *Bar*





do thos grol are read to the deceased to allow him to avoid entering a womb and either to enable him to be liberated or, if that is not possible, to choose a kind of life that will allow him to progress on the path towards liberation.



Fig. 15. Appearances arise such as whirlwinds, blizzards, hailstorms, darkness (Appendix, inscription 8). In the right corner below a couple is making love and that is where the deceased is tempted to flee (I have not been able to decipher the inscription below the couple).

Photo: Kaya Dorjay Angdus

As the deceased will have now to choose a place for rebirth, it is very important that he receives advice on which to choose. So he will learn to recognize the signs of the four continents: the eastern continent has a lake with swans; the southern continent, Jambudvipa, where he should take rebirth, has nice mansions; the western continent has a lake with horses; and the northern continent has a lake with cattle and nice forests.



Fig.16. Image of the four continents. This portion of the paintings is badly damaged. Photo: Kaya Dorjay Angdus

Then there will be appearances of the five realms he should avoid: nice houses and temples for the gods' realm, a pleasant forest and wheels of light for the demi-gods' realm, rocky caverns, crevices and straw sheds wrapped in dense fog





for the animals' realm, tree stumps, black protruding silhouettes, blind desolate gorges or total darkness for the hungry ghosts' realm, and a land of darkness with red and black cubes, black earth pits and black roads for the hell dwellers' realms. The text in the inscriptions advises him not to enter there.



Fig. 17. Image of five unfavourable realms where the deceased should not take rebirth: gods' realm, demi-gods' realm, animals' realm, hungry ghosts' realm (Appendix, inscription 9) and hell (Appendix, inscription 10)

For example, the inscription for the hungry ghosts' realm reads:

As for the signs of taking birth as a hungry ghost, [one finds oneself] in empty plains and blind desolate gorges, or sees jungles and black worlds. One should not enter there.

And for the hell realm one reads (the inscription is not complete):

If one is to take birth in hell, hearing the song of those with bad karma one wants to enter [there]; appearances arise of arriving in a dark country, of red and black houses, and black holes in the earth and a black road. Pursued from the back and drawn from the front by executioners, in darkness and tumult, snow and rain and strong hailstorms and turbulent blizzards, one flees there; fleeing there one seeks refuge and liberation inside a mansion, a shelter, a cave, a dark forest, a lotus flower and so forth, thinking: 'Now I should not get out of here' and through attachment [to the chosen place] one will assume an inferior body and feel suffering...

Having thus avoided an unfavourable rebirth, in the end the moment will come in which one can no longer delay rebirth. The inscription on the mural gives a few instructions: avoid attachment and aversion, and pray to be able to take a new birth that will be beneficial to others. If that is not possible, then pray to the Three Jewels or Chenrezik and, taking refuge in them, be born as a human or god.





Fig.18. The inscription for the last image is as follows (Appendix, inscription 11): ‘If one is to take rebirth in an impure place, one will perceive a good smell from impure [objects] and, being attached to that, one will take birth. Therefore one should abandon attraction and aversion towards whichever appearance arises, and one should enter [a womb/a place] thinking: ‘May I assume the body of a fortunate person capable of benefiting all sentient beings.’ Ordinary beings who are not able to remain free from attachment and aversion in this way should call the Three Rare and Precious ones by name and take refuge in them and pray to the Great Compassionate One. Then they should enter the blue light of the human [realm], the white light of the gods’ [realm], nice houses and the like.’

Photo: Kaya Dorjay Angdus

Comparing the Bar do thos grol text and the Mural Painting bar do in Lamayuru

From the above detailed analysis of the different features in the mural painting, it can clearly be seen that all the aspects described in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* have been scrupulously represented here, with only minor differences such as the addition of Chemchok Heruka and slight variations in the judgment scene.

However, there are a few differences as far as the presentation is concerned. First of all, the *Bar do thos grol*, a manual to be read by a person guiding a deceased, is styled in the vocative form, addressing the deceased in the second person. This obviously does not hold for the mural. The function of the mural is to make people become familiar with the appearances that will manifest at the time of death. Therefore, rather than being presented in the second person, the inscriptions are put in an impersonal form and remain merely descriptive. Lama Könchok Gyatso suggested to me that the mural should be considered as a *bar do mthong grol* (‘liberation in the intermediate state through seeing’) rather than a *bar do thos grol* (‘liberation in the intermediate state through hearing’). In this sense the mural could be considered more similar to the *gos chen thang ka* tradition, in which a large brocade image of a deity, believed to bring liberation through seeing, is displayed to devotees on a particularly auspicious day.





Secondly, after studying the inscriptions in the mural it also becomes clear that these are much simpler than the instructions given in the *Bar do thos grol*. Of course it would be impossible to write the full descriptions from the text on a wall, but that is not the only reason: the few instructions given, such as those reported in Figure 18, are themselves much simpler than the ones proposed in the *thos grol* text, where plenty of references are made to quite complicated meditation instructions belonging to the Dzogchen and the Mahamudra lineages, which require a thorough training in those meditation systems before they can be applied during the *bar do*. It seems that the mural painting is addressed to a different kind of public: the paintings with their more sober descriptions can be readily understood by the general public viewing them, even without the preparation of years of meditation. To me that seems to indicate that the mural falls totally in line with the general purpose behind the paintings in the Chenrezik temple as outlined in the introduction of this paper: Bakula Rangdröl Nyima wanted to instruct ordinary devotees so that at the moment of death they could take advantage of what they had seen by visiting this unique temple.





APPENDIX:

On some inscriptions in the Mural Painting of the Bardo

So far I have not had the opportunity to note down all the inscriptions on the wall. Below are some of those I was able to make out from Chiara Bellini's pictures.

1) Vairochana (Figs 4-5), bottom-left of the image:

brgyal sangs pa dang zhag dang po la dbus phyogs thig le gdal ba'i zhing khams nas bcom ldan bdas rnam par snang mdzad yab yum 'char.

The inscription for the wisdom light reads: chos kyi dbyings kyi ye shes 'od; the light from the six realms is the lha'i 'od dkar po

2) Amitabha, bottom-left of the image, above the deceased and the rays of light: yi dvags kyi 'od

Below the deceased:

sor rtogs ye shes kyi 'od
zhag bzhi pa la nub phyogs bde ba can gyi zhing khams nas bcom lden bdas [written in contracted form] snang ba mtha' yas 'khor bcas 'char:

'On the fourth day from the western pure land of Dewachen the Tathagata Amitabha appears with his retinue.'

3) Amoghasiddhi, above the rays: lha min gyi 'od

Below the rays: bya sgrub ye shes kyi 'od.

4) Five Vidyadharas (Fig. 7).

Each Vidyadhara is identified by an inscription, mentioning also the light from the animal realm:

rnam par smin pa'i rig 'dzin| tshe la dbang ba'i rig 'dzin| phyag rgya chen po'i rig 'dzin| sa la nas pa'i rig 'dzin| lhun gyis grup pa'i rig 'dzin| dud 'gro'i 'od.

On the right of the painting we find the following inscription:

zhag bdun pa la dag pa mkha' spyod kyi zhing khams nas rig 'dzin lha tshogs rnam kyi bsu ba la ong ste; rig 'dzin las yum lnga dang de'i phyi rim na mkha' 'gro ma'i tshogs dpag tu med pa | dur khrod kyi mkhro| rigs bzhi mkhro| gnas sum gyi mkhro| yul nyi shu rtsa bzhi mkhro rnam dang| dpa' bo dpa' mo chos skyong srung ma dang bcas pa 'char|





5) Host of wrathful deities (Fig. 8):

“From the available pictures I was able to identify some of the deities, almost halfway through the two lines of the inscription; the order is the same as in the text, with only minor differences in spelling”.

First line:

ke'u ri| tse'u ri| pra mo dmar mo| pe ta li| pu ka si| kasma ri| tsan da li| sma sha li| sing ha|
bya kri mu kha| sri la mu kha| msho na mu kha| tri ta mu kha|...
tshangs ma sbrul mgo ma| lha chen| rtog 'dod ma

Second line:

gzhon nu dmar mo| brgya byin dkar mo| dga' ba dmar ser| zhi ba dmar mo| bdud rtsi dmar
mo| zla ba dkar mo| be con ljang nag| srin mo ser nag| zla ba ljang nag bya rgod mgo|
dbang ldan dmar nag| stobs can dkar mo| {srin} mo ser mo' dod pa dmar mo|...rdo rje ser
mo| rdo rje dmar mo| rdo rje ljang nag|

6) Karmic appearances in srid pa bar do (Fig. 12):

“rlung dmar| las kyi sha za srin po mtshon cha thogs pa mang po| gcan zan gyis rgyab nas
'ded pa| mdun nas shin tu 'thibs pa'i mun nag| ser ba babs pa| ri nyil ba| chu lud pa| bu
yug| me mched pa| rlung chen po| ri dkar po| ri nag po| ri dmar po gsum las lhung la 'khad
pa'i snang ba 'byung ngo|”

7) Judgment scene (Fig. 13), on the slate held by monkey-headed:

las dkar nag gi yi ge|

below: lhan cig skyes pa'i lha dang 'dres rde'u dkar nag 'du ba|

below Dharmaraja: shin rje chos kyi rgyal pos las dkar nag me long la gzigs pa|

8) Scene illustrating the need to block entrance into womb (Fig. 15):

“rlung 'tshub dang bu yug dang ser ba dang mun nag sogs kyi snang ba byung
(I was unable to decipher the inscription below the couple making love)”.

9) Signs of rebirth in the hungry ghosts' realm (Fig. 17):

yi dvags su skye ltas ni thang stong dang grog po phug rdugs dang gnang nags sing [sic
for nag seng?] dang nag gling du mthong| der mi 'jug pa dgos|
[in the Bar do thos grol text: yi dvags su skye na ni: sdong dum dang: nag breng nge ba
dang: grog po phugs sdugs sam: nag ling bar mthong ngo|





“If you are to take birth as an anguished spirit, you will see tree stumps, black protruding silhouettes, blind desolate gorges, or total darkness” (translation Gyurme Dorje, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, p.295).

10) Signs of rebirth in the hell realms (Fig. 17):

“dmyal bar skye na ni las ngan pa’i glu dbyangs su thos pa’am ’jug dgos pa’am|mun nag gling dang|khang pa dmar po dang nag po dang sa dong nag po dang| lam nag po la sogs par phyin pa’i snang ba byung| der kyang gshed mas rgyab nas ’ded cing mdun nas ’khrid pa dang| mun nag| ku sgra| kha char| ser drag| bu yug ’tshub cing| der bros pa’i snang ba byung| der bros te skyabs ’tshol du phyin pas| khang bzang ngam| brag skyibs| sa phug| nags seb| me tok padma la sogs pa’i nang du thar pas| da ’di nas phyir thon na mi rung ngo snyams ste chags pas gang men {sic for man} pa’i lus blang nas sdug bsngal myong ba...”

Comparison with the *bar do thos grol* text (Dharamsala edition, pp.245-247); the lines that are not reported on the mural painting are in italics.

dmyal bar skye na ni las ngan pa’i glu dbyangs su thos pa’am| dbang med du ’jug dgos pa byung na| mun nak gi gling dang| khang pa nak po dang| khang pa dmar po dang| sa dong nak po dang| lam nak po la phyin pa la sogs pa’i snang ba ong| *der phyin na ni dmyal bar tshud dé| tsha grang gi sdug bsngal bzod glags med pa smyong ste| thon pa’i dus mi ong bas| de’i gseb tu mi ’gro bar gzab par bya’o |ci nas kyang ma tshüd par bya’o|mngal sgo bkag nas ru log dran par bya’o| zhes gsungs pa de dus da res dgos pa yin no| kye rigs kyi bu| khyod mi ’gro bar ’dod kyang rang la dbang med par ’gro dgos pa dang|* mdun nas gshed ma dang srog gcod kyi khrid pa dang| mun nag dang| rlung dmar ’tshub ma chen po dang| ku dgra dang| kha char dang| ser ba dang| bu yug ’tshub cing bros pa’i snang ba khyod la ’ong ngo| der bred cing skyabs tshol ba la phyin pas|gong du bshad pa’i khang bzang sam|brag skyibs dang| sa phug dang| nags gseb dang| me tog padma la sogs kha zum pa’i nang du thar nas| *de na gab ste phyir thon gyi dogs nas| nga ’di nas phyir thon na ni mi rung ngo snam nas| de dang bral gyis dogs pas khyod gnas de la shin tu chags par ’gyur ro| de nas phyi rol tu thon na ni bar do’i ’jigs skrag de rnam dang phrad kyis dogs pas|* de dag la ’jigs shing dngangs pas nang du gab pas| gang nas man pa’i lus ngan pa cig blang nas| sdug bsngal rna tshogs nyams su myong tu ’ong bas....

Translation by Gyurme Dorje (*The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, pp.295-296):

If you are to take birth as a hell being, you will hear songs of those of negative past actions. Or, quite simply, you will feel powerless and compelled to enter. Whereupon, the perception will arise that you are moving into a land of darkness, where there are black and reddened houses, black earth-pits and black roads. Were you to be drawn to this place, you would enter the hells, and experience the [searing] unbearable sufferings of heat and cold. Be careful! Do not enter into the midst of this, for there will be no opportunity to turn back. Do not enter there, under any circumstances! As it is said [in the root verses]: ‘You must obstruct the womb entrances and call to mind the methods of reversal.’ These are [wholly] necessary now!





O, Child of Buddha Nature, although you do not wish to move forward, you are powerless not to do so. The avenging forces, who are the executors of the unfailing laws of cause and effect, will be pursuing you. You will have no choice but to move forward. Before you, the avengers and executors will be leading the way. The experience will arise of trying to flee from these forces, of trying to flee from the darkness, from the most violent windstorms, from the [thunderous] tumult, the snow, the rain, the hail and the turbulent blizzards, which swirl around you. [Frightened], you will set off to seek a refuge and you will find protection inside an enclosed space, such as within the mansions just described, or in rock-shelters, or holes in the ground, or amongst trees, or within the bud of a lotus flower. Hiding there, you will be very hesitant to come out, and you will think: 'I should not leave here now'. You will be very reluctant to be separated from this protected place and you will become utterly attached to it. Then, because you are so very reluctant to go outside, where you would be confronted by the fears and terrors of the intermediate state, you will, because of this fear and awe, continue to hide away. Thus, you will assume a body, however utterly bad that may be, and you will, [in time], come to experience all manner of sufferings...

11) Last image (Fig. 18):

“Mi gtsang ba'i khrod du skye ba zhig yin na ni| mi gtsang ba'i dri zhim pa'i 'du shes skyes nas der chags te skye bar 'gyur bas| de rnams kyi snang ba gang byung yang chags sdang spangs te| sems can thams chad kyi don byed nus pa'i bsod nams can gyi lus shig blang bar bya'o snyams nas 'jug pa las| de ltar chags sdang dang bral ma thub pa'i dbang po tha ma rnams kyis dkon mchog gsum gyi mtshan nas brjod cing skyabs su 'gro ba dang thugs rje chen po la gsol ba gdebs cing mi'i 'od sngon po dang lha'i 'od dkar po khang bzang la sogs la 'jugs dgos pas dge'o|”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My greatest thanks are to Prof. Erberto Lo Bue, who sent me the pictures of Chiara Bellini and Laura Jokisaari and encouraged me to work on this project. I thank Chiara and Laura for allowing me to use their pictures, and Hilde Vets for sending me her pictures and article. I thank Bakula Rangdröl Nyima Rinpoche who kindly allowed me to copy the chronicle of his predecessor and gave me some practical advice on how to proceed with my research. Further thanks to Lama Könchok Gyatso in Lamayuru who took the time to describe enthusiastically the personality and the endeavors of Bakula Rangdröl Nyima Rinpoche and who pointed out the image of Mount Kailash in the Chenrezik Lhakhang. Many thanks also to Lama Könchok Rigzin of the Central Institute of Buddhist Studies (CIBS) in Choglamsar who prepared a short text in which he gathered useful informations about the Chenrezik Lhakhang. I thank Kaya Dorjay Angdus who provided me with a new set of images of the mural painting. Final thanks to John Bray for editing my article.



REFERENCES

- Baker, Ian A. & Laird, Thomas, *The Dalai Lama's Secret Temple: Tantric Wall Paintings from Tibet*, London (Thames & Hudson), 2000.
- Cuevas, Bryan J., *The Hidden History of the Tibetan Book of the Dead*, New York (Oxford University Press), 2003.
- Dzogchen Ponlop, *Mind Beyond Death*, Ithaca (Snow Lion), 2008.
- Gyurme Dorje, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, London (Penguin Books), 2005.
- Lo Bue, Erberto, 'Lives and Works of Traditional Buddhist Artists in 20th Century Ladakh. A Preliminary Account', in John Bray, ed., *Ladakhi Histories. Local and Regional Perspectives*, Leiden and Boston (Brill), 2005, pp.353-378.
- Lo Bue, Erberto, 'Yama's judgement in the Bar do thos grol chen mo: An Indic Mystery Play in Tibet', *The Tibet Journal*, XXX,2, 2005, pp.9-25.
- Pallis, Marco, *Peaks and Lamas*, Delhi (Book Faith India), 1995 (rpt. ed).
- Tucci, Giuseppe, *The Temples of Western Tibet and their Artistic Symbolism the monasteries of Spiti and Kunavar* (Indo Tibetica III.1), New Delhi (Sata-Pitaka Series Vol. 349, Aditya Prakashan), 1988.
- Tucci, Giuseppe, *Il libro Tibetano dei morti (Bardo Tödöl)*, Torino (UTET), 1981 repr., Milano, SE, 1998.
- Vets, Hilde & Amandus Van Quaille, 'Lamayuru, the symbolic architecture of light' in Niels Gutschow, Axel Michaels, Charles Ramble & Ernst Steinkellner, eds., *Sacred Landscape of the Himalaya. Proceedings of an International Conference at Heidelberg 22-27 May, 1998*, Vienna (Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften), pp.85-94.
- Winkler, Jakob, 'The rDzogs chen Murals of the Klu Khang in Lhasa', in Henk Blazer, ed., *Religion and Secular Culture in Tibet, Tibetan Studies 2*, Proceedings of 9th seminar IATS, Leiden (Brill), 2002, pp.321-44.
- zab chos zhi khro dgongs pa rang grol las bar do thos grol gyi skor ba bzhugs so*, Dharamsala (Tibetan Cultural Printing Press), 1992.





AN INTRODUCTION TO MUSIC TO DELIGHT ALL THE SAGES, THE MEDICAL HISTORY OF DRAKKAR TASO TRULKU CHÖKYI WANGCHUK (1775-1837)¹

STACEY VAN VLEET,
Columbia University

On the auspicious occasion of their 50th anniversary celebration, the Dharamsala Men-tsee-khang published a previously unavailable manuscript entitled *A Briefly Stated Framework of Instructions for the Glorious Field of Medicine: Music to Delight All the Sages*.² Part of the genre associated with polemics on the origin and development of medicine (*khog 'bubs* or *khog 'bugs*), this text – hereafter referred to as *Music to Delight All the Sages* – was written between 1816-17 in Kyirong by Drakkar Taso Trulku Chökyi Wangchuk (1775-1837).³ Since available medical history texts are rare, this one represents a new source of great interest documenting the dynamism of Tibetan medicine between the 18th and early 19th centuries, a lesser-known period in the history of medicine in Tibet. *Music to Delight All the Sages* presents a historical argument concerned with reconciling the author's various received medical lineages and traditions. Some

- 1 This article is drawn from a more extensive treatment of this and related 18th and 19th century medical histories in my forthcoming Ph.D. dissertation. I would like to express my deep gratitude to Tashi Tsering of the Amnye Machen Institute for sharing a copy of the handwritten manuscript of *Music to Delight All the Sages* with me and for his encouragement and assistance of this work over its duration. This publication was made possible by support from the Social Science Research Council's International Dissertation Research Fellowship, with funds provided by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.
- 2 *Dpal ldan gso ba rig pa'i man ngag gi khog 'bubs [phub] bsdus don nyung ngu'i ngag gi gtam du bya ba drang srong kun tu dgyes pa'i rol mo* (Brag dkar ba 2012). The extant manuscript, written in short-form “headless-letter” calligraphy (*tshugs thung dbu med*), appears to be complete in 67 double-sided folios. N.B. Although the original manuscript reads *khog phub*, the Men-Tsee-Khang book edition has rendered this with the more common spelling *khog 'bubs*. Yangga (2010) has translated *khog 'bubs* as “pitching (building) a framework,” while Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho 1970 and Desi Sangye Gyatso and Kilty 2010) analyses his variant spelling *khog 'bugs* as “piercing the interior,” leading Schaeffer (2003) to render the term as “interior analysis.” Brag dkar rta so sprul sku does not elaborate on his choice of spelling; he does, however, perpetuate the difference in spelling between his own title and Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's work within this manuscript.
- 3 This article follows the Tibetan and Himalayan Library (THL) system of phonetic transcription for Tibetan terms. For their equivalencies in Wylie transliteration, see Glossary.





of these had been at odds in the past, both hermeneutically and politically. In particular, Drakkar Taso Trulku (or Drakkarwa) foregrounds the *Great Vase and Small Vase of Nectar* (*Bdud rtsi bum pa che chung*), a set of revelatory medical “treasure” texts (*gter*) associated with both his home region of Kyirong and the Jang treasure tradition (*Byang gter*). Drakkarwa’s account draws attention to the prominence of these cycles – the medical treasures and their supplementary texts – between the 16th-19th centuries. Through his own medical activities and writings, Drakkar Taso Trulku seeks to propagate the *Great Vase and Small Vase of Nectar* as a regional system.

Thanks to the sponsorship of new translations, publications and institutions by the Fifth Dalai Lama Ngakwang Lobzang Gyatso (1617-1682) and his regent and political successor Sanggyé Gyatso (1653-1705) in Lhasa, the 17th century has become recognized as a “golden,” “classical” or even “early modern” period for Tibetan medicine.⁴ The impact of these medical projects beyond their time has often been taken for granted, however, with a straight line being drawn between the medical monastery at Chakpori (founded by Desi Sanggyé Gyatso in 1696 and known by its location, the “Iron Mountain” in Lhasa) and its successor institution the Mentsikhang or Institute of Medicine and Astrology founded in Lhasa under the Thirteenth Dalai Lama in 1916.⁵ In fact, the more than two hundred intervening years were characterized by significant developments and dissent in the field of medicine, deriving not least from the increasing flow of knowledge and trade along routes paved by the *pax Manjurica*. These developments, including a significant number of new Gelukpa medical colleges (*sman pa grwa tshang*) in Amdo, Mongolia, and Beijing, and the influential medical lineage of Situ Panchen Chökyi Jungné (1700-1774) from Kham, have received comparatively little attention, at least within European-language scholarship.⁶ As Tashi Tsering notes in his introduction to the printed edition of *Music to Delight All the Sages*, it has also previously been

4 See Meyer 1992, Meyer 2003, Gyatso 2004, and Gyatso 2011.

5 As in Rechung 1973, one of the earliest and most influential European-language historical overviews of Tibetan medicine. Taube (1981, p.77) further argues, based on available sources, that the creative period of Tibetan medicine ended at the latest with the 17th century.

6 As Blezer, et. al. (2007) discuss, scholarly treatments of the history of Tibetan medicine remain few and far between. However, these authors do not include the period between the early 18th and early 20th centuries in their important compilation of *desiderata* in this field. Contemporary Tibetan and Mongolian authors, on the other hand, have paid significant attention to the 18-19th century spread and development of Tibetan medicine outside Central Tibet. These sources will be reviewed in my forthcoming dissertation. For brief but important discussions, see Meyer 1992, Gyatso 2004, and Chen Hua 2008. On the medical activities of Si tu paN chen, see Ehrhard 2000 and Garrett forthcoming.





difficult to determine which famous medical practitioners and new texts became familiar amongst all the far-flung Tibetan and neighboring areas at this time.⁷

Music to Delight All the Sages details a variety of medical teachings, practices, and new compositions in the Tibetan language that circulated widely during the 18th-19th centuries, within a network that connected Drakkar Taso Trulku's Himalayan border region in southwestern Tibet with Nepal, Bhutan, Central Tibet (*Dbus gtsang*), and regions further north and east. In the wake of the Fifth Dalai Lama and Desi Sanggyé Gyatso's project of cultural and political centralization, however – a project notable for its “controlled inclusiveness” – new articulations of productive dissent also emerged.⁸ While Drakkar Taso Trulku expresses admiration for these predecessors' achievements in the field of medicine and more broadly, he also questions Desi Sanggyé Gyatso's influential narrative of Tibetan medical history. Desi Sanggyé Gyatso had designed a Tibetan Buddhist medical synthesis based on the integration of the Nyingma (or Early Translation) tradition and its Great Perfection vehicle into his own Gelukpa tradition. Drakkar Taso Trulku proposes a synthesis based instead on the hermeneutics of the “Other-Emptiness” (*gzhan stong*) view, which will be discussed further below.

DRAKKAR TASO TRULKU'S MEDICAL ACTIVITIES AND THE HERITAGE OF THE *GREAT VASE OF NECTAR*

Drakkar Taso Trulku Chökyi Wangchuk wrote substantially on medicine and its sister discipline of astrology (*rtsis*), but he is more widely known for mastering an eclectic range of Nyingma and Kagyü tradition teachings, as well as for his efforts to revitalize the religious and social life of southwestern Tibet. Drakkar Taso Trulku was born into the influential family lineage of a famous treasure-revealer from Kyirong, a district associated with the great saint Milarepa in the lower Mangyül area of Ngari bordering Nepal.⁹ He was recognized as the seventh throne-holder of the small monastery of Drakkar Taso by his great-uncle and primary teacher Rindzin [Karma] Trinlé Dūjom (1726-1789), and his candidacy was confirmed by the Thirteenth Karmapa Dūdül Dorjé (1733-1797).¹⁰ Drakkar

7 Tashi Tsering, Introduction in Brag dkar ba 2012, pp.xi-xii.

8 Dalton 2002, p.208.

9 Tashi Tsering, Introduction in Brag dkar ba 2012, pp.vi-vii.

10 Brag dkar rta so sprul sku's collected works will soon be published from a 10 volume manuscript in the collection of Slob dpon 'Gyur med at Nub ri Sa ma ga 'on monastery in Nepal. For a list of related biographical works within this *gsung 'bum* see Tashi Tsering, Introduction in Brag dkar ba 2012, pp.vii-viii. In this article I have relied upon the biographical summary of Brag dkar rta so sprul sku found in Ehrhard 2004 and related information in Ehrhard 2007 and 2008.



Taso Trulku's early experiences were shaped by the Sino-Nepalese War of 1788-1792, and he spent much of the rest of his life renovating temples and monasteries damaged in the war, managing publishing projects, writing and teaching. Drakkarwa's work to revitalize Kyirong and surrounding areas benefitted from his close ties to local rulers and families across southwestern Tibet, but also from farther afield, as indicated by a substantial donation he received from a Central Tibetan minister (*bka' blon*) and Qing amban conducting a regional inspection tour after the war's end.¹¹

Drakkar Taso Trulku cultivated an impressive network of relationships spanning the Tibetan cultural world, and in doing so received and redistributed a broad range of medical teachings and influences. Kyirong lay along a great route connecting Kathmandu and Lhasa, which served as a conduit for teachers and students, pilgrims and dignitaries, and not least of all smallpox epidemics. Drakkarwa himself travelled widely in southwestern and central Tibet as well as Nepal, seeking out rare texts and teachings along the way (such as the famous pharmacological work *Crystal Beads and Crystal Rosary* [*Shel gong shel 'phreng*] by Deumar Geshé Tendzin Puntsok (b. 1672) from Kham, who Drakkarwa considered one of the most influential medical scholars of the era). Drakkar Taso Trulku conducted correspondence with other medical practitioners, and medical students from as far as Mustang and Bhutan in turn came to visit in his home region.¹² According to the colophon, Drakkarwa wrote *Music to Delight the Sages* at the request of two of his close students and two other medical practitioners from Kyirong and the surrounding areas.¹³ Although there is no evidence of a xylographic edition, the author's autobiography indicates that his medical history also circulated well outside his home region. Around two years after its completion, Drakkar Taso Trulku met Zhapkar Tsokdruk Rangdröl (1781-1851), the lama of "great reputation" from northeastern Amdo (bordering China and Mongolia), who was traveling in Kyirong with his large entourage. Zhapkar received a reading authorization of *Music to Delight All the Sages* and is described as leaving Drakkarwa's company loaded with books.¹⁴

11 Ehrhard 2004, pp.93-94.

12 He addresses them variously as *tsho byed*, *sman pa grub chen*, and *gso rig 'dzin pa rnam*s. The letters are included in his collected works and provide fascinating sources for future study. See Tashi Tsering's Introduction to Brag dkar ba 2012, pp.ix-xi.

13 The requestors included Zhang po 'tsho mdzad rdo rje from Byams sprin in Skyid grong and La ldebs 'tsho byed tsho dbang dam chos, along with Brag dkar rta so sprul sku's students Tsho rig 'dzin pa blo gsal kar+ma phun tshogs and Shal smad rtsa phu ba rgyal po dar rgyas (Brag dkar ba 2012, p.106).

14 Ehrhard 2004, pp.101-102.



One of the most significant legacies from the Kyirong region that Drakkar Taso Trulku inherited was the medical treasure cycle *Great Vase of Nectar* (*'Chi med bdud rtsi bum pa* or *Gso byed bdud rtsi bum pa*). This cycle was discovered by the 11th century treasure-revealer Dorbum Chödrak, beneath a stone statue at the temple of Jamtrin in Kyirong.¹⁵ In the 16th century Drakkarwa's ancestor Rindzin Tennyi Lingpa discovered a treasure of his own at Jamtrin temple, and a century later Katok Rindzin Tsewang Norbu (1698-1755), the foremost teacher of Drakkar Taso Trulku's teachers, received a vision there as well, making it a site of ongoing importance in the region.¹⁶ It seems that Accomplishing Medicine (*sman sgrub*) ceremonies connected to the *Great Vase of Nectar* flourished especially in the Kyirong region between the 16th and 17th centuries, when they were performed by Chöwang Gyeltsen (1484-1549) at Kyirong Jamtrin temple, by the Third Yolmowa Trulku Tendzin Norbu (1598-1644) at Kyirong Pakpa temple, and by the treasure-finder Garwang Dorjé Nyingpo (1640-1685) in the nearby Kharbang valley of Ladep. Drakkar Taso Trulku and his teacher Mengom Chöjé (see below) carried on this legacy when they performed a large Accomplishing Medicine ceremony in 1804, resulting in the production and consecration of medicinal substances.¹⁷ According to Drakkarwa's autobiography, the significance of this event was comparable to the rituals of his three predecessors.

The *Great Vase of Nectar* and its supplementary works constitute both an important tantric cycle and a major medical corpus, covering topics related to diagnosis and practical therapies including intestinal disorders, children's illnesses and smallpox. Drakkar Taso Trulku wrote his own "daily practice" (*rgyun khyer*) text to accompany the *Great Vase of Nectar*, presumably in connection with a teaching on this body of work that he gave at Drotang in 1827 to a large group of students.¹⁸ Drakkar Taso Trulku also passed down a number of original medical compositions, on topics including eye surgery and treatments (*mig 'byed* and *mig bcos*), mercury purification and "extracting the essence" (*dngul 'gyogs 'dul gyi lag len* and *bcud len*), astrology (*rtsis*), and supplements for various tantric medical practices (*sman bla'i sgrub thabs*, *G.yu thog gsol 'debs*, etc.). He began writing *Music to Delight All the Sages* in 1816 and completed the medical history

15 For a history, outline and summary of the *Great Vase and Small Vase of Nectar* (i.e., the *Great Vase of Nectar* and its supplementary works), see Desi Sangye Gyatso and Kilty 2010, p.177-189.

16 On Brag dkar ba's family connection to Byams sprin, see Ehrhard 2004, pp.103. On the vision received by KaH thog rig 'dzin here, see Ehrhard 2008, p.21 fn. 11.

17 Ehrhard 2004, p.96. On *sman sgrub* literature and practice, see Garrett 2009 and 2010.

18 Ehrhard 2004, p.104. Brag dkar ba's works related to *sman* and *rtsis* are listed in Tashi Tsering's Introduction to Brag dkar ba 2012, pp.ix-xi.





on the eighth day of the new Fire-Ox year (1817).¹⁹ Together, Drakkar Taso Trulku's medical activities, writings, and correspondence reveal his commitment to propagating the *Great Vase of Nectar* system as well as his openness to incorporating new practices and techniques. Within his medical history, Drakkar Taso Trulku addresses the tension inherent in reconciling these two goals.

DRAKKAR TASO TRULKU AND THE LEGACY OF CHAKPORI

Despite the importance of the *Great Vase of Nectar* in Kyirong, it seems that this medical treasure cycle only attained wider repute after its 16th century systematization by Jangdak Tashi Topgyel (1550-1603), lineage-bearer of the Jang treasure tradition. Jangdak Tashi Topgyel's supplementary teachings on the *Great Vase of Nectar* are collectively known as the *Small Vase of Nectar of the Jang Treasure Heart Practice* (*Byang gter thugs sgrub kyi bdud rtsi bum chung*) or the *White, Blue and Yellow Scrolls of the Jang Treasure Heart Practice* (*Byang gter thugs sgrub kyi shog dril dkar sngo ser gsum*) – in short form, the *Small Vase of Nectar*. Jangdak Tashi Topgyel lived through a turbulent period, fleeing his home in Jang (western Tibet) to propagate the Jang treasure tradition teachings in Chonggyé (southeast of Lhasa). Under his successors, however, this tradition regained strength and built a new home at Dorjé Drak monastery with assistance from the Fifth Dalai Lama.²⁰ Jangdak Tashi Topgyel's *Great Vase and Small Vase of Nectar* redaction received considerable attention in both the record of the Fifth Dalai Lama's teachings received (*gsan yig*) and the 1703 medical history written by Desi Sanggyé Gyatso.²¹ This brought the system greater renown in Central Tibet, but is also a source of ambivalence for Drakkar Taso Trulku.

In its title, *Music to Delight All the Sages* clearly references *A Feast to Delight the Sages* (*Dpal ldan gso ba rig pa'i khog 'bugs legs bshad bayDUrya'i me long drang srong dgyes pa'i dga' ston*, better known today by the short title *Beryl Mirror*), the medical history written by Desi Sanggyé Gyatso as a sort of charter for his new medical institution at Chakpori, and regarded by scholars today as a touchstone of the genre.²² Within *A Feast to Delight the Sages*, Sanggyé Gyatso explicitly sought to combine and codify an exhaustive catalog of prior Tibetan

19 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.106.

20 See Dalton 2002 (Chapter 4) for an important discussion of the Byang gter tradition and its relationship with the Fifth Dalai Lama. The Byang gter tradition should not be confused with the Byang lugs medical tradition; more will be said about this below.

21 Ehrhard 2008, pp.22, fn. 13.

22 On Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's medical history see in particular Gyatso 2004 and 2011, and Schaeffer 2003. Gavin Kilty has recently rendered a great service by translating this quite lengthy work into English (Desi Sangye Gyatso and Kilty 2010).





medical traditions. He presented himself as a successor of these, particularly the well-known Zur (*Zur lugs*) and Jang (*Byang lugs*) traditions that branched out during the 15th and 16th centuries, as well as the tradition of the *Great Vase and Small Vase of Nectar* and other medical treasure texts. Although subsequent medical histories have largely considered the reconciliation of Jang and Zur schools as the basis for his synthesis of medicine, the regent uniquely devotes many pages to an outline and summary of the *Great Vase and Small Vase of Nectar*, creating a prominent section within his medical history devoted to this Kyirong and Jang treasure tradition. Through his great medical monastery at Chakpori, Desi Sanggyé Gyatso planned to propagate a new authoritative medical tradition based on his own commentaries of the *Four Tantras* (*Rgyud bzhi*, by this time widely considered the “root text” of Tibetan medicine): the *Blue Beryl* (*bayDUrya sngon po*) and *Additional Instructions* (*Man ngag lhan thabs*). According to Drakkar Taso Trulku, a century later Chakpori had indeed become famous and its tradition had “not diminished”; he refers to Desi Sanggyé Gyatso as a “great tradition helmsman” (*shing rta chen po*) of all the fields of knowledge and medicine in particular.²³

Drakkar Taso Trulku also offers deep respect to the Fifth Dalai Lama, hierarch of the Gelukpa tradition, praising in particular the “Great Fifth’s” close ties to the Nyingma or Early Transmission tradition: his Nyingma teachers, personal Nyingma practice, sponsorship of Nyingma monasteries and sponsorship of medical works. With evident admiration, Drakkarwa describes how the Fifth Dalai Lama’s journey to China and establishment of the patron-priest relationship with the Jamyang (Qing) emperor enabled the “white umbrella” of the Buddhist doctrine – and especially the Gelukpa teachings – to cover China, Tibet, and Mongolia, spreading all the fields of knowledge including medicine.²⁴ Medicine in this narrative is part of a larger Tibetan Buddhist knowledge system that, because of the Fifth Dalai Lama-Qing relationship, flourished beyond its cultural borders and connected disparate regions and peoples. Moreover, Drakkar Taso Trulku generously characterizes this project as an inclusive one, although it had proceeded on Gelukpa terms.

In his direct criticism of the ensuing 18th century period, however, the stakes of Drakkar Taso Trulku’s writing become apparent. Problematic undercurrents to the Fifth Dalai Lama’s Gelukpa-Nyingma reconciliation had surfaced soon after

23 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.81, 78.

24 Quoting *A Feast to Delight the Sages* on the regions covered by the Fifth Dalai Lama’s teachings (*rgya bod hor*), Brag dkar rta so sprul sku also adds the term *sog*. He also further stresses the Fifth Dalai Lama’s ties to the Rnying ma and chastises other authors for not fully understanding this relationship (Brag dkar ba 2012, p.76).





the hierarch's death, bringing a series of conflicts that led to the death of Sanggyé Gyatso, and to broad destruction for the Nyingma tradition. Although Polhané Sönam Topgyé (1689-1747), who came to power in Lhasa as a temporal ruler via his alliance with the Qing, made an effort once again to patronize Nyingma teachers such as the afore-mentioned Katok Rindzin Tsewang Norbu, tensions continued to simmer up until Drakkarwa's time. The Eighth Dalai Lama (1758-1804) notably did not mix Nyingma with Gelukpa personal practice in the eclectic tradition of his influential predecessor.²⁵ Drakkarwa bemoans "slander" that arose during this era from those "holding sectarian bias in their hearts, along with the perverse idea that the [Gelukpa] order was impure" because of the Fifth Dalai Lama's affinity for the Early Transmission teachings.²⁶ Moreover, despite his praise and defense of the Fifth Dalai Lama and Desi Sanggyé Gyatso's Nyingma alliances, it becomes clear during the course of *Music to Delight All the Sages* that Drakkar Taso Trulku has a somewhat different view of how Tibetan Buddhist and medical syncretism should proceed. It is not lost on Drakkarwa that the field of medicine – and the stunning symbolism of Sanggyé Gyatso's medical college atop the hill of Chakpori – provided a major source of legitimizing moral authority for the Gelukpa administration, tied to the incorporation of Nyingma practices such as the *Great Vase and Small Vase of Nectar* treasure tradition. In putting forth his own medical history to reclaim this regional tradition, Drakkarwa makes a rather defensive declaration (discussed in detail below) that the field of medicine is "only Nyingma."²⁷

DRAKKAR TASO TRULKU'S TEACHERS OF MEDICINE

Drakkar Taso Trulku's interpretation of the history of medicine owes much to the influence of Katok Rindzin Tsewang Norbu, the influential master of both Nyingma and Karma Kagyü traditions who taught many of Drakkarwa's own teachers in Kyirong. Although he was not born until twenty years after Katok Rindzin's death, Drakkar Taso Trulku is perhaps best known today for his important biography of this well-connected polymath. Katok Rindzin's life story clearly provided a model for Drakkarwa: he was an eclectic scholar who wrote on topics ranging from Tibetan inscriptions to Chinese Buddhism, a sponsor of restoration work on ancient Buddhist sites in Nepal and Tibet, and a peripatetic

25 Maher 2005.

26 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.76.

27 *Gso ba rig pa 'di rnying ma kho na yin* (Brag dkar ba 2012, p.96). Recent text-critical studies have similarly recognized a deep connection between medical writing and Rnying ma literature (Gyatso 2004, Garrett 2010).





teacher who spent most of his life away from his home monastery of Katok in Kham.²⁸ As mentioned above, he also maintained a relationship with Polhané Sönam Topgyé and the Seventh Dalai Lama, and conducted diplomacy on behalf of the Lhasa government in Ladakh and throughout the same Himalayan region where Drakkar Taso Trulku was later active. One of Katok Rindzin's signature achievements, however, was to resuscitate Jonang tradition teachings that had suffered suppression during the reign of the Fifth Dalai Lama. Katok Rindzin does not seem to have written specifically on the subject of medicine (with the exception of one letter, found within his collected works, in answer to a question on Accomplishing Medicine), but he did write extensively on a closely related subject that was central to the Jonang tradition: the Kalachakra tantra and its system of astrology and astronomy (*skar rtsis*).²⁹ In *Music to Delight All the Sages*, however, it is Katok Rindzin's defense of the "Other-Emptiness" view of Middle Way doctrine (Madhyamaka), a position central to the Jonang tradition, that directly influences the historical argument.

Drakkar Taso Trulku began writing *Music to Delight All the Sages* at Mangyül Riwo Pembar, one of Jetsün Milarepa's meditation retreat sites high in the Himalayas and also the site of a reliquary for Katok Rindzin Tsewang Norbu. Before finishing the work some months later at his own monastery of Drakkar Taso, "the mendicant (*bya bral ba*) Chökyi Wangchuk" (as he signed himself) also made a pilgrimage to Central Tibet and during this time greatly diversified his medical training.³⁰ The pilgrimage began and ended at Ganden Puntsokling monastery, where he received teachings of the Jonang tradition. Drakkarwa also visited the Nyingma monastery of Mindröling near Lhasa, which had been founded by the Fifth Dalai Lama for his Nyingma teacher Terdak Lingpa (1646-1714). As we shall see, Terdak Lingpa is a second crucial source within Drakkar Taso Trulku's medical history.

The legacies of Desi Sanggyé Gyatso, Katok Rindzin, and Terdak Lingpa all manifest clearly within the eclectic range of medical teachings Drakkar Taso Trulku received in Kyirong and Central Tibet. In the earliest part of his

28 For more about the life and activities of KaH thog rig 'dzin, see Smith 2001, Ronis 2009 and Stearns 2010.

29 The most extensive edition of KaH thog rig 'dzin's *gsung 'bum*, in six volumes, was published by Damchoe Sangpo in Dalhousie, H.P., 1976-77. A comparison of the astrological works of KaH thog rig 'dzin and Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho would also be an interesting topic for future study.

30 According to Ehrhard, this pilgrimage took place between 1817-18 and after completion of the *khog 'bubs* (2004, p.100). The reference to Smin grol gling indicates, however, that at least this extant manuscript version was completed after Brag dkar ba's journey to Central Tibet.





life, Drakkarwa received various cycles of Nyingma teachings from his great-uncle Rindzin Trinlé Dūjom, who was a direct disciple of Katok Rindzin.³¹ These included the *Great Vase of Nectar* medical treasure cycle and Jangdak Tashi Topgyel's supplementary texts, which formed the basis of Drakkar Taso Trulku's medical practice.³² From Rindzin Trinlé Dūjom he also received the *Yutok Heart Essence* (*G.yu thog snying thig*) tantric practice attributed to the founder of Tibetan medicine Yutok Yönten Gönpö.

Drakkar Taso Trulku's second major teacher was Mengom Chöjé Kunga [Trinlé] Penden or Ananda Karma Shri (1735-1804), who was known as an exponent of the Barawa Kagyü and Nyingma traditions.³³ Drakkarwa's studies with this teacher also began during his childhood, and included many transmissions of the works of Katok Rindzin. From Mengom Chöjé, Drakkar Taso Trulku received teachings from the field of medicine such as the initiation (*rjes gnang*) of a practice of the Seven Medicine Buddhas (*Sman bla mched bdun*) and the oral transmission of a Medicine Buddha practice that Drakkarwa attributes to the Fifth Dalai Lama (*Mdo chog yid bzhin dbang rgyal*).³⁴ Drakkar Taso Trulku describes Mengom Chöjé as a "bearer of authentic practical instructions" who had memorized the first, second and last of the *Four Tantras* with the teacher Drangsong Könchok Chöpel.³⁵ According to a biography of Mengom Chöjé that Drakkarwa wrote in 1807, this teacher famously treated the Tenth Zhamarpa, as well as certain representatives of the Lhasa government and its major monasteries that had been taken hostage during the course of the Sino-Nepalese war.³⁶ But in *Music to Delight All the Sages* Mengom Chöjé is also credited with treating many people of high, low and middling status, and having many students. Besides performing the large Accomplishing Medicine ceremony with Drakkar Taso Trulku mentioned above, Mengom Chöjé wrote three medical practice texts that covered topics such as treating poison (*dug bcos*) and venereal disease (*reg dug gi bcos*).³⁷

In 1793, Drakkar Taso Trulku met his third major teacher, Tsewang Chimé Gönpö (1755-1807) of the Gur family lineage.³⁸ Tsewang Chimé Gönpö was

31 Ehrhard 2004, p.90.

32 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.90.

33 See Ehrhard 2007 for a detailed discussion of the biography of this figure.

34 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.90.

35 "Man ngag phyag bzhes tshul bzhin 'dzin pa po," Brag dkar ba 2012, p.88.

36 Ehrhard 2007, p.125-126.

37 A collection of Sman sgom chos rje's medical works, *Gso ba rig pa'i lag len gces rigs phyogs gcig tu sdebs pa gnad don gsal ba nor bu'i 'phreng ba*, has been published as volume 85 of the series *Smanrtsis shesrig spendzod*, Leh 1977.

38 Ehrhard 2004, p.93.





another disciple of Katok Rindzin. He carried on a branch tradition of the Drukpa Kagyü school known as the Dochen Kagyü, traced to the 13th century figure Madün Rechen or Madünpa who had meditated in Kyirong. Drakkarwa does not mention studying medicine with Tsewang Chimé Gönpo in his medical history, although elsewhere he states that this teacher had learned medicine and astrology himself, and that his uncle had attained fame in the field of medicine before passing away at age 47.³⁹ Besides teachings of the Dochen Kagyü, Drakkarwa received Mahamudra and Great Perfection (*Rdzogs chen*) instructions from Tsewang Chimé Gönpo. Great Perfection doctrine figures significantly within *Music to Delight All the Sages*, as will be discussed below.

Within his medical history, Drakkar Taso Trulku honors one other teacher particularly significant to his study of medicine. Drupwang [Kunpang] Namkha Samten (18-19th centuries) was a disciple of Mengom Chöjé and another practitioner of Great Perfection teachings who specialized in the field of medicine. Drakkarwa emphasizes Drupwang Namkha Samten's medical lineage, which is traced directly to Dar mo Menrampa Lobzang Chödrak (1638-1710).⁴⁰ Dar mo Menrampa was the main disciple of the Fifth Dalai Lama's teacher from the Zur medical tradition. Drakkar Taso Trulku also describes Dar mo Menrampa as one of Desi Sanggyé Gyatso's two primary medical teachers, along with Lhundingpa Namgyel Dorjé of the Jang medical tradition (although the regent himself downplayed these relationships in his medical history, presenting himself as self-taught).⁴¹ Over the 18th century, Dar mo Menrampa's texts, disciples and their disciples had spread widely within and beyond Tibet along with the medical texts attributed to Desi Sanggyé Gyatso.⁴² Within the context of Drakkar Taso Trulku's

39 Ehrhard 2008, p.89, 84.

40 Brag dkar ba (2012, p.89) writes that Dar mo Sman rams pa's student Mer mo ba Blo gros [Blo bzang] chos 'phel in turn had Zhal ngo dar rgyas from Lho pha phrug as a student, whose medical teachings became a family lineage passed through his son to his grandson Sngags sman 'chang ba Zhal ngo lhun grub, teacher of Nam mkha' bsam gtan. Nam mkha' bstam gtan was from Pha phrug gi yul stod sgrags kyi grong stod, and was born into the Mes clan.

41 Meyer 2003, Brag dkar ba 2012, p.83.

42 The Fifth Dalai Lama appointed Dar mo Sman rams pa as teacher at Lha dbang ldog [mchog], a medical school at the Potala palace, and commissioned him to edit and complete the biographies of the Elder and Younger G.yu thog yon tan mgon po, as well as a major medical commentary of the Zur tradition, *Oral Transmission of the Ancestors (Mes po'i zhal lung)*. Dar mo sman rams pa's texts were consulted by Si tu paN chen and his lineage in Khams, and by Tibetan and Mongolian students from many of the A mdo medical colleges. Dar mo's student Be ri sman rams pa became the first teacher at the medical college of Gser khog btsan po dgon (Gdugs dkar 1990). Two more branches of Dar mo sman rams pa's lineage also appeared in A mdo Reb





writing, it is noteworthy that he traces this medical lineage not to Sanggyé Gyatso himself but to his important medical contemporary.

Drupwang Namkha Samten's own six-year medical training included study of the complete *Four Tantras, Additional Instructions* by Desi Sanggyé Gyatso, *Ten Million Relics (Bye ba ring bsrel)* by Zurkhar Nyamnyi Dorjé (progenitor of the Zur tradition, 1439-75), the *Yutok Heart Essence*, and certain practical instructions on body measurements (*lus thig gi man ngag phyag len*).⁴³ Drakkar Taso Trulku received empowerments from Drupwang Namkha Samten for the *Additional Instructions* and a brief version of the *Yutok Heart Essence*. Drakkarwa also mentions that in studying the *Four Tantras* with this teacher, they consulted Desi Sanggyé Gyatso's Potala edition for the first three sections, but the Jonang Puntsokling edition for the final section [*phyi ma rgyud*].⁴⁴ This Jonang print had likely been made available through the efforts of Katok Rindzin. In Mengom Chöjé's biography, one of Namkha Samten's medical treatments is compared to one from the great Jonang hierarch Tāranātha's teacher.⁴⁵ If Drupwang Namkha Samten's medical lineage had begun with close connections to the Gelukpa institution of Chakpori, it had drifted towards other influences over the next hundred years.

Finally, during his pilgrimage to Central Tibet, Drakkar Taso Trulku received the extended *Yutok Heart Essence* transmission and empowerment from the throne-holder of Mindröling monastery, Pema Wanggyel (18th century).⁴⁶ The teachings of Terdak Lingpa, first master of this monastery and Nyingma tutor of the Fifth Dalai Lama, had disseminated in Kyirong since the teacher's own lifetime.⁴⁷ Terdak Lingpa had also transmitted the *Yutok Heart Essence* practice to Desi Sanggyé Gyatso, meaning that Drakkar Taso Trulku shared his *Yutok Heart Essence* tradition with the founder of Chakpori.⁴⁸ By the time Drakkarwa visited Mindröling around 1817, the Nyingma monastery had remained a center

gong (Rma lho khul tshan rtsal bcu'u dang Rma lho khul mang tshogs sgyu rtsal khang 2009).

43 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.89.

44 Brag dkar ba (2012) discusses printed editions of the *Four Tantras* and other medical texts on p.92.

45 Ehrhard 2007, p.123.

46 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.90.

47 Ehrhard 2008.

48 Desi Sangye Gyatso and Kilty 2010, p.318. According to Brag dkar rta so sprul sku's biography, KaH thog rig 'dzin also studied with two sons of Gter bdag gling pa (Ronis 2009, p.93). Brag dkar rta so sprul sku calls one of these sons the manifestation (*rnam sprul*) of Vimalamitra, a figure considered central to both the Rnying ma and medical traditions (Garrett 2009). Gene Smith notes however that these names are difficult to identify with the known sons of Gter bdag gling pa [TBRC P676].





of *Yutok Heart Essence* practice for more than a century after the time of Desi Sanggyé Gyatso.

Drakkar Taso Trulku gives special emphasis in his medical history to the Zur tradition, giving us an idea of this tradition's fortunes after the time of Sanggyé Gyatso. In a list of several figures besides his own teachers whom he considers significant to the field of medicine, Drakkarwa links Zur contemporaries of Sanggyé Gyatso (including Darmo Menrampa, his teachers and others) to later figures such as Situ Panchen Chökyi Jungné and Deumar Geshé Tendzin Puntsok from Kham.⁴⁹ During the course of his narrative Drakkar Taso Trulku also repeatedly defends the Zur tradition, and in particular the scholar and historian Zurkhar Lodrö Gyelpo (b. 1509), who had received harsh criticism from Desi Sanggyé Gyatso.

At the same time, Drakkar Taso Trulku conspicuously does not include any Jang medical tradition scholars or texts within his received lineages. He even rather summarily dismisses the two Jang medical transmissions of the *Four Tantras* presented by Desi Sanggyé Gyatso, calling them contradictory and ahistorical.⁵⁰ Sanggyé Gyatso had particularly identified with the Jang medical transmission that included the Tibetan king Muné Tsenpo, whom the regent counted as one of his previous incarnations.⁵¹ Drakkar Taso Trulku's rejection of this lineage can thus be taken as a particularly stark rebuttal of Sanggyé Gyatso's legacy reconciling the Zur and Jang medical traditions. The reason for this rejection is less clear, and is surprising in light of the close relationship of the Jang medical tradition to the Jonang tradition. But in fact, both the Jang medical and Jang treasure traditions (portrayed as entirely separate in both Sanggyé Gyatso's and

49 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.78-88. Brag dkar ba provides a short biography of Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho himself, as well as details regarding his students. Besides the well-known Chags pa chos 'phel, he mentions A bo sman blo don grub and Mkhas grub ratna bha dra/Rin chen bzang po, as well as the latter's student 'Tsho byed 'phrin las rab rgyas. The figures that Brag dkar ba connects directly and indirectly to the Zur lugs also include Byang ngos Bstan 'dzin rgyal po, Byang ngos Nang so dar rgyas, Rnam gling paN chen Dkon mchog chos grags, Bod mkhas pa Mi pham dge legs rnam rgyal, Shrl mda' pa gzhan phan rgya mtsho (another of Katok Rindzin's collaborators) and Sde pa tshe brtan lha skyabs.

50 *Rgyud srol gnyis ka go rim mi mthun par ma zad lo rgyus rnam dang yang 'gal bas 'thad par ma mthong* (Brag dkar ba 2012, p.91).

51 In the unique Byang *bka' ma* lineage the *Four Tantras* are never hidden or rediscovered as a treasure text. Instead they pass through direct and unbroken oral transmission from two Indian masters to Padmasambhava to the Tibetan prince Mu ne btsan po (8th century) and down through later Byang lugs figures (Desi Sangye Gyatso and Kilty 2010, p.291). Both Byang lugs historians and Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho use this lineage to assert exceptional legitimacy for their medical tradition.





Drakkar Taso Trulku's accounts) originate in the Jang Ngamring area and have ties to the Jonang tradition.⁵² Moreover, since the circumstances surrounding the rise in repute of Jangdak Tashi Topgyel's *Great Vase and Small Vase of Nectar* roughly coincide with the waning of the Jang medical tradition, there may be some further connection with the regent's later appropriation (and possible reworking) of these traditions within *A Feast to Delight the Sages*. A comparison of these traditions and their histories begs further research.

Through his account of his medical teachers and lineages, Drakkar Taso Trulku illustrates some relationship to the legacy of Chakpori, but also the increasing distance between this institution and its own inclusive (or appropriating) roots. This distance seems to have widened especially during the late 18th century, as illustrated in the description of 'precious pills' (*rin chen ril bu*) within *Music to Delight All the Sages* (the only extended description of a specific medicine). Drakkar Taso Trulku recounts how the notoriously laborious, arcane and expensive production of precious pills, once associated with the Karmapa and Zhamarpa incarnation lineages of the Kagyü tradition and particularly with Yargyappa, Drigung and Tsechen monasteries, came to be practiced in 1783 by the Ganden Tripa in Lhasa, head of the Gelukpa tradition.⁵³ Although he writes of this event with some admiration, the gold, silver and other precious ingredients collected for the pills clearly represent a transfer of great wealth and the prestige deriving from the author's medical tradition to a government that did not continue the Fifth Dalai Lama's support for ecumenicalism at that time.

It is therefore especially significant that Drakkar Taso Trulku's medical network existed largely outside of large monastic institutions. Drakkarwa levels criticism against those "haughty people puffed up with pride" who brag about secret instructions or are "so intent on becoming great court physicians (*bla sman*) of higher and higher levels that they despise the protectorless poor and humble types, seeing them like leper corpses."⁵⁴ This description sounds suspiciously akin to the degree-granting system of Chakpori and other Gelukpa medical colleges of the period. By the early 19th century Chakpori had produced court physicians for emperors, princes and great lamas, and its medical degree (*sman rams pa*)

52 In addition to the Byang lugs physician Lhun sdings Bdud rtsi 'gyur med who was court physician to the Jonang hierarch Tāranātha, there are many other connections between the Byang medical and Jonang traditions (Desi Sangye Gyatso and Kilty 2010, p.289 and *passim*); the Byang gter tradition is tied to the Jonang through Byang bdag Bkra shis stobs rgyal's Jonang teacher Rje btsun Grol mchog (Dalton 2002, p.193).

53 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.93-94. Yar rgyab pa monastery is where Zur mkhar Blo gros rgyal po printed the Grwa thang edition of the *Four Tantras*.

54 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.98.





system had been replicated within subsequent Gelukpa medical colleges.⁵⁵ While medical history authors from earlier periods had articulated a tension between textual scholars of medicine and those who prioritized experiential learning from the instruction of teachers, Drakkar Taso Trulku – who sought both types of training – alludes to a further tension ensuing from the attempted systematization of medical learning by the highly institutionalized Gelukpa tradition.⁵⁶ This tension is negotiated within *Music to Delight All the Sages* during the course of Drakkarwa’s argument regarding the origin of the *Four Tantras*.

DRAKKAR TASO TRULKU AND THE WORD OF THE BUDDHA DEBATE

The question of the origin and authority of Tibetan medical teachings, and in particular whether and how the *Four Tantras* derived from the word of the Buddha (*bka'*), shapes the structure of all Tibetan works of medical history. Several recent studies have examined the nature of this debate and how it developed, mainly from the earliest available works (12-13th century) through Desi Sanggyé Gyatso’s *A Feast to Delight the Sages*.⁵⁷ Tibetan canonical literature distinguishes between Buddha-word (*sutra*) and the treatises of later Indian and Tibetan authors (*śāstra*), but because the *Four Tantras* are not included in the canon, medical history authors have almost always appealed instead to what Janet Gyatso has called the “logic of legitimation” of the treasure tradition.⁵⁸ Zurkhar Lodrö Gyelpo, Desi Sanggyé Gyatso and Drakkar Taso Trulku appeal to this logic in various ways, constructing “elaborate conceptions of lineage” that all seem to conceal evidence of Tibetan authorship and attribute the *Four Tantras* as the subsequently revealed but ultimate word of the Buddha.⁵⁹ The difference between these authors, it seems, is a matter of emphasis and devilish detail. Later scholars have noted Zurkhar Lodrö Gyelpo’s rationalization of the *Four Tantras* as a Tibetan-authored *śāstra*, vis-à-vis Sanggyé Gyatso’s insistence in arguing for the text essentially as Buddha-word despite his acceptance of many arguments regarding its Tibetan character.⁶⁰ Just as Desi Sanggyé Gyatso both criticized Zurkhar and incorporated this predecessor’s historical

55 Including, but not limited to, the medical colleges of Sku ’bum and Bla brang bkra shis ’khyil monasteries (Gdugs dkar 1990).

56 Schaeffer 2003, Gyatso 2004.

57 Karmay 1998, Schaeffer 2003, Gyatso 2004 & 2011, Czaja 2005-06a & 2005-06b, Garrett 2006 & 2007, Martin 2007, and Yangga 2010.

58 Gyatso 1993.

59 Gyatso 2004, p.91.

60 See Gyatso 2004 and Yangga 2010 for a fuller discussion of Zur mkhar Blo gros rgyal po’s position, which he stated more and less obliquely over the course of his works. C.f. Czaja 2005-2006a.





evidence into his own argument, Drakkar Taso Trulku quotes long passages from Sanggyé Gyatso's text and compares it to "the sun and the moon," before eventually faulting it for confusion and omissions in need of correction.⁶¹ *Music to Delight All the Sages* ultimately defends the contentious position that medicine is "only Nyingma," presenting a new and unique "extraordinary lineage" (*thun mong ma yin pa'i rgyud pa*) as the basis of the case.⁶² Not only does Drakkarwa cite Katok Rindzin Tsewang Norbu on the history of this transmission, he also admits "daring to add" some of his own remarks.⁶³

In fact Drakkar Taso Trulku presents two transmissions of the *Four Tantras* as authoritative. Although they differ, both classify the text as an 8th century revealed treasure ultimately attributable to the Medicine Buddha. The first is Drakkarwa's Canonical Transmission (*bka' ma*) lineage, which is based in the Zur tradition and emphasizes early Indian roots. This lineage is based on Terdak Lingpa's record of received teachings (*gsan yig*), which Desi Sanggyé Gyatso also used as his source for listing the Zur lineage.⁶⁴ It is the second "extraordinary lineage" that Drakkar Taso Trulku uses to build his case for the Nyingma character of medicine, however. This lineage hinges on none other than Padmasambhava (8th century), the tantric adept credited with the Early Transmission conversion of Tibet to Buddhism during the imperial period. Citing Katok Rindzin's biography of Padmasambhava, Drakkar Taso Trulku argues that the *Four Tantras* were requested by the Tibetan king Tri Songdeutsen (8th century) at Samyé monastery, which was like an emanation of the medical city Tanaduk, and that Padmasambhava taught the text in the form of the Medicine Buddha.⁶⁵ Since this lineage does not include any Indian adepts prior to Padmasambhava, it

61 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.105-6.

62 See fn. 27.

63 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.105-6.

64 Desi Sangye Gyatso and Kilty 2010, p.316-318. Brag dkar ba makes clear that *bka' ma* here alludes to the Nyingma tantric classification of canonical teachings rather than to a continuous "oral" transmission. Brag dkar rta so sprul sku's full *bka' ma* lineage is given as: *Sangs rgyas sman bla/ rig pa'i ye shes lnga/ yid las skyes/ 'tsho byed gzhon nu/ mgon po klu sgrub/ dpal ldan dpa' bo/ kha che zla dga' / lo chen bai ro/ chos rgyal khri srong/ grwa pa mngon shes/ dbus pa dar grags/ rog ston dkon mchog skyabs/ g.yu thog pa chen po nas rim par brgyud cing/* (2012, p.90). He does not follow the lineage past G.yu thog.

65 Brag dkar rta so sprul sku actually repeats this KaH thog rig 'dzin quotation from a work by Sman sgom chos rje (2012, p.29-31). Brag dkar ba lists his "extraordinary lineage" as follows: *Sangs rgyas sman bla/ slob dpon sangs rgyas gnyis pa/ lo chen bai ro/ mnga' bdag khri srong/ grwa pa mngon shes nas g.yu thog pa rje btsun gu Na nA tha/ des sum ston ye shes gzungs nas rim par brgyud pa'o/* (Brag dkar ba 2012, p.91).





deemphasizes Indian influence on the *Four Tantras*. Furthermore, Drakkar Taso Trulku claims that Padmasambhava actually taught various medical methods according to the necessities of taming each place in Tibet where he travelled to spread Buddhism. These methods eventually appeared in the *Four Tantras* and other medical treasure texts, and later Yutok Yönten Gönpo gathered these methods as additions (*kha skong*) within his redaction of the *Four Tantras*. In doing so, Drakkarwa writes, Yutok is “undifferentiated from the Medicine Buddha and from Padmasambhava.”⁶⁶ Drakkar Taso Trulku contends that at the time of treasure-revealer Drapa Ngonshé it was not suitable to say the *Four Tantras* was a treasure of Padmasambhava, so it falsely became known as the composition of Yutok Yönten Gönpo.⁶⁷ Distancing himself from Zurkhar Lodrö Gyelpo’s attribution of Tibetan authorship, Drakkar Taso Trulku thus finds his own solution to the problem of the *Four Tantras*’ Tibetan characteristics.

The figure of Padmasambhava serves within *Music to Delight All the Sages* to legitimize not just the *Four Treasures* as both Buddha-word and treasure text, but also the author’s own medical treasure text tradition, the *Great Vase and Small Vase of Nectar*. Drakkar Taso Trulku points to specific content from the *Four Tantras*, including healing mantras (*sngags*) to protect from poison and infectious diseases (*nad rims*), mantras for the practice of ‘essence extraction’ (*bcud len*), and the Nectar of Immortality “dharma medicine” (*Bdud rtsi a mrl ta chos sman*) as examples of the kinds of medical practices that count as “only Nyingma.”⁶⁸ He declares that these “antidotes for all the illnesses that quickly rob the life of beings in these degenerate times” originate within medical treasure texts such as the *Great Vase of Nectar* and its Jang treasure tradition supplements, as well as many instructional texts (*man ngag*) such as the *Ten Million Relics* “text from experience” (*nyams yig*) of the Zur tradition.⁶⁹ Not only the *Great Vase and Small Vase of Nectar* corpus, but also a range of old and new medical practices are therefore legitimized within the rubric of treasure literature and its “instructions.”

66 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.43-5. Attributing the *Four Tantras*’ authorship to Padmasambhava is not a new development among Tibetan medical histories. Zur mkhar Blo gros rgyal po also mentions scholars taking this approach (Yangga 2010, p.10).

67 On the issue of the Elder and Younger G.yu thog yon tan mgon po (see Yangga 2010), Brag dkar rta so sprul sku closely follows Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho’s presentation, which is in turn based on the biographies edited by Dar mo sman rams pa. Neither Brag dkar rta so sprul sku nor Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho includes the Elder G.yu thog as a main figure within the *Four Tantras*’ transmission.

68 According to Brag dkar ba (2012, p.95), these mantras and medicines are found within the *Man ngag rgyud* chapter 87 and *Phyi ma rgyud* chapter 26. For a discussion of *bcud len*, see Barbara Gerke’s forthcoming work.

69 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.95-96.





Despite his polemic that the field of medicine is “only Nyingma,” Drakkar Taso Trulku does seek to reconcile the medical with other traditions. He begins with a claim attributed to Desi Sanggyé Gyatso that if classified according to the treasure system, the *Four Tantras* are the type of ancillary practice (*cha lag nyams len*) known as Heart Essence (*snying thig*), and therefore “nothing other than Great Perfection,” the most complete of all teachings.⁷⁰ Great Perfection teachings, while most strongly associated with the Nyingma and Bön traditions, had also been practiced in the Kagyü tradition since the 12th century and championed along with medicine by the Fifth Dalai Lama. Drakkar Taso Trulku’s appeal to Great Perfection doctrine not only bridges his Nyingma and Kagyü lineages, he also takes it further, equating Great Perfection teachings with the Jonang “Other-Emptiness” view re-popularized by Katok Rindzin.⁷¹

According to Drakkar Taso Trulku, the “calamity of bickering” between the views of “Self-Emptiness” (*rang stong*, associated with the Gelukpa) and “Other-Emptiness” (associated, at times, with all non-Gelukpa traditions) has obstructed the ultimate essence (*don gyi ngo bo*) of the Middle Way teachings in the Snowland.⁷² In order to harmonize with temporary circumstances, he contends, the Middle Way teachings of the “Other-Emptiness” view may be considered in accordance with Early Transmission Great Perfection practice. He then cites an unimpeachable Gelukpa authority – Kedrup Jé, disciple of the tradition’s progenitor Tsongkhapa – to further argue that the views of Great Perfection and Middle Way practice are “almost without difference.”⁷³ To his own mind, any contradictions between the “Other-Emptiness” view and Great Perfection teachings (and perhaps by extension the “Other-Emptiness” and “Self-Emptiness” views, and the Gelukpa and non-Gelukpa traditions) are thus effectively resolved. In turn, resolving these hermeneutical contradictions allows Drakkar Taso Trulku to integrate all the medical teachings from his various sources and lineages without incongruity, including the Potala and Jonang Puntsokling prints of the *Four Tantras*, many practical instructions passed on from individual teachers or associated with the Zur tradition, the *Crystal Beads* and *Crystal Rosary*, the *Yutok Heart Essence*, and the *Great Vase and Small Vase of Nectar*, as well as a long list of other medical treasure texts cited by both Drakkarwa and Desi Sanggyé Gyatso.⁷⁴

70 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.94.

71 Dge rtse paN chen ’Gyur med tshe dbang mchog grub (1761-1829), an influential figure at KaH thog monastery in his own time, takes a similar position in his defense of *gzhan stong* (Ronis p.236, n. 432).

72 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.95.

73 Ibid.

74 Medical *gter ma* are discussed in Brag dkar ba 2012, p.34-36. See Garrett 2009 and 2010 on related Rnying ma tantric and medical literature.





TIBETAN MEDICINE, INSTITUTIONALIZATION,
AND INNOVATION ON THE MARGINS

Music to Delight All the Sages is a work of significance for understanding the legacy of perhaps the most pivotal point in the history of Tibetan medicine, under the Fifth Dalai Lama and Desi Sanggyé Gyatso. The connection Drakkar Taso Trulku draws between the field of medicine and the Great Perfection tradition sheds light on the significance of medical activity for these Gelukpa leaders beyond the obvious potential of medicine as a resource for moral legitimacy. We are obliquely reminded that medicine is one of two noted specialties of the Nyingma Great Perfection tradition – along with the highly controversial practice of tantric war magic, which the Fifth Dalai Lama had ambivalently assented to during the Mongol campaign to depose the rulers of Tsang and their Kagyüpa, Bönpo and Jonangpa allies.⁷⁵ Indeed this latter association could be considered the key context for Desi Sanggyé Gyatso's urgent praise of Great Perfection practices within *A Feast to Delight the Sages*, which imposes on the text a convoluted organization and a long exegesis reconciling Pratimokṣa, Bodhisattva, and Vidyādhara tantric vows that otherwise makes little sense to include within a medical history. Discussing his own life during the course of the text, the regent takes pains to describe his personal practice of the tantric vows, explaining that although “I had a great liking for the *pratimokṣa* vows, ... they did not come my way,” and making the extraordinary statement that although “I have maintained the bodhicitta dedication, keeping my vow of not taking the life of a human except when powerless to do otherwise, ... in order to maintain the rule of law when governing the country, I have come close to harming the mind of compassion, but it is difficult to be of help in every case.”⁷⁶ Later, however, after describing his medical activities to benefit his subjects, Desi Sanggyé Gyatso is able to conclude the main body of his text with the words, “In this way I think I have followed the great waves of bodhisattva conduct.”⁷⁷ The placement of Sanggyé Gyatso's new medical monastery at Chakpori, which on its hilltop perch opposite the Dalai Lama's palace became a focal point of the city of Lhasa, serves as a strong indication of the importance to the regent of legitimizing both his government and his reliance on the Great Perfection tradition.

Throughout *Music to Delight All the Sages*, Drakkar Taso Trulku wrestles with the particular legacy of the Fifth Dalai Lama and Desi Sanggyé Gyatso's political, doctrinal, and medical syncretism. Despite the regent's incorporation of the *Great Vase and Small Vase of Nectar* cycle and other Great Perfection

75 See Dalton 2011, pp.136-143.

76 Desi Sangye Gyatso and Kilty 2010, p.332.

77 Desi Sangye Gyatso and Kilty 2010, p.489.





traditions into his charter for Chakpori, Drakkarwa and his teachers had remained outside the orbit of this Gelukpa institution. Drawing on Katok Rindzin Tsewang Norbu's critique of 18th century Gelukpa sectarianism based on the Jonang "Other-Emptiness" view, and foreshadowing similar arguments among the well-known latter-19th century "nonsectarian" (*ris med*) movement, Drakkar Taso Trulku's medical history reconciles his various medical lineages and provides a historical and hermeneutical rationale for reclaiming the *Great Vase and Small Vase of Nectar* as a regional medical system. His argument links the origin of the *Four Tantras* with the Early Transmission of Buddhism in Tibet, therefore more closely associating the field of medicine in general with his teachers' Nyingma and Kagyü traditions. Drakkarwa's medical activities, along with those of his teachers and students, also provide a notable example of innovation on the margins of the Tibetan world, outside (but not entirely disconnected from) the powerful Gelukpa institutional network that benefitted considerably during this time from its ties to the Mongols and to the Qing empire.

In fact, the pattern of Tibetan knowledge circulation that emerges in Drakkarwa's historical account is one of innovation repeatedly spreading from the margins to centers, as larger institutions coaxed eremitic teachers to teach monastic students, or acquired rare manuscripts and republished them as xylographic prints. As an institution-builder himself, Drakkar Taso Trulku carried medical knowledge and practice forward with the specific goal to heal, influence, and bind together the western Tibetan regions injured in the Sino-Nepalese war. The productive tension evident in his writing points toward the vitality of Tibetan medicine at this moment preceding the global "rise of science," its flexibility to negotiate new theories and practices, and the confidence of its practitioners regarding their influence within regional networks of knowledge circulation.





GLOSSARY OF TIBETAN TERMS

THL phonetics	Wylie transliteration
Amdo	A mdo
Bön	Bon
Chakpori	Lcags po ri
Chonggyé	'Phyong rgyas
Chöwang Gyeltsen	Chos dbang rgyal mtshan
Darmo Menrampa Lobzang Chödrak	Dar mo sman rams pa Blo bzang chos grags
Desi Sanggyé Gyatso	Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho
Deumar Geshé Tendzin Puntsok	De'u dmar dge bshes bstan 'dzin phun tshogs
Dorbum Chödrak	Rdor 'bum chos grags
Dorjé Drak	Rdo rje brag
Drakkar Taso Trulku [or Drakkarwa] Chökyi Wangchuk	Brag dkar rta so sprul sku [Brag dkar ba] Chos kyi dbang phyug
Drangsong Könchok Chöpel	Drang srong Dkon mchog chos 'phel
Drapa Ngonshé	Grwa pa mngon shes
Drigung	'Bri khung [gung]
Drotang	Gro thang
Drupwang [Kunpang] Namkha Samten	Grub dbang [Kun spangs] Nam mkha' bsam gtan
Ganden Puntsokling	Dga' ldan phun tshogs gling
Ganden Tripa	Dga' ldan khri pa
Garwang Dorjé Nyingpo	Gar dbang rdo rje snying po
Gelukpa	Dge lugs pa
Gur	Gur
Jamtrin	Byams sprin
Jamyang	'Jam dbyangs
Jangdak Tashi Topgyel	Byang bdag Bkra shis stobs rgyal
Jonang	Jo nang
Kagyü [Karma, Barawa, Drukpa, Dochen]	Bka' brgyud [Kar+ma, 'Ba' ra ba, 'Brug pa, Mdo chen]
Karmapa Dödül Dorjé	Kar+ma pa Bdud 'dul rdo rje
Katok Rindzin Tsewang Norbu	KaH thog rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu
Kedrup Jé	Mkhas grub rje
Kham	Khams
Kharbang	Mkhar bang
Kyirong	Skyid grong
Ladep	La ldebs
Lhundingpa Namgyel Dorjé	Lhun sdings pa Rnam rgyal rdo rje
Madün Rechen / Madünpa	Ma bdun ras chen / Ma bdun pa





Mangyül	Mang yul
Mengom Chöjé Kunga [Trinlé] Penden	Sman sgom chos rje Kun dga' ['phrin las] dpal ldan
Mentsikhang	Sman rtsis khang
[Jetsün] Milarepa	[Rje btsun] Mi la ras pa
Mindrölling	Smin grol gling
Muné Tsenpo	Mu ne btsan po
Ngakwang Lobzang Gyatso [Fifth Dalai Lama]	Ngag dbang Blo bzang rgya mtsho
Ngamring	Ngam ring
Ngari	Mnga' ris
Nyingma	Rnying ma
Pakpa	'Phags pa
Pema Wanggyel	Pad+ma dbang rgyal
Polhané Sönam Topgyé	Pho lha nas Bsod nams stobs rgyas
Rindzin Tennyi Lingpa	Rig 'dzin Bstan gnyis gling pa
Rindzin [Karma] Trinlé Düjom	Rig 'dzin [Kar+ma] 'phrin las bdud 'joms
Riwo Pembar	Ri bo dpal 'bar
Samyé	Bsam yas
Situ Panchen Chökyi Jungné	Si tu paN chen Chos kyi 'byung gnas
Tanaduk	Lta na sdug
Terdak Lingpa	Gter bdag gling pa
Tri Songdeutsen	Khri Srong de'u btsan
Tsechen	Rtse chen
Tsewang Chimé Gönpo	Tshe dbang 'chi med mgon po
Tsongkhapa	Tsong kha pa
Yargyappa	Yar rgyab pa
Yolmowa Trulku Tenzin Norbu	Yol mo ba sprul sku Bstan 'dzin nor bu
Yutok Yönten Gönpo	G.yu thog yon tan mgon po
Zhamarpa	Zhwa dmar pa
Zhapkar Tsokdruk Rangdröl	Zhabs dkar Tshogs drug rang grol
Zurkhar Lodrö Gyelpo	Zur mkhar Blo gros rgyal po
Zurkhar Nyamnyi Dorjé	Zur mkhar Mnyam nyid rdo rje

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND WORKS CITED

- Blezer, Henk 2007. "Brief Outlook: Desiderata in the Study of the History of Tibetan Medicine." In *Soundings in Tibetan Medicine: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives, PIATS 2003: Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Oxford, 2003.*, ed. Mona Schrempf. Leiden: Brill. pp.427-438.
- Brag dkar ba Chos kyi dbang phyug 2012 [1817]. Introduction by Tashi Tsering. *Dpal ldan gso ba rig pa'i man ngag gi khog 'bubs bsdus don nyung ngu'i ngag gig tam du bya ba drang srong kun tu dgyes pa'i rol mo*. Dharamsala, India: Bod kyi sman rtsis khang. Original manuscript held in the collection of Tashi Tsering, Director of the Amnye Machen Institute, Dharamsala.
- Chen Hua 2008. "The diffusion of Tibetan medicine in China: A descriptive panorama." In *Tibetan Medicine in the Contemporary World: Global politics of medical knowledge and practice*, ed. Laurent Pordié. Needham Institute Research Series. London: Routledge. pp.91-102.
- Czaja, Olaf 2005-2006a. "Zurkharwa Lodro Gyalpo (1509-1579) on the Controversy of the Indian Origin of the rGyud bzhi." *Tibet Journal* 30/31, no. 4/1 (Winter/Spring): 133–154.
- 2005-2006b. "A Hitherto Unknown 'Medical History' of mTsho smad mkhan chen (b.16th Cent.)." *Tibet Journal* 30/31, no. 4/1 (Winter/Spring): 155–174.
- Dalton, Jacob P. 2002. "The uses of the *Dgongs pa 'dus pa'i mdo* in the development of the Rnying-ma school of Tibetan Buddhism." Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan.
- 2011. *The Taming of the Demons: Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Desi Sangye Gyatso and Gavin Kilty (transl.) 2010 [1703]. *Mirror of Beryl: A Historical Introduction to Tibetan Medicine*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications.
- Ehrhard, Franz-Karl 2000. "A Printed Laudation of Si-tu Chos-kyi 'byung-gnas and a Note on His Tradition of Tibetan Medicine." *Lungta* 13: 28-32.
- 2004. *Die Statue und der Tempel des Arya Va-ti bzang-po: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und Geographie des Tibetischen Buddhismus* (Contributions to Tibetan Studies 2). Wiesbaden: Reichert.
- 2007. "The Biography of sMan-sgom Chos-rje Kun-dga' dpal-ldan (1755-1804) as a Source for the Sino-Nepalese War." In *Pramāṇakīrtiḥ: Papers Dedicated to Ernst Steinkellner on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday* (Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde, 70.1). Wein: Arbeitskreis für tibetische und buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien. pp.115-133.
- 2008. *A Rosary of Rubies: The Chronicle of the Gur-rigs mDo-chen Tradition from South-Western Tibet* (Collectanea Himalayica 2). München: Indus Verlag.
- Gdugs dkar 1990. "Mdo smad du bod kyi gso rig gi bstan pa byung tshul dang dar tshul rags tsam ngo sprod." In *Bod lugs gso rig skor gyi ched rtsom phyogs bsdus* vol. 4. Krung hwa gso rig slob tshogs bod yan lag slob tshogs. pp.57-68.
- Garrett, Frances 2006. "Buddhism and the Historicising of Medicine in Thirteenth-Century Tibet." *Asian Medicine: Tradition and Modernity* 2(2): 204–224.

- 2007. “Critical Methods in Tibetan Medical Histories.” *Journal of Asian Studies* 66(2): 363–387.
- 2009. “The Alchemy of Accomplishing Medicine (*sman sgrub*): Situating the Yuthok Heart Essence (*G.yu thog snying thig*) in Literature and History.” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 37: 207-230.
- 2010. “Tapping the Body’s Nectar: Gastronomy and Incorporation in Tibetan Literature.” *History of Religions* 49(3): 300-326.
- Forthcoming. “Mercury, Mad Dogs and Smallpox: Medicine in the Situ Panchen Tradition.” *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies*.
- Gyatso, Janet 1993. “The Logic of Legitimation in the Tibetan Treasure Tradition.” *History of Religions* 33(2): 97-134.
- 2004. “The Authority of Empiricism and the Empiricism of Authority: Medicine and Buddhism in Tibet on the Eve of Modernity.” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24(2): 84–96.
- 2011. “Experience, Empiricism, and the Fortunes of Authority.” In *Forms of Knowledge in Early Modern Asia: Explorations in the Intellectual History of India and Tibet, 1500-1800*, ed. Sheldon I. Pollock. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. pp.311-335.
- Karmay, Samten G. 1998. “The Four Tibetan Medical Treatises and Their Critics.” In *The Arrow and the Spindle: Study in History, Myths, Rituals and Beliefs in Tibet*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Mandala Book Point. pp.228–237.
- Maher, Derek F. 2005. “The Eighth Dalai Lama Jampel Gyatso.” In *Dalai Lamas: A Visual History*, ed. Martin Brauen. Chicago: Serindia Publications. pp.117-127.
- Martin, Dan 2007. “An Early Tibetan History of Indian Medicine.” In *Soundings in Tibetan Medicine: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives, PIATS 2003, Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Oxford, 2003*, ed. Mona Schrempf. Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill. pp.307–325.
- Meyer, Fernand 1992. “Introduction.” In *Tibetan Medical Paintings: Illustrations to the Blue Beryl Treatise of Sangye Gyamtso (1653-1705)*, eds. I. U. Parfionovich, Fernand Meyer, and Gyurme Dorje. New York: H.N. Abrams, Inc. pp.2-15.
- 2003. “The Golden Century of Tibetan Medicine.” In *Lhasa in the Seventeenth Century: The Capital of the Dalai Lamas*, ed. Francoise Pommaret. Leiden: Brill. pp.99-117.
- Rechung Rinpoche Jampal Kunzang 1973. *Tibetan Medicine, Illustrated in Original Texts*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Rma lho khul tshan rtsal bcu’u dang Rma lho khul mang tshogs sgyu rtsal khang 2009. “Reb gong du gso ba rig pa dar tshul.” In *Reb gong rig gnas sgyu rtsal zhib ’jug*. Lanzhou: Kan su’u mi rigs dpe skrun khang. pp.421-55.
- Ronis, Jann Michael 2009. “Celibacy, Revelations, and Reincarnated Lamas: Contestation and Synthesis in the Growth of Monasticism at Katok Monastery from the 17th through 19th Centuries.” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Virginia.
- Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, Sde srid 1970 [1703]. *Ayurveda in Tibet: A survey of the history and literature of Lamaist medicine, being the text of Dpal ldan gso ba rig pa’i khog ’bugs legs bshad Bai durya’i me long drang srong dgyes pa’i dga’ ston*. Smarntsis shesrig spendzod. Leh: Sonam W. Tashigang.



- Schaeffer, Kurtis R. 2003. "Textual Scholarship, Medical Tradition, and Mahayana Buddhist Ideals in Tibet." *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 31: 621–641.
- Smith, E. Gene 2001. *Among Tibetan texts: History and literature of the Himalayan Plateau*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications.
- Stearns, Cyrus 2010. *The Buddha from Dölpo: A study of the life and thought of the Tibetan master Dölpopa Sherab Gyaltzen*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications.
- Taube, Manfred 1981. *Beitrage Zur Geschichte Der Medizinischen Literatur Tibets*. Sankt Augustin: VGH Wissenschaftsverlag.
- Yangga 2010. "The Sources for the Writing of the 'Rgyud Bzhi', Tibetan Medical Classic." Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University.







IN MEMORY OF ELLIS GENE SMITH (1936-2010)¹

TASHI TSERING

Amnye Machen Institute, Dharamshala

In Tibet the custom is that we never again say the name of those who have passed away. It is considered impolite towards the family and disrespectful to the one who has died. The deceased are instead referred to as “dam pa” (the “late one”), “zhing gshegs” (the “one who proceeded to the heavenly abode”), “bla ’das” (the “departed soul”) or in more colloquial terms “grong mkhan de” (the “one who died”). In the case of writing a biography or long-life supplication prayers for your Guru when he is alive, we write “don gyi slad du mtshan nas smros na” (“to spell out his name for a specific reason”) before the Guru’s personal or ordained name. If the Guru is no more, we simply say “mtshan brjod par dka’ ba” (“it is difficult to spell out his name”).

After a death, we do not wear our finery, neither dressing well nor displaying jewellery for at least 49 days, or in some cases, a full year. Until 1951, in traditional Tibetan society, we did not write obituaries or conduct memorial services. These practices were adopted after the Chinese occupation and styled after Western traditions. I cannot ignore these changes and so today I am dressed in Tibetan clothes to show my respect to the departed soul and I too will follow modern tradition and say a few words about my mentor and friend Ellis Gene Smith (1936-2010). I feel a little out of place and lacking in legitimate credentials to say anything about Gene after the gallery of very distinguished dignitaries who have already expressed their sentiments.

But I feel I can say something, because I knew Gene for some 32 years and we spent many hours exchanging findings and rare Tibetan books on numerous occasions, both in India and in America.

I like to think that Gene’s interest in Tibet—or his coming to know of Tibet for the first time—goes back to the decade before he dedicated himself to Tibetan studies in 1958. I remember seeing a *Life* magazine issue dated 23rd April 1951 that carried a full length photographic essay by Heinrich Harrer entitled “The

1 This is a keynote speech read, at the “Tibet House Salutes with Remembrance in Gratitude, Ellis Gene Smith (1936–2010)” organized by Tibet House, New Delhi at the India International Centre, New Delhi on February 2nd 2011. Previously published on 23rd September 2011, on the TBRC website’s blog as, ‘For Gene – from Tashi Tsering’ at, <http://blog.tbrc.org/for-gene-from-tashi-tsering/> accessed on the 21st December 2012. I am grateful to my friends Dr. Roberto Vitali and Emma Martin for editing this short paper. However, I take full responsibility for any errors that may be found herein.





flight of the Dalai Lama” concerning the present Dalai Lama’s sojourn in Gro mo.² Alongside it, the issue contained full coverage of the funeral service of the 7th President of the Mormon Church, George Albert Smith (1870-1951), a great uncle of Gene’s.³ When I first saw it, I thought, “My Goodness! Gene had a karmic connection with us by then already.” I once told this to him. He just laughed and did not comment, so I left it there.

I never dared to ask Gene why he chose Tibetan studies. One thing is sure: when nothing was going well for the Tibetans, his new found love for Tibetan culture was a great piece of luck for us. In the 1950s we were facing the most difficult period in our history. Gene’s interest in Tibetan studies resulted in a mammoth contribution towards preserving Tibetan literature, thus taking Tibetan studies to a new height.

During the early years of Gene’s interest in Tibetan culture, the Chinese Communists were already everywhere in Tibet and except for a handful of fellow Communists from the Eastern bloc, no foreigner was allowed in Tibet. At the same time there were only a few places in the Western world where Tibetan and Buddhist studies were taught. Most professors in those days were armchair scholars and the few who had been in Tibet before 1959 were reluctant to share their collections. Those few scholars used to hoard original Tibetan texts, waiting to write something about their “discoveries” in the Tibetan world.

The arrival of the Sa skya phun tshogs pho brang family and Sde gzhung Rinpoche (1906-1987) at the University of Washington, Seattle, in October 1960 was for the twenty-four year old Gene, the highlight and good fortune of his life. This was as if, as a Tibetan proverb goes, “a boulder of gold rolled to your door.” (“gser gyi pha bong sgo khar sgril”). He helped the Sa skya pa family unstintingly for four years. This is where he met his first Guru, Sde gzhung Rinpoche, the living treasure of Tibetan Buddhist Ris med, the nonsectarian tradition, of the last century. It was a classic meeting of the perfect Guru with the perfect disciple. In the years from 1960 to 1965, Gene also benefited from other Tibetan scholars who taught at the University of Washington, Seattle: Nor nang dge bshes ngag dbang blo gros, Jo lags bkra shis tshe ring (b.1929) and finally Sa dbang Zur khang dbang chen dge legs (1910-1977). In the early 1960s Sde gzhung Rinpoche was reluctant to teach any esoteric Tibetan initiations, but after four or five years, he gave Gene the Tibetan name of ’Jam dbyangs nam rgyal, after the most celebrated Rnying ma polymath ’Ju bla mi pham Rinpoche (1846-1912) of Khams. I quote from the biography of Sde gzhung Rinpoche written by my friend Dr. David Jackson,

“For their studies at home, Dezhung Rinpoche sat in a rocking chair, rosary

2 *Life*, April 23, 1951, pp.130-140.

3 “The Mormons Change Leaders” *Life*, April 23, 1951, pp.121-122,127-128.





in hand, while Smith sat at his feet. When Smith's question was a good one, Rinpoche kept muttering his mantras for a few moments, and then gave a most lucid answer in response, with well-organized subject divisions. They studied every morning for an hour between about eight and nine or nine and ten o'clock, after Rinpoche's breakfast, time that was squeezed in between Rinpoche's meditative practices. As Rinpoche taught, he often made little sketches of things he was describing: special hats, gtor ma offering cakes, and so forth."

Nicholas Poppe (1897-1991), the great Mongolist who worked at the University of Washington from 1949 until 1968, told Smith more than once, "You are very lucky to have Dezhung Rinpoche here. But the problem is, you don't yet know what questions to ask him."⁴

Following his intuitions and his teachers' advice, in 1965 Gene travelled to India and Nepal for the first time to conduct fieldwork on original Tibetan resource material. In Dharamshala he met Bco bryad khri chen Rinpoche (1920-2007) and a number of pre-1959 senior Tibetan Government officials. In Dalhousie he met the 8th Khams sprul don bryud nyi ma (1931-1979), in Rajpur the young H. H. the Sa skya Khri 'dzin sgrol ma pho grang (b.1945) and Mkhan po A pad Rinpoche (1927-2010). In the Darjeeling area, Gene met Skyabs rje Bdud 'joms Rinpoche (1904-1986), Skyabs rje Dil mgo mkhyen brtse Rinpoche (1910-1991), Skyabs rje Bka' 'gyur Rinpoche Klong chen ye shes rdo rje (1897-1975), Dpal spungs Dbon rgan Rinpoche (1926-1987), Sgrub dpon Bla ma Ka lu Rinpoche (1905-1989), 'Brug pa thugs sras Rinpoche (1916-1984), 'Dzi sgar mkhan po Nor dbyangs (?- c.1983), Rta nag Thub bstan bshad sgra mkhan po Sangs rgyas bstan 'dzin (1904-1991), 'Dar grang mo che mkhan po (?- c.1967) and Rev. Khu nu mthar phyin Babu (1890-1976). At all these localities he had the chance to peruse the collection of books they brought from Tibet.

While in Gangtok, Sikkim, Gene stayed at the students and scholars' quarters of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology. His prime purpose to visit Sikkim was to go through the famed private collection of the legendary Rai Bahadur Densapa (Barmiok Athing, 1902-1988), OBE, then the doyen of Tibetan studies in the Himalayan region. Gene went through Densapa's collection meticulously. Among many important texts, Gene copied the whole volume, banned in those days, of the famous, *Modern Bhutanese History* written by Gnyer chen bges po in the early 1960s in typed Wylie transliteration. Gene also copied the entire inventory of the Densapa collection and in the years to come encouraged and helped individual publishers to borrow from Densapa and reprint rare works. Gene also spent time with the Choegyial of Sikkim, Dpal ldan don grub rnam

4 *A Saint in Seattle; The Life of the Tibetan Mystic Dezhung Rinpoche*, Wisdom Publications, Boston, 2003, p.256.



rgyal (1923-1982), the co-founder and patron of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology. They shared an interest in Tibetology and often enjoyed a few rounds of drinks together.

Gene's visit to the old Rumtek Monastery gave him the opportunity to witness H.H. the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa's (1924-1981) tireless efforts to restore Tibetan literary works by commissioning traditional Tibetan wood block carvings. He got acquainted with Rje dbon Stobs dga' Rinpoche (1942-1997), and enjoyed his company and expertise in Kamtshang studies. In Delhi he was frequently in touch with the Tibetan scholar Lha lung pa blo bzang phun tshogs (1926-2008) of All India Radio and the Sikkimese scholar Renoch Kazi bsod nams stobs rgyas (1925-2009) of Tibet House. Since 1965, with the help of a couple of rich hippies, Gene helped monks from the three great Dge lugs pa seats and other schools at Buxa duar and 'Brug pa thugs sras's centre at Mim Tea Estate, within Darjeeling, to produce mimeograph and lithograph reprints of their obligatory liturgical and philosophical texts.

Gene type copied the following catalogues from the Library of Rai Bahadur Densapa to build his bibliography of Tibetan works:

1. A catalogue of printing blocks from Central Tibet, probably compiled before 1950 at the order of Stag brag Rinpoche, the regent of those days, and concluded in 1957.⁵
2. The catalogue of the *Zhol Bka' 'gyur* printing blocks.⁶
3. The catalogue of the 'Bras spungs monastery's printing blocks.⁷
4. The catalogue of the printing blocks of Dga' ldan pho brang in 'Bras spungs monastery.⁸
5. The catalogue of the Ding ri chos kyi rgyal mtshan editions.⁹
6. The catalogue of the Rtsib ri printing blocks.¹⁰

5 *Gangs can gyi ljongs su bka' dang bstan bcos sogs kyi glegs bam spar gzhi ji ltar yod pa rnams nas dkar chag spar thor phyogs tsam du bkod pa phan bde'i pad tshal 'byed pa'i nyin byed ces bya ba bzhugs so*, 38 folios.

6 *Pho brang po ta la'i zhol bka' 'gyur spar khang steng shod du gsung spar dpe ring ji yod kyi dkar chag bzhugs*, 5 folios.

7 *Chos sde chen po dpal ldan 'bras spungs kyi par khang chen mo'i gsung par dkar chag bzhugs yod*, 8 folios.

8 *Me khyi dga' ldan pho brang gi shag sgor nub brgyud par khang sgo shar blta nang gsung par mdo ma rnams kyi par shing zhal grangs 'di bzhugs kyi dkar chag bzhugs so*, 4 folios.

9 *Ding ri pa chos rgyan nas gsungs spar gsar bskrun gyi dkar chag thar lam shing ra*, 45 folios.

10 *La stod rgyal gyi shri ne'u steng du bzhugs pa'i 'brug pa gtsor 'gyur gsar rnying gsung spar dkar chag nyin byed 'od 'bar*, 28 folios.

His list also included:

7. An unpublished *Sa skya dkar chag*.¹¹

In 1968 Gene joined the United States Library of Congress (L.C.) Overseas Operations Division in New Delhi under the Library of Congress PL-480 programme. At that point the Library had bought just a few Tibetan books in New Delhi from 1963 onwards. He was first hired as “Consultant for Tibetan” (July 1968 to July 1974); then he became Assistant Field Director for Cataloging (August 1974 to January 1978); Deputy Field Director (January 1978 to August 1980), and finally Field Director (September 1980 to September 1985).

His first (and quite bold) step was to encourage Diaspora Tibetans to publish literary works belonging to the various Tibetan traditions, so that aspects of Tibetan civilization could be preserved from destruction through the auspices of the Library of Congress. His immediate motivation to pursue this activity was that he was appalled to see in Nepal in the mid 1960s that rare and precious manuscripts of Tibetan art, culture, literature, medicine and philosophy were being sold on the streets of Kathmandu and that tourists bought just the pages of the manuscripts that contained illustrations of deities and Lamas. Upon returning to India, he had thought seriously of a way to fight this menace that was gradually destroying the literary heritage of a civilization and formulated the Library of Congress system of buying reprints of rare Tibetan manuscripts and subsidizing them so that publishers were able to remain in business by securing them a profit that exceeded sweater selling or some other petty business that the majority of Tibetan refugees were reluctantly engaged in.

Dr. Lokesh Chandra’s three volumes entitled, *Materials for a History of Tibetan Literature* also helped Gene to plan his project further.¹² Gene also

11 The seventh main bibliographical source Gene used was a manuscript of a *Sa skya dkar chag* (later published by Ngawang Topgyal, New Delhi, 1987, *Dkar chag mthong bas yid 'phrog chos mdzod bye ba 'i lde mig: A Bibliography of Sa-skyapa Literature*. Dr. David P. Jackson wrote the introduction and table of contents in English). Gene typed and bound his own transliterated copy of the Tshugs ma 'khyug manuscript, a western style notebook which he called the “Lhalung Karchak” because he borrowed it from Sku ngo Lha lung pa Blo bzang phun tshogs (then at 158 Kaka Nagar, N.D.), who had asked H. H. the Sa skya Khri 'dzin in the mid 1960s to compile a list of Sa skya works. Its main source was the long list of Sa skya writings compiled a few years earlier by Mkhan po A Pad (1927-2010) in Sikkim during the early 1960s (the original copy of which is still in the library of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok). Mkhan po A pad's main source for rare Sa skya collected writings was the Central Tibet travel diary of 'Jam dbyang Mkhjen brtse'i dbang po (1820-1892), which Mkhan po A pad borrowed from the Mkhjen brtse Mchod dpon bla ma 'Jam dbyangs blo gros while he worked at the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology. That diary has long since disappeared.

12 *Materials for a History of Tibetan Literature*, Dr. Lokesh Chandra, Part i & ii,



sent Dr. Bkra shis g-yang 'phel to make a print of all the wood blocks kept in Sikkim, India and Nepal for the Library of Congress and employed him as the first Tibetan cataloguer. With Gene's ideas and guidance, Tibetan works appeared in several literary series including Dr. Lokesh Chandra's Sata-Pitaka Series of the International Academy of Indian Culture, the texts published by the Tibet House, the Sungrab Nyamso Junphel Parkhang Series of Tashijong, Smantsis Shesrig Spendzod Series of Ladakh, and the Geden Sungrab Minyam Gyunphel Series of Gelek Rinpoche, Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Literature Series of Sherab Gyaltzen.

Later on in the early 1970s, Gene was deputing Tibetan monastic or individual publishers to locate titles. He based this hunt for sources on two seminal lists of Tibetan literary rarities:

- a list of the Tibetan historical and biographical works consulted by Brag sgom dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas (1801-1866) in *Deb ther rgya mtsho*, his monumental work on Dge lugs monasteries in Amdo.¹³

- A khu ching Shes rab rgya mtsho's (1803-1875) work, containing an important list of rare works of Tibetan literature, arranged by subject.¹⁴

In short, the field of Tibetan and Buddhist studies is indebted to Gene for his pioneering and pivotal role in giving impetus to the publishing of Tibetan texts in the subcontinent from 1968. It was through Gene's guidance and encouragement as Field Director of the Library's South Asian headquarters that individuals and institutions in the Tibetan Diaspora started reproducing and publishing ancient Tibetan literature.

Gene was personally involved, in one way or another, in the publication of approximately 6,000 titles and 8,000 volumes during his tenure, by revitalizing the Library of Congress' Acquisition Program of Tibetan books from the Tibetan Diaspora, Sikkimese, Ladakhi, Mongolian and Bhutanese publishers, Gene collected and made available a diverse and indispensable literary corpus for the understanding and advancement of Tibetan Studies internationally.

Since the majority of librarians in the West do not read Tibetan and do not know how to wrap the cloths of the poti books, Gene asked everyone to publish them in Western book format. Everyday Gene singlehandedly wrote, in the Library of Congress system of Tibetan transliteration, all the titles for every book on its respective spine, as well as all its main subtitles. He also wrote introductions of

International Academy of Indian Culture, New Delhi, 1963.

13 *Histoire du Bouddhisme dans L'Amdo*, Introduction par Yontan Rgya mcho, Paris, 1972, pp.7-32.

14 *Dpe rgyun dkon pa 'ga' zhig gi tho yig don gnyer yid kyi kun da bzhad pa'i zla 'od 'bum gyi snye ma bzhuvs so*, 60 folios. *Collected Works of A khu ching Shes rab rgya mtsho*, Published by Ngawang Sopa, New Delhi, 1974, vol. 7, pp.406-525.





varying lengths for all the texts that were published. Every Sunday one would see streams of Tibetan publishers visiting him to check and read their proof copies. Since most of the Tibetan publishers did not know English, Gene, while writing the titles and contents of the book in English for the printer, used red ink for all the diacritic marks, alongside using the Library of Congress system of transliteration, so that the printers would not make mistakes. He patiently read time and again each manuscript to correct every reappearing typo. I saw Gene waking up at four o'clock every morning and can still hear the clanking of his type writer until he stopped for breakfast.

His tireless energy helped Tibetans to move first from lithograph printing to letter press and then to the more modern and up to date photo offset printing. Each year the offset printing presses in Ballimaran, Chandni Chowk, Delhi were crowded with Tibetans, Bhutanese and Sikkimese publishers between October and March. During Gene's tenure as Field Director, the publication of Indian regional language texts reached new heights as well.

In 1985 Gene was posted to Jakarta by the Library of Congress. Just before he left in September, as a symbol of appreciation for all he had done, the Guild of Tibetan Publishers (Gsung rabs nyams gso lhan tshogs), headed by Dge rnam of Tashi Jong, which comprised of around 34 institutional and individuals publishers, offered him a brocade hanging inscribed with their messages of gratitude.¹⁵ After

15 The members of Tibetan Gsung rab nyams gso lhan tshogs (i.e. the Guild of Tibetan Publishers), Delhi, in 1985 were:

1. A publisher for the LTWA
2. A publisher for the Tibet House
3. A publisher for Delhi Pal Karmapae Choedhey
4. A publisher for Dudjom Labrang
5. A publisher for Choedey Tashi Lhunpo
6. A publisher for Drepung Losel Ling
7. A publisher for Dilgo Khyentse Labrang
8. A publisher for Penor Rinpoche Labrang
9. A publisher for Ludhing Khen Rinpoche
10. A publisher for Khampa gar, Tashijong
11. A publisher for the Bonpo Monastic Centre, Dolanji
12. A publisher for the Sakya Centre
13. A publisher for Dodrupchen Labrang
14. A publisher for Kargyu Sungrab Nyamso khang
15. A publisher for the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Literature Series
16. A publisher for Tana Lama
17. A publisher for Gelek Rinpoche
18. A publisher for Trulku Namkha Drimed Rinpoche
19. Lama Pema Tashi
20. A publisher for C. Namgyal (Ladakh)





Gene left Delhi, the program was halted, but his commitment never wavered, and from 1991 onwards he returned to Delhi to help the new Field Director, Mrs. Lygia M. Ballantyne (who served from July 1990 to October 2002) re-establish what he had started. It was on his suggestion that I acted as a consultant to the Tibetan Program at the Library of Congress in New Delhi. In September 1993, Yarlung Enterprises, Kalka-ji were appointed as sole dealer for the Library of Congress in New Delhi, run by Sonam Choephel until the present day. In April 1994 Pema Dorje was hired as permanent Tibetan cataloguer. He still holds this post today.

Gene's ground-breaking role in encouraging the Tibetan Diaspora to publish their literature in the Indian subcontinent had an indirect impact by stimulating a similar activity in China. For the first time the PRC government allowed their Tibetologists to participate in the 2nd Conference of the International Association for Tibetan Studies at Columbia University, New York, in July 1982. At the conference, scholars and government authorities from China were amazed to see for the first time volumes of Tibetan works reproduced in exile and felt compelled to establish a competing program. In the following years the PRC experienced a resurgence in the publication of Tibetan texts.

When Gene's early retirement became known, His Royal Majesty's Government of Bhutan, through the Bhutanese publisher Kun bzang stobs rgyas, immediately requested him to settle there. He was offered life time support, but Gene declined the invitation. Instead, for the two years following his retirement, for the two years between 1997-1999, Gene ran the Himalayan and Inner Asian Resources (HIAR, later re-named Latse: Contemporary Tibetan Cultural Library), a branch of Trace Foundation, New York, where I also served as consultant for a brief period.

In 1999, Gene established the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Centre (TBRC), first in Boston and later in New York. From then until last December, he tirelessly

-
21. A publisher for Smantsis Shesrig Spendzod
 22. Tsondue Sengge
 23. A publisher for the Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Community, Patshang Lama
 24. Ngawang Topgyal
 25. Damchoe Sangpo
 26. Trulku Pema Lodoe
 27. Lama Kugyal
 28. Tshultrim Tashi
 29. Konchog Ladrepa
 30. Tashi Dorje
 31. Choephel Legden
 32. A publisher for Mongolian Guru Deva Lama
 33. Tobden Tsering and
 34. A publisher for Choedrak Gyatso.





Gene and me (HIAR office, New York, September 1999)

located, collected and scanned thousands of rare and not so rare texts from Tibet, China, India, Nepal and Mongolia, using his own collection as a starting point, to make them digitally available to scholars worldwide. To date, TBRC's Digital Library holds a vast and fully searchable archive of approximately seven million pages scanned.

Whether in lengthy articles, well written and informative introductions or other works, when it came to acknowledging help from fellow scholars or teachers, Gene was the finest example of intellectual honesty among all Tibetologists and Buddhist scholars. And when it came to him helping fellow scholars, his non-attachment to the most rare and important literary works led him to share his materials and findings, always of the highest standard, with anyone who needed them. Indeed from 1968 to September 1985 Gene's place in Delhi was an open house, a meeting point and haven for all scholars and students of Tibetan, Himalayan, Nepalese and Indian studies.

Since my first meeting with him many years ago, Gene has been a personal mentor and a source of great inspiration. I was privileged to offer him a small token of my appreciation when I was the Head of the Tibetan Publication Department of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamshala. The Biography of the First Tre Hor Khang gsar Skyabs mgon Blo bzang tshul khri ms bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1838-1897) was dedicated to him on the occasion of his 60th birthday. I wrote:

"This volume is dedicated to the foremost bibliographer of Tibetan texts, E. Gene Smith, on his sixtieth birthday, for opening up the literary treasures of Tibet



to the rest of the world and for his preeminent contribution to the advancement of Tibetan and Buddhist studies.”

Finally, in 2007, as a small gesture of my personal gratitude towards Gene and for his knowledge of Tibetan culture and boundless altruism in sharing information and texts, I published his Festschrift, entitled *The Pandita and the Siddha; Tibetan Studies in Honour of E. Gene Smith*, and edited by Dr. Ramon N. Prats, with contributions from 24 internationally distinguished scholars.

Gene came into contact with A lags gzan dkar Rinpoche Thub bstan nyi ma (b.1943) in 1997, and initially bequeathed to him his entire personal collection to be placed in a suitable location in the east where they had originated. Gene wanted scholars to access them. He and Rinpoche discussed many locations. Later, in 2007, they decided to place them in Lho nub mi rigs slob grwa chen mo (South West Nationalities University) of Chengdu, Sichuan, because there the texts would be centrally located, beautifully stored and preserved, and available to all nationalities. Chengdu has a large Tibetan population, and the university has a vast Tibetan student body, and it would be easy for Tibetan scholars, monks and laymen to come and go at will. In November 2007 the decision was finalised and a mutual agreement was signed with the university. The first shipment of 443 volumes was dispatched to the University on 13th April 2010, the second consignment of 135 volumes was shipped on 4th May 2010 and the third shipment of 1615 volumes was sent on 14th September 2010. Many more volumes are expected to be sent in the near future. These collections will serve as an invaluable resource for many future generations of Tibetan scholars.

During all the years I knew Gene, he never let people know he was a Tibetan Buddhist practitioner. It was only after his retirement, without much fuss and unlike many Western practitioners, that he finally felt able to reveal where his faith lay. His main root Guru was Sde gzhung Rinpoche and in his latter years his youngest Guru was Rdzong sar 'jam dbyang mkhyen brtse Rinpoche (b.1961). He also shared his long standing admiration for Mkhyen brtse Rinpoche for his skill in teaching the most challenging and difficult Buddhist texts in enlightening, entertaining and profound ways.

As the mid 19th century Tibetan Muslim Kha che pha lu 'ju, or Faizullah, advised:

Yong gin yong gin 'gro gin 'gro gin 'dug

Don du yong mi tshang ma 'gro mi red

'khor ba 'di la rtag pa gcig kyang med

Walking down the path of life leads one to leave it in the end.

Indeed everyone who comes must go:





there is no way to make this illusionary life permanent.¹⁶

Like all stories that have an end, Gene Smith died at the age of 74 on 16th December 2010 at his Manhattan apartment. Prior to his death Gene was in Noida, U.P. India at the residence and office of his long time staff member and friend Mr. Manga Ram Kashyap, where the bulk of TBRC scanning is done.

Most probably I was the last person to share a very rare text with Gene—the selected writings of Bod mkhas pa Mi pham dge legs rnam rgyal (1618-?) of the 'Brug pa bka' brgyud school. That Mi pham dge legs rnam rgyal is known as Bod mkhas pa—"The Scholar of Tibet"—is a sign of the greatness of his learning. The two volumes, from the Potala Palace Library,¹⁷ were scanned under his personal supervision in Noida, twenty days before his death. Looking back, I feel fortunate. I can see that our *Samaya* or *Dam tshig* was intact and pure until the last, since our final exchange was connected to a text as special as the works of Bod mkhas pa. This is a prophetic, auspicious omen that Gene will be reborn for the benefit of Tibetan Studies and in due course be another Bod mkhas pa.

When common friends in New York were so kind to inform me about his demise immediately after it happened, I did not feel sad because Gene's passing happened when he had reached the height of his intellectual pursuits and his memory and mental sharpness still were at their best. For many years junior scholars had been friendly, appreciative and attentive to him. At the same time the TBRC project was well established and running smoothly. He died a happy man, admired and respected by friends and grateful colleagues in an extremely positive atmosphere.

In Tibetan tradition scholars are expected to possess the triple qualities of Wisdom, Diligence and Kindness, and are judged by the three requirements of Teaching, Debating and Writing. Of these, the writings left by scholars are considered to be the most important. This idea is best expressed by Rje tsong khapa (1357-1419) in this verse:

Of all Buddha's deeds, His Words
Are the most excellent.
Knowing this, ye wise must remember
The Buddha for his Words.¹⁸

16 *Kha che pha lu'i 'jig rten las 'bras kyi bslab bya bzugs so*, Printed and Published by Thopkung (sic) at Imperial Printing Press, Dharamshala, (1964), p.7.

17 *Bka' brgyud pa'i gsung 'bum dkar chag*, Pho brang Po ta la do dam khru'u rig dngos zhib 'jug khang gis bsgrigs, Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, Lhasa, 2007, pp.280-283.

18 Mdzad pa kun las gsung gi ni/
mdzad pa mchog yin de yang ni/
'di nyid yin phyir mkhas pa yis/





A lover of books, Gene's legendary effort to inspire Tibetans to publish their literature and his own writings can also be seen as an act of gratitude for the writers of the past and present. Their works supplied him not only with the knowledge and intellectual completeness he strove for, but also for inspiration, courage and much pleasure.

This reminds me of the words of the Buryiat Mongolian Dge bshes chos grags (1898-1972) who lived and studied in independent Tibet. He compiled the first Tibetan dictionary in modern book form in 1946, published in 1949. Dge bshes Chos grags had this to say of his work:

Seeking happiness in this world of suffering,
 Wishing to look back even after death,
 All beings by nature diligently strive,
 To leave behind one's own legacy.
 The able ones leave heirs or disciples,
 Words of wisdom or deeds of fame.
 Others leave temples of learning and statues of gods,
 And others buildings of beauty and much wealth.
 With neither spiritual nor earthly wealth,
 The poor wanderer with no possessions,
 In return for long years of refuge,
 Leaves behind this book in a foreign land.¹⁹

What I have said of Gene is so little compared with the enormity of his

¹⁹di las sangs rgyas rjes dran byos//

Rje tsong kha pa, *Rten 'brel bstod pa bzhugs so*, in *Blo bzang dgongs rgyan mu tig phreng mdzes deb bzhi pa*, 'Bras spungs blo gling shes yon lhan tshogs, Mundgod, 1995, p.128.

19 Skyid la sdug pa'i 'jig rten mi yul 'dir/

Shi yang phyi mig blta ba'i re ba yis/

Skye bo thams cad rang gi lag rjes tsam/

shul du lus pa'i 'bad pa ngang gis byed/

'di na 'ga' yis rang gi rgyud 'dzin bu dang slob ma rjes su bzhag/

de bzhin gzhan gyis legs bshad nor dang snyan pa'i grags pa shul du bkod/

la la 'chad mnyan chos kyi sde dang dam pa'i rten rnams bzhengs nas 'das/

gzhan gyi lag rjes bsags pa'i nor dang mdzes pa'i khang khyim 'di dag lags/

chos nor gnyis med sprang po'i lag rjes la/

gong du smros pa 'di dag ma mchis pas/

mi zas yun ring zas pa'i rin 'bab tu/

deb chung 'di nyid mi yi yul du bzag//

Dge bshes chos kyi grags pas brtsams pa'i brda dag ming tshig gsal ba bzhugs so, Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, Beijing, 1981, p.971.





achievements and life experiences. Today, on the occasion of the 49th day of his Bardo state, I wish to say an impromptu prayer:

Spyi gtsug pad zla'i gdan steng nas/
 Skyabs gnas dkon mchog gsum po dang/
 Drin chen rtsa brgyud bla ma rnam mkhyen no/
 Gson mi yul gram ma sgang nas tshe 'phos te/
 Gshin yul gram thang skya mo 'grims dus/
 Bar do'i 'jigs skrag las skyob du gsol/
 Lam log par ma gtong shi dmyal bar ma gtong/
 Nyin gyi mel tshe mtshan gyi bya ra mdzod cig/
 Mdun nas bsus shig rgyab nas skyog zhig/
 Dgung sngon mo mi mngon dbyings rum nas/
 Pha mtshun dgra lha'i g-yang skyob mkhan tshos/
 Mi mkhas pa'i mi g-yang ma 'chor zhig
 Zas kyi bcud dang gos kyi bkrag mdangs ma nyams shig/
 Srid pa'i gangs rgan ma snyil zhig/
 Rgya mtsho phyug mo ma 'phri zhig/
 Gtsang chab chu bo ma skam zhig/
 Rgya rdzong nags ri ma tshigs shig/
 Skye ba pho lus thob par shog/
 Dam chos rin chen mjal bar shog/
 Tshad ldan bla mar 'phrad par shog/
 Gu ru mkhyen gu ru mkhyen gu ru mkhyen no//

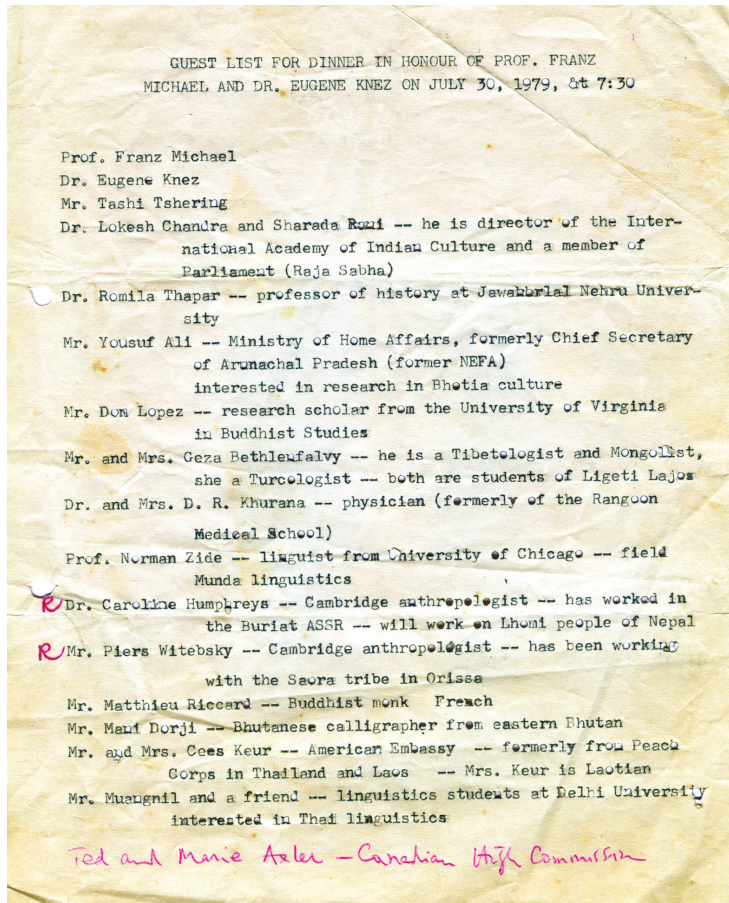
Besides writing my "official" key note for Gene's memorial service, I cannot help but jot down some of my personal accounts about him.

In 1979, at the behest of the Rai Bahadur T. D. Densapa and his son Tashi Densapa (presently the Director of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology in Gangtok), I assisted and interpreted for Prof. Emeritus Franz Michael and Dr. Eugene Knez during their field research based on the Max Weber theory and the Tibetan theocracy. We interviewed Tibetan scholars and elders in Rajpur, Mussoorie and Ladakh.²⁰

It was upon completion of this research phase that I first chanced upon meeting the legendary Gene Smith. I was also invited to the dinner he hosted in honour of the Professors on 30 July 1979 at D-29 South Extension Part II, his residence in New Delhi. Later, during that meeting, I came to know that Gene knew about me through Dr. Michael Aris (1946-1999) who had visited the LTWA in April. We had a long

20 Franz Michael, *Rule by Incarnation: Tibetan Buddhism and its Role in Society and State*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1982.





What a surprise for a young student like me to read my name in the invitation!
 (dinner hosted by Gene at his residence, South Extension, New Delhi).

discussion on the Tibetan manuscript collections at the LTWA and my field research for the LTWA in Sikkim and adjacent areas. After that, like several other scholars, I began to be acquainted with his untiring efforts in preserving Tibetan literature.

During winter 1979, while in Delhi, I visited Gene again and, to my surprise, found him writing down the title and contents of my own copy of the *Brtag thabs pad ma dkar po'i 'chun po*, a work by Sngags 'chang Hum kara dza ya, which was going to be published by Tashi Dorje, Dolanji. Gene asked me at once to write in Tibetan a short introduction to the text. I was young, inexperienced, shy and reluctant to write anything which may have not been worthwhile. So I refused. Gene was adamant that I should do it, and I penned a short introduction then and there. I borrowed Gene's Tibetan typewriter (Remington 1976, Calcutta,



designed and patented by the LTWA) and, laboriously typing with two fingers, wrote whatever little I knew about the brtag thabs literature. The next year I was asked to head the LTWA's Department of Tibetan Publications, and in the following quinquennium I published 61 volumes of Tibetan books, all due to Gene's support and kindness.

Only sometime later was I able to reciprocate his generosity. Since 2000, I let Gene scan a fairly large number of rare Tibetan books from my own library and helped him by drawing his attention to other important Tibetan collections in India and Nepal.

By being with him I realised that, whenever Skyabs rje Dil mgo mkhyen brtse Rinpoche or Sde gzhung Rinpoche visited Genes' place in New Delhi, the host would move to one guest room and prepare his room for the Lamas much in advance. He even had a collection of China and porcelain cups reserved for Rinpoches alone.

In my off-hand observation, I came to detect where his penchant lay in terms of the various literary traditions. Among all of his Tibetan texts he did not particularly treasure Pha bong kha pa bde chen snying po (1878-1942) and Bon gsar ma texts. They are kept either in the last row of the bookshelves near the door or in the store room.

Gene meticulously procured everything and anything that was published by the Tibetan Diaspora, even grey literature, since internal squabbles and intrigues are plentiful in the exiled Tibetan society. During the twenty years he spent in Delhi he did not bother to go to Dharamshala. He was not particularly fond of the Tibetan establishment there. I do not know whether this was due to doctrinal differences, or to personal and political motives. Generally, in my own experiences in Dharamshala, we draw significant numbers of weird and wacky westerners. At the same time the Tibetan establishment has a knack for attracting opportunist and mgo ser sycophants, but not genuine scholars.

Gene finally visited Dharamshala in September 2008 on an official visit to interview Bka' blon khri pa (5th) Zam gdong Rinpoche Blo bzang bstan 'dzin chos kyi rgyal mtshan (b.1939) for the documentary on his life ("One Man's Mission to Save a Culture"). Only then did Zam gdong Rinpoche host and request Gene to give a talk entitled "Tibetan books and how to catalogue them with modern electronic facilities" to the highest ranking Central Tibetan Administration officers down to the level of deputy secretary.

Despite his many achievements, his work remains incomplete, because the effort to discover and preserve documents of the Tibetan literature will occupy scholars for quite sometime to come. I'd now like to stress one or two aspects of Gene's activities that are less well known, but are important.





Two of his most revealing papers are unpublished. They deserve attention beyond the fact that they have not been circulated. One is entitled, “Notes on the History of the Cult of Rdo rje shugs ldan”. It was presented at the Inner Asia Colloquium, University of Washington, Seattle, as early as July 25th, 1963. In those days Gene felt that there was a potential risk of controversy in the doctrinal handling of this deity. Today, those pro and anti “ghost issue” divisions have come to nurture mutual hatred in a hopelessly pathological and extreme manner. The issue is so hot and biased that in 2008, and for the first time in the history of the Dge lugs pa school, the Dga’ ldan shar rtse grwa tshang (founded in 1424) broke into two factions. The PRC government has taken advantage of the situation; it is scheming, it is nosey and it has a finger in this imbroglio.

The other work is an example of Gene’s accuracy and diligence. He found out that Dge lugs pa ruling dignitaries have altered the autobiographical writing of the 5th Dalai Lama, the *Dukula’i gos bzang* volumes. Gene read a paper entitled, “Persistent Themes in the Cultural History of Lamaism Politics: Two Attempts at Rewriting the Early Life of the Fifth Dalai Lama”, at the workshop on “The History of Tibet; New Resources and Perspectives, A Tribute to Hugh Edward Richardson in His Ninety-third Year”, organised by Dr. Michael Aris at St. Anthony’s College, Oxford, 23rd May 1997, in which I also participated.

Gene also wrote volumes of notes; an activity he pursued from 1965 to 1985, a solid twenty years. They are all neatly typed and properly bound- subject wise, something I noticed first in 1979. These volumes include inter-disciplinary studies on Tibet, Bhutan, Sikkim and Mongolia. Unfortunately, in 1997, when Gene sent his collection to New York from Cairo, a couple of boxes of those legendary notes were lost. These notes are the fruits of Gene’s tireless jotting downs and typing of important findings while reading numerous Tibetan texts since the mid-1960s. This incident is most regrettable and can never be amended.

It is advisable that all the remaining notes by Gene should be published as they are for the benefit of students and scholars.

APPENDIX
TEXT OF THE SPEECH ON THE OCCASION OF THE
SCREENING OF “DIGITAL DHARMA”
(the film documenting the life and work of E. Gene Smith,
the U.S. Embassy, New Delhi, December 8th 2011)

I cannot stop thinking about Gene and I want to praise his contribution towards making the world of Tibetan Literary Heritage accessible to the world. We Tibetans and everyone else cherish and salute his monumental achievements. His name will hold a special place





in Tibetan Literary history. I can speak for the Tibetans, and I'm sure that he will always be remembered by us.

The death of Gene has left a big void in the community both from the humane and professional viewpoints. We all are trying to cope with the fact that he is no more.

I'm here to offer you briefly an outsider's view of how colleagues and friends of Gene around the world, during the last year, have tried to keep his legacy alive and pursue the work that he was undertaking in his last days.

I think of this last year because we met here in Delhi at India International Centre in February 2011 on the 49th day after Gene's demise.

I do so from the angle of an old friend who has shared the same interests in Tibetan literature for a number of decades.

I had the opportunity to spend some time at his TBRC last December when I was in New York for a conference on Tibetan language. During my stay there I realised that the project of scanning and cataloguing the available Tibetan literature has undergone important developments.

Following Gene's donation of his own books to Chengdu University (a project that was completed in the most during his last days but is still on-going), a good number of volumes are on their way to Sichuan.

At the same time a new TBRC branch office at Chengdu is going to be opened at the end of this month in order to scan and catalogue all the material from Tibet and China.

Another branch office, operated by Chris Thompson, is in Kathmandu with the same task to scan all the books from Nepal and the various Himalayan regions.

They add to the historical TBRC office at Noida, run for many decades by the most valuable Mr. Manga Ram Kashyap who is sitting here tonight.

A most important innovation is that the TBRC New York office will be relocated to Cambridge, Boston from June 2012. This decision reflects a realistic vision of future developments in the organisation. Some of the closest colleagues and friends of Gene are planning to carry on his heritage, and it is more convenient for them to do it from Massachusetts. The Trustees and the TBRC staff are aware that Gene's capacities in fund raising and contacts with everyone in the Tibetan world cannot be matched, but still they are struggling hard to locate enough resources to keep the work going as before.

For my own part, I especially welcome, as a lover of Tibetan literature and traditions, the idea that TBRC will print his legendary "green books". Gene spent some twenty years from around 1965 to around 1985 jotting down his observations on the many aspects of Tibetan culture. Their release will be a great contribution for all scholars who will benefit from his unpublished insights which advance the knowledge of Tibetan heritage.

A last remark concerns tonight's documentary. It was first shown in NY, an obvious choice given the location of the TBRC office, and I had the privilege of being there. This happened during the same seminar on Tibetan language which was held last December. This was a unique opportunity to gather the TBRC Trustees, amongst others, A lags gzan dkar Rinpoche and a good number of colleagues and friends of Gene from all over the world. The documentary was webcast. Tonight's screening here at the American Embassy in New Delhi is another special occasion.

The documentary led Gene to do something he would have been unlikely to do otherwise. Gene told his story; he had always been reluctant to talk about his achievements in other circumstances. The work on the documentary was in progress when he died, and





it is admirable that the director and everyone else involved in it had a strong determination to bring the documentary to completion.

I'm sure everyone will enjoy it very much. Thank you and Tashi Delek!





BOOK REVIEW

ROBERTO VITALI

dGon rabs kun gsal nyi snang

The History of Ladakh Monasteries

'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan ed.

Ladakh Buddhist Society Publishers, Leh 1996, pp.890

Upon getting a copy of *dGon rabs kun gsal nyi snang* (the “Sun that Sheds Light on All Groups of Monasteries”) a reader may say: “Another book on the monasteries of La dwags!”. Yes indeed so, but this is a book with a difference. The virtues of this text amply compensate its *déjà vu* concept, and the brief notes of this review do little justice to an especially comprehensive volume.

dGon rabs kun gsal nyi snang offers a view of the monastic panorama of the higher ranges of the Indus region (the religious institutions of La dwags, Zangs dkar, Pu rig, Nub ra and La dwags Byang thang) like few other books. Meant for a local readership and the community of scholars, for not everyone negotiates Tibetan, *dGon rabs kun gsal nyi snang* is a good compilation of works penned by some of the most brilliant erudites of La dwags.

What a reader would wonder next is why this review appears some fifteen years after the book was released. The volume has been culpably neglected. I myself have contributed to this state of affairs, not so much for not reading it, which I did when it came out the same time my main work to date on sTod mNga' ris skor gsum saw the light of day, but for not stressing its importance earlier. The reason behind the absence of popularity among the concerned people may rest on the problems the volume has faced with distribution, even within Ladakh.

Books on the cultures of La dwags, besides a plethora of coffee-table publications, reflect the course that the studies of the region have taken since a pioneering effort was made in the early 20th century by foreign researchers with the support of local savants.

Leaving aside domains typical of Inji studies (anthropology, ethnology, linguistics, ecology or even development), two main lines of research have been pursued about La dwags: one is historiographical and the other art historical. The latter studies focus on monuments, the former ones on a single major text (the anonymous *La dwags rgyal rabs*), whose almost ubiquitous use has influenced





remarkably the direction this branch of Ladakhi studies has taken. Not much has changed since those early times. Works by local erudites and western specialists concerning the history of La dwags have been dominated by their focus on the *rgyal rabs* literary genre, all busy studying *La dwags rgyal rabs* after this important text was first brought to the attention of the international community of experts by A.H. Francke through the auspices of his advisor Yo seb dGe rgan. Being a *rgyal rabs*, this text focuses on rulers and their accomplishments in the field of religion and secularism with a few idiosyncracies that pertain to an emphasis on the political activities of the later centuries and a minimum on information about the religious sphere, mainly monastic foundations.

It is difficult to step out of this limitation for want of sources: the paucity of other historiographical material on the regions of La dwags, Pu rig, Zangs dkar and Nub ra is surprising. Little is available pertaining to the other major literary genres that impinge on historiography. It is conspicuous that very little else historical—such as *rnam thar*, *gdung rabs*, *gdan rabs* or *dkar chag*—is available for study, and I wonder about the reasons for the absence of sources in a region that has not suffered recent massive destruction of its religious institutions, unless unrecorded damage in the past has emptied the libraries of the region's monasteries.

I, for one, have written along the same *rgyal rabs* lines, although I think that *La dwags rgyal rabs* has not yet been read critically and that other historiographical hints—although very few—should receive the attention they deserve, besides those found in this source. That is what I have tried to do in the past and plan to have some more work on the history of La dwags out in the near future.

The other line of research concerns the study of the monuments of the region and their art. Again several works dedicated to these themes have appeared in the course of the 20th century and these topics continue to be a major concern to the scholars, with issues on major monasteries remaining unsolved.

Given matters as they are at present, there is need of sources that widen the perspective of the Ladakhi studies. Hence any big or small progress in shedding some new light on any topic linked with the traditions of La dwags is a great gift to the community of scholars.

As for what is available at present, two books have been especially useful to my work on La dwags:

- One goes back to the pioneering efforts of the early generations of scholars studying the cultures of the region. *La dwags rgyal rabs 'chi med gter* by Yo seb dGe rgan is a milestone for the understanding of the history of La dwags and neighbouring territories, although not enough consulted.
- The other is the relatively recent *dGon rabs kun gsal nyi snang* I talk about here, a volume compiled in the second half of the 1990s by 'Jam dbyangs rgyal





mtshan as editor. I have benefited from both, and they are highly recommended. *dGon rabs kun gsal nyi snang*, a survey of the monasteries and temples of La dwags stod and La dwags gsham, Pu rig, Zangs dkar, Nub ra and La dwags Byang thang, is not, as I have said, a major novelty, but contributes material which should not be neglected. *dGon rabs kun gsal nyi snang* is remarkably wider ranging than other volumes conceived in a similar manner. Its completeness makes a difference.¹

The distinguished Ladakhi authors who have contributed pieces on the various major monasteries have been chosen for their expertise concerning the *dgon pa*-s they write about, for they are, in most cases, important religious masters affiliated to them.

Each chapter dedicated to a major monastery first deals with its various temples and other buildings, focusing on the description of their contents together with limited historical information, when available. Each treatment of these monasteries makes a point to mention the calendar of ceremonies held in their premises. It continues with an outline of the concerned main monastic institution's *dgon lag*-s (the "network of branch monasteries") and records what is locally known about them. The book is a small treasure of brief texts on the branch monasteries of the principal ones.

The assessments of all monasteries incorporates a great deal of local accounts—mainly oral lore put into written form—some of them remarkably unusual. This is an area of great interest but not particularly reliable, especially when the local lore relates to events going back to considerable antiquity. While double-checking is relatively practicable in the case of major monasteries, hardly anything is known about several minor ones. Assessing the reliability of some of these oral accounts is a vexed question since some of these monasteries are so little known to the literature that are not mentioned elsewhere. Hence in the latter case, the only possible criterion to validate treatments contained in *dGon rabs kun gsal nyi snang* is local inspection, for what it is worth given its limitations.

Besides being a source of information about religious buildings that hardly appear elsewhere, their grouping into a network of "children" institutions that depend on their "mother" institution (*dgon pa ma bu*) permits an analysis of the genesis and evolution of the respective monastic network. This is a study on the monasteries of La dwags and neighbouring lands not attempted at all up to now, which leads one into an area of historical studies that steps out of the *rgyal rabs* genre but, at the same time, still tackles monuments, the other foremost scholarly concern.

1 I add here an aesthetical note. I find the layout of the book typographically appealing: flipping through its pages communicates a pleasant feeling. Its illustrations, although unfortunately not too many, are beautiful and descriptive, and thus well chosen.





A treatment of the various networks of branch monasteries also offers the possibility to attempt a historical assessment of the location and extension of the territory controlled by these major religious institutions and to outline trends in the territorial deployment of the religious schools to which they belong.

One case in point, for instance, is A lci and its branch monasteries (barring the conspicuous absence of Tsa tsa pu ri), dealt with by Thub bstan dpal ldan, the well known erudite from Sa phud. The conception of the network of the branch monasteries of A lci seems to follow a criterion of proximity, for its *dgon lag-s* are mainly found in its surrounding area. Proximity is again the main criterion for the attribution of *dgon lag-s* to dPe thub, again tackled by Sa phud Thub bstan dpal ldan who belongs to this monastery. Among them are the Brag khung kha bo che caves (also see a brief treatment of them in my *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang*),² and several monastic institutions attributed to lHa dbang blo gros, the 15th century “second founder” of dPe thub, besides the latter.

A commendable work is the one dedicated to Mang spro in that it reveals the existence of close links with the creation of Leh as a major centre of the region and the capital of king Grags pa ’bum lde in the early 15th century. Like Phyang, Mang spro stands out from the other monasteries, for there are few *dgon lag-s* included in the chapter dedicated to it. This is also the case of Khrig se, in whose chapter no *dgon lag-s* are mentioned. Whereas Mang spro remained a rather isolated Sa skya pa phenomenon in La dwags, and thus with few branch monasteries, Khrig se should have been at least connected in the book with its twin temple, sTag/ITag mo lHa khang gSer po, the other religious institution founded by sTod Sher bzang and his family in the same area.

The organisation of the network of branch monasteries under He mi is remarkably different. The territorial extension of its *dgon lag-s* reflect the authority exercised by the rNam rgyal dynasty in La dwags, which supported the ’Brug pa and consequently He mi. Its branch monasteries are situated in a good number of areas across the territories of La dwags, irrespective of a geographical criterion. One is then confronted with the task of detecting the secular and religious implications surrounding the passage of many a religious institutions

2 It is somewhat discouraging to notice that my text, despite the relative popularity of *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* owing to a limited distribution and my overall treatment of difficult accessibility, has given a tiny amount of notoriety to these caves outside the local circles more than the works by Thub bstan dpal ldan. This is not only due to the fact that not everyone reads Tibetan. It is a pity that Thub bstan dpal ldan’s books have not enjoyed a much bigger recognition, including his chapters in *dGon rabs kun gsal nyi snang* owing to the above mentioned lack of distribution in La dwags and neighbouring regions.





under He mi. This is not an easy task, but only attempts at research may say whether it is a mission impossible.

When the book crosses into other lands of the wider region of the Indus, it adopts a more traditional organisation. Consequently, the monasteries of Zangs dkar and La dwags Byang thang are studied together, without religious or historical discrimination, a simple geographical criterion taking the upper hand.

I conclude these few lines with a list of the main religious institutions tackled in *dGon rabs kun gsal nyi snang* together with the authors who wrote about them. To cite all the *dgon lag* of each head monastery would be too long for the limited space of this review. It is hoped to see future studies making use of *dGon rabs kun gsal nyi snang*.

Brag thog dgon — by sTag lung rtse sprul rin po che
 Theg chog bde chen gling — by 'Jam dbyangs gyal mtshan
 He mi dgon — by 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan
 Khri rtse — by dka' chen Blo bzang bzod pa
 lDum ra sDe skyid — by 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan
 sTag sna dgon — by sTag sna sprul sku Ngag dbang don yod
 Byang thang *dgon*-s and those of Zangs dkar — by dge bKra shis rdo rje
 Mang spro dgon Thub bstan sha gling chos skor — by Ngor Klu dkyil mkhan po
 'Jam dbyangs bstan pa'i nyi ma
 Gle Jo khang — by 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan
 dPe thub dGa' ldan dar rgyas gling — by dge Thub bstan dpal ldan
 dGang sdong dgon bKra shis chos rdzong — by dge dKon mchog nam rgyal
 g.Yung drung Thar pa gling — by dge dKon mchog bkra shis
 Sha wam dgon — by dge rTogs grol
 Shar chu khul Phun tshogs chos gling — by 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan
 Klu 'kyil dgon pa dGa' ldan dar rgyas gling — by Ngag dbang rgya mtsho
 Rang gdum bShad sgrub 'Dzam gling rgyan — by Tshe ring bkra shis
 sTong sde dGa' ldam legs bshad gling — by 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan
 dKar sha dGa' ldan Byams pa gling — by 'Jam dbyangs rgya l mtshan
 Phug dal dGa' ldan bzang po gling — by 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan
 Mu ne Dga' ldan bde skyid gling — by 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan
 Lings rnyed dgon pa bKra shis 'od 'bar — by 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan
 Ri rdzong dgon pa bShad sgrub gling — by sKyabs rje sras rin po che Thu bstan
 nyi ma
 bSam gtang gling dgon — by sKyabs rje sras rin po che Thu bstan nyi ma
 and few other minor ones, all of them worthy of being discovered by a
 discerning reader.





NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

JOHN VINCENT BELLEZZA is a Senior Research Fellow at the Tibetan Center, University of Virginia. Bellezza specializes in the ancient culture and archaeology of Upper Tibet. In addition to numerous articles, his books include *Divine Dyads* (1997), *Antiquities of Northern Tibet* (2001), *Antiquities of Upper Tibet* (2002), *Calling Down the Gods* (2005), *Zhang Zhung* (2008), *Antiquities of Zhang Zhung*, vols. 1 & 2 (2011), *Death and Beyond in Ancient Tibet* (2013), and *Tibet's Most Ancient Civilization* (forthcoming). For more information about Bellezza's work, see www.tibetarchaeology.com.

KRISTIN BLANCKE is an independent researcher on topics regarding Tibetan Buddhism. The present article was her contribution at the 14th Int. Ass. for Ladakh Studies Colloquium July 2009. Together with Franco Pizzi she has translated gTsang sMyon Heruka's Mila'i mGur 'bum into Italian. In a first publication, "I Centomila Canti di Milarepa", ed. Rassegna Culturale J.M, Roma (1989), a number of stories were selected for translation out of the whole of gTsang sMyon's work. In 2002 the first of three volumes of "I Centomila Canti di Milarepa" containing the translation of the comprehensive text was published by Adelphi ed, Milano. This work has led her to research previously existing versions of Mila's songs, resulting in two so far unpublished articles: "The personal contribution of gTsang sMyon Heruka in the Mila'i rNam mGur" and a "Summary of the oral transmission of Samvara attributed to Milarepa".

STACEY VAN VLEET is a Ph.D. candidate in the History-East Asia/ Modern Tibetan Studies program at Columbia University. Her forthcoming dissertation is tentatively titled "Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries and the Medical Marketplace of Qing China."

TASHI TSERING is the Academic Director of the Amnye Machen Institute, Centre for Advanced Tibetan Studies, Dharamshala since 1992 and an Advisor to the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok, Sikkim since 2002. Tashi Tsering was a member of the Advisory Board of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, 1989-2003 and was Research and Cultural Officer of the Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, Dharamshala, from 1981-1998. He passed the seventh grade at the Central School for Tibetans, Dalhousie, H.P. India. His recent publications include, 'The Tibet-Mongol Treaty of 1913' in *Lungta 17, The Centennial of the Tibeto-Mongol Treaty 1913-2013* (Spring 2013); Sngon 'gro'i gdam gleng gangs la nyi shar', in *Mdo khams dge 'brong lo rgyus deb*





ther lci zla'i zags ma (2012), 'spar skrun gsal bshad dang 'brel ba'i mtshams sbyor gyi gnam gleng tshig gsum' in *Gso rig khog 'bubs drang srong kun tu dgyes pa'i rol mo* (2012), and 'МОНГОЛ, ТУВДИЙН 1913 ОНЫ 1 ДУГЭЭР САРД БАЙГУУЛСАН ГЭРЭЭ', in *МОНГОЛ, ТУВДИЙН 1913 ОНЫ ГЭРЭЭ - ОЛОН УЛСЫН ЭРХ ЗҮЙН БАРИМТ БИЧИГ* (2012). His research interests include topics on Tibetan history and literature.

ROBERTO VITALI is an independent scholar, author of books and articles, editor of volumes and journals. He has worked for the Amnye Machen Institute (Dharamshala), the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (Dharamshala), Tribhuvan University (Kathmandu) and Indiana University (Bloomington). His research interest is in Tibetan history from the earliest time to the 17th century.



