

# Buddhist Tradition, Catalogued: Kingship and Nonsectarian Traces in an Early 18<sup>th</sup>-Century *Dkar chag* from Sde dge

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**T**he late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries marked a major turning point in the religious history of the eastern Tibetan region of Khams. The kingdom of Sde dge, long considered a cultural center of Khams, rose to political prominence and dominance during the latter half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It grew rapidly during the reigns of kings Byams pa phun tshogs (d.u.) and his nephew Sangs rgyas bstan pa (d. 1710). King Byams pa phun tshogs annexed and conquered a large swath of Khams after aiding Gushri Khan's (1582–1654) defeat of King Don yod rdo rje (d. 1640) of the nearby Be ri kingdom, thereby expanding the bounds of the kingdom. While Sde dge developed into a religious and political hub, a number of monastic institutions were established in the kingdom under its direction and patronage. Dpal yul Monastery was founded in 1665 by Rig 'dzin kun bzang shes rab (1636–1699) to the south of the Sde dge capital. In the 1660s, the Sde dge court incorporated the area of Kaḥ thog Monastery located near Dpal yul and installed the treasure revealer (*gter ston*) Klong gsal snying po (1625–1692) at the monastery's helm.<sup>1</sup> Rdzogs chen Monastery was founded in 1685 by Padma rig 'dzin (1625–1697) in the northern reaches of Sde dge. In 1690, the first Rab 'byams pa Bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1650–1704), who was a student and colleague of Padma rig 'dzin, founded Zhe chen Monastery just to the northeast of Rdzogs chen.<sup>2</sup>

These institutional establishments were made possible by the sponsorship of the Sde dge court. Notably, the sites just listed are all Rnying ma monasteries and are included in the category of the Six Mother Monasteries (*ma dgon drug*) or the Six Great Seats (*gdan sa*

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<sup>1</sup> Ronis 2009: 56–84.

<sup>2</sup> 'Jigs med bsam grub 1995: 533. This was the first site of Zhe chen. In 1734–1735, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Rab 'byams pa, 'Gyur med kun bzang nam rgyal, expanded it via a new building nearby, which would go on to become the primary seat at Zhe chen.

*chen mo drug*) of that tradition.<sup>3</sup> The royal court was the principal patron of the networks of Buddhist actors involved in the development of these Rnying ma institutions. As such, Sde dge was a primary driver in the eastward surge of the Rnying ma, a fifty-year timespan during which these four of the tradition's six largest institutional centers were founded.

It is not the case, however, that the royal court privileged only the Rnying ma tradition in Sde dge. In fact, from early on in its history, the Sde dge court was eclectic in its patronage of the many Buddhist institutions in the kingdom.<sup>4</sup> It was predominantly affiliated with the Sa skya tradition via the main monastery, Lhun grub steng (also known as Sde dge dgon chen), which served as the seat of the Sde dge kings. In addition to Lhun grub steng's monks, lamas from Kaḥ thog, Rdzogs chen, Dpal yul, Dpal spung, and other monasteries had active roles in advising the court.

Moreover, while the late 17<sup>th</sup> and first decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries saw large-scale support for Rnying ma monasteries from the Sde dge court, the Bka' brgyud also started to receive increasing patronage, beginning with King Bstan pa tshe ring (1678–1738). This is most evident in his close relationship with the Bka' brgyud polymath Si tu paṅ chen chos kyi 'byung gnas (1699–1774), to whom he donated land for the founding of Dpal spungs Monastery in 1727.<sup>5</sup> The career of Si tu paṅ chen has been cited as a precursor to the nonsectarian (*ris med*) milieu of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Sde dge because of his broad endeavors to revive Buddhist learning in the region. These include his work on the editing of the Sde dge Bka' 'gyur and his writing on all manner of Buddhist doctrine, ritual, medicine, and arts.

Even though there is no evidence the Sde dge court patronized Dge lugs monasteries, there is also no proof from this period of an anti-Dge lugs sentiment, nor a Dge lugs-excluding *ris med* formation. In fact, Bstan pa tshe ring, who was the sponsor of the catalogue (*dkar chag*) I analyze in this article, gave refuge in Sde dge to the young 7<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> As an analytical category, this grouping deserves further investigation. Recently, Bstan 'dzin lung rtogs nyi ma, in his index to the *Great History of the Early Transmission's Rdzogs Chen* (*Snga 'gyur rdzogs chen chos 'byung chen mo*), lists these six as: Dpal ri, Smin grol gling, Rdo rje brag, Kaḥ thog, Dpal yul, and Rdzogs chen. It also, however, notes that because of the decline of Dpal ri and the prospering of Zhe chen, the latter eventually replaced the former. See Deroche 2013.

<sup>4</sup> While there is no extant survey from this time period, Blo gros phun tshogs' *Sde dge'i lo rgyus* states that in 1995 the total number of monasteries in Sde dge comprised: 69 Rnying ma, 41 Sa skya, 38 Bka' brgyud, 17 Dge lugs, and 15 Bon institutions (Blo gros phun tshogs 1995: 181–185).

<sup>5</sup> For more on Si tu paṅ chen and Bstan pa tshe ring's relationship, see Chaix 2013 and Ronis 2013.

Dalai Lama, Skal bzang rgya mtsho (1708–1757), while the young boy was escaping Lha bzang khan's (r. 1697–1717) attempt to assassinate him in order to install his own chosen candidate as the Dalai Lama. This proved to be beneficial to the Sde dge court in garnering favor with central Tibet's Dge lugs-leaning Dga' ldan pho brang government.

Paralleling and immediately following the 17<sup>th</sup>-century-Rnying-ma boom noted above were the large-scale printing projects at Sde dge. Beginning in the first decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the royal family began what would become one of the most expansive productions of xylographic blocks of the Buddhist canon in Tibetan history. The present article addresses this pivotal moment for the history of Sde dge, taking as an analytical focus the earliest available *dkar chag* of one of the first canonical printings there. I begin with an overview of the contents of this catalogue, and then move on to reflect on the functions, both documentary and worklike, of this complex and variant genre of Tibetan Buddhist literature. Considering the collected historical arcs linked together in the text, which range from the life of Buddha Śākyamuni up to the 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-century histories of the kingdom of Sde dge, I demonstrate that the narrative cataloguing of history mobilizes the construction of a nonsectarian or ecumenical Buddhist tradition.

Considering the above-mentioned pan-sectarian patterns of Sde dge royal support alongside the rhetoric of this early catalogue, the present article also aims to make sense of the nonsectarian language used to describe the Sde dge kingdom during the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Drawing from an epistle sent to King Bstan pa tshe ring in the 1720s by Si tu paṅ chen, I suggest that the nonsectarian—*ris med*—ideal so often invoked in Sde dge's history is tied to the very patrons who made an ecumenical milieu possible. In addition to the catalogue's doctrinal dimension, its nonsectarian language suggests that *ris med* was a deliberate strategy of Buddhist kingship and governance in Sde dge.

### 1. *The 'Bum dkar chag: Its History and Contents*

The construction of the Sde dge printing house and the printing of the Sde dge editions of the Tibetan Buddhist canon, the Bka' 'gyur and the Bstan 'gyur, is usually dated to 1729.<sup>6</sup> However, printing projects began at Sde dge sometime before then, namely in the very early 18<sup>th</sup> century. In 1703, King Sangs rgyas bstan pa sponsored the

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<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, Skal ldan tshe ring 1995: 43 and Karma rgyal mtshan 1994: 28.

printing of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* (*Sher phyin brgyad stong pa*)<sup>7</sup> and the following year, in 1704, he financed the printing of two texts on Tibetan grammar by Thon mi Sambhoṭa.<sup>8</sup> These are the first datable canonical printings at Sde dge.

After Sangs rgyas bstan pa's death in 1710, his nephew Bstan pa tshe ring assumed the Sde dge throne in 1714. Three years later, the first printing at Sde dge during the reign of Bstan pa tshe ring was completed. The text was the massive *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* (*Sher phyin stong phrag brgya pa*), known as the *Perfection of Wisdom in One Hundred Thousand Verses* and condensed in Tibetan to the 'Bum. The catalogue to this printing was entitled *Truly Joyful to Behold* (*Mthong na mngon par dga' ba*, hereafter 'Bum dkar chag). It states that the xylographic blocks for the 12 volumes of this sutra were completed, consecrated, and installed in early October 1717.<sup>9</sup> The 'Bum dkar chag itself was written in February 1718 by U rgyan ye shes (d.u.), an important scribe (*smyug 'dzin*) at the court of Bstan pa tshe ring. In the text, U rgyan ye shes writes that the sutra's wood blocks were installed in the Great Printery (*par khang chen mo*) at the Sde dge capital's main assembly hall at Lhun grub steng.<sup>10</sup> The printery to which U rgyan ye shes refers is probably not the same as the large structure known today as the "Sde dge Par khang." Nonetheless, given that he speaks of a "Great Printery" adjacent to the Sde dge court, the 'Bum dkar chag compels us to re-date the chronology of the founding and development of the Sde dge printing house.<sup>11</sup>

The 'Bum dkar chag is presented in seven chapters, outlined as follows:

1. *A General Outline of the Dharma* (1a–7a)
2. *How the Teachings Spread in Tibet* (7b–9b)
3. *Detailed Explanation of Prajñāpāramitā* (10a–12b)
4. *On the Lineage of This Text's Sponsors* (12a–16b)
5. *The Need and Purpose of the Printing* (17a–19b)
6. *Explanation of the Time and Place of the Printing* (19b–21b)
7. *The Benefits of the Printing and Dedication* (22a–25a)

<sup>7</sup> Nourse 2014: 129–130.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid: 200–202.

<sup>9</sup> U rgyan ye shes 1718: 21a–21b. The Tibetan date reads that it was in the "light" / first half (*dkar phyogs*) of the ninth month (*dbiyug zla*). The 'Bum dkar chag was completed in the second month of the Earth-Dog Year (*sa khyi*), i.e. February 1718.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid: 21b.

<sup>11</sup> Chaix 2016 discusses the complexities of this chronology.

As will be demonstrated in the second section of this article, the format and historical arcs of these assembled chapters of the *'Bum dkar chag* have a worklike dimension.<sup>12</sup> In positioning this sutra printing at Sde dge in direct line with ancient India and with key points in Tibetan Buddhism's past, U rgyan ye shes places his reader in direct reception of Buddhist history. I argue that in addition to documenting the histories that culminate in the production of the *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, this catalogue articulates a particular form of ecumenical Buddhist tradition.

Here, I detail in brief the contents of each of the *'Bum dkar chag*'s chapters.

### 1. *A General Outline of the Dharma*<sup>13</sup>

U rgyan ye shes begins the text in the distant past in Tuṣita Heaven with Śvetaketu, the bodhisattva who would take birth as Siddhārtha Gautama. From Tuṣita, he narrates the account of the Buddha's birth, rather at length, going on to overview the period of his renunciation and wandering. U rgyan ye shes proceeds to describe Siddhārtha's realizations during the three watches of the night during which he became a buddha and then describes all 12 of the great deeds of a buddha. The text explains Buddha Śākyamuni's three turnings of the wheel of dharma: the four noble truths preached at Varanasi, the teaching of signlessness (i.e. emptiness) atop the peak of Gṛdhra-kūṭa, and the teaching of definitive meaning. We also read about the teaching of the *kriyā*, *caryā*, *yoga*, and *anuttarayoga* tantras being taught on Mount Malaya and elsewhere, as well as the *Prajñāpāramitā* sutras. This first chapter ends with a lengthy discussion of chronologies for calculating how long the Buddhadharma will last, and when it will disappear, based on various sutras and tantras.

### 2. *How the Teachings Spread in Tibet*<sup>14</sup>

The second chapter of the *'Bum dkar chag* presents a condensed outline of the arrival and development of Buddhism in Tibet. It chronicles the arrival of Buddhist texts at the palace of King Lha tho tho ri gnyan btsan, the sponsorship activities of King Srong btsan sgam po, and the development of the Tibetan alphabet by Thon mi sambho ṭa. U rgyan ye shes describes King Khri srong lde'u btsan's invitation of Padmasambhava, who installed his 25 disciples "on the

<sup>12</sup> I cite here specifically Dominick LaCapra's *Rethinking Intellectual History*. LaCapra juxtaposes the documentary dimensions of texts, which reveal information about the world, and the worklike dimensions, which encourage certain reactions and engagements from the reader. See LaCapra 1983: 23–71.

<sup>13</sup> *chos spyi'i khog bub* (U rgyan ye shes 1718: 2a).

<sup>14</sup> *bod du bstan pa dar ba'i thsul* (Ibid: 2a).

path of ripening and liberation, the dharma of the nine vehicles,"<sup>15</sup> and then enumerates a number of Indian monks invited to Tibet to bring and translate Buddhist texts during the early dissemination (*snga dar*) at the time of the Spur rgyal dynasty (7<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> centuries CE). After the period of the dharma's decline in the aftermath of King Glang dar ma, U rgyan ye shes then names the major actors involved in translation activities during the later dissemination (*phyi dar*) of Buddhism. These include King Ye shes 'od, the translator Rin chen bzang po and his teacher Śrāddhakaravarman, Atiśa, the Kashmiri Śākyaśrī, the translator Pa tshab nyi ma grags pa, and Nāropā, along with his disciple, Maitripa. U rgyan ye shes concludes the catalogue's second chapter with the familiar assertion that these later dissemination figures are the forbears of the Sa skya, Dge lugs, and Bka' brgyud traditions.

### 3. Detailed Explanation of Prajñāpāramitā<sup>16</sup>

In the *'Bum dkar chag*'s third chapter, U rgyan ye shes doubles back to India to describe and trace the origins of the *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* itself. Four hundred years after the passing of the Buddha, the *'Bum dkar chag*'s author writes, Nāgārjuna descended into the land of the *nāgas*, where he retrieved the text, after which the sutra's teaching flourished in India. In Tibet, it was translated six times.

The first translation was commissioned by King Khri srong lde'u btsan, who dispatched Rlangs kyi khams pa to India to retrieve the sutra. This first translation is claimed to have been written in ink mixed with the king's nasal blood and a white goat's milk.<sup>17</sup> It therefore became known as the *Red Notes* (*Reg zig dmar po*).<sup>18</sup>

The second translation was known as the *Blue Notes* (*Reg zig sngon po*), as two translators, Nyang Indravaro and Sbas Mañjuśrī, retrieved the text from India and penned their translation in ink mixed with singed hair from the king's head and a white goat's milk.<sup>19</sup> Because this second translation was funded by tax tributes levied by the king, it became known as the *Tribute 'Bum* (*Dpya 'bum*).

The *Red Notes* and the *Blue Notes* were abbreviated, and the translator Vairocana decided to revisit the Sanskrit original in order to produce an unabridged copy. This third translation, which totaled

<sup>15</sup> *theg dgu'i chos kyi smin grol lam la bkod* (U rgyan ye shes 1718: 8b).

<sup>16</sup> *bye brag sher phyin chos skor bshad* (Ibid: 2a).

<sup>17</sup> *btsad po'i mtshal khrag ra dkar 'o ma la sbyar* (Ibid: 10b).

<sup>18</sup> For more on Tibetan practices of blood printing, see Helman-Ważny 2014: 101 and Jackson 1996: 251.

<sup>19</sup> *rje yi dbu skra'i gzhob nyid rams bsres te ra dkar 'o ma sbyar nas 'bri bar gngang* (U rgyan ye shes 1718: 10b).

six volumes, was known as the *Bat* (*pha wang can*) translation because a bat's nest apparently broke above the texts as they were being printed.

The fourth translation was made during the reign of King Khri lde srong btsan, Khri srong lde'u btsan's son. It was based on redactions made by the trio of translators comprising Ka ba dpal rtseg, Cog ro lu'i rgyal mtshan, and Ye shes sde of Zhing. This fourth translation was made into 12 volumes and had over 101,000 verses.

The fifth translation of the *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* in Tibet, according to the *'Bum dkar chag*, was by Rngog lo tsā ba blo ldan shes rab. He retrieved a Sanskrit copy in Nepal at the Pham thing Temple in Pharping. In addition to the *Prajñāpāramitā* sutra, that edition included other texts that he translated. These were Bhāvaviveka's *Prajñāpradīpa* (*Shes rab sgron me*) and the *Candrapradīpa Sūtra* (*Zla ba'i sgron me*).

The sixth translation was from Chinese, rendered into Tibetan by 'Gos chos grub (Chinese alias Facheng 法成), a Buddhist monk and translator active in Dunhuang during the 9<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>20</sup> These six "mother" translations became the bases for all of the printings of the *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* in Tibet.

#### 4. On the Lineage of This Text's Sponsors<sup>21</sup>

In its fourth chapter, the *'Bum dkar chag* continues a historical narrative, moving from the history of *Prajñāpāramitā* to the history of the Sde dge kingdom where it was printed. The text recounts the genealogy of the Sde dge royal family, the sponsors of this project. It is important to note that the *'Bum dkar chag* served as a primary source for the authors of the most prominent texts about Sde dge's history. These include Si tu paṅ chen's *Sde dge'i bka' 'gyur gyi dkar chag*, Zhu chen tshul khri rin chen's (1697–1774) *Sde dge bstan 'gyur gyi dkar chag*, the Sde dge prince Tshe dbang rdo rje rig 'dzin's (b. 1786) *Royal Genealogy of Sde Dge* (*Sde dge rgyal rabs*),<sup>22</sup> and the famous 18<sup>th</sup>-century Rnying ma historian Gu ru bkra shis' (d.u.) *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*. The overall history of the Sde dge royal family and its lineage spelled out in this catalogue is, therefore, virtually the same as in those texts. For instance, it begins by highlighting the Sde dge family's historical ties to the four primary clans of ancient Tibet.<sup>23</sup> It also describes the successive generations of leaders and kings, ending with King Bstan pa tshe ring, the sponsor of the *Śatasāhasrikā*

<sup>20</sup> See Demiéville 1970: 47–64.

<sup>21</sup> *chos 'di'i sbyin bdag gdung rabs skor* (U rgyan ye shes 1718: 2a).

<sup>22</sup> See Kolmaš 1968.

<sup>23</sup> The four primary ancient Tibetan clans are *sbra*, *'bru*, *dbra* and *gdong/sdong*. See van der Kuijp 1988: 1–3.

*Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra's* production.

While the history of Sde dge that U rgyan ye shes tells in this fourth chapter is overall very similar to later historical texts, there are nevertheless some notable descriptions that stand out against those other sources. For example, Dngu pa chos kyi rdo rje (d.u.),<sup>24</sup> an ancestor of the Sde dge royal family born in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, is listed as a Rnying ma lama, the first ever mentioned in Sde dge's history. Based on a prophecy after the death of his mother, he urged his younger brother Bde chen bsod noms bzang po (d.u.), who was then the Sde dge king, to move the capital to the north and expand their territory. Bde chen bsod noms bzang po soon thereafter did so, relocating the royal palace from Lcags ra, Sde dge's original capital, to its new site just north of Lcags ra, where Lhun grub steng Monastery and the Sde dge Par khang are located. The fulfilment of this prophecy is the origin story of the name "Sde dge," which is a gloss on the Buddhist categories of the four abundances (*phun tshogs sde bzhi*)<sup>25</sup> and the ten virtues (*dge ba bcu*). U rgyan ye shes describes this as the "miraculous opening" (*'phrul gyi sgo*) of Sde dge, its beginning. He thereby emphatically remarks that Sde dge's first famous Rnying ma lama is the original prophetic source of the inauguration of the Sde dge kingdom's glory.

In another brief instance of Rnying ma emphasis, U rgyan ye shes highlights that Kun dga' phun tshogs (d.u.), the first abbot of Sde dge's Lhun grub steng Monastery and the brother of King Sangs rgyas bstan pa, was a skilled practitioner of Rnying ma tantras. What is striking in this statement is that the abbot of Sde dge's capital monastery, a Sa skya institution which by virtue of its connection to the court enjoyed the unflagging support of the royal family, is celebrated as a Rnying ma pa, or at the very least an adept supporter of it. Tibetan Buddhists commonly meditate on deities or practice tantric and contemplative rites from traditions that are not their own. The singular description of Lhun grub steng Monastery's first abbot as a Rnying ma adept, however, is noteworthy, for it serves to construct the narrative of a long-standing relationship between the Sde dge royal elites and the Rnying ma. As Kun dga' phun tshogs was the head of a Sa skya institution, this inclusion suggests an ethos of ecumenism had been established early on at the Sde dge capital. It is the second nonsectarian signpost that U rgyan ye shes inserts in this chapter of the *'Bum dkar chag*.

Another such marker occurs in a section about King Bstan pa tshering, when he is described as adept in Rnying ma ritual and

<sup>24</sup> Elsewhere his name is found as Rngu pa chos kyi rdo rje.

<sup>25</sup> These are abundance in: spiritual teaching, wealth, enjoyment, and freedom.



contemplative practice. As noted above, Bstan pa tshe ring carried forth a nonsectarian practice and patronage platform, which had been advanced by his predecessors Byams pa phun tshogs and Sangs rgyas bstan pa during their reigns in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when they funded the construction of numerous Rnying ma monasteries in Sde dge. Beyond his own interests vested in the Sa skya, Bstan pa tshe ring also supported Rnying ma and Bka' brgyud lamas and institutions.

#### 5. *The Need and Purpose of the Printing*<sup>26</sup>

The fifth chapter narrates the reasons for printing the *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* at Sde dge. U rgyan ye shes avers that despite a longstanding tradition of translation and commentary on *Prajñāpāramitā* literature in Tibet, the printing of this particular sutra was quite rare. He writes that the print blocks for the sutra were constructed with the intent to preserve the text's doctrine as a means for ensuring that it would be continually read and studied, and so that its dharma might pervade the world. The printing additionally had a more mundane aim: "so that all kingdoms of the world, exemplified by these subjects [of Sde dge], enjoy perfect happiness."<sup>27</sup> In this way U rgyan ye shes characterizes Sde dge as a religious and moral exemplar for his reader.

The sources for the Sde dge printing of the *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* were manifold. The primary source was from the Bka' 'gyur created by the king of 'Jang sa tham to the southeast of Sde dge, which, as U rgyan ye shes notes, was from the Tshal pa line of the Tibetan canon. That particular version of the canon, we learn, was the fruit of numerous translators and redactors dating back centuries: Ba reg gzhon nu tshul khirms (b. 11<sup>th</sup> century), Rngog lo tsā ba blo ldan shes rab (1059–1109), Bag ston gzhon nu tshul khirms (d. 13<sup>th</sup> century), Bu ston rin chen grub (1290–1364), and many others. The manuscripts, in addition to the copy from the 'Jang sa tham Bka' 'gyur, on which the Sde dge redaction was based, included: a golden-ink copy that once belonged to Chos rgyal 'phags pa (1235–1280); one said to be the translator Vairocana's handwritten copy; a copy from the Rnying ma Dpal yul Monastery south of the Sde dge capital; and a copy belonging to a Sde dge royal ancestor, Sangs rgyas bzang po (d.u.).

The primary editors of this project were the Sde dge secretaries Phun tshogs grags pa (d.u.) and 'Jam dbyangs dga' ba'i blo gros

<sup>26</sup> *par du bzhengs pa'i dgos ched* (U rgyan ye shes 1718: 2a).

<sup>27</sup> *mnga' ris 'dis mtshon yangs pa'i rgyal khams rnams bde skyid rdzogs ldan dpal la spyod phyir* (Ibid: 18a).

(d.u.). The latter was a student of Lo chen dharma śrī (1654–1717), one of the founders of Smin grol gling, the largest Rnying ma monastery in Lhasa. This mention is the earliest evidence at Sde dge connecting its court to the Rnying ma institution in central Tibet.

During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Sde dge court hosted a steady stream of lamas from the Sa skya Ngor e waṃ Monastery to serve as chaplains. Two of these lamas, Bkra shis dbang phyug (d. 1727) and Mus pa chos rje kun dga' rgya mtsho (d.u.), also joined as primary editors of this printing project. All four of the above-mentioned editors were said to be well-versed in poetics, specifically Daṇḍin's system of poetics and *kāvya*. In total, an editorial team of ten took seven months for the editing and carving of this Sde dge edition of the sutra. This specific printing was given the title *The World's Unique Ornament* ('Dzam gling rgyan gcig).

#### 6. *Explanation of the Time and Place of the Printing*<sup>28</sup>

The topic of the sixth chapter of the 'Bum dkar chag concerns the details of the printing itself. It meticulously overviews this printing project's place in the chronology of Buddhist history, drawing from the timeline set forth in the *White Lotus Oral Instructions* (*Pad ma dkar po zhal lung*) written by the 15<sup>th</sup>-century Dge lugs pa scholars Phug pa lhun grub rgya mtsho (d.u.) and Nor bzang rgya mtsho (1423–1513). U rgyan ye shes notes that when the final woodblock carving was finished on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of the eighth month (that is, September 28<sup>th</sup>) of 1717, it was precisely 2,596 years after the Buddha's passing into *parinirvāṇa*. A direct chronological arc is traced from the lifespan of the Buddha to the completion of this printing at Sde dge.

The work of xylographic printing took over 200 skilled smiths and carvers, the editing team of 10, and 250 local laborers. The text's 4,700 wood blocks—9,400 folia—in 12 volumes were completed at a cost of 20,300 bushels of barley. This cost represents roughly one tenth of what it cost to print the Sde dge Bstan 'gyur two decades later.<sup>29</sup> The 'Bum dkar chag was a sizeable undertaking as a precursor to the later expansive productions of the Sde dge editions of the Tibetan canon.

In early October 1717, Kun dga' chos 'phel (d.u.),<sup>30</sup> a lama from Ngor Monastery who was staying at Sde dge, presided over consecration rituals when the *Satasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*'s wood blocks were installed in the printing house near the Sde dge capital and the first prints were made from them. The creation of the

<sup>28</sup> *bzhengs pa'i dus dang gnas bshad pa* (U rgyan ye shes 1718: 2a).

<sup>29</sup> Nourse 2014: 149–153. See also Chaix 2010.

<sup>30</sup> Heimbel 2017: 41 notes that Kun dga' chos 'phel was a Ngor pa lama, but he did not serve in an official capacity as court chaplain.

Sde dge print blocks for this sutra represents the first printing campaign sponsored by King Bstan pa tshe ring. It also marks the beginning of the momentum of textual production that culminated in the printing of the Sde dge Bka' 'gyur in the late 1720s. The *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* itself comprised over a tenth of that canon in total. Thus, based on this text, 1717 should be considered the year of the beginning of the "Great Printery" at Sde dge.

7. *The Benefits of the Printing and Dedication*<sup>31</sup>

The final, dedicatory section of the *'Bum dkar chag* is a lengthy and ornate poem that describes the merits of printing the *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, the longest of the *Prajñāpāramitā* sutras. The last ten quatrains of the seventh chapter read:

May the nonsectarian doctrine, the wish-fulfilling victor  
Which is the exalted summit, the banner of learning and  
accomplishment,  
And the luminosity of hearing, contemplating, and meditating  
That completely uproots the darkness of degeneration, remain  
unimpeded.

May the twice-drinkers, fortified by the three trainings,  
Thoroughly beautified by the net of the three spheres of renunciation,  
study, and work,  
Un-weared by the weight of teaching the three vehicles,  
Endeavor in the holy doctrine via the three gates.

May the Lord Pervading All Families,<sup>32</sup>  
Ascendant at the crown of the teaching and migrators, and the reality  
of  
Two hundred wisdoms comprehending the Lord of Speech,  
Along with the doctrine and rule of the glorious Sa skya pervade the  
ocean-clad world.

May this support, a gift of dharma, a canopy at the peak of existence  
Ripened from the seed of the banyan tree of superior intention,  
Through the elixir of exposition and study  
Bring about the vitality and long-life of the Victor's teaching.

May the shining of the dharma, the sun of beings,  
The companion that blossoms the hundred petals of teaching,  
scripture, and reasoning,  
And its great and intense luminosity,  
Illumine the peak of existence and the darkness and foes struck by the

<sup>31</sup> *zhengs tshul phan yon bsngo smon* (U rgyan ye shes 1718: 2a).

<sup>32</sup> *rigs kun khyab bdag*, i.e. Vajradhara.

five degenerations.

May the treasury of doctrine, the profound expanse where past sages  
have peacefully gone,  
Completely filled by the inexhaustible treasure of the two collections,  
Be a tree-bending cluster, the fruit of the two benefits,  
Nourished by the continuous flow of precious enlightened activity  
and objects of desire.

May the virtuous king who happily rules this great land,  
The *deva* who increases the fortune and might of the two teachings,  
Entrusted by the long-living heaven,<sup>33</sup>  
Remain unimpaired along with his retinue.

May this kinsman, the blossoming jasmine of the kingdom,  
Born of the great ocean of excellent activity and merit,  
Rising as the moon above beings,  
Be luminously pervasive with his pure enlightened activity.

May his descendants and wise ministers,  
Dutiful to the teachings and tradition like Indra,  
Expansive like the sun in discrimination and vigor,  
Cause the teachings and government to be glorious, expansive, and  
lasting.

From this land outwards to the extent of the vast earth,  
May the steel that opposes warfare, epidemics, and famine  
Be refined by the excellent glory of the four perfections  
And blaze in the golden realm made virtuous by the two  
accumulations.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> *tshe ring gnam gyis bskos*. This is an appropriation of a terminology usually linked to the Chinese emperor, who had "Heaven's Mandate." The author clearly intends to indicate King Bstan pa tshe ring with this term. The *tshe ring gnam gyi bskos* construction appears in decrees written by the Kangxi emperor, whose rule from 1661 to 1722 coincided with the writing of this catalogue. See Kapstein 2000: 228n23.

<sup>34</sup> *ris bral bstan pa yid bzhin dbang gi rgyal/ bshad sgrub rgyal mtshan rtse mor mngon mtho zhing/ ma lus rgud pa'i mun pa drud 'byin ba'i/ thos bsam sgom pa'i 'od snang 'gog med shog/ bsalab gsum lus stobs cher rgyas gnyis 'thung stel/ rnam gsum 'khor lo'i dra bas nyer mazes shing/ theg gsum bstan pa'i khur gyis mi ngal ba'i/ sgo gsum dam pa'i chos la brtson par shog/ ngag dbang mkhyen pa'i ye shes nyi brgya'i dngos/ bstan 'gro'i cod pañ rtse mor mngon mtho ba'i/ rigs kun khyab bdag dpal ldan sa skya pa'i/ bstan srid rgya mtsho'i gos can khyab par shog/ lhag bsam nya gro dhā shing sa bon las/ smin pa'i chos sbyin yal 'dab srid pa'i rtser/ snyegs 'dis 'chad nyan dngar ba'i ro bcud kyis/ thub bstan yun ring srog 'tsho'i rgyur gyur cig/ skye rgu'i mchod 'os chos kyi nyin mor byed/ lung rtogs bstan pa'i 'dab brgya bzhad pa'i gnyen/ lnga bdo'i mun smag gshed du ches dpa' ba'i/ 'od kyi snang ba srid rtser 'bar dang shog/ gong ma zhir gshegs zab klong chos kyi mdzod/ tshogs gnyis mi zad gter gyis yongs gang stel/ bzhed don phrin las dbyig gi char rgyun gyis/ don gnyis 'bras bzang snye ma g.yur za shog/ sa chen bde bar*

Even though U rgyan ye shes mentions an aspiration for the glory of the Sa skya, he continues with the tenor of the fifth chapter and frames the merits of printing the *'Bum dkar chag* here both in a nonsectarian rhetoric and as redounding to the glory of the Sde dge kingdom. These are exemplified in these above-quoted verses of the poem, which culminate in a praise of King Bstan pa tshe ring.

## 2. Dkar chag as Genre

### 2.1. *Buddhist Tradition Catalogued in the 'Bum dkar chag*

With respect to their generic qualities, Tibetan *dkar chags*, translated here as “catalogues,” are incredibly diverse. They can be as simple as a few folia at the beginning or end of a collected works volume that comprise a mere list of titles. As the overview of the *'Bum dkar chag* above evidences, they can also be expansive and exhaustive.<sup>35</sup> This text quite literally spans the history of the Buddhist tradition. As a documentary source, it provides a valuable lens into the religious and political world of Sde dge in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. As a form of Buddhist historical literature, it serves to bring its reader into the process of transmitting the Buddhist tradition itself.

In a documentary sense, catalogues such as the *'Bum dkar chag* offer a wealth of information about the worlds in which Tibetan texts are produced. Much more than lists of texts and names,<sup>36</sup> they are windows into histories. These include histories of Tibetan localities,

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*skyong ba dge ba'i rgyal/ bstan gnyis mnga' thang 'byor ba cher rgyas pa'i/ tshe ring gnam gyis bskos pa mi'i lha/ zhabs zung 'khor lo'i mu khyud nyams med shog/ legs byas bsod nams chu gter che las 'khrungs/ lus can mtshan mo'i mgon por yongs shar ba'i/ dbang phyogs rgyal khams kun+da bshad pa'i gnyen/ phrin las dkar po'i 'od snang mtha' khyab shog/ snying rtobs rnam dpyod mig stong bgrad pa yi/ lugs zung bstan pa legs bris dbang po lta'i/dbon dang 'phrul blon ci bgyis bka' nyan tshogs/ bstan srid dpal du dar rgyas rtag par shog/ jongs 'dir mtshon te yangs pa'i sa chen khyon/ mtshon 'khrug nad rims skya pham mi mthun lcags/rdzogs ldan sde bzhi'i dpal 'byor bzang po'i rtsis/ tshogs gnyis dge ba'i gser khams 'bar bar shog (U rgyan ye shes 1718: 24b–25a).*

<sup>35</sup> Another example of a lengthy and rich *dkar chag* is Sde srid sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's (1653–1705) catalogue for the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama's tomb, also entitled *The World's Unique Ornament*, which in 766 folios outlines numerous dimensions of the construction of the Dalai Lama's reliquary. Those include its cosmological and spatial significance, its material composition, the sacred contents contained within it, the rituals that consecrated it, and the merits of its production. See Martin 1996: 501–502.

<sup>36</sup> Martin 1996: 501. Martin's seminal article about *dkar chags* as a genre argues that they warrant serious attention as historical sources. See also Vostrikov 1970: 217–232.

of the rulers of those places, of received Buddhist traditions, and of canons, statues, and other worshipped materials. Catalogues document the sacred objects—the three supports (*rten gsum*) of texts, images, and statues that as relics sanctify a Buddhist site—installed at specific institutions and describe when, by whom, and for what purposes they were created. They moreover highlight the merits of the actors, named and unnamed, who aided in the production of public objects of reverence, such as the Buddhist canon. As documents of religious and textual tradition, catalogues are rich sources of history.

As forms of history writing, beyond their documentary quality texts like the *'Bum dkar chag* also have a worklike function. They suture together the macro-level history of the Buddhist tradition, tracing back to the biography of the Buddha, with micro-level details of how the Buddhist doctrine came to be instantiated there, in the catalogue itself. In that way, *dkar chags* such as the *'Bum dkar chag* invite their reader into an intimacy with the specificities of how the text came to them. They invite participation in the transmission of that text through the very act of reading.

For example, in the *'Bum dkar chag* U rgyan ye shes assembles together a number of historical and narrative arcs into a kind of bricolage. He weaves together the biography of the Buddha Siddhārtha, the Buddha's preaching of the *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, the history of Buddhism in India and in Tibet, the many translations and redactions of *Prajñāpāramitā* literature in Tibet, as well as the local history of the royal sponsors of printing the *'Bum* at Sde dge. This organizational format is echoed in the other canonical catalogues printed at Sde dge in the 18<sup>th</sup> century: Si tu paṅ chen's *Sde dge'i bka' gyur gyi dkar chag* and Zhu chen tshul khrims' *Sde dge'i bstan gyur gyi dkar chag*.<sup>37</sup> Each of these texts relied on the *'Bum dkar chag* as a source.

Canonical catalogues employ a specialized logic of authority and legitimation. The *'Bum dkar chag* places its reader firmly in, and in direct reception of, Buddhist history. It dialogically charts out the life of the Buddha and the many sutras and tantras he voiced—those texts' translation, publication, and dissemination in Tibet, as well as their eventual reception and reproduction at Sde dge in the eastern Tibetan region of Kham. In that way, the catalogue constructs an unbroken lineage, meticulously tracing the words of the text being catalogued back to its source: the Buddha. Beginning in Tuṣita heaven in the distant past, where the Buddha-to-be awaited his birth to Queen Māyā, and ending with a microhistory of the Sde dge

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<sup>37</sup> Nourse 2014: 37–55. See also Nourse 2016.

kingdom in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, the *'Bum dkar chag* links the production of the text directly to the voice of the Buddha who spoke it.

Fusing together biography, critical textual history, and social history, in the *'Bum dkar chag* U rgyan ye shes makes the Buddhist cosmos immanent to his reader. Through that immanence, the catalogue breathes life—from the mouth of the Buddha, no less—into the act of reading. In a relatively short fifty folia, U rgyan ye shes' catalogue connects the Sde dge printing of the *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* to both its doctrinal and redaction histories. The catalogue documents the capillary end of this Buddhist tradition, at the religious and political conjuncture of Sde dge in 1718. In the meeting of these intersecting histories, a Buddhist tradition is thereby catalogued.

This cataloguing of Buddhist tradition takes several forms in the *'Bum dkar chag*. In one valence, there are echoes of the Rnying ma boom that occurred in Sde dge. From the 1660s through the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, four major Rnying ma monasteries grew under the patronage of the Sde dge court: Kaḥ thog, Dpal yul, Rdzogs chen, and Zhe chen. These four later came to be included in the list of six “mother” Rnying ma monasteries.<sup>38</sup> Lamas from those four institutions had an increasing authority in the Sde dge kingdom and at its court.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, copies of the *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* that belonged to lamas from Kaḥ thog and Dpal yul monasteries were integral to its redaction and printing at Sde dge. Rnying ma figures therefore had a significant influence on King Bstan pa tshe ring's inaugural textual production. The catalogue also makes special mention of Sde dge abbots and kings being connected to Rnying ma tantras and practice. Thus, from a religious and social historical vantage point, the *'Bum dkar chag* catalogues the growing influence of the Rnying ma in Sde dge.

The mention in the text's fifth chapter of Lo chen dharma śrī, who was the brother of Smin grol gling Monastery's founder, Gter bdag gling pa (1646–1714), also stands out in U rgyan ye shes' catalogue. The question arises as to why, precisely, his name appears. Just a few months before this catalogue was written in 1718, Lo chen dharma śrī was killed during the Dzungar Mongolian invasions that swept through central Tibet from 1717 until 1720. It is possible that U rgyan ye shes is subtly memorializing this Rnying ma adept and scholar, whose recent death together with the widespread persecution of the Rnying ma in Dbus and Gtsang, would have been a shock in eastern

<sup>38</sup> The other two were Smin grol gling and Dpal ri, both in central Tibet.

<sup>39</sup> Ronis 2009.

Tibet. This citation is also a testament to transregional Rnying ma networks at the time. These connections between central and eastern Tibet eventuated in the institutionalization of Rnying ma ritual performances throughout Khams and A mdo, which were inaugurated at Smin grol gling by Lo chen dharma śrī and his brother.<sup>40</sup> While these ritual transmissions would not fully take form until the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the murmurs here indicate that Sde dge and its court was a prominent hub within that vast Rnying ma network at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

## 2.2. Nonsectarian Traces in the 'Bum dkar chag

In an article that scrutinizes the categories of “canon” and “catalogue,” Jonathan Z. Smith has reflected that “the catalogue, in principle, is open. But an account of why the items have been brought together can be given, transmitted, and learned.”<sup>41</sup> This is precisely what this article has aimed to consider. By assembling the respective histories of the Buddhist doctrine in India and Tibet, of the *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, of the Sde dge kingdom, and of this particular printing of the sutra, U rgyan ye shes produces in this *dkar chag* a discrete formulation of Buddhist tradition. These enumerative gestures—listing, for instance, the Sde dge’s royal generations, the six versions of the sutra, the successive periods of Indian and Tibetan Buddhist history—place the text’s reader at the forefront of Buddhist canonical transmission. The work of the catalogue is, in effect, the creation of a particular, long tradition—a *ring lugs*, as it would be in Tibetan—tied specifically to Sde dge.

In addition to imbuing Sde dge’s history with the aforementioned connection to the Rnying ma, the *'Bum dkar chag* also registers a notably nonsectarian ethic and lexicon. The conclusion to the text, translated above, extolls the buddhadharma as bereft of sectarian divides (*ris bral bstan pa*) and exemplifies one of the many instances of nonsectarian—*ris med*—rhetoric in this text. Other terms suggestive of impartiality that U rgyan ye shes employs in the text include *ris bral* (“without bias”),<sup>42</sup> *phyogs lhung med* (“not falling to any side”),<sup>43</sup> and *ris grol* (“free from bias”).<sup>44</sup> For example, in the opening lines of the *'Bum dkar chag*, U rgyan ye shes writes:

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<sup>40</sup> Dalton 2016: 251 and Dalton 2006: 100.

<sup>41</sup> J. Z. Smith 1998: 304.

<sup>42</sup> U rgyan ye shes 1718: 24b.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid: 7a.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid: 2a, 19b.



Filling the reaches of the sky with virtuous and excellent luminosity,  
 Emanating the cool nectar of scripture and reasoning,  
 Beautiful deer whose hearing and contemplation is complete in  
 practice and virtue—  
 I bow to the monastic community liberated from partisanship.<sup>45</sup>

Here, the author begins the catalogue on an ecumenical note, highlighting that the monastic community, the field of merit for the Sde dge court, was free from partisanship. In another instance, the opening verses of the catalogue's sixth chapter, which dates the printing of the sutra at Sde dge with respect to the time since the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*, elevates ecumenical qualities to the divine. U rgyan ye shes writes:

Homage to the divine denizens of the higher realms who, liberated from partisanship, perpetually sound the melody of the sacred doctrine of the three vehicles.<sup>46</sup>

This statement grounds the quality of being without bias, expressed in this *dkar chag* as being without or free from *ris*, as not only an exalted human one, but a godly one as well.

It will come as no surprise to the reader familiar with Sde dge's history that such nonsectarian terminology appears. In one of his landmark essays, E. Gene Smith remarked that the *Royal Genealogy of Sde dge* was "in many ways the first document of the nonsectarian movement" because of its advocacy for pan-sectarian patronage.<sup>47</sup> Whether or not there was an ecumenical "movement" in the 18<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>48</sup> the influence of the Sde dge court and its royal family on the religious milieu of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries is undeniable. From what U rgyan ye shes relays in the *'Bum dkar chag*, the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries should be considered inflection points in Sde dge's and in Khams' religious history. It was during this period that pan-sectarian patronage and canonical printing projects were underway as the Sde dge Buddhist kingdom rose to prominence. And the two—support for diverse Buddhist lamas and institutions and the production of Buddhist texts—were intertwined.

It has recently been highlighted that trans-sectarian ordination

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<sup>45</sup> *sbyang yon cha rdzogs thos bsam ri dags kyil nyer mdzes lung rig bsil dngar 'bum spro ba'i/ dge legs 'od snang dkar pos nam mkha'i mthar/ khyab mdzad ris grol dge 'dun sde la 'dud* (U rgyan ye shes 1718: 2a).

<sup>46</sup> *theg gsum dam chos glu dbyangs rtag rol pa'i ris grol mtho ris dbang po'i sde rnam bsngags* (Ibid: 19b).

<sup>47</sup> E. G. Smith 2001: 25.

<sup>48</sup> Gardner 2019: 348–351 questions whether or not the activities in and around Sde dge during this period could be called a "movement."

campaigns initiated by Si tu paṅ chen in the 1720s, in which the famed Bka' brgyud master traveled throughout Sde dge conducting monastic ordination rituals for Rnying ma lamas, likely formed a foundation of the so-called nonsectarian milieu of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>49</sup> Beyond the doctrinal usage, it should be added that part and parcel of nonsectarian or *ris med* rhetoric in the eastern Tibetan context is predicated on the role of the Sde dge court. With a view to the context surrounding the *'Bum dkar chag*, which is the earliest available source written about the kingdom, pan-sectarian sponsorship and ritual exchange are also attributable to the political expansions happening there. Most of the development of Rnying ma and Bka' brgyud monasteries, along with the territorial growth of Sde dge, occurred under kings Byams pa phun tshogs, Sangs rgyas bstan pa, and Bstan pa tshe ring, each of whom could be thus described as "*ris med*." Their offices were offices of dharma kings (*chos rgyal*) first and foremost. In their cases, nonsectarianism was a means of statecraft as much as it was an ecumenical religious doxa.<sup>50</sup>

The final dedication of the *'Bum dkar chag* invites us to consider another means by which we can make sense of nonsectarian ideals that occur throughout Sde dge's history. As demonstrated in the above-mentioned citation from the catalogue's seventh chapter, U rgyan ye shes proclaims that the Buddha's doctrine is fundamentally non-partisan. Yet, in a kind of soft hierarchy, that statement is immediately followed by a wish for the ascendancy and pervasive rule of the Sa skya tradition. This soft hierarchy is a useful heuristic for considering the relationship of the Sde dge court to its *ris med* patronage ethos. Whereas its capital was housed within a Sa skya monastery, the maintenance of good relationships with Bka' brgyud and especially Rnying ma lamas, and their institutions, in Sde dge was vital.

### 3. Concluding Remarks

In the autumn of 1729, just over a decade after U rgyan ye shes wrote the *'Bum dkar chag*, Si tu paṅ chen composed a poem of advice to King Bstan pa tshe ring. It was delivered when the editing and block carving of the Sde dge Bka' 'gyur began. That work counseled the king on a number of matters both mundane and transcendent, ranging from taxation and corvée labor to religious tradition and completion stage meditation. Si tu paṅ chen's verses are apt for

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<sup>49</sup> Ronis 2013: 71–72.

<sup>50</sup> See especially Ronis 2009: 56–70.

interpreting and making sense of U rgyan ye shes's text, which was written a decade prior. The conclusion to Si tu paṅ chen's poem reads:

The excellent dharmas expounded by the Buddha  
 And the collected instructions on those in Tibet—  
 Mahāmudrā, Rdzogs chen, Pacification and Cutting, Path and Result,  
 The Six Yogas, and so forth—<sup>51</sup>  
 All are the doctrine's essential points for taming your mind.  
 Therefore, reverence for them all is essential.  
 Practicing one is sufficient and does not contradict the rest.  
 Supplicate your root lama as indivisible from  
 The embodiment of all refuges, Padmasambhava.  
 Conducting yourself like that, you will come to enjoy an ocean of  
 prosperity,  
 Be virtuous in every respect,  
 And swiftly attain the state of immortality.<sup>52</sup>

Here, Si tu paṅ chen's advice to Bstan pa tshe ring situates sectarian inclusiveness—"reverence for them all"—as a conduit for the king's prosperity and virtue. His success as king depends upon a nonsectarian form of governance, wherein all traditions are equally suited for taming the mind, one no more privileged than another.

A century and a half after Si tu paṅ chen's poem, the great Rnying ma master Mi pham rgya mtsho (1846–1912) wrote a much longer *nītiśāstra*<sup>53</sup> text counseling another young Sde dge prince. Writing to Ngag dbang 'jam dpal rin chen (d.u.), Mi pham made an assertion that echoes both U rgyan ye shes and Si tu paṅ chen. The good and just king, he claims, "properly protects any ancient religious systems, each with its own traditions, that may exist within his kingdom" and while "[n]either creating a pastiche out of them, nor inciting mutual conflict, he cares for them individually so that they do not degenerate." It is thus that his subjects will "rejoice and say, 'This ruler is truly impartial.'"<sup>54</sup>

To conclude, for the rulers at the Sde dge court, to be a Buddhist

<sup>51</sup> These are included in the list of the "eight vehicles that are lineages of attainment" (*sgrub brgyud shing rta chen po brgyad*), a paradigm for categorizing the Buddhist teachings in Tibet. See Kapstein 1996 and Deroche 2009.

<sup>52</sup> *des na rgyal bas dam chos bstan kun dang/ bod du de dag gdams ngag sgril ba/ phyag rdzogs zhi byed gcod yul lam 'bras dang/ sbyor drug la sogs ji snyed mchis pa kun/ rang sems 'dul phyir bstan pa'i gnad gcig pas/ kun la gus bya kun gyi snying po yin/ kun dang 'gal med gcig chog nyams su blangs/ skyabs gnas kun 'dus pad+ma 'byung gnas dang/ rtsa ba'i bla ma dbyer med gsol ba thob/ de ltar mādā pas rnam kun dge legs kyi/ dpal 'byor rya mtsho nyid la longs spyad pas/ myur du 'chi med rtag pa'i gnas thob 'gyur (A.U. 1791: 134b–135a).*

<sup>53</sup> *A Treatise on Ethics for Kings: An Ornament for Rulers (Rgyal po lugs kyi bstan bcos sa gzhi skyong ba'i rgyan)*. See Cabezón 2017.

<sup>54</sup> Cabezón 2017: 117–118.

king was to be a *ris med* king, an impartial and inclusive king. In his introduction to *Kongtrul's Encyclopaedia of Indo-Tibetan Culture*, E. Gene Smith remarked that the *Royal Genealogy of Sde dge* affirmed that the Sde dge court's commitment to religious tolerance and pan-sectarian patronage "should be the basis of the religious policy of Sde dge and, by implication, any well-governed state."<sup>55</sup> By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the *Royal Genealogy* was written, "*ris med*" as a term signified a quality of the ideal Buddhist ruler, at Sde dge and beyond. It was a strategy for governance and for religious institutional sponsorship that could serve as the basis of the polity's prosperity and welfare. Mi pham rgya mtsho's treatise on ethical kingship, written to the Sde dge king on the verge of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is redolent of such an ideal.

In the much-earlier *'Bum dkar chag*, which has been the focus of this article, U rgyan ye shes refers to Sde dge in the early 1700s as "the great gathering place of the hundred traditions,"<sup>56</sup> a nexus of religious traditions and lineages. He also promotes Sde dge and its government's capital as the central axis of an explicitly nonsectarian Buddhist world, referring to the kingdom as comprising "hundreds of nonsectarian monasteries."<sup>57</sup> This is a dimension of the Sde dge kingdom's religious and political patronage that carried forth into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. With respect to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, this catalogue to the printing of the *Satasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* registers the growing influence of Rnying ma institutions in Sde dge and marks the beginning of the printing campaigns sponsored by King Bstan pa tshe ring. The ecumenical rhetoric it employs speaks to the importance of understanding *ris med* not merely as a form of doctrinal outlook but also as a dimension of Buddhist kingship in early modern Tibet.

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<sup>55</sup> E. G. Smith 1970: 25.

<sup>56</sup> *lugs brgya'i 'dun sa chen po* (U rgyan ye shes 1718: passim).

<sup>57</sup> *ris med chos kyi sde brgya rtsa* (Ibid: 15b).

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