

*GTER-MA AS IMPERIAL TREASURE:
THE 1755 BEIJING EDITION OF THE PADMA BKA' THANG*

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In his communication to the Thirteenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, held in Ulaanbataar in July 2013, Elliot Sperling introduced a remarkable passage gleaned from the autobiography of an outstanding eighteenth-century visionary, Sle-lung Bzhad-pa'i-rdo-rje (1697-1740). It is 1719, at the height of the Zunghar invasion of Central Tibet, and Sle-lung has been ordered to appear at the offices of the Zunghar administration in Lhasa:

Once the lord ordered me to come to the Khrom-gzigs-khang. The lord and Chos-'phel-can, who was there, had many questions about the situation and whether or not O-rgyan was reliable. About the All-knowing Great Fifth, in general and in particular, to their question as to whether Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-rgya-mtsho was Rgyal-ba Yon-tan-rgya-mtsho's *sprul-sku*, I responded: "What do I know? The former all-knowing Paṅ-chen and other reliable holy persons performed the recognition without error, declaring him to be the Exalted Fifth." To which they said, "It seems that the Paṅ-chen Rin-po-che did not perform such a recognition. It was the Gzims-khang-gong *sprul-sku* who was the inerrant birth of Yon-tan-rgya-mtsho. Because Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-rgya-mtsho was jealous at that he was angered and his intentions toward those who were close were not at ease. In our land, we call the Gzims-khang-gong *sprul-sku* the *Bha-ga ta-la'i bla-ma* (the 'little' [*< Mong. baya*] Dalai Lama)."¹

In citing this passage, Elliot was in fact primarily interested in what followed this opening, for there we find an early discussion of the topic to which his communication was dedicated, the oft-repeated rumor of the Fifth Dalai Lama's (1617-1682) paternity of his regent Sde-srid Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho (1653-1705). But my own attention was drawn above all to these initial lines, for, just a few days before, while visiting the monastery of Erdeni-zuu, I had been surprised to see there an appliqué *thang-ka* of a figure labeled as Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan.² This is perhaps

1 As given in Smith n.d., p.98 (underlined text corresponds to the use of red in Smith's transcription): *skabs shig khrom gzigs khang du dpon gyis shog zer bar/ dpon dang chos 'phel can 'dug par rang bzhin gyi dri ba shin tu mang ba dang/ o rgyan tshad ldan yin min/ kun mkhyen lnga pa chen po 'i skor spyi dang khyad par du ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho rgyal ba yon tan rgya mtaho' i skye ba yin nam min zer bar/ nged rang tsho ci shes paN chen thams cad mkhyen pa sku gong ma sogs skyes chen dam pa tshad ldan rnams kyis 'khrul med du ngos 'dzin mdzad pa ni gong sa 7 lnga pa yin par 'dug byas pas/ paN chen rin po ches ngos 'dzin de ltar mdzad med pa 'dra/ gzims khang gong sprul sku yon tan rgya mtsho 'i skye ba 'khrul med yin par de la ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtshos phrag dog gi rnam pas sdang (f. 183r) shugs dang nye rigs rnams la yang dgongs par mi bde ba mdzad 'dug/ nged tsho 'i lud [sic! to be emended to lung—MK] par gzims khang gong sprul skur bha ga ta la' i bla ma zer gyin yod zer.*

2 A guide affiliated with the Erdeni-juu with whom I discussed the *thang-ka* was convinced that it depicts the noted Sa-skyapa master Rje-btsun Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan (1147-1216), who is said to have prophesied his nephew Sa-skyapa Paṅḍita's mission to the Mongols. When I pointed out that the Sa-skyapa master was a layman, not a monk as seen here, I was told that "Mongol artists were ignorant of these details,"

none other than the Gzims-khang-gong-ma *sprul-sku* referred to above and the focal point of much acrimony in contemporary Tibetan Buddhism; for it was this figure who, following his suicide (1654), which was presumed to have been an outcome of his rivalry with the Fifth Dalai Lama, would later reemerge as the contentious spirit Rdo-rje-shugs-Idan.³



Appliqué *thang-ka* of Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan at Erdeni-zuu. Undated, but perhaps 19th century.

In the upper register: Rje-btsun-dam-pa Zanabazar, Buddha Vajradhara, Green Tārā.

In the lower register: Yellow Jambhala, Six-Armed Mahākāla, Dharmarāja. Photo: Matthew T. Kapstein.

a response that strikes me as implausible when considering a *thang-ka* that is otherwise iconographically precise. Another suggestion is that the figure in question is Tsong-kha-pa's disciple 'Dul-'dzin Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan, though the clearly tantric elements (the right hand, for instance, holds a brimming skull-cup) as well as the absence of context seems to rule that out. Besides modern images of the Gzims-khang-gong-ma Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan, as seen on websites devoted to the Shugs-Idan controversy, the only early image of him of which I am aware is in a *thang-ka* of Mag-zor-rgyal-mo in which he and the Fifth Dalai Lama appear in the upper register in miniature, but as this *thang-ka* certainly dates to the youth of the subjects, when they were both resident at the 'Bras-spungs Dga'-ldan pho-brang, it probably cannot serve as a reference for the identity of the figure at Erdeni-juu. I am grateful to Amy Heller for calling my attention to the painting of Mag-zor-rgyal-mo in question, from the John and Berthe Ford Collection, which has been published in Rhie and Thurman 2000 and in Pal and Woodward 2001.

3 Dreyfus 1998 remains the best overview of the affair. See, too, Lopez, 1998: 188-201.

The testimony of Sle-lung confirms that some factions among the Mongols had decided at a relatively early date that the Gzims-khang-gong-ma Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan was the authentic rebirth of the Fourth Dalai Lama, Yon-tan-rgya-mtsho (1589-1617). I have not yet been able to determine whether this opinion was shared by the leading Khalkha hierarch, Rje-btsun-dam-pa Zanabazar (1635-1723), who is depicted in the upper left-hand corner of the *thang-ka* I saw at Erdeni-zuu.⁴ Be this as it may, it is notable that in Sle-lung's text the several questions concerning the Fifth Dalai Lama are preceded by an inquiry into the reliability of O-rgyan, i.e. Padmasambhava. As this too is an issue that has arisen repeatedly in connection with the cult of Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan's apotheosis as Rdo-rje-shugs-ldan, it is perhaps not surprising that we should find the issue debated within the Dge-lugs-pa order and among its Mongol adherents during the same period in which the dispute concerning the Fourth Dalai Lama's true incarnation arose. It so happens, then, that a group of contested questions that might not, at first glance, seem necessarily to be connected, in due course came to be indissociably interlaced. These include the authority of the Padmasambhava traditions, the authenticity of the Fifth Dalai Lama and the status of Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan, as well as the paternity of the Sde-srid and the implications this had in regard to the Fifth Dalai Lama's monastic vows.

In relation to all this, the issue of Padmasambhava appears to be in some respects tangential to the rest. Its importance in this context was no doubt due to the Great Fifth's well-known Rnying-ma-pa sympathies, but perhaps more precisely to his family's ties to the old seat of the Tibetan empire in Yar-lung and the sense of historical warrant that this imparted to his claims. For these reasons, perhaps, the "reliability of O-rgyan" could serve as a clear, but still cautiously indirect, signifier of one's allegiances. For the remainder of this short essay I shall therefore be concerned primarily with an aspect of the contested question of the "reliability of O-rgyan," focusing on the well-known account of Padmasambhava, the *Padma bka' thang*. The reception of the text during the period of the Dga'-ldan pho-brang's rise reflects the fissure that the Fifth Dalai Lama's robust advocacy of devotion to the Lotus Guru aroused within some factions of the Dge-lugs-pa clergy and the countervailing determination of the Great Fifth's loyalists to uphold Padmasambhava's cult.

Writing in 1782, the noted Mongol polymath Sum-pa mkhan-po Ye-shes-dpal-'byor (1704-1788) listed the famed *Testament of Padmasambhava*—the *Padma bka' thang* of O-rgyan-gling-pa (var. U-rgyan-gling-pa)—among inauthentic works. As in the case of the *Mañi bka' 'bum*, which he similarly excoriated, his condemnation was not in this case directed at a marginal work preserved only by a non-mainstream sect, but at a major Tibetan revelation that had been actively promoted during the preceding centuries by leading adherents of the Dge-lugs-pa

4 It appears, in any case, that Zanabazar's relations with the Fifth Dalai Lama did deteriorate, though in fact this occurred during the period following the Fifth's death, when his passing was being concealed by Sde-srid Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho, who seems to have been the real object of Zanabazar's misgivings. The tensions here were exacerbated by the mounting conflict between Khalkha and Zunghar, culminating in the former's assault, under Galdan's leadership, on the latter in 1695, and the subsequent Manchu intervention. On the question that concerns us here, Bawden 1998: 69 comments: "The personal antipathy of the Khutuktu [Zanabazar] for the Dalai Lama and the regent was in fact the pretext for Galdan's invasion of Khalkha."

order he championed.⁵ The apparent oddness of the Dge-lugs-pa embrace of the Rnying-ma-pa *gter-ma* was underscored not just by Sum-pa mkhan-po. A half century ago, the great authority on the history of Mongolian printing, Walther Heissig, in commenting upon the early eighteenth century publication in Beijing of the Mongolian translation of the *Padma bka' thang*, asked just what the Dge-lugs-pa interest might have been in what he described as a *Rotmützenlegende*, a “red-bonnet tale.”⁶ His question is precisely what concerns us here.

In naming the *Padma bka' thang* as a key example of a textual forgery, Sum-pa mkhan-po may have had it in mind that his renowned contemporary Lcang-skya Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje (1717-1786), the Tibetan Buddhist tutor of the Qianlong emperor, had sponsored the publication of an edition of the work in Beijing, probably in 1755. In this, Lcang-skya was consciously following a long-established precedent and in fact reproduced in his edition, prior to his own brief colophon, a series of earlier colophons, which together allow us to reconstruct important aspects of the reception and publication history of O-rgyan-gling-pa's *gter-ma*. These are in fact derived from the Sde-dge edition, dating no doubt to the 1730s, which, as we shall see, was Lcang-skya's immediate source. There were other precedents, too, for his publication: Heissig's note on the Kangxi edition of the Mongolian translation has been mentioned above, and in 1730, the eighth reign year of the Yongzheng emperor, an imperial palace edition of the *Maṇi bka' 'bum* in Tibetan had been also produced.⁷

The earliest of the colophons that are reproduced and translated below is taken from a well-known sixteenth-century edition published with the support of the Fifth Dalai Lama's great-grandfather, the lord of 'Phyong-rgyas under the Phag-mo-gru-pa regime, Mi-dbang Bsod-nams-stobs-rgyal. He was, according to the Great Fifth, encouraged in this by his Rnying-ma-pa teacher, the famed 'Phreng-po gter-ston Shes-rab-'od-zer (1518-1584), the founder of Dpal-ri Monastery (where 'Jigs-med-gling-pa [1730-1798] would later be educated) and situated within Bsod-nams-stobs-rgyal's domains.⁸ The colophon notes that, as the state of most copies of the text was editorially poor, an effort was made to produce the best possible edition, relying upon a manuscript said to have been copied directly from an earlier manuscript written in O-rgyan-gling-pa's own hand, as well as an illuminated “archaic manuscript” (*yig-rnying*) and, most interestingly, a printed edition from the region of E in southern Tibet, that had been published by members of O-rgyan-gling-pa's own family line (*gdung-brgyud*). No trace of this early xylograph of the *Padma bka' thang* has, to the best of my knowledge, so far emerged.

5 On Sum-pa mkhan-po's critique of the *gter-ma* traditions, including the *Padma bka' thang*, see Kapstein 1989, 2000 (ch. 7).

6 Heissig 1954: 31.

7 This edition appears to have been prepared somewhat carelessly. For instance, the colophon refers to the emperor as being in his sixty-fourth year, but this calculation is clearly in error by one duodeccennial cycle: Yongzheng (1678-1735) was in fact fifty-two during his eighth reign year. And the spelling is frequently atrocious: one sees *grtags bdun* for *rta bdun*, *brjigs pa'i sku* for *brjid pa'i sku*, *migs dbang* for *mi dbang*, *zhungs dags* (!) for *zhus dag*, etc. The year of the composition of the colophon is given as *me-bya* (1717) instead of *sa-bya* (1729).

8 On 'Phreng-po gter-ston, refer to Deroche 2009, 201–1.

Bsod-nams-stobs-rgyal's colophon is followed by a long poem in praise of Padmasambhava, introducing the colophon written by the Fifth Dalai Lama, in which interlinear notes (*mchan-bu*) clarify the allusions made in the poem itself to "sophists" who had discredited the teaching through false views. Those named are the Rtag-brtan sprul-sku Kun-dga'-snying-po, that is to say Tāranātha,⁹ Rgyal-mtshan gnyug rab-'byams-pa, Brag-sgo rab-'byams-pa, and Lho-brag sprul-sku Gtsug-lag-phreng-ba.¹⁰ Though the first and last mentioned are of course well-known masters of the Jo-nang-pa and Karma bka'-brgyud-pa orders which the Great Fifth vociferously opposed, Brag-sgo rab-'byams-pa, it emerges, was a Dge-lugs-pa disciple of the Fifth himself.¹¹ I have so far found no information concerning Rgyal-mtshan gnyug rab-'byams-pa, though his title suggests that he may have also been a Dge-lugs-pa. That the Great Fifth may therefore have been using the publication of the *Padma bka' thang* to mark a fault-line not just within Tibetan Buddhism generally, but even within his own church, is of considerable interest, given especially the later rejection of the text by some Dge-lugs-pa, such as Sum-pa mkhan-po. The Fifth's colophon concludes by reiterating the history of the Phyang-rgyas Dpal-ri edition, amplifying some details concerning the editorial history of the text,¹² and specifying that this new colophon is written for the publication of the work at Dga'-ldan Phun-tshogs-gling, the converted Jo-nang-pa seat, with the encouragements of Grong-smad-pa Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho. In signing, the Fifth uses his title as a *gter-ston*, Rdo-rje Thogs-med-rtsal, and notes that the place of composition is Dga'-ldan Phun-tshogs-gling, in

9 Tāranātha (1575-1634) was, of course, a major target of the Fifth Dalai Lama's ire, but it is not clear that the former's biography of Padmasambhava, *Slob dpon padma 'byung gnas kyi rnam par thar pa gsal bar byed pa'i yi ge yid ches gsum ldan*, which purports to represent exclusively India traditions, was particularly singled out for criticism. Most likely the Fifth just objected to it in principle, as he seems to have done in the other cases he mentions, as being yet another effort on the part of "ordinary intellects" to rationalize the extraordinary career of Padmasambhava. Tāranātha's text, which has been published many times (e.g., in Tseten 1973), has now been translated twice into English: Ngawang Zangpo 2002 and De Falco 2012.

10 The treatment of Dpa'-bo Gtsug-lag-phreng-ba (1504-1566) here is somewhat puzzling. As will be seen below (n. 27), the placement of the *mchan-bu* mentioning him is itself unclear. And later in the colophon (see n. 32), it seems that the Fifth voices qualified approval of his work, despite his sharp (and often misplaced) criticisms of Dpa'-bo's *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston* in his own history. Perhaps Dpa'-bo's association with the Karma Bka'-brgyud factions that sharply opposed the Dge-lugs-pa in the Lhasa region during the early sixteenth century plays a role here *sotto voce*.

11 Brag-sgo rab-'byams-pa, n.d., is a sharp critique of the historical credentials of the *Padma bka' thang*, focusing upon, among other matters, inconsistencies of dating. The Dalai Lama's colophon demonstrates that this issue was a particular target of his rebuke. An extended response to Brag-sgo rab-'byams-pa may be found in Rtse-le 1979. Despite this, Brag-sgo rab-'byams-pa proclaims himself the faithful disciple of the Great Fifth in the colophon of his work, an assertion confirmed in the autobiography of the Fifth himself: Karmay 2014: 375. Further confirmation of their relationship is implied in a *thang-ka* of Mag-zor-rgyal-mo (Linrothe and Watt 2004, cat. no. 31), in which the Dalai Lama and Brag-sgo rab-'byams-pa figure together in the lineage in the upper register.

12 It is of interest to note that the Fifth Dalai Lama alters Bsod-nams-stobs-rgyal's modest claim that one of his sources was "said to have been copied from the treasure-discoverer's manuscript" (*gter ston gyi phyag bris las bshus zer ba shig*) in order to assert more robustly that the manuscript in question was the "son [= direct copy] of the mother, the treasure-discoverer's manuscript" (*gter ston gyi phyag bris ma'i bu yig*).

the wood hare year corresponding to 1676, that is, two years before Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho accepted his elevation to the post of *sde-srid*.

The colophon of the Sde-dge edition takes pains to note that the publication, sponsored by the Sde-dge prince and based directly upon the Dga'-ldan Phun-tshogs-gling edition, takes place under the ægis of the Ngor-pa order, founded by the “second Jina” Ngor-chen Kun-dga'-bzang-po (1382-1456). This is significant, as the Ngor-pa, following the lead of Ngor-chen, had sometimes been hostile to the cult of Padmasambhava. No indication is furnished as to just why the publication was undertaken at the recently founded Sde-dge printery, though I think it plausible that this reflected more the interests of the Derge court than of the Ngor-pa order.

The last colophon given is that of the *daguoshi* Lcang-skya Khutughtu, i.e. Rol-pa'i rdo-rje, who cites the precedents of both the Fifth Dalai Lama's and the Sde-dge edition as the inspiration for his own efforts. Little additional information is provided, besides the year of publication, given as the earth pig corresponding to the nineteenth reign year. This is a problem, as, during the entire Qing dynasty, there appears to have been no earth pig year corresponding to the nineteenth regnal year of any emperor. My best guess, then, is that this should be emended to be the wood pig corresponding to Qianlong's twentieth year on the throne, that is, 1755. If the production of the edition had been begun during his nineteenth year, but was only completed in his twentieth, this would perhaps explain the error. About the apparently mistaken element, earth for wood, I have not yet been able to determine whether this is simply an error, or is due to an actual difference in the calendrical system used here.¹³ However this may be, as the edition definitely belongs to the eighteenth century, and as any other explanation of the date seems even more awkward than this, I think that we may accept here, if tentatively, the “inference to the least bad conclusion” and assign the publication to the year proposed above. In any event, 1755 would be an attractive date for a Qianlong edition of the *Padma bka' thang* as there were other reasons for which the Lotus Guru may have been on the mind of the emperor and his tutor, for it was in this year that the construction of the Puningsi was begun in Jehol (Chengde). The temple was modeled on Bsam-yas and edified to celebrate the defeat of the Zunghar Mongols in Xinjiang, the same Zunghars who, thirty-five years earlier, had ordered Sle-lung to the Khrom-gzigs-khang to discuss the authenticity of O-rgyan and of the Fifth Dalai Lama.¹⁴

These last details remind us that the *Padma bka' thang* had also a history among the Mongols, some knowledge of which both complicates and advances our understanding of the material we have just reviewed. For, following the conversion of Altan Khan in 1578, though the Dge-lugs-pa emerged as the predominant Tibetan sectarian trend among the Mongols, a number of *gter-ma* traditions were soon promulgated among them as well, above all those of the *Maṇi bka' 'bum* and *Padma bka' thang*. The role of these works in underwriting the religio-political order of the Tibetan world was no doubt already established in Phag-mo-gru-pa times:

¹³ Cf. n. 7 above.

¹⁴ The campaigns of 1755 figured prominently among what Perdue 2005: 270-289 terms “the death knell of the Zunghar State.” Chayet 1985: 28-34 offers a description of the Puningsi and its relation to these events.

Mi-dbang Bsod-nams-stobs-rgyal's publication of the latter perhaps supports this.¹⁵ And it was in this role that their diffusion among the Mongols was advanced. That this was so is suggested by a striking passage in the *Jewel Translucent Sūtra* concerning Altan Khan's conversion, a work studied not long ago by Johan Elverskog and assigned by him to roughly the period during which the *Maṇi bka' 'bum* and *Padma bka' thang* were translated into Mongolian. Here, in one crucial scene, Altan Khan's envoys arrive to extend their lord's invitation to Bsod-nams-rgya-mtsho when, in front of the image of the Lhasa Jo-bo, the divinity Pehar possesses a medium:

In front of the Juu Rinpoche, the image of the Bhagavan Buddha Teacher,
King Pehar spoke to the victorious All-knowing Dalai Lama and the
assembled Samgha,
To those many assembled Tibetan great and small Alms-masters,
And particularly to the Mongol envoys.

“By decree of the Crown Jewel Master Padmasambhava,
Which reveals the prophecy of the Superior Horse-headed Powerful King
Entirely, the words of me, Pehar Khan, should be seen as conventional and
ultimate truth.

The ultimate truth is particularly beyond comprehension.

The conventional truth is visualizing the deeds of the Eight Names and Five Bodies.
I see that the helpful Dalai Lama, who by sight knows all conditions,
And the virtuous Bodhisattva Altan Khan, when we were there, all together striving,
Took a vow in front of Padmasambhava on the summit of the Glorious Copper
Colored Mountain.

By the power of the blessings of the merits vowed by them together,
The incarnation of Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, meritorious Dalai Lama was born
in the West,
The Blessed Altan Khan was born in the East in the land of the Mongols.
A sign that the religion of the Blessed Ones will spread like the sun.

For this reason, you, the Dalai Lama, whom to behold is completely beneficial,
You should go there according to the decree of the Mongol Khan.
Evenly all living beings will be enlightened and the sun of the jewel religion
will rise.”¹⁶

In the eyes of some Mongols, therefore, the authority of the Dalai Lama in relation to the Mongols had its warrant in vows witnessed by Padmasambhava himself.

As for the Mongolian *Padma bka' thang*, Heissig shows that the translation, *Badma yatang sudur-un orusiba* by Sakiya töröb kelemürči, was executed under the patronage of Erdeni Mangyus qulači bayatur tayiji, a great grand-nephew of Altan Khan through the latter's brother Mergen jinong, in the early seventeenth century (c. 1615). The xylographic edition was published

15 On the 1521 Gung-thang “Royal Print” of the *Maṇi bka' 'bum*, see now Ehrhard 2013. It may be noted that the Fifth Dalai Lama duly notes his ancestor's printing activities, including the publication of the *Padma bka' thang*, in his history of Tibet: Nor-brang 1993: 421.

16 Elverskog 2003: 143-5, lines 674-92.

nearly a century later in Beijing under the reign of Kangxi, at about the same time as that of the Mongolian *Mani gambu* (1712). The explicit association with the line of Altan Khan seems to further confirm the legitimating role attributed to these works in connection with the religio-political order.¹⁷

With this in mind, an additional observation seems warranted. Phreng-po-gter-ston Shes-rab-'od-zer, the guru of the Great Fifth's ancestor, was himself a noted revealer of prophetic treasures; his prophecies came to be particularly stressed in the writings of the Dalai Lama. Indeed, one of the notable innovations of the Fifth's works, and those of his regent Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho, was their explicit political use of prophecy drawn from *gter-ma*. In this connection, the *Padma bka' thang*, with its elaborate prophecies of the *gter-ston* themselves, that is, its prophecies of the prophets, must have assumed a privileged position, the mother, as it were, of Tibetan prophetic revelations in general.¹⁸ With the Great Fifth's confirmation of the exalted station of O-rgyan-gling-pa's text, it became an established treasure of the throne. Hence, its emblematic adoption, too, by rulers allied with and favoring the Dalai Lamas.

The story of the political use of the prophetic book, as we have begun to sketch it out here, may be further clarified by a brief comparative exercise. The late Anna Seidel once undertook to survey the transformations of the notion of "royal treasure" in early China. Under the Zhou, she wrote:

[T]reasures guaranteed the ruling family's possession of the mandate. Kaltenmark has shown that these objects, called *pao* 寶, "treasures", in ancient China, were not necessarily unique or precious. They were not used in any kind of commercial exchange and only exceptionally as gifts, but they were kept hidden and their possession had the mystical value of symbolizing a clan's good fortune. In the case of the royal family, they constituted the sacra or regalia of the dynasty. Their presence testified to the possession of the mandate and to Heaven's continuing support.

[I]f the royal treasure-houses originally contained objects like stones, jade pieces, bronzes and weapons, they in time came to include talismans, magic diagrams, charts, prophetic adages, secret recipes for personal longevity and for the prosperity of the state and, finally, dissertations on moral and political doctrines. These texts soon were valued as more efficacious than the traditional object of the family treasure. [...]

When the Han order had so far decayed that people wondered whether its mandate was exhausted, the first prognostic text (*ch'an shu* 讖書) revealing divine intentions to renew the mandate was brought to court. [...] This was the

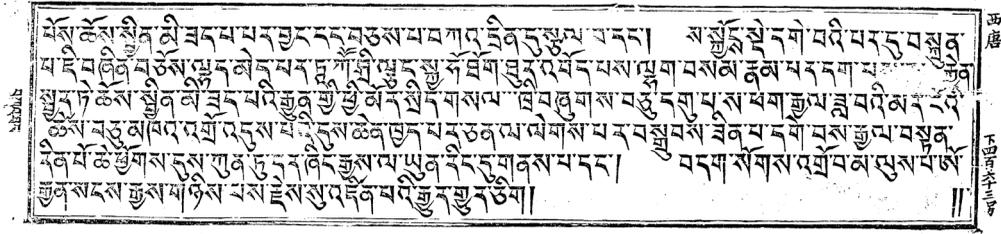
¹⁷ Heissig 1954: 47-48.

¹⁸ A curious example of this is the strange story of O-rgyan-gling-pa's mummified corpse, which was purloined by seekers of magical medicines who believed that the flesh was suffused with the properties attributed to one who had been born as a brahman throughout seven consecutive lives; see Dudjom 1991, vol. 1: 775-779. The basis for all this was no doubt the 102nd chapter of the *Padma bka' thang* itself, prophesying the benefits of such flesh. In all events, the condition of O-rgyan-gling-pa's corpse became eventually an affair of state, requiring the intercession of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama.

first revealed scripture to be used in Han politics. Previously the will of Heaven had been read only from natural phenomena, from auspicious objects and their occasional short inscriptions, a practice that continued under Wang Mang. [...] In the politico-religious propaganda that brought the first emperor of the Latter Han, Kuang-wu, to power, the written word of Heaven in *ch'an* texts came to be valued and utilized far more than auspicious objects or natural phenomena. [...] The real content of the apocrypha was a collection of ancient legends and omens recorded and elaborated for the legitimation of the Han.¹⁹

“The real content of the apocrypha was a collection of ancient legends”—can we imagine a description more fit for the Tibetan revelations of the life and deeds of Padmasambhava? As the warrant for imperial prophecies in general, can we imagine a more suitable treasure than that of O-rgyan-gling-pa? What is remarkable in this case is the evident congruence between the Tibetan revelation and Chinese conceptions of imperial treasure. That the prophetic books thought to be in the background of Tibetan and Mongol power were published in their Tibetan and Mongolian versions under the Manchu emperors in Beijing may perhaps be seen, therefore, as part of the ongoing response to the perpetual challenge of renewing the mandate of Heaven. Not surprisingly, the Zunghar Mongols and their supporters, who most firmly resisted Chinese power in Inner Asia, rejected the Tibetan tokens of that power as well.

19 Seidel 1983: 299-307.



Fols. 463b. Conclusion of Leang-skya's colophon.

Translation

[1. The colophon of Za-hor Mi-dbang Bsod-nams-stobs-rgyal, fols. 455b4-457a3.]

Among the amazing and wonderful biographies of Padmasambhava, the great master from glorious Odḍiyāna, that were composed, beyond imagination, in accord with the perspectives of those to be trained, the so-called *Padma bka'i thang yig*, in particular, is universally famed. It was brought forth by the treasure-discoverer U-rgyan-gling-pa, who was the rebirth of the king of Za-hor, Gtsug-lag-'dzin,²⁰ and who was accompanied by the so-called Hor sgom-pa Shā-kya, a fortunate individual, when this royal lineage of Sa-ho-ra [= Za-hor] was residing in the pleasure garden of Gzhu, from the Lotus Crystal Cave, which is the palace on the face of the Lotus Pinnacle Fortress of the Crystal Rock Mountain of Yar-klung.²¹ Because this version is widely distributed, in order to promote in all quarters the expansion of the enlightened activities of the great master of the *vidyādharas*, Padamsambhava, and the precious teaching of the most secret Vajrayāna according to the ancient translations, as well as the welfare and happiness of living creatures, the Lord of Men, Bsod-nams-stobs-kyi-rgyal-po of Za-hor, has, as a religious donation, multiplied it as an inexhaustible print. To this end, although the true original is in verse alone, most have [previously] produced texts according to their own assertions, so that it appears that the section breaks throughout have been lost, understandings confounded, copyists' errors multiplied, and sometimes even superfluous insertions invented by arrogant fools. For this reason, I have amassed a number of original exemplars, in particular, one said to have been copied from the treasure-discoverer's manuscript, one in archaic writing with illustrations of divinities at the beginning, and a print from E that was published by U-rgyan-gling-pa's descendants. Because these three are to some extent correct, I have left as is their common points as well as the archaicisms and provincialisms that occasionally appear. At some points, because there are various incoherencies, I have compared it with the treasure of Lord Nyang that is well known as the Copper Island Biography,²² etc., and, without being careless about it,

²⁰ I.e., the father of Padmasambhava's Indian consort, the lady Mandāravā.

²¹ The "speaking image" (*zhal-byon-ma*) of Padmasambhava said also to have been discovered there remains a treasure of Khra-'brug monastery. See Kapstein 2000: 156, figure 8.2.

²² This is the *zangs-gling-ma* version of Padmasambhava's story, revealed by Nyang-ral Nyi-ma-'od-zer (1124-1192), for an English translation of which, see Kunsang 1993.

have made efforts to correct and to purify the text. So it should be considered reliable by discerning intellects.

[2. The colophon of the Fifth Dalai Lama, fols. 457a3-462b2.]

Salutations to Padmasambhava, the consummation of Buddhas!

Your *dharmakāya*, the Omnibeneficent Limitless Light, is the essence,
 primordially pure;
 Your *sambhogakāya* is Lord Avalokita, the natural manifestation of the hundred
 clans, spontaneously present;
 You are the *nirmāṇakāya*, Padmasambhava, ceaseless compassion, transforming
 in myriad ways—
 A ho! May the red dust of your toenails fall on my crown so as to confer omniscience!

The form of E is the wisdom of emptiness, [Ye-shes] Mtsho-rgyal,
 In union with the syllable WAM, the means of great bliss,
 The pervading lord, Skull-garlanded Vajradhara,
 Chief *cakravartin* of the ocean of maṇḍalas,

Who, like a dancer changing from one into many forms,
 Presents an array of embodiments, the Eight Names, to disciples,
 As when varied hues are brightened when refracted through crystal
 And shine forth unmixed—what an amazement you are!

Wielding with compassionate hand
 The sword of method and wisdom
 To sever the net of sin and pollution for all beings lost in saṃsāra
 Is the glory, Lord! of your tireless action.

Above all, in the guise of the pandits and siddhas of India and Nepal,
 You have stolen the light of a thousand suns
 With pervasive compassion, maintaining, increasing, protecting
 The precious teaching of the fourth Guide [Śākyamuni].

Most particularly, with the taintless vision of the lord of the dance,
 Born from a lotus, here in Jambudvīpa,
 With the skill of great gnostic vows,
 Your grace for the creatures of the Glacial Land knows no limit.

Though it may be easy to count up the sands of Ganges river,
 Besides omniscient gnosis
 No mirror is sufficiently clear
 As to take the measure, Lord! of your amazing deeds.

You make manifest transformations befitting each creature's vision,
 Changing æons into moments, and moments into æons;
 Laughable, then, to calculate the months and years
 As if your life were that of a common pandit or siddha!²³

23 This verse is clearly aimed at those who, like Brag-sgo rab-'byams-pa, criticized the *Padma bka' thang* on the basis of its treatment of chronological details.

Because with the fixed habit of rehearsing other histories,
 Even those who are learned and discerning,
 Uphold only what appears in later compositions
 And so magnify the stream of mistakes,
 now is the time to open the Dharma-eye!

With the fire of errant assertions based on sophistical speech,
 Feeble minds who burn virtue's luxurious tree²⁴
 Are like those in haste to suffer indigestion²⁵
 From the fruit of unpleasant, evil lands.

But with heartfelt devotion to that lord,
 Those who read, expound, or write²⁶ his *avadānas*
 Not only arrive at the heavens and the stage of liberation,
 But visibly dispel the harm caused by the eight classes of desirous spirits²⁷—
 who is your peer?

Hence, without following those who blather,
 Or fools who take daddy's bowl to be clean,²⁸
 But with the faith of sharp wits, following you,
 I am inspired to publish this print, an inexhaustible religious donation.

Having met the true face of the real Padmasambhava,
 The intuitive awareness primordially penetrating
 the vase body of youth in the heart,
 There is no guru besides him;
 Without seeking him elsewhere, but united in single essence—this is
 the salutation.

The object of worship, the worshipper, worship itself—all these
 Are certainly only the emanations of mind alone;
 With this knowledge, the outer, inner and secret offerings
 Are given as an oblation by self to self.

24 An annotation on this line, found in the Derge edition as well, reads “for example, Rtag-brtan sprul-sku Kun-dga'-snying-po, Rgyal-mtshan gnyug rab-'byams-pa, Brag-sgo rab-'byams-pa.” Refer to notes 9 and 11 above.

25 The verb *spron pa* is unfamiliar and I have guessed that it might be related to *skran*, which would at least serve to connect it to the bad fruit of the previous line (the following line in the translation). I will be grateful to readers who might be able to confirm this interpretation or to supply a better explanation.

26 Reading here *'bri* for *'dri*, “to question,” a common orthographic variation.

27 An annotation at this point, similarly placed in the Derge edition as well, reads: “Lho-brag sprul-sku Gtsug-lag-phreng-ba.” I am not sure that I understand the point here. Is it that the Dpa'-bo Rin-po-che is being identified with the harmful classes of worldly spirits? Or is it not more likely that the *thig-phreng*, the dots connecting the annotation with the text, have been misplaced and should lead instead to the phrase “those who blather” in the first line of the following verse. See also n. 10 above.

28 The phrase here expresses disdain for those who are so fixed in their established habitudes that they are oblivious to the merits of positive developments around them. Cf. Dudjom 1991, vol. 1: 968 and n. 1386.

As the solar orb is perpetually free from darkness,
 So intuitive awareness is in fact untainted by the two obscurations,
 But as in a dream, though they are unreal appearances,
 I repent of them in relative terms.

In unlimited realms beyond counting,
 All the Sugatas of the ten directions and four times,
 Who are none other than Lotus Skull-Garland himself,
 Inexhaustibly cause disciples to enter the way—in this I rejoice!

Throughout the trichiliocosm and the regions beyond this world,
 As many as the ineffable number of particles,
 Are Buddhas and Lotus Gurus—
 I pray that they turn the wheel, as befits the disciples,
 of sūtra and tantra united!

Though many of the Guides have accepted to enter nirvāṇa,
 May you, who have attained the rainbow body,
 the body of the great transference,
 Unwavering from your comportment,
 Remain firmly embodied with five certainties!²⁹

By the virtues acquired by this,
 May all merits throughout the three times
 ripen so that here in the Glacial Land
 The enlightened activity of the Lotus Vajra pervades
 And beings enjoy the glories of well-being and happiness!

By the efforts of body, speech and mind for this publication,
 And all reading and expounding of it,
 May we, throughout all rebirths,
 Vanquish hoards of enemies, demons and obstructions,
 and rival Vaiśravaṇa in lifespan, riches and power!

Abandoning successively the fruits of taints born of affliction,
 Reborn to see Padmasambhava's face and to hear his speech,
 Entering, before long, the ranks of the *vidyādhara*s of Camaradvīpa,
 May we attain freedom through Creation, Perfection, and Great Perfection!

In the cool shade of the spreading leaves
 Of the new creeper that embraces all merits,
 May the world at large and the Tibetans in particular
 Enjoy the fruit that is happy and secure!

Beginning with the words *svasti prajābhyaḥ*,
 The song of the queen of the perfect spring
 Captures the summertime youth's delight—
 May it spread everywhere by the benedictions of virtue
 in the beginning, middle, and end!

²⁹ The five certainties are those of teacher, retinue, teaching, place and time.

Thus, it appears that, in accordance with the aptitudes of those to be taught, there are various different biographies of the glorious second Buddha, the great master from Oḍḍiyāna, Padmasambhava, including the abbreviated and expanded versions that have come from the treasures, such as the former and later treasures, those of Ba-khal-smug-po, etc.³⁰ And among [those bearing the title] *Padma bka'i thang yig*, as well, there are several treasures such as those of Rdo-rje-gling-pa, Sangs-rgyas-gling-pa, etc.³¹ Among them, this *Padma bka'i thang yig* of Yar-rje O-rgyan-gling-pa—the Rgyal-sras lha-rje who underwent thirteen lifetimes just as a treasure-discoverer, and who, because he revealed limitless precepts of the Dharma, beginning with the *Ocean of Dharma Gathering the Teachings (Bka' 'dus chos kyi rgya mtsho)*, came to be famed as “treasure mad”—was brought forth as treasure on the eighth day of the fourth month of the water-dragon year (1352), when the moon was in conjunction with the constellation *dbo* (Skt. *uttaraphālgunī*), from the heart of Mahāviṣṇu [= Rahula], the gate-protector of the Lotus Crystal Cave on the face of the rock fortress of the Lotus Pinnacle of the Crystal Mountain of Yar-klungs, by Gu-ru U-rgyan-gling-pa, whose fortunate associate was Gzhu Kun-ra-ba Hor Bsgom-shāk. Because there were various copies with interpolations, in order to fulfill the intentions of the treasure-discoverer Shes-rab-'od-zer [i.e. 'Phreng-po gter-ston], who was the emanation of the great translator Vairocana, Hor Mi-dbang Bsod-nams-stobs-rgyal of the Indian royal family of the great *Sā-la-pa*, the minister of the glorious Phag-mo-gru-pa who is the king mandated by heaven here in Tibet, acted as patron, and based on a written copy that was the son of the mother, the manuscript in the treasure-discoverer's hand, and other reliable old manuscripts, he produced, with the corrections of the great pandit Ri-zangs-tog-pa, the so-called “Phyong-rgyas Dpal-ri print,” which is authoritative. Nevertheless, despite its very great beneficial activity, syllables were lost, or became unclear or separated [owing to the deterioration of the blocks]. Because, in accord with the *Religious History* of Lho-brag sprul-sku,³² and with the biography of the Great O-rgyan composed by the discerning Sog-bzlog-pa Blo-gros-rgyal-mtshan,³³ the old exemplar of the prophecy of treasure-discoverer Rdo-rje-gro-lod obtained from an iron pen (*lcags-smyug-ma*)³⁴ and the *Signs of the Times (dus rtags)* of Mchog-sprul Legs-ldan-rdo-rje,³⁵ and so on, appear clear, besides some new additions there is no alteration

30 The “former and later treasures” (*gter kha gong 'og*) designate the discoveries of Nyang-ral Nyi-ma-'od-zer and Gu-ru Chos-kyi-dbang-phyug (1212-1270). Ba-khal-smug-po appears to have been another early *gter-ston*, who is best known for the celebrated litany addressed to Padmasambhava entitled *Gsol 'debs bar chad lam sel*.

31 Refer to Dudjom 1991, vol. 1: 784-792.

32 I.e., Dpa'-bo Gtsug-lag-phreng-ba's *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston*, of which the Great Fifth tended to be otherwise quite critical (see above). Is the suggestion here that he accepts the accuracy of Dpa'-bo's transcriptions of texts, even if not agreeing always with his interpretations of them?

33 Sog-bzlog-pa 1984.

34 Unidentified.

35 This is the second Rdo-rje-brag Rig-'dzin, the younger brother of Mnga'-ris Paṅ-chen Padma-dbang-rgyal (1487-1543).

[in the present text].³⁶ With the encouragements of Grong-smad-pa Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho, who, being captivated by the transmissions³⁷ of the profound treasures of the great and glorious O-rgyan, suggested that new printing blocks might be carved I, too, with my thoughts guided by undivided faith, solely to benefit the inhabitants of the Land of Snows with the religious gift of an inexhaustible print, being an old mantra-adept from the clan of Za-hor called by the name Rdo-rje Thogs-med-rtsal, given by Padma, the Play Gathering the Supreme Heruka (Che-mchog 'Dus-pa-rtsal), have assembled the requisites, together with [the composition of] the print colophon, and have completed this at Dga'-ldan Phun-tshogs-gling in the year of the wood hare (1676).

[3. The Derge colophon, fols.462b3-463a4.]

Subsequently, in accord with the order of Mkhan-chen Dpal-ldan-chos-skyong,³⁸ empowered in the great, sacred Dharma-realm of the second Jina, Kun-dga'-bzang-po,³⁹ the earth-protecting Lama named Kun-dga'-'phrin-las-rgya-mtsho'i-sde,⁴⁰ who controls with the measureless stride of his power the entire maṇḍala of the broad earth, in the center of victory over all the quarters, the royal capital of Lhun-grub-steng in Derge, having been entrusted as the authentic original source with the Dga'-ldan Phun-tshogs-gling print which was purified by triple examination, achieved an original source [i.e. the printing blocks] whereby his religious gift would flow forth continuously. Hence, may it be the basis for expansion and increase throughout all quarters, times, and conditions! Sarvamaṅgalam!

[4. Lcang-skya Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje's colophon, fols. 463a4-463b6.]

The biography of Padmasambhava—the great master from O-rgyan, the second Buddha who is the general form of all Jinas of the three times, whose kindness to the totality of the teaching and beings, in general and in particular, cannot be requited—which is well known as the *Padma bka'i thang yig*, was kindly bestowed by the Great Fifth, the Supreme Jina and Lord of Refuges, as an inexhaustible religious donation, together with the colophon of the print, and it was [re]published as a print of the Derge earth-protector. In accordance with this, without alteration or interpolation, the one addressed as *daguoshi* Lcang-skya Khutughtu, with a pure intention assembled the necessary resources for an original source [i.e. the printing blocks] whereby his religious gift would flow forth continuously, which was well achieved in the nineteenth throne year of Qianlong (Srid gsal), the earth-pig year, on the tenth day of the

36 This entire sentence is difficult to construe and I am not altogether satisfied with the present interpretation. The Fifth seems to be saying, in all events, that he has introduced some editorial changes into the *Padma bka'i thang* on the basis of the authorities here cited.

37 Or: “who has been prophesied in the transmissions...”

38 Dpal-ldan-chos-skyong (1702-1760) was the 34th Ngor mkhan-chen, a position he occupied in 1733-1740.

39 I.e. Ngor-chen Kun-dga'-bzang-po (1382-1456).

40 This was one of the sons of the Derge printery's founder, Bstan-pa-tshe-ring (1678-1738). Also known as Bla-chen Phun-tshogs-tshe-ring, he continued his father's work above all by achieving the publication of the Tengyur under the editorship of Zhu-chen Tshul-khrims-rin-chen (1697-1774).

waning fortnight of the month of Pauṣa, which is the special festival when the *dākinīs* gather. By this virtue, may the precious teaching of the Jina expand and increase in all quarters and times, remaining long present. And may I and beings without exception be taken into the following of the second Buddha from O-rgyan!

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