


# Prophecies and Past Lives of the Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho: On Interpretation and Authority in a Tibetan *'Khrungs rabs*\*

Ian MacCormack

(University of California, Berkeley)

 here is no official biography of the Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653–1705), the right-hand man of the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama and erstwhile ruler of the central Tibetan state. This is not to say that nothing was ever written about the Sde srid, by himself or others. There are autobiographical reflections, accounts of his auspicious birth and precocious youth, and records of his scholarship and accomplishments.<sup>1</sup> Arguably no aspect of his person was more central to portrayals of the Sde srid than his spiritual *bona fides*, that is, the narrative of his past lives and supporting prophecies. When the Sde srid and others took up “the Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho” as a subject, these topics were their main interest.

This article surveys the Sde srid’s *'khrungs rabs* or past-life narrative,<sup>2</sup> based primarily on its initial formation in the *Ngag dbang snyan sgron* or “Ngag dbang’s Report,” a critical response by the eponymous author to the Sde srid’s masterwork on astronomy and divination, the *Bai dūr dkar po* or “White Vaidurya.”

---

\* My thanks to Elizabeth Angowski, Jacob Dalton, and Sonia Hazard for their critical feedback on drafts of this article, as well as Daniel Wojahn for his editorial guidance and all the conveners of the ISYT St. Petersburg seminar. This article was written with the support of the Shinnyo-en Foundation and the Center for Buddhist Studies at the University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>1</sup> On his birth and childhood, see *Snyan sgron*: 12b; *Bai ser*: 354a–b; *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig*: 584a–85a; *Dza ya Paṇḍita* vol. 4: 170a–170b; on his studies, *Bai dkar*: 311b; Kilty 2010: 328–345. The *Du kū la'i gos bzang* recounts his years in office and the *Rna ba'i bcud len* adds details about the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama’s death and search for the 6<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama (on which see also the Sde srid’s biography of the latter). Contemporary works such as the autobiography of Sle lung Bzhad pa’i rdo rje offer occasional perspectives on the Sde srid (see, e.g., his 1702 visit to the Potala: Sle lung Bzhad pa’i rdo rje 2009, 58–63).

<sup>2</sup> I am treating *'khrungs rabs* as a type of narrative occurring within different genres (*gsol 'debs*, *rnam thar*, *thob yig*, etc.), not to mention visual and material representations.

Ngag dbang's portrayal of the Sde srid is unique because rather than just list his past lives (as is often the case), it demonstrates how the *'khrungs rabs* was constructed. It provides an opportunity for a broader reflection on Tibetan past-life narratives, especially how they, like other discourses of self-fashioning, implicate questions of power.

### 1. *The 'Khrungs rabs as an Interpretative Practice*

I want to begin by recognizing that a past-life narrative is an act of interpretation. It produces a new sense of the present through a dialogue with the past. In other words, this meaningful and purposive understanding has a dual nature: it is both inventive and responsive. Paul Ricoeur, who wrote at length on this subject, summarized this dialogical quality when he spoke of interpretation as being both "an act *on* the text" and equally "an act *of* the text."<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, persons bring their own interests to bear on the sources they interpret to refer them to their world in a particular way. Herein lies the strategic aspect of crafting a past-life narrative—say, reading a prophecy as indicating one person and not another. On the other hand, Ricoeur observed, "a work also creates its public."<sup>4</sup> That is, the sources bring an autonomy of their own that orients potential readers. As we will see with Ngag dbang's efforts to construct a narrative for the Sde srid, this autonomy operates at the level of the language of texts, as well as through intertextual relationships, communities of reading and transmission, or histories of prior interpretations. All of this weight comes to bear on the interested reader. Therefore, to assess the cultural and literary impact of such discourses requires taking into account both of these aspects of interpretation in connection to one another.

My observations here build on contributions to the study of Tibetan literature by scholars like José Cabezón and Andrew Quintman, who endeavor to restore a degree of complexity and authorial self-awareness to discourses of self-fashioning.<sup>5</sup> Quintman, mindful of developments in the field of hagiography studies, speaks of moving past the critical binaries that formerly structured scholarly inquiries. "Examining the life stories of a figure," he notes, "is no longer a matter of taking sides between the opposing factions of mytho-centrism and historical positivism."<sup>6</sup> After all, much hagiography exhibits ambivalent coordination between what may seem like hyperbolic exaggeration on the one hand and sober truth-telling on the other.

<sup>3</sup> Ricoeur 1991: 117.

<sup>4</sup> Ricoeur 1976: 31.

<sup>5</sup> Quintman 2014; Cabezón 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Quintman 2014: 25.

Religious studies scholarship has explored how hagiographers—hardly unaware of that contrast themselves—endeavored to “balance” superhuman idealizations of their subjects against frank representations of them.<sup>7</sup> The larger point, I take it, is that such tensions occurred not in spite of self-fashioning discourses, but rather were constitutive of them.

In sum, I am positing an irreducible relationship between inventiveness and responsiveness that is characteristic of past-life narratives as an interpretative practice. Although this observation may seem relatively straightforward, it presents the social and political dimensions of such narratives in a new light. Specifically, it complicates our sense of how discourses of self-fashioning functioned as authorizing discourses capable of establishing supremacy or legitimacy. I will address this problem below, after first analyzing our Tibetan sources; but it can be summarized as follows. It is basically undisputed that such authorizing discourses succeeded by attributing to their human subject some power greater than him- or herself. That power might be drawn from the charisma of those past lives, or the divine agencies animating their rebirths, or some combination of the two. At the same time, it is also uncontroversial for scholars to view the creation of those discourses as a deliberate human effort to harness sources of authority in an evidently self-interested way. In other words, power is really something that humans make for themselves, and tradition or the gods are more like instruments wielded for personal ends. The problem is that even though these two ways of thinking undermine one another, we have rarely taken seriously the ramifications of recognizing both simultaneously.

How is it, in other words, that humans both understand their authority as deriving from something beyond themselves, and also deliberately and even self-knowingly fashion one another in those terms, at the same time? What would it mean to acknowledge that they recognized the disjunction between the two? In posing these questions, I have in mind the work of the anthropologist David Graeber, who raises the same point in even more general terms:

The really striking thing is how often people can see certain institutions—or even society as a whole—*both* as a human product and also as given in the nature of the cosmos, both as something they have themselves created and something they could not possibly have created.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and their Biographers in the Middle Ages*, Oxford University Press, 1988: 30, quoted in Quintman 2014: 25–26.

<sup>8</sup> Graeber 2001: 232. Emphasis in original.

This basic problem remains on the horizon of our efforts to explain the social and political importance of Tibetan discourses of self-fashioning.

Let us approach the larger issue by first looking closely at the Sde srid's past-life narrative as formulated in the *Snyan sgron*.

## 2. Tibetan Sources

While there has been no small attention to the Sde srid, with one exception, the topic of his spiritual pedigree is conspicuously absent from scholarship.<sup>9</sup> A major reason is the evident preference of many historians for the more dramatic events, such as the Sde srid's dubious parentage or his ignominious downfall. One might also detect the long shadow of the historical positivism that Quintman decries. A. I. Vostrikov, the preeminent scholar of Tibetan historiography, declared outright that '*khrungs rabs* are of interest to the historian only to the degree that "genuine" information can be filtered from their "mythical" elements.<sup>10</sup> The genre of '*khrungs rabs gsol 'debs*, or petition prayers to past lives, "of course, have no historical value by themselves."<sup>11</sup> Although these priorities are rarely so explicitly stated, they are attested in scholarship on the Sde srid.

Nevertheless, past lives and supporting prophecies were central to the Sde srid's portrayal. This is unsurprising, given the circumstances. One, if not *the* predominant theme of the literary, material, and ritual productions issuing from the Dga' ldan pho brang, was the kingship wielded by their rulers. Past lives were an integral component of that complex topic, which also incorporated cosmological concepts and doctrines of buddhahood, bodhisattvahood, and karma. No individual was more instrumental in articulating and implementing those ideas than the Sde srid. Politically, the Sde srid's authority was tied to the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama's, the one being ideally inseparable from the other, as his edict of investiture declared. The same relationship characterized their

<sup>9</sup> Research into the Sde srid's life includes Richardson 1980; Ishihama 1992 & 2015; Mi nyag mgon po 1996: 366–378; Byams pa 'phrin las 1997 & 2000: 323–327; Yamaguchi 1999; Nor brang O rgyan 2006; Oyunbilig 2008; Sperling 2014. Other scholars reflect on the Sde srid's scholarship or literary persona, often to illuminate his broader intellectual or political milieu (see Schaeffer 2009; Gyatso 2015; and references therein). Ishihama's groundbreaking study (1992) listed the Sde srid's past lives but did not delve substantially into the sources for that narrative, its presentation in Ngag dbang's text, or the Sde srid's remarks on it. While my own analyses thus recognize her contributions, it will become clear that our interests and conclusions differ.

<sup>10</sup> Vostrikov 1970: 94.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid: 101.

past lives, which were commingled and sourced in an overlapping set of texts. Their political relationship thus reiterated a cosmic one and comprised another part of the same overarching discourse about the state and its authority.

The narrative of the Sde srid first emerged in two related texts. One is the aforementioned *Ngag dbang snyan sgron nyis brgya brgyad pa* or “Ngag dbang’s Report in 208 [Points of Contention],” by the Lu ’go Bla mkhyen Ngag gi dbang po (“Ngag dbang” for short), an expert on *dbyangs ’char* or divination based on the *Svarodayatantra* and one of the Sde srid’s teachers.<sup>12</sup> The second is a petition prayer by the Sde srid, the *Thogs med bskal pa ma* or “The ‘Unimpeded Age’ Prayer.”<sup>13</sup> Both works had their impetus in the 1685 publication of the *Bai dūr dkar po*, the Sde srid’s paradigm-setting treatise on astronomy and divinatory methods. This work prompted many responses, including Ngag dbang’s critical questions.

Ngag dbang prefaced his text with a long introduction that was essentially an argument for the Sde srid’s divinity, or as he put it, “the topic of this ruler of humans being more than an ordinary person.”<sup>14</sup> He touched on some specific events (like military victories in Yarkand that he credited to the Sde srid)<sup>15</sup> but primarily discussed the past lives. The Sde srid treated Ngag dbang as an authority on this subject and called the *Snyan sgron* “my own *avadāna*” (Tib. *kho bo’i rtogs brjod*, invoking the Buddhist genre label for life stories of the Buddha and other saints).<sup>16</sup> The release of the *Snyan sgron* in early July 1687 prompted the Sde srid to reply with his *Bai dūr g.ya’ sel* (“Tarnish Remover”), begun days later, and tackling each of Ngag dbang’s

<sup>12</sup> In the colophon to the *Snyan sgron*, he styled himself “Ngag dbang from Phying ba Stag rtse in G.yo ru.” The Sde srid named him Lu ’go bla mkhyen, Bla mkhyen Ngag gi dbang po, and similar permutations. See *Bai dkar*: 314a2; *Mu tig chun po*: 276–277; *Dzam gling rgyan gcig*: 592a; cf. also Schuh 1973: 39–40; Kilty 2010: 330. An 18<sup>th</sup>-century divination manuscript contains portraits of a lineage ending with “Vagindra” (Ngag gi dbang po), followed by “Buddhasamudra” (Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho); see Dorje 2001: 58.

<sup>13</sup> One also finds *thog med*; I follow the block print. Copies exist in the Nepal National Archives and the Tōyō Bunkō. The Sde srid mentioned a commentary by the Rnam gling paṅ chen Dkon mchog chos grags (*Lo gsar ’bel gtam*: 34a) but I am unaware if it is extant.

<sup>14</sup> *mi dbang nyid so skye’i yul las ’das pa ni* (*Snyan sgron*: 7a). The introduction spans folios 5a–16a.

<sup>15</sup> *Snyan sgron*: 14b–15a. Ngag dbang was referring to the Dzungar Galdan Boshukhtu’s conquest of the Yarkand Khanate in Xinjiang (Millward 2007: 86–92; Ma 2003: 184–185, 191–193). From the perspective of the central Tibetan state, this was an expansion of “greater Tibet” (*bod chen*), not in the sense of direct rule but rather expanding the sphere of tribute flowing into Lhasa. The foreigners fawning with gifts at the Sde srid’s feet in his portraits (e.g., Jackson 1996: 212) give some impression of this mindset.

<sup>16</sup> *Lo gsar ’bel gtam*: 34a.

critical questions. Concurrently, noting that Ngag dbang had requested to adapt the past-life series for ritual use, he also obligingly composed the *Thogs med bskal pa ma*.<sup>17</sup> This prayer named 20 of the Sde srid's past lives, all but one of which were discussed in the *Snyan sgron*. Formally and stylistically, it mirrors the *Rmad byung bskal pa ma* or "The 'Fortunate Age' Prayer," a petition to the Dalai Lama's past lives that the Sde srid assembled in 1693 out of verses written by the Dalai Lama, adding a seven-limbed offering and other prayers, plus a commentary, the *Mu tig chun po* ("String of Pearls").<sup>18</sup> Many verses in the *Thogs med bskal pa ma* specified the relationship to the corresponding life of the Dalai Lama (the reverse is not also true). It also identified itself—in its title and again in the third stanza—as an account of rebirths of Mu ne btsan po, who was the eldest son of King Khri srong lde btsan (past life of the Dalai Lama) and thirteenth of the Sde srid's past lives.<sup>19</sup> Mu ne btsan po was by far the most important of the Sde srid's past lives and formed a kind of hub for the network of persons and prophecies that Ngag dbang assembled.

Before turning to the *Snyan sgron*, let us mention a few later sources, starting with the Sde srid's preface to his *G.ya' sel*. In it, the Sde srid commented on Ngag dbang's portrayal (critically, at times) and addressed concerns such as the ethical implications of bodhisattvas assuming karmically compromised human occupations (like his own). Most pertinent here is his excursus on the sons of Khri srong lde btsan, a key concern insofar as prophecies were hardly consistent in naming them.<sup>20</sup> The Sde srid later broached the subject of his spiritual pedigree in several texts during the 1690s, including the *Lo gsar 'bel gtam* ("New Year's Speechmaking"), his guidebook for court oratory; the *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* ("Tomb Inventory"), his inventory of the Potala Palace and the Dalai Lama's reliquary stupa; and the *Bai dūr ser po* ("Yellow Vaidurya"), his survey of state-administered monasteries, which included a long appendix on the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama.<sup>21</sup> The latter text,

<sup>17</sup> *Snyan sgron*: 15a; *Thogs med bskal pa ma*: 5a; *G.ya' sel*: 472a–b. The *Snyan sgron* was published at the end of the fifth Hor month and the Sde srid began his reply on the first of the sixth month (July 10). Within about a month, he completed the preface, most answers on Indian astronomy, and the *Thogs med bskal pa ma*. Occupational responsibilities and work on the *Blue Vaidurya* delayed him until he finished the *G.ya' sel* on August 31, 1688.

<sup>18</sup> Its colophon (*Mu tig chun po*: 275–282) details the preparation of both texts.

<sup>19</sup> The sequence is not chronological but arranged by group. For the Sde srid's suggestions on chronology, see *Thogs med bskal pa ma*: 5b; *G.ya' sel*: 16a–b.

<sup>20</sup> *G.ya' sel*: 11b6–15a5.

<sup>21</sup> *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 30a–b; *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig*: 585a–588b; *Bai ser*: 353a–355a.

especially, was a vector for disseminating those ideas and, more broadly, the specific sources and interpretations that informed them.<sup>22</sup>

Among its early readers was the Dza ya Paṇḍita Blo bzang 'phrin las (1642–1715), who, in his *Thob yig* (1698–1702), recapitulated the Sde srid's arguments about the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama.<sup>23</sup> The short section on the Sde srid, often paraphrasing or quoting from the *Bai ser*, stands alongside the *Snyan sgron* as the closest things we have to a contemporary biography.<sup>24</sup> It listed the Sde srid's past lives, surveyed the major prophecies, and commented on the Sde srid's life and works. The Dza ya Paṇḍita noted that he had personally received a transmission of the *Thogs med bskal pa ma* from the Nyi ma thang zhabs drung, a frequent emissary between the Dga' ldan pho brang and the Qing.

### 3. *The 'Khrungs rabs*

There is, alas, no space to translate the whole *gsol 'debs* here, so the Dza ya Paṇḍita's terse rendition must suffice:<sup>25</sup>

1. Dharmarāja Sucandra, whom the Bhagavān Buddha taught the *Śrī Kālacakramūlatantra*;
2. Yid 'ong ma,<sup>26</sup> mother of the brahmin's pupil Gsal ba;
3. Dga' rab dpal, older brother of Kun tu dga', king in Vaiśālī;
4. The beggarwoman Des ma [who received offerings from Lha skyes];
5. The fine steed (*cang shes, ājāneya*) of Dkon mchog 'bangs;
6. King Bhaṅga, father of the prince Dad pa brtan pa;
7. Sgyu ma mchil pa, minister of Dad pa rab tu brtan pa;
8. The householder Dpal sbas, contemporary of the boy Dge 'dun chos 'phel;
9. The parrot G.yu mthing,<sup>27</sup> friend of the bird Kun tu rgyu;
10. Mu khri btsan po, son of the ruler Gnya' khri btsan po;

<sup>22</sup> For the influence of the *Bai ser* on representations of Tsong kha pa, see Dargyay 1977; for local history informed by this text and its sources, Diemberger and Wangdu 1996.

<sup>23</sup> Ujeed 2017.

<sup>24</sup> Dza ya Paṇḍita vol. 4: 165b–174b.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid: 165b–166b; cf. *Thogs med bskal pa ma*: 1b–4b.

<sup>26</sup> For this and subsequent names from the *Bka' gdam glegs bam bu chos* (nos. 2–9), I present the transliterated Tibetan rather than guessing the intended Sanskrit.

<sup>27</sup> Often called *ne tso smra mkhas*, “loquacious parrot.”

11. Khri gnyan gzugs can, scion of Lha tho tho ri snyan shal, first to encounter the holy Dharma;
12. Gung ri gung btsan, son of the Buddhist king Srong btsan sgam po, who introduced a writing system to translate Dharma from India and established the human custom of the 16 laws;
13. Mu ne btsan po, scion of the Buddhist king Khri srong lde btsan, who invited the Mkhan po Bodhisattva and omniscient Padmasambhava to build the *sanyang* (三樣, “three styles”) Mi ’gyur lhun grub gtsug lag khang [Bsam yas];
14. Lha lung dpal gyi rdo rje, slayer of Glang dar ma, who persecuted the dispensation;
15. Rngog Legs pa’i shes rab, who requested Dharma from ’Brom ston Rgyal ba’i ’byung gnas;
16. Gter ston Rin chen gling pa, *vidyādhara* (“awareness-holder”) and fifth of 17 rebirths of Lha sras to serve sentient beings, as in the immaculate guru’s prophecy (*dri med bla mas lung bstan pa*);
17. Sechen [Khubilai] Khan, sovereign over the great Sino-Mongolian empire;
18. Gter ston Bzang po grags pa;
19. Nor bzang rgya mtsho, learned and accomplished master and main guru to the omniscient [1<sup>st</sup> Dalai Lama] Dge ’dun rgya mtsho;
20. Altan Nominkhan, who invited the omniscient [3<sup>rd</sup> Dalai Lama] Bsod nams rgya mtsho to Mongolia and used the light of the teachings of the great Tsong kha pa, who is master of those wearing the Yellow Hat, to expel the gloom from outlying regions.

Lives two through nine are secondary characters from stories in the *Bka’ gdams glegs bam bu chos* (“Son Teachings of the Book of the Bka’ gdams”), all past lives of Rngog (number 15); 10 through 14 are kings from Tibet’s Spu rgyal dynasty, plus one famous regicide; the rest include two *gter ston*-s or “treasure-revealers,” a Dge lugs scholar, and two Mongol Khans. Now is a good moment to pause and mention two visual representations of this list. The first, from the Potala Palace, was published in *Bod kyi thang ka* (Chin. *Xizang tangka* 西藏唐卡) and reproduced in David Jackson’s *History of Tibetan Painting*.<sup>28</sup> The second (Fig. 1) is a linen block print that Giuseppe Tucci acquired in Rgyal

<sup>28</sup> *Bod kyi thang ka* 1985: pl. 78; Jackson 1996: pl. 33; see also *Himalayan Art Resources*, item 99078. [www.himalayanart.org](http://www.himalayanart.org). Accessed May 14, 2020.



rtse, recently reproduced in color in a survey of Tucci's collection.<sup>29</sup> The editor astutely recognized the Sde srid but noted that clarification of the figures remains a desideratum.

The Potala painting poses no issue as it includes labels identifying the 20 figures from the list above, alternating down both sides of the canvas.<sup>30</sup> The linen print, notwithstanding its unique composition and style, clearly depicts the same set. Here I offer my best guess as to their arrangement (Fig. 2). There is much overlap of iconographical detail between the two portraits, especially seats, hats, and held objects, making it easy to confirm lives 11–14 and 16–20. The composition in the top half poses difficulties because the horse and parrot (5 and 9) are featured on opposite sides, allowing an elegant symmetry but thwarting any regular alternation. The posture and crown of the center-top figure suggest Sucandra (1). I have identified Dga' rab dpal (3) by his flower and Yid 'ong ma and Des ma (2 and 4) by my best guess at gender, plus the latter's beggar's robes. The minister Sgyu ma mchil pa (7) is identifiable by his bare chest and sash; the other two (6 and 8) by their placement and the hint of a beard on King Bhaṅga. By process of elimination, we can place Mu khri btsan po (10) and Rngog (15).

---

<sup>29</sup> Tucci 1949: pl. 228; Klimburg-Salter 2015: pl. 33.

<sup>30</sup> See also Ishihama 2015: 177.



Fig. 1 — Linen print of the *Sde srid's 'khrungs rabs*. After Klimburg-Salter 2015: pl. 33.  
© Museo delle Civiltà/MAO "G. Tucci"



Fig. 2 — Proposed arrangement of figures. Drawing by the author

#### 4. Prophecies in the *Snyan sgron*

To reiterate, what is unique about the *Snyan sgron* is that it shows how this list comes together in the first place. Starting from *Mu ne btsan po*, as the pieces fall into place, they reinforce one another (and the kindred narrative about the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama). Such is not to say the entire set populates itself automatically; instead, it resulted from sifting and clarifying multiple inherited connections. It was not so much assembled from scratch as disentangled from a mass of potential relationships.

Ngag dbang organized the prophecies into three tiers: outer, inner, and secret. The logic behind this rubric probably relates to Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's 1679 enthronement as *Sde srid*, which Ngag dbang described in related terms:

On his investiture with authority as human ruler (*mi'i rje bo*), (1) outwardly, there was the unprecedented edict, marked with the profound imprints of [the Dalai Lama's] handprints and in its fine points indistinguishable from proclamations of Avalokiteśvara, which, insofar as it must be binding upon all three sorts of person—noble, middling, and base—weighs down heavy as the golden mountain [*Yugandhara*] upon all necks and should be witnessed by every person from highest to lowest; (2) inwardly, the profound rite of authorization transforming him into a sovereign king (*rgyal po la mnga' bsgyur ba'i mnga' dbang zab mo*) was devised together by the Protector and Refuge [Dalai Lama] and the Rig 'dzin Gter bdag gling pa [Gyur med rdo rje, 1646–1714], who also decreed that this sovereign authority ought to be respected in like manner as would befit a *cakravartin*, a bodhisattva assuming life in the world, or a forceful king who rules according to Dharma; and (3) secretly, what they did is not a suitable topic for discussion here.<sup>31</sup>

The “outer” prophetic sources were the thirty-sixth chapter of the *Mañjuśrīmūlatantra* and the *Bka' thang sde lnga* (“Five Chronicles”). By at least 1675, a passage in the former, once thought to refer to 'Phags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan, was being linked to the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama.<sup>32</sup>

For the *Sde srid*, the crucial thing about this passage was that it named the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama's political identity as a *sdom brtson rgyal po* or a “renunciate king,” both monk and sovereign. This key term is ubiquitous in his texts. The lines pertaining to the *Sde srid* followed immediately after.<sup>33</sup> As Ngag dbang read them, they foretold his birth-

<sup>31</sup> *Snyan sgron*: 7b.

<sup>32</sup> See Karmay 2014: 225.

<sup>33</sup> See *Bka' 'gyur dpe bsdur ma* vol. 88: 917–918. These lines on the Dalai Lama and the *Sde srid* corresponds to verses 935–939 of the Sanskrit (cf. Jayaswal 1934: 75).

name “Dkon mchog don grub”<sup>34</sup> and “Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho” in Tibetan and Sanskrit.<sup>35</sup> Thus, I suspect that this source played two roles for the Sde srid: first, it reinforced the core idea of the Dalai Lama as a *sdom brtson rgyal po*; second, it established a broad base for reconciling other prophecies tied to the Sde srid that mentioned various names (Rin chen, Dkon mchog, Sangs rgyas, etc.).<sup>36</sup>

Ngag dbang cited passages from three of the five *bka' thang*: the *Lha 'dre bka' thang*, the *Btsun mo bka' thang*, and the *Rgyal po bka' thang* (respectively, chronicles of “Gods and Demons,” “Queens,” and “the King”). The passage he quoted from the first of these predicted accomplishments of a future *dharmarāja*, such as restoring Bsam yas and military victory, that Ngag dbang credited to the Sde srid. From the second, he quoted four lines predicting a projection of Khri srong lde btsan’s “activity” named “Byang” (referring to the Dalai Lama) and calling for someone to make statues and paintings in his likeness (referring to the Sde srid). This passage echoed lines in both the *Blon po bka' thang* (“Chronicle of Ministers”) and the *Thang yig shel brag ma* (“Crystal Cave Chronicle”) that foretold five projections of Khri srong lde btsan—body, speech, mind, quality, and activity—as the progenitor of the Byang lineage. As interpreted in the Byang gter tradition, the first four were (1) Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer, (2) Guru Chos dbang, (3) the Mnga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal, and (4) Dbang po sde Bkra shis stobs rgyal. Their connections predated the Dalai Lama; for instance, Bkra shis stobs rgyal (of the Byang clan) was identified by the second Rdo rje brag sprul sku as the rebirth of the Mnga' ris Paṅ chen.<sup>37</sup> The Dalai Lama allegedly prioritized treasures of Bkra shis stobs rgyal, whom he “cherished above all.”<sup>38</sup> Fittingly, it was the 4<sup>th</sup> Rdo rje brag sprul sku Padma 'phrin las (1641–1717) who suggested that the Dalai Lama was Khri srong lde btsan’s fifth and final projection.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Evidently, he was named *in utero* by the deity Tshangs pa dung thod can. This episode became a stock part of the Sde srid’s story.

<sup>35</sup> *Snyan sgron*: 8b–9a. The *Mañjuśrīmūlatantra* mentioned one “Ratnasambhava” (*rin chen 'byung gnas*). Ngag dbang argued, first, that *rin chen* and *dkon mchog* are synonyms; and second, that *rin chen 'byung gnas* was also a poetic term for the ocean (*rgya mtsho*) and an epithet for a buddha (*sangs rgyas*). The next lines mentioned the letters *Ba* (*Va* in Sanskrit) and *A*, thus, *Buddha-apti*.

<sup>36</sup> The generosity of that reading was not lost on the Sde srid: “In a world where *rgya mtsho* and *dkon mchog* are synonyms for *sangs rgyas*, we could never measure how many persons there are [who fit this description]—so what makes it me? (*nged ga nas yin*)” (*G.ya' sel*: 8b1).

<sup>37</sup> See also the Sde srid’s exposition of those four projections based on the *Shel brag ma* and the Mnga' ris Paṅ chen’s own *Rig 'dzin yongs 'dus* (*Bai ser*: 290a–b).

<sup>38</sup> Dudjom 2002: 824.

<sup>39</sup> Karmay 2014: 244.

The Sde srid later complemented that reading with a parallel one, incorporating lines from the *Bka' gdams glegs bam*, whereby Khri srong lde btsan's first four projections simultaneously named the first four Dalai Lamas.<sup>40</sup> These parallel series rejoined in the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, inheritor of both Rnying ma and Bka' gdams/Dge lugs lineages. The three chapels that the Sde srid built around the Dalai Lama's stupa in the Potala Palace were dedicated, respectively, to his past lives and these two inheritances. The Sde srid also festooned the palace with images of the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama. He cited in support these very same lines (create his likeness in statues and murals) from the *Btsun mo bka' thang*.<sup>41</sup> Here we find a case where passages were refigured as calls to action—life imitating prophecy, so to speak.

Ngag dbang quoted two excerpts from the *Rgyal po bka' thang* predicting the Sde srid as a rebirth of Khri srong lde btsan's son. The first, from the nineteenth chapter, prophesied one "at the end of 12 disparate rebirths of the prince," born in a *kṣatriya* family<sup>42</sup> and a mighty, sagacious ruler. In the source, it seems that Padmasambhava was speaking about 12 rebirths of Khri srong lde btsan's youngest son Sad na legs; however, Ngag dbang and the Sde srid read it as referencing Mu ne, the eldest. Now, there are notorious discrepancies between Tibetan sources as to how many sons Khri srong lde btsan had, how long they reigned and lived, and even what their names were. It may be helpful here to summarize the position of Ngag dbang and the Sde srid.<sup>43</sup>

Both maintained that there were three sons: (1) the eldest, Lha sras Mu ne (or Mu khri, or Mu tig) btsan po, who ruled briefly until his mother poisoned him; (2) Mu rub (or Mu rug) btsan po, who was exiled (and later assassinated) for killing a minister's son; and (3) Sad na legs mjing yon, also known as Mu tig btsan po or Tri lde srong btsan, who eventually took the throne and had five sons. More boldly, they insisted that the epithet "Mu tig" applied to all three—as a term of office, not a personal name, hence not unlike "Sde pa" or "Sde srid." Moreover, the Sde srid added, when teachings like the *Bsam pa lhun grub ma* ("Prayer that Spontaneously Fulfills All Wishes") described how "Lha sras" requested them from Padmasambhava, this, too, was referring to Mu ne.

The Sde srid's appeal here to the *Bsam pa lhun grub ma*, last chapter of the *Le'u bdun ma* ("Prayer in Seven Chapters"), is important not only because it was revealed by Bzang po grags pa—past life number 18—

<sup>40</sup> See, e.g., *Bai ser*: 289b.

<sup>41</sup> *Dzam gling rgyan gcig*: 285a.

<sup>42</sup> Here, the landed aristocracy; see *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 31b; *Bai ser*: 353b; *Dza ya Paṇḍita* vol. 4: 167a.

<sup>43</sup> *Snyan sgron*: 13b6–14a3; *G.ya' sel*: 12a1–15a6.

but also because in that text, Padmasambhava told Lha sras that he would have *seventeen* future births.<sup>44</sup> This explains why, although the aforementioned passage from the *Rgyal po bka' thang* prophesied a life “at the end of 12,” Ngag dbang insisted that it was really describing this same series of 17 future births of Lha sras.<sup>45</sup> It may also explain Ngag dbang's other selection from the *Rgyal po bka' thang*, from its eighteenth chapter, itself a work in 44 sections called the *Kha byang mdzod kyi lde mig* (“Certificate Treasury Key”). The eighteenth section—on the holy water that Padmasambhava concealed inside a cliff at G.ya' ma lung—included lines about a rebirth in 17 future lives as one “Khri rgyal.”<sup>46</sup> Ngag dbang added that Gter bdag gling pa (who discovered his own *Rig 'dzin thugs thig* at G.ya' ma lung in 1668) had bestowed that water upon the Sde srid, along with a scroll of the *gter ma*, indicating a strong connection.<sup>47</sup> Real events thus also impacted choices for how to read.

Next, for the “inner” prophecy, Ngag dbang quoted Gter bdag gling pa's *Rig 'dzin thugs thig*,<sup>48</sup> which predicted “a projection of Mu ne, an intelligent king/ one named Buddha, turning the wheel of the two laws.” These same lines featured in the Sde srid's enthronement in 1679. The biography of Gter bdag gling pa by his brother, the Lo chen Dharma śrī, noted that during the second month of the Earth-Sheep Year (March/ April 1679), the Dalai Lama had sought Gter bdag gling pa's counsel on suitable candidates for the office of Sde srid. In response, he furnished “a detailed and lengthy memorandum on how the *Rgya can* and the treasure texts explained [who] was appropriate for the ruler of Tibet, etc.”<sup>49</sup> The *Gsang ba rgya can* or “Sealed Secret” is the Dalai Lama's record of his visions.<sup>50</sup> In 1672, the Dalai Lama authorized Gter bdag gling pa and the Rdo rje brag sprul sku as the principal bearers of this teaching; Gter bdag gling pa bestowed empowerments and transmissions of it during his travels through central Tibet.<sup>51</sup> His biography also recounted the Sde srid's rites of royal investiture, which it portrayed as fulfilling these same lines on Mu ne btsan po from the *Rig 'dzin thugs thig*.<sup>52</sup> We may speculate that Gter bdag gling pa singled out this passage for the enthronement in

<sup>44</sup> *Rin chen gter mdzod* vol. 7: 19b6; quoted in *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 31b.

<sup>45</sup> *Snyan sgron*: 9a.

<sup>46</sup> Ngag dbang took *khri* to refer to rebirths of Mu khri (i.e., Mu ne) btsan po and *rgyal* as indicating either connections to the “*rgyal ba*” Dalai Lama or his own status as king.

<sup>47</sup> *Snyan sgron*: 9b3.

<sup>48</sup> Here I follow the usual spelling, although it was the Sde srid's habit to write *rigs*.

<sup>49</sup> Dharma śrī: 59a4.

<sup>50</sup> See Karmay 1988 for a summary.

<sup>51</sup> Dharma śrī: 37a3 and 41b1.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*: 59b–60b.

concert with prophetic statements about Mu ne btsan po in the *Rgya can* (discussed below), which in turn furnished the basis for seeking statements about Mu ne (or Mu khri/Mu tig/Lha sras) from other treasure texts.

Ngag dbang cited several “secret” sources, foremost being three chapters of the *Rgya can ma*.<sup>53</sup> Its fifth chapter recounted the Dalai Lama’s visions during a retreat from May 29–June 5, 1659. The Gnas chung Oracle had urged the Dalai Lama to seek clues about keeping their subjects in order: Bsod nams rab brtan, the first Sde srid, had died over a year prior, a secret the Dalai Lama only publicized after this retreat. Ngag dbang remarked that in hindsight, these visions anticipated conflicts that year related to the succession, especially the so-called “uncle and nephew uprising” fomented by Sde pa Nor bu, the first candidate for the vacant office. Eventually, the Jai sang sde pa ‘Phrin las rgya mtsho of Grong smad, Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho’s paternal uncle, became the next Sde srid. In a vision on the eleventh (June 1), a yogin gave the Dalai Lama cryptic predictions for the upcoming 12 years. Ngag dbang highlighted two lines in particular: “the monkey will stay at the top of the tree/ doing harm [of/to] the beaked bird.”<sup>54</sup> He read this as signaling that the next Sde srid “would not live past the Monkey and Bird Years.” (Indeed, ‘Phrin las rgya mtsho died in the Earth-Monkey Year, 1668.) The dream yogin then offered what Ngag dbang took for a clue about choosing a successor: “Midst the Sde pa’s first [and] third/ seek the name and [he] will swiftly come!” He read “first and third” as referring to rows of the Tibetan syllabary (i.e., the gutturals and dentals), thus, the “K” and “D” in the Sde srid’s birth-name Dkon mchog don grub. The implication is that even at this early date, there were signs (if only recognized retrospectively) that the office should go to Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho. It went first to Blo bzang mthu stobs before being offered to him in 1675.<sup>55</sup>

From the sixteenth chapter, Ngag dbang cited a vision on November 7, 1672, which established the most unambiguous link to Mu ne btsan po. In it, Padmasambhava twice predicted a rebirth of Mu ne, as someone named “Ra tna” and then “Dkon mchog.”<sup>56</sup> Again, we see the importance of the *Mañjuśrīmūlatantra* for furnishing a rationale tying these names to Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho. Finally, Ngag dbang

<sup>53</sup> The Sde srid cited the same three chapters (5, 16, 22) for clues about the past karma responsible for the Dalai Lama’s (apparent) pain, illness, and death; see *Dzam gling rgyan gcig*: 135a (gong).

<sup>54</sup> *spre’u shing rtser gnas pa la/ mchu can bya yi gnod pa byed* (*Gsang ba rgya can* vol. ca: 6a).

<sup>55</sup> *Snyan sgron*: 10a; cf. *Dzam gling rgyan gcig*: 585a.

<sup>56</sup> *Gsang ba rgya can* vol. ma: 5b.



quoted two lines from the twenty-second chapter, supporting another key idea: "In all former lives, and for later ones too/ they are inseparable, without a doubt."<sup>57</sup> Ngag dbang coupled this to the *Bka' gdams glegs bam*, which touched on the same theme of persons who remain inseparable across lifetimes. He quoted two passages from the *Bu chos* applying that theme to 'Brom ston and his colleagues—"like the sandalwood tree and its scent," as one put it, "as father and son in every lifetime," in the other.<sup>58</sup> Given the assertions in the *Bu chos* about 'Brom's affiliation with Khri srong lde btsan, plus the longstanding association of 'Brom with the Dalai Lamas, and now adding the Sde srid's connection to Mu ne btsan po, one can see how all these elements mutually supported one another.

In addition to the *Rgya can ma*, Ngag dbang also quoted a prophecy of Dri med kun dga', a late-14<sup>th</sup>-century *gter ston*, whose empowerments the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama had received from Gter bdag gling pa. Probably its main attraction lay in its references to the names "Sangs rgyas" and "Rin chen," not to mention its prediction that this prophesied ruler would compose new treatises and "put forth his own language" (*rang skad thon pa*), which Ngag dbang used to highlight the Sde srid's singular intellectual contributions. His last secret source was from the Mnga' ris gter ston Zla ba rgyal mtshan (1640–1685), also known as Gar dbang rdo rje, whose revelations were authenticated by the Dalai Lama and Gter bdag gling pa and included prophecies about the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama (e.g., "last of the Za hor line;" "rebirth of the Mnga' bdag rgyal po and, in truth, Avalokiteśvara") as well as the Sde srid ("a *dharmarāja* named Ra tna who brings peace to Tibet; my projection, the real Lha sras"). In his own texts, the Sde srid added another prophecy, describing a projection of Lha sras named "Rin chen,"<sup>59</sup> from the *Spyi lung mdor bsdus snying po*, part of the *Rig 'dzin yongs 'dus*, revealed in 1532 by the Mnga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal, third of the five projections of Khri srong lde btsan.

### 5. On Mu ne btsan po

Many of these prophecies concerned the connection to Mu ne btsan po. As mentioned above, one impetus was the construal of the Sde srid's

<sup>57</sup> *Snyan sgron*: 11a6. The quoted passage (albeit in a letter-shifted code script common in this text) seems to be vol. *za*: 5b6–6a1.

<sup>58</sup> Ngag dbang clarified: "'Father and son' means there is no doubt that by and large they will be inseparable, whether in a Dharmic context as master and disciple, in a worldly one as husband and wife, etc." See *Snyan sgron*: 11a5.

<sup>59</sup> The Sde srid acknowledged that it was also applied to 'Bri gung Rin chen phun tshogs (1547–1602); see *G.ya' sel*: 15a.

enthronement in consultation with the *Rgya can ma* and the *Rig 'dzin thugs thig*. Those readings may have been guided by an interest in the sons of Khri srong lde btsan, unfolding against the backdrop of the Dalai Lama's own connections to the Byang gter tradition (whose literature informed his link to Khri srong lde btsan) and the *Bka' gdams bu chos* (the key source on Avalokiteśvara, which also identified 'Brom ston with that king). Not only would Mu ne thus stitch the Sde srid into the same text traditions, but since there were other sources that associated Mu ne with Khubilai Khan (and thence Altan Khan), they would reiterate the link between the Dalai Lamas and 'Phags pa. As such, Mu ne may have simply been the card the Sde srid was dealt.

However, there are resonances between their respective reigns. Mu ne was Khri srong lde btsan's scion (*sras kyi thu bo*), a term that the Sde srid employed to emphasize his own favored status in the Dalai Lama's eyes and inheritance of responsibility over the entire government, formerly the prerogative of the Dalai Lama. Both Mu ne and the Sde srid held office in an abbreviated fashion and in the absence of their departed predecessor. Khri srong lde btsan absconded to Zung mkhar, where he died (a fact kept hidden, in some accounts), whereas the Sde srid is infamous for concealing the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama's death.<sup>60</sup>

Mu ne's contributions as recounted in texts like the *Dbā' bzhed* ("Testament of Ba/Wa") and the variant *zhabs btags ma* ("supplemented version") were not lost on the Sde srid. The parallels are striking. Mu ne was instrumental in negotiating his father's funeral and upheld his father's tradition of religious patronage, including "leveling rich and poor" three times—an attempt at socioeconomic parity prompted by inequalities in public offerings.<sup>61</sup> The failure of that policy (political engineering could never overcome differences of karma) prompted Mu ne to introduce holidays of worship at Bsam yas and other sites as a means of redress. The Sde srid cited Mu ne's works as precedent for his own responses to the Dalai Lama's death, foremost the golden reliquary stupa and the new *tshogs mchod chen mo* or "Great Worship Assembly" holiday. Surely it would be oversimplifying to think copying Mu ne was the only factor here; but it demonstrates nevertheless how the Sde srid's narrative was inflected by his deeds as ruler.

<sup>60</sup> In the *G.ya' sel*, the Sde srid cited the *Mkhas pa'i dga' ston*, which says the death was hidden for three years (14b4); later, in his *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag*, he cited a version of the *Sba bzhed* in which it was hidden for one cycle (*lo skor*, i.e., 12 years), which he took as his own benchmark (139b6).

<sup>61</sup> On the funeral, see Diemberger and Wangdu 2000: 92–97. On Mu ne's actions in the *Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma*, see *Rba bzhed phyogs bsgrigs*: 57–59.

The value of past lives is not automatic or instantaneous. If their very enunciation may have bestowed some modicum of prestige or legitimacy, the narrative was also retrospectively made meaningful through action.

### 6. Past Lives

Ngag dbang turned next to other past lives of the Sde srid. He started with the *Bu chos*, which yielded past lives two through nine, all considered past lives of Rngog.

Why Rngog? After all, the *Bu chos* made many identifications regarding 'Brom's compatriots. In the *G.ya' sel*, the Sde srid recalled two encounters with the Dalai Lama:

Once, in the Earth-Bird Year [1669] while we were sitting in the Red Chapel [apartments], when [the Dalai Lama] got up to walk about, he took hold of the bird-perch on the window and said—as the chant-master Blo bzang yon tan and the chief provisioner Ge ra ba Blo bzang mkhyen brtse clearly recall—"Do you not remember when we were born as the bird Kun tu rgyu and the loquacious parrot?" And then later, in the Fire-Dragon Year (1675) while he was making himself appear as if stricken by rheumatism, once he started feeling a little better, we went for a stroll. It was easy going out but hard coming back, so I made as if to convey him, and as he went onto the cushion it occurred to him, "this is a bit like the time we went west to O rgyan in pursuit of [the *ḍākinī*] Gsang ba ye shes!"<sup>62</sup>

These episodes refer respectively to the tale of the two parrots and the tale of Dkon mchog 'bangs, whose magical steed bore him rapidly to O rgyan. Recall the prominent placement of parrot and horse in the linen print of the Sde srid's past lives. In the *Bu chos*, Atiśa explicitly identified Rngog with both. So, it is possible that specific associations like these guided the choice of Rngog, and the other eight lives followed from cues given by the text.

Why just these eight? By contrast, the Dalai Lama had past lives in all the *Bu chos* stories (and sub-stories, too).<sup>63</sup> The answer is that these were the only stories where the link between Rngog and some side character was stated explicitly in the text. Actually, Ngag dbang *did* concede that one could posit a past life of the Sde srid in the remaining

<sup>62</sup> *G.ya' sel*: 11a6–11b2.

<sup>63</sup> The Sde srid noted that chapters one and seven described their protagonists as rebirths of someone else. He added another nine lives from stories the parrot told in the *khu chos* (*Bka' gdams glegs bam bu chos*: 608–641).

stories, too, as witnessed in Ishihama's extended version of the list.<sup>64</sup> What has been overlooked, however, is that Ngag dbang set aside these hypothetical identifications in a separate section and stressed that they were only "implicit" (*shugs*).<sup>65</sup> As Ngag dbang and the Sde srid indicated, "implicit" meant that these identifications relied on annotations to the *Bu chos* manuscript, some by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Dalai Lama. Clearly, the work of sketching connections between *Bu chos* characters and 'Brom and his comrades (and thence to lives outside the text) was long underway, although the text's own language remained the determining factor.

Ngag dbang turned next to the kings Mu khri btsan po, Khri gnyan gzung btsan, Gung ri gung btsan, and Mu ne. Why just these kings? Again, there were ten kings in the Dalai Lama's direct rebirth line. An answer is found in the *Bu chos* story of King Lha'i rgyal po, which treated the quartet of Gnya' khri, Tho tho ri, Srong btsan sgam po, and Khri srong lde btsan as a significant group.<sup>66</sup> These are just the fathers of the four kings linked to the Sde srid. The logic of this quartet is that Gnya' khri was the head of the dynasty; Tho tho ri, the first to encounter Buddhism; Srong btsan sgam po, the founder of the tradition; and Khri srong lde btsan, its propagator. Indeed, the better-known "three ancestors" (*mes dbon rnam gsum*) corresponding to the "three family guardians" (*rigs gsum mgon po*) Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī, and Varjapāṇi, were not the only way of grouping kings or bodhisattvas. In Lha'i rgyal po's tale, the sage Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna predicted that in the future (as Avalokiteśvara) the king would be exhorted by four bodhisattvas (Nivāraṇaviṣkambhin, Samantabhadra, Mahākāruṇika, and Mañjuśrī) to become those four kings (Gnya' khri, Tho tho ri, Srong btsan sgam po, and Khri srong lde btsan). The story added that Khri srong lde btsan would emit two "rays of light," referring to his sons. Thus, we see how one might extrapolate a kindred quartet of kings for the Sde srid.

Ngag dbang also proposed two lives on account of the Sde srid's expertise in the *Kālacakrantra*. One is King Sucandra, whom the Buddha taught its *mūlatantra*; the other is Mkhas grub Nor bzang rgya mtsho, a Phug lugs scholar who authored a commentary on the *Kālacakra*.<sup>67</sup> I will quote the Sde srid's remarks on these two:

The *dharmarāja* Sucandra is ordinarily considered a projection of Vajrapāṇi, but because of [the formula] "three families, one essence"

<sup>64</sup> Ishihama 1992: 64–67.

<sup>65</sup> *Snyan sgron*: 11b–12a; cf. *G.ya' sel*: 11b4.

<sup>66</sup> *Bka' gdams glegs bam bu chos*: 454–455, 471–472, 476–477; quoted at *Snyan sgron*: 8a4.

<sup>67</sup> *Snyan sgron*: 13b.

(*rigs gsum ngo bo gcig pa*) there is not any problem here.<sup>68</sup> Plus, for the *Kālacakra*, [my own] vigorous understanding of [its] knowledge occurred just as taught (? *dus kyi 'khor lo la rig pa'i go ba drag tsam kyang ji ltar gsung ba ltar byung ba*). As for [my being] the all-knowing Nor bzang rgya mtsho: there is no definitive evidence of being so. Nor does he seem to have any connection to the past lives of Lha sras. Still, insofar as in the main text (*ma dpe*) of my treatise the *White Vaiḍūrya* I set forth all the ideas, which nobody understood, from the supplementary instructions (? *zhal lung bu dpe'i rigs*) and Mkhas grub Rin po che [Nor bzang rgya mtsho's] own documents (*rang gi yig cha*), plus the fact that I reached [that understanding] while thinking about them at night and designing the diagrams during the day, this accords with the idea (*thugs dang bstun*).<sup>69</sup>

Finally, Ngag dbang addressed Lha lung Dpal gyi rdo rje, the *gter ston* Bzang po grags pa, and Khubilai and Altan Khan. For Lha lung, he quoted one prediction from the Lha'i rgyal po story<sup>70</sup> and another naming Dpal gyi rdo rje as the rebirth of "Mu khri btsan po" from Ra tna gling pa's "Great General Prophecy" (*ra tna'i spyi lung chen mo*). Here, too, the Sde srid had his doubts.<sup>71</sup>

Ngag dbang described Bzang po grags pa as "certainly being Lha sras's affiliated rebirth," likely due to his status as the revealer of the *Le'u bdun ma*, in which Padmasambhava predicted those 17 future births of Lha sras. Its last chapter, the *Bsam pa lhun grub ma*, was a favorite of the Sde srid's (hearing it as a baby, he said, made his nose scrunch and eyes water).<sup>72</sup> This identification was bolstered by the fact that Bzang po grags pa's treasure *Zhal chems thugs thig* predicted that "Lha sras Mu khri btsan po" would be reborn as the *hor gyi rgyal po se chen*, that is, Khubilai Khan. (The aforementioned "Great General Prophecy" of Ra tna gling pa included lines to the same effect.) As was well known, 'Phags pa allegedly predicted to Khubilai that the two would meet again after seven lifetimes apart, respectively, as "one with an aqueous name" and "one with a golden name," thus, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Dalai Lama Bsod nams rgya mtsho and Altan Khan.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Ngag dbang made the same point, namely that Vajrapāṇi, Mañjuśrī, and Avalokiteśvara were equivalent at a higher level and hence interchangeable. (This is also how Khri srong lde btsan, linked to Mañjuśrī, was construed as Avalokiteśvara in the Dalai Lama's *'khrungs rabs*).

<sup>69</sup> *G.ya' sel*: 11b–12a.

<sup>70</sup> Ngag dbang omitted that the *Bu chos* linked Lha lung to 'Brom ston, not Rngog, which may be why the Sde srid never discussed this passage.

<sup>71</sup> The Sde srid stressed that there was no evidence apart from Ra tna's prophecy as to whether Dpal gyi rdo rje was a direct rebirth in Mu ne's series (*skye ba dngos yin min*; *G.ya' sel*: 11b6).

<sup>72</sup> *G.ya' sel*: 8b; 'Dzam gling rgyan gcig: 584b; *Bai ser*: 354a.

<sup>73</sup> See, e.g., the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama's biography of Bsod nams rgya mtsho (*Gsung 'bum* vol. 11: 128).

This leaves past life number 16: Rin chen gling pa, sometimes called Me ban Rin chen gling pa, known for treasures on Nāgarakṣa (on which Gter bdag gling pa authored practice materials) and reckoned as the fifth of Lha sras Mu ne's 17 rebirths. In the *G.ya' sel*, the Sde srid averred that this identification was validated by the Dalai Lama, quoting supporting lines from Rin chen gling pa's *lung bstan gtad rgya*, part of the *Rdzogs chen chig chod kun grol*.<sup>74</sup> Presumably, the Sde srid was following the Dalai Lama, who in his record of received teachings (*gsan yig*) had quoted the same lines and named Rin chen gling pa as Lha sras's fifth rebirth, also giving the transmission of the *Chig chod kun grol* as passing from Padmasambhava to Khri srong lde btsan and "Lha sras btsan po," and thence to Rin chen gling pa.<sup>75</sup> To justify Mu ne as the right "Lha sras," the Sde srid cited the history accompanying the Nāgarakṣa treasure, in which Padmasambhava identified its three main characters as past lives of himself, Khri srong lde btsan, and Mu ne btsan po.<sup>76</sup>

### 7. Conclusions

It is clear that the main themes of the Sde srid's past-life narrative are Mu ne btsan po and the recurring ties to the Dalai Lama. Many of the past lives were already embedded in relationships of their own or prefigured by earlier acts of interpretation. Beyond establishing the individual supremacy of the Sde srid, this narrative thus enacted what Birgit Kellner calls "a refashioning of the past," that is, a structuring of the terms for deliberating about supremacy in the first place.<sup>77</sup> Consequently, while I agree with Cabezón that past-life narratives "function to create a distinctive kind of personal identity," in other respects, the subject is not so much the end as the means.<sup>78</sup> Identity-formation was itself a way to make official the particular orientations to ideas and sources, thereby delineating a kind of canon for understanding past, present, and future.

Furthermore, the legitimacy of those discourses was hardly *sui generis*. It could be the subject who validated their narrative as much as the other way around. Wen-Shing Chou, commenting on the *'khrungs rabs* of Rol pa'i rdo rje, has suggested that a subject's former lives "prescribe their future through their past accomplishments."<sup>79</sup>

<sup>74</sup> *G.ya' sel*: 15b.

<sup>75</sup> *Gsung 'bum* vol. 3: 428.

<sup>76</sup> *G.ya' sel*: 15b3.

<sup>77</sup> Kellner 2017: 203.

<sup>78</sup> Cabezón 2017: 22.

<sup>79</sup> Chou 2018: 87.

This may be putting it too strongly, but it is true that the Sde srid's narrative was retrospectively affirmed through his real-life actions. We might say that the subject actively constitutes the capacity of their narrative to constitute themselves.

Hence my insistence on approaching the *'khrungs rabs* as a dialogical act of interpretation. If such a narrative was clearly a work of invention—a working-over of the past in the interests of the present—that understanding also became meaningful by placing itself, as Ricoeur might say, within the direction opened up by those sources. The narrative achieved clarity against the backdrop of a world where connections between persons, texts, and communities were myriad, where ambiguous visions were touchstones for parsing the evidence, and where texts were not just passive resources but sometimes dictated ways of reading.

By way of a conclusion, I want to suggest that this basic ambiguity—that it is through present action that tradition or the gods are made meaningful, even as the present orients itself by those sources and draws its force from them—has implications for how we think about power.

Allow me to make a broad—but not unfair—generalization. Academic analyses of Tibetan past-life narratives tend to be predicated on vaguely Weberian statements about authority. That is, the scholarship represents choices about past lives as motivated choices whose narration ultimately served to empower some individual or institution. As Cabezón puts it, “the temptation is to always read these choices in socio-political terms.”<sup>80</sup> The authority such discourses invoked may be grounded in tradition *per se*, as when the general Tibetan practice of identifying *sprul sku* lineages is cast as a legitimizing endeavor.<sup>81</sup> Or, it might derive from some cosmic source that stands behind those past lives—as with Avalokiteśvara for the Dalai Lama or Mañjuśrī for Qianlong.<sup>82</sup>

To be clear, this observation—that past-life narrative is a technique for acquiring power by harnessing established sources of authority—is hardly unwarranted. After all, there is something transparently self-serving about plucking important people or gods out of the past and arrogating them to a living person, with all the ease and panache of filling one's plate from the buffet. That element of intentionality is all the more apparent because, as scholars also point out, past-life narratives often introduced glaring chronological inconsistencies or depended on seemingly strained readings. All the same, they never seem to have failed to gain a willing audience. The classic formulation

<sup>80</sup> Cabezón 2017: 22.

<sup>81</sup> Maher 2006; Schwieger 2015.

<sup>82</sup> Ishihama 1993; Uspensky 2002; Kellner 2016; Chou 2018.

of this uncomfortable juxtaposition between artifice and acceptance might, again, belong to Vostrikov, who excoriated *'khrungs rabs* for employing “the most superfluous ideas of history,” while nevertheless acknowledging their sway as “an equally important source of income” for the lamas they elevated.<sup>83</sup> In other words, never mind the shoddy craftsmanship: past-life narratives were a ringing success.

But this approach begs the question of how those sources of authority could have ever been so convincing, especially when the fingerprints of the artist, so to speak, were all over the finished product. Nor should we presume that those articulating or reproducing such narratives would not have been aware of the same thing. In short, despite pointing out that past-life narratives were acts of deliberate invention, scholars also maintain—rightly, I think—that they were more than just empty rhetoric. They were socially and politically effective. How could this be? The problem is not that such observations are incorrect, but rather that their combined implications are inadequately accounted for. It is precisely by taking those implications seriously that past-life narratives might illuminate larger questions about power.

For instance, to maintain simultaneously that self-fashioning discourses (1) are self-evidently fabricated appropriations of the past (hence a kind of intentional strategy), yet (2) succeeded as authorizing claims (thus conceding that the sources of authority they invoked had real potency), is to juxtapose two ways of thinking about power. One treats it as something humans create through their own actions; the other sees it as rooted in something beyond human beings, such as the ancestors or the gods. Both of these alternatives were operative in the formation of a *'khrungs rabs*.

In the first case, power flowed from the very act of enunciation, the self-authorizing claim to know and speak on behalf of the past. Here we might invoke Pierre Bourdieu's idea of political power as the capacity “to proclaim the official,” thereby officializing oneself in the process.<sup>84</sup> In the second case, power was something invisible, a hidden potential exceeding human life, of which we have no clear and present knowledge. Along these lines, Thomas Hobbes argued in *Leviathan* that invisibility just *is* power, that is, “fear of power invisible,” unlimited because it is unknown. As we have seen, both of these alternatives coexist in practice. However, as Graeber has insightfully argued, neither would ever be effective entirely on its own.<sup>85</sup> He points to a practical dilemma: hidden forces require real human effort in order for their presence to be inferred; but then again, if everyone

<sup>83</sup> Vostrikov 1970: 92, 97n307.

<sup>84</sup> Bourdieu 2014: 33, 44–47.

<sup>85</sup> Graeber 2001: 230–247.



agreed that authority was something made up, who would ever be convinced by it?<sup>86</sup> Each depends on, but ultimately undermines, the other.

One way of dissolving that tension would be to invoke some notion of mystification. That is, one would concede that there are indeed two ways of thinking about power, but with the critical caveat that one is really false, the other true; and those who subscribe to the false alternative thereby fail to see the true one, which absolutely opposes it. Everyone must stand on one side or the other: be the deceiver or the deceived. I suspect this is how to make sense of Vostrikov's contradictory observations. But that approach is really quite condescending. It insinuates that everyone was either gullible or inept at critical thinking, or that a select few somehow learned to game cosmological and theological frameworks at everyone else's expense.

Moreover, as already discussed, it is not as if the authors of such discourses were at great pains to conceal their own handiwork, or for that matter, their skepticism. For Ngag dbang and the Sde srid, it was entirely the contrary.

What if, instead, we were to acknowledge that the people involved in producing these narratives and putting them to work were no less aware of that dilemma than ourselves? What if we viewed the tension as constitutive of the discourse, rather than dissolving it between the alternatives of false consciousness or a clever ruse? This is why I have insisted on thinking about past-life narrative as interpretation: both inventive and responsive, or as Ricoeur put it, both an act *on* and an act *of* the text. Power, I am suggesting, especially insofar as it manifested through such self-fashioning discourses, observed the same relationship.

This is the challenge that confronts us in reading texts like the *Snyan sgron*. People appealed to higher powers *and* asserted their own mastery, often in overlapping ways. They glimpsed cosmic forces behind one another but also took license to represent those forces as they saw fit. Sometimes they voiced reservations about identifying someone else or being identified themselves in this way. It would be impossible to definitively adjudicate just who was speaking sincerely and who was not, and in which cases.

Indeed, what makes the *Snyan sgron* so interesting, in my opinion, is that it highlighted that dilemma in dramatic fashion. This is a text that ascended to a high theological register but also visibly delighted in critical intellectual practice as an end in itself. Stylistically, Ngag

---

<sup>86</sup> Bourdieu is also instructive here: even if one individually doubts there is anything special about the king, one will also reckon with the fact "that the others reckon with the fact that the king is king." This expectation makes the king a king (2014, 252–253).

dbang's work is a master class in how to sing someone's praises while also twisting the knife. Again, this is not entirely unexpected: Tibetan intellectuals, like modern academics, often seasoned their polemics with sweet words for their opponent, whether in the mood of constructive criticism or simply out of convention. Here is an excerpt suggesting the spirit of Ngag dbang's prose:

Know that such a great treatise [as the Sde srid's] is unprecedented, and not only on account of its words; for above all, it gets at the real sense of *Kālacakra* and Mañjuśrī [i.e., *skar rtsis* and *nag rtsis*] and in particular Phug pa father and son, Du ha ra, Khyung nag Shāk dar, and all such illustrious scholars, in a way never accomplished before now, and it has eliminated all points of contradiction. Indeed, even before I had the opportunity to touch it to the top of my head, I had all sorts of marvelous dreams about it, particularly one vision in which I was studying it and felt like I was a protector god whose body was being pierced with arrows and spears.

Granted, were it to be dissected by the discerning eye of some exalted person from on high, they would notice some minor faults and contradictions; but otherwise, I ask nothing more than to have such a glorious opportunity to transmute the bad into the good, not to wallow in the swamps of idle criticism, so I will not venture much [!] and do so with reverent respect inseparable from my very inner being which causes my heart to shrivel up.<sup>87</sup>

Pleasurable as this delicate dance may be, there is something strange going on here. What does it mean that the first formulation of the Sde srid's spiritual pedigree came in a work whose main purpose was to show how the Sde srid was wrong? Even in a literary tradition known for effusive hagiography, this seems extreme. Who launches a critique by first raising their opponent to the status of a god? Would not this foreknowledge undermine one's own objections? Conversely, if the criticisms are still to have any bite, then what does that say about divinity?

It is unsatisfying to demur that Ngag dbang was only being polite or pragmatic and never really meant any of it about the Sde srid being "more than an ordinary person." Why did he go to such lengths to establish just that, and why were practical works and pieces of art based on it, some at Ngag dbang's own urging? Not to mention its mutual imbrication with the discourse on the Dalai Lama's divinity. Surely Avalokiteśvara is too central to our ideas about Dga' ldan pho brag authority to argue that all *that* was just fancy talk, too.

These questions may seem facetious, but they raise a crucial point. If we mean to read these discourses closely and seriously—to ask how

---

<sup>87</sup> *Snyan sgron*: 6b.

they endured, were reproduced, informed actions, or structured preferences and values—it will mean grappling with the problems that their very existence called attention to. It will mean granting that Tibetans recognized and lived those problems, too.

Ngag dbang was putting into practice the understanding that a realm ultimately ordered by cosmic powers was equally one that required humans to struggle together over the right ways to think and act, not least to make those hidden forces present. By making a case for the Sde srid's divinity, Ngag dbang reaffirmed a core ideological commitment that there were greater agencies behind the worldly exercise of authority. At the same time, the gods do not have the last word. Quite the opposite: all the actual work of knowing and making the world must be a task that humans carry out with, and against, one another. Indeed, the Dga' ldan pho brang court is basically famous for two things: the divinity of its ruler, the Dalai Lama, which has endured to the present day, and for being a wellspring of intellectual and artistic creativity, with a deep impact on subsequent discourse. The *'khrungs rabs* is at the nexus of both.

Past-life narratives are acts of interpretation that fashion the self in terms of the past while refiguring the past according to present interests. That juxtaposition of responsiveness and inventiveness is essential to the existence and exercise of power within this cosmos. To study such discourses is to inquire into the human effort to make oneself meaningful in terms of tradition or the gods, and to make those powers vital as an expression of one's own capacities, at one and the same time.

### Bibliography

*Bka' thang sde lnga: Zhö edition* [Five Chronicles]. 1982. New Delhi: Lokesh Chandra.

*Bod kyi thang ka* = Wang Lu, Sun Zhichang, and Huang Ti, eds. 1985. *Xizang tangka* 西藏唐卡 [Tibetan Thangkas]. Beijing: Wen wu chu ban she.

*Bu chos = 'Brom ston pa rgyal ba'i 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs bka' gdams bu chos le'u nyi shu pa* [Bka' gdams Son Teachings in 20 Chapters: The Past-Life Series of 'Brom ston pa Rgyal ba'i 'byung gnas]. 2012. Xining: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

Byams pa 'phrin las. 1997. "Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho'i 'khrungs rabs dang mdzad rjes dad brgya'i padma nram par bzhad pa'i

- phreng ba” [Life and Legacy of the Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho]. In *Byams pa 'phrin las kyi gsung rtsom phyogs bsgrigs* [Works of Byams pa 'phrin las], 402–442. Beijing: Krung go'i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang.
- . 2000. *Bod kyi sman pa rim byon gyi rnam thar phyogs bsgrigs* [Biographical Anthology of Tibetan Physicians]. Beijing: Mi rigs dpe sprun khang.
- Cabezón, José Ignacio. 2017. “On Tulku Lineages.” *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 38, 1–28.
- Chou, Wen-Shing. 2018. *Mount Wutai. Visions of a Sacred Buddhist Mountain*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Dargyay, Eva K. 1977. “Tsong-kha-pa and His Relation to Atiśa and Padmasambhava.” In *Buddhist Thought and Asian Civilization: Essays in Honor of Herbert V. Guenther on His Sixtieth Birthday*, edited by Leslie S. Kawamura and Keith Scott, 16–26. Emeryville: Dharma Publishing.
- Dharma śrī, Smin gling lo chen. 1977. *Gter chen chos kyi rgyal po'i rnam thar dad pa'i shing rta* [Biography of Gter bdag gling pa]. In *Collected works (gsung 'bum) of Smin gling lo chen dharma śrī*. Vol. 1. Dehradun: D.G. Khochen Tulku.
- Diemberger, Hildegard, and Pasang Wangdu, trans. 1996. *Shel dkar chos 'byung: History of the White Crystal: Religion and Politics of Southern La stod*. Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- . 2000. *dBa' Bzhed: The Royal Narrative Concerning the Bringing of the Buddha's Doctrine to Tibet*. Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- Dorje, Gyurme. 2001. *Tibetan Elemental Divination Paintings: Illuminated Manuscripts from The White Beryl of Sangs-rgyas rGya-mtsho: With the Moonbeams Treatise of Lo-chen Dharmāsri*. London: John Eskenazi in Association with Sam Fogg.
- Dudjom Rinpoche. 2002. *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History*. Translated by Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein. Somerville: Wisdom Publications.

Dza ya Paṇḍita Blo bzang 'phrin las. 1981. *Collected Works of Jaya Paṇḍita Blo bzang 'phrin las*. 4 vols. New Delhi: Lokesh Chandra.

Graeber, David. 2001. *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of Our Own Dreams*. New York: Palgrave.

Gyatso, Janet. 2015. *Being Human in a Buddhist World: An Intellectual History of Medicine in Early Modern Tibet*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Ishihama Yumiko. 1992. “攝政サンゲ・ギャンツォの著作に見る一七世紀チベットの王権論” [A Treatise on 17<sup>th</sup>-Century Tibetan Royal Authority in the Works of Regent Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho]. 東洋史研究 [Studies in Asian History] 51 (2), 230–250.

———. 1993. “On the Dissemination of the Belief in the Dalai Lama as a Manifestation of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara.” *Acta Asiatica* 64, 38–56.

———. 2015. “The Dalai Lama as the *cakravartī-rāja* as Manifested by the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara.” *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 24, 169–188.

Jackson, David Paul. 1996. *A History of Tibetan Painting: The Great Tibetan Painters and Their Traditions*. Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.

Jayaswal, Kashi Prasad. 1934. *An Imperial History of India in a Sanskrit Text, c. 700 B.C.-c. 770 A.D.: With a Special Commentary on Later Gupta Period*. Lahore: Motilal.

Karmay, Samten Gyaltzen. 1988. *Secret Visions of the Fifth Dalai Lama: The Gold Manuscript in the Fournier Collection*. London: Serindia Publications.

———. 2014. *The Illusive Play: The Autobiography of the Fifth Dalai Lama*. Chicago: Serindia Publications.

Kellner, Birgit. 2016. “Genealogy into the Future: Glimpses from Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's (1653–1705) Exposition of the Extended Dalai Lama Lineage.” In *Meanings of Community across Medieval Eurasia*, edited by E. Hovden, C. Lutter, and W. Pohl, 203–231. Leiden: Brill.

- Klimburg-Salter, Deborah E., ed. 2015. *Discovering Tibet: The Tucci Expeditions and Tibetan Paintings*. Milan: Skira.
- Lu 'go bla mkhyen Ngag dbang. 1971. *Snyan sgron = Ngag dbang snyan sgron nyis brgya brgyad pa* [Ngag dbang's 208-Point Report]. In *The Vaidurya G.ya' sel of Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho together with the Snyan sgron nyis brgya brgyad pa*. Vol. 1. Tracing of Lhasa Zhol xylograph. New Delhi: T. Tsepel Taikhang.
- Ma, Dazheng. 2003. "The Tarim Basin." In *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, edited by Ahmad Hasan Dani and V. M. Masson, vol. 5, 181–208. Paris: Unesco.
- Maher, Derek. 2006. "The Lives and Time of 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa." In *Power, Politics, and the Reinvention of Tradition: Tibet in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, edited by Bryan Cuevas and Kurtis R. Schaeffer, 129–144. Leiden: Brill.
- Mi nyag mgon po. 1996. *Gangs can mkhas dbang rim byon gyi rnam thar mdor bsdus* [Biographical Anthology of Tibetan Masters]. Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khangs.
- Millward, James A. 2007. *Eurasian Crossroads: A History of Xinjiang*. London: Hurst & Co.
- Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, Dalai Lama V. 1972. *Gsang ba rgya can ma* [Sealed Secret] = *Gsang ba'i rnam thar rgya can ma: A Record of the Visionary Experiences of the Fifth Dalai Lama*. Reproduced from a rare manuscript belonging to the Stag tshang ras pa bla brang of Hemis. Leh: S.W. Tashigangpa.
- . 2009. *Rgyal dbang lnga pa Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho'i gsung 'bum* [Collected Works of the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama]. 28 vols. Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang.
- Nor brang O rgyan. 2006. "Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho'i skor gleng ba dad pa'i char 'bebs" [A Study of the Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho]. In *Nor brang O rgyan gyi gsung rtsom phyogs btus* [Works of Nor brang O rgyan], 233–316. Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang.
- Oyunbilig, Borjigidai. 2008. "1705 年西藏事变的真相" [Facts of the 1705 Affair in Tibet]. *Zhongguo Zang Xue* 中國藏學 83 (3), 82–91.

Quintman, Andrew. 2014. *The Yogin & the Madman: Reading the Biographical Corpus of Tibet's Great Saint Milarepa*. New York: Columbia University Press.

*Rba bzhed phyogs bsgrigs* = Bde skyid, ed. 2009. *Rba bzhed phyogs bsgrigs* ["Testament of Ba" Anthology]. Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

Richardson, Hugh E. 1980. "The Fifth Dalai Lama's Decree Appointing Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho as Regent." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 43 (2), 329–344.

Ricoeur, Paul. 1976. *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Sur-plus of Meaning*. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press.

———. 1991. "What Is a Text? Explanation and Understanding." In *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

*Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo* [Great Treasury of Rediscovered Teachings]. 1976–1980. 111 vols. Paro: Ngodrup and Sherab Drimay.

Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, Sde srid. 1971. *G.ya' sel* [Tarnish Remover] = *Bstan bcos bai dūr dkar po las dris lan 'khrul snang g.ya' sel don gyi bzhin ras ston byed*. In *The Vaidurya G.ya' sel of Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho together with the Snyan sgron nyis brgya brgyad pa*. Tracing of Lhasa Zhol xylograph. 2 vols. New Delhi: T. Tsepel Taikhang.

———. 1973. *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* [Tomb Inventory] = *Mchod sdong 'dzam gling rgyan gcig rten gtsug lag khang dang bcas pa'i dkar chag thar gling rgya mtshor bgrod pa'i gru rdzings byin rlabs kyi bang mdzod*. Tracing of Lhasa xylograph. 2 vols. New Delhi: T. Tsepel Taikhang.

———. 1978. *Bai dūr dkar po* [White Vaidurya] = *Phugs lugs rtsis kyi legs bshad mkhas pa'i mgul rgyan bai dūr dkar po'i do shal dpyod ldan snying nor*. 2 vols. Tracing of Sde dge xylograph. Dehra Dun: Sakya Centre.

———. 1980. *Bai dūr ser po* [Yellow Vaidurya] = *Dpal mnyam med ri bo dge ldan pa'i chos 'byung bai dūr ser po'i me long*. Tracing of Lhasa xylograph. 2 vols. New Delhi: Ngawang Gelek Demo.

———. 2005. *Mu tig chun po* [String of Pearls]. In *Prayers to His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Previous Emanations, and Long-life Prayers to the*

- Present Dalai Lama, His Holiness the 14th*, edited by Tashi Tsering, vol. 1, 122–284. Dharamsala: Amnye Machen Institute.
- . 2010. *Mirror of Beryl: A Historical Introduction to Tibetan Medicine*. Translated by Gavin Kilty. Boston: Wisdom Publications.
- . n.d. *Thogs med bskal pa ma* [The ‘Unimpeded Age’ Prayer] = *Lha sras mu ne btsan po’i ’khrungs rabs gsol ’debs thogs med bskal pa ma*. Xylograph, 6 folios.
- . n.d. *Lo gsar ’bel gtam* [New Year’s Speechmaking] = *Rgyal khab chen po’i dga’ ston gyi dus dam pa’i chos las brtsams pa’i ’bel gtam gyi lde mig skal bzang mgrin rgyan rna bar kun dga’ ster ba’i bdud rtsi*. Xylograph, 46 folios.
- Schaeffer, Kurtis R. 2009. *The Culture of the Book in Tibet*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Schuh, Dieter. 1973. *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der tibetischen Kalenderrechnung*. Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland, Supplementband 16. Wiesbaden: Steiner.
- Schwieger, Peter. 2014. *The Dalai Lama and the Emperor of China: A Political History of the Tibetan Institution of Reincarnation*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Sle lung Bzhad pa’i rdo rje. 2009. *Rig pa ’dzin pa blo bzang ’phrin las kyi rtogs pa brjod pa skal bzang dga’ ston* [Autobiography of Sle lung Bzhad pa’i rdo rje]. Xining: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang.
- Sperling, Elliot. 2014. “Concerning the Lingering Question of Sde-srid Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho’s Paternity.” *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 47 (1), 202–221.
- Tucci, Giuseppe. 1949. *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*. 2 vols. Roma: Libreria dello Stato.
- Ujeed, Sangseraima. 2017. “The Thob yig gsal ba’i me long by Dza-ya Pandita Blo-bzang ’phrin-las (1642–1715): An Enquiry into Biographies as Lineage History.” Ph.D. diss., University of Oxford.
- Uspensky, Vladimir L. 2002. “The Previous Incarnations of the Qianlong Emperor According to the Panchen Lama Blo bzang dpal



Idan ye shes." In *Tibet, Past and Present: Tibetan Studies I*, edited by Henk Blezer, 215–227. Leiden: Brill.

Vostrikov, A. I. 1970. *Tibetan Historical Literature*. Calcutta: Indian Studies: Past & Present.

Yamaguchi Zuihō. 1999. "The Emergence of the Regent Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho and the Denouement of the Dalai Lamas' First Administration." *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Tōyō Bunko* 57, 113–136.

