


A Bout with Smallpox in Beijing: Personal Accounts of the Tibetan Statesman — Dga' bzhi pa Bsod nams bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor (1761–after 1810) and his Struggle with Smallpox*

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t is a truism that disease can potentially be and indeed often is a political, a sociological, an economic, and, in warfare, a strategic game-changer. Especially the virulent ones that rage as epidemics and wreak havoc among populations, change the make-up of societies, cause economic calamities, and can negatively impact military campaigns and thus turn the tide on the warring parties, and turn to naught every well- or ill-intended plan, crushing or raising hopes and aspirations, however low or lofty. Smallpox was one of those horrific diseases that raised its nasty head time and again in human history.¹ E. Fenn, A.M. Becker and others² have shown that it was smallpox that almost cost George Washington the American

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¹ First published in 1983, Hopkins 2002, and now Kotar and Gessler 2013 are the best introductions to smallpox and its impact on human history in general.

² Fenn 2001 and Becker 2004. Never mind the shameful words of John Winthrop (1597–1649), the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and of course a devout Christian, who, in 1634, wrote in cruel ignorance: "For the natives, they are near all dead of the smallpox, so the Lord hath cleared our title to what we possess." Lord Jeffry Amherst (1717–1797), his fellow countryman and an equally devout Christian, was one among several others to use smallpox as a WMD in his campaigns against native Americans.

revolutionary war of independence, and it was smallpox that played a key role in the decimation of the native populations of the Americas. Its historic ramifications have been studied for Europe and the Americas. There are several studies of the occurrence of smallpox in the Indian subcontinent, among the Mongols, and we have monographs and scores of articles on the subject for the Ming and Qing dynasties in China.³

That said, smallpox has barely been studied in connection with the Tibetan cultural area that was also regularly visited by this scourge. And this paper aims marginally to ameliorate this situation by drawing attention to a fearsome episode in the life of the aristocrat Dga' bzhi pa Bsod nams bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor [tshe ring] (January 7, 1761–after 1810), who is usually referred to as Bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor.⁴ Groomed in his youth to become a competent administrator, the Dga' ldan pho brang government in Lhasa appointed him cabinet minister (*bka' blon*) in 1783. However, he lost his official post in late 1792 at the order of the Qing court, because of his involvement with the second Nepalese-Tibetan-Qing war of 1791–1792.⁵ In his youth, his main teachers were Ye shes rgyal mtshan (1713–1793),⁶ who was among other things the tutor (*yongs 'dzin*) of Dalai Lama VIII 'Jam dpal rgya mtsho (1758–1804), his co-father Rdo ring [Gung < Ch. *gong* 公] Paṇḍita Mgon po dngos grub rab brtan (1721–1792) and himself a high-ranking *bka' blon*,⁷ and Lama Chos rdzong pa,⁸ Rdo ring Paṇḍita's aged teacher from Smin grol gling monastery. Dga' bzhi pa is also known as Mtsho byung dgyes pa'i lang tsho, a name he was given after he had successfully absolved a course in a branch of "linguistic" studies, in this case the poetic theories of Daṇḍin's (7th c.) *Kāvyaḍarśa*, at Smin grol gling.⁹ And he figures once in the oeuvre of one of his teachers, Yongs 'dzin Ye shes rgyal mtshan, who, in the wood-female-sheep year [1775], wrote a little celebratory piece for him in the Jo khang temple on the occasion of him having been a bright light during a course on Buddhist

³ For the Mongols, see, for example, Serruys 1980, and for the Ming and the Qing dynasties, see, for example, Chang 1998, 2004, and Norov 2019: 3-4, 9-10. As far as we are aware, there exists no study of the actual *history* of smallpox in the Indian subcontinent, let alone of its earliest occurrence.

⁴ DGA' 1988: 73, DGA'1 2006: 82.

⁵ For the first war from 1788–1789 and its concluding treaty in which Dga' bzhi pa had played a prominent role, see now Komatsubara 2017.

⁶ DGA' 1988: 132 ff., DGA'1 2006: 149 ff.

⁷ What is meant by "co-father" will become clear below.

⁸ DGA' 1988: 148-151, DGA'1 2006: 166-169.

⁹ He was one of many aristocrats who received a humanistic education at this monastery; see Townsend 2021.

stages-on-the-path (*lam rim*) philosophy he conducted in Lhasa.¹⁰

In her fine dissertation, Li Ruohong 李若紅 studied the life of this scion of one of the most prestigious eighteenth century families of Central Tibet in some detail by making judicious use of his large autobiography that Dga' bzhi pa completed in 1806.¹¹ There are two different editions of this work, one published in Lhasa and the other in Chengdu, and there is also a Chinese translation by Tang Chi'an 湯匙案.¹² The full Tibetan title of this massive work is *Dga' bzhi pa'i mi rabs kyi byung ba brjod pa zol med gtam gyi rol mo*, which translates as *A Narrative of the Rise of the Dga' bzhi pa Family: A Melody of Straightforward Talk*. We may presume that Tshe ring phun tshogs, the editor of the Lhasa edition, abbreviated this by *Dga' bzhi pa'i rnam thar, Biography of Dga' bzhi pa*. First published in 1986 under the editorial hand of Rin chen tshe ring and supervised by Tang Chi'an who, we believe, at the time headed the Sichuan Nationalities Publishing House in Chengdu, the Chengdu edition is wrongly titled *Rdo ring paṇḍi ta'i rnam thar, Biography of Rdo ring Paṇḍita*, and Tang's translation follows suit, albeit

¹⁰ Yongs 'dzin Ye shes rgyal mtshan 1974–1977a; the letter in Yongs 'dzin Ye shes rgyal mtshan 1974–1977b that is addressed to Bka' blon chen po Dga' bzhi Gung Paṇḍita had of course nothing to do with Dga' bzhi pa himself, but rather with his co-father Gung or Rdo ring Paṇḍita Mgon po dngos grub rab brtan.

¹¹ Li 2002. The autobiography is not dated, but the last date given in DGA' 1988: 1090, DGA'2 2006: 1213. And Tang 1995: 574 is July 17, 1806, the occasion on which his eldest son Tha'i ji (< Mon. *taiji* < Ch. *taizi* 太子) Mi 'gyur bsod nams dpal 'byor (1784–1834) was elevated to the rank of *bka' blon*, albeit not without controversy. DGA' 1988: 822–823, DGA'2 2006: 913, and Tang 1995: 433 indicate that the court had awarded his son the title of Tha'i ji of the first class (*rim pa dang po*) sometime during the fifth lunar month [June 9–July 8] of 1793. Petech 1973: 50–64 has given us important details about this prominent family and about Dga' bzhi pa in particular. Petech, it should be mentioned, did not have access to Dga' bzhi pa's autobiography when writing his survey and based himself on contemporary Tibetan sources. More recently, using his autobiography, Phun rab pa Bstan 'dzin dpag bsam 2010: 54–77, 118 ff. contains a summary of his life together with a series of songs that he is said to have composed.

¹² See, respectively, DGA' 1988, DGA'1,2 2006, and Tang 1995. For an initial discussion of the extant Tibetan manuscripts of this work and the editions, see Li 2002: 8–11. DGA' 1988 is based on a comparison of two manuscripts, a manuscript in *khyug yig* of the Tibetan Archives, Lhasa, and a manuscript in *kham yig* that belonged to Mr. Ma gcig of the Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences; see the *Afterword* of this edition. A reprint of the earlier 1986 printing, DGA'2 2006: 1222–1227, 1228–1265 contains an editor's note—this includes an at times misleading notice on some Mongol terms used in the autobiography—and a reprint of an important assessment of the autobiography that had been published earlier in Dbang phyug rnam rgyal 1984, albeit under a slightly different title. Shakabpa 2010: 507 ff. used another manuscript of this work for his brief narrative of the Gorkha war. Neither publication of this work is completely reliable although it would seem that the readings of the Lhasa text are often better. This also has consequences for Tang Chi'an's translation which is solely based on the Chengdu recension.

by adding the subtitle *History of the Dga' bzhi Family*. To be sure, in the secondary literature, Dga' bzhi pa is often referred to as Rdo ring Paṇḍita, but this is plainly wrong.¹³ Rdo ring Paṇḍita was the nickname of his co-father, even if he was not really entitled to bear the Paṇḍita title!¹⁴

While Dga' bzhi pa himself states that "our birth mother" (*kho bo'i skyed ma*) was Rin chen skyid 'dzoms (1740–?)— she was the daughter of minister Mdo mkhar ba Tshe ring dbang rgyal (1697–1763)—, he acknowledges that Pa sangs tshe ring (1745–1792) was "our birth-father" (*kho bo'i skyed pha*), that is to say, Pa sangs tshe ring was his biological father.¹⁵ He explains why he has two fathers in the following passage that of course has everything to do with, on one hand, the fact that already in an entry for 1753 Pa sangs tshe ring is said to have become feeble-minded and that he was induced to take the vow of celibacy and, on the other hand, the practice of fraternal polyandry¹⁶:

*kho bo'i lus skyed kyi ma ni ga zi'i rigs las bltams pa gong bzhin
dang skyed byed kyi pha ni mdzes lam kun rdzob drang don ltar na
zhabs drung bde ldan sgrol ma'i rigs sras tha'i ji pa sangs tshe ring
dang / don dam gnas lugs nges don ltar na mi rje bka' drin can
gung paṇḍi ta de nyid yin par sngon du rag shag gi sras mo rnam
gnyis khab bzhes dus kyi lo rgyus las shes par bya /*

That my mother who gave birth to my body was, as stated above, born in the Ga zi family and that my father who gave birth to me was, on a relative level, Tha'i ji Pa sangs tshe ring, the son of Zhabs drung Bde ldan sgrol ma, and, on an ultimate, ontological level the kind Lord Gung Paṇḍita himself, should be known from the account when both had earlier wedded the daughter of Rag shag.

To explain: The house of Mdo mkhar is also known as Ga zi and Rag shag. Dga' bzhi pa speaks of the two Rag shag sisters, that is, the two daughters of Mdo mkhar ba, his mother and his aunt (*sru mo*) Bu khrid

¹³ This mistake is continued in the otherwise very rewarding essay in Erhard 2019.

¹⁴ For the title *paṇḍita* in Tibet, see van der Kuijp [forthcoming].

¹⁵ DGA' 1988: 82, 74, DGA'1 2006: 93, 84. Earlier, in DGA' 1988: 23, DGA'1 2006: 26, he uses the honorific for father, *yab*, in connection with Tha'i ji Pa sangs tshe ring. For Mdo mkhar ba, see Mdo mkhar ba Tshe ring dbang rgyal 1981 and now also Hartley 2011.

¹⁶ DGA' 1988: 56, DGA'1 2006: 64 and DGA' 1988: 74-75, DGA'1 2006: 84. Chinese sources were also confused about the relationship among the three, but the issue was clarified and resolved in Li 2002: 68-78, and Li 2002: 364 charted the family's genealogy, as did Tang 1995: 584.

rgyal mo (1745–?).¹⁷ Zhabs drung Bde ldan sgröl ma was the daughter of prime minister Pho lha nas Bsod nams stobs rgyas (1689–1747)¹⁸ and the mother of both Pa sangs sangs rgyas and Rdo ring Paṅḍita.

A monument of Tibetan letters, the autobiography contains, aside from a biography of his co-father Rdo ring Paṅḍita, a wealth of information about not only Nepal and the workings of the local Tibetan government and the overarching Qing administration, but also, in a more general sense, about how an eighteenth-century Tibetan nobleman and administrator coped with the affairs of state. It contains a number of observations on the Nepalese and Chinese landscapes through which he traveled, about life in the cities he visited or passed through, and the appearance and apparel of the officials with whom he had come in contact. In addition, it also goes to show to what degree Tibetan society had absorbed Chinese and Mongol customs. For example, there are references to Chinese funerary traditions in the passages that mention the passing of Rdo ring Paṅḍita's elder brother Gung Rnam rgyal tshé brtan, who died in 1745, and Mdo mkhar ba, who passed on in 1763.¹⁹ Dga' bzhi pa himself had a smattering of some Chinese words and, as it turned out, was also somewhat able to converse in Mongol with the Qianlong emperor.²⁰ Speaking of an excursion he and his friend and fellow-minister G.yu thog Bkra shis don grub made in Beijing, he makes the following observation about the eunuchs they encountered in the Gdugs dkar lha khang, a chapel dedicated to the goddess Sitātapatrā²¹:

*rgya gar rgyal po rnam kyī lugs srol ltar na btsun mo bsrung mi
nyug rum pa zhes pa dang don gcig rgya nag skad du lū kong zhes
chung dus nas pho rtags bcad pa'i ma ning mtshan med lta bu kha
shas lha khang de'i nang du rgyu 'grul byed pa...*

¹⁷ DGA' 1988: 58, DGA'1 2006: 66. Curiously, Mdo mkhar ba Tshé ring dbang rgyal 1981 does not once mention his daughters; Dga' bzhi pa refers to Mdo mkhar ba's autobiography in DGA' 1988: 59, DGA'1 2006: 68.

¹⁸ On him and his era, recently see Sperling 2012 and the literature cited therein.

¹⁹ DGA' 1988: 25, DGA'1 2006: 28 and DGA' 1988: 98, DGA'1 2006: 111.

²⁰ DGA' 1988: 789, DGA'2 2006: 875; see also Bsam gtan 1986: 85 and Sperling 1998: 331–332. The Chengdu edition used by Sperling was first published in 1987 and not in 1986. The history of Mongol presence in Tibet during the sixteenth and early seventeenth century still needs to be fully inquired into, let alone written. There is evidence that, in the first half of the seventeenth century, the chancellery at Sa skya monastery had at least one bilingual or trilingual secretary who was able to write official letters in Mongol; see the Mongol document sent by Sa skya's twenty-eighth abbot A mes zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga' bsod nams (1597–1659) to Emperor Hong Taiji (1592–1643) in Oyunbilig and Shi 2014: 411 ff.

²¹ DGA' 1988: 793, DGA'2 2006: 879 wrongly has *srung* and *bcas* for DGA' *bsrung* and *bcad*. For this goddess, see now Liao Yang 廖陽 2016 and the literature cited therein.

We visited inside the chapel with a few individuals called *lā'u kong* (< *laogong* 老公)²² in Chinese, who had no sexual organs, eunuchs-neuters without gender identifiers, whose male genitals had been cut off at a young age, who were identical to the *mi nyug rum pa*, guardians of the queen, in accordance with the tradition of Indian kings...

He also on occasion and no doubt with an eye to his expected audience glosses Mongol and Chinese words. Thus he explains the Mongol-Sog term *noyon* as Tibetan *dpon po*, "official," and states that Chinese *gtsang tsor* (< *zangzao* 藏枣), the Tibetan jujube or date, is the equivalent of Tibetan *kha sur pa ni*.²³

Aside from his autobiography, two other products from his pen have been published to date. The first is a print of his study of the two famous treatises on Tibetan grammar that he had written in 1810; the printing blocks were housed in the Gzims khang Rdo ring, that is, the Dga' bzhi residence.²⁴ The second is an allegorical tale on the theme of the war between Nepal and Qing China titled *Bya sprel gtam rgyud*, *Tale of a Bird and a Monkey*.²⁵ To our knowledge as yet unpublished, Dga' bzhi pa also authored the *Rgyal bu grags pa'i mu khyud kyi bstan bcos* [1779], which is a literary piece on Prince Indra, the *Snyan ngag gi bstan bcos legs par bshad pa sde bzhi sgo 'phar rab tu 'byed pa'i gtam* [1785], which is a collection of gnomes, the *Blo gsal yid dbang 'dren byed rnam dpyod gser gyi shing rta* [1795], a work on poetics, and the *Char sprin rma bya'i zlos gar* [1801], the title of which does not inform us as to its genre or subject matter, but which apparently was a devotional work on masters of the stages-of-the-path (*lam rim*) literature. Aside from being a man of letters, Dga' bzhi pa was also a musician and Gar pa Mgon [po] tshe [ring] was his teacher of the subject. He thus learned how to play the Mnga' ris lute (*sgra snyan*), the two-stringed fiddle (*pi wang*), and

²² This seems to be an unusual term. The usual words for eunuch are *huanguan* 宦官, *taijian* 太监, and *yanren* 阉人. However, another one is *lao gonggong* 老公公.

²³ DGA' 1988: 25, 826, DGA'1 2006: 29, DGA'2 2006: 917, and Tang 1995: 18, 434.

²⁴ Dga' bzhi pa Bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor 1979 and for the location of these blocks, see Anonymous 1970: 239.

²⁵ Dga' bzhi pa Bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor 1991 is but one of many editions of this little, allegedly anonymous work. Bsam gtan 1986: 83-92 discusses the problem of the allegory's authorship since there was quite a bit of confusion about this slight co-nundrum. He compares several passages of Dga' bzhi pa's narrative of the Gorkha war with the allegory and concludes that Dga' bzhi pa was its author. For very interesting notes on this little piece, see also Martin 2008. The dates for some of Dga' bzhi pa's writings that follow are taken from Bsam gtan 1986: 85-86. Some eighteen stakholders that were written at this time among the Tibetan, Nepalese, and British stakeholders were studied and published in Diskalkar 1933. For the Gorkha wars, see most recently Erschbamer 2018 and Theobald 2020, and the cited literature.

the flute (*gling bu*). In late 1793, he was responsible for introducing the hammered dulcimer (*yang chin* < Ch. *yangqin* 扬琴) into the Tibetan musical repertoire.²⁶

In early 1793, Dga' bzhi pa had contracted smallpox when he and G.yu thog Bkra shis don grub together with their attendants were in Beijing.²⁷ The reason for their appearance in that grand cosmopolitan city was that the imperial court had summoned them to account for the actions that they had and had not taken during the second Nepal-Tibetan-Qing war and, in particular, to explain how they had come to be imprisoned by the Nepalese Gorkha army in 1791. Li has detailed Dga' bzhi pa's involvement with the Gurkha War, so that there is no need for us to dwell on it here; the same holds for Xie Guangdian's recent contribution with respect to his trip to Beijing.²⁸ What had apparently really irked the high-ranking official Fuk'anggan (1754–1796)²⁹ and no doubt the court in general was that neither Dga' bzhi pa nor G.yu thog had committed suicide in the face of their defeat, the result of a glaring shortcoming on their part. And this point was made abundantly clear to him.³⁰ Thus, following the routing of the Gorkha forces in 1792, Dga' bzhi pa and his colleague G.yu thog Bkra shis don grub were escorted from Central Tibet to Chengdu, where they stayed for three days and were received by the governor's office with rather unexpected fanfare.³¹ Among other diversions, they were apparently also entertained by a performance of song and dance, a musical (*phrang [g]zhi* < Ch. *changxi* 唱戏) of sorts.³² That Dga' bzhi pa and his party

²⁶ DGA' 1988: 816, DGA' 2 2006: 905-906; see also Tang 1995: 429, Li 2002: 227 and Dbang phyug rnam rgyal 1999.

²⁷ This episode of his life was studied in Sperling 1998, who, however, does not mention that he fell seriously ill with smallpox. Sperling sheds significant light on the ways in which a Tibetan aristocrat and high local government official dealt with and acknowledged that Tibet was part of Qing China. Li 2002: 227-230 briefly touched on the general issue of smallpox in Qing China and Dga' bzhi pa's encounter with this disease.

²⁸ Li 2002: 144 ff. and Xie 2018.

²⁹ On him, see Li 2002: 195-206 and now also Jagou 2007.

³⁰ For this episode, see DGA' 1988: 755-756, DGA' 2 2006: 838-839 and Li 2002: 203-204. Earlier, Bajung (Ch. Bazhong 巴忠), *amban* of the Qing court in Lhasa from 1788-1789, had committed suicide because of his failure to report the true state of affairs where the Gorkhas were concerned; see DGA' 1988: 789, DGA' 2 2006: 876; see also Sperling 1998: 332, n. 1, and Li 2002: 222-223. Jagou 2017: 330, n. 65, notes that Bazhong was a Lifanyuan 理藩院 Vice-Minister, Department of Affairs, from 1785 to 1791 and *amban* only from December 30, 1788 to January 21, 1789.

³¹ For a narrative of this trip, see Li 2002: 206-227.

³² DGA' 1988: 778-779, DGA' 2 2006: 860; see Tang 1995: 410. DGA' 1988 has *phrang gzhi*, whereas DGA' 2 2006 has *khurang zhi* – *phrang gzhi* and *khurang zhi* are homophones. A trifling quibble: Sperling 1998: 328, n. 2, suggests that Tibetan *khurang [g]zhi* reflects *jingxi* 京戲 [or *jingju* 京劇], that is, Beijing opera. And Li 2002: 181-182 also holds

traveled to Beijing via Chengdu is of course owing to the fact that Central Tibet fell under the jurisdiction of Sichuan's governor. From there they went north to Gzan shi/Shan shi (< Ch. Shaanxi 陝西) and crossing the "great Rma river", the Yellow River, they arrived in the great city of Sing nga hū (< Xi'an fu 西安府 = Xi'an 西安), "the capital of ancient China" (*rgya nag rnying khungs kyi rgyal sa*). He adds for his Tibetan readership that this was the place that was associated with Srong btsan sgam po's (7thc.) Chinese wife. In Xi'an, they were again entertained by a performance of *khrang* [*g*]zhi song and dance.³³ From there the party traveled to Mount Wutai (Wutai shan 五臺山), the small mountain range in Shanxi Province and a sacred site for Tibetan, Mongol, Manchu and Chinese Buddhists,³⁴ after which they finally arrived in Beijing on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth *hor*-month, October 11, 1792. This occasioned him to memorialize the impression that Beijing and the imperial palace had made on him in a series of verses from Shong ston Lo tsā ba Rdo rje rgyal mtshan's *circa* 1270 Tibetan translation of Kṣemendra's (11thc.) large poetic work, the *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā*, that began with the mention of an immeasurable mansion (*gzhal yas khang, vimāna*), a notion that, we can assume, he intended to resonate with the presence of its principal deity of a maṇḍala and, indeed, with the idea of the Qianlong emperor as Mañjuśrī and his palace.³⁵

In Beijing, they first stayed in a private home in the vicinity of the court house (*shing spug yā mon* < Ch. *xingbu yamen* 刑部衙門) and the next day they were taken to the military office (*cun ci yā mon* < Ch. *junji*

that the Tibetan term points to Beijing opera, but the latter had its inception in 1790 at the court of the Qianlong emperor and was apparently kept private for some years! However, earlier in Li 2002: 111, n. 19, she rightly pointed out that the Tibetan term suggests Chinese *changxi*.

³³ DGA' 1988: 778-779, DGA'2 2006: 864. The first has *khrang gzhi*, the second the homophone *khrang zhi*. The expression *khrang zhi'i* occurs in an entry for the year 1724 in Lcang skya (< Ch. Jiangjia 章嘉) III Rol pa'i rdo rje's (1717-1786) biography that Thu'u bkwan (< Ch. Tuguan 土觀) III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma (1737-1802) completed in 1794; see Thu'u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma 1989: 86. It occurs in the context of the celebrations that were held when the young Lcang skya III had fully recovered from smallpox. During the celebrations, officials headed by the two great generals (*cang jun* < *jiangjun* 將軍) – these were Nian Gengyao 年羹尧 (1679-1726) and Yue Zhongqi 岳鍾琪 (1686-1754) – held a Chinese-style feast (*rgya lugs kyi ston mo*) that included some kind of an operatic drama (*zlos gar gyi gzugs mo*) called *khrang zhi'i*.

³⁴ See the special volume devoted to this range and its cultural and religious significance in the on-line *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies* 6 (2011) and now also Ding Yi 丁一 2019.

³⁵ Bstan 'gyur dpe sdur ma 1994-2008: 95, 4; for an exceptional study of Kṣemendra's work, see Lin 2011.

yamen 军机衙门) where they were interrogated about their involvement in the recently concluded war with the Gorkhas. The interpreters who were used during this time were two of his very own former students in Lhasa whom he had taught the second chapter of Dandin's (7thc.) *Kāvyaṅdarśa*, Lord Thā (*thā lo ye* < Ch. *Da Laoye* 达老爷) and Lord Thu (*thu lo ye* < Ch. *Tu Laoye* 图老爷). They then finally ended up staying at the Yellow Monastery, the Lha khang ser po (Ch. Huangsi 黄寺, Mon. Sira süme) that had been built on the occasion of Dalai Lama V Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho's (1617–1684) trip to and stay in Beijing in 1652–1653.

The long and short of the events that transpired at the capital was that while both men lost their ministerial offices of *bka' blon* of the Dga' ldan pho brang government in Lhasa because of their unintentional mistakes, they were generally exonerated of willful wrongdoing. Dga' bzhi pa reports a private conversation between him and the Qianlong emperor in which the latter had told him in part:³⁶

*khyod nas bod gor 'khrug gzhi'i skor la snga phyir las don 'thus
sgo ma tshang ba sna tshogs byas tshul gyi [read: gyis?] bod sdod
blon po rnam nas rgyu mtshan rim par byung bar brten / 'di
phyogs ched du bkug nas rtsa ba zhib tu dpyad par / khyod rang gi
ngos nas lo na dang stobs shugs chung ba'i babs [bab] kyis gzugs
po dgra lag tu shor ba [876] sogs 'on ma sang ba'i nyes pa tsam las
gzhan byas nyes che ba gang yang mi 'dug [/]*

Since you did various inappropriate things during the Tibeto-Gurkha troubles, you were specially summoned on account of this for a detailed inquest on the basis of what has been reported by the ministers³⁷ who resided in Tibet. For your part, due to your youth and being of little strength, you (*gzugs po*) fell into the hands of the enemy, etc. You have committed no greater offense than the offense of simple inattentiveness.

To the eighty-one-year-old emperor, the thirty-one-year-old Dga' bzhi pa was evidently a "youth." To be sure, Dga' bzhi pa was by no means an unknown quantity for him. To the contrary, as indicated in M. Oidtmann's partial translation of a letter the emperor had written to Heliyen, he was very well-informed about him and his family's

³⁶ DGA' 1988: 789, DGA'2 2006: 875-876; with some modifications, I adopt the translation in Li 2002: 222-223; see also Sperling 1998: 332-333.

³⁷ We wonder why he would use here "ministers" (*blon po rnam*) and not *amban*-s, a word that he freely used before and afterwards.

multiple connections to the powers that were in Central Tibet.³⁸

Around the Chinese New Year of 1793, which fell on February 11, Dga' bzhi pa was about to return to Central Tibet were it not for having unexpectedly contracted smallpox. The passages in which he addresses his encounter with smallpox offer a poignant documentation of one who contracted this virulent disease and lived to write about it, even if the distance provided by hindsight, amounting to some thirteen years, had no doubt somewhat tempered his memory of this horrific experience. The coda of this brief paper, the thrust of which is expository, offers slightly annotated translations of these narratives. Before doing so, it will be well to make some prefatory remarks on the typology and aetiology of smallpox,³⁹ and on the identities of a few of its known victims in the Tibetan cultural area.

To begin, at first biomedicine distinguished between two different kinds of smallpox that are caused by two varieties of the variola virus, namely, the variola major and the variola minor. In recent years, a third was added, the variola tanzania or intermedius.⁴⁰ Only the first two appear to have been recognized by Tibetan sources, even if they identify several sub-types. The type of smallpox caused by the variola major virus is also known as the black pox, that caused by the variola minor virus form of smallpox is known as the white pox. The most severe cases of smallpox with a greater likelihood of being fatal are due to a contraction of the variola major virus; having been infected by the variola minor results in immunity from the variola major disease. Highly infectious and transmitted through face-to-face encounters or by one or the other fomite such as clothing, etc., the incubation period of the disease is between twelve to roughly twenty-one days. Thereafter, the disease progresses in three stages:

- [1] The prodromal or the pre-eruptive stage, the earliest stage of the disease, is similar to the flu or a cold and is characterized by general discomfort, nausea, and fever;
- [2] After roughly three days there is the onset of small, reddish lesions in the mouth, tongue, and palate;
- [3] A day or two thereafter, there is the onset of the formation of macules that begin on the forehead and then spread over large parts of the body.

³⁸ Oidtmann 2018: 71-72. Heliyen (Ch. Helin 和琳) was the younger brother of the infamous Hešen (1755-1792), and he was promoted to *amban* in Lhasa on July 7, 1792; see Oidtmann 2018: 263, n. 45.

³⁹ We would be remiss, were we not to acknowledge the use of the outstanding entries for smallpox and the smallpox vaccine in the *Wikipedia*.

⁴⁰ Rao 1972: 3.

According to the classification proposed by Rao,⁴¹ the variola major infection can follow four different courses. One of the most famous, earliest, and informed descriptions of smallpox and its treatment was given by the Persian physician Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Zakariyā Rāzī (854–925), who also made a distinction between varieties of smallpox ranging from mild to fatal ones.⁴² The phases and symptoms of the disease that these sources describe will be helpful in a future identification of the phases of the disease that are isolated in the Tibetan medical literature.

Effective immunization against smallpox can proceed in two ways. The first of these is variolation or inoculation. No longer practiced, this consists of introducing material from smallpox pustules by way of an incision into the skin or by blowing dried smallpox scabs into the nose. The second is vaccination—*vacca* is Latin for "cow"—, a method discovered and perfected in the 1690s by the English physician E. Jenner (1649–1723).⁴³ Jenner had used cowpox, a virus *similar* to smallpox to create immunity, rather than variolation/inoculation of smallpox to create the same. There is an Indian tradition that maintains that vaccination against smallpox was discovered before Jenner's time. D. Wujastyk has fully discredited this claim through some very impressive sleuthing, so that it can now be laid to rest.⁴⁴ As far as China is concerned, J. Needham has provided us with the details of the discovery of variolation or inoculation—the Chinese term is *zhongdou* 种痘, "to plant smallpox postules,"—in the sixteenth century by Wan Quan 萬全 (1495–1585), who first published his findings in 1549.⁴⁵ And the inimitable B. Laufer published a few notes on a Japanese color print (*ukiyo-e* 浮世絵) that was in the possession of Chicago's Field Museum, which he attributes, with some reservations, to Katsukawa Shuntei 勝川春亭 (1770–1820). The print contains a long inscription by a certain Sōsai Setto (?)⁴⁶ and has as its subject the introduction of vaccination in Japan. In his brief notice, Laufer added a few observations on the practice of inoculation against the disease in the Far East.

But let us now turn to the Tibetan cultural area. In Tibetan, smallpox is termed '*brum nad*. The disease was traditionally classified among the so-called *gnyan* diseases, that is, epidemic diseases caused by a *gnyan*-sprite, of which *inter alia* 'Jam dpal chos kyi bstan 'dzin 'phrin las (1789–

⁴¹ Rao 1972: 6-8.

⁴² Rāzī 1848: 34-35, 71-73.

⁴³ For a slightly different account, see Francis 2019: 15-16; see also Riedel 2018.

⁴⁴ Wujastyk 1987.

⁴⁵ Needham 1980. Van der Kuijp should like to thank his former student Dr. Li Ruohong for long ago drawing his attention to this important paper.

⁴⁶ Laufer 1911: 526-529.

1838), the well known author of a treatise on global geography, conveniently isolated a number of different types.⁴⁷ The words *thor ba* and *'brum [bu]* can mean macule or pustule and *'brum nad* should of course not be confused with *gzhang 'brum*, which refers to hemorrhoids, even if *'brum [bu]* is also sometimes used in the sense of a hemorrhoid. A condition that must have afflicted the sedentary monk accustomed to sitting for a long time, the Buddha himself is said to have pronounced on hemorrhoids and their cure in the so-called *'Phags pa gzhang 'brum zhi bar byed pa'i mdo* or the *Noble Hemorrhoids-Soothing Sutra*; the *circa* 800 Tibetan rendition of this text is contained in the tantric literature section of the Tibetan Buddhist canon.⁴⁸ Although it usually does, it would appear that the word *'brum nad* does not necessarily imply smallpox. Rather, it can refer to any variety of viral diseases that are characterized by pustules.

Among the oldest extant Tibetan treatises on medicine, the more or less anonymous *Sman dpyad zla ba'i rgyal po* (?9thc.), the *Khu tshur 'bum* iatrosophion, a compendium of short medical tracts—it is attributed to a certain Bha ro Phyag rdum (11thc.) but contains post-eleventh century tracts as well⁴⁹—, G.yu thog Yon tan mgon po's (12thc.) *Rgyud bzhi*,⁵⁰ and the anonymous Bon po inspired *'Bum bzhi*,⁵¹ to name but four treatises on medicine, all contain chapters on smallpox and its treatment. We do not propose to study these here, let alone engage with the contents of these tracts in a comparative manner, but suffice it to say that the *Sman dpyad zla ba'i rgyal po* distinguishes between three distinct types of the disease: minute smallpox (*'brum phran*),

⁴⁷ 'Jam dpal chos kyi bstan 'dzin 'phrin las 1997: 183-331; see also below for his significant contribution to inoculation against smallpox that was first signaled by Lobsang Yondan 2016. We are informed in the colophon on pp. 794-795 that a certain physician (*em chi* < Uighur/Mongol *emči*) Dpal 'byor of the Lha khang ser po, the Yellow Monastery, in Beijing, had printing blocks prepared for it. It is not clear when the Uighur/Mongol loanword *emči* entered the Tibetan lexicon as *em chi*.

⁴⁸ See Bka' 'gyur dpe sdur ma 2006-2009: 603-607.

⁴⁹ For some preliminary notes on the *Khu tshur 'bum* and its authorship, see van der Kuijp 2010: 39 ff.

⁵⁰ See *Grwa thang rgyud bzhi* 2005: 270-273. For the author and his work, see Yang ga 2010 and van der Kuijp 2010: 23 ff. A rare and a yet unstudied manuscript of a biography of G.yu thog that was written by a distant descendant was published in G.yu thog Bkra shis 2013. The text consists of seven chapters. The first deals with his previous re-births, the second with the particulars of his family line, the third with his birth, the fourth with him becoming a *bla sman*, a royal physician, the fifth with his compositions, the sixth with his trips to the realm of the gods, and the seventh with his offspring and students. We are told, on p. 199/1, that he was born in the water-female-serpent year and later that he was a contemporary of Khri srong lde btsan (742–7800) and Śāntarakṣita. This would mean that he was allegedly born in 753! The use here of the sexagenary, sixty-year cycle for the designation of the year is at best suspicious.

⁵¹ See *Gso rig 'bum bzhi* 2006: 339-342.

black [?or hemorrhagic] smallpox (*'brum nag*), and large white smallpox (*'brum dkar chen*).⁵² On the other hand, the *Rgyud bzhi* and the *'Bum bzhi* identify only two main types, black and white smallpox, and they subdivide these into three subtypes each. The narratives of the *Rgyud bzhi* and the *'Bum bzhi* are strikingly similar and they are indeed on occasion so identical that there can be no doubt that, with a few changes, one either adopted the other's narrative or, what is perhaps less likely, that both borrowed from a common source. My preliminary study of these two treatises strongly suggests that the *'Bum bzhi* is posterior to the *Rgyud bzhi*. What distinguishes these two from the *Sman dpyad zla ba'i rgyal po* is that their chapters deal with smallpox and its cure (*bcos pa*) and not merely with the disease itself, as is the case with the latter. The *Sman dpyad zla ba'i rgyal po*'s very succinct account of the disease ends on an ominous but realistic note: "He/she will die (*de ni 'chi bar 'gyur ba'o //*)."⁵³

The treatise attributed to Bha ro Phyag rdum inserts a further variable into the equation in that the first of its two chapters on the disease is titled *Rgya nag gi 'brum bcos 'phags pa 'jam dpal gyis mdzad pa*, *Curing Chinese Smallpox, Composed by the Holy Mañjuśrī*.⁵⁴ We learn from its preamble that when the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī was actually residing on Mount Wutai, which has been associated with this Bodhisattva since at least the sixth century, many people of China had contracted and died of smallpox, which the text calls "the king of disease." The Chinese king/emperor Tsakra (< ?Skt. Cakra!) had also fallen victim to the disease and after a consultation with his ministers agreed to request of Mañjuśrī a cure. Having collected a full *bre*-measure of gold dust and fine brocade or silk (*gos bzang po*),⁵⁵ they dispatched three colleagues to him. Mañjuśrī then transformed himself into a seer (*drang srong*, Skt. *ṛṣi*)⁵⁶ and began teaching them about [1] the means to protect themselves from smallpox, [2] its diagnosis, and [3] its therapy. An early indication of smallpox having possibly visited Central Tibet is the notice in this work to the effect that Mu ne btsan

⁵² *Sman dpyad zla ba'i rgyal po* 1989: 137 [= *Sman dpyad zla ba'i rgyal po*[1], 94b-95a, *Sman dpyad zla ba'i rgyal po*[2], 67a-b, *Sman dpyad zla ba'i rgyal po*[3], 60a-b]. For some preliminary text-historical remarks on this work, see Rin chen rgyal 2011 and van der Kuijp 2015/2016: 82 ff. See now also McGrath 2017.

⁵³ *Sman dpyad zla ba'i rgyal po* 1989: 137 reads: *'chi bar 'gyur ba dag yin no //*. Like most chapters of this work, this chapter, short as it is, is beset with bedeviling text-critical problems.

⁵⁴ *Khu tshur 'bum* 2006: 534-539.

⁵⁵ This is followed by the phrase *mtheb zho rib a gsum*, which we cannot explain.

⁵⁶ Already several early works ascribed to G.yu thog Yon tan mgon po in the *Cha lag bco brgyad* compendium are replete with references to Indic physicians, many of whose names are prefixed by the term "seer", as is indeed G.yu thog himself; see G.yu thog Yon tan mgon po 1999a: 19-20 and 1999b: 690-694.

po (?762–?799), the second son of the Mighty One (*btsan po*) Khri srong lde btsan had contracted this disease, specifically, so it would appear, he had contracted smallpox of the black variety.⁵⁷ We read there that after Emperor Cakra had given Zhang po Ti li ka ma, who placed it in a lacquered amulet box (*bse yi ga'u*) and wrapped it in a piece of satin (*dar zab*).⁵⁸ Zhang po carried it to Tibet and handed it over to Khri srong lde btsan in Bsam yas monastery. The Tibetan ruler promptly hid it and said a prayer: "May it meet with a person of great kindness and compassion of these evil times!" Then...⁵⁹:

*dus phyis lha sras mu tri [ne] btsan po la 'brum pa byung bas / bod
kyi lha rje mkhas pa mi dgu'i rgyud 'dzin rnams bsogs [tshogs] pas
/ mkhas pa mi nyag gis / lha sa la zhabs bskor mdzad pas [536] lha
sa'i sgo gong na / bse yi ga'o dar zab kyis dril ba mthong nas / lag
tu blangs nas kha phyé bas / 'brum pa 'chos pa'i srung thabs / brtag
thabs / gso thabs rnams gter nas gdan drangs nas / rgyal po bcos
pas drags [drag] nas / mkhas pa mi dgu'i nang nas kyang mkhas pa
mi nyag mkhas par grags pa yin /...*

...later, because the Divine Son Mu ne btsan po⁶⁰ had contracted smallpox, a meeting of the followers of the nine Mkhas pa-royal physicians (*lha rje*) of Tibet⁶¹ was convened. Thus, Mkhas pa Mi nyag made a circumambulation (*zhabs bskor*) in Lhasa and seeing a small ivory box wrapped in satin (*dar zab*) atop the Lhasa gate, he took it in his hands and, opening it, he withdrew from the treasure a protective means for curing smallpox, a means for diagnosis, and a means for healing. And having cured the king, from among the nine wise ones (*mkhas pa*), Mkhas pa Mi nyag, too, became known as a wise one.

To be sure, this narrative is not a little muddled! We read in the colophon of this work that after a long series of transmission, ultimately, a certain Phyag sman Shāk yes [Shākya ye shes] hid the text

⁵⁷ The manuscript had Mu tri btsan po; the date of Mu ne btsan po's birth is given in Sørensen 1994: 404, n. 1384. Truth be told, we have so far found no corroborating evidence in the relevant Tibetan chronicles that he died of smallpox.

⁵⁸ For *dar zab*, see Karsten n.d.: 3, which we consulted on-line. Karsten also surmized that *dar* is a loanword, whereas *zab* or *zab mo* has the sense of "fine [quality]".

⁵⁹ *Khu tshur 'bum* 2006: 535-536.

⁶⁰ The editors changed his name to Khri srong lde btsan's eldest son Mu tri [or: khri] btsan po (b. 760). Not a trace of this narrative is found in the major Tibetan chronicles.

⁶¹ On the "nine royal physicians from surrounding countries" and the "nine wise Tibetan physicians," see Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's (1653–1705) 1704 *Khog 'bugs* history of medicine in Kilty tr. 2010: 164, 168. A Mkhas pa Mi nyag is indeed mentioned among the "nine wise Tibetan physicians."

in the "balled fist (*khu tshur*)."

The second is titled '*Brum pa bcos pa'i man ngag bdud rtsi'i thigs pa, Instruction for Curing Smallpox, A Drop of Ambrosia*.⁶² In the fairly lengthy colophon of this work, we are told that that "this instruction of eliminating the path, that is, the development of smallpox was based on the experience of me, Mkhas pa Rin [chen] rgyal [mtshan]." The colophon contains several important passages that begin with indicating that a summary of various instructions, this "little tract of personal experience" (*nyams kyi yig chung*), was owed to Skyes bu Me lha (*Puruṣa Agnideva)⁶³ who in turn had given (*gnang*) it to "me, Mkhas pa Mi nyag." We then learn that it should be kept hidden from those who are not one's disciples and that a portion of this instruction was given (*sbyin*) "to me by G.yu thog Mgon po." Furthermore, not even a part of the instruction should be passed on to anyone who is willing to pay for it with a gift.

The Tibetan terms for variolation or inoculation are '*brum 'debs* and '*brum 'dzugs*, "to plant smallpox," which would seem to be a calque of Chinese *zhongdou* 种痘 and the evidence so far suggests that this calque makes its appearance in the Tibetan literature of the eighteenth century. Drawing attention to the oeuvre of 'Jam dpal chos kyi bstan 'dzin 'phrin las, alias Btsan po Nom-un han (< Mon. *nom-un qan*), Lobsang Yongdan recently published an informative essay in which he addressed the Btsan po's notices on inoculation.⁶⁴ In conversation, he also added that he may have found Tibetan references to inoculation that predate Wan Quan's mid-sixteenth century notice.⁶⁵ This would indeed be an important discovery and we await his deliberations.

Tibetan writings that deal with history, biographies and autobiographies do not always specify what kind of smallpox is at stake when they mention that someone had fallen ill with the disease or when an epidemic of sorts was at issue—the usual term is simply '*brum nad*. We have not encountered this term in the fragments of Tibetan medical texts that were found in Dunhuang.⁶⁶ More than three and a half centuries later, Gtsang pa Rgya ras pa Ye shes rdo rje (1161–1211), the first 'Brug chen hierarch, is said to have contracted black smallpox ('*brum nag*) when, as a young man in his early twenties, he was studying with a certain Dge bshes Jo dar. His biographies do not provide any additional details but suffice it to say that he was a smallpox survivor. Some

⁶² *Khu tshur 'bum* 2006: 545-551.

⁶³ For the possible implication of the prefix *puruṣa*, see van der Kuijp 2010: 42.

⁶⁴ Yongdan 2016: 580 ff.; see also 'Jam dpal chos kyi bstan 'dzin 'phrin las 1997: 286-319. We thank the author for sending us a copy of his valuable contribution in July of 2017.

⁶⁵ Yongdan 2016: 579 and n. 10.

⁶⁶ For these documents, see the studies in Luo Bingfen 罗秉芬 et al. 2002.

sources such as Tshal pa Kun dga' rdo rje's (1309–1364) *Deb ther dmar po* and Rta tshag Tshe dbang rgyal's 1446 *Lho rong chos 'byung* are fairly laconic when it comes to providing information about Karma pa IV Rol pa'i rdo rje's (1340–1383) life.⁶⁷ On the other hand, the Karma pa's biographies by his disciple Zhwa dmar II Mkha' spyod dbang po (1350–1405) and Dpa' bo II Gtsug lag phreng ba (1504–1566) relate the following: When the Karma pa stayed in Gam chu/Kam chu (< Ch. Hezhou 河州) during his travels in northwestern China in the early 1360s, he received an invitation and gifts from Tho lug thi mur (< Mon. Tuγluγ Temürn, 1329–1362), the Qan of the Western Mongols (*stod hor gyi rgyal po*), that is, of Moghulistan.⁶⁸ Several ominous omens occurred, and he fell somewhat ill. Soon a [smallpox] epidemic (*nad yams*) erupted in the area as well as in Go ra dgon mo che where he was staying at the time. Go ra dgon mo che must be located somewhere between Hezhou and Tsong kha. He was lucky and did not succumb to the disease. This may have been the same outbreak of a smallpox epidemic in Nyag rong that is noted in the autobiography of Mi nyag 'Jam dbyangs grags pa (ca. 1350–after 1415),⁶⁹ a somewhat frustrating but always interesting work in which its author never tires of pointing out that he was visited by dreams and visions with extraordinary frequency. It would appear that he himself had also fallen ill, but that he was healed through the good offices of his protector deity! Mi nyag 'Jam dbyangs grags pa met Karma pa V De bzhin gshegs pa (b. 1384) several times in person as well as in a variety of visions.⁷⁰ A traveler to the court of the Yongle 永樂 Emperor (r. 1402–1424), the Karma pa himself contracted smallpox and passed away on September 18, 1415. Many other instances of outbreaks of smallpox in the Tibetan areas can be cited. For example, Zur mkhar ba Blo gros rgyal po (1510–after 1572) and 'Brug chen IV Padma dkar po (1527–1592) both suffered from smallpox, the latter from the "black" variety, and lived to talk about it. But it was especially during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that Central Tibet was again in the throes of a recurring series of smallpox epidemics.⁷¹ It was no doubt one of the byproducts of the civil war that raged over several decades during the first half of the

⁶⁷ Tshal pa Kun dga' rdo rje 1981: 115-121, for the years 1359 to 1363, and Rta tshag Tshe dbang rgyal 1994: 246-250, for the years 1359 to 1383.

⁶⁸ This narrative is found in Zhwa dmar II Mkha' spyod dbang po 1978: 282-283 and Dpa' bo II Gtsug lag phreng ba 1986: 964.

⁶⁹ Mi nyag 'Jam dbyangs grags pa 2005: 133. A manuscript of his autobiography can be found in Mi nyag 'Jam dbyangs grags pa No date(a).

⁷⁰ Mi nyag 'Jam dbyangs grags pa 2005: 270. Mi nyag 'Jam dbyangs grags pa No date(b) is a manuscript of his biography of the Karma pa.

⁷¹ For outbreaks of smallpox in Central Tibet during the seventeenth century, see the preliminary report in Czaja 2013: 354-356.

seventeenth century in which competing Mongol forces were also involved.⁷² These recurrences are mentioned in several sources, important ones of which are the biographies of the Sa skya pa scholars of the period who make their appearance in Sngags 'chang Kun dga' blo gros' (1729–1784) work on Sa skya monastery and its ruling families of 1781.⁷³ In the middle of 1643, emissaries of the Manchu emperor Hong Taiji [*<* Ch. Huangtaiji 皇太极] (r. 1626–1643) arrived in Central Tibet to invite the five major players of the area to the court at Mukden [= Shenyang 沈阳], among them the twenty-eighth abbot of Sa skya monastery A mes zhabs. But the emperor passed away shortly after the invitations were sent and naught came of them. In 1636, A mes zhabs was infected with the disease, but recovered from it.⁷⁴ Hong Taiji was succeeded by his son the Shunzhi 顺治 Emperor (b. 1638), who himself appears to have succumbed to smallpox on February 5, 1661. His son, who was to become the Kangxi 康熙 Emperor (1654–1722), too, contracted smallpox, but survived it.

The eighteenth century also had its large share of well and lesser-known victims of smallpox. For one, it is reputed that both the Zhwa nag Karma pa XII Byang chub rdo rje (1703–1732) and Zhwa dmar pa VIII Dpal chen chos kyi don grub (1695–1732) of the Karma Bka' brgyud sect fell ill with the disease and died while en route to Beijing; the former on December 18, the latter on December 19/20, 1732.⁷⁵ While that is an oft repeated scenario, it does not quite square with what we read in Thu'u bkwan III's 1771 biography of his predecessor Thu'u bkwan II Ngag dbang chos kyi rgya mtsho (1680–1736), namely, that the latter had taken part in their "ritual murder" through violent rituals, by soliciting the aid of the deity Dam can chos kyi rgyal po [*Yama Dharmarāja], "the lord of death," and by casting various *gtor ma*-effigies.⁷⁶ It so happened that Yunli 允禮 (1697–1738), the seventeenth son of Kangxi and the Yongzheng 雍正 emperor's (1678–1735) half-brother, was particularly interested in the Rnying ma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. Both hierarchs had been privy to a bevy of Rnying

⁷² Blaming the Mongols for the spread of smallpox in Central Tibet goes back some three centuries. In his *Blon po bka'i thang yig* of 1368-1393, O rgyan gling pa (1324-?) implicates the Mongol conquest of the Tibetan area with the spread of black smallpox, an inflammatory skin disease (*me dbal*) and unnamed epidemics (*rims nad*); see O rgyan gling pa 1986: 515.

⁷³ Sngags 'chang Kun dga' blo gros 1991: 92, 316, 359.

⁷⁴ Byams pa bsam gtan rgya mtsho 2012: 330 ff.

⁷⁵ Si tu Pañ chen VIII Chos kyi 'byung gnas and 'Be Lo Tshe dbang kun khyab 1972: 443, 448. Neither capsule biography has anything to say about the causes of their deaths.

⁷⁶ Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma 1969-1971: 598-599. For Yunli, see Uspenski 1997; he is of course the subject of a host of essays published in China.

ma doctrinal entities, theoretical and practical, so that it was not odd that Yunli should have invited them to the court in Beijing. Thu'u bkwan III writes:

*rgyal sras bcu bdun pa keng zi ching wang zhes bya ba gsung rab
la blo gros kyi 'jug pa yangs shing / rnying ma la shin tu mos pa
zhig yod pa des g.yo 'phrul gyis dge lugs pa ming tsam yang mi
grags pa zhig byed rtsis kyis / rgyal po la zhus nas / bod dbus gtsang
nas zhwa dmar nag gi bla ma karma pa'i rang lugs las rnying ma
la lhag par sbyangs pa gnyis gdan [599] drangs pa la / rje 'dis dam
can chos kyi rgyal po las la bskul zhing / mngon spyod kyi las 'ga'
zhig kyang mdzad par grags la / gang ltar yang mi ring bar bla ma
gnyis kyi gcig zi ling dang gcig zhi nan phu nas grongs / de dus rje
'di pa la dam can chos kyi rgyal pos las grub pa'i rtags mtshan gsal
bar mnal lam du byung 'dug /*

The seventeenth son [of Kangxi], called Keng zi ching wang (< Ch. Kangsai qinwang 康赛亲王), with a widely developed intellect and quite devoted to the Rnying ma tradition, deceitfully considered to reduce the reputation of the Dge lugs pa traditon to a mere name and, having petitioned the emperor, invited from Dbus and Gtsang in Tibet the Zhwa dmar and Zhwa nag Lamas who had studied the Rnying ma more than their own Karma pa tradition. To that end, it is known that this Lord [= Thu bkwan II] requested Yama Dharmarāja for his activity and performed some ritual activities to do them harm (*mngon spyod kyi las*, **abhicārakarma*). Whatever the case, not long thereafter, one of the two Lamas died in Zi ling [Xining 西宁] and the other one in Zhi nan phu [??付]. At this time, a sign and indication of the karma that the Yama Dharmarāja had accomplished for this Lord clearly occurred to him in a dream.

Thu'u bkwan III continues by saying that had the two Karma pa hierarchs arrived in Beijing great harm would have befallen China and the Dge lugs pa church (*gzhung bstan*) and, not altogether unselfservingly, states that Thu'u bkwan II had essentially and by himself saved the life of the Dge lugs pa (*bla ma 'di gcig pus dge lugs pa'i bstan pa srog bzung bar 'dug /*). The information given by him about this episode in his 1794 biography of Lcang skya III sheds but a sliver of additional light on its background. There we read that the young Lcang skya III had aided his teacher with the performance of these rituals and thus had taken part in enhancing the degree to which the Dge lugs pa establishment was ensured of the continuance of the monopoly it enjoyed with its

connections in Beijing and the Manchu court.⁷⁷

Turning to the principal biographies of the Zhwa nag and Zhwa dmar hierarchs in the co-authored compilation of the history of this sect that was compiled by their contemporaries, we do not have one whiff of the alleged "metaphysical" cause of their passing or that they had died from smallpox. Rather, without any indication why this happened, both are said to have "collapsed" (*thor pa*) at or in the vicinity of Kwan gzhan gsi monastery (Guanyinsi < 觀音寺), located not far from the Great Wall without providing any reasons for these fatal collapses; we read⁷⁸:

*zla ba bcu pa'i tshes gcig la zi ling nas bteg / tshes bzhir kyong myar
[myang] du bzhugs / tā tsang tsha zer ba'i dmag dpon zhig byung
/ tshes bdun la lan jur phebs rma chu'i gram gyi lha khang gzigs /
de nas / cu'u cu'i / tshang sho'i yi / tshang kho'i yi / da na ting
shan / ho tsang shan / cing ning je'u / lung to shan sogs brgyud /
cing ce'u zhes par brag la brkos pa'i lha khang thub sku yod pa zhig
mjäl / nyer gnyis la sing ce'u zhes par brag la brkos pa'i sangs rgyas
sku shin tu che ba'i lha khang mjäl / nyer drug nyin lcags ri'i nub
byang gi zur du kwan gzhan gsi zer ba'i sgrol ma lha khang / rgya
yi spyän ras gzigs dang / gnas bcu / pu tas hwa shang sogs kyi lha
khang 'ga' re mjäl / de nyin nas rgyal ba'i dbang po thor pa byung
'dug de'i gnam gang gi nam langs skabs rgyal ba'i dbang po zhing
khams gzhan du gshegs /...*

They left Xining on the first day of the tenth lunar month [November 18]. On the fourth day [November 21], they stayed at Kyong myar [??]. A military commander named Tā tsang [大將 *dajiang*] Tsha [曹] arrived. On the seventh day [November 24], they arrived in Lanzhou and witnessed a temple on the banks of the Yellow River. From there, they traveled to Cu'u cu'i, Tshang sho'i yi, Tshang kho'i yi, Da na ting shan (??山), Ho tsang shan (??山), Cing ning je'u (< Jingningzhou 靜寧州), Lung to shan (< ?Longtoushan 龍頭山) etc. and in Cing ce'u (< Jingzhou 涇州) they encountered a temple with a statue of the Muni [= Buddha] that was rock-hewn. On the twenty-second day [December 10], in Sing [read: Ping⁷⁹] ce'u (< *ping ce'u* < Binzhou 邠州), they encountered a temple of a very large statue of the Buddha that was rock-hewn. On the twenty-sixth day [December 14], they

⁷⁷ Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma 1989: 136.

⁷⁸ Si tu Pañ chen VIII Chos kyi 'byung gnas and 'Be Lo Tshe dbang kun khyab 1972: 443, 448.

⁷⁹ We do not have the original text of this passage that must have been written in one or the other *dbu med* script. There, the *s[a]* and *p[a]* graphs are sometimes not easily distinguishable, the more so when foreign terms are being transcribed.

came across several temples such as the Sgrol ma/Tāra temple of Kwan gzhan gsi (Guanyinsi 觀音寺) at the Northwestern corner of the Great Wall, the Chinese Avalokitésvara (*Guanyin), the Sixteen Sthaviras/ Arhats, and the Pu tas hwa shang (< Budai Heshang 布袋和尚, the Chinese Maitreya), etc. After that day, the Rgyal ba'i dbang po [Karma pa] collapsed. At daybreak of the new moon day of that month [December 18], the Rgyal ba'i dbang po departed for another realm....

And Zhwa dmar followed him two days later.

The highly rewarding diaries of Si tu VIII Paṅ chen Chos kyi 'byung gnas (1699–1774) bring to the fore the prevalence and fear of smallpox and at the same time underscore his personal engagement with the disease as a practicing physician, even to the extent that he betook it upon himself to translate and excerpt still unidentified Chinese medical texts on the disease.⁸⁰ It is as yet not clear to me when he may have done so. Was it before or after he himself was inoculated against the disease? We learn from his diaries⁸¹ that he was inoculated (*me tog 'dzugs*) on December 2, 1739, together with the royal siblings (*lcam dral*) of the Sde dge king and others, presumably under a watchful eye of a Chinese physician (*rgya yi sman pa*) and was considered immune from smallpox (*'brum pa thar*) some three weeks later. Later, the monks at his see of Dpal spungs were inoculated on New Year's Day, January 29, 1740, but some seven passed away while a hundred and ten survived, having become immune to the disease.

Si tu Paṅ chen's nephew Karma nges legs bstan 'dzin (1732–?) included a lengthy chapter on the treatment of smallpox in his large compendium of 1756 titled *Si tu sman bsdus e vam* or [*Dpal ldan rgyud bzhi la sogs gso ba rig pa'i man ngag kun gyi gnad bsdus*] *Phan bde'i bzil zer spro ba'i zla gsar*.⁸² Of interest is a sentence towards the very end of this

⁸⁰ See the notes in Garrett 2013: 289-290, which must be read together with his work on smallpox that is Indo-Tibetan and being mainly based on the and his Tibetan translation of Chinese medical texts on smallpox in Si tu Paṅ chen Chos kyi 'byung gnas 1990: 211-220. Culled from various Chinese medical texts, pp. 216-220 were apparently written at Li kyang hu (< ?Ch. Lijiang hu 麗江湖), that is, at ? Lake Lijiang. On the other hand, pp. 211-216 is an untitled short tract that he wrote at the behest of "7 Sa dbang chen mo", that is, Pho lha nas Bsod nams stobs rgyal (1689–1747), while residing in the vicinity of his encampment on the shores of the Turquoise Lake (*g.yu mtsho*) in Yam 'brog. On p. 213, he refers to the 'Bri gung school of medicine of which Rig 'dzin Chos kyi grags pa (1595–1669) was the primary representative.

⁸¹ The relevant entries are found in Si tu Paṅ chen Chos kyi 'byung gnas 1968: 188-190.

⁸² The section on smallpox in his main compendium of 1756 occurs in Karma Nges legs bstan 'dzin 1973: 177-204—the passage referred to in Garrett 2013: 290 is found

section. It contains a colophon in which it is stated that this exposition was not entirely written by Karma nges legs bstan 'dzin himself, let alone by Si tu Paṅ chen, but rather by a physician from Gtsang; the colophon states in part that this work was...

*...sman pa ā yu vi dzas rang lo lnga bcu nga drug pa me pho byi
ba'i lo chu stod kyi zla ba'i yar tshes bzang po la lugs gnyis kyi
'dun sa chen po rgyal khab bsam grub rtser sbyar ba'o ||*

...written in Bsam grub rtse, the capital [of the Gtsang pa Sde srid government], the meeting place of the two systems, the religious and the secular, on July 7, 1636, my fifty-sixth [= fifty-fifth] year, by the physician A yu vi dza (< ? Skt. Āyur+vidyā = Tib. Tshe rig [pa]) (1581/-?)...

The section then closes with a citation of verses by Gling stod Chos rje who may be identified as Blo bzang rgya mtsho, a teacher of medicine of No mon han Blo bzang bstan 'dzin rgyal mtshan (1639–?1688), a re-embodiment of Rje dpon/dbon Legs tshogs lhun grub, and a student of the physician Byang ngos Nang so Dar rgyas (17th c).⁸³ Even if there are some curiosities associated with the exact circumstances and causes of his passing, Paṅ chen Lama III/VI Dpal ldan ye shes (1738–1780) ostensibly died in Beijing after having contracted smallpox.⁸⁴ His senior contemporary Lcang skya III also fell ill with the disease when he was a seven year old boy, but survived it, as his biographer Thu'u bkwan III reported in the biography of his senior.⁸⁵

The *Wikipedia* has an entry for "smallpox survivors" in which some fifty names of notables, all European or American, are listed. To this dossier we can now add Gtsang pa Rgya ras pa, Zur mkhar ba, Padma dkar po, A mes zhabs, the Kangxi emperor, Lcang skya III, and Dga' bzhi pa. And there are no doubt scores more!

on p. 203—and the very same section is of course also contained in Karma nges legs bstan 'dzin 1997: 174-200—this volume is designated by 'e' of 'e vam'. For a capsule biography of him, see Byams pa phrin las 2000: 386-389. It is perhaps surprising that he nowhere overtly refers to his uncle Si tu Paṅ chen's translation of a Chinese dossier on the subject, a circumstance that may indicate that his uncle had translated these after 1756.

⁸³ Blo bzang bstan 'dzin rgyal mtshan 2007: 3. For a capsule biography of Byang ngos Nang so, who was in part responsible for the 1662 printing of the *Rgyud bzhi* and is also quoted by Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653–1705) in his *Vaidurya sngon po* of 1688, see Byams pa phrin las 2000: 295-299.

⁸⁴ For the stories surrounding his death, see Chen-Wang 2012 and Yongdan 2021. It is a poignant irony that he himself authored, at some unknown time, a short tract on curing smallpox using traditional methods; see Paṅ chen Lama III/VI Dpal ldan ye shes 1975-1978.

⁸⁵ Thu'u bkwan III Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma 1989: 86.

Dga' bzhi pa first mentions smallpox in his autobiography when what appears to have been an epidemic swept through Central Tibet, according to *his* reckoning, from the autumn of 1771 to the following spring of 1772.⁸⁶ He refers to it as a *rdo rje tsher ma* epidemic.⁸⁷ Used euphemistically, the exceedingly rare expression "adamantine bramble" (*rdo rje tsher / 'tsher ma*) indicates the actual pustule or pox and then by extension it can also point to the disease smallpox. The Sanskrit equivalent of this expression is the equally rare *vajrakaṇḍaka*, which is found in Puṇḍarīka's (early 11th c.) *Vimalaprabhā* commentary *ad Laghukālacakratantra* II: 128.⁸⁸ In Chinese, the pox is called *dou* (痘) and smallpox is again euphemistically named "heavenly flower" (*tianhua*, 天花) and one wonders whether Si tu Paṅ chen's use of *me tog* that we saw above was based on his study of Chinese sources on smallpox variolation; the same holds for 'Jam dpal chos kyi bstan 'dzin 'phrin las' use of the expression. To be sure, I cannot explain why Dalai Lama VIII 'Jam dpal rdo rje (1758–1804) did not mention the occurrence of smallpox in the region during the relevant time period in his 1794 of his tutor (*yongs 'dzin*) Ye shes rgyal mtshan.⁸⁹ In this instance, 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje II Dkon mchog 'jigs med bang po's (1728–1791) detailed study of Paṅ chen Lama III/VI Dpal ldan ye shes of 1785–1786 is the more rewarding resource.⁹⁰ While Dga' bzhi pa does not supply any precise dates, it is different with the latter. Most probably basing himself on the Paṅ chen Lama's diaries, Dkon mchog 'jigs med dbang po writes that at the onset of an epidemic (*rims nad*), on June 8, 1771, the Paṅ chen Lama performed fulfilling and restoring liturgies (*bskang gso*) for and entrusting what one desires to ('*phrin chol*)⁹¹ the goddess (*lha mo*), that is, Dpal ldan lha mo [Śrī Devi] or possibly Gtsug tor rnam par rgyal ma [Uṣṇīṣavijayā]. And the last entry that deals with the disease is dated shortly after November 23, 1772.

⁸⁶ DGA' 1988: 140-142, DGA'1 2006: 158-159.

⁸⁷ 'Jam dpal chos kyi bstan 'dzin 'phrin las 1997: 286 uses it as well in the third verse of his work in which he petitions Shi ta la (< Śītālā) for protection against it. The first and second verses are addressed to Sna tshogs yum [Viṣvāmātā], the consort of the deity Kālacakra, and Remati, that is, a form of Śrī Devi.

⁸⁸ Upadhyāya 1986: 237. Bu ston counts the passage as commenting on *Laghukālacakratantra* II: 122; see Bu ston Rin chen grub 1965a: 167; see also his annotated edition of the *Laghukālacakratantra* II in Bu ston Rin chen grub 1965b: 75. These differences are obviously due to the different editions of the Sanskrit and Tibetan translations of these texts.

⁸⁹ Dalai Lama VIII 'Jam dpal rdo rje 2009: 121-125.

⁹⁰ 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje II Dkon mchog 'jigs med bang po 2002: 513-547; pp. 514, 541.

⁹¹ This must be variant of '*phrin bcol*, which also occurs sometimes in a *dvandva* compound *bskang 'phrin*.

There are few autobiographical reminiscences and even fewer descriptions of this disease by or about those who lived to tell about their experiences of having suffered through it. We can now add to these reminiscences the remarks made by Dga' bzhi pa in his autobiography. What follows is a lightly annotated and an at times free translation of the five excerpts taken from his autobiography in which he details his encounter with smallpox. The two publications of his work occasionally offer different readings, many but not all of which can be readily identified as typographical errors, and we did our best to navigate our way through them. The diction and lexicon, including Chinese and Mongol loanwords, that Dga' bzhi pa uses is heavily indebted to the administrative language (*gzhung skad*) used by a high-ranking bureaucrat that, from the late seventeenth century, had become a characteristic feature of the official language used by the Dga' ldan pho brang government of Tibet. It is therefore not always clearly understandable to us, so that a percentage of the translation remains tentative. In addition, we have sometimes added pertinent details in the translation that are not explicitly provided by the texts. The timeline in which the following narratives need to be placed is February to May of 1793; the entry that follows closely to the first excerpt is dated the 29th day of the 12th lunar month of the water-hen year, that is, February 9, 1793, and the first date that occurs immediately before the narrative of his homecoming is dated the 11th day of the 8th lunar month of the water-ox year, namely, September 11, 1793.⁹²

Excerpt One⁹³

...the Zhwa dmar X Chos grub rgya mtsho's (1742–1792)⁹⁴ Master of Hospitality (*mgron [gnyer]*) Ye shes rgyal mtshan arrived in Beijing and died. Apart from it having been said that the others were exiled to a place called Kong thung (< Ch. Guangdong 广东) in China,⁹⁵ they had not been killed. And at this time, I had no one aside from my children's teacher the honorable Mkhas mchog, manager (*gnyer pa*) Bkra shis don

⁹² DGA' 1988: 809, 857, DGA'2 2006: 897, 951, and Tang 1995: 424, 449.

⁹³ DGA' 1988: 808-809, DGA'2 2006: 895-896, Tang 1995: 423-424; there were a few immaterial variant readings between the two Tibetan texts.

⁹⁴ For the role played by him in the Gurkha war that led to his demise, the cessation of his re-emodiment lineage, and the confiscation of his monastery and landed property, see now Ehrhard 2007 and Schwieger 2015: 175-183, and the cited literature.

⁹⁵ Tang translates *rgya nag* by *neidi* 内地, which, next to *handi* 汉地, is the usual translation in Chinese Tibetology when a Tibetan work has *rgya nag*, but see the remarks on *rgya nag* in Li 2002: 179-180, n. 8, and van der Kuijp 2015: 65, n. 2.

'grub, and Rdo rje rab brtan [as my three servants] and from that group, excepting only Bkra shis don grub, the other two were not immune to smallpox ('brum pa ma thar). Thus, I feared that I would have a shortage of servants were they to become infected and die. Previously, when I stayed in Nepal, General (*lcang jun* < Ch. *jiangjun* 將軍) Nga'o⁹⁶ sent my assistants Bkra shis, Phun tshogs, and Sri gcod tshe ring to China. I was unsure whether they had arrived there [in Beijing]. If they had arrived, I was uncertain if they were in good health. If they were, then because both I and G.yu thog were no longer guilty of any crime (read: *nyes pa mi 'dug pas*), we would be allowed to return home to Tibet. And our servants would no longer be guilty of anything either. Due to the lack of servants, I requested the above three people to be delivered to me, so that we could return to Tibet together. This request was passed on to Lord Chen (Qin 秦老爷) of the Reception Bureau (*sne shan sbyor sgo che*, Ch. *binke si* 賓客司).⁹⁷ Just as it was being investigated, Phun tshogs and Bkra shis both died of smallpox, but Sri gcod tshe ring survived smallpox ('brum pa thar), had not died, and was returned to me.

Excerpt Two⁹⁸

We wandered (read: '*khyams nyul mang byas*) about the temples and markets in and outside the city wall of the capital city Beijing and although we were a bit apprehensive to observe or hear whether anyone or any animal might have been infected by smallpox, it did not come to pass. Previously, when I was in Nepal for over a year, I stayed in the same room with a Gorkha soldier whose smallpox scabs ('brum pa'i thor skugs) had just begun to fall off. The likelihood of infection for G.yu thog, myself, and the other servants was great, but none of us contracted smallpox. During the Chinese New Year [February 11, 1793] celebration banquets, among the attending Qing court officials such as the ambans, etc. and some of my personal Tibetan monk friends, one was likely ill with smallpox and carried the infection; it is likely that I was infected by Bkra shis rgyal po, G.yu thog's servant, who passed away with smallpox on the eve before New Year.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ According to Tang this refers to General Ehui 鄂輝 (?-1798), on whom and his connection with the Gorkha war, see Deng 2008.

⁹⁷ This bureau is part of the Lifanyuan 理藩院 department, for which see the essays in Schorkowitz and Ning 2017.

⁹⁸ DGA' 1988: 823-832, DGA' 2 2006: 914-924; Tang 1995: 433-437.

⁹⁹ The incubation period of smallpox is anywhere between seven to nineteen days and is completely asymptomatic during this time. This means that we can discount Dga' bzhi pa's surmise as to by whom he may have infected.

...in any case, on the 15th day of the second Mongol-month [March 27, 1793] in conjunction with a visit to the Beijing sandalwood statue of the Buddha,¹⁰⁰ I requested a hearing of teachings on the *Dga' ldan lha brgya ma* of the *Dben sa snyan brgyud* system¹⁰¹ in the Sandalwood Residence from Rgya nag Sprul sku Rin po che,¹⁰² the abbot [on the golden/imperial throne] of Tsan dan monastery.¹⁰³ As I walked about, my head and the joints in my arms and legs began to ache and because I was burning with fever. Doctor Zam gdong Blo bzang gzhon nu carefully checked my pulse and my urine and said: "It is most likely smallpox." Even though I received the Buddhist religious practice as described above, my pain intensified, so I decided to return [to my chambers]. Rgya nag Sprul sku said: "Your sickness will get worse if you ride in an open carriage that is pulled by a horse or mule. It is better were you carried en route by human labor in a sedan chair (*'do li < dolī*) that is shaded from the sun and shielded from the wind." I followed his advice, and four workers carried my sedan chair to my living quarters in the Yellow Monastery (*sha ra su mi < Mon. śara sume*).

.....because G.yu thog and his servant and my two servants the old teacher Mkhas mchog and Rdo rje rab brtan were all not immune to smallpox, I was isolated from them. In the past, the supreme precious Dalai lama VI Tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho (1683–1706) was escorted to China and en route dissolved his physical body into the sphere of reality at a place called Kun dga' nor. His companion De mo Rin po che¹⁰⁴ and other servants arrived in Beijing and had rented a place near the Yellow Monastery where De mo Rin po che had displayed his magical powers; it is now called the De mo Inn (*chang khang*). I still lived in my old apartment inside the Yellow Monastery. My attendants were Bkra shis don grub and Sri gcod tshe ring, who were immune to smallpox. The Yellow Monastery's Tā Lama Sangs rgyas don 'grub and doctor Zam gdong Blo bzang gzhon nu also lived in this place.

During the health care I received, the smallpox pustules did not appear on my head or my body, but my skin took on a purple red color, they swelled (*skrangts nyams*), dried up, and I was in much pain and

¹⁰⁰ For the literature on the famous sandalwood statue, see van der Kuijp 2016: 57 ff. and Kudara 2004. We thank J. Silk for alerting us to the last article.

¹⁰¹ This is a prayer cum petition to Tsong kha pa Blo bzang grags pa (1357–1419), the founder of what became the Dge lugs pa school; for the text, see *Dge lugs pa'i chos spyod phyogs bsgrigs* 1995: 122–126. For the *Dben sa snyan brgyud* precepts, see Jackson 2020.

¹⁰² He may be identified as Khri chen Rgya nag pa'i sprul sku Ngag dbang thub bstan dbang phyug dpal ldan 'phrin las rgya mtsho (1773–?), who is referred to in Yongs 'dzin Ye shes rgyal mtshan 1974–1977: 13, 138.

¹⁰³ Only DGA'2 2006: 915 has *si* 寺, "monastery."

¹⁰⁴ This was De mo VI Ngag dbang 'jam dpal bde legs rgya mtsho.

very ill. Because Manager Lord Qin of the Reception Bureau memorialized the emperor of my illness through the Office of the Prime Minister (*krung thang* < Ch. *zhongdang* 中堂), etc., the divinely appointed emperor immediately sent Oljolthu (< ?Mon. Öljeitü) Lord Da to visit me together with two Chinese doctors. Both doctors checked my pulse and my urine, observed my sick condition, and said: "Smallpox can infect a patient in three different ways: the white, the black, and the multi-colored types; your current illness seems to be the intermediate multi-colored one and if you are not carefully looked after with nutrition and rest, you will not recover. First, drink this medicine to push for the pustule to grow. Your body should not be exposed to sun light and wind, kept warm, and do not wear soft woolen clothing after the pustules have surfaced. Besides rice, chicken soup, and Tibetan date soup called *gtsang tsor* in Chinese, do not eat or drink anything else." Consequently, I was given seven red medicine pellets that resembled the *Ma ni 'bum sgrub*¹⁰⁵ together with boiled water. After I had taken the medicine, I was covered tightly from head to toe (*mgo bstums 'jug* [read: *mjug*] *bstums*); my fever and dryness almost all disappeared. My entire body was covered with smallpox pustules, and I lost consciousness and became completely delirious for seven entire days.

At this time, the following hallucinations (*'khrul snang*) occurred: The great emperor had issued an imperial decree, and a Chinese monk (*rgya mi ser mo*) carried this Chinese language decree by hand; standing in front of me, he told me the reason and said: "During your stay in China, your body, speech, and mind were not set free. So, when you travel a little to the east from here, there is a great ocean. Set sail on a boat to visit the holy Avalokiteśvara and the White Wish-fulfilling Wheel Tāra who reside on Mount Putuo.¹⁰⁶ Respect the decree by the great emperor and depart immediately! Here is the travel permit (*lam yig*)." Thereupon, he handed me a document that was written in Chinese. I immediately arrived at the seashore with four of my servants who were in China, plus the Dga' bzhi financial manager Tshe dbang don grub, who had been sent to me by my family in Tibet. There was an old Chinese monk (*hwa shang rgad po*) who looked like the owner of the boat and only allowed me and my servants Bkra shis don grub and Sri gcod tshe ring to get on board; he refused to let the Dga' bzhi financial manager Tshe dbang don grub, Lama Mkhas mchog and

¹⁰⁵ This is medicine that is prepared through the incantation of "one hundred thousand" Avalokiteśvara-oriented mantras that are aimed at the appropriate medicinal substance. See also Garrett 2009.

¹⁰⁶ Sacred to Guanyin/Avalokiteśvara, this mountain is located on Putuoshan 普陀山 island in southern Zhejiang Province; see Bingenheimer 2016.

Rdo rje rab brtan onto the boat. I showed him my travel permit from the great emperor and insisted that I must travel together with my servants, but he still did not budge. So, the Dga' bzhi financial manager Tshe dbang don grub, Lama Mkhas mchog and Rdo rje rab brtan, the three of them, all sadly returned without getting on the boat. A strong gust of wind suddenly pushed the boat and it landed downstream of the Skyid River in front of the Brag lha Klu sgug¹⁰⁷ of Lhasa, the very center of Tibet. In the center of the Klu sgug's grassland, many serpentine-*nāgas* with human bodies and snake tails gathered everywhere, and in unison they said to me many verses:

"The principal life-tree of the Teaching of Tibet,
The golden statue of the Protector, Śākyamuni,
From earlier times down to the present in the human world,
A place of worship as well as a field of merit,
The example / allegory (*dpe*) of a familiar child and a tiger,¹⁰⁸
Now, you are invited to the netherworld, the land of the serpentine-
nāgas,
Though you wished to meet [?the golden statue], you are just too
late."

And so forth; it is possible that I replied with several verses as well, but besides the verses I literally cited above, I can no longer remember the rest.

Then, immediately thereafter I had another hallucination: I thought my residence (*sdod mal*) was in the communal residence of Beijing's Yellow Monastery. The same Chinese monk (*rgya mi'i grwa pa*) of the above, a bearded (*rgya bo*) *ācārya* whose naked body was covered with ashes, together with a young woman, in the prime of her life and seemingly of Mon pa ethnicity, wearing a flower sash and an outfit with large red flowers, came to me, and the monk spoke first: "While the three of us traveled from 'On Chos sding[s],¹⁰⁹ the see of the lama, to deliver a letter to you, Skyabs mgon Rgyal sras Rdo rje 'chang¹¹⁰ sent

¹⁰⁷ See Bshes gnyen Tshul khriims 2001: 21-23 for this locale.

¹⁰⁸ Van der Kuijp does not understand this "example." In an email, Mr. Lobsang Shastri very tentatively suggested this might be a reference to the famous *jātaka*-tale of the Buddha who, in an early re-embodiment as a young man, sacrificed himself to a hungry tigress (*stag mo lus sbyin*).

¹⁰⁹ This must be Dga' ldan chos sdings monastery that is mentioned immediately below. It is located in 'On, the name of a valley that is located to the southeast of Lhasa across the Gtsang po river.

¹¹⁰ He must be identified as Bskal bzang thub bstan 'jigs med bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1743–1811), whose biography prefaces his name by Rgyal sras Rdo rje 'chang. The lengthy biography in two volumes was written in 1818 by Blo bzang 'phrin las rnam rgyal—see Blo bzang 'phrin las rnam rgyal 1842—, himself the author of

us and made the following admonishment (*bka' mngag gi don rdor*): "Because a religious retreat for the teaching of the Transference of consciousness upon death (*'pho ba*) was arranged when in the past you traveled to Dga'ldan chos sding[s] to request the religious cycle of the *Nā ro mkha' spyod ma*,¹¹¹ this was somewhat inauspicious and problematic (*rten 'brel cung zad 'chug dwogs 'dug pa bcas*). Now, if you still want to request oral instructions in the Illusory Body (*sgyu lus*) and Radiant Light (*'od gsal*) teachings, please come." To that I answered with urgency: "Since, I went my own way, it is not appropriate to meditate without a human master to teach me the oral instructions, so what I am to do?" Thereupon the monk somewhat smiled at me and said: "I am the master; it is a pity that you still have not recognized that. Saying that the oral instruction of the Illusory Body should be practiced like so, he took from his sleeve a piece of paper with the figure of a person with a head, arms, legs, etc., and he held this paper person in his left hand. In his right hand, he carried burning incense and he lit up the paper person, and the fire burned slowly. The paper turned into ash, but the shape of the person remained, and then disappeared immediately. Further, as for the instruction of Radiant Light, he showed me a very clear mirror and said that I should look at its defining feature. I thought to myself how can I, without any books, oral transmission (*lung*), or practical guidance (*khrid*), understand the instructions in the Illusory Body by watching the burning of paper or the profound Radiant Light; how can one comprehend the profound instructions by looking into a mirror? At this moment, the monk disappeared.

The *ācārya* and the woman who looked like a Mon pa woman secretly discussed together and went outside of the room. They inserted a long bamboo tube through the paper that was pasted on the window frame; the *ācārya* was holding one end in his mouth and the woman put the other end in my mouth. He blows into it, and I tasted the flavors of crystal sugar, honey, and cane sugar inside the bamboo tube; so sweet, I had never tasted anything like this before. After they had given me a milky white drink, the *ācārya* held the bamboo tube in his mouth like before, and the woman took the other end of the bamboo tube from my mouth and inserted it into my right ear. To keep my servants from hearing, the *ācārya* told me in secrecy through the bamboo tube: "Your personal attendant, Tā Lama Sangs rgyas don 'grub of the Yellow Monastery is King Bhinayaka of the obstructing spirits (*bgegs*), your manager Bkra shis don grub is the reincarnation of

several important biographies. Printing blocks for this capacious work were carved in 1842.

¹¹¹ This is a cycle of teachings concerning a typically Sa skya pa school form of the goddess Vajrayoginī.

the servant Rab brtan dbang who killed his master the old minister Rag shag Bsod nams dbang rgyal nas (1756–1788),¹¹² the doctor Zam gdong a local demon-deity (*gzhi bdag rgyal btsan zhig*) of Beijing's Yellow Monastery. The three of them are using the Black 'Jigs byed [= Bhairava] to curse you. Therefore, your fundamental master (*rtsa ba'i bla ma*)¹¹³ requested the two of us to think of a method to counter it.

... Boy! You, in the resting place of saṃsāra,
Being tormented by the conflicting emotions and disease
[or: disease of the conflicting emotions],
Drink this gnosis-nectar!
A ho ma tā [read: hā] su kha ho!¹¹⁴

As he was speaking, I again tasted a milk-like drink in my mouth. He said: "If you do not believe they are not real, you must carefully reconsider!"

At this time, in reality, my pustules (*thor ba*) were by now festering. I lost all my senses, could not lie still in my bed, and only wished to go outside. The Yellow Monastery's Tā Lama Sangs rgyas don 'grub held my right and Bkra shis don grub grabbed my left arm, and doctor Zam gdong Blo bzang gzhon nu stood in front of me and fed me porridge. But in my hallucination, Yellow Monastery's Tā Lama Sangs rgyas don 'grub who was standing to my right was wearing a Chinese monk's vestment and a red colored religious-Thang zhu (< Ch. *tangxu* 唐徐) hat with an eye design. On my left, Bkra shis don 'grub wore a shirt (*bcam / cam rtse* < ?Mon. *čamčā*) of black felt (*re ta nag po*) and donned a yellow hat that resembled a pig's head with a mouth, eyes, tusks and bristles. In front of me, doctor Zam gdong's attire and hat are all in the tradition of a Chinese monk, and he has a Chinese white rabbit (*rgya'i ri bong dkar po*) on his right and a black rabbit on his left shoulder. My four limbs and neck are all restricted with iron chains, the chains are rubbing my skin into a blue color. And I was laid on a triangular shaped cushion that was made of thick black-haired cow leather with a rough cotton cloth, but I saw that my pustules were shaped like peach blossoms with but five or seven petals. I yelled to my companion-nurses: "You are all pretending to be my nurses, but, in reality, you are involved in cursing me with the black Bhairava. As a deity of the non-Buddhists,¹¹⁵ there is a lot of purpose to the symbolism of him being trampled under the feet of Bde mchog [Cakrasamvara]

¹¹² He is noted in Petech 1973: 73-74, where, however, we learn that he died by suicide.

¹¹³ This is most likely a nod to Yongs 'dzin Ye shes rgyal mtshan.

¹¹⁴ 'Tibskrit' *ma tā* [read: hā] *su kha* is *mahāsukha*, "great bliss."

¹¹⁵ He is usually the fierce aspect of Śiva.

and Mkha' spyod ma [= Vajrayoginī], etc. And, especially, because I am a person who has maintained the practice of the evocation process (*bskyed rim*, *utpattikrama*) and fulfillment process (*rdzogs rim*, *niṣpannakrama*) of the *Bcom ldan 'das rdo rje 'jigs byed lha bcu gsum ma*, the *Dpal chen rta mchog rol pa gsang sgrub*, the *'Khor lo sdom pa lha lnga*, together with the *Nā ro mkha' spyod ma*,¹¹⁶ I am unafraid of the black Bhairava's destructive activities. Now, you have wished me ill, but look, all the lesions on my body have turned into a rain of flowers through the power of the blessing (read: *byin mthus* and not *byin mthur*) of my Lama¹¹⁷ and the tutelary deity!" I was out of control; I plucked (read: *gtogs*) the dry pustules with my fingernails and stuffed them into the mouths of the three of them. From outside of the room, the woman who looked like a Mon nationality waived her arms right and left and yelled with some urgency: "Come here!" I heard her and dashed outside immediately. The three of them could not catch me, but at the precise moment when they had come out, I became conscious. I had already walked close to the gate of the apartment and was pulled back by the three of them. After that, I never lost my reasoning again.

.....The smallpox pustules began to fall off slowly and in terms of getting well, my failed physical strength increased day by day; after recovery, I would be alive for a long time! One can imagine living through such a devastation. I assume that hallucinations come to all in the case of a severe illness, but my experientially initiated delusions (*bag chags nying 'khrul*) as described above were not normal. That being so, it is a clear and certain sign that my great fundamental tantric master Bla ma, who possesses three kinds of grace,¹¹⁸ acted as the protector of this life of mine and would be as a guide to my next life.

Especially during my hallucinations (*'khrul pa'i nyams snang*), my servants Bkra shis don grub and Sri gcod tshe ring who together with me came aboard the boat, did not die en route to Tibet (*bod*) from China (*rgya nag*), and safely returned. Both teacher Mkhas mchog and Rdo rje rab brtan who did not get on the boat simply died en route. At this

¹¹⁶ The first involves the practice anent Vajrabhairava—he is the fierce aspect of Mañjuśrī—who is accompanied by thirteen goddesses, the second revolves around practices anent a form of Hayagriva as in the eighteen Mahāyoga tantras, the third involves practices around Cakrasamvara, who is accompanied by five deities, and the fourth involves practices on a form of Vajrayoginī.

¹¹⁷ It is unclear to whom he refers here.

¹¹⁸ The types of the lama's kindness in a tantric context, which is certainly the case here, are his/her kindness of [1] bestowing empowerment[s], [2] explaining the tantra, and [3] providing oral instructions regarding practice.

time because Lord (*mi rje*) Dar han Gong Paṇḍita¹¹⁹ had passed away, the children in his family had not yet reached majority, and I myself had been forced to roam about in remote regions of China and Nepal, the financial manager (*mdzod pa*) of the Dga' bzhi estate Tshe dbang don 'grub, too, after he had his "wind-sustaining life-force" (*srog* ['*dzin*] *rlung*) carried off by a *gdon*-spirit and had become insane, passed away soon after I had returned to Tibet. What had clearly manifested itself as an hallucination in an ordinary person like me, had become true and accurate (read: *thig par*).

Excerpt Three¹²⁰

I was concerned about infecting G.yu thog, his servant (*g.yog*), and my own assistants (*zla bo*) who were not immune to smallpox, so that after my recovery I immediately washed myself and all my clothes. Even so, maybe due to the strength of the disease, right after my recovery, the children's teacher (*slob dpon*) Mkhas mchog caught the infection and became ill. His smallpox was unlike mine. The pustules were white like pearls and in size large, covering his entire head and body with no

¹¹⁹ Tibetan *dar han* is a Mongol loanword *darqan* and means "tax exempt"; see Atwood 2004: 133-134. If Skyogs ston Lo tsā ba Rin chen bkra shis (ca.1495–ca.1577) was really its author, then his 1536 *Li shi gur khang* lexicon on archaisms (*brda rnying*) and their updates (*brda gsar*) is the first lexicographic treatise in which the lexeme *dar rgan* occurs. The *Li shi'i gur khang* is not a complete work. It is but a series of notes, a *reg zig*—this word is itself an archaism and has *zin bris* as an update—and begins with a perfunctory line of homage, after which it then anomalously continues with *de yang*, "moreover." The work exists in several incarnations. Among these, there is a Sde dge xylograph of which the Sde dge king Bsod nams phun tshogs (d. ?1714) sponsored the printing blocks; its lengthy colophon is reproduced in Nourse 2016: 435, n. 18, and it states in part that the text is based on several other specimen, including a xylograph from the Po ta la (*po ta la'i par yig*). There is the new Lhasa Zhol xylograph, the printing blocks for which were prepared in 1944 at the behest of Stag brag Paṇḍita Ngag dbang gsung rab mthu stobs (1874–1952). And we have the bilingual Tibetan/Mongol xylograph that dates from 1742; see Taube 1978: 169-175 for particulars. A mes zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga' bsod nams (1597–1659) created an edition of the text with many Sanskrit equivalents that is based on five dissimilar manuscripts, some of which were annotated; see A mes zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga' bsod nams 2012. And lastly Skyogs ston Lo tsā ba 1981 is a modern edition that is based on several unspecified texts. The entry for *dar rgan* occurs in the context of Mongol words that were thought to be Tibetan archaisms: "Some appear as Mongol expressions as well; many such as *pag shi* for *btsun pa*, *dar kha che* for *dbang che ba*, *dar rgan* [for] *byin*, etc." (...*la la hor gyi brdar yang snang ste / btsun pa la pag shi dang / dbang che ba la dar kha che dang / dar rgan byin sogs mang la / ...; ...yarim-ud mongyul-un ajalyu-ber bui biüü . toyin ba siluyun-i baysi kiged : yeke erketü-yi darayači kiged : darqan öggiüsen terigiüten olan bui : ...*); see Skyogs ston Lo tsā ba 1742: 23a [note the absence of the particle *la / ber* between *dar rgan* and *byin / öggiüsen*].

¹²⁰ DGA' 1988: 834-836, DGA' 2006: 925-927; Tang 1995: 438-439.

less than fifty of them, and he became quite ill. He had been kind and caring towards me while in Nepal, was skilled in the classical scriptures and, with a gentle temperament, was a well-qualified teacher. My son Mi 'gyur bsod namdpal 'byor was still a child and needed to complete his studies. It would be a pity were he to die and it would be difficult to find another teacher to replace him. I, G.yu thog, Bkra shis don grub and other people who were immune to smallpox did our best to care for him, and because his illness was less severe, he slowly recovered.

Bkra shis lhun po monastery's envoy Mkhan po, master and servant, the government's Gos sgrub pa¹²¹ Blo bzang dpal 'bar, I, and someone's traders in Beijing were all planning to depart from Beijing to travel back to Tibet, but teacher Mkhas mchog had not yet fully recovered, so he wished to stay in the Yellow Monastery. I entrusted Tā Lama Sangs rgyas don 'grub and the Zam gdong doctor Blo bzang gzhon nu to try their best to settle his provisions, [after his full recovery] later he can travel to Tibet together with Sba yer Mkhan po, the Dga' ldan Khri Rin po che Blo bzang bkra shis (1739–1801).¹²² We discussed this. But he said the same as he told me earlier when we were leaving Nepal en route to China: "I will not have peace, if I am not going with you." So, he did not listen to me. Even after I explained the circumstances, he did not comply in the end.

Smallpox had left me with sequelae of swollen legs. It was difficult for me to walk and to sit down. I could not travel by riding a horse nor by being carried by a mulecart and I succeeded in getting a travel permit (*lam yig*) from the [Mongol] administrative office (*sbyor khang*) that allowed me to be carried by a sedan chair that is pulled by mule from Beijing through each relay station to Tibet. I thought about asking for the same sedan chair for teacher Mkhas mchog but was afraid to make this request for a servant, so I did not, and only hired a palanquin. On April 19, we left Beijing, China (*rgya nag pe cing*), to return to my homeland Tibet (*rang yul bod*). En route, teacher Mkhas mchog was exposed to the weather with sun and wind, plus other factors, and he died upon the arrival of the place where we stayed overnight. So, I wrote the Yellow Monastery's Tā Lama and doctor Zam gdong to use his entire possessions as an offering in front of the sandalwood statue of the Buddha and at China's sacred sites such as Mount Wutai, to recommend the spirit of the deceased.

¹²¹ See also DGA' 1988: 849, DGA' 2006: 941.

¹²² He is mentioned proleptically as Dga' ldan khri pa since he was [the sixty-fourth] abbot of Dga' ldan monastery from 1794 to 1801.

Excerpt Four¹²³

...because the traders were not ready to resume the journey to Tibet, the physician from Li thang told me that my swollen legs needed a hot spring's treatment to heal. There was a hot spring located in the area of the government-controlled monastery (*gzhung sde*) of Mtsho lo mo. There is a story that says that the all-knowing supreme victor the Great Fifth [= Dalai Lama V] stopped and bathed there on his visit to China's Imperial Palace;¹²⁴ the hot springs thus had magical powers. Not only that, but because it was not very far from Stong 'khor¹²⁵ and the traders from Xining were not finished with their buying and selling, I took the time that was available and went to the hot springs for treatment as well as for a complete cleansing of my body and possessions. Were I not to have given myself and my things a good scrubbing as in the saying 'Do important things now!', it would be very bad if I were to allow smallpox to spread in Central Tibet.

.....

During my three-week sojourn at the hot springs and receiving treatments, my personal servant Rdo rje rab brtan suddenly (*glo bur*) fell ill and died of smallpox. Besides Bkra shis don grub and Sri gcod tshe ring there were no other servants left.

Excerpt Five¹²⁶

As for me, at this time, in addition to my face being sun-drenched of having been on the road, with the scars (*thor rjes*) left by smallpox (*rdo rje 'tsher ma'i rims nad*), my facial features were not the same as before. Some of the people of my inner and outer circles did not immediately recognize me, and there were some who even thought that I was an imposter.

*

And thus ends Dga' bzhi pa's poignant narrative of his harrowing ordeal with smallpox and its immediate aftermath. The last case of smallpox was apparently registered in Somalia in 1977 and, in 1980, the WHO officially declared that smallpox as a public health menace

¹²³ DGA' 1988: 847-848, DGA'2 2006: 940-941; Tang 1995: 444.

¹²⁴ Mtsho lo ma does not figure in the fifth Dalai Lama's long autobiography, let alone in the narrative of his trip to and from Beijing in 1652-1653; see Yang 1994: 61-69 and Karmay 2014: 261-292, 311-322.

¹²⁵ This must refer to Stong 'khor dga' ldan chos 'khor gling that is located not far from Xining in Qinghai Province. For this monastery, see Martin 2007 and Smith 2013: 311-313.

¹²⁶ DGA' 1988: 858, DGA'2 2006: 952; Tang 1995: 449. This passage deals with how he felt when he and G.yu thought arrived in Lhasa.

was eradicated from the world. Strains of the variola virus that cause smallpox survive in various laboratories around the world. Just in case!

Abbreviations:

BDRC	Buddhist Digital Research Center
DGA' 1988	Dga' bzhi pa Bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor. <i>Dga' bzhi pa'i rnam thar</i> . Ed. Tshe ring phun tshogs. Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang.
DGA'1 2006	Dga' bzhi pa Bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor. <i>Rdo ring Paṇḍita'i rnam thar</i> . Stod cha [vol. 1]. Ed. Bsod nams dpal 'byor with Luo Runchang. Chengdu: Si khron dpe skrun tshogs pa / Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang.
DGA'2 2006	Dga' bzhi pa Bstan 'dzin dpal 'byor. <i>Rdo ring Paṇḍita'i rnam thar</i> . Smad cha [vol. 2]. Ed. Bsod nams dpal 'byor with Luo Runchang. Chengdu: Si khron dpe skrun tshogs pa / Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

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