

## Rewritten or Reused? Originality, Intertextuality, and Reuse in the Writings of a Buddhist Visionary in Contemporary Tibet

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### ABSTRACT

The study of Buddhist texts can inform us of the way scriptures were composed, as well as illuminate the reasons behind their production. This study examines the phenomenon of borrowing and reusing portions of texts without attributing them to their 'legitimate authors' within the Buddhist world of contemporary Tibet. It shows that not only is such a practice not at all infrequent and is often socially accepted, but that it is used in this case as a platform to advance specific claims and promote an explicit agenda. Therefore, rather than considering these as instances of plagiarism, this essay looks at the practice of copying and borrowing as an exercise in intertextuality, intended as the faithful retransmission of ancient truths, and as an indication of the public domain of texts in Tibet.

### KEYWORDS

Buddhist scriptures, intertextuality, plagiarism, textual borrowing, textual reuse, Tibetan Buddhism, Tibet, China.

### Introduction

One morning in the fall of 2000 when I was polishing my translations of a number of Tibetan texts for my doctoral dissertation, I suddenly realized that one such text that I had patiently translated was not an original work as I had thought. After half a year spent in a yak-wool tent at a remote mountain hermitage in Eastern Tibet studying with bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje, a renowned Buddhist teacher and visionary, I was shocked at the realization that a text he gave me, and that he composed, contained several pages copied verbatim from another text written by a well-known Tibetan author, who himself, as we shall see below, may well have copied from a previous (uncredited) source. In a panic, feeling as if the whole world had

just collapsed on my shoulders, I called my academic mentor and told him about my discovery, asking for advice. Amused by my reaction, he immediately assuaged my worries: 'Don't you know that this should not be surprising at all? This is an excellent opportunity for you, who are close to this Buddhist teacher and his community to find out why and how he writes his works. What does it mean to compose a Buddhist text in Tibet? This is what you should examine!'

This study originates from this personal episode and aims to contribute to an understanding of the concept of textual authorship in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. It focuses on the phenomenon of reuse and unattributed quoting of previous literary works in Buddhist texts produced in contemporary Tibet. I look at a genre of Tibetan Buddhist writing that is broadly classified as religious history or Buddhist history (*chos 'byung*) (van der Kuijp 1996; Martin 1997, 13–17). Instead of considering the value of these works by their originality, I propose to understand them as creative efforts to promote an agenda, disseminate values, engage in dialogue between document and meaning, and reinforce beliefs and ancient truths pertinent to the propagation of Buddhism in Tibet, the preservation of religious identity, and the promotion of a specific world order. As a microstudy, this essay will discuss a case of the reuse of portions of texts in a given work without attributing their provenance. This was not and continues not to be an uncommon practice among Tibetan Buddhist authors or even among earlier Buddhist traditions.<sup>1</sup> Several scholars have critically discussed the recurring practice in Tibetan Buddhist historiographical literature of borrowing and reusing sections of scriptures without acknowledging their sources.<sup>2</sup> However, these approaches often tend to be methodologically based on the assumption that historiographical methodology and the ethical principles of intellectual property are universally shared values of human knowledge. Based on my conversations with several contemporary Tibetan Buddhist masters in Tibetan areas of China, I argue that most religious authors are concerned with representing legacies and projecting traditions, thus confirming the historical events they believe to be true. Religious authors don't assess history, they preserve memory. They believe their task is to safeguard core knowledge and values, and refresh the public memory of a certain version of crucial events, no matter whether historical or mythical. For instance, for ordinary Tibetans the power of Treasures (*gter ma*) lies in the blessing generated by the actual revelation itself and the freshness of its physical appearance, rather than in the potential novelty and innovation of its content (in the case of revealed scriptures) (cf. Mayer 2015, 234). This is especially true in religious traditions focused more on a contemplative and mystic approach towards spiritual realization than those involved in canonical learning and scholastic pursuits. This study underscores the fact that Buddhist authors, and in my specific case, contemporary Tibetan Buddhist authors: 1) do not aim at originality when they compose a text, 2) do not necessarily offer evidence of their sources, and therefore, 3) do not subscribe particularly to any concept of plagiarism that we expect in the contemporary individualistic Euro-American literary and academic worlds.<sup>3</sup>

1. Cantwell 2014; Freschi 2014, Harrison 2003, Cabezón 1992; 2001.

2. Vostrikov 1970, 59–60; Aris 1997, 9; van der Kuijp 1996; Sørensen 2000; and Tucci 1990.

3. See Freschi 2015, 92–95. For a study of a Treasure revealer's originality and authorship in the compilation of her work, see Jacoby 2014, 87–91; Blezer 2001. On plagiarism in Tibetan historical treatises see also Sørensen 1994, 12. Relevant to this discussion is also the question of

Specifically, I will provide evidence for these claims by discussing a present-day example of a religious history, in the form of one particular work produced by the late Tibetan Buddhist visionary bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje (1921–2010).

This essay demonstrates the prevalence of intertextuality in the forms of not attributing and reusing quotations on the production of particular works of Buddhist literature. It also demonstrates that this borrowing and reusing portions of other scriptures plays an important role in composing religious texts and in shaping, re-shaping, and transmitting specific historical narratives. The essay shows as well that productive alliances between intertextuality, originality, creativity, imitation, and authority are central to today's Buddhist scriptural production in Tibet not only because they contribute to remembering and reconfirming the past, but also because they help to assure consistency and survival in the face of difficult changes while supporting and promoting new agendas.

### ***Snga 'gyur* or the history of the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet**

bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje (1921–2010) was a non-celibate Buddhist visionary who served as spiritual leader of a number of local Buddhist monasteries, nunneries, and mountain hermitages in Nang chen, a region in western Kham that is today part of Qinghai province in the People's Republic of China (PRC). In the classic fashion of non-celibate yogis, siddhas, and visionaries, bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje was largely unconcerned with institutional Buddhism and the philosophical debates predominant in the monastic milieu around him. He was also deliberately non-sectarian in his approach to practice. One of his two main teachers was Grub dbang bde chen rdo rje (also known as dPal me mkhyen brtse Kun bzang 'gro 'dul rdo rje, 1897–1946), a bKa' brgyud master highly respected in Nang chen where later bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje settled down.<sup>4</sup> He himself was quite eclectic for incorporating both rDzogs chen (Great Perfection) and Phyag chen (Mahāmudrā or Great Seal) systems of meditation in his practice as well as revelations of liturgies. Following in the footsteps of his main teachers, bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's focus was on the purity of the experiential process and the efficacy of ritual practice, aims that are clearly evinced by his extensive textual production and his lifestyle, which I had the privilege to witness first-hand during several years of fieldwork at his hermitages. His collected works include predominantly revealed texts called *gter ma* or 'Treasures' that consist of liturgies, contemplative practices, pith instructions, and several manuals related to the practice of rDzogs chen, the Great Perfection system of meditation, traditionally considered the 'ultimate teaching' in the rNying ma School of Tibetan Buddhism (Thondup 1984, xvi and 1986, 49). His disciples collected his works from the late 1970s until the time of his death in 2010, and they are now preserved in twelve volumes. Although the vast majority of his production is of a visionary and revelatory nature, his

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authorship in Mahāyāna scriptures. See on this Cabezón (1992), as well as Paul Harrison who has researched and commented extensively on this topic (2003; 2006).

4. The other teacher who was highly influential on bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's career was Nyag bla byang chub rdo rje (?–c.1978), a non-celibate Buddhist visionary and practitioner of Tibetan traditional medicine originally from Nyag rong in Eastern Tibet who was a well-known rDzogs chen master and established a vibrant community of followers in the remote area of Ra chu rka mdo near Go 'jo in Kham in present-day Chab mdo county. See Terrone 2010, 193–97.

collected works also include a number of texts that were not composed through visionary revelation. These include histories (*lo rgyus/chos 'byung*), autobiographical writings (*rang/rnam thar*), devotional songs (*gsung mgur*), and spiritual or instructional advice (*gdams ngag*). One such work is the object of this analysis, entitled 'The White Crystal Mirror of Profound and Effective Meaning' (*don zab gnad smin shel dkar me long*). This text is bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's narrative of the deeds of Padmasambhava in Tibet, one of the most widely known stories among Tibetans. It recounts the origins of the Treasure tradition, which in combination with the foundational role of Padmasambhava, is the essential setting that legitimates the historical and doctrinal existence of the rNying ma school of Buddhism in Tibet. A subtitle to this work mentioned in the text itself is 'the story of the profound and secret short lineage of the Treasures', while its short title *snga 'gyur*, or 'early translations' is the name by which members of bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's community typically refer to it.<sup>5</sup> Most of the monastics and yogis under bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje have a copy of the text and know about Padmasambhava and his role in Tibetan history as recounted in the *snga 'gyur*. In combination with bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's autobiography *Rig 'dzin nus ldan rdo rje'i rnam thar bsdus pa dri med rdo rje'i zlos gar* (The Dance of the Immaculate Vajra: A Brief Biography of Rig 'dzin nus ldan rdo rje) composed in 1998, the *snga 'gyur* contextualizes bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's life and works in the heart of Tibetan history and links him to the much glorified imperial imagery. In this sense, works such as the *snga 'gyur* offer many Tibetans the opportunity to reconnect with Tibetan history and cultural legacy through the traditional means of Tibetan learning, unmediated by external influences. The relevance of this text in his community can be evoked by the fact that when I visited bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje at his mountain hermitage for the first time in 1998 and asked what to read if I were interested in knowing about him and his tradition the way a monastic would, he gave me immediately a copy of the *snga 'gyur* which I read together with his closest assistants and disciples accompanied by other texts deemed representative of his lineage. Texts like this and other 'histories' in the Tibetan context contribute to the larger project of infusing devotees with faith. Remembering and reconnecting with a past long gone but continually affecting the present assist, I believe, in Tibetans' ability to adapt to the changing circumstances in which Tibetans find themselves. Through the work of Treasure revealers, as David Germano has insightfully observed (1998, 78–79), not only are Tibet and its sacred places 'remembered' and remapped, resistance to the government-imposed narratives and rhetoric are also put forward, thus reclaiming a Tibeto-centric genesis of religious authority and national identity. In the specific case of Treasure cycles (*gter skor*) to which the *snga 'gyur* belongs, these stories either in the forms of revelations or authored compositions provide the confidence readers need in their teacher as well as devotion for the text and the tradition it represents. Janet Gyatso suggests (1993, 110) that these kinds of 'confidence-engendering texts'

purport to give a 'historical' account of the Treasure, which usually means a narrative of the origin and subsequent development and transmission of the cycle, in which the metaphysical (and, in a certain sense, ahistorical) sources of the cycle

5. *zab gsang nye gryud gter gyi lo rgyus* (*snga 'gyur* f. 2a). Unless specified, all translations of bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's texts as well as his verbal communications in this article are mine.

are also rehearsed. Such a text will typically consider the circumstances in which the Treasure's teachings became relevant within the general context of the soteriological aims of Buddhism and the process by which the cycle was introduced into those circumstances.

By synthesizing the narrative of Padmasambhava in Tibet while adapting some of the characters associated with the introduction and early developments of Buddhism in Tibet, bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje both retransmits the story and adapts it to his needs. The text, therefore, by placing bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje within the *gter ma* tradition and its parameters provides the means to legitimize his Treasure cycle as well as confer authority on its revealer (Gyatso 1993, 111–112).

The term *snga 'gyur* refers to a period in Tibetan national history associated with what Tibetans call the earlier dissemination (*snga dar*) of Buddhism in the land of snows, which ran approximately from the seventh to the ninth century. The historicity of the religious activities allegedly performed during the early dissemination period is difficult to assess, although the emic view common to most Tibetan Buddhist masters does not share a preoccupation with this.

bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje wrote the *snga 'gyur* while he was residing in one of his favorite mountain hermitages (*ri khrod*), gNas chen pad ma shel ri khrod, the crystal mountain hermitage on the slopes of the spectacular Mount Nechen Pema to the east of Sharda (*shar mda'*) in Nang chen.<sup>6</sup> The text includes fourteen folios (recto and verso) and is organized in a simple structure that can be roughly ordered in six sections:

- Introductory verses and dedication [f. 1a – f. 1b]
- The history of the close transmission of Treasures (the sixth chapter from bDud 'joms Rin po che's *rNying ma'i chos 'byung*, pp. 411–419) [f. 2a – f. 8a]
- An abridged account of the story of Padmasambhava's establishment of Buddhism in Tibet [f. 8b – f. 10a]
- A discussion on the practitioners of the quick path (*myur lam*) of the Great Perfection (*rdzogs pa chen po*), the Secret Mantra (*gsang sngags*), asceticism (*dka' spyad*) [f. 10b – f. 11b]
- The story of Emperor gLang Darma's challenge to gNubs sangs rgyas ye shes and the importance of austere practice as shown by Mi la ras pa and Rwa Lotsāwa rdo rje grags whose activities and spiritual achievements inspired the long-haired, white-robed yogis (*gos dkar lcang lo can*)<sup>7</sup> [f. 12a – f. 13b]
- Colophon [f. 14a]

In the colophon of the text, under his Sanskrit name Prabhaswaravajra, bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje writes that many of the stories in the work have been drawn from accounts and writings of the earlier saints of the *rNying ma* tradition of the Secret

6. According to bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje, the Great Sacred Place Crystal Mountain of Padma [sambhava] is so called because Padmasambhava stayed here on his tour of Khams in the eighth century. A cave some fifty yards uphill from the hermitage is believed to have been his retreat cave and despite the perilous hike to reach it, it's now a destination of pilgrimage among the local devotees.

7. Please see below for my discussion on this topic.

Mantra of the Short Lineage, thereby making explicit the anthological nature of his work (*snga 'gyur* f. 14a; Terrone 2010, 47). To write this text bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje consulted biographies (*rnam thar*) of eminent Buddhist figures, visionaries, and other realized practitioners who 'achieved the *yoga* of the *Vajrayāna* of the Secret Mantra and who continue the tradition of the teachings of the previous Buddhist masters', as well as the story of Padmasambhava's concealment of the *gter mas* (*snga 'gyur* f. 14a).

As for the narrative of events related to the story of Padmasambhava's life and activities in Tibet and those of his closest disciples, the *snga 'gyur* does not offer anything particularly new to anyone familiar with Tibetan culture and history. It does not contain fresh information or new details that might shed more light on the foggy centuries of early Tibetan Buddhist history. What is intriguing, however, is the structure of this text itself, the literary mechanics of its *pastiche*, the logic and organization of the narrative, the choice of the themes addressed, and the historical junction and context in which it was written. These can all provide an opportunity to reflect on the relevance of 'writing history' for a Tibetan Buddhist master in present-day Tibet. When reading texts like this one, therefore, the question should not be if they are authentic, or whether they are historically accurate according to our modern conception of history, or even whether texts like the *snga 'gyur* are original works of literature. Given the importance of this text to bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje and his followers in Tibet, the question, I believe, should rather be why was this text composed the way it was, and what does this say about the nature and significance of authorship for Tibetan teachers?

The *snga 'gyur* is fundamentally a story of the origins of Treasures (*gter 'byung*) and the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet in line with other works of similar nature categorized as religious histories (*chos 'byung*).<sup>8</sup> Most of these works are characterised by a focus on religious content and were composed by religious figures. Like most of the works on Padmasambhava and his close disciples such as Ye shes mtsho rgyal, for instance, the *snga 'gyur* does little or nothing to prove the historicity of its claims.<sup>9</sup> In addition, in many instances, religious histories reflect the authors' agenda of glorifying and praising their respective schools, lineages, and traditions. In the context of contemporary Tibet, what they also do, I propose, is to reshape the Buddhist ethic and moral infrastructure after decades of chaos and confusion and revive and safeguard cultural and religious traditions essential to Tibetans' sense of national identity. This is especially true in the case of the activities of Buddhist visionaries known for their prophetic skills. Their works contribute to the rebuilding of faith, fostering trust in the Buddhist teachings, and disseminating the Buddhist history of Tibet.

The main body of the *snga 'gyur* offers an account of what a *gter ma* is, the purpose of revealing them, the difference between earth Treasures (*sa gter*), mind Treasures (*dgongs gter*), and pure visions (*dag snang*), and the origins of the revealers.<sup>10</sup> But it also emphasizes the continuing purpose of the Treasures as real

8. Martin 1997, 13–14; Cabezón and Jackson 1996, 30; van der Kuijp 1996, 4; Thondup 1987, 88–89.

9. See Gyatso's study on Ye shes mtsho rgyal on this (2006).

10. Although sharing similarities with the mind Treasures, 'pure visions' are not traditionally considered part of the mandate established by Padmasambhava. Therefore, while these teachings retain special value and are widely used as means of transmission, they are not unique to Treasure revealers or to rNying ma School teachers. See Thondup 1986, 90–91.



sources of teachings in the degenerate era, supplying spiritual sustenance until the beginning of the successful revival of Buddhist practice:

The ultimate teachings in this degenerate era will be protected by the treasures. Until [the time] the teachings of the Fifth Leader (Maitreya) rise, the activity of the profound treasures will never be eclipsed. (*snga 'gyur* f. 8a)

bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje writes that his *snga 'gyur* is 'a lamp clearing up the darkness, presented for the benefit of fortunate human beings, and thus a scheme meant to remove the obscuration [caused by] the disputes of future generations. (*snga 'gyur* f. 1a). Although the *snga 'gyur* is not technically a *gter ma*, it does share some of the same characteristics. Just like a *gter ma*, the *snga 'gyur* is meant to be beneficial in the circumstances contemporaneous to its appearance. And just like the revelations of *gter ma*, this text is believed to assist in the restoration and rejuvenation of the Buddhist doctrine in times of decline by reminding its readers of the pivotal role Padmasambhava had and continues to have in Tibet due to his ubiquitous epiphanic presence and the ongoing revelations of his teachings.

It is clear, therefore, that the memory of Padmasambhava in this context is fundamental to understanding the tradition of *gter ma* transmission and the mechanisms by which rNying ma adherents formed and refreshed their identity.<sup>11</sup> His deeds and teachings have inspired hundreds of Buddhist teachers' creations of an influential religious and intellectual movement that flowered in the eleventh century and is considered to be the birth of the Tibetan Buddhist renaissance (Stein 1972, 74; Davidson 2005, 210–11). In other words, to connect with Padmasambhava, his female partner Ye shes mtsho rgyal, and other pivotal figures associated with him including teachers, kings, and visionaries is to claim legitimate ties to the efflorescence of Buddhism in Tibet and the imperial power they enjoyed. It also harmonizes with an existing and well-established scriptural tradition, thus conforming to historical patterns and narrative consistency that assists the survival of the tradition itself (Harrison 2006, 3–4).

As for the reasons bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje wrote the *snga 'gyur*, on several occasions during interviews and conversations he commented that he was inspired by his connection with Padmasambhava. He believed that his version (*gsung zur*) of the story improves other previous histories in that it is inclusive not only of the practice of visionary revelation through Treasures, but also of the use of pure visions (*dag snang*) essential to the transmission of Buddhist teachings. Additionally, on a functional level his text promotes the practice of austerities (*dka' spyad*) as an important element in the training of a Buddhist visionary

11. The rNying ma School is not the only religious lineage to claim authority based on the revelation and transmission of spiritual texts and sacred items. The representatives of the Tibetan Bon tradition also claim a close connection with this system of transmission, which according to Bon po histories began to be systematized especially with visionaries such the eleventh-century gShen chen klu dga' (Martin 2001). Although sharing obvious similarities, the two traditions differ in terms of origins, as the Bon pos believe that their motivation behind the concealment of spiritual scriptures stemmed from persecutions of their practices and traditions during the imperial era when Buddhism started to grow in Tibet (Bstan 'dzin rnam dag 1983, 102–103). Another tradition of scriptural revelation that is not associated directly with Padmasambhava and/or the rNying ma School is the one recounting Atisha Dipamkara's retrieval of the *bka' chems ka khol ma* text in a pillar of the Jokhang temple in central Lhasa in 1048 (Martin 1997, 24; van der Kuijp 1996, 47–49).

and in the formation of the *gos dkar lcang lo'i sde*, the group of white-robed, long-haired yogis. In his words,

I have felt the need from my heart. Gu ru Rin po che and I are one thing, one thing only. The idea of writing this history (*lo rgyus*) of Gu ru Rin po che and the Treasure revealers in Tibet has come to me through him. In the text there are reference to masters, Treasure revealers, and Gu ru Rin po che. Although our minds are different, we share the same intention. This version is also different from other histories such as the *Padma bka' thang yig*, or other histories of Treasure revealers. This version is characterized by a focus also on pure visions, the spirit of austerities, and the importance of the white-robed long-haired class of *mantrins*. These are all key characteristics of Treasure revealers. This text is meant to be beneficial to all practitioners, both clerical and ordinary, but only if they listen with their ears, minds, and hearts. If they do not do this, if they do not act with the right attitude while listening or studying the text, it will be of no benefit at all.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's intentions for producing the *snga 'gyur* seem to go beyond the propagation of the value of Treasures in that he promotes the use of pure visions in the transmission of Buddhist teachings and Tantric practices, emphasizes the soteriological function of asceticism, and more importantly accentuates the social function of the *mantrins* (*sngags pa*).<sup>13</sup> The 'historical' accounts narrated in the text confirm the mechanisms and outcomes of past auspicious circumstances (*rten 'brel*) that are so important in Tibetan religious culture and especially in the Treasure revelation tradition (Jacoby 2014, 77–78). Additionally, the text emphasizes the centrality of visionary figures like bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje as a link between Tibet's present and its mythohistorical past.

bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje refers to Tantric practitioners as 'people of high conduct, children of the mountains, clad in fog and feeding on contemplation, who renounce the Eight Worldly Matters.'<sup>14</sup> The ideological background behind the employment of literary strategies such as this one is often found in hymns and devotional songs composed by inspired meditators and hermits in their works. In his translation and study of the life and works of the eighteenth-century saint 'Khrul zhiḡ ngag dbang tshe ring (1717–1794), the Ladakhi scholar Nawang Tsering wrote:

Nurtured as the sons of mountain-solitude, they dressed in clouds and mist and put on deserted caves as hats. Being totally unconcerned with the ways of this world, its (so-called) happiness and fulfilment, they always contemplated impermanence to create a sense of urgency and thus to make the best use of their lifetime. (Nawang 1979, 37)

12. bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje, personal communication, Ri phug kha mountain hermitage, August 18, 2000.

13. Janet Gyatso suggests (1986, 13) that the historical section of Treasures is a means to present evidence of the authenticity of Treasures as Buddhist scriptures. Their main purpose is thus to engender confidence (*nges shes bskyes pa*) in the readers and devotees. These texts provide a selection of events and stories from the Treasures' lives but also a series of signs (*rtags*), and exemplary forms (*dpe byad*) in order for followers to become confident in the Treasures themselves.

14. *snga 'gyur* (f. 11a). The list of the 'jig rten chos brgyad or Eight Worldly Concerns are *rnyed pa* (profit), *ma rnyed pa* (loss), *snyan pa* (reputation), *mi snyan pa* (defamation), *bstod pa* (praise), *smad pa* (blame), *bde ba* (pleasure), and *sdug bsngal* (misery).



This vision of asceticism and austerity epitomizes the ideal path that bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje followed during his life and promoted among his disciples. This ideal evokes the classic model of the realized hermit in Tibet as popularized by the figure of Mi la ras pa (1040–1123), the most well-known hermit in Tibetan history, who finds a prestigious place in the *snga 'gyur*.<sup>15</sup> Mi la ras pa's rigorous regime of asceticism (*dka' spyad*) and exertion (*brtson 'grus*) offers the perfect model, in the eyes of bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje, for anyone interested in pursuing liberation through mystic experience and contemplation. His references to the natural environment, renouncing attachment to clothes and food, and rigorous asceticism provides a useful rationale to uphold the doctrinal aspirations and ethical integrity of *mantrins*. In its concern with legitimating non-celibate tantric practitioners, the *snga 'gyur* accompanies Treasure texts in bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's *Yang gsang rta mgrin rdo rje me char* collected revelations. These belong to the tantric sphere including rituals, meditation practices, and yogic technologies mostly pertinent to the Tantric community. One such text in his collection is the *rTa mgrin yang gsang rdo rje me char gyi rtsol med gsang sngags myur lam* (TsM) or the 'Quick effortless path of the secret mantras according to the *rTa mgrin yang gsang rdo rje me char*'. As I discuss the meaning and the impact of this text extensively elsewhere, for reasons of space I will not do it here (Terrone 2010, 222–238). Suffice it to say, however, that this is an instructional Tantric manual (*khrid yig*) focused on an empowerment ritual for the meditative realization of Hayagrīva. bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje presented this text, upon revelation, as a mind Treasure (*dgongs gter*) in 1989. In the typical fashion of a mind Treasure, in the concluding lines of the colophon in the text we read:

Now I shall hide these instructions in you, oh Dharmarāja, in the space of the mind. Because they will be beneficial as a remedy in the future, in times of degeneration and suffering, they protect both the teachings and the living beings. It is a treasury of good Dharma for the one named rDo rje of the bird year. (TsM, f. 8b–9a)

bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje considers the TsM to be in line with other Tantric manuals and instructional materials practiced by saints and masters of the past in the form of both oral instructions and Treasure revelations. In particular, the TsM addresses the class of non-celibate Tantric adepts known in Tibetan as *gos dkar lcang lo can* because of the white dress (*gos dkar*) and long hair (*lcang lo*) that characterize their ritual attire and symbolize their dedication to mystic experience.<sup>16</sup> Beyond the philosophical content of the text, what is particularly interesting, however, is the discussion of a specific set of Tantric regalia worn by bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje himself and members of his community. In the typical fashion of Tantric initiation texts, the TsM expounds on a particular set of implements and decorations (*rgyan*) that glorify and support the figure of the Tantric adept (Terrone 2010, 227). The TsM, therefore, seems to provide the basis in this revelation tradition for the formal recognition of meditative achievements, and integration of a series of ritual attributes and accouterments of the Tantric adept.

15. As we shall see below, bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje is particularly interested in stressing Mi la ras pa's trust in his teacher, Mar pa chos kyi blo gros (1012–1097), who, renowned for his bad temper, tested the determination of the young but strong-willed man only to accept him as his student after much arduous scrutiny.

16. For a study of the function of the long hair and dreadlocks in the Tibetan Tantric tradition, see lCe nag tshang 2003 and Bogin 2008.

These symbols (*brda rtags*) include long hair, white robe, conch-shell earrings, bone ornaments, gold cross *vajra*, mirror, *rakṣa* prayer beads, meditation ribbon, a nine-pronged *vajra*, a ritual dagger, the raven crest, a black silken cloak, a sling, a bow and arrows, and a pair of felt boots. Each of these emblems (*rgyan*) is in fact symbolically (*brda*) associated to a specific field of spiritual realization attained by the Tantric adept. The text is an initiation for the aspiring Tantric practitioner and member of the long-haired, white-robed yogis.

### The *snag 'gyur* and its sources

The fact that bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's work reproduces almost verbatim a significant portion of the first section of bDud 'joms Rin po che's *Gangs ljongs rgyal bstan yongs rdzogs kyi phyi mo snga 'gyur rdo rje theg pa'i bstan pa rin po che ji ltar byung ba'i tshul dag cing gsal bar brjod pa lha dbang g.yul las rgyal ba'i rnga bo che'i sgra dbyangs* (henceforth 'Short History'), if at first disappointing to me, makes sense upon further reflection. The 'Short History' itself contains entire chapters that themselves are anthologies of previous works including Chapter Five and Chapter Six, which as Gyurme Dorje notes were 'masterfully anthologized' by bDud 'joms Rin po che (Gyurme Dorje 1991, 398). bDud 'joms Rin po che (1904–1987) composed this work in 1962 after arriving in India as a refugee, and one edition was published in China by the Sichuan Nationalities Publishing House in 1996, as well under the title *bDud 'joms chos 'byung*.<sup>17</sup> As one of the most popular and influential works on the history of the rNying ma tradition, it was no surprise to find a copy of this text in bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's personal library. In the compilation of a text, either a historiographical treatise or a religious scripture, it is not unlikely that entire portions of manuscripts have been drawn from other histories, scriptures, or doxographical texts, and that their titles are not always reported or listed in the text as in the case of bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's manuscript. In the introduction to their translation of bDud 'joms Rin po che's 'Short History', Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein point out that Tibetan Buddhist authors are not acquainted with the concept of 'ownership' of intellectual property as developed in Euro-American societies and that they would borrow entire chapters and passages from each other freely and with impunity (Gyurme Dorje 1991, 398). Western scholars tend too easily to label a Tibetan historiographical work as a pastiche or a mere 'cut-and-paste' job. In particular, accusations of plagiarism have been raised about *gter ma* texts, as noted in 'Ju Mi pham rgya mtsho's well-known nineteenth-century text titled 'Gem that Clears the Waters: An Investigation of Treasure Revealers' (*gTer ston brtag ba chu dwangs nor bu*), in which he writes about authentic and fraudulent Treasure texts (Doctor 2005, 44–71). That a contemporary visionary and Buddhist master such as bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje drew verbatim on existing although unattributed sources in the compilation of his own work suggests to me that he felt a need to maintain faithful coherence with the ancient past while at the same time 'blessing' the present through retransmitting new versions of these previously established values and cultural norms. This strategy is also evident in other works such as the *rNying ma'i chos 'byung*, *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, and the well-known *gTer ston rgya brtsa*, all

17. Please refer to the Appendix below for a reproduction of both passages in transliteration and publication record.

authoritative sources for the Treasure tradition. Furthermore, it can also represent the necessity to maintain the discursive strategy of the *gter ma* tradition and the core of its narrative as closely focused as possible on the already well-established story of Padmasambhava in Tibet as presented in existing texts such as the *Padma bka' thang*.

To compose his text, bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje drew a significant amount of material from several sources, some being attributed and others not. The most substantial example is to be found in six folios (2a–8a) of the *snga'gyur*, in which he narrates the core story of Padmasambhava's activities in Tibet. These pages are a verbatim reuse of Chapter six from bDud 'joms Rin po che's *rNying ma'i chos 'byung* ('A Religious History of the Ancients'), titled 'The history of the profound Treasures of the very secret close transmission.' bDud 'jom Rin po che's Chapter six is divided into two sections. The first section is titled 'A Brief History of the Extremely Profound Short Lineage of the Treasures' (*Shin tu zab pa nye brgyud gter ma'i lo rgyus mdo tsam brjod pa*) and narrates the history of the Treasure tradition and its association with Padmasambhava. The second part is the longest portion of the chapter and consists of a chronological series of biographies of Treasure revealers beginning with the tenth-century master Sangs rgyas bla ma and ending with the late nineteenth-century visionary 'Ju mi pham 'jams dbyang rnam rgyal rgya mtsho (1846–1912).

### Textual borrowing to promote an agenda

What does this unacknowledged appropriation of sequences of quotations and portions of texts tell us about bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje, the historian's enterprise, and the Buddhist author's goal? Rather than convicting him of plagiarism, a concept largely absent in the Tibetan traditional scriptural tradition, what we might find interesting and revealing is the significance of this Buddhist author's literary endeavour. First off, as we read bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's text, we cannot but notice that this is not so much a mere repetition of old stories as it is a repetition of *select* old stories. In other words, bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje has chosen specific episodes in the popularly known history of Tibet that he can employ to forward his present agenda. There is a criterion in his selection of the episodes he chose to recycle in his narrative, for these episodes indicate not just his interest in reminding the reader of the central role that Padmasambhava played in the introduction and establishment of Buddhism in Tibet, but also in pointing out that Padmasambhava was not a monastic, but a Tantric householder, a non-celibate Buddhist master. Additionally, his selective borrowings serve to underscore the superiority of Tantra over other systems and the power of the magical skills often associated with it to protect Buddhism. This is evident in the episode about gLang dar ma and gNubs sangs rgyas ye shes, where the latter wins over the former by virtue of his Tantric skills. The politics of Buddhist writing here suggests that bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje is trying to steer the reader's attention toward a specific set of events and worldview, namely one that upholds the virtue of non-celibate Tantric practitioners, promotes the power of Tantras, and advocates for the continued relevance of Treasures and their revealers:

All the future generations of practitioners who study with the white-robed Tantric yogis will follow the example of the lives of their preceding highly realized teach-

ers. By abiding in their own mind they will experience signs of accomplishments as inner qualities manifest externally and will spontaneously generate the three types of awareness [related to body, speech, and mind]. (*snga 'gyur* 13a–13b)

I suggest that this passage as well as others produced in other manuscripts illustrates bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's attempt to promote non-celibate *mantrins*' authority and legitimacy in the eyes of often critical and sceptical views of them in the larger context of mainstream monastic Buddhism. The criticism put forth about Treasure revealers of ambiguous moral demeanour and doubtful authority by mKhan po 'Jigs med phun tshogs (1933–2004), one of the most influential Buddhist teachers in twentieth-century Tibet, is well known (Germano 1998, 72). He condemned the alleged misappropriation of real Treasure teachings by charlatans (*zog po*) who appropriate revelations performed by earlier Treasure revealers and disseminate them as their own productions. He also often claimed that many Tantric professionals (*sngags pa*) pretended to be Treasure revealers by composing ritual texts full of mistakes and disconnected instructions which they then disseminated as Treasure teachings (*gter chos*) and *ḍākinī* codes (*mkha' 'gro'i brda*) (bsTan 'dzin rgya mtsho 2005, 38–39). Another indication of this criticism can be found in the autobiography of the late visionary, sKu gsum gling pa padma gtum po (1934–2009), who presents his own defence against the criticism of being a charlatan (A bu dkar lo 2003, 82). Therefore, it seems to me that in response to these doubts, bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje makes an explicit effort to revamp the role of non-celibate Tantric teachers and visionaries by praising their services and applauding their skills:

In particular, since most of the profound *dharma* teachings contained in the treasures are bound by the symbolic script of the *ḍākinīs*, apart from the fortunate human beings [the treasure finders themselves], any other person would find [the script] impossible to decode. As [these fortunate beings] have to run into the actual depicted seal of the transmitted precepts of the great O rgyan, [the teachings] are not interrupted by the lineage of ordinary human beings and [their] origin is [thus] noble, the symbolic [script] is unfabricated, their words are without any mistake, and the meaning is flawless. Having been translated [from] the secret symbolic script of *ḍākinīs*, these texts are profound and [of] great blessing [power]. No matter how much the unfortunate beings try, they will be like a blind person trying to conceive of an elephant and will be incapable of examining even something small. Truthfully the treasure revealers are beings who have transcended the sphere of ordinary activity (*snga 'gyur* 4b).<sup>18</sup>

This polemic was certainly useful in eleventh- to thirteenth-century claims for power, authority, and self-authentication that accompanied the large-scale rise of various schools of Buddhism in Tibet (Davidson 2005, 216). However, it is also useful for contemporary Tibetans, who find themselves in a historical moment that continues to challenge Buddhist religious values (Germano 1998, 89; Terrone 2008). Since the end of the Cultural Revolution in the late 1970s, despite 'religious freedom' being nominally guaranteed by the PRC, religious activities have been nevertheless strictly monitored and scrutinized. Many influential monasteries have been and continue to be under strict surveillance, and one consequence of this is that religious education is not the monopoly of monastic institutions

18. The original passage in Tibetan can be found in transliteration in the Appendix below.

but is now thriving in religious encampments and Buddhist institutes associated primarily with charismatic religious leaders who are often Treasure revealers.

The remaining half of the *snga'gyur* is devoted to the role and the relevance of the white-robed, long-haired yogis who lived during the first translation period. He describes these as followers of the 'quick path' of the Great Perfection (*rdzogs chen*). Among the ancient historical figures who appear in the section are gNubs Sangs rgyas ye shes (ninth century), Mi la ras pa (eleventh century), and Rwa lotsāwa rdo rje grags (eleventh century).<sup>19</sup> Relevant to bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's interests, some of these Buddhist masters are renowned among other things for their achievements in magic skills and others for their Tantric practices associated with the *sgrub pa bka' brgyad* ('eight heruka') cycles that are central to bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's tradition. Their lives and activities are well documented in several Tibetan writings. In bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's literary depiction, these figures represent some of the highest forms of practice and aspects within Tibetan Buddhism including the Great Perfection, the quick path to liberation, and through the practice of hardship (*dka'spyad*) and perseverance (*'bad rtsol*) they can truly strive for the welfare of the Buddhist teachings and sentient beings. bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje makes it clear that only through honest and consistent practice can one achieve complete liberation from conceptual thinking through the activation of mind energy, or the combination of *prāṇa* and mind (*rlung sems*), and thus achieve power over one's own mind (*rang rgyud*). He then offers moral advice regarding the necessity of practising with assiduity, maintaining good conduct without misbehaving and without indulging in random talk. He writes that constant Buddhist practice in times of degeneration, indifference to mundane concerns, cultivation of the attitude of renunciation and disenchantment with the world, together with regular contemplative practice will lead to achieving non-conceptual experience, realization, and the bliss-heat of channels and wind (*rtsa rlung*).

This reconstruction, therefore, serves the purpose of both praising the teachers of the past and enhancing the value of rDzogs chen by relating revered masters to it. The text legitimizes bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's claims to authority by framing his activities and work within the world of his predecessors including renowned Tantric masters and Treasure revealers. A Treasure revealer's legitimacy is thus confirmed by analogy to other Tibetans who are remembered for similar skills and deeds (Cuevas 2003, 22).

Buddhist texts, as any other type of religious text or scripture, can be seen both as sacred rhetoric as well as a form of literature. Ralph Flores comments in this regard that sacred rhetoric 'is part of a highly performative religious and literary discourse that preaches, consecrates, ritualizes, praises, proselytizes, narrates, sings, confesses, prays, advises, consoles, prophesies, heals, accuses, curses, forgives, memorializes, exhorts, warns and, above all, inspires.' (Flores 2008, 11). If this is true, then the author of the sacred scripture is herself moved

19. Attempt to fix definite dates for historical figures in the Tibeta imperial era is problematic and the dating may be based more on mythology than scholarly assessment. The tradition has it that gNubs Sangs rgyas ye shes lived for well over a hundred years, and started as a student of Guru Rinpoche. And, for the story of his relations with the emperor Glang dar ma to work, he must have lived during the ninth century. Not all scholars agree with this traditional dating, however, as Samten Karmay for instance, puts him in the tenth century (1988, 101).

by emotions and sentiments in the composition of the text, making the text speak and agitate the readers' minds. In his study of the Bible as a work of literature, Leland Ryken claims that '[w]ell constructed stories have unity, coherence, and emphasis' (1984, 14). Ryken believes that the Bible can be seen as a work of literature because the truth is not simply described but achieved through experience, its narrative is concrete and not abstract, the story is carefully crafted and constructed, and its impact on the reader is affective, not detached, allowing the audience to participate imaginatively and emotionally (Ryken 1984, 15). All these elements can be seen in the *snga 'gyur* as well where intertextual strategies are essential components of the writing. I thus propose that as a Buddhist text, the *snga 'gyur* is a mixed book, where originality and aspects of intertextuality including imitation, borrowing, and reuse participate cohesively in the complicity of writing (Ryken 1984, 12). In this light, authenticity becomes a porous, permeable quality of the text, where complicity, interconnectedness, as well as 'pedagogy, persuasion, and "skillful means" (*upāya*)' participate in the conditioned narrative of the text itself (Flores 2008, 11).

### Intertextuality and originality

If bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje had a clear agenda and knew how to promote it, why did he copy other portions of publications? What does this phenomenon tell us about the author's sense of authenticity and originality? Intertextuality and reuse of passages have been consistently documented in the various readings of Buddhist scripture (Harrison 2006; Williams 2009). Intertextuality typically involves referencing other works in implicit and explicit ways, while the act of reuse implies the borrowing of passages and/or entire chapters from other sources without attributing them to their original authors. Both of these were not uncommon practices among Tibetans, not to mention other Asian Buddhist authors, and both are still practiced today.<sup>20</sup> Tibetan Buddhist authors have for a long time borrowed, collated and edited existing material to repurpose it selectively in order to impose certain historical models and 'views of the past' on the present.<sup>21</sup> In his 1977 study and translation of the *bar do thos sgrol*, Giuseppe Tucci addressed the various editions of the revealed *qter ma* text attributed to Kar ma gling pa (1326–1386) and suggested that this text was in fact 'una compilazione' (an anthology).<sup>22</sup> Therefore, I propose that as a religious history of Tibet, the *snga 'gyur* is similar to the majority of literary genres composed within the Buddhist milieu in that it aims to edify the glories of the past and bring luster to the Buddhist figures contained therein.

The phenomenon of texts within a text that begs the question of who is speaking and who is writing presents an old dilemma not unique to Buddhist scriptures, for the practice of intertextuality is likely to be as old as the first literary productions. For Julia Kristeva intertextuality is 'a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double' (Kristeva 1969, 85; Moi 1986, 37). A text, therefore, as Michael Worton and Judith

20. cf. Cantwell and Mayer 2015 and Freschi 2015.

21. Michael Aris quoted in Martin 1997, 9; Sørensen 2000, xiii; van der Kuip 1996, 49.

22. Tucci 1990, 10; Blezer 2002, 1997, 129–130; Cuevas 2003, 19–24 and 200–204.



Still concur, 'cannot exist as a hermetic or self-sufficient whole, and so does not function as a closed system' (1990, 1). They explain that,

[t]his repetition of past or of contemporary texts can range from the most conscious and sophisticated elaboration of other poets' work, to a scholarly use of sources, or the quotation (with or without the use of quotation marks) of snatches of conversation typical of a certain social milieu at a certain historical moment. (1990, 1)

Additionally, we can often appreciate how the role of the reader and that of the writer intersect and overlap, whereas it can become hard to clearly distinguish the former from the latter as the author, consciously or not, brings to his work all the readings he has previously assimilated (Worton and Still 1990, 1–2). In this analysis I think it is important to understand that imitation was not a taboo in ancient times and to some extent even in more recent times, but rather a natural act of realism. Plato reminds his readers that 'the "poet" always copies an earlier act of creation, which is itself already a copy' (Worton and Still 1990, 3). Even though the appropriation of the work of others without attribution seems to be a concern that some Buddhist leaders have expressed, as we will see below, I think it is important to understand that in Tibet as in many other societies, including dynastic China, memorization, copying, and using texts already written by others was not frequently a subject of criticism.

Therefore, in the case of Tibetan texts, quotation, imitation, and textual appropriation should not be seen as signs of uncreative performance, but rather the opposite as 'originality may not be the best way of regarding a text' (Worton and Still 1990, 12). After all, just as many authors rewrite works of their predecessors without recognizing that they are doing so, many others go even further and 'consciously imitate, quote, and/or plagiarise extensively' (Worton and Still 1990, 12). Intertextuality, then, as Tiphaine Samoyault poetically expressed in several of her writings, is the 'memory of literature' itself (Samoyault 2001). It is a vehicle by which art is disseminated and thoughts, works, and poems of the past revive, survive and thrive in the voluptuous folds of the present. Works of literature, and I would include religious works, 'are built from systems, codes, and traditions established by previous works of literature' (Allen 2011, 1). Prophets, and in our case revealers, do not invent new religious systems, but rather they reappropriate, redefine, and reinterpret what in a way already exists, thus 'providing fresh sets of symbols and metaphors with which succeeding generations can describe the nature of reality' (Aslan 2005, 17). Therefore, they repropose, at times in slightly differently organized and narrated forms, what has already been expressed in the past.

In this regard, Robert Mayer has convincingly posited that especially Treasure revealers tend to compose communally and rarely individually (2015, 230). It is also interesting what he suggests about the way revealed texts find their way into a final literary product:

When new Treasures do innovate, the innovations do not always all persist through the generations of later editors, who may seek to integrate the new tradition with established ritual and meditative sequences, retaining a few distinctive elements, but ensuring that the practice tradition fits smoothly with familiar ritual forms. (Mayer 2015, 230)

In the estimation of an author such as bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje, the mark of what is authentic does not derive from its originality but rather from an evaluation of the knowledge contained in the text, the experience it offers, and the emotions that it produces. Treasure revealers' writing practices including reproducing verbatim entire passages from previous Treasure works thus make this sharing of literature not random but one that accords with 'more specific criteria such as lineage, incarnation, affiliation, and the prophesied destiny of the individual Treasure Revealer' (Mayer 2015, 230). In a tradition where oral, verbal, and visionary practices are part of the unity of the local fabric of both social as well as religious communications, the authentic text assumes various plastic identities, adapting sources and absorbing authors. In this sense it is worth mentioning what Mayer has recently proposed, that:

Although allowed some leeway in expressing personal style, Treasure Revealers do not primarily act as innovative creative writers, or authors, in the modern sense. Rather, they offer, in communion with their spiritual companions of the past and present, their contributions as tradents, that is to say, as transmitters of the ancient traditions within lineage communities deemed authentic.

(Mayer 2015, 232)

Mayer, following Jonathan Silk's suggestion, finds analogies in the way both Tibetan Buddhist visionaries and some Jewish authors produce their works not by inventing or creating some new sacred literature, but by transmitting and passing on already established texts (Mayer 2015, 233). Thus, as already mentioned above, the actual value of the text is not the innovation it promulgates, but the faithful, at times verbatim, adherence to the sacred truth and the authentic knowledge from ancient past.

Our concept of a text being one's 'own words' is dependent on a conception of authorship as an individual enterprise. However, just as the 'agglomerative or aggregational character' of Mahāyāna scriptures, for instance, is well documented, in Tibetan history and present, authorship is from the beginning a communal process, one that draws on historical lineage (what we might call plagiarizing other's words) as much as it does on present community (scribes, disciples, copyists, and so forth).<sup>23</sup> There is growing evidence and consensus in Tibetan Buddhist studies that historical and biographical writing was a multifaceted process in ancient Tibet rather than stemming from a single historical 'kernel' (Quintman 2014, 19–20). Historical writing in Tibet transcended the common boundaries of canonical authority and allowed for a methodological approach based on adaptation and adoption of fragments and stories to develop the narrative. Tibetan Buddhist teachers were and still are in many cases self-published writers. Some manuscripts in Tibet were hand-carved on woodblocks for further printing and large-scale distribution. However, for a long time, the majority of non-canonical texts were hand written and frequently not by the authors themselves, but by their scribes.<sup>24</sup> This is still the case today in many Buddhist circles as I have witnessed within bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's community. Like other Treasure revealers in modern Tibet, bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje

23. Harrison 2006, 2; 2003, 142; Williams 2009, 38–44; Cabezón 2001, 251.

24. For a study on Buddhist authorship and the role of scribes, see Cabezón 2001.

composed his texts aided by scribes.<sup>25</sup> I witnessed this process myself in Nang chen when bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje would reveal a Treasure or compose a text orally for his scribe bKra shi mtsho mo to transcribe. She would then write down the master copy of the manuscript and reread it to bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje over an extended period of time, sometimes taking days or weeks. Together with the scribe he would edit, correct, and polish the text. Finally, bKra shis mtsho mo would rewrite a clean copy as a final version. In bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's congregation, some disciples would spend time and effort handwriting copies of prayers or other texts for themselves. Recently the cheap and widespread use of photocopy machines provide a more efficient alternative to this laborious copying process, but still members of this community choose the traditional approach of copying texts by hand. Most of bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's texts were therefore written down by several individuals around him including bKra shis mtsho mo, mentioned above, and then alternatively bKra shis rgyal mtshan, one of bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's closest followers and himself a visionary, Tshe bzang bsam gling rin po che (1972–2009), or a couple of monks who were known for their reading and writing skills. This process involved attentive reading, correcting typos, adding missing syllables, particles, and words to improve style and form before bKra shis mtsho mo read the final draft to her master.

As a result, what emerges from my reading of the *snga 'gyur* is that it features a plurality of voices and a multiplicity of texts, some of bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's own authorship and some not. In this light, he was a reader before being an author. Despite claiming that he was illiterate and uneducated, he could nevertheless read Tibetan and received basic writing education as a child even though he never received a monastic education. Memorization has always been an essential component of reading and studying texts within monastic Buddhist education in the Tibetan tradition. The great works of philosophy, epistemology, and logic in monastic colleges across Tibet, are first memorized and only later discussed and debated thus prioritizing memorization before creative thinking and reasoning (Dreyfus 2003, 91–92). bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje was not trained in the same education system prominent in more monastic and scholastic traditions. However, on more than one occasion, I have witnessed the 'old lama' (or *bla rgan*, as his closest followers called him) repeat out of memory long portions of several classics of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition including the *Padma bka' thang*, and the songs of Mi la ras pa. He would also recite his own songs of realizations (*nyams mgur*) that he had composed himself in the past. By acknowledging his gratitude to his predecessors and ancestors not only from the rNying ma but also from other Buddhist schools such as the bKa' rgyud, bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje not only deliberately showed his eclectic tendencies and respect for the rich Buddhist heritage he received, but also consciously established his own creative space and voice in proclaiming his tradition.

### Recycling history

One of bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's dominant characteristics as a visionary and a Buddhist master is his devoted interest in the past, in his version of religious

25. For another example from the early twentieth-century, Sera mkha' 'gro (1892–1940) used scribes to write down many of her revelations. See Jacoby 2014, 8.

history. He drew on Tibet's ancient history as the source of his legitimacy as a Treasure revealer, and reinforced his work through tuning it with works of earlier authors. He portrayed an image of Tibet imbued with the imperial glories and spiritual achievements of the past to foster confidence and inspiration among his followers. Recollections from his past pervaded several moments of our meetings and conversations when I was at his hermitage. He would tell me stories, episodes, and memoirs from his travels, masters he met, and teachings he received. More than the musings of an elderly man, bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje used stories to make a religious point or to emphasize the relevance of a Buddhist teaching. In clear conflict with some of the criteria that Carl Becker discusses with regard to the 'detached historian', bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's approach to the writing of history constitutes a departure, if not a downright severance from the historiographer idealized and even prescribed in Euro-American academe (Becker 1958, 13–23). He was not a trained historian and yet as a Buddhist master and visionary claiming rebirth from an eight-century figure, he was not detached from the historical processes that he described in his writings. In other words, he was not outside the subject of his own investigation and historical narrative (Becker 1958, 24). In fact, for him the religious motive drove his urge to communicate events of the past and the exemplary lives of his predecessors. Austere asceticism, therefore, was a desirable path to spiritual salvation, a method of self-discipline and mastery of yogic practice proven to be the most efficient path to realizing fully that the nature of material and mental universes is purely conceptual, and thus leading to attaining mental power and illumination.

As a man of religion and a representative of faith, bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje incarnates the dichotomy between the theologian and the historian, thus 'he is necessarily engaged with his subject, and therefore liable to be subjective in his judgements' (Murray 1989, 165). Like Becker's historian, however, bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje had a 'concept round which to group the facts — a concept derived from the practical or intellectual interests that concern him' (Becker 1958, 23). Therefore, just like many other Tibetan Buddhist authors, bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje is not concerned with the truthfulness of the events he writes about and as a consequence does not feel the need to provide evidence either to those facts nor to the sources he uses. As an officially recognized incarnation, an honoured visionary, and an established Buddhist master, he already had all the evidence necessary to provide authenticity to his writings, bolstered in part by the way he underscored his points by borrowing from other famous works of religious literature. Therefore, bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje was less concerned with innovation, creativity, and originality, than he was with maintaining faith in his lineage and tradition by respecting and adopting the contributions of the past in order to continue to transmit the authentic tradition in the present (Mayer 2015, 232).

The *snga 'gyur* engages the past by reproducing the 'canonical' account of the origins of Buddhism in Tibet to such an extent that it even appropriates portions of this canon from other sources. However, in his conversation with the past, an author like bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje takes many liberties that transform past events while documenting them. In his authorial hands, a religious history such as the *snga 'gyur* is a 'textualized reminder of the past', to use LaCapra's terms, in that it is not merely a document of facts (credible or legendary, original or appropriated) that conveys information about events; it also includes 'the roles of

commitment, interpretation, and imagination' (LaCapra 1980, 247; 250). The text, therefore, acquires the characteristics of a *dialogue* rather than a documentary, in which the author interacts with texts in different ways and different forms, respecting the past without neglecting the present (LaCapra 1980, 254). The text thus becomes not a property of some sort, but enters the sphere of public domain where intentions, interpretations, and authority transcend the contractual criterion of normative textual production to give full freedom to meaning and function (LaCapra 1980, 255–256).

The transmission of Buddhism in Tibet and historical narratives related to the early history of Buddhism in the land of snows are based on faith, where tradition overweighs any attempt to give those very same events and stories some kind of secular historicity. Therefore, religion and history in the case of the author and the text under scrutiny here cannot be separated, because the historical facts in the narrative are not knowable events. For this reason, the difference between rewriting and re-interpreting already well-established narratives or simply reproducing them in their entirety from earlier sources does not seem to affect the importance of the text for bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's community.

### Concluding remarks

The purpose of this paper is to explore the significance of imitation and copying in Tibetan Buddhist literature through a specific case study. In Tibet as in other Asian cultures, such as China for instance, reverence for the past and imitation of classics as well as modelling on ancient religious masters is not only socially accepted, but pedagogically encouraged. Recent developments in the study of Treasure texts in the rNying ma *gter ma* tradition of visionary revelation unveil more and more convincingly the communal rather than individual authorship of sacred scriptures, a practice meant to disseminate older authorized narratives, liturgies, and histories for the benefit of living lineages and traditions.

In the specific case of bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's *snga 'gyur*, one could argue that his textual borrowing from bDud 'joms Rin po che's 'Short History' is a case of plagiarism. However, based on the discussion above, there is ample evidence that the correlation between imitation or plagiarism and the absence of originality and creativity is not relevant in the case of Tibetan Buddhist literary works. In fact, as examples from literary theory and criticism suggest, intertextuality and the appropriation and reuse of other textual material can be in itself a method of original literary composition (Mayer 2015). It seems clear to me that bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje tactically appropriated a specific section of bDud 'joms Rin po che's text that he wanted to highlight, so as to underscore its importance by linking it to authoritative traditions. The goal of the *snga 'gyur* is to honor and revamp the role of *mantrins* and Treasure revealers as the supreme preservers and propagators of the Vajrayāna system of Buddhism.

Since the mid-twentieth century and the Chinese takeover of Tibet, freedom of religious practice has gone through several phases of prohibition, revision, and adaptation. Both monastic and nonmonastic religious communities have struggled to restore the texture of their religious life, reconnect with century-old traditions and practices, and restart literary productions halted for decades and still controlled by the state. As a literary production generated by a local Tibetan Buddhist master under the new circumstances of the Chinese administration of

Tibet, the value of the *snga 'gyur* lies in its project to benefit the Buddhist tradition, foster faith in its pious followers, and reconnect present-day Tibetans with the glory of Tibet's past and its unique Buddhist culture. The borrowing of others' works in the form of paragraphs, phrases, expressions or entire pages should not hamper our appreciation of this project but instead stimulate our interest in understanding this form of authorship. Despite being a hermit and favouring a secluded life dedicated to meditation and ritual, bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje was a 'man of the text', reading and composing texts, quoting from scriptures at will, often remembering in which text to look to find a certain passage, and always remembering where he left off in his dictation of a Treasure text he was in the process of revealing. Such an activity easily speaks for the 'public domain' of texts, where borrowing, using, and 'copying' from other texts is common (Neumaier-Dargay 1992, 6). It is also important to remember how memorization and rote learning are central to the traditional Tibetan way of learning and how such a practice would inevitably blur the boundaries between one's own production and that of idealized masters of the tradition. All things being equal, however, it is also important to keep in mind the author's intention when we look at authorship. As Dan Martin and Dominick LaCapra note in different works, ultimately intentionality can affect an author's product. While Martin believes that plagiarism is 'a conscious effort to unjustly assume the authority that comes with authorship by concealing one's actual sources' (2008, 29, n. 41), LaCapra, instead is interested more in the dialogical quality of an openly authored text. He posits that 'to believe that authorial intentions fully control the meaning or functioning of texts ... is to assume a predominantly normative position that is out of touch with important dimensions of language use and reader response.' (LaCapra 1980, 256). Finally, central to these remarks is the often multi-handed nature of religious literary production in Tibet, where in many instances editors, publishers, distributors, and reviewers take part in the at times long process of writing. After all, what is important in devotees' eyes is not the way a Buddhist work was composed, but rather the message it conveys in order to facilitate following the path of religious practice that a teacher has laid down for them. Therefore, rather than understanding bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's historical work through modern critical Western historiographical lenses, it would be more productive to appreciate its value in terms of the relevance of its content for its intended audience as well as the literary devices it uses (Dorje and Kapstein 1991, 398).

With this in mind, we may conclude that the general purpose of bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's work is to reinforce Tibetans' sense of cultural and national identity, and to bridge Tibet's past with its present through retelling narratives that glorify Tibet's role in transmitting Buddhist doctrine. The more specific purpose of the writing is its focus on upholding the class of non-celibate Buddhist *mantrins* as virtuous in addition to celibate monastics. As non-Tibetan readers of bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's *snga 'gyur*, we would surely benefit from keeping in mind that such a work does not represent the single authored, original, academically rigorous literary writing we assume in the Euro-American culture. It was instead just what the author himself claimed it was, a Buddhist text drawing on the works of previous outstanding figures of the past.



## Appendix

The pages below are excerpts from bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's *snga 'gyur* [f. 2a – f. 8a] (left) that match with the sixth chapter from bDud 'joms Rin po che's *rNying ma'i chos 'byung* [pp. 411–419] (right) as discussed above. The additional italicized parts in the *snga 'gyur* text below are bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's summarized versions of omitted passages from Dudjom's text. The version I used for this study is the 'History of the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism', *Gangs ljongs ryal bstan yongs rdzogs kyi phyi mo snga 'gyur rdo rje theg pa'i bstan pa rin po che ji ltar byung ba'i tshul dag cing gsal bar brjod pa lha dbang g.yul las rgyal ba'i rnga bo che'i sgra dbyangs* (Chengdu, PRC: Sichuan Nationalities Publishing House, 1996).

*Don zab gnad smin shel dkar me long  
(snga 'gyur)*

*Shin tu zab pa nye brgyud gter ma'i lo rgyus  
mdo tsam brjod pa from the bDud 'joms chos  
'byung, Chengdu: Sichuan Nationalities  
Publishing House, 1996, pp. 411–419.*

[f. 2a] zab gsang nye rgyud gter gyi lo rgyus  
mdo tsam brjod par bya na / de la 'ang klu'i  
rgyal po'i zhus pa'i mdo las / dkon mchog  
gsum gyi gdung mi chad pa'i gter chen po  
mi zad pa dang / chos rtogs pa chen po mi  
zad pa tshad med pa'i gter chen po dang /  
sems can 'gu [= mgu] bar bya ba'i mi zad  
pa gter chen po dang / nam mkha' dang  
mnyams [= mnyam] pa'i mi zad pa'i gter  
chen po ste / bzhi po de dag ni gter chen  
po mi zad pa yin no / zhes pa dang / gter  
gyi ngo bo'am rang bzhin bstan zhing de  
bzhing du 'phags pa bsod nams thams cad  
sdud pa'i ting nge 'dzin gyi mdo las / dri  
ma med pa'i gzi brjid chos 'dod pa'i byang  
chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po rnams  
kyi[s] / chos kyi gter ri dang ri sul dang  
shing dag gi nang du bcug pa yang yod de  
/ gzungs dang chos kyi sgo mtha' yas pa  
gleg bam [= glegs bam] du byas pa [f. 2b]  
dag kyang lag tu 'ong[s] bar 'gyur ro / zhes  
pas kyang gter chos dang / gter gnas dang  
'don pa po'i gang zag bcas legs par bstan /  
bsam pa phun gsum tshogs pa ni / gal te  
sangs rgyas mi bzhugs kyang nam mkha'i  
dkyil dang / rtsig[s] pa dang shing rnams  
las 'byung ngo / zhes pa gnam chos phyogs  
kyang bstan pa dang / gzhan yang yongs  
su grags pa'i mdo rgyud ci rigs pa las / gter

[p. 411] da ni shin tu zab pa nye brgyud gter  
ma'i lo rgyus mdo tsam brjod par bya ste /  
de'ang klu'i rgyal pos zhus pa'i mdo las /  
dkon mchog gsum gyi gdun mi chad pa'i  
gter chen po mi zad pa dang / chos rtogs pa  
chen po tshad med pa gter chen po mi zad  
pa dang / sems can mgu bar bya ba'i gter  
chen po mi zad pa dang / nam mkha' dang  
mnyams pa'i gter chen po mi zad pa ste /  
bzhi po de dag ni gter chen po mi zad pa yin  
no / zhes pas gter gyi ngo bo'am rang bzhin  
bstan cing / de bzhin du 'phags pa bsod  
nams thams cad sdud pa'i ting nge 'dzin  
mdo las / dri ma med pa'i gzi brjid chos  
'dod pa'i byang chub sems dpa' sems dpa'  
chen po rnams kyis chos kyi gter ri dang  
/ ri sul dang / shing dag gyi nang du bcug  
pa dag yod de / [p. 412] gzungs dang chos  
kyi sgo mtha' yas pa glegs bam du byas pa  
dag kyang lag tu 'ongs par 'gyur ro / zhes  
pas kyang gter chos / gter gnas / 'don pa  
po'i gang zag bcas legs par bstan / bsam pa  
phun sum tshogs pa la ni gal te sangs rgyas  
mi zhugs kyang nam mkha'i dkyil dang  
rtsigs pa dang shing rnams las chos 'byung  
ngo / zhes pas gnam chos sogs kyang bstan  
pa dang / gzhan yang yongs su grags pa'i  
mdo rgyud ci rig pa las gter gyi ngo bo /  
nges tshig / rnam grangs / dgos pa sogs  
yang nas yang du bstan pa ni 'phags bod

gyi ngo bo nges tshig rnam grangs dgos pa  
 sogs yang nas yang du bstan pa ni / 'phags  
 bod gnyis du grags pa las bod yul lta bu'i  
 gang zag re re'i [= re res] gsar du bcos pa  
 ma yin zhing / gter du sbas pa'i dgos pa'ang  
 / chu klung rol pa'i mdo las / nga yi bstan  
 pa'i chos kyi gzhang / thugs nas thugs kyi  
 gter du sbos / yang na sa yi snying por bya  
 / ci phyir mu stegs can mgo rgod / de don  
 dkrugs par 'gyur ta re [= sta re] / de phyir  
 chu klung rgyun mi bcod [f. 3a] ces dang  
 / chos rgyal ratna gling pa'i gter lung las  
 / shin tu zab pa'i mthar thug snying po  
 rnams / snyigs ma'i 'gro la lhag par snying  
 brtse bas / mtha' dbus thams cad gter gyi  
 bkang nas bzhang / las can bu dang 'phrad  
 pa'i smon lam btab / ma 'ongs dus su rtog  
 ge tha snyed [= tha snyad] mkhan / sgom  
 chen la sogs phyogs dang ris dregs can /  
 rang che 'byin zhing gter la brtsod pa na  
 / snyigs ma'i chos byed phal cher gter gyi  
 'dren / zab la kha tshang ma 'grib mtha'  
 rgyas shing / gdams pa sna res gang zag grol  
 bar nges / de bas las sad skal ldan sbyang  
 pa can / 'chi ba dran na gter chos nyams  
 su long / tshe gcig sangs rgyas thob bo rjes  
 'jug rnams / snyigs dus gter la mos pa'i skal  
 ldan kun / dongs sang gu ru'i zhal mthong  
 smon lam thob / thams cad las can yin  
 pas dga' ba bsgoms / kho mo'i tshig 'di rin  
 chen gser las dkon [f. 3b] ces sogs / gter  
 kha gzhan las kyang mtha' yas pa 'byung  
 ba ltar dang / snyigs ma'i dus su bka' ma  
 rnams tsheng [= tshong] dus kyi 'o ma bzhang  
 dbang dang gdams ngag gi bka' chad [= bka'  
 'chal] cing rgyud [= brgyud] pa mang  
 pos bar du chad pa dam tshig gi sel dang  
 'dres khyer gyi slad [= bsld] zhugs pa mang  
 bas byin rlabs kyi bab so nyams pa yin la /  
 gter du bzhugs pa rnams ni gter ston sprul  
 sku de nyid u rgyan chen po dngos kyi rjes  
 su bzungs te sming grol dbang dang gdams  
 pa ma lus pa'i bka' gtad thob cing / zab chos  
 mkha' 'gro'i kha rlabs ma yal ba spyang  
 drang pas na / nye rgyud [= nye brgyud]  
 byin rlabs kyi gzi byin 'gran zla dang bral  
 ba'o / de 'ang gter gyi phyogs 'di dgongs  
 brda snyan brgyud kyi sdeng du khyad par

gnyis su grags pa las / bod yul lta bu'i gang  
 zag re res gsar du bcos pa ming cing / gter  
 du sbed pa'i dgos pa'ang / chu klung rol pa'i  
 mdo las / nga yi bstan pa'i chos kyi gzhang  
 / thugs nas thugs kyi gter du sbos / yang  
 na sa yi snying por bya / ci phyir mu stegs  
 can mgo rgod / des don dkrug par 'gyur ta  
 re / de phyir chu klung rgyun mi gcod / ces  
 dang / chos rgyal ratna gling pa'i gter lung  
 las / shin tu zab pa'i mthar thug snying po  
 rnams / spyir yang bod rnams gsar ngas  
 che ba dang / snyigs ma'i 'gro la lhag par  
 snying brtse bas / mtha' dbus thams cad  
 gter gyis bkang nas bzhang / las can bu dang  
 'phrad pa'i smon lam btab / ma 'ongs dus  
 su rtog ge tha snyad mkhan / sgom chen la  
 sogs phyogs dang ris dregs can / rang che  
 'byin cing gter la rtsod na yang / snyigs [p.  
 413] ma'i chos byed phal cher gter gyi 'dren  
 / zab la kha tshang ma bsgribs mtha' rgyas  
 shing / gdams pa sna res gang zag grol par  
 nges / de bas las sad skal ldan sbyangs pa  
 can / 'chi ba dran na gter chos nyams su  
 longs / tshe gcig thar lam thob bo rjes 'jug  
 rnams / snyigs dus gter la mos pa'i skal  
 ldan kun / deng sang gu ru'i shal mthong  
 smon lam btab / thams cad las can yin pas  
 dga' ba sgoms / kho mo'i tshig 'di rin chen  
 gser bas dkon / ces sogs gter kha gzhan las  
 kyang mtha' yas pa 'byung ba ltar / snyigs  
 ma'i dus su bka' ma rnams tshong dus kyi  
 'o ma bzhin dbang gdams ngag gi bka' 'chal  
 zhing / brgyud pa mang po bar du chod pas  
 dam tshig gi sel dang 'dres 'khyer gyi bsld  
 zhugs pa mang bas byin rlabs kyi babs so  
 nyams par 'gyur ba yin la / gter du bzhugs  
 pa rnams ni gter ston sprul sku de nyid o  
 rgyan chen po dngos kyi rjes su bzung ste  
 smin grol dbang dang gdams pa ma lus pa'i  
 bka' gtad thob cing zab chos mkha' 'gro'i  
 kha rlabs ma yal bar spyang drangs pas na  
 nye brgyud byin rlabs kyi gzi byin 'gran  
 zla dang brel ba'o / de 'ang gter gyi phyogs  
 'dir dgongs brda' snyan brgyud pa steng du  
 khyad par gyi brgyud pa gsum dang ldan  
 pa'i phyir brgyud pa drug ldan du grags pa  
 ste / dgongs brda snyan brgyud gsum gong  
 du smos pa ltar la / smon lam dbang bskur

gyi brgyud pa gsum dang ldan pa'i phyir / brgyud pa drug ldan du grags pa ste / dgongs brda snyan brgyud gsum gong du smos pa ltar la / smon lam dbang bskur [f. 4a] ni / gter kha de nyid la dbang pa'i gang zag des thob par shog ces sogs bden tshig mon lam gyi rgyas btab par mdzad pa dang bka' bab lung bstan ni / gter 'byin skyes bu de la mtshan bya don gyi yes shes dgongs pa'i mthil gtad nas / 'byung 'gyur gyi lung bstan dang bcas dbugs dbyung ba la bya / mkha' 'gro gter rgya [= gtad rgya] ni mtshon byed brda'i yi ge tshig rgyud [= tshig brgyud] du bkod nas / rdo rje'i brag g.yang zhags kyi mtsho mi 'gyur pa'i sgrom la sogs pa gter bdag so so la gnyer byang gtad nas mi snang bar rgyas gdab pa nyid slar lung bstan dus la bab / smon lam gyi mthu smin / las kyi 'phro sad / gter bdag gi bskul ma byas / kha byang yod pa dang med pa ji snyed pa'i zab gter gyi sgrom bu ji bzhin

gter ston nyid kyi phyag tu son pa rnams so / khyad par gter du bzhugs [f. 4b] ya [= pa]i zab chos phal mo che mkha' 'gro brda'i yi ges bcings pa ste / skal mnyams kyi gang zag las gzhan gyi[s] khrol mi srid pas na / u rgyan chen po'i bka' rtags phyag rgya'i ri mo dngos la thug pas / gang zag phal pa'i brgyud pas bar du mi chod cing khung btsun pa dang brda ma bcos / tshig ma 'khrul don ma nor ba mkha' 'gro'i gsang ba'i brda brgyur bas gzhung zab cing byin rlabs che ba dang / skal ba dang mi ldan pa'i gang zag blo ji ltar bsgrim kyang dmus long gis glang chen bskyed pa ltar phyogs tsam yang brtag mi bzod pas / gter 'byin skyes bu nyid phal pa'i spyod yul las 'das pa yid ches pa yin no /

de yang bod kyi yul 'dir bstan pa'i snying po gsang sngags rdo rje theg pa spyi dang khyad par zab mo gter gyi 'phrin las 'dul bya mtha' yas pa 'dul bar mdzad pa po ni / sangs rgyas gnyis pa padma 'byung gnas te / [f. 5a] myang 'das kyi mdo las / nga ni mya ngan 'das 'og tu / lo ni bcu dang gnyis tsam nas / dha na ko sha'i mtsho gling du / nga bas lhag pa'i skyes bu 'byung / zhes lung

ni gter [p. 414] kha de nyid la dbang pa'i gang zag des thon par shog ces bden tshig smon lam gyi rgyas btab par mdzadpa dang / bka' babs lung bstan ni gter byin skyes bu de la mtshon bya don gyi ye shes dgongs pa'i mthil gtad nas 'byung 'gyur gyi lung bstan dang bcas dbugs dbyung ba la bya / mkha' 'gro gtad rgya ni mtshon byed brda'i yi ge tshig brgyud du bkod nas rdo rje'i brag / g.yang zhag gi mtsho / mi 'gyur ba'i sgrom la sogs par gter bdag so so la gnyer byang gtad nas mi snang bar rgyas btab pa nyid slar lung bstan dus la babs / smon lam gyi mthu smin / las kyi 'phro sad / gter bdag gi bskul ma byas / kha byang yod pa dang med pa ji snyed pa'i zab gter gyi sgrom bu ji bzhin pa yin no //

de'ang bod kyi yul 'dir bstan pa'i snying po gsang sngags rdo rje theg pa spyi dang khyad par zab mo gter gyi phrin las kyi 'dul bya mtha' yas pa gdul bar mdzad pa po ni sangs rgyas gnyis pa padma 'byung gnas te / myang 'das kyi mdo las / nga ni mya ngan 'das 'og tu / lo ni bcu dang gnyis tsam nas / dha na ko sha'i mtsho gling du / nga bas lhag pa'i skyes bu 'byung / zhes lung

bstan ltar / slob dpon chen po 'di nyid lam  
rim bgrod kyi gang zag 'am sa la gnas pa'i  
'phags pa tsam ma yin pa / mi dang mi ma  
yin pa 'dul dka' ba rnams thabs sna tshogs  
pas 'dul ba'i slad du / sangs rgyas 'od dpag  
med dang mnyam med shakya'i rgyal po'i  
sprul pa'i sku bstan pa yin la / de'i rnam  
par thar pa 'phags chen rnams kyi cha tsam  
brjod pa mi nus mod / mdo tsam gong du  
smon pa ltar la / khyad par phrin las kyi  
che ba ma 'ongs pa'i 'dul bya dang bstan  
pa'i btsas su dgongs nas rgya bal bod yul  
rnams su chos nor dang sman rtsis dam  
rdzas la sogs pa gter kha bgrangs gi mi long  
ba zhig [f. 5b] sbas mdzad pa las /

*gtso bo gangs can yul 'dir 'dul bya gang la gang  
'dul gyi thabs la mkhas pas / chos sgo spyi dang  
khyad par yo ga rnam pa gsum dang 'brel ba'i  
rgyud lung man ngag las tshogs mtha' yas par  
gsungs / de thams cad gsang ba'i bdag mo dby-  
ings phyug ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi mi brjod pa'i  
gzungs kyis bzung nas bka' yi bsdu bar mdzad /*

shog ser rigs lngar mkha' 'gro'i brda yi yi  
ger bkod / gter snod sna tshogs pa 'byung  
bas mi 'jigs pas [= mi 'jigs pa'i] rgyal gdams  
/ gter gnas so so ru gu ru yab yum dang  
rjes 'bangs lhan cig bcas kyis sbas te gter  
srung la gnyer du gtad / khyad par gu ru  
rnga yab gling du gshegs pa'i rjes su mtsho  
rgyal nyid lo brgya lhag tsam bzhugs nas  
bod yul stod smad bar gsum la gter kha  
bsam gyis mi khyab pa sbas nas gter zhabs  
gdams / gzhan yang [f. 6a] lo pañ grub thob  
rjes 'bangs du mas gter kha grangs med du  
sbas pa rnams physis 'dul ba'i dus su phyin  
pa'i tshe ma 'ongs pa gter la longs spyod  
cing 'gro don 'byung bar byin gyi brlabs te  
lung bstan smon lam thebs pa'i rjes 'bangs  
skal ldan rnams kyi skye ba dang sprul pa'i  
sgyu 'phrul rigs dang spyod pa la nges pa  
rim par byon nas / bstan 'gro'i don mdzad  
pa rnams ni gtso bo sa gter gyi byon tshul  
dang zab mo dag snang dang dgongs pa'i  
gter gyi 'byung tshul ni / de'ang byan chub  
sems dpa' rnams kyi smon lam gyi khyad

bstan pa ltar / slob dpon chen po 'di nyid  
lam rim bgrod kyi gang zag gam sa la gnas  
pa'i 'phags pa tsam ma yin par / mi dang mi  
ma yin gdul dka' ba rnams thabs sna tshogs  
pas 'dul ba'i slad du / sangs rgyas 'od dpag  
med dang mnyam med shākya'i rgyal po  
sogs sprul pa'i skur bstan pa yin pas de'i  
rnam par thar pa 'phags chen rnams kyi  
kyang cha tsam brjod pa mi nus mod / mdo  
tsam gong du smos pa ltar la / khyad par  
phrin las kyi che ba ma 'ongs pa'i gdul bya  
dang bstan pa'i btsas su dgongs nas rgya bal  
bod yul rnams su chos nor sman rtsis rten  
dang dam rdzas la sogs pa gter kha bgrang  
gis mi lang ba zhig sbas par mdzad pa las /  
[...]

[p. 416] shog ser rigs lngar mkha' 'gro'i brda  
yi yi ger bkod / gter snod sna tshogs par  
'byung bas mi 'jigs pa'i rgyas gdams / gter  
gnas so sor gu ru yab yum kho na dang rjes  
'bangs lhan cig pa bcas kyis sbas te gter  
srung la gnyer du gtad / khyad par gu ru  
rnga yab gling du gshegs pa'i rjes su mtsho  
rgyal nyid mi lo brgya lhag tsam bzhugs  
nas bod yul stod smad bar gsum la gter kha  
bsam gyis mi khyab pa sbas nas gter zhabs  
bsdams / gzhan yang pañ chen bi ma la mi  
tra / chos rgyal yab sras / lo chen bai ro tsa  
na / gnubs sangs rgyas ye shes dang nam  
mkha'i snying po / gnyags dzanyā na ku mā  
ra dang sna nam rdo rje bdud 'joms / nyang  
ban ting 'dzin bzang po sogs kyis kyang zab  
gter mang du sbas pa rnams / physis 'dul  
ba'i dus su son pa'i tshe ma 'ongs par gter  
la spyod cing 'gro don 'byung bar byin gyis  
brlabs te lung bstan smon lam thebs pa'i  
rjes 'bangs skal ldan rnams kyi skye ba dang  
sprul pa'i sgyu 'phrul rigs dang spyod pa  
ma nges pa rim par byon nas bstan 'gro'i

par lus can rnams kyi bya dang ni / shing dang 'od zer thams cad dang / nam mkha' las kyang chos kyi sgra / rgyun mi 'chad par thob par shog / ces pa ltar / smon lam gyi mthu btsan pa dang de dag la chos kyi 'phongs pa'i rgyu med pa'i phyir 'byung ba'i sgra dang ri dwags lta bu las kyang [f. 6b] chos kyi sgra rgyun mi 'chad pa gsan cing sangs rgyas dang byang chub sems dpa' rnams kyis kyang zhal bstan zhing chos gsungs bar bshad do / bsod nams thams cad bsdu pa ting nge 'dzin gyi mdo las / dri ma med pa'i gzi brjid chos 'dod pa'i byang chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po bsam gyi [= gyis] mi khyab pa phun sum tshogs pa gus pa dang bcas pa rnams ni 'jig rten gyi kham s gzhan dag du 'dug kyang sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das kyi zhal ston par mdzad cing chos kyang thos par mdzad do / zhes gsungs shing khyad par du 'phags chen rnams kyi gzigs ngor dag pa'i snang ba 'ba' zhig las ma dag pa'i snang ba ma 'chis pas dus gsum rtag pa rgyun gyi 'khor lo rt sa gsum lhag pa'i lha rab 'byams dag dang / chos kyi sgro ba rmad du byung ba du ma rgyun chags su mdzad pa las / zab mo gdams pa mtha' yas 'byung ba dag skal ba dang ldan pa [f. 7a] rnams la spel bar 'os pa'i gang zag so so'i mos blo 'tsham pa'i dag snang gi chos sde ji snyed pa kun gyi spyod yul du snang bar mdzad pa 'phags yul gyi paṇ grub du ma dang / bod yul gyi gsar snying ris med dge ba'i bshes gnyen dang gter ston grub thob rnams kyi rnam thar las byung ba ltar dang / de ltar dgongs gter du grags pa rnams kyang / mdo las 'jam dpal 'byung ba bzhi nas nam mkha'i gter nas 'byung gi / de bzhi du chos thams cad rgyal ba'i thugs gter las 'byung bas gter gyi don la longs spyod par shes par byos shig / ces gsungs pa dang / rjes su mthun pa 'phags pa'i gang zag rnams la dgongs pa'i klong nas chos kyi gter kha brdol du yong ba gsungs sde / chos yang dag pa bsdu pa'i mdo las / byang chub sems dpa' [f. 7b] sems dpa' dag pa nas rang gi yid kyi 'dod pa nyid las gdam ngag rjes su ston pa thams cad 'byung ngo / zhes dang / gzhan yang mdo

don mdzad pa rnams ni gtso bor sa gter gyi byon tshul la / yang zab mo dag snang dang dgongs pa'i gter gyi 'byung tshul ni / de'ang byan chub sems dpa'rnams kyi smon lam gyi khyad par / lus can rnams kyis bya dang ni / shing dang 'od zer thams cad dang / nam mkha' las kyang chos kyi sgra / rgyun mi 'chad par thos par shog / ces pa lta bu'i smon lam gyi mthu btsan pa dang / de dag la chos kyis 'phongs pa'i rgyu med pa'i phyir 'byung ba'i sgra dang ri dwags lta bu las kyang chos kyi sgra rgyun mi 'chad par gsan cing / sangs rgyas dang byang chub sems dpa' rnams kyis kyang zhal bstan cing chos gsungs bar bshad de / bsod nams thams cad sdud pa ting nge 'dzin gyi mdo las / dri ma med pa'i gzi brjid / chos 'dod pa'i byang chub sems dpa' chen po bsam pa phun sum tshogs pa gus pa dang bcas pa rnams ni / 'jig rten gyi kham s gzhan du 'dug kyang sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das kyis zhal ston par mdzad cing chos kyang thos par mdzad do / zhes gsungs shing / khyad par du 'phags chen rnams kyi gzigs ngor dag pa'i snang ba 'ba' zhig las ma dag pa'i snang ba ma 'chis pas / dus gsum rtag pa rgyun gyi 'khor lor rt sa gsum lhag pa'i lha rab 'byams dag dang chos kyi sgro ba rmad du byung ba du ma rgyun chags su mdzad pa las zab mo'i gdams pa mtha' yas pa byung ba dag / skal ba dang ldan pa rnams la spel bar 'os pa rnams gang zag so so'i mos blor 'tshams pa'i dag snang gi chos sde ji snyed pa kun gyi spyod yul du snang bar mdzad pa 'phags yul gyi paṇ grub du ma dang / bod yul gyi gsar snying ris med dge ba'i bshes gnyen dang gter ston grub thob rnams kyi rnam thar las byung ba ltar dang / de bzhi du dgongs gter du grags pa rnams kyang mdo las / 'jam dpal 'byung ba bzhi ni nam mkha'i gter nas 'byung gi / de bzhi du chos thams cad rgyal pa'i thugs gter las 'byung bas gter gyi don la longs spyod pa shes par byos shig / ces gsungs pa dang rjes su mthun par 'phags pa'i gang zag rnams la dgongs pa'i klong nas chos kyi gter kha brdol du yod par gsungs te / chos yang dag par sdud pa'i mdo las / byang chub

las / don la nges pa'i gdengs [=gding] rnyed  
 na / sems las chos gter 'bum phrag brdol /  
 zhes sogs gsungs pa bzhin / 'phags bal bod  
 ljongs kun tu mkhas grub chen po rnams  
 kyi zab mo dgongs pa'i gdam zab mtha' yas  
 pa zhig da lta'i bar du 'byung bzhin pa dang  
 / mdor na chos nor dam rdzas la sogs pa'i  
 sgo 'phar ci dgar 'gyed [=byed] cing grol ba  
 bzhi ldan gyi 'phrin las rmad du byung bas  
 dus ngan gyi mtha' la dam pa'i chos 'dzin  
 zhing 'dul mdo'i bstan pa mi bzhugs pa'i  
 gnas su gsang sngags rdo rje theg pa'i bstan  
 pa khol bur khol bur mi nub dar zhing rgyas  
 sde 'gro ba 'dul dka' ba mtha' dag sgrol ba'i  
 'phrin las rgya che zhing rgyun chags pa  
 nyid de gu ru'i gsungs las / snyigs [f. 8a]  
 ma'i dus su bstan mtha' gter gyis skyongs  
 / zhes ji srid rnam 'dren lnga pa'i bstan pa  
 ma shar gyi bar du zab mo gter gyi phrin las  
 nam yang mi nub par gsungs so /

sems dpa' bsam pa dag pa ni rang gi yid kyi  
 'dod pa nyid las gdams ngag rjes su bstan pa  
 thams cad 'byung ngo / zhes dang / gzhan  
 yang mdo las / don la nges pa'i gting rnyed  
 na / sems las chos gter 'bum phrag brdol /  
 zhes sogs gsungs pa bzhin 'phags bal bod  
 ljongs kun tu mkhas grub chen po rnams  
 kyi zab mo dgongs pa'i gdams zab mtha'  
 yas pa zhig da lta'i bar du 'byung bzhin pa  
 dang / mdor na chos nor dam rdzas la sogs  
 pa'i sgo 'phar ci dgar 'byed cing grol ba bzhi  
 ldan gyi phrin las rmad du byung bas dus  
 ngan gyi tha mar dam pa'i chos 'dzin cing  
 'dul mdo'i bstan pa mi bzhugs pa'i gnas su  
 gsang sngags rdo rje theg pa'i bstan pa khol  
 bu khol bur mi nub dar zhing rgyas te 'gro  
 ba gdul dka' ba mtha' dag sgrol ba'i phrin  
 las rgya che zhing rgyun chags pa nyid de/  
 gu ru'i gsungs las / snyigs ma'i dus su bstan  
 mtha' gter gyis skyongs / zhes ji srid rnam  
 'dren lnga pa'i bstan pa ma shar gyi bar du  
 zab mo gter gyi phrin las nam yang mi [p.  
 419] nub par gsungs so/

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