



CENTRE
FOR COMPARATIVE
STUDIES
OF CIVILISATIONS
JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY OF KRAKOW

The Polish Journal of the Arts and Culture. New Series 14

(2/2021): 9–34 [ARTYKUŁ]

DOI:10.4467/24506249PJ.21.014.15320

Birth of a Tibetan Buddhist Master, Part 2: Auspicious Signs and Events at the Birth of the Seventh Karma pa, Chos grags rgya mtsho (1454–1506)


Dominik DELL

Abstract

This paper deals with accounts of miraculous and auspicious signs and events as an aspect of the secret level in life stories (*nam thar*) of Tibetan Buddhist masters and traces these patterns back to the life story of Buddha Śākyamuni, as well as to Vajrayana symbolism. An annotated translation, analysis, and edition of a so-far untranslated section of the *nam thar* of the Seventh Karma pa from the *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston* are provided.

KEYWORDS: *Chos grags rgya mtsho, Karmapa VII, nam thar, secret life story, chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston, auspicious signs, miracles*

DOMINIK DELL – external PhD student at the Department of Philosophy of the Jagiellonian University, and researcher at the International Institute for Tibetan and Asian Studies, Vélez-Málaga, Spain. His research interests include life stories of Tibetan Buddhist masters of the Kagyü (*bka' brgyud*) tradition as well as their works. He published several articles ranging from aspects of the Seventh Karmapa's birth to the religious historical work *Feast of the Wise* (*chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston*). Currently, he is preparing his PhD thesis on the birth stories of several Karmapas.

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5816-0814>

E-MAIL: dominik.dell.research@gmail.com

1. Introduction

The “[story of a person’s] complete liberation”, *rnam thar*, is one of the most popular genres of Tibetan literature.¹ In part 1 of this two-part article, I shed light on the definition of *rnam thar* (Dell 2021a, 12–14). Thereby, it became clear that its functions go beyond mere provision of historical or biographical facts about a person. Thus, it evidently exceeds the Western concept of “biography”. Similarly, it was shown that it also transcends the Western or Christian concept of “hagiography”, since a person’s path towards complete liberation is a key element and guiding theme of these stories, which is foreign to Western culture.²

Representatives of the *rnam thar* genre have been classified in various ways. The most prominent and classical divisions are probably the outer, inner, and secret levels.³ Secret life stories (Tib. *gsang ba’i rnam thar*) contain mystic events experienced by the protagonist, such as miraculous dreams, visions, and supernatural phenomena – all of them representing realisation of the nature of mind. While part 1 focused on visionary experiences, this paper aims to take a closer look at miraculous and auspicious events and signs, again using the example of the Seventh Karma pa’s birth.

The subject of “miracles” in Buddhism has been widely discussed among researchers over different publications (e.g. Gómez 2011; Fiordalis 2008 and 2011).⁴ Their focus is mostly on miracles performed by the Buddha himself, as well as his direct disciples. Even though this paper analyses the example of a Tibetan Buddhist master, it makes sense to go back to the source and compare the events described there with the life stories of the Buddha, since it functions as a blueprint for any life story of a Buddhist master. The topic of Buddhist miracles is too vast to provide a summary in this introductory section. For this reason, I merely wish to touch lightly upon some terminology. Some

¹ I would like to thank Artur Przybysławski, who encouraged me to write this paper and who kindly provided some feedback on an earlier version.

² Nevertheless, renderings such as “biography” and “hagiography” are justified, if they fit the content of a particular *rnam thar*. Other renderings found in literature are “spiritual biography”, “sacred biography”, “life story”, “liberation story”, “spiritual story”, “life example”, “hagiography”, “(hagiographic) life writing” and some more. For enumerations and discussions of different English renderings, see also Roesler 2014, 117, as well as Rheingans 2014, 69–70, and Rheingans 2010, 252–53.

³ Vostrikov 1994, 186–87. This classification is ascribed to sDe srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653–1705). For a brief and accessible explanation of the three levels, see also Choegyäl Gyamtso Tulku 2000, 21–22.

⁴ More useful references are found in Fiordalis 2014 (Accessed: 27.08.2020).



scholars avoid the term “miracle”, as some religious groups claim exclusive rights to it and it is closely linked to the idea of an almighty God, absent in Buddhism. Similarly, the related terms “thaumaturgy” and “magic” are considered to be somewhat problematic and esoteric.⁵ For instance, Gómez uses the terms “wonder” and “wonder-working” instead (Gómez 2011, 513). Within the frame of this paper, I will not avoid the term “miracle”, but use it rather interchangeably with the latter two terms following Kieschniks more pragmatic definition of it in the Buddhist context as “object of wonder” (Kieschnik 2004, 514).

Instead of arguing about the subtleties of English terms, it might be more illuminating to take a look at indigenous terms and concepts related to miracles. Interestingly, there is not one single Sanskrit term corresponding to our Western concept of “miracles” or “wonder-working”, but a variety of terms covering different aspects of it. There is a set of extraordinary powers ascribed to the Buddha, as well as to bodhisattvas, which is referred to by the Sanskrit term *abhijñā* (Tib. *mngon shes*) and usually rendered in English as “higher knowledge” or “supernatural knowledge”. These miraculous powers are said to be obtained as a by-product of meditation. Enumerations of them encompass six items, where the first five items are considered to be mundane achievements, gained through meditation, and the sixth item is reserved for a fully developed buddha, since it is attained based on the cultivation of insight into the nature of the mind (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 8–9):

1. “remembrance of past lives”,
2. “telepathy”,
3. “clairaudience”,
4. “clairvoyance”,
5. “telekinesis and various other ‘supernatural’ powers”,
6. “knowledge of the true nature of reality”.⁶

Even though the first five *abhijñās* are considered to be a sign of spiritual progress, the Buddha warns not to use them, since they are a distraction from the path towards the sixth *abhijñā* (Kieschnik 2004, 543). Nevertheless, the Buddha demonstrates these powers repeatedly in his teachings. Especially, he frequently makes use of the ability to know others’ previous lives in order to explain the concept of karma to them (Kieschnik 2004, 542).

⁵ Gómez 2011, 513. For a more elaborate discussion of the different terms, see Fiordalis 2011, 381–83.

⁶ Enumeration according to Fiordalis 2017 (Accessed: 27.08.2020).



Another Sanskrit term which covers some phenomena that one would usually categorise as miracles is *ṛddhi* (Tib. *rdzu 'phrul*). It “literally means ‘success’ or ‘accomplishment’, but it usually refers, in a technical sense, to a subset of powers contained within the overarching category of *abhijñā*, including flying through the air, passing through solid objects, walking on water, appearing in multiple places at the same time, visiting hells and heavenly realms, and so on”.⁷ There is another term, which is very similar, but which originates from the tantric context – *siddhi* (Tib. *dnegos grub*). Literally, it also means “accomplishment” or “success”. It refers to supernatural powers, which are said to be attained through tantric practice, such as the repetition of mantras or the practice on a meditational deity. There is a distinction between the ordinary or mundane *siddhis* and the supreme *siddhi* (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 817). The latter describes the attainment of a Buddha and therefore corresponds to the sixth item in the list of *abhijñās*. The ordinary *siddhis* “refer to various supernormal powers, such as the ability to fly, walk through walls, and find buried treasure” (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 732). Hence, the list of powers is similar to those associated with *ṛddhi*, but taken from a different context.

There are a number of other related terms also in one way or the other associated with supernatural powers or knowledge, such as *adhiṣṭhāna*, *vikurvaṇa*, and *vidyā*.⁸ Without delving into detail here, they mostly overlap with the above terms and their discussion will not yield any additional insight in the context of this paper.⁹ Another aspect, which can also be counted towards the category of miracles are miraculous or auspicious signs. There are different lists of signs found in the Buddha’s life story, but also applied to later bodhisattvas or worldly rulers, such as the thirty-two marks of a great being (*mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇa*) (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 506) and the eighty minor marks (*anuvyañjana*) (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 55). I will come back to these lists in the analysis section of this paper.

As mentioned earlier, when analysing the life story of any Buddhist master, it is useful to keep the Buddha’s life story in mind, since it functions as a blueprint for any later life story. Generally, parts of Buddha’s life are described in different sutras. Since this paper sets out to analyse a part of the life story of a Tibetan Buddhist master, a Mahāyāna version of the Buddha’s life story should be used as a reference, and since the focus is on the birth

⁷ Fiordalis 2017. See also Buswell and Lopez 2014, 704.

⁸ Fiordalis 2017.

⁹ For some explanation on these three terms, see Fiordalis 2008, 25, 126, and 127.



story, the *Lalitavistara Sūtra* suggests itself for comparison.¹⁰ This sutra covers the period from the time where the Buddha enjoys a perfect life in the gods' realms by entering Queen Māyā's womb, his renouncement of the life in the palace, through to his awakening and first teaching of the Four Noble Truths near Vārāṇasī.¹¹ The text is a compilation of various older sources, as it contains a mixture of verse and prose and repeats many sections again in different words and different level of detail. However, these sources have been elaborated and reinterpreted according to the Mahāyāna worldview, probably in the third century CE.¹²

From an etic perspective, an attempt has been made to remove all miracles from the Buddha's and others' life stories or to reinterpret them as "rhetorical tools for explaining Buddhist doctrines" (Kieschnik 2004, 542) in order to make these accounts more credible. However, seen from the emic perspective, the perspective of the tradition itself, it must be said that most Buddhists at all social levels take these miracles literally. For them they show the Buddha's special attainments and are rather common sense (Kieschnik 2004, 542). Ray argues in the same direction when it comes to Tibetan *nam thars*. For him miracles are an integral part of those accounts, since it is an "accurate representation of how life was experienced in Tibet, up to the Chinese invasion of the 1950s" on all levels of society.¹³

In the introduction to the translation of the *Lalitavistara Sūtra*, it is stated:

[The] events in the Bodhisattva's life are not ordinary karmic activity that unfold based on the mechanisms of a conceptual mind, but rather the playful manner in which the nonconceptual wisdom of a tenth-level bodhisattva unfolds as an expression of his awakened insight. In this manner of storytelling, the reader is invited into the worldview of a timeless and limitless universe as perceived by the adepts of the Mahāyāna.¹⁴

¹⁰ Dharmachakra Translation Committee 2013. There is another English translation of this sutra (Bays 1983), which was made in 1983 from a French translation dating back to 1882. The latest translation by the Dharmachakra Translation Committee for the 84000 project takes this earlier translation by Bays and other extant partial translations into account, as well as the Sanskrit and Tibetan manuscripts. Therefore, I consider it an improved translation of the *Lalitavistara Sūtra* and will only use this in the analysis section of the paper.

¹¹ Dharmachakra Translation Committee 2013, paragraphs i.3–i.10.

¹² Ibid., paragraphs i.16–i.17.

¹³ Ray 1980, 11. For a more extensive explanation on the element of magic in *nam thars*, see Ray 1980, 10–18. He also presents a classification of different kinds of miracles that differs a bit from the one presented here.

¹⁴ Dharmachakra Translation Committee 2013, paragraph i.14.



This pattern or viewpoint might not only apply to the Buddha's life story as described in the *Lalitavistara Sūtra*, but also to some *rnam thars* presenting the life of Tibetan Buddhist masters, among them that of the Seventh Karma pa. In the context of Vajrayāna, guru devotion or identification with the teacher is one of the key characteristics, which also expresses itself in the practice of guru yoga, the meditation on the teacher.¹⁵ In this sense, *rnam thars* can serve as a support to inspire the practitioner and to see one's own lama as a Buddha, especially, if the life story is about a master, who stands in a lineage of successive incarnations.¹⁶ In this case, the practitioner might attribute the attainments told in a *rnam thar* of a past incarnation to the current incarnation, his own teacher, which increases the ability to see one's teacher as a Buddha. Therefore, it makes sense to compose such life stories so that they show how life is experienced by the protagonist himself being a bodhisattva of a high level. This includes miracles, visionary experiences and auspicious signs as quite normal events from an emic perspective. Even though supernatural powers are usually considered a side product of progress on the spiritual path – subordinate to the actual goal of enlightenment, and not a goal in themselves – they still serve as a means of inspiration to the audience of *rnam thars*, the practitioner who aspires after the given example.

The following section provides an annotated translation of a short paragraph of the Seventh Karma pa's life story, which exhibits auspicious signs and miraculous events of the kind mentioned above related to his birth. Subsequently, this text is analysed with regards to its meaning.

¹⁵ For further elaborations on the role of the lama and the devotion to him, see Willis 1995, 16–18. For the relationship between teacher and disciple in Tibetan Buddhism, see also Verhufen 1992, 43ff.

¹⁶ The question of what really continues in the new body is an interesting one. According to Greek philosophy *metempsychosis* is the transmigration of the very same subject. This view is not shared in Buddhist philosophy, since – despite the continuation of successive lives – the identity of the samsaric subject is considered an illusion. From selfless phenomena, there arise selfless phenomena – as the Indian Mahāyāna Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna would put it. Ketcham (2020) discusses the problem of continuity and rebirth in Buddhism in a very short paper. In this context, the question of the identity of a tulku (Tib. *sprul sku*) is even more complicated, but a discussion – though very interesting – clearly exceeds the scope of this paper.



2. Translation

2.1. Introduction to the translation

The Seventh Karma pa's life story in the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* starts with his *bar do'i rnam thar* – his account of the intermediate state between his sixth and seventh incarnation. It is followed by a section, which mainly contains prophesies, visions, dreams and miraculous events that happened prior to the birth of the Seventh Karma pa. Next, his birthplace is described based on principles of Tibetan Geomancy (*sa dpyad*).¹⁷ The subsequent section is to be translated here. It mainly contains auspicious signs and events associated to the birth of the Seventh Karma pa. For easier reference, I inserted the page numbers of the three texts used for the edition into the translation – those from the original block print (A),¹⁸ those from one of the book versions (B)¹⁹ and those from Chandra's handwritten edition (C).²⁰ For an overview of all texts used, see the introduction to the edition in the appendix.

2.2. Annotated translation²¹

There,²² on the morning when the moon took its course²³ into the constellation of Maghā,²⁴ at the full moon day of the first Tibetan lunar month in the male wood-dog year (1454), [also] known as dNgos po [year],²⁵ [there] appeared a pattern of a five-coloured rainbow in the completely clear sky for a short while and a rain of flowers fell down like snow.

¹⁷ For a translation and discussion of these three sections, see Dell 2020, 2021a, and 2021b.

¹⁸ dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba 1980, vol. 2, 189.

¹⁹ dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba 1986, vol. 2, 1036–37.

²⁰ dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba 1959–1965, vol. 2, 540.

²¹ I would like to thank Āchārya Choying Tendar for explaining to me various terms and phrases in the Tibetan text, which at first sight had seemed obscure to me.

²² “There” refers to the future birthplace described in the section preceding this paragraph.

²³ Tib. *longs spyod pa*.

²⁴ Tib. *skar ma mchu*. The term *skar ma* means “star” or in this case “constellation” where *mchu* is one of 28 constellations according to the ancient Indian traditions. It is called Maghā in Sanskrit and Regulus in Latin. For further information and a list of these constellations, see Duff 2009, *rgyu skar nyi shu rtsa brgyad* (“the 28 constellations”).

²⁵ According to Duff 2009, *dngos po* is a “[t]ranslation epithet of the Sanskrit ‘bhāva’ and an epithet of *shing pho khyi lo*, the male wood dog year.



When [something, of which it] was unclear what it was,²⁶ resounded again and again like the sound of thunder, [the Karma pa] was born to [his] mother without pain.

Immediately, [he] said “A la la!” and laughed.

On [his] body six self-arisen [signs] were clearly visible: many types of flowers on the body, an image of Vajradhāra on the crown of [his] head, the letter “a” shaped by the veins at the heart chakra, a *dharmodaya*²⁷ and a wheel²⁸ at [his] secret place,²⁹ and wheels at [his] feet.

[B, p. 1037] Urine flowed down as milk and everything was pervaded by fragrances of fine smells.

Even [his] parents bowed down out of devotion and immediately [his] father gave [him] the name Mi pham mGon po³⁰ for the sake of supplication and [his] mother gave [him] the name mTsho skyes rDo rje³¹ for the sake of a stable life-span.

Among the many utterings [of the child] that came up within [the first] week, [his] father heard [him] say many mantras, [his] mother heard [him] say vowels, and other [people] heard [him] say the *maṇi* [mantra].

3. Analysis

Having presented an annotated translation in the previous section, I would like to supplement it with further analysis of the text in this section. The content of the paragraphs is summarised and the major events and signs are analysed by explaining them against the background of other research or

²⁶ Tib. *gar yod mi mngon pa*.

²⁷ Tib. *chos 'byung*, Skt. *dharmodaya*, lit. “source of dharmas/ [all] phenomena”. “Secret mantra terminology. The name of a particular part of the iconography of certain deities. It represents the source from which all dharmas arise” (Duff 2009, *chos 'byung*). It consists of two triangles that are combined to form a star shape similar to the “Star of David”.

²⁸ Tib. *khor lo*, Skt. *cakra*, lit. “wheel”. The term has many connotations. Refer to the discussion in the analysis section.

²⁹ Tib. *gsang gnas*, lit. “secret place”. This term denotes the area of the genitals, as well as the lowest of the five *cakras* (energy centres of the subtle body), which is considered to be at this level of the body (Duff 2009, *gsang gnas*).

³⁰ Lit. “The Invincible Guardian”, Skt. Ajitanātha, an epithet of Byams pa, Maitreya (Duff 2009, *mi pham mgon po*).

³¹ Lit. “Lake-born Vajra”, one of the eight manifestations of Guru Rinpoche (Duff 2009, *mtsho skyes rdo rje*).



tradition or by relating them to other sources. Finally, possible functions of certain paragraphs are discussed.

Despite being rather short, this paragraph touches many aspects, which are to be analysed here:

- The day and time of his birth, the appearance of an auspicious star
- Outer signs connected to the birth: picture of five rainbow colours in the completely clear sky and rain of flowers; repeated sound like thunder
- Born to his mother without pain
- Immediately, he says “A la la!” and laughs
- Six self-arisen signs on his body: flowers on the body, an image of Vajradhāra on the crown of his head, the letter “a” shaped by the veins at the heart chakra, a dharmodaya and a wheel at his secret place, and wheels at his feet
- Urine flows down as milk and everything is pervaded by fine smells
- His parents bow down to him and give names to him for the sake of supplication and a stable life-span
- Utterings within the first week: many mantras (heard by the father), vowels (heard by the mother), the *maṇi* mantra (heard by other people)

The paragraph to be analysed starts with the mention of the constellation at the time of the Seventh Karma pa’s birth. Tibetan tradition divides the night sky into 27 or 28 lunar mansions (Tib. *rgyu skar*). This is due to the fact that the moon completes one revolution around Earth in slightly more than 27 days. The system of 28 lunar mansions is especially used in Sino-Tibetan divination calculations (Tib. *nag rtsis*). This is closely related to the system of Tibetan geomancy (Tib. *sa dpyad*), which plays a role in the preceding section with respect to the description of the Seventh Karma pa’s birthplace. Each lunar mansion corresponds to a certain constellation. The constellation mentioned here is called *mchu* and consists of six main stars having the shape of a river. Each lunar mansion is identified with a certain deity.³² The mention of an auspicious star at birth is preceded in other biographies of Tibetan Buddhist masters and underscores the extraordinariness of the master (Young 1999, 80).

³² For a list of constellations and some information, see Duff 2009, *rgyu skar nyi shu rtsa*. For the main Tibetan source about this topic, see the 33rd chapter of Sans rgyas rgya mtsho 1972, 415–505. Images of the deities attributed to the lunar mansions are found on pages 437 to 455 of this work. For a short summary based on academic sources, see also Wikipedia contributors, *Tibetische Mondhäuser* (Accessed: 07.08.2020).



The sentence continues with a description of miraculous events accompanying or preceding the Seventh Karma pa's birth: "a five-coloured rainbow [appeared] in the completely clear sky for a short while and a rain of flowers fell down like snow". First of all, the "completely clear sky" (Tib. *nam mkha' yongs su dwangs pa*) is an illustration of the Buddha's mind, which is unobscured. In this image, clouds, which come and go, correspond to the "transitory thoughts or delusions which appear to obscure the mind's true nature, yet the nature of the sky remains unchanged. Like the mirror, which is always unaffected by the appearances which arise in it, the sky is clear, transparent, infinite, and immaculate" (Beer 1999, 31).

Rainbows are auspicious signs par excellence. They often accompany the birth or demise of a great master or other important events in their lives. They are "eternity's expression of momentary delight" (Beer 1999, 31). The five-colour scheme mentioned here is one way of depicting a rainbow in Buddhist art. The colours used in this sequence are red, orange, yellow, green, and blue.³³ Here, this most likely points out that the rainbow is clearly visible and complete, and thus perfect. Sometimes, the five rainbow colours are also enumerated as "white, yellow, red, green, and blue, which correspond to the five elements and the Five Buddhas, or the particular Buddha Family" (Beer 2003, 55). In this way, the five-coloured rainbow can also be a sign that the Seventh Karma pa has been empowered by the five buddhas to execute their activity in the world. This might be an over-interpretation, but indeed, at the beginning of the life story, during his account of the intermediate state, he meets those five buddhas, who ask him to work for the benefit of sentient beings.³⁴

The rain of flowers is mentioned in Buddha's life story as one of the signs accompanying his birth.³⁵ There, it is explicitly stated that this rain of flowers is strewn by the gods.³⁶ Before entering the mother's womb, the Buddha dwelled in Tuṣita heaven, one of the gods' realms. When he is born into the human realm, the gods welcome him in this way. He is such an extraordinary being that even the gods are aware of him, venerate him or support him. However, it is also a religious rhetoric showing the Buddha's superiority with respect to the Indian gods. In the context of the Seventh

³³ Alternatively, also three-colour and six-colour schemes are in use (Beer 1999, 32).

³⁴ Dell 2020, 49–51. For more information on the five buddhas or buddha families, see Beer 1999, 91–93.

³⁵ Dharmachakra Translation Committee 2013, paragraphs 7.21, 7.33, 7.37, 7.59, 7.150.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, paragraphs 7.59, 7.150.



Karma pa, the flower rain at his birth puts him in a similar position. In his account of the intermediate state, he meets the future buddha, Maitreya, who is to become the fifth buddha of the current eon, in Tuṣita heaven (Dell 2020, 50). It is said that the Karma pa will become the sixth buddha of this eon, Siṃha, and every buddha trains with his predecessor in Tuṣita – which in Karma pa’s case would be Maitreya.³⁷ Hence, the Karma pa and Buddha Śākyamuni eventually are considered to play in the same league.³⁸

The sound of thunder, mentioned in the next sentence, is again an allusion to the Buddha’s life story.³⁹ There, it happens at his birth, enlightenment and death and is mentioned together with trembling of the earth (Kieschnik 2004, 542). Hence, it marks the different stages in the life of a great being as having a significant impact on the world. The sentence goes on to say that the Karma pa was born without causing pain to his mother. This is also found in the Buddha’s life story, where the Buddha is said to have “emerged from his mother’s right side”,⁴⁰ which afterwards “was not torn or damaged but had returned to its usual state.”⁴¹ It is explained that in this way, “he was unstained by any impurities of the womb”, but also that due to his compassion as a bodhisattva, he is born in this way.⁴² Hence, it points out to his purity and thus his extraordinariness, as well as his compassion by not wanting to harm his mother. This applies to both, the Buddha and the Karma pa.

Immediately after his birth, the Buddha took seven steps towards each of the cardinal directions, as well as uphill and downhill. In each of these six directions he uttered a sentence, such as “I will be supreme among all sentient beings.”⁴³ It is explained that this happened due to his karma from his previous lives and that at that time he had already realised the *dharmakāya*.⁴⁴ As for the Seventh Karma pa, he did not follow those seven steps, nor did he utter full sentences, but he said “A la la”, which is an expression of joy,

³⁷ Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Tayé 2010, 349: “The future sixth buddha, Lion’s Roar, in the guise of a bodhisattva, appears as the Karmapas.”

³⁸ Also the birth of the Seventh Karma pa’s successor, the Eighth Karma pa, Mi bskyod rdo rje (1507–1554), is described with similar auspicious or miraculous signs such as rainbows and rains of flowers (Verhufen 1992, 78–79). For more information on the Eight Karma pa in general, see also Rheingans 2017.

³⁹ Dharmachakra Translation Committee 2013, paragraph 7.33.

⁴⁰ Ibid., paragraph 7.27, see also paragraphs 7.39, 7.54, and 7.73.

⁴¹ Ibid., paragraph 7.73.

⁴² Ibid., paragraphs 7.27 and 7.39.

⁴³ Ibid., paragraph 7.31, see also paragraphs 7.36, 7.56, and 7.59–7.63.

⁴⁴ Ibid., paragraphs 7.32 and 7.36.



and laughed. Albeit less impressive as the Buddha's story, this is still quite unusual and certainly highlights the realisation of the Karma pa.

Next, it is mentioned that on the Karma pa's body six self-arisen signs were visible: "many types of flowers on the body, an image of Vajradhāra on the crown of [his] head, the letter 'a' shaped by the veins at the heart chakra, a *dharmodaya* and a wheel at [his] secret place, and wheels at [his] feet." If one seeks to compare those signs with the Buddha's life story, the thirty-two marks of a great being (Skt. *mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇa*) suggest themselves, as well as the eighty minor marks.⁴⁵ A great being bearing these marks is said to be either a buddha or a *cakravartin*, a universal ruler and Dharma king.⁴⁶ Comparing the list of these marks with the signs attributed to the newborn Karma pa, there is only one match in the list of the thirty-two marks. About the Buddha it is said, "on the palms of his long-fingered hands and on the soles of his long-toed feet, there are beautiful thousand-spoked wheels with both center and rim."⁴⁷ In case of the Karma pa, wheels are at his feet and his secret place. With the list of the eighty minor marks there is even a negative match. There, it is said that the Buddha's "veins are not visible,"⁴⁸ whereas the Karma pa bears "the letter 'a' shaped by the veins at the heart chakra". But, of course, here the focus lies on the letter 'a' (as a Tibetan letter), rather than on the idea that visible veins do not satisfy a certain ideal of beauty.

Examining the Karma pa's physical signs one by one, first there are the many types of flowers on his body. Flowers are widely used in Tibetan art. They are a "universal symbol of love, compassion and beauty" (Beer 1999, 41). As previously seen in context of the flower rain, they are often related to gods, deities or paradise realms. Many buddhas and bodhisattvas are depicted with a flower as an attribute, especially the lotus flower. Besides, they usually dwell on a lotus flower as their seat or throne (Beer 1999, 38). As the lotus grows from the mire, but is unstained by it, it is the symbol of absolute purity. Likewise, the buddhas and bodhisattvas manifest in the cyclic existence, but are free from obscurations (Beer 1999, 37). "The lotus [...] is one of the most common sacred symbols in Tibetan art [... and ...] a symbol of purity, perfection, compassion, and renunciation" (Beer 1999, 37). Hence, the appearance of flowers on the Karma pa's body potentially bears all the

⁴⁵ Ibid, paragraphs 7.90,–7.91, 7.94–7.95, 7.98–7.103, and 7.128.

⁴⁶ Ibid., paragraphs 7.94–7.95.

⁴⁷ Ibid., paragraph 7.99, item 31.

⁴⁸ Ibid., paragraph 7.100, item 7.



meanings attributed to flowers in general and to lotus flowers in particular: love, compassion, beauty, purity, perfection and renunciation.

The second mark mentioned is “an image of Vajradhāra on the crown of [his] head”. Vajradhāra (Tib. *rdo rje 'chang*) is the primordial buddha (Skt. *ādibuddha*) of the three new (Tib. *gsar ma*) sects of Tibetan Buddhism, to which also Karma pa’s school, the bKa’ brgyud sect, belongs. Buddha Śākyamuni is said to have given his Vajrayana teachings in the form of Vajradhāra, who is considered as an expression of his mind, the *dharmakāya*. Hence, in turn, it means that the students, who received those teachings and perceived him in this form, were so highly realised that they looked directly into the mind of the Buddha. Moreover, Vajradhāra “is the chief buddha for the Mahāmudrā traditions”, as he is said to have revealed those teachings to Tilopa, who passed them on to Nāropa (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 954). Via Mar pa and Mi la ras pa the transmission finally reached the Karma pas. Mahāmudrā (Tib. *phyag rgya chen po*, “great seal”) “is particularly associated with the bKa’ brgyud sect”, where “it is regarded as the crowning experience of Buddhist practice” (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 500). The location of the image of Vajradhāra – on the crown of his head – also bears significant meaning. Buddhism works with an energy system in the body, which consists of up to 72,000 “channels” (Skt. *nāḍī*, Tib. *rtsa*) depending on the specific system which is used. These channels conduct the “winds” (Skt. *prāṇa*, Tib. *rlung*), on which the “drops” (Skt. *bindu*, Tib. *thig le*), which are associated with consciousness, can move. Besides, all channels are connected to the central channel, which “runs from the base of the spine to the crown of the head” (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 560). There are also a left and a right channel, which are in parallel, but also wrapped around the central channel at certain points. These points are the chakras (lit. “wheels”, Skt. *cakra*, Tib. *rtsa 'khor* or *'khor lo*), which are networks of smaller channels radiating throughout the body. The number of chakras varies between different systems.⁴⁹ For instance, the Hevajra Tantra states four or five of them, while the later Kālacakra Tantra works with six chakras. The chakras are often depicted as lotus flowers with different numbers of petals for different chakras. Hence, the flowers on the Karma pa’s body, the first sign, could also be related to his chakras. The chakras present in all systems are crown, throat and heart chakra, which are related to body, speech and mind, respectively. The crown chakra on the crown of the head is called *mahāsukha* (Tib. *bde chen*, “great bliss”) (Samuel 2013, 40–41).

⁴⁹ Buswell and Lopez 2014, 560. For a more detailed presentation of the system of channels, winds, drops and chakras, see also Beer 1999, 135–48.



Much tantric practice is concerned about moving the winds into the central channel and have them flow smoothly through the chakras. The special bliss consciousness, which is generated through this practice, is also referred to as *mahāsukha* (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 510 and 560). An important practice, where the place at the crown of the head plays an eminent role, is *pho ba* (“transferring consciousness”). In this practice one learns to “eject one’s consciousness from one’s body (through the aperture at the top of the skull) at the moment of death and send it into a pure realm, with Sukhāvātī [(Tib. *bde ba can*, lit. “having bliss”)] of the buddha Amitābha [(Tib. *’od dpag med*, lit. “measureless light”)] generally the preferred destination” (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 641–42). It is practised in all traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, but is particularly associated with the bKa’ brgyud tradition and is one of the so-called “six yogas of Nāropa” (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 576 and 642). Hence, this particular spot on the crown of the head, where the central channel ends, is very much related to pure realms. At the beginning of the Seventh Karma pa’s life story, when he recounts his experiences in the intermediate state between two lives, he travels to different pure realms and meets different buddhas and bodhisattvas there, among them also Vajradhāra, who tells him the names of his parents (Dell 2020, 49). Thus, the image of Vajradhāra on the crown of his head can be associated with this. The Karma pa meets Vajradhāra, the primordial buddha of the bKa’ brgyud tradition and founder of the Mahāmudrā transmission lineage, in the pure realms, where he directs him to this future parents. At his birth, he exhibits Vajradhāra’s image at the spot of his body, which is most associated with the pure realms, from where he has just arrived. It suggests that he is always connected with Vajradhāra through the crown chakra aperture.

The third mark on the Karma pa’s body is “the letter ‘a’ shaped by the veins at the heart chakra”. The letter “a” functions as a seed syllable (Skt. *bīja*, Tib. *sa bon*). Seed syllables are attributed to different buddhas and sometimes also to different chakras, for instance, “oṃ” to the crown chakra, “āḥ” to the throat chakra, and “hūṃ” to the heart chakra. They are considered to contain the essence of their related mantra and are often used in tantric visualisation practises (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 119). Here, it should be noted that on the Karma pa’s body, there is not the more common long “āḥ” syllable, which is usually associated with the throat chakra and the Buddha Amoghasiddhi, but the short “a” syllable, whose significance is as follows:

[It is the] first vowel and letter in the Sanskrit alphabet. The phoneme “a” is thought to be the source of all other phonemes and its corresponding letter the



origin of all other letters. As the basis of both the Sanskrit phonemic system and the written alphabet, the letter “a” thus comes to be invested with mystical significance as the source of truth, nondifferentiation, and emptiness (*śūnyatā*), or even of the universe as a whole. The *Prajñāpāramitāsarvatathāgatamātā-ekākṣarā*, the shortest of the perfection of wisdom scriptures, also describes how the entirety of the perfection of wisdom is subsumed by this one letter (Buswell and Lopez 2014, 1).⁵⁰

Apart from the seed syllable, also its location on the Karma pa’s body is imbued with meaning. The heart chakra plays an eminent role in the energy system sketched above and in tantric visualisation practices. At conception the “white drop” from the father and the “red drop” from the mother are said to unite with a consciousness seeking for rebirth. They form the “indestructible drop” (Tib. *mi shigs pa’i thig le*), which is enclosed at the heart chakra during one’s whole life and which is the seat of the consciousness. From this indestructible drop in the heart chakra, some weeks after conception, a white essence (also called “white *bodhicitta*”) starts moving up to the crown chakra, while a red essence (also called “red *bodhicitta*”) starts descending to the navel chakra along the central channel, where they remain during one’s lifetime and spread throughout the body through the channels. The essences reach full maturity at puberty.⁵¹ At the time of death the reverse process takes place. First, the white *bodhicitta* descends to the heart level, then the red *bodhicitta* ascends to the heart level, where they reunite with the indestructible drop. “Finally the indestructible drop at the heart centre opens, revealing the extremely subtle consciousness and its wind as the ‘clear light of death’, which arises as an exceedingly clear and bright vision, similar to the sky at dawn.⁵²” Next, the consciousness of the deceased leaves the body through one of nine apertures. If it leaves through the crown chakra, as described above in the context of the *’pho ba* practice, it goes to the pure realms, otherwise it is reborn in one of the six karmic realms of existence (Beer 1999, 141). The subtle energy system also plays an important role in what is called “deity yoga” or “*yi dam* practice”. It applies techniques of visualisation and imagination to identify

⁵⁰ Admittedly, the letter “a” is written in Tibetan script in the text from which this has been translated, but Sanskrit language and script are considered “holy” and auspicious in Tibet. Therefore, the Tibetan letter “a” can be equated with the Sanskrit letter “a” here. In a preceding paragraph within this text, for instance, the Karma pa utters the Sanskrit alphabet, while still in the mother’s womb (Dell 2021a, 21).

⁵¹ This is a shortened description of the process, for more details see Beer 1999, 140–41.

⁵² For more details, see Beer 1999, 141.



oneself with the form and qualities of a certain *yi dam*, a buddha aspect used as a meditational deity. The practice consists of two stages. First, in the generation stage (Tib. *bskyed rim*), one dissolves one's mind into emptiness and generates oneself in the form of the particular *yi dam*. Second, in the completion stage (Tib. *rdzogs rim*), one causes the winds to enter the central channel and release the indestructible drop at the heart chakra.

With the opening of the indestructible drop and the dawning of the “clear light”, emptiness is consciously realised as the “blissful mind of clear light”. This gives rise to the “illusory body” which manifests in the form of the deity. The union of “clear light” and “illusory body” – as the pure empty form of the deity meditating on emptiness – rapidly results in the accumulation of wisdom and method which leads directly to the full enlightenment of Buddhahood. (Beer 1999, 142)

The death experience consists of three *bar dos* (“intermediate states”): (1) the actual death process, (2) the intermediate state (between two lives), and (3) the seeking for rebirth. *Yi dam* practice simulates these three *bar dos* and transforms them into the experience of the three bodies or states of a buddha (Skt. *trikāya*). When the winds in the indestructible drop are dissolved and clear light is experienced in the completion stage, one attains the *dharmakāya*, the formless “truth body”. The arising from emptiness as the seed syllable in the generation stage leads to the attainment of the illusory body in the completion stage. In this way, one attains the *sambhogakāya*, the visionary “enjoyment body”. The arising as the *yi dam* in the generation stage, leads to experience of one's own body as the *nirmāṇakāya*, the “emanation body” of a buddha. “With the attainment of the three *kāyas*, death itself is transformed into the state of full enlightenment” (Beer 1999, 142). Having the seed syllable “a” at the level of the heart chakra, might signify that the Karma pa actually became the meditational deity (due to practice in previous lives). Thus, he accomplished this practice and with it the three *kāyas* of a buddha, which means that he reached full enlightenment.

The fourth and fifth marks are a *dharmodaya* and a wheel or circle (Tib. *khor lo*) at his secret place. The secret place is the lowest chakra. It is at the place of the sexual organ and represents the activity of an enlightened being (Beer 1999, 144). A *dharmodaya* (“source of reality”, Tib. *chos 'byung*) is a geometrical shape consisting of two triangles, combined such that the resulting shape is a six-pointed star similar to the “Star of David”. The upward-pointing triangle represents the male sexual organ, the down-pointing triangle the female sexual organ. Together, they represent the union of male and female. It



is used in visualisation practices and mandalas (Skt. *maṇḍala*) related to certain *yi dams*, such as Vajrayogini or her wrathful form Vajravārāhī (Beer 1999, 353). The latter is one of the main *yi dams* within the bKa' brgyud sect. The wheel which is also at the secret place can have various meanings. One possibility is that it means a circle, which surrounds the *dharmodaya*, which would then look like the mandala of Vajravārāhī, for instance. In this way, the Karma pa's mark at the secret place might indicate his enlightened activity, since this chakra is anyway associated with enlightened activity and particularly, since the union of male and female also points to enlightenment, as union of method and wisdom, bliss and emptiness. Besides, since the *dharmodaya* is particularly associated with wrathful *yi dams*, it might mainly stand for the Karma pa's protecting activity (Tib. *drag po'i phrin las*) out of the four enlightened activities (Tib. *phrin las bzhi*).

The sixth sign on the Karma pa's body are wheels at his feet. As mentioned above, this is one of the thirty-two marks of a great being, which are also attributed to the Buddha. In case of the Buddha, they are described as thousand-spoked wheels, which are on the soles of his feet.⁵³ In the *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, the causal relation for this sign is explained: "The Bodhisattva-mahasattva fittingly offers things to his parents, the honoured ones, elders, and animals. Because of this, he gains on his sole the mark of excellence of a thousand spokes [...]" (Yamamoto 2007, 396). Hence, this passage suggests that the cause of this mark is generosity in previous lives. The wheel or chakra in general has many meanings (Beer 1999, 160–62 and 185–86). When found on the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet, it is a sign of a great being, be it a buddha or a *cakravartin* (in this way it is a prominent representative of the thirty-two marks).⁵⁴ "The turning of the wheel symbolises both secular and religious authority; it denotes change, movement, extension, conquest, and the formation of a new ethical and moral order. The deliverance and transmission of the Buddhist teachings are known as 'turning the wheel of dharma'" (Beer 1999, 160). The thousand-spoked wheel is also the main one of the seven possessions of a *cakravartin*. It represents his vehicle, which is capable of travelling vast distances across the sky and even of travelling between dimensions (such as to the kingdom of Shambhala, which is described in the Kālacakra Tantra). It is also a "symbol of both

⁵³ Dharmachakra Translation Committee 2013, paragraph 7.99, item 31.

⁵⁴ In the *Lalitavistara Sūtra* wheels at the Buddha's feet are mentioned several times independently of the thirty-two signs, see Dharmachakra Translation Committee 2013, paragraphs 7.56, and 7.118.



temporal and spiritual sovereignty” (Beer 1999, 162). Moreover, the golden wheel is among the eight auspicious symbols, which in Buddhism “represent the offerings made by the gods to Shakyamuni Buddha immediately after he attained enlightenment. Brahma, the great god of the form realm, was the first to appear with an offering of a thousand-spoked golden wheel, requesting Shakyamuni to turn the teaching wheel of the dharma” (Beer 1999, 171). In this way, the wheel became the symbol of Buddha’s teachings. Hence, the wheels at the Karma pa’s feet again put him in one row with the Buddha. It is a sign of power and authority, as well as of generosity, in particular of the greatest kind of generosity one can give from the Buddhist point of view – the provision of the Buddha’s teachings to beings.

In the next sentence of the Karma pa’s birth story, it is said that “urine flowed down as milk.” Generally, urine is considered as one of the six excreta (Duff 2009, *dri ma drug*), but here it is transformed into milk, which has a very positive connotation. There are the eight auspicious substances (Tib. *bkra shis rdzas brgyad*), which are considered to represent different events in the Buddha’s life. One of these substances is yoghurt or curds, which “represent the offering of milk rice made by the virtuous lady Sujata to Shakyamuni before he sat under the body tree” (Beer 1999, 187–188). Curds are considered as a nourishing food. This also holds true for the symbolical level, as its “pure white nature symbolises spiritual nourishment and the abandonment of all negative actions” (Beer 1999, 188). This symbolic meaning likewise applies to all three white substances derived from the cow – milk, yoghurt and ghee. The Buddha experienced the extreme of overabundance in the palace and exchanged it for a life of extreme austerities. When the fasting Buddha received the meal of milk-rice, it gave him the strength to attain enlightenment and recognise the truth of the middle way (Beer 1999, 189). For this reason, milk and its derivatives also stand for the middle way, far from extremes. Hence, also in the Karma pa’s case the milk released from his bladder might bear all this symbolism of spiritual nourishment, abandonment of negative actions and teaching of the middle way. The fact that he does not consume the milk, but releases it, might signify that he does not primarily receive these items, but that he already accomplished them and is now able to give them to others in the form of teachings.

It is said that at the Karma pa’s birth “everything was pervaded by fragrances of fine smells”. This is also found in the Buddha’s birth story in different places. There one finds descriptions such as “[all] of Lumbinī Grove was sprinkled with droplets of perfumed water”, “and many hundreds of



thousands of gods then bathed the Bodhisattva in perfumed water”, “many trillions of goddesses resting in the center of the sky showered [...] scented oils.”⁵⁵ In all these places, not only the perfumes in the air, but also flowers falling from the sky are mentioned, as well as the presence of gods and goddesses. Hence, perfumes and flowers in the air and sky indicate that the gods attended the Buddha’s birth and showed their veneration. Also in case of the Karma pa, rain of flowers and fragrances are mentioned, which might be a sign that he has the same attention of the gods’ realms as the Buddha.

It is described that the Karma pa’s parents bowed down in front of the newborn out of devotion and gave auspicious names to him. His father called him *Mi pham mGon po*, which means “The Invincible Guardian”, an epithet of the future buddha, Maitreya (Duff 2009, *mi pham mngon po*). Given the fact that in the preceding section the Karma pa has already been described as a buddha in various respects, it is not surprising that his father is able to see the Karma pa as a buddha and thus gives him the name of a buddha. As already mentioned above, Karma pa also met the fifth buddha, Maitreya, during his intermediate state and trained with him in Tuṣita heaven, himself being designated as the sixth buddha (Dell 2020, 50). Hence, there is a strong connection between those two. His mother gave him the auspicious name of *mTsho skyes rDo rje*, which means “Lake-born Vajra”. This is one of the eight manifestations of Guru Rinpoche (8th century) (Duff 2009, *mtsho skyes rdo rje*), the founder of Buddhism in Tibet. The eight manifestations correspond to eight different forms assumed by him at different points in his life. The name applied here refers to his birth.⁵⁶ It is further said that his mother gave this name to him “for the sake of a stable life-span”. There are various versions of Guru Rinpoche’s life story, which may differ quite significantly.⁵⁷ However, generally according to legend and according to many Tibetan’s belief, he was born eight years after the passing of Buddha Śākyamuni (Sogyal Rinpoche 1990, 29). Since he only brought Buddhism to Tibet in the eighth century, he must have lived more than 1000 years. That is why his mother selected his name for the sake of a long life.

According to the next sentence, in the Karma pa’s first week, his father heard him say many mantras, his mother heard him say vowels and other people heard him say the *maṇi* mantra. The fact that a newborn utters clear words or phonetic sequences within the first week is quite unusual. Mantras

⁵⁵ Dharmachakra Translation Committee 2013, paragraphs 7.25, 7.29, 7.49, and 7.63.

⁵⁶ Rigpa Wiki contributors, *Eight Manifestations of Guru Rinpoche* (Accessed: 23.08.2020).

⁵⁷ For an overview on different sources and some translations thereof, see Zangpo 2002.



are considered the Buddha's speech and might indicate that the Karma pa's throat chakra, associated with speech, is fully developed or at least significantly more than for other babies. As already touched upon above, in the context of the Karma pa's uttering of "A la la!" directly after his birth, according to the *Lalitavistara Sūtra*, the Buddha took seven steps and said clearly: "I am the leader of the world."⁵⁸ Hence, the Karma pa's utterings might not be as elaborate as the Buddha's, but might still be an allusion to the Buddha's words.

4. Conclusion

In the introduction, I briefly touch upon the topic of miraculous events and signs and on their indigenous classifications. Further on, I point out that the Buddha's life story functions as a blueprint for all later life stories of Buddhist masters, which also applies to the miracles described therein. Finally, I put it into the context of the *rnam thar* genre and especially its secret level, which seeks to inspire the practitioners and to increase their devotion towards their lama. As an example, I present an annotated translation, analysis and edition of a so far untranslated section of the *rnam thar* of the Seventh Karma pa from the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, where such miraculous events and signs are described. Looking at it in connection with part 1 of this two-part article, I analyse two main aspects of the secret level of life stories using the example of the Seventh Karma pa – visionary experiences and miraculous events.

Nevertheless, I see much room for further related research. First, the continuation of the story would also be interesting to analyse, as it describes the recognition of the Seventh Karma pa as an incarnation, which again involves elements, which could certainly be categorised as miracles or visions. Second, it could be interesting to compare the birth stories of several Karma pa's with each other in order to carve out common elements, as well as differences. Third, there is also another level of comparison, which might be interesting. The current work is based on a translation of a section of the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* by the Second dPa bo Rinpoche, which is, with some certainty, the most important source for the Seventh Karma pa's life story. However, another important work about the life of the earlier Karma bka'

⁵⁸ Dharmachakra Translation Committee 2013, paragraph 7.62. For variations of what he said, see *ibid.*, paragraphs 7.31 and 7.56.



brgyud masters is the so-called *Kam tshang*⁵⁹ by the Eighth Si tu Rinpoche and his student 'Be lo Tshe dbang. It is often said that he draws mainly from the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, but I am not aware that this has been investigated systematically so far. Therefore, it might also be interesting to compare the birth stories between these two works. Fourth, it would, of course, be interesting to translate and analyse not only the birth section of the Seventh Karma pa's life story, but the whole life story. Again comparison between the different sources and the different Karma pa's would be interesting. This, however, exceeds the scope of a research paper by far and probably requires several books to be written about it.

5. Appendix: Edition

5.1. Introduction to the edition

All editions of the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, which I could identify are based on the lHo brag printing blocks. According to Richardson (1959, x), referring to the colophon of these blocks, they were originally stored in gNas bzhis, a bKa' brgyud monastery, in lHo brag, but later on were moved to lHa lung monastery, also in lHo brag, where he and Lokesh Chandra obtained some copies.⁶⁰ I could not find any evidence or hint for the existence of other printing blocks of the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*.

I could identify several textual witnesses of the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, of which the most interesting and original one is a reproduction of prints from the lHo brag blocks from Rumtek Monastery in two volumes from 1980.⁶¹ This reproduction is also available via BDRC, and I took this as the starting point for the edition I provide here. There are several other prints or reproductions of prints from those printing blocks available. However, all being produced from the same printing blocks, I do not expect any added value considering them and therefore, omitted them for the edition. All other textual witnesses have been derived from these printing blocks' text more recently.

⁵⁹ Chos kyi 'byung gnas and 'Be lo Tshe dbang kun khyab 1998.

⁶⁰ Richardson (1959) or Chandra (1959), respectively, do not mention, when that was, but it must have been before Chandra issued his edition that is, before 1959. I have no information as to whether these blocks still exist today.

⁶¹ dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba 1980.



Lokesh Chandra already published the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* in four volumes from 1959 to 1965.⁶² This edition is based on a print from the lHo brag blocks he had made, and was copied in handwriting using *dbu can* script.⁶³

rDor je rgyal po made a modern edition in a book format published by Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, first in 1986 in two volumes, then in 2006 in one volume, and again in 2015 in one volume.⁶⁴ The first two are available via BDRC, while the third is subject to restricted access in BDRC. Since all three editions are from the same publishing house and editor, I assume that the 2006 and 2015 editions do not add information to the 1986 edition. I found references to further modern book editions from other publishers, which seem rather difficult to obtain. Therefore, apart from the reproduction of the original block print (A⁶⁵) and Chandra's handwritten version (C⁶⁶), I only considered the 1986 edition (B⁶⁷) for the edition provided here.⁶⁸ My impression is that Chandra's version is rather close to the block print reproduction, with only a few rare differences in spelling. However, it was also useful to consider rDo rje rgyal po's edition, since in many places the latter corrects mis-spellings or non-standard spellings from the original. If there are differences, I indicate in the apparatus which variants there are in which text, and for which reading I decided. For instance "gsungs B] gsung A, C" means that I decided to read *gsungs* according to text B, while texts A and C actually read *gsung*. Generally, there are no significant differences in the section I studied. The guiding theme of the edition is classical Tibetan grammar and orthography.

In the edition below, the page numbers of all three texts are indicated in brackets, if a new page starts.

5.2. Edition

(A, vol. 2, p. 189, l. 2; B, vol. 2, p. 1036, l. 16; C, vol. 2, p. 540, l. 1)

der dngos po zhes bya ba shing pho khyi'i lo hor zla dang po'i tshes bco lnga skar ma mchu la zla bas longs spyod pa'i snga dro nam mkha' yongs su

⁶² dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba 1959–1965.

⁶³ Chandra 1959, vii, and Richardson 1959, x.

⁶⁴ dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba 1986, 2006, and 2015.

⁶⁵ dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba 1980, vol. 2, 189.

⁶⁶ dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba 1959–1965, vol. 2, 540.

⁶⁷ dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba 1986, vol. 2, 1036–37.

⁶⁸ These three editions are also mentioned in Martin and Bentor 1997, 88–89. For a much more extensive survey of the textual witnesses of the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* and an introduction into the work in its entirety, see Dell 2021c.



*dwangs*⁶⁹ *pa la 'ja' 'od kha dog lnga'i ri mo cung zad snang zhing me tog gi char kha ba ltar 'bab/*

'brug gi sgra lta bu gar yod mi mngon pa yang yang grag pa'i tshe yum la zug rngu med par sku bltams/

de ma thag zhal nas a la la gsung zhing bzhad/

sku la me tog gi rnam pa mang po dang dbu ltang du rdo rje 'chang gi sku thugs kar rtsa ris kyi a yig gsang gnas su chos 'byung dang 'khor lo zhabs la 'khor lo ste sku la rang byon drug gsal bar snang/

gsang chab 'o mar 'bab cing dri (B, p.1037) bzang gi ngad kyis thams cad khyab/

*yab yum gyis kyang dad pas 'dud cing de ma thag yab kyis gsol ba 'debs pa'i slad du*⁷⁰ *mtshan mi pham mgon po dang yum gyis sku tshe brtan pa'i slad du*⁷¹ *mtsho skyes rdo rjer mtshan gsol/*

zhag bdun na gsung mang du byon pa na yab kyis sngags mang du gsung bar go/ yum gyis dbyangs yig gsung bar go/ gzhan rnams kyis ma Ni gsung bar go/

Bibliography

Tibetan literature

Chos kyi 'byung gnas (1699/1700–1774), 'Be lo Tshe dbang kun khyab (b. 18th cent.). 1998. *sGrub brgyud karma kam tshang brgyud pa rnam thar rin po che'i rnam par thar pa rab 'byams nor bu zla ba chu shel gyi phreng ba*. Kun ming: Yun nan mi rigs dpe skrun khang. BDRC, W24686.

dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba (1504–1564/1566). 1959–1965. *Mkhas pahi dgah ston by Dpah-bo-gtsug-lag 'phreng-ba* (4 volumes). Edited by Lokesh Chandra. Śatapiṭaka Series no. 9[4]. New Dehli: International Academy of Indian Culture. BDRC, W1KG24245.

----. 1980. *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston* (2 volumes), reproduced from prints from lHo brag blocks from Rumtek Monastery. Dehli: Dehli Karmapa Chhodhey Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang. BDRC, W28792.

----. 1986. *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston* (2 volumes), edited by rDo rje rgyal po. Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang. BDRC, W7499.

----. 2006. *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston*. Edited by rDo rje rgyal po. Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang. BDRC, W1PD96069.

----. 2015. *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston*. Edited by rDo rje rgyal po. Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang. BDRC, W8LS19006.

Sans rgyas rgya mtsho, sDe srid (1653–1705). 1972. *The Vaidūrya dkar po of sDe-srid Sans-rgyas-rgya-mtsho, The Fundamental Treatise on Tibetan Astrology and Calendrical*

⁶⁹ *dwangs* B, C] *dangs* A.

⁷⁰ *slad du* B] *slad tu* A, C.

⁷¹ *slad du* B, C] *slad tu* A.



Calculations (2 volumes), reproduced from a print from the Lhasa blocks from the collection of Burmiok, Athing. New Delhi: T. Tsepal Taikang. BDRC, W30116.
Yīsūn, Zhāng 张怡荪 (ed.). 1985. *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo / Zàng-Hàn dà cídiǎn* 藏汉大辞典 (3 volumes). Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

Western literature

- Bays, Gwendolyn (trans.). 1983. *The Voice of the Buddha: The Beauty of Compassion* (2 volumes). Berkeley: Dharma Publishing.
- Beer, Robert. 1999. *The Encyclopedia of Tibetan Symbols and Motifs*. Boston: Shambala.
- . 2003. *The Handbook of Tibetan Buddhist Symbols*. Chicago and London: Serindia.
- Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC) (Accessed: 22.12.2019 to 05.02.2020).
- Buswell, Robert E. and Donald S. Lopez. 2014. *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Chandra, Lokesh. 1959. "Preface." In *Mkhas pahi dgah ston by Dpah-bo-gtsug-lag 'phreng-ba* (4 volumes), edited by Lokesh Chandra, vol. 1, vii–viii. Śatapiṭaka Series no. 9[4]. New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture.
- Choegyal Gyamtso Tulku. 2000. "Foreword." In *The Divine Madman, The Sublime Life and Songs of Drukpa Kunley*. Translated by Keith Dowman, and Sonam Paljor, 21–23. Varanasi and Kathmandu: Pilgrims Publishing.
- Dell, Dominik. 2020. "Tibetan Buddhist Masters between Two Lives: A Closer Look at the Genre of bar do'i rnam thar Using the Example of the Seventh Karma pa, Chos grags rgya mtsho (1454–1506)." *Polish Journal of the Arts and Culture*, n.s., 11 (1/2020): 41–63. DOI: 10.4467/24506249PJ.20.002.12988.
- . 2021a. "Birth of a Tibetan Buddhist Master, Part 1: Visionary Experiences prior to the Birth of the Seventh Karma pa, Chos grags rgya mtsho (1454–1506)." *Polish Journal of the Arts and Culture*, n.s., 13 (1/2021): 11–36. DOI: 10.4467/24506249PJ.21.001.13728.
- . 2021b. "Birthplace of the Seventh Karma pa, Chos grags rgya mtsho (1454–1506): Description Draws from Tibetan Geomancy and Pilgrimage Guidebooks." *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 58 (April 2021): 81–102. http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/ret/pdf/ret_58_03.pdf.
- . 2021c. "'Feast of the Wise': Author, Structure and Textual Witnesses of the 16th Century Religio-Historical Work Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston by the Second dPa' bo, gTsug lag phreng ba (1504–1566)." *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 61 (October 2021): 110–65. http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/ret/pdf/ret_61_03.pdf.
- Dharmachakra Translation Committee. 2013. *The Play in Full, Lalitavistara*. 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha. <https://read.84000.co/translation/toh95.html> (Accessed: 21.07.2020).
- Duff, Tony. 2009. *The Illuminator Tibetan-English Encyclopedic Dictionary* (5.17 ed.). Kathmandu: Padma Karpo Translation Committee.
- Fiordalis, David V. 2008. "Miracles and Superhuman Powers in South Asian Buddhist Literature." PhD diss. The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
- . 2011. "Miracles in Indian Buddhist narratives and doctrine." *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 33, no. 1–2 (2010; published in 2011): 381–408.
- . 2014. "Buddhist Miracles." *Oxford Bibliographies*. DOI: 10.1093/OBO/9780195393521-0116 (Accessed: 27.08.2020).



- . 2017. “Abhijñā/Ṛddhi (Extraordinary Knowledge and Powers).” *Oxford Bibliographies*. DOI: 10.1093/OBO/9780195393521-0112 (Accessed: 27.08.2020).
- Gómez, Luis Oscar. 2011. “On Buddhist wonders and wonder-working.” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 33, no. 1–2 (2010; published in 2011): 513–54.
- Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Tayé. 2010. *The Treasury of Knowledge. Books Two, Three and Four: Buddhism’s Journey to Tibet*, Ngawang Zangpo (trans. and introduction). Ithaca and New York: Snow Lion Publications.
- Ketcham, Christopher. 2020. “Continuity and Rebirth.” *Academia Letters*, article 26. DOI: 10.20935/AL26 (Accessed: 10.01.2021).
- Kieschnik, John. 2004. “Miracles.” In *Encyclopedia of Buddhism, Volume 1, A–L*, edited by Robert E. Buswell, 541–44. New York: Macmillan.
- Martin, Dan, and Yael Bentor. 1997. *Tibetan Histories: A Bibliography of Tibetan-language Historical Works*. London: Serindia Publications.
- Ray, Reginald. 1980. “Introduction.” In *The History of the Sixteen Karmapas of Tibet* by Karma Thinley, 1–20. Boulder: Prajña Press.
- Rheingans, Jim. 2010. “Narratives of Reincarnation, Politics of Power, and the Emergence of a Scholar: The Very Early Years of Mikyo Dorje.” In *Lives Lived, Lives Imagined—Biography in the Buddhist Tradition*, edited by Linda Covill, Ulrike Roesler, and Sarah Shaw, 241–98. Boston: Wisdom Publications.
- . 2014. “Narratology in Buddhist Studies: Dialogues about Meditation in a Tibetan Hagiography.” In *Narrative Pattern and Genre in Hagiographic Life Writing: Comparative Perspectives from Asia to Europe*, edited by Stephan Conermann and Jim Rheingans, 69–112. Berlin: EB-Verlag.
- . 2017. *The Eighth Karmapa’s Life and His Interpretation of the Great Seal. A Religious Life and Instructional Texts in Historical and Doctrinal Contexts*. Hamburg Buddhist Studies Series 7. Bochum and Freiburg: Projekt Verlag.
- Richardson, Hugh Edward. 1959. “Foreword.” In *Mkhas pahi dgah ston by Dpah-bo-gtsug-lag ‘phreng-ba* (4 volumes), edited by Lokesh Chandra, vol. 1, ix–xi. Śatapiṭaka Series no. 9[4]. New Dehli: International Academy of Indian Culture.
- Rigpa Wiki contributors. “Eight Manifestations of Guru Rinpoche.” *Rigpa Wiki* (Accessed: 23.08.2020).
- Roesler, Ulrike. 2014. “Operas, Novels, and Religious Instructions: Life-stories of Tibetan Buddhist Masters between Genre Classifications.” In *Narrative Pattern and Genre in Hagiographic Life Writing: Comparative Perspectives from Asia to Europe*, edited by Stephan Conermann and Jim Rheingans, 113–40. Berlin: EB-Verlag.
- Samuel, Geoffrey Brian. 2013. “The subtle body in India and beyond.” In *Religion and the Subtle Body in Asia and the West*, edited by Geoffrey Brian Samuel and Jay Johnston, 33–47. London and New York: Routledge.
- Sogyal Rinpoche. 1990. *Dzogchen and Padmasambhava*. California: Rigpa Fellowship.
- Verhufen, Gregor. 1992. “Die Biographien des achten Karma-pa Mi-bskyod rdo-rje und seines Lehrers Sangs-rgyas mNyan-pa Rin-po-che. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Karma-bKa’-brgyud-pa-Schulrichtung des tibetischen Buddhismus.” MA diss. University of Bonn.
- Vostrikov, Andrew Ivanovich. 1994. *Tibetan Historical Literature*. Abington, Oxon, UK: Routledge.
- Wikipedia contributors. “Tibetische Mondhäuser.” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia* (Accessed: 07.08.2020).



- Willis, Janice Dean. 1995. *Enlightened Beings: Life Stories from the Ganden Oral Tradition*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.
- Yamamoto, Kōshō (trans.). 2007. *The Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra*, edited by Tony Page (Accessed: 19.08.2020).
- Young, Serenity. 1999. *Dreaming in the Lotus: Buddhist Dream Narrative, Imagery & Practice*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.
- Zangpo, Ngawang. 2002. *Guru Rinpoché, His Life and Times*. Ithaca and Boulder: Snow Lion Publications.

