

A Dialogue Between Text and Image:  
Examining the Historico-Religious Context of a  
Narrative Thangka Painting Depicting Episodes from  
the Life of Shar chen Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan  
(1717-1780)\*

Jörg Heimbels

**ABSTRACT:** The rich tradition of Tibetan biographical and historiographical writing is an important textual source for the study of Tibetan art history. It provides us with precious references to the commissioning of works of sacred art (i.e., external evidence). Similarly important is the information contained within the works of art, such as iconography, style, and inscriptions (i.e., internal evidence). A dialogue between these two types of evidence can help enormously, revealing vital information that is not only helpful for dating individual works of art but also for clarifying the larger historico-religious context in which they were produced. Adopting this approach, the present contribution discusses a biographical narrative painting of Shar chen Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan (1717-1780), the thirty-seventh abbot of Ngor Monastery (tenure: 1746-1751). The painting illustrates six episodes from his life accompanied by verse captions in golden dbu can lettering. Regarding written sources, including his full-length biography,

---

\* I would like to express my gratitude to David Jackson for carefully proofreading this article. I am also very grateful to Volker Caumanns and Yannick Laurent for their valuable remarks on an earlier draft of this article.

these episodes are introduced and placed within the larger context of his life. Moreover, when we take into account the verses Zhu chen Tshul khri ms rin chen (1697-1774) wrote as inscriptions for commissions of sacred art, it becomes clear that the present painting was part of a larger thangka set depicting not only the present life of Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan but also his previous lives, and those lives are also recorded in his biography. In addition, we can demonstrate that the entire set was commissioned in about the 1760s or 1770s. To further clarify the historical context of this commission, the role of Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan as Ngor chaplain at the court of Sde dge is discussed and his relation with members of the royal family — including the king, Blo gros rgya mtsho (1723-1774), his wife, Bkra shis dbang mo (d. 1768), his nephew, Chos skyong mgon po (d. 1767/68), and his sister, Dbyangs can sgrol ma (1727-1786) — is introduced.

The rich tradition of Tibetan biographical and historiographical writing is an important textual source for the study of Tibetan art history. It provides us with precious references to the commissioning of works of sacred art (i.e., as external evidence). Similarly important is the information contained within the works of art, such as iconography, style, and inscriptions (i.e., as internal evidence). A dialogue between these two types of evidence—or between texts and images, one of the topics of the conference—can help enormously, revealing vital information that is not only helpful for dating individual works of art but also for clarifying the larger historico-religious context in which they were produced. Adopting this approach, I shall discuss an individual narrative thangka painting (Fig. 1), which most likely formed part of a larger set depicting episodes from the life of Shar chen Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan (1717-1780), the thirty-seventh abbot of Ngor Monastery (tenure: 1746-1751).

Previously, several scholars briefly discussed the painting, mentioning it in auction or exhibition catalogues or in art-historical studies. They dated it to the late eighteenth century, specifying Khams as its provenance in eastern Tibet, in particular, the kingdom of Sde dge.<sup>1</sup> They devoted special attention to a specific scene that depicted a painting workshop headed by Zhu chen Tshul khri ms rin chen (1697-1774). There, a master artist was shown painting a set of Avadāna stories from the *Kalpalatā* (*Dpag bsam 'khri shing*), a classic Indian Buddhist work composed by the Kashmiri poet Kṣemendra in 1052.<sup>2</sup>

The painting then belonged to the collection of Richard R. Ernst, who also discussed it in some of his scientific papers.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, it was not sold when Sotheby's auctioned his

1 See Béguin 1977: 237, no. 276, 238-239, Fig. 276; Heller 1999: 195, 198, no. 114, 211; Jackson 1996: 303, Fig. 160, 312-313, Pl. 63, 411; Jackson 2012: 9-10, Fig. 1.8, 106-107, Fig. 5.22; and Sotheby's 2018: 168-169, no. 966. In addition, see also Lin 2011: 151, 317-319, Figs. 4.1-4.4 and HAR 8002.

2 On Kṣemendra's *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā*, see, for instance Mejor 1992 and Straube 2009.

3 See Ernst 2001: 902-903, Fig. 1; Ernst 2010: 283-286, Fig. 9; and Ernst 2014: 18-24, Fig. 1.7.





Fig. 1 Thangka painting with episodes from the life of Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan; size: 78 x 58 cm (Sotheby's 2018: 169).





Fig. 2 Arrangement of the verse captions on the painting.



collection in 2018, and thus might still remain in his possession.<sup>4</sup> Reflecting about the origins of his Tibetan art collection, Ernst revealed, in a later Sotheby's auction catalogue, that he originally acquired the painting from a curio shop in Lugano, Switzerland, that was selling cuckoo clocks (!):

Our collecting now continued in Switzerland. My professional life, back in Switzerland, was at the beginning neither productive nor pleasant. A serious nervous breakdown in 1969, caused by private and professional inadequacies, kept me from scientific endeavors for several months and I was forced to spend a convalescence stage near the beautiful city of Lugano. I had the leisure to browse through some curio shops in this tourist's place. By another pure chance, in a cuckoo clock shop, I discovered two thangkas and a gilded bronze figure, having just arrived from Tibet by refugees. [...] The second painting at the curio shop was in its original state illustrating episodes from the life of Ngorpa Rinchen Gyaltzen (lot 966). This very unique painting with fascinating vignettes show the master painter Zhou Chen with his students and his atelier in a meta-image that is a rare glimpse into the very activity of thangka painting.<sup>5</sup>

## Description of the Narrative Painting

The painting depicts six biographical episodes in an asymmetrical composition, with two on the left and four on the right. Five of them are portrayed within walled monastic complexes and one within a tented encampment. Each episode is separated from the other by landscape elements such as hills, trees, plants, and clouds. Within the landscape, travellers can be seen both on horseback and on foot, obviously connecting some of the episodes.

Each episode is accompanied by a caption written in verse with golden *dbu can* lettering, though without numbering that would allow an easy chronological interpretation (Fig. 2). Unfortunately, detailed photos of these captions were never published, though some were presented in transliteration or English translation.<sup>6</sup> However, the most important caption for illuminating the historical background of the painting (the one at bottom left) most likely was at first either overlooked or was never properly deciphered. This may have been due to the fact that the caption's golden lettering is extremely worn and thus largely illegible. In addition, a

4 See <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/2018/the-richard-magdalena-ernst-collection-n09800.html#&page=all&sort=lotSortNum-asc&viewMode=list&lot=966&scroll=16220>, lot 966 [accessed 17.09.2019].

5 Sotheby's 2018: 10. See also Ernst 2014: 3-5.

6 See Jackson 1996: 316, n. 694, 411 and Sotheby's 2018: 168, no. 966.

second caption of another episode, in the upper right corner, has until now been completely overlooked.

Let us begin with the episode in the upper left corner for the viewer (Fig. 3). There, we see Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan depicted inside a temple, with thangka paintings hanging on the wall behind him. He is expounding a scripture that he is holding in his left hand to two lamas placed to his proper right. In front of them, both monastics and lay people can be seen engaging in different activities that appear to include the writing or copying of scriptures and making offerings. The entire scene is placed within a monastic building that, on the basis of the accompanying caption, can be identified as the Klu sdings bla brang, one of the four main lama palaces of Ngor Monastery and the monastic seat of members of the famous Shar family to which Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan belonged.<sup>7</sup> The Klu sdings bla brang was his residence for about twenty-two years during his years of study after moving to Ngor at age eight (i.e., seven), later for about eight or nine years after stepping down as abbot of Ngor, and for the last four years of his life when he came back to Ngor after retiring from his sixteen-year position as court chaplain of Sde dge.<sup>8</sup> The accompanying caption describes the episode as follows:

- [Line 1] རྒྱལ་ཤར་ཆེན་མཁས་པའི་རིགས་འཁྲུངས་སྐུ་ལའི་བྲིང་། །བསྐྱེད་ཅུ་བསྐྱེད་པའི་  
 [Line 2] བསྐྱེད་གནས་སྐྱེད་པའི་གྲོ་བུ་བྲུང་དགའ་ཚལ་ཞལ་འཛམ་རྒྱལ་སྐྱེད་པའི་  
 [Line 3] སྐྱེད་པ་དཔག་ཡས་གཞན་དོན་སྐྱེད་པའི་ཚུལ།

How Shar chen, born into a family of scholars, [like a bead of] a rosary of *sāla* [wood], engaged for the benefit of others in the unfathomable behaviour of a bodhisattva in the [...] pleasure grove of the lama palace of Klu sdings, the dwelling place of [his] upbringing.<sup>9</sup>

Starting in the upper right corner and continuing all the way to the centre of the painting (Fig. 4), we find three more episodes that are depicted within monastic settings. The first one, in the upper right corner, shows Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan within a temple teaching to a surrounding group of disciples. Its caption is written to the left, above the temple's roof within

7 On the Shar family, the Klu sdings bla brang, and the other lama palaces of Ngor, see Heimbel 2017: 112-118, 267-268, n. 217.

8 See Gu ru 'phel, *Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar*, fol. 92a5-b1. See also Gu ru 'phel, *Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar*, fols. 10.1ff., 72a3, 76b1ff., and Dpal ldan chos skyong, *Ngor gdan rabs kha skong*, pp. 578.2-579.1. During his tenure as Ngor abbot, Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan most likely resided in Ngor's abbatial quarters.

9 The term *zhal 'dzam* is most likely an abbreviation of *zhal ras 'dzam bu chu bo'i gser*, and it might relate to the pleasure grove of the lama palace of Klu sdings, the appearance of which is compared to the gold of the Jambū River (Jambūnadi), the finest gold in the world.





Fig. 3 Detail of the first episode showing Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan in the Klu sdings bla brang of Ngor Monastery.



Fig. 4 Detail of episodes two to four.





Fig. 5 Detail of episode three showing Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan receiving offerings in the presence of four dignitaries.

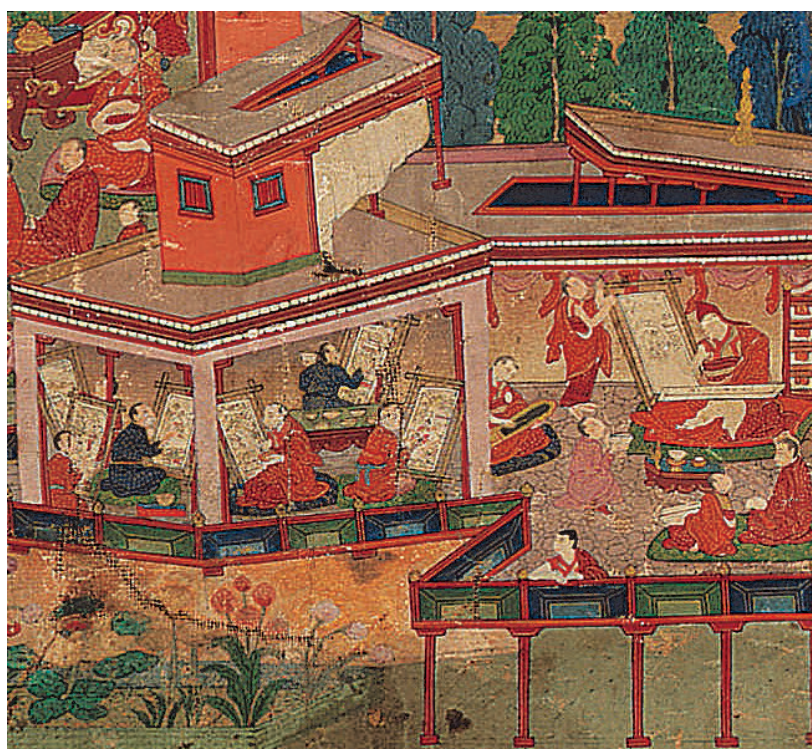


Fig. 6 Detail of episode four showing Zhu chen Tshul khri ms rin chen and the Lha dga' brothers with their assistants painting a set of Avadāna stories from the *Kalpalatā* (*Dpag bsam 'khri shing*) for Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan.



the middle hilltop. However, since precisely this caption has thus far been overlooked and for it, I lack images, nothing can be said about the content of the episode or its possible location.<sup>10</sup>

To the left, below and attached to the above-mentioned temple, we find a depiction of a second, much larger monastic complex surrounded by a wall that delineates the space in which the next episode takes place. In a large courtyard, we see a group of people, including both monks and laity, paying homage to Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan by presenting various kinds of offerings to the master, who is sitting on a large throne inside a temple. To his proper right, four secular and religious dignitaries, who include one laywoman, are depicted, sitting on smaller thrones. Just next to the proper right of Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan, we find a standing monk official who appears to either be recording those offerings in a list or reading aloud from that list the names of the donors and their offerings (Fig. 5).

Within that walled-in complex, the right half is occupied by another fenced-off building, which serves as setting for the next episode. The building houses a painting workshop with two rooms (Fig. 6). Inside the right room, surrounded by six variously occupied persons, we find Zhu chen Tshul khri ms rin chen sitting in front of a canvas sketching an Avadāna story from the *Kalpataṭā* (*Dpag bsam 'khri shing*) cycle, whose scripture lays on his lap for reference purposes. In the room to the left, we find a group of six painters working on canvases that have already been painted with colours. This setting seems to imply that Zhu chen (in the other room) was responsible for sketching the paintings while the other painters completed them by colouring, shading, and outlining. Among these painters are depicted Lha dga' of Karma Lha steng and his brother who, as pointed out by David Jackson, were Zhu chen's preferred artists for such projects in Sde dge and adjacent regions of Khams.<sup>11</sup>

Some of those above-mentioned details can be gleaned from the accompanying captions. The caption for the entire episode is written outside of the temple complex, below the centre of its surrounding wall:

- [Line 1] ལྟུ་བའི་རྟོགས་བརྗོད་དཔག་བསམ་འབྲི་ཤིང་གི། ཡལ་འདབ་ཆོག་བརྟུ་བརྟུད་པའི་གཟུགས་  
བཞོད་
- [Line 2] རྣམས། ལྷག་མཆོད་རྟེན་དུ་(?) བསྐྱུན་ཞིང་ཨི་མྱི་པ། རིན་ཆེན་མི་འབྱུང་ལྟུ་མཆོད་དཔལ་  
བཟང་པོ།

10 Without identifying individual episodes, Jackson (1996: 411) provides a transliteration of three of those captions. Among them, there is one that does not match any of the other five: “(The first line is completely illegible.) zhabs stegs XX XX gser khri mnga' gsol na[s]// [three syllables illegible] pa theg gsum chos sgra che// mkhan chen chos kyi rgyal mtshan XX XX XX (The verse alludes to his enthronement as Ngor abbot).” It needs further clarification whether this is the caption under discussion or Jackson's reading of one of the other five.

11 See Jackson 1996: 301-316 and Jackson 2012: 9, 106.

Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po, the one from [the monastery of Ngor] E wam [chos ldan], produced the pictorial representation of the 108 buds, [i.e.,] episodes, of the *Wish-Granting Vine* [*Kalpapatā, Dpag bsam 'khri shing*], the moral tales of the Victorious One, as a support for [his own making] prostrations and offerings.

[Line 1] །དཔལ་རྒྱལ་རྟོགས་བརྗོད་བརྒྱ་བརྒྱད་རི་མོའི་ལམ། །དང་སྔ་འདྲེན་པ་ཚུལ་གྱིས་ས་

About how the dramatic play of the fingertips of Tshul khrims rin chen, who at first showed the way of the glorious 108 Avadāna story paintings, and of Lha dga' [and his] brother together with [their] assistants was performed and [the Avadāna stories] painted.<sup>12</sup>

12 The term *tshig* was preliminary translated as episode, in reference to the 108 moral tales (*rtogs brjod*), or buds (*yal 'dab*), the *Wish-Granting Vine* comprises.





Fig. 7 Detail of episode five showing Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan with members of the Sde dge royal family.



Fig. 8 Another detail of episode five showing Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan with the king of Sde dge, Blo gros rgya mtsho, and the latter's nephew and wife (or sister).

kinds of offerings that are most likely destined for Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan. In a two-level extension of the temple on the right, we see an art workshop including artisans sculpting statues on the upper level and what appears to be blacksmiths on the lower level.

In a three-storeyed building in the left foreground, other scenes of monastic life are seen, including what appears to be the writing or proofreading of scriptures on the second level, and a kitchen on the first level. Another interesting detail is the stables shown in the foreground, home to yaks and horses. Unfortunately, as mentioned above, the gold lettering of the accompanying caption has largely worn off and only fragments are legible. Nevertheless, these fragments reveal the name of a king of Sde dge, Blo gros rgya mtsho (1723-1774), alias Blo gros rgyal mtshan. Moreover, the caption mentions the king's nephew (*dbon*), Chos skyong mgon po (d. 1767/68), and his wife or sister (*lcam*), Bkra shis dbang mo (d. 1768) or Rje btsun Dbyangs can sgrol ma (1727-1786):

[Line 1] (illegible) ...

[Line 2] ...ཚས་ཀྱི་བྱུང་པ་མཛད་ཁམས་ ...

[Line 3] ...བཞིས་མཉེས་བྱེད་པ་(?) ས་(?) རྒྱུར་(?) རྩོམ་གྱི་

[Line 4] མཚོ་དངོན་ལྷུང་རྣམས།

...

...the Dharma king, Mdo khams ...

... Sa skyong Blo gros rgya mtsho, who pleased with the four ...  
nephew, sister/wife, [and] companions.<sup>15</sup>

Blo gros rgya mtsho was the third and youngest son of the great king of Sde dge, Bstan pa tsher ring (1678-1738, r. 1714-1738), and he functioned both as abbot of the royal monastery of Lhun grub steng and ruler of Sde dge, after the passing of his second eldest brother, Phun tshogs bstan pa (d. 1751, r. 1738-1751).<sup>16</sup> Prior to that, as his two older brothers had done before him,

15 The term *lcam* can either refer to the wife of Blo gros rgya mtsho, Bkra shis dbang mo, or his sister, Dbyangs can sgrol ma. In the biography of Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan, for instance, a further distinction is made by referring to his wife as *lha lcam* Bkra shis dbang mo, and to his sister, among others, as *lcam* Dbyangs can ngag dbang bstan pa'i sgrol ma; see Gu ru 'phel, *Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar*, fol. 92b5-6. However, in other contexts his wife is also referred to as *lcam* Bkra shis dbang mo; see Gu ru 'phel, *Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar*, fols. 58b2, 62a6, 63b6. In most cases, however, personal names are not specified, and his sister is merely referred to as *lcam dral*.

16 For biographical sketches of Blo gros rgya mtsho, see Gu ru bkra shis, *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, pp. 929.14-930.11; 'Jam dbyangs Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, *'Bel gtam*, pp. 528.6-529.2; Tshul khriims rin chen, *Bstan 'gyur dkar chag*, pp. 321.7-324.6; and Tshe dbang rdo rje rig 'dzin, *Sde dge'i rgyal rabs*, pp. 63.1-64.1, 67.5-73.6. For further references, see Heimbel 2017: 417, n. 3.



he embarked on a pilgrimage to the holy sites of central Tibet (Dbus and Gtsang) during which he also paid a visit to Ngor Monastery. Accompanied by his younger sister, Dbyangs can sgrol ma, he is recorded to have reached Ngor on the twenty-fifth day of the eleventh month of 1748. While at Ngor, he paid his respects to Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan, who was the incumbent abbot of the monastery, and received from him full monastic ordination as well as teachings such as the *Lam 'bras* cycle.<sup>17</sup> Later on, in 1760, Blo gros rgya mtsho, now king of Sde dge, invited Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan to become the new Ngor chaplain of Sde dge, following the passing of the previous chaplain, Dpal ldan chos skyong (1702-1760), the thirty-fourth abbot of Ngor (tenure: 1733-1739).<sup>18</sup> In doing so, Blo gros rgya mtsho continued to maintain the close relationship that existed between the royal house of Sde dge and the Ngor branch of the Sa skya school. This relationship had existed since the seventeenth century, when retired or ex-abbots of Ngor were almost continuously invited to serve as chaplains at the powerful royal court of Sde dge, outside of the administrative grip of the Dga' ldan pho brang government.<sup>19</sup> In his capacity as court chaplain, Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan served for the long period of sixteen years, until 1776, a detailed account of which is included in his biography written by the physician and secretary of the Sde dge court, Gu ru 'phel (fl.18th century).<sup>20</sup>

Against this historical background, the episode at the bottom left of the biographical narrative appears to illustrate an official function at the Sde dge court that shows Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan and members of the royal family, including the king, his nephew, and wife or sister, according to its caption. The king can most likely be identified as sitting to the proper left of Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan, and he is accompanied by a noble laywoman (Fig. 8). She might be his wife, Bkra shis dbang mo, a niece of the Seventh Dalai Lama Bskal bzang rgya mtsho (1708-1757), whom he had married in 1765 when the family line of Sde dge was about to die out. Advised by both Si tu Paṇ chen Chos kyi 'byung gnas (1700-1774) and Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan, and with the backing of Sa skya, the monk-king was compelled to return his monastic vows and to marry in order to produce an heir. A few years later, shortly after the Tibetan New Year of 1768, his son, Kun 'grub bde dga' bzang po (1768-1790) alias Sa

17 See Dpal ldan chos skyong, *Ngor gdan rabs kha skong*, p. 535.5-6; Tshul khriṃs rin chen, *Bstan 'gyur dkar chag*, pp. 320.11-321.7, 345.2-398.15; and Tshe dbang rdo rje rig 'dzin, *Sde dge'i rgyal rabs*, pp. 67.6-68.2. For further references, see Heimbels 2017: 417, n. 3. While at Ngor, Blo gros rgya mtsho and his entourage also received a long-life empowerment (*tshe dbang*) from Byams pa Bsod nams bzang po (1689-1749), the thirtieth abbot of Ngor (two tenures: 1713-1722 and 1739-1740).

18 See Gu ru 'phel, *Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar*, fols. 22a3ff. For further references, see Heimbels 2017: 419, n. 12.

19 On the relationship between Ngor and Sde dge, see Heimbels 2017: 37-42, 416-421.

20 See Gu ru 'phel, *Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar*, fols. 22a3-71a2. For a list of the patrons of Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan from the royal family of Sde dge, see Gu ru 'phel, *Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar*, fols. 92b3-93a2.

dbang bzang po, was born, though the queen mother passed away soon after giving birth.<sup>21</sup>

Another possibility for identifying the noble woman would be that she was the king's sister, Dbyangs can sgrol ma, who, having taken *pravrajyā* monastic ordination at a young age would be expected to be shown as a nun and not a laywoman, however.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, Dbyangs can sgrol ma played a more dominant role at the royal court of Sde dge than Bkra shis dbang mo, as is also evidenced by the biography of Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan, in which she appears frequently. Later on, when the king passed away in 1774, she served throughout the minority of Kun 'grub bde dga' bzang po as both regent (or acting queen) of Sde dge and abbess of Lhun grub steng, more or less until her passing in 1786.<sup>23</sup>

The second pair of nobles, if not representing the same individuals, might show the king's nephew (*dbon*), Chos skyong mgon po, together with his wife. He was the son of Mi dbang Bsod nams mgon po (d. 1761), the eldest brother of Blo gros rgya mtsho, and he married a sister of the Seventh Dalai Lama. From this marriage, however, it seems that no offspring were born, which is why, as mentioned above, the monk-king Blo gros rgya mtsho was compelled to marry.<sup>24</sup>

With this in mind, it seems most likely that the previous episode of Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan commissioning a set of Avadāna story paintings also took place in Sde dge, where Zhu chen and his collaborators were mainly active, and that among the dignitaries seen to the proper right of Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan are present the king of Sde dge and his wife (or sister).

The king also played a part in the last episode, which is located in a camp of tents at the

21 See Gu ru 'phel, *Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar*, fols. 58a6-62b2; 'Jam dbyangs Mkhayen brtse'i dbang po, *'Bel gtam*, p. 529.2-3; and Tshe dbang rdo rje rig 'dzin, *Sde dge'i rgyal rabs*, pp. 71.4, 72.4-6. See also Thub bstan phun tshogs, *Sde dge'i lo rgyus*, pp. 50.20-51.10.

22 See Gu ru bkra shis, *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, p. 930.12-14. On other sources on her life, see Heimbels 2017: 417, n. 3. Dbyangs can sgrol ma received ordination "in the tradition of Ngor E waṃ pa chen po" (*ngor e waṃ pa chen po'i ring lugs*); see Gu ru bkra shis, *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, p. 930.13-14. This remark should most likely be understood as a reference to one of Sde dge's court chaplains from Ngor, such as Bkra shis lhun grub (1672-1739), the thirty-first abbot of Ngor (tenure: 1722-1725), or his successor as chaplain, Dpal ldan chos skyong. The latter addresses Dbyangs can sgrol ma as Dge tshul dByangs can ma in his autobiography; see Dpal ldan chos skyong, *Dpal ldan chos skyong gi rtogs brjod*, vol. 2, pp. 353.3, 373.4. Thus, her receiving of monastic ordination (*pravrajyā*, *rab tu byung ba*) should be understood as her taking novice-nun (*śrāmaṇerikā*, *dge tshul ma*) vows. At one mention, Gu ru 'phel, *Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar*, fol. 69b5, refers to her even as *dge slong ma* (*bhikṣuṇī*).

23 See Gu ru bkra shis, *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, p. 930.12-13; 'Jam dbyangs Mkhayen brtse'i dbang po, *'Bel gtam*, p. 529.2; and Tshe dbang rdo rje rig 'dzin, *Sde dge'i rgyal rabs*, pp. 73.6-74.3, 75.1ff. See also Thub bstan phun tshogs, *Sde dge'i lo rgyus*, p. 51.17-21.

24 See Tshe dbang rdo rje rig 'dzin, *Sde dge'i rgyal rabs*, pp. 63.1-2, 64.1-2, 72.4-6 and n. 21. Gu ru 'phel, *Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar*, fol. 58b2 records that another suggestion was that Chos skyong mgon po would take another wife, a daughter of the Nga phod family (*nga phod sras mo*).



Fig. 9 Detail of episode six showing Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan with his donor, the Sde dge king, in a tented encampment.



Fig. 10 Detail of Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan accompanied by members of the Sde dge royal family shown travelling.



bottom right (Fig. 9). In the largest tent at the back, Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan is shown teaching a group of disciples and holding a holy book in his left hand, while another teaching session appears to be in progress in the second largest tent. The camp site and other tents are occupied by both monks and laity, and the camp's kitchen can be found in the black tent in the front. From the accompanying caption, it is evident that the episode depicts a conjoint summer excursion of the preceptor-donee and ruler-donor (*mchod yon*), that is, Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan and Blo gros rgya mtsho:

[Line 1] རྩོམ་པས་དབྱར་གྱི་སྤུ་མོའི་དུས་སྟོན་གྱི། མགོན་པོ་(?) གཞིར་ལ་ཞེར་ལྷགས་མཆོད་  
 [Line 2] ཡོན་དག(?) ། ལྷན་ཅིག་ཕུན་ཚོགས་སྡེ་བཞིའི་དཔལ་འབྱོར་ལ། རྣམ་པར་ཅེན་པའི་ངོ་མཆར་  
 བཀྲག་ཏུ་ཆེ།

The great lustrous marvel of [how] the preceptor-donee and ruler-donor enjoyed together the wealth of the four domains of excellence having been invited and come as guests of the lush green festival of the summer girl.<sup>25</sup>

As outlined in his biography, this episode appears to illustrate one of the numerous excursions and travels that Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan undertook together with the king, during which they were sometimes accompanied by the king's sister. The laywoman seen with two servants in the third tent from the front left might either be the king's wife or his sister.<sup>26</sup> This trio most likely also forms part of the group of people seen travelling through a plain between mountains in the lower middle of the painting (Fig. 10).

## The Set of Biographical Narrative Paintings

Since the painting illustrates only a few episodes from the life of Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan, it can be assumed that it forms part of a larger set depicting many more individual episodes of his life spread out over several paintings. The first hint allowing such an assumption is an inscription found on the back of the painting, the existence of which has thus far only

25 The four domains of excellence (*phun tshogs sde bzhi*) most likely refer to the domains of Dharma (*chos*), wealth (*nor*), enjoyment (*'dod*), and liberation (*thar*); see Krang byi sun et al., *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, p. 1718.

26 See Gu ru 'phel, *Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar*, fols. 55b6–56a1, 57b4, 58a6–b1, 61b1, 62b1, 66a1–2, 65b1. Among these references, for the sixth month of 1763, an excursion as a large tented encampment (*sgar chen*) is mentioned to Lha lung bya khra thang chen, which also included Dbyangs can sgröl ma and Chos skyong mgon po (*lcam dral khu dbon bcas*). Most likely on an annual basis, the king and Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan embarked on what is termed a *dbyar gzigs dgun sde 'grims*, a summer trip and a winter tour of the local monasteries; see Gu ru 'phel, *Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar*, fol. 67b2.

pointed out by David Jackson: “The faint inscription on the back identifies this painting as the thirteenth thangka on the left in a large collection: *g.yon bcu gsum ma'o*.”<sup>27</sup>

Further evidence for the existence of such a set is given by the collected works of Zhu chen Tshul khirms rin chen. In the catalogue that he wrote for his collected works, he successively records two verses that he composed as inscriptions to accompany biographical narrative paintings of Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan. First, a dedicatory inscription (*bsngo byang*) for paintings of his successive lives, and second, a colophon-like inscription (*zhal byang*) for the original (*phyi mo*) set of the pictorial representation (*gzugs bkod*) of his successive lives.<sup>28</sup>

Zhu chen also included both verse inscriptions, one immediately following the other, in his compilation of numerous colophon-like inscriptions (*zhal byang*), dedications (*bsngo ba*), and aspirational prayers (*smon lam*) that he wrote for commissions of sacred art.<sup>29</sup> Though neither inscription exactly matches the captions of the present painting, I would assume that both do refer to the same painting set, and that both can be linked with the set to which the present painting belongs. The dedicatory verses of Zhu chen would be expected to have appeared on the back in some prominent location within the whole set, usually the back of the final painting. A main colophon-like inscription, Zhu chen's *zhal byang*, could have occurred on the back of the first—that is, the main or central painting (*gtso thang*)—or the final painting of the set. As the thirteenth painting, the present painting is obviously neither the first nor last in its set, and thus would not have borne these inscriptions.<sup>30</sup>

Within his two verse inscriptions, Zhu chen reveals interesting details regarding the patronage of this set. In each inscription, he names a different patron, which again raises the question whether we are dealing with one single set commissioned by two different patrons or

27 Jackson 1996: 411.

28 See Tshul khirms rin chen, *Tshan grangs gser mig 'drid pa'i lcags kyo*, fol. 16a5-6: *mkhan chen rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan pa'i skye phreng bris sku bzhengs pa'i bsngo byang/ mkhan chen rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan pa'i sngon rabs skye phreng dang bcas pa'i gzugs bkod kyi phyi mo zhal byang/*.

29 For the *Bsngo byang*, see Tshul khirms rin chen, *Rten bzhengs*, pp. 384.4-385.4: ... *ces mkhan chen rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan pa'i skye phreng bris sku bzhengs pa'i bsngo byang 'di'ang don gnyer gyi ngor/ bande tshul rin gyis smras so//*. For the *Zhal byang*, see Tshul khirms rin chen, *Rten bzhengs*, pp. 385.4-386.6: ... *ces mkhan chen rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan pa'i sngon rabs skye phreng dang bcas pa'i gzugs bkod kyi phyi mo zhal byang du byas pa 'di'ang don gnyer gyi ngor/ bande tshul khirms rin chen gyis sug bris su byas pa sarba manga lam bha wa tu//*. The existence of these verses was first mentioned by David Jackson; see Jackson 1996: 316, nn. 694, 705 and Jackson 2012: 212, n. 18, 216, n. 212.

30 I am indebted to David Jackson for explaining the possible location of the dedicatory and colophon-like inscriptions.

two different sets with their respective patrons. But until other paintings from the set appear, I would provisionally assume that both patrons conjointly commissioned just one single set.

Within the dedicatory verses, Zhu chen identifies one patron as Chos 'byor,<sup>31</sup> and another one as Shes rab chos dbang within the colophon-like inscription.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, there is almost nothing known about either of them except for a few stray mentions in other works by Zhu chen. From those mentions, we come to know that Chos 'byor was also responsible for other commissions for which Zhu chen contributed other verse inscriptions. One such commission was for a painting (*bris sku*) depicting Ngag dbang kun dga' blo gros (1729-1783), the thirty-first throne-holder of Sa skya.<sup>33</sup> Another project in which he was involved was an image (*sku brnyan*) of Dpal ldan chos skyong, the above-mentioned predecessor of Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan as Ngor court chaplain of Sde dge.<sup>34</sup> For both commissions, Zhu chen wrote dedicatory verses. Moreover, Chos 'byor might be the same person as a certain Kun dga' chos 'byor. We find the latter recorded in a supplication that Zhu chen wrote on the occasion of an offering that Kun dga' chos 'byor made to the remains (or *stūpa* containing the remains of) Dpal ldan chos skyong.<sup>35</sup>

In the works Zhu chen mentions Shes rab chos dbang, he bears the title “secretary”

31 Tshul khriims rin chen, *Bsngo byang*, pp. 384.4-385.1: *rgyal gsung snying po sngom gsum zil mngar gyi/ /dga' ston mi zad rnams grol gsos 'gyed pa'i/ /skyabs mchog rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan par/ /sngon rabs skye ba' i phreng ba 'dod lhar bcas/ /dad can slob bu chos 'byor can gyis bzhengs/*.

32 Tshul khriims rin chen, *Zhal byang*, p. 386.1-4: *sa gsum ldir ba'i lugs bzang rin chen nyid/ /skye dgu'i bsod nams mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan rtser/ /tsho gzhes mkhas pa'i phrin las skyong mchog gi/ /sngon rabs skye ba rin chen rnam bdun grangs/ /dus gsum gzigs pas mi 'gyur bsdebs pa'i 'phrin/ /dbyings nas bsgrags pa ngur smrig rgyal mtshan 'chang/ /byams chen sras kyi thos pa'i 'dzin du bsnyad/ /gang de rnam bkra'i ri mor shar ba'i gzugs/ /brgya byin tshon ris gzhon nu'i tshul mtshungs kyang/ /mthon don snying pos lci ba'i khyad par can/ /slob 'bangs shes rab chos dbang can gyis bzhengs/*.

33 See Tshul khriims rin chen, *Rten bzhengs*, p. 384.1-4: *... /kun dga' blo gros sangs rgyas bstan pa'i dpal/ /gang gi zhal skyin ston pa gnas brtan dang/ /bla ma yi dam lha yis bskor ba gang/ /chos 'byor gyis bzhengs dge bas rgyal ba'i sku/ /mthong na mi mthun med rgyur yongs su bsngo/ ... ces pa bris sku'i bsngo byang 'di'ang don gnyer gyi ngor/ /shī la ratnas smras pa'o//*. See also Tshul khriims rin chen, *Tshan grangs gser mig 'drid pa'i lcags kyo*, fol. 16a5: *... dpal sa skya pa ngag dbang kun dga' blo gros sku brnyan gyi bris sku'i bsngo byang/*.

34 See Tshul khriims rin chen, *Rten bzhengs*, p. 392.1-3: *... /skyabs mchog dpal ldan chos skyong sku brnyan gyi/ /nam mkha'i rna ba mthong don che ba gang/ /mngon 'dod bla ma lha yis yongs bskor ba/ /chos 'byor zhes byas phyag mchod rten bris pa'i/ /dge bas skye ba 'di nas tshe rabs phreng/ /skyabs gsum 'bral med gtsug gis bsten par shog ... /ces pa 'di'ang chos 'byor gyi ngor/ /bande tshul rin gyis bris pa sarba manga lam//* // See also Tshul khriims rin chen, *Tshan grangs gser mig 'drid pa'i lcags kyo*, fol. 16b3: *... dpal chos pa'i sku brnyan bzhengs pa'i bsngo byang/*.

35 See Tshul khriims rin chen, *Dkar chag bsngo ba smon lam bsdoms pa*, p. 565.2-5: *... ces dpal chos pa'i sku gdung la kun dga' chos 'byor gyis mchod 'bul gyi tshe gsol 'debs su bande tshul rin gyis so//*.



(*drung yig*), and Zhu chen reveals that he served in this capacity to the “divine son” (*lha sras*).<sup>36</sup> Though this could be a reference to Blo gros rgya mtsho as king of Sde dge, within the biography of Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan, the term “divine son” (*lha sras*) is employed for princes, such as the king's nephew, Chos skyong mgon po, or even for his own son, Kun 'grub bde dga' bzang po, whereas the king is referred to as *sa dbang* (or *sa'i dbang phyug*).<sup>37</sup> Thus, the divine son was presumably Chos skyong mgon po (Kun 'grub bde dga' bzang po would have been only a couple of years old by then).

For another commission of Shes rab chos dbang—an image (*sku brnyan*) of Khadiravanī Tārā surrounded by the group of Twenty-one Tārās—Zhu chen wrote the dedicatory verse inscription.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, at his behest, Zhu chen composed a versified letter to Ngag dbang kun dga' blo gros (1729-1783), the thirty-first throne-holder of Sa skya, and verses for an offering that Shes rab chos dbang made to Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan in the main temple (*gtsug lag khang*) of Lhun grub steng.<sup>39</sup>

Within the second, colophon-like verse inscription, Zhu chen also provides the number of previous lives (*sngon rabs skye ba*) of Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan, which were most likely illustrated by the whole set: “The precious previous lives numbering seven.”<sup>40</sup> This attribution of seven lives is repeated in the biography of Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan. When discussing the previous lives (*sngon gyi rabs*) of the master, Gu ru 'phel quotes from a supplication of Phur bu lcog Chab mdo Mkhas grub Ngag dbang byams pa (1682-1762), who had perceived seven

36 See Tshul khriims rin chen, *Zhu yig snyan dngags 'dab brgya bzhed pa*, fol. 4a5: *lha sras bka' lung spyi bor lhung ba'i drung yig mkhan/ /shes rab chos dbang can gyis rtse gcig dad pas phul/*. For other mentions of him as secretary, see nn. 38-39.

37 For instance, see Gu ru 'phel, *Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar*, fols. 58b2-3, 61b2, 62a1, 63a5, 63b6.

38 See Tshul khriims rin chen, *Sku brnyan bzhengs pa'i bsngo byang*, p. 389.3-6: ... *zhes drung yig shes rab chos dbang gis seng ldeng nags kyi sgrol ma la phrin las sgrol ma nyer gcig gis bskor ba'i sku brnyan bzhengs pa'i bsngo byang 'di'ang bande tshul rin gyis so//*. See also Tshul khriims rin chen, *Tshan grangs gser mig 'drid pa'i lcags kyo*, fol. 16b1-2: *seng ldeng nags kyi sgrol ma la phrin las sgrol ma nyer gcig gis bskor ba'i sku brnyan bzhengs pa'i bsngo byang/*.

39 See Tshul khriims rin chen, *Zhu yig snyan dngags 'dab brgya bzhed pa*, fol. 4a6-b1: *zhes dpal sa skya'i rje btsun ngag dbang kun dga' blo gros sangs rgyas bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan pa'i zhabs stegs su 'bul rgyu'i zhu yig snyan dngags 'dab brgya bzhad pa zhes bya ba 'di ni/ drung yig shes rab chos dbang gi ngor/ bande tshul khriims rin chen gyis bris pa dge legs 'phel bar gyur cig/*; and Tshul khriims rin chen, *Chu skyes 'phyang 'phrul*, fol. 6a1-3: *bkra shis lha dar dkar po sogs bcas pa'i tshan grangs 'di dag bka'i slob ma'i tha shos drung yig shes rab chos dbang can gyis phul ba lags so/ /zhes pa lhun grub steng gi gtsug lag khang du 'dus tshogs kyi dbur mkhan chen rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po spyan 'dren zhus pa'i 'bul ba'i gong brjod chu skyes 'phyang 'phrul zhes bya ba de nyid kyi ngor/ bande tshul khriims rin chen du bod pas bris pa dge legs 'phel bar gyur cig/*.

40 Tshul khriims rin chen, *Zhal byang*, p. 386.2: *sngon rabs skye ba rin chen rnam bdun grangs/*.

lifetimes of Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan:

...Rin chen mdzes pa'i tog in the presence of the Victorious One,  
Grub chen Ḍombi He[ruka] in the Land of Nobles [i.e., India],  
Mahāyāna in Great China,  
Dge slong Punye [from] the kingdom of Mdo gzher,  
Shud pu Dpal seng ge at the sacred place of Bsam yas,  
Mthu stobs Rdo rje dpal in the Land of Southern Mon,  
At present, Klu sdings pa, the crest ornament of the Land of Snows [i.e., Tibet],  
[I] supplicate at the feet of Mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan. ...<sup>41</sup>

Based on this listing, we can assume that these seven lifetimes were presumably shown in the painting set. As the supplication clarifies, what was called previous lives (*sngon rabs skye ba*, *sngon gyi rabs*) refers not only to the six past lifetimes of Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan but also includes as seventh his present life. If we imagine how the set might thus have been organised, there could have been a main painting as the first painting in the set, then possibly six paintings individually depicting his previous lives (as numbers two through seven), and then at least six or more paintings depicting the episodes of his present life. But to confirm this hypothesis more firmly, other paintings of this set would have to surface in the future.

Nevertheless, regarding its dating, the whole set must have been commissioned between the years 1760 and 1774—that is, around the time Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan was in Sde dge acting as court chaplain and before the author of the verse inscriptions, Zhu chen, passed away. If the above-mentioned divine son was Chos skyong mgon po, then we could date this set of thangka paintings to before December 1767 or January 1768, when Chos skyong mgon po passed away in the second of two eleventh months of the fire-pig year, having fallen seriously

41 Gu ru 'phel, *Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar*, fol. 8a3-5: *de ltar gyur pa phur bu lcogs chab mdo mkhas grub ngag dbang byams pa'i dgongs pas gzigs tshul ni/ rgyal ba'i mdun na rin chen mdzes pa'i tog /'phags pa'i yul na grub chen ḍom bhi he/ /ma hā tsi nar ma hā ya na dang/ /mdo gzher rgyal khab dge slong punye ste/ /bsam yas gnas su shud pu dpal seng ge/ /lho mon yul du mthu stobs rdo rje dpal/ /da lta gangs can gtsug rgyan klu sdings pa/ /mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan zhabs la gsol 'debs/ /ces phul ba bzhin mtha' med 'gro ba yongs kyi skyabs mgon phrin las bsam gyis mi khyab mang du skyes ba bzhes pa sogs sngon gyi rabs dang/*. The kingdom of Mdo gzher (*mdor gzher rgyal khab*) awaits further clarification. The Land of Southern Mon (*lho mon yul*) might be a reference to Bhutan.

ill due to his excessive consumption of alcohol.<sup>42</sup>

## Verse Captions

### Inscription top left (Caption 1)<sup>43</sup>

- [Line 1] ཨ།ཤར་ཆེན་མཁས་པའི་རིགས་འབྲངས་སྤྱ་ལའི་ཕྱེང་། །བསྐྱེད་ཏུ་བསྐྱིངས་པའི་  
[Line 2] བསྐྱེད་གནས་སྤྱི་ཕྱིངས་ཀྱི། །ཁྲ་བའ་དགའ་ཚལ་ཞལ་འཛམ་རྒྱལ་སྤྱི། །  
[Line 3] སྤྱོད་པ་དཔག་ཡས་གཞན་དོན་སྤྱད་པའི་ཚུལ། །

### Inscription top right (Caption 2)

[no image available]

### Inscription centre (Caption 3)

- [Line 1] རྒྱལ་བའི་རྟོགས་བརྗོད་དཔག་བསམ་འབྲི་ཤིང་གི། །ཡལ་འདབ་ཆོག་བརྒྱ་བརྒྱད་པའི་གཟུགས་  
བཞོན་  
[Line 2] རྣམས། །ཕྱག་མཆོད་རྟེན་ཏུ་(?) བསྐྱེད་ཞིང་ཨེ་ཤི་པ། །རིན་ཆེན་མི་འབྱུར་རྒྱལ་མཆོན་དཔལ་  
བཟང་པོ། །

### Inscription centre right (Caption 4)

- [Line 1] །དཔལ་སྤྱུག་རྟོགས་བརྗོད་བརྒྱ་བརྒྱད་རི་མའི་ལམ། །དང་པོ་འབྲེན་པ་ཚུལ་བྱིས་  
[Line 2] རིན་ཆེན་དང་། །ལྷ་དགའ་མཆོད་འཁོར་བཅས་པའི་སོར་ཅེ་ཡི། །སྒྲོལ་གར་རི་ལྷར་  
[Line 3] བསྐྱེད་ནས་བྲིས་པའི་ཚུལ། །

### Inscription bottom left (Caption 5)

- [Line 1 illegible]  
[Line 2] □□ <sup>44</sup> ཆོས་ཀྱི་རྒྱལ་པོ་མདོ་ཁམས་ □□□  
[Line 3] □□□ བཞིས་མཉེས་བྱེད་པོ་(?) ས་(?) སྤྱོད་(?) སྒོ་ཤོས་རྒྱ་  
[Line 4] མཆོད་བོན་ལྷ་མ་རོགས། །

### Inscription bottom right (Caption 6)

- [Line 1] །སྤོ་བསངས་དབྱར་གྱི་བུ་མའི་རུས་སྟོན་གྱི། །མགོན་ཏུ་(?) གཉེར་ལ་ཉེར་ལྷགས་མཆོད་  
[Line 2] ཡོན་དག(?) །ལྷན་ཅིག་ཕུན་ཚོགས་ལྷེ་བཞིའི་དཔལ་འབྱོར་ལ། །རྣམ་པར་ཅེན་པའི་ངོ་མཆར་  
བཀྲག་ཏུ་ཆེ། །

42 See Gu ru 'phel, *Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar*, fol. 61b4.

43 The numbering of the verse captions was made by the present author. The original captions are not numbered.

44 Each □ stands for one illegible syllable (estimated).



## Bibliography

### *Tibetan Language Works*

- Krang dbyi sun et al., eds. 1993. *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*. 2 vols. Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang.
- Gu ru bkra shis, Stag sgang Mkhas mchog (fl. 18th/19th century). 1990. *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung = Bstan pa'i snying po gsang chen snga 'gyur nges don zab mo'i chos kyi byung ba gsal bar byed pa'i legs bshad mkhas pa dga' byed ngo mtshar gtam gyi rol mo*. Gangs ljongs shes rig gi nying bcud. Beijing: Krung go'i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang.
- Gu ru 'phel (fl. 18th century). *Rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar = Dpal shar pa mkhan rin po che rdo rje 'chang rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan gyi rnam par thar pa/ smra ba'i seng ge'i gsung rdo rje sgra ma'i mchod pa rgyas par spros pa zhing khams rgya mtsho'i mchod sprin*. In *Dpal ldan shar pa mkhan chen rdo rje 'chang rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan gyi gsung 'bum*. Block-print from Sde dge. TBRC: W00EGS1016236, fols. 157a-254a.
- 'Jam dbyangs Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po (1820-1892). 1977-1980. *'Bel gtam = Dam pa'i chos kyi byung ba brjod pa las gtso bor brtsams pa'i gtam skal bzang rna ba'i bcud len*. In *'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po bka' 'bum: The collected works (gsun 'bum) of the great 'Jam-dbyaṅs Mkhyen-brtse'i-dbañ-po*. 24 vols. Reproduced from a set of prints from the Rdzong-gsar xylographic blocks. Gangtok: Gonpo Tseten, vol. 19 (dza), pp. 477-533.
- Thub bstan phun tshogs (b. 1955). 2010. *Sde dge'i lo rgyus = Sde dge'i lo rgyus spyi don zla 'od gsar pa'i me long*. Bod kyi lo rgyus rig gnas dpyad gzhi'i rgyu cha bdams bsgrigs, vol. 28. Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang.
- Dpal ldan chos skyong (1702-1760). 1985. *Ngor gdan rabs kha skong = E waṃ pa'i gdan rabs rin chen phreng mdzes kyi kha skong rtogs brjod byin rlabs 'dod dgu'i dpal ster*. In *Lam 'bras tshogs Tshogs bsad: The Sa-skya-pa teachings of the path and the fruit, according to the Nor-pa transmission. As arranged by 'Jam-dbyaṅs Blo-gter-dbañ-po and his successors and incorporating other texts transmitting the lineage through the present Nor and Sa-skya systems*. 6 vols. Reproduced from prints from the Sde-dge blocks from the library of the Ven. Klu-sdiṅs Mkhan Rin-po-che of Ñor. Sa-skya Lam 'bras Literature Series, vols. 22-27. Dehra Dun, U.P.: Sakya Centre, vol. 4, pp. 495-593.
- 1974-1975. *Dpal ldan chos skyong gi rtogs brjod = Ñor mkhan-chen dpal-ldan-chos-skyoṅ žabs kyi rnam thar sna tshogs ljon pa stug po'i khri śiṅ: The autobiography of the 33rd Abbot of Nor Dpal-ldan-chos-skyoṅ*. Completed and edited by Žu-chen Tshul-khrims-rin-chen of Sde-dge. Reproduced from tracing of a print from the Sde-dge blocks from the library of Burmiok Athing by The Eight Khams-sprul Don-brgyud-ñi-ma. 4 vols. Tibetan Craft Community Tashijong, Palampur, H.P.: The Sungrab Nyamso Gyunpel

Parkhang.

- Tshul khrims rin chen, Zhu chen (1697-1774). *Sku brnyan bzhengs pa'i bsngo byang* = *Drung yig shes rab chos dbang gis seng ldeng nags kyi sgrol ma la phrin las sgrol ma nyer gcig gis bskor ba'i sku brnyan bzhengs pa'i bsngo byang*. In *Rten bzhengs*, p. 389.3-6.
- *Dkar chag bsngo bas mon lam bsdoms pa* = *Bla ma rgyal ba rgyal sras bstan srung nor lha rnam la yan lag bdun pa 'bul ba gsol ba gdab pa sku gsung thugs rten dang mchod rdzas gsar bskrun rnam kyi dkar chag bsngo ba smon lam bsdoms pa phun tshogs sde bzhi'i bang mdzod*. In *Tshul khrims rin chen gyi gsung 'bum* 1, vol. 3 (ca), pp. 477-577.
- *Bsngo byang* = *Mkhan chen rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan pa'i skye phreng bris sku bzhengs pa'i bsngo byang*. In *rTen bzhengs*, pp. 384.4-385.4.
- *Chu skyes 'phyang 'phrul* = *Lhun grub steng gi gtsug lag khang du 'dus tshogs kyi dbur mkhan chen rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po spyen 'dren zhus pa'i 'bul ba'i gong brjod chu skyes 'phyang 'phrul*. In *Zhu yig gandharba'i glu ma*, fols. 4b1-6a3.
- *Rten bzhengs* = *Rten bzhengs rnam kyi zhal byang dang bsngo ba smon lam gyi tshigs su bcad pa'i sbrang rtsi'i yol go*. In *Tshul khrims rin chen gyi gsung 'bum* 1, vol. 5 (ja), pp. 383-393.
- 1985. *Bstan 'gyur dkar chag* = *Kun mkhyen nyi ma'i gnyen gyi bka' lung gi dgongs don rnam par 'grel ba'i bstan bcos gangs can pa'i skad du 'gyur ro 'tshal gyi chos sbyin rgyun mi 'chad pa'i ngo mtshar 'phrul gyi phyi mo rdzogs ldan bskal pa'i bsod nams kyi sprin phung rgyas par dkrigs pa'i tshul las brtsams pa'i gtam ngo mtshar chu gter 'phel ba'i zla ba gsar pa*. Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang.
- *Tshan grangs gser mig 'drid pa'i lcags kyo* = *Shākya'i bande tshul khrims rin chen gyis rang dang skal mnyam ched du nyer mkho sug bris byas pa rnam phyogs su bsdebs pa'i tshan grangs gser mig 'drid pa'i lcags kyo*. In *Tshul khrims rin chen gyi gsung 'bum* 2, vol. 10 (a), fols. 303a-327a.
- 1972-1974. *Tshul khrims rin chen gyi gsung 'bum* 1 = *Collected Writings on Buddhist Philosophy, Liturgy, and Ritual of Źu-chen Tshul-khrims-rin-chen*. Reproduced from the Ven. Luding Rimpoche's Example of the sDe-dge Edition of the gSung-'bum. 7 vols. New Delhi: B. Jamyang Norbu.
- 2000. *Tshul khrims rin chen gyi gsung 'bum* 2 = *Zhu chen tshul khrims rin chen gyi gsung 'bum*. Sde dge dgon chen: Sde dge par khang. 10 vols. TBRC: W1KG10853.
- *Zhal byang* = *Mkhan chen rin chen mi 'gyur rgyal mtshan pa'i sngon rabs skye phreng dang bcas pa'i gzugs bkod kyi phyi mo zhal byang du bcas pa*. In *Rten bzhengs*, pp. 385.4-386.6.
- *Zhu yig gandharba'i glu ma* = *Dpal sa skya pa ngag dbang kun dga' blo gros sangs rgyas bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan par phul ba'i zhu yig gandharba'i glu ma*. In *Tshul khrims rin chen gyi gsung 'bum* 2, vol. 8 (nya), fols. 311a-324a.
- *Zhu yig snyan dngags 'dab brgya bzhed pa* = *Dpal sa skya'i rje btsun ngag dbang kun dga'*

*blo gros sangs rgyas bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan pa'i zhabs stegs su 'bul rgyu'i zhu yig snyan dngags 'dab brgya bzhad pa.* In *Zhu yig gandharba'i glu ma*, fols. 3a1-4b1.

Tshe dbang rdo rje rig 'dzin, Sa skyong (1786-1847). 1994. *Sde dge'i rgyal rabs = Dpal sa skyon sde dge chos kyi rgyal po rim byon gyi rnam thar dge legs nor bu'i phren ba 'dod dgu rab 'phel: A brief history in verse of the Sde-dge principality and its rulers* [sic]. Reproduced from a clear print from the Sde-dge Dgon-chen blocks. Kangra, H.P.: D. Tsondu Senghe Yorey Tsang.

### ***Non-Tibetan Language Works***

Béguin, Gilles. 1977. *Dieux et demons d' Himâlaya: Art du Bouddhisme lamaïque*. Paris: Editions des Musées Nationaux.

Ernst, Richard R. 2001. "Arts and Sciences. A Personal Perspective of Tibetan Painting." *Chimia* 55: 900-914.

———2010. "In situ Raman microscopy applied to large Central Asian paintings." *Wiley InterScience* 41: 275-287.

———2014. "Science and Art—My Two Passions." In *Science and Art: The Painted Surface*, edited by Antonio Sgamellotti, Brunetto Giovanni Brunetti, and Costanza Miliani. Cambridge: Royal Society of Chemistry, 1-27.

HAR = Himalayan Art Resources. [https:// www.himalayanart.org](https://www.himalayanart.org) (accessed 04.10.2019).

Heimbel, Jörg. 2017. *Vajradhara in Human Form: The Life and Times of Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po*. Lumbini International Research Institute.

Heller, Amy. 1999. *Tibetan Art: Tracing the Development of Spiritual Ideas and Art in Tibet 600-2000 A.D.* Milan: Jaca Book.

Jackson, David P. 1996. *A History of Tibetan Painting: The Great Tibetan Painters and Their Traditions*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.

———2012. *The Place of Provenance: Regional Styles in Tibetan Painting*. New York: Rubin Museum of Art.

Lin, Nancy Grace. 2011. "Adapting the Buddha's Biographies: A Cultural History of the *Wish-Fulfilling Vine* in Tibet, Seventh to Eighteenth Centuries." PhD thesis, University of California, Berkeley.

Mejor, Marek. 1992. *Kṣemendra's Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā: Studies and Materials*. Tokyo: The International Institute for Buddhist Studies.

Sotheby's. 2018. *The Richard R. & Magdalena Ernst Collection of Himalayan Art*. New York: Sotheby's.

Straube, Martin. 2009. *Studien zur Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā: Texte und Quellen der Parallelen zu Haribhaṭṭas Jātakamālā*. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag.

◆ Author: Jörg Heimbel, Dr. phil., University of Hamburg.