

Article

Death for a Buddhist Dreamer: Identity and Mortality in Jetsun Drakpa Gyaltsen's Autobiographical Dream Narrative

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Abstract: This article examines the role of dreams in the life of the Tibetan Buddhist master Jetsun Drakpa Gyaltsen (1147–1216). Focusing on *The Lord's Dreams (Rje btsun pa'i mnal lam)*, Drakpa Gyaltsen's only autobiographical text, along with the first biography of him written by his influential nephew Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyaltsen (1182–1251), this paper explores the work of dreams in negotiating issues of identity and mortality. It argues that dreams were important sources of knowledge about the past, the future, and the dead in this context, creating intermediate spaces in which access to these times and individuals became possible.

Keywords: Tibetan Buddhism; dreams; death; autobiography; biography; Sakya; Jetsun Drakpa Gyaltsen; Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyaltsen



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1. Introduction

Dream narration is a common feature of Tibetan life writing, with many auto/biographical sources detailing significant dreams their subjects experienced. An early example of this is a short but fascinating work by the Sakya (Sa skya) patriarch Jetsun Drakpa Gyaltsen (Rje btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan) (1147–1216). Titled *The Lord's Dreams (Rje btsun pa'i mnal lam)*, this text was composed in 1213 or 1214, not long before Drakpa Gyaltsen's passing. Interestingly, this is Drakpa Gyaltsen's only autobiographical text. He did not, in his old age, choose to speak about his extensive studies, his accession to the seat of the Sakya school of Tibetan Buddhism, his encounters with visitors from India, Nepal, and other regions, his creation of new structures and statues at Sakya, or his years teaching numerous gifted individuals including his nephew Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyaltsen (Sa skya Paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan) (1182–1251). Rather, he opted to narrate a particular dimension of his inner life, namely, his experiences while sleeping, foregrounding these as moments of note for his survivors. What does this text tell us about the importance of dreams for Drakpa Gyaltsen and his followers? How are dreams described and what purpose do they serve? This article explores the place of dreams in negotiating issues of identity and death, examining their roles as sources of knowledge about previous and future lives and in forming connections between the living and the dead.

2. Death in the Life of Drakpa Gyaltsen

Drakpa Gyaltsen was a major figure in the early history of the Sakya lineage. He was the third of four sons born to Sachen Kunga Nyingpo (Sa chen Kun dga' snying po) (1092–1158), a charismatic teacher who turned a small Buddhist center founded by his father into an important site for Buddhist study and practice. It was Sachen's gifts as an interpreter of tantric Buddhism—in particular the Lamdré (*lam 'bras*) or "Path and Result" system—that enabled him to initiate a distinctive Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Drakpa Gyaltsen, in turn, became a primary inheritor of his father's legacy, further systematizing his teachings and producing a broad oeuvre addressing topics ranging from death ritual to embryology (Garrett 2008, pp. 43–44).

Drakpa Gyaltsen's life story is punctuated by loss. Sakya histories¹ report that his half-brother Kunga Bar (Kun dga' 'bar) (d.u.), born to Sachen's first wife Jocham Phurmo (Jo lcam phur mo), spent several years studying in India but died before he could return to Tibet. Sachen passed away when Drakpa Gyaltsen was just eleven, and his elder brother Lopön Sönam Tsemo (1142–1182), also born to Sachen's second wife Machik Ödrön (Ma gcig 'od sgron), died when he was only thirty-six. Even his younger brother Palchen Öpo (Dpal chen 'od po) (1150–1203), the father of Sakya Paṇḍita, predeceased him by some thirteen years. The available histories rarely mention the women to whom he had close ties, but we can only assume that he suffered the loss of some of these important figures as well.

Sachen's passing was particularly significant. Ronald Davidson describes it as "the pivotal event in Drakpa Gyaltsen's life" (Davidson 2005, p. 344), and it is striking that biographies place him and Sönam Tsemo at the center of their father's funeral proceedings despite their young age. With Sachen's death, Drakpa Gyaltsen came to rely on Sönam Tsemo as another of his primary teachers, though the latter spent extended periods away from Sakya, studying under the famous Chapa Chökyi Sengé (Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge) (1109–1169) at Sangphu Neuthok (Gsang phu ne'u thog) (A mes zhabs Ngag dbang Kun dga' bsod nams 2009, p. 64). Sakya was home to other gifted teachers, and Drakpa Gyaltsen flourished under the tutelage of Geshé Nyan Phul Jungwa (Dge bshes Gnyan phul byung ba), who, after Sachen's death, oversaw Sakya until 1161 (Davidson 2005, p. 345). Yet Sachen remained Drakpa Gyaltsen's root guru, and his enduring importance is reflected in his appearances in dreams.

These losses may in part have driven Drakpa Gyaltsen's concern with funerals. One of his most significant contributions to Tibetan Buddhist tradition was his work on death ritual, especially rituals grounded in the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra*, an Indian Buddhist work first translated into Tibetan in the late eighth century.² Important for its discussion of tantric funerary rites, Drakpa Gyaltsen devoted considerable ink to this text's exegesis, penning no fewer than six works on its history and rituals.³ The most important of these was his *Light Rays for the Benefit of Others: The Rituals of Sarvavid* (Kun rig gi cho ga gzhan phan 'od zer).⁴ This seminal ritual manual unpacks the tantra's mortuary procedures in exquisite detail, and it remained influential for centuries, being referenced by writers even outside the Sakya fold.⁵

Apart from his own writings on funerary rites, Drakpa Gyaltsen's focus on the mortuary is stressed in Sakya Paṇḍita's biography of him, which is titled *The Biography of My Lama, the Great Lord* (*Bla ma rje btsun chen po'i rnam thar*).⁶ Sakya Paṇḍita states that his uncle devoted extensive resources to postmortem undertakings, a custom that perhaps began with Sachen's obsequies and was repeated for the funerals of Sönam Tsemo and Palchen Öpo. Sakya Paṇḍita touts the grandeur of these occasions, detailing the many canonical Buddhist texts that were copied, the special reliquaries that were constructed, and the offerings that were made and distributed widely. In particular, he relates that the massive *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra in 100,000 Lines* was copied over 300 times, the resultant tomes being housed either at Sakya or given as gifts to scholars and other Buddhist centers in the area (Sa skya Paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan 1993, pp. 581–83).

3. Dreams in Drakpa Gyaltsen's First Biography

While funerals are prominent in Sakya Paṇḍita's panegyric to his uncle, dreams are even more so. We are told, for example, that when Drakpa Gyaltsen entered his mother's womb, he appeared to her in a dream, assuming the appearance of a nāga king (*klu'i rgyal po*).⁷ His mother rejoiced at this vision, and various signs of good fortune followed. When he was born, further miraculous signs appeared, which Sakya Paṇḍita likens to those recounted in bodhisattva stories (Sa skya Paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan 1993, p. 577). Similarly, in another dream just prior to Sachen's passing, Drakpa Gyaltsen requested the books of the three tantras of Hevajra. We are told that upon receiving these, he spontaneously understood the nature of all phenomena. Sachen had been giving teachings on the two-chaptered root *Hevajra Tantra* before he died, and during the funerary

proceedings, Drakpa Gyaltzen amazed everyone by reciting this text from memory, an ability stemming in part from this dream. As is common in Tibetan Buddhist hagiography, both dreams position Drakpa Gyaltzen as extraordinary. His birth was miraculous, and his childhood was miraculous, signaling his natural superiority as a Buddhist master.

This emphasis on the astonishing continues as Sakya Paṇḍita relays how his uncle used dreams to meet the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, a deity understood in Mahāyāna traditions to be the embodiment of insight. By reciting Mañjuśrī's name, we are told, Drakpa Gyaltzen was twice able to perceive Mañjuśrī directly, gaining blessings and knowledge. He later taught that if one recites Mañjuśrī's name in earnest, this bodhisattva will become one's tutelary deity for up to seven lifetimes, noting that after encountering this figure he was able to recall his past lives in dreams. Sakya Paṇḍita attests to the authenticity of his uncle's claims, noting that despite his own lack of success in this practice, he personally had seen Mañjuśrī appear through his uncle.

Next, Sakya Paṇḍita references a dream that is also discussed in Drakpa Gyaltzen's autobiography. Not long after Sönam Tsemo's death, Drakpa Gyaltzen had a dream in which he learned—via a sound issuing from his brother's remains—that in a future lifetime he would become a powerful Buddhist monarch (*cakravartin*; 'khor los sgyur ba'i rgyal po). This prophesy is followed by another transmission he received, this time from his father. It is unclear whether this episode was a dream or some other kind of vision, but its placement among a series of dreams would suggest that it can be understood as such.⁸ The teaching that Sachen imparted in this case, later known as the Very Short Transmission (*shin tu nye brgyud*) or Clear Signs and Meaning (*brda don gsal ba*), summarizes the Path and Result system, and it would occupy an important place in Sakya tradition (Davidson 2005, p. 351). It reads as follows:

Moreover, son, if you gather all the Dharma teachings I have given, it's like this.

Listen carefully!

Real masters of bodhicitta

should first make reality their throne.

Grabbing hold of the wind element,

They should generate the inner heat of *tummo* (*gtum mo*).

The stream of bodhi will enter the central channel,

and take control of the earth element and the rest.

After the five forms of gnosis are actualized,

the deathless state is attained!⁹

The basic message is that awakening stems from a combination of insight into the way things are and the advanced tantric practices of the Path and Result system. By manipulating the "winds" (*prāṇa*; *rlung*) of the subtle body, one can generate a purificatory heat that produces a transformation in this body that leads to a state of great bliss and, ultimately, freedom from cyclic existence. Notice that both the prophecy linked to Sönam Tsemo and this teaching from Sachen exemplify the connections made possible through the intermediate space of dreams.¹⁰ Even after his gurus/kin had died, Drakpa Gyaltzen was able to interact with them and receive instructions from them. We will return to other examples of this below.

4. Identity and Death in *The Lord's Dreams*

Now that we have surveyed some of the dreams discussed in Sakya Paṇḍita's biography, let us turn to Drakpa Gyaltzen's dream narrative. *The Lord's Dreams* recounts seven dreams in total.¹¹ These occurred at ages seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, thirty-six, forty-eight, sixty, and sixty-six. It is evident from the text itself and from the colophon appended to one version of it¹² that Drakpa Gyaltzen's student Baltön Sengé Gyaltzen (Sbalston Seng ge rgyal mtshan) served as scribe while Drakpa Gyaltzen recounted his dreams

orally, sometimes while still asleep.¹³ Each dream relates to issues of identity and/or death in some way. Consider the first two:

When I was seventeen, in a dream I had after falling asleep at around noon in a ravine, I recited some of *Reciting the Names of Mañjuśrī* without having memorized it, having internalized it in a previous life. When I had completed about half of it, I woke up. At that point I was reciting some of the words. When I reached age eighteen, at Kyawo Khadang, to the right of the spot where the great Sakyapa Lama (i.e., Sachen) passed into bliss, I had a dream after falling asleep in a ravine at around noon. I dreamt that I recited *Reciting the Names of Mañjuśrī* once.¹⁴

Here Drakpa Gyaltsen reflects on two dreams he experienced in his late teen years. Describing the first, he sets the scene by noting that he had fallen asleep in a ravine, evoking the scenic solitude so prized in Tibetan contemplative traditions. There he dreamt that he was reciting aloud *Reciting the Names of Mañjuśrī*,¹⁵ an important tantric work that he had not yet memorized in his formal training at Sakya. He wastes no time in stressing what this means: he had memorized the text in a previous life. And if he had memorized this text in a previous life, then he must have been a dedicated Buddhist practitioner at that time. Further, this reference to *Reciting the Names of Mañjuśrī* stresses his special connection with this bodhisattva, a point Sakya Paṇḍita emphasizes in his biography.

The second dream picks up from the first, situating him a year later in an area near to where his father had passed away. It is here that Drakpa Gyaltsen dreamt of reciting the text in its entirety, thus finishing the task left incomplete in the previous dream. The very fact that he mentions Sachen is significant because it ties this accomplishment to his father and more specifically to his father's death. Indeed, that Drakpa Gyaltsen finishes the text at this location hints at Sachen's postmortem influence, which seems to have inspired, in some way, Drakpa Gyaltsen's recitational feat.

The text then segues into a third dream, which occurred the following year. Here again we find Drakpa Gyaltsen in a ravine, this time near the Tsangpo River, where he falls asleep and experiences an elaborate series of visions of his previous lives. Striking is the detail with which Drakpa Gyaltsen describes the geography of his dreams, including important Buddhist sites such as Nālandra (=Nālandā) Monastery and Vulture Peak, as well as the slopes of mountains, the forests surrounding them, and the temples and monasteries located therein. The first phase of the dream describes his life as Mukhānandāti, a tantric practitioner who had grown too old to consecrate a royal shrine. Next, we are thrown into a rapid series of deaths and rebirths, the emphasis falling on the final stage of life in each case:

Then, to the north of Vulture Peak, I was a venerable old paṇḍita. After I died, there was a large rocky mountain on the northern side of the region of Uḍḍiyāna. There was a monastery there, and in the lower part of that there was a shrine. Inside, I was an old venerable master among his retinue. After I died, I was in the northern upper part of the valley in the Tibetan region of Chungpa. There was a sandstorm in the area below. Then, having climbed out of the eastern side of a deep grove, I faced north. I climbed onto the steps of a cliff, and at the monastery there was forest to the south and a shrine to the north. Inside of that, there was a golden stūpa, and there was a bed between the upper and lower courtyard with the pillow facing east. An old tantric master was explaining *Reciting the Names of Mañjuśrī* in detail.¹⁶

This remarkable passage has Drakpa Gyaltsen witnessing his previous lives in short vignettes, rhetorically mimicking the discontinuities so typical of dreams. At one moment he is an elderly master on the northern side of Vulture Peak, in the next, he is dying in a shrine in the region of Uḍḍiyāna (located in the Swat Valley in present-day Pakistan), and in the next he faces a sandstorm before finding his way into a Tibetan monastery where an elderly master is giving teachings on *Reciting the Names of Mañjuśrī*. The detail with which Drakpa Gyaltsen recalls orientation (e.g., "there was forest to the south and a shrine to the

north”) anchors the unpredictable movements of the narrative, adding a sense of realism. It is as though he is navigating the routes of his past with a clear sense of direction rather than being flung from memory to memory by the whim of his dreaming mind. Interestingly, Drakpa Gyaltsen adds that Sachen was a student at the time that the old master was giving these teachings. There was a text there—a commentary on *Reciting the Names of Mañjuśrī* titled *Seeing the Meaning of the Mantras (Sngags don rnam gzigs)*—and Drakpa Gyaltsen indicates that it is still located at this monastery, describing even the vermilion pigment with which it was written and its cursive script.¹⁷ The body of the old master, he adds, remains there too. He then closes this section by noting that he could recall a total of seven previous lives.

The emphasis on previous lifetimes in the first three dreams underscores the importance of dreams for Drakpa Gyaltsen in understanding his identity vis-à-vis rebirth. Through dreams he confirms for himself and his readers that he had long been a Buddhist practitioner and was karmically qualified to assume a leadership role at Sakya. He would not lead his community just by virtue of being Sachen’s son, but also through his cultivation over many lifetimes. This must have been especially significant given his age when his father died and given Sönam Tsemo’s departure from Sakya a short time later. Such dreams would have been reassuring as Drakpa Gyaltsen settled into his leadership role without the tutelage of his primary teachers.

Interestingly, *The Lord’s Dreams* then pauses its dream narration and reports on the circumstances under which it was penned. We are told that Drakpa Gyaltsen’s disciple Baltön Sengé Gyaltzen was nearby as Drakpa Gyaltsen described this third dream aloud while he was still asleep. Baltön took note of what his teacher was saying and repeated it back to him after he woke up. This interesting detail offers a glimpse into an interaction between Drakpa Gyaltsen and his student and the circumstances under which this text was produced.

Next, with the fourth dream we come to a transition in the text. No longer do we find Drakpa Gyaltsen dreaming of his past lives but rather of the present and future. As noted earlier, this fourth dream is referenced in Sakya Paṇḍita’s biography and takes place after Sönam Tsemo’s death:

Moreover, when I was thirty-six, I fell asleep one morning after Lopön Rinpoché passed away. Not long afterward, from the hollows of his remains there emerged out of the air a sound like that of large bees, which resounded: “When you have gone beyond the many world systems to the north of this place, during the period of the Tathāgata *Suvarṇaprabhālarāja’s¹⁸ teachings in the world system known as Kanakavarṇa, you’ll become the universal emperor *Guṇānanta, son of the universal emperor *Puṇyānanta”.¹⁹

In what may be the most striking image in the text, Drakpa Gyaltsen reports dreaming that from the spaces in his brother’s remains there emerged a sound like buzzing bees, which relayed to him a prophecy about his future. In addition to this visual, what is striking about this passage is that Drakpa Gyaltsen is not promised full awakening as we might expect of a tantric master leading Sakya. Rather, he is informed that he will become a powerful king in a faraway place during the age of a future Buddha. This is not to say that becoming a king of this stature is a minor achievement, but it would seem to position Drakpa Gyaltsen below his father and brother in his progress on the Buddhist path. Sönam Tsemo, after all, is understood to be residing alongside Sachen in a pure realm, having died a miraculous death that was suggestive of awakening.²⁰ At the same time, this dream confirms that Sönam Tsemo is active and available; Drakpa Gyaltsen is not alone in his efforts, and he maintains access to his brother’s tutelage even in death.

Such connections continue in the next episode, which begins with a forty-eight-year-old Drakpa Gyaltsen entering a dream while in Rutsham (Ru mtshams). Overwhelmed in a crowded house full of jarring noises and mournful cries, he seeks to escape. But before he is able, Sachen and Sönam Tsemo appear and teach the path of the fourth empowerment, the most profound of the four phases of tantric initiation. This enables Drakpa Gyaltsen to lead

the masses out of the building and up into the mountains, where he guides them toward the various paths to which they are suited. Notably, in this context, Drakpa Gyaltsen frames himself as ranking not among Sachen's most accomplished disciples. While disciples like Jangchup Sempa Tak (Byang chub sems dpa' Stag) and other students mastered Mahāmudrā (i.e., the nature of mind and reality) without abandoning their bodies, Drakpa Gyaltsen, in a moment of humility, includes himself among a group of Sachen's disciples who "obtained patience," noting, "I think I too will merely be equal with them."²¹ In a sense, this is unsurprising because Sachen died when Drakpa Gyaltsen was only eleven, and Drakpa Gyaltsen thus had fewer opportunities to study with him. But this comment speaks to Drakpa Gyaltsen's future, not his past, and his access to the Path and Result system and other tantric practices would seem an ideal circumstance for pursuing the highest soteriological ambitions, although saying as much would perhaps be out of step with the humility expected of the autobiographical genre. Moreover, this admission of spiritual limitations renders his dreams essential; he needs his gurus' help now just as he needed it before, and it is the power of dreams that enables their post-mortem counsel.

The remainder of Drakpa Gyaltsen's dreams focus on the time of his death and further instructions he received from his father and brother. One of the most extraordinary of these recounts his exchange with a *dākinī*, that is, a kind of female tantric deity:

Moreover, when I was sixty, while I was staying the winter in Mangkhar Langra, in a dream at dawn there was a parasol raised in the sky, and there was a ladder planted in the ground where I was standing. I think it was a *dākinī* who said, "Climb this ladder!" I climbed up to the top and was invited to a celestial realm, where she arrived to greet me. She said, "There is the sound of pleasant music," and there was music that was lovely to hear. I said to the celestial being, "I can't promise that I'll stay," to which she replied, "But there is great meaning in this. Stay here!" She continued, "There is also a meadow outside, on which there is a golden wheel. Sit on the throne that's on top of that." I sat on the throne and said, "I'm going to a celestial realm!" She replied, "But there is great meaning in this. Stay here!" Then I woke up.²²

Here we find Drakpa Gyaltsen facing his own mortality. On a winter morning he dreams of ascending to a celestial realm at the behest of a *dākinī*. He refuses to remain in the abodes to which he is invited despite the *dākinī*'s insistence that he do so, though he does intimate that he will go to a celestial realm when he dies. This trope of being summoned by divine beings would become common in Tibetan biographical literature, and this is a rather early example of it. The point is that Drakpa Gyaltsen is accomplished enough to be welcomed to a *dākinī*'s paradise, but he remains committed to earthly existence for the sake of benefitting others and thus refuses to die early.

The last dream occurred when Drakpa Gyaltsen was sixty-six, just three years before his death. In this dream, he receives a series of instructions from his father. Perhaps reflecting the voice of Baltön, the text's scribe, the text prefaces this dream by stating, "In general, when the Lord [Drakpa Gyaltsen] had a dream, he met with his gurus, and it was to clarify his many doubts."²³ It then details an exchange between Sachen and Drakpa Gyaltsen in which the former first clarifies the doctrine of the three bodies of a buddha (*trikāya*; *sku gsum*). Sachen asks whether the enjoyment body (*sambhogakāya*; *longs sku*) or the emanation body (*nirmāṇakāya*; *sprul sku*) is better, and Drakpa Gyaltsen replies that the Buddha manifested his emanation body to help beings. In his view, there is no "good" or "bad" regarding a buddha's emanations, but if such a body is perceived that way, it is because it is a *manifestation*, that is, something visible to ordinary awareness. In this sense, the enjoyment body is better because it is not a manifestation of this sort. This answer pleases Sachen, who then suggests that Drakpa Gyaltsen should become a monk rather than remain a lay tantric practitioner. Interestingly, Drakpa Gyaltsen replies that it is too late for him to do so given his age—he would be over eighty years old by the time he would become a preceptor qualified to ordain others. Finally, he and Sachen discuss the relationship between the maṇḍala of the nine deities of Hevajra on the one hand, and the

Buddha Śākyamuni and his disciples on the other, ultimately collapsing any distinctions between them. This implies that taking the vows of a Buddhist monk or those of a tantric practitioner are ultimately done vis-à-vis the same community of realized beings. Moreover, Sachen leads Drakpa Gyaltsen to understand that given there is no real difference between the guru and the buddhas of the past, present, and future, he should take all vows from his father. The text ends by noting that Sachen had clarified many misunderstandings for Drakpa Gyaltsen, and that he had similar discussions with his late brother.

It is striking that Drakpa Gyaltsen's limitations are so readily acknowledged here. He is not cast as omniscient, as Sachen or Sakya Paṇḍita are in Sakya literature, but rather as one who faced uncertainties even at the end of his life. It is important, however, to read to the end of these stories: Drakpa Gyaltsen's doubts are always resolved, and his encounters with Sachen demonstrate the greatness of the latter, including his indistinguishability from buddhas and his complete understanding of the nature of reality. What Drakpa Gyaltsen cannot resolve, his departed superiors can, establishing a link between the living and the dead that ensures the continuity and authority of the Sakya lineage.

5. Conclusions

We have seen in Drakpa Gyaltsen's earliest biography and his only autobiography that dreams serve as important sources of knowledge and inspiration. It was through dreams, we are told, that Drakpa Gyaltsen met with Mañjuśrī, recalled his past lives, received a prophecy about a future lifetime, faced his mortality, and received instructions from his brother and father following their deaths. While Sakya Paṇḍita emphasizes the miraculous and inspirational dimensions of his uncle's dream life, *The Lord's Dreams* is more candid about uncertainties that Drakpa Gyaltsen faced. Yet according to both of these texts, such uncertainties were ultimately overcome, owing to the power of dreams by which knowing what normally might have been out of reach became possible.

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Notes

- ¹ See, for example, (A mes zhabs Ngag dbang Kun dga' bsod nams 2009), which draws on earlier Sakya historical narratives.
- ² *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatejorājāyatathāgatasāyārhatē samyaksambuddhasya kalpa nāma; De bzhin gshegs pa dgra bcom pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba gzi brjid kyi rgyal po'i brtag pa zhes bya ba* (Tōh 483).
- ³ These are (1) *Ngan song yongs su sbyong ba'i rgyud kyi dkyil 'khor bri ba dang sgom pa'i mngon par rtogs pa la brten nas dbang bskur te sdig pa sbyang ba'i thabs nye bar mkho ba'i 'od zer*, (2) *Kun rig gi cho ga gzhan phan 'od zer*, (3) *Gzhan phan nyer mkho*, (4) *Ngan song sbyong rgyud kyi sa bcad*, (5) *Ngan song sbyong rgyud kyi spyi don*, and (6) *Dus tha ma'i cho ga gzhan phan bdud rtsi'i thigs pa*.
- ⁴ *Graggs pa rgyal mtshan* (1993). For a study of this work and its influence, see (Lindsay 2018).
- ⁵ See, for example, 'Dul 'dzin Grags pa rgyal mtshan's (1374–1434) *Kun rig rnam bshad*, which refers to *Light Rays for the Benefit of Others* as the *Great Light Rays for the Benefit of Others* (*Gzhan phan 'od zer chen mo*), a reverential title that I have not seen used elsewhere. ('Dul 'dzin Grags pa rgyal mtshan 1944, p. 17).
- ⁶ For an English translation of this work, see (Sakya Pandita 2014, pp. 169–88).
- ⁷ Nāga kings (*klu'i rgyal po*) are serpentine rulers associated with the protection of the Mahāyāna.
- ⁸ Davidson refers to this revelation as a dream, while Cyrus Stearns describes it as a direct postmortem encounter between Drakpa Gyaltsen and Sachen. See (Davidson 2005, p. 351; Stearns 2001, p. 257).
- ⁹ *yang rje sa skya pa chen po nyid kyi bu ngas chos ji snyed cig bstan pa thams cad bsdu na 'di yin pas legs par nyon cig/ byang chub sems kyi bdag nyid dngos/ dang po chos nyid gdan du bya/ 'byung ba rlung la spar zin byas/ gtum mo'i me drod rab tu bskyed/ byang chub chu rgyun dbu mar gzhus/ sa sogs 'byung ba dbang du 'du/ 'ye shes lnga ni mngon gyur nas/ 'chi ba med pa'i gnas 'thob bo/.* (Sa skya Paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan 1993, pp. 584–85).
- ¹⁰ For an excellent study rooted in contemporary Egyptian contexts in which dreams become intermediate spaces whereby the living have, inter alia, transformative encounters with the dead, see (Mittermaier 2011).
- ¹¹ For an English translation of *The Lord's Dreams*, see (Jetsun Dragpa Gyaltsan 2014, pp. 87–95).
- ¹² (*Graggs pa rgyal mtshan* 1983, p. 64). The *Sa skya bka' 'bum* version does not identify Baltön in the colophon.

- 13 Given Baltön's role in producing this text, we might question the extent to which these dream narratives index the voice of Drakpa Gyaltzen or to what extent they are a product of subsequent editorial activity and redaction in the formation of Drakpa Gyaltzen's posthumous identity and broader Sakya institutional identity. Further research into the history of this work—if such history can be recovered at all—would be necessary to make any determinations in this regard.
- 14 *kho bo lo bco brgyad pa'i dus na g.yang bar nyi ma phyed tsam na/ gnyid du song ba'i rmi lam na mtshan brjod cig sngar thugs la bzung ba med par/ skye ba snga ma la bzung ba yin byas nas/ kha ton byas pas phyed tsam song tsa na mnal sad/ de'i dus na tshig 'ga' zhid 'don zhid 'dug gsungs/ lo bcu dgu lon pa'i tshel/ bla ma chen po sa skya pa bde bar gshegs pa'i sa g.yas ru skya bo kha gdangs su/ g.yang bar nyi ma phyed tsam na gnyid du song ba'i rmi lam na/ mtshan brjod tshar gcig kha ton byas pa rmi gsungs/. (Graggs pa rgyal mtshan 1983, p. 57; 1993, pp. 394–95; 2007, pp. 663–64). Passages reproduced from the *Rje btsun pa'i mnal lam* in this article follow (Graggs pa rgyal mtshan 1993). Corresponding sections in (Graggs pa rgyal mtshan 1983) and (Graggs pa rgyal mtshan 2007) are referenced for purposes of comparison.*
- 15 *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*; 'Jam dpal gyi mtshan yang dag par brjod pa (Tōh 360). Reciting the Names of Mañjuśrī is widely recited and memorized in Tibetan Buddhist communities. For an introduction to this text and the available scholarship on it, see (Tribe 2015).
- 16 *de nas bya rgod phung po'i ri'i byang phyogs na btsun pa paṇḍita bgres po zhid tu 'dug pa de tshel' dus byas nas au dyaṇa gyi yul gyi byang ngos na ri brag chen po zhid yod pa la/ dgon pa cig 'dug pa de'i shod na lha khang yod pa de na 'khor rnam' 'dug pa'i dpon po btsun pa paṇḍita bgres po zhid 'dug pa de 'das nas/ bod gcung pa'i yul na lung pa'i phu byang na yod pa mda' bye tshub ldang ba cig 'dug/ de nas gad gle zhid la shar nas 'dzegs nas byang du kha bltas pa/ gad them la 'dzegs pas dgon pa cig na/ lho phyogs na nag tshang byas pa/ byang phyogs na mchod khang yod pa/ de na gser gyi mchod rten cig yod/ nyal sa khyams stod khyams smad kyi mtshams na sngas shar du bstan pa cig yod/ de na sngags pa bgres po zhid yod pa des mtshan brjod mang du bshad/. (Graggs pa rgyal mtshan 1983, p. 58; 1993, pp. 395–96; 2007, pp. 664–65).*
- 17 This probably refers to a commentary included in available Bstan 'gyur collections titled 'Jam dpal gyi sngags don rnam gzhigs dang nye bar bsod pa'i rnam par rtog ge gnyis kyi don bsod pa mtshan gyi sgron me (Tōh 2095). No Sanskrit title for this work is provided in the Degé or other editions consulted.
- 18 This and the followings asterisks denote Sanskrit names constructed from the Tibetan.
- 19 *yang dgung lo sum cu so bdun lon pa'i dus na/ tho rangs mnal du song ba'i tshel/ slob dpon rin po che sku gshegs nas/ ring por ma lon pa'i gdung gi gseb nas/ sbrang po che'i skad lta bu'i sgra zhid bar snang las 'thon nas/ khyod 'di nas byang phyogs su 'jig rten gyi khams du ma 'das pa na/ 'jig rten gyi khams gser mdog can zhes bya bar de bzhin gshegs pa gser 'od rnam par rtsen pa'i rgyal po zhes bya ba'i bstan pa la/ de na 'khor los sgyur ba'i rgyal po bsod nams mtha' yas zhes bya ba'i sras 'khor los sgyur ba'i rgyal po yon tan mtha' yas zhes bya bar 'gyur ro/ /zhes sgra grag go zhes gsungs/. (Graggs pa rgyal mtshan 1983, p. 59; 1993; 2007, pp. 665–66).*
- 20 For an account of Sönam Tsemo's death, see (A mes zhabs Ngag dbang Kun dga' bsod nams 2009, pp. 66–67).
- 21 "There will be five or six who obtain patience like Shujé (Zhu byas). I think I too will merely be equal with them." *zhu byas lta bu'i bzod pa thob pa lnga drug yong bar 'dug/ nga rang yang de dag dang mnyam pa tsam yong bar 'dug snyam gsungs/. (Graggs pa rgyal mtshan 1983, p. 61; 1993, p. 399; 2007, p. 668). It should be noted that the mastery of patience is an important part of a bodhisattva's career, patience being one of the six perfections (pāramitā; pha rol tu phyin pa) of the Mahāyāna. It is also possible that patience here denotes "acceptance of the unborn" (ma skyes pa'i chos la bzod pa), an achievement that entails direct insight into emptiness—a major achievement in Mahāyāna Buddhist contexts. Note also that Shujé (Zhu byas) here refers to Sachen's close disciple Shujé Ngödrup (Zhu byas Dngos grub). For more on Shujé, see (Stearns 2001, pp. 21–22, 25, 131, 242, 253, 256).*
- 22 *yang dgung lo drug cu rtsa gcig pa'i tshel/ mang mkhar slang rar dgun bzhugs pa'i dus su tho rangs mnal lam du nam mkha' las gdugs shig brkyang nas sa la skas shig btsugs nas 'dug pa la/ mkha' 'gro ma yin snyam pa cig na re/ skas 'di la 'dzegs shig/ steng du thon pa dang mkha' spyod du gdan 'dren pa yin 'di ga na bsu bar sleb yod de rol mo'i sgra dang bcas pa 'di yin zer nas snyan na rol mo'i sgra grag cing 'dug pa la/ mkha' spyod pa langs khe che rgyud med/ da dung 'di na don che bas 'dir sdod gsung ngo / yang phyi rol ne'u gsing zhid gi steng na gser gyi kor kor 'phang lo tsam zhid 'dug pa la 'di'i steng du gdan things la bzhugs shig/ gdan bteg nas mkha' spyod du 'gro ba yin no zer ba la/ da dung 'di n don che bas 'dir sdod gsungs pa dang mnal sad do/. (Graggs pa rgyal mtshan 1983, pp. 61–62; 1993, pp. 399–400; 2007, p. 668).*
- 23 *spyir rje ba la mnal lam gyi dus su bla ma rnam dang mjal zhid / the tshom du ma sel bar byas pa yin zhid /. (Graggs pa rgyal mtshan 1983, p. 62; 1993, p. 400; 2007, p. 669).*

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