



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Bya rog prog zhu, The Raven Crest

Terrone, A.

Citation

Terrone, A. (2010, February 2). *Bya rog prog zhu, The Raven Crest*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/14644>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/14644>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

BYA ROG PROG ZHU, THE RAVEN CREST



THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF
BDE CHEN 'OD GSAL RDO RJE,
TREASURE REVEALER OF CONTEMPORARY TIBET

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van
de graad van Doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
op gezag van Rector Magnificus prof. mr. P.F. van der Heijden,
volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties
te verdedigen op dinsdag 2 februari 2010
klokke 11.15 uur
door

Antonio Terrone

geboren in Verona, Italie
in 1966

Promotiecommissie:

Promotor: Prof. dr. Barend J. ter Haar

Copromotor: Dr. Peter C. Verhagen

Overige Leden: Prof. dr. Heleen L. Murre-van den Berg

Prof. dr. B.C.A. Walraven

Dr. Andrew M. Fischer (Institute of Social Studies,
The Hague, NL)

Dr. Robert Mayer (Oxford University, UK)

*Followers and disciples [of Padmasambhava],
These are beings of extraordinary conduct.
Sons of the mountains, they chose mist as their clothes
and contemplation as their food,
To mentally transcend the eight worldly concerns.*

bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje, *The Clear Mirror of Profound Meaning and Perfect Essence* (1990: f. 11a).

Ad memoriam
Tulku Tsezang Samling Rinpoche (1972-2009)
dear friend, invaluable teacher

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	i
Map of Tibet	v
INTRODUCTION.....	1
<i>The Study and its Methodology.....</i>	2
<i>Sources.....</i>	4
<i>Bibliographical Considerations: Western Works of Modern Scholarship</i>	10
<i>Scope of the Project and Outline of the Chapters.....</i>	26
CHAPTER ONE: TREASURES AND THEIR REVEALERS: DISCOVERING BUDDHISM IN TIBET	33
<i>Introduction.....</i>	33
<i>Locating gter ma in the Tibetan Buddhist Tradition</i>	35
<i>Padmasambhava and the Sources of the Treasure Narrative</i>	40
<i>The Narrative in Today's Revelations</i>	43
<i>Treasure Politics: Need for Concealment or Need for Revelation?</i>	49
<i>Eschatology and Liberation: Treasure Revelation in the Shaping of rNying ma Identity.....</i>	52
<i>Authentic Revealers or Authentic Revelations?</i>	58
<i>gTer ma and rDzogs chen</i>	63
<i>Concluding Remarks</i>	64
CHAPTER TWO: RELIGION AND POLITICS IN TIBET: THE CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT	67
<i>The Political Context: Post-Mao, Post-Deng, and the Development of the Western Regions .</i>	71
<i>The Religious Context: Religious Revivalism and Cultural Reassertions</i>	80
<i>Resurgence of Traditional Icons: Ge sar and the Treasures</i>	90
<i>Treasure Revealers, Religious Encampments, and Mountain Hermitages.....</i>	96
<i>New Trends in Tibetan Buddhism: A New Chinese Journey to the West?</i>	110
<i>Concluding Remarks</i>	112
CHAPTER THREE: TREASURE REVEALERS IN CONTEMPORARY EASTERN TIBET.....	114
<i>Who are Today's Tibetan Treasure Revealers?.....</i>	116
<i>The Dagger of Sublime Wisdom: On Revelation and Consorts.....</i>	123
<i>Consorts, Noncelibacy, and the Debate about Authentic Treasure Revealers</i>	132
<i>The Mobility of Religion: Treasure Revealers and Communication Technology.....</i>	140
<i>Maṇḍala Spheres, Rainbow Lights, and Internet: A Case Study</i>	146
<i>Concluding Remarks</i>	152

CHAPTER FOUR: BYA ROG PROG ZHU: THE RAVEN CREST	155
<i>bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje and his Tradition.....</i>	155
<i>The Autobiography: rnam thar or rang rnam?.....</i>	157
<i>The Scribe: bKra shis mtsho mo</i>	163
<i>Early Visions: the Announcement of a Treasure Revealer's Career</i>	164
<i>Early Training, Eclecticism, and Self-Teaching</i>	171
<i>Travels, Pilgrimages, and the Force of Experience</i>	173
<i>Teachers, Teachings, and Religious Formation</i>	178
<i>Practice and Spiritual Achievements</i>	181
<i>Himalayan Pilgrimage and Gro mo dge bshes rin po che.....</i>	182
<i>Return to Central Tibet.....</i>	184
<i>The First Root-Teacher: Grub dbang bde chen rdo rje.....</i>	189
<i>First Community: The Me 'bar monastery</i>	191
<i>The Years at Nyag bla byang chub rdo rje's chos sgar.....</i>	193
<i>Visions, Treasures, and Other Arcane Claims</i>	197
<i>More Visions in a Rural Brigade during the Cultural Revolution.....</i>	206
<i>Renaissance: Tradition and Change.....</i>	212
<i>gNas chen padma shel ri: Reconnecting the Land with its People.....</i>	213
<i>Revelations, Patronage, and Religious Instructions.....</i>	217
<i>Concluding Remarks</i>	219
CHAPTER FIVE: TREASURE CYCLES, HEROIC ORNAMENTS, YOGA OF FOOD, AND MU TIG AMULETS.....	221
<i>Revelations: The Yang gsang rta mgrin rdo rje me char Collection</i>	222
<i>rTsol med: A Tantric Initiation Ritual for the White-robed Group</i>	224
<i>Top-knot, White Robes, and the Raven Crest: The Fifteen Heroic Ornaments</i>	233
<i>Hayagrīva Pills and the Yoga of Food</i>	238
<i>Mu tig tsa tsa: bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's Protective Amulets</i>	246
<i>Concluding Remarks</i>	248
CONCLUSIONS: BDE CHEN 'OD GSAL RDO RJE'S LEGACY	251
APPENDIX ONE: <i>The Dance of the Immaculate Vajra.....</i>	256
APPENDIX TWO: Texts in Transliteration	275
Text 1: <i>bde chen rdo rje'i rnam thar phran bu.....</i>	275
Text 2: <i>rig 'dzin nus ldan rdo rje'i rnam thar bsdus pa dri med rdo rje'i zlos gar</i>	277
Text 3: <i>don zab gnad smin shel dkar me long</i>	285
Text 4: <i>rta mgrin yang gsang rdo rje me char gyi rtsol med gsang sngags myur lam</i>	298
APPENDIX THREE	307

<i>A Preliminary List of gTer chen bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's Revealed Cycles</i>	307
APPENDIX FOUR.....	317
<i>A General Bibliography on the Treasure Tradition in non-Tibetan Languages</i>	317
BIBLIOGRAPHY	325
<i>Tibetan Sources.....</i>	325
<i>Secondary Sources and Critical Editions in Other Languages</i>	329
<i>Interviews.....</i>	349
<i>Online Sources</i>	350
Summary.....	352
<i>Introduction.....</i>	352
<i>Research Questions.....</i>	352
<i>Outline of the Chapters</i>	353
Samenvatting.....	356
<i>Inleiding</i>	356
<i>Onderzoeksvragen.....</i>	356
<i>Samenvatting van de hoofdstukken</i>	357
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	360

Acknowledgments

This dissertation is the result of a whole decade of research, travels, and work that began in September 1999. It would not have been possible without the 1999-2003 Doctoral Dissertation Grant generously offered by what was then called the Research Institute for African, Asian, and Amerindian Studies (CNWS) of the University of Leiden in the Netherlands. I am profoundly grateful to all those members of the CNWS and its administration staff who made those years of support and attention crucial for the completion of this work. In particular I would like to thank Professor Tillman E. Vetter, at that time Chair of Buddhology for his support and for accepting me as a Doctoral candidate. My deepest gratitude goes also to Dr. Peter C. Verhagen for his years of patience, support, encouragement and attention to this project. My thanks go also to Dr. Henk Blezer for his support and advice in numerous occasions during my years at the CNWS. I would like to express my sincere and deepest gratitude also to Professor dr. Barend J. ter Haar for having taken over the role of main dissertation advisor to this dissertation in the latest phase of its writing and for having always showed encouragement and support for my research. I want to express special thanks to Dr. Robert Mayer, Oriental Studies Faculty Member at the University of Oxford, U.K., for his helpful insights and comments on my manuscript. I am very grateful to Dr. Andrew M. Fisher from the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, and to Prof. dr. Heleen L. Murre-van den Berg and Prof. dr. B.C.A. Walraven for their comments and useful remarks on my final version of this manuscript. I am also grateful for the years of consultation and reading at the Library of the Kern Institute of Leiden University where I have been able to take advantage of its rich collection of texts and books on Tibet and Himalayas.

Being a study of Tibetan religious figures in Tibet, this work acknowledges the assistance of and numerous interviews and conversations with a significant number of people. Therefore, I have accumulated a large quantity of debts to many individuals who graciously accepted and agreed to help me in this project. First of all, I want to express my greatest gratitude to gTer chen bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje for having accepted me into his community, allowed me to observe and study his life, and assisted me in my studies. He has treated me with great kindness and understanding and has always encouraged me in this research since July 1998, the first time we met at his hermitage on the Mount gNas chen padma. In addition to him I also want to express

my most profound thanks to gTer chen bKra shis rgyal mtshan, my teacher and friend, for his patience in helping me understand numerous texts, teachings, and practices that represent bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje and his Buddhist tradition. mKha' 'gro dPal chen lha mo, his wife and herself a fascinating religious figure deserving attention and study, has always been welcoming over the years when I appeared at her house. Her great kindness, patience, and hospitality made my years of fieldwork unforgettable moments of personal growth, experience, and learning. A teacher and a friend, sPrul sku Tshe bzang bsam gling rin po che, student of both bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje and bKra shis rgyal mtshan, has constantly showed me his perseverance in helping me study and understand the material during many years and to understand difficult passages of many texts. His premature departure has left a deep vacuum in my life and has surely deprived the world of a great teacher. bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje and bKra shis rgyal mtshan's monks and nuns also proved to be great friends and were always ready to provide assistance and help in numerous circumstances during my travels accompanying bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje or by myself. And last but not least I am deeply indebted to the nun bKra shis mtsho mo, assistant and scribe of bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje. Her sincere, selfless, and patient assistance in reading bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's writings (which she handwrote under bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's dictation) have been invaluable and instrumental to the success of this study. Her irresistible joviality and sense of humor that always accompanied our meals together are fond memories that I will cherish forever. A special thanks also goes to the mGo rjo villagers, farmers, and herdsmen, fervent devotees of bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje, who graciously and spontaneously provided delicious dairy products during my long summer and fall stays at bDe chen 'od gsal rdo rje's gNas chen pad ma mthong grol and Ri phug kha mountain hermitages from 1998 to 2001. The nuns of rDza mer chen nunnery in Shar mda' always welcomed me to their convent over the years showing me friendship and support during my visits.

I am deeply indebted to other individuals who over the years made my sojourns in various areas of Eastern Tibet possible and pleasant. These are A ma Tshe chung from sKye rgu mdo town (Yushu), the Third dGe bsnyen rin po che sprul sku dge legs padma rnam rgyal, gTer ston lHa rgyal rin po che, and gTer ston lHa mtsho rin po che from Padma town, gTer chen Sangs shis rin po che and his consort, and Rig 'dzin nyi ma rin po che from Tsung shar hermitage in sNyan lung. I also want to thank Nam sprul 'Jigs med phun tshogs and his late consort Tāre lha mo (1938-2003) for their hospitality and support when I first met them in 2000

and stayed at their mountain hermitage. The late mKhan po ‘Jigs med phun tshog and his closest assistants, bsTan ‘dzin rgya mtsho, bSod dar rgyas, mKhan po Tshul khrims from bLa rung sgar in gSer rta, and mKhan po a chos rub dbang lung rtogs rgyal mtshan from Ya chen sgar in dKar mdzes, provided instrumental assistance during my frequent sojourns at their encampments.

I would like to express my special thanks to Dr. Ramon Prats d’Alos-Moner, my friend, teacher, and mentor, for his continuous support, patience, and attention over the past two decades. During that time, he attentively oversaw my studies as his undergraduate student in Italy and assisted me as a graduate student in Leiden. I am grateful to his availability for conversations and reflections on Tibetan Buddhism. Special thanks go also to Gene Smith for sharing his encyclopedic knowledge with me and for his generous patience in discussing several aspects of the Treasure tradition with me. I also want to thank him for having offered me the possibility to work for one year as “scholar in residence” at the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center in New York, a year that proved formative and instrumental for my advancement. Among the friends who helped me in completing this project two deserve special thanks. I want to single out Matthew Pistono to whom I express my most sincere gratitude for the years traveling together across the Himalayas and for the countless conversations that have enriched my insights into Tibetan Buddhism and the Treasure tradition, and for having proofread early versions of this dissertation. However, it is my wife Sarah Jacoby who really helped this manuscript to see the light by proofreading it several times in its final phase and providing invaluable comments and insights. I cannot thank her enough for her vast patience and selfless concern that are second only to her continual encouragement, insightful thoughts, and groundbreaking ideas about this project.

To A lags gzan dkar rin po che thub bstan nyi ma goes my heartfelt gratitude for having patiently read my translation of bDe chen ’od gsal rdo rje’s autobiography with me and for having clarified some difficult passages from the original manuscript in 2003. I want to heartily thank Tulku Thondup for various helpful conversations and for having shared with me his insights on the Treasure tradition, and Tashi Tsing of the Amye Machen Institute of Tibetan Studies for his help in identifying various personalities mentioned in bDe chen ’od gsal rdo rje’s autobiography and for sharing his insight into the Tibetan Treasure tradition during our meetings in Europe and India.

I want to acknowledge the support and encouragement of Professor David Germano and Professor Janet Gyatso whose words in the beginning and works on the subject fueled my enthusiasm for this project on the Treasure tradition since the first time I met them in Lhasa in the summer of 1998. I also want to thank Professor Geoffrey Samuel, Professor Leonard van der Kuijp, Alexander Gardner, Yang Enhong, Professor Norbu Wangdan, Matthew Akester, the Lhatse Library, the Alderman Library of the University of Virginia, the libraries of Columbia University, and Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Gangchen Kyishong, Dharamsala. A special thanks goes to Sangs rgyas and his wife Phu mo for their continual hospitality in Shar mda', Nang chen, and rDzogs tshang Tshe ring rdo rje and his family for their heart-felt hospitality in Gangchen Kyishong, Dharamsala.

Lastly, without my mother Maria's support, patience, and sacrifice, not only this project, but my studies and my travels in their entirety would have never been possible. This dissertation is dedicated to her and to the memory of my father Catello Terrone (1930-1990). To them goes my never-ending gratitude and love.