HOUSEHOLDERS AND MONKS: A STUDY OF TREASURE REVEALERS AND THEIR ROLE IN RELIGIOUS REVIVAL IN CONTEMPORARY EASTERN TIBET

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[Grub dbang lung rtogs rgyal mshan] became the personal attendant of Khrom dge a rig rdo rje 'chang, an emanation of Vairocana. The faith generated in his heart for seeing such a Buddha extinguished the particularly unimaginable miseries during the Cultural Revolution. For forty-three years he honoured the three kinds of satisfaction for a student to his master [respect, food, and meditation accomplishment] just like the lives of the sages of the past and received the complete instructions on the three transmissions and three vows. The master encouraged him by prophesying that the pleasant continuum of general and specific teachings of the clear Seminal Heart would benefit both the Buddhist doctrine and the living beings, and thus he named him 'Jam dbyangs lung rtogs rgyal mshan, making him his chief student with great respect and reverence.

Additionally, O rgyan drag rtsal gling pa nominated himself doctrine holder of his profound Treasures. In particular, he received the entire teachings of the supremely secret Seminal Heart from the excellent master, the wish-fulfilling gem 'Jigs med phun tshogs, and he became a beautiful ornament of the teachings of the earlier translations. In accordance with a prophecy of the Treasure revealer Dri med ['od gsal gling pa?], which said “In the upper part of Khrom the emanation of Dpal [gyi] seng [ge] will appear/ A small monastery will be established on a mountain unseen before/ and the teachings of Sūtra and Tantra will flourish everywhere”, in the fire-hare year of 1987 the O rgyan bsam gtan gling temple was erected on [Mount] Ya rtse dpal ri gnyis pa and the teachings of the Sūtra and Tantra were established as fundamental.

The supremely secret, unsurpassable explanation on the ripening of the Great Perfection showered both Chinese and Tibetans in accordance with their intellect. Having achieved the virtues of experience and realisation similar to the scriptures, they still preserve them nowadays. Many miracles took place, such as the manifestation of bodily remains, tiny spherical relics, and images of the peaceful and wrathful deities associated with afterlife.
Also, just as reported in the Treasure prophecies of Padma bdud ’dul: “Raise the skull of conch shell to Amitābha, and pray for the silk tiara of the mirror of great benefit”, especially in such a great sacred place, he opened many Treasure gates. While numerous unprecedented items representing the body, speech, and mind of the Buddha spontaneously manifested, he excavated various Treasure articles. Furthermore, non-human Treasure lords directly offered him both profound and public Treasures, while he attained other profound Treasures independently. Having achieved knowledge of the three times, he was thus able to make predictions. On his body divine images would appear to every devotee and bodily remains and tiny spherical relics would materialise from his body as signs of Buddhahood.\(^1\)

The passage above is taken from *The Melodious Drum of the Gods: A Short Biography of the Incomparable Kind Master Grub dbang lung rtogs rgyal mtshan*.\(^2\) It is a presentation of a Tibetan Buddhist master from eastern Tibet, the well-known Treasure revealer Grub dbang lung rtogs rgyal mtshan, who leads a Buddhist community of both Tibetan and Chinese devotees at his religious encampment (*chos sgar*) called Ya rtse bsam gtan gling.\(^3\) More popularly known as Ya chen sgar, his religious community is not far from the eastern Tibetan town of Dkar mdzes in present day Sichuan Province of the People’s Republic of China (PRC).

Autobiographical and self-promoting pamphlets of Treasure revealers such as the one containing the description above have been quite common in Tibet over the last decade and represent one of the new forms of literature distributed among devotees. In addition to providing an essential biographical outline of the Treasure revealer including his deeds and major spiritual achievements, they often

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\(^3\) In this paper ‘Tibet’ refers in general to cultural Tibet including those regions and areas under the jurisdiction of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), and corresponds to the definition of Tibet as provided by the Tibet Information Network (TIN): “Tibet was traditionally comprised of three main areas: A mdo (north-eastern Tibet), Khams (eastern Tibet), and U-Tsang (central and western Tibet). The Tibet Autonomous Region (Ch. Xizang Zizhiqu) was set up by the Chinese government in 1965 and covers the area of Tibet west of the Yangtze river, including the part of Khams, although it is often referred to as ‘Central Tibet’ in English. The rest of A mdo and Khams have been incorporated into Chinese provinces, and where Tibetan communities were said to have ‘compact inhabitancy’ in these provinces they were designated Tibetan Autonomous prefectures and counties. As result, most of Qinghai, and parts of Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan provinces are acknowledged by the Chinese authorities to be ‘Tibet’”, TIN 2002: 11.