

Dge-slong-ma dpal-mo, the Princess, the Mahasiddha, the Nun and the Lineage Holder: as Presented in the *thob yig* of Za-ya Paṇḍita Blo-bzang 'phrin-las (1642-1715)

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Za-ya Paṇḍita Blo-bzang 'phrin-las (1642-1715) was a Khalkha Mongolian Tibetan Buddhist monk scholar belonging to the Dge-lugs-pa school of Tibetan Buddhism. He was a renowned Buddhist master who left behind a huge corpus of religious writing of which the most famous is his *Thob yig gsal ba'i me long* (The clear mirror of the records of teachings received). As well as numerous transmission lineages of teachings and practices, this encyclopedic text contains detailed biographical, historical and instructional information on various topics. This article is a study of the Kriyāntāra section of the *thob yig*. Emphasis is given to the biography of the nun Dge-slong-ma dpal-mo, founder of a major Dge-lugs-pa Kriyāntāra fasting practice known as *smjung gnas* that belongs to the system of the Bodhisattva Mahākāruṇika Avalokiteśvara. My analysis aims to offer some clarity in regard to her dating and her identity within the religious context of Za-ya Paṇḍita's tradition, the Dge-lugs-pa school during the 17th century.

Introduction

This paper results from a short study of the enormous *thob yig* 'Record of teachings received' of the 17th century Khalkha Mongolian Dge-lugs-pa monk scholar Za-ya Paṇḍita Blo-bzang 'phrin-las (1642-1715). *Thob yigs* can be considered to belong to the historiographical, biographical and bibliographical literary genres of Tibet. So far, aside from two papers written

by Sobisch (2002) and Kramer (2008) on the short *thob yig* of the Sa-skyia patriarch A-mes-zhab, the genre of *thob yig* has received limited attention from academics. Za-ya Paṇḍita's *thob yig* is one of the most extensive known examples of the genre; only the *thob yig* of the great Fifth Dalai Lama is longer. The work itself is preserved in Tibetan *dbu can* script printed in a clear Beijing block print, and consists of the last four of the six volumes of Za-ya Paṇḍita's *gsung 'bum* 'collected works'. It has never been translated into English or studied in detail.

This paper is mainly based on the *Kriyātantra* section of the *thob yig*, to be found in volume 4 of Za-ya Paṇḍita's collected works. This section consists of 30 folios from F16a, line 3 to F45b line 3. It contains the biography of Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo, who is held as the propagator of the Tibetan Buddhist fasting practice of *smyung gnas*¹, which remains widely popular today in Tibet, Ladakh, Nepal and Mongolia (Vargas-O'Brian 2001:159). As with any Tibetan Buddhist practice, the identity of its propagator is fundamental for the authenticity of the transmission lineage and the tradition to which that lineage belongs. Thus an analysis of the identity of Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo as presented by Za-ya Paṇḍita can tell us how the Dge-lugs-pa school of Tibetan Buddhism in the seventeenth century interpreted who she was and claimed authority for the practices and teachings associated with her.

The first part of this paper introduces the historical and academic background of the text, the author and the passage under analysis. The second part contextualizes the *Kriyātantra* section of the *thob yig* by presenting its structure and analysing its content. The third part contains the transliteration, translation and commentary on the passage which contains the biography of Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo. The translation and running commentary are all original unless otherwise stated.

The fourth and main part of this paper contextualizes the contents of the passage and highlights its implications for the wider Tibetan Buddhist tradition through analysis of the figure of Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo as presented by Za-ya Paṇḍita as well as in other known sources. This will demonstrate that in the 17th century both she and Mahāsiddha Princess Lakṣmīṅkarā were considered by Za-ya Paṇḍita's tradition to have been the same person, and links between the two will be discussed.

¹On *smyung gnas*, see page 6.

1. Za-ya Paṇḍita

The 16th and 17th centuries saw a revival of Mongolian and Tibetan foreign relations. The manner in which the Third Dalai Lama and Altan Khan conducted their affairs was largely modelled on the relations between the Sa-skyas and the descendants of Chinggis Khaan during the 13th century. Buddhism once again played an important role in the development of the political and religious structure within which the Tibetans and Mongolians would interact throughout the subsequent centuries. During this period, many Mongolian scholars undertook to study Buddhist doctrine in Tibet, which was for most a decades-long commitment. They became experts in Tibetan Buddhism, its accompanying academic framework of study and made lasting contributions to both Tibetan and Mongolian intellectual culture (Erdenibayar 2007:303).

Mongolian historiographical and religious writing was heavily influenced by the Tibetan tradition (Bira 1970:125). As scholars operating within multi-ethnic and multi-religious networks, the works of the Mongolian masters who had studied in Tibet epitomised the religio-social contexts of both Tibet and Mongolia. Some of the most prolific writers and influential individuals in the history of Buddhism in Mongolia include the first religious leader of Mongolia, the Khalkha Jebtzundamba Khutuktu Zanabazar² (1635–1723), the prolific historian and mathematician Sum-pa mkhan-po Ye-shes dpal-'byor³ (1704-1788) and the renowned philosopher Alasha Lharampa Ngag-dbang bstan-dar⁴ (1759–1831/1840).

The exchange of religion and culture and the close-knit foreign relations between Mongolia and Tibet blurred their ethnic boundaries. In this amalgamated world, Buddhism created a shared plane of existence between the two cultures: a plane on which Buddhism acted as the catalyst for the formation of religio-political and socio-cultural relations. Due to the form of Buddhism being 'Tibetan Buddhism', most scholarship has focused on the religio-historical writings by Tibetan monk-scholars. However, ever since Mongolia adopted Buddhism, it followed the Tibetan tradition and most of the Mongolian monk scholars composed in Tibetan after their return from their religious training in Tibet.

² Popularly dubbed the 'Mongolian Dalai Lama'. For a study of the biography of the first Jebtzundamba see Bareja-Starzynska's (2010). For a study of the religious and political position of the first Jebtzundamba see Bareja-Starzynska (2008).

³ Renowned historian, doctor, geographer, mathematician, composer, poet, philosopher and astronomer who was proficient in Sanskrit and Tibetan. See Bira, S (2002), Erdenibayar (2007).

⁴ For detail on his life and work see Borjigin-Ujeed (2009), Szpindler (2008).

The individual whose work is the focus of this paper is Za-ya Paṇḍita Blo-bzang 'phrin-las (1642-1715) from Khalka Mongolia. He was born in 1642 in Mukhar Khujirt, which is now known as Arkhangai Aimag, Khalka Mongolia. He was recognised as the reincarnation of Sain Noyan Köndülün or Köndelen Chökür⁵ (1558-1640) at the age of three. At the age of twelve he was accepted as the disciple of the first Jebtzundamba Khutuktu Zanabazar and was bestowed the title Noyan Khutuktu. When he was nineteen, he went to Tibet and received his full monastic ordination from the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682). After his stay in Lhasa, he travelled to Tashilunpo monastery, his main monastic college, where he met and studied with the fourth Panchen Lama (1570-1662). In 1678 he was bestowed the title Za-ya Paṇḍita by the Fifth Dalai Lama and was then sent back to Mongolia to contribute to spreading the dharma in Mongolia. He was enthroned as the abbot of Zaya-yin Kūriy-e⁶ in Mongolia and established many other temples and monasteries. Aside from these above mentioned Tibetan Buddhist hierarchs, he had the privilege of studying with and forming intimate relations with many other religio-historically important masters of the Dge-lugs-pa tradition.

Za-ya Paṇḍita is renowned as a prolific writer, composing his first written work at the age of seventeen. It was a prayer book called the *Bogdiin Zalbiral* (Prayer to the Buddha). He composed works in both Mongolian and Tibetan; they include prayers, commentaries, philosophical treatises, poems and works of history and biography. The most famous of these is his *thob yig*, the text which concerns this essay. Its full title is *Shakya'i btsun pa blo bzang 'phrin las kyi zab pa dang rgya che ba'i dam pa'i chos kyi thob yig gsal pa'i me long*⁷ (The clear mirror of the teachings received by Za-ya Paṇḍita Blo-bzang 'phrin-las).

Thob yig, 'Records of teachings obtained', is synonymous with the term *gsan yig*, 'Records of teachings heard'. More often, they are generally referred to as 'Records of teachings received' (Martin 1997:vi). In their simplest form, they are “nothing more than bare lists of disciplines, precepts, directions and consecrations taken, and of the person giving them” (Vostrikov 1970:199). However, the more complex works comprise not only lists of lineages but also detailed information on topics such as sutra, tantra, historical episodes, biographical material

⁵ A nephew of Abadai Khan who was a key figure in the spread of Buddhism in Mongolia

⁶ Zayain Khüree (this can be in modern spelling or give old and new bot) was renovated and reopened after its partial destruction during the communist revolution and stands in Arkhangai Aimag, Tsetserleg, 257 miles west of Ulaanbaatar.

⁷ Will be referred to from here onwards as the *thob yig gsal ba'i me long*.

regarding the author and often other prominent individuals of the tradition etc (Vostrikov 1970, Sobisch 2002, Kramer 2008, Wayman 1962). They have characteristics of the historiographical, biographical or bibliographical literary genres and contain material valuable for any field of Tibetan Studies (Vostrikov 1970:199). A large number of these works have survived until today and vary hugely in length: from the 23 folio *thob yig* of Phags-pa Blo-gros rgyal-mtshan (1235-1280) (van Schaik 2000:5) to the huge 1500 folios of the fifth Dalai Lama Ngag-dbang Blo-bzang Rgya-mtsho (1617–1682). The oldest known texts that could be considered as *thob yig* date back to the 11th century, which coincides with the renaissance of Buddhism and the beginning of sectarianism in Tibet. However, the actual term *gsan yig* or *thob yig* does not appear until the 13th century. Van der Kuijp suggested that the beginning of the tradition of composing *thob yigs* may be tied to the concern for authenticity that arose with the establishment of the first “schools” of Tibetan Buddhism after the dark period (Van der Kuijp 1995:920). On the other hand, the newest *thob yigs* date from as recent a period as the 20th century and more will undoubtedly be compiled by present day Tibetan Buddhist masters. If looked at chronologically, they form the “biography” of the lineages of Tibetan Buddhism since the very beginning of sectarian Buddhism in Tibet.

2. The *Kriyātantra* Section of *thethob yig gsal ba'i me long*

The passage under examination here belongs to the *Kriyātantra* section of the *Za-ya* Paṇḍita's *thob yig*. The section is found in the fourth of the six volumes and runs from folio 16a, line 3 to folio 45b, line 6. The structure of the section is as follows:

1. The legend of the Buddha Amitāyus (folio 16a, line 3 - folio 23a, line 5)
2. Transmission lineage of a tantric system of Amitāyus (folio 23a, line 5 - folio 25a, line 5)
3. The Legend of Avalokiteśvara and his first appearance in Tibet (folio 25a, line 5 - folio 37b, line 3)
4. The practice of fasting known as *smyung gnas* (folio 37b, line 3 - folio 45b, line 3)

The fourth subsection on *smyung gnas* has the following structure:

1. The hagiography of Dge-dlong-ma Dpal-mo, the founder of the practice of *smyung gnas*
2. The benefits of the practice
3. The transmission of the practice
 - How Paṇḍita *Dpal Ye-shes bzang-po* obtained the transmission
 - How Bodhisattva *Zla-ba rgyal-mtshan* (Candradhvaja) obtained the transmission
 - Short accounts validating the identity of Bodhisattva *Zla-ba rgyal-mtshan* (as a manifestation of Avalokiteśvara)
4. The difference between *smyung gnas* and *bsnyen gnas*⁸
5. The proper method of conducting *smyung gnas*
6. The transmission lineage of *smyung gnas*

The fasting practice *smyung gnas* propagated by Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo is widespread today in Tibet, Ladakh, Nepal, and Mongolia (Vargas-O'Brian 2001:159). Fasting practices are found in many religious traditions not only in the Himalayan region and are credited with a variety of benefits. For the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, the main aim of the practice is to purify one's negative karma, and accumulate merit (Jackson 1997:275). The *smyung gnas* practice is supposed to be conducted during the full moon of the fourth month of the Tibetan calendar, but can also be practised at any other time. The fasting lasts one day, but the entire ritual generally lasts for two days in most places where the lay communities are offered the opportunity to undergo the ritual together with the monastic community. *Smyung gnas* represents for the laity a period of renunciation, which symbolises temporary escape from *samsāra* (Mumford 1989:25). Due to its identification with the deity cycle of Mahākāruṇika Avalokiteśvara, it can be considered as part of the cult of Avalokiteśvara.

⁸ *Bsnyen gnas* is another fasting practice that is similar to *smyung gnas*, which can sometimes lead to misunderstandings and confusion of the two.

Most studies to date have approached the fasting ritual using an ethnographic methodology,⁹ and have treated it separately from its founder. The present study will only focus on the founder of the practice, Dge-long-ma Dpal-mo, in an effort to bring clarity to her identity and dating and thus place her firmly within the tradition. For this purpose, I will here present only the translation of her hagiography and the transmission lineage of the practice.

3. Transliteration and translation of the *rnam thar* of Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo

(F37b, L3) *ji skad du / indra bo dhis lung bstan 'phags pa sgrubs / shing 'phel gnas su mchog gi dngos grub brnyes / kha sar ba' nir cho 'phrul chen po bstan¹⁰ / dpal ldan dpal mo'i zhabs la phyag 'tshal lo /*

As it is said, “I pay homage to the glorious Dpal mo
Who achieved the Ārya Avalokiteśvara practice according to the prophecy
of Indrabhūti,

Obtained the highest siddhis in the Expansive Woods [of Li-kha-ra]¹¹
And demonstrated a great miracle in the realm of Khasarpani.”

(F37b, L4) *zhes pa'i bstod yul dam pa / dge slong ma dpal mo 'di ni rig pa'i gnas lnga la mkhas shing / bslab sdom rnams kyang shin tu bcun par bzhugs pa las /*

As for Dge slong ma Dpal mo, the noble object of this praise, she was skilled in the five sciences and had also completely mastered the vows and precepts.

⁹ For ethnographic accounts and detailed description of *smyung gnas* fasts in Nepal, see von Fürer-Haimendorf (1964) and Mumford (1989). For Ladakh see Gutschow (1999) and Pedersen (1999). For India see Havnevik (1990).

¹⁰ Khasarpani is a form of Avalokiteśvara. In Schaeffer's account of the life of Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo, he mentions that after severing her own head, she dances around the busy marketplace of Khasarpani. This would suggest that Khasarpani here is a location rather than the deity. Thus this line could also be translated as 'demonstrated a great miracle in Khasarpani' (Schaeffer 2004:64).

¹¹ This is translated from *shing 'phel*, which refers to *li-kha-ra shing 'phel*, which is mentioned later in the *rnam thar*. *Li-kha-ra* is said to have been a place in eastern India and translates as sugar cane. *Shing* is a 'field' or 'woods', whereas *'phel* means 'grow' or 'expansive'. We could assume that it was a wooded region in Eastern India where there had been plentiful sugar cane cultivation.

(F37b, L5) *sngon gyi las dbang gis mdze byung ste / phyag g.yas
pa'i mkhrig ma nas chad / zhal gyi gdong yang khro*¹²*gzer btab pa
bzhin du gyur cing / sha mdog ni ston ka'i me tog la ba mos 'phog
pa bzhin du gyur / bza' btung byed pa yang phyag gis snyod mi shes
par dud 'gro rtswa za ba bzhin du gyur / rig pa'i gnas lnga la mkhas
kyang / nad drag pos btab pas sdug bsngal sems la bzhag thabs med
pa lta bu dpag tu med pa byung ste/*

Due to her past karma, she contracted leprosy. Her right hand was cut off from the wrist. Her complexion had also become like *gzer-btab-pa*.¹³ The colour of her flesh had become like frostbitten flowers in autumn. Even when eating and drinking, she couldn't bring food to her mouth with her hands and ate like an animal that eats grass on all fours. Although skilled in the five sciences, because she was stricken with serious illness, her suffering was so great that there was no way of containing it in her mind (it was unbearable/unimaginable).

(F38a, L1) *'khor rnams kyis logs shig tu rtswa'i spyil bu zhig tu
bskyal nas der shums kyin bzhugs pa na / nub gcig rmi lam du /
rang gi yab rgyal po inadra bo dhi byon nas / shel gyi bum pa spyi
blugs gcig bsnams ste / thugs rje chen po la zhus pa'i khrus chu
yin gsungs nas spyi bo nas blugs pas lus ngag yid gsum bde lhod
kyis song / rgyal po'i zhal nas khyod kyi nad drag po 'dis rkyen
byas nas mchog gi dngos grub myur du 'thob par 'dug gis snying
rus bskyed la / dus gsum gyis sangs rgyas thams cad kyi ngo bo
zhal bcu gcig pa la mos gus drag tu gyis shig gsungs nas mi snang
bar song ngo /*

The household servants escorted her outside to a straw hut, and she stayed there weeping. Then one night, in a dream, her father king Indrabhūti appeared holding a full crystal initiation vase. Saying “This is the holy water of Mahākāruṇika Avalokiteśvara, he poured it onto the crown of her head. Because of this, her body, speech and mind became relaxed. The king said: “Having made your illness the reason for your motivation, you will obtain a *siddhi* quickly.

¹² Possible mis-spelling of *'khrög* meaning dislocated or stirred up.

¹³ This phrase was rather problematic. Arjia Rinpoche has suggested that *gzer btab* refers to a type of pain one gets when the face muscles are distorted in the expression of pain from being struck. It can also mean iron nails embedded in her face. Thus, we can take this as an expression of severe pain, which causes distortion of the features.

Therefore be steadfast and act in strong devotion to the eleven-faced, who is the essence of all the Buddhas of the three times,” and then he vanished.

(F38a, L3) *de'i nang mo nas phyag gis zas snyod pa 'ong pa dang / nad kyang sdug bsngal du mi byed par / nyin mo yi ge drug pa dang / mtshan mo bcu gcig zhal gyi gzungs la thugs dam du mdzad cing zla ba drug song ba'i tho rangs kyi tshe / da ni bdag la sgrub sla la rtog pa¹⁴ chung ba'i lha gcig dgos te mi 'dug / nad drag po 'di dang bcas / di bas shin dga' ba la snyam pa'i 'phro la mnal du rib tsan song ba na /*

The next morning she was able to bring food to her mouth [eat food normally using her hands]. Also, in order for her illness to stop causing her suffering, during the day she practised the *sādhana* practice of the six-letter mantra, and at night the *sādhana* practice of the eleven-faced. After six months of doing so, at dawn she thought to herself: “I need the deity of a practice that is easy to practice with [need for] little conceptual elaboration, which I don't have - and I also have this illness. I would be happier to die than to remain like this.” After that moment of thought, she passed into sleep for a little while.

(F38b, L5) *spyil ba pu'i¹⁵ nang thams cad 'od kyi gang ba'i snang ba zbig byung / der khye'u bzhon nu seng ge la zhon pa cig byung nas khyod 'dir ma sdod par / li kha ra shing 'phel du song dang / de na dus gsum gyi sangs rgyas thams cad kyi ngo bo phyag stong spyan stong dang ldan pa bzhugs kyis de'i drung du snying po bzlos shing gsol ba thob dang sgrub sla la rtog pa chung ba'i lha de yin gsungs nas lung bstan cing lce thog tu bdud rtsi ril bu gcig bzhag go /*

Then the entire inside of her hut appeared to light up. A young child riding a lion appeared and said: “Don't stay here, go to *Li kha ra shing 'phel*. Staying there is the thousand-armed thousand-eyed one, who is the essence of all the Buddhas of the three times. Recite the mantra in his vicinity and pray, as he is the deity of the easily practised practice.” After thus prophesying, he put an elixir pill¹⁶ on her tongue.

¹⁴ Conceptual elaboration.

¹⁵ Is a misspelling and should be *bu'i*.

¹⁶ Tantric meditational pill. These can vary according to the tantra and the tradition. They can sometimes be made of the five fluid excretions of the human body, which are used strictly for tantric initiations when an adept receives the transmission from the master.

(F38b, L1) *de la nyid su yin zhus pas / nga 'jam dbyangs gzhon nu yin gsung / dngos grub gcig zhu zhus pas / da lta'i da ka yin mod gsungs nas 'ja' yal ba bzhin du song / de nas byams snying rje drag po rgyud la skyes / thugs rje chen po la mos gus rtse gcig tu mdzad cing li kha ra shing 'phel la byon te zhag bdun song ba'i tshe shing sdong gcig gi 'gram du gzims pa na / gcan gzan gdug pa can mang po'i skad drag ste 'jigs nyams byed pa cig byung nas / 'phags pa la mos gus drag tu byas pas 'jigs pa de yang rang yal du song ste.*

She asked him: “Who are you?” He said, “I am Manjughoṣa the Youth.” She then requested: “Can I have a siddhi?” Manjughoṣa said, “It has already happened,” and immediately disappeared into the rainbow. Then strong love and compassion arose in her mind. She practised one-pointedly towards Avalokiteśvara Mahākāruṇika and arrived at *Li kha ra shing 'phel*. After a week had passed, she was sleeping near a tree. She was surrounded by the sound of ferocious wild animals and was afraid. [Therefore,] she fervently venerated the noble one, and because of this her fear disappeared by itself.

(F38b, L3) *mkha' 'gro ma dmar mo me tog gi thod bcings can bdun mdun du byung nas / khyod kyis mchog gi dngos grub thob pa na / nged rnams kyang 'khor gyi thog mar mchis te bka' srungs bgyid do zhes zer / khyed rnams gang gi rigs kyi mkha' 'gro yin byas pas / nged rnams pad ma'i rigs kyi mkha' 'gro yin / u rgyun nas 'ongs / nyid kyang u rgyan du byon nas mkha' 'gro ma rnams kyi gtso bo mdzad par gda' zer ro /*

Then seven red *ḍākinīs* wearing turbans of flowers appeared in front of her. They said: “When you achieve supreme accomplishment, we ourselves will come as your first entourage and will obey whatever you say.” [Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo] asked: “You are *ḍākinīs* of what [Buddha] family?” [They answered] “We are the *ḍākinīs* of the Padma family. We come from Uḍḍiyāna.¹⁷ If you yourself also go to Uḍḍiyāna, there you can act as the chief of the *ḍākinīs*.”

¹⁷ Uḍḍiyāna is located in today's Peshawar plain in Pakistan and was renowned in Buddhist history for the huge number of tantric masters to have emerged from it (Kragh 2011:86). It was one of the four original *pīthas* of tantra along with Jālandhara, Pūrṇagiri and Kāmarūpa, and is also referred to as O-rgyān, U-rgyān, Oḍḍiyāna and Oḍḍiviśā (Donaldson 2001:11).

(F38b, L5) *bdag la li kha ra shing 'phel du myur du slebs pa'i dngos grub cig bslang byas pas mkha' 'gro ma gnyis kyis ras kha tshar ma nyams pa cig khyer byung nas 'di'i steng du byon zer ba dang / de ka'i nub mo la li kha ra shing 'phel gyi 'gram du slebs 'dug / der mkha' 'gro ma gcig gis ras dkar gcig gi khud du 'bras grus ma khal gcig tsam phul nas mi snang bar gyur to /*

“Give me a *siddhi* so that I can quickly arrive in *Li kha ra shing 'phel*.” So two *ḍākinīs* gave her an immaculate cloth with tassels, and said: “We will ride on it [like a horse].” That very evening they arrived at the borders of *Li kha ra shing 'phel*. There a *ḍākinī* offered her a *khal*¹⁸ of hulled and prepared rice [wrapped] in a white cloth, and then vanished.

(F39a, L1) *de nas zhal bcu gcig pa'i drung du bzhugs nas mchog gi dngos grub ma thob bar du 'di nas gzhan du mi 'gro ba'i dbu snyung bzhes te bza' ba dang btung ba yid la mi byed par nyin mtshan khor yug¹⁹tu zhal bcu gcig pa la thugs dam du mdzad nas lo gcig lon pa'i tshe lus kyi nad thams cad sbrul gyi shun pa bud pa bzhin du song/*

After she had been staying in the vicinity of the eleven-faced and practising *smyung gas*, she vowed not to go anywhere else until she had achieved the supreme attainment in that place. So, not thinking about food or drink, day and night she continuously performed the *sādhana* of the eleven-faced. After a year had passed, her bodily illness had completely disappeared like a snake shedding its skin.

(F39a, L2) *phyag g.yas pa yang sor chud cing sku lus ni mdze ma byung ba'i dus las kyang mtshar bar gyur / ting nge 'dzin bzang po rgyud la skyes / phyi rol gyi bdud la sogs pas bar chad rtsom du byung ba la / byams snying rje cung zad re bsgoms pas thams cad byang chub kyi sems dang ldan par gyur / phyogs skyong bcu la sogs pa yang cung zad glags blta bar byung ba la / thugs rje chen po'i bskyed rim la brtan par bzhugs te mdun du bkug gnas dam la btags pas / thugs rje chen po'i sgrub pa byed pa'i chos skyong du khas blangs shing / khyad par du klu chen bryad kyis zhal bcu gcig pa'i sgos kyi chos skyong du khas blangs /*

¹⁸ Measure used by Tibetans – generally the side bracket of a load animal.

¹⁹ Also can mean environment.

Her right hand was also restored, and her body had become even more beautiful than it was before the leprosy had occurred. So an exceptional *samādhi* arose in her. When the external demons²⁰ etc. came to cause obstacles, she contemplated a little on love and compassion, and so they became endowed with the *Bodhicitta*. When the protectors of the ten directions and others also appeared, looking for an opportunity [to test her], she firmly stayed in the generation stage and summoned them to her presence and they promised under oath to become dharma protectors for those who practise Avalokiteśvara Mahākāruṇika. Especially, the eight great *nāgas* were brought under oath as the particular dharma protectors of the order of the eleven-faced.

(F39a, L5) *sa ga sa ri nam mthongs kyi zla ba la bar du gcod pa'i
bgegs rnams byang chub kyi sems la bkod / nad dang sdig sgrib
rnams byang ste / sa dang po'i bden pa mthong / sa ga zla ba'i
tshes gcig la rje btsun sgrol ma'i zhal gzigs te / dus gsum sangs
rgyas thams cad kyi 'phrin las nyid la 'dus so zhes lung bstan / tshes
brgyad la don zhags lha lnga la sogs kri ya'i lha phal che ba'i zhal
gzigs /*

In the month when *sa ga* and *sa ri*²¹ could be seen, the obstructive spirits were converted to the *Bodhicitta* and her diseases and defilements were purified, and she saw the truth of the first Bodhisattva level (*prathamā bhūmi*). On the first day of the *Sa ga zla ba*²², she perceived the face of Ārya Tārā, who prophesised: “You have gathered the Buddha activity of all the Buddhas of the three times to yourself.” On the eighth day [of *Sa ga zla ba*] she perceived the faces of the various deities of the Kriyātantra such as the *Don-zhags-lha-lnga*²³.

(F39b, 1) *bco lnga la zhal bcu gcig pa phyag stong spyan stong
dang ldan pa'i zhal gzigs shing / de yang ba spru'i bu ga thams
cad na sangs rgyas kyi zhing dpag tu med pa dang / phyag stong*

²⁰ Could refer not only to demons but also to any being looking to do harm.

²¹ The 14th and 15th lunar mansion constellations according to the Tibetan astronomical system. They coincide with the 10th Mongolian month according to the Mongolian lunar calendar.

²² The fourth month of the Tibetan calendar; in this month the Buddha was born, enlightened and entered parinirvana.

²³ *Don-yod zhags-pa* is a specific form of Avalokiteśvara known as Amoghapāśa (he of the unfailing noose), who belongs to a set of five Amoghapāśa deities that are among the deities belonging to the Kriyātantra class (himalayanart.org 2013).

*ni bskal bzang gi sangs rgyas stong dang / phyag mthil gyi spyan
stong ni gsang sngags kyi dkyil 'khor dpag tu med par zhal gzigs
shing / de rnams kyis chos gsungs bas skad cig re re la ting nge 'dzin
dpag tu med pa 'khrungs shing sa brgyad pa thob /*

On the 15th day, she perceived the face of the eleven-faced, thousand-armed and thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara. Furthermore, she perceived infinite Buddha fields in the pores [of Avalokiteśvara], and the thousand Buddhas of the good *kalpa*, who were the thousand arms, and the thousand eyes on the palms, that were the innumerable mandalas of the tantra. They taught the dharma [to her], and instantly limitless meditative practices arose in her, and she achieved the eighth Bodhisattva level.

(F39b, L2) *de nas der sems can thams cad kyi don du smyung gnas
zla ba gsum mdzad nas / yul dbus su byon pas mi rnams na re / dge
slong ma 'di nad drag nas mdangs bzang por song 'dug ste / sngar
bas bslab sdom g.yel du song ba 'dra bas ci 'dra yin cha med zer
cing ma dad pa rnams bzlog pa'i phyir / kha sa rpa' ni'i dus mchod
kyi nyin / dbu bcad nas 'khar gsil gyi mgo la bkal te khrom gseb tu
gar mdzad pas / thams cad dad cing grub thob tu shes nas chos 'di
nyams su blangs ba rnams mchog gi dngos grub thob par gyur te /*

After that, she practised *smyung gnas* there for three months for the benefit of all sentient beings, and then went back to Magadha. The people said: “This Bhikṣuṇī, having recovered from her disease, has gained a beautiful complexion. It seems as if she has become more negligent in the keeping of her vows and precepts than before; we are not sure about this.” To turn these faithless people away [from their wrong view], on the day of offering to Avalokiteśvara Khasarpaṇi, having cut off her head and having hung it on a staff,²⁴ she performed a dance in the marketplace. Because of this, they gained faith and understood that she was a *siddha*, and those who practised it achieved supreme *siddhis*.

²⁴ This could be interpreted as a tantric staff rather than a monk’s staff, as Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo was a master of tantra. The argument later regarding her synonymous identification with Mahāsiddha Princess Lakṣmīṃkarā and her dance in the marketplace with a staff would support this. In this case it could be the same as a khatvāṅga staff. For a study on the origins of the khatvāṅga staff, see Brick (2012).

(F39b, L5) *phyi ltar na rgyal po indra bo dhi'i sras mo dge slong
ma dbal mo / kha cig pan di ta zla ba gzhon nu'i sras mor 'dod pa'ng
snang / indra bo dho'i lcam mor 'dod pa yang snang ngo / nang ltar
na mkha' 'gro sde lnga'i ngo bo 'am dbu bcad ma dngos yin /*

According to outsiders [of the tradition], the daughter of King Indrabhūti, Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo is considered to be the daughter of Paṇḍita *zla ba gzhon nu*. There are also those who consider²⁵ her to have been the wife of King Indrabhūti. By Buddhists, she herself is considered the essence of the *dākinīs* of the five systems or *dbu-bcad-ma*²⁶.

(F39b, L6) *De ltar na sa gzla ba la dge slong ma dpal mos dgra
bgegs btul bden pa mngon sum du gzigs / yi dam dang zhal mjal
zhing sangs rgyas thams cad kyi 'phrin las khyod la 'dus pa yin
gsungs nas lung bstan pa'i phyir ro/*

Thus afterwards, in the *Sa-ga zla-ba*, Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo subdued all [of her inner] hindrances and enemies, fully saw the truth, met her yidam face to face and they prophesised: “All Buddha activities are gathered within you.” It was because of this that it is so.

(F45b, L2) *de ltar phan yon dpag tu med pa dang ldan pa'i smyung
gnas kyi snod rung du byed pa'i gtso bor gyur pa pad ma'i rigs kyi
bdag po dpal mo lugs kyi 'phags pa bcu gcig zhal gyi dbang bya
rgyud lugs su thob pa'i brgyud pa ni / 'phags pa spyen ras gzigs /
dge slong ma dpal mo pan'di ta candra ku ma' ra / ye shes bzang po
/ bal po pe nya ba / byang sems zla ba rgyal mtshan / grub thob nyi
phug pa chos grags / sbru ba rdo rje rgyal po / zhang ston sgra 'jigs
/ rtsi 'dul bthugs rje byang chub / mkhan chen bdeb can pa / byang
sams chu bzang pa byang chub 'bar / rin chen shes rab 'bum / sams
dpa' chen po / gun mkhyen shes rab dpal / chul khrims mtshan can
/ yon tan rin chen / sangs rgyas rgya tsho / skyabs mchog dpal / rje*

²⁵ It is interesting to note here when the author prefers to use phrases such as “she is considered by some... there are also those who consider her...”. This may indicate that he himself is not sure of the authenticity of these facts and thus prefers to use the third person to avoid misleading the audience.

²⁶ Chinnamuṇḍa or Chinnamastā in Sanskrit is a form of Vajrayoginī with a severed head. See section 3.3.2 below for more discussion of this deity.

*blo bzang don grub ba / rje sangs rgyas ye shes / rigs dang dkyil
 'khor kun gyi khyab bdag pan chen phyogs thams cad las rnam par
 rgyal ba blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po / khyab
 bdag ngag dbang bstan 'dzin 'phrin las / nges bdag la'o.*

Thus the benefits of this practice are limitless. The lineage of transmission of the *dbang* of *smyung gnas* of the eleven-faced belonging to the system of the *Kriyātantra* that was transmitted by Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo, who is the leader of the Padma family and the perfect example of one who perfected the practice, is as follows:

Ārya Avalokiteśvara, Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo, Paṇḍita Candrakumāra, Ye-shes Bzang-po, The Nepalese Pe-nya-ba, The Bodhisattva Candradhvaja, Grub-thob Nyi-phug-pa, Chos-grags, Sru-pa Rdo-rje rgyal-po, Rtsi-'dul Thugs-rje byang-chub, Mkhan-chen Bdeb-can-pa Byang-chub-'bar, Rin-chen Shes-rab-'bum, Sems-dpa' Chen-po, Gun-mkhyen Shes-rab-dpal, Chul-khrims mtshan-can, Yon-tan rin-chen, Sangs-rgyas rgya-tsho, Skyabs-mchog-dpal, Rje Blo-bzang don-grub-ba, Rje Sang- rgyas ye-shes, The lord of all the mandalas of lineages and the conquerer of all beings of all directions, his holiness the glorious 4th Panchen Lama Blo-bzang Chos-kyi rgyal-mtshan, my own teacher Ngag-dbang bstan-'dzin 'phrin-las, who bestowed it upon me.

4. Contextualising the *rnam thar* of Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo

Hagiographies in the west are of saints and monks, and western hagiographical study attempts to discover the historical figures behind the legends, or to correlate mythical elements cross-culturally (Tiso 1989: 227). In Tibet, hagiographies and biographies are synonymously identified by the term *rnam thar*, literally meaning 'liberation story'. Compared to the common *rnam thars*, hagiographies can be interpreted as those that recount the lives of extraordinary individuals, such as Padmasambhava or the Mahāsiddhas, lives riddled with mythical components (Roberts, 2010:189). However, magical episodes and superhuman characteristics are also found in many common *rnam thar* accounts. Furthermore, there can be a number of versions of one individual's *rnam thar*, making it difficult to piece together a historically accurate account of his or her life. But if one reads between the lines, like western hagiographies, the myths and legends in *rnam thars* are perceived as exemplary role models by the tradition (Tiso, 1989:226). Especially, the author's downgrading of the saints to human standards, suffering human ordeals (Roberts, 2010:198), brings them closer to the mundane realm.

Tibetan *rnam thars* thus serve as inspiration and motivation for later disciples of the tradition as well as giving us a glimpse of what was considered sacred at the time of the work's compilation.

5. Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo

Besides her mention of the *rnam thar* of Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo in relation to *smyung gnas*, Vargas-O'Brian is the only scholar to have devoted a separate study to attempting to contextualize her *rnam thar*. Some of her sources are:

1. Jo-gdan Bsod-nams bzang-po's (1341-1433) *Smyung gnas bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar* (The Biography of the Lineage Gurus of the State of Fasting)
2. 'Od-dpag rdo-rje's (Date unknown) *Thugs rje chen po bcu gcig zhal gyi bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar nor bu'i phreng ba* (The jewelled ornament of the life stories of the lineage gurus of the eleven-faced great compassionate one)
3. Brag-dkar Blo-bzang dpal-ldan bstan 'dzin snyan grags. *Smyung gnas bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar yig drug dang smyung gnas kyi phan yon bcas legs par bshad pa gser gyi phreng mdzes*. (The divine golden rosary of the proper explanation of the benefits of the six-letter mantra and the biographies of the lineage gurus of the practice of *smyung gnas*)

(Vargas-O'Brian 2001:161).

There is also an English version of her life story included in Dbang-chen Rin-po-che's book on *smyung gnas*.²⁷ As well as contextualising Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo's *rnam thar* from a feminist perspective,²⁸ Vargas-O'Brian also analyzed it in relation to the Buddhist ideologies of suffering and liberation.²⁹ Miranda Shaw also contextualized the *rnam thar* of Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo

²⁷ See Wangchen Rinpoche (2009) pp. 17-21.

²⁸ Vargas-O'Brian focussed on her characteristics and achievements as an outstanding female practitioner, who has acted and still is acting as a role model for female Buddhist practitioners today, see Vargas-O'Brian (2006).

²⁹ She explored the idea of pain and suffering caused by leprosy in relation to one's practice towards enlightenment on both a physical and a psychological level. See Vargas-O'Brian (2001).

using the feminist studies approach³⁰ and reflected upon the *rnam thar* and other written works attributed to her and other female tantric masters.

There are five works attributed to Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo preserved in the Tibetan Canon:

1. *Lokeśvarastotra* ('*Jigs rten dbang phyug bstod pa* Toh 2729)
2. *Bhaṭṭāarakāryāvalokiteśvaraikadaśamukhasya sādhana* (*Rje btsun 'phags pa spyān ras gzigs dbang phyug zhal bcu gcigs pa'i sgrub thabs*. Toh 2737)
3. *Āryāvalokiteśvarastotra* ('*Phags pa spyān ras gzigs dbang phyug gi bstod pa*. Toh 2739)
4. *Bhaṭṭāarakamahākāruṇikastotra* (*Rje btsun thugs rje chen po la bstod pa*. Toh 2740)
5. *Āryāvalokiteśvarastotra* ('*Phags pa spyān ras gzigs dbang phyug la bstod pa*. Toh 2738)

She is considered by the practitioners of *smyung gnas* today to have been a historical figure, and her relics are believed to be kept in Zhwa-lu monastery near Gshis-ka-rtse inside an image of Mahākāruṇika Jinasāgara and a medicine image (*sman sku*) of Avalokiteśvara (Vargas-O'Brian 2006:3). Considering her association with healing, the medicine image of Avalokiteśvara as the resting place of her relics is fitting. Moreover, the common theme of Avalokiteśvara, which runs throughout the texts authored by her, and the location of her relics indeed support her historical existence and her connection with the deity Mahākāruṇika Avalokiteśvara. Nevertheless, as with many other Buddhist hagiographical persons, there is much confusion over her historicity and dating.

There are definite discrepancies amongst the various *rnam thars* of Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo. What can be generalized from the episodes common to all of them is as follows. She was a princess from Uḍḍiyāna whose father was King Indrabhūti. She came to be known as Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo after her ordination. She became deformed as a result of contracting leprosy and lost her right hand. Through divine intervention in a dream, she was advised to practise upon the eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara. After practising she attained the highest

³⁰ See Shaw (1994).

siddhi and was cured of her leprosy. She then brought faith to the masses through magical demonstrations of her accomplishments.

Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo is widely accepted as the propagator of *smyung gnas*, but most practitioners know little of her identity or of her literary contribution to the Buddhist tradition (Havnevik 1990:113). There are very few sources on which to base her historicity or dating; “The Blue Annals” is the most widely referenced for all the existing hypotheses (Dimitrov 2000:10).³¹ The difficulty in determining any solid facts about her life is further complicated by the questions surrounding the reliability of the information in the Blue Annals. However, as one of the few historical sources available today to cover the widest range of topics and centuries, it cannot be taken lightly.

Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo is said to have been known as princess Lakṣmīṃkarā prior to her ordination (Vargas-O'Brian 2001:163). This is complicated by the existence of at least two other individuals with the same name. One of them is the Mahāsiddha Princess Lakṣmīṃkarā, who is one of the four female Mahāsiddhas from Śrī Abhayadatta's famous 11th or 12th century 'Caturasīti-siddha-Pravṛtti'³² (The lives of the Eighty-four Mahāsiddhas). The other is the male Kashmiri Mahāyoga scholar Lakṣmī the great (Roerich 1976:869). Dimitrov, based on evidence from the Blue Annals, wrote an article concerning the multiple Lakṣmīs. The different Lakṣmīs and their possible dates according to Dimitrov are as follows:

1. The Mahāsiddha Princess Lakṣmīṃkarā of Uḍḍiyāna: 9th century.
2. Nun Lakṣmī (Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo): 10th century.
3. Lakṣmī the great from Kashmir: 11th century.
4. The great scholar Lakṣmī from Kashmir: 11th century.
5. The Indian translator Lakṣmī(m)karā: 13th century.

(Dimitrov 2000:9)

³¹ Using the Blue Annals to determine the historicity and dating of various figures will be discussed in more detail later. Scholars who have used the Blue Annals in this way include Vargas-O'Brian (2001; 2006) Dimitrov (2000), Snellgrove (1959), Kragh (2011).

³² See translations by Dowman (1985,1988) and Robinson (1979).

Although Dimitrov (Dimitrov 2000:9), Bernard (Bernard 1994:15) and Dowman (Dowman 1985:375) distinguish between Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo and the Princess Lakṣmīṃkarā, in Za-ya Paṇḍita's presentation the two are treated as one. Consequently, only the first two Lakṣmīs from Dimitrov's list are concerned here. Before we can compare the two individuals, it is necessary to introduce the Mahāsiddha Princess Lakṣmīṃkarā.

6. The Mahāsiddha Princess Lakṣmīṃkarā

Princess Lakṣmīṃkarā is a prolific tantric master from Uḍḍiyāna. The most popular account of her life is that by Śrī Abhayadatta (see above). In Abhayadatta's rendition, she was a princess from Uḍḍiyāna, the sister of King Indrabhūti of the land of Shambhola. She was devoted to Buddhism, but was betrothed against her will by her brother to the son of King Jalendra of Laṅkāpurī. Upon realizing that the kingdom of Laṅkāpurī was devoid of the dharma, she pretended to be insane and escaped to the cremation grounds where she one-pointedly practised and attained the highest *siddhi*. Later, upon a chance meeting with King Jalendra in a cave, she converted him, and also facilitated the supreme realisation of her brother Indrabhūti, and thus was recognized as a *siddha*.

As well as this popular account, there is another less well known version of her *rnam thar* by Sle-lung rje-drung Bzhad-pa'i rdo-rje (1697-1740), included in his collection of the *rnam thars* of protectors, *Bstan-srung rgya-mtsho'i rnam-thar*.³³ This narrative too originates from a 16th century text belonging to the Mahākāruṅika Avalokiteśvara cycle discovered by *gter ton* Orgyan-las 'phro-gling-pa (Bernard 1994:11). The account is set in the country of Orgyan,³⁴ where there was a King known as Indrabhūti, who had five sisters. The eldest was Princess Lakṣmīṃkarā, who became his consort. When her father decided to punish her, in order to let her father understand her transcendent nature and innocence in consorting with her brother, she severed her own head with a golden razor and walked around the city seven times as symbolic of her *siddha* nature, at which people called her Cinnamuṇḍavārāhī³⁵ (Bernard 1994:11,

³³ Full title of '*Dam can bstan srung rgya mtsho'i rnam par thar pa cha sas tsam brjod pa snon med legs bshad*' (An account of the origins and iconography of the protective deities of Tibetan Buddhism), see Sle-Lung (1979).

³⁴ Synonymous with Uḍḍiyāna, see footnote 57.

³⁵ Otherwise known as the severed head Vajrayoginī or Vajravārāhī. For a detailed study on Vajrayoginī see English (2002).

Shaw 2006:410). This account provides more detail but does not outwardly conflict with Abhayadatta's. One point worth noting that will be revisited in the subsequent sections is the character of her father, regarding whom no further information is given.

As mentioned above, there are four texts³⁶ attributed to Lakṣmīṅkarā 's authorship:

1. *Advayasiddhisādhana* (*Gnyis su med par grub pa'i sgrub thabs.* Toh 2220)
2. *Sahajasiddhipaddhati* (*Lhan cig skyes grub kyi gzhung 'grel.* Toh 2261)
3. *Chinnamuṅḍavajravārāhīsādhana* (*Rdo rje phag mo dbu bca'd ma'i sgrub thabs.*Toh 1554)
4. *Vajrayoginīsādhana* (*Rdo rje rnal 'byor ma'i sgrub pa'i thabs.* Toh 1547)

(Dimitrov 2000: 15)

Looking at their respective colophons, there are some variations in her name. She appears as Lakṣmī in the colophons of the first three works and the longer form Lakṣmīṅkarā appears in the colophon of the *Vajrayoginīsādhana*. In later Tibetan sources, she is referred to as Legs-smin-ka-ra as well as Dpal-lha-lcam Legs-smin-ka-ra, Dpal, Dpal-mo and other misspellings (Dimitrov 2000:9). As Dpal-mo is a direct translation of Lakṣmī, it is the first link between the Princess Lakṣmīṅkarā and Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo. However, commonality of name is not enough to ensure their identity. The following analysis aims to reconstruct how the tradition at the time of Za-ya Paṅḍita interpreted and understood who she was and what implications this had for the tradition.

7. Dating Princess Lakṣmīṅkarā and Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo

As with many individuals in the history of Buddhism, dating them is made problematic by the lack of historical sources, and by the question of the reliability of the sources that are available. The argument below by no

³⁶ Apart from the *Advayasiddhisādhana*, which survives in both Sanskrit and Tibetan, all of these texts are preserved in their Tibetan translations in the Tibetan canon.

means claims absolute validity, but aims to provide a solution by asserting a set of dates which reflects how the tradition may have understood things at the time of Za-ya Paṇḍita. By taking into account the possible conflations and interpretations from over the centuries, it is possible to reconstruct the identity of an individual that explains how they were perceived and utilised by a particular tradition for authenticating and legitimizing the practices and teachings associated with them.

8. Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo

In the Blue Annals, Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo appears in two passages in the chapter regarding the deity cycle of Mahākāruṇika Avalokiteśvara. The first is from the transmission lineage of *smyung gnas*:

“The degree of propitiating Ārya Avalokiteśvara by performing the rite of fasting was preached by the Nun Lakṣmī (Dpal-mo) personally blessed by Ārya Avalokiteśvara. She taught it to the Paṇḍita Ye-shes Bzang-po (Jñānabhadra), blessed by her. He to Bal-po (the Nepalese) Peñaba, blessed by him”

(Roerich 1976:1007-1008)

This passage then chronologically lists the other individuals in the transmission lineage. The following list compares the individuals from the Blue Annals to those in Za-ya Paṇḍita's *thob yig*:

Blue Annals	Za-ya Paṇḍita
Ārya Avalokiteśvara	Ārya Avalokiteśvara
Nun Lakṣmī (Dpal mo)	Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo
N/A	Paṇḍita Candrakumāra
Paṇḍita Ye-shes bzang-po (Jñānabhadra)	Ye-shes bzang-po
Bal-po Pe-nya-ba	Bal-po Pe-nya-ba
Bodhisattva Candradhvaja	Byang-sems Zla-ba rgyal-mtshan

Blue Annals	Za-ya Paṇḍita
'Gro-ba'i mgon-po Dpal Phag-mo-gru-pa (1110-1170)	N/A
Siddha La-gag-pa	N/A
Nying-phug-pa (1094-1186)	Grub-thob Nyi-phug-pa
La-stod (renamed Chos-kyi-grags-pa)	Chos-grags
Sru-pa Rdo-rje rgyal-po	Sru-pa Rdo-rje rgyal-po
Zhang-ston	Zhang-ston Sgra-'jigs
Mahā-upādhyāya Rtsi-'dul Thugs-rje byang-chub	Rtsi-'dul Thugs-rje byang-chub
Ldog-long-pa Sakya Byang-chub	Mkhan-chen Bdeb-can-pa
Mahā-upādhyāya Byang-chub-'bar	Byang-sems Chu-bzang-pa Byang-chub-'bar
Snyag-phu-pa Bzod-nams dbang-phyug (?-1370)	Rin-chen Shes-rab-'bum
Mahā-upādhyāya Bzod-nams bzang-po (1341-1433)	Sems-dpa' chen-po

The two lists are almost in complete agreement. The only early distinction is the figure of Paṇḍita Candrakumāra (Zla-ba gzhon-nu), who directly follows Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo in Za-ya Paṇḍita's account and is missing from the lineage from the Blue Annals. There is no information regarding him elsewhere in the Blue Annals. However, we find the following passage regarding how Paṇḍita Ye-shes Bzang-po obtained the practice found in Za-ya Paṇḍita's *thob yig*:

“The manner of transmission of this teaching is this: there was a Paṇḍita who was learned in the five sciences by the name of Dpal Ye-shes bzang-po. On his upper body appeared a sore, which he apprehended as harm done by gods and demons. Whatever wishes for good health people spoke for him were not beneficial. So his disciple named Paṇḍita Zla-ba gzhon-nu invited Dge-slong-ma

Dpal-mo and she arrived. After she cultivated the generation stage of the eleven-faced, the illness, like water boiling [and evaporating away] was pacified at once. After that, he perceived Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo as the eleven faced Avalokiteśvara. Thus immeasurable faith was born in him.³⁷

Paṇḍita Candrakumāra is presented here as a disciple of Paṇḍita Ye-shes bzang-po. If this was the case, then his place in the transmission lineage could be attributed to the possibility that he obtained the transmission from Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo when he went to invite her to aid his master Ye-shes bzang-po. Consequently, clarifying the identity of these two individuals would contribute to the task of dating Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo. However, before we can discuss this, we need to look at the second passage from the Blue Annals which directly concerns Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo.

This gives the transmission lineage of the cycle of Mahākāruṅika Avalokiteśvara:

“Also there existed a Lineage of the *dmar-khrid* (detailed exposition) of the Cycle of the Great Merciful One (Mahākāruṅika). The Nun Lakṣmī (Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo) imparted it to Dpal-gyi Bzang-po (Śrībhadra). The latter to Rin-chen Bzang-po, who imparted it to Atiśa....The Chapter on the Lineage of the system of Dpal-mo (Lakṣmī) of the Cycle of Avalokiteśvara.”

(Roerich 1976:1044)

There is no information in the Blue Annals regarding the person of Dpal-gyi bzang-po (Śrībhadra). However, there are two texts attributed to someone by the same name in the Beijing Tibetan Tripiṭaka catalogue, as well as a text translated by him (Daisetz and Skorupski 1962:1109-1110). The Tibetan Buddhist Resource Centre (tbrc.org 2013) estimates his dates “circa 8th/9th century” (tbrc.org 2012:P4CZ15376). We have more information regarding the

³⁷ ...chos 'di'i brgyud lugs 'di / dpal ye shes bzang po zhes bya ba gnas lnga rig pa'i pan di ta gcig yod pa de / sku stod la rma gcig byung ba de lha 'dre'i gnod par bzungs nas yod pa la [...] byin rlabs che zer tshad la bstan kyang ma phan pa la / khong rang gi slob ma pan di ta zla ba gzhon nu bya bas / dge slong ma dpal mo gdan drangs nas byon te / bcu gcig zhal gyi bskyed rim gcig bsgoms pas / na zug chu khol ba 'dra ba de 'phral du zhi nas / dge slong ma dpal mo bcu gcig zhal du dngos su gzigs te / dad pa bsam gyis mi khyab pa skyes so / (F41a, L2-L6)

dating of the latter two individuals which places them in the 10th - 11th centuries: Rin-chen bzang-po (958-1055³⁸) and Atiśa (980-1054). This suggests that Dpal-gyi bzang-po should be dated to the 10th century and consequently Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo is no earlier than the 9th and possibly in the first half of the 10th century.

If we examine the *smyung gnas* transmission lineage from the Blue Annals, there is a slight problem with the 10th to 11th century dating of Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo. Firstly, no scholarship has yet attempted to identify Paṇḍita Ye-shes Bzang-po, who immediately follows Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo in the transmission lineage. If we look at the Blue Annals, there are two individuals who bear the name Ye-shes bzang-po. The first is referred to in the following passage:

“...in the year earth male horse (958), the Lo-tsa-ba Rin-chen Bzang-po was born. At the age of thirteen (970), he was ordained by the Upādhyāya Ye-shes Bzang-po...”

(Roerich 1976:68)

The biographies of Rin-chen Bzang-po used by Snellgrove (1980) and Tucci (1988) in their respective studies concur with this passage from the Blue Annals in also mentioning his master Ye-shes Bzang-po.³⁹

The second mention of Ye-shes Bzang-po appears in this following passage:

“Drin-can-pa's eldest son - the hermit Ye-shes Bzang-po lived for 42 years between the year Iron-mouse (1300) and Iron-serpent (1341)”

(Roerich 1976:965)

It is highly unlikely that the Ye-shes bzang-po in the *smyung gnas* lineage is identical with this 14th century figure. If we take the first to be the individual mentioned in the *smyung gnas* transmission lineage, then, as the earlier Ye-shes bzang-po was Rin-chen Bzang-po's teacher, he must have been at a stage in his life to have the authority and experience to bestow ordination. This could place him in the early 10th century. If this Ye-shes bzang-po received the transmission from Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo, this would place her earlier than him.

³⁸ There has been some dispute over his dates in the past: H.V Guenther dated him from 1016-1026 but Tucci and Snellgrove both agree with Prasad Singh's dating of 958-1055; see Tucci (1988) and Snellgrove (1980).

³⁹ This figure also appears under the variation Legs-pa Bzang-po, see Snellgrove and Skorupski (1980).

If we turn to Za-ya Paṇḍita's transmission lineage and the figure of Paṇḍita Candrakumāra, there is another reference to Candrakumāra which states that some consider Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo to have been the daughter of Paṇḍita Candrakumāra.⁴⁰ This would suggest he was older than Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo. Since the Blue Annals do not provide a date for him, his dating is currently unclear. If we assume that this Ye-shes bzang-po is the same individual who is the master of Rin-chen bzang-po, and take the dates in the previous paragraph as valid, then Paṇḍita Candrakumāra may have been older than his master Ye-shes bzang-po. However, we don't know Za-ya Paṇḍita's sources for the possible paternal relationship between Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo and Paṇḍita Candrakumāra. Additionally, Za-ya Paṇḍita's uncertainty about its truth only allows for a 9th century estimate for this individual. Regardless, this dating still supports the dating of Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo hypothesized earlier.

In the Beijing Tibetan Tripiṭaka, there is a work titled *Mahāyāna-viṃśaka* by Nāgārjuna that is translated by Candrakumāra and Śākyaprabha (Śākya-'od) (Daisetz and Skorupski 1962:626;1126). There is one reference to a Śākyaprabha in the Blue Annals, “Śākyaprabha belongs to the lineage of '*dus-pa*” (Roerich 1976:159), which does not tell us much about his dates. However, the 5th century *Śūraṅgamasamādhi Sūtra* is thought to have been translated into Tibetan by Śākyaprabha and Ratnarakṣita at the beginning of the 9th century (Lamotte 2002:263). If Śākyaprabha collaborated with Candrakumāra in the translation of the *Mahāyāna-viṃśaka*, and this Candrakumāra is the same individual as we find in the *smiyung gnas* transmission lineage, then Candrakumāra, Śākyaprabha and Ratnarakṣita were contemporaries. This would validate the 9th century dating of Candrakumāra and would support the hypothesis that Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo lived during the 9th century.

If we go back to Dimitrov's analysis of the various individuals by the name of Lakṣmī in the Blue Annals, his main argument for the separate identity of Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo and the Mahāsiddha Princess Lakṣmīṅkarā was their dating: the former as 10th century and the latter 9th century. If we adopt the 9th century dating of Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo, then at this point these two individuals share both name and date. If they may in fact be one and the same person, the person of Mahāsiddha Lakṣmīṅkarā also needs attention.

⁴⁰ See page 21, Chapter 2.

9. Mahāsiddha Princess Lakṣmīṅkarā

We find a short reference to Lakṣmīṅkarā in the Blue Annals in regard to the transmission lineage of the system of the *phag-mo gzhung-drug*⁴¹ (Vārāhī's Six Topics):

“The majority of the yogins in the land of snows were especially trained in and followed the exposition and meditative practice of the system known as *Phag-mo gzhung-drug*... and based themselves on the Sdom-pa rgya-mtsho... which was bestowed by King Indrabhūti's sister Lakṣmīṅkarā on the venerable Virūpa, then on Avadhūtipa”.

(Roerich 1976: 390).

We know that Virūpa and Avadhūtipa are dated to the 9th and 10th centuries respectively, which would support the possible dating of Princess Lakṣmīṅkarā to the 9th century. Dimitrov acknowledges this, and uses the dating of her works to contribute to his argument. He states:

“...together with the information in the colophon, according to which the *Sahajasiddhipaddhati* was translated by Prajñākīrti and Manābhīhalala... leaves no doubt that Lakṣmīṅkarā lived definitely before the 11th c”.

(Dimitrov 2000:16)

Thus, she may have lived during the 9th and possibly into the 10th century, which correlates with Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo's dates offered earlier. Looking at the possible dating of both individuals, there is a definite possibility that they were the same person.

10. Looking Beyond the Individual

Dating alone however, is not sufficient to provide a full analysis for their synonymous identities. Contextualising the links between their lives is necessary for a better understanding of who they were and what they represent in the tradition; the siddhas and Mahāsiddhas, as well as practices and transmission lineages associated with these

⁴¹ Belongs to the system of Vajrayoginī propagated by Lakṣmīṅkarā.

individuals, need to be examined in context. Looking at the *rnam thar* of Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo and Princess Lakṣmīṅkarā, the figure of King Indrabhūti and the deity Chinnamuṅḍā⁴² or Chinnamastā appear in both narratives in close connection with both individuals. The subsequent sections will introduce and analyse other persons, deities and practices associated with them in more detail.

11. The Mahāsiddha Indrabhūti

King Indrabhūti is referred to as the father or brother of Dge-slong-pa Dpal-mo in the various *rnam thars*. In princess Lakṣmīṅkarā's hagiography, he is her brother. To add to the confusion, at the end of Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo's *rnam thar*, Za-ya Paṅḍita mentions that he is also considered by some to have been her husband.⁴³ If we consider Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo and Lakṣmīṅkarā as the same person, then it is necessary to identify King Indrabhūti and his relationship to both individuals.

Like the issue of multiple Lakṣmīs, the possible multiplicity of King Indrabhūtis pose problems. The Blue Annals contain a number of references to King Indrabhūti.⁴⁴ However, it does not offer any dates or distinguish between them. Aside from the Blue Annals, in the *Bka' babs bdun ldan* (The Seven Instruction Lineages) by Tāranātha (1575–1634), there are references to two King Indrabhūtis.⁴⁵ Various scholars have attempted to distinguish between them. Primarily on the basis of these two works, Snellgrove came to the conclusion that there were at least three King Indrabhūtis (Snellgrove 1959:13, English 2002:105). In his study of Tāranātha's *Bka' babs bdun ldan*, Templeton concludes that there were two King Indrabhūtis (Templeton 1983:24), regarding which Wayman and Donaldson are in agreement (Wayman 1999:96, Donaldson 2001:12). If we summarise their findings:

1. King Indrabhūti the Great of Uḍḍiyāna known as King Dza (Dowman 1985:232), who lived at the time of the Buddha,⁴⁶ based on the quote from Tāranātha's *Bka'-babs bdun-ldan* "...he desired to see the Buddha but when the ministers told him that he would not come such a distance..." (Templeton 1983:24).

⁴² For detailed studies of the origins, iconography and symbolisms of Chinnamuṅḍā see Shaw (2006), Bernard (1994) and English (2002)

⁴³ See page 2, Chapter 2.

⁴⁴ See Roerich (1976) pages 159; 359; 361-363; 385; 390; 533; 553-554; 869.

⁴⁵ See Templeton (1983) pp 24-25.

⁴⁶ Does not concern us, due to his dating to the time of the Buddha.

2. King Indrabhūti of Zahor, Eastern India, who was also known as King Dza (Karmay 1981:192, Dowman 1985:232). We also find reference to him in the Blue Annals in the passage concerning the transmission lineage of '*Dus-pa-mdo*: “Vajrapani to King Dza to his sons Nāgabodhi, Gayabodhi and Indrabhodi⁴⁷...”” (Roerich 1976:159). This Indrabhūti is dated to the 8th century (Tucci 1999, Wayman 1999, Donaldson 2001) and is said to have had a son by the same name.
3. King Indrabhūti of Uḍḍiyāna, also known as La-ba-pa (Roerich 1976:363). This Indrabhūti is considered to have been one of Abhayadatta's eighty-four Mahāsiddhas, and the brother of Princess Lakṣmīṃkarā. There are passages in the Blue Annals that refer to them, e.g.: “Lady Lakṣmīṃkarā established her own brother the King Indrabhūti in the degree of spiritual realisation” (Roerich 1976:553). This Indrabhūti is dated to the 9th century (Donaldson 2001:12, English 2002:105).

The second Indrabhūti is said to have had a son by the same name. The dates of the second and third Indrabhūti would allow for the conclusion that the third Indrabhūti, known as La-ba-pa, may have been the son of the second Indrabhūti as well as the brother of princess Lakṣmīṃkarā. This possibility would support the dating of princess Lakṣmīṃkarā to the 9th century.

If we assume that the second Indrabhūti was indeed the father of the third Indrabhūti, this would identify the Indrabhūti from the *rnam thar* of Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo. In his *thob yig*, Za-ya Paṇḍita mentions that King Indrabhūti is considered to have been either the father or the husband⁴⁸ of Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo. Following the above hypothesis, both possibilities presented by Za-ya Paṇḍita could be valid without contradiction. The second Indrabhūti from the 8th century could have been her , whilst the third from the 9th century could have been her husband. This would also accord with the *rnam thar* of Lakṣmīṃkarā found in the work of Sle-lung rje-drung Bzhad-pa'i rdo-rje, where she is said to have been the consort of her brother. It could be assumed that her father, who punished her for this, was the second King Indrabhūti, and her brother was the

⁴⁷ Indrabodhi is used synonymously with Indrabhūti by scholars as well as the Blue Annals and other Tibetan and Sanskrit works. Dowman (1985) (1988), Robinson (1979) and Kragh (2010).

⁴⁸ See page 21, Chapter 2.

third King Indrabhūti. The notion of being a 'consort' may have inspired the interpretation of the third King Indrabhūti as her husband. These grounds would further strengthen the possibility of a shared identity.

12. Chinnamuṅḍāvajravārāhī

If we now turn to the practices associated with these two individuals, as well as the iconography and symbolisms surrounding them, we find more evidence that places them on a shared plane. In Sle-lung rje-drung Bzhad-pa'i rdo-rje's version of princess Lakṣmīṃkarā's *rnam thar*, to prove her innocence and siddha nature she severs her own head and, after placing it upon her tantric staff, dances around the marketplace, at which people called her Chinnamuṅḍāvārāhī⁴⁹ (Bernard 1994:12; Shaw 2006:410; Bailey⁵⁰). Similarly, in Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo's *rnam thar*, in order to prove her devotion to her faith and her *siddha* nature to convert the faithless, she too severs her own head, places it upon a ritual staff and dances around the marketplace.⁵¹ At the end of her *rnam thar*, Za-ya Paṅḍita comments that “she herself is Dbu-bcad-ma”,⁵² which is the Tibetan translation of Chinnamuṅḍāvajravārāhī (Nihom 1992:223). These clear parallels in their *rnam thars* add another layer to the evidence supporting their shared identity. However, we need to contextualize the deity Chinnamuṅḍāvajravārāhī and the associated practices.

Chinnamuṅḍā⁵³ or Chinnamastā is a specific form of Vajrayoginī with her head severed. She is yellow in colour with a reddish glow. She holds a ceremonial knife in her right hand, which she used to sever her own head. In her left hand, she holds her own head. Apart from her tantric belt and a necklace of freshly severed heads, she is completely naked. From her neck flow three streams of blood; one goes into the mouth of her own severed head, whilst each of the other two go into the mouth of one of the two attendant goddesses on either side of her, Vajravārāṇī and Vajravairocanī. The particular depiction with the two attendant goddesses is known as the Trikāyavajrayoginī (Shaw 2006:404).

⁴⁹ Otherwise known as the severed head Vajrayoginī or Vajravārāhī. For a detailed study on Vajrayoginī see English (2002).

⁵⁰ I here owe my thanks to Cameron Bailey for letting me use his translation. See Bailey forthcoming.

⁵¹ See page 20, Chapter 2.

⁵² See page 21, Chapter 2.

⁵³ For detailed studies of the origins, iconography and symbolisms of Chinnamuṅḍā see Shaw (2006), Bernard (1994) and English (2002).

Virūpa is held responsible for this form of Vajrayoginī and her accompanying practices, belonging to the *Annutarayogatantratantra* (English 2002:95). The dating of this individual is also problematic. If we are to assume he is the same Virūpa from Abhayadatta's *Caturasīti-siddha-Pravṛtti*, then based on his contemporary, King Dharmapāla (770-810) (Dowman 1985:50), he could be dated to the 8th century. However, there is a later Virūpa who taught Maitrīpāda and Marpa, which would place him as late as the early 11th century (English 2002:10). If Virūpa took instruction from Lakṣmīṅkarā as well as being taught by Anaṅgavajra and Kambala (Dowman 1875:52), then there is a third Virūpa who is the one associated with the Chinnamuṅḍā cycle. The Sa-skya tradition considers Virūpa as their *ādiguru* (first lama) and thus sometimes attribute the notable accomplishments of the various Virūpas to a single individual. Nevertheless, if we take the third Virūpa as the one related to the cult of goddess Chinnamuṅḍā, there are at least five texts preserved in Tibetan that represent this deity, one of which is authored by Virūpa. The other texts are attributed to the Mahāsiddhas Mekhalā and Kanakhalā, the severed-headed sisters who are considered as the disciples of Lakṣmīṅkarā (Shaw 1999:55). The remaining texts in the canon are authored by Lakṣmīṅkarā herself. These texts are:

1. *Chinnamuṅḍāvajravārāhīsādhana* by Srīmatidevī⁵⁴
2. *Vajrayoginīsādhana* by Dpal-lha-lcan Legs-smin-ka-ra
3. *Chinnamuṅḍāsādhana* by Virūpa
4. *Chinnamuṅḍāvajrayoginīsādhana* by Virūpa's disciple Śāriputra
5. *Nandyavartatrayamukhāgamanāma* by Mekhalā and Kanakhalā

(Nihom 1992:223, Bernard 1994:15)

Lakṣmīṅkarā is popularly accepted as the propagator of the transmission lineage of Chinnamuṅḍā and her associated practices. This is mirrored in the transmission lineage of the practice of Chinnamuṅḍā, where Lakṣmīṅkarā is placed at the head of the transmission lineage, only preceded by Vajrayoginī herself (Shaw 2006:410). Moreover, as seen earlier in the Blue Annals, Lakṣmīṅkarā is placed before Virūpa

⁵⁴ It is widely accepted that this is a synonym of princess Lakṣmīṅkarā.

in the transmission lineage of the *Phag-mo gzhung-drug*, which also belongs to the Vajrayoginī deity cycle, which supports Lakṣmīṅkarā preceding Virūpa in the transmission lineage of Chinnamuṅḍā. Za-ya Paṅḍita claims Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo herself as a manifestation of Chinnamuṅḍā. Consequently, both individuals carry the same symbolism and both are closely associated with Chinnamuṅḍā, strengthening their shared identity in the eyes of the tradition, if not historically. This evidence would not only tie together the two individuals as one but also connect four of the great Mahāsiddhas⁵⁵ to the practices and lineages associated with Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo and Lakṣmīṅkarā, thus bestowing authority and legitimacy on those traditions that are associated with them.

Conclusion

Authenticity and legitimacy of transmission lineages are fundamental to the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. The connections here not only support the possibility that Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo and princess Lakṣmīṅkarā are the same person but also, seen from the viewpoint of the tradition, strengthen and bestow authority on their associated practices and teachings. It would be highly desirable to compare the various texts attributed to these individuals in terms of writing style and content, which may reveal whether or not they were authored by the same person. Regardless, even if the historicity of this argument cannot be proven beyond a reasonable doubt, at least in the presentation given by Za-ya Paṅḍita and Sle-lung rje-drung Bzhad-pa'i rdo-rje they are considered as one. This would suggest that in the 17th century, for Za-ya Paṅḍita's and Sle-lung rje-drung Bzhad-pa'i rdo-rje's respective tradition; the Dge-lugs-pas, the narratives and practices associated with them acted as authority and sources of legitimacy. In the majority of cases, if we take a step back and look beyond the historiography and rather consider how an individual or their associated works are interpreted throughout time and what their contribution is to the wider Buddhist tradition, then there is more of value to be found.

A comparative study of the various versions of Dge-slong-ma Dpal-mo's *rnam thars* over the centuries would also tell us a lot about the individual and how she was perceived and utilized by different traditions. The references to her various possible relationships with King Indrabhūti and Paṅḍita Zla-ba gzhon-nu do not appear in the other versions consulted for this paper. Though mentioning these links, Za-ya

⁵⁵ Namely King Indrabhūti, Mekhalā and Kanakhalā and Virūpa.

Paṇḍita remains skeptical and does not state these as facts in his usual assured tone, but rather opts to use the third person: “she is considered by some... there are also those who consider her...” (see page 21, Chapter 2). Future research comparing the information provided for in the works of Za-ya Paṇḍita with that of other famous Buddhist polymaths would contribute to the study of Tibetan Buddhism.

This paper represents the findings of a very short study on a small section of Za-ya Paṇḍita's *gsan yig*. Nevertheless, if the hypothesis regarding the identity of Dge-long-ma Dpal-mo and princess Lakṣmīṅkarā has valid ground, then this short passage contributes to clarifying the issue of the multiple Lakṣmīs. The entirety of the *gsung 'bum* is over 2000 folios with the *thob yig* consisting of 1234 folios. If this study is based on the contents of only 3 folios of this text, then what else may be uncovered leaves much to the imagination.

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Za-ya Paṇḍita Blo-bzang 'Phrin-las. “*Shakya'i btsun pa blo bzang 'phrin las kyi zab pa dang rgya che ba'i dam pa'i chos kyi thob yig gsal pa'i me long*” (the clear mirror of the profound and extensive noble teachings received by the Buddhist Monk Za-ya Paṇḍita Blo-bzang 'phrin-las).

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