


Reanimating the Great Yogin: On the Composition of the Biographies of the Madman of Tsang (1452-1507)

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I. Introduction

ne of the most important figures of fifteenth-century Tibet was Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan, more commonly known as gTsang smyon he ru ka—"the Madman from Tsang, the Heruka" (1452-1507). Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan became famous as the "Madman of Tsang" for dressing and acting in a seemingly odd fashion that, as I have argued elsewhere, resulted from his literally enacting certain transgressive passages from the Unexcelled Yoga Tantras.¹ Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan became even more notable for composing and then block-printing in 1488 what quickly became the standard biography or *Life (rnam thar)* and *Collected Songs (mgur 'bum)* of the eleventh-century meditator and poet Mi la ras pa. This was followed by a flurry of writing and publishing activity by the Madman of Tsang's disciples, who are responsible for creating many of the biographies and song collections of the early luminaries of the Kagyü sect. The body of work produced by the Madman of Tsang and his literary school has been addressed in recent studies by Michela Clemente, Franz-Karl Ehrhard, Stefan Larsson, Andrew Quintman, Peter Alan Roberts, Kurtis Schaeffer, Marta Sernesi, and others.

Much of what we think we know about the Madman of Tsang's life is derived from three versions of his biography, written by three of his disciples: dNgos grub dpal 'bar (1456-1527), lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal (1473-1557), and rGod tshang ras pa sna tshogs rang grol (1482-1559). There has been some uncertainty regarding the order in which these texts were composed and the relationships they bear to one another. The purpose of this article is to clarify what we know about when each biography was written and to establish the relationships between them, based on close readings of their contents.² The

¹ See *The Holy Madmen of Tibet*. Research for this article was carried out with support from a Junior Fellowship from the American Institute for Indian Studies and an award from the Graduate School Research Council at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

² To summarize a few of the assertions this article seeks to redress: In his introduction to the 1969 reprint of rGod tshang ras pa's version of the *Life of the Madman of Tsang*, E. Gene Smith stated that it was the last of the three hagiographies to be

Madman of Tsang's *Collected Songs* and a *gSol 'debs* ("praise") of the great yogin composed by lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal will also be discussed, as dNgos grub dpal 'bar, lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal and rGod tshang ras pa at times drew from these texts in the course of writing their respective versions of the *Life of the Madman of Tsang*. Other sources that might illuminate these matters—like the biographies of dNgos grub dpal 'bar, lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal, and rGod tshang ras pa—will not be considered in this article.

In the course of establishing the relationships between these texts, this article will shed some light on the process through which these biographies were written, including the role the Madman of Tsang seems to have played in telling his own life story. The production of each of these biographies emerges as a highly collaborative process.

II. dNgos grub dpal 'bar's version of the *Life*

The first of the three biographies of the Madman of Tsang was written by dNgos grub dpal 'bar, with the title *The Ordinary Biography of the Venerable Heruka from Tsang, Called, "The Lion of Faith Atop the Snow Mountain of Good Qualities."* The text's colophon states that it was finished in 1508 (*sa pho 'brug*), the year after the great yogin's death.³ The

written, and this in 1547; "Introduction to *The Life of Gtsang smyon Heruka*," 62. This seems to be based on a misreading of the colophon. Numerous authors, myself included, have at times been influenced by Smith's claim. As will be shown below, the text was written in 1512, 1524 or 1536. Peter Alan Roberts has argued that lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life* must have been the last of the three to be written, based on the fact that in its colophon the author mentions that there were earlier biographies—in the plural—of the Madman of Tsang written by his past dharma brothers. Roberts assumes that this must include rGod tshang ras pa's version of the *Life*, along with dNgos grub dpal 'bar's; *Biographies of Rechungpa*, 40-1. This is mistaken. Although lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal drew from a number of texts concerning the life of the Madman of Tsang, I will show that rGod tshang ras pa's version of the *Life* was not one of them. Although Roberts may be correct that lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's was the last of the three biographies to be written, the proof he offers for this is faulty. Andrew Quintman has stated that "large portions" of rGod tshang ras pa's version of the *Life of the Madman of Tsang* were copied directly from lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's; "Mi la ras pa's Many Lives," 191-2. This is mistaken. It is not that rGod tshang ras pa drew from lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life*, but that both drew from dNgos grub dpal 'bar's, as well as other shared sources. Noting the similarities between these three biographies, Stefan Larsson has stated that it is "plausible to assume" that rGod tshang ras pa and lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal both drew from dNgos grub dpal 'bar's version of the *Life* when creating their own; *Crazy for Wisdom*, 42. In this article I hope to prove Larsson's suspicion to be correct.

³ 30b3. For a transcription and analysis of the colophon, see Ehrhard, "Editing and Publishing the Master's Writings," 154-5.

woodblocks were most likely carved shortly after the text was written.

Concerning the process by which the biography was composed, early in the narrative dNgos grub dpal 'bar describes how during a time when he was receiving instructions from the Madman of Tsang, he was requested by some of the great yogin's main students to write his biography (*rnam thar*). dNgos grub dpal 'bar got the Madman of Tsang's permission to do so, asked him some questions about his life, then set about composing a verse root text (*rtsa tshig*) relating his life story. This was in 1507, shortly before the Madman of Tsang's death. Not long after, the Madman of Tsang's disciples encouraged dNgos grub dpal 'bar to write a commentary (in prose) expanding on these verses, which resulted in the full version of the *Life* finished in 1508.⁴ The original verses are preserved within the *Life*. Stefan Larsson has extracted and translated what he believes to have been dNgos grub dpal 'bar's original verse biography. It is comprised of fifteen four-line stanzas, the first ten of which follow the form, "... to you I bow" (... *la 'dud*).⁵

Toward the beginning of the *Life*, dNgos grub dpal 'bar states that the majority of his version of the biography is based on things he heard directly from the Madman of Tsang (*rje bstun nyid la dngos su thos pa*), while other parts are derived from other reliable sources.⁶ Later, in the author's colophon, dNgos grub dpal 'bar specifies what sources he was drawing from: he describes his composition of the *Life* as "bringing into one place" things he had heard directly from the great yogin; notes (*skyus khrigs*) by the disciple Nor bu dpal ldan; notes (*tho yig*) about the Swayambhūnāth stūpa by one rGod tshang pa (which may refer to rGod tshang ras pa sna tshogs rang gro⁷); notes about the master's death by Lo paN pa [Jam dpal chos lha]; and things he heard from the master's consort and patron, the lady

⁴ 2b3-5.

⁵ Larsson, "Birth of A Heruka," 284-7.

⁶ 2b5-6.

⁷ dNgos grub dpal 'bar's, lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's and rGod tshang ras pa's versions of the *Life* all have very similar passages describing the renovation of the stūpa. In his version of the *Life*, dNgos grub dpal 'bar mentions drawing from a *Shing kun tho yig* by one Thugs sras rgod tshang pa, which may refer to a text written by rGod tshang ras pa; Larsson, *Crazy for Wisdom*, 41. The long section in rGod tshang ras pa's version of the *Life* describing the renovation of the stūpa, 213.5-220.6, is said to have been extracted from a certain description of the stūpa referred to as the *Kun rang gi dkar chag*. lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal and rGod tshang ras pa may be drawing from dNgos grub dpal 'bar's description of the renovation (which was based on another source), or from a separate text (perhaps by rGod tshang ras pa) that circulated independently. Although there are various *dkar chag* of the stūpa, I have been unable to find the text dNgos grub dpal 'bar drew from.

Kun tu bzang mo.⁸ Lo paN pa edited the biography and oversaw its printing; he would also have a hand in compiling the Madman of Tsang's *Collected Songs* around this same time.⁹

dNgos grub dpal 'bar's version is a brief, spotty account of the Madman of Tsang's life, totaling sixty folio-sides. Its chapters are unnumbered. There are no dates in the text, save for those of the Madman of Tsang's birth and death, and of dNgos grub dpal 'bar's composing the versified sketch and finishing the final prose version of the *Life*. The text is very readable, free from the bad spelling for which rGod tshang ras pa's version of the *Life* has become infamous. Much of dNgos grub dpal 'bar's text would be repeated word-for-word by rGod tshang ras pa and lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal when writing their respective versions of the *Life*, as will be shown below.

A passage in dNgos grub dpal 'bar's version of the *Life*—which would be repeated in the later versions—allows some insight into the process through which this biography was composed. dNgos grub dpal 'bar tells of a period early in the Madman of Tsang's career when he was living near rTsa ri and practicing meditation intensively, focusing on the deity Hevajra. dNgos grub dpal 'bar here mentions that a significant event attesting to the Madman of Tsang's special relationship with Hevajra occurred at this time, which the great yogin would tell him about years later, in the course of narrating his "secret *Life*" (*gsang ba'i rnam thar*). dNgos grub dpal 'bar states that this story will be related in full later on in the *Life*.¹⁰ True to his word, some thirty-three folio-sides later, dNgos grub dpal 'bar tells the tale. Two days before his death, the Madman of Tsang was giving teachings to some of his disciples. dNgos grub dpal 'bar writes that at that time, the great yogin "told us the sacred teaching of his 'secret *Life*' in these exact *vajra* words..."¹¹ After an homage of *na mo gu ru de wa Da ki ni*, a story is given in the first person voice, as if narrated directly by the Madman of Tsang, beginning with the line, "At the time when I (*kho bo*) was staying at the great abode of rTsa ri..." The Madman of Tsang then relates how one day (in a dream? in a vision?) he found himself before his guru, Sha ra rab 'byams pa, in a temple made of corpses, the ground covered with blood. When Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan knelt to request an empowerment, he saw an expression of great fright on his master's face. Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan turned around to see a giant skeleton with nine heads and eighteen arms

⁸ 30b1-2.

⁹ Ehrhard, "Editing and Publishing," 155-8.

¹⁰ 9a6-7.

¹¹ *gsang ba'i rnam thar zhal gdams rdo rje'i tha tshig 'di ltar du gnang ngo*, 25b7. For more information on and a translation of this passage, see Larsson, *Crazy for Wisdom*, 126-9.

coming toward him. The yogin tried to flee, but the skeleton caught him and swallowed him whole. He immediately arrived in a divine mansion inhabited by Hevajra and his retinue. Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan then asked Hevajra for an empowerment. The deity gave him some *samaya* vows to adhere to, followed by a series of tantric empowerments. At the time of the “word empowerment,” Hevajra took up a *vajra* and bell, and with his right hand poking the yogin in the chest, spoke some verses, including the words, “This wisdom is very subtle...” (*ye shes 'di ni ches phra zhing*), which are drawn from the *Hevajra Tantra*. The Madman of Tsang states that from hearing these words, he completely understood the meaning of the four empowerments and knew that he had obtained the blessing of Hevajra. dNgos grub dpal 'bar punctuates the end of this first person account with the Sanskrit phrase *e baM*, then returns to the narrative of the *Life*, stating that after the yogin told this story, his disciples knew that he would not live much longer.

The earliest biography of the Madman of Tsang is thus already a hybrid, based on multiple sources. These include dNgos grub dpal 'bar's own understanding of the events of the yogin's life, some of which he observed directly; notes composed by other of the great yogin's followers; and tales told by the Madman of Tsang himself, rendered by dNgos grub dpal 'bar in either the third person voice or the first.

III. The Collected Songs of the Madman of Tsang

The fifty-four folio-side *Collected Songs* of the Madman of Tsang bears the title *The Collected Songs of the Noble Heruka from Tsang, Called, "The Lord of Jewels, Showing the Path of Omniscience."* The text is easy to read, with relatively few spelling errors. In my counting, the collection is comprised of twenty-nine compositions. Twenty-six are songs or poems, varying in length from nine lines to almost three hundred.¹² Of the three passages entirely in prose, the first is a description of how, on the occasion of their final meeting, Sha ra rab 'byams pa commanded Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan to take up a life of great asceticism, which continues into a description of how the yogin forced his way into the palace of Khri rnam rgyal lde in Mang yul gung thang while performing the tantric practice of the Observance (*brtul zhugs*; in Sanskrit, *vrata*). The second prose passage describes

¹² At the end of the text, 27a5, it is stated that there are twenty-seven *mgur* in the collection. It may be that I have failed to notice the transition from one song to the one that follows it, thus lumping two together and counting them as a single song.

how the deity Viśvakarman appeared before and spoke to the yogin when he was preparing to work on the Swayambhūnāth stūpa. The third is an account of the Madman of Tsang's final words to his disciples, in which he congratulates them on having met Mi la ras pa (i.e., him).¹³ It seems that the compilers of the *Collected Songs* saw these passages as significant enough to warrant their inclusion in the collection, even though they were not songs or poems. They may be notes on the yogin's life taken down by his disciples, likely based on things he himself said.

Each of the twenty-six verse compositions included in the *Collected Songs* is preceded by a brief description of the context in which it was sung or composed, in most cases including where the Madman of Tsang was at the time, with whom he was interacting, and the topic of discussion between them. Many of the songs and compositions are followed by brief statements about the effects the yogin's words had on the people to whom they were addressed. For example, in describing the context in which one song was sung, it is stated that the Madman of Tsang was invited to Skyid grong by the local king and his son, and while staying at Kos dkar brag he met a Bönpo from Khams named rDo rje snying po. The Bönpo requested dharma teachings from the yogin. In the course of instructing the Bönpo about the nature of the mind, the Madman of Tsang sang the twenty-two-line song that is then related. After the song, the text states that because of hearing this teaching, "the Bönpo encountered the true nature of the mind and turned to the dharma"—i.e., became a Buddhist. This song is also included in rGod tshang ras pa's and lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's versions of the *Life of the Madman of Tsang*, but with some details changed.¹⁴

It seems that the contents of the *Collected Songs* are meant to be understood as given in chronological order, for, as will be mentioned again below, rGod tshang ras pa for the most part kept the songs in this same order when incorporating them into his version of the *Life*.

The work of compiling the *Collected Songs* probably took place alongside dNgos grub dpal 'bar's writing his version of the *Life*. The colophon to the *Collected Songs* states that Kun tu bzang mo went over part of the song collection with the great yogin himself, making sure that things were correct as they were written down. The collection was finished shortly after the yogin's death and printed under the sponsorship of Kun tu bzang mo (whose portrait is included on the final page of the document). The first third of the *Collected Songs* was

¹³ 4a2-6, 25b5-7, 27a3-6.

¹⁴ *Mgur 'bum*, 10a6-10b4; rGod tshang ras pa, 93.7-94.5; lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal, 66.1-5.

compiled by Lo paN pa 'jam dpal chos lha.¹⁵ The rest of the collection was compiled by rGod tshang ras pa.

No date is given for when the *Collected Songs* were finalized or printed, but we can safely assume that this was around the same time that dNgos grub dpal 'bar's version of the *Life* was written and printed, 1508, for a handful of reasons. In rGod tshang ras pa's version of the *Life of the Madman of Tsang*, the printing of these two texts is said to have taken place at the same time.¹⁶ Moreover, Kun tu bzang mo is mentioned as the main sponsor for the printing of both texts, making it likely that work on the two would have taken place at the same time. Also, the physical block print of the *Collected Songs* at our disposal is very similar to that of dNgos grub dpal 'bar's version of the *Life*, in terms of the size of the printed pages, the line borders around the text, and the depiction of the Madman of Tsang on the first page. The print of dNgos grub dpal 'bar's version of the *Life* bears the letter *ga* on the left side of the page before each page number, while the *Collected Songs* bear the letter *nga*. This suggests that they were the third and fourth volumes of a greater collection.¹⁷

The literary record of the life of the Madman of Tsang is, to this point, relatively straightforward. Things become more complicated when we consider the two later versions of the *Life of the Madman of Tsang* and their relationships to these earlier texts.

IV. rGod tshang ras pa's version of the *Life*

rGod tshang ras pa sna tshogs rang grol's biography of the Madman of Tsang bears the title *The Life Story of the Madman of Tsang, the Heruka, who is Victorious in All Respects, Called, "The Heart of the Sun, Clarifying the Vajrayāna."* The author's colophon states that the text was finished in a monkey year (*spre'u lo*). This most likely refers to 1512, but could also be 1524 or 1536.¹⁸ The holdings of the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project contain an untitled verse composition in praise of the Madman of Tsang, in one folio, which was written by rGod tshang ras pa at rTsa ri on the occasion of his finishing writing the *Life*. Unfortunately, it does not mention a date.¹⁹

Many scholars have asserted that the copy of rGod tshang ras pa's

¹⁵ Ehrhard, "Editing and Publishing," 155-7.

¹⁶ 282.2.

¹⁷ The first two volumes may well have been the Madman of Tsang's versions of the *Life* and *Collected Songs* of Mi la ras pa; Ehrhard, "Editing and Publishing," 154.

¹⁸ rGod tshang ras pa, 284.5. Ehrhard, "Editing and Publishing," 145; Roberts, *Biographies of Rechungpa*, 41.

¹⁹ This is the fourth of seven texts contained within NGMPP L803/5.

version of the *Life* that is at our disposal was written in 1547. There is no clear statement in the text's colophon to support this view.

At 293 folio-sides, rGod tshang ras pa's version of the *Life* is twice as long as lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's and almost five times as long as dNgos grub dpal 'bar's. It is the most detailed of the three, and is remarkably well organized. The *Life* is divided into three parts (*tshom*), fifteen chapters (*le'u*), and forty-three subsections (*skor*).²⁰ The fifteen chapter headings are listed at the beginning of the *Life*, then given in variant forms marking the end of each chapter. At the beginning of each chapter, the number of subsections it will include is stated. Within each chapter, the subsections are numbered and clearly marked. This is a rare feat of organization in a text of this genre.

There are very few dates in the text, save for those of the yogin's birth and death. The age of the young Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan is given a few times when describing the early years of his life.

Much of rGod tshang ras pa's version of the *Life* is comprised of material taken directly from the Madman of Tsang's *Collected Songs* (which rGod tshang ras pa helped compile). Every song or composition included in the Madman of Tsang's *Collected Songs* is included in this version of the *Life*. There are a handful of brief verse exchanges in rGod tshang ras pa's version of the *Life* that are not in the *Collected Songs*. rGod tshang ras pa also includes the three prose passages from the Madman of Tsang's *Collected Songs*, re-using the three passages almost word-for-word, but making liberal additions in select places.²¹ The way rGod tshang ras pa describes the context and audience for these verse compositions in his version of the *Life* are in most cases based nearly word-for-word on the contexts as they were given in the *Collected Songs*, although rGod tshang ras pa at times expands these snippets to a few more descriptive sentences. For example, in describing the context for a song the Madman of Tsang sang for the king Shes rab dpal bzang, the *Collected Songs* describes how the yogin was staying in the capital of Gung thang, giving teachings to the king and his son, at which time Shes rab dpal bzang requested a teaching, which the yogin gave in the form of a song. In setting up the context for this same song in his version of the *Life*, rGod tshang ras pa adds the details that it was summer and they were planning to go to Mount Kailash; the Madman of Tsang sent some of his disciples ahead, while he and a few others stayed behind for an extra month. It was on the occasion of the Madman of Tsang's making ready to leave

²⁰ The accounting given at the end of the text, 283.6, says that there are forty-two sub-sections (*skor*), but by my and E. Gene Smith's counting, there are forty-three; Smith, "Introduction," 62.

²¹ 25.5, 216.3-4, 273.3-5.

after that month that he sang the song.²² rGod tshang ras pa thus drew directly from the *Collected Songs*, but felt free to make changes or elaborate where he saw fit.

When re-using songs, compositions and episodes from the *Collected Songs* in his version of the *Life*, rGod tshang ras pa kept them in the same order, save for three exceptions.²³ This suggests that the contents of the *Collected Songs* were understood as being in chronological order.

In composing his version of the *Life* of the Madman of Tsang, rGod tshang ras pa also made extensive use of the version written by dNgos grub dpal 'bar. In some places, rGod tshang ras pa lifts passages from dNgos grub dpal 'bar's version word-for-word. In other places, rGod tshang ras pa draws from dNgos grub dpal 'bar's version while adding to it. As an example of the former, rGod tshang ras pa's description of a scene when, on his way to Nepal, the Madman of Tsang was moved by his overwhelming compassion to buy a woman and her three children out of slavery is taken directly from dNgos grub dpal 'bar's version of the *Life*. rGod tshang ras pa's version is word-for-word the same, but adds some egregious spelling errors (at least in the printing at our disposal).²⁴ For an example of the latter, we may look at the description of activity and miracles that took place just after the Madman of Tsang's death: here rGod tshang ras pa is clearly working from dNgos grub dpal 'bar's description of these events, but deviating from and adding to it.²⁵ Further comparisons between passages in rGod tshang ras pa's and dNgos grub dpal 'bar's respective versions of the *Life* will be given below, once lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version has been added to the discussion.

rGod tshang ras pa also repeats the story of the Madman of Tsang's being swallowed by a skeleton and receiving empowerments from Hevajra, drawing directly from dNgos grub dpal 'bar's version of the *Life*. rGod tshang ras pa includes the story at the same place in

²² *Mgur 'bum*, 24b4-25a3; rGod tshang ras pa, 176.7-177.6.

²³ 1) rGod tshang ras pa moves Sha ra rab 'byams pa's final instructions to the Madman of Tsang to an earlier moment in his life, before any of the yogin's songs are recounted; beginning at rGod tshang ras pa, 25.5; *Mgur 'bum*, 4a2. 2) A song sung at Ron 'od gsal phug is moved to an earlier moment in the yogin's life; rGod tshang ras pa, 88.2-89.1; *Mgur 'bum*, 11b4-12a4; also included in lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version, 80.4-81.3. 3) The song that follows the previous one in the *Mgur 'bum*, 12a7-13a4, is also moved up slightly in rGod tshang ras pa's version of the *Life*.

²⁴ rGod tshang ras pa, 173.4-7; dNgos grub dpal 'bar, 18a4-18b1. This story is not told in lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life*; if it were, we would expect it to come at 101.7. Smith, "Introduction," 68, discusses this passage in the course of his analysis of rGod tshang ras pa's writing style. It should instead be attributed to dNgos grub dpal 'bar.

²⁵ rGod tshang ras pa, 275.4-276.6; dNgos grub dpal 'bar, 27b2-28a6.

the narrative that dNgos grub dpal 'bar had: near the end of the yogin's life, just two days before his death (at the time of the yogin's telling of the event, rather than when it purportedly occurred). rGod tshang ras pa's version of what is again referred to as part of the Madman of Tsang's "secret *Life*" (*gsang ba'i rnam thar*) follows dNgos grub dpal 'bar's wording almost exactly, save for some minor differences in particles and the addition of some spelling mistakes.²⁶ As in dNgos grub dpal 'bar's version, this is the only passage in rGod tshang ras pa's version of the *Life* told in the first person, as if from the perspective of the Madman of Tsang himself.

There are many episodes in rGod tshang ras pa's version of the *Life* that do not appear in either dNgos grub dpal 'bar's or lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's account. To name a sampling of these: there is the tale of how the first Dpa' bo, Chos dbang lhun grub (1440-1503), sent his younger brother to train under the Madman of Tsang; the story of how Kun tu bzang mo came to be his follower; the story of how his students got drunk at a tantric feast accompanying a twenty-ninth-of-the-month *torma* (*dgu gtor*) and almost got into a fight with one another; the story of the evil abbot of Ding ri glang 'khor, who scolded an artist for making statues in the yogin's likeness; the letter of safe passage (*lam yig*) the Madman of Tsang gave to his disciples, which would be lampooned by 'Brug pa kun legs in his *Miscellaneous Writings*; and many others.²⁷ rGod tshang ras pa's version of the *Life* is the only one of the three to mention the Madman of Tsang's interactions with his peer, dBus smyon Kun dga' bzang po, the Madman of Ü (1458-1532).

Lastly, there are the questions of how rGod tshang ras pa positions himself with respect to his version of the *Life* and how he positions it in relation to other texts. At one point in the narrative, rGod tshang ras pa mentions himself in the third person, marking the moment when he and some others became disciples of the Madman of Tsang. On this occasion, rGod tshang ras pa refers to himself as "one who gathered the words of [the Madman of Tsang] for the purpose of blessing his lineage."²⁸ Here rGod tshang ras pa describes himself as something like an embedded reporter, making a record of events as

²⁶ The story runs 272.3-273.3 and is introduced as *gsang ba'i rnam thar zhal gdams rdo rje'i tha tshig*. rGod tshang ras pa's version changes the Madman of Tsang's first person pronoun *kho bo* to *nga*, then directly after this changes a *nga* to a *kho bo*, dNgos grub dpal 'bar, 16a2; rGod tshang ras pa, 272.6.

²⁷ Dpa' bo, 126.6-127.3; Kun tu bzang mo, 140.1-142.1; fight, 149.3-150.2; abbot, 165.2-166.3; *lam yig*, 191.3-192.5. On the *lam yig*, see 'Brug pa kun legs kyi rnam thar, 79.17-83.15; Stein, *Vie et chants*, 143-8; DiValerio, *The Holy Madmen of Tibet*, chapter 6.

²⁸ *rje nyid kyi rgyud byin gyis rlabs phyir bka' yi bsdud pa po rgod tshang ras pa sna tshogs ming can*, 208.3.

they took place. In the colophon to his version of the *Life*, rGod tshang ras pa mentions that he was repeatedly requested by Kun tu bzang mo and many of his dharma brothers to write a version of the yogin's life, very similar to the way dNgos grub dpal 'bar had been petitioned. rGod tshang ras pa states that he composed this version of the *Life* based on the Madman of Tsang's own account of things (most likely mediated through notes rGod tshang ras pa had been taking), and the reliable accounts of the dharma brothers who preceded him.²⁹ rGod tshang ras pa does not state explicitly that he drew from dNgos grub dpal 'bar's version of the *Life* or from the *Collected Songs*, although the printing of these texts had been mentioned just earlier in the *Life*.³⁰

One of the Madman of Tsang's great innovations in his literary work on Mi la ras pa was to extract the songs from the biography and put them in a separate *Collected Songs*. This made the narrative of the *Life* flow more smoothly and helped create the engrossing tale we know and love today. It is interesting to observe that shortly after the Madman of Tsang's death, a collection of songs and a separate biography were written and printed. But his two later biographers, rGod tshang ras pa and lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal, both saw fit to rewrite his *Life* with the songs embedded within it. It would seem that the Madman of Tsang's innovation of separating the *Songs* from the *Life* could not stand up against the prevailing literary conventions of his time.

V. lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's *gSol 'debs* of the Madman of Tsang

The holdings of the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project contain two different printings of a four-folio *gSol 'debs* of the Madman of Tsang composed by lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal. The text, which only bears the title *gSol 'debs*, tells the life of the Madman of Tsang in fifty four-line stanzas. According to the colophon, the *gSol 'debs* was written (*sbyar*) at Ling ba brag dmar in 1522 (*chu pho rta*).³¹

The events of the yogin's life are broken into various acts, in a terse, almost mnemonic form. All but two of the stanzas take the form, "To you who... I bow" (*khyod la 'dud*). lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's *gSol 'debs* of the Madman of Tsang is similar to the versified

²⁹ ... yang yang skul nas/ phal cher rje btsun rang gi gsung ji lta ba la/ mched grogs gong ma rnams kyi gsung sogs nges pa can rnams kyi's phra btob te rags pa mdo tsam bkod pa 'di nyid, 284.3-4.

³⁰ 282.2.

³¹ NGMPP L581/6, 4a6-7.

account of the yogin's life composed by dNgos grub dpal 'bar in tenor and in their reliance on the form "... to you I bow." However, a close reading reveals that the two texts bear no direct relationship to each other.

In the second quatrain, lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal states that he will undertake to write just a little about the yogin's life, "although his 'secret *Life*' is infinite."³² In the colophon, the author refers to the work just finished as "this versified praise of the noble Madman of Tsang, drawn mainly from his 'secret *Life*,' written with the intention of benefitting self and others."³³ This suggests that in composing this *gSol 'debs*, lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal was working from the Madman of Tsang's own, probably oral telling of his life.

To review the contents of lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's *gSol 'debs* of the Madman of Tsang, the future yogin's residing in his mother's womb, his birth, childhood, turning toward the dharma and renouncing worldly life are all told in a single quatrain. The first third of the text then moves swiftly through his meeting his guru, receiving empowerments, and his yogic training, followed by further austerities and meditation. The yogin's eccentric activity at rTsa ri and his receiving the name "the Madman of Tsang" are told in the fourteenth quatrain.

Much of the middle third of the text tells of miracles, visions of and interactions with divine beings the yogin had while staying in various places. When staying at Dom tshang, he was charged by an apparition of a boar, which led to a vision of Cakrasamvara; while staying at g.Yu mtsho, he had a vision of Vajrayoginī. One time he made a *torma* offering, which was followed by an earthquake and a vision of Mahākāla. Other passages tell of his miraculously crossing a river seated in the lotus posture, without a boat; his taking the Tshe ring/rings mched lnga, "Five Long-Life Sisters," as his consorts; a vision he had of Mi la ras pa and Pha dam pa sangs rgyas together; a vision of the *arhats* at Mount Kailash; and so on.³⁴

The final third of the text contains many verses praising the yogin's accomplishments in a more general way: his manifesting realization of the Mahāmudrā; his accomplishment of *siddhis*; and his success in instructing disciples, some of whom are mentioned by name.

³² *mgon khyod gsang ba'i rnam thar mtha' yas kyang / mchog dang thun mong gdul bya'i snang ngo ru/ brtul zhugs spyod pas rdzu 'phrul bstan tshul la/ ngo mtshar dad pas mdo tsam bstod par bgyi*, 1b1-2. The words missing from the broken corner of the paper are supplied from lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's full version of the *Life*, 3.3.

³³ *rje btsun gtsang pa smyon pa la gtso bor gsang ba'i rnam thar gyi sgo nas bstod pa/ don gnyis mthar phyin bces pa'i tshigsu bcad pa 'di*, 4a5-6.

³⁴ Cakrasamvara, 2a4-5; Vajrayoginī, 2a5; Mahākāla, 2a7-2b1; river crossing, 2b2-3; Long-Life Sisters, 2b5; Mi la ras pa and Pha dam pa, 2b6; *arhats*, 3a1.

Many of the yogin's important works are referred to only obliquely: the *Life of Milarepa* (simply called "the *rnam thar*") is mentioned only once, when it is said that the yogin was encouraged by the Long-Life Sisters to write it.³⁵ All that is said about the yogin's renovation of the Swayambhūnāth stūpa in 1504 is that he was praised by the *yakṣas* (*gnod sbyin*) and *dākinīs* when outfitting the thirteen-ringed tower with a new parasol.³⁶ This text is impressionistic, giving glimpses of the significant events of the Madman of Tsang's life and some of its flavor.

Many of the events in the yogin's life mentioned in the *gSol 'debs* are of visions and occurrences that only the yogin himself was party to, and which are not mentioned in dNgos grub dpal 'bar's or rGod tshang ras pa's versions of the *Life*, or in the *Collected Songs*. It would seem that much of the autobiographical account (the "secret *Life*") given by the Madman of Tsang to IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal was taken up with these more intimate details of his life. This is in keeping with how the term "secret *Life*" was used in dNgos grub dpal 'bar's version of the *Life* (to be repeated in rGod tshang ras pa's as well), as referring to the yogin's first-hand account of his being swallowed by a skeleton.

VI. IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life*

IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life* of the Madman of Tsang is titled *The Life Story of the Mad Siddha from Tsang, Called, "That which Gives Goosebumps of Faith."* The colophon is somewhat unclear, and could be read as saying that IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal finished composing his version of the *Life* in 1543 (*chu pho yos*) at Brag dkar rta so, or that it was printed in 1543, leaving the date of its composition unstated.³⁷ As this version of the *Life* includes within it the composition finalized by IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal in 1522, it was likely written between 1522 and 1543. It is thus most likely the last of the three versions of the *Life* to be written. However, we cannot be sure about this, because of uncertainties over which monkey year (1512, 1524 or 1536) rGod tshang ras pa's version was written in and when exactly IHa btsun composed his versified account of the yogin's

³⁵ 3a5.

³⁶ 4a1.

³⁷ ... bya btang lha'i btsun pa rin chen rnam rgyal gyis/ mdzes byed zhes bya chu mo yos kyi lo hor zla da(?)g pa'i dkar phyogs kyi 'grub sbyor 'dzom pa (/?) la par du bsgrubs pa pa 'dis kyang, 128.2-3. The edition of IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life* of the Madman of Tsang used in this study is not made from the original Brag dkar rta so woodblocks; Larsson, *Crazy for Wisdom*, 50.

life (despite the date of 1522 being given).³⁸

The uncertainty over whether rGod tshang ras pa's version of the *Life* preceded lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's or *vice versa* is not particularly important, however, because of the fact that neither text bears any sign of having been influenced by the other. A close reading makes clear that the two texts are completely independent of one another. lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life* does, however, draw from dNgos grub dpal 'bar's version of the *Life*, the *Collected Songs*, and the *gSol 'debs*. This version of the *Life* also includes original sections added by lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal, which likely derived from his direct contact with the Madman of Tsang, as will be shown below.

lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life* is the only one of the three that consistently tells us *when* in the Madman of Tsang's life certain events occurred. For example, the *Life* states that the Madman of Tsang was twenty-five when he met Thang stong rgyal po at Ri bo che; that he was forty-five when he went on his second trip to Kathmandu; that he was fifty when he accepted the request that he should renovate the Swayambhūnāth stūpa, and so on.³⁹

lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life* is organized as a series of expansions on the stanzas of the *gSol 'debs*. lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life* includes a total of forty-eight of the printed version of the *gSol 'debs*'s quatrains, kept in their original order; it is missing three of the quatrains included in the *gSol 'debs*, but adds one of its own.⁴⁰ The prose sections between the verses vary in length, from only a few lines to twelve folios. The prose sections that follow each verse expand on the events described therein. Some of these sections relate the events of a significant time in the yogin's life, in the manner that we would expect from a work of the *rnam thar* genre. Other sections have little to say and are quite short, especially later in the text, when they are expanding on the *gSol 'debs*'s descriptions of the yogin's realizations and meditative accomplishments. These latter prose sections basically offer only a commentary on the

³⁸ A biography of lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal mentions that he wrote a versified account of the life of the Madman of Tsang just after the great yogin told him the story of his life; Larsson, *Crazy for Wisdom*, 49-50. It may be that the text finalized by lHa btsun in 1522 is the same as or very similar to the one he must have written before 1507. If that is the case, then lHa btsun may have written his version of the *Life* before 1522, leaving us unable to say anything about the dating of the text other than that it was finished before 1543.

³⁹ 41.5, 102.1, 111.7.

⁴⁰ The stanza added by lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal, absent from the *gSol 'debs*, is at 15.3. The three stanzas of the *gSol 'debs* not included in the *Life* are at 2a2, 2a5-6, and 3a2-3.

verse itself.⁴¹

Much of the second half of IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life* is taken up by twenty-one songs that were originally in the *Collected Songs* of the Madman of Tsang. There are eight songs in the *Collected Songs* that are not included in IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life*. These eight songs are contiguous and come near the end of the *Collected Songs*.⁴² This suggests that IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal was working from a physically incomplete copy of the *Collected Songs*, or from an earlier collection of the great yogin's songs that preceded the one finalized around 1508.

IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life* also includes the three prose sections of the *Collected Songs*, with some changes made to them.⁴³

There are also three songs in IHa btsun's version of the *Life* that are not included in the *Collected Songs* or in rGod tshang ras pa's version of the *Life*.⁴⁴

Just as rGod tshang ras pa had, for the most part IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal follows the *Collected Songs* in explaining the context in which these songs were sung, but sometimes diverges from it significantly. In the way that IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version diverges from the *Collected Songs*, there is no evidence of its being influenced by rGod tshang ras pa's.⁴⁵

IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life* also draws directly from dNgos grub dpal 'bar's, sometimes reusing passages exactly, sometimes modifying them, just as rGod tshang ras pa's had. Significantly, the ways in which rGod tshang ras pa's and IHa btsun

⁴¹ See the section running 105-108, in which eight verses and their explanations given in quick succession, with little being added to the narrative save for wonderment at the yogin's state of realization.

⁴² *Mgur 'bum*, 21a6-27a1. The text ends at 27b.

⁴³ 1) The final meeting with Sha ra rab 'byams pa, *Mgur 'bum*, 4a2-3; IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal, 13.4-5; also included in rGod tshang ras pa, 25.5. 2) Viśvakarman, *Mgur 'bum*, 25b5-7; IHa btsun, 115.5-6; also in rGod tshang ras pa, 216.3-4). 3) The Madman of Tsang's final advice, *Mgur 'bum*, 27a3-6; IHa btsun, 126.5; also in rGod tshang ras pa, 273.3-5.

⁴⁴ 1) A thirteen-line song expressing the yogin's thoughts upon being tasked by Hevajra to write a *yig cha* on Hevajra and Cakrasaṃvara, 50.5-7; this same vision is described in dNgos grub dpal 'bar's (11b) and rGod tshang ras pa's (51.1-3) versions of the *Life*, but without the song. 2) A fourteen-line song, 125.6-126.1. 3) The long song running 66.5-69.3.

⁴⁵ For example, the nine-line song in IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal, 55.1-2, is set up differently from the way it is in the *Mgur 'bum*, 3a5-6. rGod tshang ras pa's set-up for the song follows the *Mgur 'bum* more closely, 61.3-4. The same can be said concerning the song located in the *Mgur 'bum*, 9b6-10a5; IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal, 65.1-7; and rGod tshang ras pa 85.2-86.1. See also the song in the *Mgur 'bum*, 11b5-12a4; IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal, 80.4-81.3; and rGod tshang ras pa, 88.2-89.1.

rin chen rnam rgyal's versions of the *Life* deviate from that of dNgos grub dpal 'bar bear no relationship to one another. rGod tshang ras pa and lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal were both working directly from dNgos grub dpal 'bar's version of the *Life*, but not from each other's, proof of which will now be given.

All three versions of the *Life* (as well as the *gSol 'debs*) include a description of the Madman of Tsang's miraculously floating cross-legged across a river without a boat. The three versions are very similar, but rGod tshang ras pa follows dNgos grub dpal 'bar's wording more closely than does lHa btsun. rGod tshang ras pa also adds the detail, absent from both other accounts, that the yogin used his *khat-vāṅga* staff as a rudder.⁴⁶

All three versions of the *Life* include a story about the Madman of Tsang's having a vision of a black demonic figure roasting a head over a fire. When the yogin asks the demon whose head it is he's burning, he says that it is the yogin's own. dNgos grub dpal 'bar and rGod tshang ras pa both place this story just after the Madman of Tsang's first trip to Nepal; lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal puts it before that trip. rGod tshang ras pa again follows dNgos grub dpal 'bar's wording more closely than does lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal.⁴⁷

All three versions of the *Life* tell the story of how the Madman of Tsang once got into an argument with some residents of Nas mo over their refusal to perform the compulsory service (*'u lag*) of transporting his belongings. lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version is nearly the same as that offered by dNgos grub dpal 'bar. rGod tshang ras pa works off of dNgos grub dpal 'bar's description of the event, but adds significantly to it, placing the Madman of Tsang in the position of mediator who tries to bring the angry people to reason.⁴⁸

All three versions of the *Life* tell of an instance when, at the age of twelve, Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan had a dream in which some girls appeared and offered him gold. The next morning, the boy is said to have found some gold, which he gave to his family. lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal and rGod tshang ras pa both make slight variations to dNgos grub dpal 'bar's earlier account: lHa btsun adds that the boy found both gold *and* a small turquoise; rGod tshang ras pa only mentions the boy's finding gold, but adds that it was a large piece of gold, and that, rather than giving it to his family in general, he hand-

⁴⁶ dNgos grub dpal 'bar, 10a6-7; rGod tshang ras pa, 43.1-2; *gSol 'debs*, 2b2-3; lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal, 37.4-6.

⁴⁷ dNgos grub dpal 'bar, 11a4-6; rGod tshang ras pa, 50.6-51.1; lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal, 42.4-43.1.

⁴⁸ dNgos grub dpal 'bar, 15a2-4; lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal, 90.5-7; rGod tshang ras pa, 121.5-122.3.

ed it directly to his mother.⁴⁹

When describing the Madman of Tsang's mother's pregnancy with him, rGod tshang ras pa and lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal both clearly take dNgos grub dpal 'bar's account as a starting point, each adding details of his own.⁵⁰

lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life* also includes the Madman of Tsang's telling of how he was swallowed by a skeleton and met Hevajra, but makes a minor change: when Hevajra points at the yogin's heart and addresses him, lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal includes the full four-line stanza from near the end of the *Hevajra Tantra*, whereas dNgos grub dpal 'bar and rGod tshang ras pa had both included the first line only.⁵¹ lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal also moves this story closer to the beginning of the narrative, telling it at the moment when it purportedly occurred in the Madman of Tsang's life, rather than having him tell the story as a reminiscence shortly before his death.

rGod tshang ras pa and lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal both drew directly from dNgos grub dpal 'bar's version of the *Life*, but there is no indication that they influenced each other in any way. Significantly, there are no passages from rGod tshang ras pa's version of the *Life not* in dNgos grub dpal 'bar's that then appear in lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's. There are also no passages from lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life not* in dNgos grub dpal 'bar's that then appear in rGod tshang ras pa's. The fact that rGod tshang ras pa's and lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's versions of the *Life* developed independently of one another makes the question of the precise chronology of their composition much less important.⁵²

⁴⁹ dNgos grub dpal 'bar, 5b5-6; lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal, 8.6-7; rGod tshang ras pa, 18.3-4.

⁵⁰ dNgos grub dpal 'bar, beginning at 3b1; rGod tshang ras pa, beginning at 13.4; lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal, beginning at 5.1.

⁵¹ It begins the same as dNgos grub dpal 'bar version, *ye shes 'di ni ches phra zhing*, but continues: *rdo rje nam mkha'i dkyil lta bul brtul bral mthar phyin zhi ba stel khyod rang yang ni de yi pha*, 14.7-15.1. This is the fourth verse of the seventh chapter of the second book of the *Hevajra Tantra*. See Snellgrove, *Hevajra Tantra*, 2:101. lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version specifies that the yogin was at the time staying at g.Yu mtsho, whereas the other versions simply state that he was staying near rTsa ri.

⁵² This was not the only instance of rGod tshang ras pa's and lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's drawing from a common source in the course of their writing projects. One of Ras chung pa's three main disciples, Sum pa, composed in 1195 a biography of the yogin, called *The Essence of a Wonderful Jewel*. When composing his own biography of Ras chung pa in 1503, lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal summarized from this earlier biography. In writing his own version in 1531, rGod tshang ras pa lifted passages directly from *The Essence of a Wonderful Jewel*. Roberts, *Biographies of Rechungpa*, 2, 8, 98-9.

IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life* deviates from dNgos grub dpal 'bar's chronology of events in a few small ways. IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal moves the Madman of Tsang's first trip to Nepal (during which he had the Swayambhūnāth stūpa white-washed) into an earlier moment in his life; he moves some stories about the yogin's practicing and spending time in rTsa ri to an earlier moment in his life as well.

IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life* includes a number of stories that are not included in any other version of the *Life* or the *Collected Songs* (many of these events were mentioned briefly in the *gSol 'debs*, however). For example, contained in all three versions of the *Life* and the *gSol 'debs* is the story (with variations) of the yogin's defeating a host of zombies with the aid of his disciple, Kun dga' legs bzang. These corpses were those of people who had died from an epidemic.⁵³ There is another story of the yogin's defeating a host of frightening zombies, told in rGod tshang ras pa's version of the *Life* but not included in any other.⁵⁴ IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life* contains yet another zombie story (also mentioned in the *gSol 'debs*). This is the fascinating tale of the Madman of Tsang's purposefully reanimating a corpse near rTse thang, struggling to subdue it, then being confronted by some soldiers. They run away in fright when they realize the extent of the yogin's eccentricity.⁵⁵

IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life* also includes a description of some extreme asceticism practiced by the Madman of Tsang, which is not mentioned in either other version. For some months, Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan was sustaining himself with nothing but water, pushing himself to his physical limits. The hardship led to his having a vision of Saraha and some deep meditative experiences. The story intimately relates how one night the yogin felt thirsty and desperately drank an excessive amount of water directly from the riverbank, which he then vomited up. He saw that in his vomit were innumerable insects (or perhaps he had vomited *on* the insects), which led to feelings of great remorse for his carelessness, and a renewed commitment to compassionate religious practice.⁵⁶

Among the passages included in IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life* that are not included in dNgos grub dpal 'bar's,

⁵³ dNgos grub dpal 'bar, 136b-14a2; rGod tshang ras pa, 83.5-84.2; IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal, 63.6-64.3. This event is mentioned laconically in the *gSol 'debs*, 3a2-3, but that stanza is not repeated in IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life*.

⁵⁴ rGod tshang ras pa, 47.6-48.3.

⁵⁵ IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal, 33.7-37.4. *gSol 'debs*, 2b1-2.

⁵⁶ IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal, 20.3-23.1; *gSol 'debs*, 2a1-2.

rGod tshang ras pa's, or the *Collected Songs* (but some of which are mentioned in the *gSol 'debs*) are many that tell of miraculous visions: the boar attack at Dom tshang, leading to a vision of Cakrasaṃvara; the vision of Vajrayoginī at g.Yu mtsho; the earthquake and the vision of Mahākāla; the vision of Mi la ras pa and Pha dam pa sangs rgyas; the vision of the Buddha surrounded by 36,000 disciples at Mount Kailash; and so on.⁵⁷ Of the three versions of the *Life*, lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's has the greatest proportion of fantastical or visionary material. lHa btsun's version has more mentions of the yogin's having sex with various women and female divinities.

All three versions of the *Life* include at least one passage narrated in the first person from the perspective of the Madman of Tsang: that in which he describes being swallowed by a skeleton and encountering the deity Hevajra. In dNgos grub dpal 'bar's and rGod tshang ras pa's versions of the *Life*, this passage is specifically mentioned as being part of the Madman of Tsang's "secret *Life*" (*gsang ba'i rnam thar*), which he told to some of his disciples shortly before his death. In his version of the *Life*, lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal does not label this passage as part of the yogin's "secret *Life*." Nor does lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal signal that he is here drawing from another source, or that these are the words of the Madman of Tsang, save for the fact that the story is narrated in the first person. Concerning this passage, lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal is most likely drawing from dNgos grub dpal 'bar's version of the *Life*.

However, in lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life* there are a handful of other passages told in the first person—from the perspective of the Madman of Tsang—that are not included in either other version of the *Life* or in the *Collected Songs*. For example, lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life* contains an account of how the Madman of Tsang found a woman's corpse, which he ate parts of. He then happened upon a group of government officials sitting and drinking alcohol (*chang*). The yogin joined them, and after having a few drinks, pulled out his "secret *vajra*" (*gsang rdor*) and started urinating on the officials. They gave him a horrific beating, but he did not die. All were impressed by this miraculous feat and took him as their guru. The beginning of this story is told in the third person (as is most of the biography) and uses polite (*zhe sa*) forms of nouns and verbs in reference to the Madman of Tsang. But after a few lines it changes briefly to the first person voice, using a pedestrian form of the pronoun I (*nga*). Then it changes back to the

⁵⁷ Cakrasaṃvara, 2a4-5 in the *gSol 'debs*, 27.4-28.6 in the *Life*; Vajrayoginī, 2a5, 28.6-29.5; Mahākāla, 2a7-2b1, 31.6-32.6; Mi la and Pha dam pa, 2b6, 49.6-50.2; Kailash, 3a1, 55.7-56.3.

third person voice.⁵⁸

The same kind of switch occurs in other passages as well. IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life* describes the Madman of Tsang's going to the market in IHa sa, where he has an argument with monks from Se ra and 'Bras spungs monasteries. This leads to a physical altercation. After being beaten and buried under a pile of stones, the yogin is accompanied back to the hut he had been occupying at a nearby boneyard by a girl. As soon as they are alone, she turns red, with fangs and three eyes. This low caste girl (*rigs ngan*) is actually an emanation of Vajravārahī, we are told. The yogin couples with her and she disappears. The narrative then slips briefly into the first person, telling of the intoxicating pleasure the yogin experienced with the girl (*nga bde ba'i ra ro ba'i ting nge 'dzin la song 'dug*). The text then alternates between the first and third person voice, telling of how the yogin went to visit the Jowo Śākyamuni statue the next morning. When the statue miraculously spoke to him, he put his arm around the statue's head to get closer and hear better. The caretaker thought the yogin was trying to steal some gold, and started beating him. Then the statue spoke, saying, "Don't do that!" The caretaker was shocked. The story moves in and out of the first person for a few more lines, as the yogin takes off his clothes and makes a hundred circumambulations of the statue (*ngas kyang phyi gos dor nas skor ba brgya song*).⁵⁹ It would seem that IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal based this passage on the Madman of Tsang's own first person account, but added lines to clarify what was happening.

Another passage tells of how, when the yogin was twenty-six years old, he had a series of visions of Mi la ras pa and the Five Long-Life Sisters. At one point, while the yogin was in a state of half-dreaming, Mi la ras pa appeared before him holding a crystal skull-cup (*shel gyi ka pA la*) filled with divine nectar. The text then reads, "He poured the cup of nectar into my mouth" (*bdud rtsi ka pA la nga'i kha ru blug byung ba*).⁶⁰ The passage then switches definitively to the third person again, using polite forms to describe the way the yogin took the Five Long-Life Sisters as his sexual consorts.

These three passages suggest that in composing his version of the *Life*, IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal relied on the Madman of Tsang's own autobiographical tellings (or that IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal pretended to do so). One possibility is that IHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal was working with diary-like notes actually written by the Madman of Tsang. It may also be the case that the Madman of Tsang

⁵⁸ 25.4-26.5.

⁵⁹ 38.5-40.2.

⁶⁰ 45.7.

did not write down any parts of his autobiography, but instead his students (likely including lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal himself) used the first person voice when writing down parts of the great yogin's autobiography as he told it to them.

We should observe that these passages given in the first person voice tend to be descriptions of the Madman of Tsang's own experiences, or things that occurred in relatively private moments, including his visions of divine beings. This is precisely the kind of material that is often the subject of a Tibetan master's "secret biography" (*gsang ba'i rnam thar*). However, in the few instances where lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal makes reference to the Madman of Tsang's "secret *Life*," it seems to refer specifically to things the yogin told him orally, rather than referring to a written text. For example, when narrating the circumstances in which the future Madman of Tsang met his guru, Sha ra rab 'byams pa, lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal makes an editorial aside (which is marked off by an ornamental *shad*) mentioning that he had heard conflicting accounts about this meeting, but the matter was cleared up when the Madman of Tsang "gave him his secret *Life*" (*gsang ba'i rnam par thar pa byin*). Here the "secret *Life*" seems to mean a first-hand, oral account of the master's life.⁶¹

It should be mentioned that there are instances in the *Life* that seem to be derived from lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's first-hand observations of the events as they happened. For example, lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's account of the renovation of the Swayambhūnāth stūpa is basically the same as those included in dNgos grub dpal 'bar's and rGod tshang ras pa's versions of the *Life*, except that he adds a four folio-side section in the middle of the description of the renovations, which tells of how there was a serious disagreement with the king of Kathmandu over the amount of gold the Madman of Tsang felt the king should offer for the project. lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal mentions himself in the midst of these events, which suggests that this addition to the narrative is based on what he himself witnessed.⁶² Moreover, before launching into the narrative of the *Life* proper, lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal states that the following is based on what he had seen and heard of the great yogin's life, much of it coming directly from the master's own mouth.⁶³

lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal does not mention that he drew from the *gSol 'debs*, the *Collected Songs*, or from dNgos grub dpal 'bar's ver-

⁶¹ This passage in lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life* follows dNgos grub dpal 'bar's almost exactly, save for this editorial aside. dNgos grub dpal 'bar, 6a; lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal, 9.

⁶² 116.7-120.7.

⁶³ 3.6-4.1.

sion of the *Life*. But he does mention their existence. After the section relating the Madman of Tsang's death, lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal states that he was not present at the time of the yogin's passing, so "if you want to see a more detailed account, you should consult the biographies composed by my earlier dharma brothers."⁶⁴ This presumably refers to the work of dNgos grub dpal 'bar, notes composed by other of the great yogin's disciples, and perhaps rGod tshang ras pa's version of the *Life*.

lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life of the Madman of Tsang* draws from many different sources. It draws from dNgos grub dpal 'bar's version of the *Life* (which is based on earlier notes compiled by dNgos grub dpal 'bar and other followers of the great yogin, as well as things dNgos grub dpal 'bar heard from the Madman of Tsang directly); the *Collected Songs* (compiled mainly by rGod tshang ras pa); and lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's own verse *gSol 'debs* of the Madman of Tsang. lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal was also working from the Madman of Tsang's own telling of his life. This may have been in the form of a written document composed by the Madman of Tsang in the first person voice, or in the form of the yogin's oral autobiography, which was then written down in the first person by his disciples. It seems that lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal would consider either of these—a written document or stories told orally—as constituting the same text, the "secret *Life*" of the Madman of Tsang. Here "secret" does not suggest that the account was to be kept secret, but rather that it came directly from the great master.

For these reasons, if we accept the contents of lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life* of the Madman of Tsang as not significantly doctored or falsified, it would seem to be the one most intimately connected to the great yogin's life, containing numerous passages that are essentially autobiographical. This is despite the fact that lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's version of the *Life* was most likely the last of the three to be written.

VII. Conclusion

To summarize what has been established above: dNgos grub dpal 'bar finished and then printed his version of the *Life of the Madman of Tsang* shortly after the great yogin's death, in 1508. dNgos grub dpal 'bar's version of the *Life* was based on a brief versified account of the yogin's life he had composed a year prior.

The Madman of Tsang's *Collected Songs* was compiled and pub-

⁶⁴ 127.4.

lished concurrently with dNgos grub dpal 'bar's version of the *Life*. Another of the Madman of Tsang's disciples, rGod tshang ras pa, played a major role in putting this collection together.

In what was most likely 1512, rGod tshang ras pa composed his own version of the *Life*, drawing heavily from dNgos grub dpal 'bar's version, but also including the entire contents of the *Collected Songs*.

The remaining version of the *Life of the Madman of Tsang* was written by lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal sometime before 1543. Regardless of which was written before the other, the versions of the *Life of the Madman of Tsang* composed by lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal and rGod tshang ras pa developed entirely independently of one another.

Having come to this point, we are left with a significant question: why were three versions of the *Life* of the Madman of Tsang composed within a span of no more than thirty-five years (1508-1543)? The writing of dNgos grub dpal 'bar's version of the *Life* does not pose a problem. But why the latter two versions? As rGod tshang ras pa and lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal included so much of dNgos grub dpal 'bar's version of the *Life* when writing their own versions, they must have seen it as a valuable and worthwhile text. Perhaps they did not consider it to be thorough enough. But still: why the latter *two* versions?

After the Madman of Tsang's death, there developed two great hubs of literary production among his followers. One of these centers of literary production was at Ras chung phug in central Tibet, and headed by rGod tshang ras pa. The other main center was based at Brag dkar rta so in western Tibet, headed by lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal, who was native to nearby Glo bo smon thang. Kurtis Schaeffer has shown that there was very little overlap in the literature composed and published by these two centers, which suggests that they were communicating and coordinating effectively with one another.⁶⁵ Given the amount of communication within this circle, it seems unlikely that lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal or rGod tshang ras pa would have been unaware of a version of the *Life* of the Madman of Tsang written by the other.

Often in the composition of multiple versions of the *Life* of a saintly figure we can observe that the various authors are competing for control over his memory, that each author wants to characterize the saint in some way in order to use his legacy toward some end. This does not seem to be the reason behind the creation of multiple versions of the *Life* of the Madman of Tsang, for although rGod tshang ras pa's and lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal's versions of the *Life* are

⁶⁵ Schaeffer, "The Printing Projects of Gtsang smyon Heruka and His Disciples," 456-60; Schaeffer, *Culture of the Book in Tibet*, 58-60.

different in many ways, they do not seem to be significantly different in how they characterize the yogin. Instead, it seems that lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal may have been moved to write his version of the biography because he had records of the great yogin's own telling of his life, which he wanted to incorporate into a text, to make them more widely available or preserve them for posterity. It seems that lHa btsun rin chen rnam rgyal was privy to some of the more intimate details of the Madman of Tsang's experiences, and was in a position of composing a unique account of his life, revived and animated by these tales of his experiences. Otherwise many of these details would have fallen out of the historical record forever.

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