



On the so-called Secret Biography of Tshangs dbyangs rgya mtso

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The author is the 6th Lamatan of the Baruun Heid monastery in Alasha (Inner Mongolia) and the reincarnation of sDe srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho.

(1) This paper focuses on the so-called secret biography of the Sixth Dalai Lama, which has been widely discussed among Tibetan scholars and abroad, by considering the materials from Baruun Heid monastery in Alasha. The text “thams cad mkhyen pa ngag dbang chos grags rgya mtsho dpal bzang po’i rnam par thar ba phul du ’byong ba’i mdzad pa bzang po’i gtam snyan lha’i rgyud kyi tam bu ra’i sgra dbyangs zhes bya ba bzhugs so” is called for short “The Biography of Tshangs dbyangs rgya mtso ”or ‘the Biography of The Sixth Dalai Lama ”. It is a complete biography of the Sixth Dalai Lama Blo bzang rin chen tshang dbyangs mtso and was written by a Mongolian author from Alasha, called Nang dbang lhun grub dar rgyas or Lha btsun Dar rgyas no min han. However many people in the field of Tibetan studies call this text The Secret Biography of Tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho. In my paper I will provide a clarification of this issue on the basis of historical materials stemming from the Alasha Baruun Heid monastery and of other relevant Tibetan and Mongolian sources.

(2) The biography was finished in 1757 in the Baruun Heid monastery in Alasha, in western Inner Mongolia, 11 years after the death of the Sixth Dalai Lama. According to this text he died in Alasha in 1746 and not in the Kokhnuur in 1706 as claimed by other historical sources. The Baruun Heid monastery was completed in 1756 and a mchod rten was built to host the body of the deceased 6th Dalai Lama. The text of the biography was completed one year after the construction of the monastery and was then spread among the other temples of the area. It is said that a section of this edition of the Sixth Dalai Lama’s biography was presented to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama by the Fifth Lamatan of Baruun Heid, sDe srid Hutugtu Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1871–1944), early in the Twentieth century. The Dalai Lama chanted the praise of this work after having read it and gave order to have it engraved in Lhasa. This Lhasa wood engraving was the one that would

become widespread and would be translated into other languages. There is no doubt, however, that the wood engraving in Alasha Baruun Heid is the earliest edition of this biography. In fact the Thirteenth Dalai Lama presented a copy of the new Lhasa edition biography of the Sixth Dalai Lama to Alsha Baruun Heid monastery in return through the Alasha Mongolian Phul 'byung rdo rams pa and this text was kept in the monastery until the "Cultural Revolution".

(3) Why did this biography circulate with the name of "Secret Biography"(gsang rnam)? There is only one possible interpretation. This is because the words "Secret Biography" had been written on every margin when the "tam bu ra'i sgra dbyang", the sixth Dalai Lama biography, was published in Lhasa. Today nobody can find the words "Secret Biography" from the title page to the colophon of the work.. But why that person had written such words when he transcribed it is still a puzzle.

(4) This biography has also been translated into Mongolian. The translator was a Buryad Mongol, called Doromba (Phul 'byung mdo rams pa) Geligjamtro. It was translated into Cyrillic Mongolian by G. Jamsorongjab, as part of the 33rd volume of the "Mongolian Literature Collection" published in Ulaanbaatar in 1998. Comparing this translation with the original we can see that the quality of the translation was not very high. A new Mongolian edition was published by the Inner Mongolian People's Publishing House, in Hohhot, in December 1999. This book was translated by 'Jam dbyangs bstan 'phel nyi ma and proof-read by myself. Having at my disposal the original version from Baruun Heid and the other versions of the text I was able to look at the differences between them and address the question of the very definition of the text as "secret biography".