Introduction

Rituals constitute an important part of every religion. Yet, even though the study of the Buddhist religion is well established in the West as well as in Japan, investigations of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist rituals appeared, for the most part, only very recently\(^1\). The situation is different among scholars within the tradition. Tibet's esteemed lamas and scholars not only performed rituals such as consecration, they were also actively engaged in investigating them.

This paper will discuss certain aspects of the historical development of the Indo-Tibetan consecration ritual for stūpas and images. I use the term 'consecration ritual' for the Tibetan rab-gnas cho-ga (Sanskrit: \textit{pratīṣṭhā-vidhī}). Some confusion has been created by the use of the English term 'consecration' to translate both rab-gnas and dbang-bskur. But the Tibetan language makes a clear distinction between the two terms. Dbang-bskur, for which I prefer the translation 'initiation', is conferred on people, while rab-gnas is conferred on receptacles of the Buddha's Body, Speech, and Mind; meaning mainly images, books, stūpas, and temples\(^2\). The Tibetan term rab-gnas, which translates the Sanskrit term \textit{pratīṣṭhā}, can be literally rendered in English as 'firmly establish' or 'stably reside'. While the Sanskrit term \textit{pratīṣṭhā} originally meant the 'establishment' of an image or stūpa, it later (in India) developed the meaning of firmly establishing the 'holy' or 'sacred' within the image or stūpa\(^3\). The latter is also the meaning of the Tibetan term rab-gnas. It corresponds to the English term 'consecration', the etymology of which is 'together with the sacred'. In Vajrayāna Buddhism, the 'holy' is the Enlightened Awareness Being (Sanskrit: \textit{Jñānasattva}; Tibetan: Ye-shes-sems-dpa') which, by the means of consecration ritual, is invited to

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2) There are some exceptions to this even within the consecration ritual itself, when initiation is conferred on the deity which was invited to the object being consecrated. During the conference at Narita, Dr. Brigitte Steinmann pointed out that the Tamang in Nepal perform a ritual called so-rape for people. This ritual, however, is not the Tamang consecration proper. See also Brigitte Steinmann, "La ceremonie funeriere chez les Tamang de l'est" \textit{BEFEO} 76(1987) 217–280, on p. 253.

reside within the sacred object (rten), making it suitable for worship. The Enlightened Awareness Being is invited in the form of one's own deity (yi-dam), in Tibetan rituals at present usually Rdo-rje-'jigs-byed (Vajrabhairava), Rdo-rje-sems-dpa' (Vajrasattva), Kye-rdo-rje (Hevajra), Bde-mchog (Cakrasamvara), etc. Part of the role of high lamas is the performance of consecrations for newly constructed images, stūpas and temples, or for already established objects of veneration upon the lama's visit during his pilgrimages and travels.

Is there Sūtra-style Consecration?

In this article I will discuss sūtra-style consecration as a key to one part of the historical development of the ritual. While there is a certain amount of discussion among Indian and Tibetan writers under which of the four tantra sections consecration ritual should be classified, there is unanimous agreement that consecration, in its present form, falls within the tantra and not the sūtra class. The consecration ritual contains such characteristic tantric elements as the invitation of one's own deity (yi-dam), construction of mandalas, etc. A number of consecration works make a point of emphasizing that sūtra-style consecration do not exist. The most probable origin for these statements is in Sa-skya Pandita's Sdom Gsum Rab-dbye, where he maintains that "consecrations are not taught in the sūtras" and "the so-called sūtra-style consecration expounded in [his] days is not the teaching of the Buddha" (see below).

The Gandi-Sūtra

Contrary to Sa-skya Pandita's claim that consecrations are not taught in the sūtras, the sūtra section of the Tibetan Kanjur contains the Gandi-Sūtra translated into Tibetan at the time of

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5) The Consecration Tantra is classified in the Tibetan Kanjur as Yoga Tantra. "Rab-tu gnas-pa mdor-bsuls-pa'i Rgyud" The Tibetan Tripitaka, Peking Edition, ed., D. T. Suzuki, Tibetan Tripitaka Research Institute: Tokyo-Kyoto, 1955-61 [hereafter P], #118, vol, 5, pp. 122.1.1-123.4.7 (Tôhoku #486)]. Indians pandits and Tibetan scholars following them mostly categorize the consecration ritual as either Anuttara-Yoga Tantra or Yoga Tantra. In a small number of cases the consecration is classified as Kriya Tantra. For a summary of these different opinions see, for example, Sde-srid Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtho (1635-1705) "Rab-tu gnas-pa'i skor brjod-pa'i sgra" chapter nine of the Mchod-sdang 'jam-gling-rgyan-geig Rien Gtsug-lag-khang dang bcas-pa'i Dkar-chag Thar-gling Rgya-mthor Bgrod-pa'i Gru-rab-ding Byin-riabs-kyi Bang-mdzod (New Delhi, 1973) vol. 2, pp. 151-356, on pp. 151-2; and Rdo-rje-brag Rig-'dzin Padma-'phrin-las (1641-1717) "Rab-tu gnas-pa'i rnam-par nges-pa rgyud don rgya-mtho gsal-bar byed-pa nor-bu'i snying-po" Rituals of Rdo-rje-brag (Leh, 1973) vol. 1, pp. 1-285, on pp. 9-13, which discusses both Rnying-ma and Gsar-ma classifications.


Rin-chen-bzang-po\(^8\). This *sutra* explains the construction and consecration of the *gandi\(^9\)*, a wooden bell used to call the monks to assemblies such as the bimonthly gso-sbyong (Sanskrit: *posadhaka\(^10\)*). *Gandi* consecration consists in the recitation of three lines of verse identifying the *gandi* with the *Dharmakāya\(^11\)*. Due to the absence of tantric elements, this is quite different from the consecrations now in use for *stūpas* and images. Still, not finding other clear references to consecrations in the *sūtras*, the *gandi* consecration is considered by certain Rnying-ma and Bka'-brgyud writers as a source or origin of consecration\(^12\). Yet, although we have seen that consecration is briefly mentioned in the *sūtras*, I would agree with Sa-skya Pandita to the extent of saying that there is no systematic exposition on consecration in the *sūtra* texts.

**Some Indian *Stūpa* Cult Practices**

Let us examine now some early Buddhist modes for sanctifying *stūpas* in India. There can be no doubt that what originally rendered the Indian *stūpa* sacred was the presence of the physical relics of the Buddha or another Buddhist saint. Schopen has shown “that the Mahācetiya at Nāgārjunikonda was not conceived as ‘un reliquaire,’ but as a structure housing the living presence of the Buddha – any worship of ‘it’ would actually be of him\(^13\).” Since at least the seventh century A. D. there is evidence for *stūpas* with a written form of the ye dharma... gāthā forming their nuclei. The ye dharma.... gāthā or the ‘verse of interdependent origination’ is considered to subsume the essence of the Buddha’s teachings\(^14\). Similar to *stūpas* with relics as their nuclei (*dhatugarbha*), these *stūpas* contain in addition to, or instead of relics, the ‘verse of interdependent origination’. This verse, as will be more fully discussed below, is called Dharmadhātu, which in this

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8) P #964, vol. 38, pp. 300.3.1–301.3.1 [Tohoku #298].
10) Or *uposatha*. The basic text for this ritual is contained in the second chapter of the *Vinaya-cestu* (P #1030, vol. 41 [Tohoku #1]).
11) P vol. 38, p. 301.1.4–5, “[Gandi] de’i rab-gnas bya-ba ni shin-tu btsan-pa’i’i chos-kyi sku’ shyed-pa ma yin’ jig’byed ming’ gnod-nas ma’ skyes-pa dge-bal’ de-laar rab-gnas byas-nas ni’”. This verse refers to the Dharmakāya in its meaning as contrasted with the Rūpakāya (the ‘form body’) or as part of the triad Dharmakāya, Sambhogakāya, Nirvāṇakāya. Dharmakāya carries, however, additional meaning of ‘the corpus of the Buddhist teachings’ (see below). The teachings (Dharma) are often symbolized by sounds such as lion-roar, conch or great drum. Hence the association of the Dharmakāya with a sound producing instrument such as the gandi. The Gandi Sūtra has: “The Mother [of all the Buddhas] Prajñāpāramitā is the form of the gandi.” (“Yum shes-rab-kyi pho-ro’i phyin-pa gandṣi guge-so’i”) *ibid.* pp. 300.5.3. The Prajñāpāramitā here means the Mahāyāna teachings in general.
context can be translated as dharma-relic\textsuperscript{15}. Miniature clay tablets on which the ‘verse of interdependent origination’ had been stamped were found inside stūpas in numerous archaeological excavations in the Indian cultural sphere dating from the seventh century onward\textsuperscript{16}. The Chinese travellers to India in the seventh century, I Ching\textsuperscript{17} and Hsüan Tsang\textsuperscript{18}, observed this custom of placing the ‘verse of interdependent origination’ in a written form inside stūpas as well. The scriptural authority for this practice, which may have either predated or followed it, is provided by the Pratītyasamutpāda Sūtra\textsuperscript{19}. The ‘verse of interdependent origination’ is still deposited at present time inside Tibetan stūpas and images, however, the concept of Dharma-relic grew significantly to include the scriptures, large number of dhāranīs, works by Tibetan authors, etc.\textsuperscript{20}

Thus, since at least the seventh century, in addition to the enshrinement of physical relics therein, the stūpa received sanctification through the insertion of the ‘verse of interdependent origination’, which functions in a similar way to the former – it infuses the stūpa with the presence of the Buddha\textsuperscript{21}. As the physical relic, the Dharma-relic is, from then on, fundamental to stūpa worship. At the same period, according the testimony of Hsüan Tsang, once completed, a certain ritual was performed for the stūpa\textsuperscript{22}. The ritual of inviting the Enlightened Awareness Being into the stūpa is a further tantric development which, without supplanting the earlier customs of inserting either physical or Dharma-relic, is performed for the completed stūpa. The invitation of the Enlightened Awareness Being which represents both physical and Dharma-relics is a part of a general tantric process of the ritualization of earlier Buddhist ideas\textsuperscript{23}.

\textbf{Atiśa’s Sūtra-style Consecration Ritual}

What was then the sūtra-style consecration being expounded at the time of Sa-skya Pandita, to which he strongly objected in his Sdoṅ Gsum Rab-dbyed? Zhang G.yu-brag-pa (1123–1193)\textsuperscript{24},

\textsuperscript{15} For the translation of this word as ‘Dharma-relic’ see also Richard Salomon and Gregory Schopen, “The Indravarman (Avaca) Casket Inscription Reconsidered: Further Evidence for Canonical Passages in Buddhist Inscriptions” The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies 7 (1984) 107–123, on p. 117. See also Gregory Schopen, “On the Buddha and his Bones: The Conception of a Relic in the Inscriptions from Nāgārjunakonda” (see note 13 above).

\textsuperscript{16} See Maurizio Taddei, “Inscribed Clay Tablets and Miniature Stūpas from Gāzni” East and West 20 (1970) 70–86 and references there.


\textsuperscript{19} P #221 vol. 7 and #878 vol. 34 [Tohoku #212, #520, #980]. This sūtra is known only in translation, however, N. A. Śāstri in Ārya Śālistamba–Sūtra, Pratītyasamutpāda-vabhanganirdesa–Sūtra and Pratītyasamutpādagāthā–Sūtra (Adyar Library, 1950) reconstructs the Sanskrit. See also the Tathāgataabhinirvāṇa–Sūtra from Gilgit which instructs one to make an image of the Buddha with either a relic or with the Pratītyasamutpāda verse, in Adelheid Mette, “Zwei kleine Fragmente aus Gilgit” Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik 7 (1981) 135–152, on p. 136.

\textsuperscript{20} See Gyalzur (note 4 above). There is a class of Tibetan composition called guongs-bul or guungs-gshug which instructs on the physical and Dharma-relics deposited in stūpas and images. For example, Kong-sprulBlo-gros-mtha’-yas, “Rten la nang-gshug ‘bul-ba’i lag-len lugs-srol kun-gsal dri-bral nor-bu chu-sel-gyi me-long” Collected Works vol. 12, pp. 97–148.


\textsuperscript{22} See note 19 above. I would like to thank here Prof. Takeuchi Tsubugihito for clarifying the meaning of this passage to me by consulting the original Chinese version.


\textsuperscript{24} Zhang G.yu-brag-pa who was the founder of the Tshal-pa sub-sect mentions a sūtra-style consecration (rab-tu gras-pa mdo-lugs) which was transmitted from Atiśa. “Dkar-rgyud Rnam-thar” Writings (Bka’ Thor-bu) of Zhang G.yu-brag-pa Brtson-grus-grags-pa (Tashijong, Palampur, 1972) p. 428.2–3.
Padma-dkar-po (1527–1592)\(^{25}\) and Kong-sprul Blo-gros-mtha'-yas (1813–1899)\(^{26}\) among others remarked that Atiśa (982–1054) composed sūtra-style consecration(s). Also of some of the commentaries to the Sdom Gsum Rab-dbye trace the teaching of sūtra-style consecrations to Atiśa\(^{27}\). Atiśa’s consecration text found in the Tibetan Tanjur\(^{28}\) describes a typical tantra-style consecration. However, Atiśa composed also the Pha-rol-tu phyin-pa’i theg-pa’i sā-tstsha gdab-pa’i cho-ga\(^{29}\) “The pāramitā-yāna ritual of making sā-tstsha”\(^{30}\). This appears to be the locus classicus of the sūtra-style consecration ritual. The pāramitā-yāna here is complementary to tantra (gsang-sngags)-style\(^{31}\). According to this work, after completing the sā-tstsha “one recites the mantra of interdependent origination three or seven times onto grain or flowers and offers them [to the sā-tstsha]”\(^{32}\). Here, the ‘verse of interdependent origination’ is not only a holy relic which impregnates the stūpa with the presence of the Buddha, but also a powerful mantra capable of consecrating the sā-tstsha\(^{33}\).

This scattering on the object being consecrated of grain/flowers, onto which the ‘verse of interdependent origination’ – the essence of the Buddhist teachings – has been recited, occurs in almost every Tibetan consecration ritual\(^{34}\). Moreover, in the concise consecrations performed at present this ritual action plays a major role. Additional sources on the consecration of caityas are...

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\(^{28}\) “Sku dang dang dang thugs rab-gnas-pa zhes-by-a-ba” P #3322, vol. 70, pp. 29.3.1–31.5.2; [Tōhoku #2946].

\(^{29}\) P #5373= #5041, vol. 103 [Tōhoku #3976= #4488]. Note that while most texts on tsha-tsha are found in the tanjur section of the Tanjur, this text, apparently because of its name, is also found in the Dbu-ma section. The subject-matter, however, is similar.


\(^{31}\) “Bla-med lugs-kyi rab-gnas-kyi cho-ga yan-lag bzhi-pa” Collected Works vol. 15, pp. 511.1.4; and in the works of Phag-mo-gru-pa (see note 43 below).

\(^{32}\) “De-nas ‘bru ‘am me-log-la tren-brel-gyi sngags lan gsum mam bdun bglas-la dbul-lo” P #5573 p. 179.1.2; #5041 p. 203.5.2–3.

\(^{33}\) The word consecration (rab-gnas), however, does not appear in this text. Rab-gnas does appear in another work by Atiśa on sā-tstsha as well as in his consecration text. [“Tsha-tsha’i cho-ga” P #4868, vol. 86, p. 123.3.7. For the consecration text see note 28 above.]
the *Kudrstitirghatana* by Advyavajra\(^{35}\) and the *Adikarmpradip\(^{36}\) both preserved in Sanskrit and both mentioned by G. Tucci\(^{37}\). These two works have close parallels with Atiśa's *sā-tstsha* text. However, they differ from him in one respect. That is, while they do employ the recitation of the 'verse of interdependent origination' in their consecrations, they do this without mentioning grain or flowers\(^{38}\).

Since the manufacturing of *sā-tstsha* is a much simpler process than the construction of a stūpa or image it is not surprising that it is accompanied by an uncomplicated consecration ritual. Further, the making of *sā-tstsha* was a ritual open to everyone and did not require vajrācārya qualifications\(^{39}\). Moreover, this sort of consecration did not necessitate elaborate offerings. Phag-mo-gru-pa says about the tantra-style consecration that in contrast to *sūtra*-style consecration, “Unless the patron possesses riches like those of a king, he will not complete it”\(^{40}\). The application of this short consecration, which is simple and requires neither tantric qualifications nor wealth seems to have been extended to the consecration of stūpas and images as well. The so-called *sūtra*-style consecration, in spite of Sa-skya Pandita's criticism, never died out.

**Bka'-gdams-pa Consecration Rituals and Phag-mo-gru-pa's Consecration Works**

Let us turn now to Tibetan sources of consecration in the first centuries of this millennium. At present, consecration rituals composed before the mid-seventeenth century are very rarely used. Only a few consecrations written by Tibetans have survived from the 11th to 13th centuries and even fewer treat the subject of *sūtra*-style consecration\(^{41}\). Yet, the available writings of Phag-mo-gru-pa (1110–1170) include four works on consecration ritual\(^{42}\). These works discuss three types of consecrations - *sūtra*-style, tantra-style and mixture of *sūtra* and tantra style\(^{43}\).

Phag-mo-gru-pa studied with, among others, Bka'-gdams-pa teachers. Shesrab-byung-gnas (1187–1241) gives the lineage leading from Atiśa to Phag-mo-gru-pa for various teachings including consecrations\(^{44}\). Among them are the Bka'-gdams-pa Dge-bshes Bya-yul-pa, 'Bromston-pa\(^{45}\) and Spyan-snga\(^{46}\), on whom Phag-mo-gru-pa relied for his mixed-style consecration ritual\(^{47}\). Thus, Phag-mo-gru-pa continued the *sūtra*-style consecration of Atiśa. The early Bka'-gdams-pa who followed Atiśa's precepts were condemned for their practice of *sūtra*-style

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35) (See note 30 above) pp. 7–8.
37) See note 30 above.
40) "Yon-bdag yang rgyal-po lo-sogs-pa 'byor-pa dang-ladan-pa ma yin-pas mi 'grub gsung," work no. 3 (in note 42 below) p. 688.
41) According to the Fifth Dalai Lama, the collected works of Zhang G.yu-brag-pa Brtson-grags-pa (1123–1193) contained a work entitled "Rab-tu gnas-pa'i cho-ga mdo-Iugs bsdus-pa" see Record of Teachings Received, the Gsan-yig of the Fifth Dalai Lama Ngug-dbang-blo-bzang-rgya-mtsho (Delhi, 1971) vol. 2, p. 181.6.
43) (1) "Pha-rol-tu phyin-pa's lugs" in work 3 ibid. p. 688.2 and 'mdo-lugs' or 'mdo-sde'i lugs' in work 4 ibid. p. 710.4–5.
(2) "Gsang-sngags-kyi lugs" in work 3 ibid. p. 688.2. (3) "Mdo sngags brse-ba" in work 4 ibid. p. 710.
47) Work no. 4 (in note 42 above) 710.5.
consecration in some of the commentaries on the *Sdom Gsum Rab-dbye*\(^\text{48}\), as well as by Sa-skya Pandita himself in his answers to questions posed by the Bka'-gdams-pa Dge-bshes Do-kor-ba\(^\text{49}\).

Phag-mo-gru-pa explains a little further the *sūtra*-style ritual such as the one mentioned by Atiśa in his *pāramitā-yāna sā-tṣetsha* text: "Then, having recited the 'verse of interdependent origination' 108 times onto grain or flower, they (the grain/flowers) turn into the nature of Dharmadhātu. Having scattered them (on the object being consecrated) it is made to be as the Dharmakāya\(^{50}\)". I have not translated the words Dharmadhātu and Dharmakāya since they carry multiple meanings. Taking *Dharma* in its meaning of 'teaching', Dharmakāya can be rendered as 'the corpus of the teachings'. Later the term Dharmakāya was contrasted with Rāpakaśā - form body, and thereafter became a part of the triad Dharmakāya, Sambhogakāya and Nirmānakāya\(^{51}\). Similarly the word dhātu can mean realm or realm\(^{52}\). Thus, Dharmadhātu can be translated as either 'Dharm-relic' or 'Dharma-realm'. The second "is further identified with that of dharmatā or tathatā (suchness) or even śūnyatā (emptiness)\(^{53}\). Thus, when the Pratītyasamutpāda Sūtra\(^{54}\) which instructs one to deposit the 'verse of interdependent origination' inside stūpas calls this verse 'chos-kyi-dbyings' - Dharmadhātu\(^{55}\), and 'de-bzhin-gshegs-pa-rrnams-kyi chos-kyi-sku' - the Dharmakāya of the Tathāgata, it is difficult to determine whether the Pratītyasamutpāda Sūtra simply calls the 'verse of interdependent origination' a 'Dharm-relic' and 'the corpus of the teachings of the Tathāgata' or whether it plays on the ambivalence of the these two terms.

Phag-mo-gru-pa's interpretation of consecration by means of the 'verse of interdependent origination', the Gandś-Sūtra (mentioned above), is based on taking the term Dharmakāya in its abstract meaning. This interpretation, as we shall see below, was a subject for disagreement\(^{56}\). Yet, the ritual action itself, which is very similar to the one described by Atiśa, continued to live.

### Sa-skya Pandita

Sa-skya Pandita (1182–1251) did not approve of the *sūtra*-style consecration. In his *Sdom Gsum Rab-dbye* he makes three basic assertions\(^{57}\):

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\(^{49}\) Sa-skya Pandita Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan, "Bka'-gdams Do-kor-ba'i zhu-ba" Sa-skya Bka'-bum vol. 5, pp. 402.4.3–403.1.6 on p. 403.1.2; and "Bka'-gdams Do-kor-ba'i zhu-lan" ibid. pp. 403.1.6–404.2.3 on p. 403.4.1–2.

\(^{50}\) "De-nas 'bru am me-log-la rien-brei brgya-rsa-rgya-brgyad balas-te chos-kyi-dbyings-kyi rang-bzhin-du gnyor-pa de-la mthar-bas chos-kyi-shur byas" work no. 1 (in note 42 above) p. 649.1 and again in p. 654.1; work no. 3 ibid. p. 690.3–4, and p. 694.3–4; work no. 4 ibid. p. 718.6. See also work no. 3 ibid. p. 688.5 where Phag-mo-gru-pa states that *sūtra*-style consecration basically means establishing the consecrated object as the Dharmakāya, ("Pha-ro'i tu phyin-khyi gtsor-bor chos-kyi skor rab-tu gnas-pa yin-'it"). In another work (no. 4 ibid. p. 710.4) he says that the *sūtra*-style consecration is 'the verse of interdependent origination alone.' ("mdo-lugs ni rten-brei brkyang-pa").


\(^{52}\) See Schopen, "On The Buddha and his Bones" (see note 13); Nagao, ibid; Gösta Libberti, Iconographic Dictionary of the Indian Religions (E. J. Brill: Leiden, 1976) p. 76.

\(^{53}\) Nagao, ibid p. 27.

\(^{54}\) See note 20 above, P #875 p. 307.3.5–7.

\(^{55}\) See note 15 above. See also John M. Cooper, "Two Sutras on Dependent Origination" Buddhist Studies Review 1 (1983–4) 31–4 on p. 34.

\(^{56}\) As we shall see, Sa-skya Pandita, Spos-khang-ba and Gung-thang-ba did not accept this kind of consecration. However, Bka'-brgyud-pa masters and especially Brug-pa such as the Third Khams-sprul adapted it. See the Third Khams-sprul Ngag-dbang Kun-dga'-bstan-'dzin (1680–1728), "Rab-gnas me-toeg bsgrub-pa'i cho-ga spyi mdo bkod-pa byin-rlabs phung-po" Collected Works (Tashigjong, Palampur, 1978) vol. 3 pp. 89–99 [published also separately].

\(^{57}\) P.311.1.1–2.5 (see note 7 above). The following is the passage on consecration from which the citations below were taken. "De-bzhin rab-gnas mdo-lugs dang/ Phyag-na-ra-je mdo-lugs dang/ lhung-bshags dang ni Sher-smying sogs/ smaggs-lugs yin schem 'chad-pa tho/ di-yang brtags-par bya-bas nyo/ mdo-nas rab-gnas bshad-pa med/ 'on-kyang mchad-bsod bkra-shis sogs/ rgyal-po'i mnga'-dbul la-bu-la/ rab-gnas yin schem smra-na smros/ la bigom-pa dang smags-bslas dang/ bum-pa tha-yi sta-gon"
(1) *Mdo-nas rab-gnas bshad-pa med/ “Consecrations are not taught in the sūtras.”*58) Sa-skya Pandita adds here, “however, if one says that rituals such as offerings, praises, recitations of verses for auspiciousness, royal enthronement are consecrations, then one may say that consecrations are taught in the sūtras.”59) Sa-skya Pandita then lists the steps of a proper consecration. These include generation of the Commitment Being (Sanskrit: *Samayasattva* / Tibetan: *Dam-rit-sig-sems-dpa’*), invitation of the Enlightened Awareness Being, etc.

(2) *Deng-sang rab-gnas mdo-lugs zhes/ chad-pa sangs-rgyas bstan-pa mini/ “The so-called sūtra-style consecration being expounded these days is not the teaching of the Buddha.”*60)

(3) *Mdo dang rgyud-kyi khyad-par ni/ cho-ga’i bya-ba yod med yin/ “The distinction between sūtras and tantras depends on the presence or absence of ritual action.”*61) In this last statement Sa-skya Pandita is saying that all rituals are tantric by definition. No ritual, the consecration ritual included, can possibly belong to the sūtras. This statement has further implications for the definition of ritual in general, and of tantric ritual in particular. It should be examined in light of the numerous examples of ritual in both sūtras and *dhāranī-sūtras*. However, I will here set aside this complex and important issue and instead will concentrate on the question of sūtra-style consecration.

As was mentioned above, in both the *Gândi-Sūtra* and in Phag-mo-gru-pa’s explanation of consecration by means of the ‘verse of interdependent origination’ the consecrated object is conceived as Dharmakāya in its abstract meaning. In his answers to Do-kor-ba’s question on the difference between the blessings of consecrations performed by 1. blessing as Dharmakāya and 2. summoning (dgug-pa) of the Enlightened Awareness Being (i.e. tantra-style consecration), Sa-skya Pandita disapproves any consecration by blessing as Dharmakāya. He says “At the time of performing consecration the Dharmakāya remains in its own natural state, its condition is without elaborations for it *[Dharmakāya]* no consecration was taught.” As was mentioned above, in both the *Gândi-Sūtra* and in Phag-mo-gru-pa’s explanation of consecration by means of the ‘verse of interdependent origination’ the consecrated object is conceived as Dharmakāya in its abstract meaning. In his answers to Do-kor-ba’s question on the difference between the blessings of consecrations performed by 1. blessing as Dharmakāya and 2. summoning (dgug-pa) of the Enlightened Awareness Being (i.e. tantra-style consecration), Sa-skya Pandita disapproves any consecration by blessing as Dharmakāya. He says “At the time of performing consecration the Dharmakāya remains in its own natural state, its condition is without elaborations for it *[Dharmakāya]* no consecration was taught.”

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58) Ibid., p. 311.1–2.
60) Sa-skya Bka’-bum vol. 5, p. 311.2–3. It seems that part of Sa-skya Pandita’s reasons for objecting to sūtra-style consecration may have been reaction to a situation where tantra-style consecration was being performed by unqualified masters. The performers of such consecrations, not being qualified *samsāra* sākāra, might have claimed that they were performing sūtra-style consecrations (see Sa-skya Bka’-bum vol. 5, p. 311.1–2.4). However, as we have seen above, there is more to the argument than that. Sūtra-style consecration did indeed exist.
61) Sa-skya Bka’-bum vol. 5, p. 311.2–5.
Rang-byung-rdo-rje and the Bka'-brgyud-pa

Another Tibetan writer known for his sutra-style consecration work is the Third Karma-pa Rang-byung-rdo-rje (1284-1339). Unfortunately, this work, which is mentioned by Kong-sprul Blo-gros-mtha'-yas and Gung-thang-pa among others, is presently unavailable. The following is extracted from Kong-sprul's description. Rang-byung-rdo-rje's consecration work called Bum-gnyis-ma seems to have been the very root text of the Karma-pa consecrations. It explained both sutra- and tantra-style consecrations. The sutra-style consecration followed the practice of Atiśa and the Bka'-gdams-pa. Because in this consecration the thun-mong-ba'j lugs-so.

bskyed-pa-la mdo-lugs zhes tha-snyad-du mdzad-pa-lasl bdag-bu. (see Bka'-brgyud Sngags-mdzod #3139), where the colophon title of this work is gdab-pa-laI mdo-lugs-Iryi sngags-lugs mi sUtra-style nil dang pOO-rol-tu phyin-pa Dharmakīya, Atisa mal-'byor bnen-pa'i Kam-tsÖOn-gi ma"!4ala bzhugs-te sutra-style consecration followed the Buddha appears also in Phag-mo-gru-pa's work thus supporting dbang-bskur-nas Tht Blut Annals Kye-rdo-Jje'i Tibet and Sakyamuni sutra-gnyis-su gsungs-pa'i dang-po this as: dang bral-ba'i 'og-ma dang (literally sutra-style yangpam) which both interpret here as A-ti-sÖO'i gdams-ngagJo-bo rejects any and dbags-dong-pa don-gyi rab-gnas and p. 8.3. nor image being consecrated while reciting the 'verse of interdependent origination'.

Sutra-style Consecration in Tibet and its Importance

rgyal-mtshan (15th century) in his commentary on the Sdom Gsum Rab-dbye rejects any consecration higher than the tantra-style consecration. He states that this tantra-style consecration operates within the relative truth. "Since the ultimate truth is without elaborations the term sutra-style cannot be applied to it."

Thus, these two Sa-skya-pa masters do not agree with the interpretation of sutra-style consecration as a transformation of the consecrated object into something conceived as Dharmakāya, which both interpret here as Dharma-realm. This, however, had very little consequence for the actual practice. In performing the Dpal-'byor Rgya-mtsho, currently the most popular Sa-skya-pa consecration, the ritual master does scatter grain or flower on the stūpa or image being consecrated while reciting the 'verse of interdependent origination'.


64) Ngag-dbang-blo-gros-snying-po-gzhan-phan-mtha'-yas-pa'i 'od-zer (1874-1952), "Dpal Kye-rdo-rje'i rnal-'byor brten-pa'yi rab-gnas mdo-bsdus-pa Dpal-'byor Rgya-mtsho srbu-skyes lha'i bcud-len" Lam-bras Tshogs-lshad (Dehra Dun, H.P., 1985) vol. 6, pp. 484-521, on pp. 506.4-507.2. This ritual action is not considered to be sutra-style here. See also Sakyamchog-idan (1428-1507), "Le'u gsum-pa rig-'dzin sdom-pa'yi skabs-kyi 'bel-gtam mam-par nges-pa" Collected Works (Thimphu, Bhutan, 1975) vol. 7, pp. 1-229, where he says that the verse of interdependent origination belongs to the tantra ("Rten-'brel snying-po'i sha-lo-ca [leloka gzig-po sngags-lugs yin-pa dang]") p. 105.1.

65) The Third Karma-pa also consecrated the Kanjur and Tanjur at 'Chims-phu near Bsam-yas. See The Blue Annals (see note 44 above) p. 492.


67) See note 6 above (on p. 102.2).

68) See note 66 above.


70) "Rab-tu gnas-pa'i cho-ga" P #3960 vol. 80 [Tökhö #3139], where the colophon title of this work is "Rab-tu gnas-pa'i cho-ga thun-mong-ba". Rig-'dzin Padma 'phrin-las reads this as: "Gshang-sngags dang pha-rol-tu phyin-pa thun-mong-gi cho-ga". A ritual common to [both] tantra and sutra (literally paramita)' Rituals of Rdo-rje-brag (see note 12 above) p. 5.5-6 and p. 8.3.
This form of sūtra-style consecration is different from Atiśa’s sūtra-style consecration. While the latter is performed by the recitation of the ‘verse of interdependent origination’ onto grain/flowers, the former consecration employs certain tantric means such as the invocation of the Enlightened Awareness Being. However, the yi-dam here is Śākyamuni Buddha and not, as in most present-day consecrations, one of the higher tantra deities. The important point here is that this consecration may represent a ritual tradition pertaining to both sūtra and the lower tantra. This form of consecration also did not die out. Kong-sprul’s consecration text, as mentioned above, relies on it. His text is perhaps the most common consecration manual currently in use within the Karma-pa sect. Another interesting example is the consecration text of the Third Khams-sprul which combines both the visualization of Śākyamuni Buddha and the recitation of the ‘verse of interdependent origination’ for the permeation of the grain/flowers.71

The Fifth Dalai Lama

The Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-rgya-mtsho (1617–1682), maintains that instructions for consecration rituals were orally transmitted. In the Sdom Gsum Rab-dbye, Sa-skya Pandita had already answered such arguments by saying: “Some maintain that it (sūtra-style consecration) is a transmission of precepts (gdams-ngag). But they must state on which part of the sūtra section they based themselves.”73 Sa-skya Pandita holds here a strictly textual approach. As we have seen above and elsewhere, extra-canonical sources such as archaeology and testimonies of travellers to India provide us with richer material on stūpa cults than the sūtras themselves. Thus we might accept the Fifth Dalai Lama’s opinion that there were various oral traditions concerning stūpas and images which were not included in the sūtras. Whether these traditions were all taught by the Buddha as the Fifth Dalai Lama claims is an entirely different question.

Later Tibetan Sources

Another source for the application of the ‘verse of interdependent origination’ in sūtra-style consecrations performed by the Bka’-gdams-pa is found in one of the explanatory writings on consecration, a new genre of consecration works which developed in the 17th century. This work was written by Rigdzin Padma-phrin-las (1641–1717), abbot of Rdo-rje-brag monastery. He describes what certain people, including the Bka’-gdams-pas, considered to be sūtra-style consecration as follows: A mirror on which the ‘verse of interdependent origination’ is written with saffron, is placed on a heap of grain or flowers. The reflection of this gāthā is absorbed in the grain or flowers. Then the monks circumambulate the object being consecrated and scatter on it the grain or flowers, which were ‘empowered’ (sgrub) with the ‘verse of interdependent origination’. Padma-phrin-las maintains that such sūtra-style consecrations seem to be acceptable. Yet, the remainder of his two hundred and eighty-five page work on consecration deals with tantra-style consecration. The brief description in this rather late text resembles the sūtra-style

71) See note 56 above.
72) “Gzhan-yang man-ngag-tu byas-te skal dang snyan-nas brgyud dgos-pa-mams.” Even though this type of argument is common in attempting to account for a religious practice not found in scriptures, the Fifth Dalai Lama definitely has a point here. The Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-rgya-mtsho (1617–1682) “Gzun-gnas blo-ldan ngo-mtshar skyed-byed gzung-bul-gyi lag-len ‘khrul spong nyin-mor byed-pa” Rituals of Rdo-rje-brag (Leh, 1973) pp. 389–437 on p. 402, but more generally on pp. 400–3. This work is missing one folio and some part folios. A complete copy is located at The Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharmsala; access no. pa 1053.
73) “La-lad gdam-pa-sgrub byin-’byin bzhag-sprul dgos-sa’i” Sdom Gsum Rab-dbye (see note 7 above) p. 311.1.4. According to some commentators on the Sdom Gsum Rab-dbye (see note 27 and note 48 above) it was Atiśa’s precepts.
74) Gregory Schopen (see note 13 above) and references there. Yael Bentor, see note 16 above.
consecration depicted by Atiša. The main difference is in the use of the mirror to permeate the grain/flowers with the ‘verse of interdependent origination’. According to Atiša this was performed through the recitation of that verse. The consecration ritual as it is performed today incorporates both these practices. As was mentioned above, the present-day consecrations are characteristically tantric rituals. However they did not entirely supplant the several earlier forms of consecrations.

Another later writer, Gung-thang-pa (1762–1828) in writing on the history of the consecration ritual supports Sa-skya Pandita. He asserts that both the gāndī consecration and the consecration by means of scattering flowers blessed by the ‘verse of interdependent origination’ are merely designated as consecrations; however they do not possess the essential characteristics of consecration76).

Contemporary Tibetan Practices

I recently observed the annual three-day re-consecration of Bodhanath stūpa performed in the assembly hall of the Dge-lugs-pa monastery Dga’-ldan-chos-’phel-gling77). During the preparatory steps of the ritual the ‘verse of interdependent origination’, together with the seed-syllables of the five Tathāgatas, was written on paper and placed under the stūpa. The ritual master then recited the ‘verse of interdependent origination’. Through this ritual action the mantras pervade the grain/flowers79). In the central part of the consecration (the only part which was performed publicly in front of the stūpa), after circumambulating the stūpa, two ritual steps were performed:

1. Requesting the tantric deity to firmly abide in the stūpa.
2. Scattering of the grain and ‘flowers’ into which the ‘verse of interdependent origination’ and the seed-syllables had been dissolved80).

Thus, in this ritual the blessing of the ‘verse of interdependent origination’ stands side by side with the core of the tantric component of the consecration. Furthermore, as was mentioned above, the short forms of consecration consist mainly of those two ritual actions. In other consecration rituals which I observed recently in Tibetan monasteries in Kathmandu Valley a mirror was not used. Instead the scattering of grain/flowers onto which the ‘verse of interdependent origination’ was recited was performed within the mngag-dbul (enthrone ment offering) section81). Nevertheless, the sūtra-style consecration is always included in the present tantric consecration ritual.


78) For Sanskrit campaka, see Mahāyānapraṇīti #6151. These are seeds, which grow in a large pod, and look like white dry flowers. They are widely used in Tibetan rituals as a substitute for flowers.

79) Rab-gnas p. 361.3–5. This ritual action was preceded by 1. the invitation of the blessing of the Victorious Ones and their sons together with all the qualities of existence and peace to the ‘flowers’ and grain and 2. by the recitation of the ‘verse of interdependent origination’ one hundred times. On pp. 360.6–361.3.

80) Rab-gnas pp.440.6–442.5. This ritual action is mentioned also by Losang Paldhen Gyaltshur and Anthony H. N. Verwey, (see note 4) on p. 179.

81) In most cases the ritual master while reciting the ‘verse of interdependent origination’ holds a dhārani thread (gzungs-thag) in his hand. The other end is tied to the object being consecrated. The recited gāthā is assumed to coil around the dhārani thread, reach the stūpa or image and permeate it with its presence.
Conclusions

To conclude, present-day Tibetan consecration rituals, as is the case with many other Tibetan rituals, are composite. Their main part, as mentioned above, is the invitation of the Enlightened Awareness Being and the request for it to remain in the consecrated object (brtan-bzhugs). However, the ritual incorporates various early forms of consecration such as the sūtra-style consecration, eye opening ritual (spyin-dbye), bathing (khrus-gsol), and enthronement offerings (mnga'-dbus)\(^{82}\).

Thus, the sūtra-style consecration ritual provides us with another example for the preservation of ritual actions sanctified by previous masters. Sometimes earlier forms of ritual were modified to better accord with developments in the theoretical level of the religion, but they were not supplanted\(^ {83}\). Various historical strata are still preserved at the core of the present-day consecration ritual.

In conclusion, even though some of Tibet's most renowned scholars expressed their opinions about sūtra-style consecration, this controversy is primarily a matter of designations and classifications. It proves its importance to us mainly for the light it sheds on the historical development of the consecration ritual.

\(^ {82}\) Additional examples for Tibetan rituals whose histories follow theoretical developments in the religion are burnt offering ritual sbyin-rreg (Sanskrit: homa) and the bathing ritual khrus-gsol (Sanskrit usually: snana). The Tibetan sbyin-rreg includes various elements rooted in the Vedic burnt offering. Agni is invited, offerings are made to him, etc. The main part of the ritual, however, centers around the tantric deity. The Tibetan khrus-gsol ritual sometimes consists of two phases, the ordinary bath (phal-khrus) and the supreme bath (mchog-khrus). The ordinary bath relies heavily on pre-tantric rituals common also to other traditions in the Indian subcontinent, while the supreme bath is actually conferred by the tantric deities.

\(^ {83}\) For example, in this case the blessing by the seed-syllables (Sanskrit: ὃια) of the five Tathāgatas is added to the blessing by the 'verse of interdependent origination'.