

The Ghost in Mañjuśrī's Maṇḍala: Excavating Trülku Drakpa Gyeltsen's Prophecies in the Ruins of the Qing

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Prophecy in the republic of Inner Asian letters is a poetics of space. For monastic historians since at least the twelfth century, the citation and interpretation of prophecy has been a literary practice to arrange new intimacies, new affect, and new moral obligations. People and events otherwise separated by the chronological tyranny of narrative history and the normative proximities of genealogy and transmission are set into new relation. This article explores a scene of prophetic excavation along the Tibet-Mongol interface in the early twentieth century. Then, monks from one of Yeke-yin Küriy-e's philosophical colleges recovered a cache of texts attributed to Trülku Drakpa Gyeltsen (1619–56), a long-repressed Central Tibetan contemporary of the 5th Dalai Lama Ngawang Lozang Gyatso (1617–82). Among their discoveries was a prophetic dream journal that had apparently survived the seventeenth-century erasure of Drakpa Gyeltsen's larger oeuvre. In the early twentieth-century Mongolian reading, Trülku Drakpa Gyeltsen's recovered prophecies articulate a vision of trans-Asian political and religious sovereignty tied deeply to Mañjuśrī as curator of both the Gélukpa Buddhist tradition and the Qing imperial project (1644–1912). This article follows the ways that these “users” of Trülku Drakpa Gyeltsen's prophecies sought desperately to refigure the violences of the Qing ruins by appeal to the intimacies revealed in those long-forgotten dreams.