

“TURNING THE WHEEL OF THE DHARMA
IN ZHING SA VA LUNG”
THE DPAL RI SPRUL SKUS (17TH TO 20TH CENTURIES)

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1. *Introduction*

Among the incarnation lineages or “lines of rebirth” (*skyes rabs*) which concentrated their activities within Sikkim, the “hidden land” (*sbas yul*) called ’Bras mo ljongs, the most outstanding—both on account of its religious legacy in Tibet and its role in later Sikkimese history—is that of lHa btsun Nam mkha’ ’jigs med (1597-1653). This master, also known as Kun bzang rnam rgyal and dubbed the “Madman from Kong[po]” (*kong smyon*), was among the three Tibetan teachers considered as spiritual masters of the first Buddhist king of the country, and he is still celebrated today for having introduced the doctrine of the “Great Perfection” (*rdzogs chen*) to this part of the Himalayas. The course his life took is a matter of general knowledge, and his collected writings are still extant. Among these one finds various texts concerning Sikkim. Of special interest is one text devoted to his journey to the hidden land which started in the year 1646; it was at that time that Nam mkha’ ’jigs med opened the “Rice Valley” and established sundry hermitages along the way.¹

In comparison to these sources, the known details of the short life of Ngag dbang Kun bzang ’jigs med (b. 1656), the immediate re-embodiment of lHa btsun Nam mkha’ ’jigs med, are quite sparse. But we do know that his incarnation status was acknowledged by the Fifth Dalai Bla ma Ngag dbang Blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617-1682) and that

¹ For a biographical account of lHa btsun Nam mkha’ ’jigs med as a master of the rNying ma pa school, see Dudjom Rinpoche (1991: 818-620). A full treatment of the stages of his life and the next three members of the “chain of incarnations of lHa btsun [Nam mkha’ ’jigs med]” (*lha btsun sku phreng*) is contained in lHa Tshe ring: *Blo gsar gzhon nu dga’ ston*, pp. 65-195. The writings describing his travels in Sikkim fall under the genre of “route descriptions” (*lam yig*); see especially Nam mkha’ ’jigs med: *Rab gsal nyin byed ’bar ba’i ’od stong*, pp. 462.3 ff. This seems to be the work referred to in local historiography as the “book describing the various caves and peaks in Sikkim after having visited the places on foot”; see Steinmann (1998:135). It is used as a literary source for describing the arrival of lHa btsun Nam mkha’ ’jigs med in Sikkim in Mullard (2005: 35-36) and Mullard (2009: 168-178).

he was clearly granted a monastic estate in Central Tibet by the newly established dGa' ldan pho brang government.²

The situation is different with respect to the third member of the incarnation lineage, inasmuch as a compendious autobiography of lHa btsun sPrul sku 'Jigs med dpa' bo (b. 1682) has survived. This work sheds light on the political and religious conditions in Sikkim under Phyag rdor rnam rgyal (1686-1717) and 'Gyur med rnam rgyal (1707-1734), respectively the third and fourth Buddhist rulers—particularly the spread of the teaching traditions of sMin grol gling and the “new treasures” (*gter gsar*) of Rig 'dzin gTer bdag gling pa (1646-1714). These ties between the rNying ma pa monastery in Central Tibet and the royal court became even closer when in 1719 the wife and daughters of Rig 'dzin gTer bdag gling pa escaped the Dzungar armies in Tibet and took refuge in the hidden land of 'Bras mo ljongs. The party was welcomed by lHa btsun sPrul sku 'Jigs med dpa' bo and the ruler 'Gyur med rnam rgyal, and later one of the daughters was given in marriage to the king. Another daughter, the famous Mi 'gyur dpal gyi sgron ma (1699-1769), conferred various teachings on the religious authorities of the country, including lHa btsun sPrul sku 'Jigs med dpa' bo. The latter accompanied Mi 'gyur dpal gyi sgron ma when she went back to Tibet, visiting together with her sacred sites associated with his predecessor (among others, Grub gnas Padma thang). During these travels he made use of the text describing these sites penned by lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med.³

² Details on the life of Ngag dbang Kun bzang 'jigs med can be found in lHa Tshe ring: *Blo gsar gzhon nu'i dga' ston*, pp. 143.3-147.9. The monastic estate which the incarnation received from the dGa' ldan pho brang government was known as dPal ri dgon pa or Chu mo dPal gyi ri, a former establishment of the 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud pa school; see *ibid.*, pp. 145.5-17. This information can be gleaned from the autobiography of the third lHa btsun sPrul sku, who seems to have based his account on oral sources; see 'Jigs med dpa' bo: *mThong grol chen mo*, pp. 42.4-44.1. For the location of the monastery between Shigatse and Gyantse, see Waddell (1991: 277).

³ The autobiography of 'Jigs med dpa' bo served as the main source for the presentation of his life in lHa Tshe ring: *Blo gsar gzhon nu'i dga' ston*, pp. 147.10-187.8; compare Mullard (2005: 43-46) and Vandenhelsken (2006: 79-82) regarding 'Jigs med dpa' bo's place in Sikkimese political and religious history. The text contains a complete “record of teachings received” (*gsan yig*) by the Third lHa btsun sPrul sku, including the teaching traditions obtained from Rig 'dzin gTer bdag gling pa; see 'Jigs med dpa' bo: *mThong grol chen mo*, pp. 118.2-196.1. The details of the arrival of rJe btsun Mi 'gyur dpal gyi sgron ma in Sikkim together with her mother and two sisters in the year 1719 can be found *ibid.*, pp. 525.3-533.4; further details of the marriage between the daughter of gTer bdag gling and 'Gyur med rnam rgyal, the fourth Buddhist ruler of Sikkim, are given in Mullard (2009: 258-259). For the events of the flight from Tibet and the sojourn in 'Bras mo ljongs as described in the

The next two members of the incarnation lineage of lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med visited Sikkim during the reign of rNam rgyal phun tshogs (1733-1779), the fifth Buddhist ruler of Sikkim. Their activities are particularly associated with the sacred site of Do bo lung. Like his predecessors Kun bzang 'jigs med rgya mtsho, the Fourth lHa btsun sPrul sku, had received his training in sMin grol gling, and on his first journey to 'Bras mo ljongs he opened a hidden land known as Do lung sKyid mo tshal. The monastic community established there was later cared for by his successor, Padma bDe chen rgya mtsho, the Fifth lHa btsun sPrul sku. It was to that remote spot in the Sikkimese Himalayas where personal belongings of lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med, including old books and the collected writings of the master, were brought to safety during an invasion of Gorkha troops into Sikkim in the year 1816.⁴

In the following I will look more closely at the lives of the first three members of this incarnation lineage and try to identify the main persons involved in establishing it. Among them, it turns out, are persons who had close family ties to Nam mkha' 'jigs med and who produced incarnation lineages of their own.

2. *The Fifth Dalai Bla ma and the lHa btsun sPrul skus*

Having opened the hidden land 'Bras mo ljongs and revealed treasures in a "pure vision" (*dag snang*), lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med returned to Tibet in 1651 and offered his visionary teachings to the Fifth Dalai Bla ma Ngag dbang Blo bzang rgya mtsho. This meeting is recorded in the autobiography of this former religious and secular head of Tibet. It took place at the monastery of 'Bras spungs in the vicinity of lHa sa. Before the meeting lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med had

biography of rJe btsun Mi 'gyur dpal gyi sgron ma, see Khyung po ras pa: *Dad pa'i gdung sel*, pp. 76.2-100.2; the suppression of the rNying ma pa school during the period of the Dzungar invasion is put in context in Ehrhard (2003: 662-663). The third lHa btsun sPrul sku used the work of his predecessor on earlier occasions, too, for the purpose of identifying sacred sites in 'Bras mo ljongs; see 'Jigs med dpa' bo: *mThong grol chen mo*, pp. 396.3 & 481.4.

⁴ For the life of Kun bzang 'Jigs med rgya mtsho and the foundation of the monastery of Do lung Rig 'dzin mchog grub gling, see lHa Tshe ring: *Blo gsar gzhon nu'i dga' ston*, pp. 187.9-195.2. Compare the description of the activities of the Fourth and Fifth lHa btsun sPrul skus during the rule of rNam rgyal phun tshogs in Chos dbang: *bDen pa kun gsal*, pp. 154.4-17 & 158.10-159.14. The information that the personal belongings of lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med and individual ritual items were safeguarded in Do bo lung during the Gorkha invasion is based on White (1999: 66-67).

encountered Zur Chos dbyings rang grol (1604-1669), one of the teachers of the Fifth Dalai Bla ma, at Tshal Gung thang, to the north-east of the Tibetan capital:

Kun bzang rnam rgyal, the adept of [the doctrine of] the Great Perfection from Kong po, arrived after he had opened the gate of the sacred site 'Bras [mo] ljons and [witnessed] the appearance of many profound teachings [in] a vision at lHa ri Rin c[h]en spungs [= lHa ri snying phug]. [He came] in order to perform religious ceremonies as a means of [ensuring] the happiness of the Tibetan subjects. At [Tshal] Gung thang he offered full pronouncements of his doctrine to the noble teacher [= Zur Chos dbyings rang grol]. He also performed, together with the master and his disciples, one ritual practice of the *Rig 'dzin srog sgrub* [cycle].

He came in person to [the monastery of] 'Bras spungs, whence an auspicious connection was established [that favoured] his staying a long time [there]. He gave different kinds of soil, stones [and] wood from 'Bras [mo] gshongs [to me]—a rainbow crystal and so forth. To him I offered [in return] the reading authorization for a secret scripture of the *Tshe sgrub bdud rtsi 'khyil ba*, [one] of the New Treasures of the Great Vidyādhara [= Rig 'dzin gTer bdag gling pa].⁵

During his stay in Tshal Gung thang lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med composed several literary works, including a “secret biography” (*gsang ba'i rnam thar*) of one Khrag thung Hūṃṃ dkar. (This is obviously an alternative spelling of Hūṃṃkara, the name of an important early

⁵ See Ngag dbang Blo bzang rgya mtsho: *Du kū la'i gos bzang*, vol 1, p. 317.13-21 (*kong po rdzogs chen pa kun zang rnam rgyal gyis 'bras gshongs gnas sgo phye nas lha ri rin cen spungs par dag snang gi zab chos mang du byung ba bod 'bangs bde thabs kyi rim gro mdzad par byon te gung thang du rje bla mar chos bka' rnam rdzogs par phul / dpon slob lhan du rigs [= rig] 'dzin srog sgrub kyi sgrub pa zhig kyang mdzad / 'bras spungs su ngos byon gyis yun du gnas pa'i rten 'brel bsgrigs shing 'ja' shal mtshan sogs 'bras gshongs kyi sa sna rdo shing du ma byin / phar rigs [= rig] 'dzin chen po'i gter gsar gyi tshe sgrub bdud rtsi 'khyil ba'i gsang yig lung phul*). These events are also recorded in the biography of Zur Chos dbyings rang grol written by the Fifth Bla ma; see Ngag dbang Blo bzang rgya mtsho: *Theg mchog bstan pa'i shing rta*, p. 197.1-3, and lHa Tshe ring: *Blo gsar gzhon nu'i dga' ston*, p. 137.5-16. For the activities of Zur Chos dbyings rang grol at Tshal Gung thang according to the register of the monastery, see Sørensen & Hazod (2007: 246-250). It is reported that as a result of the meeting between the Fifth Dalai Bla ma and lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med a relationship was established between Ngag dbang Blo bzang rgya mtsho and Phun tshogs rnam rgyal, the first Buddhist ruler of Tibet; see Chos dbang: *bDen don kun gsal*, pp. 117.21-118.13. Phun tshogs rnam rgyal was accorded the status of Dharmarāja on that same occasion and received formal notice of this along with various ritual implements; these items, too, were later safeguarded at Do bo lung.

lineage-holder of the “spoken teachings” (*bka' ma*) of the rNying ma pa school). The person in question is described by the author as his main spiritual son and a direct “nephew” (*rigs dbon*), and reference is made to his collected writings and to the fact that they were transmitted as a *gsung 'bum* collection. The work itself was composed to commemorate his death and is testimony to the fact that he had quite close spiritual and family ties to lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med. The date of his passing is given as the twenty-first day of the twelfth Tibetan month of the iron [male] tiger year [= 1650]. According to the illumination on the introductory folio of the text, this nephew of lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med was known as “Noble Rig 'dzin lhun grub, the Great Vajradhara” (*rje rig 'dzin lhun grub rdo rje 'dzin pa chen po*).⁶

A few years later, in 1660, the reincarnation of lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med was introduced to the Fifth Dalai Bla ma, and a religious name was given to the young boy of Bhutanese origin. During this ceremony, as on other occasions, one Chos dbyings lhun grub was among those admitted into the presence of the Fifth Dalai Bla ma. He, too, is called a “nephew” (*dbon po*) of lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med:

I seized the first lock of hair of the rebirth of lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med, the adept of [the doctrine of] the Great Perfection from Kong po, and gave him the name Ngag dbang Kun bzang 'jigs med. At the urging of Chos [dbyings] lhun[grub] (d. 1684), the nephew [of lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med], I wrote something [to the effect] that my long life and that of the reincarnation should be joined together on equal terms.⁷

⁶ See Nam mkha' 'jigs med: *Khrag 'thung hūṃ dkar gyi gsang ba'i rnam thar*, fol. 1b. Concerning Hūṃkara, who was born in Nepal and played an important role in transmitting the spoken teaching tradition of the Yang dag precepts of Mahāyoga, see Dudjom Rinpoche (1991: 475-477). For the date of the composition of the text, see Nam mkha' 'jigs med, op. cit., fol. 7b/4: “Written at the miraculously manifested palace of [Tshal] Gung thang on the twenty-first [day] of the second month, [the day] of the memorial offerings for this noble one” (*zhes rje 'de nyid kyi dus mchod zla ba gnyis pa'i nyer gcig la gung thang sprul pa'i pho brang du bris pa'o*); compare the final line of the colophon, fol. 8a/1-2: “They are immaculate words composed at the palace of bDe ba rdo rje in [Tshal] Gung thang in the second month of the iron [female] hare [year] [= 1651] (*ljags yos dbo yi zla bar gung thang bde ba rdo rje pho brang du mdzad pa'i zhal gsung dri ma med pa yin 'dug go*). For the extant writings of Rig 'dzin lhun grub, see Appendix I; they include, along with spiritual songs, a substantial collection of “instructions” (*zhal gdams*).

⁷ See Ngag dbang Blo bzang rgya mtsho: *Du kū la'i gos bzang*, vol. 1, p. 593.2-6 (*kong po rdzogs chen pa lha btsun nam mkha' 'jigs med kyi sku skye'i skra phud blangs mtshan ngag dbang kun bzang 'jigs med du btags / dbon po chos lhun pas*

Accordingly, there existed at least two nephews of lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med, each of whom was a religious master in his own right, and one of whom was directly involved in the process of acknowledging the status of his uncle's reincarnation, and thus in initiating the lineage of the lHa btsun sPrul skus.

3. *The Two lHa dbon and their Reincarnations*

The autobiography of lHa btsun sPrul sku 'Jigs med dpa' bo contains a great deal of information on the events surrounding the recognition of the next reincarnation. The whole process began with a prophecy concerning the right candidate, as requested by the Fifth Dalai Bla ma, obviously in the year of his own death, from the gNas chung oracle. Once again mention is made of Chos dbyings lhun grub, who had already had a hand in installing the previous lHa btsun sPrul sku. As Chos dyings lhun grub was now residing in Sikkim and signs had already manifested that the end of his life was approaching, the question arose among the concerned authorities—including bsTan srung nam rgyal (1644-1699), the second Buddhist ruler of the country—as to who would be a possible candidate for the task of looking after the new reincarnation:

On that occasion, when the time was near that the expanse that had manifested as a mirage taken to be real—[that is, the body] of Chos dbyings lhun grub, the youngest of the three nephews [who were] Dharma sons of the glorious Khrag 'thung chen po [= lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med]—would perish in Sikkim, those [persons] dwelling in his presence, including gNam lcags (the master [and his] disciples), Srid zhi khyab brdal, gSang chen dbang po and the king of Sikkim, bsTan srung nam rgyal, asked [Chos dbyings lhun grub] if the

bskul pa'i nged rang dang sku skye'i brtan bzhugs bsdebs mtshungs su yod pa zhig bris); the same account can be found in lHa Tshe ring: *Blo gsar gzhon nu'i dga' ston*, pp. 143.14-144.2. The Fifth Dalai Bla ma and Chos dbyings lhun grub had met on an earlier occasion, during which the former was requested to compose a similar long-life prayer for the reincarnation; see Ngag dbang Blo bzang rgya mtsho: *Du kū la'i gos bzang*, vol. 1, p. 586.1-2 (*dbon po chos lhun pas bskul ba'i lha btsun kun bzang rnam rgyal gyi sku skye'i brtan bzhugs byas*), and lHa Tshe ring: *Blo gsar gzhon nu'i dga' ston*, p. 143.13-14. After the early death of Ngag dbang Kun bzang 'jigs med, another prayer was composed by the Fifth Dalai Bla ma upon the request of Chos dbying lhun grub for his swift rebirth; see Ngag dbang Blo bzang rgya mtsho: *Rab dkar dge ba'i chu klung*, vol. 1, pp. 349.3-350.3.

Reincarnation from [g]Zar would be worthy to take responsibility for [the reincarnation of] the adept of the Great Perfection.⁸

According to this information, there were a total of three nephews of IHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med, of whom Chos dbyings lhun grub was the youngest. As already noted, the one whose name was Rig 'dzin lhun grub—his uncle was personally involved, after the journey to 'Bras mo ljongs, in establishing his religious legacy—died at a quite early age. Up to now no information has surfaced on the name and dates of the third nephew.

The autobiography of 'Jigs med dpa' bo provides further details on the early education of the Second IHa btsun sPrul sku. It turns out that there was a reincarnation of Rig 'dzin lhun grub, but unfortunately his name is not given in the text. He is called “the reincarnation of Rig 'dzin lhun grub, the nephew of IHa[btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med]” (*lha dbon rig 'dzin lhun grub kyi yang srid*). An equivalent expression is found in connection with the second nephew whom we know by name, he having been followed by an incarnation perhaps of Sikkimese origin. This latter is known as “the reincarnation of Chos dbyings lhun grub, the nephew of IHa[btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med]” (*lha dbon chos dbyings lhun grub kyi yang srid*). This reincarnation bears the name [mKhan chen] Rol pa'i rdo rje. He was a close associate of 'Jigs med dpa' bo starting from the days of his early training in the monastery of [g]Zar. A more detailed study of the period when 'Jigs med dpa' bo was active in Sikkim and at the court of Phyag rdor nam rgyal and

⁸ See 'Jigs med dpa' bo: *mThong grol chen mo*, p. 41.1-4 (*de'i tshe na dpal khrag thung chen po'i chos sras rigs dbon gsum yod pa'i chung mtha' chos dbyings lhun grub dpal gyi 'bras mo ljongs su rtag 'dzin sgyu ma'i snang tshul rgya zhig par nye skabs / drung du gnas pa dpon slob gnam lcags dang / srid zhi khyab gdal dang / gsang chen dbang po / 'bras ljongs rgyal po bstan bsrung nam rgyal la sogs pa rnams kyi rdzogs chen pa'i 'gan khu da cha / zar sprul sku 'os sam zhus par*). Compare IHa Tshe ring: *Blo gzar gzhon nu'i dga' ston*, pp. 151.9-153.1, where Chos dbyings lhun grub's answer is given and the early education of 'Jigs med dpa' bo is recapitulated up to his twelfth year. The candidate for inviting the Third IHa btsun sPrul sku to his former residence turned out not to be the proposed “Reincarnation from [g]Zar” (*zar sprul sku*) but the mentioned gNam lcags, who installed the young boy at dPal gyi dgon pa also known as Chu mo dPal gyi ri. Afterwards the youth studied under Kun bzang Tshe dbang, also known as the “Reincarnation from dPal ri” (*dpal ri sprul sku*), who seems to have been none other than the “Reincarnation from [g]Zar.” The monastery of [g]Zar lies to the south-east of the lake mTsho mo Drel thang and is not far from the Tibet-Sikkim border. Its foundation is associated with the journey undertaken by IHa btsun Rin chen nam rgyal; see Waddell (1991: 49). This monastery and its incarnation lineage is different from the one of the same name presented in this article.

'Gyur med rnam rgyal will surely set in greater relief the religious influence of these two masters, who were regarded respectively as reincarnations of lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med and of the latter's nephew Chos dbyings lhun grub.⁹

As the early phase of the incarnation lineage which goes back to Rig 'dzin lhun grub, the other nephew, is not documented in a comparably informative way, I now turn to literary sources which shed light on the later members of the lineage and on their activities in Tibet and the Sikkimese Himalayas.

4. *The Lineage of the dPal ri sPrul sku*

In a historiographical work of the rNying ma pa school completed in 1882 we find the following information about a religious master who was part of the incarnation lineage which traces its origin back to Rig 'dzin lhun grub, regarded in this source as the brother of lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med:

Among those who in later times have held the teaching tradition of sMin [grol] gling is my own guide, he of accomplished speech, to whom I am most grateful, [namely] Rig 'dzin Padma dBang rgyal rdo rje (1779-1841), the noble incarnation of Pad ri [= dPal ri] [in] gTsang.

It was prophesied that this noble one would be the reincarnation of the true Indian Vidyādhara Hūṃ chen Kara. He was born in Yid 'ong sa mang [in] sPo bo as the re-embodiment of him [who is known as] rDo rje Chos dbyings yongs grol, who had come in succession after Khrag 'thung Hūṃkara, the brother of lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med. He was installed on the throne of Pad ri [= dPal ri] and the lHa lung residence by Klong gsal, the treasurer of the noble previous incarnation [i.e. rDo rje Chos dbyings yongs grol]. At sMin [grol]

⁹ For references to the reincarnation of Rig 'dzin lhun grub in the year 1687, see 'Jigs med dpa' bo: *mThong grol chen mo*, pp. 45.4 ff. The first meeting between 'Jigs med dpa' bo and [mKhan chen] Rol pa'i rdo rje is recounted *ibid.*, pp. 74.5 ff. In this passage, the father of the reincarnation of Chos dbyings lhun grub is called a "king" (*radza*= *rāja*); this implies that [mKhan chen] Rol pa'i rdo rje was the physical son of bsTan srung rnam rgyal. Phyag rdor rnam rgyal, the third Buddhist ruler of Sikkim, is characterized in local historiography as being connected with three "great beings" (*skyes chen gsum*). These persons are the third lHa btsun sPrul sku 'Jigs med dpa' bo, mKhan chen Rol pa'i rdo rje (the reincarnation of lHa dbang Chos nyid lhun grub [= lHa dbon Chos dbyings lhun grub]) and gZar dPal ri sprul sku; see Chos dbang: *bDen don kun gsal me long*, p. 126.8-16. If the above observation is true, Phyag rdor rnam rgyal and mKhan chen Rol pa'i rdo rje would have been brothers. For further information on the religious revival and reform due to the influential role of 'Jigs med dpa' bo at the Sikkimese court, compare Mullard (2009: 252-264).

gling he offered a lock of his hair to the previous throne-holder, 'Gyur med Phrin las rnam rgyal; he studied with aspiration in sMin [grol] gling itself and—relying on the lotus feet of many great beings, headed by the great throne-[holder] (i.e. 'Gyur med Phrin las rnam rgyal)—listened extensively [to the Buddhist teachings].

As he had seen through to completion the approaching to [and] attaining of [the presence of his personal deity] at many solitary places [that housed such treasure cycles] as *Bla ma zhi drag*, *Thugs rje chen po bde gshegs kun 'dus* [and] *sGrub sde brgyad pa* [of Rig 'dzin gTer bdag gling pa], the qualities associated with spiritual experience [and] realisations were born [in him]. When the time arrived to act for the benefit of beings by caring for others with compassion, he was honoured as the religious teacher of the king, the monarch of 'Bras [mo] ljongs [= gTsug phud rnam rgyal (1785-1864)], [and] his activities in the regions of the hidden place [were] extensive. In dBus gtsang, too, [and] in the southern regions [and] in Nyang [po] [and] Kong [po] he acted solely for the benefit of the Buddhist doctrine [and] beings.

[He was of] particularly great vision in regard to the impartiality of [both] the new [and] old [mantras], above all [the teachings of] the Early Translations. Whatever he was able to hear and examine studiously the rare teaching traditions—and given the great wave of his desire to spread it joyfully to others—he offered [to disciples,] first and foremost the previous throne-holder, Sangs rgyas Kun dga' chos mchog from sMin [grol] gling. [He showed his] unsurpassable kindness in extending the life of the Buddhist doctrine at the end of time.

I myself, too, when I heard the name of this noble one, immediately sought his presence, and at Pad ri bKra shis 'od 'bar and the lHa lung residence—[these] two—obtained most of the treasure teachings of 'Ja' tshon [snying po] and gTer bdag gling pa; the upper and lower treasure mines (i.e. the treasure cycles of [respectively] Nyang ral Nyi ma'i 'od zer and Gu ru Chos kyi dbang phyug); the 'Dod 'jo bum bzang [of gTer bdag gling pa]; the *g.Yu thog snying thig*, the Seven Treasuries [and the cycle] *Ngal gso skor [gsum]* of Klong chen [Rab 'byams pa]; the *Rig 'dzin srog sgrub* [and] *rDo rje snying po* [of lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med] and many other sMin grol gling teachings.

Afterwards [Rig 'dzin Padma dBang rgyal rdo rje] moved for a brief period to the region of Western Tibet for the great benefit of the Buddhist doctrine [and sentient] beings—in order, among other things, to turn back the foreign armies at the border. Upon orders of the central government [in Tibet] he established facilities (lit. 'means of happiness') in a fitting manner in important places [and] localities up to Gangs Ti se (i.e. Mount Kailāśa). In the iron [female] ox year [=

1841], at the age of sixty-three, while he was uninterruptedly turning the wheel of the Dharma in the region of Zhing sa Va lung, he demonstrated how to contract his physical form into the Dharmadhatu (i.e. passed away).

The precious high incarnation [of Rig 'dzin Padma dBang rgyal rdo rje] was born as the son of a government clerk in gZhis [kha] rtse [in] gTsang. He studied at sMin [grol] gling, and thanks to his having heard the pronouncements of the precious throne-holder (i.e. Sangs rgyas Kun dga' mchog) and lCags sbug rin po che O rgyan rNam grol dbang po, a direct disciple of the previous [incarnation], and others, he is [still] living and engaging in (lit. 'seizing') [actions] for the glory of the Buddhist doctrine and sentient beings.¹⁰

¹⁰ See Kun bzang Nges don klong yangs: *Nor bu do shal*, pp. 319.1-321.3 (*dus phyi su smin gling chos rgyun 'dzin pa'i nang nas mdzad pa phyag rjes bka' drin che ba bdag cag gi rnam 'dren dam pa gtsang pad ri sku gong ma rig 'dzin padma dbang rgyal rdo rje ste / dam pa 'di ni rgya gar gyi yang dag rig 'dzin slob dpon hūm chen ka ra'i rnam sprul du lung gis zin cing / lha btsun nam mkha' 'jigs med kyi sku mched khrag 'thung hūm ka ra nas rim par rdo rje chos dbyings yongs grol / de'i yang srid spo bo yid 'ong sa mang zhes par sku bltams / rje gong ma'i phyag mdzod klong gsal gyis pad ri dang / lha lung gdan sa'i khri la bkod / smin gling du khri rin po che 'gyur med phrin las rnam rgyal la gtsug phud phul / smin gling rang du thugs gnyer gsan sbyongs dang / khri chen gtso gyur gyi skyes chen mang po'i zhabs pad bsten nas gsan rgya cher mdzad / bla ma zhi drag thugs rje chen po bde gshegs kun 'dus / sgrub sde brgyad pa sogs dben gnas du mar bsnyen sgrub mthar phyin mdzad pas nyams rtogs yon tan 'khrungs / thugs rjes gzhan rjes su 'dzin pa'i 'gro don dus babs kyis 'bras ljongs sa spyod rgyal po'i dbu blar bkur te sbas gnas phyogs su phrin las che / gzhan yang dbus gtsang / lho rgyud / nyang kong phyogs su bstan 'gro'i don kho na mdzad cing / khyad par snga 'gyur gtso bor gyur pa'i gsar rnying ris med la dag snang che / chos rgyun dkon pa rnam rtsol ba chen po'i rtsad gcos kyis gsan gang thub dang / gzhan la spel bar skyo bsun med pa'i thugs dgongs brlabs po ches gtso cher smin gling du khri rin po che sangs rgyas kun dga' chos mchog la 'bul bar mdzad pa sogs dus mthar bstan pa'i srog 'thud pa'i bka' drin bla na med / bdag gis kyang dam pa 'di'i mtshan snyan thos 'dzin lam du son pas zhabs drung du bsnyegs nas / pad ri bkra shis 'od dang / lha lung gdan sa gnyis su 'ja' tshon dang / gter bdag gling pa'i gter chos phal cher dang / gter kha gong 'og / 'dod jo'i bum bzang / g.yu thog snying thig / klong chen mdzod bdun ngal gso skor / rig 'dzin srog sgrub / rdo rje snying po sogs smin grol chos bka' mang po'i bka drin thob / de nas mi ring bar stod phyogs su mtha dmag bzlog pa sogs bstan 'gro'i don chen slad du 'chi kha bsgyur gnang ste gangs ti si'i (= se'i) bar du sa gnad (= gnas) che sar gzhung sa'i bka' brel bde thabs legs par grub ste / zhing sa va lung phyogs su chos 'khor rgyun mi chad du bskor bzhin dgung lo re gsum sa lcags glang lor gzugs sku chos dbyings su bsdu tshul bstan pa slar yang / mchog sprul rin po che gtsar (= gtsang) gzhis rtse las drung gi sras su sku bltams pa smin gling du gsan sbyongs dang / khri rin po che dang / gong ma'i dngos slob lcags sbug rin po che o rgyan rnam grol dbang po sogs la chos bka' gsan bzhes kyis bstan 'gro'i dpal su 'tsho zhing gzhes pa'o).*

This account was written by a disciple of Rig 'dzin Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje who was a native of Kong po and who has left two autobiographical works to us along with his work on the history of the rNying ma pa tradition. With the help of both of them it is possible to date the encounter with the master to the year 1838; it took place at the stated lHa lung residence, whence Rig 'dzin Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje proceeded directly to gTsang and Sikkim in order to perform the rituals requested by the Tibetan government. These activities need to be seen in the context of the so-called Tibetan-Dogra war, which lasted from 1834 to 1842, and included military engagements between the invading troops of the Dogra Raja of Jammu and Tibetan forces at mNga' ris skor gsum in Western Tibet. Kun bzang Nges don klong yangs was in contact with his teacher during this period, and his memoirs mention that Rig 'dzin Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje—described earlier as the preceptor of the tenth king of Sikkim—asked him to accept the position of *bla mchod* of gTsug phud rnam rgyal, and thence to head on to 'Bras mo ljongs.¹¹

Once again it was mainly the teaching tradition of sMin grol gling—during this period, represented by 'Gyur med 'Phrin las rnam rgyal and Sangs rgyas Kun dga' mchog, respectively the fifth and seventh throne-holders of the rNying ma pa monastery in Central Tibet—that were spread by Rig 'dzin Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje.¹² Concerning the incarnation lineage of which he was a part, it is stated

¹¹ The studies under Rig 'dzin Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje are described in Kun bzang Nges don klong yangs: *sGra dbyangs lha mo'i gling bu*, pp. 335.1-343.5, and *Ngo mtshar dpyid kyi rgyal mo'i rang sgra*, pp. 177.1-178.2. An overview of the main events of the Tibetan-Dogra war is given in Tsepon W.D. Shakabpa (1967:176-180); for the written correspondence that formed the basis of a settlement between Ladakh and Tibet see (*ibid.*: 327-328). See also the chapter titled “War between Tibet and Ladvags” (*bod dang / la dvags dmag 'khrug skor*) in Zhva sgab pa dBang phyug bde ldan: *Blo gsar byung ba dga' ba'i rol mtsho*, vol. 2, pp. 3.10-11.5. The exchange of letters between Rig 'dzin Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje and his disciple, and the invitation to visit Sikkim, are noted in Kun bzang Nges don klong yangs: *sGra dbyangs lha mo'i gling bu*, p. 349.4-6. The site of the teacher's demise is given in the text as sTod gangs blon chen; see *ibid.*, p. 359.5-6. This epithet applies—along with “lord minister” (*jo bo blon po*)—to Mount Makalu in the eastern part of the Nepalese Himalayas, close to Mount Everest; see Diemberger (1997: 283-284).

¹² For the place of 'Gyur med 'Phrin las rnam rgyal and Sangs rgyas Kun dga' mchog within the succession of throne-holders of sMin grol gling, see bsTan pa'i sgron me: *O rgyan smin grol gling gyi dkar chag*, p. 132.4-8. Their lineage of the spoken teaching tradition spans the continuous family line of the gNyos clan, i.e. the linear descendants of Rig 'dzin gTer bdag gling pa; see Dudjom Rinpoche (1991: 733).

that it can be traced back to the Buddhist master Hūṃkara, having begun with the “brother” (*sku mched*) of lHa btsun Nam mkha’ ’jigs med called Khrag ’thung Hūṃkara (or Khrag ’thung Hūṃ dkar); this is none other than the above-mentioned Rig ’dzin lhun grub. The name of the member in the lineage immediately before Rig ’dzin Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje is given in the historiographical source as rDo rje Chos dbyings yongs grol, it being stated that by then there already existed a succession of “incarnations of Rig ’dzin lhun grub.”

This can only mean that at least one person came between Rig ’dzin lhun grub and rDo rje Chos dbyings yongs grol, and in fact this hypothesis is corroborated by a document providing a complete list of the individual members of the incarnation lineage going back to the nephew (or, in later sources, brother) of lHa btsun Nam mkha’ ’jigs med. According to this source, the person in question was known as O rgyan gSang sngags bstan ’dzin. At the same time, we are informed of the name of the next member of the lineage after Rig ’dzin Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje; he is called ’Gyur med Padma tshul khirms (d. 1895). Trained again in sMin grol gling, he was still alive when the written history of the rNying ma pa school was completed in 1882. In order to provide a complete overview of this incarnation lineage, the document will be presented in Appendix I. Several writings of individual members of the lineage of the so-called dPal ri sPru skus have also become available, and these will be presented in Appendix II (including those of O rgyan rnam grol dbang po, the disciple of Rig ’dzin Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje).

5. *The gNas yig of Blon chen gangs*

Rig ’dzin Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje, who can be considered to be the Fourth dPal ri sPrul sku, taught in the final phase of his life in Va lung (present-day Walung in the Sikkim-Nepalese borderlands), a region of “arable land” (*zhing sa*), and passed away near Mt. Makalu. We have now to turn to the monastic sites associated with the lineage in these Himalayan valleys in or bordering on south-western Tibet. The document used for reconstructing the lineage refers on two occasions to the “Glacier of the Minister” (*blon pa’i gangs*) and provides the alternative name of [g]Zar mo ri as well, which could be translated as “Steep Mountain”. The monastery located in the wider surroundings of Mt. Makalu is called dPal ri Theg chen gling, and was obviously the seat of the dPal ri sPrul skus in the region.

A guidebook to this monastery, known as a “history of the sacred site” (*gnas kyi lo rgyus*), has survived, and it is thus possible to form a

general idea of the foundation myth and the subsequent development of this institution. As the full title implies, the place is regarded as a former “site of spiritual realisation” (*sgrub gnas*) of the great adept Padmasambhava. Basing himself on older literary sources, the author presents [g]Zar mo ri as lying in the centre of four other sacred sites topographically related to it: it lies south-west of dPal Sa skya, north-west of 'Bras mo ljongs (i.e. Sikkim), north-east of mKhan pa lung, and south-east of Tsib ri. The text also contains an explanation of the name “Glacier of the Minister,” linking it with the account of King Khyi kha ra thod and his son Blon po'i mchog byed. It states that Padmasambhava stayed there for a period of two months, for the most part at a cave known as bKa' bryad phug mo che.¹³

After an idealised description of the landscape—the sacred springs, naturally formed stūpas and various caves encountered there (including the so-called 'Od gsal phug gong ma, frequented by the “Madman from Kong [po]” (*kong smyon*) lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med)—the text has a separate chapter on the foundation of the monastery itself. The latter had originally been established as a “community for spiritual realisation” (*sgrub sde*) by 'Phyong rgyas ras chen (seventeenth century), a native of dBus and a disciple of lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med; according to the guidebook, 'Phyong rgyas ras chen was following a direct order of his master when he founded the site. Faced with an influx of many disciples, it was eventually divided into two monastic settlements, called Shar gling and Nub gling. Later it was administered by O rgyan gSang sngags bstan 'dzin and rDo rje Chos dbyings yongs grol, respectively the second and third dPal ri sPrul sku; they are called in the text the reincarnations of Hūm chen kara Rig 'dzin lhun grub, the “nephew of

¹³ For the passage relating to the topography and account of [g]Zar mo ri, see Chos dbang rig 'dzin: *Dad ldan blo gsal rnams kyi gzigs lo*, fols. 10b/2-11a/6. The importance of the figure of Khyi kha ra thod (“Dog Face, Goat Neck”) and his later expulsion in the context of the opening of Himalayan hidden lands is described in Aris (1979: 60-82). Chos dbang rig 'dzin, the author of the text, again followed the tradition of sMin grol gling and can be identified as the Sixth dPal ri sPrul sku; see *Dad ldan blo gsal rnams kyi gzigs lo*, fol. 21b/2-6 (*de ltar gnas yig gsal bar bkod pa 'di nyid smin gling chos 'bangs su gtogs pa dpal sprul rig 'dzin chos dbang ming pas snga sor gnas yig rmying pa gzhir bzhag gsal kha phran bus brgyan ste bkod pa yin cing / gnas 'di'i lo rgyus khungs ma gzhan dag yod shag kyang phran gyi mthong thos ma myong bas re zhig 'di tsam las zhu tshod ma thing zhing tshig don 'gal 'char 'dug na bzod par dgongs la tshangs par mdzod cig*). A prayer for the long life of Chos dbang rig 'dzin written by his contemporary, the rDza rong phu Bla ma Ngag dbang bsTan 'dzin nor bu (1867-1940) has survived; see id.: *bDen pa'i sgra dbyangs*.

IHa btun [Nam mkha' 'jigs med]" (*Iha btsun mched dbon*). It is further stated that rDo rje Chos dbyings yongs grol was himself the nephew of Mi dbang bSod nams stobs rgyas (1689-1747), who played a key role in the civil war in Tibet of the years 1727-28 by restoring political stability to the country. It was from this uncle and the Seventh Dalai Bla ma sKal bzang rgya mtsho (1708-1757) that the monastery of the lineage of the dPal ri sPrul skus received a "religious endowment" (*chos gzhis*), from which point onwards it was known as dPal ri Theg chen gling. To this monastic site were attached "branch monasteries" (*dgon lag*) including Blon chen Phun tshogs bSam gtan gling. Under Rig 'dzin Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje and 'Gyur med Padma tshul khrim, respectively the Fourth and Fifth dPal ri sPrul skus, this latter monastery was lavishly furnished with religious statues and books, and during the time of the fifth throne-holder a special temple was erected for housing a complete *bKa' 'gyur* together with a xylograph edition of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum*.¹⁴

To judge by these details, the lineage of the dPal ri sPrul skus had, from O rgyan gSang sngags bstan 'dzin onwards, its main residence at dPal ri Theg chen gling, and branch monasteries in southern Tibet strung out from the Sikkim-Nepalese borderlands to [IHo brag] IHa lung in the east. While the original seat of the lineage, dPal ri dgon pa, was located in gTsang, after the death of Rig 'dzin lhun grub the following incarnations appear to have been mainly active in the southern border regions of Tibet.

6. *The Documents from Walung*

Constructing a new religious building meant, among other things, setting down in writing the history of the temple and cataloguing its

¹⁴ Two sections of the text describe the sacred landscape of the site and the history of dPal ri Theg chen gling and Blon chen Phun tshogs bSam gtan gling; see Chos dbang rig 'dzin: *Dad ldan blo gsal rnam kyi gzigs lo*, fols. 11a/6-16b/2 (*mtshan nyid dang rang byon bzhugs tshul*), and fols. 16b/2-19a/2 (*sgrub sde rten gyi lo rgyus*). 'Phyong rgyas ras chen was also actively engaged in other regions of south-western Tibet in transmitting the teachings of IHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med; concerning his contacts with mDo chen pa Nor bu bde chen (b. 1617) and O rgyan dPal bzang (1617-1677) in Mang yul Gung thang and the transmissions he gave according to the writings of these two religious teachers, see Ehrhard (2008: 103-104). On the civil war in Tibet, the rise of Mi dbang bSod nams stobs rgyas to political power, and his rule, which lasted from 1735 to 1747, see Petech (1972: 122-197) and Tshen ring dbang rgyal: *'Jig rten kun tu dga' ba'i gtam*, pp. 197. 16 ff.; there is no information on a nephew of the ruler and the ruler's support of the monastery of dPal ri Theg chen gling in this second source.

sacred objects—statues, religious books and so forth. Such a document has survived, from the pen of 'Gyur med Padma tshul khrim, written down during the establishment of the temple, which came to be known as the bKa' 'gyur lha khang. The historical part of the work contains the same details as recorded in the guidebook to Blon chen gangs, the region being described as “the upper part of [g]Zar, enclosed by the Glacier of the Great Minister (i.e. Mt. Makalu)” (*zar phu blon chen gangs kyi rva ba*). The importance of 'Phyong rgyas ras chen is highlighted, as is—for his having produced many religious artefacts—Rig 'dzin Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje. Then follows the construction of the bKa' 'gyur lha khang by the latter's incarnation, who also composed the register when the construction work was completed.¹⁵

The same kind of register is available for another monastic site that was under the administration of the incarnation lineage of the dPal ri sPrul skus. The name of this institution is bDe chen dgon or bDe skyid chos gling, located still further south within the area where the borders of Tibet, Sikkim and Nepal now converge. The site was special not only in virtue of its physical location but also in a religious sense; this is reflected in the introductory part of the document:

This [monastery of] bDe skyid chos gling is a place in the hidden land of Sha lba lung [= Walung], which is a branch sacred site of 'Bras mo ljongs, [itself] a pilgrimage site blessed by the mighty Jina Padmakara [= Padmasambhava] [as] the hidden land known as Kamaru, [which is one] of the twenty-four [pīṭha] countries and [is] praised as Be'u ra Valley in the *Ratnakutasūtra* by our teacher Ādityabandhu [Śākyamuni Buddha], the all-knowing son of Śudhodana.

During the successive arrival of the line of the dPal ri incarnations in the early period, when [the area] was governed by the Sikkimese—the dance of [emanations of] lHa dbon Rig 'dzin lhun grub, the second of the pair of two brothers of lHa btsun Kun bzang rnam rgyal [= lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med], he who opened the door of the sacred site 'Bras [mo] ljongs—[and to be precise,] during the time of Rig 'dzin Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje, the headmen of lBa lung [= Walung] and all the ordained and laypersons of the five districts [signed] an

¹⁵ See 'Gyur med Padma tshul khrim: *sGo 'phar 'byed pa'i lde mig*. This register should be compared with another one bearing the title *Gangs blon lhun grub 'od gsal bde chen yang rtse'i gan dho la rten pa bcas gsar bzhengs gi dkar chag srid zhi'i dge legs sgo 'phar phyed ba'i (= 'byed pa'i) sde mig (= lde mig)*, 15 fols., NGMPP reel-no. AT 105/3. The author gives his name as dPal sprul Padma bdud 'dul dbang phyug, which may be an alternative name of the Fifth dPal ri sPrul sku 'Gyur med Padma tshul khrim.

agreement, requesting assistance [of the sort] given by the [Sikkimese] government as of old.

During the time of the Highest Refuge 'Gyur med Padma tshul khirms, the king of Gorkha issued a series of pronouncements in the form of land tenure documents, to the effect that [the former] right to own [both] the internal [and] external [property] of the monastery bDe skyid chos gling would be protected. In the wood [female] sheep year [= 1895] the Lord of Refuge 'Gyur med Padma tshul khirms dissolved his mind into the Dharmadhatu and later, in the fire [male] monkey year [= 1896], a true manager and storekeeper known to all, [who] was involved in the memorial service [for the deceased teacher] [ceased to] live permanently [there] with his family and therefore a representative had to be nominated. On top of that, the [once] freshly produced account book for the three [kinds of] sacred items (i.e. statues, books and stūpas), offering substances [and] furniture had become greatly tattered during its many years [of use].

Now, therefore, in the iron [female] bird [year] [= 1921], when the Refuge, the Precious Reincarnation [= Chos dbang rig 'dzin]—the teacher and his entourage—comes personally to the residence of bDe [skyid] chos[gling] for the purpose of closely inspecting everything, including the sacred items representing the body, speech [and] mind [of the Buddha], and in order to delight the custodians, the monks responsible for the offerings and the general assembly [of the monastic community]—in their succession of old and new—two account books have been set up [new], which are similar [in content], like mother and son.¹⁶

¹⁶ See Anonymous: *Yid ches dngos kun gsal ba'i adarśa*, fols. 1a-3b (*de yang bdag cag gi ston nyi ma'i gnyen nam kun mkhyen zas gtsang sras pos mdo sde dkon brtsegs las be'u ra zhes lung du bsngags cing yul nyer bzhi las ka ma ru zhes rgyal dbang padma karas sbas yul du byin gyis brlabs pa'i gnas chen 'bras mo gshongs kyi gnas lag sbas yul sha lba lung gi sti gnas bde skyid chos gling 'di nyid / 'bras mo ljong (= ljongs) gnas sgo 'byed par mdzad po lha btsun kun bzang rnam rgyal gyi mched gnyis lha dbon rig 'dzin lhun grub gyi zlos gar dpal ri sku 'phreng rim byon nas sngar dus 'bras ljongs pa'i skabs nas 'dzin skyongs mdzad mus kar / rig 'dzin padma dbang rgyal rdo rje'i sku dus lba lung 'go dpon rnam dang yul 'tsho lnga'i khongs ser skya drag gzhan tshang nas sngar lam 'dzin skyongs gnang grogs zhus pa'i gan yig dang / skyabs mchog 'gyur med padma tshul khirms kyi sku dus gor rgyal mchog nas gtsan tshigs ru bka' rim stsal 'bru don dgon bde skyid chos gling gi phyi nang 'dzin dbang bdag thob skyongs mus gyis shing lug lo skyabs rje 'gyur med padma tshul khirms dgongs pa chos dbyings su thims rjes me sbrel lo las 'dzin mdzad pa kun shes ngo ma dgongs rdzogs mchos sprin dang 'brel dgon gnas su ngo sbyor (= 'byor) gyi ngo ma gtan sdod med stabs ngo tshab bkod mngags thog rten gsum mchod rdzas 'dzin chas sogs sprod gsher (= bsher) gyi gtan (=rten) deb gsar bskrun byas pa lo mang hrul songs ches gshis / da lam lcags bya skyabs sprul rin po che ston 'khor bde chos gdan sar ngo phebs kyi rten pa sku gsung thugs rten 'dzin chas sogs gang cir zhib gsher (= bsher) gyi slad dkon gnyer / mchod dpon / spyi mo bcas gsar rnying*

7. Conclusions

The foregoing description of the monastery of bDe skyid chos gling shows quite clearly that Walung was at different periods under the political administration of both Sikkim and Nepal, a situation which has to be seen in the context of the expansion of the Gorkha state (the earliest Gorkha invasion is dated from the year 1774). This expansion led to the Sino-Nepalese war in the years 1788-1792, with East Nepal and Sikkim being in great turmoil from 1791 till the peace agreement signed between the Gorkha ruler and the Manchu sovereign in the following year. The Nepal-Sikkim boundary has been a matter of dispute ever since, Sikkim having lost a lot of its territory to Nepal.

In view of the contents of the document from bDe skyid chos gling, it should be pointed out that Sikkimese governance was regarded as the “old way” (*sngar lam*) of political rule in contrast to the one imposed by the Gorkha government. This earlier custom implies that the Tibetan monastery was administered by religious masters with close ties to both the Sikkimese court and the central government in Lhasa, as witnessed in the case of the Fourth dPal ri sPrul sku Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje, who served as preceptor to King gTsong phud rnam rgyal and performed ritual acts for the protection of the border regions on behalf of the dGa’ ldan pho brang government. This changed with the integration of Walung into the Nepalese state, which was achieved—as is generally accepted—by relying on the local authority of “headmen” (*’go ba*), the same ones mentioned in the document from Walung. The peculiar status of the monastery—as lying within the sphere of interest of Tibet, Sikkim and Nepal—is still to be witnessed in modern times, as reported in an eyewitness account from the year 1981; at that time bDe skyid chos gling was under permanent surveillance by Nepalese officials, with tensions running high between them and the Tibetan population of Walung.¹⁷

rims par spro len bde phyir gtam (= rten) deb ma bu ’dra gnyis su bkod par). One of the two mentioned texts has survived; see anonymous: *rTen gsum ma deb*. These kind of registers, which list the movable property of a monastery at the time of its passing over from one incarnation to the next, can be compared to the so-called “conveyance documents” (*sprod deb*) used as part of Tibetan government practice; see Cueppers (2007:13).

¹⁷ For an overview of the expansion of the Gorkha state to the west and the conquests of East Nepal and Sikkim, see Pradhan (1991: 106-149). There were several reasons for the Sino-Nepalese war, among them the annoyance felt by the Gorkha rulers over an agreement that had been signed between Tibet and Sikkim after the Gorkha state, in collusion with the Bhutanese, invaded the neighbouring

The document further attests that bDe skyid chos gling was under the religious administration of the incarnation lineage of the dPal ri sPrul skus. Rig 'dzin Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje in particular must have contributed in the first decades of the nineteenth century towards the development of the monastery. The significance of the place where bDe skyid chos gling had been erected has to be seen in connection with the trade route which passed along the upper reaches of the Tamur Valley. The important strategic role of this pass is known from the many disputes between Tibet and Nepal from 1750 onwards. It was there that the agreement between the Gorkha leaders and the Tibetan government was signed on the eve of the Sino-Nepalese war.

It has already been observed that sacred sites in Himalayan regions are often to be found in the vicinity of a trade route. This means that the emergence of a "hidden land" (*sbas yul*) in a specific geographical area had a strong impact on patterns of economic and cultural exchange. The wording of the document is quite explicit in this regard, for it presents the region of Walung as a hidden valley and links it with 'Bras mo ljongs, describing it as a "branch sacred site" (*gnas lag*) of the latter region. This connection was all the closer for the incarnation lineage of Rig 'dzin lhun grub being responsible for the spiritual welfare of the inhabitants of the minor hidden land of Walung, in the same way as lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med and his successors had been active in Sikkim.¹⁸

Like the lHa btsun sPrul kus, the incarnation lineage of the dPal ri sPrul skus was active in Sikkim and valleys neighbouring it, and with the help of the literary sources presented here it has been possible to

Himalayan kingdom. The Sikkimese had asked the Tibetan government for help, and this resulted in the Walung agreement, which only made the Gorkha leaders look for an excuse to march into Tibet; see Ehrhard (2007b: 118). For the eyewitness account of the situation in bDe skyid chos gling in 1981, see Steinmann (1988: 191). See also Diemberger (1994: 149) regarding the community of Gunsu, another region bordering on Sikkim under local headmen from Walung, shared with the latter region its peculiar position between Tibet, Nepal and Sikkim, and was likewise integrated into the nation-state of Nepal.

¹⁸ The trade through Walung and the importance of the pass for trans-Himalayan trade is described by Schrader (1988: 264-277). It should be noted that the privileges of local headmen were recognized by the Nepalese government from 1841 onwards (i.e. after the death of Rig 'dzin Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje); see *ibid.*: 272-273. Soon afterwards, in the year 1848, Joseph Dalton Hooker (1817-1911) reached Walung and Gunsu as the first European visitor who would leave descriptions of these places and their settlements; see Hooker (1987: 206) and Robertson (1998: 67-68). For the 'hidden valley' as conceptually a religious space, and for further examples of such sanctuaries in the vicinity of Himalayan trade routes, see Ehrhard (2001: 238-239).

follow their activities from Central Tibet through the Mt. Makalu region up to Walung in the Nepalese Himalayas. Although we now possess an overview of the individual members of this lineage and their writings, a complete history still remains to be written. At least we are now well informed about the activities of the Fourth dPal ri sPrul sku Rig 'dzin Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje, who is especially remembered for having “turned the wheel of the Dharma in Zhing sa Va lung.”

APPENDICES

The materials presented here are part of the collection of the Tibetan texts originally kept in the Nepalese National Museum, Chauni, and afterwards transferred to the Nepalese National Archives (Ramshah Path) and microfilmed by the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project (NGMPP). Their place of origin is the monastery of bDe skyid chos gling in Walung. A complete evaluation of the contents of this Buddhist library is currently in progress.

[1]

The document which contains a eulogy of the incarnation lineage of the dPal ri sPrul skus from dPal ri Theg chen gling in the Makalu region has no title, and was microfilmed by the NGMPP under reel-no. AT 172/7. It has also no folio numbers and may well have been written as an introduction to an inventory of the religious items contained in the monastery. It should be noted that the individual that appears after rDo rje Hūm mdzad (i.e. Hūm kara), the founder of the lineage, the “Dharma minister” (*chos blon*) is Padma Gung btsan. The latter, known for his support of the Buddhist religion at the court of King Khri Srong lde'u btsan, played an important role in the establishment of other incarnation lineages, including that of the Yol mo ba sPrul skus; see Ehrhard (2007a: 27). The underlined passages are written in red ink in the document.

zla med stobs bcu'i dpal mnga' rdzogs sangs rgyas /
zab zhi spros pa kun bral dam pa'i chos /
nyan rang byang sems 'phags chen chos pa'i tshogs /
mchog gsum rin chen gtsug na mdzes gyur shig /

snang stong zung du 'jug pa lhun grub sku /
gsal stong brjod pa dang bral skye med gsung /
bde stong gnyug ma'i ye shes rdo rje'i thugs /
rig stong rang byung don gyi bla mar 'dud /

gdod nas dri bral 'pho med chos sku'i mkhar /
lhun grub 'du ma byas pa'i 'od phung brdal /
bsam yas sgyu 'phrul drva ba'i dkyil 'khor che /
spro bsdu'i byed po rdo rje sems dpar sngags /

*gnyug ma mi gshigs sder rnon cher bsgrad pas /
rtag chad mtha' bzhi'i va skyes mthar bskard cing /
rang byung rig pa'i rtsal chen yongs rdzogs pa /
gdengs lnga'i dbang po rdo rje hūm mdzad mchod /*

*bsil ljongs phan bde'i gzhi rtsa lha'i me tog /
nag bsnums lcang lo'i rtse mor rab bcings nas /
lugs gnyis khrims kyi gser 'khor drangs po ru /
bsgyur mdzad chos blon padma'i gung btsan rgyal /*

*ma dag 'khor ba'i snang tshul ji snyed pa /
ma spangs sgyu 'phrul drva ba'i phyag rgya ru /
yongs gzigs rig 'dzin kun gyi gtsug rgyan mchog /
rnam bzhi'i 'phrin las lhun gyi grub der bsngags /*

*o rgyan gu ru'i thugs bcud gdams pa'i mdzod /
gsang chen sngags kyi rgyud sde rgya mtsho'i bstan /
'dzin mkhas gser phreng rim byon tshogs bcas la /
dad gsum rnam par spro ba'i phyag gis btud /*

*chos dbyings rig pa'i glog phreng rab bar bas /
chos can gnyis 'dzin rmag rum 'thib po'i mun /
yongs su grol bas snang grags lha dang sngags /
dbang po'i rgyan du gyur la ngo mtshar rmad /*

*zab las ches zab smin grol ku mu ta tshal /
khyod thugs ri bo 'dzin pas rab bzhad nas /
skal bzang yid kyi ral pa'i rtser bkod mdzad /
rig 'dzin padma dbang rgyal spyi bos mchod /*

*mi 'gyur 'pho med bde chen rdo rje'i rtser /
chos zad rig pa'i mkha' la yongs bsgyur mkhas /
gsang chen 'od gsal snying po'i bstan 'dzin mchog /
bka' drin zla med pad ma tshul khrims rgyal /*

*tshogs zung chu gter rlabs phre ri dbang rtser /
phyar las legs grub dpal ri padma 'od /
theg mchog rdzogs pa chen po'i chos gra che /
gling bzhi'i rgyan du lham mer gsal gyur cig /*

*padma kā ra'i thugs rje'i byin rlabs kyi /
gzhi 'od rtag 'bar rtsa gsum sprin bzhin gtibs /
skal ldan rgyud la ye shes 'char byed gnas /
blon po gangs zhes bsngags pa'i me tog 'thor /*

*sngon tshe rgyal ba'i snyan sngar bstan pa dang /
che 'dzin skyongs bar zhal bzhes rgyud gsum gyi /
dam can tshogs dang dpal 'bar ma ning nag /
zhing skyongs ma mor bcas pas 'dir dgongs shig /*

*de ltar smin grol bdud rtsi'i chu rgyun che /
 'byung ba'i sgo gcig dpal ri theg chen gling dang /
 zar mo'i ri'i blon po gangs zhes pa'i /
 deb ther zla ba'i rdzing bu 'di na ldar /*

*zhes mchod par brjod pa tshig 'phreng ma ra ba'i me tog bsil ma 'thor te gang brjod
 par bya ba /*

[2]

The following title list presents the writings of the first four members of the incarnation lineage of the dPal ri sPul sku up to Rig 'dzin Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje and his disciple O rgyan rnam grol dbang po. This is a preliminary survey, containing as it does only those manuscripts available in the above-mentioned collection; it is hoped that more writings of these teachers and the following dPal ri sPul sku will surface in the future.

Rig 'dzin lhun grub, 1st dPal ri sPul sku (d. 1650)

*dGongs gter thugs kyi klong gsal las tshe dpag med dkar po / dbang lung khrid bla
 ma'i rnal 'byor sogs gang la 'jug kyang yongs ba'i sngon 'gro rim pa, 12 fols.,
 NGMPP reel-no. AT 67/4*

_____ *sGyu 'phrul glu'i phreng ba mngon sum ye shes kyi 'khor lo, 30 fols.,
 NGMPP reel-no. AT 86/2*

_____ *Zhal gdams kyi rim pa rnam grol thar gling gi shing rta, 131 fols., NGMPP
 reel-no. AT 80/1*

_____ *Rig 'dzin chen po nam mkha' 'jigs med kyi zhal gdams dang gsung mgur
 kha 'thor phyogs gcig tu bsdus pa, 31 fols., NGMPP reel-no. AT 109/10 (compiled by
 Rig 'dzin lhun grub)*

O rgyan gsang sngags bstan 'dzin, 2nd dPal ri sPul sku

*dKon mchog spyi 'dus kyi bla bsgrub zin bris dran gsal, 17 fols., NGMPP reel-no. AT
 60/21*

_____ *bKa' rdzogs pa chen po yang zab dkon mchog spyi 'dus kyi khrid yig, 10
 fols., NGMPP reel-no. AT 61/1*

_____ *rJe btsun khros ma nag mo'i bsnyen yig nyung bsdus sgron me, 5 fols.,
 NGMPP reel-no. AT 84/2*

_____ *sNying gam 'phrin glur phul ba, 10 fols., NGMPP reel-no. AT 103/10*

_____ *dPal ri gnas bdag 'bar ba mched bdun gyi mchod 'phreng 'dod dgu'i char
 'bab, 3 fols., NGMPP reel-no. AT 66/7*

_____ *Phur pa spu gri'i las mtha' bsreg pa'i bsngags dregs 'joms pa'i stag gdong
 gi me dpung, 7 fols., NGMPP reel-no. AT 97/17*

_____ *Yang zab dkon mchog spyi 'dus kyi sgrub chen zin bris yid bzhin gter
 mdzod, 22 fols., NGMPP reel-no. AT 61/2*

_____ *Seng gdong 'jug dang po zhi rgyas dbang drag, 3 fols., NGMPP reel-no. AT
 85/7*

rDo rje Chos dbying yongs grol, 3rd dPal ri sPul sku

*rJe btsun khros ma nag mo'i bsnyen yig nyung bsdus sgron me, 5 fols., NGMPP reel-
 no. AT 85/7 (same title as one of the works of the O rgyan gsang sngags bstan 'dzin)*

Rig 'dzin Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje (1779-1841), 4th dPal ri sPrul sku

rGya po dkar po drug mdos, 4 fols., NGMPP reel-no. AT 161/6

_____ *gTer bdag 'dod don kun ster*, 6 fols., NGMPP reel-no. AT 161/6

_____ *bDe gshegs kun 'dus kyi bskyed rdzogs kyi 'khrid nyams len byed tshul gyi zin bris zur 'debs*, 3 fols., NGMPP reel-no. AT 100/19

_____ *bDe gshegs kun 'dus las mtshan mo'i rnal 'byor zab gnad zur gsal sogs zhal shes zin bris bskor mams*, 9 fols., NGMPP reel-no. AT 100/19

_____ *rDo rje snying po sprin (= 'phrin) gyi thol glu'i dngos gzhi lha 'khrid bskor rdo rje 'chang gi dgongs brgyan*, 38 fols., NGMPP reel-no. AT 159/1

_____ *Phyag rdor gyi gzungs / gter gsar gshin rje dregs 'joms kyi dbang bshad*, 12 fols., NGMPP reel-no. AT 67/6

_____ *Zhi khro nges don snying po'i sgrub chen gyi lag len chu 'babs ltas mchog tu bkod pa*, NGMPP reel-no. AT 137/4

_____ *gSang mtshan thugs kyi sgrub pa las / rdo rje rnams (= rnam) 'joms kyi khrigs su sdebs pa*, 15 fols., NGMPP reel-no. AT 97/5

_____ *Las 'brel gnyen po lha gsum gyi rgyun khyer*, 3 fols., NGMPP reel-no. AT 145/8

O rgyan rnam grol dbang po, lCags sbug Rin po che

bCom ldan 'das rdo rje phur bu yang gsang spu gri 'bar ba'i sgrub chen dngos grub dga' ston gyi gsal byed lhan thabs rig 'dzin dgongs rgyan, 58 fols., NGMPP reel-no. AT 120/4

_____ *bsNyen bsgrub spyi la gces pa'i man ngag*, 19 fols., NGMPP reel-no. AT 147/17

_____ *sDe dpon gsum bcu'i gsol mchod / dregs pa sde dpon sum bcu'i gsol kha*, 47 fols., NGMPP reel-no. AT 136/11

_____ *Byang gter gsang ba rmad byung gi gcod kyi ngag 'don khol du byung ba*, 5 fols., NGMPP reel-no. AT 124/6

_____ *Byang gter phur pa lha nag gi phur pa'i rgyu tshad dbyibs bstan pa'i gzhung las zur bkod*, 2 fols., NGMPP reel-no. AT 124/6

_____ *Byed grol gser gyi lde mig gi rtsa gzhung las byang ltor mtshams 'byor khog sgrig lag len*, 23 fols., NGMPP reel-no. AT 89/9

_____ *sBas mtha'i ri khrod du 'dug tshul dang rnams (= rnam) kun rang brgyud (= rgyud) chos dang bsre tshul gyi bslab bya zhal gyi gdams pa'i nying khu gsang ba bdud rtsi thig le*, 5 fols., NGMPP reel-no. AT 82/7

_____ *Rakta sbyor tshad 'ga' rga'i chu rgyun*, 2 fols., NGMPP reel-no. AT 98/18

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_____ *Wa lung bde chos kyi rtsib (= zhib) bshod (= bshed) rten gsung (= gsum) ma 'debs (= deb)*, 11 fols., NGMPP reel-no. AT 172/6.

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Ngag dbang bsTan 'dzin nor bu, rDza rong phu Bla ma (1867-1940)
dPal ri mchog sprul chos dbang rig 'dzin gi zhabs brtan gsol 'debs [bden pa'i sgra dbyangs], 2 fols. (xylograph), NGMPP reel-no. L 317/13.

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