

## On the Life of Chos rgyal bsod nams (1442-1509): Unlocking the Mysteries of a Byang gter Master from Mustang<sup>1</sup>

Jay Holt Valentine  
(Troy University)

**I**n previous works, I have focused attention on a collection of early biographies of the patriarchs of the Byang gter tradition that were written before the seventeenth century as part of my larger objective to develop a more complete account of the tradition's early history. This work is continued here through an investigation of the little-known Chos rgyal bsod nams (1442–1509), whose autobiography has been translated into English and attached to this article. While the autobiography should be considered a success from the religious perspective in that it can easily be imagined to fill the reader with faith in the Buddha-dharma in general and Chos rgyal bsod nams in particular, it does not sufficiently explain the historical significance of its subject. Thus, in the first major section of this article, I will weave together a narrative of the life of Chos rgyal bsod nams that is intended to be illuminating regarding the basic contours of his life, while also bringing into focus the mysteries posed by the autobiography. In the remainder of the article, I will present evidence from other sources in an attempt to provide tentative solutions to those mysteries, a process that will yield a higher vantage point, metaphorically speaking, from which one can more completely appreciate Chos rgyal bsod nams's place within the early history of the Byang gter.

The principal source for this study is the autobiography, simply entitled *The Liberation Story of Rigs 'dzin Chos rgyal bsod nams*.<sup>2</sup> It is not only the earliest hagiography of this patriarch; it is also the most extensive. The first of its five parts describes his birth and early training in Mustang, while the second offers an account of his exploits at a variety of other locations, concluding with his visit to the epicenter

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<sup>2</sup> Chos rgyal bsod nams (1442–1509) 1983, pp. 235-250.

of the Byang gter tradition in La stod Byang. The third section discusses his retreat practices and death, which demonstrates that this work is not completely autobiographical. An autobiographical song of realization constitutes the fourth section, and the fifth is a prayer that praises Chos rgyal bsod nam, who is addressed therein as "father." While it is not clear when the autobiography reached its current form or who may have been the final editor, parts of the autobiography were presumably composed before Chos rgyal bsod nam passed away in 1509. The history of the rNying ma pa, the *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, that was composed in the eighteenth century and the history of the Byang gter, the *Byang gter thub bstan rdo rje brag gi chos 'byung*, that was published in 2015 are both employed below as they include sections devoted to Chos rgyal bsod nam, though they appear to be based solely on the autobiography.<sup>3</sup> The *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung* reduces his life to a single paragraph, while the more lengthy section that appears in the *Byang gter thub bstan rdo rje brag gi chos 'byung* can be read as a commentary on the autobiography as it offers a few clarifications of obscure sections of the text. Because of the reverence of the Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682), for the Byang gter and his close spiritual relationship with the patriarchs of the tradition, his voluminous record of received teachings (*thob yig*) is an important source for any detailed study of the Northern Treasure Tradition.<sup>4</sup> The *thob yig* is particularly useful for this current investigation as the Fifth Dalai Lama employed the *thob yig* of Chos rgyal bsod nam as one of his main sources for tracing the Byang gter lineages that he received.<sup>5</sup> As a result, there are nearly fifty appearances of his name within that source.

The beginning of the autobiography, as stated above, is dedicated to the period of Chos rgyal bsod nam's life from his birth (1442) until the age of twenty-three (1464) that unfolds in Glo bo (i.e., Mustang) in modern-day Nepal.<sup>6</sup> The territory, along with the rest of mNga' ris, had been consistently controlled by the kings of Mang yul Gung thang

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<sup>3</sup> For the eighteenth-century biography, see Gu ru bkra shis (b. 18th c.) 1990, pp. 672–673. For the twenty-first-century biography, see Chos dbyings khyab brdal 2015, pp. 201–206. I am very appreciative, as always, of the advice provided by Stéphane Arguillère, who has identified the author of this more recent work as Chos dbyings khyab brdal. For a discussion of the overall value of Gu kra'i chos 'byung, see Martin 1991, pp. 329–349. There is also an entry for Chos rgyal bsod nam in a twentieth-century bibliographic encyclopedia as well. See mKhas btsun bzang po (b. ca. 1920) 1973–1990, Vol. 3, p. 725.

<sup>4</sup> For the Fifth Dalai Lama's record of received teachings, see Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682) 1991–1995, vol. 1–4. For an introduction to this important document, which also discusses Chos rgyal bsod nam, see Ehrhard 2012, 79–96.

<sup>5</sup> Ngag dbang blo bzang (1617–1682) 1991–1995, Vol. 3, p. 228.

<sup>6</sup> Chos rgyal bsod nam (1442–1509) 1983, pp. 236–240.

from their capital city of rDzong dkar from the middle of the thirteenth century through the latter half of the fourteenth century.<sup>7</sup> As the power of Gung thang diminished, largely because of the weakening of their Sa skya pa allies and the demise of the Yuan Dynasty (1368), their ability to control Glo bo was also diminished.<sup>8</sup> A general by the name of A ma dpal (1380–ca. 1440), whose forefathers had already begun to consolidate power in Glo bo with the blessing of their overlords in Gung thang, is regarded as the first king of Glo bo.<sup>9</sup> He constructed the palace in the capital city of sMon thang in Upper Mustang, began the process of eliminating internal rivals throughout Mustang, and exerted control over neighboring regions.<sup>10</sup> After his death, A mgon bzang po (1420–1482) completed his father's political and military aspirations during his reign as the second king and shepherded Glo bo into its golden age, which lasted until the late sixteenth century.<sup>11</sup>

In order to strengthen the Buddhist traditions of their kingdom, both A ma dpal and A mgon bzang po invited the Sa skya pa master named *Ngor chen* Kun dga' bzang po (1382–1456) to Glo bo.<sup>12</sup> This great master and founder of the Ngor subsect of the Sa skya pa visited the newly established kingdom on three separate occasions between 1427 and 1449.<sup>13</sup> *Ngor chen* transformed the religious landscape of Glo bo as he renovated important monastic centers, appointed their abbots, and aided with the preparations of entire collections of Buddhist scriptures.<sup>14</sup> Although both the rNying ma pa and bKa' rgyud pa were active in the region at the time,<sup>15</sup> the Sa skya pa exerted the most obvious influence over the region as a result of the relationship between *Ngor chen* and the kings of Glo bo.

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<sup>7</sup> For the sake of orientation, note that Kathmandu is about 125 km directly south of rDzong dkar. Glo bo, on the other hand, is about the same distance to the west-northwest of rDzong dkar. See Ryavec (2017: 118) for a map of the region with markers relevant to this discussion. While there are many wonderful sources that discuss the history of Glo bo, the description of the history of the kingdom through the sixteenth century and its relationship with its neighbors by Kramer (2008: 13–35) was found to be the most complete presentation and the most relevant for this study.

<sup>8</sup> Kramer 2008, p. 15.

<sup>9</sup> For a critical discussion of the royal line of Glo bo that focuses on A ma dpal, see Heimbels 2017, pp. 276–282 and Kramer 2008, pp. 19–22. For a brief discussion of the entire royal line, see Jackson 1980, pp. 133–136.

<sup>10</sup> Kramer 2008, p. 20.

<sup>11</sup> Kramer 2008, p. 22.

<sup>12</sup> For an extensive examination of the three journeys to Glo bo by *Ngor chen*, see Heimbels 2017, pp. 271–343.

<sup>13</sup> Heimbels (2017: 271) lists the dates of these three journeys to Glo bo as follows: 1427–1428, 1436–1437, and 1447–1449.

<sup>14</sup> Heimbels 2017, pp. 271–343.

<sup>15</sup> Kramer 2008, p. 25.

Chos rgyal bsod nam was born in this new kingdom in the Year of the Water-Dog (1442), just after A mgon bzang po succeeded his father, A ma dpal, as king (ca. 1440) and between the second (1436–1437) and third (1447–1449) visits of *Ngor chen*. Chos rgyal bsod nam's father, *dPon chen* lHa grub 'bum (ca. 15th c.), was a scion of the lDong family, which consisted of a long line of practitioners of the path of mantras.<sup>16</sup> The lDong hailed from the village of Dzar, also known today as Jharkot, located within the valley of Muktinath in Lower (*smad*) Glo bo. *dBon mo* dKar lcam 'bum (ca. 15th c.), Chos rgyal bsod nam's mother, birthed her child near a fortress named Glo bo rGyam dpal.<sup>17</sup> For the first seven years of his life (1442–1448), Chos rgyal bsod nam was permitted to comport himself as any other child before spending two years learning to read and write (1449–1450) and a third year (1451) receiving a basic introduction to religious life. The following two years of his training (1452–1453) included introductions to *Medicine Buddha* (*sman bla*), *Sarvavid Mahāvairocana* (*kun rig*), *The Peaceful and Wrathful Deities* (*zhi khro*), *Cakrasaṃvara* (*bde mchog*), and a cycle of teachings dedicated to a four-armed protector (*chos skyong bzhi pa*).

At the age of thirteen (1454), Chos rgyal bsod nam went to study the *Śāstra* commentaries (*bstan chos*) and the *Prajñāpāramitā* (*phar phyin*) at the great monastic center known as rNam rgyal Chos sde chen po, which was just northwest of the capital city of sMon thang.<sup>18</sup> *Ngor chen* oversaw the renovation of this monastic center during his third visit

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<sup>16</sup> The lDong is one of the four great ancestral clans. In some sources, "lHong" is used as a variant. For an example, see Sørensen 1994, p. 367, note 1189.

<sup>17</sup> The author of the autobiography does not reveal the name he was given by his family, referring to himself from the beginning as Chos rgyal bsod nam, despite the fact that he did not receive this name until 1465. The autobiography does not explicitly state that the fortress of Glo bo rGyam dpal was located in the village of Dzar, and I have not yet found reference to a location by this name elsewhere. There is, however, brief mention of a minister named rGyam dpal bzang in a seventeenth century document entitled *The Archive of Te* (Ramble 2008: 194, 201, 205). Seeber estimates that the fortress of Dzar was not constructed until the early seventeenth century (Seeber 1994: 85), which suggests that either Glo bo rGyam dpal was the name of a preexisting fortress in Dzar or that it was located elsewhere in Glo bo. Nevertheless, there are reasons to conclude that Glo bo rGyam dpal was in Dzar and, therefore, that Dzar was in fact the birthplace of Chos rgyal bsod nam. For example, the Fifth Dalai Lama refers to Chos rgyal bsod nam as "*glo bo dzar pa*" in his record of received teachings, which suggests that he understood Chos rgyal bsod nam himself—and not simply his paternal ancestors—as having hailed from Dzar, Mustang; see, Ngag dbang blo bzang (1617–1682) 1991–1995, Vol. 3, p. 302.

<sup>18</sup> For a good description of the location of rNam rgyal chos sde, see Heimbel 2017, p. 306, fn. 388.

(1447–1449), just six years before the arrival of Chos rgyal bsod nam.<sup>19</sup> For the following nine years (1455–1463), Chos rgyal bsod nam trained with sNgags 'chang bDe legs rgyal mtshan (ca. 15th c.) at an unnamed monastery that was presumably in or near Dzar. Although bDe legs rgyal mtshan is known as "an adherent of the rNying-ma-pa tradition,"<sup>20</sup> the extensive list of teachings received from this master includes a wide range of materials, such as *Sūtras (mdo sde)*, *Jātaka Tales (skyes rabs)*, bKa' ma (e.g., *Vajrapāṇi Ucarya*), gTer ma (e.g., *Ma ni bka' 'bum*), and gSar ma (e.g., *The Mahāmudrā Coemergent Awareness*).<sup>21</sup> bDe legs rgyal mtshan was also a significant player in the relationship between the monarch and the Sa skya pa, as he was a disciple of Ngor chen and one of the early teachers of *Glo bo mkhan chen* bSod nam lhun grub (1456–1532), the son of King A mgon bzang po and the grandson of A ma dpal.<sup>22</sup>

After Chos rgyal bsod nam completed his training with bDe legs rgyal mtshan at the age of twenty-two (1463), he engaged in an extensive practice of mantra recitation focusing on *Tāra (sgrol ma)*, *Vajracchedikā (rdo rje gcod pa)*, and the *Peaceful Guru (gu ru zhi ba)*. It was at this point, according to the autobiography, that Padmasambhava appeared in the sky in front of him to bestow prophetic instructions. The Master from Uḍḍiyāna informed him, in seven-syllable verse, that it was not yet time to focus all of his efforts in permanent retreat. Because of his residual karma—and in order to benefit sentient beings—he must travel east to obtain transmission of the 500 cycles of the Vehicle of Secret Mantras. Thus, the following year (1464), Chos rgyal bsod nam embarked upon a journey, more or less in an eastern direction, from which he never returned. From the religious perspective, this visionary episode is theologically important as it suggests that all Chos rgyal bsod nam was to accomplish in Tibet, including his mastery of the Byang gter teachings, was "meant to be,"

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<sup>19</sup> According to Heimbel, rNam rgyal Chos sde and Thub bstan dar rgyas gling are two names for the same institution. For details regarding the name and the nature of the renovations, see Heimbel 2017, pp. 305–308.

<sup>20</sup> Kramer 2008: 25.

<sup>21</sup> For the account of his training with bDe legs rgyal mtshan, see Chos rgyal bsod nam (1442–1509) 1983, pp. 238–240.

<sup>22</sup> bSod nam lhun grub in turn is connected to the patriarchs of the Byang gter as he bestows full ordination on mNga' ris paN chen Padma dbang rgyal (1487–1542), who is known as the earliest master of the Northern Treasure Tradition to practice strict monasticism. For details, see Kramer 2008, p. 25. Padma dbang rgyal's brother, Rig 'dzin Legs ldan bdud 'joms rdo rje (1512–ca. 1580), who later identifies himself as the reincarnation of the founder of the Byang gter tradition, Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, is said to have had two important early teachers, one of whom is none other than *Glo bo mkhan chen*. See Legs ldan bdud 'joms rdo rje (1512–ca. 1580) 2015, p. 283 and Chos dbyings khyab brdal 2015, p. 272.

as it was indeed prophesized by Padmasambhava, the central-most figure of the rNying ma pa Tradition in general and the Byang gter in particular. From an analytical perspective, however, the use of foreshadowing by the author suggests that the autobiography is not a simple record of events, but a well-crafted piece of literature. It should also be noted that while the second half of the fifteenth century was a high point for the political and religious culture of Glo bo itself, it was also a period in which religious pilgrims, such as Chos rgyal bsod noms, consistently traveled to Tibet, experiencing and impacting the religious culture of the Himalayan Plateau. In fact, *Ngor chen* encouraged this activity by establishing the tradition of sending those training in Glo bo to the great seats of Sa skya pa power in Tibet in order to complete their studies, and a group of three hundred monks is said to have embarked upon this journey in 1450.<sup>23</sup>

The narrative of the second section of the autobiography traces the exploits of Chos rgyal bsod noms as he traveled to various destinations in Nepal, Tibet, and Bhutan, beginning in 1464 and concluding in 1467.<sup>24</sup> He first traveled east to visit the pilgrimage destinations sKyid grong and the Kathmandu Valley (1464), and it is at the latter where he met the Bengali master of the *Kālachakra Tantra* named Vanaratna (1384–1468).<sup>25</sup> The following year (1465), Chos rgyal bsod noms traveled to Central Tibet and finally received his name from the secular and religious ruler of the 'Bri gung bKa' brgyud pa, Chos rgyal rin chen dpal (ca. 1421/2–1469).<sup>26</sup> One must assume that Chos rgyal bsod noms held the 'Bri gung bKa' brgyud pa tradition in very high regard, but the precise reason is not explicitly explained in the autobiography. It is known, however, that the 'Bri gung were present in Glo bo as early as the twelfth century, not long after the tradition's founding by 'Jig rten mgon po (1143–1217).<sup>27</sup> It has also been suggested that the temple at Muktinath, which is very close to Dzar where Chos rgyal bsod noms was born, was essentially a branch monastery of 'Bri gung in the thirteenth century.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps his visit to the 'Bri gung seat of power is best understood within the context of the larger religious imperative

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<sup>23</sup> Heimbel 2017, p. 308.

<sup>24</sup> Chos rgyal bsod noms (1442–1509) 1983, pp. 240–242.

<sup>25</sup> Vanaratna is said, interestingly enough, to have taken Sras mo Padma bzang po (ca. 14th–15th c.) as his consort after the death of her husband, *Rig 'dzin rGod ldem*. For details, see Gu ru bkra shis (b. 18th c.) 1990, p. 669. For an interesting discussion of Vanaratna's exploits in Tibet, including brief mention of his visit to La stod Byang, see Ehrhard 2004, pp. 245–265.

<sup>26</sup> For a brief synopsis of the life of Chos rgyal rin chen dpal, see Sørensen 2007, p. 725.

<sup>27</sup> Jackson 1976, pp. 43–44.

<sup>28</sup> Jackson 1976, p. 44.

of the time to visit the Tibetan sources of the Buddhist traditions that were present in Glo bo. Later that same year, Chos rgyal bsod nam also visited the important pilgrimage destinations of Central Tibet, including Lha sa and bSam yas.

The following year (1466), Chos rgyal bsod nam received his first transmission of the *rDzogs chen* teachings of the Byang gter, the *dGongs pa zang thal*, at the feet of *sPrul sku* Dharmarāja (*sprul sku dharma ra dza*, ca. 15th c.) at sTag tshang seng ge in present day Bhutan.<sup>29</sup> In the autobiography, this is the first explicit reference to the Byang gter, but, according to the Fifth Dalai Lama, Chos rgyal bsod nam had already received transmission of other Byang gter cycles from bDe legs rgyal mtshan while in Glo bo.<sup>30</sup> Despite the fact that Chos rgyal bsod nam later received extensive training in the entirety of the Byang gter tradition from Sangs rgyas dpal bzang (ca. 15th c.) at Mt. bKra bzang, he explicitly expressed his gratitude to *sPrul sku* Dharmarāja in the song of realization that appears toward the end of the autobiography.<sup>31</sup> By mentioning only *sPrul sku* Dharmarāja by name, he suggests that he owes the greatest of debts to this master. Chos rgyal bsod nam continued his pilgrimage that year in a northerly direction passing through Sa skya, the account of which is surprisingly uneventful. Later, at the 'Brug pa dKar brgyud pa monastery of Ban 'brog rDo rje

<sup>29</sup> For detailed studies of the *dGongs pa zang thal* scriptures and practice manuals, see, respectively, Turpeinen 2015 and Arguillère 2018. For a further discussion of *sPrul sku* Dharmarāja, see Valentine 2018, p. 105.

<sup>30</sup> For examples, see Ngag dbang blo bzang (1617–1682) 1991–1995, Vol. 3, pp. 284–285, 341. Within the five-chambered treasure casket discovered by *Rig 'dzin* rGod ldem (1337–1409), the central chamber contained the bulk of the *rDzogs chen* material. The Byang gter transmissions that were received through bDe legs rgyal mtshan came from the Southern and Western chambers according to the Fifth Dalai Lama. One can presume that there must have been Byang gter cycles included in the collections of cycles, e.g., *Hayagrīva*, *Vajrakīla*, and *The Eight Herukas*, that Chos rgyal bsod nam received from this master. Unfortunately, *sPrul sku* Dharmarāja's name does not appear in the Fifth Dalai Lama's *thob yig*. Therein, Chos rgyal bsod nam receives transmission of teachings from eight individuals: Sangs rgyas dpal bzang (twenty-seven transmissions, including Byang and lHo gter), bDe legs rgyal mtshan (eight transmissions, including *bka'* and various gter ma), rDo rje rgyal mtshan (three transmission, including Byang and lHo gter), Chos kyi rin chen (two transmissions, lHo gter), 'Jam dpal 'od zer (two transmissions, Byang gter), Ngag dbang grags pa (one transmission, Byang gter), Byams pa chos grags (one transmission, lHo gter), and mChog grub rdo rje (one transmission, lHo gter). There is the slim possibility that rDo rje rgyal mtshan, who is at times addressed as *sPrul sku*, could be the same person as *sPrul sku* Dharmarāja, for he is the only unidentified teacher in the group from whom the Fifth Dalai Lama reports that Chos rgyal bsod nam received Byang gter *rDzogs chen* teachings. For the Byang gter transmission records, see Ngag dbang blo bzang (1617–1682) 1991–1995, Vol. 3, pp. 250–350. For a discussion of the contents of *Rig 'dzin* rGod ldem's five-chambered treasury, see Turpeinen 2015, pp. 24–25.

<sup>31</sup> Chos rgyal bsod nam (1442–1509) 1983, p. 247.

gling, Chos rgyal bsod noms received transmission of both Byang and lHo treasures from rDo rje rgyal mtshan (ca. 15th c.) and Chos kyi rin chen (ca. 15th c.).<sup>32</sup>

Finally, in the year 1467 (age 26), Chos rgyal bsod noms arrived at Mt. bKra bzang, the original epicenter of the Byang gter Tradition in La stod, where he learned everything there was to know about this tradition from Sangs rgyas dpal bzang, the leading patriarch of the tradition at the time. According to the Fifth Dalai Lama, Chos rgyal bsod noms also received transmission from Ngag dbang grags pa (ca. 15th c.), who was one of Sangs rgyas dpal bzang's two Byang gter masters and the son of Rin chen grags pa (ca. 14th–15th c.), a close disciple of the principle Byang gter treasure revealer, *Rig 'dzin* rGod ldem (1337–1409).<sup>33</sup> After Chos rgyal bsod noms copied the entire repository of Byang gter texts, Sangs rgyas dpal bzang performed a prayer intended to scatter Chos rgyal bsod noms's remaining karma. At this point, nearly all of the foreshadowing embedded in the vision of Padmasambhava, which occurred in 1463, had come to fruition. He was ordered to travel east and request the 500 teachings of the Path of Secret Mantras, and after his journey to the east, as well as to the north, he had arrived at Mt. bKra bzang and received the 501 teachings of the Byang gter Tradition. It was necessary for him to embark upon this quest because of his remaining karma from previous lives, and that karma had now been scattered by the prayers of Sangs rgyas dpal bzang. The only remaining task suggested by the foreshadowing is to return to the intense practice of the recitation of mantras, and that is precisely what he does next. Upon the completion of his training at Mt. Bkra bzang, Chos rgyal bsod noms enters retreat, where he spends the remainder of his life from 1468 through 1509.

The third section of the autobiography, which covers these final 42 years of his life, consists nearly entirely of a list of the cycles that he practiced each year and the number of times that he recited the mantras of each of those cycles.<sup>34</sup> He devoted himself to the recitation of a single mantra some of those years. For example, during his thirty-fourth year (1475), he did naught but complete 10,300,000 recitations of the *Peaceful Guru* (*gu ru zhi ba*) heart mantra. Many of the other years,

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<sup>32</sup> While the names of the teachers do appear in the autobiography, the nature of the teachings received are not mentioned. For those details, see Ngag dbang blo bzang (1617–1682) 1991–1995, Vol. 2, pp. 605–606, 695–696, and Vol. 3, pp. 259–260, 301–302.

<sup>33</sup> Ngag dbang blo bzang (1617–1682) 1991–1995, Vol. 3, pp. 287–288. For an English translation of biographies of Ngag dbang grags pa, Sangs rgyas dpal bzang, and Rin chen grags pa, see Valentine 2017, 156–165. For a study of the biography of *Rig 'dzin* rGod ldem, see Herweg 1994.

<sup>34</sup> Chos rgyal bsod noms (1442–1509) 1983, pp. 242–247.



however, involved a variety of practice cycles. His thirtieth year (1471), for example, included 10,200,000 recitations of the *Vajrapāṇi Ucarya* (*phyag na rdo rje u tsha*) heart mantra, 100,000 recitations of the *Vajrapāṇi gZa' 'dul* (*phyag na rdo rje gza' 'dul*) heart mantra, 100,000 recitations of the *Vajrapāṇi Rigs gsum 'dus pa* (*phyag na rdo rje rigs gsum 'dus pa*) heart mantra, and 100,000 recitations of the *Wrathful Vajrapāṇi* (*phyag na rdo rje gtum po*) heart mantra. This section also contains an account of the death of Chos rgyal bsod nams, which occurred on the eighth day of the first month of 1509, including a brief mention of the various signs that demonstrated the extent of his accomplishments to the faithful. The description of his passing proves, as mentioned above, that this hagiographic text is not entirely autobiographical.<sup>35</sup>

The central mystery, or perhaps contradiction, that is contained within the pages of the autobiography, which I have avoided until now, involves the precise location where Chos rgyal bsod nams performed his end-life retreat from 1468 through 1509. Conventional wisdom maintains that after he received his final instructions from Sangs rgyas dpal bzang at Mt. bKra bzang, he traveled directly to Bodhgaya, India and never returned.<sup>36</sup> In fact, in the section of the autobiography that describes the end of his life, it explicitly and simply states, "I went to rDo rje gdan" (*rdo rje gdan du phyin*).<sup>37</sup> While it does not specify which rDo rje gdan, for there are other locations in Tibet with that name, it is usually understood to mean the original rDo rje gdan, which is *the* Bodhgaya of India, despite the fact that the term for India does not appear in the text.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, if one were to consider that passage in isolation from the rest of the autobiography, it is a reasonable conclusion. However, the autobiographical song of realization that appears after the account of Chos rgyal bsod nams's passing, the penultimate section of the entire autobiography, is perplexing with regard to this subject. The final 9-syllable quatrain reveals that he practiced the 501 cycles of the Path of Secret Mantra with single-pointed focus for thirteen years in an isolated mountain

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<sup>35</sup> One might also note that in the first two sections of the autobiography that discuss Chos rgyal bsod nams's birth and training, the verses are written almost entirely in 7-syllable or 9-syllable lines. The structure of the writing is much more irregular in this third section of the text. My hypothesis, which at this point remains untested, is that this section of the text was assembled or written by an unnamed individual who used a practice journal belonging to Chos rgyal bsod nams and accounts of his death to "complete" the autobiography.

<sup>36</sup> While there are other sources that mention this perspective, it is clearly represented in Chos dbyings khyab brdal 2015, 204.

<sup>37</sup> Chos rgyal bsod nams (1442–1509) 1983, p. 242.

<sup>38</sup> The recently composed history of rDo rje brag, however, clarifies the account by adding "rgya gar gyi" (i.e., "of India") to the sentence. See Chos dbyings khyab brdal 2015, p. 204.

retreat in the northern region of La stod.<sup>39</sup> Then, immediately following this passage in the section's colophon, he reports that he wrote the song in his practice chamber at rDo rje gdan. If we are to presume that neither statement has been significantly altered over time, then the closeness of the proclamations suggests that the author did not understand them to be inconsistent statements.

How might one interpret these apparently contradictory claims? Perhaps the most straightforward option is to conclude that he practiced in La stod near Mt. bKra bzang for thirteen years and then relocated to Bodhgaya, India for the remainder of his life. While this is a plausible interpretation of the song itself, it is problematic when considered together with the rest of the autobiography, for it states that he was at Mt. bKra bzang in 1467 and rDo rje gdan in 1468, which leaves no time for thirteen years of retreat in La stod. Alternatively, one could translate the colophon of the song in a number of ways that would allow for rDo rje gdan to be a location in La stod.<sup>40</sup> For example, it could be understood to refer to a practice chamber that is at a currently unknown location in La stod that was named rDo rje gdan. It could also be the case that Chos rgyal bsod nam refers to his practice chamber, presumably in the mountains of La stod, as rDo rje gdan because it is where he had already achieved—or intended to achieve—enlightenment, just as the Buddha achieved enlightenment in Bodhgaya, India. These alternatives, which are based on reasonable interpretations of the text, suggest that Chos rgyal bsod nam not only conducted his retreat in La stod, but that he also, in all likelihood, never traveled to India.

A clear solution to "the rDo rje gdan problem" cannot be yielded decisively from an analysis of the autobiography on its own. The plausibility of the traditional understanding of Chos rgyal bsod nam's life (i.e., that he lived in India from 1468–1509) is reduced, however, when one considers how such an interpretation would magnify a more subtle—but perhaps more significant—problem created by the autobiography through omission. The mystery that the autobiography entices us to investigate is why, and indeed how, we have come to possess a hagiography of this master from Glo bo who appears within the biography itself to have been nearly irrelevant to the Byang gter communities of Byang Ngam ring and completely insignificant in the

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<sup>39</sup> Chos dbyings khyab brdal 2015, p. 248. Regarding the length of time of the retreat in La stod, the text reads, "mi lo bcu gsum." Given the semantic groupings within the other lines of the stanza, I have translated this as "thirteen years," but it could also be translated as "three decades." While they are very different lengths of time, neither translation significantly affects the problem at hand.

<sup>40</sup> The Tibetan reads as follows: "rDo rje gdan gyi sgrub khang du sbyar." For the complete passage, see Chos dbyings khyab brdal 2015, p. 248.

context of the patriarchs who transmitted the Byang gter to rDo rje brag in Central Tibet. When scrutinized with this question in mind, it appears that the autobiography was written, or perhaps edited, in a manner that prohibits an accurate understanding of his significance. In what follows, I will offer evidence from other sources that suggests, quite to the contrary, that Chos rgyal bsod noms was both a significant patriarch of Byang Ngam ring and that he was an important link in the transmission lineage that connected the patriarchs of Mt. bKra bzang and rDo rje brag. As will become clear below, however, the evidence I will propose will nearly require an abandonment of the supposition that Chos rgyal bsod noms resided in India from 1468 until 1509.

Given the emphasis on transmission lineages in the Tibetan traditions, it is very likely that the reason we know about Chos rgyal bsod noms at all is precisely because there were individuals who believed that he was an important teacher. Nevertheless, this hagiographic work offers absolutely no insight into his role as a teacher. There is not a single episode in which he transmitted teachings to anyone, and the only people who are explicitly mentioned are his parents and teachers; not a single disciple makes an appearance in the text's narrative.<sup>41</sup> The seeming irrelevance of Chos rgyal bsod noms is magnified when considered in the context of the biography of Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan (1454–1541), one of his Byang gter contemporaries, who was also a disciple of Sangs rgyas dpal bzang.<sup>42</sup> Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan's biography contains an extensive list of his disciples who were installed at important seats throughout La stod and beyond, including the renowned Shākya bzang po (ca. 16th c.).<sup>43</sup> Perhaps because of the nature of these two early biographies, the later narrative traditions tend to trace the Byang gter lineage from Sangs rgyas dpal bzang, to Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, and then to Shākya bzang po. This tendency can be observed in the 18th century *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, where there is an account of the early history of the Byang gter that includes a brief vignette of the life of Chos rgyal bsod noms.<sup>44</sup> The larger narrative of the section within the *Gu kra'i chos 'byung* is intended to demonstrate how the religious authority of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, the tradition's founding treasure revealer, was transmitted to rDo rje brag in Central Tibet. The author tends to narrate streamlined

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<sup>41</sup> The final section of the autobiography, however, is a six-stanza prayer that praises the guru, which is discussed below. It does not, however, explicitly identify any students by name.

<sup>42</sup> Regarding the biography of Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, see Nam mkha' bsod noms (16th c.) 1983, pp. 207-234. For an English translation, see Valentine 2018, pp. 117-133.

<sup>43</sup> For the complete list, see Nam mkha' bsod noms (16th c.) 1983, pp. 220-224.

<sup>44</sup> Gu ru bkra shis (b. 18th c.) 1990, pp. 672-673.

accounts of the lives of the early patriarchs that emphasize each subject's connection to a previous master as well as to the student or students who maintained the lineage as it was transmitted through the generations. The brief account of the life of Chos rgyal bsod nam that is included predictably emphasizes his link to Sangs rgyas dpal bzang, but it does not mention any of his disciples. Moreover, the biographies that appear after his in this source feature Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, who is not a student of Chos rgyal bsod nam, and then Shākya bzang po, through whom the lineage is transmitted to the next generation of patriarchs.<sup>45</sup> Thus, one is left wondering why Chos rgyal bsod nam is included in the narrative, for he is presented as a lineage dead end.

There are also a few narratives of the history of the Byang gter that do not include Chos rgyal bsod nam. For example, the Fifth Dalai Lama's biography of Ngag gi dbang po (1580–1639), the third incarnation of *Rig 'dzin* rGod ldem, begins with a discussion of the subject's previous incarnations, which nearly amounts to a prehistory and early history of the Byang gter.<sup>46</sup> Therein, Chos rgyal bsod nam is appropriately absent for he does not directly encounter any of the incarnations. As mentioned in the discussion of sources above, however, Chos rgyal bsod nam is an extremely important figure within the pages of the Fifth Dalai Lama's thob yig. He reports that Chos rgyal bsod nam did indeed transmit teachings to three individuals: Sangs rgyas bstan pa, Shākya bzang po, and Chos skyong bSod nam bkra shis.<sup>47</sup> The first of these figures, Sangs rgyas bstan pa (ca. 15th–16th c.), is relatively unknown, but we can be sure that he is not *Rig 'dzin* rGod ldem's uncle (ca. late 14th c.) who had the same name, for they are separated by several generations. Sangs rgyas bstan pa received eleven cycles of teachings from Chos rgyal bsod nam, which suggests that their acquaintance was far from casual.<sup>48</sup> He also received transmission of the Se lineage of the Byang gter from *sPyan tshab* mGon po zla ba (b. 15th c.).<sup>49</sup> Sangs rgyas bstan pa in turn

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<sup>45</sup> Gu ru bkra shis (b. 18th c.) 1990, pp. 673–674.

<sup>46</sup> For the biography of Ngag gi dbang po, see Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682) 1972, 443–570. Chos rgyal bsod nam is also not included in either of Boord's published accounts of the history of the Byang gter. See Boord 1993, pp. 21–35 and Boord 2013, pp. 31–85. His very helpful narrative emphasizes the role of the incarnations of *Rig 'dzin* rGod ldem, and in this way is very similar to the account given by the Fifth Dalai Lama in the biography of Ngag gi dbang po.

<sup>47</sup> For examples of each, see Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682) 1991–1995, pp. Vol. 3, pp. 284–285, 301–302.

<sup>48</sup> For examples, see Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682) 1991–1995, Vol. 3, pp. 252–253, 256, 259–260.

<sup>49</sup> The records are scattered throughout the third volume, but for an example, see Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682) 1991–1995, pp. Vol. 3, p. 253.

transmitted the Byang gter teachings to 'Khrul zhig dKon cog bzang po (b. 15th c.) and Shākya bzang po.<sup>50</sup>

Shākya bzang po (ca. 16th c.) is generally held to be a much more important figure in Tibetan history in general as well as with respect to the Byang gter in particular.<sup>51</sup> Although there is no surviving, early biography of this figure, he is well known as the first of the famous *Yol mo Bla ma* incarnations and, as his name suggests, he is responsible at least in part for the spreading of the Byang gter through northern Nepal. As mentioned above, Shākya bzang po is also a significant figure within the Central Tibetan tradition, for it is he who received the Byang gter treasures from Nam mkha rgyal mtshan and transmits them to the *mNga' ris Rig dzin* Legs ldan bdud 'joms rdo rje (1512–ca. 1580), who later identifies himself as the reincarnation of the tradition's founder, *Rig 'dzin* rGod ldem. Thus, after generations during which the treasures were passed through family lineages and merit-based disciple lineages, Shākya bzang po places the revealed scriptures back into the hands of the individual who revealed them in his previous life.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, the Fifth Dalai Lama confirms that Shākya bzang po received at least eight transmissions from Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan.<sup>53</sup> However, he is also reported to have received at least twelve transmissions in total from Chos rgyal bsod nams (seven transmissions) and his disciple, Sangs rgyas bstan pa (five transmissions).<sup>54</sup> Although only tentative conclusions can be obtained solely on this quantitative data, the number of transmissions suggests that Shākya bzang po's relationship with Chos rgyal bsod nams could have been as significant as his relationship with Nam mkha' rgyal

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<sup>50</sup> For examples, see Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682) 1991–1995, pp. Vol. 3, p. 253, 256.

<sup>51</sup> For a discussion of this figure and his first two reincarnations, see Bogin 2005.

<sup>52</sup> Legs ldan bdud 'joms rdo rje's reincarnation, Ngag gi dbang po (1580–1639), is the one who founds the rDo rje brag Monastery in Central Tibet early in the seventeenth century. The third *Yol mo bla ma* incarnation, bsTan 'dzin nor bu (1598–1644) was later instrumental in the identification of Ngag gi dbang po's reincarnation, Padma 'phrin las (1641–1717), who was enthroned at rDo rje brag after his death. Padma 'phrin las received ordination from none other than the Fifth Dalai Lama, which is not only a testament to their political and religious connections, but it is also a significant step in the monasticization of the Byang gter tradition.

<sup>53</sup> Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682) 1991–1995, pp. Vol. 2, pp. 767, 769, 771, Vol. 3, pp. 229, 252, 264, 289, 315.

<sup>54</sup> For examples of the records involving Chos rgyal bsod nams, see Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682) 1991–1995, pp. Vol. 3, pp. 326, 588, 607. For examples of the records involving Sangs rgyas bstan pa, see Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682) 1991–1995, pp. Vol. 3, pp. 260, 285, 305.

mtshan.<sup>55</sup> It should be noted, however, that Shākya bzang po also received transmission from Ngag dbang grags pa, who was one of the Byang gter masters of Sangs rgyas dpal bzang and Chos rgyal bsod noms, and transmitted teachings to not only both of the mNga ris brothers, but also their father, 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan (1445–1558).<sup>56</sup>

The last of Chos rgyal bsod noms's students, but far from the least intriguing, is *Chos skyong* bSod noms bkra shis (ca. 16th c.), who was his biological heir. The Fifth Dalai Lama describes him not only as the "son" (sras) of Chos rgyal bsod noms, but also as a "bKra bzang pa," signifying that his identity was intimately bound to a term of residency at Mt. bKra bzang, the primary ancestral estate of the Byang gter tradition.<sup>57</sup> To a certain extent, his identity is corroborated by the biography of Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, where bSod noms bkra shis is listed as one of his disciples.<sup>58</sup> Although he is not explicitly identified therein as the son of Chos rgyal bsod noms or as a bKra bzang pa, his clan name, lHong, is suggestive of the former. Also, bSod noms bkra shis's name appears among the disciples who are seated at important estates in the vicinity of Byang, such as bKra bzang.

The Fifth Dalai Lama also reports that bSod noms bkra shis transmitted teachings to six students, who can be organized into three lineages. First, he transmitted teachings to both Shākya bzang po and Legs ldan bdud 'joms rdo rje, who are, as stated above, important in the lineage associated with rDo rje brag. Second, bSod noms bkra shis transmitted teachings to *gNubs chen* Ngag dbang rgya mtsho (ca. 16th c.), who sits within a separate lineage that reaches the Fifth Dalai Lama in the seventeenth century. Third, there is *gZhon nu stobs ldan* (ca. 16th c.), *Tshar chen* Chos kyi rgyal po (1502–ca. 1566/7), and 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang phyug (1524–1568). The most significant individual in this grouping is 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse, as he also received transmissions directly from both *gZhon nu stobs ldan* and *Tshar chen* Chos kyi rgyal po. 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse is particularly important as the Fifth Dalai Lama also relied upon his

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<sup>55</sup> One can at the least agree to lament the fact that at present, we do not possess and narrative accounts of the meetings between Chos rgyal bsod noms and Shākya bzang po.

<sup>56</sup> For the record involving Ngag dbang grags pa, see Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682) 1991–1995, pp. Vol. 3, p. 253. For the record involving 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan, see Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682) 1991–1995, pp. Vol. 3, p. 699.

<sup>57</sup> For examples, see Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682) 1991–1995, pp. Vol. 3, p. 287–288, 265, 266.

<sup>58</sup> Nam mkha' bsod noms (16th c.) 1983, p. 222.

record of teachings to construct his own thob yig.<sup>59</sup> In 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse's autobiography, he reports that he received an invitation to travel to Mt. bKra bzang to receive transmissions from bSod noms bkra shis in 1558.<sup>60</sup> This passage is extremely interesting, for it offers a small glimpse into the situation at Mt. bKra bzang seven years after the death of Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, while Chos rgyal bsod noms's autobiography is again astonishing in that it remains silent with respect to the circumstances of his child's conception, birth, training, etc., we can be reasonably sure that Chos rgyal bsod noms had a son by the name of bSod noms bkra shis who resided at Mt. bKra bzang.<sup>62</sup> We can further surmise that the pair were not estranged, for bSod noms bkra shis received many transmissions from his father.<sup>63</sup>

From this refreshed perspective on the life of Chos rgyal bsod noms that includes a discussion of his son and disciples, one can more fully grasp the significance of this patriarch. With respect to the lineage that is transplanted to Central Tibet, both Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan and Chos rgyal bsod noms should be understood as the sources of the tradition that was transmitted through Shākya bzang po to Legs ldan bdud 'joms rdo rje despite the fact that the hagiographic tradition focuses solely on Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan. And, with respect to the significance of Chos rgyal bsod noms in La stod, it is very likely that he remained in retreat in the mountains near enough to bKra bzang to remain relevant. While the exact location of Chos rgyal bsod noms's retreat will remain a mystery, it is clear that bSod noms bkra shis was a significant patriarch at Mt. bKra bzang itself. This information, speculative as it may be, helps explain the fame of Chos rgyal bsod noms in La stod.

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<sup>59</sup> Ngag dbang blo bzang (1617–1682) 1991–1995, Vol. 3, p. 228.

<sup>60</sup> 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang phyug (1524–1568), p. 96.

<sup>61</sup> As I have discussed elsewhere, Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan's biography leaves us with the understanding that the Se clansmen had already taken over as the leading patriarchs at Mt. bKra bzang by the mid-16th century, but from this small reference we can at the least deduce that the situation was more complicated and that perhaps the lHong family had reigned dominant for at least a brief period in the mid-16th century. See Valentine 2018, pp. 109–111.

<sup>62</sup> It is also likely, therefore, that the final section of the autobiography, a prayer that praises the guru, was authored by bSod noms bkra shis, for it begins by addressing Chos rgyal bsod noms as "father" (*pha*). One might go so far as to speculate that bSod noms bkra shis could have even been the editor of autobiography, for he certainly would have had motive. As would be expected from his appearance in the biography of Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, the thob yig records that bSod noms bkra shis did receive a single transmission of teachings from that master.

<sup>63</sup> For examples, see Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682) 1991–1995, pp. Vol. 3, pp. 263, 287–288, 301–302.

When all of the above is considered, the scenario in which Chos rgyal bsod nam is believed to have lived in India from 1468 until 1509, is all but impossible to maintain. Are we to conclude that after a single year of training at Mt. bKra bzang, Chos rgyal bsod nam made such an impact as a great master that they continued to revere him after his departure? Would he have even been recognized as a master at that stage of his life before completing years of isolated practice? Is it plausible that Chos rgyal bsod nam was visited by Shākya bzang po and Sangs rgyas bstan pa in India to receive teachings from him or is it more plausible that they encountered each other in La stod? Is it plausible that bSod nam bkra shis might have trained with his father in Bodhgaya and then traveled to Mt. bKra bzang where he was accepted as a patriarch of the tradition? How would we even know of Chos rgyal bsod nam's meditative exploits in India? Who would have witnessed his passing? Who would have transported the news back and forth across the Himalayas? It is important to remain open to the possibility that new information could come to light that would allow for the construction of affirmative answers to these rhetorical questions. Until such a time, however, I propose that it would be best to describe Chos rgyal bsod nam as a spiritual seeker from Lo Mustang, who traveled throughout the Himalayas until he reached Byang. While there, his thirst for new teachings was permanently slaked by drinking deep of the Byang gter tradition at the feet of Sangs rgyas dpal bzang. His desires thus quenched, he went into retreat somewhere in the vicinity of Mt. bKra bzang for the remainder of his life. While in retreat, he fathered a child, bSod nam bkra shis, and trained him and a very few others in the Northern Treasure Tradition. One of his other disciples, Shākya bzang po, is revered within the tradition for his role in training Legs ldan bdud 'joms rdo rje, the reincarnation of *Rig 'dzin* rGod ldem and a figure of paramount importance for the lineage that relocates to rDo rje brag in Central Tibet. His son, bSod nam bkra shis, eventually rose in importance at Mt. bKra bzang, and by 1558 he was an active patriarch in residence at this important center for the Byang gter.

It would be negligent of me to not at least mention that Chos rgyal bsod nam and bSod nam bkra shis were not the only Byang gter patriarchs of La stod to bear the heritage of the region of Glo bo. Both Padma dbang rgyal (1487–1542) and his brother, Legs ldan bdud 'joms rdo rje were also born in Mustang.<sup>64</sup> Unlike Chos rgyal bsod nam, however, the familial lineage of the siblings can be traced to the royal

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<sup>64</sup> For biographies in English, see Einhorn 2013 and Samten Chhoshpel 2013, respectively. For an argument for these dates for Legs ldan bdud 'joms rdo rje, see Valentine 2013, pp. 162-165.



lineage of the kingdom of Gung thang.<sup>65</sup> Their father, 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan (1445–1558), lived in Glo bo despite the fact that he was the only remaining biological heir to the throne of Gung thang, which had been the seat of power of the entire region of mNga' ris in previous generations.<sup>66</sup> It is perhaps for these reasons that Padma dbang rgyal and Legs ldan bdud 'joms rdo rje are known respectively as the *mNga' ris Paṇ chen* and the *Rig 'dzin mNga' ris pa chen po*. For more on the mNga' ris brothers and their family, look for my future work that will focus on the recently published autobiography of Legs ldan bdud 'joms rdo rje.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Kramer 2008, p. 34.

<sup>66</sup> Kramer 2008, 34.

<sup>67</sup> Legs ldan bdud 'joms rdo rje (1512–ca. 1580) 2015, pp. 217-304.

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### The Liberation Story of Rigs 'dzin Chos rgyal bsod nam (1442–1509)

[236] Homage to the assemblage of the Bla ma, Yi dam, and mKha' 'gro!

The sNgags pa of the lDong [family], Chos rgyal bsod nam,  
Wrote this abridged liberation story for the benefit of his  
successors (*brgyud 'dzin*).

Kye Ho!

Below the spread out canopy of azure-blue sky,  
On top of a precious and well-formed expanse (*gdal pa*) of earth,  
South of Ma gro, where the four great rivers descend from Mt.  
Kailash,

In the middle of the resplendent forests of medicinal herbs in the  
region called Dzar,

There was a lineage of patriarchs of a noble family of genuine  
origins called lDong,

Which included King (*mi dbang chen po*) *dPon chen Zang dar*  
*phyug*, and

The scions of that family were vajra masters of the path of  
mantras.

My father, [who was of this family] was named *dPon chen lHa*  
*grub 'bum* (ca. 15th c.), and

My mother was named *dBon mo dKar lcam 'bum* (ca. 15th c.). As for the two of them, [237]

It was a period [of their lives] when they were comporting themselves in a manner suitable to householders.

Before the fortress named *Glo bo rGyam dpaI*,

On a day within the [astrological interval called] *Puṣya (skar ma rgyal smad)* in the Year of the Water-Male-Dog (1442),

I was born at sunrise.

My second year was the Year of the Pig (1443), and my third was the Year of the Mouse (1444).

My fourth year was of the Year of the Ox (1445), and my fifth was of the Year of the Tiger (1446).

My sixth year was of the Year of the Rabbit (1447), and my seventh was of the Year of the Dragon (1448).

Both the children and the elders comported themselves according to custom [during those years].

My eighth year was the Year of the Snake (1449), and I learned the alphabet, etc.

My ninth year was the Year of the Horse (1450), and I learned to write.

My tenth year was the Year of the Sheep (1451), and I learned various forms of religious behavior.

My eleventh year was the Year of the Monkey (1452), and I learned about *Medicine Buddha (sman bla)*, *Sarvavid Mahāvairocana (kun rig)*,

*The Peaceful and Wrathful Deities (zhi khro)*, and the Hell Realms, and my desire to move away from cyclic existence was roused.

My twelfth year was the Year of the Rooster (1453), and I learned the *Yi dam* of *Cakrasaṃvara (bde mchog)*, and [238]

The cycle of teachings dedicated to that four-armed protector (*Chos skyong bzhi pa*).

My thirteenth year was the Year of the Dog (1454). I started [reading] the *Śāstra* commentaries (*bstan chos*) and the *Prajñāpāramitā (phar phyin)*, and

I was sent to study at *rNam rgyal chos sde chen po*.

My fourteenth year was the Year of the Pig (1455), and I went to the monastery near where I was born. At the feet of *sNgags 'chang bDe legs rgyal mtshan* (ca. 15th c.),

I requested many cycles of teachings for granting protection (*bsrung*), performing reversals (*bzlog*), suppressing [spirits] (*dbab*), and cutting (*bcad*),

Beginning with the longevity cycle called *rDo rje tshe bsgrub*,  
Purification practices for both Buddhists and non-Buddhists, (*chos spyod rab bsal phyi nang gnyis*),

The cycle called *rDo rje rnam 'Joms dpal bsdud pa*,

The cycle called *rDo rje gcod pa bzang spyod mtshan 'bum*,

The effigy (*gtor ma*) cycle called *brGya bzhi gtor 'bum padma gces 'phreng*,

The fire ceremony for purification called *Kun rig ngan song sByong rgyud sbyin bsreg*, and others.

My fifteenth year was the Year of the Mouse (1456), and I requested

The complete cycle of teachings, reading transmissions, and empowerments for: *The Ma ni bka' 'bum*,

The *Sūtras (mdo sde)*, the *Jātaka Tales (skyes rabs)*, fasting instructions (*bsnyung gnas*),

The *Tārā Sarasvatī (sgrol ma dbyangs can)* and *Hermitage Goddess (lha mo ri khrod ma)* cycles,

The *White Acala (mi g.yo dkar po)* and *Wrathful Bhurkumkuṭa (khro bo rme ba brtsegs)* cycles,

The *Vajrapāṇi Ucarya (phyag na rdo rje gZa' 'dul u tsa)* cycle,

All the revealed cycles within the *Precious Treasury (rin chen gter mdzod)*, and

The *Vajrabharava (bcom ldan rdo rje 'jigs byed)* cycle of the Ra tradition (*ra lugs*).

My sixteenth year was the Year of the Ox (1457), and I requested absolutely all of the reading transmissions and empowerments for:

The *Peaceful Guru* cycle (*gu ru zhi ba*), [239]

All of the cycles for the *Wrathful Red Guru (gu ru drag dmar)*

Of various sizes (*brgyad tshan drug dang phra mo zhe gnyis*), and

All of the cycles for the heart-sādhanas of the Gurus (*gu ru thugs bsgrub*).

My seventeenth year was the Year of the Tiger (1458), and

I requested many reading transmissions and empowerments for the *Vajrakīla (rdo rje phur pa)* cycles, including

The *Golden Jowo (gser mdog jo bo lugs)* and the *Sa skya pa (sa phur)* cycles.

My eighteenth year was the Year of the Rabbit (1459), and

I requested all of the cycles related to [a particular form of] *Hayagrīva* (i.e., *rta mgrin yang gsang*),

A *Vajravārāhī* cycle (i.e. *rdo rje phag mo'i chos tshan brgya rtsa*), and *Protector Ma ning* (*mgon po ma ning*).

My nineteenth year was the Year of the Dragon (1460), and I requested all of the cycles related to

The *Medical Elixir Sādhana* (*bdud rtsi sman sgrub*) and *Yamāntaka, Lord of Life* (*gshin rje tshe bdag*).

My twentieth year was the Year of the Snake (1461), and I requested absolutely everything related to

*The Great Sādhana of the Eight Herukas* (*sgrub chen bka' brgyad*).

My twenty-first year was the Year of the Horse (1462),<sup>68</sup> and I requested all there is regarding

*The Skillful Means* (*thabs lam*) cycle,

*The Family [Lineage] Holder of the Mantra Practitioner of Uḍḍiyāna* (*o rgyan sngags lam rigs 'dzin chen po*) cycle,

*The Mahāmudrā Coemergent Awareness* (*phyag rgya chen po lhan cig skyes sbyor*) cycle,

The three retreat cycles of *rGyal ba yang dgon* (*rgyal ba yang dgon ri chos bskor gsum*), and the means for pacifying harmful emotions (*dam chos nyon mongs zhi byed*).

My twenty-second year was the Year of the Sheep (1463), and I requested

The *Niguma* cycle of teachings (*ni gu chos bskor*) and *Dharma Protector Phiyag drug pa* cycle (*chos skyong phyag drug pa*).

My benefactor, bDe legs rgyal mtshan, [240] was very kind to me.

Later [that year], I had completed ten thousand recitations of the *Tāra* (*sgrol ma*) Mantra, and

One hundred recitations of the *Vajracchedikā* (*rdo rje gcod pa*), and

While I was performing the familiarization rites and reciting the mantras for the *Peaceful Guru* (*gu ru zhi ba*),

Padmasambhava appeared in the sky in front of me, and said:<sup>69</sup>

<sup>68</sup> For some reason, the biography that was published in 2015 skips the twenty-first year, despite remaining very close to the autobiography for each of the preceding years. See Chos dbyings khyab brdal 2015, p. 202.

<sup>69</sup> Chos dbyings khyab brdal clarifies that this is a "prophecy" (*lung bstan*) (2015, p. 203).

Son of earthly guardians (*zhing skyong*) and the Ḍākinī, you listen!

Consider the misfortune that has resulted from past actions, and

While remembering death and impermanence,  
Meditate continuously on the empty luminousness of the mind itself, and

[You] and I will form an inseparable union!

However, because of [you still possess] residual karma from your past life,

Go quickly in the direction of the rising sun, and  
Request the 500 cycles of the Secret Mantra (*gsang sngags*), and  
You will be of great benefit [to sentient beings] in this life and the next.

This concludes the chapter of my biography concerning my training in the dharma while residing in my homeland.



My twenty-third year was the Year of the Monkey (1464), and I went to see the sKyid grong Jo bo statue.

Then, I traveled in a southerly direction into the Nepalese region, and circled through the [pilgrimage destinations], and [saw] the likes of

The three sibling Jo bo statues (*jo bo mched gsum*), the Svayāmbhūnath Stūpa ('*phags pa shing kun*), and

The sacred caves called Yang le shod and A su ra,

The Boudhanath Stūpa, Changu Narayan (*khyung rang byon*), and

The meditation sites of the eighty *mahāsiddhas*.

Then, I went before the great Vanaratna (1384–1468) and

Requested many cycles of teachings from the five classes of tantra.  
[241]

My twenty-fourth year was the Year of the Rooster (1465), and that is when I traveled to Central Tibet (*dBus*).

I met personally with the Precious Master of the Northern 'Bri gung pa sect,

The one named Chos rgyal rin chen dpal (1421/2–1469).

Indeed, while attending him, he gave me the name "Chos rgyal bsod nams."



I requested his blessing to go on pilgrimage to places such as Lhasa, bSam yas, Shangs kyi zab bu lung, and gNas rnying ngor.

My twenty-fifth year was the Year of the Dog (1466), and I went to sTag tshang seng ge.

I met personally with sPrul sku Dharmarāja (*sprul sku dharma ra dza*, ca. 15th c.).<sup>70</sup>

From him, I requested absolutely everything regarding The Great Perfection cycle [of the Northern Treasure Tradition] called *dGongs pa zangs thal*.

Then, I went on the pilgrimage route that included places such as the sacred sites at dPal ldan Sa skya, rGod tshang sbu kra in Southern La stod, and The Ding ri glang circuit.<sup>71</sup>

Then, I went to Ban 'brog rDo rje gling.

I requested many empowerments and reading transmissions of the profound *Mantrayāna* (*gsang sngags*) from

The two masters named *Bla ma* rDo rje rgyal mtshan (ca. 15th c.) and

*Bla ma* Chos kyi rin chen (ca. 15th c.).<sup>72</sup>

My twenty-sixth year was the Year of the Pig (1467), and that is when I went north into La stod, to

The sacred mountain abode known as Ri bo bKra bzang, to [serve] before

*Bla ma* Sangs rgyas dpal bzang (ca. 15th c.).

He gave me the complete transmission of all of the empowerments and reading transmissions for [242]

The 501 dharma cycles of the *Mantrayāna*.<sup>73</sup>

I indeed copied all of the books completely.

<sup>70</sup> The Sanskrit transliteration in the autobiography is mangled, but it has been corrected to the form presented in this translation by Chos dbyings khyab brdal (2015, p. 204).

<sup>71</sup> The activities of this stanza are not discussed in the newer version of the biography, see Chos dbyings khyab brdal 2015, p. 204.

<sup>72</sup> Chos dbyings khyab brdal only mentions the first of these two teachers (2015, p. 204).

<sup>73</sup> Chos dbyings khyab brdal clarifies that this includes the five treasuries of lHa brag, which most importantly includes the *dGongs pa zang thal* (2015, p. 204).

We came together when it was time to pray for my past karma to be scattered,  
 And I obtained the secret treasury of advice that the lama had for his heart-sons.  
 The precious Sangs rgyas dpal bzang was so kind!

This concludes the chapter of my biography concerning my experience of hardships in the Tibetan regions of dBus and gTsang.



My twenty-seventh year was the Year of the Mouse (1468), and during that year, I went to rDo rje gdan.<sup>74</sup>

Because I want to achieve enlightenment in this body and life, I completed 10,300,000 recitations of the heart mantra for the *rDo rje tshe* [longevity ritual].<sup>75</sup>

My twenty-eighth year was the Year of the Ox (1469), and during that year, I completed 100,000 recitations of the *Vajrasattva* (*rDo rje sems pa*) heart mantra, 100,000 recitations of the *Vajravidāraṇa* (*rDo rje rnam 'joms*) heart mantra, 100,000 recitations of the *Maitreya* (*rGyal ba byams pa*) heart mantra, 100,000 recitations of the *Mañjuśrī* (*'jam dpal dbyangs*) heart mantra, 100,000 recitations of the *Sarasvatī* (*dbyangs can ma*) heart mantra, 100,000 recitations of the *Dākinī Seng gdong* (*mkha' 'gro seng gdong*) heart mantra, and 100,000 recitations of the *White Acala* (*mi g.yo dkar po*) heart mantra.

My twenty-ninth year was the Year of the Tiger (1470), and during that year, I completed 30,500,000 recitations of the heart mantra of the *Noble Mahākāruṇika* (*'phags pa thugs rje chen po*).

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<sup>74</sup> Chos dbyings khyab brdal "clarifies" that this is Bodhgaya in India, but as discussed in the accompanying article, this is very likely not the case. See Chos dbyings khyab brdal 2015, p. 204.

<sup>75</sup> Wherever it is that Chos rgyal bsod nam resided during his twenty-seventh year, he appears to have stayed there until his passing in 1509 doing nothing but reciting mantras. Chos dbyings khyab brdal states that, "he did nothing but direct his mind toward the recitations for the bla ma, yi dam, and chos skyong" and then directs us to the autobiography for the rest of the details (2015, p. 204). The next few pages of the autobiography are rather formulaic. Each irregular stanza states an age (e.g., twenty-seven), a year (e.g., Year of the Mouse), the name of a tantric cycle (e.g., rDo rje tshe), the word "essential [mantra]" (i.e., snying po ma Ni), and a number (e.g., 10,300,000). If more than one mantra was recited that year, its name and number of recitations follows the first. It should also be noted that the lines of verse begin to be more erratic from here forward. Up until this point, they have been in steady 9-syllable or 7-syllable lines.

My thirtieth year was the Year of the Rabbit (1471), and during that year, I completed 10,200,000 recitations of the *Vajrapāṇi Ucarya* (*phyag na rdo rje u tsha*) heart mantra, 100,000 recitations of the *Vajrapāṇi gZa' 'dul* (*phyag na rdo rje gza' 'dul*) heart mantra, [243] 100,000 recitations of the *Vajrapāṇi Rigs gsum 'dus pa* (*phyag na rdo rje rigs gsum 'dus pa*) heart mantra, and 100,000 recitations of the *Wrathful Vajrapāṇi* (*phyag na rdo rje gtum po*) heart mantra.

My thirty-first year was the Year of the Dragon (1472), and during that year, I completed 300,000 recitations of the *Vajrapāṇi 'gro bzang* (*phyag na rdo rje 'gro bzang*) heart mantra, and 10,100,000 recitations of the *Vaiśravaṇa* (*rnam sras*) heart mantra.

My thirty-second year was the Year of the Snake (1473), and during that year, I completed 300,000 recitations of the *Bhagavān Guhyasamāja* (*bcom ldan 'das dpal gsang ba 'dus pa*) heart mantra, 300,000 recitations of the *Bhagavān Maha ba ya* (*bcom ldan 'das maha ba ya*) heart mantra, 300,000 recitations of the *Bhagavān Hevajra* (*bcom ldan 'das kye'i rdo rje*) heart mantra, and 400,000 recitations of the supreme mantra of the *Bhagavān Cakrasamvara* (*bcom ldan 'das 'khor lo bde ma*) heart mantra.

My thirty-third year was the Year of the Horse (1474), and during that year, I completed 10,100,000 recitations of the *Bhagavān Vajrabhairava* (*bcom ldan 'das rdo rje 'jigs byed*) heart mantra.

My thirty-fourth year was the Year of the Sheep (1475), and during that year, I completed 10,300,000 recitations of the *Peaceful Guru* (*gu ru zhi ba*) heart mantra.

My thirty-fifth year was the Year of the Monkey (1476), and during that year, I completed 20,400,000 recitations of the *Guru Brag dmar* (*gu ru brag dmar*) heart mantra.

My thirty-sixth year was the Year of the Rooster (1477), and during that year, I completed 80,300,000 recitations of the *Guru Thugs bsgrub* (*gu ru thugs bsgrub*) heart mantra.

My thirty-seventh year was the Year of the Dog (1478), and during that year, I completed 10,300,000 recitations of the *Peaceful and Wrathful Bhagavān* (*bcom ldan 'das zhi khro*) heart mantra.

My thirty-eighth year was the Year of the Pig (1479), and during that year I completed 300,000 recitations of the heart mantra of the root text of the *Great Sādhana of the Eight Herukas* (*sgrub chen bka' brgyad kyi rtsa ba*) and 400,000 recitations of the *gSang sngags nus 'dril chen po* heart mantra.

My thirty-ninth year [244] was the Year of the Mouse (1480), and during that year, I completed 40,400,000 recitations of the *Bhagavān Mañjuśrī Yamāntaka* (*bcom ldan 'das 'jam dpal gshin rje*) heart mantra.

My fortieth year was the Year of the Ox (1481), and during that year, I completed 30,300,000 recitations of the *Bhagavān Padma dbang chen* (*bcom ldan 'das padma dbang chen*) heart mantra.

My forty-first year was the Year of the Tiger (1482), and during that year, I completed 20,100,000 recitations of the *Bhagavān Śrī Viśuddha* (*bcom ldan 'das dpal yang dag*) heart mantra.

My forty-second year was the Year of the Rabbit (1483), and during that year, I completed 40,100,000 recitations of the *Bhagavān Che mchog yon tan* (*bcom ldan 'das che mchog yon tan*) heart mantra.

My forty-third year was the Year of the Dragon (1484), and during that year, I completed 20,200,000 recitations of the *Bhagavān Che mchog yon tan* (*bcom ldan 'das che mchog yon tan*) heart mantra.

My forty-fourth year was the Year of the Snake (1485), and during that year, I completed 50,100,000 recitations of the *Bhagavān Vajrakīla* (*bcom ldan 'das rdo rje phur pa*) heart mantra.<sup>76</sup>

My forty-sixth year was the Year of the Sheep (1487), and during that year, I completed 20,100,000 recitations of the *Bhagavān mNgon rdzogs Heruka Srid pa ma mo* (*bcom ldan 'das mngon rdzogs he ru ka srid pa ma mo*) heart mantra.

My forty-seventh year was the Year of the Monkey (1488), and during that year, [245] I completed 20,100,00 recitations of the *Bla ma rigs 'dzin* heart mantra.

My forty-eighth year was the Year of the Rooster (1489), and during that year, I completed 20,600,000 recitations of the *Bhagavān Vajrapāṇi Tamer of Haughty Spirits* (*bcom ldan 'das phyag na rdo rje dregs pa kun 'dul 'jig rten mchod rten*) heart mantra.

My forty-ninth year was the Year of the Dog (1490), and during that year, I completed 20,300,000 recitations of the wrathful heart mantra of *Śrīmahā sTobs ldan nag po smod pa* (*dpal chen stobs ldan nag po smod pa*).

My fiftieth year was the Year of the Pig (1491), and during that year, I completed 10,100,000 recitations of the *Jina Putra Garuḍa* (*rgyal sras khyung chen*) heart mantra.

My fifty-third year was the Year of the Tiger (1494), and during that year, I completed 10,600,000 recitations of the *Bhagavān Śrī Hayagrīva drags pa kun sgrol* (*bcom ldan 'das dpal rta mgrin dregs pa kun sgrol*) heart mantra.

My fifty-fourth year was the Year of the Rabbit (1495), and during that year, I completed 20,100,000 recitations of the *Bhagavān Padma dbang chen yang gsang 'khros pa* (*bcom ldan 'das padma dbang chen yang gsang 'khros pa*) heart mantra and 10,100,000 recitations of the *Bhagavān of the Union of Hayagrīva-Vajravārāhī* (*bcom ldan 'das rta phag yab yum*) heart mantra.

My fifty-fifth year was the Year of the Dragon (1496), and during that year, I completed 30,500,000 recitations of the *Vajravārāhī* (*rdo rje phag mo*) heart mantra.

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<sup>76</sup> Note that the forty-fifth year is missing from the autobiography.

My fifty-sixth year was the Year of the Snake (1497), and during that year, I completed 30,300,000 recitations of the '*Phya sa rigs gsum 'dus pa* heart mantra.

My fifty-seventh year [246] was the Year of the Horse (1498), and during that year, I completed 10,100,000 recitations of the '*Phags pa phrin las grub pa* heart mantra.

My fifty-eighth year was the Year of the Sheep (1499), and during that year, I completed 10,300,000 recitations of the *Śrī Jñānaguhya* (*dpal ye shes gsang ba*) heart mantra.

My fifty-ninth year was the Year of the Monkey (1500), and during that year, I completed 100,000 recitations of the '*Jam dpal gshin rje yang zab* and 10,000 recitation *E rings* heart mantra.

My sixtieth year was the Year of the Rooster (1501), and during that year, I completed 500,000 recitations of the *Mañjuśrī Yamāntaka yang zab* ('*jam dpal gshin rje yang zab*) heart mantra.

My sixty-first year was the Year of the Dog (1502), and during that year, I completed 20,100,000 recitations of the *Mahādeva* (*lha chen*) *Dregs pa stobs 'dul* heart mantra.

My sixty-second year was the Year of the Pig (1503), and during that year, I completed 20,100,000 recitations of the *Mahādeva* (*lha chen*) *bSod nams dpal 'bar* heart mantra.

My sixty-third year was the Year of the Mouse (1504), and during that year, I completed 40,100,000 recitations of the *Ye shes mgon po ma ning* heart mantra.

My sixty-fourth year was the Year of the Ox (1505), and during that year, I completed 30,300,000 recitations of the *mGon po phyag bzhi pa* and 10,100,000 recitations of *Las mgon seng gdong* heart mantra.

My sixty-fifth year was the Year of the Tiger (1506), and during that year, I completed 600,000 recitations of the *bDe gshegs* heart mantra and 500,000 recitations of *Yang Kīla* (*yang phur pa*) heart mantra.

My sixty-sixth year was the Year of the Rabbit (1507), and during that year, I completed 630,000 recitations of the *Black Vajra Garuda* (*rdo rje khyung nag*) and 500,000 recitations of '*Jig rten mchod rten* heart mantra. [247]

My sixty-seventh year was the Year of the Dragon (1508), and during that year, I completed 600,000 recitations of the *Hayagrīva dregs pa dbang bsdud* (*rta mgrin dregs pa dbang bsdud*) heart mantra.

His sixty-eighth year was the Year of the Snake (1509). He departed [this world] for the benefit of others on the eighth day of the first month (i.e., the Month of Miracles).<sup>77</sup> There were many amazing signs such as rainbows and lights as well as showers of flowers. Having

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<sup>77</sup> Note that this section cannot be autobiographical. I have this shifted to the third-person here.

arranged his body in a squatting position, he departed peacefully into the expanse of reality (*chos kyī dbyings*).



E! MA! HO!

I am the *sngags pa* from lDong named Chos rgyal bsod nam, and  
From the age of eight until twenty-seven,  
I trained in the holy dharma incessantly.  
My achievements were grounded in listening, thinking, and  
contemplating, and I am so very happy!

Then, thirty-two different learned ones from dBus and gTsang,  
Bestowed upon me an uncountable number of teachings,  
empowerments, reading transmissions, and instructions.

Because I was taken as a student by *sPrul sku Dharmarāja (Dharma Ra dza)*,

I have come to be endowed with fortunate karma, and I am so  
very happy!

By practicing *Rigs 'dzin yongs rdzogs*, first and foremost,  
I have come to know hundreds of *sādhanas* focused on the *Rigs 'dzin Bla ma*, [and]

[I can see] the self-cognizing consciousness shining within the *Bla ma*.

[Now], phenomenal reality appears as the *Bla ma*, and I am so  
very happy!

By practicing the *bKa' brgyad yongs rdzogs*, first and foremost, [248]  
I have come to know hundreds of mandalas of the *Yi dam* deities,  
and

From this self-manifesting clarity within the *Yi dam* deities,  
I am never separated, and I am so very happy!

By practicing the *Supreme Mother, Vajravārāhī (yum chen rdo rje phag mo)*, first and foremost,

I have come to know hundreds of *sādhanas* focused on the *Ma mo Dākinī (ma mo 'kha' 'gro)*, [and]

[Now], because of the inseparability of methods and knowledge, I  
have entered into a state in which appearances and emptiness are  
united, and I am so very happy!

By practicing the *sādhana* of the *Assembled Guardians of the Teachings* (*bstan srung kun 'dus*), first and foremost,  
 I have come to know hundreds of *sādhana*s of the protectors and guardian spirits, [and]  
 [Thus], the 80,000 afflictive emotions have been liberated into the expanse, and  
 I have won the battle against bad transmigrations, and I am so very happy!

By practicing the *Zang thal* of the Great Perfection, first and foremost,  
 I have come to know hundreds of completion stage (*rdzogs rim*) practices of the highest path of Secret Mantra, [and as a result],  
 The self-aware, self-arising, and self-shining *Dharmakāya*,  
 I see through direct perception, and I am so very happy!

In an isolated, mountain retreat in the northern region of La stod,  
 In single-pointed focus on the 501 cycles of the Path of Secret Mantra,  
 I practiced for thirteen years, [and]  
 Accomplished my wish in accordance with the dharma, and I am so very happy!

I wrote this while in my practice chambers at rDo rje gdan.



Maṅgalaṃ! Namō Guru!

Father, Precious and Authentic Lama,  
 Benevolent Scholar and Master, Lord of the Teachings, [249]  
 [Your] son prays [to you] from his heart with faith,  
 That through your compassion, your devotee,  
 Will be blessed by the radiance of your experience and realization!

With respect to [your practice of] the holy teachings of the Great Perfection,  
 You established the eighteen roots, the three sets of six teachings, [which are]  
*The Six Oral Transmissions of the Vajra Masters* (*rdo rje slob dpon gyi snyan brgyud drug*),  
*The Six Great Spheres of Vajrasattva* (*rdo rje sems pa'i klong chen drug*),  
 and

*The Six Profound Seals of Vajravārāhī (rdo rje phag mo'i zab rgya drug)!<sup>78</sup>*

[During] the Elaborate [Vase Empowerment], the Non-elaborate [Secret Empowerment], the Exceedingly Non-elaborate Insight-Wisdom [Empowerment], [you] illuminated [me] with [your] experiential knowledge.

[During] the Fourth [Empowerment] and the Empowerment to Awareness's Creativity, [and]

By means of the Twenty-one Introductions,<sup>79</sup>

[You] expanded in the ten directions the branches and leaves [through initiation]!<sup>80</sup>

Having established the [foundation] through the [Three] Immobilities (*mi 'gul ba*),

[You] took the measure [of your progress] through the Three Abidances (*sdod pa*), and

Intensified [your practice] with the Three Attainments (*thob pa*).

[Thus], in [your] experiential practice of the Three Gazes (*lta stangs*),

The radiance of the manifest flowers [of Reality] blazed!<sup>81</sup>

Because [my] actions have not been in vain with respect to the [eight] freedoms and the [ten] favorable [conditions necessary for advancement],

[I have practiced] liberations through wearing, seeing, and hearing, and

As the Four Visions gradually [dawn],

I pray that the fruit of [my] meditation ripen,

As my experiential realization [becomes] permanent!

May [you] apprehend [Chos rgyal bsod nams as] an example of a wish-fulfilling tree

[Through] this good song of realization, [250]

<sup>78</sup> This refers to a system of classifying the various texts of the dGongs pa zang that that was employed by the Fifth Dalai Lama. For a discussion of this set of the eighteen root teachings, see Turpeinen 2015, pp. 71-73.

<sup>79</sup> For a discussion of the Twenty-one Introductions, see Turpeinen 2015, pp. 36, 41, 131, 256.

<sup>80</sup> This stanza refers to the collection of initiation texts that are found together in The Six Oral Transmissions of the Vajra Masters (*rdo rje slob dpon gyi snyan brgyud drug*) discussed in the previous stanza. See Turpeinen, 2015, pp. 255-256.

<sup>81</sup> The translation of this stanza was completed in reliance upon the generous suggestions of Jean-Luc Achard, who also supplied the following reference for clarification. See Rig 'dzin rGod ldem (1337-1409) 2015, pp. 212-218.



That has been established within [his] inner [circle] of heart sons.  
I pray that we will meet over and over again, [and]  
That you will auspiciously accomplish your wishes in accordance  
with the dharma!

Maṅgalaṃ!<sup>82</sup>



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<sup>82</sup> There are three lines of verse at the very end of the text, which are essentially illegible. My best guess, arrived at with the aid of Christopher Bell, is "bsod nams kyī rnam thar la/\_lta ba de [...] par/\_chos bsgrubs na/\_rang gzhan kun la phan par 'gyur," which seems to be a suggestion that the reader would be of great benefit if he would follow the example of Chos rgyal bsod nams.