

Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines

For A Critical History of the Northern Treasures

edited by Jay Valentine, Stéphane Arguillère,
and Jean-Luc Achard



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Introduction

For A Critical History of the Northern Treasures

Stéphane Arguillère
(Inalco / IFRAE)

Ny interest in the ‘Northern Treasures’ goes back to 1989, when I was led to make the acquaintance—to serve him as French interpreter—of the famous ‘C. R. Lama’ (‘Khor gdong *gter sprul* ‘Chi med rig ‘dzin rin po che, 1922–2001).¹ There is little trace of this in my earlier publications, but to be fair, my 2016 book, *Le Manuel de la transpiration immédiate*, is the fruit of a quarter century of work on a manual of practice for the *dGongs pa zang thal*, one of the two main cycles of rDzogs chen in the Byang gter—so it is no exaggeration to say that in fact the Northern Treasures have been a focus of my attention almost from the moment I began learning Tibetan.

But it was during the preparation of the last IATS conference in Paris (2019) that I had the good fortune to get to know Dr. Jay Valentine and his work—especially his doctoral dissertation, which is the actual real starting point of all critical history of the Byang gter—*The Lords of the Northern Treasures* (2013). It was he who took the excellent initiative of setting up a first Byang gter panel, which was admittedly modest in terms of both the number of participants and the audience, but which can be seen as the unofficial inauguration of a new branch in Tibetological research. The present issue of the *Revue d’Etudes Tibétaines*, of which he was the sole project manager, marks a further step in the foundation of this new research pole, as well as our obtaining, in July 2021, of ANR funding for the collective research project described below, which itself will be supported by the next major IATS conference in Prague (July 2022).

The Research Project

This special issue of the *Revue d’Etudes Tibétaines* is an opportunity for us to publicize the existence of this collective research project, funded by the ANR (Agence Nationale de la Recherche, CNRS, France), entitled ‘For a Critical History of the Northern Treasures’ (FCHNT, which I submitted on behalf of a group formed by Jean-Luc Achard, Jay Holt Valentine and myself).

¹ For a short biography of this interesting figure, see: Ritiman Das (2021).

This project will last four years from February 2022. The purpose of this introductory article is to outline the spirit and method of the FCHNT project, while providing a more general framework for the papers presented in this special issue of the RET.

We will begin by discussing the difficulties encountered in researching the history of Tibet in relation to the nature of the documents that form the main—and most abundant—basis of the historian's work. Then we will indicate how research based on the accessible sources on the Byang gter is rich in potential in this context.

To this end, we will briefly describe what the Northern Treasures are, based on a compilation of this tradition published in 2015 in 63 volumes, and that is, if not exhaustive, at least very complete. We will try to show how it is a relatively compact tradition, in the sense that it constituted the first and perhaps the only real 'order' within the nebulous rNying ma family. But this relatively closed and well-defined character is far from having prevented it from playing a very important role in Tibetan history, with a peak in the 17th century, at the time of the 5th Dalai Lama, followed rapidly by a collapse due to the 1717–1718 Dzungar invasion.

We will then discuss the important text that will serve as a basis for the FCHNT project: a great history of the Northern Treasures, written by a contemporary author, not well identified yet, who signed his name as Chos dbyings and who is obviously a monk from the 'Khor gdong monastery in the Golok area, or from one of its branches. In any case, the exact identity of the author, who is above all a compiler, is of little importance.

In conclusion, we shall say a word about the benefits that can be expected from a critical and complete translation of Chos dbyings' (2015) *A History of Dorjedrak [and the] Northern Treasures*.

1. WRITING TIBETAN HISTORY: DIFFICULTIES AND DOCUMENTS.

The history of Tibet remains obscure in many of its parts, despite the research accumulated during the past decades. And yet, there are tens of thousands of pages of historiographical material that remain unexploited.

This abundant documentation tends to take the form of religious genealogies—series of biographies of individuals belonging to spiritual lineages or institutions, which represent themselves as if they were families or clans. Writing history often has to do with constructing legitimacy. In Tibet, this takes the form of the construction of the spiritual pedigree of the Buddhist (or Bon) masters: the transmission

lineages of tantric, etc., materials have to prove themselves to be *authentic, continuous, and illustrated by heroic figures* who, in each generation (or at least some of them) must have displayed, in any spectacular way, the power and the value of what they were transmitting. Thus, so as to get a global view of a given period, one must first follow these many and singular threads, and then try to reweave them in the way they were actually interwoven into the real fabric of Tibetan social history.

Of course, one can only face the difficulties that the historian always encounters, when she or he works on the basis of documents that have not been designed by their authors to satisfy her or his appetite for knowledge of material, social details—be it even those relating to religious institutions and the concrete conditions of the exercise of even the most valued activities: there are few specific elements, for example, even about *libraries or the circulation and the availability of the texts* in Tibet. It is only incidentally that hagiographies, when very carefully read, provide us with this kind of information.

A keen awareness of this state of affair obliges us to introduce an intermediate stage between the raw sources and the *historian proper's* syntheses: the task of the philologists who edit and compare the documents, restore their meaning, detail what is reported of the facts while trying to locate and date them through crossing the available sources, with also the idea to give them more context.

This preparatory part therefore has to be carried out by specialists whose skills include: philology (a strong knowledge of the classical Tibetan language), a solid training in the field of Tibetan religious studies and a real familiarity with Tibetan hagiographies, allowing the reconstruction of chronologies and the discernment of implicit assumptions—researchers of the kind of the Bollandists composing the *Acta Sanctorum*. Only should a later stage involve professional, 'broad spectrum,' historians, for global syntheses.

2. THE CHOICE OF THE SPECIFIC OBJECT: THE NORTHERN TREASURES

For such a preliminary work, one should ideally pick up, among the many Tibetan religious lineages:

1. one that is sufficiently documented through a well-preserved literature;
2. one that kept a well-defined sense of its singular identity over many centuries;
3. one that played an important role in many aspects of Tibetan life, and whose study is likely to cast light on many unknown

aspects of Tibetan cultural and political history.

Among various possibilities, the researchers associated in this project—many of whom also participate in the special issue of the RET—have chosen one branch of the ‘Ancient Order’ of Tibetan Buddhism: the Byang gter or ‘Northern Treasures.’

1. A tradition that is sufficiently documented through a well-preserved literature

The ‘Northern Treasures’ are a branch of the rNying ma, the ‘Old School’ of Tibetan Buddhism, which traces its origins to the first diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet around the 8th century. But most of its materials belong to the category of ‘hidden treasures’ (*gter ma*), the fruits of a later process of continuous revelation of which the Northern Treasures are a typical, albeit singular, case.

As it is well-known, both of the branches of the Tibetan religion that have their roots before the second diffusion of Buddhism (11th century)—the rNying ma pas (who consider themselves Buddhists) and the Bon pos (who do not)—have in common, with some differences, a system of beliefs and practices connected to this idea of ‘hidden treasures’—texts and other objects supposed to have been concealed between the 8th and the 9th centuries C.E. to be rediscovered at some later time, when the circumstances would be ripe. This is an immense literature, covering various genres and enjoying diverse degrees of authority in those two different traditions.

These ‘revelations’ obviously tell us a lot about the times in which they were ‘invented’—one of their functions clearly being to ‘upgrade’ these ancient traditions to the supposedly more advanced level of Indian tantric material brought into Tibet in the 11th century, so that the Bon pos and rNying ma pas could compete with the ‘modern’ (*gsar ma*) orders of Tibetan Buddhism. They also construct the myth of a glorious past, which participates in giving them a particular legitimacy. But whatever part of their content is rather attributable to the time of their later ‘invention,’ a close scrutiny also reveals the presence of strata, at least, of older material, perhaps rewritten or edited, but whose archaic features are probably not entirely the work of their ‘discoverers’—who, in this respect, should rather be considered as their *editors* than as their *authors* in the full sense of the term.

Be it as it may, in 1366, in central Tibet, a ‘Treasure Revealer,’ Rig ‘dzin rGod ldem (rGod kyi ldem ‘phru can, dNgos grub rgyal mtshan,

1337–1408)⁴ is said to have extracted from a cave a collection of such texts now known as the ‘Northern Treasures’ (15 first volumes of the 63-vol. collection described below), one of the most famous sets of ‘hidden treasures’ among the many collections of such revelations known in the Ancient Order of Tibetan Buddhism.

A singular characteristic of these Northern Treasures is that this charismatic figure founded a tradition that has become, so to speak, ‘an empire within an empire’ inside the rNying ma family of Tibetan Buddhism—a branch whose main legacy includes, uniquely to this degree in Tibet, not only his own revelations, but also those of figures regarded as his later reincarnations (*sprul sku*), in a process of constant expansion at least from the 1366 revelations of Rig ’dzin rGod ldem to those of Rig ’dzin sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug (rGod ldem’s 4th reincarnation, d. 1770 or 1771). This is quite unique among the rNying ma pas and this very specific character has not yet been properly studied. The most surprising aspect of this feature is that this corpus includes revelations by some ‘Treasure Revealers’⁵ who are not otherwise regarded as wholly Byang gter—as if the Byang gter was *originally an organic unity* whose ongoing revelation was a collective work over the centuries, tending towards a complete whole to which many could contribute for a larger or smaller part (the idea of this *complete whole* seems not to have been theorized, though, and remained implicit, but was definitely there at the background; and the criterion that made some revelations ‘Byang gter,’ and others not so, is so far also a bit obscure).

The corpus, in a, now, much broader sense, also includes other

⁴ According to the most commonly accepted chronology, which is not above further critical examination.

⁵ Especially: mNga’ ris *pañ chen* Padma dbang rgyal (1487–1542), Byang bdag bKra shis stobs rgyal (1550–1602 ?), whose revelations are more or less regarded as wholly ‘Byang gter,’ plus the stranger cases of *gter ston* whose revelations are regarded as *partly* Byang gter, in a way that does not seem to be absolutely well settled: bsTan gnyis gling pa (1480–1535) and Gar dbang rdo rje (1640–1685). The fact that some *gter ston* who are not *sprul skus* of Rig ’dzin rGod ldem can discover ‘Treasures’ that belong to the Byang gter, on the one hand, and that in some cases their revelations wholly belong to the corpus, while in other cases they don’t, is quite puzzling. What is more, there are discrepancies between the description of the Byang gter found in the preface of the 1973 edition of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, on the one hand, and the corpus that we actually find in the 63-vol. compilation (2015), on the other hand. Anyhow, the corpus seems to have been regarded as closed with the death of Rig ’dzin sKal bzang padma dbang phyug, at the end of the 18th century. It would be interesting to make a field-work inquiry so as to understand why, for example, the ‘*Khor gdong gter gсар*, revealed by a series of *gter ston* starting with ‘Khor gdong *gter chen* Nus ldan rdo rje (1802–1864) in an otherwise completely Byang gter context, are not regarded as ‘being Byang gter’ though practiced only by people who identify themselves as Byang gter practitioners.

older tantric systems of which the masters of the Northern Treasures have become the depositaries and specialists, but that are called ‘Byang gter’ only in that sense and not regarded as belonging to the unitary whole to the same degree.

As mentioned above, a very large part of the fruits of all this history has recently (2015) been published in the form of a 63-volume compilation of its literature, highlighting an enormous collection of as-yet-unknown material from perhaps the 10th century to the most recent years of the 21st century. A complete copy of this collection, as a basis for the FCHNT project, has been purchased by the Institut d’Asie of the Collège de France in Paris (the whole set of which is also freely available to scholars in pdf format on the BDRC/TBRC website⁶).

Thanks to this long-awaited publication, which has no equivalent for the other branches of the rNying ma pas, the Northern Treasures are a perfectly suitable choice for ‘pre-historiography’ in the sense that we understand it, meeting perfectly, first of all, our first criterion—that of being ‘sufficiently documented by a well-preserved literature.’

As for this 63-vol. compilation, a cursory analysis shows the following major subdivisions:

1. The revelations of Rig ‘dzin rGod ldem (1337–1408?) – vol. 1-15.
2. The cycle of *Vajrasattva’s Heart Mirror* (*rDo rje sems dpa’ thugs kyi me long*) of Gar dbang rdo rje (1640–1685)⁷ – vol. 16.
3. The cycle of *The Sow With a Profound Seal* (*Lung phag mo zab rgya*) by bsTan gnyis gling pa (1480–1535)⁸ – vol. 17.
4. The cycle of *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* (*‘Jam dpal tshe bdag*), mostly (but not wholly) ‘invented’ by rGya zhang khrom (11th Century?)⁹ – vol. 18-27.

⁶ Reference in the bibliography in the final pages of this volume.

⁷ It should be noted that in the preface (Gene Smith?) to the 1973 edition of the *dGongs pa zang thal* (vol. I, p. 7), which calls him mNga’ ris gter ston Gar dbang zla ba rgyal mtshan, 6 volumes of his revelations are supposed to be ‘Byang gter,’ including the following cycles, besides (1) the *rDo rje sems dpa’ thugs kyi me long*; (2) *sPyan ras gzigs rtsa gsum snying thig*; (3) *Padma’i snyan rgyud yang gsang dri med*; (4) *Zab tig chos dbyings rang gsal*; (5) *rDo rje phur pa’i skor*; (6) *Tshe sgrub rdo rje rgya mdud*. The reasons why these do not appear in the 63-vol. collection remains to be researched.

⁸ On this figure and his *Yang tig ye shes mthong grol*, see Achard, Jean-Luc (2004). The *Yang tig ye shes mthong sgrol*, incidentally, is, for any reason, never regarded as Byang gter. The case of the *Lung phag mo zab rgya* is extremely interesting, as this is explicitly a complement (like another part of the same jigsaw puzzle) to a section of Rig ‘dzin rGod ldem’s revelations, a sub-section of the *dGongs pa zang thal*.

⁹ On this figure, see, in the present volume, Dr. Dylan Esler’s contribution, pp. 190-215. This is considered ‘Byang gter’ only in the broader sense, that of traditions that became organic part of the spiritual legacy of the Byang gter masters.

5. The cycle of Rāhula, *The Poisoned Razor*, 'discovered' by Padma las 'brel rtsal (end of the 13th-first years of the 14th Century)¹⁰ – vol. 28-29.
6. The cycle of Padmasambhava, *The Complete Gathering of the Knowledge-Holders (Rig 'dzin yongs 'dus)*, revealed by mNga' ris paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal (1487–1542)¹¹ – vol. 30-32.
7. The revelations of Rig 'dzin Legs ldan rdo rje (1452 [1512?] – 1565): *Liberating the saṃsāra in the Dharmadhātu (Thugs rje chen po 'khor ba dbyings grol)* and the cycle of *Amṛtakundali (Tshe sgrub bdud rtsi 'khyil pa)* – vol. 33.
8. The *Nine-Headed Wrathful One*, revealed either by Rig 'dzin Legs ldan rdo rje or by mNga' ris paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal – vol. 34.
9. The revelations of *Byang bdag bKra shis stobs rgyal* (1550 (?–1603): *Karma Guru* and *The Essential Meaning of the Mother-Tantras (Ma rgyud snying po don gsum* or *Ma rgyud khrag lung ma)* – vol. 35.
10. The complete writings of Rig 'dzin Padma 'Phrin las (rGod ldem IV, 1641-1717) – vol. 36-50.
11. The autobiography of Rig 'dzin sKal bzang Padma dBang phyug (rGod ldem V, 1719–1770) – vol. 51.
12. The revelations of Rig 'dzin sKal bzang Padma dBang phyug: *The Epitome of the Precepts (bKa' 'dus)* – vol. 52-53, the *Wrathful Padmasambhava*:¹² vol. 54.
13. The Byang gter-related writings of *sPrul sku Tshul lo* or *Tshul khrim bzang po* (1895–1954) – vol. 55-56.
14. Writings by *Theg mchog bstan 'dzin* (mGo tswa *mkhan chen*, 1878–1949) – vol. 57.
15. Writings by *Kun bzang bstan 'dzin* (d. unknown) – vol. 58.
16. A collection of biographies of masters of the Northern Treasures – vol. 59.

¹⁰ This figure was so far known as the revealer of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* and as Klong chen pa's predecessor in a lineage of reincarnations. His chronology is full of obscurities despite his close association with extremely important figures like Karma pa III Rang byung rdo rje. A close scrutiny of this gZa' corpus might bring more light on his life than what could already be derived from the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*. As the previous one, this cycle is 'Byang gter' only in the broadest sense.

¹¹ There is also some uncertainty as to what portion of his revelations should be included in the Byang gter, even though there is no discussion of Padma dbang rgyal's characterization as a Byang gter master and as one of the founding fathers of the rDo rje brag tradition (on this figure, see A. Sukhanova and J.-L. Achard's contributions to this volume). Again, one would have to begin by comparing, for example, the catalog presented in the 1973 edition of the *dGongs pa zang thal* and the contents of this 63-volume collection, searching why some of the texts that appear in the 1973 catalog are not present in the 2015 collection.

¹² Not mentioned in the *dGongs pa zang thal* preface.

17. Writings mostly by Bāḥ gnas *mchog sprul* mDo sngags bshad sgrub rgyal mtshan (1888–1964) – vol. 60.
18. Common recitations / basic rituals of the Northern Treasures – vol. 61.
19. *A History of rDo rje brag [and the] Northern Treasures* – vol. 62.¹³
20. Table of contents (*dkar chag*) [of previous editions] and ‘checklists of received teachings’ (*gSan yig*)¹⁴ on the Northern Treasures – vol. 63.

To be more specific about the historiographical materials scattered in this collection, here is a list of the main ones:

- Among n° 10:
 - Vol. 36-37 (1180 p.): autobiography of Rig ‘dzin Padma ‘Phrin las (1641–1717).
 - vol. 41: a history of the lineage of the *Gathering of Intentions* (*mDo dgongs ‘dus*) by Padma ‘Phrin las (439 p.).
- N° 11 (vol. 51: 814 p.) is the autobiography of Rig ‘dzin dKal bzang Padma dBang phyug (1719–1770).
- N° 16 (559 p.) includes biographies or autobiographies of:
 - Rig ‘dzin rGod ldem
 - mNga’ ris *paṅ chen* Padma dbang rgyal
 - Legs ldan rje
 - Rig ‘dzin Ngag gi dbang po
 - A series of biographies of the masters of the lineage from the beginning to Yol mo bsTan ‘dzin nor bu (1589–1644)
 - Thub bstan chos dbang mnyam nyid rdo rje (1886–ca. 1935)
 - The autobiography of mGo tswa *mkhan chen*

¹³ The author of this historical compilation signs ‘Chos dbyings’ and introduces himself as a monk of the ‘Khor gdong monastery in eastern Tibet; we earlier supposed that it would be ‘Khor gdong *mkhan chen* Chos dbyings khyab brdal, but it is not the case: the publication is very recent (2015) and as the history continues up to around 2011, while Chos dbyings khyab brdal died in 1997.—Just when I was doing the final proof-reading of this article, I fortuitously came into contact with *dGen* O rgyan btsan ‘dzin, a monk from the rDo rje brag monastery in India, who knows the author personally and confirmed that he is indeed not *mKhan chen* Chos dbyings khyab brdal but another *mkhan po* Chos dbyings, who spent a long time in India, is still alive and is now back to Khams.

¹⁴ Those two types of items are meant to establish the correctness and completeness of the published corpus.

- Theg mchog bstan 'dzin (1878–1949)
 - A biography of Bāḥ gnas *mchog sprul* mDo sngags bshad sgrub rgyal mtshan (1888–1964)
- No. 19 (vol. 62: 905 p.) is a history of the Northern Treasures (in Tibetan style: a series of hagiographies) and is, if not our main primary source, at least the most up-to-date synthesis of the history of this tradition, which will serve as the basic framework for this research.

In total, therefore, in this collection we have, as a basis for historical research, just under 4,000 p. of primary materials; but, in fact, many valuable pieces of information are scattered throughout the 63 volumes, especially in the ritual texts in which the 'spiritual pedigree,' *i.e.*, the lineage of masters and disciples who transmitted the practice, is often mentioned. It is sometimes there that we must look for the only remaining traces of certain figures—or at least, the mention of their name sometimes opens the way to research in other sources, which allows us to establish a richer and more refined chronology.

In some cases, available documents that are directly related to the history of the Northern Treasures have not been included in this collection, or are merely summarized in the large historiographical compilation of vol. 62, though they fall within the scope of our project.¹⁵ Since the main purpose of the Tibetan writing of religious history is to establish simple lines of transmission (with more or less *one individual per generation*, from the beginning of a tradition to the present day), besides the omission of almost all social, political, etc., context, there are figures that, in fact, played an extremely important role in the actual history of these traditions who may be completely omitted in such hagiographic compilations, or, in the best case, heavily understated—for example, because they belonged to what, in retrospect, appear to be *secondary lines* or even *dead arms* of the tradition (or aspects of it to

¹⁵ For example, we have autobiographical writings by bsTan gnyis gling pa (1480–1535). It is also quite well-known that Thang stong rgyal po (1351?–1485) was an important figure of the early history the Northern Treasures, which he himself partly 're-revealed,' though this aspect does not appear so much in Cyrus Stearns (2007) and though he is barely mentioned also in our n°19 (*A History of rDo rje brag [and the] Northern Treasures*). Another good example would be Zur Chos dbyings rang grol (1604–1669), a master of both the 5th Dalai Lama and Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las, of whom we have a large biography by the 5th Dalai Lama—and the 5th Dalai Lama (1617–1682) himself who was one of the important links in the transmission of the Northern Treasures and whose life is well documented. These two figures are not omitted in Chos dbyings (2015), but the large, available sources for their biographies have not been included in the collection.

which, for whatever reason, it preferred somehow to ignore).¹⁶ Though neglected in our main sources, these figures will not be ignored in our project.

2. A tradition that kept a well-defined sense of its singular identity over many centuries

The Northern Treasures are not merely, as we have already said, one of the main branches of the Ancient (*rNying ma*) ‘School’—or rather: *family*—of Tibetan Buddhism: one could go so far as to say that, for many centuries, it was the only institution among the *rNying ma pas* that tended to build itself, with some success, as a religious order, like those that existed among the ‘Modern’ (*gsar ma*) trends of Tibetan Buddhism. In this sense, the Northern Treasures are quite opposite to the dominant style of the Ancient School—which tends to make the *rNying ma pas* a kind of protoplasm: they have always lacked an institutional centralization, a canon of texts with a well-defined perimeter, a clear magisterium (other than the *sensus fidei* of the *rNying ma bla mas*) to define what is authentic and what is apocryphal, or even an undisputed corpus of authoritative authors or a fully unified doctrine.

Instead of a central authority, the Ancient School has always had a large number of leaders, each of whom enjoyed a kind of partial and local authority—in the sense that he had authority over his own patrimony, both in a material and social sense (a more or less extended community with its related movable and immovable property) and in a sense of textual content (its unique share of the common spiritual patrimony). Each of these provincial institutions (many of which did not last more than a few generations) tended to cultivate a unique and distinctive style, despite a very strong ‘family resemblance’ between them all, and a rather fluid tendency to borrow elements from each other, which created a background of unity in a network otherwise devoid of a center of gravity. The *rNying ma* family of Tibetan Buddhism is thus, if we dare say, a *blob* from which new tentacles constantly emerge, new shoots that can then be reabsorbed into it, which does not prevent them from being reactivated later on. The whole is full of life but absolutely chaotic, even according to the feudal standards of the other tendencies of the Tibetan religions.

The *Byang gter*, although it is originally one of the many pseudopods that grew from this anarchical background, contrasts quite strongly with it, in that, for example, it has a slightly more precise

¹⁶ A good example, besides *Thang stong rgyal po* or *bsTan gnyis gling pa*, is all the tradition stemming from the former that flourished in the far eastern *Kaḥ thog* monastery, which I try to reconstruct somehow in my article below (p. 233-298).

sense of its canon. This is a strange fact as such, given that, as all the other Nyingma canonical corpuses, it has enjoyed a process of constant growth as we have already said and as shown by the list provided above (n° 1-3, 6-9 and 12, mostly, altogether more or less 24 bulky volumes).

Just as the corpus of the Northern Treasures forms a somehow strongly interconnected whole distinct from the fluid mass of other rNying ma literature, so too does this tradition exhibit an institutional compactness that distinguishes it from most others, especially in the earlier period. Similarly, although the center from which the Northern Treasures radiate has shifted over the centuries, the precise location of that center at any given time has always been clearly fixed without equivocation or discussion. And, for example, the title 'Master of the North' or 'Lord of the North' (*Byang bdag*, meaning, the head of this tradition, the holder of its transmissions) has been for centuries in use among the rNying ma pas, and there is no true equivalent for other branches of the Ancient School,¹⁷ at least before the 17th Century.

The combination of the well-defined character of both the content of its textual, liturgical and spiritual traditions on the one hand, and its organizational structures on the other hand, makes this 'order' fully satisfy our second criterion.

3. A tradition that played an important role in many aspects of the Tibetan life, and whose study is likely to cast light on many unknown aspects of the Tibetan cultural and political history

Some of the revelations of rGod ldem and his successors have had an influence that, to this day, extends among the followers of the Ancient School far beyond the confines of the Northern Treasures institutions. Two examples: the tantric cycles related to Vajrakīla (Boord: 1992,

¹⁷ This is a quite bold assumption and maybe a very daring hypothesis—mostly based on my reading of many biographies, especially in the context of my former researches about Klong chen rab 'byams (1308–1364), in which I found no evidence of well-organized, long-lasting institutions, besides the chains of master to disciple transmissions that can be reconstructed. In a slightly later period, it might be the case that something a bit similar, though less centralized, crystalized around Padma gling pa (1450–1521) and his successive incarnations. The case of Kaḥ thog in the Far East might also be an exception, but the tradition of this monastery, while very old in its roots, took on an eclectic, not to say catch-all, character very early on, and Kaḥ thog was more than once refounded on apparently largely new grounds, which makes one wonder how this tradition could be characterized in a way that would remain valid through the centuries. Indeed, the nature of the capture by the masters of this monastery of at least part of the Byang gter legacy and the treatment they gave it—which I discuss in my article, below p. 233-298—illustrate this extremely eclectic bias, already deeply marked in the 16th century.

1993, 2003...)¹⁸ and those related to the ‘Great Perfection’¹⁹ are considered ‘classic’ among the rNying ma pas.²² Research on the Byang gter will thus shed light more generally on the entire rNying ma branch of Tibetan religion (the study of which has long been central, incidentally, to the intellectual traditions of French Tibetology).

A phenomenon that is perhaps almost unparalleled in the history of religions is the extraordinarily amazing system of ‘re-revelations,’ or *yang gter* (literally: a ‘re-treasure’): a second (or third, etc.) revelation of the *exact same* body of texts by a later ‘treasure discoverer.’ Apart from emic justifications, *retreasures* most often occur when a high-ranking rNying ma lama cannot properly obtain the transmissions of a given tantric cycle, especially (the case of Byang gter might well be a perfect example) because it is jealously guarded by an institution as one of its specialties.

This idea can only be understood if one considers the crucial character of proper transmission from master to disciple in the tantric systems: no one can improvise himself or herself as a teacher of a corpus that he or she has not properly received; and if its legitimate custodians do not want to entrust it to him or her, his or her only resource is to *receive a direct revelation of it, which adds nothing to its content, but confers the legitimacy to teach it*. Besides Thang stong rgyal po’s ‘re-treasures’ that have already been mentioned, certain cycles of the Northern Treasures have thus gained new popularity thanks to the enormous amount of ‘re-treasures’ found in the *Rin chen gter mdzod* (110 vols.), which contains, among other things, numerous Northern Treasure materials torn away from the Byang gter institutions (for reasons the details of which would also deserve being researched—maybe the decadence in which the Northern Treasures institutions had fallen in the times when the *gTer mdzod* was compiled, in the 19th century).

Beyond the dissemination of Byang gter content in an overtly recognizable form (including through the ‘inheritance capture’ of the ‘re-treasures’), there is also a tendency in the rNying ma ‘school’ to synthetically recycle (without always citing) older ritual materials into

¹⁸ See our general Byang gter bibliography below pp. 299-305.

¹⁹ Turpeinen, Katarina S. (2015); Malcolm Smith (2016); Arguillère 2016 and 2018b; Karl Brunnhölzl (2018).

²² One might also wonder, for example, how the *bKa’ brgyad rang shar* cycle (vol. 9-12 of the 63 vol. collection) fits into what appears to be the progressive construction of the *bKa’ brgyad* system, the main earlier levels of which were laid down by the revelations of Nyang ral Nyi ma’i ’od zer (1124–1192) and Guru Chos dbang (1212–1270). Various recent developments in research about the rNying ma pa world are now shifting the focus to what might be called ‘biographies of textual corpora’—the history of their transmission and the successive roles they have been made to play (along the lines of e.g. Jake Dalton’s *The Gathering of Intentions*).

later liturgies, even in cases where the latter present themselves as revelations and thus, theoretically, as not requiring an inherited tradition as their basis. Because of this feature of the rNying ma literature, in the Tibetan cultural world, only a few scholarly liturgists are able to identify the accumulated layers of textual elements. In many ways, rNying ma scholarship is an art of allusive citation and composition of texts that are skillfully crafted puzzles from a large number of sources.²³ Only a thorough analytical dismantling of these constructs can deliver their full meaning—and for this reason, any research on the Northern Treasures (which can be considered the best preserved part of the relatively ancient ‘hidden treasures’) will allow us to better understand the history of Tibetan religions.²⁴

The Northern Treasures, as a complete distinct sub-school of the Ancient Order, also inherited many other traditions considered ‘oral transmission’ (*bKa’ ma*) and developed distinct exegeses and liturgies for them. Jacob P. Dalton (2016) shows, for example, that the contrasting hermeneutics of one tantra, the *Gathering of Intentions* (*mDo dgongs ’dus*), had a structuring function in the history of this Order. The central figure of the Northern Treasures in the 17th century, Padma ‘phrin las (1641–1717), played a key role in the exegesis of the *Gathering of Intentions* and thus in the construction of the identity of the whole rNying ma school. Although the syntheses proposed a little later, notably within the rival rNying ma institution in central Tibet, sMin sgrol gling, eventually became more popular, the followers of Byang gter have preserved to this day their own rich hermeneutics of the *Gathering of Intentions* and the specific liturgies that derive from them.²⁵ Padma ‘phrin las’ exegetical works on the *Gathering of Intentions* (which also include an extensive history of its transmission) are well preserved in various editions, and their historical side, at least, falls

²³ On this point, our research closely depends on Cathy Cantwell (2020—output of an AHRC project on ‘Authorship, originality and innovation in Tibetan Scriptural Revelations: A case study from the Dudjom Corpus.’ This is the most up to date piece of research on these internal borrowings in the case of tantric rituals). But my own (Arguillère 2016: Tülku Tsullo, *Le Manuel de la transparution immédiate*) integral ‘de-construction’ of an important meditation manual belonging to the Byang gter tradition also shows in details (and this will get even clearer in the English version that is under press) to what extent a Tibetan text can be a pure patchwork of many barely paraphrased texts, embroidered upon pre-existing canvasses.

²⁴ But this also works the other way round: part of the Byang gter may surely be regarded as a reworking of earlier materials—especially of Nyang ral Nyi ma’i ‘od zer (1124–1192) and *Guru Chos dbang* (1212–1270)’s revelations. We are not, however, focusing so far on this aspects of things, for fear of getting lost in the too many paths of research that any investigation into the Byang gter automatically opens.

²⁵ For example, ‘Khor gdong *gter chen* Nus ldan rdó rje comes all the way from the ‘Go log area to rDo rje brag in the 1850s in order to receive all the transmissions for this cycle (Arguillère 2018a).

within the scope of our research project, as this history of the transmission lineages of the *Gathering of Intentions* is part of the construction of legitimacy of the Northern Treasures institutions. But deep research in this field is also likely to provide insights into the early centuries of the rNying ma school, building upon the foundation laid by J. Dalton (2016), one of the most groundbreaking recent contributions to the historical understanding of the Ancient School of Tibetan Buddhism, along with the work of the group active in recent years around C. Cantwell and R. Mayer).

The Byang gter institutions were not only custodians of their own specific corpus and of all this common heritage of the rNying ma school. They also became, as we have said, a repository for other sets of 'hidden treasures.' Most notable among them is the *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* (vols. 18-27 in the 2015 63-vol. edition), incorporated into their spiritual heritage. This very large corpus, quite central among the systems of 'war magic' that helped grant the Byang gter institutions their central political status in the seventeenth century, may in fact be somehow older than any other 'hidden treasure' that has been the subject of academic research to date: a large part of its revelation is attributed to rGya Zhang khrom, who might well antedate Nyang ral Nyi ma'i 'od zer by a century. This, as such, would be a major reason to study the Byang gter legacy.

The Order of the Northern Treasures, born in the 14th century, reached the height of its glory with the foundation of the rDo rje brag monastery (at the beginning of the 17th century, and from then on the mother house of the Northern Treasures), and later under the reign of the 5th Dalai Lama (1617–1682), mostly with the activity of Padma 'phrin las. Now, one of the functions devolved at rDo rje brag during the reign of the 'Great Fifth' (and somehow until the Cultural Revolution put an end to it) was precisely this 'war magic' and more broadly the performance of all kinds of magical rites for the protection of the sovereign and for the order and integrity of the territory. Then, rDo rje brag (and hence Byang gter as such) suffered badly from the Dzungar invasion of 1717–1718, an episode that is not yet fully understood but whose specifics are probably not unrelated to rDo rje brag's status as, dare we say, a 'launch pad for magic missiles' on Tibet's enemies.²⁶

²⁶ On this point, our ANR-funded research project is naturally linked to the work carried out within the framework of the TibArmy project in the CRCAO (Paris), from which the 'war magic' aspect is not absent. See most notably, in connection with both TibArmy and *'Jam dpal tshe bdag*: George S. Fitzherbert (2018): 'Rituals as War Propaganda in the Establishment of the Ganden Phodrang State' in Travers, Alice and Federica Venturi (eds.), *Buddhism and the Military in Tibet during the Ganden Phodrang period (1642–1959)*, special issue of *Cahiers d'Extrême Asie*, EFEO, vol. 27, 2018: 49–119.

The subsequent survival of the Northern Treasures was in some respects a long twilight—despite some form of revival in Eastern Tibet from the late eighteenth century onwards, well documented in the historical text that provides our research with its basic framework. Surprising as it may seem, an in-depth study of Byang gter institutions would allow us to understand more precisely many aspects of the reorganization of the Tibetan state and society under the 5th Dalai Lama—as well as aspects of its foreign policies. It is plain, for example, that the perception of the Tibetan state as capable of fighting its enemies by magical means is not to be overlooked, however strange this may sound to us, in order to understand the history of this region in those times.

The political dimension of the Northern Treasures, however, goes far beyond this—admittedly very important—charge of magic in the service of state power. Indeed, as it is well-known to Tibetologists, in Tibetan civilization, the ultimate ideological foundation of all political power lies in the reference to the imperial period and in particular to that of King Khri srong lde'u btsan (8th century), closely associated, according to traditional accounts, with the heroized and even deified Indian master Padmasambhava. And it is through the 'hidden treasures' of the Ancient School that this revered legendary past resurfaced in the following centuries, made *effectively* accessible through the revealed rituals of the rNying ma School. In addition to the strong awareness, among the followers of the Northern Treasures, of their duty to bless and protect the state and its rulers, the Byang gter corpus contains, for example, the coronation rite used for the current king of Bhutan and other rulers before him. The links with political powers should be very carefully examined in all the remarkable figures we propose to study.

Finally, the Northern Treasures are not only a religious current remarkable for the many insights it offers into periods of the Tibetan past, about which much is still unknown. It is, in fact, a tradition that is still alive, not only in a scholarly form in a number of monasteries in Tibet or in the Tibetan diaspora, but also, even today, a fairly widespread religious affiliation in a more popular form (and which some might consider degraded, but this normative assessment is of course of no interest to researchers) in the Himalayas, among populations whose religion is Tibetan Buddhism. A solid knowledge of the ritual literature of the Northern Treasures is often necessary to analyze the materials that anthropologists encounter among these populations, which are much more accessible to fieldwork than those of the PRC.

Context, positioning and objectives of FCHNT Research objectives and hypotheses

The interest of the subject being now well established, and the context—that of the publication of this vast 63-vol. compilation of the literature of the Northern Treasures—somewhat clarified, one still ought to present the method that we plan to implement in relation to the state of the art.

Basing ourselves on Chos dbyings' *A History of Dorjedrak [and the] Northern Treasures* (2015: vol. 62), the FCHNT project and team plan to entirely translate this text (with the exception of a few irrelevant sections²⁷), while adding critical notes and commentaries, *etc.* In fact, many more chapters of various nature will have to be added.

This work of critical translation will enable us to establish a 'sectional view' of a large portion of the Tibetan history (a millennium, if we count the amalgamated materials from before the 14th century) based on the literature of the Northern Treasures, using the traditional historiography of this singular lineage to reconstruct a path—or a few paths—through the forest of global Tibetan history. As already explained, we consider the expected outcome of our research to be preparatory material for future historians, who will find in our work some of the many factual threads that they will later have to weave in order to reconstruct the concrete History.

In practice, the 800 or so pages that are to be translated will be divided, roughly, into four 200-page sections. Each 200-page segment (intended to form the basis of one English-language volume) will be shared among the contributors according to their expertise and more particular interests. They will be expected not only to translate the text rigorously, but also to do all the secondary research required to achieve the greatest possible clarity and accuracy. Each participant will also be expected to reread the work of the others, in order both to clarify the parts of the text for which she or he will be responsible, to harmonize the style of the translation and to help the other translators to cope with any difficulties they may face, or to suggest useful clarifications. The work of editing the whole will have to eliminate redundant commentaries: as this is a relatively homogeneous tradition, a good system of internal cross-references, well-designed prefaces (or

²⁷ In fact, there are almost a hundred pages at the beginning of this chronicle that are superfluous, at least for research purposes (at a later stage, a complete translation could certainly be desirable, so as not to detract from the work under study; but this is not a priority: one more life of the Buddha, one more legendary biography of Padmasambhava, one more general account of the mythical beginnings of the Ancient School of Tibetan Buddhism, would not bring anything new or scientifically sound).

appendices at the end of the volumes) should make it possible to pool many of the required explanations.

From a disciplinary point of view, therefore, this is mainly a *philological* type of work mobilizing a strong specialized competence in the *history of religions* and *religious anthropology*, since the text under consideration is stuffed with allusions to a whole doctrinal, ritual and meditative literature for the understanding of which a *very solid knowledge of classical Tibetan* and of the *general history of Tibet* are required, but would not be sufficient.

In conclusion, we can only express our wish to be joined in the field of 'Jangterology' by many colleagues—well beyond the first circle that formed around the first Byang gter panel organized by Jay Valentine at the IATS symposium in 2019. Far from wanting to appropriate this field as our own, we hope in this introduction to have made its many facets shimmer enough to persuade many researchers, especially in the younger generation, that there is an abundant wealth of material here to draw on with both hands and that, provided good communication and coordination are established and maintained, this field opens up innumerable possibilities for research which it is to be hoped that, like the Northern Treasures themselves, revealed little by little by many visionaries, they will all fit together harmoniously like the pieces of a vast and coherent picture puzzle.



Introduction to the Contents of this Special Issue

Jay Valentine
(Troy University)

he articles contained in this special issue of the *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* can be understood as constituting the first of two tangible fruits of our efforts to encourage and organize the study of the Northern Treasure Tradition. The efforts to move in this direction began in Berkeley, California with a very small panel entitled 'Recent Studies in the Northern Treasure Tradition' that was planned for the American Academy of Religion's Western Regional Conference (2018), which involved Katarina Turpeinen, Michael Burroughs, and myself (Jay Valentine) with the institutional aid of Jake Nagasawa.

The momentum that has led to this current special edition, however, began to build in significance with the recruitment of compatriots for the Northern Treasure Tradition (*Byang gter*) panel that was to be convened at the International Association of Tibetan Studies seminar in Paris, France (2019). It was during this stage that the research group found its anchorage point in the person of Stéphane Arguillère, who initially enunciated the dream of a special issue focusing on 'Jangterology.' As will be clear to anyone who reads his research manifesto (above) or his article that offers a historical analysis of the *dGongs pa zang thal* practice manuals (the final article in this special issue), Arguillère possesses an unparalleled grasp of the historical breadth and doctrinal depth of the Northern Treasure Tradition. Moreover, his participation as one of the leaders of our burgeoning research group has been indispensable.

The *Byang gter* panel in Paris (2019) was a success, bringing together a diverse group that included: Stéphane Arguillère, Kanako Shinga, Frederica Grassi, Zsóka Gelle (her paper was graciously read by Gijs Creemers), and Jay Valentine, three of whom have provided articles for this special issue. There were also significant networking successes, which, for example, gained us the support and participation of Tenzin Ghegay, who has since become the Vice Principle for Specialized Studies at The Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Studies. (We look forward to his planned presentation at the IATS Seminar (2022) in Prague.) Shortly after the 2019 seminar, we contacted Jean-Luc Achard regarding the possibility of producing this volume, and we

have henceforth enjoyed his support and participation as a core member of the research group. (Achard's welcomed contribution to this special edition is introduced in brief below.)

The following years would contain a flurry of activity aimed at recruiting researchers both for this special issue and for the collective research project entitled 'For a Critical History of the Northern Treasures' (FCHNT), which has been described in detail above. This activity led to what may be considered as the group's first major success, which was the securing of funding from the ANR. The assembly of this special issue focused on the Northern Treasure Tradition is, of course, also representative of the culmination of our activities over the past four years.

Before finally moving to the summative vignettes that aim to introduce the articles contained in this volume, we would like to take a brief moment for reflective gratitude. Indeed, those for whom we are thankful are too many to be named in a short paragraph such as this, therefore the reader is asked to imagine that each of the lists below is simply the start of a much greater enumeration that persists in our hearts and minds. Among the many who helped lay the academic foundations upon which our current studies are formed, we would especially like to thank Anne-Marie Blondeau, Martin Boord, and C. R. Lama, who was not only academically engaged but also served as an informant to many. We would also like to express our gratitude to all those who have produced works that have illuminated some aspect of the Northern Treasure Tradition's history, teachings, etc., such as Franz-Karl Erhard, Jurgen Herweg, Benjamin Bogin, and Jacob Dalton. Lastly, we want to express our appreciation for the efforts of the authors, whose articles are contained in this special issue, for, of course, this collection could not be formed without them.

Description of the Contents of this Special Issue

The first article, by Elizabeth Angowski, is constituted by a welcomed discussion of the Imperial Age pre-incarnation of *Rig 'dzin rGod ldem*, namely *sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms* (fl. 8th c.). It has already been well-established that the treasure traditions and their literature is largely responsible for producing a larger-than-life profile of Guru Rinpoche, a figure who may have otherwise persisted only as a little-known historical figure. Angowski here draws attention to the fact that a similar process has transformed *sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms* from relative obscurity into one of the most important Imperial Age figures for the Northern Treasure Tradition.

The second article in this collection, written by Kanako Shinga, pro-

vides a critical edition and annotated translation of the *Longevity Practice of Vajrakīla* (*rDo rje phur pa'i tshe bsgrub*), which was revealed by Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. It is plain in the hagiographic materials that the ability to perform longevity benedictions is a quintessential component of a religious specialist's repertoire. While such life-extending rites are perhaps indirectly related to the ultimate soteriological goals of the various Buddhist pathways, the pragmatic value of extending one's life is self-evident. It is likely for this reason, among others, that longevity rites are so often requested and performed.

It should also be noted, however, that an important byproduct of the performance of any religious services is that such activities forge important connections (*rten 'brel*) between the participants. In such contexts, longevity benedictions are particularly useful because, unlike complicated empowerments that might require prior training by the recipients, longevity benedictions can be given to anyone. Thus, we often witness the performance of life-extending rites for lay patrons and children in the hagiographic materials of the tradition. One important example involves Rig 'dzin Ngag gi dbang po, the third incarnation of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, who performed longevity rites in 1617 for a young child, who would later be known as the Fifth Dalai Lama.¹ Conversely, longevity rites are also performed by lamas who are still quite young. For example, a six-year-old Rig 'dzin sKal bzang padma dbang phyug (c. 1720–1770), the fifth incarnation of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, performed longevity rites in order to forge a connection (*rten 'brel*) between himself and the King of lCags la.²

From a different perspective, however, the Byang gter treasures in general can be understood in terms of 'life-extension.' In *The Ray of Sunlight* (*sPrul sku chen po'i rnam thar gSal byed nyi ma'i 'od zer*), the primary biography of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, it is explained that just as Guru Rinpoche was able to extend the life and reign of Emperor Khri srong lde'u btsan, the Northern Treasures themselves, when wielded by Guru Rinpoche's future regents, have the ability to extend the reign of future monarchs, particularly the dynasty of Mang yul Gung thang.³

With the significance of longevity blessings in mind, readers are sure to find Kanako Shinga's very accessible translation of the *rDo rje*

¹ For details regarding this event, see Boord, Martin (2010), *A Roll of Thunder from the Void: Vajrakīla texts of the Northern Treasures Tradition: Volume Two*, Berlin: Wendel Verlag, p. xvii.

² This event is described within the biography of sKal bzang padma dbang phyug, which appears in Gu ru bkra shis (b. 18th c.) (1990), *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, Beijing: Krung go'i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, p. 692.

³ To read about this relationship in more detail, see Herweg, Jurgen (1994), *The Hagiography of Rig 'dzin Rgod kyi ldem 'phru can and Three Historical Questions Emerging from It*, M.A. thesis, University of Washington, pp. 69-71.

phur pa'i tshe bsgrub quite illuminating. Therein, we find that there are forces, divinities, etc., in every dimension and direction constantly working to deplete our life force and that those who wield this rite can not only name each offendant, but can also call upon a great host of divinities to counter these nefarious beings to preserve and extend one's life.

The third article, by Alexandra Sukhanova, is the first of four articles involving mNga' ris *Paṅ chen* Padma dbang rgyal (c. 1487-1542), who stands out among the Byang gter patriarchs of the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries for his favorable stance toward monasticism. As a group, these articles make the case that it is difficult to underestimate the role of Padma dbang rgyal in the early history of the Northern Treasure Tradition. Sukhanova's presentation of this master's life and works far exceeds previous offerings on several fronts. First, her historiographic approach that identifies and analyzes the relationships between twelve different hagiographic sources is appreciated for its clarity and methodological strength. Second, there is an amazingly thorough and detailed analysis of the sacred geography related to the birth and exploits of Padma dbang rgyal in Mustang, which is replete with illuminating photographs. Third, the overall account of Padma dbang rgyal's life is rather extensive and presented in a sophisticated manner that allows for a critical understanding of the biographical material.

The fourth article, by Jean-Luc Achard, begins with a succinct but very enlightening presentation of the early life and education, revelations and advanced training, and demise of Padma dbang rgyal. In this case, however, the biographic materials serve as a strong introduction to an exceptionally clear explanation of the teachings and organization of one of Padma dbang rgyal's revelations, *The Heart Drops of Samantabhadra* (*Kun bzang snying tig*). As such, this work represents yet another contribution to the study of what is often considered the crown-jewel of the Northern Treasure Tradition, its immense collection of Great Perfection teachings. On the one hand, this article will be of interest to those involved in the comparative study of Great Perfection teachings across various traditions, which is an active area within Tibetology. On the other hand, the lucid explanation of Great Perfection theology and practice is strong enough to stand on its own as an effective introduction to the subject and intriguing enough—given the detailed discussions of meditation practices, death and the other intermediate states, and enlightenment—to demand one's attention throughout.

In the fifth article, by Christopher Bell, our attention is drawn to a Dharma protector known as Tsi'u dmar po, who is the focus of a cycle of treasure scriptures revealed by Padma dbang rgyal and his younger

brother named *Rig 'dzin* Legs ldan rdo rje (c. 1512–1625). Bell offers a well-researched explanation of how this Dharma protector that originated within the treasure scriptures of the Byang gter Tradition was eventually incorporated into each of the major traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. The article is completed with a translation of the root tantra for Tsi'u dmar po entitled *The Warlord's Tantra* (*dMag dpon gyi rgyud*). As will be expected by anyone familiar with the genre, the root tantra offers an account of the macabre origins and taming of Tsi'u dmar po, the details emerging as part of a conversation between a Bhagavan and his interlocutor, in this case Hayagrīva and the *dākinī* rDo rje bde byed ma respectively. The articles by Achard and Bell can be thought of as didactic counterpoints in that they demonstrate the diversity of theological perspectives, practices, and concerns not only within a single treasure tradition, but within the treasures of a single treasure revealer.

The sixth article in the collection, by Dylan Esler, draws attention to another cycle of wrathful teachings within the Northern Treasure Tradition; in this case it is a cycle focused on the deity Yamāntaka, which persists as an integral part of the ritual program at rDo rje brag Monastery in India. Following a somewhat reverse trajectory of what we find in Bell's article, Esler explains how a treasure cycle revealed by rGya Zhang khrom (c. early 11th cen.) eventually takes root within the Northern Treasure Tradition. The first of the well-known Byang gter masters to wield rGya Zhang khrom's Yamāntaka treasures is none other than Padma dbang rgyal, followed closely by Legs ldan rdo rje. Padma dbang rgyal is preceded in the transmission records, however, by a relatively unknown figure named Nam mkha' dpal ldan, who appears to have been a disciple of the Byang gter master Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan (1454–1541).⁴ Among the many welcomed components of Esler's article one finds a summary of the life of rGya Zhang khrom that includes comparisons to the treasure career of *Myang ral* Nyi ma 'od zer (1124–1192). Byang gter enthusiasts are sure to recognize themes that also appear in the life of other treasure revealers such as *Rig 'dzin* rGod ldem.

The seventh contribution, by Jay Valentine, is constituted by a summary of *The Chariot of Marvels* (*Ngo mtshar 'dren pa'i shing rta*), a travel memoir authored by *Rig 'dzin* Padma 'phrin las (c. 1641–1717), the fourth incarnation of *Rig 'dzin* rGod ldem. The narrative chronicles Padma 'phrin las's four-month pilgrimage in 1690 from rDo rje brag in Central Tibet to the original epicenter of the Northern Treasure Tradition in Byang Ngam ring. Along the way to and from these sacred

⁴ For an amazingly long list of the disciples of Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, see Valentine, Jay (2018), 'The Great Perfection in the Early Biographies of the Northern Treasure Tradition: An Introduction to and Translation of *The Life of Nam mkha'i rgyal mtshan*,' *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, N. 43, January 2018, pp. 126-127.

lands, Padma 'phrin las is received as a master of celebrity status by both religious and secular leaders, and he offers a nearly constant stream of benedictions and empowerments. The article includes a discussion of a selection of episodes to demonstrate the variety of content within the travel memoir.

The eighth article is a complement to Stéphane Arguillère's translation (French version: 2016; English version: in press) of a practice manual (*khrid yig*) of the *dGongs pa zang thal* (1366?), the main rDzogs chen cycle in the Northern Treasures — the work of *sPrul sku* Tshul lo or Tshul khriṃs bzang po (1895–1954).⁵ In the book, the Tibetan text is nearly completely boiled down to a finely devised patchwork of innumerable quotations or slightly paraphrased texts (either from rGod ldem's *gter ma*, or from a text of Klong chen rab 'byams' *mKha' 'gro yang tig*, the *Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin*). In this paper — an English adaptation of an article already published in French in an earlier issue of the *RET*,⁶ Arguillère, attempting to gain additional clarity on *sPrul sku* Tshul lo's text, ventures in a survey of all the preserved and accessible practice manuals of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, excluding the instructional texts belonging to the *dGongs pa zang thal* itself.

After a brief inventory of this literature and some remarks on the curious absence, in all these manuals, of tantric aspects of *dGongs pa zang thal*, the article proceeds to a chronological examination of this literature, identifying mostly two blocks: On the one hand, the two 16th-century manuals from the tradition of Kaḥ thog in Khams — those of Śākya rgyal mtshan and bKra shis rgya mtsho, which are put in their context — and on the other hand, the 17th-18th-century manuals from the rDo rje brag tradition: Zur Chos dbyings rang grol (1604–1669), gTer bdag gling pa (1646–1714), *Rig 'dzin* Padma 'phrin las (1641–1717) and Tshe dbang nor bu (1698–1755).

The fruits of this comparative examination of a thousand pages of various practice manuals are rich in unexpected results, notably on the poorly known traditions of Kaḥ thog — but paradoxically null in terms of the initial objective, which was to try to better understand the work of *sPrul sku* Tshul lo. Or rather, the investigation leads to the disconcerting but fascinating conclusion that *sPrul sku* Tshul lo, though a conservative mind, has, so to speak, wiped the slate clean and started all over again on the basis of the *gter chos* alone, just complemented by Klong chen pa's *Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin*.

The volume concludes with a select bibliography of secondary materials written in Western Languages that are dedicated in significant

⁵ This summary was written by Stéphane Arguillère.

⁶ 'Histoire des manuels de pratique du dGongs pa zang thal.' *Revue d'Études Tibétaines*, CNRS, 2018, Études rDzogs chen — Volume I, 1 (43), pp.196-255.

measure to the Byang gter. It is our sincere wish that in some small way, the work presented in this volume inspires ever more research in this subfield, requiring the continuous expansion of this bibliography.



The rDo rje in the Details: A Note on sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms (fl. eighth century) and His Role in Bringing Padmasambhava to Tibet

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Listen, O tantric yogin!
My life story, my deeds
Are inconceivable, inexpressible!¹

This paper surveys early historical and hagiographical references to sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms (fl. eighth century), an imperial-era figure renowned as one of the main disciples of Padmasambhava, a Vajrakīla (rDo rje phur pa) adept, and a pre-incarnation of dNgos grub rgyal mtshan (1337–1408), *alias* Rig 'dzin rGod kyi ldem 'phru can, the “Vulture-quilled Awareness-holder” whose late fourteenth-century revelations at Mt. bKra bzang in Byang established the Byang gter, or “Northern Treasure,” tradition. What follows does not aim to identify the real sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms of imperial-era fame. Rather, it explores textual representations of this figure, and it inquires after how sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms might have become (1) a noteworthy player in the effort to bring Padmasambhava, and thus Buddhism, to Tibet and (2) a personality at the heart of Byang gter mythology and authority. The central question can be encapsulated as follows: According to the written record, who might sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms have been before and during the time of Rig 'dzin rGod kyi ldem 'phru can's birth and treasure-revealing activity?

1. Introduction

With only pre-fourteenth-century sources at their disposal, a reader of Tibetan historio- and hagiographical works could easily be forgiven

¹ Spoken to sNa nam Rdo rje bdud 'joms by Padmasambhava in the *gSol 'debs le'u bdun ma*, or the *Seven-Chapter Supplication*, these lines are quoted in Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (Dalai Lama V 1617–1682), *Byang pa rig 'dzin chen po ngag gi dbang po'i rnam par thar pa ngo mtshar bkod pa rgya mtsho* (*Byang chen rnam thar*) (Dharamsala: Nam gsal sgron ma, 2007) 670.4–5: *nyon cig sngags kyi rnal 'byor pa/ nga yi rnam thar mdzad tshul nil/ bsam gyis mi khyab brjod mi lang*. Cf. Padma 'phrin las (1641–1717), *Bod du sna nam rdo rje bdud 'joms nas rig 'dzin chen po rgod ldem pa'i rnam thar*, in *bKa' ma mdo dbang gi bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar* (Leh: S. W. Tashigangpa, 1972), 431.2–6. For more on the context for this citation within the Fifth Dalai Lama's biography of Ngag gi dbang po (1580–1639), see note no. 7 below.

for lacking a clear sense of who, exactly, sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms (fl. eighth century) was. Among the many individuals mentioned in early accounts of Tibet's imperial era (seventh–ninth centuries), this figure, or someone similarly named, might appear as a minister, a messenger, a disciple, or a translator. But beyond being designated as such, his activities go largely unelaborated upon. In a word, biographical information about him appears scant. Prior to the late 1300s, one might catch a glimpse of the import that rDo rje bdud 'joms would eventually take on for the scions of the Byang gter, or “Northern Treasure,” tradition, yet it would seem that whoever this particular member of the sNa nam clan might have been—whatever part he may have played in the dramatic events of his time—is left almost entirely to the imagination.

We know that over time, however, details related to sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms's life emerged and coalesced such that today, readers of modern accounts of the imperial era will find him cast as a key player in bringing Buddhism—or, more specifically, Guru Padmasambhava, the “second Buddha” (*sangs rgyas gnyis pa*) himself—to Tibet. To read 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's ('Jam mgon Kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas 1813–1899) collected biographies of treasure-revealers and bDud 'joms Rin po che's (bDud 'joms Rin po che 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje 1904–1987) history of the rNying ma school together, for example, one finds a similar, basic sense of sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms's life shared between them, and what is outlined suggests a remarkable individual, indeed.²

For his part, Kong sprul begins by noting that the sNa nam in question was born among the *zhang blon*, i.e., “uncle” or “in-law” ministerial families,³ and he became, in his youth, a religious minister (*chos blon*) under the emperor Khri Srong lde btsan (742–c. 800). Regarding what this role might have entailed for sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms on

² Popularly referred to as the *gTer ston brya rtsa'i rnam thar*, or *Biographies of One Hundred Treasure Revealers*, Kong sprul's work is the *Zab mo'i gter dang gter ston grub thob ji ltar byon pa'i lo rgyus mdor bsdu bkod pa rin chen baidūrya'i phreng ba*, in *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo*, vol. 1 (*ka*) (New Delhi: Shechen Publications, 2007–2008). For bDud 'joms Rin po che's history, see 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje, *rNying ma'i chos 'byung* (Bylakuppe, Karnataka: Ngagyur Nyingma Institute, 2002). For an English translation of this work, see Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History*, translated and edited by Gyurme Dorje in collaboration with Matthew Kapstein (Boston: Wisdom Press, 1991). Notable as well in this regard is Gu ru bKra shis's (b. eighteenth century) history, which Kong sprul's *gTer ston brya rtsa* reflects in many respects. On sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms in particular in that history, see *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung* (Beijing: Krung go'i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, 1990), 171–172.

³ See Kong sprul 2007–8: 386.2–387.2. bDud 'joms Rin po che does not specify that this sNa nam was born among the *zhang blon*, but it may be that he simply did not feel the need to do so. Cf. Gu ru bKra' shis (1990: 171–172) who also does not state as much.

a daily basis, neither Kong sprul nor bDud 'joms Rin po che have anything to say. However, both indicate that in the grand scheme of things, it would seem to have put him in a prime position to become one of the first disciples of Padmasambhava, and in that capacity, a Vajrakīla (rDo rje phur pa) adept.⁴ Beyond that—which is to say, beyond the limits of his own lifetime—we also learn that sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms reappeared on the religious scene in the form of dNgos grub rgyal mtshan (1337–1408), *alias* Rig 'dzin rGod kyi ldem 'phru can (hereafter Rig 'dzin rGod ldem or rGod ldem), the “Vulture-quilled Awareness-holder” whose late fourteenth-century treasure (*gter ma*) revelations at Mt. bKra bzang in Byang established the Byang gter tradition.⁵

By the time of Kong sprul's writing in the late nineteenth century, then, sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms appears to have been a renowned personality, storied both in the sense of being a celebrated individual and a figure biographically fleshed out. Yet precisely when, how, and why the sNa nam of Byang gter fame gained the significance he enjoys today are hardly closed questions.

If one follows the present conception of sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms backward in time in order to trace, as it were, a genealogy of his story and his affiliation with Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, the now familiar shape of sNa nam rDo rje's life, complete with references to his discipleship of Padmasambhava and his status as the pre-incarnation of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, seems to have been established as the norm by the seventeenth century.⁶ Notably, the Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682) testifies to rDo rje bdud 'joms's importance to the Byang gter at various turns, but not least in his biography of Ngag

⁴ For a discussion of the renderings of this deity's name as either Vajrakīla or Vajrakīlaya, see Martin J. Boord, *The Cult of the Deity Vajrakīla: According to the Texts of the Northern Treasures Tradition of Tibet (Byang-gter phur-ba)* (Tring, U.K.: The Institute of Buddhist Studies, 1993), 5. On sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms's relationship to the Vajrakīla cult, see *ibid.*, 23. As this paper focuses on sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms's appearances in historio-hagiographical works that are not centered around the transmission and development of Vajrakīla practices in Tibet, I direct readers interested in that subject to Boord and, especially, to the many inimitable *phur pa*-related studies by Cathy Cantwell and Robert Mayer.

⁵ For modern Tibetan biographies of this figure see, e.g., Kong sprul 2007–8: 561.6–564.6; bDud 'joms Rin po che 2002: 626.2–631.1; Gu ru bKra shis 1990: 171–172. For secondary scholarship on Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's life, see Jurgen Wilhelm Herweg, “The Hagiography of Rig 'dzin Rgod kyi ldem 'phru can and Three Historical Questions Emerging from It” (MA thesis, University of Washington, 1994) as well as Boord 1993 and Katarina Turpeinen, “Vision of Samantabhadra: The Dzokchen Anthology of Rindzin Gödem” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 2015), 14–20.

⁶ On this point, see Jay Valentine, “Lords of the Northern Treasures: The Development of the Tibetan Institution of Rule by Successive Incarnations” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia 2013), 50–51.

gi bang po (1580–1639), the Third rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin. Therein, the Fifth Dalai Lama notes that sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms was among Padmasambhava's "inner circle of five" (*'khor lnga'i nang tshan*) among his twenty-five main disciples, and he states that given the extent of rDo rje bdud 'joms's realizations, he was "the one and only" (*ya gyal gcig yin*) disciple extolled by his guru via receiving the *Le'u bdun ma*'s verses that constitute the epigraph to this paper.⁷ Additionally, perhaps to emphasize the point about rDo rje bdud 'joms's unique realizations, the Fifth Dalai Lama also cites Chos rgyal dbang po'i sde (*alias Karma Gu ru*, a.k.a. Byang bdag bKra shis stobs rgyal 1550–1602)⁸ where he states that "rDo rje bdud 'joms was unhindered, like the wind!"⁹—a simile that no doubt carries a dual reference: one to this sNa nam's miraculous ability to fly and pass through solid objects

⁷ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2007: 670.3–5: *de rjes slob dpon chen po pad ma 'byung gnas bod gangs can gyi ljongs 'dir phebs pa'i tshes las can dag pa'i 'khor lnga'i nang tshan zhang sna nam pa rdo rje bdud 'joms zhes sngags kyi rnal 'byor pa chen por u rgyan rin po ches le'u bdun ma'i stong thun du/ nyon cig sngags kyi rnal 'byor pa/ nga yi rnam thar mdzad tshul nil/ bsam gyis mi khyab brjod mi lang/ zhes gzengs bstod cing grub rtags mi 'dra ba ngo mtshar can re ston pa'i rje 'bangs nyi shu rtsa lnga'i ya gyal gcig yin pas chos rgyal dbang po'i sdes rje 'bangs nyi shu lnga'i gsol 'debs smin byed dbang gi chu rgyun du/ rdo rje bdud 'joms rlung ltar thogs med/ ces bsnags pa de'o*. Echoing the earliest biography of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, discussed later in this paper, the *lo rgyus* of the *Le'u bdun ma* states that the yellowed scrolls of this text were given (perhaps indirectly, according to tradition) to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem by the treasure-revealer bZang po grags pa (fourteenth century): *bzang po grags pas rgod ldem can la gnang ba'i le'u bdun ma'i shog ser rnams*. See bZang po grags pa, *O rgyan gu ru padma 'byung gnas kyi rdo rje'i gsung 'khrul pa med pa'i gsol 'debs le'u bdun ma lo rgyus dang bcas pa* (*Byang gter gsol 'debs le'u bdun*), edited by Tshe dbang nor bu, in *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo*, vol. 5: 571–616 (New Delhi: Shechen Publications, 2007-2008), 616.2–3. Cf. the Fifth Dalai Lama where he attributes the discovery of the *Le'u bdun ma* to bZang po grags pa in *Jo mo'i nyams len skor dgu'am zab pa skor dgur grags pa'i lung ji ltar nos pa'i skor*, in *gSung 'bum: Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho*, vol. 2 (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2009), 541.6–7. On the prayer's connection to the brothers mNga' ris Pañ chen Padma dbang rgyal (b. 1487) and Legs ldan rdo rje (1452–1565), the latter of whom was recognized as a reincarnation of rGod ldem, see the Fifth's *gTer ston chen po dri med kun dgas spyang drangs pa'i gter chos khag gi skor*, in *gSung 'bum: Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho*, vol. 4 (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2009), 148.10 and Franz-Karl Ehrhard, "'An Ocean of Marvelous Perfections': A 17th-Century Padma bka'i thang yig from the Sa skya pa School," in *Tibetan Literary Genres, Texts, and Text Types: From Genre Classification to Transformation*, vol. 37, Brill's Tibetan Studies Library (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015), 161. On the *Le'u bdun ma* more broadly, see also Lewis Doney, "Life and Devotion: The Biography of Padmasambhava in Two Works of A mes zhabs," in *Unearthing Himalayan Treasures: Festschrift for Franz-Karl Ehrhard*, ed. Volker Caumanns, Marta Sernesi, and Nikolai Solmsdorf (Marburg: Indica et Tibetica Verlag, 2019), 144–63.

⁸ See Kong sprul 2007–8: 596.4–598.1.

⁹ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2007: 670.5. See note no. 7 above.

(details forthcoming), and the other to whatever heights he might have reached in his efforts to cultivate non-attachment.

In short, even if it is not the most robust or three-dimensional of depictions, by the seventeenth century, the imagination has some support in its efforts to conjure a sense of rDo rje bdud 'joms. Yet as we narrow our focus to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's time, rDo rje bdud 'joms's persona and his relationship to the treasure-revealer at the Byang gter's center appear to be less obviously settled. And if we extend our inquiry farther back in time, behind the world into which Rig 'dzin rGod ldem was born, things become less definitive still.

So, as sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms recedes, unobstructedly, into the mists of time, one is apt to wonder: Who might he have been in the eyes of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem? What sense or senses of this figure did the Byang gter's founder and his immediate disciples inherit?

2. Narrowing to sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms

In the process of seeking the earliest mentions, or actual depictions, of sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms (as we might recognize him), perhaps telling for our purposes is an asymmetry in the two modern accounts referred to above. That is to say that even though Kong sprul and bDud 'joms Rin po che agree that sNa nam rDo rje was a royal minister—or, at least, a messenger—as well as a disciple of Padmasambhava and an accomplished Vajrakīla practitioner, they differ in the sense they offer regarding when, where, and how sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms first met his guru. As bDud 'joms's *rNying ma'i chos 'byung* has it, emperor Khri Srong lde btsan dispatched sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms and other religious ministers as part of a delegation to invite Padmasambhava from Nepal to Tibet so that upon his arrival, the tantric adept could tame the noxious spirits hindering the consecration of bSam yas monastery. In fact, where bDud 'joms Rin po che states that Khri Srong lde btsan sent (initially unnamed) messengers in an effort to reach Padmasambhava posthaste, he adds that Padmasambhava anticipated the messengers' arrival, and he goes so far as to single sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms out among them such that he is the *only* named member of the delegation.

The specific reference to him occurs after we see Śāntarakṣita (fl. mid-eighth century), the figure originally invited to Tibet to help establish Buddhism on the plateau, advises Khri Srong lde bstan to solicit Padmasambhava's help next. After we see Śāntarakṣita declare his intention to send messengers to invite Padmasambhava to Tibet, the *rNying ma'i chos 'byung* continues:

Since the emperor said that he himself would likewise entreat [Padmasambhava], [royal] messengers were subsequently dispatched. Anon, the master knew that sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms and the others dispatched were swiftly on their way.¹⁰

By contrast, neither Kong sprul's biographical section on sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms nor his summary account of how Padmasambhava came to Tibet under the section on Khri Srong lde btsan offer this detail.¹¹

In fact, if one were to read Kong sprul's account without external knowledge of rDo rje bdud 'joms, Kong sprul's version of events would instead seem to suggest that this sNa nam only encountered Padmasambhava after the guru from Oḍḍiyāna (by way of Nepal) reached bSam yas. According to the *gTer ston brgya rtsa*, sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms's "gnostic vision" (*ye shes kyi gzigs pa*) drew him from wherever he was at the time to bSam yas while its grounds were being consecrated by "the abbot, master, and religious king" (*mkhan slob chos gsum*), i.e., Śāntarakṣita, Padmasambhava, and Khri Srong lde btsan. In order to join the trio on site, says Kong sprul, rDo rje bdud 'joms aimed his *kīla* at Mt. Has po, created a tiny crack in the rock, and passed through it.¹² To be sure, Kong sprul could have assumed prior knowledge on the part of his readers such that it would be needless to say that sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms had met Padmasambhava before this miraculous event. (After all, how else could he have become so skilled with a *kīla* as to pierce a mountain?) Nevertheless, on the surface, it would seem that sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms arrived rather late to the party.

If this difference in accounts is not enough to send a scholar of Tibet's religious history back to the archives, a closer look at Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's earliest biography might prove motivating in this regard. In their recent work on the history of the Byang gter and on Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's *oeuvre*, respectively, Jay Valentine and Katarina

¹⁰ bDud 'joms 2002: 171.1–2: *btsan po rang yang de bzhin 'tshal gsungs pas pho nya snga rting du brdzangs/ slar sna nam rdo rje bdud 'joms la sogs pa lam du stabs myur pos mngags pa slob dpon gyis mkhyen te*. Cf. Gu ru bKra shis 1990: 150: *slob dpon spyan 'dren pa'i pho nya snga rting du brdzangs shing/ slar sna nam rdo rje bdud 'joms sogs lam du bshad rtsol drag pos rin po che'i phyag rten dang bcas mngags pas pho nya rnam ngal zhing dub pa slob dpon gyis mkhyen nas*.

¹¹ Kong sprul 2007–8: 362.1–3.

¹² Twice amid his brief biography of sNa nam, Kong sprul (2007–8: 386.2–387.2) states that the mark made by the tantric adept's *kīla* remains today. bDud 'joms (1991: 196.5–197.1) too, affirms sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms's affiliation with *kīla* practices and his ability to pass directly through solid rock (*sna nam rdo rje bdud 'joms kyis brag ri la zang thal du gshegs*), but he does not explicitly associate him with Has po ri.

Turpeinen observe that during the Northern Treasure tradition's earliest days, sNa nam rDo rje hardly occupied a place of prominence in the Byang gter lineal imaginaire.¹³ Based on careful analysis of *sPrul sku chen po'i rnam thar gsal byed nyi ma'i 'od zer*, or *The Ray of Sunlight* (*Nyi ma'i 'od zer*),¹⁴ a biography of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem written by Nyi ma bzang po (fl. fifteenth century), one of rGod ldem's immediate disciples, Valentine argues that "It is doubtful that Gödem Truchen was considered to be a direct reincarnation of Nanam Dorjé Dujom or anyone else during his lifetime." Still, "even if he was," he continues, "his status as a reincarnation of an eighth-century personality is not as important as his status as a magical emanation of [the buddha] Samantabhadra in his early biography."¹⁵

Turpeinen concurs on both points. She notes that it is indeed curious that in *The Ray of Sunlight*, Rig 'dzin rGod ldem is nowhere stated to be a direct incarnation sNa nam rDo rje, especially given how important this assertion is later on in the tradition.¹⁶ And although it is true that in the anthology titled *Kun tu bzang po'i dgongs pa zang thal*, or *The Unimpeded Realization of Samantabhadra*, Rig 'dzin rGod ldem is, in fact, deemed a rebirth of rDo rje bdud 'joms, Turpeinen notes that in that case, sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms nevertheless has a very slight role such that "he is only mentioned in passing a couple of times."¹⁷ Therefore, in spite of identification with sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms during (or very close in time to) Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's own lifetime, it would seem that such an association was not integral to rGod ldem's status as an authentic treasure-revealer (*gter ston*).¹⁸ The salient legitimizing factor may have been his connection to Samantabhadra, the primordial buddha at whose behest Padmasambhava himself is said to have concealed treasures.¹⁹

The fact that early sources on Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's life and career as a treasure-revealer would emphasize a connection to Samantabha-

¹³ See Valentine 2013: 50–53 and Turpeinen 2015: 16.

¹⁴ Nyi ma bzang po, *sPrul sku chen po'i rnam thar gsal byed nyi ma'i 'od zer*, in *Byang gter lugs kyi rnam thar dang mang 'ongs lung bstan*, vol. ga (Gangtok, Sikkim: Sherab Gyaltzen and Lama Dawa, 1983), 49–147.

¹⁵ Valentine 2013: 53.

¹⁶ Turpeinen 2015: 16.

¹⁷ Ibid. In terms of sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms's role in the *Unimpeded Realization*, Turpeinen's point stands. However, he is mentioned there more than a couple of times as sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms or rDo rje bdud 'joms across the three-volume collection. See, for example, vol. 1 of Rig 'dzin rGod kyi ldem 'phru can 1973: 18.4, 62.1, 79.1–2, 91.4, 96.2, and 243.6. I thank Jean-Luc Achard for bringing this to my attention.

¹⁸ Valentine 2013: 50–53; Turpeinen 2015: 16.

¹⁹ Turpeinen 2015: 15 and Ibid., "Tales of Realization – Narratives in Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's Great Perfection Revelation", *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 43, (January 2018), 156. On this connection, see also Boord 1993: 22–23.

dra over a link to sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms is perhaps unsurprising. After all, Samantabhadra is, in a sense, rDo rje bdud 'joms's teacher's teacher—his *ādibuddha* as *ādiguru*—and why not trace one's lineage directly to the primordial source? But, even where sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms's identity and role in history goes unelaborated upon, his connection to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem remains. And so, where does one first meet the sNa nam who would link rGod ldem not only to the imperial era but also to an ahistorical past?

3. A Rocky (or) Emissarial Start?

The earliest source that would seem to reflect, at least in spirit, the sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms we know today is Pelliot tibétain 44 (PT 44), the *circa* late-tenth-century Dunhuang text²⁰ that details Padmasambhava's journey from Yang le shod, a site traditionally held to be near modern-day Pharping in Nepal, to the temple of Nālandā in India in order to fetch the *Phur bu'i 'bum sde* (i.e., *The Hundred Thousand [Verse] Tantra of Vajrakīla*).²¹ Within this text, which, as Cathy Cantwell and Robert Mayer note, "in many ways works as a charter myth for Phur pa rituals as practiced to this day,"²² we find a member of the sNa nam clan receiving the "glory of the Kīla" among other disciples of Padmasambhava. Matthew Kapstein's translation of the relevant passage is reproduced below:

Having acquired the accomplishment of the Kīla, concerning [his attainment of] the signs, Padmasambhava, having set a limitless forest ablaze, thrust [the Kīla] at the blaze. Śrīgupta, having struck it at the rock in the region of the frontier forest of India, broke the rock into four fragments and thus "thrust it at stone." The Newari Ser-po thrust it at water and so reversed the water's course, thereby establishing Nepal itself as a mercantile center. Such were the miraculous abilities and powers that emerged.

In Tibet Ācārya Sambhava explained it to Pagor Vairocana and Tse Jñānasukha. Later Dre Tathāgata and Buna Ana heard it and practiced at the cave of Samye Rock at Drakmar. Dre Tathāgata thrust it at fire. Buna thrust it at

²⁰ For a summary of the scholarship on the date of PT 44, see Cathy Cantwell and Robert Mayer, *Early Tibetan Documents on Phur pa from Dunhuang* (Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2008), 41–42. See also the earlier work by Frederick Alexander Bischoff and Charles Hartman, "Padmasambhava's Invention of the Phur-bu: Ms. Pelliot Tibétain 44," in *Etudes Tibétaines dédiées à la mémoire de Marcelle Lalou*, ed. A. Macdonald (Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, 1971), 11–28.

²¹ On this source, see esp. Cantwell and Mayer 2008.

²² *Ibid.*, 37.

the Rock of Hepo. Then the glory of the Kīla came to Chim Śākya and Nanam Zhang Dorje-nyen. Then it was explained to Jin Yeshe-tsek.²³

Above, we see Buna ('Bu na) associated with the Rock of Hepo, i.e., Has po ri, not, as we find in Kong sprul,²⁴ the named member of the sNa snam clan. And although we do see that sNa nam clan member associated with *kīla* practices, the name rDo rje gnyan only approximates that of rDo rje bdud 'joms.²⁵ Whether this passage carries a misnomer for rDo rje bdud 'joms or intends to signify another notable member of his clan (say, for example, the translator sNa nam Zhang Ye shes sde or minister Zhang sNa nam Nya bzang) is unclear.

Unfortunately, our hope for a less ambiguous initial encounter does not lie in the *dBa' / sBa bzhed*, even if several sNa nam clan members—namely rGyal tsha lha snang, Nya bzang, Ma zhang khrom pa skyes, Ye shes sde, and Bse btsan²⁶—occupy its folios. But if, from PT 44 and the *dBa' / sBa bzhed*, we turn to the *Chos 'byung me tog snying po*, the late twelfth-century chronicle attributed to Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124–1192),²⁷ things get a bit more interesting. There, we do find sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms associated with a particular *phur pa* tradition,²⁸

²³ Matthew Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation, and Memory* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 158–159; see also Cantwell and Mayer 2008: 61–62 and Bischoff and Hartman 1971: 11–28. In a master's thesis on the Phur-pa cycle, Mengyan Li cites Bingfen Luo (2007: 662) who suggests a different separation of the syllables in the text than those accepted by Bischoff and Hartman 1971, Kapstein 2000, and Cantwell and Mayer 2008. See Mengyan Li, "Origination, Transmission, and Reception of the Phur-pa Cycle: A Study of the Rdo-rje-phur-pa Cycle of Tantric Teachings in Tibet with Special Reference to Sog-bzlog-pa Blo-gros-rgyal-mtshan's (1552–1624) *Phur pa'i lo rgyus*" (Master's Thesis, Universität Hamburg, 2018), 36, note no. 4. In addition to Cantwell and Mayer's studies, I encourage readers interested in *phur pa* transmissions to read this excellent thesis.

²⁴ Kong sprul 2007–8: 386.

²⁵ See Cantwell and Mayer (2008: 51–52) on whether this could be sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms.

²⁶ On these figures and how they are referred to across witnesses to this work, see Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Deimberger, *dBa bzhed: The Royal Narrative Concerning the Bringing of the Buddha's Doctrine to Tibet* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften 2000) on rGyal tsha lha snang (67n220 and 93n362); Nya bzang (50n125); Ma zhang khrom pa skyes (35–38; 35n61); Ye shes sde (96n380), and Bse btsan (70n241).

²⁷ See Martin 2020: 64, no. 33.

²⁸ See mNga' bdag Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (Nyang ral), *Die größte Geschichte des tibetischen Buddhismus nach alter Tradition Rnying ma'i chos 'byung chen mo*, edited by R.O. Meisezahl (Sankt Augustin: VGH Wissenschaftsverlag, 1985), 354.2.3. Cf. *Ibid.*, *Chos 'byung me tog snying po sbrang rtsi'i bcud*, ed. Nyan shul mKhyen rab 'od zer et al., *Gangs can rig mdzod 5* (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1988), 485: *sna nam rdo rje bdud 'joms la brgyud pas sna nam lugs su grags*. He is also listed among Padmasambhava's disciples. See, e.g., Nyang ral 1985: 318.1.1.

affirming early characterizations of him as a *kīla* adept. However, if we look for him where modern accounts might otherwise lead us, that is, to the scene wherein Khri Srong lde btsan sends a delegation to invite Padmasambhava to Tibet, we do not find him tasked with entreating the guru (not explicitly, in any case). Nevertheless, as it stands, the episode is worth recounting in brief for how it would seem to shift across texts and over time to include rDo rje bdud 'joms.

So, as Nyang ral's *Me tog snying po* has it, after Śāntarakṣita has been unable to subdue the noxious spirits wreaking havoc at bSam yas, he advises Khri Srong lde btsan to invite Padmasambhava up from Yang le shod to quell them. Khri Srong then tells his court that he has been having dreams about the guru, and he announces that he wishes to invite him to Tibet. From there, the emperor orders his subjects to send three messengers (*bang chen pa mi gsum*) to approach Padmasambhava with the invitation.²⁹ After some deliberation, it could not be resolved among his subjects who should go, and so, the Khri Srong himself orders what would appear to be two, rather than three, main messengers, and depending on the source, one or three servants (*g.yog po gcig* or *g.yog po gsum*) to bear gold to Padmasambhava. Within the passage on the king's dream and following order, the line that refers to the number of individuals dispatched reads "a whole *drey* of gold was entrusted to both sBas Mang rje gsal snang and Se 'og Lha lung, along with *one* servant" or "along with *three* servants."³⁰

At first glance, this difference might appear insignificant. Perhaps a scribe simply got the number of servants wrong in copy, or the account is remembered (slightly) differently on this point. But with later versions of this event in mind, one can begin to see how the devil—or the rDo rje—could come to inhabit the details in this case. Disagreement would seem to have opened a door, or ambiguity may have paved the way for opportunity. Whatever the case, the details are worth scrutinizing, if not yet in terms of the *who*-s, then with respect to the *how many*-s.

Along these lines, if we recall and reassess Khri Srong lde btsan's original wish to dispatch a party of three messengers, it seems a curious move on his part to designate only two himself. Why not appoint three named messengers and note, incidentally (or not), the number of

²⁹ Nyang ral 1985: 203.1.2. Cf. *ibid.* 1988: 276. Cf. Kong sprul 2007–8: 362.1–3: *bang chen mi lnga*.

³⁰ Nyang ral 1985: 203.1.3–4: *sbas smang rje gsal snang dang se 'og lha lung gnyis g.yog po cig dang bcas pa la gser phyed bre gang bskur*. Cf. Nyang ral 1988: 276–277: *sbas man rje gsal snang dang/ se 'og lha lung gnyis g.yog po gsum dang bcas la gser phyed bre gang bskur*. The names of the two messengers above vary depending on the source. Where I refer to them in the body of this paper, I transliterate their names as they appear in whatever text is cited directly.

servants or attendants that accompanied them? Why two messengers plus one servant or two plus three?

A source that offers the names of two main messengers and notes that there was one unnamed servant would, at least, seem to resolve the issue of achieving Khri Srong lde btsan's originally desired party size. Such a group does total three individuals, even if not all members are named. But where one finds two named messengers and three servants, this brings the total number up to five individuals, and suddenly, the emperor's emissarial cup runneth over. Moreover, where once there was only one person unaccounted for among the first Tibetans to meet Padmasambhava, now, in the latter case, there are three.

Still, whether any of the messengers in Nyang ral's history were sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms remains, as yet, a mystery, and this mystery persists in the *Zangs gling ma*, the highly influential revealed history-cum-hagiography of Padmasambhava that is also attributed to Nyang ral.³¹ Although we find a similar passage therein about the emperor's dispatch of two named messengers and three unnamed attendants, again, we cannot confirm the presence of rDo rje bdud 'joms. However, what proves nonetheless interesting about the *Zangs gling ma* is that when one compares witnesses and editions, numbers continue to prove vexing. Or, better, one finds that numbers tend to warrant enough concern as to bear overspecification.

To wit, in the *Zangs gling ma*, after Khri Srong lde btsan has appointed two named messengers, who are, once again, sBas Mang rje gSal snang and Senge mgo Lha lung (rather than Se 'og Lha lung, as above), and the emperor has conferred upon them what would appear to be, decidedly, three servants, the narrator sees fit to tally up the entire party by way of noting that "the five masters and servants" (*dpon g.yog lnga*) were given a whole *drey* of gold dust to convey to Padmasambhava.³² And so, even at the risk of redundancy, the *Zangs gling*

³¹ On Nyang ral's *oeuvre* and attributions to him, see Daniel Hirshberg, *Remembering the Lotus-Born: Padmasambhava in the History of Tibet's Golden Age* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2016).

³² See *Slob dpon padma'i rnam thar zangs gling ma* (Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1989), 38–39 where it specifies that five people went to Yang le shod: *bang chen gyi khas len ma byung nas/ rgyal po nyis kyis/ sbas mang rje gsal snang dang/ senge mgo lha lung gnyis la bka' stsal nas/ g.yog po gsum dang dpon g.yog lnga la gser phye bre gang dang lam rgyags sogs bskur nas lam du zhugs pas*. Compare with the passages from the witnesses reproduced in Lewis Doney, *The Zangs gling ma: The First Padmasambhava Biography. Two Exemplars of its Earliest Attested Recension*. Series Monumenta Tibetica Historica, Abteilung 2 (Vitae), Band 3 (Andiaest: International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, 2014), 125, fol. 24b.3–25a.1 and 245, fol. 21a.2–4. In the manuscripts reproduced by Doney, ZLh (125, fol. 24b.3–25a.1) reads *rgyal po nyid kyi ltsas [?] mang po rje gsal snang dang/ seng mgo lha lung gnyis la bka' lung gsal nas/ g.yog po gsum btang ste/ spon g.yog lnga la gser phye bre gang rdzad nas/ bar gyis lam rgyags la sogs pa bskur ste lam du btsug pa dang/ slob dpon gyi spyang sngar/*

ma prefers to do the math for the reader rather than leave the calculation up to her.

To seek the same inclination or further details in historical sources that appear close in time to Nyang ral's works is, regrettably, to come up short on both counts. The *Chos la 'jug pa'i sgo* (ca. 1167) by bSod nams rtse mo (1142–1182), for example, states that Khri Srong lde btsan sent messengers to invite Padmasambhava, but he does not name any,³³ and the shorter IDE'u history (ca. mid-thirteenth century),³⁴ despite its interest in the status and affairs of the sNa nam clan, does not indicate messengers among its ranks.³⁵

However, if we look to the longer IDE'u history, written sometime after 1261,³⁶ sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms makes several appearances. The section on Khri Srong lde btsan's life and interest in Buddhism notes the king's own (contested) sNa nam clan affiliation, and it lists the names of the ministers at court during both the earlier and later parts of the emperor's life.³⁷ Although none of the ministers in this section are dubbed sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms, later in the text, we do learn that when Khri Srong lde btsan saw fit to dispatch messengers to invite Padmasambhava to Tibet, he designated *three* individuals by name: mChims Shākya sra/spra (=pra) ba, Shud pu (=bu) Dpal gyi seng ge, and finally, sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms.³⁸ For his part, Bu

bsrung ma rnams kyis bskul ba. ZLi (p. 245, 21a.2–4) reads *bang chen pa la khas len pa ma byung nas rje nyid kyis/ sbas mang po rje gsal snang dang/ ye gong lha gnyis la bka' gsal nas/ g.yog gsum bskul tel/ dpon g.yog lnga la gser phye bre gang brdzangs nas/ bar gyi lam rgyags la sogs pa bskur nas lam du bcug pa dang/ ghu ru'i spyan sngar srungs ma rnams kyis bskul ba.*

³³ bSod nams rtse mo, *Chos la 'jug pa'i sgo*, in *'Phags yul rgyan drug mchog gnyis kyi zhal lung* vol. 1: 47–141 (Lha sa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe nying dpe skrun khang, 2015), 133.

³⁴ Martin (2020: 85, no. 68) estimates a date of ca. 1220 for this source.

³⁵ IDE'u Jo sras, *IDE'u chos 'byung* (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1987).

³⁶ Martin 2020: 96, no. 88. On both the shorter and longer histories and their attributions, see Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp, "Dating the Two Lde'u Chronicles of Buddhism in India and Tibet," in *Études Bouddhiques Offertes à Jacques May, Asiatische Studien/Études Asiatiques* 46.1 (1992), 468–91.

³⁷ mKhas pa IDE'u, *mKhas pa lde'us mdzad pa'i rgya bod kyi chos 'byung rgyas pa*, in *rGya bod kyi chos 'byung rgyas pa*, 1–412 (Lha sa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1987). On Khri Srong's contestation, see Lewis Doney, "Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer and the *Testimony of Ba*," *Bulletin of Tibetology* 49, no. 1, 7–38 (2013), 22–25.

³⁸ mKhas pa IDE'u 1987: 303: *btsan pos mchims shākya sra ba/ shud pu dpal gyi seng gel/ sna nam rdo rje bdud 'joms gsum la gser bskur nas btang bas bod du byon.* See also *ibid.*, 340–341 where, as in bDud 'joms Rin po che (2002), Padmasambhava is said to have anticipated the group's arrival: *rgyal po dgyes nas spyan 'dren mi gsum btang ste/ sna nam rdo rje bdud 'joms/ 'chims shākya sra ba/ shud bu dpal gyi seng ge gsum la gser gyi pa tra brgyad brdzangs te btang ba/ slob dpon gyis spyan 'dren 'byung bar mkhyen nas/ rgya gar gyi chu 'phreng shing 'phreng dang...* In Ne'u Paṇḍita's history (1283), we find a "rNa nam rDo rje" associated with an invitation to Yer pa, but this would

ston Rin chen grub (1290–1364), like Nyang ral, designates just two main messengers—sBa Mang rje gSal snang and Seng gong Lha lung (rather than Se 'og or Senge mgo)—in his *chos 'byung* (ca. 1322–1326). But Bu ston also names their attendants, which number five individuals total, instead of one or three, and the first attendant listed is sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms.³⁹

To be sure, an examination of all available witnesses to these works (and more) could aid us further in refining our understanding of precisely when and how sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms might have occasion to slip in or out of the imperial picture at the point of Khri Srong's decision to invite Padmasambhava to Tibet. Yet even here, based on a cursory look at several of the influential sources leading up to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's time, rDo rje bdud 'joms appears to be a more mutable messenger than not.

4. Taking Padma-vitae into Account

Fourteenth-century hagiographical accounts of Padmasambhava's exploits prove especially interesting for thinking through how it is that sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms might have come to exceed mere mention. Still, his mutability—or what seems, in some instances, to be his fungibility—persists. On this point, we will examine the *Padma bka'(i) thang (yig)* (alt. *bKa' thang shel brag ma*, 1352⁴⁰) attributed to the treasure-revealer O rgyan gling pa (b. 1323) closely. But first, in observance of its indebtedness to Nyang ral's *Zangs gling ma*,⁴¹ we might see what, if anything, Sangs rgyas gling pa's (1340–1396) *Me long gsal ba* yields.

seem to be rNa nam rDo rje dbang phyug who is noted earlier in the same line. See Grags pa smon lam blo gros, *Bod kyi rgyal rabs phyogs bsdebs* (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1985), 38.4–5. See also 'Gos Lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal on Yer pa, a place famous for its flying adepts, in *Deb ther sngon po* (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1974), 44, fol. 22b.1: *yer pa nas nam mkha' la 'phur ba mang po byung zhes grags*.

³⁹ Bu ston Rin chen grub, *bDe bar gshegs pa'i bstan pa'i gsal byed chos kyi 'byung gnas gsung rab rin po che'i mdzod* (s.l.: Chos grwa chen mo bkra shis lhun grub), fol. 141a.1: *slob dpon padmasam bha wa zhes bya ba mthu rtsal dang ldan pa zhig yod pas/ de spyan drongs shig gsungs pa dang/ btsan pos/ rmi lam du byung ba skad bgyis te/ sba mang rje gsal snang dang/ seng gong lha lung gnyis la g.yog sna nam rdo rje bdud 'joms/ lce dznyā na siddha/ mchims shākya pra bha/ brang ting dza ya rakši ta/ shud pu dpal gyi seng ge dang/ lnga btang bas/ slob dpon gyis mkhyen te*.

⁴⁰ On redactions of this source, see Lewis Doney, "A Richness of Detail: Sangs rgyas gling pa and the *Padma bka' thang*," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 37 (December 2016), 71–72. Doney notes that extant versions of this source were redacted in line with a version of the *Zangs gling ma* in the sixteenth century. The possible implications of this fact for representations of sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms will be discussed in the conclusion to this paper.

⁴¹ On this point, see Doney 2016: 73n15.

This text, contained in the *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* cycle,⁴² shows the figures sBas Mang po rje sNang gsal and Gser 'og Lha lung dispatched along with three attendants, and it notes that the party of five, total, was outfitted with many offerings (*g.yog po gsum dang lnga la zhu rten mang po bskur*).⁴³ The scene and its numbers are certainly familiar enough. Here, however, because the number five (*lnga*) immediately follows “three servants” (*g.yog po gsum*)—rather than “[the entire party of] five masters and servants” (*g.yog po gsum dang dpon g.yog lnga*), as we find in the *Zangs gling ma*⁴⁴—one wonders if readings alternative to “the five [masters and servants]” could have occurred more readily than not. Some prevailing lack of clarity around just how many servants there might have been (three? three plus five?) could, in short, account for the numbering we find in histories along the lines of Bu ston's, for example. Or, albeit a speculative stretch, perhaps the homophony between *lnga* and *sna* could have paved the way for the appearance of a sNa nam in the emissarial mix in general, but not least at the head of the group of attendants.⁴⁵ Either way—whatever the potential for variant readings—consensus at the time of Sangs rgyas gling pa's writing would still appear to lean in favor of two main messengers and one to three anonymous attendants.

Or does it? The kindred *bka' thang*-s, or “testimonies,” of O rgyan gling pa and Sangs rgyas gling pa indicate otherwise, and what is more, they have the identities of the main messengers take a new turn. Put another way, in both O rgyan gling pa's *Padma bka' thang* and Sangs rgyas gling pa's *bKa' thang gser 'phreng* (late 1300s), clan affiliations are no longer what they once were. Listed first in concordant emissarial triplets is one sBa Mi khri bzher rDo rje bdud 'joms, followed by mChims kyi Shākya pra bha and Shud bu Dpal gyi ye shes.⁴⁶ With

⁴² Ibid., 73.

⁴³ Sangs rgyas gling pa, *Yid ches shing khungs btsun pa'i lo rgyus shel gyi me long gsal ba*, in *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* (Gangtok: Sonam Topgay Kazi, 1972), 704.6: *slob dpon chen po spyan drang pa la/ sbas mang po rje snang gsal dang/ gser 'og lha lung gnyis g.yog po gsum dang lnga la zhu rten [705.1] mang po bskur nas btang bas/ bang chen pa rnams lam du zhugs pa*.

⁴⁴ See note no. 32 above.

⁴⁵ See note no. 39 above. One also wonders about *phur pa* and 'phur pa in this regard given sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms was renowned as a *kīla* (*phur pa*) adept who could fly (*'phur ba*).

⁴⁶ See O rgyan gling pa, *Padma bka' thang* (Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2006), 292: *de skad gsol bas rgyal po shin tu dgyes/ de nas rgyal pos myur mgyogs kha gsum btang/ sba mi khri gzher rdo rje bdud 'joms dang/ mchims kyi phru gu shākya pra bha dang/ shud pu dpal gyi seng ge bzhi la ni/ gser phye bre re gser gyi pa tra re/ rgya gar rdo rje gdan du brdzangs par gyur/ lo tsā bzhi pos rgya gar yul du bgrod*. Cf. Sangs rgyas gling pa, *bKa' thang gser 'phreng* (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 2007), 229: *de nas rgyal pos nyid kyi bang chen du 'os pa'i mi gsum bkug stel sbas mi khri bzher rdo rje bdud 'joms dang/ mchims kyi shākya pra bha dang/ shud bu dpal*

that, a question arises: is sBa Mi khri bzher rDo rje bdud 'joms his own person, or has rDo rje bdud 'joms been conflated with—or rendered potentially conflatable with—sBa Mi khri bzher, a figure who does not appear elsewhere with “rDo rje bdud 'joms” attached to his name?

In an initial effort to make sense of what we ultimately find in these *bka' thang*-s, we might check them against other notable *Padma-vitae* that hail from roughly the same time. In the *O rgyan padma 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs* (late 1300s),⁴⁷ attributed to the treasure-revealer rDo rje gling pa (1346–1405?), for example, we find the same series and numbering that occurs in both the *Padma bka' thang* and the *gSer 'phreng*. Yet in Padma gling pa's (1450–1521) *bKa' thang mun sel sgron me*, the group is noted to be four (*bzhi*) rather than three in number.⁴⁸ With that, discrepancies, however subtle, persist.

Since it is the most well-known of the fourteenth-century *Padma-vitae*, perhaps a careful examination of *O rgyan gling pa's Padma bka' thang* is in order. Below, with emphasis added, is a translation of the passage from a modern edition in which sBa Mi khri bzher and rDo rje bdud 'joms are distinguished from one another as separate individuals. Here, in chapter fifty-nine of the *Padma bka' thang*, after a figure named Siddharāja tells Khri Srong lde btsan that India is teeming with *paṇḍita*-s, and that in terms of tantric accomplishments, Padmasambhava stands at the apex of the lot, the narrator states:

The king was extremely pleased by [Siddharāja's] tidings. Subsequently, he dispatched *three* high-speed messengers. To the *four*—sBa Mi khri bzher, rDo rje bdud 'joms, mChims kyi Phru gu Shākya pra bha, and Shud dPal gyi seng ge—[he distributed] *drey*-s of gold dust and gold bricks, each of

gyi ye shes gsum la gser bre re dang gser gyi pa tra re bskur nas rgya gar rdo rje gdan du brdzangs so/ de nas bod kyi lo tsā ba gsum pos kyang rgya gar di slebs te.

⁴⁷ rDo rje gling pa, *O rgyan padma 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs lo tsha'i 'gyur byang rnam thar rgyas par bkod pa* (Thimphu, Bhutan: Druk Sherig Press, 1984), p. 179.3, fol. 90a.3: *de nas rgyal pos myur 'gyogs pa nya btang/ sba mi khri bzher rdo rje bdud 'joms dang/ 'chims kyi phru gu shakya pra bha dang/ shud pu dpal gyi senge dang gsum yin/ gser phye bre re gser gyi pa tra rel rgya gar rdo rje gdan du rdzangs par gyur/ lo tsha gsum pos rgya gar yul du bgrod.* sBa Mi khri bzher is named at the end of the previous chapter, i.e., chapter 55 (p. 179.2; fol. 90a.4), in the context of naming the rebirths of the personages involved in the building of the Boudanath *stūpa*. See also p. 181.7, fol. 91a.7 where we see, with a variant spelling of the clan name, a rNa rnam rDo rje bdud 'joms named among the seven individuals sent to meet Padmasambhava at Nyi ma mtsho in Nepal. See Doney 2016 on the dating of this source.

⁴⁸ Padma gling pa, *bKa' thang mun sel sgron me*, (Thimphu, Bhutan: Drug Sherig Press, 1981). See chapter 55, p. 357.7, fol. 171a: *sba mi khri bzher rdo rje bdud 'joms dang/ mchims kyi phrug gu shākya pra rba dang/ shud pu dpal gyi seng ge bzhi la ni/ gser phye bre re gser gyi pa ta rel g.yog po bdun bdun sum bcu rtsa gnyis la.* As in *O rgyan gling pa* (2006), sBa Mi khri bzher appears at the end of the previous chapter, i.e., chapter 54, p. 355.4, fol. 170b.4.

which were to be conveyed to Bodhgaya in India. [Then,] the *four* translators traveled to the Indian subcontinent.⁴⁹

Here, we see three messengers dispatched, but four individuals are supplied with gold. By contrast, in Sangs rgyas gling pa's *gSer 'phreng*, the numbers do not change across the passage, and the fact that there are three individuals is, fittingly, noted three times:

Then, the king himself summoned *three* people who were worthy messengers: sBas Mi khri bzher rDo rje bdud 'joms, mChims kyi Shākya pra bha, and Shu bu dPal gyi ye shes. Having furnished the *three* [messengers] each with a *drey* of gold [dust] and a gold brick, he dispatched them to Bodhgaya in India. Then, the *three* Tibetan translators departed for India as well.⁵⁰

Even where the numbers in both passages above would indicate otherwise, text-internal evidence suggests that Mi khri bzher and rDo rje bdud 'joms are not one and the same figure. To offer but one indicator on this point, in both the *Padma bka' thang* and the *gSer 'phreng*, sBa Mi khri bzher appears (sans rDo rje bdud 'joms attached to his name) in the chapter immediately prior to the one in which Khri Srong lde btsan dispatches his messengers.⁵¹ There, a Yar klungs sBa Mi khri bzher features in the story of the origins of Boudhanath *stūpa* (*mchod rten bya rung kha shor*), and he is karmically linked to Khri Srong lde btsan, Sāntarakṣita, and Padmasambhava as the fourth of four sons born to the daughter of a poultry farmer (*bya rdzi*).⁵²

⁴⁹ O rgyan gling pa 2006: 291: *de skad gsol bas rgyal po shin tu dgyes/ de nas rgyal pos myur mgyogs kha gsum btang/ sba mi khri gzher rdo rje bdud 'joms dang/ mchims kyi phru gu shākya pra bha dang/ shud pu dpal gyi seng ge bzhi la ni/ gser phye bre re gser gyi pa tra re/ rgya gar rdo rje gdan du brdzangs par gyur/ lo tsā bzhi pos rgya gar yul du bgrod.* Toward the end of the same chapter, rDo rje bdud 'joms appears (sans sBa Mi khri bzher) once again but as part of an emissarial triplet including sKa bad dPal brtsegs and Cog ro Klu'i rgyal mtshan. Cf. Sangs rgyas gling pa 232.

⁵⁰ Sangs rgyas gling pa 2007: 229: *de nas rgyal po nyid kyis bang chen du 'os pa'i mi gsum bkug ste/ sbas mi khri bzher rdo rje bdud 'joms dang/ mchims kyi shākya pra bha dang/ shu bu dpal gyi ye shes gsum la gser bre re dang gser gyi pa tra re bskur nas rgya gar rdo rje gdan du brdzangs sol/ de nas bod kyi lo tsā ba gsum pos kyang rgya gar du slebs te.*

⁵¹ See O rgyan gling pa 2006: 291 and Sangs rgyas gling pa 2007: 228. See also, e.g., where O rgyan gling pa (2006: 341–342) names the intrepid (*snying rus can*) who went to India, and sBa Mi khri bzher and rDo rje bdud 'joms appear a page apart. Wangdu and Deimberger (2000: 70n239) note that we do find alternatives names for Khri gzher across *sBa bzhed* witnesses. None are rDo rje bdud 'joms, however.

⁵² Keith Dowman (1973, revised 2004) has translated the legend of this *stūpa*'s construction, the *mChod rten chen po bya rung kha shor gyi lo rgyus* attributed to Yol mo ba Shākya bzang po (fl. early sixteenth century). See Keith Dowman, trans., *The Legend of the Great Stupa and the Life Story of the Lotus Born Guru*, Revised Edition (Berkeley, CA, 2004). Tradition holds that this treasure text, which dates to 1512

According to Śāntarakṣita, who, in this context, offers up this information as part of an effort to convince an initially reluctant Khri Srong lde btsan to invite Padmasambhava to Tibet, the four brothers who built the *stūpa* wished to one day be reborn as, effectively, Śāntarakṣita, Padmasambhava, Khri Srong lde btsan, and sBa Mi khri bzher—the abbot, master, emperor, and minister in charge of correspondence (*'phrin blon*).⁵³ Given that imperial-era sBa clan members were renowned for their diplomatic work, it is, in general, unsurprising to see a sBa occupying this position. But to recall the *Zangs gling ma's* chapters twelve and fifteen is to find this inclusion of a minister as a fourth brother unexpected. As Nyang ral's chapters have it, the brothers once united in their *stūpa*-related efforts and aspirations were not four but three.⁵⁴

5. Conclusion: Mixed Messengers, or Meetings and Partings

If we imagine, now, a reader who would trace narrative representations of sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms forward in time from around the late-tenth century to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's era, it would still be easy to forgive them for having, at best, a hazy sense of who rDo rje bdud 'joms was—that is, save to say that he was hardly a fixture in the story of Padmasambhava's invitation to Tibet. (And at this juncture, to see bDud 'joms Rin po che single rDo rje bdud 'joms out where he might be otherwise entirely absent⁵⁵ strikes one as a bold move ripe for further explanation.) After all else, it would seem that this sNa nam was

(see Martin 2020: 214, no. 253), was first discovered in the eleventh century and then re-concealed before being rediscovered in the sixteenth. Therein, the youngest brother of the poultry farmer's daughter is also Yar klungs sBa Mi khri bzher. On the origins of this legend, see Anne-Marie Blondeau, "Bya-rung kha-shor: Légende Fondatrice Du Bouddhisme Tibétain," in *Tibetan Studies*, ed. Per Kvaerne, vol. 1 (Oslo: Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, 1994), 31–48 and Franz-Karl Ehrhard, "The Stūpa of Bodhnath: A Preliminary Analysis of the Written Sources," *Ancient Nepal*, no. 120 (October 1990): 1–9.

⁵³ See O rgyan gling pa 2006: 291 and Sangs rgyas gling pa 2007: 228, respectively.

⁵⁴ See, e.g., Nyang ral 1988: 55–64 and 85–91. Later, where 'Gos Lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal (1392–1481) refers to the connection, it appears as if it were only between Śāntarakṣita and Khri Srong lde btsan. See 'Gos Lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal, *Deb ther sngon po* (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1974), 42, fol. 21b.6.

⁵⁵ In the *Deb ther Sngon po* (1476–1478), for example, where it recounts the invitation of Śāntarakṣita to Tibet, we see dBa' gSal snang entreat Śāntarakṣita to come to Tibet, but we do not learn who made up the emperor's delegation to Padmasambhava. See 'Gos Lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal 1974: 41, fol. 21a.6 ff. 'Gos Lo tsā ba otherwise mentions sNa nam Rdo rje bdud 'joms in the context of listing *siddha*-s who lived during the time of emperor Khri Srong lde btsan (p. 93, fol. 2a.3) and where he discusses the life of Rong zom Chos kyi bzang po (fl. eleventh century). On p. 150, fol. 30b.2–3, he says that Rong zom learned precepts (*gdams pa*) within the lineage of sNa nam Rdo rje bdud 'joms and others.

remembered along with the emissarial sBa-s of the imperial age, and in some cases, that recollection resulted in an interchange, a conflation, or, simply, a conjunction in the textual record. To be sure, one can leave open the possibility that sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms—as either a main messenger or an attendant—did, in fact, first encounter his guru abroad. It would be difficult to claim that he did so unequivocally, however.

Ultimately, the idea of rDo rje bdud 'joms inherited by Rig 'dzin rGod ldem and his contemporaries seems unlikely to have been a stable one. But if the literary record has taught us anything about the evolution of Tibet's heroes of yore, determinacy may be that which works against the formation and development of authority. In other words, the ability to project or expand upon the idea of rDo rje bdud 'joms as, at bottom, an early disciple of Padmasambhava could have been one of this figure's most attractive features for the founders of a nascent treasure-revelation tradition. Going forward, as one traces sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms beyond the fourteenth century, the question then becomes, to what degree did the creation of rGod ldem and rDo rje bdud 'joms occur in tandem?

To begin to address this question, one might take a cue from the Fifth Dalai Lama and turn to the *Le'u bdun ma*, both the prayer itself and its history. If, at the time of the Fifth's writing, it was above all important to affirm sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms's presence at Padmasambhava's moment of departure rather than at the very start the guru's sojourn in Tibet, we would do well to examine how he came to occupy such a prominent role in that scene. Did rDo rje bdud 'joms arrive there of his own accord, unobstructed like the wind, or was he conveyed there on the basis of something decidedly more than a whim—a drive on the part of early Byang gter patriarchs that would render him not an incidental connection to Padmasambhava but an integral one?

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**The Longevity Practice of Vajrakīla
Revealed by Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can:
A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of
the *rDo rje phur pa'i tshe bsgrub****

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0. Preamble

his modest study centres around a longevity practice titled *rDo rje phur pa'i tshe bsgrub* (abbr. DT), the *Longevity Practice of Vajrakīla*, revealed by Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can (1337?–1408; BDRC#P5254).¹ Regarding his attainment of both mundane

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¹ As for rGod ldem can's birth year, besides Herweg's admittedly pioneering work (Herweg 1994:161–165, 177–178), here it may be permissible to observe that awareness among scholars seems to be distressingly low. Regarding a dispute among several modern dictionaries that were recently published in Tibet/China (see below), the main disagreement between 1325 (*shing mo glang gi lo*) and 1337 (*me mo glang gi lo*) presumably stems from the two extant *dbu med* manuscripts of the *gSal byed nyi ma'i 'od zer*, a biography of rGod ldem can, written by his direct disciple (*angos slob*) *Sūryabhadra (ca. 14c; BDRC#P8839). This apparently Indic alias is conjectured by the colophon, S_A 83,1; S_B 147,3). See *gSal byed nyi ma'i 'od zer*, S_A 11,2; S_B 61,2: *me* [me em.] *shing* A, [+ B] *pho byi ba'i lo/ rdo rje phur pa'i sgrub pa gcig grol ba'i nub mo/ lhums su* [su B] *du* A] *zhugs te/* [S_A 11,5; S_B 61,4] *de ltar zla ba dgu dang* [dang B] *om. A*] *ngo bcu rdzogs nas/ me* [me B] *shing* A] *mo glang gi lo zla ba dang po'i tshes bcu'i nyin/ 'ja' tshon* [tshon B] *mtshon* A] *gyi gur khyim* [khyim A] *om. B*] *dang/ dri bzang gi ngad pa* [pa A] *om. B*] *dang/ sgra dang/ me'i* [me'i A] *me* B] *'od lta bul 'od dmar pos* [pos B] *po'i A*] *nam mkha' gang ba* [gang ba em.] *kheng pa* A; *gang pa* B] *dang/ rol mo'i sgra dang/ me tog gi char la sogs pa'i* [pa'i A] *om. B*] *ltas bsam gyis* [gyis B] *gyi* A] *mi khyab pa dang bcas nas sku* [sku A] *om. B*] *'khrungs te/* [te/ B] *ste:* A]. Apropos of the above-mentioned dispute, for 1325 see *Mi sna* (1993), s.v. *gter chen rig 'dzin rgod ldem* (pp. 402–404), *Dung dkar* (2002), s.v. *gter chen rig 'dzin rgod ldem* (pp. 974–975), *Mi sna ngo sprod* (2019), s.v. *gter chen rig 'dzin rgod ldem* (vol. 3, pp.

and supramundane benefits, the longevity/life practice (*tshe sgrub*)² must have functioned as a decisive factor in his religious system of the wrathful deity Vajrakīla.³ As is the case with the majority of the *tshe sgrub* texts, it, however, has been concerned with very little attention to text-critical work so far.⁴

166–167); and for 1337 see Khetsun Sangpo (1973), s.v. *dnegos grub rgyal mtshan* (pp. 537–540), *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* (1985), s.v. *rig 'dzin rgod ldem* (p. 2685).

² Note that the term *tshe bsgrub* given as a part of the title here (see § 0.1 Title) differs from the form *tshe sgrub*. The latter *tshe sgrub* seems to be nowadays accepted as more or less “standard” for this longevity practice (see Almogi 2005:39–40n48, Samuel 2014:87), whereas both term formulas are actually known as the Tibetan translation of **āyuhśādhana*, e.g. the *Tshe bsgrub pa'i thabs* (P 4863) and the *Tshe sgrub pa'i thabs* (D 2336). Judging by the presence of these tantric texts in the Tibetan Tengyur collections, even though I have not been able to locate any Sanskrit source to support the term **āyuhśādhana* as the Tibetan equivalent of *tshe sgrub/bsgrub*, some tantric practices associated with longevity had been already transmitted by the time of translation. For instance, bSod nams rgya mtsho (1424–1482; BDRC#P208), who has translated the **Āyuhśādhana* (D 2336) with Nags kyi rin chen (alias Vanaratna, 1384–1468; BDRC#P207), is known to have performed a *tshe sgrub* ritual. See Ehrhard 2002:82: ‘Because of the latter prophecy the decision was made that bSod-nams rgya-mtsho should first perform a “life prolonging ritual” (*tshe sgrub*) for Byams-gling Pañ-chen (addressed with the title “rJe Ya-da”), and only if the signs were right would work on the great stūpa be started. bSod-nams rgya-mtsho accordingly went to the monastery of Tshal-min and undertook the required ritual, which is said to have prolonged the life of Byams-gling Pañ-chen up to the age of seventy-five years’.

³ For instance, as one of the essential elements of the Vajrakīla cycle, *tshe sgrub*, along with *nor sgrub* and *bza' tshogs*, has been given for the benefit of *yogins*. See *Phur pa che mchog gi them byang*, 1b2. See also the 10th chapter of the *sPu gri nag po'i rgyud* (104,4f) where the final intention (*dgongs pa*) of Vajrakīla is revealed. In it, beating death and lengthening life (*shi rgyag tshe 'thud*) are told to be brought after successfully cutting the *prāṇa* of defilements (*nyon mongs srog dbugs bcad pa*). For a recent discussion of the rGod ldem can's ritual, see Turpeinen 2015:135–157, where ‘long life rituals (*tshe sgrub*)’ (p. 135) has been examined with other rituals such as ‘ransom rituals (*glud*), rituals to summon escaped life force (*bla 'gug*) or emptying the hells (*na rak dong sprugs*)’ and so forth. See also Li 2018, which investigates the genres of *rdo rje phur pa* literature. In it, note that DT_B (in “Compilation D” at our disposal) was wrongly referred to as ‘vol. 13, pp. 43–60’ (164n2), which should presumably be “vol. 13, pp. 53–59”.

⁴ Apart from Boord's leading examination, little work has been done on rGod ldem can's longevity practice. Hence, a study of the *Tshe sgrub lcags kyi sdong po*, another longevity literature revealed by rGod ldem can, might attract some attention. In its own right, DT is of course of significant, but in view of the diversity in the longevity practice—essence-extraction (*bcud len*) with the aim of producing *amṛta* (*bdud rtsi*) in order to deceive the impending death ('*chi blu/bslu*), releasing caged animals as a work of merit (*srog bslu*), magical formulas consisting of the *dākinī*'s coded scripts (*mkha' 'gro'i brda yig*), *dhāraṇī* citation from the *Aparimitāyuhśūtra* and so forth—it is perhaps natural that many scholars should find the importance of the *Tshe sgrub lcags kyi sdong po* to lie more in its testimony to rGod ldem can's longevity practice than in the DT. For a preliminary critical edition and annotated Japanese translation of the *Tshe sgrub lcags kyi sdong po*, see Shinga Forthcoming a,

It has been decades since Boord 1993 examined the ‘longevity ritual (*tshe sgrub*)’ (p. 207) from three compilations of Byang gter Vajrakīla literature.⁵ As a brief but precise exegesis of rGod ldem can’s longevity practice, along with his occasional English translation of the DT,⁶ Boord 1993 is quite successful in combining accuracy with clarity in an observing way. Hence anyone who seriously occupies him/herself with the DT cannot but pay careful heed to his two remarks: (1.) its chief aim is “to postpone the termination of either their own or another’s lifespan” (p. 207)⁷ and (2.) ‘apparently based upon the twenty-first chapter of the Vajrakīla *Garland of Flames Tantra (Me lce’i ’phreng ba)*’.⁸ It was surely a breakthrough, but only offers a partial summary of the longevity practice among rGod ldem can’s revelation. It does not seem that his intention is to examine the DT from the standpoint of textual criticism. Albeit one may not find significant differences among the recensions, it must be admitted that the task of textual criticism cannot be avoided for its testimonial value with reference to the DT. One such example can be observed as a substratum to form the various strata of rGod ldem can’s longevity practice.

In spite of attempting to contribute to our understanding of the *tshe sgrub* text by editing the DT, the present work is devoted to exploring without exhaustive annotation. Regarding the DT and its historical and cultural milieu, as far as I have been able to determine at this point, there is no definitive study of its genesis, transmission lineage (*brgyud*), and so forth.⁹ I am happy to leave these tasks to future scholars who

which deals with the five sections (§§0–4: *them byang + phyi/nang/gsang/yang gsang sgrubs*).

⁵ They are abbreviated as “Compilation A”, “Compilation B”, and “Compilation C” in the present study.

⁶ It aligns with §§2.4, 3.4–3.5 in the present study.

⁷ Cf. §0.3. (Preparation).

⁸ The problematic phrase “*le’u nyi shu pa khol du byung ba*”, which is found in the full title of the *Phur pa me lce’i ’phreng ba*, demonstrates the extent to which current studies are stifled by missing manuscripts. An analysis of this issue is found in Boord 1993:207n738: ‘Chapter Twenty-one alone appears extant of this otherwise unknown *tantra*, originally supposed to have been taught by “the *bhagavat heruka king*” (*bcom ldan ’das khrag ’thung gi rgyal po*) in response to a request made by the deity Vajrakīla’.

⁹ The *gSal byed nyi ma’i ’od zer*, for instance, as far as I can tell from a preliminary reading of the text, does not mention the DT. As is to be expected, however, scrutiny of later sources, such as the Great Fifth Dalai Lama’s (1617–1682; BDRC#P37) *gsan/thob yig* (e.g. *Thob yig gangga’i chu rgyun*) and his bibliotheca (e.g. *’Bras spungs dkar chag*), allow further progress to be made. For rGod ldem can’s *tshe sgrub* texts, the Great Fifth’s commentary is of course an important witness, see Shinga Forthcoming a. In comparison with the *Tshe sgrub lcags kyi sdong po* (abbr. CD), I have to admit that the evidence for the DT is found rather scarce so far. There are many textual evidences which suggest that the CD has been practised in a long line. The Great Fifth, inter alios, enumerated the lineage of empowerment

might be concerned enough to provide this useful information. Within its limited scope, hence I dare hope that the product of this study might represent a small step forward for the more intellectual critic.

1. The Edition and Its Basis

This text edition of the *rDo rje phur pa'i tshé bsgrub* (DT) is produced by collating the following four *dbu med* manuscripts (DT_A, DT_B, DT_C, and DT_D). All manuscripts are available in the modern publications of compilations (*phyogs bsgrigs*), which embody the exuberance of Byang gter rdo rje phur pa tradition. For this reason, the below mentioned size criteria are chiefly given according to the modern reproductions (e.g. Smanrtsis Shesrig Spendzod). Regarding the manuscripts DT_A and DT_C, I employed the black-and-white pdf version available from BDRC.

DT_A

rDo rje phur pa'i tshé bsgrub. 4 folios; 6 lines per folio. 28 x 36 cm. In: Compilation A, pp. 145–152. Reprinted in Compilation D, vol. 14, pp. 135–142. This edition has been referred to as 'A18' by Boord 1993. The preface of Compilation A is given in English. As for the provenance, it says that 'this manuscript was brought from Tibet by Pema Choden who has completed and supplemented his collection with sections from the collection belonging to the Ven. Talung Tsetul¹⁰ of Brag-thog Monastery'.

DT_B

rDo rje phur pa'i tshé bsgrub. 4 folios; 6 lines per folio, 5 in fols. 1b–2a. 28 x 36 cm. In: Compilation B, v. 2, pp. 53–59. Reprinted in Compilation D, vol. 13, pp. 53–59. This edition has been referred to as 'B22' by Boord 1993. As for the provenance of Compilation B, the title page of vol. 1 (same as vol. 2) says that it has been 'reproduced from a rare collection of manuscripts from the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala, H. P.'.

(*dbang brgyud*) from Amitāyus (*tshé dpag med*) including rGod Idem can (*gter ston rig [rig] rigs*) 'dzin chen po, see *Thob yig gangga'i chu rgyun*, vol. 3, 287,5f. For another lineage up to Kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas (1813–1899; BDRC#P264), see *RT dkar chag dang brgyud yig*, 202,1. Although neither lineage includes the name of Grub chen Thang stong rgyal po (1361–1485? BDRC#P2778), according to his hagiographic-biographical literature, he was said to become *tshé'i rig 'dzin* (**āyuhdhara*) as a result of his mastery of the CD, see Shinga 2017:51n29.

¹⁰ "Talung Tsetul" might be "sTag lung rtse sprul" as I have been noticed by Prof. Valentine (personal communication, June 2021).

DT_C

rDo rje phur pa'i tshe bsgrub. 3 folios; 7 lines per folio. 8 x 38 cm.¹¹ In: Compilation C, pp. 123–128. This edition has been referred to as 'C12' by Boord 1993. As for the provenance of Compilation C, the title page says that 'reproduced from a manuscript belonging to Yol-mo Bla-ma Rdo-rje'.

DT_D

rDo rje phur pa'i tshe sgrub. 5 folios; 5 lines per folio, 4 in fol. 1b. In: Compilation D, vol. 12, pp. 183–191. 9 x 39 cm. This edition has been referred to as 'E13' by Boord 2013. As for the provenance of Compilation D, according to the colophon of the attached catalogue, namely, the *dPal chen kī la ya'i chos skor phyogs bsgrigs kyi dkar chag*, it is based on the contribution made by mChog sprul Shes rab 'od zer, Em rig Kho lum bhi (Columbia University?), An thar rdi (?), and so forth.

Regarding the above four compilations of the Byang gter phur pa texts, as far as I am aware, Boord 1993 (revised and enlarged in 2013) was the first bibliographical work which was exclusively devoted to synoptic analysis.¹² As one of his examinations convincingly shows (p. 8), the term *phur pa dril sgrub* from the title page of Compilation A represents "*phur pa* texts rolled into [one]". With its proper name *Byang gter phur pa lugs gsum gcig tu dril ba'i chos skor* given in the table of contents (*dkar chag*), it fully renders "the religious cycle which rolls the three Byang gter phur pa traditions into one".¹³ According to the brief preface of Compilation A, the three Byang gter phur pa traditions are: (1.) the most supreme (*che mchog*) tradition in 15 sections (*le'u*) as the largest (*rgyas pa*),¹⁴ (2.) the razor (*spu gri*) tradition as the medium (*'bring po*), and (3.) the wrathful *dhāraṇī* (*drag sngags*) tradition as the shortest (*bsdus pa*). Among the three divisions, according to its marginalia,¹⁵ the DT can be classified as the most supreme.

¹¹ This size criterion is based on the BDRC data.

¹² As for the bibliographic references to Compilation A, B, and C, see Boord 1993:8–10, and for Compilation D, see Boord 2013:13–14. All the titles and folio numbers are found in the Appendix I (Boord 2013:334–347). These sections are quite valuable not only for comprehensiveness but also for the unparalleled venture in documentation.

¹³ Intriguingly, the term *dril* is presumably relevant to a pun with '*dril*'. For the rhetorical analysis, see Boord 1993:8: "This name acts as a pun in Tibetan because Kīla meditation is accompanied by the ritual act of rolling (*'dril ba*) a symbolic nail between the palms of the hands'.

¹⁴ As Boord has noted, the number of sections seems to be thirteen. See Boord 1993:8n29.

¹⁵ The left margin of the first folio (viz. DT_A 1a; p. 145) reads "*che mchog*" just after the *mgo yig "ma"* and the letter-numeral "*gcig*".

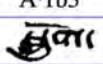
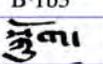
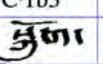
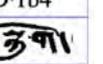
Apparently, the handwritings of Compilation A and B are deemed to be an “East Tibetan style” and C is deemed to be a style related to ‘Nepal (Yol-mo)’ (Boord 1993:10). Compilation D is of special interest, due to the use of an upper horizontal line which connects the letters in a cluster.¹⁶ As is customary in *dbu me* manuscripts, all four are replete with orthographical abbreviations (*bskungs yig/bsdu yig*). Regarding such abbreviations found in the DT, their expansions are given in the text edition. *dhāraṇīs* (*snying po/sngags*) and *bījas* (*yi ge*) given in the present edition are inevitably cumbersome and difficult to determine with certainty.¹⁷ Hence the accepted readings below are not the only possibilities; they should be considered as provisional rather than definitive.¹⁸

2. Conventions

The critical apparatus is a positive one. The order of the witnesses is philological; this means that each entry begins with a lemma, and then the actual variant. A litany of variant readings may make this study valuable but also disquieting with many doubts on the veracity of the corpus’ transmission. After this, followed by a “Cf.”, the relevant passage such as from the *gSang ba’i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa* (D 834; P 457) is given.

¹⁶ As for the characteristics about the handwriting of Compilation D, see Boord 2013 as ‘written in a more fluid hand’ (p. 15) in comparison with other compilations. For a comparison of the four handwriting features, see Table 1 below.

Table 1: A Comparative Table of the Four Handwriting Features

	A-1b3	B-1b3	C-1b3	D-1b4
སྐྱུ་མདོག་				

¹⁷ Far from their Indian matrix, these Tibetanized *dhāraṇīs* and *bījas* had lost or degraded the original mnemonic functions with various vernacular phrases such as expletives, imperatives and optatives. One major recent publication on their ‘referential indeterminacy’ (p. 135) is clearly Davidson 2009, in which the author focuses *dhāraṇī* as a function term denoting “codes/coding,” so that the category *dhāraṇī* is polysemic and context-sensitive’ (p. [97]). For *mantras* in the Byang gter Vajrakīla literature, see Boord 1993:10: ‘Despite (or, in some cases, because of) the repetition of the most salient *mantras* in several texts which present us with an enormous number of variants from which to chose [sic], a ‘correct’ reading could only be hoped for in a minority of the more obvious cases’.

¹⁸ Concerning the *dhāraṇīs* and *bījas*, the manuscripts themselves present us with a series of interesting palaeographical features. To compare the four manuscripts, I will likely produce a future study that would feature comparative tables of scanned images.

2.1. Symbols

- § Indicates section. As there is no indication for the section (e.g. *sbrul shad*) in the DT, this thematic division is mine in order to clarify the context, and thus can be probable but uncertain.
- [] Enclose editorial additions which do not form a part of the text such as divisional heading and folio indications.
- () Enclose editorial additions which have been supplied to fill up translation.
- <<>> Enclose marginal or inter-linear gloss (*mchan 'grel*). Note that texts enclosed by this symbol on the last folio (§5.2: Merit Transfer) presumably can be written by the second hands. They, however, are considered to belong to the main text.¹⁹
- ... Indicates a space-saving ellipsis in the apparatus. The series of *tshegs* used to fill out a space (e.g. DT_A 2b5) is not recorded.
-] Follows and demarcates the accepted reading (lemma) of a positive critical apparatus entry. Thus rejected readings appear to the right of this symbol.
- Stands for the same syllable (either in the accepted reading or in the rejected reading).
- + Indicates an illegible syllable which is enclosed in brackets, i.e. '[+]'.
em. Denotes an emendation.
om. Denotes an omission.

2.2. "Standard Orthography"

The Tibetan text in the text edition below has been presented in *dbu can* script. I strongly believe that this convention is appropriate here because it brings the advantage of being more easily readable to more scholars than a Romanized transliteration. In this manner, *tsheg* can be recorded not as an invisible zero-space character but as a proper character.

The common Tibetan shorthands, such as *bum pa* for *bum pa*, have been emended in the edited text, but not provided as the emendation. Regarding orthographical abbreviation (*bskungs yig/bsdu yig*), as I have already mentioned, their expansions are given in the text edition. The *yig mgo* or *dbu khyud* are recorded only at the very beginning of the text (§0.2: Salutation). In the DT, although the *gter shad* is most dominant, various types of Tibetan punctuation marks (e.g. *rnam cad/gcig*

¹⁹ This treatment of the annotations or insertions might require closer examination. The related genre terms such as *rang 'grel*, *yang 'grel*, and *spyi'i 'grel* have already been discussed in previous studies, e.g. Almogi 2005:39n46.

shad/gnyis shad/tsheg shad/nyis tsheg shad/rin chen spung shad) are found somewhat inconsistently. In most cases I have generally opted for DT_A which is thought to be well reflected more careful readings. With the aim of presenting ‘ausgearbeiteter, deutlicher Grundriß’ (Fischer 1950:27) for both scholarly and practical readings,²⁰ in order to lighten the apparatus, these variants, including *tsheg* after final *nga*, are removed or added without explicit notice. Common confusion lies between affix *pa* and *ba*, superscript *ra* and *sa* (e.g. *rtsa* and *stsa*) are tacitly chosen unless another variant reading appears.

The verses are generally given in periodical metre. This measure has, however, not been applied as rigidly as some might perhaps wish. Mainly due to my lack of knowledge, the metrical alternation to maintain the proper ways (in number of syllables, rhyming lines, the strong/weak positions) was often not possible.

In the annotated translation, the Wylie transliteration is generally employed. For the *ku ru kha*, the sign × has been employed. The character *m̄* has been employed to denote *rjes su nga ro* (*≈anusvāra*), and the character *m̄* for *sna ldan* (*≈candrabindu*). They are, however, considered to lack a congruous standard, and thus not altered unless the variant reading appears. The distinction between transitive and intransitive verbs in Tibetan is not always accurately reflected in the English translation.

²⁰ As is well known, Tibetan punctuation marks are utilised for multi purposes. One factor which may render the marks more decisive is that the DT is expected to be recited by the practitioner. Such texts run a risk to be inadequately edited, as it is necessary to go through them with extra care to note the directives as visual cues for him/her to pause and take a breath. As for these usages of *shad*, see Beyer 1992:51–52, and for *gter shad*, see Gyatso 1996:158. In this regard, Fischer’s famous essay on the musical score note (i.e. Fischer 1950) has made, I think, some cogent remarks which apply with full force to nearly all editors of *sādhana* text in the *gter ma* literature.

3. Text Edition

[§0. Introductory Remarks] [A 1a1; B 1a1; C 1a1; D 1a1]

[§0.1. Title]

རྩོམ་པའི་ཚེ་བསྐྱབ་བཞུགས་སྟུགས་སྟེ་²¹

[§0.2. Salutation] [A 1b1; B 1b1; C 1b1; D 1b1]

༄༅། འོ་རྩོམ་པའི་ལྷ་ལ་ཕྱག་འཚལ་སྟེ་²²

[§0.3. Preparation] [A 1b1; B 1b1; C 1b1; D 1b1]

སྲིད་པ་སྐྱབ་པའི་རྣལ་འབྱོར་རྣམས་སྟེ་²³

རང་གཞན་ཚེ་ཟད་བསྲིང་འདོད་ན་སྟེ་²⁴

སྐྱབ་ཐབས་འདི་ལ་འདུག་པར་བྱ་སྟེ་²⁵

དཔེན་པའི་གནས་སུ་ཡོ་བྱད་བསོག་སྟེ་²⁶

ཚེ་བྱམ་ཚེ་རྣམ་ཅི་རིགས་བཤམ་སྟེ་²⁷

རྩོམ་པའི་འགྲིམ་བྱ་སྟེ་

ཚོགས་ཀྱི་སྐྱབས་སུ་ཚེ་ཚོག་བྱ་སྟེ་²⁸

[§1. Development Phase] [A 1b2; B 1b2; C 1b2; D 1b3]

[§1.1. Five-figure Amitāyus Maṇḍala]

ལྷི་ལས་རིན་ཚེན་གཞལ་ཡས་ཁང་སྟེ་²⁹

གྲུ་བཞི་སྟོེ་བཞི་རྒྱན་དང་ཡུན་སྟེ་³⁰

21 འོ་སྐྱབ་བཞུགས་སྟུགས་སྟེ་ A] འོ་སྐྱབ་བཞུགས་སྟུགས་སྟེ་ B; འོ་སྐྱབ་བྱོན་སྟེ་ཟད་ཟད་ལྷ་ཕྱག་གི་གཏེར་མ་ནི། C; འོ་སྐྱབ་བཞུགས་སྟེ་ D.

22 རྩོམ་པའི་ A, B, D] རྩོམ་པའི་ C.

23 འོ་སྐྱབ་པའི་ A, C, D] འོ་སྐྱབ་པའི་ B.

24 འོ་གཞན་བསྲིང་འདོད་ན་ A, D] འོ་གཞན་བསྲིང་འདོད་ན་ B; འོ་གཞན་བསྲིང་འདོད་ན་ C.

25 འོ་སྐྱབ་བྱ་སྟེ་ A, D] འོ་སྐྱབ་བྱ་སྟེ་ B; འོ་སྐྱབ་བྱ་སྟེ་ C.

26 འོ་བསོག་སྟེ་ A] འོ་བསོག་སྟེ་ B; འོ་བསོག་སྟེ་ C; འོ་བསོག་སྟེ་ D.

27 འོ་རྣམ་ཅི་རིགས་བཤམ་སྟེ་ em.] འོ་རྣམ་ཅི་རིགས་བཤམ་སྟེ་ A; འོ་རྣམ་ཅི་རིགས་བཤམ་སྟེ་ B, D; འོ་རྣམ་ཅི་རིགས་བཤམ་སྟེ་ C.

28 འོ་ཚོག་བྱ་སྟེ་ A, B, D] འོ་ཚོག་བྱ་སྟེ་ C.

29 འོ་གཞལ་ཡས་ཁང་སྟེ་ A, C, D] འོ་གཞལ་ཡས་ཁང་སྟེ་ B.

30 འོ་གྲུ་བཞི་བཞི་རྒྱན་འདུག་སྟེ་ A, D] འོ་གྲུ་བཞི་བཞི་རྒྱན་འདུག་སྟེ་ B; འོ་གྲུ་བཞི་བཞི་རྒྱན་འདུག་སྟེ་ C.

ཞེས་གསུངས་སོ་⁴⁸ ལྷོད་བརྟུང་ཐམས་ཅད་འོད་དུ་ཞུ་ནས་རང་དང་ཆོ་རྒྱས་ལ་ཐིམ་པར་བསམ་
མོ་⁴⁹

[§2. Prayer for Summoning Life-energy] [A 2a1; B 2a2; C 1b7; D 2b1]
[§2.1. Prayer to the Five Buddha Amitāyus]

དེ་ནས་ཆོ་འགྲུགས་པ་ནི་⁵⁰
 སྡི་བཙེམ་ལྡན་མགོན་པོ་སངས་རྒྱས་ཆོ་དཔག་མེད་⁵¹
 ཡུམ་ཆེན་ཅན་རྣེ་ལི་དང་གཉིས་མེད་འཁྲིལ་⁵²
 ཡབ་ཡུམ་གཉིས་མེད་ཐབས་གྱི་དགྱིལ་འཁོར་ནས་⁵³
 ཆོ་དང་དཔལ་གྱི་དངོས་གྲུབ་སྣོལ་དུ་གསོལ་⁵⁴
 ཤར་ཕྱོགས་རྣམ་སྣང་ཆོ་དཔག་ཡབ་ཡུམ་དང་⁵⁵
 སྟོ་ཕྱོགས་རིན་ཆེན་ཆོ་དཔག་ཡབ་ཡུམ་དང་⁵⁶
 བྱབ་ཕྱོགས་པར་ཆོ་དཔག་ཡབ་ཡུམ་དང་⁵⁷
 བྱང་ཕྱོགས་ཀམ་ཆོ་དཔག་ཡབ་ཡུམ་དང་⁵⁸

སྐྱབ་པ་ཡང་ནི་གསུམ་པ་སྟེ།
སྐྱབ་པ་ཆེན་པོ་བཞི་པའོ།
⁴⁸ ཞེས་° A] ཅེས་° B, C, D.
⁴⁹ °རང་དང་ཆོ་རྒྱས་° em.] °རང་དང་ཆོ་སྐྱབ་° A; °རང་ལ་དང་མཚོན་སྐྱབ་° B; °རང་དང་ཆོ་རྒྱས་° C;
°རང་དང་ཆོ་སྐྱབ་° D.
⁵⁰ °འགྲུགས་པ་ནི་° D] °འགྲུགས་ནི་° A; °གྲུག་པ་ནི་° B; °འགྲུགས་པ་ནི་° C.
⁵¹ སྡི་°སངས་རྒྱས་ཆོ་དཔག་མེད་° A, D] སྡི་°ཆོ་དཔག་མེད་° B; སྡི་°སངས་རྒྱས་ཆོ་དཔག་མེད་° C.
⁵² °ཅན་རྣེ་ལི་དང་གཉིས་° A, C] °ཅན་རྣེ་ལི་° B; °ཅན་རྣེ་ལི་དང་གཉིས་° D.
⁵³ °ཐབས་° A, B, D] °ཐབས་° C.
⁵⁴ °སྣོལ་ em.] °སྣོལ་° A, D] °སྣོལ་° B; °བསྣོལ་° C.
⁵⁵ °སྣང་ཆོ་° A, B, C] °སྣང་<<[+]>>ཆོ་° D.
⁵⁶ °དཔག་° A, C] °དཔག་མེད་° B; °དཔག་× D.
⁵⁷ °པར་ཆོ་དཔག་° A, C] °སྣང་མཐའ་ཆོ་དཔག་མེད་° B; °པར་ཆོ་དཔག་× D.
⁵⁸ °ཆོ་དཔག་° A, C] °ཆོ་དཔག་མེད་° B; °× D.

ལྷ་སྲུ་ལྷ་སྲུ་གྲི་རྒྱུ་འུ་རྒྱུ་མུ་རྒྱུ་བུ་སྲུ་ཨ་ལོ་གེ་གཞེ་མུ་མུ་⁵⁹

[§2.2. Prayer to the Four Goddesses] [A 2a4; B 2a5; C 2a2; D 2b3]

ལྷགས་ཀྱུ་ལྷགས་པ་ལྷགས་སྒྲོག་རྒྱུ་བུ་མུ་⁶⁰

ཀུན་ཀྱང་ཕྱག་གཡས་ཆེ་དར་ཕྱོགས་བཅུར་གཡོ་བུ་⁶¹

གཡོན་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་ཆེ་བུམ་བདུད་ཚིས་བཀའ་ུ་⁶²

སྐལ་ལྷན་བདག་ལ་ཆེ་ཡི་དངོས་གྲུབ་སྦྱེ་ལུ་⁶³

[§2.3. Prayer to Vajrakumāra and His Mother Consort
'Khor lo rgyas 'debs ma] [A 2a5; B -; C 2a3; D 2b4]

རྒྱུ་བཅོམ་ལྷན་དཔལ་ཆེན་དོ་རྩེ་གཞོན་ལྷ་དང་ུ་⁶⁴

ཡུམ་ཆེན་ལྷ་མོ་འཁོར་ལོ་རྒྱས་འདེབས་མས་ུ་⁶⁵

སྐལ་ལྷན་བདག་ལ་ཆེ་ཡི་དངོས་གྲུབ་སྦྱེ་ལུ་⁶⁶

[§2.4. Prayer to the Ten Wrathful Ones in the Ten Directions] [A 2a5;

B 2b1; C 2a4; D 2b5]

[§2.4.1. Prayer for the Zenith]

རྒྱུ་སྲེང་ཕྱོགས་ཚངས་པའི་ཡུལ་དུ་ཆེ་ཉམས་ནུ་⁶⁷

ཁོ་ཆེན་རྒྱུ་ཀ་ར་ཡིས་ཆེ་ལྷག་ལུ་⁶⁸

59 ལྷ་སྲུ་ལྷ་སྲུ་གྲི་རྒྱུ་འུ་རྒྱུ་མུ་རྒྱུ་བུ་སྲུ་ཨ་ལོ་གེ་གཞེ་མུ་མུ་ em.] ལྷ་སྲུ་ལྷ་སྲུ་གྲི་རྒྱུ་འུ་རྒྱུ་དང་ུ་བུ་སྲུ་ཨ་ལོ་གེ་གཞེ་མུ་མུ་ A, ལ་སེ་མ་ལེ་གི་རྒྱུ་འུ་རྒྱུ་མུ་རྒྱུ་བུ་སྲུ་ཨ་ལོ་གེ་གཞེ་མུ་མུ་ B, ལ་སྲུ་མ་ལེ་གྲི་རྒྱུ་འུ་རྒྱུ་མུ་རྒྱུ་བུ་སྲུ་ཨ་ལོ་གེ་གཞེ་མུ་མུ་ C, ལྷ་སྲུ་ལྷ་སྲུ་གྲི་རྒྱུ་འུ་རྒྱུ་དང་ུ་བུ་སྲུ་ཨ་ལོ་གེ་གཞེ་མུ་མུ་ D.

60 འུ་རྒྱུ་ A, D] འུ་རྒྱུ་ B, C.

61 འུ་རྒྱུ་ A, B, C] འུ་རྒྱུ་ D.

62 འུ་རྒྱུ་ A, B, C] འུ་རྒྱུ་ D.

63 འུ་རྒྱུ་དངོས་གྲུབ་སྦྱེ་ལུ་ A, D] འུ་རྒྱུ་དངོས་གྲུབ་སྦྱེ་ལུ་ B; འུ་རྒྱུ་[+]གཡུ་བསྦྱེ་ལུ་ C.

64 འུ་རྒྱུ་ A] om. B; འུ་རྒྱུ་ C; འུ་རྒྱུ་ D.

65 ཡུམ་ཆེན་ལྷ་མོ་འཁོར་ལོ་རྒྱས་འདེབས་མས་ུ་ A, C] om. B; ཡུམ་ཆེན་ལྷ་<<[+]>>མོ་འཁོར་ལོ་རྒྱས་འདེབས་མས་ུ་ D.

66 འུ་རྒྱུ་དངོས་གྲུབ་སྦྱེ་ལུ་ A, D] om. B; འུ་རྒྱུ་[+]གཡུ་བསྦྱེ་ལུ་ C.

67 ཕྱོགས་ཚངས་པའི་ A, B, D] ཕྱོགས་[+]འི་ C.

68 རྒྱུ་ཀ་ར་ཡིས་ལུ་ A] རྒྱུ་ཀ་རའི་ལུ་ B; རྒྱུ་ཀ་ར་ཡིས་ལུ་ C; རྒྱུ་ཆེན་ཀ་རའི་ལུ་ D.

ཡུམ་ཚེན་སྐྱེ་འབྱེན་མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིག།⁶⁹

[§2.4.2. Prayer for the Eastern Direction]

ཤར་ཕྱོགས་རི་ཟའི་ལག་རྒྱ་ཚེ་འཐོར་ནུ།⁷⁰

སྐོ་ཚེན་རྣམ་པར་རྒྱལ་བས་ཚེ་སྐྱུ་ལུ།⁷¹

ཡུམ་ཚེན་རྣམ་བསྐྱེམས་མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིག།⁷²

[§2.4.3. Prayer for the Southeastern Direction]

ཤར་ལྗོ་མེ་ལྷའི་ལག་རྒྱ་ཚེ་འཐོར་ནུ།⁷³

སྐོ་ཚེན་དབྱུག་སྐོན་ཅན་གྱིས་ཚེ་སྐྱུ་ལུ།⁷⁴

ཡུམ་ཚེན་རྡོ་རྗེ་སྐྱེར་མོས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིག།⁷⁵

[§2.4.4. Prayer for the Southern Direction]

སྐོ་ཕྱོགས་གཤིན་རྗེའི་ལག་རྒྱ་ཚེ་འཐོར་ནུ།⁷⁶

སྐོ་ཚེན་གཤིན་རྗེ་གཤེད་པོས་ཚེ་སྐྱུ་ལུ།⁷⁷

ཡུམ་ཚེན་དུར་སྐོད་བདག་མོས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིག།⁷⁸

[§2.4.5. Prayer for the Southwestern Direction]

སྐོ་རུབ་སྐྱིན་པོའི་ལག་རྒྱ་ཚེ་འཐོར་ནུ།⁷⁹

69 °མ་ཡིས་ཤིག། A] °མའི་ཉུ B; °མ་ཡིས་ཅིག། C, D.
 70 °འཐོར་ནུ A] °ཉོས་ནུ B; °འཐོར་ནུ C; <<°འཐོར་ནུ>> D.
 71 °སྐྱུ་ལུ A] °སྐྱུ་ཉུ B; °མུ C; <<°སྐྱུ་ལུ>> D.
 72 °རྣམ་བསྐྱེམས་མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིག། A; °རྣམས་སྐྱེ་མའི་ཚེ་སྐྱུ་ལུ B; °རྣམ་སྐྱེམས་མ་ཡིས་མུ C; <<°རྣམ་སྐྱེམས་མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིག།>> D.
 73 °ལག་རྒྱ་ཚེ་འཐོར་ནུ A, D] °མ B; °ལག་རྒྱ་ཚེ་མུ C.
 74 °ཚེ་སྐྱུ་ལུ A] °མུ B; °མུ C; °ཚེ་མ D.
 75 °མོས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིག། A] °མོས་མུ B; °མོས་མུ C; °མོའི་མ D.
 76 °ལག་རྒྱ་ཚེ་འཐོར་ནུ A] °མུ B; °ལག་མུ C; °ལག་རྒྱ་ཚེ་མ D.
 77 °པོས་ཚེ་སྐྱུ་ལུ A] °པོས་མུ B; °པོའི་མུ C; °པོའི་མ D.
 78 °མོས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིག། em.] °མོས་མ A; °མོས་མུ B; °མོས་མུ C; °མོའི་མ D.
 79 °ལག་རྒྱ་ཚེ་འཐོར་ནུ em.] °ལག་རྒྱ་ཚེ་མ A; °མུ B; °མུ C; °ལག་རྒྱ་ཚེ་མ D.

ཁྲོ་ཆེན་མི་གཡོ་མགོན་པོས་ཆོ་སྲུག་ལུང་⁸⁰
ཡུམ་ཆེན་མཁའ་དབྱིངས་མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིགུང་⁸¹

[§2.4.6. Prayer for the Western Direction]

རྒྱབ་ཕྱོགས་སྐྱེ་དབང་ལག་རྒྱ་ཆོའཕོར་ནུང་⁸²
ཁྲོ་ཆེན་རྟ་མགིན་རྒྱལ་པོས་ཆོ་སྲུག་ལུང་⁸³
ཡུམ་ཆེན་གརྒྱུ་མོ་ཡིས་ནི་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིགུང་⁸⁴

[§2.4.7. Prayer for the Northwestern Direction]

རྒྱབ་བྱང་རྒྱུང་ལྷའི་ལག་རྒྱ་ཆོའཕོར་ནུང་⁸⁵
ཁྲོ་ཆེན་གཞན་གྱིས་མི་ཐུབ་ཆོ་སྲུག་ལུང་⁸⁶
ཡུམ་ཆེན་མདའ་སྟེམས་མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིགུང་⁸⁷

[§2.4.8. Prayer for the Northern Direction]

བྱང་ཕྱོགས་གནོད་སྐྱེན་མ་ཡིས་ཆོའཕོར་ནུང་⁸⁸
ཁྲོ་ཆེན་བདུད་ཅིའབྱིལ་པས་ཆོ་སྲུག་ལུང་⁸⁹
ཡུམ་ཆེན་རྒྱང་འབྱིན་མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིགུང་⁹⁰

80 ོཆོ་སྲུག་ལུང་ em.] ོཆོ་ A; ོུ B; ོ་མུ C; ོ་ D.
81 ོམ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིགུང་ em.] ོམ་ཡིས་ A; ོམའི་མུ B; ོམ་ཡིས་མུ C; ོམ་ཡིས་མ D.
82 ོལག་རྒྱ་ཆོའཕོར་ནུང་ em.] ོལག་རྒྱ་ A; ོ་མུ B; ོལག་མུ C; ོལག་རྒྱ་ D.
83 ོཆེན་ོརྒྱལ་པོས་ཆོ་སྲུག་ལུང་ em.] ོའོ་རྒྱལ་པོས་ A; ོཆེན་ོམུ B; ོཆེན་ོརྒྱལ་པོས་མུ C; ོཆེན་ོརྒྱལ་པོས་མ D.
84 ོམོ་ཡིས་ནི་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིགུང་ em.] ོམོ་ཡིས་ནི་ A; ོམོས་མུ B; ོམོས་མུ C; ོམོ་མ་ཡིས་མ D.
85 ོལག་རྒྱ་ཆོའཕོར་ནུང་ em.] ོལག་རྒྱ་ A; ོུ B; ོ་མུ C; ོལག་རྒྱ་ D.
86 ོགཞན་གྱིས་མི་ཐུབ་ཆོ་སྲུག་ལུང་ em.] ོགཞན་གྱིས་མི་ཐུབ་ A; ོག<ཞ>ན་གྱི་མི་ཐུབ་གྱིས་ུ B; ོགཞན་མི་ཐུབས་གྱི་མུ C; ོགཞན་གྱིས་མི་ཐུབ་མ D.
87 ོམདའ་སྟེམས་ོདཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིགུང་ em.] ོམདའ་སྟེམས་ོམ A; ོཅན་ན་སྟེམས་ོུ B; ོའདའ་སྟེམས་ོམུ C; ོམདའ་སྟེམས་མ་ཡིས་མ D.
88 ོམ་ཡིས་ཆོའཕོར་ནུང་ em.] ོམ A; ོུ B; ོ་མུ C; ོལག་རྒྱ་ D.
89 ོཔས་ཆོ་སྲུག་ལུང་ em.] ོཔས་ A; ོཔས་ུ B; ོ་མུ C; ོའི་མ D.
90 ོའབྱིན་མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིགུང་ em.] ོཆེན་མ་ཡིས་ A; ོའབྱིན་མའི་ུ B; ོའབྱིན་མ་ཡིས་མུ C; ོའབྱིན་མ་ཡིས་མ D.

[§2.4.9. Prayer for the Northeastern Direction]

བྱང་ཤར་དབང་ལྷན་མ་ཡིས་ཆེ་འཛོར་ནུ།⁹¹
སློ་ཆེན་ཁམས་གསུམ་ནམ་རྒྱལ་ཆེ་ལྷག་ལུ།⁹²
ཡུམ་ཆེན་གསོད་བྱེད་མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིག།⁹³

[§2.4.10. Prayer for the Nadir]

འོག་ཕྱོགས་ས་བདག་ལག་ཏུ་ཆེ་འཛོར་ནུ།⁹⁴
སློ་ཆེན་སྐྱོབས་པོ་ཆེ་ཡིས་ཆེ་ལྷག་ལུ།⁹⁵
ཡུམ་ཆེན་སྐྱོད་བྱེད་མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིག།⁹⁶
ཨྲི་ཨྲུའུ་རྩེ་ཀྱི་བྱི་བཟླ་ཡུ་ཤེ་རྩེ་ཨྲུ།⁹⁷

[§2.5. Prayer to the Animal-headed Attendants] [A 2b6; B 2b6; C 2b3;

D 3a5]

[§2.5.1. Prayer for Protection in the Variegated Lofty Sky]

རྩི་དགུང་པ་ཕྱ་ལྷོའི་གསེབ་ཏུ་ཆེ་འཛོར་ནུ།⁹⁸
ཕྱག་བརྟན་པག་མགོ་ཅན་གྱིས་ཆེ་ལྷག་ལུ།⁹⁹
ཡུམ་ཆེན་སྐྱིག་བྱའི་མགོ་ཅན་མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིག།¹⁰⁰

91 མ་ཡིས་ཆེ་འཛོར་ནུ། em.] མ་ A; མུ་ B; མུ་ C; ལག་ཏུ་ x D.
92 གསུམ་ཆེ་ལྷག་ལུ། em.] ག་མ་ A; གསུམ་ུ་ B; གསུམ་ུ་ C; གསུམ་ུ་ D.
93 གསོད་མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིག། em.] གསོད་མ་ཡིས་ x A; གསོད་མའི་མུ་ B; གསོད་མ་ཡིས་མུ་ C; གསོད་མ་ཡིས་ x D.
94 བདག་ལག་ཏུ་ཆེ་འཛོར་ནུ། em.] བདག་ལག་ཏུ་ཆེ་འཛོར་ནུ་ A; གག་ B; བདག་མུ་ C; བདག་ལག་ x D.
95 ཆེ་ལྷག་ལུ། A] ུ་ B; མུ་ C; མ་ D.
96 མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིག། A] མའི་ B; མ་ཡིས་མུ་ C; མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཅིག། D.
97 ཨྲི་ཨྲུའུ་རྩེ་ཀྱི་བྱི་བཟླ་ཡུ་ཤེ་རྩེ་ཨྲུ། em.] ཨྲི་ཨྲུའུ་རྩེ་ཀྱི་བྱི་བཟླ་ཡུ་ཤེ་རྩེ་ཨྲུ་ A; ཨྲི་ཨྲུའུ་རྩེ་ཀྱི་བྱི་བཟླ་ཡུ་ཤེ་རྩེ་ཨྲུ་ B; ཨྲི་ཨྲུའུ་རྩེ་ཀྱི་བྱི་བཟླ་ཡུ་ཤེ་རྩེ་ཨྲུ་ C; ཨྲི་ཨྲུའུ་རྩེ་ཀྱི་བྱི་བཟླ་ཡུ་ཤེ་རྩེ་ཨྲུ་ D.
98 རྩི་དགུང་འཛོར་ནུ། D] རྩི་དགུང་འཛོར་ནུ་ A; རྩི་དགུང་འཛོར་ནུ་ B; རྩི་དགུང་འཛོར་ནུ་ C.
99 ཕྱག་བརྟན་གྱིས་ཆེ་ལྷག་ལུ། A, D] ཕྱག་བརྟན་གྱིས་ཆེ་མུ་ B; ཕྱག་བརྟན་གྱི་ཆེ་ལྷག་ལུ་ C.
Cf. sPu gri nag po'i rgyud, 95,5: བཟུངས་མགོ་གཉན་ཉེ་ཤུངས།
100 ཡུམ་ཆེན་སྐྱིག་བྱའི་མགོ་ཅན་མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིག། A] དམིགས་བྱའི་མགོ་ཅན་དཔལ་མུ་ B; དམིགས་བྱའི་མགོ་ཅན་མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཅིག། C; དམིགས་བྱའི་མགོ་ཅན་མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཅིག། D.

[§2.5.2. Prayer for Protection in the Forest in the Southern Valley]

སྣེ་རིང་ནགས་ཚལ་གསེབ་རྩེ་ཆོའཕོར་ནུ།¹⁰¹

ཕྱག་བརྟན་སྟག་མགོ་ཅན་གྱིས་ཆོའཕྱག་ལུ།¹⁰²

བྱ་ཚོད་མགོ་ཅན་མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྟོབས་ཤིག།¹⁰³

[§2.5.3. Prayer for Protection in the Rocky Copper Mountain]

རྩེ་རི་བོང་མ་བོང་རྩེ་ཆོའཕོར་ནུ།¹⁰⁴

ཕྱག་བརྟན་གཡག་མགོ་ཅན་གྱིས་ཆོའཕྱག་ལུ།¹⁰⁵

བྱ་རོག་མགོ་ཅན་མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྟོབས་ཤིག།¹⁰⁶

[§2.5.4. Prayer for Protection in the Green Hills]

སྒང་རི་ཞལ་མ་ཞོལ་རྩེ་ཆོའཕོར་ནུ།¹⁰⁷

ཕྱག་བརྟན་ཤ་བའི་མགོ་ཅན་གྱིས་ཆོའཕྱག་ལུ།¹⁰⁸

འཕྱག་པའི་མགོ་ཅན་མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྟོབས་ཤིག།¹⁰⁹

[§2.5.5. Prayer for Protection in the Snow and Slate]

གངས་དང་གཡའ་ཡི་མཚམས་སུ་ཆོའཕོར་ནུ།¹¹⁰

101 འགས་གསེབ་རྩེ། A] འགས་ནང་རྩེ། B; འགས་གསེབ་རྩེ། C; འགས་གསེབ་རྩེ་མ། D.

102 ཕྱག་བརྟན་གྱིས་ཆོའཕྱག་ལུ། em.] ཕྱག་བརྟན་གྱིས་མ། A; ཕྱག་ཉན་གྱི་ཆོའཕྱག་ལུ། B; ཕྱག་ཉན་གྱི་ཆོའཕྱག་ལུ། C; ཕྱག་བརྟན་གྱིས་མ། D.

103 ཡིས་དཔལ་སྟོབས་ཤིག། em.] ཡིས་དཔལ་མ། A; ཡིས་མུ། B; མུ། C; ཡིས་མ། D.

104 རྩེ་རི་བོང་མ་བོང་རྩེ་ཆོའཕོར་ནུ། em.] རྩེ་རི་བོང་མ་བོང་རྩེ་ཆོའཕོར་ནུ། A; རྩེ་རི་བོང་མ་བོང་རྩེ་ཆོའཕོར་ནུ། B; རྩེ་རི་བོང་མ་བོང་རྩེ་ཆོའཕོར་ནུ། C; རྩེ་རི་བོང་མ་བོང་རྩེ་ཆོའཕོར་ནུ། D.

105 ཕྱག་བརྟན་གྱིས་ཆོའཕྱག་ལུ། em.] ཕྱག་བརྟན་མ། A; ཕྱག་ཉན་མུ། B; ཕྱག་ཉན་མུ། C; ཕྱག་བརྟན་མ། D.

106 འཕྱག་པའི་སྟོབས་ཤིག། em.] མ། A; མུ། B; མུ། C; མ། D.

107 སྒང་ཆོའཕོར་ནུ། A] སྒངས་ཆོའཕོར་ནུ། B; སྒང་ཆོའཕོར་ནུ། C; སྒང་མ། D.

108 ཕྱག་བརྟན་གྱིས་ཆོའཕྱག་ལུ། em.] ཕྱག་བརྟན་གྱིས་མ། A; ཕྱག་ཉན་མུ། B; ཕྱག་ཉན་ཆོའཕོར་ནུ། C; ཕྱག་བརྟན་མ། D.

109 མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྟོབས་ཤིག། em.] མ་ཡིས་མ། A; མུ། B; མ་ཡིས་མུ། C; མ་ཡིས་མ། D.

110 འཕྱག་པའི་མཚམས་སུ་ཆོའཕོར་ནུ། A] འཕྱག་པའི་མཚམས་སུ་ཆོའཕོར་ནུ། B; འཕྱག་པའི་མཚམས་སུ་ཆོའཕོར་ནུ། C; འཕྱག་པའི་མཚམས་སུ་ཆོའཕོར་ནུ། D.

ཕྱག་བརྟན་གཟིག་མགོ་ཅན་གྱིས་ཚེ་ལྷག་ལུང་།¹¹¹
 ལྷ་ཏའི་མགོ་ཅན་མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིག།¹¹²

[§2.5.6. Prayer for Protection in the Field Edge]

ཞིང་ཚིགས་ལྷང་མ་ལྷུང་དུ་ཚེ་འཐོར་ནུ།¹¹³
 ཕྱག་བརྟན་བྱི་བའི་མགོ་ཅན་གྱིས་ཚེ་ལྷག་ལུང་།¹¹⁴
 སུ་ལྷང་མགོ་ཅན་མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིག།¹¹⁵

[§2.5.7. Prayer for Protection in the Black Shadow of the Evening]

དགོང་གྱི་གིབ་སོ་ནག་ལ་ཚེ་འཐོར་ནུ།¹¹⁶
 ཕྱག་བརྟན་སྤང་མགོ་ཅན་གྱིས་ཚེ་ལྷག་ལུང་།¹¹⁷
 ལྷ་ཡི་མགོ་ཅན་མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིག།¹¹⁸

[§2.5.8. Prayer for Protection in the Maroon Maimed Snow Mountain]

གངས་རི་སྐྱུག་རུམ་གསེབ་དུ་ཚེ་འཐོར་ནུ།¹¹⁹

111 ཕྱག་བརྟན་གཟིག་གྱིས་ཚེ་ལྷག་ལུང་ em.] ཕྱག་བརྟན་གཟིག་གྱིས་x A; ཕྱག་བརྟན་གཟིག་གྱིས་ལུང་ B; ཕྱག་བརྟན་གཟིག་ལུང་x C; ཕྱག་བརྟན་གཟིག་གྱིས་x D.

112 ལྷ་ཏའི་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིག་ em.] ལྷ་ཏའི་x A, D; ལྷ་ཏའི་ལུང་ B; ལྷ་ཏའི་ལུང་x C.

113 ཚིགས་ལྷང་ཚེ་འཐོར་ནུ་ A] ཚིགས་ལྷང་ལུང་ B; ཚིགས་ལྷགས་ཚེ་ལུང་x C; ཚིགས་ལྷང་ལུང་x D.

114 ཕྱག་བརྟན་བྱི་བའི་གྱིས་ཚེ་ལྷག་ལུང་ em.] ཕྱག་བརྟན་བྱི་བའི་x A; ཕྱག་བརྟན་བྱི་བའི་ལུང་ B; ཕྱག་བརྟན་བྱི་བའི་ལུང་x C; ཕྱག་བརྟན་བྱི་བའི་x D.

115 སུ་མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིག་ em.] སུ་མ་ཡིས་x A; སུ་མ་ཡིས་ལུང་ B; སུ་མ་ཡིས་ལུང་x C; སུ་མ་ཡིས་ལུང་x D.

116 དགོང་ནག་ཚེ་འཐོར་ནུ་ em.] དགོང་ནག་ཚེ་འཐོར་ནུ་ A; དགོང་ནག་ཚེ་འཐོར་ནུ་ B; དགོང་ནག་ཚེ་འཐོར་ནུ་x C; དགོང་ནག་ཚེ་འཐོར་ནུ་x D.

117 ཕྱག་བརྟན་སྤང་གྱིས་ཚེ་ལྷག་ལུང་ em.] ཕྱག་བརྟན་སྤང་གྱིས་x A; ཕྱག་བརྟན་སྤང་གྱིས་ལུང་ B; ཕྱག་བརྟན་སྤང་གྱིས་ལུང་x C; ཕྱག་བརྟན་སྤང་གྱིས་x D.

118 ལྷ་ཡི་མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིག་ em.] ལྷ་ཡི་མ་ཡིས་x A; ལྷ་ཡི་མ་ཡིས་ལུང་ B; ལྷ་ཡི་མ་ཡིས་ལུང་x C; ལྷ་ཡི་མ་ཡིས་ལུང་x D.

119 གངས་རི་སྐྱུག་རུམ་གསེབ་དུ་ཚེ་འཐོར་ནུ་ em.] གངས་རི་སྐྱུག་རུམ་གསེབ་དུ་ཚེ་འཐོར་ནུ་ A; གངས་རི་སྐྱུག་རུམ་གསེབ་དུ་ཚེ་འཐོར་ནུ་ B; གངས་རི་སྐྱུག་རུམ་གསེབ་དུ་ཚེ་འཐོར་ནུ་x C; གངས་རི་སྐྱུག་རུམ་གསེབ་དུ་ཚེ་འཐོར་ནུ་x D.

ཕྱག་བརྟན་སེང་མགོ་ཅན་གྱིས་ཚེ་སྲག་ལུང་¹²⁰
པ་མང་མགོ་ཅན་མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིགུང་¹²¹

[§2.5.9. Prayer for Protection in the Cold Desert]

བྱང་ཐང་ཕྱད་མ་ཕྱོད་དུ་ཚེ་འཕོར་ནུང་¹²²
ཕྱག་བརྟན་བྱིད་མགོ་ཅན་གྱིས་ཚེ་སྲག་ལུང་¹²³
སྐྱེ་མོང་མགོ་ཅན་མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིགུང་¹²⁴

[§2.5.10. Prayer for Protection in the Expansive Oceanic River]

ཚུ་ཚེན་རྒྱ་མཚོའི་ཁྲིང་དུ་ཚེ་འཕོར་ནུང་¹²⁵
ཕྱག་བརྟན་དོམ་མགོ་ཅན་གྱིས་ཚེ་སྲག་ལུང་¹²⁶
བྱི་བའི་མགོ་ཅན་མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིགུང་¹²⁷

[§2.6. Prayer to the Four Guardian Goddesses of the Gate] ^{IA 3b1;}

B 3a6; C 3a1; D 4a2]

ལྷགས་ཀྱུ་ཞགས་པ་ལྷགས་སྐྱོག་དེལ་བུ་མསུང་¹²⁸
མོ་བསྐྱང་ལྷ་མོ་བཞི་ཡིས་ཚེ་སྲག་ལུང་¹²⁹

120 ཕྱག་བརྟན་གྱིས་ཚེ་སྲག་ལུང་ em.] ཕྱག་བརྟན་གྱིས་x A; ཕྱག་ཉན་གྱིསུང་ B; ཕྱག་ཉེན་གྱི་མུང་ C; ཕྱག་བརྟན་གྱིས་x D.
121 མང་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིགུང་ em.] མང་x A; མམུང་ B; མམ་དཔལ་མུང་ C; མང་x D.
122 ཐང་ཕྱོད་དུ་ཚེ་འཕོར་ནུང་ A] ཐངས་ཕྱོད་དུང་ B; ཐང་ཕྱོད་དུ་མུང་ C; ཐང་ཕྱོད་དུ་x D.
123 ཕྱག་བརྟན་གྱིས་ཚེ་སྲག་ལུང་ em.] ཕྱག་བརྟན་གྱིས་x A; ཕྱག་ཉན་གྱིསུང་ B; ཕྱག་ཉེན་མུང་ C; ཕྱག་བརྟན་གྱིས་x D.
124 སྐྱེ་མོང་མགོ་ཅན་མ་ཡིས་ཤིགུང་ em.] སྐྱེ་མོང་མགོ་ཅན་x A; སྐྱེ་མོང་མུང་ B; སྐྱེ་མོང་མགོ་ཅན་མུང་ C; སྐྱེ་མོང་མགོ་ཅན་x D.
125 ཚུ་ཚེན་རྒྱ་མཚོའི་ཁྲིང་དུ་ཚེ་འཕོར་ནུང་ A, B] ཚུ་ཚེན་རྒྱ་མཚོའི་ཁྲིང་དུ་མུང་ C; ཚུ་ཚེན་རྒྱ་མཚོའི་ཁྲིང་དུ་x D.
126 ཕྱག་བརྟན་ཚེ་སྲག་ལུང་ em.] ཕྱག་བརྟན་x A; ཕྱག་ཉན་མུང་ B; ཕྱག་ཉེན་མུང་ C; ཕྱག་བརྟན་x D.
127 བའི་མགོ་ཅན་མ་ཡིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིགུང་ em.] བའི་མ་x A; བའི་མའི་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིགུང་ B; བའི་མགོ་ཅན་མུང་ C; བའི་མགོ་ཅན་x D.
128 ལྷགས་མསུང་ A] ལྷགས་མུང་ B; ལྷགས་མུང་ C, D.
129 བསྐྱང་བཞི་ཡིས་མུང་ A] བསྐྱངས་མུང་ B; བསྐྱངས་བཞི་ཡིས་མུང་ C; བསྐྱང་བཞི་ཡིས་མུང་ D.

དམ་ཅན་སྲུང་མ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་དཔལ་སྐྱོབས་ཤིག།¹³⁰

[§3. Concealing and Protecting Life-energy] [A 3b1; B 3b1; C 3a2;

D 4a3]

[§3.1. Development Phase]

དེ་ནས་ཆེ་སླ་ཞིང་བསྲུང་བ་ནི།¹³¹ སློག་ཚའི་ནང་དུ་ཡི་གེ་རྒྱ་ལྡང་གུ་ཡོད་པའི།¹³² ཚ་སྐོར་རྟ་
མགྲིན་དང་བདུད་རྩི་འབྲིལ་པ་གཉིས་ཀྱིས་ཞབས་བསྐོལ་ཏེ་བསྲུང་བར་བསམ།¹³³

[§3.2. Concealment] [A 3b2; B 3b2; C 3a3; ; D 4a3]

རྫོང་ཡོན་ཏན་ཆེན་པོ་ཆེ་ཡི་ལྷང་།¹³⁴
དབྱིངས་སུ་ཡང་ནི་སླ་བར་བྱ།
ཆོས་ཀྱི་དབྱིངས་སུ་ཆེ་སླས་པས།
སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱིས་ཀྱང་མི་གཟིགས་སོ།¹³⁵
མདུ་བོ་རྩི་ཅི་རྩ། རྩམ་རྩོ་ན་རྩྱ་ཨ།¹³⁶

[§3.3. Activity ('phrin las): Protecting Armour] [A 3b3; B 3b3;

C 3a4; D 4a5]

རྫོང་འཕྲིན་ལས་ཆེན་པོ་ཆེ་ཡི་ལྷང་།¹³⁷
རྫོང་པའི་གོ་ཆ་སླ་ན་མེད།
ཕྱག་རྒྱ་བསྲུང་བའི་གོ་ཆར་ལྡན།¹³⁸

130 སྲུང་གིས་ཤིག། A] བསྲུངས་གིས་ཀྱང་། B; བསྲུངས་ཀྱི་ཅིག། C; བསྲུངས་གིས་ཅིག། D.

131 དེ་བསྲུང་། A] [+ དེ་བསྲུངས་ཀྱང་། B; དེ་བསྲུང་། C; དེ་བསྲུང་ཀྱང་། D.

132 རང་དུ་ཡི་གེ་རྒྱ་ལྡང་པའི། em.] རང་དུ་ཡི་གེ་རྒྱ་ལྡང་པའི། A; རང་དང་དུ་ཡི་གེ་རྒྱ་ལྡང་པའི། [+ ཡི་གེ་རྒྱ་ལྡང་པའི། B; རང་དུ་ཡི་གེ་རྒྱ་ལྡང་པའི། C; རང་དུ་ཡི་གེ་རྒྱ་ལྡང་པའི། D.

133 སྐོར་གཉིས་ཀྱིས་བསྐོལ་ཏེ་བསྲུང་། A] སྐོར་འཕྲིན་ལས་ཀྱིས་བསྐོལ་ཏེ་བསྲུང་། B; སྐོར་གཉིས་ཀྱི་བསྐོལ་ཏེ་བསྲུང་། C; སྐོར་གཉིས་ཀྱིས་བསྐོལ་ཏེ་བསྲུང་། D.

134 རྫོང་ཆེ་ཡི་ལྷང་། em.] རྫོང་ཆེ་ཡི་ལྷང་། A, D; རྫོང་ཆེ་ཡི་ལྷང་། B; རྫོང་ཆེ་ཡི་ལྷང་། C.

135 ཀྱིས་ཀྱང་། A, B, D] ཀྱིས་ཀྱང་། C.

136 མདུ་བོ་རྩི་ཅི་རྩ། ཨ། A] མདུ་རྩི་ཅི་རྩ། ཨ། B; མདུ་བོ་རྩི་ཅི་རྩ། ཨ། C; མདུ་རྩི་ཅི་རྩ། ཨ། D.

137 རྫོང་ཆེ་ཡི་ལྷང་། em.] རྫོང་ཆེ་ཡི་ལྷང་། A; རྫོང་ཆེ་ཡི་ལྷང་། B; རྫོང་ཆེ་ཡི་ལྷང་། C; རྫོང་ཆེ་ཡི་ལྷང་། D.

138 བསྲུང་། A, C, D] བསྲུངས་ཀྱང་། B.

ཚོགས་པར་བྱིན་གྱིས་བརྒྱབ་ཏུ་གསོལ།¹⁵³

[§4. Receiving Empowerment and Siddhi] [A 3b6; B 3b6; C 3a7; D 4b3]

[§4.1. Ritual Procedure]

དེ་ནས་དབང་དང་དངོས་ལྷུབ་སྒྲུབ་བཞི།¹⁵⁴ སློབ་མ་ལ་བསྐྱར་ན།¹⁵⁵ བགལས་བསྐྱར།¹⁵⁶ ལྷས་
དང་མཚུལ་སྤུལ་ལ། ལྷུབས་འགོ་སེམས་བསྐྱེད་སློམ་པ་བབྱང་།¹⁵⁷ ལྷ་གསོལ་ལ་སོགས་ཚེ་སྐྱབ་
ཚེན་པོ་འམ།¹⁵⁸ རྩོམ་སྤྱད་པའི་གཞུང་ལྟར་བྱའོ།

[§4.2. Petition] [A 4a2; B 4a1; C 3b1; D 4b4]

ལྷོ། ཐབས་ཀྱི་སྐྱོད་པས་འགོ་དོན་དུ།¹⁵⁹
བྱམས་དང་སློང་རྗེས་གང་འདུལ་བ།¹⁶⁰
སངས་རྒྱས་འཕྲིན་ལས་རྩོགས་མཛད་ལྱིར།¹⁶¹
དབང་དང་དངོས་ལྷུབ་འདིར་སློལ་ཅིག།¹⁶²

[§4.3. Dhāraṇī for Kalasābhiṣeka] [A 4a2; B 4a2; C 3b2; D 4b5]

རྩོམ་གཞུང་ལྷུ་འཁོར་བཅས་ཀྱི་ཅ་སྤགས་གཤམ་དུ་ཨ་ལྷི་ཕི་རྩུ་མི།¹⁶³ ཞེས་བསྐྱར་རོ།¹⁶⁴ དེ་

153 བསོད་ནམས་སྤུན་སྲུམ་ཚོགས་བརྒྱབ་། A] སྤུན་སྲུམ་ཚོགས་བརྒྱབ་། B; བསོད་ནམས་སྤུན་སྲུམ་
ཚོགས་བརྒྱབས་། C; བསོད་ནམས་སྤུན་སྲུམ་<<ཚོགས>>བརྒྱབས་། D.
154 དེ་ནས་དང་སྒྲུབ་། D] དེ་ནས་<<དང>>སྒྲུབ་། A; དེ་ནས་དང་སྒྲུབ་། B; དེ་ནས་དང་སྒྲུབས་། C.
155 བསྐྱར་། A, C] བསྐྱར་། B; བསྐྱར་། D.
156 བསྐྱར། A, B, D] བསྐྱོད། C.
157 བསྐྱེད་། C, D] བསྐྱེད་། A; བསྐྱེད་། B.
158 ལྷུབ་པོ་འམ། A] ལྷུབ་པོ་འམ། B; ལྷུབ་པོ་བསམ། C; ལྷུབས་པོ་འམ། D.
159 ལྷོ། ལྷོ། A, D] ལྷོ། ལྷོ། B; ལྷོ། ལྷོ། C.
160 རྩོམ་། A, B, D] རྩོམ་། C.
161 རྩོགས་། em.] རྩོགས་། A, B, D; རྩོགས་། C.
162 རྩོལ་ཅིག། A, D] རྩོལ་། B; རྩོལ་ཅིག། C.
163 ལྷོ། ལྷོ། A] ལྷོ། ལྷོ། B; ལྷོ། ལྷོ། C; ལྷོ། ལྷོ། D.
164 ཞེས་བསྐྱར་རོ། A] om. B; ཞེས་བསྐྱར་རོ། C, D.

བྱང་ཚུབ་སེམས་གྱི་ལྷ་ཡུ་དམར་པོ་སྐྱོས།¹⁷⁵

བདག་ཅག་ནམས་ལ་ཆོ་ཡི་སཱིི་སྐྱོལ།¹⁷⁶

ལྷ་ཡུ་གསང་ཆེན་འདི་ལ་བྱིན་བརྟུན་བོ།¹⁷⁷

[§5.2. Merit Transfer] [A 4a6; B 4a6; C 3b6; D 5a5]

ཞེས་དངོས་གྲུབ་སྐྱབས་ལུང་།¹⁷⁸ བཀྲ་ཤིས་བསྐྱོ་བ་བྱའོ། འུ་གླི།¹⁷⁹ རིག་འཛིན་ཆེན་པོའི་གཏེར་
མའོ།¹⁸⁰

4. Annotated Translation

[§0. Introductory Remarks]

[§0.1. Title]

The Longevity Practice of Vajrakīla.¹⁸¹

[§0.2. Salutation]

Homage to the deity of *vajra* life (*rdo rje tshe'i lha*).

[§0.3. Preparation]

If the *kīla yogins* in the cyclic existence wish to extend (*bsring*) the depletion of life-length [for] oneself and others, might want to engage in this *sādhana* [i.e. The Longevity Practice of Vajrakīla].

You should arrange (*bsog*) the necessities in a solitary place. Having set (*bsham*) a long-life vase with whatever articles are suitable for [supporting] life-energy,

¹⁷⁵ འུ་ལྷ་། A] འུ་ལྷ་། B, D; འུ་ལྷ་། C.

¹⁷⁶ འུ་ལྷ་སྐྱོལ། A] འུ་ལྷ་སྐྱོལ། B; འུ་ལྷ་སྐྱོལ། C; འུ་ལྷ་སྐྱོལ། D.

¹⁷⁷ ལྷ་ཆེན་བརྟུན་བོ། A] ལྷ་ཆེན་བརྟུན་བོ། B; ལྷ་ཆེན་བརྟུན་བོ། C; ལྷ་ཆེན་བརྟུན་བོ། D.

¹⁷⁸ ཞེས་། A] ཞེས་། B, C, D.

¹⁷⁹ འུ་གླི། A] འུ་གླི། B, C; འུ་གླི། D.

¹⁸⁰ རིག་འཛིན་ཆེན་པོའི་གཏེར་མའོ། *em.*] རིག་འཛིན་ཆེན་པོའི་གཏེར་མའོ། <<ཉ་ལྷས།>> A; རིག་འཛིན་ཆེན་པོའི་གཏེར་མའོ། <<ཉ་ལྷས།>> B; རིག་འཛིན་ཆེན་པོའི་གཏེར་མའོ། <<ཉ་ལྷས།>> C; རིག་འཛིན་ཆེན་པོའི་གཏེར་མའོ། <<ཉ་ལྷས།>> D.

¹⁸¹ DT_C specifies the revelation of the DT as “[this] *gter ma* text [was revealed at] Zang-zang-lha-brag [mountain]” (*zang zang lha brag gi gter ma ni*). Unfortunately, any other clues for more precise dating and/or locations, e.g. the specific cache among the fivefold repository (center/south/north/east/west), are not provided.

establish (*bya*) the object of reliance (*'khri sa*) for Vajrakīla.
[And then] perform (*bya*) the longevity ritual at a religious assembly.

[§1. Development Phase]

[§1.1. Five-figure Amitāyus Maṇḍala]¹⁸²

From [the seed syllable] *bhruṃ*, [imagine the appearance of] a precious celestial palace

beautifully ornamented with four sides and four gates.

In its centre, upon moon on the lotus [seat],

Buddha Amitāyus, whose body is white in colour, holding (*bsnams*) a long-life vase [that emerged] from the [seed syllable] *Hriḥ*.

In its east, Vairocana Amitāyus [, whose body is] azure blue [in colour,] [appears] holding a long-life vase.

In its south, Guṇa Amitāyus, whose body is yellow in colour, [appears] holding a long-life vase.

In its west, Amitābha Amitāyus, whose body is red in colour, [appears] holding a [long-life] vase.

In its north, Karma Amitāyus [, whose body is] green [in colour,] [appears] holding long-life vase.

*Lāse māle gīrti nīrtima dhūpe puṣpe āloke gandhema.*¹⁸³

[§1.2. Dhāraṇī Recitation for the Siddhi of Life]

Aṅkuṣī (*lcags kyu [ma]*), Pāṣī (*zhags pa [ma]*), Śṛṅkhalā (*lcags sgrog [ma]*), and Ghaṅṭā (*dril bu ma*),¹⁸⁴ [and]

the five consorts in non-dual union with the [aforementioned] father consorts [appear].

All body colours [and] hand symbols are complete with all adornments.

Each and every one of them is distinct [and] entirely clear.

Repeat the [following] *dhāraṇī* (*snying po*) in order to invite [and present them] offerings and praises.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² For a comparative table containing such sundry deities of the directions, see Table 2 (Presiding Deities of the Directions) in the below fn. 194.

¹⁸³ The eight feminine deities are divided into two groups: four inner offerings bodhisattvas (Vajra-lāsyā/mālā/gītā/nṛtyā) and four outer offerings bodhisattvas (Vajra-dhūpā/puṣpā/ālokā/gandhā). See e.g. *Sarvatathāgatataṭṭvasaṅgraha*, sections 152–177 and *Niṣpannayogāvali*, Vajradhātu-maṇḍala (rDo rje dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor), NY_s/NY_t, pp. 159–160. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Yasutaka Saito for drawing my attention to these materials.

¹⁸⁴ As for the four guardian goddesses of the gate, see §2.6. In the *sPu gri nag po'i rgyud*, the four goddesses each of who guards the *maṇḍala* gates with (1.) an iron hook, (2.) a noose, (3.) an iron shackle, and (4.) a bell are depicted as wrathful, see *sPu gri nag po'i rgyud*, 95,5: *sgo skyong khro mo bzhi rnam sprul*.

¹⁸⁵ The term *bzlas*, a generic verb for “to recite/repeat”, might be classified into *yid bzlas* (mental recitation), *ngag bzlas* (vocal recitation), *'gog bzlas* (silent recitation), *sgom bzlas* (meditation and recitation), and so forth. Thus, even though it does not

“Om ā hūm, diduṃ vajra āyuṣe hūm ah”.

By means of the recitation, contemplate that you have the *siddhi* of life.

[§1.3. Citation from the Buddhist Canon]

[In the *gSang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa*] it is said that:¹⁸⁶

“[In the development phase (*bskyed rim*), you would step-by-step] [1.] approach (*bsnyen [pa]*) life-energy, and then [2.] closely approach (*nye bsnyen*) [it], and [3.] accomplish (*sgrub [pa]*) life-energy, and then [4.] greatly accomplish (*sgrub chen*) [it]”.¹⁸⁷

Contemplate that all the [external] receptacle [world] (*[phyi] snod [kyi 'jig rten]*) and the [inner] contents [of sentient beings] (*[nang] bcud [kyi sems can]*) dissolve into light, and then melt down into yourself and the long-life articles.

inspire me confidence, I am inclined to suppose that the term *bzlas* may be rendered as “to repeat orally over and over again”. As has already been mentioned (see fn. 20), the whole DT is expected to be “recited” by the practitioner. It is therefore this *bzlas* to which one should look first in order to determine the particular nature of the term as “repeat [*dhāraṇī*]”. This seems to be a process or phase to cultivate basically the pride of the deity (*lha'i nga rgyal*) by the power of words. As for *dhāraṇī* citation in a *tshes sgrub* text among rGod ldem can's revelation, see Shinga Forthcoming b. In it, I have tried to discuss the possibility that the *Tshes sgrub lcags kyi sdong po* cites a *dhāraṇī* from the *Aparimitāyusūtra*.

¹⁸⁶ This is a citation from the *gSang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa* (**Guhyagarbhatattvanirṇaya*; D 834; P 457). Having also been cited in the *Phur pa me lce'i 'phreng ba* (213,5), it implies that this canonical work could be regarded as an authoritative text on which rGod ldem can's longevity practice were founded. Towards the references to all rGod ldem can's citation, like the references to all Klong chen pa's works published in 2008 by Arguillère (i.e. Arguillère 2008), I aim to make a future contribution. For a recent relevant analysis of rGod ldem can's textual borrowing from Klong chen rab 'byams pa Dri med 'od zer (1308–1364; BDRC#P1583), see Turpeinen 2015:218–219.

¹⁸⁷ The literary antecedent of these four aspects of approach and accomplishment (**catvārisevāsādhanaṅga*; *bsnyen sgrub yan lag bzhi*), namely (1.) approaching (*sevā*; *bsnyen pa*), (2.) near achievement (*upasādhana*; *nye bar sgrub pa*), (3.) actual achievement (*sādhana*; *sgrub pa*), and (4.) the great achievement (*mahāsādhana*; *sgrub pa chen po*), is the *Guhyasamājantra*, Ch. 18 (*Uttaratantra*. *rGyud phyi ma*, D 443), see GS_s 162,14, GS_c 885.18.509a29, GS_t 154a2. According to the hagiography, rGod ldem can is said to have revealed the *dharma* of the four limbs of practice (*bsnyen sgrub rnam pa bzhi'i chos*) from the golden treasure in the south (*lho phyogs gser mdzod ser po*), see *gSal byed nyi ma'i 'od zer*, S_A 31,3; S_B 84,3. As Bentor 1996 has noted, these four aspects are ‘variously applied in most tantric rituals of all types’ (p. [1]). See also Kunsang 1990:167 (glossary) for the *bsnyen sgrub kyi yan lag bzhi* in the phase of recitation. Compared with the well-annotated and well-researched *sādhana*s (e.g. *Guhyasamāja sādhana*s within the dGe lugs pa school), the interpretation and therefore translation of the four aspects here (*bsnyen / nye bsnyen / sgrub / sgrub chen*) are quite uncertain, particularly with regard to the term *tshes*.

[§2. Prayer for Summoning Life-energy]

[§2.1. Prayer to the Five Buddha Amitāyus]

After that, for summoning life-energy, [contemplate the following verse:]¹⁸⁸

Hrīḥ! Bhagavat Nātha Buddha Amitāyus
 in non-dual union with gTum mo, the supreme mother consort!
 Please grant [us] the *siddhi* of life and prosperity (*dpal*)
 from the *maṇḍala* of skilful means (*thabs kyi dkyil 'khor*)¹⁸⁹ in the non-
 dual unity of the father and mother consort.
 From the eastern direction, Vairocana Amitāyus (*rnam snang tshe dpag dpag [med]*) in [non-dual unity of] the father and mother consorts,
 and
 from the southern direction, Ratna Amitāyus (*rin chen tshe dpag [med]*) in [non-dual unity of] the father and mother consorts, and
 from the western direction, Padma Amitāyus (*padma tshe dpag [med]*)¹⁹⁰ in [non-dual unity of] the father and mother consorts, and
 from the northern direction, Karma Amitāyus (*karma tshe dpag [med]*) in [non-dual unity of] the father and mother consorts,
 [please grant us the *siddhi* of life and prosperity].
Lāse māle gīrti nīrtima dhūpe puṣpe āloke gandhema.

[§2.2. Prayer to the Four Goddesses]

Aṅkuṣī, Pāśī, Śṛṅkhalā, and Ghaṅṭā
 with [your] right hands, all [holding] long-life banners waving to
 the ten directions,
 with [your] left [hands], all [holding] long-life vases which are filled
 with the *amṛta* nectar (*bdud rtsis*),
 please grant to us, the fortunate ones, the *siddhi* of life!

[§2.3. Prayer to Vajrakumāra and His Mother Consort

'Khor lo rgyas 'debs ma]¹⁹¹

Dhīḥ! Bhagavat Great Glorious Vajrakumāra (*rdo rje gzhon nu*),¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ Regarding the process of 'summoning the lifespan', see Boord 1993:209.

¹⁸⁹ Here the term *thabs* (DT_A, DT_B, and DT_D) seems to share curious lexical features with the variant reading *thugs* (DT_C). For the relevant analysis in the Vajrakīla texts, see Boord 1993:138n512.

¹⁹⁰ For the variant reading *snang mtha' tshe dpag med* (DT_B) for *padma tshe dpag* (DT_A, DT_C, and DT_D), cf. *snang mtha' tshe dpag med*, Amitābha Amitāyus (§1.1).

¹⁹¹ An English translation of §§2.3–2.4 is found in Boord 1993:209.

¹⁹² The identification of *rdo rje gzhon nu* (Vajrakumāra) with *rdo rje phur pa* (Vajrakīla) has been discussed in Boord 1993:59n227. As pointed out there, in the later Tibetan tradition, *rdo rje gzhon nu* 'uniquely and ubiquitously refers to the deity Vajrakīla'. Cf. *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, s.v. *rdo rje gzhon nu* (p. 1441): 'bla med rgyud kyi yi dam phur pa'i ming gi rnam grangs shig'. In view of the Chinese source for 金剛童子 (Vajrakumāra), in the *Shengjiani fennujingangtongzipusa chengjiuyiguijing* (聖迦尼忿

and

Great Mother Consort Goddess 'Khor lo rgyas 'debs ma,¹⁹³
please grant to us, the fortunate ones, the *siddhi* of life!

[§2.4. Prayer to the Ten Wrathful Ones in the Ten Directions]¹⁹⁴

[§2.4.1. Prayer for the Zenith]

Hūṃ! To consider the life-energy in the zenith, the realm of Brahmā,
Great Fierce Hūṃkāra, summon life-energy! and
Great Mother Consort sGra 'byin ma, protect the prosperity!

[§2.4.2. Prayer for the Eastern Direction]

As the hands of Gandharva scatters [our] life-energy in the east,
Great Fierce rNam par rgyal ba, summon the [return of our] life-
energy! and

Great Mother Consort rNam bsnyems ma, protect [our good]
fortunes (*dpal*)!

[§2.4.3. Prayer for the Southeastern Direction]

As the hands of Agni (the fire deity) scatters [our] life-energy in the
southeast,

Great Fierce dByug sngon can, summon the [return of our] life-en-
ergy! and

Great Mother Consort rDo rje sder mo, protect [our good] fortunes!

怒金剛童子菩薩成就儀軌經, T 1222) for instance, life extension (增壽命) is extolled as one of the merits of the *sūtra*. See 21.109b14: 又法取骨屢草嫩苗。搵酥護摩誦真言一千八遍。一遍一擲火中。即得一切災難悉皆殄滅及增壽命。

¹⁹³ Boord 1993 has translated the term 'khor lo rgyas 'debs ma as 'Trptacakra' (p. 209).

¹⁹⁴ For presiding deities of the directions, see below a comparative table (Table 2) between the three relevant sections (§§1.1, 2.1, 2.4).

Table 2: Presiding Deities of the Directions

No.	Direction	§1.1	§2.1	§2.4
0.	center	Buddha Amitāyus	Buddha Amitāyus	-
1.	zenith	-	-	Hūṃkāra / sGra 'byin ma
2.	east	Vairocana Amitāyus	Vairocana Amitāyus	Vijaya / rNam bsnyems ma
3.	southeast	-	-	Niladaṇḍa / rDo rje sder mo
4.	south	Guṇa Amitāyus	Ratna Amitāyus	Yamāntaka / Dur khrod bdag mo
5.	southwest	-	-	Acalanātha / mKha' dbyings ma
6.	west	Amitābha Amitāyus	Padma Amitāyus	Hayagrīva / gTum mo
7.	northwest	-	-	Aparājita / mDa' snyems ma
8.	north	Karma Amitāyus	Karma Amitāyus	Amṛtakūṇḍalin / Rlung 'byin ma
9.	northeast	-	-	Trailokyavijaya / gSod byed ma
10.	nadir	-	-	Mahābala / sKyod byed ma

[§2.4.4. Prayer for the Southern Direction]

As the hands of Yama scatters [our] life-energy in the south,
Great Fierce Yamāntaka, summon [the return of our] life-energy!
and
Great Mother Consort Dur khrod bdag mo, protect [our good]
fortunes!

[§2.4.5. Prayer for the Southwestern Direction]

As the hands of Rākṣasa scatters [our] life-energy in the southwest,
Great Fierce Mi g.yo mgon po, summon [the return of our] life-en-
ergy! and
Great Mother Consort mKha' dbyings ma, protect [our good]
fortunes!

[§2.4.6. Prayer for the Western Direction]

As the hands of Nāgendra (*klu dbang*)¹⁹⁵ scatters [our] life-energy in
the west,
Great Fierce King Hayagrīva, summon [the return of our] life-en-
ergy! and
Great Mother Consort gTum mo, protect [our good] fortunes!

[§2.4.7. Prayer for the Northwestern Direction]

As the hands of Vāyu (the wind deity) scatters [our] life-energy in
the northwest,
Great Fierce Aparājita (*gzhan gyis mi thub [pa]*),¹⁹⁶ summon [the re-
turn of our] life-energy! and
Great Mother Consort mDa' snyems ma, protect [our good]
fortunes!

[§2.4.8. Prayer for the Northern Direction]

As Yakṣī¹⁹⁷ scatters [our] life-energy in the north,
Great Fierce Amṛtakunḍalin,¹⁹⁸ summon [the return of our] life-en-
ergy! and

¹⁹⁵ As for the equivalent *nāgendra / klu dbang*, see Negi, s.v. *klu'i dbang po* (p. 93): '= *klu dbang nāgendrah*'.

¹⁹⁶ As for the equivalent *aparājita / gzhan gyis mi thub pa*, see Mañjuvajra-maṇḍala ('Jam pa'i rdo rje'i dkyil 'khor), NY_s 172,35; NY_t 174,6, where Aparājita is also positioned in the west.

¹⁹⁷ As for the equivalent *yakṣī / gnod sbyin ma*, see Vajrasattva-maṇḍala (rDo rje sems dpa'i dkyil 'khor) according to the Samputatantra, NY_s 44,16: *vajrayakṣī*; NY_t 44,28: *rdo rje gnod sbyin ma*, where Vajrayakṣī is positioned in the northeast (*aiśānyān*; *dbang ldan du*).

¹⁹⁸ As for the equivalent *amṛtakunḍalin / bdud rtsi 'khyil pa*, see Dharmadhātuvāgīśvara-maṇḍala (Chos kyi dbyings gsung gi dbang phyug gi dkyil 'khor), NY_s 209,7: *amṛtakunḍali*; NY_t 209,12: *bdud rtsi 'khyil pa*.

Great Mother Consort Rlung 'byin ma, protect [our good] fortunes!

[§2.4.9. Prayer for the Northeastern Direction]

As dBang ldan ma scatters [our] life-energy in the northeast,
Great Fierce Khams gsum rnam rgyal, summon [the return of our]
life-energy! and
Great Mother Consort gSod byed ma, protect [our good] fortunes!

[§2.4.10. Prayer for the Nadir]

As the hands of lord of the earth (*sa bdag*)¹⁹⁹ scatters [our] life-energy
in the nadir,
Great Fierce Mahābala (*stobs po che*),²⁰⁰ summon [the return of our]
life-energy! and
Great Mother Consort sKyod byed ma, protect [our good] fortunes!
Om ā hūṃ, diduṃ vajra āyūṣe hūṃ aḥ.

[§2.5. Prayer to the Animal-headed Attendants]

[§2.5.1. Prayer for Protection in the Variegated Lofty Sky]

Hriḥ! As [our] life-energy scatters in the midst of (*gseb tu*) the varie-
gated (*phra phro'i*) lofty sky (*dgung pa*),
Attendant (*phyag brnyan*) Phag mgo can (who has a pig's head),²⁰¹
summon [the return of our] life-energy! and
Great Mother Consort sMig bu'i mgo can ma (who has a lizard's
head), protect [our good] fortunes!

[§2.5.2. Prayer for Protection in the Forest in the Southern Valley]

As [our] life-energy scatters in the midst of forest in the southern
valley,
Attendant sTag mgo can (who has a tiger's head), summon [the re-
turn of our] life-energy! and
[Great Mother Consort] Bya rgod mgo can ma (who has a vulture's
head), protect [our good] fortunes!

¹⁹⁹ As for the term *sa bdag*, see *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, s.v. *sa bdag* (p. 2898): '[...] (3) *sa bdag zer ba'i mi ma yin/ 地祇, 土地神*'; Negi, s.v. *sa bdag* (p. 7021): '= *rgyal po bhūpatih'*.

²⁰⁰ As for the equivalent *mahābala/stobs po che*, see **Guhyasamājākṣobhya-maṇḍala* (*gSang 'dus mi bskyod pa'i dkyil 'khor), NY_s 33,15: *mahābalaḥ*; NY_t 34,5: *stobs po che*.

²⁰¹ As for the term *phag mgo can*, see *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, s.v. *phag mgo* (p. 1700): '(1) *sems can phag gi mgo bo'*. In the *sPu gri nag po'i rgyud*, there are said to be twenty emanated deities such as who has hawk head, but no specific names are given for the deities. See *sPu gri nag po'i rgyud*, 95,5: *khra thabs mgo gnyan nyi shu dang*. Regarding the term *gnyan*, as Boord 1993 has reported in the critical apparatus (242n106), *brnyan* and *rnyan* are compared as variant reading.

[§2.5.3. Prayer for Protection in the Rocky Copper Mountain]

As [our] life-energy scatters somewhere (*zang ma zong du*)²⁰² in the rocky mountain (*rdza ri*),

Attendant g.Yag mgo can (who has a yak's head), summon [the return of our] life-energy! and

[Great Mother Consort] Bya rog mgo can ma (who has a crow's head), protect [our good] fortunes!

[§2.5.4. Prayer for Protection in the Green Hills]

As [our] life-energy scatters somewhere (*zhal ma zhol du*) in the green hills (*spang ri*),

Attendant Sha ba'i mgo can (who has a deer's head), summon [the return of our] life-energy! and

[Great Mother Consort] 'Ug pa'i mgo can ma (who has an owl's head), protect [our good] fortunes!

[§2.5.5. Prayer for Protection in the Snow and Slate]

As [our] life-energy scatters in the midst of (*mtshams su*) snow and slate (*g.ya'*),

Attendant g.Zig mgo can (who has a leopard's head), summon [the return of our] life-energy! and

[Great Mother Consort] Khwa ta'i mgo can ma (who has a crow's head), protect [our good] fortunes!

[§2.5.6. Prayer for Protection in the Field Edge]

As [our] life-energy scatters somewhere (*khyad ma khyud du*) in the field edge (*zhing tshigs*),

Attendant Byi ba'i mgo can (who has a mouse's head),²⁰³ summon [the return of our] life-energy! and

[Great Mother Consort] Pu shud mgo can ma (who has a hoopoe's head), protect [our good] fortunes!

[§2.5.7. Prayer for Protection in the Black Shadow of the Evening]

As [our] life-energy scatters in the black shadow of the evening,

Attendant s.Pyang mgo can (who has a wolf's head), summon [the return of our] life-energy! and

²⁰² In the phrase "*zang ma zong du*", just like the following "*zhal ma zhol du*" (§2.5.4), "*khyad ma khyud du*" (§2.5.6) and so forth, the vowel alternation (e.g. *a/o*) along with the negative "*ma*" would seem to suggest the approximate feature of "something like" in a rhyming way. The finer nuances are still to be investigated and thus deserve more meticulous attention in future studies.

²⁰³ As for the term *byi ba* (mouse), interestingly, *byi la* (cat) is consistently attested in DT_C. And thus my choice seems even more of a toss-up to be fully warranted at present.

[Great Mother Consort] Khra yi mgo can ma (who has a hawk's head), protect [our good] fortunes!

[§2.5.8. Prayer for Protection in the Maroon Maimed Snow Mountain]
As [our] life-energy scatters in the maroon maimed snow mountain (*gangs ri smug rdum*),²⁰⁴
Attendant Seng mgo can (who has a lion's head), summon [the return of our] life-energy! and
[Great Mother Consort] Pha wang mgo can ma (who has a bat's head), protect [our good] fortunes!

[§2.5.9. Prayer for Protection in the Cold Desert]
As [our] life-energy scatters somewhere (*phyad ma phyod du*) in the cold desert (*byang thang*),²⁰⁵
Attendant Dred mgo can (who has a Dred's head), summon [the return of our] life-energy! and
[Great Mother Consort] sBre mong mgo can ma (who has a weasel's head),²⁰⁶ protect [our good] fortunes!

[§2.5.10. Prayer for Protection in the Expansive Oceanic River]
As [our] life-energy scatters in the expansive oceanic river (*chu chen rgya mtsho'i klong du*),
Attendant Dom mgo can (who has a bear's head), summon [the return of our] life-energy! and
[Great Mother Consort] Byi ba'i mgo can ma (who has a mouse's head), protect [our good] fortunes!

[§2.6. Prayer to the Four Guardian Goddesses of the Gate]
Four guardian goddesses of the gate, [namely,]
Añkuṣī (*lcags kyu [ma]*), Pāṣī (*zhags pa [ma]*), Śṛṅkhalā (*lcags sgrog [ma]*), and Ghaṅṭā (*dril bu ma*), summon [the return of our] life-energy! and
protectors of the oath (*dam can srung ma rnams*), protect [our good] fortunes!

²⁰⁴ I take the term *rdum*, lit. 'maimed, mutilated' (see Jäschke, s.v. *rdum po* (p. 286)), in the sense of "denuded (mountain)".

²⁰⁵ As for the term *byang thang* (cold desert), see *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, s.v. *byang thang* (p. 1872): '[...] *gnam gshis skam shas dang grang ngar ha cang chen po yod*'.

²⁰⁶ The term *sbre mong* (DT_B and DT_C) is apparently an older form of *sre mong* (DT_A and DT_D). See *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, s.vv. *sbre mong* (p. 2035): '(*rnying*) *sre mong*', and *sre mong* (p. 2985): '*ne'u le*'.

[§3. Concealing and Protecting Life-energy]
[§3.1. Development Phase]

And then, for concealing and protecting life-energy, contemplate that the letter *rGri* in green [concealed] inside [your] life artery (*srog rtsa*). At the gate of life artery (*rtsa sgo*), both Hayagrīva and Amṛtakuṇḍalin protect [it] with their feet crossed.

[§3.2. Concealment]

Hrīh, [this] greatly virtuous precept of life should be concealed into the [*dharmā-*]dhātu (*dbyings*). By concealing life-energy into the *dharmadhātu*, even a Buddha could not perceive [it].
Mahābodhicitta dharmajñāna hūṃ aḥ.

[§3.3. Activity (*'phrin las*): Protecting Armour]

Hrīh, the great activity of [this] precept of life [works as] an unexcelled armour of the emptiness. [The armour is] armed with the protecting seal. By wearing the indestructible *vajra* armour, [you] would be protected from the erroneous great obstructors.
Oṃ vajra kavaci hūṃ.

[§3.4. Gathering Life]²⁰⁷

Hoh! By hosts of deities of the deathless *vajra* life, [and by] hosts of deities of the activity of *kīla*, our scattered life has been gathered.

[§3.5. Petition]

[In the same manner, our] crooked [life] has been straighten out, [our] cut off [life] has been prolonged (*'thud*),²⁰⁸ [our] consumed [life] has been extended, and [our] weakened [life] has been nourished [by the hosts of deities]. Beseech [them] for: [1.] birthless life-energy, [2.] life-energy of the deathless *amṛta* nectar, [3.] indestructible life-energy, [4.] life-energy of the victory banner which never droops, [5.] life-energy of the unchanging great bliss, along with the complete life empowerment, beneficial virtues, and blessings.

[§4. Receiving Empowerment and Siddhi]

[§4.1. Ritual Procedure]

Now, [this section] is about receiving the empowerment and the *siddhi*.

²⁰⁷ For an English translation of §§3.4–3.5 based on DT_A, see Boord 1993:211.

²⁰⁸ Regarding the term *'thud*, see Jäschke, s.v. *'thud pa*, *methud pa* (p. 244): 'to make longer by adding a piece, to piece out, to prolong'. Whereas Boord 1993 seems to render the term as 'replace' (p. 211): '[...] replace that which has broken off'.

Once [the empowerment and the *siddhi*] are bestowed to the disciple, the obstructors are expelled. [The disciple] ablutes (*khruṣ*) [in sacred water] and offers *maṇḍala*. And then [s/he] takes refuge, generates [*bodhi*]-*citta*, and [promises to] adhere to the general pledges. [As for these ritual procedures including] making petition and so forth, [they] should be followed according to the great longevity practice or the treatise of Vajrakīla.

[§4.2. Petition]

Hūṃ! For the benefit of all living beings, by the conduct of skillful means,
Buddha's activities,
[such as] kindness and compassion to tame whoever needs, are fully perfected.
So that please grant us the empowerment and the *siddhi*.

[§4.3. Dhāraṇī for Kalaśābhiṣeka]

After (*gsham du*)²⁰⁹ [reciting] the root *dhāraṇī* on Vajrakumāra with attendants (*'khor bcas*), "*Abhiṣiṅca māṃ*" is devoted. Then, [the practitioner] holds the [long-life] vase [over their head, and repeats the following *dhāraṇī*]: "*Buddha, Vajra, Ratna, Padma, Karma. Kalaśa abhiṣiṅca bhruṃ*".

[§4.4. Petition]

Hrīḥ! Bhagavat Nātha Vajra Amitāyus!
To own the body which is equal to the reaches of space, and to be authorised as the *vajra* body of the sameness (*mnyam nyid*) [or emptiness],²¹⁰
please bestow [upon us] the life empowerment of the *vajra* mind.

[§4.5. Retribution]

In the same way, the empowerment of virtue, activity, and so forth would be bestowed in sequence. The empowerment of the seven kinds

²⁰⁹ One wonders whether the text reads *bsham du*, in which case, however, the meaning of the phrase, namely, "to prepare" would not be explicit. As for the term *bsham*, see Jäschke, s.v. *shom pa* (p. 564): 'to prepare, make ready, arrange'.

²¹⁰ As for the term *mnyam nyid*, I understand it in the sense of *stong nyid*. See *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, s.v. *mnyam nyid* (p. 987): '(1) *gcig mtshungs kyi ngo bo'am rang bzhin!* [...] (2) *kun tu khyab pa'i rang bzhin te stong nyid!*'. In this case, *mnyam nyid rdo rje'i sku* is rendered as "the *vajra* body of the absolute nature".

of precious materials²¹¹ and the eight auspicious articles²¹² would be bestowed [to the practitioner].

[§5. Collecting Siddhi]

[§5.1. Blessing]

Now, here is about collecting the *siddhi*.

Hrīḥ! From the western direction, the realm of Padma dbang,²¹³

Bhagavat Nātha Vajra Amitāyus [appears].

[Within his] breast, [there is] a crescent-shaped charm box [with] a mark of the endless knot (*dpal be'u*).²¹⁴

From [the charm box,] the life (*āyu*) of the enlightened mind in red spreads out,

[and] bestows the *siddhi* of life (*tshe yi siddhi*) to us.

May [Amitāyus] bless this great secret of life!

[§5.2. Merit Transfer]

Thus [the practitioner] obtained the *siddhi*. Therefore [s/he] should

²¹¹ About the components of *rin chen sna bdun*, see *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, s.v. *rin chen sna bdun* (p. 2697): 'rgyal srid sna bdun te 'khor lo rin po che/ nor bu rin po che/ btsun mo rin po che/ blon po rin po che/ glang po rin po che/ rta mchog rin po che/ dmag dpon rin po che bcas so'.

²¹² About the components of *bkra shis rdzas brgyad*, see *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, s.v. *bkra shis rdzas brgyad* (p. 84): 'me long dang/ zho/ rtswa dur ba/ shing tog bil ba/ dung g.yas 'khyil/ ghi wang/ li khri/ yungs kar te brgyad'.

²¹³ Regarding the term *padma dbang*, the connection between *padma* and *dbang* is unclear. It might be treated syllabically with supplement as "Padma [Amitāyus, who bestows] the empowerment". This rendering seems plausible in view of the close correspondence with the above-mentioned "*padma tshe dpag [med]*" (Padma Amitāyus), whose abode is also said to be the western direction, see §2.1. Semantically, here in §5.1, as there is a notable variant reading *padma 'od* (DT_A, DT_D) for *padma dbang* (DT_B, DT_C), the Tibetan rendering of 'od which might designate Amitābha ('*od dpag med/ snang ba mtha' yas*) undoubtedly deserves a separate examination. Hence the following table (Table 3) provides a degree of help in this confusion mainly concerning the name Amitāyus/ Amitābha among the four manuscripts.

Table 3: The Various Figures Shown in the Western Direction

§1.1	<i>snang mtha' tshe dpag med</i>
§2.1	<i>padma tshe dpag [med]</i> (DT_A, DT_C, DT_D) <i>snang mtha' tshe dpag med</i> (DT_B)
§5.1	<i>padma 'od</i> (DT_A, DT_D) <i>padma dbang</i> (DT_B, DT_C)

²¹⁴ As one of the *bkra shis rtags brgyad*, *dpal be'u* (Skt. *śrīvātva*) can be interpreted as symbolizing of 'longevity or the "knot of life"'. See Reynolds 1999:256. For a secular symbol, see also Beer 1999:176: 'continuity or dependent origination as the underlying reality of existence'.

bless [it] and offer one's merit to others. Auspicious (*Śubham*)! Mahā Vidyādhara's (i.e. Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can) discovered text [comes to an end].

Abbreviations and Bibliography

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Compilation C

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ICPBS International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies.

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²¹⁵ All the above foliations of Compilation A, B, and C are gleaned from Boord 1993:8.

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- P Peking edition of bKa' 'gyur and bsTan 'gyur. Numbers according to catalogue published in: Daisetz T. Suzuki (ed.). *The Tibetan Tripitaka, Peking Edition: Catalogue & Index*. Tokyo: Suzuki Research Foundation, 1962.
- RT Kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas. *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo*. 111 vols. Paro: Ngodrup and Sherab Drimay, 1976–1980. [BDRC#W20578]
- T Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō. Numbers according to the SAT Daizōkyō Text Database. (<https://21dzk.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/SAT/ddb-bdk-sat2.php>)

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- Guhyasamājatantra*
(GS_s) See Bhattacharyya 1931.
(GS_c) 施護譯『佛說一切如來金剛三業最上祕密大教王經』T 885, vol. 18, 469c17–511b18.
(GS_t) Śraddhākaravarman, Rin chen bzang po (tr.). *rGyud phyi ma*. D 443, rGyud, ca, 148a6–157b7.
- Niṣpannayogāvalī*
Abhayākara Gupta.
(NY_s) See Lokesh Chandra/Nirmala Sharma 2015.
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 See Boord 2002, pp. 93–106.
- RT dkar chag dang brgyud yig*
Kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas. Rin chen gter gyi mdzod chen por
ji ltar bzhugs pa'i dkar chag dang/ smin grol rgyab brten dang bcas
pa'i brgyud yig dngos grub sgo brgya 'byed pa'i lde'u mig. In: RT,
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- gSal byed nyi ma'i 'od zer*
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The Life and Identity of mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal (1487-1542) – the Outstanding Master from Mustang, the “Ordinary Bodily Being”

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he Great Pundit of mNga' ris, Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje (Ngari Paṅchen Pema Wangyal Dorjé, 1487–1542) passed away more than five hundred years ago. But he remains well-known and recognizable in the Tibetan religious world until today. His oeuvre *Ascertaining the Three Vows* (*sDom pa gsum rnam par nges pa*) is included in the monastic curriculum of many rNying ma pa institutions.¹ mNga' ris Paṅ chen stood at the source of the cult of Tsi'u dmar po (Tsiu Marpo), a protective deity and the oracle residing at bSam yas (Samyé) monastery.² Also, he had a prominent role in the transmission lineages of various treasure cycles (*gter skor*) in the Dolpo area and in the lineage of the Mahākaruṇika's [Avalokiteśvara, the Great Compassionate One's] practice according to the system of Songtsen Gampo (*thugs rje chen po'i rgyal lugs*).³ The importance of his figure in the transmission of the Northern Treasures has been well-addressed in the earlier scholarship.⁴ After all, it was mNga' ris Paṅ chen who initially inspired his younger brother Legs ldan bdud 'joms rdo rje (Lekden Dūdjom Dorjé, 1512–ca. 1580) to seek teachings from Shākya bzang po (Śākya Zangpo, fl. 15th–16th cent). The former was eventually recognized as a reincarnation of rGod [kyi] ldem ['phru] can dNgos grub rgyal mtshan (Gödem Truchen Ngödrup Gyaltsen, 1337–1408/1409)⁵ and hold the title of the 2nd Rig 'dzin (Rikdzin), a lineage of incarnation that will finally settle at rDo rje brag (Dorjé Drak, 29°19'41.27"N,

¹ See Smith 2001, p. 17

² See Akester 2016, p. 316, fn. 43.

³ See Ehrhard 2000 and 2013a.

⁴ See Boord 2010, Ehrhard 2013b, Valentine 2013, and Dalton 2016.

⁵ Jay Valentine provides a case study on the formation and the passage of authority within an incarnation lineage and serves as an excellent source on Legs ldan bdud 'joms rdo rje and Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las. For the account of mNga' ris Paṅ chen urging Legs ldan rdo rje to go and meet Shākya bzang po, see *ibid.*, pp. 139-140.

91° 6'27.93"E), the headquarters of the Northern Treasures.⁶ Thus, mNga' ris Paṅ chen had a crucial role in the formation of the Northern Treasures and its passage from South-Western to Central Tibet. Nevertheless, his life, projects, and affiliations have not been studied in detail. This article is prepared in the hope to fill some gaps in knowledge on this remarkable spiritual master.⁷

1. Introduction

What makes mNga' ris Paṅ chen truly distinguished amongst the great number of Tibetan spiritual figures of the 15-16th century, is that he was a learned scholar, a tantric practitioner, a *gter ston*, and a righteous monk who attained according to tradition mundane and supramundane *siddhis*, along with the status of a *vidyādhara* – and all of that he managed to combine in one lifetime.⁸ According to Gene Smith, it is unusual to hear of an ordained *gter ston*, as most of them ought to have a female partner.⁹ This signifies that mNga' ris Paṅ chen possessed the utmost expertise in combining the three kinds of vows – that of the *prātimokṣa*, the *bodhisattvayāna*, and the *tantrayāna*.

mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal was born at the end of the 15th century in Mustang to 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan (Jamyang Rinchen Gyaltzen, 1445/1473–1558).¹⁰ The former was a *sprul sku* of Mar pa Lo tsā ba Chos kyi blo gros (Marpa Lotsāwa Chökyi Lödro, 1012-1097) and a direct prodigy to the Gung thang ruling family owing to the fervid temperament of his father Chos rgyal Nor bu lde (Chögyal Norbu Dé, 1450-1484) who was involved into an extramarital affair with 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan's mother.¹¹ When Padma dbang rgyal was born, the power was in the hands of A seng rdo rje brtan pa (Aséng Dorjé Tenpa, d. ca. 1496) and bDe legs rgya mtsho (Délek Gyatso, d. ca. 1500), the brothers of one of mNga' ris Paṅ chen's primary spiritual masters, Glo bo mKhan chen bSod nams lhun

⁶ Jakob Dalton meticulously documented the efforts of Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las in raising rDo rje brag to prominence, and the conflict that evolved around the recognition of mNga' ris Paṅ chen's *sprul sku* (see Dalton 2016, pp. 78-96).

⁷ I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Alexander Schiller for proof-reading this article and for providing me with the digital input of mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal's autobiography.

⁸ This unique combination was also noted and admired by his biographer Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las (See *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen by Pena Trinlé*, p. 310.6-311.1).

⁹ See Smith 2001, p. 330, fn. 818.

¹⁰ Karl-Heinz Everding provided solid arguments why 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan's year of birth should be taken as 1473 (see Everding 2000, p. 548, fn. 410).

¹¹ See Everding 2004, p. 269

grub (Lowo Khenchen Sönam Lhündrup, 1456-1532).¹² After bDe legs rgya mtsho passed away, he was succeeded by his brother mGon po rgyal mtshan grags pa mtha' yas (Gönpo Gyaltzen Drakpa Thayé), the uncle of Glo bo mKhan chen. As for mNga' ris Paṅ chen's maternal descend, he was an ancestor of 'Brom ston Lo tsā ba rGyal ba'i 'byung gnas (Dromtön Lotsāwa Gyalwé Jüngné, 1008/1017-1064/1076).¹³ Padma dbang rgyal left from Mustang in the direction of Central Tibet in his forty-second year, in 1528. He passed away in 1542 in 'On (the Öñ valley), south of Lhasa, and never came to visit his homeland again.

It is necessary to remark on the protagonist's full name, mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje Grags pa rgyal mtshan dpal bzang. "mNga' ris" designates a geographical area. Before the 18th century, the native homeland of Padma dbang rgyal, Glo bo (Lowo), was a part of mNga' ris.¹⁴ Thus, the first part of his title refers to his origin.¹⁵ "Paṅ chen" is an abbreviation for *paṅdita chen po*, the great pundit. Thus, "mNga' ris Paṅ chen" is a respectful title under which Padma dbang rgyal is renowned: the Great Pundit of mNga' ris. "Padma" is his *gotra* (*rigs*), and "dBang rgyal rdo rje" is the name he was given at birth.¹⁶ As for "Grags pa rgyal mtshan dpal bzang," mNga' ris Paṅ chen received this name upon taking his *bhikṣu* ordination.¹⁷

2. The Homeland of mNga' ris Paṅ chen

Most of the biographies on mNga' ris Paṅ chen, such as his well-known hagiography by Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las (Rikdzin Pema Trinlé, 1641–1718), speaks of a certain lHun grub chos sdings (Lhündrup Chöding) of Glo bo Ma thang (Lowo Mathang) as his birthplace.¹⁸

¹² For the translation of his autobiography and a catalogue of his collected works, see Kramer 2008.

¹³ See *A Talk by the Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 2v3.

¹⁴ According to Jackson 1984 (p. 5 and p. 10, fn. 21), Glo bo was a part of eastern, or Lower Ngari (mNga' ris smad). At the same time, a prophecy relating to mNga' ris Paṅ chen speaks of Upper Ngari (mNga' ris stod) as his native place. Cf. *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen by the Fifth Dalai Lama*, p. 166.

¹⁵ Valentine 2020, p. 130 suggests another possible explanation why Padma dbang rgyal was renowned under the name "the Great Pundit of Ngari" (*mNga' ris Paṅ chen*). He was a direct descendant of the lineage of the ruling family of Gungthang, "the seat of power of the entire region of mNga' ris" (Valentine 2020, p. 130). This suggestion is bolstered by the fact that bSod nams lhun grub, a native of Glo bo who directly belonged to its ruling family, was famous under the title *Glo bo mkhan chen*, the "Great Scholar of Lowo" (and not of mNga' ris). In addition, some biographical accounts report that mNga' ris Paṅ chen belongs to the "royal lineage of Gungthang in mNga' ris" (*mnga' ris gung thang rgyal po'i gdung*, see *The Historical Account of the Northern Treasure's Thubten Dorjé Drak Monastery*, p. 233.2). See *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 305.6

¹⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 315.6.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 315.1: *khrungs yul ni glo bo ma thang gi lhun grub chos sdings*.

Should an inquisitive reader try to locate this place, he or she will be highly disappointed because modern maps do not provide information on any locality in Mustang that goes by this name.

“Lo” (Glo) or “Lowo” (Glo bo) is the name of the Lo Kingdom, an area that is called “Mustang” nowadays. At some point in time, the non-native non-Tibetan speakers started to refer to the whole territory of the Kingdom as “Mustang,” a corruption of its capital’s name “Mönthang” (sMon thang).¹⁹ Tibetan written sources interchangeably adapt two spellings of that name: *sMon thang* and *sMan thang*.²⁰ For this reason, one might at first assume that “Mathang” (*Ma thang*) from mNga’ ris Paṅ chen’s hagiography is also a corruption of “Mönthang” (*sMon thang*) and designates either the area of Mustang in general (as did the non-native speakers do) or its capital Mönthang in particular. This assumption is substantiated by the fact that “Lo Manthang” is one of the five modern administrative subdivisions of the Mustang region of Nepal. Furthermore, some modern maps name the capital of Mustang “Lo Manthang” which sounds very similar to Padma ‘phrin las’s “Glo Ma thang” (Lo Mathang). However, a closer look will prove that the birthplace of mNga’ ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal is not the capital of Mustang. It rather turns out to be an old spelling of what we see as “Marang” on modern maps.

Glo bo (Lowo) in Tibetan indigenous literature designates the Glo Kingdom, i.e. Mustang. Its natives sometimes refer to its villages and towns by putting “Lo” before each of their names: for example, the Drakmar village is on some occasions called “Lo Drakmar,” the Tsarang village “Lo Tsarang” and so forth. Thus it is not likely that Padma ‘phrin las would refer to the whole territory of Glo as *Glo Mathang*. He is rather talking of a particular place in Glo, the *Ma thang* situated in Glo (Mustang). Even though it is common to find spelling mistakes in the names of toponyms in Tibetan indigenous literature, it is unlikely that Padma ‘phrin las could have misspelled the name of sMon thang because this name refers to the capital of Mustang, a large-scale political and religious center that was often mentioned in all kinds of literature. Furthermore, the toponym “Mathang” is clearly differentiated from “Mönthang” in mNga’ ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal’s autobiography, the primary source of the biography written by Padma ‘phrin las.²¹ “Mathang” in Padma ‘phrin las’s account is also not a name of a city or a village, for if that would have been the case, there would have been no need to provide a further elaboration “IHun grub chos sdings.”

Thus, IHun grub chos sdings had to be a notable landmark, but it

¹⁹ See Jackson 1984, pp. 5-7 and Dhungel 2002, pp. 185-186.

²⁰ See Dhungel 2002, p. 186.

²¹ *A Talk by the Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 22r6: *ma thang*; fol. 23v2 and fol. 27v1: *smon thang*.

can't be found on modern maps (as is the case with Mathang). The residents of modern Mustang whom I asked do not recall any ruins or any area by the same name. But lHun grub chos sdings was certainly a monastery, not a fortress. Firstly, its name has a religious connotation and secondly, mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal refers to it as "his [native] monastery"²² and Padma 'phrin las as well states that this is a monastery.²³

Some locals, such as mKhan po Ngag dbang 'jigs med (Khenpo Ngawang Jigmé), a Sakya-affiliated modern researcher of Glo's History, reports that lHun grub chos sdings stood south of Ghar monastery, on the western mountain ridge of the upper Marang valley en route to the Marang pass. This assumption is made on the ground that locals call this area "Omo Lhündrup."²⁴

But apart from the similarity in the soundings of the names, this theory is not substantiated by any other arguments.



Fig. 1 — The ruins at "Omo Lhiindrup", 29° 6' 51.52"N, 83° 53' 19.05"E (March 2020, © Dawa Sunduk)

²² *A Talk by the Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 21v3: *rang nyid kyi dgon pa lhun sdings*. On another instance mNga' ris Paṅ chen refers to it as "lhun grub dpal gyi chos sde," see *The Wheel of the Sun and the Moon that Dispels the Darkness* by Ngari Panchen, p. 209.6.

²³ *The Biography of Jamyang Rinchen Gyaltzen*, p. 215: *ma thang lhun grub dpal gyi chos sdings dgon pa*. Cf. *The Biography of Lekden Dudjom Dorjé* by Pema Trinlé, p. 340: *glo bo ma thang lhun grub chos sdings dpal gyi dgon pa*.

²⁴ I am very grateful to Dawa Sunduk (Zla ba bsam grub) for sharing locations and local legends of Marang. All further photos were as well generously provided by Dawa Sunduk.

A comparatively recent publication from 2001 authored by a Sakya-affiliated mKhan po bKra shis bstan 'dzin (Khenpo Tashi Tenzin), *The Register of the Progressive Spreading of the Doctrine in the Land of Lowo*, names the birthplace of mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal "lHun grub chos gling" (*Lhündrup Chöling*) and asserts it is located in Sag ra in Marang.²⁵ Sag ra is labeled as "Saukre" on modern maps and lies in the upper part of the Marang valley, not so far from "Omo Lhündrup."

Apart from the data given by Padma 'phrin las, there is another description of mNga' ris Paṅ chen's birthplace provided by the Fifth Dalai Bla ma who cites the *gter ma* text *Essential Summary of General Instructions* (*Spyi lung mdor bsdu snying po*) in his own writings.²⁶ It does not mention lHun grub chos sdings, but it does provide a descriptive account of mNga' ris Paṅ chen's native land as follows: it is situated to the south from the Yang 'dul (Yangdül) [temple located on] the Peak of sPra dun (Pradün), to the north of the Naga Subjugation Temple [of] Ge gar, on a side of a great mountain that resembles a mighty elephant, on the bank of a forceful grand river and in the upper part of Ma thang valley.²⁷ The words "south from Yang 'dul sprā dun temple" hint in the direction of Mustang. The sentence "north of the Naga Subjugation Temple" narrows the area down by talking of a certain "Naga Subjugation [Temple]" (Klu yi kha gnon) in Ge gar. The legends report that the Ghar Monastery in Ge gar was founded in the 8th century by Gu ru Rin po che (Guru Rinpoché, fl. 8th century) on a place where he subjugated the *nagas*. This monastery at times is referred to by the name of the area where it stands: the dGe dkar (Gekar), or dGes sgar (Gegar) monastery.²⁸ On Google maps, we see it as "Ghar gompa." The account provided by the Fifth Dalai Bla ma further says that the birthplace is in "the upper part of the so-called Ma thang [of] Glo bo." Ghar monastery (i.e. the *Ge gar klu yi kha gnon*) is indeed located in the upper part of a valley called nowadays "Marang" and this might mean that Marang used to go by the name of "Mathang," at least until the middle of the 17th century. Afterward, this name has at some point (perhaps even recently) been changed to "Marang" and the personal communication

²⁵ *The Register of the Progressive Spreading of the Doctrine in the Land of Lowo*, p. 230: *sngon ma rang zhes pa de ru gter ston padma dbang rgyal sag ra lhun grub chos gling du sku 'khrung pa'i padma dbang rgyal*.

²⁶ See *The Flow of the River Ganggā*, vol. 4 (nga), p. 174.

²⁷ See *ibid*, vol. 4 (nga), p.174.5-6: *yang 'dul sprā dun rtse yi lholl ge gar klu yi kha non byangll ri rgyal glang chen 'gying 'dra'i 'dabll chu chen drag po 'bab pa'i 'gramll glo bo ma thang zhe bya'i phurll*

²⁸ Alternative spelling is dGe sgar. The name dGe sgar means "White Virtue" (*dGe dkar*) and *dGes sgar* means "Encampment of Virtue." Its foundation is closely connected to Padmasambhava, who, according to a legend, tamed demons here en route to Central Tibet. The temple is also believed to be the first place where a treasure-text (*gter ma*) was ever discovered, see Ehrhard 2013, p. 242, fn. 5; p. 247.

with the local villagers had confirmed that the names “Mathang” and “Marang” are used interchangeably.²⁹ The rest of the account from the work of the Fifth Dalai Bla ma bolsters mKhan po bKra shis bstan 'dzin's statement that lHun grub chos sdings was situated in Sagra (or Saukre on the maps) because Sagra does stand on a bank of a river and on a mountainside. Although the modern-day Sagra actually lies to the east of Ghar monastery (not to the north), it could have happened that due to the continued land desiccation its inhabitants moved slightly to the south, and the main village in former times was located a few hundred meters further to the north of the modern-day Sagra (Saukre) village. This then would perfectly fit into the description given in the *gter ma* text that it is north of the dGe sgar (Ghar) temple. The communication with locals of Marang village had revealed that they think of Sagra as lying to the north of Ghar monastery and they do call sometimes the mountain to the east of the village “the Elephant’s Mountain” because it looks like an elephant to them.

Furthermore, the biography of 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan “vividly describes the shocks felt at **Marang** in upper Glo bo in 1505” and according to this account, his own residence and temple were not hardly affected.³⁰ This leads us to the conclusion that the residence of Padma dbang rgyal's father was located in Marang. To sum up, the descriptions of mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal's birthplace found in the old and the new textual sources³¹ point out that it was at the Sagra (Saukre) village situated in the upper part of Marang valley.

And so do the testimonies of Marang's local inhabitants who have no doubts that the area to the north of their village, namely, the upper part of the Marang valley, is the place where 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan's family was active. The Marang valley has several places associated with the deeds of mNga' ris Paṅ chen and 'Jam dbyangs rin chen. For example, the local villagers know the place located in Marang where 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan in his childhood was met by a party of lamas who came from Central Tibet looking for Mar pa Lo tsā ba's reincarnation. To the north of Marang village and to the south from Sagra we find a footprint attributed to mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal.

²⁹ Dawa Sunduk, oral communication in May 2020.

³⁰ For the account of this earthquake that took place in June 1505 and the descriptions of this event by the locals including the father and the spiritual master of mNga' ris Paṅ chen, see Jackson 2002.

³¹ Such as *The Register of the Progressive Spreading of the Doctrine in the Land of Lowo*, Jackson 2002, and *The Flow of the River Ganggā*.



Fig. 2 — The footprint found on the mountainside between the villages of Sagra and Marang that the locals ascribe to mNga' ris Paṅ chen (29° 7' 5.38" N, 83° 54' 27.70" E)

mKhan po bKra shis bstan 'dzin cites the verses from mNga' ris Paṅ chen's biography describing how he reversed the flood and says that this event took place in Marang.³² North of Sagra we find a *stūpa* commemorating this event that happened in 1498 when Padma dbang rgyal was able to stop the horrible flood when he was only twelve years of age.



Fig. 3 — The remains of the Flood Commemoration Stūpa (29° 7' 32.37" N, 83° 53' 35.66" E)

³² *The Register of the Progressive Spreading of the Doctrine in the Land of Lowo*, p. 230

The inhabitants of Marang also believe that mNga' ris Paṅ chen used a cave below the valley for one of his manifold meditation retreats. They call it the “Oglungpa cave” (*Og lung pa'i phug*), a provisional name that literally means “a cave below the valley.”



Fig. 4 — The “Oglungpa” (*Og lung pa*) meditation cave of mNga' ris Paṅ chen (29° 6' 51.40" N, 83° 54' 21.16" E)

To the north-west of Marang village, we find another cave that according to oral testimonies goes by the name of Golékha (*sGo le kha*). It is situated just across the river from the Sagra settlement, on a slope of a hill to the south of Ghar monastery.



Fig. 5 — Golékha cave (approximate coordinates: 29° 7' 19.03" N, 83° 53' 21.09" E)

The autobiographical details confirm that this cave is located in Gagar.³³ The biography by Padma 'phrin las describes how in 1513 mNga' ris Paṅ chen had made a retreat on Avalokiteśvara from the Northern Treasures tradition in Golékha cave and had visions of three different forms of Mahākāla.³⁴



Fig. 6 – The interior of the Golékha cave

The question of the exact location of lHun grub chos sdings, namely whether this monastery was standing on the western or the eastern bank of the river in the upper part of Marang valley remains open. To the west is the “Omo Lhündrup” area with some minor ruins (see Fig. 1) and to the east, just above the Sagra village we also find ruins of something that could have been that of a monastery or a fortress.

According to the eyewitnesses, one of the ruined walls seems to have been painted red which indicates that this was a wall of a monastery.

³³ *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 19r7: *dgun gyi dus su glo bo ge gar gyi/ sgo le khu yi phug tu spyan ras gzigs/ 'gro ba kun sgrol (=grol) bsgrubs pas gur mgon gyi/ sku yi bkod pa lan grangs gsum du mthong.*

³⁴ *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 317.1-2.



Fig. 7 — The ruins above Sagra village in the upper part of Marang valley (29° 7'17.10"N, 83°54'16.58"E)

The Sagra settlement is located on the eastern bank of the river and has ruins of residential houses to its north, whereas on the western bank (below the “Omo Lhündup” area, see Fig. 1), we find neither active settlements nor any signs of ruined settlements. Besides, the oral communication with local villagers revealed that they talk of the mountain to the east of the river just above Sagra (Fig. 7) as resembling an elephant. Given those facts, we could carefully assume that this speaks in favour of the eastern location of lHun grub chos sdings (Fig. 7). However, this remains mere speculation, and let us hope that in the future some new textual or archeological evidence will shed light on the long-vanished yet not forgotten witnesses of the spiritual greatness of Mustang’s masters from the past.

3. Tibetan sources on mNga' ris Paṅ chen

Tibetan indigenous sources provide very little first-hand early biographical information on mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal. He was doubtlessly an eminent and well-respected spiritual teacher, with numerous followers who settled around him in his new residence in Öñ valley ('On) in Central Tibet.³⁵ Yet, unlike many other prominent *lamas*, Padma dbang rgyal's biographies composed by his disciples seem to be non-existent. An explanation to this fact can be found in his

³⁵ The fact that a community of monks formed around mNga' ris Paṅ chen's residence is evident from his biography by Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las (See *ibid.*, p. 330.1, 332.4).

versified autobiographical writing, *A Talk by the Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland* (*Lus can skye bo'i gtam rin chen phreng ba*). According to the author, when he was in his forty-first year, several close disciples (*bu chen*) approached him with a request of allowing them to write down his biographical "account of liberation" (*rnam thar*). But the protagonist refused the requests out of several concerns, such as the fear of breaking the secret oaths that he gave to his guru and the *dākinīs*, furthermore, of becoming proud and uprooting the virtuous qualities (*yon tan*) that "arise in secrecy."³⁶

The known Tibetan biographical sources on mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal can be summarized as follows.

A. Autobiographical Accounts (16th century)

- A1. mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje. *Yongs rdzogs bstan pa'i mnga' bdag nges pa don gyi pan chen mnga' ris pa padma dbang rgyal rdo rje grags pa rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i rtogs pa brjod pa rin chen 'phreng ba*. (*Lus can ske bo'i gtam yang zer*). In Padma dbang rgyal, *gSung thor bu*, 48 fols. No date, no place. BDRC W3CN18537.
- A2. mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje. *gSang ba'i rnam thar rin po che'i rna rgyan*. (not available at present).
- A3. mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje. In *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa'i 'chad thabs mun sel nyi zla'i 'khor lo*. In Nyi ma 'od zer, *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa'i chos skor*. Gangtok, Sikkim: Sonam Topgay Kazi, 1978. BDRC W1KG12075. (An autobiographical narration is partly present, see pp. 165-229).

B. Traditional Hagiographies (17th–19th century)

- B1. Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, Dalai bla ma 05 (1617-1682). *Bod gangs can du 'phags pa'i thugs rje 'jug tshul las rgyal blon byang sems dang 'brom ston la sogs pa'i rnam par byon tshul*. In *rGyal dbang lnga pa ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho'i gsung 'bum*, vol. 8, pp. 155-161. Beijing: Khung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2009. BDRC W1PD107937
- B2. Padma 'phrin las, rDo rje brag rig 'dzin 02 (1641-1717). In *bKa' ma mdo dbang gi bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar ngo mtshar dad pa'i phreng ba*. In *Smanrtsis shesrig spendzod*, vol. 37, pp. 304-335. Leh: S.W. Tashigangpa, 1972. BDRC W21523.
- B3. Ngag dbang blo gros, sTag sgang mkhas mchog alias Gu ru bkra shis (b. 18th cent.). In *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung = bsTan pa'i snying po gsang chen snga 'gyur nges don zab mo'i chos kyi byung ba gsal bar byed*

³⁶ See *A Talk by the Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fols. 37v7-38r2.

- pa'i legs bshad mkhas pa dga' byed ngo mtshar gtam gyi rol mtsho*, vol. 2, pp. 32-41. Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1992. BDRC W20428
- B4. Chos kyi dbang phyug, Brag dkar rta so sprul sku (1775-1837). *Chos kyi rgyal po tshangs pa lha'i me tog*. In *Chos kyi dbang phyug gsung 'bum*, vol. 13, pp. 634-642. Kathmandu: Khenpo Shedup Tenzin, 2011. BDRC W1KG14557.
- B5. Blo gros mtha' yas, 'Jam mgon kong sprul (1813-1899). In *gTer ston brgya rtsa'i rnam thar: zab mo'i gter dang gter ston grub thob ji ltar byon pa'i lo rgyus mdor bsduḥ bkod pa rin chen bai dūrya'i phreng ba*, pp. 156-158. Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 2007. BDRC W1PD83972.
- B6. Kun bzang nges don klong yangs (alias rDo rje gsang ba rtsal, b. 1814). In *Bod du byung ba'i gsang sngags snga 'gyur gyi bstan 'dzin skyes mchog rim byon gyi rnam thar Nor bu'i do shal*, pp. 266-268. Dalhousie, Himachal Pradesh: Damchoe Sangpo, 1976. BDRC W19708.

C. Modern Hagiographies (20th–21st century)

- C1. 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje, bDud 'joms (1904–1987). In *bDud 'joms chos 'byung = Bod snga rabs pa gsang chen rnying ma'i chos 'byung legs bshad gsar pa'i dga' ston gyi dbu 'dren gzhung don le'u'i ngos 'dzin*, pp. 474-478. Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1996. BDRC W20827.
- C2. Chos dbyings khyab brdal, Bya bral (1920–1997).³⁷ Byang gter thub bstan rdo rje brag gi chos 'byung, fol. 231-302. In *sNga 'gyur byang gter chos skor phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 62. [S. l.]: Byang gter dpe sgrig tshogs chung, 2015. BDRC W2PD17457.
- C3. sNga 'gyur rig 'dzin (ed.). *mNga' ris paṅ chen padma dbang rgyal gyi mdzad bsduḥ*. In *sNga 'gyur rig 'dzin dus deb*, no. 32 (2017-03/04), pp. 46-50. Lausanne: Thegchok Ling, 2017.

The majority of the above-listed Tibetan biographical accounts and “stories of liberation” (*rnam thar*) available on mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje are either a paraphrase or a summary of the mid. 17th century's biographies by Padma 'phrin las (B2) or by the Fifth Dalai Bla ma (B1), except for the *History of the Nyingma School* by bDud 'joms Rin po che (C1). At present, the most comprehensive account on mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal is the biography in the recently published *Historiographical Account of the Northern Treasure's Thubten Dorjé Drak Monastery* (C2). All of these works largely rely on mNga' ris

³⁷ This name was adopted according to Valentine 2020, p. 115, fn. 3. The author thanks Stéphane Arguillère who helped to identify the authorship.

Paṅ chen's autobiographical account *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland* (A1). At some points, the text of that autobiography seems to make no sense for the outside reader. On some occasions it looks as if the verses are comprised of just some keywords put together, naming places, persons, and treatises. On other occasions, the reader finds informal dialogues and descriptions of the author's personal, intimate feelings. It seems as if mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal wrote the *Talk by the Ordinary Bodily Being* solely for himself. It was meant to serve as a sort of a diary, and he did not plan to share it with the wider public.

4. Padma 'phrin las's Biography of mNga' ris Paṅ chen

The principal source for the summary of mNga' ris Paṅ chen's biography is his hagiography composed by Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las in the second half of the 17th century, roughly one hundred and forty years after the protagonist's passing. As mentioned above, this hagiography closely follows the versified autobiography by mNga' ris Paṅ chen that ends with Padma dbang rgyal's forty-seventh year of age (1533). The hagiography of mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal is a part of Padma 'phrin las's extensive composition on the biographies of masters that stay in the rNying ma pa's transmission lineage of the *Sūtra Empowerment*, *bKa' ma mdo dbang gi bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar* (*The Accounts of Eminent Masters*). Padma 'phrin las composed this work in about one and a half months in the Yang dben 'chi med Pho brang (Yangwen Chimé hall) of rDo rje brag monastery in the summer of 1681 at the age of forty-one.³⁸ At that age, he had already received the transmission of the *Sūtra Empowerment* (*mdo dbang*) five times in his life.³⁹ Both mNga' ris brothers received the *Sūtra's* lineage from their father, 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan, and later forwarded it to sKyi ston Tshe ring dbang po (Kytön Tsering Wangpo).⁴⁰ Padma 'phrin las traces the lineage of the *Sūtra* empowerment through Legs ldan rdo rje,⁴¹ who is the "original source" of the *Sūtra Empowerment's* transmission.⁴² In the introductory sentences to Padma dbang rgyal's biography, Padma 'phrin las states that "the transmission [of the *Sūtra Which Gathers All Intentions*] should continue with the chief of the

³⁸ See the colophon to *The Accounts of the Eminent Masters*, p. 420.6: "thub bstan e waṃ lcoḡ sgar gyi chos smra ba'i dge slong bya bral ba padma 'phrin las kyis rang lo zhe gcig pa lcaḡs mo bya'i lo dbyar zla rva snron gyi zla bar 'go btsams/ dbyar 'bring chu stod kyis nya ba'i dbang phyogs bzang po dang po'i tshes la yongs su tshang bar 'og min bla ma'i gdan sa thub bstan rdo rje brag gi yang dben 'chi med pho brang du [...]"

³⁹ *Ibid.*, fol. 419.1: "da lta rang lo zhe gcig pa phan la mdo dbang tshar lnga song ba sogs [...]"

⁴⁰ See his biography in the *Accounts of Eminent Masters*, pp. 376–379.

⁴¹ See Dalton 2002, p. 171.

⁴² This remark made by the Fifth Dalai Bla ma can be found in Karmay 1988, p. 52.

lineage, Rig 'dzin rJe."⁴³ The reason why the younger, not the older brother is the chief of the lineage, is perhaps due to the fact, that the autobiography of mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal neither explicitly mentions sKyi ston Tshe ring dbang po nor gives the date and place of this event. For this reason, Padma 'phrin las was unable to explicitly include mNga' ris Paṅ chen into the lineage. Besides, Legs ldan bdud 'joms rdo rje belongs to the direct reincarnation lineage (*skyes rabs*) of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can, and thus he is of utmost importance for the *Sūtra's* transmission lineage of Padma 'phrin las. Although Legs ldan bdud 'joms rdo rje is the youngest son in his family, he is the "chief of the lineage" (*brgyud pa'i gtso bo*).

Thus, it wasn't strictly necessary to include the biography of mNga' ris Paṅ chen in the collection. The author explains his decision in the two first sentences of the biography, saying that since mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal was one of Legs ldan's main spiritual masters and that the former's activity was of enormous benefit for the Dharma, he decided to write about Padma dbang rgyal, too.⁴⁴ This stipulation sounds almost like an apology to justify the inclusion of mNga' ris Paṅ chen's biography into his *Accounts of Eminent Masters*.

That decision turned out to be of utmost significance and benefit for the future generations and researchers since the greatest part of consecutive biographers of mNga' ris Paṅ chen depended on Padma 'phrin las's work that summarized the known textual sources on the life of this outstanding master that were available at that time. Some of those sources are lost to the present day,⁴⁵ and the surviving autobiography in verses is a voluminous text that requires cumbersome work for its summarization, and ends in the forty-eight year of mNga' ris Paṅ chen's life, about eight years before his passing. We can thus be assured that Padma 'phrin las's effort prevented some bits of knowledge from falling into oblivion, and his role in preserving knowledge on mNga' ris Paṅ chen can not be underestimated.

Padma 'phrin las cites four sources that he used for the compilation of mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal's life: (1) the extensive versified autobiography, [*A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being,*] *the Precious Garland* (*rgyas par rnam thar rin chen 'phreng ba*), (2) *The Collected Works* (*bKa' 'bum*), (3) *The Record of Teachings Received* (*gSan yig*), as well as (4) the autobiographic, presumably versicular, *Secret Account of Complete Liberation, The Precious Ornament for the Ears* (*gSang ba'i rnam thar Rin po che'i rna rgyan*).⁴⁶ Only the first text survived to the present day, the

⁴³ See *The Biography of Ngari Panchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 304.5: "brgyud pa'i gtso bo rig 'dzin rje las brgyud dgos shing." Cf. Valentine 2013, p. 151.

⁴⁴ See *The Biography of Ngari Panchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 304.5-6.

⁴⁵ See the paragraph below.

⁴⁶ Cf. *The Biography of Ngari Panchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 332.5-6.

other three seem to have been lost at some point in the tumultuous events of Tibetan history.

Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las's account of Padma dbang rgyal's life takes about thirty large-sized pages, each page has six lines of text. About sixty-five percent of this work closely follows the above-mentioned autobiography in verses, with minor additions from the *Record of Teachings Received*. Padma 'phrin las makes a remark, that starting with the protagonist's forty-seventh year of age (1534), the events in the autobiographical account are not given in full, so he will continue the hagiography by employing the *Secret Account* and Legs ldan rdo rje's biography. Since other sources available to Padma 'phrin las (*The Secret Account*, *The Record of Teachings Received*, and *The Collected Works*) are not extant to this day, it is difficult to evaluate to which extent Padma 'phrin las utilized them. Likely, that the events describing the supposedly visionary meeting with Blo chen bSod rnam rnam rgyal (Lochen Sönam Namgyal, 1400–1475) at Byams pa gling (Jampaling) monastery, the clear visions, and the prophecies⁴⁷ were borrowed from the autobiographical *Secret Account*. At the same time, it is reasonable to suggest that the events describing the invitation of 'Bri gung pa Rin chen phun tshogs (Rinchen Püntsook of Drikung, 1509–1557), the building of a residence in Ön, and the post-mortal arrangements were complemented from the *Biography of Lekden Dorjé* (Rig 'dzin rje'i rnam thar). Padma 'phrin las makes some minor remarks based on some of mNga' ris Pañ chen Padma dbang rgyal's works. For example, the reference to Nam mkha'i rnal 'byor (Namkhé Neljor) as a highly realized master who was “able to hover in the air, unhindered like a bird”⁴⁸ originates from mNga' ris Pañ chen's autobiographical narration in *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa'i 'chad thabs mun sel nyi zla'i 'khor lo*.⁴⁹

The verses comprise about one-third of the whole text. They are followed or preceded with a commentary by the author; all of them, except the concluding ones, are citations from bibliographical sources available to Padma 'phrin las. Thus, the concluding devotional verses were composed by the latter.

Roughly eighty percent of the entirety of verses employed by Padma 'phrin las derive from the autobiography, *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being*, a voluminous manuscript of ninety-six folios with six lines of text on each folio. In the first part, comprising about one-fourth of his entire work, Padma 'phrin las extensively cites the biographical verses, provides many details, including some subsidiary events, until

⁴⁷ See *The Biography of Ngari Pañchen* by Pema Trinlé, pp. 326.5–328.6. For translation, see Sukhanova 2021, pp. 117–118.

⁴⁸ See *The Biography of Ngari Pañchen* by Pema Trinlé, p. 324.4.

⁴⁹ See *The Wheel of the Sun and the Moon that Dispels the Darkness by Ngari Pañchen*, fol. 213.5.

at some point⁵⁰ he decided to give up the citations of verses and paraphrase them in prose. Interestingly, Padma 'phrin las abridges some of the years of the protagonist's life to just one sentence, even though the events that happened in those years took mNga' ris Paṅ chen several pages to describe. For example, the thirty-eighth year of age that takes about two folios of autobiographical verses describing the events in Dolpo,⁵¹ is summarized into just one sentence: "he widely turned the Dharma wheel of the New and the Old [Schools]." Likewise, the thirty-ninth year of mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal's life is condensed to one observation: "he did a lot of studies and contemplations."⁵² The difficulty of an effort of trying to convey some ninety-six pages full of events in one work is thoroughly understandable; however, Padma 'phrin las skips some important events, such as, for example, mNga' ris Paṅ chen's activities in Gungthang: the names of the persons and the teachings he received and transmitted prior his departure to Nepal. Another major omission concerns the meeting of mNga' ris Paṅ chen with the "heart disciple" (*thugs sras*) of Go rams pa bsod nam seng ge (Gorampa Sönam Sengé, 1429–1489), Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (Künga Gyaltzen).⁵³ Unfortunately, the scope of this work does not allow me to study the autobiography in full and in detail. However, even a cursory comparison of the autobiography to Padma 'phrin las's biography shows that the emendations of names, places, and transmitted teachings seem to be substantial. This stands in contrast to the first third of the biography, where Padma 'phrin las largely cited the autobiographical verses. The reader can not help but have the feeling that even though the author was surely acquainted with the autobiography, he did not plan the scope and contents of the forthcoming biographical project. It almost seems that Padma 'phrin las underestimated the volume of the autobiography, and as if he suddenly realized that he has to substantially abridge its contents in the course of writing. For this reason, the autobiographical contents are not presented proportionally: while the episodes from the younger years of mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal's life are cited thoroughly, many important events that took place later in his life were left out.

But even so, Padma 'phrin las's work is undisputable well-structured, the sentences are unambiguous, and the citations are explicitly marked. The life events are ordered according to the protagonist's age, similar to the autobiographical verses. Since the author provides his

⁵⁰ See *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen* by Pema Trinlé, p. 315.2.

⁵¹ Cf. *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fols. 36v5-37r6. For a rough translation of those events, see Sukhanova 2021, p. 104, fn. 751.

⁵² *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen* by Pema Trinlé, p. 320.3.

⁵³ Cf. *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 20v1-2. This seems to be Kun dga' rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po, see Sukhanova 2021, p. 96, fn. 713.

date of birth from the very start, this enables the reader to identify the dating of events without great difficulties. Except for some minor unintentional omissions, presumably made by the scribe, the verses are copied truthfully to their autobiographic source. Even though, as seen above, some autobiographical events are omitted, the author didn't miss any crucial ones: the occasions of taking vows and ordinations, receiving transmissions, and paying visits to important places are meticulously documented, including the person's names involved. To sum up, the biography of mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal by Padma 'phrin las is a reliable source for assessing the chronicle of events and the history of religious transmission lineages.

What follows is a summary of mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal's life based on Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las's biography in *The Accounts of the Eminent Masters* with some minor additions from the former's *Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland* and *The Historiographical Account of the Northern Treasure's Thubten Dorjé Drak Monastery*.⁵⁴

5. A Descriptive Summary of the Life and Deeds of mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal

The child who eventually is to be renowned as mNga' ris Paṅ chen was born in the Marang valley of Mustang. He starts his education at the age of eight. His father, 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan, "one of the most important religious personalities in Mustang,"⁵⁵ transmits him the principal empowerments and teachings of Maha-, Anu- and Atiyoga. The gifted scion of 'Jam dbyangs rin chen's family came to the attention of the local ruler (*mi dbang*) right away: the latter invited Padma dbang rgyal to give a public exposition. The nine-year-old child was able to defeat a certain Blo bzang (Lobsang), the "Great Pundit of mNga' ris" (*mNga' ris kyi Paṅ chen*).⁵⁶ At the age of twelve, Padma dbang rgyal had his first vision of a deity. It was Dhūmāṅgārī (Dhūmavatī, Düsöl Lhamo).⁵⁷ Pad ma 'phrin las remarks that Padma dbang rgyal saw specifically that goddess because the latter's father was an

⁵⁴ For the full translation of the biography of mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal by Padma 'phrin las, see Sukhanova 2021, pp. 74-128.

⁵⁵ Everding 2004, p. 269.

⁵⁶ And the ruler pronounced that this special child is "certainly a *tulku*" (*sprul pa zhig yin par the tshom med*). See *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 3v3-5.

⁵⁷ *Dud sol lha mo* or Dhūmavati. According to Cécile Ducher, *Dhūmāṅgārī* is the best rendering for *dud sol lha mo* (see Ducher 2017, p. 110, fn. 385). For the goddess's role in the transmission of the bKa' brgyud lineage and in particular, in the rNgog lineage, see *ibid*, pp. 109-112.

emanation (*rnam sprul*) of Mar pa Lo tsā ba. At the same age, Padma dbang rgyal reverses the flood that threatened the very existence of local inhabitants of Marang valley. The remains of a *stūpa* commemorating this event can still be seen in the upper part of the valley (see Fig. 3). In the next year mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal will have a vision of Bhurkumkūṭa (rMe brtsegs). At the age of fourteen he begins practicing austerities (*dka' spyad*), the extraction of nutrients (*bcud len*), and *Equal Taste* (*Ro snyoms*). These activities were interrupted by having to put his skills to serve the royal household of the ruler of Mustang, who quickly came to appreciate the talents of the young prodigy. As to be expected, Padma 'phrin las at this point omits that apart from long-life and *sādhana* rituals,⁵⁸ Padma dbang rgyal also performed rituals for repenting the Mongol armies (*hor dmaḡ*).⁵⁹ After mNga' ris Paṅ chen was done with the service at the ruler's court (a service that presumably was difficult to refuse), he continues to take special oaths (*dam 'bca*), to practice austerities, such as keeping silence (*ngag bcad*) and staying in solitude (*them spang*). He will intensively engage in such practices until the age of eighteen. At the same age he will vow to be a vegetarian.⁶⁰

Already in his fifteenth year of life, the future-to-be Pundit of mNga' ris shows interest in teachings from masters other than that of the rNying ma tradition. Padma dbang ryal goes to receive instructions from Glo bo mKhan chen at Brag dkar theg chen gling monastery⁶¹ and at the palace of 'Khor lo sdom (Cakrasaṃvara) situated at the mKha' spyod (Khachö) hill.⁶² About two years later Glo bo mKhan chen will invite Padma dbang ryal to travel and to attend some masters of the Sa skya tradition. He is unable to follow this invitation because his father commands him to stay home.⁶³ But the young Padma dbang rgyal does not give up his interest in the Sa skya pa. Upon hearing people praising

⁵⁸ See *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen* by Pema Trinlé, p. 309.1.

⁵⁹ *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 6v5-7.

⁶⁰ See *ibid.*, fol. 11v5.

⁶¹ Brag dkar theg chen dar rgyas gling (Drakar Thegchen Dargyé Ling) of the Sa skya tradition was founded by Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po (Ngorchen Künga Zangpo, 1382–1456) on his first visit to Glo bo, 1427–1428. After a series of calamities, the monastery was eventually moved to another place (see Heimbel 2017, pp. 289-290). For a photo of its ruins, see *The Register of the Progressive Spreading of the Doctrine in the Land of Lowo*, p. 48, image no. 33. The ruins are located at 29°11'11.3"N, 83°57'46.9"E. Cf. Kramer 2008: "According to G. Tucci (1956), p. 18 note 3, this monastery was located at the east of sMon-thang."

⁶² This place started to serve as the residence of Mustang rulers starting with A ma dpal (alt. A me dpal, 1380–ca.1440). The Cakrasaṃvara temple was consecrated by Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po in 1436 (see Heimbel 2017, p. 281). For the first account of meeting with Glo bo Mkhan chen, see *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 8r2.

⁶³ *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 10r2-3.

a certain Sa skya pa master⁶⁴ Chos bstan bzang (Chöten Zang)⁶⁵ Padma dbang rgyal goes to seek for him. This master eventually grants Padma dbang rgyal numerous instructions on the *sūtra* and the *vinaya*, and explanations on classical Buddhist treatises.⁶⁶ At the age of twenty-one Padma dbang ryal “skillfully sweeps away [the notions] of clan and familial lineage, as if it was a spit on the ground,” and relies on all the scholars with great devotion.”⁶⁷ Timely, in the next year, his father has a dream where he saw numerous Indian and Tibetan spiritual masters of different traditions uttering “I am Padma dbang rgyal” and dissolving into his son.⁶⁸ He continues to receive teachings from Glo bo mKhan chen, especially the exegesis on *Lam 'bras* that included the general (*Tshogs bshad*) and the esoteric exposition (*Slob bshad*).⁶⁹ His faith in Glo bo mKhan chen grows,⁷⁰ and he decides to follow his footsteps even more closely. Thus, in 1511 in his twenty-fifth year, he takes the full *bhikṣu* ordination at bSam grub gling (Samdrupling, 29°11'9.40"N, 83°54'25.32"E) monastery.⁷¹

In his autobiography mNga' ris Paṅ chen casually describes how he flew in the air, walked on a surface of a lake, entered the face of a cliff.⁷²

⁶⁴ This master likely belonged to the Sa skya pa as well, because he stayed at Brag dkar (Drakar) monastery. See *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 310.2

⁶⁵ Dūdjom Rinpoché calls this master “Nor bstan bzang po” (see Dudjom 1991, p. 805 and Dargyay 1998, p. 156).

⁶⁶ Such as the *Five Treatises of Maitreya (Byams chos sde lnga)*, *The Perfection of Wisdom (Phar phyin, Prajñāpāramitā)*, *The Valid Cognition (Tshad ma, Pramāṇa)*, *The Root Stanzas on the Middle way (dBU ma rtsa shes, Mūlamadhyamakārikā)*, *The Four Hundred Verses (bZhi brgya pa, Catuḥśataka)*, *The Compendium of Instructions (bSlab btus, Śikṣasamuccaya)*, *Entering the Bodhisattva's Way of Life (sPyod 'jug, Bodhicaryāvatāra)*, *The Eight Principal Subjects and Seventy Topics (dNgos brgyad don bdun cu)*, see *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 312.6. Other early teachers of mNga' ris Paṅ chen included Slob dpon Namka (*ācārya* Nam mkha'), 'Jam dbyangs chos skyong (Jamyang Chökyong), sDom brtson Tshul khriṣṣon dpal (Domtsön Tsültrim Pel), Dri med dam pa Rin chen seng ge (Drimé Dampa Rinchen Sengé), 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi rgyal po (Jamyang Chökyi Gyalpo). See *ibid.*, pp. 313.1-3.

⁶⁷ Tib. *mkhas grub kun la dkon pa'i sems kyis bsten// rigs rus cho 'brang mchil ma'i thal ba ltar// thabs kyis spangs nas*, see *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 13v7. The words *mchil ma'i thal ba ltar* is a common idiomatic expression that is used to convey a notion of something that has a zero value.

⁶⁸ See *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen by Pema Trinlé*, pp. 314.1-315.1

⁶⁹ See *ibid.*, p. 315.2-3.

⁷⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 315.3: *de'i tshe yang bla ma nyid dgyes mdzad rdo rje dngos su gzigs*.

⁷¹ This monastery lies about five kilometers to the west of Mönthang. As the seat of Glo bo Lo tsā ba Shes rab rin chen (Lowo Lotsāwa Sherab Rinchen, b. 13th century), it is strongly associated with the Sa skya school. Glo bo mKhan chen resided and passed away here in 1532 (see Ehrhard 2013a, p. 325, fn 20 and Kramer 2008, p. 77). For references on this monastery, see Heimbel 2017, p. 327, fn. 482. For a brief historical sketch, a detailed description of the ruins and its restoration plans, see Kitamura 2010, pp. 148-159.

⁷² See *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 310.3-4 and *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 9v3-4. In my opinion, this bolsters the

Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las's remark⁷³ demonstrates that in the 17th century Padma dbang rgyal was in the first place renowned as the great ordained pundit, not as a *gter ston* or a *siddha*.

In his eighteenth year, Padma dbang rgyal conducts his first visit to sKyid grong (Kyirong) and pays respects to the image of 'Phags pa wa ti (Padmapāni Lokeśvara) that was enshrined in the 'Phags pa lha khang (Phakpa Lhakang).⁷⁴ According to the autobiography, the statue miraculously talked on this occasion, and Padma dbang rgyal had clear visions of the geographical places he had a karmic connection with. In the future mNga' ris Paṅ chen will regularly pay his respects to this shrine and undertake a renovation of its *maṅdalas* around 1521.⁷⁵ The autobiography mentions his visit to the temple dedicated to Buddha Maitreya, Byams sprin lha khang (Jamtrin Lhakhang) only once.⁷⁶ Padma dbang rgyal started his frequent travels by visiting Dolpo in 1512. He stayed in retreat at the Shel gyi ri bo 'brug sgra (the Crystal-Mountain Dragon's Roar, 29°21'10.5"N, 82°56'00.6"E).⁷⁷ Padma 'phrin las omits that mNga' ris Paṅ chen contributes in building a temple (*gtsug lag khang*) in the vicinity of sTag phug (Tagphuk) monastery that was supposed to repent foreign invaders (*mtha' dmag bzlog*) from the

hypothesis that the autobiography was not meant to be shared with the wider public, since the same author later refused to give a permission for writing his *rnam thar* out of several concerns that include the notion of secrecy as being indispensable for nurturing virtuous qualities (*yon tan*), see *ibid.*, fol. 38r2.

⁷³ "Nowadays, some teachers of ourselves and others maintain that mNga' ris Paṅ chen was just a learned noble monk. [However,] I think that among people who consider themselves to be accomplished there isn't anyone who has the greater awesomeness of accomplishment signs such as walking on [the surface] of a lake, flying above a cliff like a bird, entering the boulder of a rock without any obstacles like a mouse, running across the precipice and so forth." See *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen* by Pema Trinlé, pp. 310.6-311.1: *deng sang rang gzhan gyi bshes gnyen 'ga' zhig mnga' ris paṅ chen mkhas btsun tsam yin zer yang/ mtsho'i steng du 'byon pa dang/ brag la [311] bya ltar 'phur ba dang/ ri brag la thogs pa med par byi ltar 'dzul ba/ g.yang sar rgyug pa sögs grub rtags kyi ngo mtshar 'di las che ba rang grub par khas len pa rnam la yang med 'dra snyam.*

⁷⁴ The self-arisen statue of Padmapāni Lokeśvara was housed in the temple of 'Phags pa lha khang (28°23'47.64"N, 85°19'39.38"E) until 1959. Afterward, it was "evacuated" to India and since then it is kept in the private quarters of the XIV. Dalai Lama. A rare photograph of this statue is found in Decler 2006, p. 78, p. 97. For the translation of the history, or "biography," (*rnam thar*) of this statue that was accidentally discovered within when it was transported from Nepal to India, see Ehrhard 2004.

⁷⁵ Padma dbang rgyal visited 'Phags pa lha khang for at least five times: in 1504, 1518, 1520, 1521, and 1522. See *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 10v7, 23v6, 28r2, 33r2, 34r2.

⁷⁶ See *ibid.*, fol. 24r7.

⁷⁷ On this mountain, see Mathes 2019, pp. 299-321.

region.⁷⁸ In the future, from 1523-1524, mNga' ris Paṅ chen will spend two years in Dolpo meditating and exchanging Dharma teachings.⁷⁹ In the same year when Padma dbang rgyal journeys to Dolpo the first time (1512), he also goes on a pilgrimage to Purang (Tib. [s]Pu hrang), a journey he will once again undertake in the company of Glo bo mKhan chen in 1518. On his first journey in 1512, mNga' ris Paṅ chen visits the citadel of sKu mkhar Nyi ma'i gzung,⁸⁰ the Kho char (alt. 'Khor chags, 30°11'43.5"N, 81°16'03.9"E) monastery⁸¹ and en route encounters "Mongolian robbers" (*hor gyi jag pa*).⁸² He eventually composes a guidebook (*lam yig*) that includes a description of his visions and auspicious signs he encountered en route.⁸³ On his second visit to Purang in 1518, he visits Byang chub gling (Changchub ling, 31°20'33.58"N, 79°46'53.87"E), the "summer dwelling of Lord Atiśa, the place of Bāri Lotsāwa,"⁸⁴ where Glo bo mKhan chen bestows some

⁷⁸ See *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 18r6. Cf. *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen* by Pema Trinlé, p. 316.2-3.

⁷⁹ Padma 'phrin las limits the description of these years to saying that "at the age of thirty-eight he widely turned the Dharma wheel of the New and the Old Schools. At the age of thirty-nine he again continued numerous studies and contemplations." See *ibid.*, p. 320.3. For the autobiographical description of those two years, see *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fols. 34r4-37r6. For the rough summary in English, see Sukhanova 2021, pp. 104-105, fn. 751. mNga' ris Paṅ chen was "the unifying figure for the different transmissions [in Dolpo] in the 15th and the 16th centuries." (Ehrhard 2013a).

⁸⁰ This citadel was built in the early 10th century by sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon (Kyide Nyima Göñ) and Glo bo Lo tsā ba Shes rab rin chen (Lowo Lotsāwa Sherab Rinchen, fl. 13th century) translated many texts in the 13th century here (see Stearns 1996, p. 135). The visit to the Nyi gzung fortress is not mentioned in Padma 'phrin las's biography of mNga' ris Paṅ chen and was complemented from the autobiography (see *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, 19r2).

⁸¹ For the numerous variations of its spellings, a brief description, and references, see Heimbel 2017 p. 297, fn. 355. For a brief historical survey see Buswell & Lopez 2014, p. 431. For detailed descriptions of the modern monastic complex of Khorchag, its sitemap, historical survey, and colorful photos, see Gyalpo et. al 2015

⁸² And by virtue of taking refuge, he was veiled from their sight (see *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 19r7). This account is omitted in *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen* by Pema Trinlé.

⁸³ See *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 19r6. This guidebook seems to be inaccessible at the present. Cf. Dowman 1983 for a hypothesis that mNga' ris Paṅchen wrote the earliest guidebook on Nepal for pilgrims (*gnas yig*). It is based on the fact that [Tenzin] Chos kyi nyi ma (Chökyi Nyima) and Bla ma bTsan po (Lama Tsenpo) mention a certain "mNga'-ris Pan-chen" in their works (Dowman 1983, pp. 186-187). However, this hypothesis has yet to be substantiated, since Bla ma bTsan po refers to mNga' ris *Grub chen*, not to mNga' ris Paṅ chen (see Decler 2006, p. 104; Wylie 1970, p.18).

⁸⁴ See *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 24r2-3: jo bo a ti shas// dbyar gnas kyi sa cha byang chub gling// snying rje can ba ri lo tsā'i gnas / /

special instructions and empowerments to the public.⁸⁵

The first mention of Shākya bzang po in mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal's autobiography comes in his twenty-seventh year. In 1513, Padma dbang rgyal makes a six-month retreat under the guidance of Padma 'Bum. He applies "experiential instructions" (*nyams khrid*) on the Boundless Vision (*dGongs pa zang thal*) and on the *Blue [Cycle of] the Mind Sādhana (Thugs sgrub sngon po)*.⁸⁶ Later in the same year, he meets sPrul sku Shākya bzang po at the capital of Glo bo.⁸⁷ From him [Ngari Paṅchen] receives many empowerments and teachings such as the *Three Sādhana Cycles of the Northern Treasures (Byang gter sgrub skor gsum)*. In the sGo le kha cave (29°07'17.8"N, 83°53'20.4"E, see Fig. 5-6) he performs an initiatory retreat (*bsnyen pa*) on "Avalokiteśvara from the Northern Treasures" (*Byang gter spyan ras gzigs*), *Avalokiteśvara Who Liberates All Living Beings (sPyan ras gzigs 'gro ba kun grol)*⁸⁸ and sees three different appearances of Pañjaranātha Mahākāla (mGon po gur). In the course of his life, mNga' ris Paṅ chen strives to use every opportunity of meeting and receiving instructions and transmissions from Shākya bzang po. In 1518 and in 1520 at Gung thang and at dKar ye respectively, he receives the Nyang Cycles, *Hayagrīva [according to] the Nyang [tradition] (rTa mgrin nyang lugs)*, the *Great Yoga of Padmasambhava (O rgyan gyi rnal 'byor chen mo)* and *The Ngadak's Precious Ornament of the Dakinis (mNga' bdag gi mkha' 'gro nor bu 'phreng)*.⁸⁹ Padma dbang rgyal later gave the transmissions of Nyang cycles to 'Bri gung pa Rin chen phun tshogs, and thus it became an important element of the 'Bri gung bka' brgyud tradition.⁹⁰ Besides, mNga' ris Paṅ chen also met Shākya bzang po in 1521 at sKyid grong. On that

⁸⁵ See *ibid.* Padma 'phrin las limits the description of this journey by saying "at the age of thirty-two, he traveled to Purang as an attendant of Glo bo mKhan chen." (See *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 317.4).

⁸⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 316.4-5. Cf. *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 18v6.

⁸⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, fol. 19r6.

⁸⁸ Whereas Padma 'phrin las speaks of *byang gter spyan ras gzigs* (see *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 317.1), the autobiography provides the full name of this cycle: *spyan ras gzigs 'gro ba kun sgrol (=grol)*. See *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 19r7. mNga' ris Paṅ chen eventually transmits this cycle to rNam grol bzang po (Namdröl Zangpo, fl. 16th century). See Ehrhard 2013a, p. 327.

⁸⁹ See *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 24v4-5, 28r2. Cf. the biography of Legs ldan rdo rje: "They received the Mahākaruṇā and the Awareness-Holder cycles [of the Northern Treasure Tradition], the root empowerment for the *Assemblage of Sugatas (bDe 'dus rtsa dbang)* cycle, the longevity practice from the *Radiant Longevity Benediction (Tshe sgrub 'od zer dra ba)*, *The Hayagrīva cycle of the Nyang Tradition (rTa mgrin Nyang lugs lcags ral can)*, Śākya Zangpo's autobiography, prophecies, and treasure practices revealed at the Red Stupa [at Samyé]." (Valentine 2013, p. 140).

⁹⁰ Akester 2016, p. 169.

occasion mNga' ris Paṅ chen made lavish offerings to the Drang so sPrul sku and received the remaining teachings on [the *gter ma Cycles of*] *Nyang: the Peaceful and Wrathful [Aspects of the] Guru (Bla ma zhi drag)* and the *Black Wrathful [Lady, Tröma Nagmo] (Khros nag)*.⁹¹ Their final meeting took place in 1527 at dGon pa bDe grol (Dedrol monastery)⁹² in Byang ngam ring (Northern Ngamring). Shākya bzang po stayed there with Thugs sras Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan (Thuksé Namkha Gyaltsen, b. 1454–d.1541).⁹³ Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las remarks that on this occasion Legs ldan rdo rje received the *Boundless [Vision] (Zang thal)*.⁹⁴

mNga' ris Paṅ chen went on a pilgrimage to Nepal in 1522. He visited the Stūpas of Svayambhūnāth (Shing kun) and Bodhnāth (Byarung kha shor), and Pharping (Pham mthing). In Tham Vihāra in Kathmandu⁹⁵ he saw a *yogī* playing a huge *dāmaru*, wearing maroon clothes and bone ornaments.⁹⁶ Padma 'phrin las reports that mNga' ris Paṅ chen saw the great Indian *siddha* Śāvarīpa (Sha ba ri pa).⁹⁷ mNga' ris

⁹¹ See *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 28v2, 32v3-5.

⁹² This was the family estate of the Mes (Mé) family, “which had strong familial connections to the Northern Treasure Tradition” (Valentine 2018, p. 105, p. 107) and the seat of Thugs sras Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, b. 1454–d.1541 (see Ehrhard 2013b, p. 125, fn. 9). For the discussion of his life and the translation of his biography, see Valentine 2013.

⁹³ For the discussion of his life and the translation of his biography in English, see Valentine 2013.

⁹⁴ *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 321.5. Cf. *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 39v2.

⁹⁵ *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 33r4 reads *yam bur thang bhi ra*. “Thang Bihari [...] is the Tham Bahil or Tam Vihara in the present-day Thamel area of Kathmandu. Also known as Vikramaśīla, it was founded, or re-founded, by Atiśa Dipaṅkara in 1040. [...] It appears to have been a popular residence of Tibetans.” (Roberts 2007, p. 172). “However, of the plethora of names - Thang Baidhari, Stham Vihāra, Tham Vihāra, Vikramaśīla Mahavihāra, and Thamel Bāhāl - which have been used to describe this supposedly same Vihāra, only the last two are known to the Newars of today, and more research is necessary before we can definitely identify Thamel Bāhāl with Atiśa's vihara.” (Dowman 1983, p. 231). The geographical coordinates of what is known as “Bhagawan Bahāl” or “Bikramśīla Mahavihār” in Thamel are 27°42'56.05"N, 85°18'45.23"E.

⁹⁶ In his autobiography, mNga' ris Paṅ chen does not explicitly mention the name of this person (cf. *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 33r4-6).

⁹⁷ For a biographical sketch on this *siddha*, see Stearns 1996, pp. 139-141, fn. 46; Burghart 2017, p. 68, fn. 222. Śavarīpa was the guru of Maitrīpa (ca. 1007–ca. 1085) and lived much earlier than mNga' ris Paṅ chen. His possible dating ranges from the 10th up to the 15th century (see Mathes 2008, p. 249). For this reason, the account of their meeting is problematic. Perhaps, Padma 'phrin las makes this statement because of the existing belief that Śavarīpa was “known to have obtained the state of deathlessness because of his tantric practice” (Ehrhard 2002, p. 48, fn. 17) and realized emptiness (see Mathes 2008, p. 249). Besides, Śavarīpa is known to have given visionary teachings to Vanaratna (1384–1468, see Ehrhard 2002, p. 48, fn.17) and Vibhūticandra (12th–13th century); the visionary meeting with the latter

Paṅ chen stayed in Yang le shod (Yanglesho, 27°36'59.73"N, 85°15'51.05"E)⁹⁸ for seven days. He had a vision of Padmasambhava (O rgyan chen po) surrounded by the deities of the *Eight [Great] Sādhanas*. From the Nepalese guru Jñānaśrī and his disciples (Jñā na shrī yab sras) mNga' ris Paṅ chen received the *Cycles of Acala (Mi g.yo ba)*, the *Five [Great] Dhāraṇīs (Grwa lnga)*, *Tara (sGrol ma)*, *Yoga (Yo ga)*, *Hevajra (dGyes rdor)*, and *Vajravārāhī (Phag mo)*.

On his route back home in 1523, Padma dbang rgyal stays in a meditation retreat in dGe lung in lower Glo bo (Glo bo smad).⁹⁹ With a help of a *ḍākinī*, he realizes that he was once born as Ācārya Abhayākara.¹⁰⁰ Thereupon, mNga' ris Paṅ chen then decides he must receive the initiation of the *Vajra Garland [Vajrāvalī] (rDo rje 'phreng ba)*. So, he travels to see Lo chen dKon mchog chos skyabs, a master who previously acted as the presiding abbot (*mkhan po, upādhyāya*) at Padma dbang rgyal's monastic ordination at bSam grub gling in 1511.¹⁰¹ According to Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las, at the age of forty mNga' ris Paṅ chen completed all the approximation rites (*bsnyen par rdzogs pa*) on all the *maṅdalas* of the *Vajra Garland (rDo rje 'phreng ba'i dkyil 'khor)*, and that is something that deserves very high esteem.¹⁰²

happened at the exact same place where mNga' ris Paṅ chen is said to have met him, at Thām or Stham Vihāra (see Stearns 1996, pp. 139-140). Perhaps this is the reason why the master of mNga' ris Paṅ chen suggests that the latter must have seen Śavaripa himself at Stham Vihāra (cf. *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 33r4-6) and why Padma 'phrin las, basing his work on the autobiography, later wrote that the protagonist had actually met Śavaripa. The immortal *siddhas* are not considered to be something unusual in the Tibetan world (see Mathes 2008, p. 249, fn. 26).

⁹⁸ For the legendary accounts of Padmasambhava connected to this place according to various Tibetan sources, see Dowman 1983, pp. 249-254.

⁹⁹ Literally, "The Valley of Virtue." This village is nowadays sometimes spelled as *sger lung*, the "Private Valley" (see Jackson 1984, p. 35). Modern maps give the following variants: "Geling," "Gheling," "Chiling Gaon," "Ghiling Gaon." At present, this village administratively belongs to Upper Mustang, whereas Padma 'phrin las refers to it dGe lung in Glo bo smad (see *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 319.5).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 319.5-6. Franz-Karl Ehrhard understood this passage in a way that the *ḍākinīs* prophesized dKon mchog chos skyabs, not mNga' ris Paṅ chen, as an incarnation of Abhayākara Gupta (see Ehrhard 2013a, p. 319). However, if we read the autobiography, then it is evident that the karmic imprints of Abhayākara Gupta had awakened in mNga' ris Paṅ chen (cf. *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 34r6).

¹⁰¹ *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 316.4. Cf. Ehrhard 2013a, p. 319. On another occasion, mNga' ris Paṅ chen refers to this master as "the one who speaks two languages, pundit Chōjé" (see *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 16v4: *skad gnyis smra ba'i paṅ chen chos kyi rje|| 'khor lo sdom pa dkon mchog chos skyabs*). The title of this person, '*khor lo sdom pa*, suggests his affiliation with the temple at mKha' spyod.

¹⁰² *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 320.3-4.

Inspired by Glo bo mKhan chen in 1527, mNga' ris Paṅ chen decided to go to Tibet to “restore the precious teaching of the Victorious One” together with his younger brother Legs ldan rdo rje. Padma 'phrin las meticulously underlines that this journey took place after both 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan and the local governors (*sde bdag*) granted their blessings and permission to do so.¹⁰³ Prior to arriving in Lhasa, mNga' ris Paṅ chen and Legs ldan rje spent one year in Tsang.¹⁰⁴ Upon their arrival to Lhasa, they visit principle pilgrimage sites of Lhasa – the Ramoché temple and “the palaces on the Marpori and the Chakpori hill” (*pho brang dmar lcags*), and mNga' ris Paṅ chen yearns for the *Doctrines of Ngok* (*rNgog chos*) and *Pacification* (*Zhi byed*).¹⁰⁵ At Barkhor he is approached by the protectress dPal ldan lha mo (*dpal lhas*)¹⁰⁶ who advises him to seek those doctrines from rNgog ston gZhung pa, the rNgok Teacher of gZhung. When the mNga' ris brothers arrive to Nya mo skyur (Nyamo Kyur, 29°17'30.01"N, 90°56'23.15"E), the goddess Dhūmāṅgārī welcomes them.¹⁰⁷ At gZhung spre'u zhing (Zhung Tre'u Zhing, 29°12'38.20"N, 90°57'50.47"E)¹⁰⁸ and Thar pa gling (Tharpaling, 29°16'24.52"N, 90°55'22.49"E)¹⁰⁹ they met rNgog Rin po che bSod nams bstan 'dzin (Ngok Rinpoché Sönam Tenzin, fl. 16th century)¹¹⁰ and obtained the entirety of transmissions of the *rNgog dkyil* (*Ngok Maṅḍalas*).¹¹¹ Later in 1533, mNga' ris Paṅ chen again returns to the valley of gZhung and receives all the remaining doctrines of rNgog (*rNgog chos*), as well the [teachings on] the *Merging and Transference* (*bSre 'pho*).¹¹² Besides, sometime after 1528 in Grwa thang (Dratang), the mNga' ris brothers receive the *Cycle of Red Yamāri* (*gShed dmar*) and other teachings from Zhwa lu Lo chen Chos skyong bzang po (Lotsāwa Chökyong Zangpo

¹⁰³ See *ibid.*, p. 320.6-321.2

¹⁰⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 321.6.

¹⁰⁵ See *ibid.*, p. 322.1.

¹⁰⁶ In his autobiography mNga' ris Paṅ chen does not explicitly name this lady “*dPal ldan lha mo*,” but he cites her telling that she “is a goddess in a female body, the guardian of this area.” Cf. *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland* fol. 40r5: *nga bu mo'i lus can lha'i rigs/ gnas 'di nyid kyi bdag po yin*. For detailed arguments why *dpal lhas* refers to dPal ldan lha mo, see Sukhanova 2021, p. 107, fn. 757.

¹⁰⁷ *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 322.5.

¹⁰⁸ See Ferrari 1958, p. 55. Also, see Ducher 2017, pp. 358-359.

¹⁰⁹ This monastery was founded in the late 15th century as a residence for the Gyaltsa (rGyal tsha) branch of the hereditary lineage of rNgog (see Ducher 2017, p. 141).

¹¹⁰ He is the last master of “rNgog about whom something substantial is known” (for a brief summary of his activities see Ducher 2017, pp. 350-351).

¹¹¹ *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 322.6.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 325.4.

of Zhalu, 1441–1527/1528).¹¹³ Also, mNga' ris Paṅ chen highly praises the master Nam mkha'i rnal 'byor (Namké Neljor) whom he meets at the White monastery, dGon dkar (Gönkar).¹¹⁴ The teachings he received from Nam mkha'i rnal 'byor include *The Assembly of the Sugatas of the Eight Pronouncements* (*bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa*). This transmission was the last one out of total twenty-five times that mNga' ris Paṅ chen receives it in his life, and he feels that it is the authentic one.¹¹⁵ Around 1529 mNga' ris Paṅ chen meets a certain “Guru of Lhodrak” (lHo brag gu ru pa),¹¹⁶ with Kaḥ thog pa Chos rje bSod nams rgyal mtshan (the Dharma Lord Sönam Gyaltzen of Kaḥtok, 1466–1540),¹¹⁷ and with Kong chen Rin po che Nam mkha' dpal ldan rgya mtsho (Kongchen Rinpoché Namkha Palden Gyatso, fl. 16th century)¹¹⁸ in 'Phreng phu O rgyan chos rdzong (The Dharma Fortress of Oddiyana in the upper Treng valley).¹¹⁹

¹¹³ Based on his date of death, Cécile Ducher proposes that “it may be wiser to accept the dates for mNga' ris Paṅ chen's journey to gZhung given by bDud 'joms Rin po che, namely that it occurred 'starting from his 38th year,' i.e. from 1524 onward.” (Ducher 2017, p. 350). However, this is problematic because mNga' ris Paṅ chen's autobiography clearly places this visit between his forty-third and forty-sixth year of age (that is, if we take 1487 as the accurate date of mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal's birth, then this should have been between 1529–1532). Cf. *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 41v5.

¹¹⁴ This monastery was situated in Lhodrak in Tsendro (bTsan gro), see Ahmad 1999, p. 168. bTsan gro lies in gTam shul, see Akester 2016, p. 450.

¹¹⁵ *The Biography of Ngari Panchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 324.2. Throughout the course of his entire life mNga' ris Paṅ chen strived to find the “actual paper of the Treasure (*gter shog dngos*) of Nyang ral's *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa* cycle” (Gyatso 1986, p. 33, fn. 44). mNga' ris Paṅ chen's descriptive autobiographical account of his quest is found on pp.165-229 in “*The Wheel of the Sun and the Moon that Dispels the Darkness*.” (*bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa'i chad thabs mun sel nyi zla'i 'khor lo*). For a bibliographical reference, see Bibliography.

¹¹⁶ I was unable to identify this person. Cf. *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 42r1: *lho brag gi bla ma gu ru pa// sku mched mkhan chen seng rgyal sogs*.

¹¹⁷ In his autobiography, bSod nams rgyal mtshan lists the mNga' ris brothers as his disciples (for an analysis of his life based on his autobiography, see Ehrhard 2013, pp. 379-391). For a reference to this meeting, see *ibid.*, p. 390.

¹¹⁸ The biography of Legs ldan bdud 'joms rdo rje mentions that this master acknowledges mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal as the emanation of the *qualities* of the king Khri srong lde btsan (Trisong Detsen), and his younger brother as the speech emanation of rDo rje bdud 'joms (Dorjé Düdjom), see Valentine 2013, p. 148.

¹¹⁹ The entrance to the valley of Treng (Trang) lies east of rDo rje brag, on the northern shore of the Tsangpo (Brahmaputra) river, 29°21'23"N, 91°08'11"E. This valley nowadays belongs to Gongkar County. Other spellings include *'phreng po*, *phreng po*, *phreng bu*, *'phreng 'go* or *'phrang 'go* (not to be confused with Trango in Western Tibet (Tib: Phrang sgo, Chinese pinyin: chang guo xiang, which lies about eighty kilometers to west from Saga). The exact location of the Dharma Fortress of Oddiyana, O rgyan chos rdzong, within the valley seems to be unclear. This hermitage was founded by Rin chen phun tshogs (Sørensen & Hazod 2007, p. 180, fn. 428), a

mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal's activities as a renowned Dharma-master included presiding over the great accomplishment ceremony (*sgrub chen*) on the *Gathering of Intentions* (*dGongs 'dus*) in Yar res sNye mo¹²⁰ and giving teachings on the *Assembly of Sugatas* (*bDe 'dus*) at Phung po ri bo che (Phungpo Riwoché, 29°18'9.66"N, 89°15'24.32"E)¹²¹ in 1532.¹²² In the same year he held activity rituals (*las kyi cho ga*) at the monasteries of Ngor Ewaṃ chos ldan (Ngor Ewaṃ Chöden, 29°7'9.74"N, 88°49'31.08"E)¹²³ and Thub bstan gser mdog can (Thubten Serdokchen, 29°19'2.92"N, 89°2'0.42"E).¹²⁴ He also visited

spiritual ally and student of mNga' ris Paṅ chen and Legs ldan rdo rje, whom they likely first met at bSam yas monastery. The mNga' ris brothers later invited Rin chen phun tshogs to perform consecration ceremonies at bSam yas together (see *The Biography of Ngari Panchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 330.3-4). For more references on this valley and its connection to various historical figures, see Sørensen & Hazod 2007, p. 180, fn. 428. Eva Neumaier-Dargyay in her translation of mNga' ris Paṅ chen's biography names here a certain *Phreng so O rgyan chos bzang* who gave teaching to the mNga' ris brothers along with Kong chen Nam kha' dpal ldan (see Dargyay 1998, p. 158). However, upon consulting the autobiography, we can rest assured that *O rgyan chos rdzong* is a name of a place, not of a person, and that *bzang* is probably just a misspelling of *rdzong* that found its way into the Tibetan sources that the author used for her translation. The autobiography speaks of the "Dharma fortress" (*Chos rdzong*) of Phreng phu. It seems that "Orgyan" (*O rgyan*) was supplemented later by Padma 'phrin las (Cf. *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 42r: *de nas kyang phreng bu'i chos rdzong du/ grub chen gyi rgyal po nam mkha'i mtshan/ kong chen la 'jam dpal bshes gnyen dang/*)

¹²⁰ The modern Nyemo County lies about 150 kilometers to the east from Shigatsé, on the northern bank of the Yarlung Tsangpo river. Its former capital was Dar grong (Dardong), 29°26'22.94"N, 90°9'4.68"E.

¹²¹ This sacred mountain lies about forty kilometers to the east of Shigatsé at the southern bank of the Yarlung Tsangpo river near the modern-day airport. This place has a hermitage of Padmasambhava and is associated with discoveries of several treasure-texts (see Dorje 2004, p. 288). g.Yung ston rDo rje dpal (Yungtön Dorjé Pel, 1284-1365) used to have this place as his residence (see Ferarri 1958, p. 70; p. 162, fn. 628).

¹²² The explanation on the *Assembly of Sugatas* by mNga' ris Paṅ chen bears the ornamental title "*The Wheel of the Sun and the Moon that Dispel the Darkness.*" Full title: *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa'i chad thabs mun sel nyi zla'i 'khor lo*. For a bibliographical reference, see Bibliography.

¹²³ This famous monastic institution was founded by Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po (Ngorchen Künga Zangpo, 1382–1456). The abbot in 1533 was lHa mchog seng ge (Lhamchok Sengé, 1468–1535, see Heimbel 2017, p. 518), who paid a visit to Mustang in 1523. mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal attended lHa mchog seng ge's teachings upon returning from Nepal in 1523 (Padma 'phrin las refers to lHa mchog seng ge as Ngor chen lHa mchog bzang po, see *The Biography of Ngari Panchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 319.5).

¹²⁴ This monastery was founded in 1469 by Shākya mchog ldan (Śākya Chokden, 1428–1507, see Ferarri 1958, p. 70; p. 162, fn. 625). It is situated to the north-east of Shigatsé, on the southern bank of the Yarlung Tsangpo river. This was one of the monasteries in Central Tibet where monks from Mustang traveled to for obtaining the *bka' bcu pa* title (see Heimbel 2017, p. 308, fn. 399). This title means "the one who had mastered ten texts." For the history of its founding and for a detailed

and gave teachings at Nyang stod (Upper Nyang)¹²⁵ and Zhwa lu (Shalu, 29° 7'40.38"N, 88°59'34.54"E).¹²⁶ All those places belong to the gTsang (Tsang) province of Tibet.

In fact, mNga' ris Paṅ chen hopes to depart to gTsang earlier. But he follows the urge of Kaḥ thog Chos kyi rje bSod rgyal (Sogyal, the Dharma Lord of Kaḥtog, 1466–1540),¹²⁷ and rather unwillingly¹²⁸ accepts the request of a certain sPrul sku Chos kyi dbang po (Tulku Chökyi Wangpo) to come to lHo brag (Lhodrak) in 1530.¹²⁹ mNga' ris Paṅ chen visits bSam grub bde ba chen po'i gtsug lag khang (Samdrup Dewa Chenpo Temple, 28°22'0.93"N, 90°38'11.24"E),¹³⁰ mKhar chu (Kharchu, 28°05'36.0"N, 91°07'36.5"E),¹³¹ lHa bro (Lhadro),¹³² sMra bo lcog (Mawochok, 28°27'25.33"N, 91°26'46.81"E),¹³³ and Gro bo lung (Drowolung, 28°10'43.26"N, 90°49'38.45"E). Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las omits that apart from sPrul sku Chos kyi dbang po, mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal also gave teachings to “the king of lHo brag, Khra pa” (*lho brag gi rgyal po Khra pa*).¹³⁴ At Zha stod (the Upper Sha) and bTsan gro (Tsendro) mNga' ris Paṅ chen presides over a “great

account of its development during the times of Shākya mchog ldan, see Caumanns 2013. I was unable to find any evidence in support of Martin Boord's claim that mNga' ris Paṅ chen was the founder of that monastery (see Boord 1993, pp. 28-29).

¹²⁵ Alt. Myang stod. This district corresponds with the modern area of Gyantsé (rGyal tse), see Ryavec 2015, p. 38 map 10. The present-day Nyang valley lies to the south of Gyantsé. References: Sørensen & Hazod 2007, p. 312 (map).

¹²⁶ See *The Biography of Ngari Panchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 325.2

¹²⁷ Full name: Kaḥ thog pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan (Sönam Gyaltzen of Kaḥtok). See *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 42r2-3: *ka (=kaḥ) thog gi chos rje bsod rgyal* and *ibid.*, 42r7: *ka (=kaḥ) thog gi ches rtes (=ka thog gi chos rje)*. For the analysis of Kaḥ thog pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan's life based on his autobiography, see Ehrhard 2013, pp. 379-391.

¹²⁸ Cf. *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 42r7.

¹²⁹ See *The Biography of Ngari Panchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 323.4

¹³⁰ Alternative name: La yags gu ru lha khang (Layak Guru Lhakang). “For information on the Gu-ru lha-khang in La-yags (also known as the bSam-grub bDe ba chen-po'i lha-khang) and the rather few details on the descendants of Gu-ru Chos-[kyi] dbang[phyug] who kept the family residence in lHo-brag, see the historiographical work of Guru bKra-shis, p. 653.6-12; the site came in the 16th century into the hands of the lHo-brag gSung-sprul incarnations from the tradition of Rig-'dzin Padma gling-pa (1450–1521).” (Ehrhard 2002, p. 76, fn. 42).

¹³¹ For a detailed description of this site see Chan 1994, p. 693 (map). Also, see Ferrari 1958, p. 136.

¹³² This site in western part of Lhodrak is associated with Guru Chöwang (see Ehrhard 2002, p. 59)

¹³³ This was the residence of the descendants of Nyangrel Nyima Özer (*ibid.*, 2002, p. 26). In addition, one account reports that it was here that Ngari Paṅchen acquired the prophetic guide to the treasures that he will later reveal at bSam yas at the age of forty-six, see *The Historiographical Account of the Northern Treasure's Thubten Dorjé Drak Monastery*, p. 279.3-4.

¹³⁴ See *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 43r1.

accomplishment ceremony" (*sgrub chen*)¹³⁵ on the *Eight Pronouncements* (*bKa' brgyad*).

After in 1532 Padma dbang rgyal was finally done with exchanging teachings with sPrul sku Chos kyi dbang po and giving "all sorts of explanations of his own tradition to the descendants of Myang, those of sGang zur and others," thus fulfilling his obligations for the Padmasambhava's prophecy "granted to Myang Rin po che (Nyang Rinpoché, 1124/1136–1192/1204) that mNga' ris Paṅ chen Rin po che [should] restore the deteriorated doctrine's lineages,"¹³⁶ to come true, he straight away went to bSam yas.

At bSam yas, mNga' ris Paṅ chen gives teachings on *The Heart Essence of the Dākinīs* (*mKha' 'gro snying thig*) and on *The Five Stages of Guhyasamāja* (*gSang 'dus rim lnga*) to the descendants of the divine royal dynasty, the ones from the Bu tshal ba (Butselwa) clan.¹³⁷ Later, when mNga' ris Paṅ chen again stayed at bSam yas in 1533, he resides at the Bu tshal (Butsel) temple.¹³⁸ Here, in 1532, he composes *The Commandment, the Splendour of the Flaming Vajra* (*bka' yig rdo rje 'bar ba'i gzi byin*).¹³⁹ This text serves as the monastic constitution (*bca' yig*) for the

¹³⁵ "Drupchen" is a public ritualistic ceremony that may last for several days. It usually focuses on a certain deity (in this case, the deities of *The Eight Pronouncements*). The sound of the mantra of the particular deity on which the ceremony is focused may not be interrupted. For this reason, the participants usually take turns participating in sessions that run twenty-four hours around the clock. "The goal of a great accomplishment rite is for a group of ritualists and participants to communally realize the ultimate awakened state of Buddhahood through materializing and experiencing themselves and their immediate environment as a *maṇḍala* of awakened deities and their pure realm." (Gentry 2017, p. 58).

¹³⁶ *The Biography of Ngari Panchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 323.5-6: *myang rin po cher o rgyan dngos kyis lung bstan tel mnga' ris paṅ chen rin po ches chos brgyud kyi nyams pa gso bar gsungs pa'i don mngon du gyur te mnyang gi gdung sgang zur sogs la rang lugs kyi nyan bshad sna tshogs mdzad/ sprul sku chos kyi dbang por yang chos mang du gsan cing phul/*

¹³⁷ Tib. *chos rgyal lha'i gdung rnams/* (see *The Biography of Ngari Panchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 324.6). The autobiography mentions that those persons belonged to the *bu tshal* lineage (see *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 43v6: *de dus su chos rgyal lha yi brgyud/ bu tshal gyi chos rje dpon slob kyis*). The Bu tshal ba [clan] used to rule at bSam yas (see Smith 2001, p. 319, fn. 675). According to *The History of Treasures of Zablungpa* (*Zab lung pa'i gter 'byung*), those persons were lHa btsun Chos kyi rgyal po (Lhatsün Chökyi Gyalpo) and lHa rigs rNam rgyal grags pa (Lharig Namgyal Drakpa), see *The Historiographical Account of the Northern Treasure's Thubten Dorjé Drak Monastery*, p. 289.6.

¹³⁸ *The Biography of Ngari Panchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 326.3. In some sources the Bsam yas bu tshal temple is referred to as the *Bu 'tshal gser khang gling* (Butsel Serkang Ling), see Wangdu et al. 2000, p. 68, fn. 227. This temple was built in form of a Vajradhātu-maṇḍala (see Klimburg-Salter et al. 1997, p. 174).

¹³⁹ See *The Historiographical Account of the Northern Treasure's Thubten Dorjé Drak Monastery*, p. 297.6. mNga' ris Paṅ chen writes that he composed the text in the third month of the dragon year (without specifying its element). On the discussion why the dragon year should be considered to be 1534, see Sukhanova 2021, p. 126, fn. 845.

rDo rje brag monastery. Besides, he contributes to the renovation of bSam yas. In 1542 the mNga' ris brothers together with 'Bri gung pa Rin chen phun tshogs reconsecrated the bSam yas complex.¹⁴⁰

In 1533, mNga' ris Paṅ chen granted extensive teachings on the Northern Treasures. At Zangs mdog sgrags phu ri (The Copper-colored Mountain of the upper Drak valley)¹⁴¹ he taught the *Three Cycles* (*sGrub skor gsum*),¹⁴² *The Eight Pronouncements: Natural Arising* (*bKa' brgyad rang shar*), as well as the *Unimpeded [Realization]* (*Zang thal*), and the *Viśuddha–Vajrakīla* (*Yang phur*).

As a *gter ston*, mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal is known to have revealed treasure texts on one occasion in his life.¹⁴³ This event took place at the bSam yas monastery when he was forty-six years old. According to Padma 'phrin las, mNga' ris Paṅ chen employed Legs ldan rdo rje's *kha byang* the latter acquired at lHo brag srin mo sbar rjes can (The Demoness's Claw Cliff of Lhodrak).¹⁴⁴ Another account says that the prophetic guide was carried by the wind and fell into the hands of mNga' ris Paṅ chen when he was visiting sMrā bo lcog.¹⁴⁵ The treasures consisted of *The Full Gathering of the Gurus, the Awareness Holders* (*Bla ma rig 'dzin yongs 'dus*) and *The Full Gathering of the Gurus, the Eight Pronouncements* (*Bla ma bka' brgyad yongs 'dus*).¹⁴⁶ There were several hagiographies of Padmasambhava, one of them was the *Great Comprehensive Account of Liberation of the Exalted One* (*'Phags pa grangs nges kyi rnam thar chen mo*).¹⁴⁷ Padma 'phrin las refers to mNga' ris Paṅ chen's treasures as *The Five Former and Latter Profound Treasures* (*sNga phyi zab gter lnga*).¹⁴⁸

Sometime after 1534, the mNga' ris brothers build a residence in 'On. Many disciples settle in its vicinity. Padma 'phrin las refers to this

¹⁴⁰ See Akester 2016, p. 317; *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 330.3.

¹⁴¹ This mountain is the birthplace of gNubs sangs rgyas ye shes (Nupchen Sangyé Yeshe), one of the twenty-five principal disciples of Padmasambhava. Besides, this is the location of a hermitage of the 9th-cent. rGya 'Jam dpal gsang ba (Gya Jampel Sangwa), see Sørensen & Hazod 2007, p. 179, fn. 427.

¹⁴² Cf. *A Talk by an Ordinary Bodily Being, the Precious Garland*, fol. 44v1: *thugs sgrub gsum*. It included the *gDung sgrub sādhana*, see *ibid.*

¹⁴³ That is, apart from his endeavour in finding the "actual paper" (*gter shog dngos*) of *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa's*, see fn. 114.

¹⁴⁴ *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 324.6.

¹⁴⁵ See *The Historiographical Account of the Northern Treasure's Thubten Dorjé Drak Monastery*, p. 279.3-4.

¹⁴⁶ According to Franz-Karl Ehrhard and Christoph Burghard, *Bla ma bka' brgyad yongs 'dus* and *Rig 'dzin yongs 'dus* designate the same cycle (see Ehrhard 2015, p. 161, fn. 26, and Burghard 2017, p. 68, fn. 223). This statement requires further research. Cf. *The Historiographical Account of the Northern Treasure's Thubten Dorjé Drak Monastery*, p. 279.5-6.

¹⁴⁷ For the full listing of the treasures revealed by mNga' ris Paṅ chen on this occasion, see *ibid.*, fol. 279.4-281.1.

¹⁴⁸ *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 325.1.

community as “the monastic encampment of the *vajra*-holders” (*rdo rje 'dzin pa'i lcog grwa*).¹⁴⁹ mNga' ris Paṅ chen passes away in his residence 'On smon ldan gyi bla brang (The Guru's Residence of Ön Mön-den)¹⁵⁰ on 11th September, 1542.¹⁵¹ Legs ldan rdo rje managed the distribution of mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal's heritage. It included the materials pervading to the Sa skya, bKa' gdams, rNying ma pa, and bKa' rgyud traditions.¹⁵²

Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las lays an emphasis that mNga' ris Paṅ chen served “the Old and the New Schools without bias.”¹⁵³ Some later biographers call mNga' ris Paṅ chen “the non-sectarian sovereign of the *Sūtric* and the *Tantric* teachings” (*mdo sngags bstan pa'i ris med kyi bdag po*).¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 332.4.

¹⁵⁰ This residence is also referred to as 'On smon thang (Ön Mönthang), see *Historiographical Account of the Northern Treasure's Thubten Dorjé Drak Monastery*, p. 288.2. Oral communication with the monks of Dorjé Drak revealed that there should be four destroyed *stūpas* with relics of mNga' ris Paṅ chen in the valley of 'On located to the north of Brag dmar ke ru lha khang (Drakmar Keru temple, 29°22'44"N, 91°49'49"E). The monks of the Ke ru temple, in turn, reported that the ruins above Ke ru used to be a nunnery by the name of 'On smon thang (not smon ldan) affiliated with the rDo rje brag monastery (November 2020. I am greatly indebted to Tenzin Namgyal who agreed to drive from lHa sa to 'On to conduct the interview). Approximate coordinates of the ruins of 'On smon thang are 29°22'40.78"N, 91°49'31.48"E.

¹⁵¹ *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 332.6. The exact date according to the Western calendar is given according to Ahmad, 1999, p. 170. For arguments why the year of death provided by Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las is correct, i.e. 1542, not 1544, see Sukhanova, 2021, p. 124, fn. 845.

¹⁵² See *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 334.1-2.

¹⁵³ See *The Biography of Ngari Paṅchen by Pema Trinlé*, p. 320.4.

¹⁵⁴ *The Jewel Necklace*, p. 268.5-6



Fig. 7 – Places connected to Ngari Paṅchen in the Marang Valley of Mustang

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 The Oglungpa ('Og lung pa) cave | 4 Golékha cave (sGo le kha) |
| 2 mNga' ris Paṅ chen's footprint | 5 Ruins with a red wall |
| 3 "Omo Lhündrup" | 6 The Flood Commemoration Stūpa |

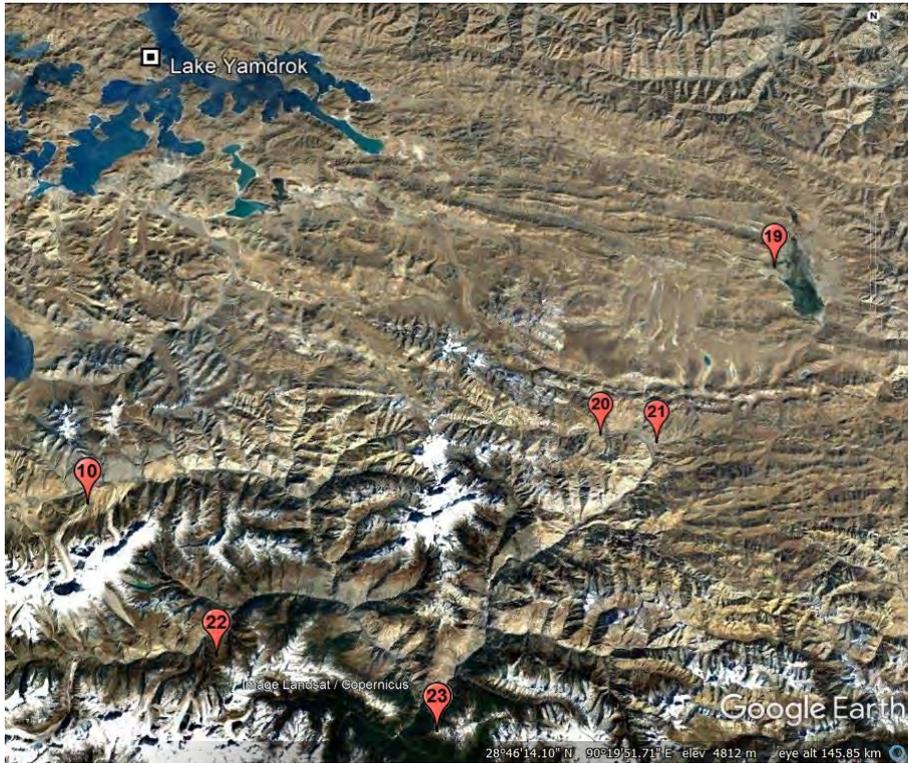


Fig. 8 – Places connected to Ngari Pañchen in lHo brag

10 Gangzur (sGang zur)

21 Mawochok (sMra bo lcog)

19 Trigu (Gri gu)

22 Drowolung (Gro bo lung)

20 Guru Layak Temple
(bSam grub bde ba chen po'i gtsug
lag khang)

23 Kharchu (mKhar chu)

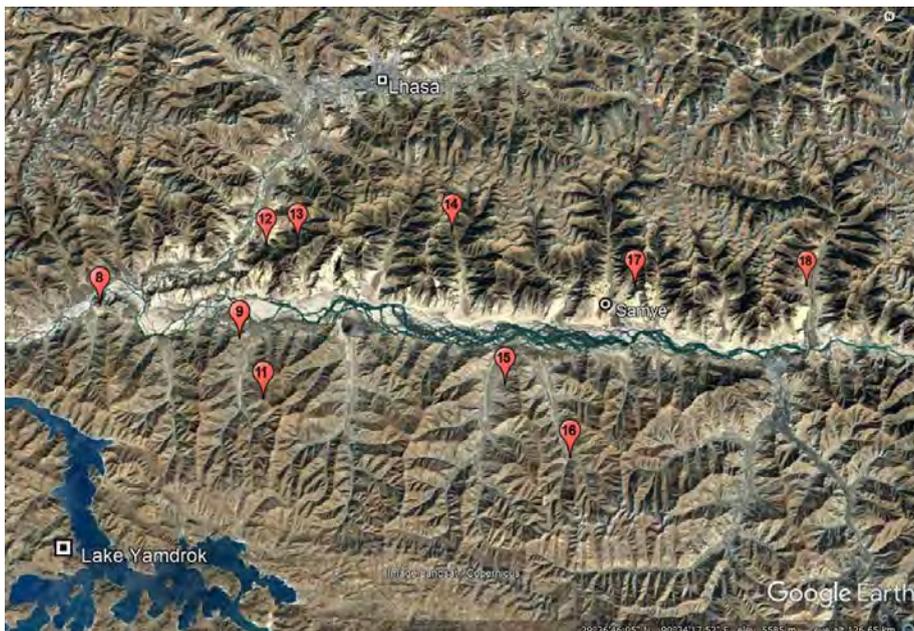


Fig. 9 – Places connected to Ngari Paṅchen in Central Tibet

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|--------------------------------------|
| 8 | Mt. Chuwo (dPal chen chu bo ri) | 14 | Drak Yangdzong (sGrags yang rdzong) |
| 9 | Tharpaling monastery (Thar pa gling) | 15 | Jampaling monastery (Byams pa gling) |
| 11 | Shung Tre'u Shing (gZhung spre'u zhing) | 16 | Mt. Chakri (lCags ri) |
| 12 | Ushangdo temple ('U shang rdo) | 17 | Chimpu hermitage (mChims phu) |
| 13 | Nyiphu valley (sNyi phu) | 18 | Ön Mönden ('On smon ldan) |

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The Heart Drops of Samantabhadra (*Kun bzang snying tig*) as revealed by mNga' ris paṅ chen (Padma dbang rgyal, 1487–1542)*

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Together with the systems of the Eight Pronouncements (*bKa' brgyad*), of Anuyoga, and Phurpa cycles, the teachings of the Great Perfection (rDzogs chen) occupy a central place within the tradition of the Northern Treasures (*Byang gter*). In general, when one discusses Dzogchen in the context of these Treasures, one immediately thinks of the *Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra* (*Kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal*) or its complementary cycle, the *Natural Emergence of the Self-Arisen Primordial Purity* (*Ka dag rang byung rang shar*), both revealed by the founder of the Northern Treasures, Rig 'dzin rGod ldem (1337–1409). In the present paper, I will briefly describe another Dzogchen cycle of this tradition, entitled *The Heart Drops of Samantabhadra* (*Kun bzang snying thig*). Several cycles of teachings share a similar title, for instance the *Kun bzang snying thig* revealed by Rva ston sTobs ldan rdo rje (17-18th c.), the one revealed by bsTan gnyis gling pa (1480–1535), or that discovered by Gro shul Las 'phro gling pa (15th c.). There even exists a late Bon work of the same title that was authored in the 20th century by the 'ja' lus pa Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan (1859–1934).¹

The cycle which is the object of the present study was revealed by the famed mNga' ris paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal (1487–1542), during his stay in bSam yas monastery. To my knowledge it has never been studied or translated in any Western language so far.

* This paper is a short introductory study adapted from the prefatory material to the ongoing French translation of the *Kun bzang snying thig* text to appear in the near future. I want to express my deep appreciation to Marianne Ginalski and Jay Valentine for their kind suggestions and corrections on earlier drafts of this article.

¹ See the abridged translation of this text in Lopön Tenzin Namdak, *Heart Drops of Dharmakaya*.

1. *The life of mNga' ris paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal*1-1. *Early life and education*

According to the *History known as the Torch of Primordial Wisdom (Lo rgyus ye shes sgron me)* by the Vth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin chen mo,² mNga' ris paṅ chen was born in the Glo bo county (Mustang, Nepal). His father, named Rin chen rgyal mtshan, was a tantric yogi belonging to a clan of practitioners originating from the gods (*lha babs*).³ Padma dbang rgyal himself was the eldest of six sons, his youngest brother being Legs ldan rdo rje (1512–1580).⁴ During his early years, he practiced various tantric cycles, such as those of Yang dag Heruka, Phur pa, the *Web of Illusion (sGyu 'phrul drwa ba)*, the *Assemblage of Sugatas (bDe gshegs 'dus pa)*,⁵ as well as various other tantric teachings from the rNying ma and gSar ma schools. Then, he took full ordination vows (*bsnyen par rdzogs*) from Glo bo mKhan chen (bSod nams lhun grub, 1456–1532)⁶ who gave him the name Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal. After that, he travelled with his younger brother, through dBus, gTsang, Lho brag, Dwags po, Kong po, and so forth, visiting numerous rNying ma masters from whom he received extensive teachings.

After that, he journeyed to O rgyan chos rdzong in Phreng po, where he met Kong chen Nam mkha' dpal ldan rgya mtsho (15th c.) from whom he received the transmission of the *Contemplative Fusion of the Master (Bla ma dgongs 'dus)* and the *Thirteen Heart*

² sKal bzang padma dbang phyug: *Lo rgyus ye shes sgron me, sNga 'gyur byang gter chos skor phyogs bsgrigs*, volume 54, pp. 285-289.

³ And not *lha bab*, which refers to divine possession. In Dūdjom Rinpoche's *Melody of Devendra's Great Drum* (p. 593, trans. *The Nyingma School*, p. 805), his clan is styled as *lha rigs*, a clan of divine descent in the scheme of the "three clans" (*rigs gsum*, i.e., *lha rigs*, *mi rigs*, and *klu rigs*).

⁴ Samten Chhospheḷ erroneously considers him as the older brother of mNga' ris paṅ chen (see <https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Second-Dorje-Drak-Rigdzin-Lekden-Dorje/3010>) while the *Lo rgyus ye shes sgron me* describes him as a younger brother (*gcung*, p. 285.-5-6, p. 287.3, and p. 289.5) and mNga' ris paṅ chen as the eldest among the siblings (*che ba*).

⁵ These cycles of practice all belong to the Mahāyoga class. On this category of teachings, see N. DeWitt Garson, *Penetrating the Secret Essence Tantra, passim*. See also the fascinating study by K. Eastman, *Mahāyoga Texts at Tun Huang*.

⁶ Or 1441-1525 (see TBRC Resource ID P782), a very famous master belonging to the Sa skya school.

*Drops of the Great Perfection (rDzogs chen snying thig bcu gsum).*⁷

Next, he travelled down to Lho brag and arrived in sMra bo lcog, a famed monastery following the tradition of Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124–1192). There, he met a descendant of Nyang ral himself, in the person of Nam mkha'i rnal 'byor⁸ and received from him numerous transmission, starting with the Treasure revelations of Nyang ral such as the *Assembly of the Sugatas (bDe gshegs 'dus pa)*, and the *Bi ma snying thig*, including its *One-Hundred and Nineteen Precepts (Man ngag brgya bcu dgu).*⁹

Following his stay in Lho brag, he moved north and visited countless temples in dBus and gTsang where he listened to teachings and reflected on their meaning. He also visited bSam yas, Brag kha and 'On smon thang (where he would eventually

⁷ The *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* is a revelation by Sangs rgyas gling pa (1340–1396), containing highly advanced tantric and rdzogs chen teachings. The corpus of the *rDzogs chen snying thig bcu gsum* refers to a set of teachings of which I have not been able to locate a complete list. The longest I have found is in Guru bKra shis' Chos 'byung (p. 428) where he lists the following nine cycles: 1. *The Heart Drops of Samantabhadra (Kun bzang snying thig)*, 2. *The Heart Drops of Vajrasattva (rDo rje sems dpa'i snying thig)*, 3. *The Heart Drops of Mañjuśrī ('Jam pa'i [= dpal] snying thig)*, 4. *The Heart Drops of Padmasambhava (Padma'i snying thig)*, 5. *The Heart Drops of Vairocana (Bee ro'i snying thig)*, 6. *The Heart Drops of the Quintessential Elixir (bCud phur snying thig)*, 7. *The Heart Drops of the Hūm Cycle (Hūm skor snying thig)*, 8. *The Heart Drops of the Quintessence (sNying po snying thig)*, and 9. *The Heart Drops of the Svāstika (g.Yung drung snying thig)*. Note though that, in the very same context and instead of the *Thirteen Heart Drops*, the *sKu gsum brgyud pa drug ldan gter ston bkra shis grangs kyi gsol 'debs kyi 'grel pa* by Brag dkar ba Chos kyi dbang phyug (1775–1837) mentions (p. 639) the *rDzogs chen snying thig bcu drug*, a collective appellation unknown to me. According to Kong sprul's *Abridged Methods for Explaining the Instructions of the Heart Drops of the Hūm Cycle of the Great Perfection (rDzogs pa chen po hūm skor snying thig gi khrid rnam kyi 'chad thabs mdor bsdus, Rin chen gter mdzod*, vol. 56, pp. 781–786), the *Thirteen Heart Drops* are actually a collection of texts (including the nine listed above) revealed by rDo rje gling pa (1346–1405). The collection of the *Thirteen Heart Drops* should not be mistaken for the eponymous *sNying thig bcu gsum* revealed by mkha' 'gro bDe chen dbang mo in the early 20th century.

⁸ Styled (p. 286) as *rje rigs*, i.e., belonging to the rJe clan (*rigs*). This clan is named *rJe'u* in other sources such as Dūdjom Rinpoche's *Melody of Devendra's Great Drum* (p. 596). Some regard it as a sub-branch of the lDong clan but I am inclined to think that, given the fact that Nam mkha'i rnal 'byor is a descendant of "Lord" (*rje*) Nyang ral and that he therefore belonged to his clan (*rigs*), *rje rigs* should be understood as referring to an aristocratic clan (of royal descent, as Nyang ral was a "Lord" [*rje*] in his fief) rather than anything else (in particular since, in classical literature, *rje'u rigs* points to the vaiśya [merchant] caste which makes strictly no sense in the present context).

⁹ The *Bi ma snying thig* is a revelation of lCe btsun Seng ge dbang phyug (11th century) which was later on re-discovered by Zhang ston bKra shis rdo rje (1097–1167). On the latter, see Achard, "Zhang ston bKra shis rdo rje (1097–1167) et la continuation des *Essences Perlées (sNying thig)* de la Grande Perfection."

pass away in 1542).

1-2. Revelations of Treasures and further spiritual training

It is in Lho brag gTam shul¹⁰ that he found the list (*kha byang*) of the Treasures (*gter*) he was predestined to discover.¹¹ With this list as a guide, he journeyed with his brother up to bSam yas where, in the Upper Hall (sTeng khang), from the “brown dome of the treasure of his heart” (*snying mdzod ba sgam [=gam] smug po*),¹² he revealed the cycle of the *Complete Assembly of the Eight Pronouncements of the Master* (*Bla ma bka' brgyad yongs 'dus*),¹³ the *Supreme Light of Amitāyus' Wisdom* (*Tshe dpag med ye shes 'od mchog*),¹⁴ the cycle of the Multicolored Garuḍa, the one centered upon rDo rje go lod, and other sādhanas. He further revealed two individual works making up the *Heart Drops of Samantabhadra according to the Great Perfection* (*rDzogs chen kun bzang snying tig*)¹⁵ and the *Heart Drops of Padmasambhava* (*Padma snying thig*), together with other Treasures connected to Gu ru drag po.¹⁶

After that, he gave and received numerous transmissions of the *Heart Drops of the Ḍākinīs* (*mKha' 'gro snying thig*), as well as of the *Assembly of the Blissful Ones* (*bDe 'dus*) and of the

¹⁰ Spelt sTams shul in the text. It is of course Lho brag gTam shul, the birth place of Nyang ral.

¹¹ This happened when he was 46, in ca. 1513 according to Dūdjom Rinpoche (*op. cit.*, p. 596).

¹² This is a literary device that one encounters in the *gter ma* literature in reference to the revelation of a Treasure through visions. However, not all works “revealed” in this way are considered *gter ma*. For instance, Shardza Rinpoche revealed several texts in this way but these are not styled *gter ma* and himself is not considered as a *gter ston*.

¹³ TBRC W27871 (in two volumes). This collection also exists in one volume (TBRC W23199). According to Mengyan Li (*Origination, Transmission, and Reception of the Phur-pa Cycle*, p. 107), “[t]his is the instruction for the ripen (*sic*) and liberation related to the gSöl 'debs lde'u bdun pa.” In reality, this statement should only apply to the first volume dedicated to the practice of the *Zhi ba* (nicknamed *zhi pod*, “volume on the peaceful deities”) which is indeed associated to this prayer which has been expanded with sādhanas, as well as Perfection Stage (*rdzogs rim*) instructions. The second volume (nicknamed *khro pod*, “volume on the wrathful deities”) is connected to the cycle of teachings centered upon Gu ru drag po (*gu ru drag po'i skor*).

¹⁴ This corresponds to the *Rig 'dzin yongs 'dus kyi tshe sgrub ye shes 'od mchog* which is included in the *Rin chen gter mdzod*, vol. 19 (p. 593-674).

¹⁵ The spellings *snying thig* and *snying tig* alternate regularly in this title but do not change the meaning.

¹⁶ The *Padma snying thig* is a very short work that he discovered under the name of Padma rgyal po Ye shes rol pa rtsal. I will discuss this work in a forthcoming paper.

Contemplative Fusion of the Master ([*Bla ma*] *dgongs 'dus*). At that time, his main disciples were—besides his own younger brother Legs ldan rdo rje—'Bri gung Rin chen phun tshogs (1509–1557), 'Brug pa Ngag dbang chos rgyal (1465–1540), Lha btsun Chos kyi rgyal po (16th c.), and numerous other erudite and accomplished practitioners.

In order to bring benefit to the doctrine and beings, Padma dbang rgyal invited Rin chen phun tshogs to bSam yas where, together with Legs ldan rdo rje, the three masters performed extensive rituals, ensuring thirteen years of peace and well-being throughout Tibet, after which Legs ldan went to Sikkim in order to open the doors of secret sanctuaries. At that time, Padma dbang rgyal returned to Mustang.

1-3. Influence and demise

Throughout his life, mNga' ris pan chen gave both rNying ma and gSar ma teachings, insisting greatly on maintaining the purity of one's vows. His influence on this subject was strengthened by his composition of an important work entitled *The Ascertainment of the Three Vows* (*sDom gsum rnam nges*), at a time when rNying ma tantric practitioners were not necessarily known for being preoccupied with monastic vows.¹⁷

As far as his own practice is concerned, Padma dbang rgyal protected his vows and tantric samayas without error, as they are explained in the numerous works discussing this issue. He himself intensively engaged in the practice of the Two Stages (*rim gnyis*), performing four sessions of meditations on a daily basis. His main practice remained however that of the Great Perfection (rDzogs chen): "In particular, owing to his constantly pervading Contemplation of the Great Perfection's Clear-Light, he was able to actually display the numerous signs and their measure indicating that he had ultimately reached the accomplishment of naturally liberating Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa into the Expanse of his Awareness."¹⁸ He was thus able to benefit sentient

¹⁷ See the translation of this work (together with a commentary by Dūdjom Rinpoche) in Ngari Panchen, *Perfect Conduct — Ascertaining the Three Vows*, *passim*.

¹⁸ *Lo rgyus ye shes sgron me*, p. 288: *gtso bor 'od gsal rdzogs pa chen po'i dgongs pa 'khor yug tu gdal bas 'khor 'das rig pa'i klong du rang sar grol ba'i grub pa mthar phyin pa'i rtags tshad du ma mngon sum du ston nus pa*.

beings through the performance of the four activities : appeasing, increasing, power, and violence.

Eventually, at the end of his life, as his mind was soon to dissolve into the Absolute Space (*chos dbyings*), he gathered his devotees around him and gave them his ultimate oral instructions (*zhal gdams*). To his monks, he gave the transmission of the code of conduct they should all follow, entitled *The Official Statement known as the Blazing Adamantine Splendor* (*bKa' yig rdo rje 'bar ba'i gzi byin*).

Then, as he was staying in his fief in Mustang, on the second day of the eighth month of the Tiger Year,¹⁹ he displayed his entrance into *parinirvāṇa*, passing away among wonderful signs such as rainbow lights and music filling the entire sky. The funerals and cremation were directed by his younger brother Legs ldan rdo rje himself.

2. *The Heart Drops of Samantabhadra*

This cycle is a good example of an unusual presentation of a *Man ngag sde* series of instructions. It appears unusual in terms of its structure which is organized into short individual sections (see § 3 *infra* for the actual structure) separated by colophonic mantra-like formulas, entrustment of the protection of these teachings to the Guardians of rDzogs chen, and the homage introducing the next section. As we have seen above, this *Kun bzang snying thig* was discovered in bSam yas in 1513.²⁰ An inner title given on p. 210 describes the cycle as the *Absolute Heart Drops of Samantabhadra* (*Kun bzang don gyi snying thig*).

Basically, and regardless of their actual subdivisions, the instructions given in the text are divided into: 1. the manner in which the transmission occurred (*ji ltar brgyud pa'i babs*), and 2. the instructions on the key points (*gnad kyi gdams pa*) of practice.

2-1. *The original transmission of the teachings*

The history of the lineage is described in a very cursory way,

¹⁹ This should be the Water-Tiger year (*chu mo stag*) of the 9th rabjung. According to the Phugpa calendar, it corresponds to Monday, September 11, 1452 (http://kalacakra.org/calendar/tdata/pl_1542.txt).

²⁰ See *supra* note 11.

with barely any details. It concerns the direct contemplative transmission of the Victorious Ones (*rgyal ba dgongs brgyud*) and the symbolic transmission of the Knowledge-Holders (*rig 'dzin brda brgyud*), although none of these classical expressions are used. Rather the text provides a very hasty description of the transmission, as follows:

With his great, thoroughly liberated Wisdom, the Self-Arisen Revealer (Samantabhadra) displayed his natural manifestations as the maṇḍala of Wisdom to the great Diamond-Holder (Vajradhara) symbolizing the dynamism of (his own) Awareness. The latter (revealed) it to dGa' rab rdo rje who instructed the Abbot of Oḍḍiyāna wearing a hair-knot (Padmasambhava). The latter instructed the Lord (Khri srong lde btsan), the liege (the twenty-five disciples), and the friend (Ye shes mtsho rgyal). Samayā!²¹ Na rag ṣhaṇ! Seal! Seal! Seal!²²

2-2. The actual instructions for practice

The instructions on the key points of practice are divided into three categories: 1. the oral instructions for instantaneously reaching Buddhahood, for practitioners of superior capacities (*rab skad cig ma la sangs rgya ba'i gdams ngag*); 2. the oral instructions for reaching Buddhahood at the time of death, for practitioners of intermediate capacities (*'bring 'chi khar sangs rgya ba'i gdams ngag*); and 3. the instructions for reaching Buddhahood during the Bardo, for those of lower capacities (*tha ma bar dor sangs rgya ba'i gdams pa*).

²¹ The correct spelling should simply be *sa ma ya* but here I simply follow the reading of the text. The same remark applies to the end of the next abstract translated here

²² P. 210: *rang byung gi ston pa rnam par grol ba'i ye shes chen pos: rig pa'i rtsal rdo rje 'dzin pa chen po la rang snang ye shes kyi dkyil 'khor du bstan: des dga' rab rdo rje la: des o rgyan gyi mkhan po thor cog can la gdams: des rje 'bangs grogs gsum la gdams so: sa ma yā: na rag ṣhaṇ: rgya rgya rgya:*

2-2-1. *The instructions for practitioners of superior capacities*

[1].²³ The actual instructions open with a quotation from the *Tantra of the Three Stanzas on Contemplation* (*dGongs pa tshig gsum pa'i rgyud*),²⁴ saying:

Since one's vivid Knowing-Awareness is (already) fully enlightened,

*Buddhahood should not be searched elsewhere.*²⁵

Thus, in order to experience that Knowing-Awareness (*shes rig*), one should control the three doors and focus the eyes upon the empty blue sky. Practicing in this way for twenty-one days is said to be a method for reaching Buddhahood very swiftly. This can be done by sustaining the state of Awareness (*rig pa*) in order to avoid deviating into obstacles. On this topic, the *Tantra of the Three Stanzas on Contemplation* further says:

*Since one's vivid and lucent Awareness radiates continuously,
There is nothing to do to accomplish the Absolute Body of Buddhahood.*²⁶

When one abides in the practice in this way, one experiences the brilliant (*sal le*), naked (*rjen ne*), limpid (*seng nge*) and genuine (*yer re ba*) state of Awareness, similar to a totally pure lake upon which the reflection of stars shines naturally, and from which one should not be distracted.

[2]. To clarify this state and make sure it is correctly understood, disciples receive a direct introduction (*ngo sprod*) to it, based on the *Tantra* which states:

One's Awareness — the Absolute Body — is devoid of birth and

²³ Regarding the numbering in-between square brackets, see *infra* § “3. The structure of the Cycle.”

²⁴ On this text, see *infra* § “4. The source of the cycle.”

²⁵ P. 211: *rang gi shes rig wa le ba 'di sangs rgyas pa yin pas: sangs rgyas gzhan du rtsal (= btsal) du med do* . This quote corresponds to the text of the *Tantra* p. 268.

²⁶ P. 212: *rang gi rig wa le khyug ge ba 'di rgyun du gsal bas: sangs rgyas chos kyi sku la sgom sgrub byar med do*. For the translation, I have followed the original version of the *Tantra* (p. 268) which is: *rang gi rig pa wal le khyug ge ba 'di rgyun du gsal bas sangs rgyas chos kyi sku la bsgrub par byar med dol*, correcting *sgom sgrub byar med do* into *bsgrub par byar med do* which sounds more correct.

death;

*There is no virtue nor vice in its activity.*²⁷

In this perspective, since Awareness is like the sky, does it experience birth and death? Since the sky knows neither virtue nor vice, can Awareness be subjected to virtues or vices? What the disciples must understand at that stage is that the state of Awareness is not dependent upon karma or the latter's fruition. There is nothing to do to obtain that Awareness since it is the true nature of the Mind.²⁸ What one ultimately realizes through this investigation is the non-discursive Wisdom radiating as the Heart of the Buddha (*sangs rgyas kyi thugs*). Quoting the Tantra again, the text concludes that merely recognizing that one's luminous Awareness abides as the Buddha is sufficient in itself.²⁹

[3]. To intensify the understanding resulting from the direct introduction, one should stay in an isolate place and unblinkingly gaze at the sky in the southern direction during the morning sessions of meditation. When practicing in this way continuously, except for the four kinds of activities,³⁰ during twenty-one days, one will contemplate the arising of various luminous visions which are the inherent expression of the Spontaneity (*lhun grub*) of one's natural state. This is however not explicit *thod rgal* practice (which is briefly discussed in § 5 below) but a preliminary training aimed at deepening one's experience of the sapiential (*shes cha*) and visionary (*snang cha*) aspects of Awareness.³¹

[4]. Then, in terms of *khregs chod* practice, one should train in

²⁷ P. 213: *rang gi rig pa chos kyi sku la skye shi med do: las la dge sdig med do*. The version in the Tantra (p. 268) reads: *Since one's Awareness — the Absolute Body — is devoid of birth and death, it is not polluted by karma and by the total fruition of karma; there is therefore neither virtue nor vice in its activity (rang gi rig pa chos kyi sku la skye shi med pas las dang las kyi rnam par smin pas gos pa med pas las la dge sdig med do)*. In other words, the knowledge of the natural state is not produced by good karma or impaired by bad actions. It is beyond cause and effect, production and cessation.

²⁸ In other words, it is not to be searched for since we already possess our own Awareness.

²⁹ This means that it is sufficient for understanding the purpose of the direct introduction, not for reaching Liberation (of which there is no mention in this context). In general, unqualified vessels who receive the direct introduction prematurely deviate into nihilistic views, imagining that there is nothing to do to reach Buddhahood. This is a definite negation of the Path which propels these vessels out of the Buddha's teachings.

³⁰ *sPyod lam rnam bzhi*, i.e.: standing, walking, sitting, and sleeping. There are other lists of these four activities.

³¹ Pp. 214-215.

not altering the state of Awareness in order to remain in the virginal condition of Non-Action (*byar med*).³² By cultivating this utterly pure condition without artifices, one experiences one's true nature beyond virtues and vices, and one can cultivate this realization during the absorption (*ting 'dzin*) arising in the course of one's meditative equipoise (*mnyam bzhag*). Abiding in this immutable condition is the ultimate Contemplation of the Buddhas of the three times (*dus gsum sangs rgyas kyi dgongs pa mthar thug*). At that level, the core of the practice consists in not deviating from this state while continuing in this condition without separating from it, even for a single instant.³³

[5]. As far as *thod rgal* practice is concerned,³⁴ one should sit in the ṛṣī (*drang srong*) position, gazing toward the east in the morning, with totally immobile, half-closed eyes. After some time of familiarization with this practice, one should see one's own Wisdom (*rang gi ye shes*) arise in visions having the form of the diamond chains of Awareness (*rig pa rdo rje'i lu gu rgyud*), of garlands of pearls, of vertical and horizontal undulating lines with various colors, and so forth. As one spends a long time contemplating in this way, feelings of pain may affect the lower part of the body, in which case one should resume the practice in the elephant position. If, on the contrary, pain occurs in the upper part of the body, one should use the lion position. In case, the light coming from the sun causes eye fevers, one should practice with a brown cotton cloth covering the eyes.³⁵ Special breathing techniques, combined with specific visualizations, are also discussed in the text (p. 219), explaining how to control the breath in case obstacles arise. Repeated again and again, these yogic devices are said to clear away illnesses, demons, and all kinds of nuisances. They are also described as purifying channels, winds, and seminal essences (*rtsa rlung thig le*). The dispelling of these obstacles ensures the prompt arising of the visions of Wisdom. All that is contemplated at that stage makes up what is designated as the Vision of Manifest Reality (*chos nyid mngon sum gyi*

³² This Non-Action literally means leaving the body motionless, the speech silent, and the mind in a state free from mental proliferations, visualizations, and so forth. Pp. 215-216.

³⁴ For further details regarding *thod rgal* as it is practiced in the Northern Treasure tradition, see Achard, *The Oral Transmission of Padmasambhava*.

³⁵ Usually this piece of cloth is either blue or red.

snang ba).³⁶

[6]. As one becomes gradually familiar with the practice, one enters the Vision of the Increasing Luminous Experiences (*nyams snang gong 'phel gyi snang ba*) during which the visions are becoming ever more complex until one directly sees Bodies (*sku*) within Thiglés (*thig le*) and so forth.³⁷ Then, when these Thiglés start to gather together as fivefold clusters, one reaches the Vision of the Full Measure of Awareness (*rig pa tshad phebs kyi snang ba*). Eventually, when all impure manifestations disappear, one enters the Vision of the Exhaustion of Reality (*chos nyid zad pa'i snang ba*), i.e., the stage of Buddhahood (*sangs rgyas kyi sa*).³⁸ The *Tantra of the Three Stanzas* explains this ultimate stage as follows:

*This is the Absolute Body of the Buddha. The fact that your own Awareness is the undifferentiation of Emptiness and Clarity abiding as orbs of lights and that it is devoid of birth and death, this means that it is the Buddha "Immutable Light". Recognizing this is enough.*³⁹

The detailed description of this state is rendered as follows in the original text of the *Heart Drops of Samantabhadra* quoting again the root-Tantra with its own repetitive style:

Such visions of Bodies and Wisdoms are the (signs) indicating that Authentic Buddhahood abides within oneself. On this topic, the Tantra says: " — Kye! O you, Lord of Mysteries, listen! Within the center of one's heart primordially abide the Three Bodies of Buddhahood. The Wisdom Body of Buddhahood is the luminous Essence of one's knowing Awareness. The Wisdom Body of Buddhahood, which does not experience any decrease in its clarity, is this limpid Essence of one's knowing Awareness abiding throughout the three times. Since the Body of Buddhahood

³⁶ Pp. 217-220.

³⁷ P. 221-222.

³⁸ P. 221.

³⁹ P. 222: *sangs rgyas chos kyi sku yin no: rang gi rig pa gsal stong dbyer med 'od kyi phung por bzhugs pa 'di: skye shi med pas sangs rgyas 'od mi 'gyur ba yin no: de ngo shes pas chog go.* At that stage, there is nothing to practice anymore, implying that the entire Path has been trodden. Thus, recognizing this is enough in itself for experiencing the splendors of the Fruit.

is free from decrease in its clarity, one's knowing Awareness abides as overflowing orbs of lights. Since the natural body of one's own Awareness abides as great orbs of lights, the natural light of one's own Awareness does not know any fluctuation. Since the natural light of one's own Awareness is free from fluctuation, once one's Awareness has come out of the eyes, deluded appearances arise as Wisdom. Once one has, through (direct) realization, recognized that deluded appearances (arise) as Wisdom, there is no need to purify karma and karmic traces anymore. If one recognizes one's own light, (this light) cannot be obscured by the complete fruition of karma (since) there is no karma, virtues or vices anymore. Thus, since there are neither virtues nor vices when one recognizes one's own light, the ten virtuous practices and the five inexpiable crimes with immediate retributions appear of an equal nature to the intellect endowed with realization. Kye! O Lord of Mysteries, regarding this Great Principle, even (the Buddhas) of the past and of the future have been unable to reveal it. This Great Principle cannot be meditated upon. So, recognizing this Great Principle of Non-meditation is sufficient (in itself).⁴⁰ Kye! O Great Vajra Holder! Hoping (to obtain) Buddhahood without such a recognition (is like) splitting the head of the Blissful Ones of the three times." Thus spoke the Great Buddha Immutable Light.⁴¹

⁴⁰ As shown by the next sentence of the root-Tantra, those who, within their present state in delusion, think that recognizing this principle intellectually is sufficient in itself are simply deluding themselves since the stage that is referred to here is that of the Fruit, when one becomes able to manifest Bodies and Wisdom, and to accomplish liberating activities.

⁴¹ P. 222: *de lta bu 'i sku dang ye shes kyi snang ba de ni yang dag pa 'i sangs rgyas rang la gnas pa 'i don yin te: de skad du yang rgyud las: kyi: gsang ba 'i bdag po khyod nyon cig: rang gi snying gi dkyil na sangs rgyas sku gsum ye nas bzhugs pa yin no: sangs rgyas kyi ye shes kyi sku ni rang gi shes rig gi ngo bo yang sang nge ba 'di yin no: sangs rgyas ye shes kyi sku la gsal 'grib mi mnga' bar: rang gi shes rig gi ngo bo seng (p. 223) nge ba 'di dus gsum du bzhugs pa yin no: sangs rgyas kyi sku la gsal 'grib med pas: rang gi shes rig 'od kyi phung por mer mer bzhugs pa yin no: rang gi rig pa 'i rang lus 'od kyi phung po chen por bzhugs pas: rang gi rig pa 'i rang 'od la 'char nub med pa yin no: rang gi rig pa 'i rang 'od la 'char nub med pas: rang gi rig pa mig nas thon pas 'khrul snang ye shes su 'char ba yin no: 'khrul snang ye shes su rtogs pas rang ngo shes nas las dang bag chags sbyang mi dgos pa yin no: rang 'od ngo shes na las kyi rnam par smin pas ma sgrub nas: las dang dge sdig med pa yin no: rang 'od ngo shes na dge sdig med pas chos spyod bcu dang mtshams med lnga: rtogs pa 'i blo la rang bzhin mnyam pa yin no: kye gsang ba 'i bdag po don chen po de ni 'das pa dang : ma 'ong pas kyang ston par mi nus so: don chen*

[7]. If the yogi has not been able to manifest the dissolution of his aggregates without leaving remains behind him, when death is approaching, he should sit comfortably and focus his gaze on the sky. He should then witness the visionary signs indicating the gradual dissolution of the elements after which he should contemplate the stages of white appearance, red increase, and black near-obtainment. During the arising of these visions, he should eradicate all mental proliferations until he actually experiences his own Clear-Light.⁴²

At that time, it is crucial to pay attention to the white Thiglé falling from the top of the head inside the central channel, giving rise to the experience of white light corresponding to the mind of white appearance (*snang ba dkar lam*). This is followed by the rising of the red Thiglé causing the manifestation of the red increase (*inched pa dmar lam*). Then, when the vision of the black obtainment (*thob pa nag lam*) is about to arise, the last movements of the inner winds resorb into one's consciousness which coincides with the actual, precise moment when body and mind part. At that time, the afflicted consciousness associated with the five passions (*nyon mongs pa'i lnga'i rnam shes*) dissolves into one's mental consciousness which itself dissolves into the *ālayavijñāna*. As the latter is emptied of all its traces, the five-colored radiance of one's Awareness (*rig pa*) in the heart manifests concretely in the manner of the display of Wisdom (*ye shes*) filling the entire sky. Recognizing this visionary display as being one's own manifestations implies instantaneously reaching non-regressive Buddhahood.⁴³

po 'di la sgom du med do: sgom med kyi don chen po de ngo shes pas chog go: kye rdo rje 'dzin pa chen po: de ngo ma shes par sangs rgyas re na: dus gsum gyi bde bar gshegs pas mgo 'khos: zhes sangs rgyas 'od mi 'gyur ba chen pos gsungs so:.

⁴² The stages of white appearance, red increase, etc., are discussed in Highest Tantras, and are experienced during the dissolutions of the main passions. Thus, the manifestation of the mind of white appearance arises with the dissolutions of thirty-three conceptions indicative of anger and hatred (*zhe sdang*); the mind of red increase arises with the dissolutions of forty conceptions indicative of desire and attachment (*'dod chags*); and the mind of black near-obtainment arises with the dissolutions of seven conceptions indicative of nescience (*gti mug*). The sign associated with the mind of white appearance is the vision of a cloudless autumn sky filled with moonlight. The sign associated with the mind of red increase is a vision of an utterly pure autumn sky with a blazing sun. The sign associated with the mind of black near-obtainment is a vision of a night sky without stars or any source of light.

⁴³ Pp. 224-226.

2-2-2. *The instructions for practitioners of intermediate capacities*

These instructions have the form of a direct introduction (*ngo sprod*) aimed at clarifying the natural state of the mind in order to recognize it at the time of death. It can be performed by the master or a qualified practitioner with pure samaya, and even by oneself through remembering the principles of this direct introduction or reading a text about it. Basically, this direct introduction explains that one's own Awareness (*rang gi rig pa*) abides as Bodies (*sku*) and Wisdoms (*ye shes*) which respectively correspond to the twofold aspect of this state, namely Emptiness and Clarity (*stong gsal*). When the nature of this state is not recognized, then this twofold aspect manifests as one's conditioned body (*lus*) and karmic traces (*bag chags*).

After the separation of the mind from the body, if the natural lights (*rang 'od*) of one's own state are recognized, then the manifestation of delusion will cease and the pure visions of this state will manifest for five days. The mere recognition of the nature of these lights entails instantaneously reaching Buddhahood. It is so powerful that it is defined as the Secret Pathway of Buddha Vajrasattva (*sangs rgyas rdo rje sems dpa'i gsang lam*).⁴⁴ However, in general, despite the fact that such lights manifest again and again, ordinary beings do not recognize them and thus re-enter the mode of delusion.⁴⁵ Thus, those failing to recognize their own nature at the time of death are taught the instructions on the Bardos, aimed at practitioners of lower capacities.⁴⁶

2-2-3. *The instructions for practitioners of lower capacities*

[1]. At the time of death, the elements dissolve into one another until the air element dissolves into the consciousness. Then, the consciousness dissolves into Clear-Light (*'od gsal*), giving rise to

⁴⁴ This expression is sometimes spelt *rdo rje sems dpa'i gseng lam*, with the compound *gseng lam* meaning direct or short path. In classical Dzogchen jargon, this corresponds to the Lamp of the White and Smooth Channel (*dkar 'jam rtsa'i sgron ma*), i.e., the channel of light (*'od rtsa*) connecting the heart to the eyes. It is also sometimes called the Crystal Tube (*shel bug can*). See *inter alia*, Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, *Bee ro tsa na'i snyan brgyud phyi ma*, p. 47.

⁴⁵ They do not recognize them as their own visions (*rang snang*) which is the cause of ignorance. This very ignorance is the reason why delusion arises.

⁴⁶ Pp. 226-227.

a vision similar to a sun shining in a cloudless sky. If one is able to recognize that vision and cultivate some familiarization with it, then one is assured to obtain Buddhahood during the Bardo of Reality (*chos nyid bar do*). This possibility occurs because, at that time, one's consciousness is not affected by karma, passions, karmic traces, and the like. On the contrary, its clarity is sustained by the discriminating Sublime Knowledge (*so sor rtogs pa'i shes rab*) which pulverizes the seeds of delusion. Consequently, the flow of Saṃsāra and of painful rebirths is eradicated and one obtains a complete certainty in the abiding mode of one's true Essence. A similar process of dissolution of the elements and of the arising of Clear-Light takes place as one falls asleep. Therefore, training into the practice of sleep and dream is a good preparation for the experience of the Bardo of Reality.⁴⁷

[2]. This is however not enough. In order to recognize the visions of Peaceful and Wrathful deities appearing during this Bardo, it is crucial to train in the yogas of the Development and Perfection Stages (*b skyed rdzogs*) during one's lifetime. The practice of virtues is also important in order to maintain the purity of one's continuum. One should thus excel in understanding what to cultivate (virtues) and what to give up (vices). This will be of a huge help when trying to cultivate Awareness during meditative equipoise. If one's stability has reached a sufficient threshold, then the manifestations appearing during the Bardo of Reality will arise as Wisdom and this state will simply be experienced as the "Bardo of Wisdom" (*ye shes bar do*).

At that time, the sounds (*sgra*) arising during the Bardo will be recognized as the empty sound of the Absolute Body; the lights (*'od*) will appear as empty yet radiating visions (that one should recognize as the natural display of one's own visions); and rays (*zer*) will arise as various kinds of empty, visionary marvels making up the dynamism of the Wisdom of one's Awareness (*rang rig ye shes kyi rtsal*). During one's lifetime, there are specific secret key points to train in, in order to recognize the display of sounds, lights, and rays, as well as the manifestations of the dissolutions of the elements and the ultimate arising of Clear-Light. This training is crucial for maintaining the recognition of Awareness and its visions during the entire Bardo process.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Pp. 228-229.

⁴⁸ Pp. 229-231.

[3]. The recognition is also possible through the direct introduction to the Body of Perfect Rapture (*longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku'i ngo sprod*) which relies on the use of a crystal. The symbolic meaning of this direct introduction is as follows:

Kye! O Son of Noble Clan, listen! The crystal is the symbol of your body. Its light is the symbol of the Wisdom of Awareness. The Bodies and Mudrās that manifest in various (modes) are the symbols of the hosts of peaceful deities (abiding) inside your heart (now) arising during the Bardo. Their wrathful aspect which manifests frightfully is the symbol of the appearance of the self-arisen Wrathful (deities abiding in) the Conch Mansion. The rays are the symbols of the Wisdom of your Awareness that manifests everywhere. The Essence of these (symbols) is empty, so do not be afraid by them! Their Nature is luminous, so do not be attached to them! Their Compassion is all-embracing, so do not long from them! Recognize this (as it is)!

In this regard, in the reliquary of the heart (within) your own body, the self-arisen Peaceful Bodies always abide according to the triple (mode) of Essence, Nature, and Compassion. Within the Citadel of the Conch Mansion (in your brain), their dynamism (in the form of) Wrathful Bodies always abides in the triple (mode) of Essence, Nature, and Compassion.⁴⁹

If one is capable of recognizing these manifestations during the Bardo, then one will undoubtedly reach Buddhahood as one contemplates the display of these very Bodies appearing within Thiglés, together with their pure realms and so forth.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ P. 232: *kye: nyon cig rigs kyi bu: shel 'di ni rang lus kyi brda'o: 'od 'di ni rigs pa ye shes kyi brda'o: sku dang phyag rgya cir yang snang ba de ni snying nang gi zhi ba'i lha tshogs bar dor 'char ba'i brda'o: khro tshul 'jigs par snang ba 'di ni dung khang rang byung khro bo (p. 233) 'char ba'i brda'o: zer ni rang rig ye shes kun du snang ba'i brda'o: 'di dag kyang ngo bo stong pa yin no: de la ma 'jigs shig: rang bzhin gsal ba yin no: de la ma chags shig: thugs rje kun la khyab pa de la rings du ma bzungs shig: de ngo shes par gyis shig: de yang rang lus snying gi ga'u nas: rang byung zhi ba'i sku ngo bo rang bzhin thugs rje gsum du rtag tu gnas so: klad pa dung khang gzhal yas na: rang rtsal khro bo'i sku yang ngo bor rang bzhin thugs rje gsum du rtag tu gnas so:.*

⁵⁰ P. 233.

[4]. The instructions then tackle the various Bardo states, enumerating the Bardo of the present time (*da lta bar do*), i.e., the intermediate state of the present lifetime; the Bardo of the moment of death (*'chi kha'i bar do*); and the Bardo of Reality (*chos nyid bar do*).⁵¹ The root-Tantra, which is quoted at that point, says:

*The (Bardo of) the present (time) is the Bardo of Nature. The (Bardo of) the time of death is the Bardo of suffering, i.e., the Bardo of the cessation of deluded appearances. The Bardo of Reality is the Bardo of the arising of Wisdom because (during its course) the pure visions arise once the impure appearances have ceased. Recognizing the Bardo of the arising of Wisdom is sufficient in itself.*⁵²

Each of these three Bardos has specific oral instructions (*gdams ngag*), as stated in the root-text:

*The oral instructions for (the Bardo of) the present time are like an escort. The oral instructions for (the Bardo of) the time of death are like attendants. The oral instructions of the Bardo (of Reality) are like a king coming back to his castle after (travelling) through his own country.*⁵³

The oral instructions similar to an escort (*skyel ma*) are actually illustrative examples (*dpe*), their actual meaning (*don*), and the signs (*rtags*) that are associated with the understanding of their

⁵¹ Here it does not mention the Bardo of Becoming (*srid pa'i bar do*) which is discussed in the next two sections [5] & [6].

⁵² P. 234: *da lta ni rang bzhin gyi bar do yin no: 'chi kha sdug bsnal gyi bar do ni: 'khrul snang 'gags pa'i bar do yin no: chos nyid kyi bar do de ni 'khrul snang 'gags nas: dag snang 'char bas ye shes 'char ba'i bar do yin no: ye shes 'char ba'i bar do ni ngo shes pas chog go:*

⁵³ P. 234: *da lta'i gdams ngag 'di skyel ma dang 'dra'o: 'chi kha'i gdams ngag sun ma dang 'dra'o: bar do'i gdams ngag rang gi yul nas btsan po'i mkhar du chud pa dang 'dra'o:* The instructions like an escort are associated here with examples, meaning and signs (*dpe don rtags gsum*). Those which are like attendants refer to the sounds, lights and rays (*sgra 'od zer gsum*) appearing at the time of death. Those of the king coming back to his castle are not mentioned in the text *per se* but actually correspond to the teachings centered around the recognition of the nature of the visions appearing during the Bardo of Reality. Other teachings on Bardo may use these specific expressions—escort, attendants, and lord or king—with a different meaning in a slightly different context. See rGod ldem, *Bee ro tsa na'i snyan brgyud phyi ma, pas-sim*, which gives a detailed account of these teachings (except those associated with the king).

meaning. The order in which these are discussed in the text is that of examples, signs, and meaning. The three examples (*dpe*) that help illustrate the instructions for the Bardo of the present time are a crystal (*shel*), the sun (*nyi ma*), and a mask (*'dra 'bag*). The crystal symbolizes here the Essence of the natural state experienced during the lifetime; the sun, symbolizes its spontaneous radiating Nature, while the mask is contemplated as a reflection in a mirror in order to illustrate its unceasing dynamic mode of arising.⁵⁴

The signs (*rtags*) refer to the Absolute Body residing within one's heart; to the Body of Perfect Rapture that one sees while gazing at the sky, contemplating the pure realms of the Buddhas; and to the Emanation Body which appears symbolically in the form of pure visions arising after the interruption of deluded appearances.⁵⁵

The meaning (*don*) of these examples and signs is the following one: one's vivid Awareness is nothing other than the Absolute Body of the Buddha. Its Sublime Knowledge (*rig pa*) is the Body of Perfect Rapture, while the fact that the Wisdom of one's Awareness abides within the aggregates corresponds to the Emanation Body of the Buddha. In reverse order, the text further adds that the five lights of Wisdom abiding within one's heart are the Emanation Body; the five Bodies blazing within these five lights make up the Body of Perfect Rapture, while the Absolute Body abides as one's Awareness free from concept and expressed in both Bodies (*sku*) and lights (*'od*).⁵⁶

At the time of death, the fivefold lights associated with the elements divide into a set of impure lights resorbing within the aggregates, and pure lights manifesting as the five lights of Wisdom arising in the sky of Reality (*chos nyid kyi nam mkha'*).⁵⁷

[5]. Individuals who have a weak familiarization with all these principles and who are still attached to the appearances of this world will not recognize the Bardo of the Body of Perfect Rapture (*longs sku'i bar do*) and will in consequence experience the Bardo of Becoming (*srid pa'i bar do*). The following advice clarifies the nature of the three attendants (*bsun ma gsum*) that

⁵⁴ Pp. 234-235.

⁵⁵ P. 235.

⁵⁶ Pp. 235-236.

⁵⁷ P. 236.

were mentioned above (p. 234):

*O son of noble clan! As soon as the breath stops, the pure visions (of the natural state) arise. At that time, the three attendants will come, namely lights, sounds, and rays. The lights are the natural light of the Blissful Ones. They are subtle and wide, luminous and radiant. Their nature is resplendent and equal, like a mirage pulsating on a summer prairie, filling all world-systems to the brim. Do not be afraid by them! The sounds will come from within all these lights, as the sounds of Reality rattling in the manner violent and booming sounds, like the roar of one thousand dragons. Do not be terrified by them! Within the lights will come rays, falling like a shower of blades, streaming up in multiple forms of weapons. Do not fear them! Do not be afraid and terrified by these three (attendants)! Do not fear them!*⁵⁸

Furthermore, the text explains that the visions of the master, of the Yidam and of the Ḍākinīs indeed appear during the Bardo. One should therefore not be afraid by them since they are one's own natural manifestations. It is also important to understand at that stage that all that appears is merely the display of the lights of one's own Awareness. If one fails to recognize that, then one will err in the six destinies of transmigration.⁵⁹

[6]. If one fails to recognize the nature of the lights and Wisdom that appear during the Bardo, then one will powerlessly be drawn by one's own karma to a rebirth in the six destinies. This is the reason why it is crucial to train in the practice of *thod rgal* during one's lifetime, in order to generate a sufficient form of familiarization which will be the actual cause of one's recognition of the nature of the vision arising after death. When this is

⁵⁸ P. 237: rigs kyi bu dbugs chad pa dang dag pa'i snang ba 'char ro: de'i dus su bsun ma gsum 'ong ngo : 'od dang sgra dang zer dang gsum mo: 'od ni de bzhin gshegs pa'i rang 'od do: phra la gdangs pa gsal la 'tsher ba: rang bzhin bkra la mnyam pa sos ga'i thang la mig sgyu 'gyu ba bzhin du 'jig rten gyi khams thams cad khengs nas mer mer 'ong ngo : de la ma 'jigs shig: sgra ni 'od kyi nang thams cad nas chos nyid kyi sgra 'brug stong ldir ba tsam drag la sgra che ba dir ri 'ong ngo: de la ma dngangs shig: 'od la zer mtshon cha'i char 'babs pa ltar mtshon cha rnam pa sna tshogs gzengs nas 'ong ngo : de la ma skrag cig: de gsum la mi 'jigs mi dngangs ngo : mi skrag go:.

⁵⁹ P. 237.

not recognized, then the manifestations of the six destinies appear naturally and for five days one wanders in the path of the five poisons. Visions of gods, semi-gods, humans, animal, hungry ghosts and denizens of hells arise and if one's consciousness engages in one of these, one will assuredly take rebirth accordingly.⁶⁰

While still in the Bardo, one will enter a state similar to a land without sun or moon, where tempests and storms rage constantly. After seven days, one will be carried by one's simultaneously-born deity and one's simultaneously-born demon in front of Yamantaka where one's karma will be examined. Even at that stage, if one recognizes that all this is merely the display of one's own light, it is possible to reach Buddhahood. One should thus train throughout one's life to recognize that all manifested existence is the expression of the dynamism of one's mind (*sems kyi rtsal*). The fact that it appears in this way is merely an illusion which is not established in reality.⁶¹

The last part of the text deals with individual sections containing complementary teachings associated with the Bardo of Becoming. Interestingly enough, these instructions explain that in order to recognize one's errancy in the Bardo, one needs to have beforehand performed some practices during one's lifetime, starting with taking Refuge (*skyabs 'gro*), generating *bodhicitta* (*sems bskyed*), collecting the two accumulations (*tshogs bsags*), performing the meditation of the guru-yoga (*bla ma'i rnal 'byor*), and then engaging in the Development Stage (*bskyed rim*) before training in the yogas of the Perfection Stage (*rdzogs rim*). [7-9, 11]. Further instructions deal with initiations (*dbang*), secret key points on the three channels (*rtsa*), samayas, and presenting offerings to the Protectors (*bka' srung*) of Dzogchen.⁶²

[10]. The section on samayas (*dam tshig*) is supposed to explain the Dzogchen samayas which are traditionally explained as

⁶⁰ Pp. 238-239.

⁶¹ Pp. 239-240.

⁶² Pp. 240-249. The instructions on Refuge, *bodhicitta*, and so forth, help in purifying the three doors and are therefore crucial for crossing the Bardo states with a purified mind unlikely to be carried away by its own proliferations, in particular during the Bardo of Becoming. Without such preparations and purification, the deceased is generally swept away by his mental projections running amok, to such an extent that he can't even remember the instructions he received during his lifetime and potentially perform a *post mortem* transference (*'pho ba*).

forming a set of 31 (= 27+4) samayas, composed of 27 samayas which are common with Tantras, and four specific Dzogchen samayas known as: 1. absence or non-existence (*med pa*), 2. unicity (*gcig pu*), 3. immensity (*phyal ba*), and 4. spontaneity (*lhun grub*).⁶³ Rather, the text introduces the following advice (pp. 247-248):

Homage to the Primordial Protector, the Victorious One "Great Orbs of Light"! As to the samayas of the Great Perfection, there are none for the access-to-equality and subsequent-obtainment.⁶⁴ (The only requirement is that) you always contemplate (the visions of) the Wisdom of Awareness and that you recognize that they are not manifestations of delusion. This is the samaya of Passing-over-the-Crest (thod rgal).⁶⁵ Moreover, if one does not practice any virtue, (at least) one should not engage into any evil deed. There is nothing whatsoever to protect or to transgress. If there is a transgression (of a samaya) to protect, then practice virtues.⁶⁶ There is (in reality) neither karma nor fruition of karma. If there is fruition of some karma, then give up the ten evil deeds.⁶⁷ Throughout the three times, there is neither birth or death. If there is birth or death, integrate and contemplate them. There is strictly nothing to meditate upon. If you have to have something to meditate upon, meditate upon the master. There is strictly nothing to be distracted by. If there is distraction, observe the agent that is being distracted. There is strictly nothing to enjoy. If you have to

⁶³ On these four samayas, see Longchenpa, *gNas lugs mdzod*, *passim*. See the English translation of this work in R. Barron, *The Treasury of the Way of Abiding*, Dharma Publishing.

⁶⁴ This means that for the periods of meditation and periods subsequent to meditation sessions, there are no samayas to keep or cultivate.

⁶⁵ There is no explicit mention of those of *khregs chod*, although one may suggest that some of the advice that follow are associated with it.

⁶⁶ I.e., if one experiences the fruition of what is identified as a samaya that has not been protected, then, in order to correct that transgression, one should engage in the practice of virtues.

⁶⁷ *sDig bcu*, i.e.: 1. to kill, 2. to steal, 3. to engage in sexual misconduct (these are the three misdeeds of the body); 4. to lie, 5. to slander, 6. to use harsh words, 7. to gossip (these are the four misdeeds of speech); 8. to harbor covetousness, 9. to generate ill-will, and 10. to cultivate wrong views (these are the three misdeeds of the mind). Engaging in these non-virtuous activities will lead to rebirth among the three lower realms (animals, hungry ghosts, and denizens of hells).

*have something to enjoy, enjoy your mind. Such are the samayas themselves. Samayā!*⁶⁸ Seal! Seal! Seal! Khatham!⁶⁹

The last section of the text is also worth translating in full:

Emaho! How marvelous! Here is the redaction of the Secret Guide, extracted from the Heart Drops of Samantabhadra, according to the Great Perfection. Samaya! “ — In order to point out the essential key points of the Heart Drops of Samantabhadra, its basic source is the Three Stanzas on Contemplation (dGongs pa tshig gsum pa). Its essential instructions are the following two (sets of teachings): the flow of the transmission and the guidance for higher, medium and lower (practitioners). Each has key points (revealing) instructions for practice, and together with the direct introduction, this makes up sixteen mother and sons (texts). Its objects of meditation are the Refuge, the generating of bodhicitta, collecting the accumulations, conferring initiations, the yogas of the Development and Completion (Stages), the samayas, the tormā (offering) to the Dākinīs, together with their hundred stages, (making up) twenty-four (sections) and counting twenty-five with the root-Tantra.

For the period of the last five hundred years, when, about to reach the other shore, you are unable to be inspired by the Sūtras, Tantras, and Precepts, and to meditate on the teachings, the Refuge against deluded manifestations, painful sufferings and going unprotected is (made of) these very instructions on the key points (of practice) so melt them into your heart! Whoever encounters them will hold Buddhahood in his hands! Those who shall not encounter them will be like thieves in an empty house. You should not be

⁶⁸ See *supra* note 21.

⁶⁹ P. 247: thog ma'i mgon po rgyal ba 'od phung chen po la phyag 'tshal lo: rdzogs pa chen po'i dam tshig la: mnyam bzhag rjes thob med pa ste: rtag tu rig pa'i ye shes blta: 'khrul snang med par ngo shes so: de ni thod rgal dam tshig yin: gzhan yang dge ba ma grub na: sdig pa ci yang spyad du med: (p. 248) bsrung dang nyams pa gang yang med: bsrung nyams yod na dge ba spyad: las dang las kyi rnam smin med: rnam smin yod na sdig bcu spongs: dus gsum skye 'gag med pa la: skye 'gag 'dug na blang bzhin blta: sgom du ci yang med pa la: sgom du 'dug na bla ma sgom: yengs su ci yang med pa la: yengs su 'dug na yengs mkhan blta: spyad du ci yang med pa la: spyod byar 'dug na sems su spyad: de dag dam tshig nyid yin no: sa ma yā: rgya rgya rgya: khatham:.

*separated, even for a single instant, from these Three Stanzas on the Contemplation of the Buddha. Hold this refined heart-nectar of the Victorious Ones of the three times! Grasp it! Read it! Comprehend it entirely!" The redaction of the Secret Guide is (hereby) completed. Samayā! Seal! Seal! Seal!*⁷⁰

3. The structure of the cycle

The numerals organizing the structure of the cycle have been added for sake of clarity. They do not appear in the original, except for the occasional numbering (*dang po*, *gnyis pa*) without however any aim at being systematic or regular.

The Cycles of Teachings of the Heart Drops of Samantabhadra
(*rDzogs pa chen po kun bzang snying tig gi chos skor rnam*s)

[sNga 'gyur byang gter chos skor phyogs bsgrigs,
vol. 30, pp. 209-250]

1. The manner in which the transmission occurred (*ji ltar brgyud pa'i babs*): 210

2. The instructions on the key points (*gnad kyi gdams pa*) of practice: 210-249

2-1. The oral instructions for instantaneously reaching Buddhahood, for practitioners of superior capacities (*rab skad cig ma*)

⁷⁰ P. 249: *e ma ho: rdzogs pa chen po kun bzang snying tig las: gsang ba'i them s kyi yi ge: sa ma ya: kun bzang snying tig gnad don mdzud btsugs la: rtsa ba'i mdo ni dgongs pa tshig gsum pa: de yi dmar khrid dag la gnyis yin te: brgyud pa'i babs dang rab 'bring tha ma'i khrid: re re lag len gdams pa'i gnad dang ni: ngo sprod bcas pas ma bu bcu drug dang : de yi dmigs bya skyabs 'gro sems bskyed dang : tshogs bsags dbang bskur bskyed rdzogs rnal 'byor dang : dam tshig dam can mkha' (p. 250) 'gro'i gtor ma ste: rim pa brgya dang bcas pa nyi shu bzhi: rtsa ba'i rgyu dang nyi shu rtsa lnga'o: de ni lnga brgya tha mar gyur pa'i dus: mdo rgyud man ngag nyan bshad bsgom pa yi: spros pa mi nus pha rol 'gro ba'i tsho: 'khrul snang dos drag sdug bsngal mgon med skyabs: gnad kyi gdams pa yin no snying la bstims: 'di dang su 'phrad sangs rgyas lag bcang yin: 'di dang ma 'phrad khang stong rkun ma 'dra: sangs rgyas dgongs pa tshig gsum 'di nyid dang : skad cig tsam du'ang 'bral ba'i skabs ma mchis: dus gsum rgyal ba'i thugs bcud dwangs ma 'di: zungs shig chongs shig klog cig kun chub kyis: zhes gsang them s kyi yi ger bris pa rdzogs so: sa ma yā: rgya rgya:*

la sangs rgya ba'i gdams ngag): 211-226

- 2-1-1. Instructions sufficient in themselves (*gcig chod kyi gdams pa*): 211-212.
- 2-1-2. The direct introduction to one's Primordial Wisdom arising as being rootless (*rang gi ye shes rtsa bral du shar ba ngo sprod pa*): 212-214
- 2-1-3. The instructions on the self-sufficient practice training in the innate radiance of Self-Arisen Wisdom (*rang byung ye shes kyi ngang dwangs sbyong ba'i lag khrid chig chod du gdams pa*): 214-215
- 2-1-4. The Guidance explaining how to strike the key-points of the instructions on Cutting-through-Rigidity (*khregs chod kyi gdams pa gnad rdeg tu bstan pa'i khrid*): 215-216
- 2-1-5. The instructions for integrating the Wisdom of (one's) Manifest Reality to the Path (*chos nyid mngon sum gyi ye shes lam du khyer ba'i gdams pa*): 217-220
- 2-1-6. The secret commentary known as the Absolute Quintessence (*gsang ba'i ti ka don gyi snying po zhes bya ba*): 221-223
- 2-1-7. Instructions for reaching Buddhahood without passing through the Bardo (*bar do med par sangs rgya ba'i gdams pa*): 224-226

2-2. The oral instructions for reaching Buddhahood at the time of death, for practitioners of intermediate capacities (*'bring 'chi khar sangs rgya ba'i gdams ngag*): 226-227

- 2-2-1. The essential teaching clarifying the direct introduction (*ngo sprod gsal ba'i gal mdo*): 226-227⁷¹

2-3. The instructions for reaching Buddhahood during the Bardo, for those of lower capacities (*tha ma bar dor sangs rgya ba'i gdams pa*): 227-249

- 2-3-1. The secret Path of the Bardo of Reality (*chos nyid bar do'i gsang lam*): 227-229
- 2-3-2. The instructions on the key points of the Bardo (*bar do gnad kyi gdams pa*): 229-232
- 2-3-3. The direct introduction to the Bardo of the Peaceful and

⁷¹ There are no other subdivisions in this section of the cycle.

- Wrathful Deities (*zhi khro'i bar do'i ngo sprod*): 232-233
- 2-3-4. The direct introduction to the Arch-Quintessence of the Unsurpassable Tantras (*bla na med pa'i rgyud kyi yang snying ngo sprod*): 233-236
- 2-3-5. The direct introduction to the Bardo of Existence (*srid pa bar do'i ngo sprod*): 236-238
- 2-3-6. Oral instructions on the Bardo of Existence (*srid pa bar do'i gdams ngag*): 238-240
- 2-3-7. The Lock of the utterly perfect Initiations (*yongs rdzogs dbang gi tha ram*): 240-246
- 2-3-8. The secret list of the key points (*gnad kyi thems yig gsang ba*): 246-247
- 2-3-9. Untitled section about channels (*rtsa*): 247
- 2-3-10. The Samayas of the Great Perfection (*rdzogs pa chen po'i dam tshig*): 247-248
- 2-3-11. The offering rite to the Protectors of the Teachings of the Great Perfection (*rdzogs pa chen po'i bka' srung mchod pa'i cho ga*): 248-249

Conclusion: 249-250.

4. The source of the cycle

The final section of the *Heart Drops of Samantabhadra* clearly states that the actual source of the cycle is the *Tantra of the Three Stanzas on Contemplation* (*dGongs pa tshig gsum pa'i rgyud*) which is known in its full form as the *Tantra of the so-called Three Stanzas of Buddha Vajrasattva's Contemplation* (*Sangs rgyas rdo rje sems dpa'i dgongs pa tshig gsum po zhes bya ba'i rgyud*). This is a rarely quoted Tantra that was first revealed by lCe btsun Seng ge dbang phyug and then re-hidden by him in mChad pa stag can before it was eventually retrieved by lCe sgom nag po. As far as I know, it is not particularly associated with the tradition of the Northern Treasures.⁷²

⁷² For instance, it has not been included in the large *Byang gter* collection in 63 volumes compiled by Rig 'dzin chen mo and published in 2015 under the collective name of *sNga 'gyur byang gter chos skor phyogs bsgrigs*. The Tantra itself exists in three different versions (at least in the material at my disposal): the first one was revealed by lCe sgom nag po; the second one was found by Padma Las 'brel rtsal (1291?-1313?); and the third was retrieved by mNga' ri pañ chen, together with the *Kun bzang snying thig* and the *Padma snying thig*.

lCe btsun himself was one of the most important lineage holders of the *sNying thig* tradition with his revelation of some of the secret precepts of the *Heart Essence of Vimalamitra* (*Bi ma snying thig*). He is supposed to have lived down to the age of 125 and to have manifested the Body of the Great Transfer (*'pho ba chen po'i sku*) at the end of his life. He then appeared in a vision to Zhang ston bKra shis rdo rje (1097–1167), exhorting him to reveal the texts of the *Secret Heart Essence* (*gSang ba snying thig*) he had re-hidden since he could not find a proper vessel for his transmission.

According to Dzogchen traditional narratives, fifteen years after lDang ma Lhun rgyal had revealed the collection of the *Seventeen Tantras* (*rGyud bcu bdun*), their commentaries and related precepts, etc., from the Zhwa'i lha khang, lCe btsun was born in Myang ro, to lCe Thub pa'i dbang po and Khyung mo bza'. Then, for several years lDang ma tried to find a qualified vessel for his transmission but could not find any. Eventually, as lCe btsun had come of age and while he was in Mang yul, he met lDang ma and became the vessel of his Treasures. They agreed to meet at a later date so that lCe btsun could invite four scribes to prepare copies of the texts. After lDang ma's demise, lCe btsun moved to the valley of gNubs yul and other places where, for ten years he in his turn looked for a qualified vessel to receive his transmission. Unsuccessful, he decided to divide his teachings into four sets and hid three of them under a fountain in mChad pa stag 'dra (same as mChad pa stag can), a locality of Lang gro county. He entrusted the treasures to the *klu btsan* rDo rje bde 'bar. He then hid the rest of the secret precepts of the *gSang ba snying thig* collection in 'U yug. Thirty years after lCe btsun's Body of the Great Transfer, the yogi lCe sgom nag po retrieved a treasure that had been hidden by lCe btsun in which he found instructions that he was not to spread these teachings but that he should practice them for his own benefit. In general, lCe sgom is associated with the Secret Cycle (*gsang skor*), one of the four main subdivisions of the Precept Series (*Man ngag sde*).⁷³

The colophon of the Tantra according to the gTing skyes edition of the *rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum* states (p. 314) that the text was, as we have seen above, hidden by lCe btsun seng ge dbang

⁷³ See Zhang ston bKra shis rdo rje, *gNas 'byed bdun pa*, pp. 213-219.

phyug in mChad pa stag can, and that it was then revealed by lCe sgom nag po.⁷⁴ The version appended to the *Kun bzang snying thig* root-text is even shorter, merely saying that this is a Treasure of mNga' ris pañ chen. The text itself is composed of three chapters, namely:

1. the explanation of the secret pathway of Vajrasattva (*rdo rje sems dpa'i gseb lam bstan pa*, pp. 302-306, fol. 2a-5b),
2. the view of the escort, the oral instructions for the present (*da lta'i gdams ngag skyel ma lta ba*, pp. 306-310, fol. 5b-9a), and
3. the obtainment of Buddhahood through recognizing the importance of receiving the oral instructions (*gdams ngag can gnad ngo shes pas sangs rgya ba*, pp. 310-314, fol. 9a-13a)

Appendix — Comparative table of the contents of the electronic and the manuscript versions

In this table, the first column lists the chapter titles of the *Kun bzang snying thig*. The second one gives the page references of the 2015 edition, while the third indicates the folio numbers of the manuscript version. The contents of the electronic edition have in general more typos and errors than the contents as they appear in the manuscript version. Since it is generally the other way around, the fact is worth mentioning.

Chapter	Electronic edition	Manuscript version
1. <i>ji ltar brgyud pa'i babs</i>	210	1b
2. <i>gnad kyi gdams pa</i>	210-249	1b-32b
2-1. <i>rab skad cig ma la sangs rgya ba'i gdams ngag</i>	211-226	2a-13b

⁷⁴ See also Achard, "sGang steng Catalogue" p. 55, no. 324. For the mTshams brag version, see *rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum*, mTshams brag ed., vol. 13, p. 780.

2-1-1. <i>gcig chod kyi gdams pa</i>	211-212	2a-3a
2-1-2. <i>rang gi ye shes rtsa bral du shar ba ngo sprod pa</i>	212-214	3a-4b
2-1-3. <i>rang byung ye shes kyi ngang dwangs sbyong ba'i lag khrid chig chod du gdams pa</i>	214-215	4b-5a
2-1-4. <i>khregs chod kyi gdams pa gnad rdeg tu bstan pa'i khrid</i>	215-216	5a-6b
2-1-5. <i>chos nyid mngon sum gyi ye shes lam du khyer ba'i gdams pa</i>	217-220	6b-9b
2-1-6. <i>gsang ba'i ti ka don gyi snying po zhes bya ba</i>	221-223	9b-11b
2-1-7. <i>bar do med par sangs rgya ba'i gdams pa</i>	224-226	11b-13b
2-2. <i>'bring 'chi khar sangs rgya ba'i gdams ngag</i>	226-227	13b-14b
2-2-1. <i>ngo sprod gsal ba'i gal mdo</i>	226-227	13b-14b
2-3. <i>tha ma bar dor sangs rgya ba'i gdams pa</i>	227-249	14b-32b

2-3-1. <i>chos nyid bar do'i gsang lam</i>	227-229	14b-15b
2-3-2. <i>bar do gnad kyi gdams pa</i>	229-232	15b-17b
2-3-3. <i>zhi khro'i bar do'i ngo sprod</i>	232-233	17b-19a
2-3-4. <i>bla na med pa'i rgyud kyi yang snying ngo sprod</i>	233-236	19a-21a
2-3-5. <i>srid pa bar do'i ngo sprod</i>	236-238	21a-22b
2-3-6. <i>srid pa bar do'i gdams ngag</i>	238-240	22b-24a
2-3-7. <i>yongs rdzogs dbang gi tha ram</i>	240-246	24a-29b
2-3-8. <i>gnad kyi thems yig gsang ba</i>	246-247	29b-30a
2-3-9. Untitled section about channels (<i>rtsa</i>)	247	30a-30b
2-3-10. <i>rdzogs pa chen po'i dam tshig</i>	247-248	30b-31a
2-3-11. <i>rdzogs pa chen po'i bka' srung mchod pa'i cho ga</i>	248-249	31a-32b
Conclusion	249-250	32b-33a

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Tsi'u dmar po: How a Northern Treasure God Became Ecumenical

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Tibetan Buddhist Dharma protectors are a chimeric lot. Those deities popular enough to be propitiated by several communities or different sectarian traditions are especially prone to multiple and sometimes conflicting narrative identities, iconographic qualities, and ritual capabilities. Too often, however, the mosaic nature of these figures is diminished or elided in the face of more monolithic representations that cast the deity in a synchronic and timeless fashion. In an attempt to highlight the composite character of Tibetan protector deities, I will examine the mythic and ritual representations of the Dharma protector Tsi'u dmar po, specifically as his cult has radiated out across sectarian and monastic boundaries from his origins within the Northern Treasure (*byang gter*) tradition. Tsi'u dmar po is known most for being one of the major protectors of bSam yas Monastery, Tibet's first Buddhist monastery. However, he started out as a rNying ma deity in the sixteenth century, whose treasure literature (*gter ma*) was first rediscovered and promoted by the famous Northern Treasure master and treasure revealer mNga' ris paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal (1487-1542; BDRC: P1699) and his brother, the second rDo rje brag rig 'dzin Legs ldan rdo rje (1512-1625; BDRC: P1701). The earliest treasure literature on Tsi'u dmar po stemmed from these figures, who were responsible for revealing the bulk of it. Over the next three hundred years, the deity's ritual corpus would be adopted by the other major sectarian traditions and become codified in the nineteenth century within the nonsectarian Ris med canon as well. Although, the reasons for his rapid growth in popularity are unique to each religious community and would require a more detailed exploration of his ritual materials, as well as an intertextual study of various pertinent histories and biographies, the present article offers a bird's eye view of Tsi'u dmar po's ecumenical evolution. As such, this paper ends with a complete translation of the deity's root tantra, referred to here as the *Warlord's Tantra*.

To illustrate Tsi'u dmar po's shifting characterizations across time, I will briefly contrast three works that emphasize the deity's particular salience as he moves from his Northern Treasure milieu out into Sa skya and dGe lugs contexts, respectively. For his rNying ma origins,

Tsi'u dmar po's founding mythos is found within one of the first texts to concern the deity at length. This is the sixteenth-century treasure text, the *Warlord's Tantra*, rediscovered by mNga' ris paṅ chen. Like many Tibetan works, this text has variant titles; depending on the collection it is called the *Seven-Chapter Heart Tantra for the Capricious Spirit Citta Marpo*,¹ the *Seven-Chapter Heart Tantra for Red Razor*,² or the simpler – and more evocative – *Warlord's Tantra*.³ The second text I will draw from is a Sa skya history of bSam yas Monastery entitled the *Wish-Fulfilling Symphony of the Captivating Gods*.⁴ This early seventeenth-century history was composed by the Sa skya hierarch A myes zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga' bsod nams (1597-1659; BDRC: P791) and concerns not only the origins of bSam yas Monastery, but also the roles that Tsi'u dmar po and Pe har – the other important protector of bSam yas – play in its history. The final text discussed below is a ritual entitled the *Ten Point Sādhana*,⁵ which was rediscovered by the famous twelfth-century rNying ma treasure revealer Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124-1192; BDRC: P364). While it is a rNying ma treasure text, this work has had important connections to the lineage of the Dalai Lamas since the second incarnation and was especially utilized by the Great Fifth (1617-1682; BDRC: P37).⁶ This text is likewise found in Northern Treasure ritual corpora.⁷

To make sense of this diverse and incongruous assortment of liturgical and historical texts, I will frame my observations using Prasenjit Duara's theory of "superscription,"⁸ which highlights the simultaneously continuous and discontinuous nature of shared symbols. Ac-

¹ Tib. *gNod sbyin tsitta dmar po'i snying gi rgyud le'u bdun pa*; see Padma dbang rgyal 1985.

² Tib. *sPu gri dmar po snying gi rgyud le'u bdun pa*; see Padma dbang rgyal 1976.

³ Tib. *dMag dpon gyi rgyud*. This is part of the larger title, the *Warlord's Tantra with Accompanying Sādhanas* (*dMag dpon gyi rgyud sgrub thabs dang bcas pa*) as found in the nineteenth-century *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo*; see *ibid.* The accompanying *sādhanas* (*ibid.*, pp.312-332) are not included in this translation, as they were appended to the text much later; however, for rough translations of their contents, see Bell 2006, pp.164-179.

⁴ The full title is the *Symphony of the Captivating Gods that Grants all Desires and Makes the Wish-fulfilling Dharma Protectors Rejoice: A Good Explanation for the Origins of the Great Monastery of Glorious and Spontaneously Present Samyé and its Guardians of the Teachings* (*dPal bSam yas lhun gyi grub pa'i gtsug lhag khang chen po bka' srung dang bcas pa'i byon tshul legs par bshad pa chos skyong yid bzhih nor bu dges par byed pa'i yid 'phrog lha'i rol mo dgos 'dod kun 'byung*); see A myes zhabs 2000.

⁵ The full title is the *Ten Point Sādhana: A Supplication Offering for the Five King Spirits and Their Retinue* (*rGyal po sku lnga 'khor bcas kyi gsol kha phrin las don bcu ma*); see Nyi ma 'od zer n.d.

⁶ Tib. *Tā la'i bla ma 05 Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho*.

⁷ See, for instance, bsTan 'dzin nor bu, pp.209-249.

⁸ See Duara 1988.

ording to Duara, as mythic elements are exchanged across diverse social contexts, old elements take on new significance or emphases and new elements accrete to existing representations over time. Thus, different versions of a mythic complex compete and negotiate with each other within and between different groups without necessarily erasing previous versions.

In the case of Tsi'u dmar po, his rNying ma roots establish his mythic origins and ritual orientation. After the deity's initial popularization by mNga' ris paṅ chen and his brother Legs ldan rdo rje, Tsi'u dmar po's cult would quickly become part of the ritual program at rDo rje brag Monastery, the central institution of the Northern Treasure tradition. These brothers, along with the seventeenth throne-holder of the 'Bri gung bKa' brgyud school, Rin chen phun tshogs (1509-1557; BDRC: P399), traveled to bSam yas sometime around 1533 to reconsecrate the sacred site.⁹ Around this time, mNga' ris paṅ chen discovered many treasure texts at the monastery, including the *Warlord's Tantra* and its related rites. The tantra is divided into seven chapters, with the first and seventh chapter providing the frame narrative of the wrathful tutelary deity Hayagrīva explaining to the *ḍākinī* rDo rje bde byed ma how he subjugated Tsi'u dmar po and entrusted him with protecting the Buddha's teachings. The rest of the chapters provide Tsi'u dmar po's mythic origins, the ritual preparations needed to propitiate him, and the mantric and contemplative practices necessary to direct his activities.

In terms of Tsi'u dmar po's mythic origins, I summarize what the appended tantra states as follows: In the legendary past, a Khotanese prince joined a monastery and dwelled in a forest ruled by a king. One day the king's daughter was bathing in a pool near where the mendicant prince resided. She was attacked by a poisonous snake, so the prince came to tend to her wound. However, the king's ministers secretly saw this and returned to tell the king falsely that a ruffian was having sex with the princess. This angered the king, so he ordered his servants to find the monk and kill him. When the princess returned and found out what had happened, she pleaded with her father, but to no avail. The hapless prince discovered this plot against him and fled the kingdom. However, due to this traumatic affair, he became disturbed and regressed in his practice. The prince went to Tibet, where he killed men and raped women until the king's men eventually caught up to him on a mountain path and struck him down. On the verge of death, he promised through a regressive prayer to be reborn as a terrifying spirit so he could kill the king and his ministers; as such, he was immediately reborn as Tsi'u dmar po.

⁹ See Gu ru bkra shis 1990, p.536.

Six other pernicious spirits emanated from different parts of Tsi'u dmar po's body, such as his head, his bones, and his pus. These seven deities collectively came to be called the Seven Unruly Riders (*yan pa rkya bdun*). Because they brought ruin to the three realms, they were first subjugated by Hayagrīva. Then, in India, the great tantric exorcist Padmasambhava encountered them in a charnel ground. He retamed Tsi'u dmar po and his horsemen by manifesting the form of Hayagrīva. When Padmasambhava journeyed to Tibet he was welcomed by these deities, who came to be associated with western Tibet overall.¹⁰

According to the supplementary texts attached to Tsi'u dmar po's root tantra in the *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo* edition, this corpus was hidden around bSam yas Monastery and in the nearby mChims phu Valley – often within a statue of Vairocana.¹¹ Beyond this, however, and a vague reference to gTsang, no real attention is given to Tibetan geography. Instead, the focus consistently stresses Tsi'u dmar po's relationship to King Khri srong lde'u btsan (742-800; BDRC: P7787), the famous Dharma King and a previous incarnation of mNga' ris paṅ chen. At multiple points, there is mention of the “noble line of Khri srong lde'u btsan” or Tsi'u dmar po as the “protective deity of Khri srong lde'u btsan.”¹² What this suggests is that, rather than a specific place being important to Tsi'u dmar po, it is a person – King Khri srong lde'u btsan and his line of incarnations – that he has sworn to protect and to which mNga' ris paṅ chen belongs. Given this close association, it is no surprise that Tsi'u dmar po becomes an important protector deity of rDo rje brag Monastery, since it is tied to the incarnation line associated with mNga' ris paṅ chen's brother and partner-in-revelation, Legs ldan rdo rje.

¹⁰ The mythic material on Padmasambhava can be found in the accompany *sādhana*s, see Padma dbang rgyal 1976, pp.327-328.

¹¹ See *ibid*, pp.318, 328.

¹² See *ibid*, pp.318, 319, 322, 331, 332.



*Tsi'u dmar po, rDo rje brag Monastery Assembly Hall, Tibet
(Photo: Christopher Bell, 2011)*

While Tsi'u dmar po is at first most associated with the Tibetan imperium rather than to any other specific institution, this changes quickly with the Sa skya pa, who take the nascent associations the deity has with bSam yas and expand on it. According to Ariane Macdonald,¹³ around 1570 the 23rd Sa skya throne-holder Kun dga' rin chen (1517-1584; BDRC: P460) repaired bSam yas's central temple and founded the college of Sa skya monks at the monastery, called the Rab byung grwa tshang, which was charged with organizing the annual mDo sde mchod pa festival. During this festival, the Sa skya monks propitiated Tsi'u dmar po as one of the major protector deities of bSam yas, who also spoke through the monastery's oracle. It was Kun dga' rin chen's student, A myes zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga' bsod nams, who wrote the *Wish-Fulfilling Symphony of the Captivating Gods*, which elaborates on bSam yas's history. However, this history heavily emphasizes the Sa skya pa in a bid to secure their place as the rightful preservers of Tibetan religious history, and it does so by using mNga' ris pañ chen's own text.

A myes zhabs begins his history by tracing a line of authority

¹³ See Macdonald 1978, pp.1140-1141.

through the earliest Tibetan kings, the three Dharma Kings, Padmasambhava, and down to the lineage of Sa skya masters in general, as well as his teacher Kun dga' rin chen in particular. After discussing bSam yas's founding and architecture at length, A myes zhabs quotes and elaborates on content from the *Warlord's Tantra*, specifically the first and seventh chapter that frame the tantra with Hayagrīva's subjugation of Tsi'u dmar po.¹⁴ A myes zhabs also quotes from one of the accompanying *sādhana*s of the *Warlord's Tantra*, one that details the encounter that the Seven Unruly Riders first have with Padmasambhava in India. All of this material is not only quoted verbatim, it is expanded upon to emphasize the explicit connection Tsi'u dmar po has with bSam yas Monastery, and by extension the Sa skya school. To provide a striking example of just one such elaboration, while the *Warlord's Tantra* never explicitly mentions the monastery, let alone the deity's connection to it, A myes zhabs's bSam yas history overtly emphasizes such a connection between the protector and the place:

Later, when the incarnated king Khri srong lde'u btsan invited the great precious master Padmasambhava to Tibet, the Seven Riders, emanations of the capricious spirit (*gnod sbyin*) [Tsi'u dmar po], welcomed him at dPal thang in mNga' ris and accompanied him until they arrived at bSam yas. When [the riders] accomplished more and more activities for favorable conditions such as this, the master said with delight, "The king of the capricious spirits rTse dmar's homeland is truly in this very place!"¹⁵

Not only does A myes zhabs have Padmasambhava arrive specifically at bSam yas rather than Tibet more broadly, but the great exorcist's equivocation about Tsi'u dmar po's country, visible in mNga' ris paṅ chen's treasure texts,¹⁶ is gone and replaced with a confident proclamation that the sacred site is the deity's real home. There are many other such instances in A myes zhabs's text, and he further cements the authority of his mythic account by reiterating the events in nine-syllable poetic verse. Given the Sa skya control over bSam yas at the turn of the seventeenth century, anchoring an imperial protector deity and his cult to the monastery as an institution – through narrative and ritual mechanisms, including the mDo sde mchod pa festival – was clearly part of their larger legitimizing efforts to tie their lineage back to the dynastic age. While mNga' ris paṅ chen emphasized Tsi'u dmar

¹⁴ See A myes zhabs 2000, pp.381-388.

¹⁵ Ibid, p.390.1-3.

¹⁶ See Padma dbang rgyal 1976, p.328.

po's role as King Khri srong lde'u btsan's personal protector to reinforce his incarnation line, A myes zhabs emphasized the deity's connection to Padmasambhava and bSam yas Monastery to support a Sa skya-centric view of Tibetan history.

A myes zhabs's history also discusses another protector deity at length, the great king spirit (*rgyal po*) Pe har, who is the second major protector of bSam yas Monastery. However, this deity comes second to Tsi'u dmar po in the text in terms of content order, and he is at best equal to Tsi'u dmar po in importance. This fragile relationship between the two deities shifts dramatically under the burgeoning administration of the Fifth Dalai Lama in the mid-seventeenth century. While the Sa skya pa used Tsi'u dmar po at bSam yas to tie them to the Tibetan empire, the Dalai Lama would do the same with Pe har at gNas chung Monastery outside Lhasa. The lineage of the Dalai Lamas would go on to utilize an incarnational technique like mNga' ris pañ chen's by tapping into Padmasambhava's incarnation line, as well as an institutional technique like A myes zhabs's by reorienting Pe har from bSam yas to gNas chung, and eventually create satellite centers throughout Lhasa's old town around the Jo khang Temple.¹⁷

Since Pe har holds pride of place in the dGe lugs pantheon of worldly protector deities, especially for the Dalai Lamas, where does that leave Tsi'u dmar po? To turn a phrase, the dGe lugs pa effectively 'gNas chung-ized' him. Tsi'u dmar po is placed under Pe har's seventeenth-century ritual, iconographic, and mythic paradigm as a means to reorient the powerful symbols of Tibet's royal past under the lineage of the Dalai Lamas. This involves a complex series of textual adoptions and interpolations involving the two central texts of Gnas chung Monastery's liturgical corpus. The first ritual is the *Ten Point Sādhana*, the twelfth-century treasure text concerning Pe har that was rediscovered by Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer. At least four extant additions exist of this work, two of which are found in collections concerning the Northern Treasure tradition.¹⁸ While all four editions of this text have intriguing differences, the two Northern Treasure versions are notable for inserting brief but important passages about Tsi'u dmar po that do not exist in the other editions. One such example is as follows:

In front of [Pe har's emanation, there is] the capricious spirit, the king of the warrior gods (*dgra lha*), the lord of life Yang le ber. His color is red [and he has] the brilliance of a thousand suns. He is fiercely wrathful, and he eats and drinks flesh, blood, and life breath (*dbugs*). Sometimes he bites his lower lip with his upper teeth, and his eyebrows and forehead are

¹⁷ For a detailed exploration of this process, see Bell 2021.

¹⁸ For the two Northern Treasure editions, see Nyi ma 'od zer 1994 and n.d.

contorted into a wrathful grimace. He wears a coat of armor and a leather helmet. He throws at the enemy the red lance in his right hand and the lasso of the martial spirits (*btsan*) in his left hand. He rides an excellent horse that is as fast as the wind, [and it is] decorated with a jeweled saddle, as well as a bridle and silken head ornaments.¹⁹

This interpolation provides the common iconographic description for Tsi'u dmar po, though he is called Yang le ber here, one of his more frequent epithets.²⁰

The second central ritual for gNas chung Monastery is a liturgical text composed by the Fifth Dalai Lama and heavily based on the *Ten Point Sādhana*. This work is entitled the *Unceasing Adamantine Melody*,²¹ and it contains an almost verbatim copy of the Tsi'u dmar po description from the Northern Treasure version of the *Ten Point Sādhana* quoted above.²² Thus, Tsi'u dmar po was absorbed from his Northern Treasure origins into the dGe lugs cult of Pe har at gNas chung. This is not surprising, given the Fifth Dalai Lama's close familial and transmissional ties to the Northern Treasure tradition.²³ It merits further mention that the Great Fifth received the *Ten Point Sādhana* from his Northern Treasure root teacher Zur chen Chos dbyings rang grol (1604-1669; BDRC: P650).²⁴ In turn, he had a hand in collating, condensing, and amending a lot of mNga' ris paṅ chen's material on Tsi'u dmar po – including the root tantra – for a text still found in Northern Treasure corpora.²⁵

The deity's significance is nonetheless diminished in the dGe lugs context, however. The surrounding text of the *Ten Point Sādhana* makes him a servant of one of the five forms of Pe har. Rather than being a central deity as he is at bSam yas, Tsi'u dmar po has been demoted and deemphasized in this predominantly dGe lugs ritual and institutional setting. This shift in Tsi'u dmar po's status from bSam yas to gNas chung is still visible today as well. While both monasteries were damaged during the Cultural Revolution, the array of deity images found at both sites, as well as their satellite temples, still speaks to the heritage of their individual pantheons. At bSam yas Monastery, the central image of the main protector temple was once Tsi'u dmar po and has

¹⁹ Nyi ma 'od zer 1994, p.213.

²⁰ See Bell 2006, pp.147-149.

²¹ The full title is the *Unceasing Adamantine Melody: A Sādhana for Presenting Prayers and Offerings to the Five Great King Spirits* (rGyal po chen po sde lnga la gsol mchod 'bul tshul 'phrin las 'gags med rdo rje'i sgra dbyangs); see Tā la'i bla ma 05 1983, pp. 12-53. See *ibid*, pp.22-23.

²² See Valentine 2013, pp.215-227.

²³ See Tā la'i bla ma 05 1991-1995, p.615.

²⁴ See Padma dbang rgyal 1994 and n.d.

since been replaced by statues of Tsi'u dmar po and Pe har together. At bsTan rgyas gling Monastery, bSam yas's satellite in Lhasa, one finds a statue of Tsi'u dmar po at the center of the protector chapel with a smaller statue of Pe har to his left. By contrast, at gNas chung Monastery and its ritual satellites – such as dGa' gdong Monastery to the west and rMe ru snying pa behind the Jo khang Temple – Pe har and his emanations are the central deities, while Tsi'u dmar po is relegated to a secondary position or even a door guardian.



Tsi'u dmar po, secondary statue; gNas chung Monastery. (Photo: Christopher Bell, 2007)



Tsi'u dmar po, door guardian mural; dGa' gdong Monastery. (Photo: Christopher Bell, 2011)



Tsi'u dmar po, door guardian mural; rMe ru snying pa Monastery. (Photo: Christopher Bell, 2011)

Through the lens of Duara's theory of superscription, we see in these sixteenth- and seventeenth-century examples how Tsi'u dmar po's mythic representation has not only expanded but evolved in scope and character across sectarian lines from its Northern Treasure beginnings. His rNying ma origins evince a classic wrathful protector closely connected to the imperial incarnation line of his tantra's treasure revealer, mNga' ris paṅ chen. When adopted by the Sa skya pa, Tsi'u dmar po's vague associations with bSam yas Monastery became more pronounced and amplified to legitimize the Sa skya management of this historically and politically significant site. The dGe lugs pa, specifically through the Fifth Dalai Lama, also institutionalized Tsi'u dmar po, however, they did so by diminishing his significance in relation to their favored protector deity, Pe har. All three sectarian examples use

mNga' ris paṅ chen's treasure tantra, but to varying degrees and toward different ends. In all these instances, Tsi'u dmar po remains the same deity, yet certain qualities are foregrounded or built upon to support a different community's needs. As Duara states:

extant versions [of myths] are not totally wiped out. Rather, images and sequences common to most versions of the myth are preserved, but by adding or 'rediscovering' new elements or by giving existing elements a particular slant, the new interpretation is lodged in place. Even if the new interpretation should become dominant, previous versions do not disappear but instead come into a new relationship with it, as their own statuses and roles with what might be called the 'interpretive arena' of the myth come to be negotiated and redefined.²⁶

As an addendum to round out the major sectarian contexts, it is worth reiterating that mNga' ris paṅ chen was close friends with a 'Bri gung bKa' brgyud throne-holder, Rin chen phun tshogs. Moreover, while earlier bKa' brgyud examples are harder to come by, a nineteenth-century text tells us that portions of the *Warlord's Tantra* made its way into the bKa' brgyud ritual corpora, and likely did so earlier.²⁷ This is also significant because the whole of the *Warlord's Tantra*, along with several exemplary *sādhana*s from mNga' ris paṅ chen's corpus, would eventually make its way into the *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo*, the grand nineteenth-century Ris med collection of tantric literature compiled by 'Jam mgon kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (1813-1899; BDRC: P264). Over a century earlier, the *Warlord's Tantra*, along with other of mNga' ris paṅ chen's Tsi'u dmar po rites, can be found in a compilation by Sle lung bZhad pa'i rdo rje (1697-1740; BDRC: P675). This dGe lugs hierarch is famous for his collection of protector deity hagiographies entitled the *Ocean of Oath-Bound Guardians*, and his chapter on Tsi'u dmar po within this work likewise quotes at length from the *Warlord's Tantra* and its related texts.²⁸

The eighteenth-century dGe lugs edition and the nineteenth-century Ris med edition form the basis of the below complete translation of the *Warlord's Tantra*. While I used the earlier *dbu med* script edition

²⁶ Duara 1988, p.780.

²⁷ See Rin chen rNam par rgyal ba 1978, pp.405-406; see also Gibson 1991, pp.201-206.

²⁸ The full title of this work is the *Unprecedented Elegant Explanation Briefly Expounding the Hagiographies and Iconographies of the Ocean of Oath-Bound Guardians of the Teachings (Dam can bstan srung rgya mtsho'i rnam par thar pa cha shas tsam brjod pa sngon med legs bshad)*; see Sle lung rje drung 1976. For an extensive study on Sle lung, see Bailey 2017.

as my basis,²⁹ I drew on the *dbu can* script Ris med edition³⁰ to clarify obscurities, and especially to include, italicized in footnotes, the informative nineteenth-century interpolations and comments added by the rNying ma treasure revealer mChog gyur gling pa (1829-1870; BDRC: P564), which gives the text's transmission a pleasant symmetry. It is with this edition that the *Warlord's Tantra* has a select – and likely most popular – sample of *sādhana*s appended to it. The title page of this composite text within the *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo* illustrates this vividly and evocatively, with the root tantra foregrounded by a heart offering to the deity that says in Tibetan, the *Warlord's Tantra with Accompanying Sādhana*s:



Title page of the Ris med edition (Padma dbang rgyal 1976, p.299)

After this title page, the contents of the seven chapters that make up the *Warlord's Tantra* proper can be summarized as follows:

1. Introduction of Hayagrīva in his blazing *maṇḍalic* palace, where he is exhorted by the *dākinī* rDo rje bde byed ma to subjugate the arrogant spirits with his *mantra*, specifically Tsi'u dmar po.
2. rDo rje bde byed ma asks for and receives from Hayagrīva the tale of Tsi'u dmar po's mythic origins, along with the Seven Unruly Riders.
3. rDo rje bde byed ma asks for and receives from Hayagrīva the ritual materials and preparations needed to subjugate Tsi'u dmar po.
4. This chapter enumerates the secret *mantra* recitations needed during the ritual.
5. This chapter provides the approach and accomplishment stages the practitioner must master, as well as the expected signs of success to observe.
6. This chapter offers a contingency plan for taming Tsi'u dmar

²⁹ See Padma dbang rgyal 1985.

³⁰ See Padma dbang rgyal 1976, specifically, pp.299-312.

- po if the above methods are not successful, as well as the proper conduct expected of him and the Seven Unruly Riders.
7. Hayagrīva concludes the tantra with the entrustment of the deities.

While the dGe lugs representation of Tsi'u dmar po may be the most dominant in and around Lhasa, in other centers and communities – such as at rDo rje brag, Sa skya, and bSam yas – alternative representations continue to hold sway. Hegemony is never absolute even if one is able to reorient or dominate the interpretive arena, and this allows multiple versions to coexist and negotiate, or even compete, with one another. In these and other instances, however, it is worth asking who such changes in representation serve and why. While the works of mNga' ris paṅ chen, A myes zhabs, and the Fifth Dalai Lama cannot be taken as indicative of the motivations for an entire sectarian community, they are nonetheless influential within their lineages and act as a starting point for delineating the many faces and facets of a divinity. With root texts like the *Warlord's Tantra* as a starting point, it is the simultaneously continuous and discontinuous nature of a Tibetan protector deity that affords different masters, sects, and monastic institutions the ability to cast such powerful and useful beings in their own image. This has allowed a figure like Tsi'u dmar po to move beyond his Northern Treasure origins and become the popular intersectorian Dharma protector that he is today.

The Warlord's Tantra

[a.k.a.] *The Seven-Chapter Heart Tantra for Red Razor*

Chapter 1: Introduction

[dGe lugs: 4.1-5.5; Ris med: 300.1-301.6]

In the Sanskrit language:³¹ *Yakṣarājasiddhigr̥vācittatantra*.³² In the Tibetan language: *Heart Tantra for Red Razor, King of the Capricious Spirits*.³³

Homage to the king of glorious power!³⁴

³¹ because it is an authentic source.

³² along with the secret sign [samaya].

³³ The Tibetan translation of the Sanskrit title is mostly accurate, except for the deity's name, which is given as "Red Razor" in Tibetan (*spu gri mar po*) but "Attainment-Neck" in Sanskrit (*siddhigr̥vā*).

³⁴ the teacher.

Thus have I once heard:³⁵ In the highest Pure Land of the miraculous [Buddhist] teachings,³⁶ in the middle of a blazing bonfire of malicious anger, amid swelling waves of bloody lust, within a radiant³⁷ dark-red triangular *maṇḍala*, the Bhagavan – Glorious King Hayagrīva himself – [recites] his mantra to cultivate meditative stabilization, which subjugates³⁸ the three realms.

Now, at that time he resided surrounded by the horde of arrogant ones, a retinue that displayed the very nature of the five poisons of afflictive emotions.³⁹ They were countless malicious ones [like] hindering spirits (*bdud*),⁴⁰ savage spirits (*dmu*),⁴¹ martial spirits (*btsan*),⁴² king spirits (*rgyal po*), skeleton spirits (*ging*), and capricious spirits (*gnod sbyin*).⁴³ Various illnesses arose from their ferocity, weapons, breath, and the like, and they were about to destroy⁴⁴ all the worldly realms when the *dākinī* rDo rje bde byed ma⁴⁵ rose from her seat among the retinue and exhorted the Bhagavan, “Emaho! Mighty King Bhagavan, if the miraculous powers of the malicious arrogant ones can even destroy the three realms, you must compassionately command them!”⁴⁶ The Bhagavan replied, “Since⁴⁷ insightful wisdom did not arise in the arrogant gods and demons of the world, they were produced by the cause of delusion – the afflictive emotion of ignorance⁴⁸ – and the condition of an unruly seed. I will subjugate the worldly wrathful gods!⁴⁹ HRĪḤ PADMACANDAMAHAĀKRODHAHAYAGRĪVA HULU HULU HŪM PHAṬ.”⁵⁰ The arrogant ones⁵¹ panicked because of this, and each⁵² gave their life essence (*srog*) and pledged to be guardians of the [Buddhist] teachings. [Thus,] the Bhagavan bestowed life essence blessings on the top of the vicious, poisonous Razor Slash.

³⁵ *the requesting disciple.*

³⁶ *for the disciples to be tamed.*

³⁷ *powerful.*

³⁸ *the garuḍa bird that is on top of the horse’s head and...*

³⁹ Pride (*nga rgyal*; Skt. *māna*), desire (*’dod chags*; Skt. *rāga*), anger (*zhe sdang*; Skt. *dveṣa*), jealousy (*phrag dog*; Skt. *īrṣyā*), and ignorance (*gti mug*; Skt. *moha*).

[such as] *Hānubakṣu*.

⁴⁰ [such as] *Legs pa*.

⁴¹ [such as] *the Seven Riders*.

⁴² *like a heap of sesame seeds.*

⁴³ *with arrows and weapons.*

⁴⁴ Lit. “Adamantine Bliss-producing Woman.”

⁴⁵ *the time of taming having come.*

⁴⁶ *the ultimate truth of.*

⁴⁷ *false self-perception.*

⁴⁸ Padma dbang rgyal 1985, p.5.3-4: *’jig rten drag po bdag gis dbang du bsdud/*; Padma dbang rgyal 1976, p.301.3-4: *’jig rten dregs pa’i sngags bdag gis/ dbang du bsdu/*. The former makes more sense, so I am translating this section as such.

⁴⁹ *the fierce root mantra.*

⁵⁰ *completely.*

⁵¹ *of the malicious arrogant ones [such as] the Seven Emanating Riders.*

This is the first chapter, the introduction within the *Heart Tantra for Red Razor, King of the Capricious Spirits*.⁵³

Chapter 2: Lineage

[*dGe lugs*: 5.5-8.2; *Ris med*: 301.6-305.4]

Next the *ḍākinī* rDo rje bde byed ma exhorted the Bhagavan accordingly, “Alas!⁵⁴ Great Glorious and Mighty Form [Hayagrīva]! Regarding the Seven Riders⁵⁵ – malevolent capricious spirits who possess primordial wrath, power, and might – first, what are the causes and conditions of their [past] karma? [Second,] by what corrective measure were they truly tamed?”

The Great Glorious God replied, “Regarding the Seven Riders⁵⁶ – malevolent capricious spirits – long ago in the age of perfection,⁵⁷ in the last days of [Buddha] Kaśyapa’s teachings, to the north of the southern continent Jambudvīpa, in a jeweled pure land⁵⁸ of joy and happiness, [there was] a father gSang ba, the King of Khotan,⁵⁹ a mother named Utpala rgyan, and their son ’Phyor ba, the prince of Khotan. The son was moved by faith,⁶⁰ so he received *pratimokṣa* vows as the monk Candrabhadra. While he was dwelling in a forest, there was a princess named Ma byin,⁶¹ the daughter of King Dharmāśrī,⁶² in a city of that region. She was blissfully resting in a bathing pond⁶³ when she was attacked by a vicious poisonous snake.⁶⁴ The monk saw this with his own eyes, so he spread a fragment ointment [over the wound] and saved her. He [also] rubbed it on [areas of] her body that were not at risk.⁶⁵ Two cruel ministers who relished in licentious talk saw this and relayed this [supposedly] perverse activity to their lord.⁶⁶

⁵³ *this is, in truth, a secret tantra.*

⁵⁴ *she entreated.*

⁵⁵ *manifesting as martial spirits.*

⁵⁶ *manifesting as martial spirits.*

⁵⁷ *that has past (rdzogs ldan; Skt. kṛtayuga).* This is the first of four eras in the Indo-Tibetan cosmological timeline. The three that follow are the *gnyis ldan*, *sum ldan*, *rtsod ldan* (ages possessing half virtue, a third virtue, and strife, respectively).

⁵⁸ *in Khotan, the Dark Willow Grove.*

⁵⁹ *King of Khotan.* To keep the seven-syllable meter, the original line has *li rje*, while mChog gyur gling pa clarifies with the fuller note, *li yul gyi rje’o*.

⁶⁰ *he intended to practice the Dharma.*

⁶¹ *possessing a beautiful form.*

⁶² *called Glory of the Dharma (chos kyi dpal).* mChog gyur gling pa is providing the Tibetan equivalent to the name in the text, which consists of Tibetan letters transliterating the Sanskrit name.

⁶³ *bathing.*

⁶⁴ *which had come from within the forest.*

⁶⁵ *for fear of it spreading in the future.*

⁶⁶ *they said, “a ruffian who jealously disparages monks is having sex with the King’s daughter!”*

The king became enraged and summoned his servants and attendants, and they⁶⁷ set out to kill the monk. Then the princess told them her account [of what happened],⁶⁸ but the ministers and attendants did not listen to her words. Because of this, she maliciously made an evil prayer⁶⁹ and⁷⁰ committed suicide by jumping off a cliff.⁷¹ The monk heard of this and was sent off,⁷² so he rode a golden powerful one⁷³ and fled. Because of vicious negative thoughts, he⁷⁴ regressed in his [religious] practice. He made it to Mount [Kailash]⁷⁵ in the Land of Snow [Tibet], and in the domain of the king there,⁷⁶ the monk⁷⁷ killed the men and raped the women.

Then one day,⁷⁸ the king exhorted his best soldiers⁷⁹ and they killed 'Phyor ba – the Khotanese prince⁸⁰ – with swords. With perverse thoughts⁸¹ he prayed, "In my next life of this eon,⁸² I furiously desire to become a vicious capricious spirit. May I become the executioner⁸³ of all sentient beings!" [The monk] declared thus, and instantly at mChong ri zangs mtsho⁸⁴ in the west, a blood red egg was born among the horde of malicious arrogant ones⁸⁵ to the fierce-faced lord of the savage spirits, named Legs pa,⁸⁶ the lord of the martial spirits,⁸⁷ Zla ba thod dkar,⁸⁸ and their sister, the red-faced capricious spirit.⁸⁹ The egg

⁶⁷ soldiers.

⁶⁸ [she told] her father that a poisonous snake appeared [and that the monk] applied medicinal musk.

⁶⁹ "I will be reborn into the world as the consort of 'Phyor ba, the Khotanese prince, and I will become your executioner!" The Tibetan is as follows: *ra li sras 'phyor pa'i yum srid du skyes la khyed kyi gshed por gyur*. The *ra* which begins this interpolation is difficult to decipher and thus left untranslated here; it may refer to 'Phyor ba's clan.

⁷⁰ having prayed.

⁷¹ she leapt from a rocky crag.

⁷² by a friend.

⁷³ a horse.

⁷⁴ the venerable monk.

⁷⁵ the source of lake Manasarovar.

⁷⁶ a relative of Dharmasrī.

⁷⁷ poisoned and...

⁷⁸ the Khotanese prince thought, "I am ashamed!" and fled.

⁷⁹ many combed the mountains [for him].

⁸⁰ with many weapons.

⁸¹ a fierce rage having risen at the moment of his death.

⁸² which is the very same as Śākyamuni's teachings.

⁸³ of the ruling king and his ministers.

⁸⁴ Lit. "Agate Mountain, Copper Lake."

⁸⁵ tormented by attachment.

⁸⁶ Lit. "Excellent One."

⁸⁷ forefather of all the martial spirits.

⁸⁸ Lit. "White Skull Moon."

⁸⁹ These three lines vary widely between the two editions, making an accurate understanding Tsī'u dmar po's parentage difficult, while also acting as a vivid exam-

burst,⁹⁰ and the malicious capricious spirit Tsi'u dmar [po]⁹¹ arose violently from within it. Due to his great malicious thoughts of attachment and hatred,⁹² six vicious martial spirits arose from his body: [1] the black hindering-martial spirit⁹³ formed from his head, [2] the god-martial spirit⁹⁴ formed from his white bones, [3] the cliff-martial spirit⁹⁵ formed from his body heat and radiance, [4] the defiling-martial spirit⁹⁶ dBal thogs⁹⁷ formed from his blood, [5] the serpent-martial spirit⁹⁸ formed from his puss, and [6] the red sword-martial spirit⁹⁹ formed cleanly from his flesh, sinew, and bowels.

From their dwelling place at Gri thang dmar po,¹⁰⁰ [these spirits] craved sword fights and slaughtered everyone. They consumed the life forces (*bla*)¹⁰¹ of the three worlds for food and brought these three realms to ruin. Because of this, through the power of his ancient connection to compassion, the subjugating emanated form of Avalokiteśvara¹⁰² glared furiously and roared with rage. The arrogant ones¹⁰³ and their retinue came into his presence and said: "Alas! Great Glorious God of Gods, we and our retinue listened to the commands of the matricide warrior [Rudra]. Since we will offer the essence of our¹⁰⁴ life forces, reveal to us our allotted work and share of food."

ple of the ambiguities and discrepancies that are common among deity genealogies. The dGe lugs edition (Padma dbang rgyal 1985) has "*gdong drag dmu rje legs pa zhes/ btsan rje zla ba thod dkar dang/ sring mo gnod sbyin gdong dmar la/*" which suggests the polyandrous, and even incestuous, relationship reflected in my translation. The later Ris med edition (Padma dbang rgyal 1976) has "*gdung drag rmu rje legs pa las/ btsan rje zla ba thod dkar gyi/ sras mo gnod sbyin gdong dmar ma/*" The most notable difference between the two is the substitution of *sring mo* ("sister") for *sras mo* ("daughter"), and the genitive particle that precedes it, suggesting that Tsi'u dmar po's mother is the daughter of Zla ba thod dkar, not his sister, and that her sole partner is Legs pa.

⁹⁰ [he arose] *violently from within an ocean overflowing with flesh-eating spirits (srin).*

⁹¹ *the martial spirit lord.*

⁹² *Because of his prayer of sincere anger.*

⁹³ *with a black-headed heron.*

⁹⁴ *with a face on his body.*

⁹⁵ *of the red ridge.*

⁹⁶ *immediately.*

⁹⁷ Lit. "Hindering dBal Spirit." The Ris med edition (Padma dbang rgyal 1976, p.304.4) has *rtsal thog*, meaning "Mighty Lightning."

⁹⁸ *who had previously been a king.*

⁹⁹ *who is also everlasting.*

¹⁰⁰ Lit. "Red Plain of Swords." In the Ris med edition, mChog gyur gling pa adds the commentary: *All sentient beings were conquered by these [spirits], and they each abided pervading all realms.*

¹⁰¹ *of all sentient beings.*

¹⁰² *since the ordained master is Avalokiteśvara.*

¹⁰³ *the seven riders.*

¹⁰⁴ *individual.*

Then they offered their life force essence.¹⁰⁵ Their allotted work was directed toward protecting the Buddha's teachings. Their share of food granted them the flesh, blood, and life breath [of the enemy].¹⁰⁶ Because of [Tsi'u dmar po's] past actions and karmic traces,¹⁰⁷ the consort of the Seven Unruly Riders, who is superior to all the hindering spirits of royal lineage, is the goddess sister¹⁰⁸ Ekajāti.

This is the second chapter, revealing [Tsi'u dmar po's] stream of births within the *Heart Tantra for the Capricious Spirit Red Razor*.

Chapter 3: Ritual Materials and Preparation

[dGe lugs: 8.2-9.2; Ris med: 305.4-307.1]

Then the *ḍākinī* again exhorted [the Bhagavan]: “Alas! Great Glorious and Mighty Form, regarding the malicious Seven Unruly Riders, what are the stages of practice¹⁰⁹ for these warrior gods of all yogis?”

The Bhagavan replied: “For the *sādhana* of these malicious capricious spirits, the *mantrika* endowed with the [proper] view and conduct should perform the mantric recitation of Mighty Hayagrīva. In a place suitable for malevolent red rock martial spirits,¹¹⁰ on the last Friday [of the month],¹¹¹ make a *maṇḍala* at the martial spirits' abode. Anoint a raised sacrificial box with blood. Mix excrement in with the heart's blood of a man and horse killed by the sword and make a *liṅga* effigy. Put soot¹¹² on the [spirit's] 'bone-element' name.¹¹³ Bind [the effigy] with the red cursed cord¹¹⁴ of the martial spirits. On a barley dough [effigy of a] dark red mule,¹¹⁵ [place the effigy of the martial spirit] in a manner of apprehending [the enemy]¹¹⁶ and brandishing [a weapon].¹¹⁷ On a red martial spirit fortress a hand-span high, you will place the red horse of the martial spirit [as well as] red arrows. [Also] fasten [to the effigy] red silk flags, iron wings, and a tiger-skin quiver.

¹⁰⁵ for protection (Skt. *rakṣa rakṣa*).

¹⁰⁶ of those who destroy the teachings.

¹⁰⁷ of being originally killed by the king.

¹⁰⁸ because of the princess's original prayer.

¹⁰⁹ This is understood as summoning the deities for purposes of propitiation.

¹¹⁰ regarding the place where they manifest.

¹¹¹ [when] Mars is rising.

¹¹² with sword[-drawn] blood.

¹¹³ inside the effigy. 'bone-element' (*rus khams*) refers to the patrilineally-inherited element associated with a being since their birth; see Maurer 2020, pp.104-110.

¹¹⁴ a thread of colored wool.

¹¹⁵ smeared with colored powder. Both texts have *gong gsum sa dmar*, which I am reading as a misspelling of *rkang gsum pa dmar*, for red mule.

¹¹⁶ using the red horse of the martial spirits.

¹¹⁷ a weapon. This is the most common iconographic appearance for Tsi'u dmar po; astride his mount, he binds an enemy below with his lasso and threatens or pierces them with his spear.

Pour various jewels and grains, as well as fragrant incense, into a satin pouch and tie it [to the effigy]. In a leather or copper vessel, combine barley with the blood of a *bheta*,¹¹⁸ then fill it with three hearts of the [offering] object¹¹⁹ and the six excellent substances.¹²⁰ In an authentic red Chinese pot, grind jewels down for the porridge of various grains.¹²¹ Having prepared the seven red food offerings of the martial spirit, you should adorn them with red flesh and blood. Then draw a suppressed and struck *liṅga* effigy on the heart and shoulder blade of a red rhinoceros. On the highest story of the completed fortress, smear excellent copper stag horns¹²² with vermillion. This is the outer support of the malicious capricious spirit."¹²³

This is the third chapter, expounding the materials and ritual preparations within the *Heart Tantra for Red Razor, King of the Capricious Spirits*.

Chapter 4: Mantras

[*dGe lugs*: 9.2-9.6; *Ris med*: 307.1-308.2]

Now recite this series of secret mantras accordingly: “OM PAD-MACANDAMAHĀKRODHAHAYAGRĪVA¹²⁴ HULU HULU HŪM PHAṬ. OM RAKṢA RAKṢA *snying la*¹²⁵ HŪM HŪM. ŚŪLAGRĪVA¹²⁶ TRISŪLA HRIN HRIN JAḤ JAḤ. OM MUKṢA MUKṢA¹²⁷ JAḤ. CITTA CITTA *sod. lcebs te thibs sod. snying khrag dun dun. btsan* JALAYA. *srog* JALAYA.¹²⁸ ŚATRŪM *srog* LAYA. ŚATRŪM *dbugs* LAYA. *myur* TRĪLA BHYO BHYO. YATRI YATRI¹²⁹ THUṀ THUṀ *rbad.* CATRI CATRI *rbad.* CALAYAM CALAYAM *rbad.* JALAYA JALAYA *rbad.*

¹¹⁸ make a blue horse tinged with crimson as well as a red-stone knife[-murdered] spirit with crimson flesh. The transliterated term *bheta* likely refers to a vow-breaker, from the Sanskrit “to cleave, violate.”

¹¹⁹ sheep.

¹²⁰ Bamboo pitch (*cu gang*), saffron (*gur gum*), clove (*li shi*), nutmeg (*dza ti*), cardamon (*sug smel*), and Chinese cardamom (*ka ko la*).

¹²¹ the five precious jewels; gold (*gser*), silver (*angul*), turquoise (*g.yu*), coral (*byu ru*), and pearl (*mu tig*).

¹²² affix red banners [to them].

¹²³ after attending [to the spirit] and ritually slaughtering [the offerings], through the medium of the *liṅga*, you will serve [the remains] in order to propitiate [the spirit].

¹²⁴ this is the [tutelary] deity to approach.

¹²⁵ this is not the principal [deity].

¹²⁶ request the martial spirits of the retinue and such to appear.

¹²⁷ the accomplishment.

¹²⁸ This line is not in the *Ris med* edition.

¹²⁹ [ritually] slay [the spirit].

YAM YAM RAM RAM KHAM KHAM LAM LAM. TRIYA TRIYA ŚA-
MAJAYA. *snying la* BHYO thun BHYO. OM *srog*¹³⁰ RULU RULU *sha*.
bla sha bla sha PHAṬ. *blab hats* MUYA *rbad*. OM KĀYAVAJRACARAT-
HANG. VĀGAVAJRACARATHANG. CITTAVAJRACARAT-
HANG.¹³¹ LAM LAM *srog* CALA *khrag thibs*.¹³² KHAM KHAM¹³³ *sny-*
ing la thum ril. RAM RAM¹³⁴ *shag rbad*. YAM YAM¹³⁵ NRI *srog breng*
breng MĀRAYA *rbad*.¹³⁶

“When you inhale inward, your own life essence is interrupted.
[When] you expel outward, you harm all living beings. Therefore,¹³⁷
[the spirit must] offer [their life essence] at the site of the effigy.”

This is the fourth chapter on the mantras within the *Heart Tantra for Red Razor, Great King of the Capricious Spirits*.

Chapter 5: Characteristics and Stages of the Approach and Accomplishment

[*dGe lugs*: 10.1-10.4; *Ris med*: 308.2-309.4]

Then the Bhagavan expounded the stages of the approach and accomplish-
ment and the stages of the signs: “The oath-bound yogic practition-
er, having first obtained the meditative warmth of the [tutelary]
deity, [should] perform and recite for twenty-one days [or] three
weeks. First, during the times for the approach, approach the Great

¹³⁰ Because these are the mantras for summoning the [spirit’s] life force, recite the accomplish-
ing mantras hundreds and hundreds [of times] in the mornings and evenings.

¹³¹ This cuts at the essence of [Red] Razor [with] a ritual dagger.

¹³² This cuts at the essence of [Red] Razor with the elements.

¹³³ [the element] of water.

¹³⁴ [the element] of fire.

¹³⁵ [the element] of wind.

¹³⁶ Given that this string of mantras is a dense, and often confusing, compilation of
Sanskrit and Tibetan words and seed syllables, the following is an approximate
translation: OM lotus moon, great wrathful Hayagrīva, alas, alas HŪM PHAṬ. OM
protect, protect in one’s hearts HŪM HŪM. JĀH JĀH. Iron-necked trident HRIN
HRIN JĀH JĀH. OM snare, snare JĀH. Slay the heart, the heart. Slay the throng of
suicides. A portion, a portion of heart’s blood. Martial spirits JĀLAYA. Life essence
JĀLAYA. The enemy’s life essence LAYA. The enemy’s life breath LAYA. Thrice
quickly BHYO BHYO. Going, going, be dispatched THUM THUM. Hidden, hid-
den, be dispatched. On the wind, the wind, be dispatched. In the water, the water,
be dispatched. Wind wind, fire fire, water water, earth earth. Thrice, thrice pacify
and conquer. For the heart BHYO a portion BHYO. OM life essence RULU RULU
flesh. Life force and flesh, life force and flesh PHAṬ. [With] a mouthful, be dis-
patched MUYA. OM field of the body’s adamantine movements, field of the
speech’s adamantine movements, field of the mind’s adamantine movements.
Earth, earth – the dense blood that moves the life essence. Water, water – the round
sheath on the heart. Fire, fire – completely dispatches. Wind, wind – the life essence
is annihilated and, fluttering, is dispatched to MĀRA.

¹³⁷ having [performed] the two approaches, command [the spirit] and.

Mighty Divinity [Hayagrīva] in the day and enumerate the life essences of the martial spirits at night. Periodically proffer the effigy as an offering.¹³⁸

Then, during the times for the accomplishment, one should summarize the approach and accomplishment in the day, and at night perform the accomplishment alone, as well as ascribe and invoke the life force mantra. Even if the concentrated blood dissipates in nine [or] seven days after slaying [the effigy],¹³⁹ finish the arrow¹⁴⁰ that splits the essence¹⁴¹ of the element and throw the magical weapons of mustard seeds (*thun zor*) and blood (*khraḡ zor*).¹⁴² [Also] send off the effigy of the martial spirit form and the mule.

“Then, as for the stages of the signs: A ruler¹⁴³ born to the matrilineal line of royal ministers; a horseman with a leather shield and clanging cymbals passing the peak of Red Rock [behind bSam yas];¹⁴⁴ the sun and moon¹⁴⁵ rising; blue wolves roaming about – these should be known as signs divine and human. Battles being waged and savage beasts roaming the distant mountains; enemy fortresses being destroyed¹⁴⁶ and prisoners being captured; clothes and jewelry stolen and animals slaughtered – these should be known as

¹³⁸ The following indented portion is found in the Ris med edition but not in the earlier dGe lugs edition. While the latter is older and would suggest that this material was a later addition, much like the interpolations, the dGe lugs text makes much less sense without it. For instance, this line ends with *g.yo ba dang* in the dGe lugs edition and *bstab* in the Ris med edition, with the latter term making much more sense in the context of the effigy (*liṅga*) being discussed. By contrast the following extra content from the Ris med edition ends on *g.yo ba dang*, suggesting that the scribe of the dGe lugs edition skipped a folio side while copying the text and continued to complete the line with the start of the next side. This likely, and not unheard of, scenario also makes the current line of verse 9 syllables long in the dGe lugs edition, which stands out abruptly from the near universal 7-syllable meter used in the text. Finally, given that this chapter concerns both the approach and accomplishment stages as well as the stages of the signs, the former section would be greatly diminished and the latter almost nonexistent without the indented content that follows.

¹³⁹ [This being of] *the three – approaching, accomplishing, and slaying.*

¹⁴⁰ *of the session for slaying.*

¹⁴¹ *OM KĀLAVAJRA and so forth.*

¹⁴² See Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1998, pp.356-357.

¹⁴³ *a lord.*

¹⁴⁴ *at a place where people do not wander.*

¹⁴⁵ *many [times].*

¹⁴⁶ *which delights him [Tsi'u dmar po].*

signs of warfare. Lights,¹⁴⁷ sounds, and shaking;

Doors being knocked on and houses cracking; effigies moving and fleeing;¹⁴⁸ the jangling of a¹⁴⁹ bridle and clopping of¹⁵⁰ hooves arising – these should be known as the inner signs. A weapon piercing oneself; a jackal biting – these are the signs of warding off. Because of this, recite the counter measures.”

This is the fifth chapter, expounding the stages of the approach and accomplishment, as well as the stages of the signs, within the *Heart Tantra for Red Razor, King of the Capricious Spirits*.

Chapter 6: Essential View and Conduct
[dGe lugs: 10.4-11.3; Ris med: 309.4-310.5]

Then [Bhagavan] explained thoroughly and definitively: “If the capricious spirit opposes you, draw the eight-spoked three-fold wheel [of Dharma] on cotton cloth or birch bark paper with vermillion, shellac, poison, and blood. At the center [place] the five grains¹⁵¹ endowed with protective mantras;¹⁵² on the spokes write the eight fierce syllables;¹⁵³ and on the edge write the protective mantras of the three Bud-dhas bodies¹⁵⁴ and the quintessential *samaya* vow. Bind the structure in a rolled up red banner [with] the mantra for Rosewood Dagger Hayagrīva. If he is not captured even with that, reverse the order of the essential syllables. Even the martial spirits, hindering spirits, and Seven Emanating Riders arise from me and appear as manifestations.¹⁵⁵ One should know them as my own mind – indivisible and ultimately perfect as one.

“As for the stages of conduct and the *samaya* vow: renounce the meat¹⁵⁶ of powerful illusion, do not distribute the chief weapons,¹⁵⁷ and do not lay out bear- and tiger-[skins] as mats.¹⁵⁸ Do not kill the force¹⁵⁹ of the sharp-pointed mantra, do not obstruct the path¹⁶⁰ [with] one’s

¹⁴⁷ quaking,

¹⁴⁸ and falling apart.

¹⁴⁹ horse.

¹⁵⁰ horse.

¹⁵¹ Barley (*nas*), rice (*'bras*), wheat (*gro*), peas (*sran*), and millet (*so ba*).

¹⁵² OM TRI HŪM PHAṬ PHAṬ.

¹⁵³ [PADMA]CANDAMAHĀKRODHA; lit. “lotus moon, great wrathful one.”

¹⁵⁴ VAJRARĀJATHANG; lit. “field of the adamantine king.”

¹⁵⁵ One should know they do not exist elsewhere.

¹⁵⁶ The meat of a hooved red horse and a donkey.

¹⁵⁷ which killed monks long ago.

¹⁵⁸ Renounce the desire to be the son of a widow.

¹⁵⁹ Do not display the weapons.

¹⁶⁰ Do not deal with martial spirits in a place that harms martial spirits.

own anger, and do not break the turquoise arrow of longevity.¹⁶¹ Do not blow air [over] charcoal stones,¹⁶² do not give a dedication of misty vapor,¹⁶³ and do not be untimely with your promises. If one does not have the security [for their debts], you cannot exploit them.¹⁶⁴ An unguarded *samaya* vow wrecks the consecration. By not approaching the [tutelary] deity, one opposes me.”

This is the sixth chapter on the essential view and conduct within the *Heart Cakra Tantra for Red Razor – the Butcher King – Ruler of the Capricious Spirits*.

Chapter 7: Transmission

[*dGe lugs*: 11.3-12.3; *Ris med*: 310.5-312.2]

Then [Bhagavan] explained this tantric transmission: “The *Va-
jradākinīyoginīs*, gods and demons among the worldly arrogant ones, and those assembled as my retinue are apparent¹⁶⁵ but empty, like a wavering illusion; they are arranged by the conceptual thoughts of ignorance and arrogance. If one wants to practice because malicious capricious spirits – these Seven Riders – guard the [Buddha’s] teachings, casually losing sight of the¹⁶⁶ objects of attachment and aversion, they who possess [excessive] confidence in their view will [only] accomplish the complete abandonment of compassion. If one [selectively] adopts or rejects [whatever practices they wish], they will die, and if the offerings lapse,¹⁶⁷ it will cause misfortune – shooting an arrow without a target¹⁶⁸ harms the retinue. The provisions for the protectors of the Secret Tantra teachings are the offerings for the ‘givers of harm.’¹⁶⁹ The gods who bestow excellence on oneself¹⁷⁰ and the thousand swift martial spirits are the butchers who take the life essence.

Because [its transmission lineage] is completely connected, this is called “tantra;” because it cuts off appearances, this is called “razor;” because it teaches through slaying, this is called “red;” and because it consecrates, this is called “heart.” To this guardian of the teachings and your retinue, I entrust you to gather as attendants.”¹⁷¹

¹⁶¹ Do not kill jackals.

¹⁶² Do not desire crows.

¹⁶³ Do not deviate from the hearth.

¹⁶⁴ They must be known as my own mind.

¹⁶⁵ to see.

¹⁶⁶ five.

¹⁶⁷ Dedicate the food offerings on the full and new moon days when it is time to practice.

¹⁶⁸ not connected to an effigy.

¹⁶⁹ The etymology [for capricious spirits].

¹⁷⁰ [in the form of] assistance.

¹⁷¹ when you emanate wherever.

Having spoken thus, the entire retinue circumambulated [the Bhagavan] many times and praised him [as follows], “HŪM. We pay homage and praise [you], laughing, neighing Hayagrīva! [You] Lotus Speech – the Supreme Speech of All the Victorious [Buddhas]! [You] splendid form [that arises] from HRĪ – the emanation of the Dharma lords Amitābha, Vajradharma,¹⁷² and Avalokiteśvara!” Having proclaimed thus, they all abided in the innate nature of realization. Regarding the subject of this very tantra, the *dākinī* [rDo rje bde byed ma] wrote down these miraculous words. After swearing an oath [to act] as guardians of the teachings, the Seven Arrogant Riders were entrusted with their own abode.

This is the seventh chapter on the entrustment within the *Heart Cakra Tantra for [Red] Razor, the Butcher King of the Capricious Spirits*.¹⁷³ Thus ends the *Tantra for Tsi'u dmar po*,¹⁷⁴ *King of the Capricious Spirits*, and this contemplation on these martial spirits, the Seven Emanating Riders. SAMAYĀ. Seal, seal, seal!

Colophon

[dGe lugs: 12.3-12.4; Ris med: 312.2-312.3]

This was revealed from a treasure [text] by the Venerable mNga' ris paṅ chen.¹⁷⁵

[From Sle lung] bZhad pa'i rdo rje's class of volumes [concerning] martial spirits.¹⁷⁶

May it be virtuous!¹⁷⁷

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¹⁷² *in four aspects*.

¹⁷³ This line describing the seventh chapter is slightly misplaced in the dGe lugs edition, found as it is at the very end, after the colophon, and written in the 'khyug cursive script.

¹⁷⁴ *This is actually his secret name*.

¹⁷⁵ *It was copied from a little yellow scroll*. This is the only interpolation found in the dGe lugs edition; it is not present in the Ris med edition.

¹⁷⁶ Understandably, this line is only found in the dGe lugs edition, written in the 'khyug script.

¹⁷⁷ Tib. *dge'o*; this final expression is only found in the Ris med edition.

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Yamāntaka's Wrathful Magic: An Instance of the Ritual Legacy of gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes on the Byang gter Tradition via the Figure of rGya Zhang khrom*

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Introduction

part from his more philosophically oriented works, gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes is also (perhaps even especially) known for his mastery of the arts of black magic, which he is said to have achieved by meditating on the deity Yamāntaka and which he famously put to use when facing persecution during the troubled times that followed the collapse of the Tibetan empire.¹ It is this latter aspect of gNubs chen's persona and legacy that seems to have been particularly appropriated by rGya Zhang khrom, who was identified (and may also have self-identified) as his incarnation. In this paper, I will seek to briefly present and contextualize a short Yamāntaka ritual of wrathful magic revealed by rGya Zhang khrom, which is transmitted as part of the Byang gter tradition.

1. The treasure revealer

Not much historical information is available regarding rGya Zhang

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¹ Esler, Dylan, 'On the Life of gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes', in *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 29, April 2014, pp. 12f, pp. 20f.

khrom.² He is generally placed in the early 11th century, and is said to have been born in a dragon year,³ though the prophecy from a text called the *Zab pa chos drug gi dkar chag* [Index of the Six Profound Doctrines] announcing his birth mentions a dragon or dog year.⁴ Based on this information, the year of his birth suggested by Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein in their masterful translation of Dudjom Rinpoche's *Chos 'byung* is 1016 (a dragon year).⁵ This calculation tallies with Guru bKra shis' (early 18th c.) statement that rGya Zhang khrom preceded Mi la ras pa (1040–1123) by one generation,⁶ which makes good sense, since rGya Zhang khrom is known as the teacher of lHa rje gNubs chung, who instructed Mi la ras pa in the arts of destructive magic.⁷

According to 'Jam mgon kong sprul (1813–1899), rGya Zhang khrom was born in gTsang rong near the Dum pa hot spring in order to fulfil the past aspirations of gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes,⁸ although an alternative opinion, attributed by Guru bKra shis to Sog bzlog pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1552–1624), gives his birthplace as g.Yung mda'.⁹ This latter view may have arisen due to confusing the place of one of his treasure discoveries with his place of birth. His family line (*rus*) was the rGya; his given name (*bla dwags kyi mtshan*) was Zhang khrom; and his secret name (*gsang mtshan*) was rDo rje 'od 'bar.¹⁰ The account provided by Tshul khriims bzang po (1884–1957), a

² The present biographical sketch is based on the works of Guru bKra shis, of 'Jam mgon kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas and of Tshul khriims bzang po. A brief *rGya Zhang khrom gyi gter byung gi lo rgyus* appears in the *Byang gter chos skor phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 20, *Byang gter dpe sgrig tshogs chung*, n.p., 2015, pp. 227–230, but unfortunately it contains nothing that is not found in the above-mentioned works.

³ This is the opinion retained in 'Jam mgon kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, *Zab mo'i gter dang gter ston grub thob ji ltar byon pa'i lo rgyus mdo bsdus bkod pa Rin chen bai dū rya'i phreng ba*, in 'Jam mgon kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (ed.), *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo*, vol. 1/ka, Paro: Ngodrup and Sherab Drimay, 1976–1980, p. 366.2: *dgungs snying 'brug yin pa dang [...] lung dang mthun par yod ces grags!*

⁴ The prophecy is quoted in 'Jam mgon kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, *Rin chen bai dū rya'i phreng ba*, p. 365.6: *lo ni khyi 'brug lo pa la!* Likewise, Guru bKra shis (*Gu bKra'i chos 'byung: bsTan pa'i snying po gsang chen snga 'gyur nges don zab mo'i chos kyi byung ba gsal bar byed pa'i legs bshad mkhas pa dga' byed ngo mtshar gtam gyi rol mtsho*, Beijing: Krung go'i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, 1990, p. 367), quotes the same prophecy, though ends up siding with the opinion of the dragon year.

⁵ Dorje, Gyurme, and Kapstein, Matthew, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History*, vol. 2: Reference Materials, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1991, p. 65, n. 908.

⁶ Guru bKra shis, *Gu bKra'i chos 'byung*, p. 369.

⁷ Martin, Dan, 'The Early Education of Milarepa', in *The Journal of the Tibet Society*, vol. 2, 1982, pp. 56f.

⁸ 'Jam mgon kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, *Rin chen bai dū rya'i phreng ba*, p. 366.1.

⁹ Guru bKra shis, *Gu bKra'i chos 'byung*, p. 367.

¹⁰ 'Jam mgon kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, *Rin chen bai dū rya'i phreng ba*, p. 366.2.

Byang gter master who may well be considered one of the most accomplished Tibetan scholars of the early 20th century,¹¹ lists various physical signs conforming to the prophecies of his birth, including a short and corpulent body, a mole, curly and blondish (!) hair, a yellowish complexion tinged with white on the right side and red on the left, and strong white teeth.¹² Of course, from a modern academic perspective, the manner in which a particular prophecy announcing a treasure revealer (*gter ston*) in fairly broad terms becomes linked to a specific master can be seen to be part of a wider process of authentication which legitimizes a given revealer's vocation and status by connecting him to a compelling religious narrative of predestined activity.¹³ In any case, if the textual record is anything to go by, rGya Zhang khrom's overall appearance must have been that of a short yet impressively built, and perhaps even somewhat frightful man.

Tshul khriims bzang po tells us that, foregoing all wealth, Zhang khrom lived in the manner of a beggar (*mu to ba*) and took up the occupation of a goatherd (*ra rdzi*). Once, as he arrived at a temple in Nya mo, he met a mysterious wandering *yogin*, who told him that they both had great purposes to accomplish together. He thereupon followed him. When they arrived in gTsang Ri bo che, they begged for some food and had a meal of barley flower. The *yogin* then told Zhang khrom to stay there and that he would return within a short while. Having searched for a small circular stone, he found one and brought it along, telling Zhang khrom to hit it upon the back of the rock, where a *svastika* was drawn with red vermilion. Zhang khrom pierced (*bsnun pas*)¹⁴ it five times, until a treasure chest was released from

¹¹ Arguillère, Stéphane (tr.), *Tülku Tsullo – Manuel de la Transparution Immédiate*, Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2016, pp. 27–30.

¹² Tshul khriims bzang po, 'Jam dpal gshin rje tshe bdag gi dbang gi Lo rgyus mun sel sgron ma, in Tshul khriims bzang po, *gSung 'bum*, vol. 8, n.d., n.p., fol. 49b.1–2. It may be remarked that the biographical note repeatedly gives the apparent misspelling Zhing khrom. The text has been republished (with the odd spelling Zhing khrom) in the more recent edition of Tshul khriims bzang po's collected works (in 16 volumes): Tshul khriims bzang po, 'Jam dpal gshin rje tshe bdag gi dbang gi Lo rgyus mun sel sgron ma, in Tshul khriims bzang po, *gSung 'bum*, vol. 3, n.p., 2014, pp. 349–358.

¹³ See Cantwell, Cathy, *Dudjom Rinpoche's Vajrakīlaya Works: A Study in Authoring, Compiling, and Editing in the Tibetan Revelatory Tradition* (with a chapter by Robert Mayer), Sheffield: Equinox, 2020, p. 115. For a discussion of this theme within the context of a revealer's autobiographical writings, see Gyatso, Janet, *Apparitions of the Self: The Secret Autobiographies of a Tibetan Visionary*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2001, p. 128, pp. 240f.

¹⁴ Whereas Tshul khriims bzang po has the verb *bsnun pas*, meaning 'to pierce', Guru bKra shis (*Gu bKra'i chos 'byung*, p. 367) has *brgyab pas*, 'to hit'.

within a door in the rock.¹⁵ The *yogin* eliminated the debris and squeezed into a crack in the rock, followed by Zhang khrom. Upon an arrow-length *maṇḍala*, there was a silver vase filled with longevity water, which the *yogin* suddenly drank from. Zhang khrom wanted to take his share of the water, yet the *yogin* handed him the empty vase, telling him that his was another share. As the light from the crack in the rock above their heads was dwindling, Zhang khrom inserted the silver vase into his breast pocket; distracted by thinking where this other share might be, he found some paper scrolls – below the ice according to Guru bKra shis, within a terracotta box according to Tshul khrim bzang po. Then, after having walled up the door, the two companions came out. By selling the silver vase, Zhang khrom made some wealth and learnt to read and write. Having become skilled in reading, he looked at the original scrolls, and deciphered the *gShin rje kha thun*, and the inventories (*kha byang*) for the treasures of g.Yung and rMu.¹⁶

Guru bKra shis also supplies an additional anecdote, which is said to be taken from the previously mentioned *Zab pa chos drug gi dkar chag*: According to this account, the inventories of his treasures¹⁷ were found by a poor monk above the door of the sPra dun rtse temple. Wanting to meet rGya Zhang khrom, the anchorite searched for him by means of the prophecy mentioning his country, year, name and family line, and found him at the Dum pa hot spring. The two of them conversed, and taking out the treasures, there were twenty-one yellow scrolls on cycles for benefiting and harming (which we might call 'white' and 'black magic'). There was also an inventory of other treasure caches; they were taken out by Zhang khrom from the Dum pa hot spring. Before the anchorite had vanished, he knew that he was an

¹⁵ Tshul khrim bzang po, *Lo rgyus mun sel sgron ma*, fol. 49b.3–6. At this point, the TBRC scan of Tshul khrim bzang po's text is almost illegible, so I here turn to the more recent edition (of 2014), which I have supplemented with the text of Guru bKra shis, both accounts being in any case very close.

¹⁶ Guru bKra shis, *Gu bKra'i chos 'byung*, pp. 367f. Cf. Tshul khrim bzang po, *Lo rgyus mun sel sgron ma* (2014), p. 356.

¹⁷ The crucial role played by the inventory (*kha byang*) and similar forms of certificate (*byang bu*) in the process of treasure discovery is discussed in Gyatso, Janet, 'The Logic of Legitimation in the Tibetan Treasure Tradition', in *History of Religions*, vol. 33:1, 1993, pp. 126–130.

emanation (*sprul pa*)¹⁸ of Sangs rgyas ye shes.¹⁹

It is worth pausing for a moment to reflect on these various accounts: in both of them, the treasures are recovered as physical objects in a rather matter-of-fact manner, a pattern which may also be observed in other early treasure revelations, notably those of Myang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124–1192).²⁰ Furthermore, in both our accounts, a mysterious anchorite plays an instrumental role as a catalyst for Zhang khrom's revelations; in the second story, the unnamed monk comes to be identified as having been emanated by Sangs rgyas ye shes,²¹ and it may be assumed that he also triggers Zhang khrom's self-identification with the latter, though the story is not too explicit about this point.

The socially embedded nature of treasure discovery and the revealer's reliance on a network of significant others²² is nicely illustrated by this further story recounted by Guru bKra shis. On one occasion, rGya Zhang khrom was going for alms with two companions. There was a former recluse who had previously worked for twelve years in the service of the king of dBus, and as a farewell gift had been offered the choice between a copy of the extensive *Prajñāpāramitā* and an inventory of treasures; he had chosen the latter, yet arriving in his country, he had lacked the courage to search for the treasures. Later, he became a layman and then died. When Zhang khrom and his companions arrived in the area, the wife of the deceased layman invited

¹⁸ Regarding the distinction between an emanation (*sprul pa*) and an incarnation (*sprul sku*), and their occasional intentional blurring, see Hirshberg, Daniel A., *Remembering the Lotus-Born: Padmasambhava in the History of Tibet's Golden Age*, Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2016, p. 71. Briefly put, whereas an emanation signifies a magically evanescent apparition that can manifest from a great master even as he resides in a pure field, an incarnation refers to a definite embodiment of enlightened activity as a highly evolved but nonetheless still reincarnating *bodhisattva*. It is the former term, emanation, that is used in Guru bKra shis' account to describe the mysterious *yogin*.

¹⁹ Guru bKra shis, *Gu bKra'i chos 'byung*, p. 368.

²⁰ Cf. Mayer, Robert, 'Rethinking Treasure (Part One)', in *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 52, October 2019, p. 147; and Esler, Dylan, 'The *Phurpa* Root Tantra of Nyangrel Nyima Özer's (1124–1192, Tib. Myang ral Nyi ma 'od zer) *Eightfold Buddha Word, Embodying the Sugatas* (Tib. *bKa' brgyad bDe gshegs 'dus pa*) Corpus: A Thematic Overview and Philological Analysis', *BuddhistRoad Paper* 7.1, 2020, p. 8, p. 10. For a detailed study of a concrete example of the incorporation of older material within a treasure revelation, see Cantwell, Cathy, 'The Action *Phurpa* (*'phrin las phur pa*) from the *Eightfold Buddha Word, Embodying the Sugatas* (*bKa' brgyad bDe gshegs 'dus pa*), Revealed by Nyang-rel Nyima Özer (1124–1192, Tib. Myang ral Nyi ma 'od zer)', *BuddhistRoad Paper* 7.2, 2020.

²¹ Guru bKra shis, *Gu bKra'i chos 'byung*, p. 368: *bya bral ba gar song ma byung ste Sangs rgyas ye shes kyi sprul pa yin par shes/*.

²² See Gyatso, *Apparitions of the Self*, pp. 176f; and Cantwell, *Dudjom Rinpoche's Vajrakīlaya Works*, pp. 17f.

them into her home. Explaining her late husband's story, she offered them the inventory of treasures. Zhang khrom was very pleased, and this inventory subsequently allowed him to discover many other treasure caches.²³

Again basing himself on the *Zab pa chos drug gi dkar chag*, Guru bKra shis writes that rGya Zhang khrom's treasure caches were revealed in the following eight locations: Phung po Ri bo che in gTsang; Phu'i rdza lhung mo in g.Yung; the rock of Mon mo gTsug rum in rGya; the adamantite casket (rDo rje sgrom bu) in Nyug; 'Gram skyer ma in gTsang; as well as sPra dun rtse; the mKhon mthing temple; and bSam yas mchims phu.²⁴ As remarked by Jacob Dalton, it is interesting that the treasures associated with gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes and discovered by rGya Zhang khrom were revealed in areas of Central Tibet that are closely connected to the Zur and rGya clans.²⁵

2. The treasures discovered

In terms of the content of his treasure discoveries, the works listed by Guru bKra shis²⁶ include many 'doctrinal sections on accomplishing enlightenment' (*byang chub sgrub pa'i chos sde mang po*), specified by 'Jam mgon kong sprul as chiefly pertaining to the mind orientation (*sems phyogs*),²⁷ as well as fierce spells (*drag snags*) to guard the teachings. Notable among these are the 'Jam dpal tshe bdag nag po'i skor lcags sdig; the lCags 'dra; and the Thog 'dra gnam thog chen mo'i skor; as well as evocations (Skt. *sādhana*) for the 'Jam dpal gshin rje gshed kha thun nag po'i rgyud and for the 'Jam dpal khro bo 'dus kyi rgyud; the gShin rje ru mtshon dmar po'i skor,²⁸ etc. Also mentioned are a few cycles on therapeutics (*gso dpyad*), as well as a rDzogs chen cycle related to Yamān-

²³ Guru bKra shis, *Gu bKra'i chos 'byung*, p. 368. The story is also briefly alluded to in Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las, *Tshe bdag dbang bshad*, in *Byang gter chos skor phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 50, pp. 135.6–136.2.

²⁴ Guru bKra shis, *Gu bKra'i chos 'byung*, pp. 368f.

²⁵ Dalton, Jacob, 'Preliminary Remarks on a Newly Discovered Biography of Nupchen Sangyé Yeshé', in Bogin, Benjamin, and Quintman, Andrew (eds.), *Himalayan Passages: Tibetan and Newar Studies in Honor of Hubert Decler*, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2014, pp. 155f.

²⁶ Guru bKra shis, *Gu bKra'i chos 'byung*, p. 369. Cf. the list supplied in Tshul khriims bzang po, *Lo rgyus mun sel sgron ma* (2014), pp. 356f.

²⁷ 'Jam mgon kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, *Rin chen bai dū rya'i phreng ba*, p. 366.6: *sems phyogs gtso bor gyur pa'i byang chub sgrub pa'i chos sde mang po*.

²⁸ A cycle with this name is found in sNga 'gyur bka' ma, ed. Kaḥ thog mKhan po 'Jam dbyangs, vol. 6/cha, Chengdu: Kaḥ thog, 1999, though the contributions after p. 563 seem to be re-workings by later masters.

taka, entitled *Ye shes gsang rdzogs*, again said to be of the mind orientation; and commentaries on the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*, on the *Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya*, and on the phases of meditating on wisdom at the time of death.²⁹ The allusion to cycles connected to the mind orientation of rDzogs chen is intriguing, considering his predecessor's, gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes', role in codifying the early rDzogs chen tradition. However, many of the cycles listed no longer seem to be extant, and some of the works given by Guru bKra shis (the philosophical commentaries, for instance) are slightly incongruous given rGya Zhang khrom's background as an illiterate goatherd, intended perhaps to represent him in a more positive light, as being more than a sorcerer. Nonetheless, it must also be said that vast quantities of Tibetan texts have indeed been lost (sometimes irretrievably so) and that the only picture we have of rGya Zhang khrom is that handed down to posterity by later tradition. Given this state of affairs, what may seem incongruous to us today may simply be due to our having a biased and limited knowledge of Zhang khrom's range of interests and activities in the first place. This is what Guru bKra shis suggests when he writes that whereas many of Zhang khrom's teachings were lost and are no longer extant,³⁰ his Yamāntaka cycles were transmitted to the new schools via the figure of Rwa Lo tsā ba (1016–ca. 1128). Dudjom Rinpoche too explains that rGya Zhang khrom gave Rwa Lo tsā ba about half of his Yamāntaka teachings (the full extent of which made up a clay barrel), and that the latter appended these to his own Yamāntaka cycle, inventing a Sanskrit origin for it in the process.³¹ Of course, the version of this encounter recounted in Rwa Lo tsā ba's biography sheds a slightly different light on these events, casting Rwa Lo tsā ba in a favourable role as the master who awakened Zhang khrom's former positive propensities.³² Be that as it may, it is clear that most, if not all, of rGya Zhang khrom's revelations as they have come down to us are concerned with the wrathful deity Yamāntaka, which was also the tutelary deity of Zhang khrom's precursor, gNubs chen

²⁹ Interestingly, in view of his association with gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes, a similarly named instruction is quoted in the *bSam gtan mig sgron*, 424f. For a translation of the passage, see Esler, Dylan, 'The Exposition of *Atiyoga* in gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes' *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*', in *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 24 (Special issue), October 2012, pp. 112f.

³⁰ Guru bKra shis, *Gu bKra'i chos 'byung*, p. 369: *gzhan rnam ni dus snga ches bas deng sang mi bzhugs pa 'dra'ol*.

³¹ Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History*, Translated and edited by Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. 1, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1991, p. 713.

³² See Cuevas, Bryan J. (tr.), *Ra Yeshe Sengé – The All-Pervading Melodious Drumbeat: The Life of Ra Lotsawa*, New York: Penguin Books, 2015, ch.12.

Sangs rgyas ye shes,³³ and with the associated fierce spells of destructive ritual magic. It is thus a Yamāntaka cycle revealed by rGya Zhang khrom, the 'Jam dpal tshe bdag, which became part of the heritage of the Byang gter tradition, playing a significant role in its annual ritual calendar³⁴ and being practised intensively during a one-year retreat by Nus ldan rdo rje 'gro phan gling pa (1802–1864),³⁵ the throne-holder of 'Khor gdong monastery in eastern Tibet. The textual material making up this cycle occupies a full ten volumes in the recently published *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*,³⁶ although at least some of this material may turn out to be accretive in nature, incorporating subsequent reworkings of older texts.³⁷

To gain an idea of when these teachings became integrated into the Byang gter heritage, we may turn to the *dBang chog mu tig phreng ba*, an empowerment rite used to initiate disciples into the 'Jam dpal tshe bdag cycle, which mentions three distinct lineages of transmission.³⁸ The early part of the lineage, which is connected to Mañjuśrīmitra, passes through Vasudhara, gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes and rGya Zhang khrom, as well as a number of intermediary figures, before converging in a master named Nam mkha' dpal ldan. In the general lineage Nam mkha' dpal ldan passes on the teachings to Padma dbang rgyal (i.e. Mnga' ris Pañ chen Padma dbang rgyal, 1487–1544), who transmits them to bDud 'joms rdo rje (alias Legs ldan rdo rje, 1512–1625). In the close lineage (*nye brgyud*) Nam mkha' dpal ldan transmits them, simultaneously it seems, to both Padma dbang rgyal and Legs ldan rdo rje, a transmission which is also mentioned by Rig 'dzin

³³ Esler, 'On the Life of gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes', p. 8.

³⁴ Low, James (ed.), *The Collected Works of C.R. Lama*, Simply Being, 2013, p. 164.

³⁵ See Arguillère, Stéphane, 'Khordong Terchen Nuden Dorje', in *The Treasury of Lives*, July 2018: <https://treasuryoflives.org/zh/biographies/view/Khordong-Terchen-Nuden-Dorje/13617> (accessed 13 October 2020).

³⁶ *Byang gter chos skor phyogs bsgrigs*, Byang gter dpe sgrig tshogs chung, vols. 18–27, n.p., 2015. Stéphane Arguillère has started preparing a catalogue of the volumes making up the 'Jam dpal tshe bdag, here: <https://www.arguillere.org/2021/03/manjusri-master-of-life-a-table-of-the-texts-of-the-jam-dpal-tshe-bdag-cycle-included-in-the-byang-gter-phyogs-sgrigs.html> (accessed 1 April 2021).

³⁷ A case in point is the *dPal gshin rje 'khrul 'khor nag po sdig pa snying 'dzings gsang ba'i rgyud*, in *rNying ma rgyud 'bum*, mTshams brag edition, vol. 28/sa, pp. 691–720, translated by Vasudhara and gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes (under the name sPus ngan (*sic!*)), which is reproduced with some interpolations as *sDig pa snying 'dzings 'khrul 'khor gsang rgyud*, in *Byang gter chos skor phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 20, pp. 1–32. I am grateful to Stéphane Arguillère for pointing out this correspondence and for drawing my attention to the empowerment rite mentioned in the following note.

³⁸ *lCags sdig khams lnga'i 'od mdangs las dBang chog mu tig phreng ba*, in *Byang gter chos skor phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 19, pp. 126f.

Padma 'phrin las (1641–1717) in his *Tshe bdag dbang bshad*.³⁹ Incidentally, the close lineage (i.e. the treasure lineage) is also interesting for placing rGyal ba g.Yung ston chen po (i.e. g.Yung ston rDo rje dpal, 1284–1365)⁴⁰ immediately after rGya Zhang khrom. g.Yung ston rDo rje dpal's position in the treasure lineage is confirmed by Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las, although he places four additional figures, the last of which is Śākya 'bum (13th c.), between rGya Zhang khrom and g.Yung ston rDo rje dpal.⁴¹ In the lineage of orally transmitted injunctions (*bka' ma'i brgyud pa*), which does not mention rGya Zhang khrom, since the latter is associated with the treasure teachings instead, the lineage passes from Nam mkha' dpal ldan to bDud 'joms rdo rje directly.⁴² The upshot is that Legs ldan rdo rje, the second incarnation of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, appears to have played a key role in integrating the 'Jam dpal tshé bdag cycle into the transmissions of the Byang gter lineage. This is not altogether surprising, since his treasure companion, 'Bri gung Rin chen phun tshogs (1509–1557),⁴³ was also a renowned specialist of rGya Zhang khrom's Yamāntaka revelations, which he transmitted to Rig 'dzin Chos kyi grags pa (1595–1659).⁴⁴ The latter integrated these teachings with his own revelations, compiling the *Yang zlog gshin rje me'i spu gri* cycle,⁴⁵ and used these techniques of fierce magic against the Qoshot Mongol armies of Gushri Khan (1582–1655), which in 1641–42 attacked and defeated the forces of the ruler of g'Tsang, ushering in the political dominance of the 5th Dalai Lama, Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682).⁴⁶ Due to his opposition to the Dalai Lama's takeover, Rig 'dzin Chos kyi grags pa was imprisoned in 1645, but he was pardoned after swearing never again to magically attack the newly established dGa' ldan pho brang government. He subsequently seems to have become fairly close to the Dalai Lama, even exchanging notes with him and helping to clarify

³⁹ Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las, *Tshe bdag dbang bshad*, p. 138.4.

⁴⁰ For a brief biography, see Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, vol. 1, pp. 666f.

⁴¹ Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las, *Tshe bdag dbang bshad*, p. 137.5–6. This same listing is taken up by sTag lung rtse sprul Rinpoche (1926–2015) in his *Byang gter chos skor khag gi thob yig*, in *Byang gter chos skor phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 63, p. 216.3–4.

⁴² *dBang chog mu tig phreng ba*, p. 126.5.

⁴³ Valentine, Jay Holt, *The Lords of the Northern Treasures: The Development of the Tibetan Institution of Rule by Successive Incarnations*, PhD thesis, Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 2013, pp. 150f.

⁴⁴ FitzHerbert, Solomon G., 'Rituals as War Propaganda in the Establishment of the Tibetan Ganden Phodrang State in the Mid-17th Century', in *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie*, vol. 27, 2018, p. 106.

⁴⁵ Rig 'dzin Chos kyi grags pa, *'Jam dpal gshin rje'i gshed yang bzlog me'i spu gri'i chos skor*, 4 vols., Bir: D. Tsondru Senghe, 1977–1982.

⁴⁶ van Schaik, Sam, *Tibet: A History*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011, pp. 121f.

the latter's doubts regarding technical aspects of the Yamāntaka rites of reversal. Thereafter, the 5th Dalai Lama instituted these practices within the rNam rgyal grwa tshang.⁴⁷ This was part of a wider trend reflecting the Dalai Lama's keen interest in rNying ma traditions of exorcistic magic⁴⁸ and his personal devotion to the Byang gter, which no doubt went back to his earliest years, since he was blessed in the year of his birth by a Byang gter Yamāntaka longevity empowerment bestowed upon him by Ngag gi dbang po (1580–1639), the third incarnation of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem.⁴⁹ This connection is particularly interesting for our purposes, given that Ngag gi dbang po's father, bKra shis stobs rgyal dBang po'i sde (ca. 1550–1603),⁵⁰ also seems to have played a role in the transmission of the 'Jam dpal tshe bdag corpus within the Byang gter lineage, thus continuing the work of his master Legs ldan rdo rje, referred to above. However, in the Byang gter lineage of the orally transmitted injunctions (*bka' ma*) of the 'Jam dpal tshe bdag, bKra shis stobs rgyal's immediate predecessors are Se ston Rin chen rgyal mtshan (b. 14th c.), sPyan tshab mGon po zla ba (b. 15th c.) and gNubs dgon pa Byams pa chos kyi rgyal mtshan (b. 16th c.),⁵¹ thus indicating that he received these particular teachings from the latter rather than from Legs ldan rdo rje. This is also confirmed by a lineage prayer for the 'Jam dpal tshe bdag, apparently composed by bKra shis stobs rgyal, which again mentions the stages of the transmission from Mañjuśrīmitra, Padmasambhava, Vasudhara, gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes, rGya Zhang khrom and a number of intermediary figures, before being received by Se ston Rin chen rgyal mtshan, sPyan tshab mGon po zla ba and Byams pa chos kyi rgyal mtshan, and then by dBang po'i sde himself and his son and successor Ngag gi dbang po.⁵² bKra shis stobs rgyal's contribution to this process of transmission would have been quite natural, since as the incarnation of Legs ldan rdo rje's elder brother Mnga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal, he was educated and reared by Legs ldan rdo rje himself,⁵³ and thus would have considered it his duty to consolidate the transmission of the 'Jam dpal tshe bdag within the Byang gter lineage which Legs ldan

⁴⁷ FitzHerbert, 'Rituals as War Propaganda', pp. 106f.

⁴⁸ van Schaik, *Tibet: A History*, p. 120.

⁴⁹ Boord, Martin J., *A Roll of Thunder from the Void: Vajrakīla Texts of the Northern Treasures Tradition, Volume Two*, Berlin: Wandel Verlag, 2010, p. xviii.

⁵⁰ On the relationship between bKra shis stobs rgyal and Ngag gi dbang po, see Valentine, *The Lords of the Northern Treasures*, pp. 158–162.

⁵¹ sTag lung rtse sprul, *Byang gter chos skor khag gi thob yig*, pp. 214f.

⁵² 'Jam dpal tshe bdag gter brgyud la gsol 'debs kyi rim pa kun khyab ma, in *Byang gter chos skor phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 20, pp. 148.1–150.3.

⁵³ See Valentine, *The Lords of the Northern Treasures*, pp. 154–158; and Chhosphel, Samten, 'Tashi Tobgyel', in *The Treasury of Lives*, May 2013: <https://treasuryof-lives.org/biographies/view/bkra-shis-stobs-rgyal/9052> (accessed 19 May 2021).

rdo rje and others⁵⁴ had spearheaded.

3. Yamāntaka and wrathful magic

As far as the deity Yamāntaka is concerned, Martin Boord draws attention to the fact that the epithet Yamāntaka was originally used to refer to Yama, the Lord of Death, and thus carried the meaning 'Death, the ender'. Later, however, the same epithet came to refer to a separate deity held to 'put an end to death', with the name being reinterpreted accordingly.⁵⁵ There is thus, implicit in the very name and symbolism of Yamāntaka, an intimate correlation, or even an inbuilt tension, between death and its overcoming. The *Phur 'grel 'bum nag*, for instance, explains that Yamāntaka is associated with longevity (the forestalling of death) because he has abandoned the fault of taking life,⁵⁶ yet it is evident that many of the rituals of destructive magic connected to Yamāntaka are concerned precisely with killing. How is this contradiction to be resolved? The fierce rites of 'liberation through killing' (*sgrol ba*) must be understood as part of a wider soteriological framework where they belong to a repertoire of ritual practices designed to overcome various difficulties and to enhance positive circumstances;⁵⁷ these practices are codified as the four tantric activities of pacifying (Skt. *sānti*), increasing (Skt. *puṣṭi*), dominating (Skt. *vāśa*) and fiercely exterminating (Skt. *māraṇa*) – all of them are supposed to have enlightenment as their ultimate goal, although this does not preclude the attainment along the way of useful magical powers, termed 'common accomplishments' (Skt. *sādhāraṇasiddhi*). In this context, the activity of liberation through killing is primarily directed towards an internal enemy, namely the inveterate tendency of self-grasping (Skt. *ātma-graha*):⁵⁸ by exterminating this fiend, there can be no question of 'taking life' in the ordinary sense. Yet there can be little doubt that the practice of liberation does often take as its referent an actual human enemy, and that success in the ritual is achieved when the enemy has been killed; numerous examples could be given of lamas engaging in

⁵⁴ Viz. Se ston Rin chen rgyal mtshan, sPyan tshab mGon po zla ba and Byams pa chos kyi rgyal mtshan.

⁵⁵ Boord, Martin J., *The Cult of the Deity Vajrakīla, According to the Texts of the Northern Treasures Tradition of Tibet*, Tring: The Institute of Buddhist Studies, 1993, p. 205.

⁵⁶ Boord, Martin J., *A Bolt of Lightning from the Blue: The vast commentary on Vajrakīla that clearly defines the essential points*, Berlin: Edition Khordong, 2002, p. 189.

⁵⁷ For an example of the way the fierce rites are integrated into the larger ritual framework of a tantric scripture, see Esler, 'The *Phurpa Root Tantra*', pp. 46–50.

⁵⁸ Meinert, Carmen, 'Assimilation and Transformation of Esoteric Buddhism in Tibet and China: A Case Study of the Adaptation Processes of Violence in a Ritual Context', in *Zentralasiatische Studien*, no. 45, 2016, p. 343, p. 353, p. 356.

such magical attacks, yet for present purposes it will suffice to say that gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes and rGya Zhang khrom are both considered to be specialists in this genre of activity. The doctrinal justification in such cases is that the adept who performs the ritual does so motivated by great compassion and in a state of mind in which the sharpness of hatred has been transformed into indestructible egoless wisdom. If the adept has the indispensable compassionate motivation and required skill, the ritual of killing is equated with liberation, since the consciousness of the enemy is sent off to a pure field and the enemy is freed from his entrenched tendencies to perpetuate vicious deeds that would otherwise have further bound him to the lower realms of cyclic existence.⁵⁹ The tension, remarked upon above, between death and its vanquishing that is implicit in Yamāntaka's name, might be said to reflect the ambivalent nature of the fierce rituals themselves,⁶⁰ which always risk slipping out of the soteriological framework within which they normatively operate, thereby degenerating into a glorification of violence for its own sake.

This, then, is the background against which rGya Zhang khrom's Yamāntaka revelations must be placed. What, if anything, is remarkable about them is certainly not that they are wrathful rituals, for that is in the very nature of the fierce spells, but perhaps only Zhang khrom's seemingly exclusive focus on such practices, to the extent that 'Jam mgon kong sprul considered him to be "the single ancestor of all the fierce spells in Tibet."⁶¹ Whereas gNubs chen is believed to have hidden away the wrathful spells to prevent them from being misused, and indeed is depicted as having authored the *bSam gtan mig sgron* in his old age in order to purify the misdeeds associated with his prior engagement in black magic,⁶² Zhang khrom seems to have embraced the destructive rituals with almost unbridled enthusiasm. In terms of narrative structure, there is a clear continuity between the concealment of the spells by the illustrious and perspicacious gNubs chen,

⁵⁹ Cantwell, Cathy, 'To Meditate upon Consciousness as Vajra: Ritual "Killing and Liberation" in the rNying-ma-pa Tradition', in Krasser, Helmut, *et al.* (eds.), *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 7th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Graz 1995*, Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1997, pp. 107f, pp. 110–112.

⁶⁰ Meinert, Carmen, 'Between the Profane and the Sacred? On the Context of the Rite of "Liberation" (*sgrol ba*)', in Zimmermann, Michael (ed.), *Buddhism and Violence*, Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2006, pp. 99–130.

⁶¹ 'Jam mgon kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, *Rin chen bai dū rya'i phreng ba*, p. 367.3–4: [...] *bod yul 'dir drag sngags thams cad kyi phyi mo pa gcig pu ste gter ston rgyal po gcig go/*. An almost identical statement is found in Guru bKra shis, *Gu bKra'i chos 'byung*, p. 369.

⁶² Esler, 'On the Life of gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes', p. 15.

rallying figure of many rNying ma transmission lineages,⁶³ and their later revelation by the more marginal and perhaps more imprudent rGya Zhang khrom. The narrative of gNubs chen's involvement in concealing the treasures serves at once to legitimize Zhang khrom's discoveries and to highlight their dangerous yet potent nature. Despite the above-mentioned caveat that Zhang khrom may have revealed texts on other subjects which were subsequently lost, it must be said that he does not seem to have enjoyed a particularly good reputation, even within early rNying ma circles. Such is the impression one gets from a quotation attributed to Guru Chos dbang's (1212–1270) father, Pang ston grub pa'i snying po, where the latter chastises Zhang khrom for his overt propagation of the fierce spells.⁶⁴ It is possible that this reflects an internalization on the part of early rNying ma sensitivities of the criticisms levelled against literal interpretations of tantric praxis in Tibet, notably the disapproving comments formulated by lHa Bla ma ye shes 'od (ca. 947–ca. 1024).⁶⁵ In any case, this negative impression of rGya Zhang khrom was evidently not shared in all quarters, since the late Chhimed Rigdzin Rinpoche (1922–2002), a learned and highly respected master of the Byang gter tradition of 'Khor gdong monastery and pre-eminent disciple of the aforementioned Tshul khrim bzang po, refers to rGya Zhang khrom in laudatory terms, mentioning in particular his skill in the practice of transference (*'pho ba*), which enabled him to liberate many of his goatherd disciples, a favour he is said to have granted them before dying himself.⁶⁶

4. The ritual text

The ritual text presented here is called the *Tshe bdag gi zor las*, which can be translated as 'Ritual of the Magic Missile of the Custodian of Longevity', and is described as being a treasure of rGya Zhang khrom.

⁶³ Germano, David, 'The Seven Descents and the Early History of rNying ma Transmissions', in Eimer, Helmut, and Germano, David (eds.), *The Many Canons of Tibetan Buddhism: Proceedings of the Ninth Seminar of the International Association of Tibetan Studies, Leiden 2000*, Leiden: Brill, 2002, p. 254.

⁶⁴ Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, vol. 1, p. 765. This quotation of Guru Chos dbang's father is also mentioned by Martin, 'The Early Education of Milarepa', p. 57. Janet Gyatso has succeeded in tracing this citation to Guru Chos dbang's *gTer 'byung chen mo*; see Gyatso, 'The Logic of Legitimation', p. 121, n. 56.

⁶⁵ See Karmay, Samten Gyaltzen, 'The Ordinance of lHa bla-ma Ye-shes-'od', in Karmay, Samten Gyaltzen, *The Arrow and the Spindle: Studies in History, Myths, Rituals and Beliefs in Tibet*, Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point, 2009, pp. 3–16.

⁶⁶ Low, *The Collected Works of C.R. Lama*, p. 119.

The text is transmitted within the Byang gter tradition as part of the rituals dedicated to the deities of the eight injunctions (*bka' brgyad*),⁶⁷ alongside the teachings connected to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's (1337–1408) major revelation on this topic, the *Drag po rang byung rang shar chen po'i rgyud* [Tantra of the Great Self-Originated and Self-Arisen Fierce (Eight Injunctions)].⁶⁸ The continued relevance of rGya Zhang khrom's short text for the ritual life of the communities practising the Byang gter tradition⁶⁹ may be gauged from the fact that it has recently been republished as part of the essential recitations of rDo rje brag monastery in Simla.⁷⁰ Moreover, as mentioned above, rGya Zhang khrom's Yamāntaka revelations as a whole are highly valued by the Byang gter tradition, and we may mention in this respect another short text transmitted in the same Byang gter collections, namely the *Tshe bdag nag po'i gtor bzlog* [The Oblation-Exorcism of the Black Custodian of Longevity].⁷¹

Of course, the 'custodian of longevity' in the title of both these texts is none other than Yamāntaka, the deity whose particular form of slaying increases rather than diminishes life. The magic missile (*zor*) named in the *Tshe bdag gi zor las* refers to the ritual weapon that is hurled at the enemy to be destroyed by the rite. It is a particular type of oblation (*gtor ma*), which is empowered by the tutelary deity invoked in the rite and is thrown in the manner of a bomb in the enemy's

⁶⁷ *Tshe bdag gi zor las rGya Zhang khrom gyis gter nas spyang drangs pa rgyas pa*, in Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, *Drag po rang 'byung rang shar chen po'i rgyud dang bka' brgyad kyi bsnyen thabs 'das pa'i zhal lung rin chen phreng ba*, vol. 2, Delhi: Tashi Dorji, 1975, pp. 447–453.

⁶⁸ *Drag po rang byung rang shar chen po'i rgyud kyi rgyal po*, in *Byang gter chos skor phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 9, pp. 29–175. Stéphane Arguillère has prepared a useful catalogue of this and related texts of the *bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar* cycle: <https://www.arguillere.org/2019/07/catalogue-du-bka-brgyad-rang-shar.html> (accessed 29 March 2021).

⁶⁹ The important social function of such rituals in binding together the community of practitioners and in providing a common ground of shared interests for the laity and the group of ritual specialists is discussed in Turpeinen, Katarina, *Vision of Samantabhadra – The Dzokchen Anthology of Rindzin Gödem*, PhD thesis, Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 2015, pp. 156f.

⁷⁰ *Tshe bdag gi zor las rGya Zhang khrom gyis gter nas spyang drangs pa rgyas pa*, in sNga 'gyur byang gter chos skor las 'don cha'i skor, vol. 3, Simla: Thub bstan rDo rje brag e waṃ lcog sgar dgon, 2000 (?), pp. 313–319.

⁷¹ *lCags sdig yan lag drug pa las tshe bdag nag po'i gtor bzlog*, in Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, *Drag po rang 'byung rang shar chen po'i rgyud dang bka' brgyad kyi bsnyen thabs 'das pa'i zhal lung rin chen phreng ba*, vol. 2, Delhi: Tashi Dorji, 1975, pp. 433–445; and *lCags sdig yan lag drug pa las tshe bdag nag po'i gtor bzlog*, in sNga 'gyur byang gter chos skor las 'don cha'i skor, vol. 3, Simla: Thub bstan rDo rje brag e waṃ lcog sgar dgon, 2000 (?), pp. 325–340.

direction or on the effigy representing him.⁷² It belongs to the magic arsenal of the Tibetan sorcerer.

Our text is a fine and unabashed example of the 'art of cursing',⁷³ yet as is typical of this genre of rNying ma literature, it succeeds in weaving profound metaphysical ideas and elaborate cosmological notions into the fabric of seemingly mundane rites, ensuring thereby and *en passant* that the hereditary (and other) *mantrins* who engage in these forms of pragmatic magic often retain a relatively high degree of doctrinal learning alongside their ritual expertise.⁷⁴ Moreover, the sinister language of the text reflects the context within which it is used, one in which it functions as a ritual to avert and violently exorcize various harmful influences.⁷⁵

The text opens appropriately with an invocation, during which offerings are presented to the masters, the peaceful and wrathful deities, and especially to Yamāntaka and his entourage. This then continues for the various deities of the eight injunctions: the gods of awakened body, Yamāntaka; the gods of awakened speech, Padma (i.e. Hayagrīva); the gods of awakened mind, Yang dag Heruka; the gods of awakened qualities, Che mchog; the gods of awakened qualities, Vajrakīlaya; the gods of Ma mo rbod gton; the gods of 'Jig rten mchod bstod; the gods of dMod pa Drag sngags (fierce spells for cursing); as well as the leader of the arrogant custodians of spells; the seventy-two glorious wardens; the ocean of pledge-bound guardians; and the land-owning deities (*gzhi bdag*).⁷⁶ All these deities are invited to accept the golden libation (*gser skyems*) and asked to perform the deeds entrusted to them by the holder of spells (*sngags 'chang*; Skt. *mantradhara*), i.e. the *mantrin* doing the ritual. The text then proceeds to describe the trajectory of the magic missile as it is hurled in the four directions; in each case, the particular guardian of the direction is addressed in honorific terms and urged to dodge the missile (*sku zur*) and avert his gaze (*spyān byol*). This is interesting considering the violent and potentially disruptive nature of the rite: since ultimately the aim of the ritual is to destroy a negative, disturbing influence (be it a demonic or a human

⁷² FitzHerbert, 'Rituals as War Propaganda', p. 74, n. 84, p. 85; see also Boord, *The Cult of the Deity Vajrakīla*, pp. 197f; and Esler, 'The Phurpa Root Tantra', p. 55.

⁷³ Boord, *A Bolt of Lightning from the Blue*, p. xvii.

⁷⁴ Mayer, Robert, 'Indigenous Elements in Tibetan Tantric Religion', in *Mongolo-Tibetica Pragensia* '14: Ethnolinguistics, Sociolinguistics, Religion and Culture, vol. 7:2, 2014, pp. 43f.

⁷⁵ For a detailed anthropological study of the sociological dimension of such violent rituals and the specialist practitioners who perform them, see Sihlé, Nicolas, *Rituels bouddhiques de pouvoir et de violence: La figure du tantriste tibétain*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2013, pp. 172–177, pp. 215–261.

⁷⁶ On the complex relationship of the *gzhi bdag* deities to the treasure tradition, see Mayer, 'Rethinking Treasure (Part One)', pp. 150–153, p. 166.

enemy!) and thus to restore harmony, it is necessary to secure the co-operation of the appropriate cosmic forces – here the four great kings (Skt. *cāturmahārājakāyikas*) presiding over the cardinal directions.⁷⁷ In order to avoid upsetting the four benevolent kings and their entourage by the violence of the ritual proceedings, they are asked both to duck the missile as it tears through their rightful domain and to turn away their eyes from the devastation it wrecks. Let us here quote from the text itself:

HŪM. Showing the path of the oblation, showing wherever [it goes].

Showing the path of the oblation, showing it eastwards.

In the east, king Dhṛtarāṣṭra, [p. 449]

Surrounded by your retinue of many scent-eaters (Skt. *gandharva*),

Your body dodging, turn your gaze away!⁷⁸

Refrain:

The red oblation missile, *sha ra ra*.

The red bloody magic missile, *khyi li li*.

The minute yellow cursed missile, *nyi li li*.

The star-like arrow missile, *brengs se breng*.

The skull missile, like an avalanche, *ri li li*.

The dagger missile, into the flesh, *thims se thim*.

The rock missile, like lightning, *rbab de rbab*.⁷⁹

HŪM. Showing the path of the oblation, showing wherever [it goes].

Showing the path of the oblation, showing it southwards.

In the south, king Virūḍhaka,

Surrounded by your retinue of many trolls (Skt. *kumbhāṇḍa*),

Your body dodging, turn your gaze away!

Refrain.

⁷⁷ According to the Abhidharma cosmology, they are the rulers of the first and lowest of the six classes of gods of the desire realm (Skt. *kāmadhātu*). They have a cosmological function as protectors of the world. See Lamotte, Étienne, *Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien: Des Origines à l'Ère Śaka*, Louvain: Institut Orientaliste, 1958, pp. 759f.

⁷⁸ *Tshe bdag gi zor las*, p. 448.6–449.1: *hūṃ gtor ma'i lam bstan gang du bstan/ gtor ma'i lam bstan shar du bstan/ shar du rgyal po yul 'khor srung/ dri za mang po'i 'khor gyis bskor/ sku zur de ni spyan byol cig/*. These verses are repeated with appropriate modifications for the other kings.

⁷⁹ *Tshe bdag gi zor las*, p. 449.1–2: *gtor zor dmar po sha ra ra/ khrag zor dmar po khyi li li/ thun zor ser phran nyi li li/ mda' zor skar ltar brengs se breng/ thod zor rbab ltar ri li li/ phur zor sha la thims se thim/ rdo zor thog ltar rbab de rbab/*.

HŪM. Showing the path of the oblation, showing wherever [it goes].

Showing the path of the oblation, showing it westwards.

In the west, king Virūpākṣa.

Surrounded by your retinue of many sovereign serpent-spirits (Skt. *nāga*),

Your body dodging, turn your gaze away!

Refrain.

[p. 450] *HŪM*. Showing the path of the oblation, showing wherever [it goes].

Showing the path of the oblation, showing it northwards.

In the north, king Vaiśravaṇa,

Surrounded by your retinue of many goblins (Skt. *yakṣa*),

Your body dodging, turn your gaze away!

Refrain.

One may note in the refrain given above the various kinds of magic missiles; these will be picked up and their function elaborated upon below in the text. Again securing the cooperation of the various inhabitants of the Tibetan Buddhist cosmos, the next three verses emphasize whom the missile is *not* intended to hurt: the gods in the sky above, the serpent-spirits in the netherworld and the powerful *gnyan* above ground.⁸⁰

The missile is not hurled at the gods above;
Assemble at the feet of the king of great gods!

The missile is not hurled at the serpent-spirits below;
The king of great serpents has been vilified.⁸¹

The missile is not hurled at the cruel spectres (*gnyan*) in between;
You four groups of great cruel spectres, with your bodies
dodge [the missile]!⁸²

⁸⁰ On this popular tripartite classification scheme, see Karmay, Samten Gyaltzen, 'Une note sur l'origine du concept des huit catégories d'esprits', in *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 2, April 2003, p. 69.

⁸¹ In Tibetan *dbu 'phang smod*, meaning 'to belittle'.

⁸² *Tshe bdag gi zor las*, p. 450.2–3: *steng gi lha la zor mi 'phen/ lha chen rgyal po zhabs sdus shig/ 'og gi klu la zor mi 'phen/ klu chen rgyal po dbu 'phang smod/ bar gyi gnyan la zor mi 'phen/ gnyan chen sde bzhi sku zur cigl.*

At this point begins the actual magical attack, and the language becomes more blood-curdling, with the function and target of each of the missiles being explicitly described:

This oblation missile of the fierce Yamāntaka,
This oblation missile is for the hateful enemy, YĀ:
May the enemy's lineage be eradicated for seven generations!

This bloody missile is for the harmful obstructors, YĀ:
May the uterine blood of their mother's lineage dry up!

This cursed missile is for the lineage of sons, YĀ:
May the sons' lineage be eradicated for seven generations!

This arrow missile is for the livestock, YĀ:
May the livestock be swept aside by misfortune and devils!

This skull missile is for the devils (*sri*) of the storehouse, YĀ:
May they be swept aside and cast to the wind like dust!

This dagger missile is for the enemy's heart, YĀ:
May the enemy be killed by the sword or by illness!

This rock missile is for the enemy's castle, YĀ:
May his retainers and retinue be cut off!

Repel the curse, turn the dagger round!
Accomplish your entrusted activities!⁸³

The next part of the text (pp. 450.6–452.3) gives various spells for exorcism, which it would be both tedious and unnecessary to reproduce here. Suffice it to say that they are identified as: the Reversal that is the Turquoise Jackal (*bZlog pa g.yu yi spyang mo*); the Spell of the Black Dawn,⁸⁴ the Fifteenth Town (*'Char kha nag po'i sngags grong khyer bco*

⁸³ *Tshe bdag gi zor las*, p. 450.3–6: *drag po gshin rje'i gtor zor 'di/ sdang ba'i dgra la gtor zor yā/ dgra bo bdun rgyud rtsad nas chod/ gnod pa'i bgegs la khrag zor yā/ mo rgyud khrag gi mngal nas skems/ thun zor bu rgyud tsha la yā/ bu tsha bdun rgyud rtsad nas chod/ mda' zor sgo yi nor la yā/ sgo nor god 'dre phyags mas thob/ thod zor bang khang sri la yā/ phyags mas thal ba rlung la skur/ phung zor dgra bo'i snying la yā/ dgra bo gri thab nad kyis sod/ rdo zor dgra bo'i mkhar la yā/ skye bo 'khor gyi rgyud lam chod/ byang kha bzlog la phur kha sgyur/ bcol ba'i 'phrin las 'grub par mzdod/.*

⁸⁴ During the 9th month of the Tibetan calendar, monks from rDo rje brag would perform the *'Char kha nag po* rites of Yamāntaka in the southern gate of bSam yas monastery. See Boord, *The Cult of the Deity Vajrakīla*, p. 33. The performance of Yamāntaka rites at 'Khor gdong monastery during the 10th month of each of the

lga pa);⁸⁵ the Reversal that is the Spell of the Diamond (*Yang bzlog rdo rje pha lam gyi sngags*); and the Reversal that is the Spell of the Fire Razor (*Yang bzlog me'i spu gri'i sngags*).⁸⁶

At this point, the so-called dance of the horse (*rta bro* = Hayagrīva?) is to be performed, whereby the various negative forces are trampled upon and suppressed. As can be seen from the accompanying text, the dance evokes Yamāntaka, filling the entire tripartite cosmos with his emanations, and the dancer, who identifies with this awe-inspiring deity, tramples upon the different kinds of harmful influences, personified as devils. The final part of the dance consists in accomplishing the four tantric activities, which are correlated with the four cardinal directions, as is typical in tantric literature. The text reads:

HŪM. Everywhere in the third order chiliocosm
Mañjuśrī Yamāntaka
Fills the whole of space with his assembly of male wrathful
ones;
Fills the entire atmosphere with his assembly of female wrathful
ones;
Fills the earth's surface with his assembly of little wrathful
ones.

From within the state which assembles all of these,
I dance with the right leg,
Suppressing the male devils (*pho sri*) under my right foot.
I dance with the left leg,
Suppressing the female devils (*mo sri*) under my left foot.
I dance the dance of non-duality,
Smashing to dust the infant-harming devils (*chung sri*) and the
pledge devils (*dam sri*).

This dance is the dance of great wisdom,
The dance which pulverizes enemies,
The dance which grinds the demons to powder;
Hence, the song and dance are uninterrupted.

male years is also mentioned by Chhimed Rigdzin Rinpoche, in Low, *The Collected Works of C.R. Lama*, p. 164.

⁸⁵ A text of this name is found in 'Char kha nag po'i sngags grong khyer bco lga pa, in 'Jam mgon kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (ed.), *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo*, vol. 17/tsa, Chengdu: lHo nub mi rigs dpar khang, 1990s (?), pp. 201f. Whereas the spell provided there is longer than the one found in our text, its final part does parallel, with a few minor variations, the spell as it is given in our text.

⁸⁶ These different spells are also conveniently compiled together along with related materials in sNga 'gyur byang gter chos skor las 'don cha'i skor, vol. 3, pp. 315–322.

In the east, through the dance of pacifying, [p. 453]
 May the enemies, obstructors and pledge devils be pacified!
 In the south, through the dance of increasing,
 May longevity and merit increase!
 In the west, through the dance of dominating,
 May the gods, ghosts and men be overwhelmed!
 In the north, through the dance of fierce extermination,
 May the enemies, obstructors and pledge devils be liberated!⁸⁷

In this final part concerning the four activities, it is worth noting that the objects of the activities of pacifying and of fiercely exterminating are identical; this is not illogical, though, since despite the different means employed, both activities are concerned with the riddance of undesired evil.

The ritual text ends with a spell, in a mix of Sanskrit and Tibetan, signalling the final suppression of the negative forces and the successful performance of the four activities:

*Oṃ sumbhāni sumbhāni hūṃ. Svambhāni svambhāni hūṃ.
 Grhṇāpaya grhṇāpaya hūṃ. Ānaya hoḥ bhagavān vajravidyā rājaya
 hūṃ phaṭ. Mi mthun pa'i phyogs thams cad sāntiṃ kuruye svāhā.
 gNod byed dgra bgegs thams cad māraya hūṃ phaṭ. Tshe dang bsod
 nams puṣṭiṃ kuruye svāhā. lHa 'dre mi gsum vāsaṃ kuruye svāhā.*

Conclusion

This article has merely provided an impressionistic sketch of the life of rGya Zhang khrom, insofar as it can be pieced together from the traditional sources, and of the types of revelations, centred on Yamāntaka, which are said to have been discovered by him. More research is clearly required, particularly regarding the life of the revealer and the manner in which his treasures became part of the Byang gter tradition; the latter aspect will no doubt become clearer as the biographies of the

⁸⁷ *Tshe bdag gi zor las*, pp. 452.3–454.2: *hūṃ stong gsum stong gi 'jig rten nal kun kyang 'jan dpal gshin rje'i gshed/ khro bo 'dus pas nam inkha' gang/ khro mo 'dus pas bar snang gang/ khro chung 'dus pas sa gzhi khengs/ thams cad 'dus pa'i ngang nyid las/ rkang pa g.yas kyis bro brdungs pas/ pho sri thams cad g.yas su mnan/ rkang pa g.yon gyis bro brdungs pas/ mo sri thams cad g.yon du mnan/ gnyis su med pa'i bro brdungs pas/ chung sri dam sri rdul du rlogs/ bro 'di ye shes chen po'i bro/ dgra rnam thal bar rlog pa'i bro/ bdud rnam phyē mar 'thag pa'i bro/ de phyir glu bro rgyun mi 'chad/ shar du zhi ba'i bro brdungs pas/ dgra bgegs dam sri zhi bar shog/ lho ru rgyas pa'i bro brdungs pas/ tshe dang bsod nams rgyas par shog/ nub tu dbang gi bro brdungs pas/ lha 'dre mi gsum dbang sdud shog/ byang du drag po'i bro brdungs pas/ dgra bgegs dam sri sgrol bar shog/.*

various Byang gter lineage masters are carefully studied by scholars working on the tradition. As I have suggested above, Legs ldan rdo rje seems to have played an important role in this regard, as does his disciple bKra shis stobs rgyal. To these must also be added the lesser-known earlier figures of Se ston Rin chen rgyal mtshan, sPyan tshab mGon po zla ba and Byams pa chos kyi rgyal mtshan, who in the lineage accounts are placed just above bKra shis stobs rgyal.

What I hope to have shown is that despite, and perhaps even because of, his marginality, rGya Zhang khrom presents an interesting case study for research into the tantric traditions of treasure revelation. His marginality is evident in at least three ways: firstly, from the point of view of his social status, he was apparently an illiterate wandering goatherd who succeeded in building a reputation as a powerful sorcerer and productive treasure revealer. Secondly, from the point of view of the purported source of his revelations, he is an example of an early revealer whose inspiration centres not on Padmasambhava, as would become increasingly normative after Myang ral Nyi ma 'od zer,⁸⁸ but rather on gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes. Thirdly, from the point of view of the deity at the heart of his treasures, Yamāntaka, while revered as an important deity of the eight injunctions, seems in the long run to have been displaced, though certainly not eclipsed, by Vajrakīlaya in most traditions of rNying ma tantric practice.⁸⁹

The scarcity of biographical or even hagiographical materials concerning rGya Zhang khrom may well be due in part to a bad reputation that early on seems to have accrued around him because of the morally ambivalent character of his treasures, mainly centred on destructive magic. Yet the line between lowly marginal sorcerer and exalted thaumaturge is a thin one in tantric contexts,⁹⁰ and despite his bad reputation, rGya Zhang khrom has produced numerous treasures which are still valued for their magical potency. Moreover, from the emic perspective of the treasure tradition's own logic,⁹¹ he has contributed to the post-mortem literary legacy of his precursor gNubs chen, invoked both as seal of legitimacy and as inspirational impulse.

⁸⁸ Doney, Lewis, 'Padmasambhava in Tibetan Buddhism', in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, vol. 2, Leiden: Brill, 2019, p. 1199. See also Hirshberg, *Remembering the Lotus-Born*, p. 92, p. 151.

⁸⁹ For a story illustrating the superiority of Vajrakīlaya over Yamāntaka, see Boord, *The Cult of the Deity Vajrakīlaya*, p. 121.

⁹⁰ See Samuel, Geoffrey, *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra: Indic Religions to the Thirteenth Century*, New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 232–235.

⁹¹ Cf. Gyatso, 'The Logic of Legitimation', pp. 102–104, p. 111, p. 115.

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An Introduction to *The Chariot of Marvels*: Northern Treasure Master Padma 'phrin las's Memoir of a Journey to Byang Ngam ring in 1690¹

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Padma 'phrin las (1641–1717) was the fourth incarnation of the Byang gter treasure revealer named Rig 'dzin rGod ldem (1337–1409) and the second throne-holder of rDo rje brag Monastery in Central Tibet.² It appears that the majority of Padma 'phrin las's life was spent developing the estate at rDo rje drag into a first-rate rNying ma monastery. He also regularly performed state-level rites on behalf of the dGa' ldan pho brag government, including annual rites at bSam yas. While the Fifth Dalai Lama very likely cultivated his relationship with rDo rje brag at least in part as an attempt to solidify rNying ma authority amongst his allies and against those who supported his gTsang pa adversaries, it is not clear to what extent Padma 'phrin las was a mere tool of the state and to what extent he

¹ This article is a revised version of a paper that was presented in 2019 at the International Association of Tibetan Studies Conference in Paris, France.

² Although Padma 'phrin las was the fourth incarnation of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, he was the first in the series to be the focal point of a relatively robust social institution that maintained the tradition of rule by successive incarnations. Padma 'phrin las's predecessor, Ngag gi dbang po (1580–1639), was recognized as the reincarnation of Legs ldan rdo rje (1512–1580) by his father, Chos rgyal dbang po'i sde (1550–1603), but it does not appear that at that time there was an extensive community of Byang gter practitioners who were anticipating the rebirth of their patriarch. However, we learn from the autobiography of Padma 'phrin las that the circumstances that lead to his recognition were significantly more complex. Padma 'phrin las's incarnational predecessor, Ngag gi dbang po (1580–1639), intended to be reborn in Central Tibet so that he could return to rDo rje brag. He in fact charged his primary disciple, *Yol mo pa* bsTan 'dzin nor bu (1589–1644), with the task of guiding the fledgling monastery through the transition. The community that supported the establishment of an incarnation lineage at rDo rje brag included the Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682), and *Zur chen* Chos dbyings rang grol (1604–1669), who were both disciples of Ngag gi dbang po. Both of these figures also took part in the training of Padma 'phrin las. Later in life, he returned the favor as he was involved with the reincarnations of all three figures, taking the rebirth of Zur chen as his primary protégé. For a summary of the life of Padma 'phrin las, see Samten Chhosphel 2012 or Boord 2013.

was his own man.³

In the Year of the Iron-Horse (1690), however, when Padma 'phrin las was fifty years of age, the Fifth Dalai Lama had been dead (secretly) for eight years.⁴ Although during this period he still received directives from the Regent, *sDe srid* Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653–1705), Padma 'phrin las's epic journey to Byang Ngam ring to visit the homeland of his incarnational ancestors was clearly part of his own spiritual journey. Many of the exploits of Padma 'phrin las life, including his various travels, are recorded in his voluminous autobiography, known as *The White Crystal Mirror* (*Rab dkar shel gyi me long*).⁵ While the entire work consists of 578 folios (1156 pages), it contains an 80-folio (160 pages: 493–653) travel memoir of his journey to Ngam ring as a titled text, *The Chariot of Marvels* (*Lam yig ngo mtshar 'dren pa'i shing rta*), which is the focus of this study.⁶

Summary of the Journey

Padma 'phrin las made the decision to travel during the first month of the year (1690), then spent three months preparing and getting permissions before departing in the fourth month.⁷ Thus, his journey took place during the summer months of an apparently calm year, while the authorities in Lha sa held their collective breaths in the absence of the Fifth Dalai Lama. The Sixth Dalai Lama, Tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho (1683–1706) had already been born and discovered (1688) by the emissaries of the Regent, but he had not yet been publicly recognized.⁸ By the time that Padma 'phrin las departed on his journey to

³ Samten Chhosphele implies that the force of the Fifth Dalai Lama's support for the Byang gter tradition at rDo rje brag in Central Tibet was at least in part politically motivated. For details, see Samten Chhosphele 2012. Conversely, Martin Boord makes a strong case that the Fifth Dalai Lama was an ardent practitioner of the Byang gter tradition, receiving visionary empowerments from various patriarchs of the tradition, and that Padma 'phrin las was in fact his favorite disciple. Nevertheless, Boord also describes the manner in which Padma 'phrin las was employed by the Fifth Dalai Lama for political purposes. For details, see Boord 2010, pp. xxi–xxvi.

⁴ For details regarding the secretive nature of the Fifth Dalai Lama's death, see Schaeffer 2013, pp. 357–358.

⁵ At present, there are two unedited redactions of this text, both of which are listed in the bibliography. The differences between the two are largely limited to spelling irregularities. Despite the fact that the redaction listed first, BDRC Work Number ID: W23811, is missing a couple of pages, it is by far the clearer version and therefore the primary source used in this study. The pagination that is listed throughout this article, therefore, refers to this first version of the text.

⁶ The travel memoir, like the larger autobiography, is written mostly in prose with summaries at the end of each section that are written in verse.

⁷ Padma 'phrin las, pp. 491–493.

⁸ For a brief summary of the life of the Sixth Dalai Lama, see Wickham-Smith 2012.

Ngam ring, the eight-year-old Sixth Dalai Lama had just begun to train in the complicated arts of scholarship in secret far from Lhasa.⁹ Meanwhile, the Regent, who directed the educational curriculum of the young incarnate lama from the capital, worked to consolidate the power of his relatively newly formed government. He had also already begun construction of the Red Palace at the Potala, where the remains of the Fifth Dalai Lama would eventually be installed.¹⁰

Padma 'phrin las's journey began on the 10th day of the Fourth Month of 1690 and concluded on the 18th day of the Eighth Month of that same year, which is a total of approximately 128 days or 4 months and 8 days. He spent 41 days traveling roughly west from rDo rje brag in Central Tibet, 28 days in the greater Byang Ngam ring region, and 59 days returning east to rDo rje brag. Although he visited a great many important sites along the way, Padma 'phrin las spent multiple days at each of the following locations: Gong dkar rDo rje gdan, sPungs pa Ri bo che, rTse gdong, Gru 'dzin, Ri bo bKra bzang, Zang zang lha brag, gCung Ri bo che, lHa rtse, Sa skya, Khro pho, gZhis ka rtse, rGyal rtse, and sNa dkar rtse.

Table 1. Itinerary Highlights of Padma 'phrin las's Travel Memoir

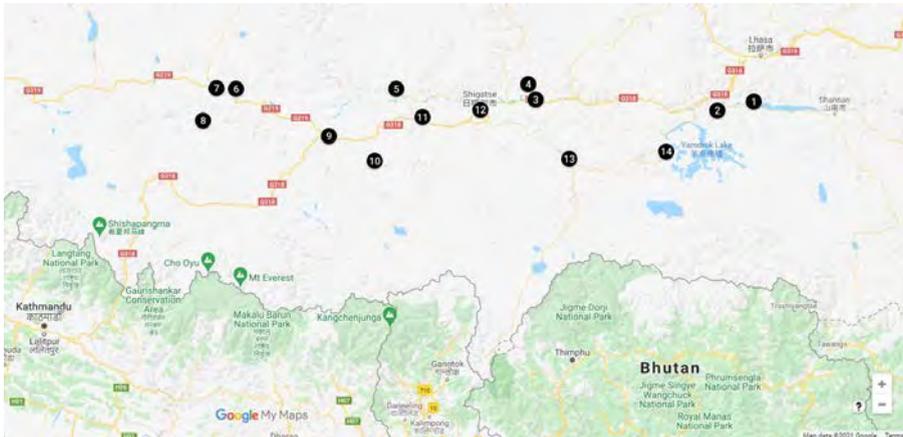
Location Map #	Du-ration	Arrival	Departure	Paginat-ion
rDo rje brag (1)	---	---	10 th Day of the 4 th Month	p. 494
Gong dkar rDo rje gdan (2)	7 Days	11 th Day of the 4 th Month	17 th Day of the 4 th Month	pp. 495-505
sPungs pa Ri bo che (3)	7 Days	25 th Day of the 4 th Month	1 st Day of the 5 th Month	pp. 514-518
rTse gdong (4)	9 Days	1 st Day of the 5 th Month	9 th Day of the 5 th Month	pp. 519-528
Gru 'dzin (5)	4 Days	15 th Day of the 5 th Month	18 th Day of the 5 th Month	pp. 535-538
Ri bo bKra bzang (6)	9 Days	25 th Day of the 5 th Month	3 rd Day of the 6 th Month	pp. 559-570

⁹ Aris 1989, p. 138. Although Padma 'phrin las was among those who knew that the Fifth Dalai Lama had died, he appears to have not met the Sixth Dalai Lama until much later (1697), when he and gTer bdag gling pa (1646–1714) were sent to sNa dkar rtse to offer empowerments to the young incarnation for their respective treasure cycles. His first encounter with the Sixth Dalai Lama is described in his autobiography (pp. 1017-1018). See also Aris 1989, p. 146.

¹⁰ For an account of the construction of the Red Palace, see Chayet 2003, pp. 49-52. For an excellent description of the manner in which Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho consolidates power through the memorialization of the Fifth Dalai Lama in the 1690s, see Schaeffer 2006, 187-188.

Zang zang lha brag (7)	8 Days	4 th Day of the 6 th Month	11 th Day of the 6 th Month	pp. 573-578
gCung Ri bo che (8)	5 Days	15 th Day of the 6 th Month	19 th Day of the 6 th Month	pp. 583-588
lHa rtse (9)	7 Days	24 th Day of the 6 th Month	30 th Day of the 6 th Month	pp. 591-598
Sa skya (10)	3 Days	1 st Day of the 7 th Month	3 rd Day of 7 th Month	pp. 599-609
Khro phu (11)	3 Days	6 th Day of the 7 th Month	8 th Day of the 7 th Month	pp. 611-613
gZhis ka rtse (12)	5 Days	11 th Day of the 7 th Month	15 th Day of the 7 th Month	pp. 616-624
sPungs pa Ri bo che (3)	13 Days	17 th Day of the 7 th Month	29 th Day of the 7 th Month	pp. 629-637
rGyal rtse (13)	4 Days	2 nd Day of the 8 th Month	5 th Day of the 8 th Month	pp. 639-641
sNa dkar rtse (14)	6 Days	8 th Day of the 8 th Month	13 th Day of the 8 th Month	pp. 644-648
rDo rje brag (1)	---	18 th Day of the 8 th Month	---	p. 650

*Map 1. Major Destinations Described in Padma 'phrin las's Travel Memoir*¹¹



Generally speaking, Padma 'phrin las received a warm welcome—often involving mounted escorts or processions of monks—and was granted audiences with the top ranking lay or monastic officials at each of these locations. He met with two different patriarchs of the

¹¹ This map was prepared under the generous tutelage of Dr. Yuhao Wu at Troy University.

'Khon clan—'Khon ston 'Jam dbyangs bsod noms bstan 'dzin (17th c.)¹² in rTse gdong¹³ and Ngag dbang kun dga' bkra shis (1656–1711) in Sa skya, and he also met the Fifth Panchen Lama, Blo bzang ye shes (1663–1737), at bKra shis lhun po.¹⁴ Although he visited sites associated with each of the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism, he does mention at least one bKa' rgyud pa location (to be discussed below) to which he was not permitted to travel. He performed empowerments for a wide range of cycles during his travels, but tended to focus on the Byang gter at the various rNying ma pa institutions he visited.¹⁵ The traditions he established during this journey and the great number of people he ordained along the way likely contributed to the spread of the rDo rje brag monastic paradigm in gTsang and Central Tibet in the seventeenth century.

Padma 'phrin las appears to have also been constantly involved with reading and writing during his journey. The travel memoir is peppered with references that make it clear that he used the biographies of the Byang gter masters to guide his pilgrimage activities.¹⁶ He gave a vast number of reading transmissions, spent significant time reading biographies related to the places he visited, and even appears to have travelled to Khro phu in-part to obtain a reading transmission of a biography of Chos rgyal dBang po'i sde.¹⁷ With respect to

¹² The BDRC reports that gTer bdag gling pa received teachings from a *rTse gdong pa* bSod noms bstan 'dzin <https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=P9484>, which is possibly the same patriarch of the Khon clan met by Padma 'phrin las at rTse gdong.

¹³ For a record of Padma 'phrin las's exploits in the region of rTse gdong, see Padma 'phrin las, p. 519–528. For a description of rTse gdong, see Cassinelli & Ekval 1969, pp. 362–363.

¹⁴ While Padma 'phrin las was received with great fanfare almost everywhere he visited during this journey, the two exceptions, perhaps unsurprisingly, were Sa skya and bKra shis lhun po. For details of his visits to these two areas, see respectively, Padma 'phrin las, pp. 599–609 and 616–624.

¹⁵ For example, Padma 'phrin las stayed at the rNying ma pa monastery of sPungs pa Ri bo che for a week on his way out to Ngam ring and for nearly two weeks on the return trip. During both visits, he gives extensive empowerments for various Byang gter cycles. For details, see Padma 'phrin las, pp. 514–518, 583–588.

¹⁶ For example, while traveling between Gru 'dzin and bKra bzang, Padma 'phrin las reaches a point along the river that he identifies as a site mentioned in the biography of Legs ldan rdo rje, one of his previous incarnations. Evidently Legs ldan rdo rje and Shākya bzang po (ca. 16th c.) were stopped there for three days while attempting to cross the river. For details, see Padma 'phrin las, p. 540.

¹⁷ For details regarding his visit to Khro phu, see Padma 'phrin las, p. 611. For another interesting episode that occurs at gCung Ri bo che, where he reads the biographies of Thang stong rgyal po (1361–1486) and Lo chen 'Gyur med bde chen (1540–1615), see Padma 'phrin las, p. 586. According to Cyrus Stearns (2008), 'Gyur med bde chen gave over control of gCung Ri bo che, the seat of Thang stong rgyal po, to Yol mo pa bsTan 'dzin nor bu (1589–1644), who was the individual who identified Padma 'phrin las as the reincarnation of Ngag gi dbang po.

his writing activities, surely he at least took notes that were used to produce his travel memoir. He also authored a few ritual manuals, wrote numerous letters, and composed a great number of prayers that he gave away as gifts.¹⁸

As a complete explanation of his exploits is not possible here, I will focus on three different points. I will discuss the details of one of his visits to a Sa skya pa Monastery, the manner of his arrival in Byang Ngam ring, and various episodes that unfolded while Padma 'phrin las travelled through the mountains of dBus and gTsang. These passages will be highlighted to demonstrate the historiographic significance of this travel memoir and the captivating quality of Padma 'phrin' las's intimate writing style.

The Kālacakra Initiation at rDo rje gdan Gong dkar Chos sde

While Padma 'phrin las was preparing for his journey, he was invited to take part in the Sa ga zla ba festivities at Sa skya monastery of Gong dkar Chos sde, which is just more than a day's journey west along the southern bank of the gTsang po River.¹⁹ The festivities were to include an extensive set of initiations for the Kālacakra Tantra (*Dus 'khor*), and they invited him to take part in the administration of those rites. He therefore began his journey by departing rDo rje brag on the 10th day of the Fourth Month so that he could arrive at Gong dkar Chos sde on the 11th. Ritual preparations, including the consecration of the ritual space and the construction of an elaborate sand maṇḍala, began as soon as he arrived and continue through the 12th and 13th.

On the 14th of the month, they began a two-day set of initiations called "Seven Empowerments for Raising Children" (*Byis pa 'jug pa'i dbang bdun*) that employed the sand maṇḍala, which the monks had

¹⁸ For an excellent example of this literary activity, see the discussion of Padma 'phrin las's adventures in the mountains after departing from gCung Ri bo che, which is described in detail below.

¹⁹ For an account of the invitation, see Padma 'phrin las, pp. 491-492. For the details regarding his visit to Gong dkar, many of which are summarized below, see Padma 'phrin las, pp. 495-505. Gong dkar Chos sde was established in the fifteenth century by Kun dga' rnam rgyal (1432-1496). For a discussion of his life and works, see Fermer 2009. Evidently, Gong dkar ought to be considered the fourth of the major subdivisions of the Sa skya, alongside the more well-known Sa skya, the Ngor pa, and the Tshar pa traditions. Several of the branch monasteries were involved with the ritual institutions supporting the rule of the Dalai Lamas, including a contingent of monks stationed at the Potala's Kālacakra temple. For details, see Jackson 2015, pp. 243-244. There is also an interesting description of the drum-dancers of Gong dkar who were featured performers in a large-scale public ceremony called "The Golden Procession of the Assembly of Worship" (*tshogs mchod ser spreng*); for details, see Richardson 1993, pp. 74-81.

just spent two days creating. Padma 'phrin las himself was empowered as a master of the ceremonies (*rdo rje slop dpon*) and was seated at the center of a gathering of approximately 200 participants. The assembly include Padma 'phrin las's brother, *rNam gling Panchen* dKon mchog chos grags (1646–1718), as well as the masters and disciples of Gong dkar Chos sde and several nearby monasteries.²⁰ Padma 'phrin las performed the preparatory rites that took up much of the first day and gave an explanation of the Kālacakra Tantra based on a commentary written by bSod nams rgyal mtshan,²¹ whose manuals were also employed throughout the proceedings.

On the 15th of the month, the initiates were marched through the seven empowerments, which is understood as a multi-stage process that purifies the individual from birth through to physical maturity and establishes one as a novice tantric practitioner both literally and metaphorically. On the 16th of the month, Padma 'phrin las bestowed two sets of higher empowerments that employ the maṇḍala of the body of the visualized consort (*phyag rgya'i lus*), which is appropriate for the initiate who is no longer a child. The first set of these more exclusive empowerments is called "Four Higher Empowerments of Conventional Reality" (*Gong ma kun rdzob drang ba'i don gyi dbang bzhi*); they bring the initiates through to the level of Vajra-master. Lastly, he bestowed the final set of empowerments called the "Four Higher Empowerments for the Ultimate Sovereign" (*Don dam bdag po'i dbang gong chen bzhi*).

It is evident that the above activities greatly affected Padma 'phrin las as he recorded the following reflection in the travel memoir:

As I was returning from the temple after having just completed the higher empowerments, [I saw] that it had come down like it was the

²⁰ Despite being the younger brother of Padma 'phrin las, dKon mchog chos grags is more widely known as having trained at sMin grol gling Monastery, not rDo rje brag. He is also recognized as an accomplished scholar, thus the title "rNam gling Panchen" or "The Panchen of rNam sras gling," which is the name of his family's estate where both he and Padma 'phrin las were born. For an ever-so-brief biography of his life, see Sonam Dorje 2016. dKon mchog chos grags also made significant contributions to the study of medicine, working with the Fifth Dalai Lama and *sDe srid* Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho. For a discussion of his work in this area, see Schaeffer 2003, pp. 631-632. Padma 'phrin las's autobiography reveals that the brothers maintained a close relationship. As a matter of fact, the brothers were supposed to spend more time traveling together during the summer of 1690, but as the pair departed from Gong dkar, dKon mchog chos grags is called to bDe chen chos 'khor. For Padma 'phrin las's lamenting account of their separation, see Padma 'phrin las, pp. 505-506.

²¹ I assume this to be bSod nams rgyal mtshan (1312–1375), the 14th throne-holder of Sa skya, who is known to have written about the Kālacakra. For details, see Townsend 2010.

start of the heavy rains for the year. [Everything] was wet with [various forms of] precipitation, including hail. Although they had irrigated the streets of the monastery, on that day even the drainage ditches were overflowing with water. Occurrences such as these [demonstrated that I had established] very good and appropriate connection [through my activities at the monastery]. Indeed, with this contented state of mind, I engaged in my nightly activities [as if I were] in the realm of the Lord of the Naga-serpents.²²

In total, Padma 'phrin las remained in Gong dkar for eight days before departing for destinations further west.

Arrival at the Byang gter Related Sites of Byang Ngam ring

The first place that Padma 'phrin las visited as he entered the homeland of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem was a small town in the region called Tho yor nag po. He had read in the biography of Chos rgyal dbang po'i sde that there had been a scale model of a maṇḍala here that was used in the fifteenth century to repel foreign invaders. Padma 'phrin las was very disappointed to discover that the pilgrimage destination did not live up to his expectations as there was no maṇḍala to be found. In anger he writes:

Generally speaking, in Tibet we have made sure that there are [still living] embers of the important places such as the destroyed temples of holy sites. But here, I felt sincere remorse as there wasn't even a trace of what had been destroyed by the people of Byang and g'Tsang. I thought about how this [place was] like [the fabled] city of frightened Gandharvas [far] up in the mountains, which was destroyed by the power of the sun. That is where the old potter lives, turning his potter's wheel. I thought of how [his movements] causes the continuous turning of his wheel, just as this city [turns in] the bowels of cyclic existence. Although [the syllables for invoking the wrath of the gods] came to my mind and I wanted to form them in my mouth, I hesitated [before rushing toward] the eight worldly desires. [Instead], I swallowed [the words] along with my [angry] spittle before they left my mouth.²³

Padma 'phrin las also finds Ngam ring to be uncomfortably hot. Unlike the region surrounding rDo rje brag in central Tibet, there had been very little rain in Ngam ring. He also complains that there are very few trees, so even shade was difficult to find. Thus, as Padma

²² Padma 'phrin las, pp. 502-503.

²³ Padma 'phrin las, pp. 547-548.

'phrin las reached Ngam ring, he reported that he was physically exhausted and mentally tormented by the heat of the road.²⁴ Nevertheless, these negatives were balanced by his warm welcome in Ngam ring.

By the time Padma 'phrin las began to approach Ngam ring, all of the relevant parties knew that the living incarnation of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, one of the most important treasure revealers of their own region, was on his way home. A large party of both lay and ordained practitioners mounted their steeds and rode out to meet him on the trail so that they could ceremoniously escort this great lama into Ngam ring.²⁵ The escort party notably included the living patriarchs of the Se ston and Me ston lineages of family practitioners who received the Byang gter transmissions from Rig 'dzin rGod ldem in the fourteenth century and continued to maintain those traditions at their family estates in Ngam ring when Padma 'phrin las arrived in 1690.

As the party came near to the great fortress of Ngam ring, Padma 'phrin las viewed the remains of gSang sngags Theg mchog gling, which was the regional seat of Rig 'dzin Legs ldan rdo rje—the second incarnation of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem—and was constructed by Chos rgyal dbang po'i sde. When they finally arrived before the fortress of Ngam ring, Padma 'phrin las was welcomed in grand fashion. On the nearby mountain aptly named bSangs ri, large juniper-burning rituals (*lha bsangs*) were performed simultaneously at the base, middle, and peak in his honor. This practice followed a time-honored local custom that was originally performed by the king, ministers, and vassals who would be stationed respectively at the top, middle, and bottom of the mountain in reflection of the social hierarchy of Ngam ring. Padma 'phrin las's visit coincided with an important summer religious gathering, and thus he writes:

Indeed, a very large number of alms-bearers (*rams chos rgyag mkhan*) had arrived from such places as Shis ser 'bras, which was nearby, for a summer religious gathering. The laity [came to] express their loyalty to Jang [Ngam ring]. As soon as [everyone] was assembled to fill the temple to its twelve doors, I spoke [the words of] a blessing. [Later,] those living in the common dwellings of the monastic college urged me to join them. I went as [they asked,] and they earnestly honored me with tea, sweets, and other [refreshments].²⁶

²⁴ Padma 'phrin las, pp. 546-548.

²⁵ For the events described in this paragraph and the next, see Padma 'phrin las, pp. 550-552.

²⁶ Padma 'phrin las, p. 552.

While visiting with the monks, Padma 'phrin las questioned them regarding the controversial expulsion of Chos rgyal dbang po'i sde, who was a scion of the ruling family of Jang Ngam ring.²⁷ After spending a few days visiting the estates of the Se ston and Mes ston patriarchs, Padma 'phrin las traveled to the original epicenter of the Byang gter Tradition, Ri bo bKra bzang. Along the way, he stopped at the birthplace of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem and at the location by a river where the would-be treasure revealer received a cash of treasure materials from disciples of *Ri 'khrod pa bZang po grags pa*. Both of these events, of course, figure prominently in the biographies, and the reader can feel the tension building as Padma 'phrin las narrates his journey to bKra bzang in the travel memoir. He writes:

I got off of my horse and rested for a short while at the ruined dwellings of sNa mo lung, which is where the great treasure revealer, [Rig 'dzin rGod ldem], was born. Then, following the horse trail I had used to ascend, I guided [my steed] easily back along the road. Just before I arrived at that sacred destination, more than one hundred male and female practitioners of bKra bzang, predominantly nuns (*btsun ma*), [joined me as my] escort, bearing an extensive variety of instruments—drums, cymbals, and conch-shell trumpets—as well as flags, victory banners, and pennants.²⁸

As he narrates his passage past the temples that mark the outer circumambulation route of bKra bzang, he reflects on the auspiciousness of reaching his final destination on the 25th day of the fifth month, which he understands to be a good sign. He reports that the weather confirms his interpretation:

Rain had been scarce while I was on the road, and [here they] were pained by the drought. However, since the night I arrived in Ngam ring, there had been a little rain, and since [I passed the village of] Ra lung, there had been a little more. But, upon arriving at bKra bzang, great torrents of rain began to fall [frequently], fulfilling the wishes of the farmers. And, [the great rains were signs that I had established]

²⁷ This is a sensitive subject for on the one hand, the monks clearly express that it was prudent to banish Chos rgyal dbang po'i sde because he performed wrathful tantric practices without first receiving proper initiations and trainings. The monks were evidently concerned that his actions would cause calamities in Ngam ring if Chos rgyal dbang po sde had been permitted to remain. Interestingly, one of the monks reportedly produced a letter for Padma 'phrin las to read that had been written to chastise Chos rgyal dbang po'i sde for his misdeeds. On the other hand, if it weren't for the expulsion of this besmirched patriarch, rDo rje brag might not have been established in Central Tibet. For details, see Padma 'phrin las, pp. 552-553.

²⁸ Padma 'phrin las, pp. 559-560.

very good connections [with the people of Ngam ring].²⁹

Padma 'phrin las remains at bKra bzang for a total of nine days, before heading to Zang zang lha brag, where there is another community of Byang gter practitioners awaiting his arrival.

Cathartic Experiences in the Mountains

Not all of Padma 'phrin las's adventures, however, involve high-level meetings with regional leaders. The memoir includes many descriptions of the cathartic experiences he enjoyed while traveling through the mountains. For example, on the 18th day of the fourth month, Padma 'phrin las traversed the Gam pa la Mountain Pass. This was a harrowing experience, which, as he explains in the memoir, caused him to experience some sort of stomach illness that was to plague him sporadically throughout his journey. On the 21st day of the fourth month, the main trail brought Padma 'phrin las within close proximity of the cave complex called Brag dmar ke'u tshang, which is in the borderlands between Yar 'brog and Rin spungs.³⁰ He was particularly interested to visit these caves because they were originally occupied by *sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms*, the 8th-century disciple of Guru Rinpoche, who is said to have been involved in the concealment of the Northern Treasures. Moreover, *sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms* was also understood by this point in history as one of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's pre-incarnations and therefore also as one of Padma 'phrin las's pre-incarnations.³¹

Unfortunately, when Padma 'phrin las reached the mouth of the gorge that includes this cave complex, he was still suffering from the illness that he had contracted the last time he ventured high up in the mountains. He decided, therefore, that he would commune from afar and send his prayers from the safety of the trail. As his company was

²⁹ Padma 'phrin las, pp. 560-561.

³⁰ For the details of this episode, see Padma 'phrin las, pp. 508-509.

³¹ As I argue elsewhere, it is not entirely clear in the earliest extant biography of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem that he was understood as a "reincarnation" of *sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms* during his own time. He is described as an emanation (*sprul pa*) of *rDo rje bdud 'joms*, but the designation is not presented as central to his identity. See Valentine 2013, pp. 26-56. It appears that over time it becomes nearly a requirement that a treasure revealer must be a reincarnation of one of Guru Rinpoche's twenty-five Tibetan disciples. And, while there are early examples, such as Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (12th c.) who claimed to a reincarnation of the emperor Khri srong lde btsan (c. 742-800), I remain unconvinced that such an incarnational relationship was considered a requirement until later. The development likely paralleled the proliferations of the institution of rule by incarnation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For details on Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer, see Hirshberg 2016, p. 65.

about to depart, however, Padma 'phrin las changed his mind. This is the first site associated with the great siddhas of the past that he had come across on this journey. How could he pass up the opportunity to make a karmic connection with such an important site? He also clearly did not want to set the precedent of retracting from hardship during this journey at the expense of missing such great opportunities.

Thus, Padma 'phrin las descended from his mount and sent it along with the packhorses and their minders to strike camp in a nearby meadow. He then climbed the steep trail in solitude with very few supplies. As he explored the cave complex, he blessed the rooms and forged a connection with the sacred site by sprinkling medical herbs in each of the rooms. In observation of the fact that sNa nam rdo rje is revered as an early master of the Vajrakīla, Padma 'phrin las performed his own ritual arrangement of the cycle in the caves, chanting the liturgy while tapping out rhythms on a small drum, which he discovered in one of the caves. He then performed a small feast offering with his meager supplies and wrapped the statuary of the caves with ceremonial scarves. Before he departed, he encountered the nun who maintained the site. She served him tea while he granted audiences to the locals who were also there visiting these sacred caves.

Padma 'phrin las's descent was very difficult; he felt weak and had to borrow a walking staff to help himself down the path. These hardships, however, did not detract from the auspiciousness of his experiences of the day. Quite to the contrary, the difficulties that were experienced figured prominently in Padma 'phrin las's own interpretation of the events of this meaningful day. In the travel memoir, he writes:

I have opened this first door [of my pilgrimage] by visiting a sacred site of a [true] siddha, [and]

[Receiving] the blessings of sNa nam [rdo rje], [in these caves of] Brag dmar ke'u tshang, [and]

By means of my esoteric practice of the sacred activity of the Kīla-Dagger Cycle,

I have [also] widely opened hundreds of doors [for establishing all] varieties of sacred connections!

The physical illnesses of my body, which were caused by the influence of demons,

Have been cleared well away [from me], and in my heart, [I feel] the supreme gift of profound happiness!

I ascertained these signs and their meanings with crystal clarity, [and]

[Having] obtained these sprouts [of comprehension], my confi-

dence [in myself and the importance of this journey] has been assured!³²

Two months later, on the 21st Day of the Sixth Month, Padma 'phrin las had finished his extensive visit to Ngam ring and had just departed gCung Ri bo che, which was established by Thang stong rgyal po and was the home to a skilled troupe of actors. After spending a couple of days traveling in the mountains intent on reaching his next destination, which happened to be lHa rtse, Padma 'phrin las decided to proceed at a more leisurely pace. He writes:

Although I planned to travel [far] the day after that, the road was in bad condition. As soon as [this] was explained [to me], the pack animals [were permitted] to descend [without me]. I was very pleased [to] travel the bare minimum [on foot that day]. There were [verdant] pastures, and I stopped for a break at a mountain pass. That day, the sky was clear and I was as happy and carefree as a drunk and burden-free layman without [a care in the world]. In the morning and the evening, I performed my practices while walking with a slow gait.

I received correspondences from Lama Kun dga' rgya po (17th c.).³³ He gifted me with a book—an instruction manual for Mind-Training (*blo sbyong*)—that was written by Sems dpa' chen po gZhon nu rgyal mchog (14th c.).³⁴ I had sent [him a letter] from Zang zang [expressing my] doubts regarding the creation and completion stages (*bskyed rdzogs*) for [the goddess] mKha' spyod ma. [His correspondence included], among other things, annotations [meant to] clear away my doubts. I composed a response in verse and sent [it back to him with the courier].

[Then], in accordance with the request of *rTse gdong bdag chen* Khri Rin po che,³⁵ [I had begun] writing a manuscript concerning the empowerment for the longevity benediction (*tshé dbang*) of the Byang gter cycle [known as] lCags sdong ma. Because I had leisure on that day, I finished writing it.³⁶

³² Padma 'phrin las, p. 510.

³³ Bla ma Kun dga' rgyal po was an elderly master, presumably of the Se clan given that Padma 'phrin las met with him at brGya mkhar gSang sngags gling, the ancestral seat of the Se in the Ngam ring area. It seems that the two forged a strong connection while Padma 'phrin las was in the region. For details, see Padma 'phrin las, pp. 556-589.

³⁴ The bKa' gdams pa master named gZhon nu rgyal mchog is well known for his extensive work with Mind-Training (*blo sbyong*) teachings. For details, see Sernesi 2016, p. 168-169.

³⁵ This is, of course, the young Sa skya patriarch, 'Khon ston 'Jam dbyangs bsod nams bstan 'dzin, who he met at rTse gdong on the trip out to Ngam ring.

³⁶ Padma 'phrin las, pp. 589-590.

This passage wonderfully captures the personality of Padma 'phrin las, revealing him both as an individual who truly enjoys the natural world around him and as a sincerely engaged practitioner of the dharma who relishes any opportunity to put pen to paper.

This final episode in the mountains takes place on the Seventh Day of the Eighth Month, close to the conclusion of his journey. He writes:

We departed early the next morning [from sKyid khud in Nyang]. We arrived at the seat of an ancient family called Lung dmar. There was hardly any reason to go on pilgrimage here as almost all the buildings [were in] ruins and the walls [were] crumbling.³⁷ A descendent of the house of Lung dmar, however, did come out to meet me. [Later,] I ate the midday meal by the banks of the gZhung chu River straight up from Ra lung. Although I did not see the monastery of Ra lung, I could just make out the haze of incense [in that direction]. I am connected on my mother's side to 'Brug smyon Kun [dga'] legs [pa] (1455-1529), and I am very devoted to the past bKa' brgyud masters.³⁸ And, Chos rgyal dbang po'i sde took one of his consorts (*gsang yum*) from Ra lung.³⁹ [Thus,] I wanted to visit and make a connection. In those days, however, [the monastery] had been put under the jurisdiction of the family [of] the [master of] religious services (*sku rim pa*) of the government. If I were to go on pilgrimage to Ra lung, it would break my promises and so forth. [So, I] did not have the opportunity [to visit], and I bent [my] course [away] and did not go [to Ra lung].⁴⁰

As Padma 'phrin las continued his journey in the afternoon, he encountered further complications in the mountains. He writes:

A short way ahead, [I reached] the snow-capped mountain called gNod sbyin gang bzang, which terrified me. [I found myself experiencing] fearful respect for those mountains and gorges, into which I did not want to travel. When I was almost to the mountain pass called Kha ro, black clouds gathered in the sky. Then came flashes of red lightning, the fierce sounds of thunder, and other [signs of impending meteorological doom]. Because of all that, I thought about how I was so frequently tormented [by such experiences], [which led to the further] torment of *duḥkha*.

³⁷ Gyurme Dorje describes Lung dmar as "one of the most impoverished areas of Tsang," which suggests that there has been little improvement over what Padma 'phrin las experienced in the area in 1690; see Gyurme Dorje 2004, p. 267.

³⁸ For a discussion of the life and works of 'Brug smyon Kun dga' legs pa, see DiValerio 2011, pp. 397-473.

³⁹ Presumably, this consort was someone other than 'Phyong rgyas Za hor Yid 'dzin dbang mo (16th c.), the mother of his child, Ngag gi dbang po (1580-1639), who was one of Padma 'phrin las's previous incarnations.

⁴⁰ Padma 'phrin las, pp. 642-643.

As was appropriate [in such situations], I visualized the yidam divinities and recited [their mantras] from atop my horse. [Donning] the identities (*nga rgyal*) of each of the divinities, I proclaimed my vows at [gNod sbyin] Gang bzang. In particular, for a long time I cultivated the identity of the subjugating and wrathful Padmasambhava as I generated a protective boundary [around myself].

Then, it rained savagely. Swirling [winds], which I had never before experienced, were coming from Mt. gNod sbyin gang bzang, and [another] whirlwind was fiercely approaching from the direction of Ra lung. I thought [about how the weather] was like my anger over not visiting Ra lung [where I should have visited] the four-armed protector of my ancestors. So, abiding in the identity of Cakrasaṃvara, I pronounced the names of the bKa' brgyud Lamas and proclaimed my vows. Then, I praised and exhorted the Wisdom-Protectors (*ye shes mgon po*) saying, for example, "Sugatas of [gNod sbyin] gang [bzang], I make these vows [here] before your eyes!" As soon as I was [engaged in] bKa' brgyud practices in the presence [of the protectors], the sky cleared up and the sun [suddenly] appeared! We all laughed [with relief]! That night, I stayed in a pleasant pasture in the boarder [regions].⁴¹

The passages above offer, of course, only a small sampling of what Padma 'phrin las's travel memoir has to offer as a historiographic source. The empowerment ceremonies, which he performed at his major destinations, were often events as prestigious and well-attended as the Kālacakra initiation at Gong dkar rDo rje gdan described above. Although he was not welcomed with burning mountains at each of his stops, Padma 'phrin las was consistently received in a manner befitting his status as an elite Buddhist master, and the narratives of each of these receptions offers insight into the varying customs of each of his destinations. Lastly, Padma 'phrin las's reflections in the travel memoir, such as those describing his experiences in the mountains, provide us with the small windows that are needed to capture a glimpse of another individual's heart and mind from whom we are separated by hundreds of years and the veil of death.

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⁴¹ Padma 'phrin las, pp. 643–644.

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A History of the *dGongs pa zang thal* practice manuals

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The present article is a slightly enriched English version of a paper originally published in French in 2018 under the title: “Histoire des manuels de pratique du dGongs pa zang thal,” in the n° 43 (Etudes rDzogs chen – Volume 1) of the Revue d’Etudes Tibétaines (pp. 196-255).

In the course of the very long work that led to the publication (2016) of my French translation of the practice manual for the *dGongs pa zang thal* composed by *sPrul sku Tshul khrim bzang po* or *sPrul sku Tshul lo* (1884–1957),¹ I had the opportunity to ask myself many questions about the way in which was written this vast text, which is commonly (and justly, as we will see) considered the most substantial *khrid yig* of this cycle.

In the footnotes of *Le Manuel de la Transparution immédiate*, one finds not only the identification of most of the quoted or paraphrased texts (notably those of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, the seventeen *tantras* or the *Klong gsal*),² but also the explanation of what could be called the hidden structure of the text—the way in which the author uses *Klong chen pa* (1308–1364)’s great *mKha’ ’gro yang tig* practice manual, the *Zab don rgya mtsho’i sprin*—never cited in the work itself—as a framework and as a link between all the elements of the *dGongs pa zang thal* which he combines, when the *khrid yigs* included in the *gter chos* are not sufficient for this purpose.

However, in *Le Manuel de la Transparution immédiate*, I have completely left aside one of the possible fields of interpretation: that of *sPrul sku Tshul lo*’s relationship to the literature of practice manuals written between the time of *Rig ’dzin rGod ldem* and his own.

I confess that I have found in this literature very few answers to the perplexities that reading *Tshul lo*’s *Khrid yig skal bzang re skong*—and the *dGongs pa zang thal* itself—had inspired in me over the years. But,

¹ Arguillère 2016: Tülku Tsullo, *Manuel de la transparution immédiate*, Cerf, Paris, Nov. 2016.

² The work had already been largely completed by Tulku Thondup, in an unpublished (2001) English translation: *Boundless Vision by Tulku Tsultrim Zangpo (Tulku Tsulo)—A Byangter Manual on Dzogchen Training. An Outline Commentary on the Boundless Vision of Universal Goodness*. However, Tulku Thondup has not noted the ubiquitous underground presence of *Klong chen pa*’s *Zab don rgya mtsho’i sprin*.

as is often the case, the researcher, who does not find what he is looking for, finds instead many things he did not expect.

It is in any case a first sketch of the literary history of the *dGongs pa zang thal* that I want to propose in this article—a literary history, in the sense that I have been interested here in the transmission of the *dGongs pa zang thal* only to the extent that it allows one to situate its *khrid yigs*, their authors and the relationships that link them to one another. In other words, I made only a quite superficial use of biographical sources and, given the abundance of material (of which I have tried to list the most important), it must be said that I am only laying down here the first steps in the history of the *dGongs pa zang thal* between its *invention* and the present day.

The *dGongs pa zang thal* practice manuals

K. Turpeinen (2015: p. 161 *ff.*) has identified five manuals for the practice of the *dGongs pa zang thal*; I have taken them from her repertoire of “commentaries,” which also includes a list of exegetical texts on the famous “Samantabhadra prayer” of the *dGongs pa zang thal*. Here they are, in the chronological order reconstructed here:

1. Śākya rgyal mtshan, *rDzogs pa chen po dgongs pa zang thal gyi man ngag zab don mngon sum gsal byed*;
2. bKra shis rgya mtsho, *Zab mo snying thig gi gnad thams cad bsdu pa'i don khrid lag len gsal ba*;
3. Zur chen Chos dbyings rang grol, *Kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal gyi nyams khrid thar gling chos sku'i zhing khams su bgrod pa'i nye lam chen po*;
4. Kaḥ tog Tshe dbang nor bu, *rDzogs chen kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal gyi khrid kyi 'chad thabs 'od kyi 'khor lo*;
5. sPrul sku Tshul khriims bzang po, *Kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal gyi dgongs don phyogs gcig tu bkod pa khrid yig skal bzang re skongs rig 'dzin dgongs rgyan*.

To this list, I have to add, to stick to what I found at this stage :

(a) The *Ka dag rang byung rang shar gyi khrid yig chos dbyings lam bzang of Kha'u dGa' ldan pa Chos dbyings rang grol*, with its direct source:

(b) Padma phrin las' *Yang tig gces sgron zin bris*,³ which proceeds:

³ This is in fact the most complete practice manual of *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*, even if presents itself as something else (as we will see).

(c) From a text by Zur *chen* Chos dbyings rang grol: the *Yang tig gces pa'i sgron me'i khrid kyi rtsa tshig gsung rgyun rab gsal*, which apparently depends in turn on the:

(d) *Yang tig gces sgron gyi khrid yig* of 'Gyur med rdo rje (gTer bdag gling pa), which comments on:

(e) A text from Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's *gter chos*, the *Thugs sgrub snying po blang ba'i phyir yang tig gces pa'i sgron me smar khrid mngon sum gtan la dbab pa'i rgyud*.

6. There is also a very detailed commentary by *sPrul sku* Tshul lo on the *gZer lnga*, the *Byang gter sngon 'gro rin po che gnad kyi gzer lnga zhes bya ba tshig don legs par ston pa'i rin po che'i them skas kun bzang myur lam* (in the new edition of his complete works: vol. XI, pp. 219-365);
7. And above all a commentary by the same author on the *Lung phag mo zab rgya*, the *Rig 'dzin gter ston rnam gnyis kyi gter byon phag mo zab rgya'i dmigs khrid nyung ngur bkod pa gsang khrid gsal ba'i lde mig* (in the new edition of his complete works: vol. I, pp. 219-282).⁴

There are also instructions for practice in his commentary on the Samantabhadra prayer, the *Byang gter dgongs pa zang thal gyi rgyud chen las byung ba'i kun bzang smon lam gyi rnam bshad kun bzang nye lam 'od snang gsal ba'i sgron me* (in the new edition of his complete works: vol. I, pp. 283-282-328). But it would be the object of another article to study the history of the commentaries of *Kun bzang smon lam*. Rightly or wrongly, I have left aside this entire corpus—even more abundant in reality than it appears in the review given by K. Turpeinen.⁵ There would be ample material to be exploited here, in addition to what has been learned in this article, for a literary history of the *dGongs pa zang thal*.

⁴ The original (French) version of this paper was written before the large collection *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs* (2015) became available to me. Still, the situation is not basically changed, except for new practice manuals about the *Lung phag mo zab rgya*. One could be surprised that I include this text in the range of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, while I am very reluctant to do so for the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*. Actually, while the *Lung phag mo zab rgya* grew, with bsTan gnyis gling pa's revelations (see: Achard 2004), to the proportions of a wide, complete, autonomous cycle, its core is a section of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, and it can be regarded as its "inner yoga" (*rtsa rlung*) part of this rDzogs chen cycle. I intend to focus more on the *Lung phag mo zab rgya* later on, as it can be regarded as the most exemplary case of a "Byang gter cycle" revealed by an otherwise "non-Byang gter discoverer", which is extremely interesting to try and define the perimeter of what is Byang gter and what is not.

⁵ See Karl Brunnhölz 2018: *A Lullaby to Awaken the Heart—The Aspiration Prayer of Samantabhadra and its Tibetan Commentaries*, which includes a study and translation of three of those commentaries, including that of *sPrul sku* Tshul lo.

Methodological remarks

Generally speaking, it would be an excellent method, in order to achieve a true understanding of the history of Tibetan thought, to follow, over the centuries, commentaries on the same text. This is a project I already had in mind around 1995, rather about Tibetan scholastic philosophy; circumstances have prevented me from implementing it since then—but it is undertakings of this kind that I propose to mainly devote the time I still have available.

Indeed, nothing is more revealing of the evolution of a thought—especially when this thought has a strong inclination towards exegesis—than the progressive shifting of the interest from one point to another in the same text, or the way in which it is contextualised (put in relation to other corpora), etc.⁶

The present research is in line with both my previous work on the history of Tibetan (philosophical) thought and the field opened up by Jean-Luc Achard's work on the practice instructions of rDzogs chen, considered from a historical and philological point of view.⁷

It could be objected that the *khrid yig* literature on the *dGongs pa zang thal* would not be a good witness of the history of Tibetan thought, given the technical and specialised nature of the “rDzogs chen practice manual” genre. But this objection stems from both an ignorance of the subject and a misconception of cultural history.

Ignorance of the subject matter, because rDzogs chen manuals are not a poor genre or a more stereotyped one than any other: certainly is there a lot of repetition from one text to another; but, after all, the same is true in any other genre of Tibetan didactic prose (as in our medieval religious or philosophical literature, for that matter). Developments are always discreet, never openly claimed; but a slight change of interpretation on what appears to the lay reader as a point of detail can lead to a rather profound reorientation of a whole system.⁸

A misconception of cultural history, I said: one that would fancy the whole field of a people's intellectual production to be governed by great homogenous and one-sided movements, great *turning points in civilisation*, as if one were to be able to spot the same tendencies at work throughout the whole range of this field, from commentaries on the Madhyamaka to treatises on medicine or astrology, *via* tantric exegesis

⁶ Gene Smith, in his day, had that in mind and it was in that spirit that in the late 1990s he sent me a DVD compiled by TBRC of Tibetan commentaries on the *Uttara-tantra-sāstra*.

⁷ Achard 1992, 1995, 1999, to refer only to what had a direct influence on the early stages of my long work on *sPrul sku* Tshul lo's manual.

⁸ On this idea and for a set of methodological considerations on how to study the history of thought in Tibet, see e.g. the afterword in Arguillère 2004.

and manuals of meditative practice.

I for one do not tend towards any great overly unifying synthesis—even if we should not exclude, as a matter of principle, in the name of an inopportune methodological nominalism, any possibility of this kind. All the more so since Tibet has been rich in polygraphs extending their activity to a good part of the diverse registers of Tibetan culture in the broadest sense. *sPrul sku* Tshul lo, for example, remains the same man whether he writes on Madhyamaka or on the *dGongs pa zang thal*: besides, the two spheres sometimes meet in him, notably in a very remarkable writing, the *Kun bzang dgongs rgyan*, of which I have said a few words elsewhere:⁹ *sPrul sku* Tshul lo certainly conceived it as a sort of appendix to his writings on the *dGongs pa zang thal* (as its title indicates), even if, regarding its form, it is rather a sort of theoretical text of general scope, aiming at philosophically clarifying what happens during the “confrontation” or “pointing out” (*ngo sprod*) and afterwards when one “preserves Intelligence” (*rig pa skyong ba*), in terms of the becoming of the ordinary mind (*sems*) and its possible sublimation into Intelligence (*rig pa*). This text does not cite the literature of the *dGongs pa zang thal* or any other specific cycle of practice and does not seem to be paraphrasing it either.

Be it as it may, this small treaty will not be discussed in this article. Similarly, I will not study separately *sPrul sku* Tshul lo’s commentaries on the *gZer lnga* and on the *Lung phag mo zab rgya*—the former because it does not contribute much to what interests us (the evolution of the way of commenting on the *dGongs pa zang thal*), being simply a very thorough literal commentary on the “extraordinary preliminary practices” (*thun mong ma yin pa’i sngon ’gro*);¹⁰ the second, because at this stage, I have not solved a thorny problem—namely: why are the practices corresponding to the first three of the five consecrations (*dbang*) of the *dGongs pa zang thal* never included as steps that should be inserted, say, between the “extraordinary preliminary practices” and the specific *rDzogs chen* preliminary practices?

The architecture of the *rDzogs chen* manuals and the absence of the tantric instructions

This question is not gratuitous. In the autumn of 1992, in Nepal, I met the Lama of Maratika, Ngag dbang chos ’phel rgya mtsho (1922-

⁹ Arguillère 2016: p. 479-482; see also index, p. 468, for other occurrences.

¹⁰ It should be noted that calling this set of practices (from refuge to *guru-yoga*) “non-ordinary preliminary practices” seems to be a quite late usage, that is at least not yet fixed, e.g., even at the time of Zur Chos dbyings rang grol (1604–1669).

1996).¹¹ At the time of our first meeting, I had in my hand *sPrul sku Tshul lo's Khrid yig skal bzang re skong*, carefully packed in its *dpe ras*, because I was immersed in reading this manual that Chhimed Rigdzin Rinpoche ('Khor gdong gter sprul, 1922–2002) had introduced me to a few months earlier. The Lama of Maratika, whose curiosity had undoubtedly been piqued by this spectacle of a young Westerner respectfully carrying a Tibetan text, asked me what it was; when I replied that it was apparently the widest and most detailed of all the manuals for the practice of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, he immediately told me that this rDzogs chen cycle of the Northern Treasures had been his main practice during his long years of retreat in various hermitages; he took me in sympathy and so he told me in detail how he had practised all the stages of this system.

Unfortunately, I did not take notes at the time, but I distinctly remember the account he gave me of how he practised three systems that actually belong to the corpus of the *dGongs pa zang thal*. He explained to me that he had meditated on them between the “extraordinary preliminary practices” (the *gZer lnga*, in this case) and the specific rDzogs chen preliminary practices.

These three systems,¹² to name them in the order in which they appear in the corpus, are:

- The *Lung phag mo zab rgya* (whose texts can be found on pp. 413-654 of vol. I of the *dGongs pa zang thal* in A 'dzom 'brug pa's edition);
- The water *bcud len* detailed in particular on pp. 423-484 of vol. IV;
- The *gSang ba rmad du 'byung ba*, a *gCod* system, the texts of which can be found on pp. 515-625 of vol. IV.¹³

¹¹ His biography can be found in Katia Buffetrille's book, *Pélerins, Lamas et visionnaires* (2000: p. 297-325).

¹² One could add the whole system of practice of the peaceful and wrathful deities known as *Rigs lnga'i sgrub pa* (with its 'outer', 'inner' and 'secret' forms), corresponding to the first of the four consecrations, all the elements of which are found in vol. I of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, pp. 331-411, just before the *Lung phag mo zab rgya* which corresponds to the second and third consecrations. But I do not remember Maratika Lama mentioning them when he summarized his successive involvement in all the elements of the *dGongs pa zang thal* path.

¹³ Beyond the texts pertaining to the *dGongs pa zang thal* proper, and apart from the huge “appendix” to the *Lung phag mo zab rgya* revealed by bsTan gnyis gling pa, a certain amount of ritual literature and instruction manuals about these sub-cycles of the *dGongs pa zang thal* has been made available in vol. 3 of the *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs* (2015). I had no access to these when I wrote the original (French) version of this paper, but they should not be overlooked in order to draw out the thread of

I clearly remember how the Lama of Maratika told me that, in the *gCod* of the *gSang ba rmad byung* as his master¹⁴ had him practise, between sessions, it was necessary to expose oneself almost naked to the bites of the mosquitoes that infested the place; he described to me how he would lie down on the ground and, when his body was completely covered with bites on one side, he had to turn around to present the other. He told me that he caught malaria on this occasion—but that the subsequent practice of *bcud len*, this sort of “alchemical fasting”,¹⁵ had cured him of it.

Since such a custom existed among the Byang gter practitioners, how is it that the practice manuals do not bear the trace of it? Of these three stages of the practice, indeed, there is not even mention in *sPrul sku Tshul lo's khrid yig*, however detailed. And in his *khrid yig* of the *Lung phag mo zab rgya*, conversely, there is no mention either of the way in which these internal *yoga* practices are to be inserted into the gradual path of the *dGongs pa zang thal*. Was this the general practice of the *dGongs pa zang thal* masters, or is it the expression of a personal choice on the part of *sPrul sku Tshul lo*? I might as well say it straight away: I have not found the solution to this enigma anywhere in the set of practice manuals preserved, except for the constant custom of *not talking about* these meditations in the context of a *rDzogs chen khrid yig*.¹⁶

our investigation a little further. The colophons do not reveal anything very decisive, though, at first sight.

¹⁴ *rDza sprul rin po che*, Ngag dbang bstan 'dzin nor bu (1867-1940); TBRC: P29036.

¹⁵ In this case: Maratika Lama told me that he took only water for a fortnight, if I remember correctly.

¹⁶ However, this is not an absolute rule in the general *rDzogs chen* tradition. Thus, for example—among many others—the *rDzogs chen snying thig mkha' khyab rang grol gyi lam rim gsang bdag dpa' bo rdo rje rig 'dzin chos kyi dbang po'i zhal lung*, a *khrid yid* composed by a certain Rig pa'i rdo rje for the *mKha' khyab rang grol (gter chos of Nyag bla Padma bdud 'dul, 1816-1872)*, develops all kinds of internal *yoga* practices before presenting the instructions of *rDzogs chen* in the narrower sense. This manual could be made use of, given the highly homogeneous character of the highest *rDzogs chen* systems, as a guide or model if one were to analogically reconstruct the full sequence of the practice in the *dGongs pa zang thal*. The same structure can be found in Orgyan Tenzin and Dylan Esler (2015).—But, to go back to the other end of the history of the “visionary” *rDzogs chen*, one could already find this complete exclusion of Tantric-style instructions in the *Phyag khrid*, the practice manual for the *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud* composed by the *bon po* master 'Bru rGyal ba g.yung drung (1242–1290?)—even though this ancient cycle was nevertheless linked to a deity (*Zhang zhung me ri*) which is the subject of all sorts of *sadhānas* of purely Tantric character. We are dealing here with the complex, almost contradictory (or, at the very least, dialectical) relationship between *rDzogs chen* and *rdzogs rim*, amply developed and theorized by Germano (1994).—In the case of *sPrul sku Tshul lo's* manual, it is all the more interesting when one remarks that he also composed two practice manuals for the *mKha' 'gro gsang mdzod* (TBRC: W1KG670), a cycle that belongs *gTer chen* Nus ldan rdo rje's revelations, in which, exactly as in the case of the *dGongs pa zang thal* and the *Lung phag mo zab rgya*, he

On the other hand, as we shall see, many elements emerged from this survey as to how the masters of the posterity of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem envisaged the articulation of two corpora that are often confused as a single block: the *dGongs pa zang thal* proper, on the one hand—and the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*, on the other hand. The latter was published by A 'dzom 'brug pa (1842–1924) as the fifth and last volume of the collection, as well as by *Chos rje Śā kya yar 'phel* (19th century). However, it will be seen that only one of all the practice manuals consulted actually articulates the two corpora: that of Zur Chos dbyings rang grol in the 17th century. The available editions of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, which do not predate the 19th century, do not bear witness with certainty to an older tradition—but perhaps rather to the influence of what may have been a *coup de force* by Zur Chos dbyings rang grol. The issue of the connection or complete non-connection of the two rDzogs chen cycles of the Northern Treasures is a very important question, which K. Turpeinen seems maybe too easily to take for granted in her otherwise very remarkable work on the *dGongs pa zang thal* (2015).

The corpus on which the present study is based will therefore be reduced, at least as far as detailed studies are concerned, to the following six texts (placed in presumed historical order of composition):

1. Śākya rgyal mtshan, *rDzogs pa chen po dgongs pa zang thal gyi man ngag zab don mngon sum gsal byed*;
2. bKra shis rgya mtsho, *Zab mo snying thig gi gnad thams cad bsdu pa'i don khrid lag len gsal ba*;
3. Zur chen Chos dbyings rang grol, *Kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal gyi nyams khrid thar gling chos sku'i zhing khams su bgrod pa'i nye lam chen po*;
4. Kha'u dGa' ldan pa Chos dbyings rang grol, *Ka dag rang byung rang shar gyi khrid yig chos dbyings lam bzang* with its sources mentioned above;
5. Kaḥ tog Tshe dbang nor bu, *rDzogs chen kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal gyi khrid kyi 'chad thabs 'od kyi 'khor lo*;
6. sPrul sku Tshul khriṃs bzang po, *Kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal gyi dgongs don phyogs gcig tu bkod pa khrid yig skal bzang re skongs rig 'dzin dgongs rgyan*.

Among these six manuals, it is easy to discern two more or less unified families, which form historical, geographical and thematic blocks (by

also presents *separately*, in the first text, a set of practices ranging from the ordinary preliminaries to the Thod rgal visions and *bar do* instructions, on the one hand (*gSung 'bum*, vol. iv, p. 35-78), and, in the second text, the main *ḍākinī* practice of this cycle, on the other hand (p. 79-98).

the way they treat the corpus): on the one hand, the two practice manuals of the 16th century (or the first years of the 17th), from the Kaḥ thog tradition—Śākya rgyal mtshan and bKra shis rgya mtsho; on the other hand, the practice manuals of the 17–18th centuries, from the tradition of rDo rje brag (in a broad sense): Zur Chos dbyings rang grol, to which I add 'Gyur med rdo rje and Padma 'phrin las for the *Yang tig gces sgron*, then Kha'u dGa' ldan pa Chos dbyings rang grol and Tshe dbang nor bu. To tell the truth, the last two are not unrelated to Kaḥ thog; but we will see in what sense and why they belong to the tradition of central Tibet.

sPrul sku Tshul khrim bzang po's *khrid yig* of is quite different, although I will show that its author was familiar with both these earlier traditions. The result of the present research is, it must be said, rather disappointing as regards the fruits of the study of all these practice manuals in terms of explaining the particularities of *sPrul sku* Tshul lo's; this line of research proved to be much less fruitful at this stage than the more structural one, which is favoured in the notes of *Le Manuel de la transpiration immédiate* (Arguillère 2016), where I showed the complex montage the author was engaged in, between the *khrid yigs* included in Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's *gter ma* and some texts by Klong chen rab 'byams (mostly the *Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin*).

Indeed, it should be remembered that the *dGongs pa zang thal* itself contains several *khrid yigs*, which are or should be the main source of all subsequently composed practice manuals.

This is what *sPrul sku* Tshul lo says in the first pages of his manual:¹⁷

“On the basis of the *Fundamental Manual, Oral Transmission of the Great [Master] of Oḍḍiyāna about the Direct Perception of Reality*¹⁸ and of the *Oral Transmission of the Exact Meaning*,¹⁹ supplementing these two [texts with elements] taken, for example, from the *Great Oral Transmission of Vimalamitra*,²⁰ the *Three Nails*²¹ and the *Oral Transmission of*

¹⁷ Translation adapted from Arguillère (2016), p. 47 and notes.

¹⁸ *rDzogs pa chen po yang gsang bla na med pa chos nyid mngon sum gyi khrid yig, dGongs pa zang thal*, vol. II, pp. 353-392.

¹⁹ *Yang dag don gyi snyan rgyud rin po che rtsa ba'i man ngag gnyis pa*, op. cit. vol. II, pp. 393-422. This text was used by *sPrul sku* Tshul lo notably for the confrontation (*ngo sprod*) and the instructions of the first system of Khregs chod (Arguillère 2016: p. 255-263), in which it is almost copied with very slight explanatory additions. Part of the developments on the intermediate *post-mortem* state (Arguillère 2016: pp. 361-419) are also drawn from it.

²⁰ *Bi ma mi tra'i snyan rgyud chen mo rgyal po la gdams pa yang gsang bla na na med pa'i rdzogs pa chen po'i 'grel pa ye shes rang gsal* or *Bi ma la'i snyan rgyud 'grel tig chen mo*, op. cit. vol. IV, pp. 183-401. This is the text translated by Malcolm Smith under the title: *Buddhahood in This Life - The Great Commentary by Vimalamitra* (Wisdom Publications, 2016).

²¹ *Khrid yig gnad kyi gzer bu gsum pa Bi ma la mi tras mdzad pa*, op. cit. vol. II, pp. 335-

Vairocana,²² I have synthesised them and I will give an explanation of the *Fundamental Manual*,²³ which condenses the elements [of the others].²⁴

Let us add, since the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* is not fully outside the scope of the present study, that this cycle is largely a collection of instructions for gradual practice, in particular:

1. The *Ma rig mun sel sgron me snying po bcud bsdu lam gyi gnad khrid kyi rim pa* (pp. 189-200), especially pp. 195-199;
2. The *O rgyan Padmas mdzad pa'i zhal chems sgon ma rnam gsum* (p. 201-244), even though the numerous instructions it contains are not methodically arranged in a progressive way;
3. The *Gegs sel nor bu rin po che'i mdzod* (p. 261-320), which is a true manual of Khregs chod;
4. The *Zab mo gnad kyi them bcu* (pp. 321-401) also has this character.

The existence of these texts is undoubtedly one of the reasons why we have no practice manuals preserved for the earlier period—from the invention of the *gter chos* (winter 1366-1367) to the masters of Kaḥ thog in the 16th century—and it is also undoubtedly one of the reasons for the rather nebulous and syncretic character of the *khrid yigs* that the latter composed.

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²² Cycle consisting of four texts: *Yang gsang bla na med pa Bai ro tsa na'i snyan rgyud dang po*, *op. cit.* vol. II, p. 461-484; *Yang gsang... snyan rgyud bar ma*, *op. cit.* vol. II, p. 485-536; *Yang gsang... phyi ma*, *op. cit.* vol. II, p. 537-577 and *Yang gsang bla na med pa Bai ro tsa na'i thugs brgyud zab mo*, *op. cit.* vol. II, pp. 579-602. It is the third of these texts that is most often quoted or paraphrased.

²³ The first of the texts just quoted. *sPrul sku* Tshul lo's mode of composition is explained in the introduction to Arguillère 2016; above all, the footnotes in the book make it possible to identify the elements that the author has combined, when he does not mention them himself (which he never does when it comes to sources foreign to the Northern Treasures).

²⁴ In fact, the author makes extensive use of other *dGongs pa zang thal* texts, which he combines with those he has just listed. In addition to the *Five Nails of the Precious Key Points* (or *gZer lnga*), of which the entire section on “extraordinary preliminary practices” is an explanatory paraphrase, we should mention in particular the *Text [that explains] of the Key Points, Secret Lamp* (*gNad yig gsang sgron, dGongs pa zang thal*, vol. III, pp. 141-162), central to the rDzogs chen specific preliminary practices (Arguillère 2016: pp. 185-226).

The *dGongs pa zang thal* in Kaḥ tog

In the collection *Kaḥ tog khrid chen bcu gsum*, the entire fifth volume is filled by three texts presented as relating to the *dGongs pa zang thal*.

We know from *Guru bkra shis' Chos 'byung* (p. 751) that it was a certain A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan who spread the *dGongs pa zang thal* in Kaḥ tog. What is more, there is a history of the transmission of this corpus, the *Kun tu bzang po dgongs pa zang thal gyi lo rgyus rin chen phreng ba*, preserved in the collection of *Kaḥ tog khrid chen bcu gsum* (vol. V, p. 1-89²⁵), which is, in all probability, the work of the latter.

This text presents, as appropriate, a narrative relating to the early, semi-mythical (or, at least, otherworldly or metaphysical) stages of the transmission of the *dGongs pa zang thal*—the *rgyal ba dgongs pas brgyud tshul* (pp. 5-17) and the *rig 'dzin brda' brgyud tshul* (pp. 17-53)—which are of no interest to historical research and do not anyway bring new elements to what is already clearly stated in the *gter chos*. In the third part (p. 53-89), I leave aside all that concerns the traditional links prior to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem (p. 53-64, including the account of how the *gter chos* was hidden, etc.) as well as the life of rGod ldem himself up to the transmission of the *dGongs pa zang thal* to his disciple *Kun sprangs Don yod rgyal mtshan* (p. 75). From this figure onwards, the line continues as follows:²⁶ *dBon po bSod nams mchog bzang* (p. 79), then *brTson 'grus bzang po* (p. 81)—who is none other than Thang stong rgyal po (1361 or 1385–1485, or 1509, or 1464?)²⁷—of whom it is said (p. 82) that he also received the *dGongs pa zang thal* initiations directly from *Kun sprangs Don yod rgyal mtshan*. He passed them to *Byang sems Kun dga' nyi ma* from *Kyi mo* in *dBus* (15th century; TBRC: P10111).²⁸ In the text

²⁵ There is another edition of it in the *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 2, p. 957-1012. This text is not of great historical interest for what concerns us here, because it devotes very little development to what is subsequent to Thang stong rgyal po. – A careful scrutiny of the A 'dzom 'brug pa edition of the *dGongs pa zang thal* reveals some occurrences of A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan's pen name: 'Tra ye ka dus' or of one or another of its variants, as the author of explanatory notes, concluding paragraphs, ritual arrangements of certain texts.

²⁶ Another disciple of *Kun sprangs Don yod rgyal mtshan* in *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung* p. 488: *gSang bdag bDe chen lhun grub*. "Teacher in an alternate transmission for the *byang gter* precepts stemming from Rig 'dzin rGod kyi ldem 'phru can and passing through Thang stong sgyal po" (BDRC P 10106). He obtains the complete rainbow body (*Guru bkra shis*, p. 488). He himself has a disciple called *Grags pa'i mtshan can* (BDRC P10107), also a disciple of *bDe chen lhun grub* (himself a disciple of *rNam rgyal mgon po*) and master of Thang stong rgyal po.

²⁷ On this figure, see mainly Cyrus Stearns 2007: *King of the Empty Plain—The Tibetan Iron-Bridge Builder Tangtong Gyalpo*.

²⁸ He seems to have received every possible and imaginable tantric teaching (p. 84 ff.), including, from *rTogs ldan Ri phug pa* (unknown to TBRC), on the *Kun byed rgyal po* and *Ye shes gsang rdzogs*; then from *Nyang ston Rig pa'i 'byung gnas* on the

of A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan, it is not perfectly clear who is the disciple of *Byang sems Kun dga' nyi ma* for the *dGongs pa zang thal*.

We are then helped by the presentations of the lineage in the two later authors of *Kaḥ tog*. Indeed, it is given in its entirety on p. 95-96 of Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan's manual: *Kun spangs pa* Don yod rgyal mtshan, bSod nams mchog bzang, Thang stong rgyal po, *Byang sems Kun dga' nyi ma*, dKon mchog rgyal mtshan, Rong po dKon mchog rdo rje, then Śā kya rgyal mtshan himself. This perfectly confirms what we find in A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan and we read the same thing in Bu 'bor ba bKra shis rgya mtsho (f° 2b-3a, in the second *khrid yig* of *Kaḥ tog* studied below). There is also a short lineage through Thang stong rgyal po, which is identical.²⁹

Curiously, Śā kya rgyal mtshan as well as bKra shis rgya mtsho add a lineage of *man ngag gzhan*: Mar pa, etc., through Phag mo gru pa, through Rin chen gling pa, etc., but reaching them through the same dKon mchog rdo rje. We are indeed in a syncretic lineage, or at least tending towards a synthesis. We will soon understand the function of this addition of a lineage of transmissions clearly belonging to the bKa' brgyud pas' Mahāmudrā in this context. There is also a very short lineage which counts only the *rtsa ba'i bla ma* (p. 96).

A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan

There are short biographies of these various figures in the *rGyal ba Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus mdor 'dus* by 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan (p. 76 ff.). We learn that A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan, a disciple of *Byang sems chos rje*, went to Shangs zams bu lung where he received the *dGongs pa zang thal* from *Byang sems Kun dga' nyi ma*, a disciple of Thang stong rgyal po—which is in perfect harmony with the indications found in *Guru bKra shis*.

In the *rGyal ba Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus mdor 'dus* (p. 76), it is stated that A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan had a vision of Padmasambhava and

Bi ma snying thig and *mKha' 'gro snying thig*. He is otherwise unknown. His disciple Sangs rgyas brtson 'grus is dated to the same century by BDRC. He has a disciple, Padma sangs rgyas, which BDRC cannot date clearly between the 15th and 16th centuries, who will himself have a disciple called Nyi zla sangs rgyas—which is not better dated. All of them are mentioned in the 5th Dalai Lama's *gsan yig*.

²⁹ This means that Thang stong rgyal po had a personal "re-revelation" (*yang gter*) of the *dGongs pa zang thal*. It does not mean that he added anything to the original corpus, unlike bsTan gnyis gling pa for the *Lung phag mo zab rgya*, but that he got, so as to say, a "supernatural permission" to teach it without having to be allowed by his human masters. It is to be feared that the reader will get lost in the ramifications and meanders of the *dGongs pa zang thal* lineages. Therefore, for ease of reference, a tree of these genealogies—reduced to branches that lead more or less to known practice manuals—is included at the end of this paper (p. 289).

then returned to rMugs sangs dgon where he remained in retreat. Then, when Drung lHa dbang rdo rje was serving as *gdan sa* of Kaḥ thog, he was appointed to the position of '*chad nyan mkhan po*. After which, "at the Byang seng cave of Kaḥ thog, he gave all the books of the *dGongs pa zang thal* to *Bya bral ba* Byang chub seng ge."³⁰ We also know (p. 77) that he travelled very often to central Tibet where he dif-fused the *mDo sgyu sems gsum*, i.e., all the tantric / rDzogs chen traditions of the rNying ma pas. He also received the entire cycle of *Kar gling zhi khro* which he transmitted to He pa Chos 'byung (TBRC: P2MS9533), from which the "tradition of He of the Peaceful and Wrathful deities" originates. He meditated in various places and his main disciple was Rong po dKon mchog rdo rje, who received from him the Mahāmudrā and the rDzogs chen in general, and more particularly the *dGongs pa zang thal*. Not much more is known about Rong po dKon mchog rdo rje, except that he stayed at Kaḥ thog for a long time and did long practice retreats.

The life of mGon po dbang rgyal (1845–1915) by his disciple and nephew *sPrul sku* Tshul lo (p. 21) tells us that, in his thirteenth year (i.e. in 1857), mGon po dbang rgyal received from one of his masters "a manual of instructions on the *dGongs pa zang thal*, composed by A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan" (*dGongs zang gi gnad khrid A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan gyis mdzad pa*). This text, if it existed, seems to have been lost; to the attention of researchers, let us only point out that in the colophon of the *Kun tu bzang po dgongs pa zang thal gyi lo rgyus rin chen phreng ba*, appears an—already mentioned—curious pen name, "*Rang bzhin rdzogs pa chen po'i rnal 'byor pa Tra ye ka dus*."³¹ Let us

³⁰ Byang chub seng ge is given, in the linear presentations of the lineages from master to disciple, as the disciple of Śā kya rgyal mtshan, himself disciple of A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan.

³¹ Tra ye ka dus might be a corruption, by an ignorant script, of what was, it seems, A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan's real pen name, which we find in what I suppose to have been its original form in a colophon of the A 'dzom 'brug pa prints of the *dGongs pa zang thal*: in vol. II (*hūm*), volume, one finds these verses, pp. 601-602, at the end of the *Yang gsang bai ro tsa na'i thugs rgyud zab mo* (pp. 579-602): *rgya gar mkhas pa śrī sing ha yis | | man ngag thugs rgyud bee ro'i snyan du bryud | | bee ro'i khyad chos sems rig dbye ba 'di | | mthong thos tsam gyis rang grol 'gro ba'i chos | | kham pa'i ban 'khyams rnal 'byor bdag dang 'phrad | | sangs rgyas tshe 'dir 'grub pa e ma ho | | theg dgu'i yang rtse 'od gsal snying po'i don | | 'khrul grol 'khor 'das gang gis ma gos pa'i | | rgyu med rkyen bral ye nas sangs rgyas pa'i | | rang byung rig pa'i gnad mtshar 'di rig pas | | drin chen bla ma'i gdams ngag chud ma zos | | dal 'byor mi lus thob pa don dang ldan | | dge des 'gro drug sems can pha ma nams | | rang grol rdzogs pa chen po'i don rtogs shog | zhes 'khrul zhig chen po tra ya dhwa dza'i gsung byin rlabs can de nyid kyi phyag dpe la bzhugs pas ma dpe ltar bris pa dge legs 'phel | | sarva maṅgalaṃ | |—I also suppose that he is the author of these other verses placed as an appendix to another text of the same volume, the *Yang gsang bla na med pa rdzogs pa chen po rgyal thabs spyi blug gi dbang*, pp. 73-89, where one reads (pp. 88-89): *rang rig don gyi gnas lugs de rig na | | spyi blug rdzogs pa'i dbang yang de**

therefore be on the lookout for a rDzogs chen manual that might well appear under this odd name: it would undoubtedly be the work of A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan.³²

Even if this would be unexpected on the part of such a well-informed and rigorous author as *sPrul sku* Tshul lo, it is not impossible that he has confused A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan either with Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan, or with the disciple of the latter's disciple, Bu 'bor ba bKra shis rgya mtsho, author of another *khrid yig* which will be discussed a little later.

Another information about A rdo dKon chog rgyal mtshan is that it seems he was a direct disciple of Padma gling pa (1450–1521): there is in the *Kaḥ thog khrid chen bcu gsum* (vol. III, pp. 45-50) a small text entitled *Kun bzang dgons pa kun 'dus kyi dbu phyogs*, beginning with an homage to the lineage, where we find (p. 47), after Padma gling pa, directly "Tra ye ka tu," whom we know to be A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan, and then directly the author's *rtsa ba'i bla ma*. The latter is identified as "*Kaḥ thog khrid chen bdun pa Bya bral ba bSod nams don 'grub*" (TBRC: P7966).

TBRC gives us this information about bSod nams don 'grub: "W20396 [p. 164] a scholar of the kaH thog tradition and student of drung tsho ba blo gros bzang po; this source mentions his *rdzogs*

dus thob | | *gdod ma'i kun tu bzang dang de dus mjal* | | *ye sangs rgyas kyi sangs rgyas de rig pas* | | *rtogs pa mngon gyur sangs rgyas zhes grags so* | | *'di nyid go nas chos 'di la* | | *dad gus rtse gcig byed pa'i rnal 'byor pa* | | *kham s kyi ban 'khyams dKon mchog rgyal mtshan yin* | | *zhes 'khrul zhig chen po'i gsung byin rlabs can rang sor bzhag pa'o* | | *sarva maṅgalaṃ* | |

³² The correct form Tra ya dhwa dza is found also in a manuscript containing a lineage prayer of the *dGongs pa zang thal* (TBRC: W1KG23047). From this text (difficult to decipher because of the many abbreviations), we can reconstruct the following lineage (leaving aside the parts before rGod ldem): (1) rGod ldem; (2) Don yod rgyal mtshan; (3) bSod nams mchog bzang, (4) Thang stong rgyal po, (5) Kun dga' nyi ma, (6) 'Khrul zhig Tra ya dhwa dza, (7) Tra ya ba dzra (dKon mchog rdo rje), (8) *mKhas mchog* Śā kya'i mtshan can (Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan), (9) Byang chub seng ge; (10) bKra shis rgya mtsho (Bu 'bor ba -), (11) sTon pa seng ge, (12) *sPrul sku* Chos nyid rgya mtsho, (13) 'Khrul zhig sTon pa rgyal mtshan, (14) *Drin chen rtsa ba'i bla ma*. N° 11, 12 and 13 are mentioned in the *sMar pa bka' brgyud chos 'byung* (p. 238-239).—Now, this lineage is known to us thanks to a text by Tshe dbang nor bu, the *lHa rje mnyam med zla 'od gzhon nu'i bka' brgyud phyag chen gdams pa ji tsaṃ nod pa'i rtogs brjöd legs bshad rin chen 'byung khungs* (TBRC W1GS45274, vol. 2, p. 407), which seems to make dKon mchog rgyal mtshan a contemporary of Ratna gling pa (1403–1479), and then continues the lineage as we know it: dKon mchog rdo rje, Śā kya rgyal mtshan, Bo dhi sing ha, bKra shis rgya mtsho—and there we find an interesting note: *'di gter ston zhig pa'i chos bdag yin*. This is Zhig po gling pa (P640, 1524–1583). Unfortunately, bKra shis rgya mtsho is not named as one of his students on TBRC/BDRC, but this makes him more or less a contemporary of Sog bzlog pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1552–1624, another student of Zhig po gling pa).—Then we find Chos nyid rgya mtsho, called Ba khyim Chos nyid rgya mtsho, then bsTan pa seng ge (*sTon pa seng ge), Shes rab rgya mtsho, etc.

chen khrid zab don snying po." This must be the *Man ngag zab don snying po'i khrid yig* (*Kaḥ tog khrid chen bcu gsum*, vol. I, p. 351-539), at the end of which we read this note: *Drung tsho ba Blo gros bzang po'i slob ma sDong bya bral ba bsod nams don 'grub gsungs*. The front page has this subtitle: *sems sde khams lugs kyi sngon 'gro'i khrid yig sDong bya bral ba bSod nams don 'grub gsungs*.

It might be the case also that another text, the *rDzogs pa chen po man ngag zab don snying po mun sel dpal gyi sgron me*, preserved in vol. 2, p. 1-865 of the *Kaḥ tog khrid chen bcu gsum*, is also a writing of his. Though the colophon is not absolutely explicit about the author, still, in a presentation of the lineage in the *guru-yoga* section of this enormous text, our *bSod nams don 'grub* appears indeed at the head of a *kha skong* (p. 430)—which seems to mean that he was later added by the successive generations of those who transmitted the text. He might then be the author of the text. We can also understand from that passage that *bSod nams don 'grub* was the master of a "*Nag tshal Hor po*," "Forest Hor po," so as to say, who might well be one of the figures of this *dGongs pa zang thal* lineage: *Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan*, which would then explain why, as we will see, it is said that *Rig 'dzin 'Jigs med gling pa* praised *Śā kya rgyal mtshan's* exposition of *Sems sde*: this would be this second text, the *Zab don snying po mun sel dpal gyi sgron me*, which actually has the same literary features (extremely prolix style, combination of various traditions, overabundance of quotations from often unusual and difficult to identify texts) as the oldest of the *dGongs pa zang thal* manuals, which we are about to investigate.

Rig 'dzin dKon mchog rdo rje (rDo pa bla ma)

A *rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan* and his disciples are mentioned in the *sMar pa bka' brgyud kyi rnam thar phyogs sgrigs*,³³ which gives some details not found in *Guru bkra shis*. It reads (p. 234) that the disciple of A *rdo dKon mchog rgyal msthan*, *Rig 'dzin dKon mchog rdo rje* (also called here *rDo pa bla ma*), received from him "the *dGongs pa zang thal* of *Kun dga' rgyal msthan*," a curious formula which could designate either a lineage (but we have not found a *Kun dga' rgyal msthan* so far—would this be another name of *dKon mchog rgyal mtshan*?), or a practice manual which is now lost: here again, let us be alert, in case such a text resurfaces. It would be about a synthesis of *Mahāmudrā* and *rDzogs chen* (*phyag rdzogs zung 'jug*)—which is in fact a fair description of the manual composed by *Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan*.

³³ TBRC: W00EGS1017393.

Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan

This figure is of particular interest to us because he is the author of the oldest preserved text that presents itself as a *dGongs pa zang thal* practice manual.

The *rGyal ba Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus mdor 'dus* tells us little more about Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan (p. 77-78) than it does on his predecessors: he was not satisfied with the instructions he received until he obtained the *dGongs pa zang thal* from Rong po dKon mchog rdo rje; he divided his life, we are told, between contemplation and teaching and, 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan adds, he spread the *sGyu 'phrul* widely. Since his direct and indirect disciples are no easier to date, the fact remains that we are somewhere between the 15th century of Kun dga' nyi ma and the 17th century of Klong gsal snying po. Basically, Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan must be a contemporary of Zhig po gling pa (1524–1583), as we will see that they have at least one student in common—Bu 'bor ba bKra shis rgya mtsho. We must therefore be in the middle of the 16th century.

In the *sMar pa bka' brgyud kyi rnam thar phyogs sgrigs*, Śā kya rgyal mtshan is called Hor so (rather than Hor po) Śā kya rgyal mtshan. The author of the biography insists, for this figure as for his predecessors, on his combined practice of Mahāmudrā and rDzogs chen.³⁴ We find here, in the same terms as in *Guru bKra shis*, the idea—already alluded to—that *Rig 'dzin 'Jigs med gling pa* praised his exposition of *Sems sde*.³⁵ But the only additional piece of information this biography brings us is that Śā kya rgyal mtshan remembered being, in his previous incarnation, dGe mang *mkhan po* Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, associated earlier in the same text with the *dGongs pa zang thal*. I have not been able to identify this figure—whose date of death would give a *terminus a quo* for the birth of Śā kya rgyal mtshan—nor to unravel this tangle of riddles.

Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan's text, although oversaturated with tex-

³⁴ *Op. cit.* p. 235: *Phyag rdzogs dbyer med nyams bzhes kyi rtogs pa mthar phyin mkhas shing grub pa brnyes* l. —One of the sources for these biographies and those compiled by *Guru bKra shis* is apparently the *Phyag rgya chen po snying po don gyi brgyud pa'i lo rgyus nyung ngur bsdus pa* contained in vol. III of *Kaḥ thog khrid chen bcu gsum*, p. 75-130; the text is anonymous, but the last masters mentioned are Śā kya rgyal mtshan and Byang chub seng ge, which could point to Bu 'bor ba bKra shis rgya mtsho as author—but the style of this writing is hardly reminiscent of his *khrid yig* studied below.

³⁵ At this stage, I have not found the corresponding passage in 'Jigs med gling pa, but (which was not the case in the French version of this paper), I think I may have identified the alluded work of Śā kya rgyal mtshan (above, p. 247, in the paragraph about A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan).

tual references and statements attributed to all sorts of Tibetan masters, does not (it seems to me) contain any indication or clue that would allow us to date it more precisely (as would be a clear allusion to any 16th century figure). In any case, it is indeed the oldest of the *dGongs pa zang thal* practice manuals currently available.

Bu 'bor ba bKra shis rgya mtsho

The *rGyal ba Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus mdor 'dus* contains (p. 79) a small life of bKra shis rgya mtsho, where we learn that he received the *dGongs pa zang thal* from Śā kya rgyal mtshan himself; Byang chub seng ge, who is placed in between the two in the ordinary presentations of this lineage, must have been his slightly older contemporary and they appear to have been active at the same time. One element, however (p. 80) helps us to date these two figures: the visit of *Byang bdag* bKra shis stobs rgyal (TBRC: 1550?–1603) to Kaḥ thog during the lifetime of bKra shis rgya mtsho. It is therefore possible to date *Don khrid lag len gsal ba* approximately at the very end of the 16th century or at the beginning of the 17th, and, with reservations, to place Śā kya rgyal mtshan's manual in the second half of the 16th.

The same chronicle of Kaḥ thog confirms that bKra shis rgya mtsho is the author of a *dGongs pa zang thal* practice manual;³⁶ it adds that it would be found in the *Rin chen gter mdzod*—and, actually, the *Zab mo snying thig gi gnad thams cad bsdus pa'i don khrid lag len gsal ba*, which I shall study below, is found in vol. 90 of the sTod lung mTshur pu edition of the *gTer mdzod*, p. 1-96.

Posterity

Moreover, thanks to *Guru* bKra shis, we can reconstruct the filiation of the *dGongs pa zang thal* in Kaḥ tog after these two authors,³⁷ but this is

³⁶ *rGyal ba Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus mdor 'dus*, p. 80: *Drung rDo rje 'od zer dus bKra shis rgya mtshos 'chad nyan mkhor (sic for mkhan por?) mdzad l Slob ma rnam la Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan gyi khrid yig la gzhi byas te Zangs thal gyi khrid rgyun dar spel gnang l Khong gis kyang Zangs thal gyi khrid yig gсар du mdzad pa da lta Rin gter du bzhugs pa de'o l*

³⁷ *Op. cit.* pp. 751-752: A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan [TBRC: P2359] (at the time of mGon po rdo rje [*gdan sa*] and Nam mkha' dpal ba [*chad nyan*, many writings of who, mostly about the *gSang ba snying po*, are found in the *rNying ma bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*]); Rong po dKon mchog rdo rje (P2734? "At the time of Drung lHa dbang rdo rje [*gdan sa*]," P1370 ?); Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan; *mTshungs med* Byang chub seng ge and Bu 'bor ba bKra shis rgya mtsho [at the time of *gdan sa* Drung rNam par dge ba'i mtshan]; disciples of bKra shis rgya mtsho: rMog tsha ba He pa chos 'byung [P2MS9533], rGyal thang ba bsTan pa seng ge, dPal mo Shes rab bzang po and rGyal rong ba [*gDan sa ba: Drung rTa mgrin*, in the time of *Bla ma Tshe mdo* and *Grub thob Ma la bla ma*]; then came sDo (sNgo ?) khang Sangs

of less interest to us, if not to understand one day how the Kaḥ tog tradition of the *dGongs pa zang thal* reached Tshe dbang nor bu (1698-1755), and then, much later, *sPrul sku* Tshul lo. mGon po dbang rgyal, the master of the latter, has indeed received this tradition from *rJe dbon* Byang chub rdo rje, a *sprul sku* of *gTer chen* bDud 'dul rdo rje.³⁸

The *dGongs pa zang thal* literature in Kaḥ tog (16th century)

Apart from the historiographical text by A rdo dkon mchog rgyal mtshan, what is preserved of this literature seems to be reduced to two manuals: that of Śā kya rgyal mtshan and that of bKra shis rgya mtsho.

The *rDzogs pa chen po dgongs pa zang thal gyi man ngag zab don mngon sum gsal byed* by Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan

It is a 297-page text, numbered from 91 to 387 in the consulted edition of the *Kaḥ tog khrid chen bcu gsum*. In this edition, which is the only accessible one, the text³⁹ has been quite corrupted by careless and ignorant copyists (the spelling is extremely defective and there are huge mistakes everywhere, such as “Lhun grub” instead of Klu grub for Nāgārjuna, to give just one characteristic example).

The attribution to Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan is certain (1) by the colophon of this text; (2) on the basis of a passage from the *rGyal ba Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus mdor 'dus* by 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan to which reference has already been made (p. 164); (3) because the fact is confirmed again in the *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung* (p. 750-751).

As for the content of this text, it must be said that it is particularly disconcerting. While the author clearly claims to follow Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's heritage as far as rDzogs chen is concerned, in fact, the links with the *dGongs pa zang thal* are excessively loose. One only has to look at the index of quotations and in the index of names of persons, compiled below (p. 252 ff.), to see how Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan brews

rgyas rin chen and dPal 'bar ba Nam mkha' rgya mtsho ; the latter's disciple was Ba so dBang grags rgya mtsho, master of rGa rjes Chos skyong rgya mtsho [referenced in BDRC without any information, except as master of Klong gsal snying po], whose disciple was Byang chub rgya mtsho who is none other than *gter ston* Klong gsal snying po (1625–1692; he is at Kaḥ tog in 1646 according to BDRC).

³⁸ If he is the most famous person of this name, his dates are 1615-1672 (cf. Jann Ronis 2006). Among his disciples, Klong gsal snying po (1625–1692) has a disciple named Byang chub rdo rje who, if he is indeed the *sprul sku* of the *gter chen*, should have been born in the years following 1672—which is obviously much too early to have been the master of mGon po dbang rgyal, born in 1845...

³⁹ See below (p. 289) for a summary tree of the lineages leading to the authors of the preserved *dGongs pa zang thal* manuals.

references. He is particularly keen to defend the thesis of the substantive unity of the *bKa' brgyud pas' Mahāmudrā* and the *rDzogs chen*. This syncretic inclination leads him not only to assimilate the *Madhyamaka* in its *spros bral* interpretation (that is to say, rather that of *Go rams pa* than that of *Tsong kha pa*), but also to lay down a common basis for all the traditions of spiritual practice in Tibet: we are already, in the middle of the 16th century, in an atmosphere that one might have thought typical of the 19th century *ris med* masters.

If it were permissible to risk a qualitative assessment in a research work, the *Man ngag zab don mngon sum gsal byed* cannot be described otherwise than as fairly talkative, diffuse and disjointed, though profoundly erudite. Some passages are very beautiful; the whole, however, has rather the character of a huge open-ended lecture on all sorts of themes, to which the *dGongs pa zang thal* does not even give a common frame of reference. In a word: it is *not* at all a manual of practice of this cycle of *rDzogs chen*, and even: it is not at all a *khrid yig*, because the instructions only appear in the form of often vague allusions.⁴⁰

Very interesting originality: whereas *Klong chen rab 'byams* associates to the luminous *visions* of the *Thod rgal* only *auditions* (of the type of the *chos nyid rang sgra* referred to in the *bar do* texts), and this for precise reasons of “subtle physiology,” Śākyā rgyal mtshan, for his part, has abundant developments on experiences of the other three senses, which, according to him, would be of the same order.

About *Klong chen rab 'byams*, another interesting point is (as will be seen from the indexes below) the rather strong presence of this author in the *Zab don mngon sum gsal byed*—at least as strong as that of the *dGongs pa zang thal*. In the middle of the 16th century, this contradicts rather head-on Katarina Turpeinen's thesis (2015) on the supposed oblivion of *Klong chen pa* after the 14th century,—an oblivion which would only have ended at the time of *Jigs med gling pa* (18th century), after an eclipse of several hundred years, during which the *dGongs pa zang thal*, nearly alone, would have taken centre stage.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Sometimes, on the contrary and paradoxically, the author gets extremely precise, when it is a point which apparently fascinates him, such as the body postures, which are described in much greater detail than what is the case in the *dGongs pa zang thal*. In short, he composes without any rules, except his fantasy. He is also very profuse when he describes the visions, the auditions, *etc.*, with which the practitioner may be confronted—with a kind of curious taste (if one can conjecture it from his insistence) for horrific visions.

⁴¹ See, for example, Turpeinen (2015), p. 210: “In these days, Longchenpa is the single most known author of the pre-modern Nyingma tradition, and his impact to the Great Perfection tradition is unquestioned. Longchenpa's works are regarded in high esteem and studied widely in the Nyingma colleges (*bshad grwa*). His great influence is internalized in the tradition to the extent that many are unaware that Longchenpa's extensive popularity is a relatively recent development sparked by

In the index below, I have not bothered to restore the Sanskrit titles of the canonical or para-canonical texts, or even to identify them as much as it would have been possible (nor the characters quoted), as my purpose is only to show that the *Man ngag zab don mngon sum gsal byed* is in reality nothing less than a practice manual for the *dGongs pa zang thal*. On the other hand, I have corrected (as far as possible) the faulty spelling of the edition consulted. This list deserves interest because of the number of unknown texts it contains—but part of our impression of strangeness may also be due to the aberrant spellings.

I have put in bold, for different reasons of course, the *dGongs pa zang thal* texts (few) and the express references to Klong chen pa.

INDEX OF TEXTS CITED IN THE MAN NGAG ZAB DON MNGON SUM GSAL
BYED BY HOR PO ŚĀ KYA RGYAL MTSAN

<i>Kun byed</i> : 140.	<i>bKod pa dung bu'i rgyud</i> : 347 (2 cit.).
<i>Kye rdo rje</i> : 266, 353.	<i>bKra shis mdzes ldan</i> : 252.
<i>Klong drug pa</i> : 191, 314, 372, 373.	<i>sKal ba bzang po'i mdo</i> : 130.
<i>Klong yang(s) Śāk thub dgongs khrid</i> : 184.	<i>mKha' 'gro rgya mtsho'i rgyud</i> : 206, 207.
<i>Klong gsa l</i> : 104, 120, 121, 125, 126, 151, 154, 189, 200, 235, 236, 283, 284.	<i>dGe sdig bsdus pa'i sgron me</i> : 303, 314.
<i>dKon mchog ta la l'i md o</i> : 343.	<i>dGongs pa kun 'dus</i> : 338 (2 cit.). ⁴²
<i>dKon mchog brtsegs p a</i> : 115, 190.	<i>dGongs pa tshigs gsum pa'i rgyud</i> : 277, 280.
<i>bKa' [ma] mdo [dbang]</i> : 339.	<i>dGongs pa zang thal gyi</i>

the revelations of Jikmé Lingpa (1730–1798) received in visionary encounters from Longchenpa and the subsequent academic turn of the Nyingma tradition inspired by figures like Mipham (1846–1912). However, in the 14th century, Nyingma Dzokchen audience was not particularly inclined to academic study, but generally focused on ritual and contemplative practice, and the time was not ripe for the sophisticated philosophical treatises of Longchenpa to reach wide circulation.”—Such statements should be nuanced as the presence of Longchenpa is quite ubiquitous, especially in the biographies of lamas, when it comes to the topics of either the *gSang ba snying po* or the *rDzogs chen*. They can be accepted as useful exaggerations meant to correct a mistake in the opposite direction, but should not be taken at face value. What is true is that the *dGongs pa zang thal* was once very famous and widespread and then, around the 18th century, fell, if not into oblivion, surely to a more marginal position—while the traditions inspired by Klong chen pa grew much more central.

⁴² This reference is of the utmost importance: it is the latest text that can be at least approximately dated, since it is a *gter ma* of Padma gling pa (1450–1521). But we already knew that, two generations earlier in this lineage, A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mshan was a direct disciple of Padma gling pa.

- rgyud**: 365 (2 cit. + “Zang thal”).
mGur: 205.
rGya cher rol pa'i mdo: 202.
rGyal mtshan dam pa'i mdo: 337.
rGyud klong yangs: 211.
rGyud 'grel spar khab: 187 (2 cit.), 238.
rGyud don tig: 337, 356.
rGyud rdor phreng: 203.
rGyud bang mdzod: 268, 346.
rGyud bu chung gi rgyud 'grel: 177.
rGyud bla ma: 105, 119, 226, 256.
rGyun stug po bkod pa'i mdo: 229.
sGyu 'phrul gyi lam rnam bkod: 149.
sGyu 'phrul drwa ba: 186, 189, 234.
sGyu 'phrul lam rim: 190, 193 (2 cit.).
sGyu 'phrul rtsa rgyud: 232.
sGyu ma lam rim: 192 (2 cit.), 193 (3 cit.), 216, 261.
sGron ma bkod pa: 197, 200.
sGron ma snang byed: 237, 266, 283.
sGron ma 'bar ba'i rgyud: 200.
bsGrub pa bka' brgyad: 355.
mNgon rtogs rgyan: 215, 375.
mNgon pa kun btus: 229.
Chos dbyings bstod pa: 221, 223, 231.
Chos dbyings mdzod: 343, 357, 358.
Chos dbyings ye shes rin po che'i mdzod:⁴³ 341 (3 cit.).
Chi med rdo rje'i glu (Saraha): 127, 128.
- Nyams sgron, dGa' rab rdo rje'i -*: 334.
Nyi ma rab tu snang byed kyi mdo: 197.
bsNyan rgyud thig le mchog tu gsang ba: 290, 291, 292 (3 cit.).
sNyan rgyud bar pa: 366.
sNying gi me long: 227.
Ting nge 'dzin rgyal po'i mdo: 336, 354.
brTag gnyis: 205, 207, 210, 214, 215, 232, 238, 239, 250, 253, 254.
bsTan pa bu gcig gi rgyud: 222, 277, 308, 313, 359.
Thal 'gyur: 197, 200, 372.
Thig le kun (gsal?) gyi rgyud: 311.
Thig le rtsa ba'i rgyud: 210.
Thugs kyi me long: 201.
Thugs rgyud, Śrī Simha'i : 365.
Thugs rje chen po yang snying gi rgyud: 249, 268.
Thos grol, rJe btsun Pad 'byung -: 249.
mThar thug rin po che'i mdzod:⁴⁴ 371.
Da lta sangs rgyas mngon sum du bzhugs pa'i mdo: 281.
Dam pa rin po ches Po (is one syllable missing?) *Ye shes la gdams pa'i zhi byed man ngag gi lam gzhung*: 271.
Dam tshig rdo rje gsal bkra: 184, 187, 226.
Dus kyi 'khor lo'i rgyud: 257, 367.
De bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po'i mdo: 106.
Don tig 'gro ba kun sgröl: 119,

⁴³ Probably Klong chen pa's *Chos dbyings mdzod*.

⁴⁴ Could it be a passage from the *Chos dbyings mdzod*?

145.
Don gsal me long: 201.
Dri med 'od ('*Grel chen -*): 198, 200, 365.
gDam ngag 'bogs pa'i mdo: 339.
bDe mchog bstod 'grel: 263.
mDo nyi ma rab tu snang ba: 339.
mDo phal po che: 202, 216-220, 242, 295-297, 348, 354.
'Das rjes: 236.
'Dus pa chen po'i mdo: 336.
mDo sde rgyan: 261, 373.
mDo rnam rol: 339.
mDo padma brtsegs pa: 363.
rDo rje 'chang gi zhal chems: 203, 319, 320.
rDo rje brtsegs pa'i rgyud: 336.
rDo rje sems dpa'i man ngag gi rgyud: 316, 333.
rDo rje sems dpa' zhal nas man ngag rgyud du gsung pa: 326.
sDud pa: 122, 209, 261.
Nam mkha' klong chen: 368 (2 cit.).
Nam mkha' klong yangs kyi rgyud: 275.
Nam mkha' che'i rgyud: 269.
rNam snang mngon byang: 352.
dPal ldan rgyud: 226.
dPa' bar 'gro ba'i ting nge 'dzin (gyi mdo): 340.
sPyod 'jug: 241.
sPyod pa bsdus pa'i sgron me: 314, 343.
sPros pa gcad pa'i sgron me: 315.
Phyag rgya chen po bsam gyis mi khyab pa ye shes kyi 'khor lo: 138.
Phags pa blo gros mi zad pas bstan pa'i mdo: 190, 223, 258.
Byang chub sems dpa' spyan ras gzigs kyis zhus pa'i mdo rnam grol: 128.
Bhi ma'i snying bkod: 254 ("Bhi ma" is the author's, or the copyist's, common spelling for Vimalamitra).
dBang rnam par dbye ba: 169, 188.
Bum pa nyi khri: 204 (3 citations), 205, 298.
'Bum dang Nyi khri: 240, 249.
Ma Sangs rgyas rang chas chen po'i rgyud: 313.
Mahāmāyā: 196.
Me tog bkod pa'i mdo: 363.
Mya ngan 'das mdo: 203, 248, 370 (2 cit.).
gTsong gtor chen po'i mdo: 198 (2 cit.), 242.
gTsong nag me 'bar gyi 'grel pa: 303.
rTsa rgyud dbang mdor bstan: 255.
Tshad ma rnam 'grel: 213, 223.
mTshan brjod ('*Jam dpal -*): 114, 255.
mTshan brjod kyi 'grel pa: 255 (2 quotes).
rDzogs chen sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor: 126 (2 cit.), 127.
Zhal gdams snying gi sgron me, rDo rje bdud 'dul rtsal gyis—: 311.
Zag med thig le'i man ngag: 331.
Zang thal: 365.
Zang thal gyi rgyud: 105.
Zang thal man ngag gi rgyud: 367.
Zangs yig can: 232.

Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin:⁴⁵
189.

Yi ge med pa'i rgyud: 210, 222,
227, 309-310.

Yid bzhin mdzod: 106.

Yum: 117 (2 cit.), 134, 197, 241
(2 cit.), 337.

Ye shes snang ba rgyan gyi mdo:
354.

Rig pa bsdus pa'i sgron me: 317.

Rin chen spungs pa'i rgyud: 248.

Rin chen spungs pa'i mdo (sic):
340.

Rin po che bkod pa'i rgyud: 347.

Lang kar gshegs pa'i mdo: 106,
228.

Shes rab snying po: 204, 366.

Sa bon gyi rgyud: 331.

Sa ra ha'i brda' khrid: 117.

Sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor: 118,
121.

Seng ge rtsal rdzogs: 104, 191,
236, 314.

*Sems kyi ngo sprod gsang don rab
gsal:* 276.

Sems bskyed pa'i mdo: 259.

Sems nyid ngal bso (sic for
gso): 188, 222.

Sras gcig sa bon gyi rgyud: 121.

gSang ba spyi rgyud: 237 (2 cit.).

gSang ba yongs rdzogs kyi rgyud:
355

*bSam gyis mi khyab ye shes 'khor
lo:* 139.

lHa rnams 'dus pa'i rgyud: 361.

*lHa'i bu blo gros rab gnas kyi
zhus pa'i mdo:* 139.

lHun grub kyi sgo'i mdzod: 206.

INDEX OF NAMES OF PERSONS⁴⁶ MENTIONED IN HOR PO ŚĀ KYA RGYAL
MTSHAN'S MAN NGAG ZAB DON MNGON SUM GSAL BYED

Ku ku ri pa: 124.

Kun dga' nyi ma, *Byang sems:*
95.

Kun spangs pa Don yod rgyal
mtshan: see Don yod rgyal
mtshan, *Kun spangs pa*.

Klong chen rab 'byams: 191.

dKon mchog rgyal mtshan: 95,
96.

dKon mchog rdo rje, Rong po:
95, 96.

Kha che ('i rgyal po) Rab
snang: 345.

Khri srong lde'u btsan: 94.

Grag pa rgyal mtshan: 137.

dGa' rab rdo rje: 94, 334.

rGya ston pa, *bshes gnyen chen
po:* 350.

sGam po pa (dwags po lha rje):
95, 285.

sGeg pa'i rdo rje: 187, 226.

Ngag gi dbang phyug, *Slob
dpon* : 258.

rNgu pa Chos kyi rdo rje: 96.

'Jam dpal bshes gnyen: 94, 333.

'Jig rten dbang phyug: 265.

Te lo pa: 95, 116, 130, 188, 227,
254, 255.

rTag tu ngu: 221.

Thang stong rgyal po: 95.

Don yod rgyal mtshan, *Kun
spangs pa:* 95.

⁴⁵ This is indeed the great manual of the *mKha' 'gro yang tig* composed by Klong chen pa, which *sPrul sku* Tshul lo will make such great use of in his own *khrid yig*.

⁴⁶ I did not distinguish between historical figures and "imaginary" or legendary figures.

- bDag nyid chen po* (?): 375.
*rDo rje bdud 'dul rtsal*⁴⁷: 235, 311.
rDo rje sems dpa': 166.
 Nāgārjuna (always referred to as "lHun grub"): 123, 221, 229, 266, 333, 350.
 Nā ro pa: 95, 214.
 Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, *dPal sa skya pa'i mkhas grub*: 290.
sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms: 94.
 Padmasambhava: 94, 145, 264, 353, 364.
dPal dbyangs, Slob dpon: 124.
sPyan nga ba, skye mchog—(Rin chen ldan): 95.
 Pha dam pa: 270, 335 (*rJe btsun Dam pa*).
 Phag mo gru pa (*rDo rje rgyal po*): 95, 129.
 Phyar thub pa, *Pha rtogs ldan gyi rgyal po*: 137.
Phyogs kyi glang po, Slob dpon: 264.
Phyogs med byang sems chos rje: 96.
 Bi ma mi tra (Vimalamitra): 94, 105, 120, 268, 269, 318, 356.
 Bai ro tsa na (Vairocana, translator): 94, 264.
 Bla ma Mes: 290.
 Bla ma Zhang: 134, 135-136.
 Bla ma Shar pa, Kaḥ tog pa'i : 230.
 dBu rtse pa, *rGyal sras*: 95.
 Mar pa lo tsā ba: 95, 129, 214, 216, 282.
 Mi la ras pa, *rJe btsun*: 95, 272, 334 (3 cit.).
 sMar pa Rin chen, *Chos rje*: 95.
 Zur mo ba, *Chos rje*: 245, 269, 297.
 Zla grags, *Slob dpon* (Candrakīrti): 139.
 Od zer bla ma, *mkhan chen*: 96.
 Yang dgon pa: 95, 273, 349, 350.
 Ye shes rgyal mtshan: 96.
 Ye shes mtsho rgyal: 94.
 Rig 'dzin rGod ldem: 94.
 Rin chen gling pa: 95.
 La ba pa, *Grub thob*: 215.
 Śā kya rgyal mtshan (Hor po –, the author himself): 95, 387.
 Śa ba ri pa: 190.
 Shang ston pa, *Chos rje*: 230.
 Śāntideva: 123.
 Shing mgo ras pa: 96.
 Śrī Simha: 94, 365, 370.
 Saraha: 123, 127, 226, 232, 234, 238, 256, 257, 294 (*sNyan brgyud*, 2 cit.), 295, 336, 338.
 Sangs rgyas gsang ba, *Slob dpon*: 228.
 Seng ge dbang phyug, lCe btsun—: 316 (?), 320-324 (with a kind of obscure text title), 360 (*lHa rjes lCe btsun gyi man ngag*).
 bSod nams mchog bzang: 95.
 A ba dhu ti pa, *Grub thob*: 274, 300.

I renounce giving here a summary or *a fortiori* a complete paraphrase

⁴⁷ This might be the *gTer ston rDo rje bdud 'dul*, though little late maybe (1615-1672; cf. Jan Ronnis 2006).

of this very long text (nearly 300 p.): it is very unlikely that anyone has ever used it as a guide in the practice of the *dGongs pa zang thal*; far from clarifying the manuals found in the *gter chos*,⁴⁸ it is infinitely *less* precise and *less* concrete. It is also obvious, for anyone who reads both texts, that it has not served as a source of inspiration for *sPrul sku* Tshul lo either closely or remotely.

However, I draw the attention of scholars to the curious p. 376-387—a sort of long song of lament, which goes far beyond the proclamations of incompetence with which Tibetan authors like to conclude (or start) their works on subjects reputed to be profound. One has the feeling, from reading Śā kya rgyal mtshan, that he has come up against almost insurmountable obstacles and has been plunged into deep bitterness, of which the tiny biographies I have been able to consult so far do not give the slightest explanation.

In this text, apparently composed a bit by the pen (and which, it is true, is not well served by its edition in the *Kaḥ tog khrid chen bcu gsum*—disastrous, often forcing us to speculate on the meaning by correcting the copyist's deplorable spelling), one feels, to a degree that is not common among Tibetan authors, the expression of a somewhat capricious subjectivity, which lingers on what is dear to the author's heart, which dispatches what bothers him, which wants to share his sadness and above all his wonder. The *Zab don mngon sum gsal byed* would deserve in this respect a thorough study: if I spoke about it with a touch of impatience, it is because I found in it nothing that interested me in the context of a research on the history of the practice manuals and commentaries on the *dGongs pa zang thal*—a fact that is interesting as such: how could a text be regarded as a *khrid yig* of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, without containing *anything* that corresponds to its title?

Bu 'bor bo bKra shis rgya mtsho's *Zab mo snying thig gi gnad thams cad bsduṣ pa'i don khrid lag len gsal ba*

Shorter by half⁴⁹ than the text of Śā kya rgyal mtshan, this one obviously proceeds from the former, as we shall see, but altogether differs from it in its style. Its title is more honest: it is not exactly intended to be a *dGongs pa zang thal* manual; however, the lineages are presented in exactly the same terms as in Śā kya rgyal mtshan, that is to say that *all that it contains of rDzogs chen is placed, for any reason, under the authority of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem and his posterity*. In this regard, perhaps the

⁴⁸ The difficulty for the practitioner with these manuals included in the *gter chos*, which I listed earlier, is not so much that they would be unclear (though some are extremely allusive), but that they do not form a coherent whole.

⁴⁹ 139 p. in the *Kaḥ tog khrid chen bcu gsum*, numbered on the right p. 388 to 527-528; folios numbered on the left from 1 to 70.

most interesting point would be to determine why, at the time of its composition (the very end of the sixteenth century, or the very beginning of the seventeenth), the authority par excellence for the rDzogs chen, even when traditions from other streams were presented, could be Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. On this point, one should perhaps agree with K. Turpeinen: not in the sense of a real hegemony of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, but in the sense of a prestige superior to any other cycle or a kind of superior magisterium of its "discoverer".

The identity of the author of this manual is known by an annotation in the colophon (which, to the word *kho bo*, adds the name: bKra shis rgya mtsho⁵⁰). However, in the presentation of the lineages at the beginning of the volume, we have (f° 2b), after bKra shis rgya mtsho, *rtsa ba'i bla ma*, which would suggest that the text could have been composed two generations later;⁵¹ but the reader familiar with Tibetan texts naturally assumes that this must be one of those very frequent notations added for their own use to texts by the masters who transmit them and which later editors piously incorporate, as if they were corrections—thus giving rise to unfortunate anachronisms.

On reading it, it is clear that we are dealing with a text of the same tradition as the previous one, which is expressly claimed in the colophon, where, moreover, the author does not hide its eclectic character either.⁵² At the same time, however, its synthetic character is not at all evident through the accumulation of references in all directions, as in *Śā kya rgyal mtshan*—but, on the contrary, in the total omission (quite exceptional in Tibetan religious texts of this kind) of *any* text title, even in the form of mere allusions. Only the lineage which bKra shis rgya mtsho claims to be following as regards rDzogs chen obliges us to relate this treatise to the *dGongs pa zang thal*; as far as the content is concerned, definitely, it is very much the shared legacy of the highest section of Dzogchen according to the traditional doxographies—and the few passages which would be found in a practically identical form in

⁵⁰ *Kho bos [bKra shis rgya mtshos] gud du phyungs nas bris pa la...* See below note n° 52 for the complete passage.

⁵¹ If one were to take this clue seriously, one would have to go down two notches in the lineage tree to find the real author of this manual. Note that, among the possible candidates, we would then have an A rdo dKon mchog rdo rje, which could perhaps explain what seems to be a misunderstanding of sPrul sku Tshul lo in his *Life of mGon po dbang rgyal : dGongs zang gi gnad khrid A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan gyis mdzad pa* should then simply be corrected as: *dGongs zang gi gnad khrid A rdo dKon mchog rdo rjes mdzad pa*.

⁵² F° 70a : *Zab mo snying thig chos so cog rnams las | | zab khrid mi 'dra rgya cher grangs mang yang | | zab gnad kun 'dus lag len 'di kho na | | zab zab yig tshogs mang pos dgos med snyan | | 'di ni mtshungs med Śā kya rgyal mtshan gyis | | Zab don mngon sum gsal byed man ngag las | | bla mas zhal bzhes lag khrid byes pa rnams | | kho bos [bKra shis rgya mtshos] gud du phyungs nas bris pa la | | don du mi 'byung nyes skyon gang yod rnams | | bla ma yab sras gnyis la bzod par gsol |*, etc.

Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's *gter chos* are those which, in fact, are common to *all* the sNying thig literature. In short, as in *Sā kya rgyal mtshan*, the invocation of the Byang gter lineage seems to be there merely to *authorise* bKra shis rgya mtsho to speak of the rDzogs chen teachings belonging to the *whole* register of the sNying thig.

The *Zab mo snying thig gi gnad thams cad bsdu pa'i don khrid lag len gsal ba* bears very well in this respect its name, the first part of which means: "a synthesis of all the key points of the profound quintessence:" it draws fully from the common treasure of the lineages that had merged at Kaḥ thog; it has this feature in common with Hor po *Sā kya rgyal mtshan's* text. But, unlike the latter, it really deserves the second part of its title—*don khrid lag len gsal ba*, "manual on the meaning [of this synthesis] which elucidates the practice:" while *Sā kya rgyal mtshan* evaded all the technical details, bKra shis rgya mtsho is very precise and concretely practical—except that *he never specifies anything to such an extent that his manual would be more in keeping with one tradition than another.*

One small detail, among many others, makes it possible to immediately recognise the degree of familiarity of the authors of manuals with the *dGongs pa zang thal* literature: the purification of the body (*lus sbyong*), generally prescribed in *Bi ma'i 'grel tig* (p. 338), is specified in another *dGongs pa zang thal* text, the *gNad yig gsang sgron* (p. 144):⁵³

"Meditate in a colour corresponding to your [dominant] element:
Rats, oxen and tigers meditate their bodies on the whiteness of the water;
Hares, dragons and snakes meditate their bodies yellow [like] the earth;
Horses, sheep and monkeys meditate their bodies red [like] fire;
Birds, dogs and pigs meditate their bodies with the greenness of the air."⁵⁴

This modification of the colour of the visualisation according to the year of birth is peculiar to the *dGongs pa zang thal*, and even specifically to the *Secret Lamp* only: it is unknown even to the *Chos nyid mngon sum gyi khrid yig* (p. 361). It is not found in the parallel passages of Klong chen pa: neither in the *dNgos gzhi 'od gsal snying po'i don khrid* (p. 7), nor

⁵³ See Arguillère (2016), p. 210.

⁵⁴ *Rang gi 'byung ba dang mthun pa'i kha dog tu bsgom ste ṣ byi ba glang stag gsum chu'i lus dkar po bsgom ṣ yos 'brug sbrul gsum sa'i lus ser po bsgom ṣ rta lug spral gsum me'i lus dmar po bsgom ṣ bya khyi phag gsum rlung gi lus ljang gu bsgom ṣ*

in the *Khrid yig sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor* (p. 243), nor in the *Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin* (p. 439). The first two prescribe that everyone should imagine their bodies to be blue in colour; the latter says nothing about this, nor does the *Theg mchog mdzod* (p. 204—but, anyway, the text is very allusive about these instructions for practice; it seems more concerned with justifying their authenticity by accumulating references from the *Seventeen Tantras*). In the *Yang tig nag po* system, the parallel exercise (which is not exactly identical, in fact) is done by imagining the vajra of different colours in succession or simultaneously (see *Khrid rim don gsal sgron me*, in vol. III of this cycle, p. 49).⁵⁵

bKra shis rgya mtsho (f° 38a) does indeed present a visualisation of the *vajra* of the colour of the birth element, with the prescriptions specific to the *gNad yig gsang sgron*—a genuine sign of an in-depth personal knowledge of the *dGongs pa zang thal*. It is true that this author also mentions the possibility of a *vajra* of all five colours at the same time (as it seems to be the case in the *Yang ti nag po*) and indicates that the *vajra* could be three or five-pointed: once more, for his part, the main concern is to produce a synthetic, even syncretic manual.

The text is very well structured, as one can easily see from the analytical table I have put online at the following address: 2017/09/analytic-table-sa-bcad-of-bu-bor-bo-bkra-shis-rgya-mtsho-s-practice-manual-of-the-dgongs-pa-zang-thal.html. This is a pleasant difference from the *Man ngag zab don mngon sum gsal byed* of Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan. Although bKra shis rgya mtsho's text may be regarded, in a sense, as an abbreviation of his predecessor's work, one could only advise anyone wishing to study the older one to rely, as a basis and as a guide, on the more recent one, which is much more clearly framed. Śā kya rgyal mtshan's developments, often interesting but profuse and rather unbalanced, are best understood from bKra shis rgya mtsho's concise and neatly branched text; having it in mind as well as in the background, one would better grasp how to articulate the rhetorical proliferations of his spiritual forefather to one another.

Compared to the practice manuals found in the *dGongs pa zang thal* itself and the text of *sPrul sku Tshul lo*, these two manuals in the Kaḥ thog tradition are characterised, beyond their syncretic character in relation to the various branches of rDzogs chen, by their willingness to fully integrate the bKa' brgyud pas' Mahāmudrā, practically substituted for Khregs chod (it is clearer in bKra shis rgya mtsho, not because this tendency is actually more pronounced in him, but simply because his text is clearer). This reveals a profound difference in the order of practices, which, moreover, does not seem perfectly clear to me in ei-

⁵⁵ Paragraph taken from Arguillère (2016), p. 210, n. 3.

ther text: in short, it seems that the “Khregs chod-Mahāmudrā” is proposed *before* the specific preliminaries of rDzogs chen, and not *afterwards* as in *sPrul sku Tshul lo*, in accordance with the dominant tradition of his time. That is to say, it sorts of fills a space that, in texts as the *Chos nyid mngon sum gyi khrid yid* (the text that *sPrul sku Tshul lo* calls the *Fundamental Manual, Khrid gzhung*) is devoted to the “search for the mind” (which does not get a separate development in *sPrul sku Tshul lo*’s manual, for it is clearly redundant with features both of the specific preliminary practices of rDzogs chen and of the Khregs chod).⁵⁶

The insistence, truly obsessive under the pen of Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan, on the unity of meaning of Madhyamaka, Mahāmudrā and rDzogs chen clearly remains in bKra shis rgya mtsho also, albeit attenuated (and above all reduced to a few clear and firm formulas, while Śā kya rgyal mtshan extended without measure). In the same way, bKra shis rgya mtsho’s manual contains allusions to Zhi byed and gCod, but infinitely more condensed than Śā kya rgyal mtshan’s. All these elements will be totally absent in the masters of central Tibet and in *sPrul sku Tshul lo*.

Remarkable in our two authors are the developments on visionary practice in the dark (which is the exclusive subject of about 25 p. out of 140 in bKra shis rgya mtsho, not counting additional allusions and explanations elsewhere). This practice will simply never be mentioned in any of the manuals of the Central Tibetan tradition, nor in *sPrul sku Tshul lo*. Its considerable development here is no doubt related to the addition of *Yang ti nag po* to the *Khrid chen bcu gsum* of Kaḥ thog. It would obviously be interesting to carry out an investigation, parallel to the one we are dealing with here, into the history of the *Yang ti nag po* in Kaḥ thog.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Alongside the desire to build a syncretic system integrating Mahāmudrā and rDzogs chen, typical of this Kaḥ thog tradition at the time under consideration, it may be that all the wavering found throughout the *dGongs pa zang thal* manuals on the question of Khregs chod stems from the fact that this practice is virtually absent, at least in its classical form and with its proper name, throughout the corpus (it is barely mentioned e.g. in the *Bi ma’i ’grel tig*—and even in that context, it seems, as a practice meant for a type of practitioners different from those who will engage in the visionary path). In sum, the Kaḥ thog manuals, on the one hand, make up for what must have come to be seen as a deficiency by injecting Mahāmudrā, while Zur chen Chos dbyings rang grol, on the other hand, will draw from the other major cycle of rDzogs chen of the Byang gter, the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*. Only *sPrul sku Tshul lo* succeeds in constructing a system that mobilizes *only* texts from the *dGongs pa zang thal*, but he does not do so without an *exegetical ruse* that allows him to treat the practice of “blending the three spaces” as the true Khregs chod of the *dGongs pa zang thal*.

⁵⁷ The overall impression that emerges from these two manuals is that the different cycles of visionary rDzogs chen could be seen, at that time and in that milieu, as so

**The *dGongs pa zang thal* manuals in central Tibet
(17th and 18th centuries)**

The texts grouped in this section present, for the most part, no difficulty in dating their authors: Zur Chos dbyings rang grol (1604–1669), *Rig 'dzin* Padma 'phrin las (1641–1717), 'Gyur med rdo rje (gTer bdag gling pa, 1646–1714) or Tshe dbang nor bu (1698–1755)⁵⁸ are fairly well known; as for Kha'u dga' ldan pa Chos dbyings rang grol, if I am not mistaken about his identity, he is no more obscure than the previous ones, and for good reason.

The *Kun tu bzang po'i dgongs pa'i bcud ka dag lhun grub kyi nyams khrid thar gling chos sku'i zhing khams su bgrod pa'i nye lam* by Zur Chos dbyings rang grol (1604–1669)

This short manual (28 p., numbered from 305 to 322), quite remarkable, is the work of Zur *chen*, or Zur *thams cad mkhyen pa*, Chos dbyings rang grol, a figure known to us from a long biography (452 p. in the edition consulted), the work of the fifth Dalai Lama. There are a number of others; here, I will be contented with the much shorter one that is found in the *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung* (pp. 300–303).

To confine ourselves to the elements that interest us here, we read (p. 300) that Chos dbyings rang grol met the *Byang bdag Rig 'dzin* Ngag gi dbang po (1580–1639) in his ninth year (1612) and that Ngag gi dbang po prophesied that he would be of great service to the Ancient tradition. His main practice in retreat (1619–1621?) seems to have been the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* (*op. cit.*, p. 301), received from Ngag dbang ye shes grub (TBRC: P1076) around 1615.⁵⁹ He was one of the principal masters of the fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682) and it was he who recognised Padma 'phrin las (1640–1718) as the *sprul sku* of *Rig 'dzin* Ngag gi dbang po. This very abbreviated biography tells us nothing of his interest in the *dGongs pa zang thal*; we find more, in this respect, in the

many facets of a single practical teaching, which could be reconstituted by combining them. This is a characteristic trait that disappears as early as with Zur *chen* Chos dbyings rang grol in the seventeenth century, and is really the antithesis of the choices that *sPrul sku* Tshul lo will make in the twentieth century. This detail is certainly not devoid of meaning regarding the construction of the identity of the School, or Order, of the Northern Treasures.

⁵⁸ We will see later why this figure, who is also associated with Kaḥ thog, is placed here in the company of the masters of Central Tibet.

⁵⁹ *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, p. 300. Note the curious formula: *mKha' 'gro snying thig bka' gter gnyis*. Perhaps the *bka'* aspect of *mKha' 'gro snying thig* is simply the *tantra* on which these teachings are based—the *Klong gsal*—which is not said to have been hidden and then rediscovered and is not included in the *gter chos* of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*.

short biographical notes of Padma 'phrin las' commentary on the *Yang tig gces pa'i sgron me*, studied a little further on. Chos dbyings rang grol was clearly the repository of an enormous amount of diverse traditions. A deepening of the present research should definitely explore the long *rnam thar* composed by Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho in order to see more clearly his precise relationship with the Byang gter in general and the *dGongs pa zang thal* in particular. In order to situate him in my tree of the *dGongs pa zang thal* lineages, I have settled—provisionally—on the indications (summarised below) of Padma phrin las' commentary on the *Yang tig gces pa'i sgron me*.

The colophon of Zur Chos dbyings rang grol's *Nyams khrid* contains hardly any historically usable elements, apart from the fact that another hand (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho? Padma 'phrin las?) may have been involved in the final edition of the text, apparently based on "notes" by Chos dbyings rang grol.⁶⁰

There is no doubt, in any case, that the subject of the text in question is the *dGongs pa zang thal*: Chos dbyings rang grol expressly states so (p. 306 sq.), with the peculiarity, already underlined (perhaps an innovation of this author), of considering the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* as dealing with the aspect of "primordial purity" (in other words: the Khregs chod), whereas the *dGongs pa zang thal* strictly speaking would have as its object the *lhun grub* aspect (i.e. the Thod rgal).⁶¹

Certainly, it is an idea that seems as natural as it is judicious, to complement the (scanty) texts of the *dGongs pa zang thal* on Khregs chod by the rich developments of the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*. However, it has to be said that this has generally not been the preferred approach in the secondary literature of the *dGongs pa zang thal* that we are studying here. Zur Chos dbyings rang grol's manual is an exception in this respect, and it is also original in many points of detail that

⁶⁰ *Op. cit.* p. 332: *rJe btsun bla ma dam pa Zur thams cad mkhyen pa | Chos dbyings rang grol gyi zin bris su mdzad pa'i phyag bris su yig char zhal bshus pa'o |*. These "notes" (*zin bris*) could have been (unlikely hypothesis) the *Yang tig gces pa'i sgron me'i khrid kyi rtsa tshig gsung rgyun rab gsal*, text evoked below. But the Tibetan formulation would rather mean that the printed edition is directly derived from an autograph manuscript, perhaps with some finishing work on the part of an editor.

⁶¹ ...*rGyud sde bco lnga'i dgongs don snyan rgyud drug gi nying khu Kun tu bzang po'i dgongs pa zang thal du bstan pa'i nges don rdzogs pa chen po'i khrid tshul zab mo gter las 'byung ba 'di nyid la gnyis te | Ka dag rang byung rang shar gyis gnas lugs kyi don gtan [307] | la 'bebs pa dang | lhun grub dGongs pa zang thal gyis thod rgal gyi rang rtsal rjen par ston pa gnyis te | ...* In this formula, the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* is well treated as a sort of section of a larger whole, including the *dGongs pa zang thal* (in the narrow sense), the whole being itself called "*dGongs pa zang thal*"—exactly as K. Turpeinen (2015) does: so when I object to her approach, it is not to say that it is wrong, but that this specific feature of Zur chen's manual (1) seems not to be originally there in the *gter ma* texts themselves and (2) has not been followed very systematically after him, but was rather abandoned by the posterity.

cannot be developed here. On the other hand, in comparison with the practice manuals from Kaḥ thog, it is much more in line with what can be found from Klong chen pa to sPrul sku Tshul lo in terms of the order of the practice.

The *Thar gling chos sku'i zhing khams su bgrod pa'i nye lam* is quite purely concrete and practical. Like that of bKra shis rgya mtsho, this practice manual is very clear and well-structured—rather than nebulous and profuse like that of Śā kya rgyal mtshan. But, unlike bKra shis rgya mtsho, Zur Chos dbyings rang grol bases his argument, down to the last detail, on the *dGongs pa zang thal* literature (in the broadest sense—including, as has been said, the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*).

Thus, for example, in what is called “non-ordinary preliminary practices” (from the *ka dag* section), a series of three exercises is presented (p. 313 sq.) that have not been encountered so far—but will soon be found again—called respectively:

- a) *rDo rje dkar po la brten nas sems 'dzin pa*,
- b) *rDo rje mthing kha hūṃ yig dang bcas pas la sems 'dzin pa* and
- c) *Thig le dkar dmar la brten nas sems 'dzin pa*.

Now, these meditations directly come from a text of the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*, the *Ma rig mun sel sgron me snying po bcud bsdu lam gyi gnad khrid kyi rim pa*,⁶² which is clearly the main source of this entire *ka dag* section of Chos dbyings rang grol's manual.

In the *lhun grub* part, Chos dbyings rang grol seems to be closely following the *Bi ma'i 'grel tig* (which he calls *Bi ma'i snyan (b)rgyud*, indeed one of his short titles),⁶³ rather than the *Chos nyid mngon sum gyi khrid yig* which sPrul sku Tshul lo will call “*khrid gzhung*,” “the main and authoritative instruction manual,” so as to say. We have no clue whence comes this shift in the appreciation of what should be regarded, in the original corpus, as the main basis for teaching the *dGongs pa zang thal* as a whole.⁶⁴

K. Turpeinen, as has already been mentioned, often comes back to the idea that Klong chen pa's work had practically fallen into oblivion

⁶² P. 195 sq: *mDun du khru bdun bcar ba'i sar ṣ rdo rje dkar po rtse lnga pa g.yas su 'khyil pa rang gzugs ṣ...*

⁶³ The large text translated by Malcolm Smith (2016).

⁶⁴ This *Bi ma'i 'grel tig* is more in line with what has become the dominant tradition in visionary rDzogs chen—notably in that it is one of the only texts in the *dGongs pa zang thal* that clearly mentions (and devotes a chapter to) the practice of Khregs chod. For the rest, if we stick to the letter, the *dGongs pa zang thal* is rather reminiscent of the system of the Bon pos' *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud*, where one goes directly from the rDzogs chen specific preliminary practices to the visionary practice of Thod rgal.

after the death of its author until 'Jigs med gling pa brought it back to the forefront. During these centuries of latency, she says, it was the *dGongs pa zang thal* that attracted all the attention. However, it would be possible to temper this opinion by making, as I sketch here for the *dGongs pa zang thal*, a history of the practice manuals of the two *sNyung thigs* composed between the 14th and the 17th centuries: we would see that what K. Turpeinen says probably applies, to some extent, to the most speculative or enigmatic works of Klong chen pa (and still: the quotations from the *Chos dbyings rin po che'i mdzdod* found in Śā kya rgyal mtshan's manual should give us food for thought), but probably not to the instructions for the practice of the "quintessential" rDzogs chen. In any case, Zur Chos dbyings rang grol, in the 17th century, is no less a reader of Klong chen pa than was Śā kya rgyal mtshan in the 16th: one can be persuaded by the last lines of the instructions on the fourth vision of Thod rgal in the *Nyams khrid thar gling chos sku'i zhing khams su bgrod pa'i nye lam* (p. 311 sq.):

"The details are to be found in the *tantras* specific to this [tradition, that is, those included in the *gter chos* of rGod ldem], in the *Seventeen Tantras*, in the *Kun bzang klong gsal*, in the *six oral transmissions* and the *texts on the measures* [of the levels of attainment reached], nectar of the words of Dri med 'od zer, the spacious *yogin* of the Great Completeness."⁶⁵

It should be noted here that the association of the *dGongs pa zang thal* with the *Klong gsal*, the fundamental *tantra* of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*, is a constant, if not from the beginning, at least since the 16th century (13 quotations in Śā kya rgyal mtshan's manual), continued⁶⁶ here by Zur Chos dbyings rang grol.

⁶⁵ *Op. cit.* p. 331-332: *Zhib par 'di'i sgos kyi rgyud sde rnams dang rgyud bcu bdun dang | Kun bzang klong gsal dang snyan rgyud drug dang rtag tshad kyi yi ge [332] rdzogs chen nam mkha' rnal 'byor Dri med 'od zer gyi gsung gi bdud rtsi las shes bya te | ...*

⁶⁶ This formula should not be taken as if Zur Chos dbyings rang grol had read Śā kya rgyal mtshan: we have no idea about that and there is no clue that he wrote in any sense in reaction to Śā kya rgyal mtshan's manual.—A text of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* (pp. 508-514), the (anonymous) *g.Yung gi lo rgyus*, mentions Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, who appears to be giving a disciple (g.Yung ston pa rDo rje dpal (1284–1365)? this is chronologically difficult, if not impossible, or would oblige us to move Rig 'dzin rGod ldem a but backward in time) teachings supplementing the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*. The text is quite confusing and would require closer examination. But it somehow implies that Rig 'dzin rGod ldem would have been familiar with the *Klong gsal*, which is actually quoted, though only very few times, in the *dGongs pa zang thal*.

The *Chos dbyings lam bzang* of Kha'u dGa' ldan pa Chos dbyings rang grol and the *Yang tig gces sgron* cycle

1. The *Ka dag rang byung rang shar gyi khrid yig Chos dbyings lam bzang* and Padma 'phrin las' *Yang tig gces sgron zin bris*

At this stage, it seems that only one practice manual for the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* has reached us: it is the work of a Chos dbyings rang grol which should not be confused with Zur Chos dbyings rang grol. The author signs two names in the colophon: Chos dbyings rang grol and Padma las rab rdo rje rtsal; a note added by the publishers reads: *Kha'u dGa' ldan pa grub dbang Dhar ma'i mtshan yin 'dug*. The BDRC/TBRC site helps us to identify this character (P6867): “*rning ma* practitioner of the rDo rje brag tradition who held the hermitage of Kha'u dga' ldan in the Nyang area of gTsang” and for which it refers to the *dBus gtsang gi gnad yig* (p. 403) of Chos kyi rgya mtsho, Kaḥ thog si tu III (1880-1923/25). However, the *dBus gtsang gi gnad yig* contains absolutely nothing to date our Kha'u dga' ldan pa Chos dbyings rang grol more precisely.

The colophon of the *Chos dbyings lam bzang* (p. 372) does, however, give us some useful information: the order to compose this manual was given to the author in a *shing khyi* year. The commissioner of this manual is also named: a certain Kun dga' bzang po. The colophon suggests that there already existed a manual going as far as the *guru yoga*, perhaps composed by this Kun dga' bzang po (the author's master?) and that the latter ordered our Chos dbyings rang grol to complete it.⁶⁷ The task was finished “the following wood-pig year” at dGa' ldan gsang sngags chos gling (the author's hermitage). He mentions his master again, this time under the name Kun bzang rgya mstho,⁶⁸ but it is probably the same person as Kun dga' bzang po / Kun bzang dbang po.

One thinks first of all of the Kun bzang dbang po which is mentioned on the BDRC/TBRC site (P10284) as one of the masters of Zur Chos dbyings rang grol, “master in the transmission of the *Kun bzang thugs gter* of Byang chub gling pa dPal gyi rgyal mtshan; little else is known about this teacher”⁶⁹ and one would be tempted to conclude

⁶⁷ Op. cit. p. 372: ...*Kun dga' bzang po dang mjal te Ka dag khrid yig bla ma'i rnal 'byor yan legs par gnang ste* \ 'di man khyod kyis khrigs chags su grigs shig ces bgos bzhin du bka' stsal pa yid la brtan du bzung ste...

⁶⁸ *bKa' drin 'khor med rje btsun Kun bzang rgya mtsho'i thugs rje las rdzogs chen gyi man ngag la cha tsam rtog pa tsam...*

⁶⁹ There is certainly also a Kun dga' rgya mtsho in the branch of the *dGongs pa zang thal* lineages which leads to *sPrul sku* Tshul lo—but this is *Byang bdag* Padma 'phrin

that there is in fact only one Chos dbyings rang grol, which the tradition has mistakenly split into two figures (contrary to its general tendency to “lend to the rich,” to condense under the name of a single famous personage the works of minor and poorly identified authors), or, possibly, that our Chos dbyings rang grol is a slightly younger contemporary of Zur Chos dbyings rang grol.

However, this hypothesis does not hold, as the author refers, as one of his important sources, to the *Yang tig gces sgron khrid kyi zin bris* by Rig 'dzin Padma phrin las.

The *Yang tig gces sgron zin bris* is a text preserved in the *Rin chen gter mdzod* (vol. XVIII, 86 pages numbered 133 to 218 in the edition of sTod lung, Tshur phu, BDRC/TBRC: W20578) as well as in the *Thugs sgrub drag po rtsal gyi chos skor* published by gNas chung Śā kya yar 'phel (vol. IV, pp. 7-108). Its author is very clearly the *Byang bdag* of that name (1640-1718).⁷⁰ Its content is given⁷¹ by Padma 'phrin las as an essay on the oral teaching of “Zur chen rDo rje 'chang,” i.e., in context, Zur Chos dbyings rang grol. In fact, Padma 'phrin las' text is a very broad amplification of the *Yang tig gces pa'i sgron me'i khrid kyi rtsa tshig gsung rgyun rab gsal*, a writing of a Phrin las rab rgyas who is none other than Zur Chos dbyings rang grol. The author's name appears in the colophon (p. 131). The TBRC/BDRC file on Zur Chos dbyings rang grol also confirms that one of his names was indeed Phrin las rab rgyas, which further confirms the elements found in the *Thugs sgrub yang tig gces sgron khrid kyi zin bris gzhung don rab gsal* by Padma 'phrin las.

Once this filiation is discovered, it is immediately apparent that Kha'u dGa' ldan pa Chos dbyings rang grol's *Chos dbyings lam bzang* is, in several of its parts, a copy of Padma 'phrin las' *Yang tig gces sgron gyi zin bris*, a text which itself proceeds from the small text by Zur Chos dbyings rang grol—which makes it possible to clearly distinguish the two Chos dbyings rang grol(s) and helps to reconstruct the chronology.

2. Who is Kha'u dGa' ldan pa Chos dbyings rang grol?

In the colophon of the *Yang tig gces sgron khrid kyi zin bris* (p. 217),

las's own master. This Kun dga' rgya mtsho is moreover probably the one mentioned by Jann Ronis (2006: p. 173) as a master of *gTer ston bDud 'dul rdo rje* (1615-1673)—the latter likely being himself the “*gter ston bDud 'dul*” who appears at the end of another branch, roughly in the middle of the summary table (below p. 289).

⁷⁰ We also have it now in the 63-volume collection *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*, among the complete writings of Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las (vol. 36-50). It is found in vol. 43, p. 1-81.

⁷¹ P. 134 in the *Rin chen gter mdzod* edition, which I follow here for the references to this text.

Padma 'phrin las says he composed it in his seventy-second year, which would place us about 1712—*terminus a quo*, therefore, for the composition of Kha'u dGa' ldan pa Chos dbyings rang grol's *Ka dag rang byung rang shar gyi khrid yig Chos dbyings lam bzang*. The colophon of the latter text mentions two years, *shing byi* and *shing phag*: at the earliest, 1754 and 1755. The *terminus ad quem* is the date of the death of Chos kyi rgya mtsho (Kaḥ thog si tu III), who mentions Kha'u dGa' ldan pa Chos dbyings rang grol in his history of the holy places of central Tibet—either 1923 or 1925. This leaves us, as the only other dating possibilities for the *Chos dbyings lam bzang*, nothing else, besides 1754-55, than 1814-1815 or 1874-1875.

Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu (1698–1755) includes among his many names Chos dbyings rang grol. Moreover, one of his numerous masters is a certain Kun bzang dbang po (P2871), of whom there is a brief *rnam thar* in Blo gros don yod's *Dus 'khor chos 'byung indra nī la'i phra tshom* (p. 503-504).⁷² This short biography,⁷³ while placing Kun bzang dbang po mainly in the context of the transmission of the Jo nang pa system of Kalacakra, tells us that he was very well versed in the *rnying ma*⁷⁴ doctrines.

Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu is a perfect fit for the chronology: 1755 is the year of his death; the passage mentioning Kun bzang dbang po suggests that he appeared to him in a vision. Tshe dbang nor bu, although closely associated with Kaḥ thog, also spent a lot of time in Central Tibet and was very familiar with the traditions of rDo rje brag. The idea of composing a practice manual for the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*, which had lacked until then, and, what is more, of doing so with barely a reworking of a text of the highest authority—that of Padma 'phrin las—resembles his spirit both encyclopaedic and, in its own way, conservative.

In order to decide this question definitively, all that would be left to do is to plunge into the most developed biographies of Tshe dbang nor bu, to see if among his hermitages there is indeed one that could bear the name of Kha'u dGa' ldan.⁷⁵ But we already know that one of the hermitages of Tshe dbang nor bu in gTsang was called dGa' ldan mkha' spyod. Kha'u is of course a toponym:

“To the East of Sa skya there is the Kha'u lung valley. In this area are several settlements (*grong pa*) that are known as the Khab po

⁷² TBRC: W00EGS1016994.

⁷³ Expressly inspired by Klong sprul Blo gro mtha' yas.

⁷⁴ *Op. cit.* p. 485: *Khyad par snga 'gyur bka' ma'i chos skor ma lus pa gsan bsam mthar phyin by mdzad* l.

⁷⁵ See, for a start, <http://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Rigdzin-Tsewang-Norbu/9372>.

che."⁷⁶

The other clue that could be exploited is the—*gter ston?*— name that the author gives himself in the colophon: Padma las rab rdo rje rtsal. It should be checked whether Tshe dbang nor bu signed his revelations with this name.

In any case, a number of clues converge to attribute the *Chos dbyings lam bzang* to Tshe dbang nor bu. Admittedly, the lineage through which Tshe dbang nor bu received the *dGongs pa zang thal*, as it can be reconstructed from the '*Chad thabs 'od kyi 'khor lo* (supposed to be his *khrid yig* of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, which I study later), does not seem to pass through a Kun (dga') bzang (rgya mtsho) / dbang po. This is a subject of perplexity that will have to be explored further.

However, this lineage, apart from its first links, is practically identical to the one claimed by the author of *Chos dbyings lam bzang* in the context of *guru yoga* (p. 357; I mention only the links after rGod ldem): Nam mkha' grags pa, bDe legs rgyal mtshan, Se ston mGon po bzang po, Se ston Rin chen rgyal mtshan, mGon po zla ba, Nub dgon pa, Blo gros rgyal mtshan, Byam bzang, Śā kya rgya(l) mtshan, 'Brug sgra bzang po, Nam mkha' 'jigs med, Chos dbyings rang grol, lHa btsun Padma 'phrin las, rJe btsun Kun bzang rgya mtsho.

Here is, for comparison, the lineage of '*Chad thabs 'od kyi 'khor lo* (p. 523 ff.): rNam rgyal mgon po, bSod nams bzang po, Chos kyi rgyal mtshan, Chos kyi rin chen, Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, *Bya btang* Śā kya dpal bzang, Nub dgon pa Chos kyi rgyal mtshan, Blo gros rgyal mtshan, Byams pa bzang po, Śā kya rgyal mtshan, La stod pa 'Brug sgra bzang po, Theg mchog bsTan pa'i nyi ma, dBon 'Jigs bral Nam mkha', *Yongs 'dzin dam pa* Ratna bhadra, then Tshe dbang nor bu himself.

The penultimate one should be Kun bzang rin chen, identified on the TBRC site as P6990, which gives us one more suggestion for Kun bzang rgya mtsho / Kun bzang dbang po.⁷⁷ In any case, the problem of the identity of Kha'u dga' ldan pa Chos dbyings ran grol, the author of the *Chos dbyings lam bzang*, is now practically solved.

⁷⁶ Gene Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*, p. 298. The following passage can also be found in a short biography of Thang po che Kun dga' 'bum (<http://www.jonangfoundation.org/masters/tangpoche-kunga-bum>): "At the Sakya hermitage of Khau (kha'u) up the valley from Sakya monastery, he received many tantric transmissions from the master Yeshe Pal (Ye shes dpal, 1281–1365), such as the *Vajrapanjara Tantra* and the *Samputa Tantra* of the *Hevajra Tantra* cycle, the esoteric instructions of the protector Caturmukha (*zhal bzhi pa*), the *Six Dharmas of Niguma*, and the *Six Dharmas of Naropa*." The association with one of the founding masters of the *jo nang pa* current also suits Tshe dbang nor bu well.

⁷⁷ This would imply that P2871 and P6990 are the same person. Both were masters of Tshe dbang nor bu.

3. What is the *Yang tig gces sgron*?

Mentioning the *Yang tig gces sgron zin bris* (1712) by Padma 'phrin las and the small text of Zur *chen* Chos dbyings rang grol on which it is based, I have not yet traced the source of these instructions linking the Khregs chod of the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* to the (more tantric-style) practice of *Guru rDo rje drag po rtsal*, the wrathful form of Padmasambhava most central in the Byang gter.

In his *Thugs sgrub yang tig gces sgron khrid kyi zin bris gzhung don rab gsal* (from now on: *gZhung don rab gsal*), Padma 'phrin las begins (p. 136 ff.) with a story of the transmission from which his text proceeds. He mentions the triple filiation of the Byang gter "by the son, by the disciple and by the wife" (*sras brgyud slob brgyud yum brgyud*) and he claims the first two.

Here is the detail of the first of the two lineages from rGod ldem, given on p. 136 sq.:

(1) rNam rgyal mgon po (TBRC : P10100),⁷⁸ (2) *Rig 'dzin* Sangs rgyas byams bzang (P10127), (3) *Se ston* Nyi ma bzang po (P8839),⁷⁹ (4) *Se ston* mGon po bzang po (P10120),⁸⁰ (5) *Se ston* Rin chen rgyal mtshan (P8343),⁸¹ (6) *rGyal tshab* mGon po zla ba (P10130—we are now in the 15th century according to TBRC), (7) Nub dgon pa Byams pa chos rgyal mtshan (P6105),⁸² after who there are four figures that we find in the line leading to *Rig 'dzin* Tshe dbang nor bu: (8) Blo gros rgyal mtshan (P2737), (9) *mKhan chen* Byams pa bzang po (P10098—of whom it is said (p. 139-140) that he was *rDzogs chen zang thal dang Lam 'bras kyi rnal 'byor pa mthar phyin pa* and that he was the abbot of Dam rin dGa' ldan byams pa gling), then (10) Kun bzang chos kyi nyi ma and (11) *Rig*

⁷⁸ About rNam rgyal mgon po's dates, see Jay H. Valentine (2017) and (2018). According to *Guru bKra shis* (p. 669), he is in his tenth year at the time of his father's death (supposedly 1408). He would therefore have been born around 1399. He had received the *dGongs pa zang thal* the year before rGod ldem's death, i.e. 1407. He married around 1416. He had no children. He is above all master of the *byang lcags mdzod nag po*; the master of *rDzogs chen* is rather *rDo rje dpal ba*. He died in his 25th year, around 1424 (all this calculation is clearly based on the commonly accepted, but not indisputable, dates for Rig 'dzin rGod ldem).

⁷⁹ The author of *Rig 'dzin* rGod ldem's *rnam thar*, TBRC W29603.

⁸⁰ Padma 'phrin las expressly mentions as an error the inversion, in the lineage, of Nyi ma bzang po and mGon po bzang po, according to the order found on TBRC/BDRC.

⁸¹ He wrote commentary on the *rDo rje sems dpa' sgyu 'phrul drwa ba*, found p. 7-22 of vol. LXXX of the *bKa' ma shin tu rgyas pa* of Kaḥ thog.

⁸² One of the masters of *Byang bdag* bKra shis thob rgyal (1550?–1603) according to TBRC/BDRC. So we would have suddenly passed to the 16th century...

'dzin 'Brug sgra bzang po.⁸³ After this master, the lineage becomes specific again: his main disciple was (12) Nam mkha' 'jigs med (*IHa btsun* Nam mkha' 'jigs med—1587–1650; P1691), who transmitted it to (13) Rig 'dzin 'Phrin las lhun grub (P359: 1611-1662), who was also a disciple of *mKhas grub* mDo sngags bstan 'dzin (1576–1628: P648); “later... the fifth Great Omniscient Conqueror himself praised him.” His main disciple (p. 141) was (14) *gTer chen* 'Gyur med rdo rje (1646–1714), “who gave it to my master, (15) Zur rDo rje 'chang the Great, Chos dbyings rang grol” (1604–1669).⁸⁴ The sixteenth master is therefore Padma 'phrin las (1641–1717, rDo rje brag rig 'dzin IV).

We note that the link before Zur Chos dbyings rang grol is *gTer bdag gling pa*, although the latter is entirely of the same generation as Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las himself. Now, *gTer bdag gling pa* is the author of a very short text that may well be the source of the Zur Chos dbyings rang grol's “notes” (*zin bris*): the *Yang tig gces sgron gyi khrid rgyun* (*gSung 'bum*, vol. VI, pp. 621-626), which in turn refers to a much broader text (22 to 29 pp., depending of the editions) of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's *gter chos*: the *Thugs sgrub snying po blang ba'i phyir yang tig gces pa'i sgron me smar khrid mngon sum gtan la dbab pa'i rgyud*.⁸⁵

Neither Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's *gter ma*, nor 'Gyur med rdo rje's text (which is a sort of brief analytical table) contains the slightest hint of a link to the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*.⁸⁶

⁸³ Once again, the familiarity with the work of Klong chen pa at the time of the full flowering of the *dGongs pa zang thal* can be noted, since it is said of this figure (p. 140): *Kun mkhyen chen po'i bstan bcos gSang 'grel phyogs bcu mun sel thugs la chud cing l*, etc. (p. 140). It is also said of him: *rDzogs chen zang thal gtso bor gyur pa bka' gter gyi zab chos mang du bzhugs pa rdzogs chen gyi 'chad nyan gtso bor mdzad pas Rong po rdzogs chen par grags*. 'Brug sgra bzang po requires further research; on this figure see e.g. *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, p. 727.

⁸⁴ It is surprising here to see 'Gyur med rdo rje (*gTer bdag gling pa*) teaching his master, who is almost forty years older than him. But Padma 'phrin las is quite clear and there is no ambiguity in the identification of the persons. A study of the biographies of the three protagonists—Zur Chos dbyings rang grol, *gTer bdag gling pa* and Rig 'dzin Padma phrin las—would be much needed and would no doubt help to clarify the situation.

⁸⁵ *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 7, p. 537-559.

⁸⁶ This should be inquired further. In my present perceptions of this question, it is much more likely to connect, as Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las does, the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* to the *Thugs sgrub rDo rje drag po rtsal* than to the *dGongs pa zang thal* (which only Zur Chos dbyings rang grol attempted). The *Thugs sgrub* original text focuses on the nature of the mind and speaks of it in terms that are very much in the same style, in the same register as the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*, except for the initial focus on tantric practices—which are, incidentally, very simplified, very close to the so-called *sems 'dzin*, these tantric-type methods, but torn from the heavy ritual context of the *sādhana* and reduced to their simplest expression in order to produce directly the experiences that are their aims.—In the same style, there might well be, quite unexpectedly, narrow ties between the *dGongs pa zang thal* and another tantric cycle of the Northern Treasures: the *bKa' brgyad rang byung*

It is Zur Chos dbyings rang grol that (to the best of our knowledge) first expressly made the connection in his *Yang tig gces pa'i sgron me'i khrid kyi rtsa tshig gsung rgyun rab gsal*. This very brief text (3 p. in vol. XVIII of the *Rin chen gter mdzod*) combines, in a continuous development, the *gZer lnga*, the instructions for visualizing rDo rje drag po rtsal and the practices of the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*. Naturally, a good knowledge of the context is necessary to understand the very allusive formulas of the p. 129 of Zur Chos dbyings rang grol's text.⁸⁷ The practices briefly alluded to here are those detailed in the *Ma rig mun sel sgron me* of the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* (p. 195-199) and, a remarkable detail, it is exactly this material that Chos dbyings rang grol also extracted from *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* to make up the instructions of Khregs chod in his own *dGongs pa zang thal* manual.

This is the matrix of *Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las'* text, which will give its full development to Zur Chos dbyings rang grol's insight. Now, as has been said, the *Thugs sgrub yang tig gces sgron khrid kyi zin bris gzhung don rab gsal* of Padma 'phrin las is in turn—to put it mildly—the source of the *Chos dbyings lam bzang*.

4. Comparison of Padma 'phrin las' *gZhung don rab bsal* (1712) and Tshe dbang nor bu's *Chos dbyings lam bzang* (1755)

Padma phrin las' work, as it is now clear, presents itself as a practice manual for *Guru rDo rje drag po rtsal*, the main wrathful form of Padmasambhava in the Byang gter; however, in sum, from p. 169 onwards (so, in more than half of the text), Padma 'phrin las hardly comments on anything but rDzogs chen texts—mainly from the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*, although the *dGongs pa zang thal* is not absent. When one knows that the first 28 pages are mainly devoted to the *gZer lnga*, in other words, that there are only 9 pages devoted exclusively to the Tantric-style practice of *Guru rDo rje drag po rtsal* as such, it is clear that it would have sufficed for the one I think is Tshe dbang nor bu to cut out these nine pages in order to compose his *Chos dbyings lam bzang*. To a certain extent, that is precisely what he did. Once this compositional principle is understood, the text by “Kha'u dGa' ldan pa Chos dbyings rang grol” becomes quite transparent, though of little interest in itself—except for the decision to endow the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* with an autonomous practice manual.

rang shar. But this point cannot be developed here, as it is never stressed in the context of the *dGongs pa zang thal* practice manuals, and because it feels somehow counter-intuitive and would require quite some development.

⁸⁷ *De bas ka dag sngon 'gro rdo rje dang | | hūṃ sngon thig le dkar dmar dmigs rim bskyang | | bar bar ngo bo bltas te shar grol btang | | de rjes khrid gzhung dngos gzhi la zhugs te | | mnyam bzhag gsal stong 'dzin med ngo bo skyong |*

The paradox is as follows: we are in the posterity of Zur Chos dbyings rang grol, who boldly inaugurated a genuine articulation of the two rDzogs chen cycles among Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's revelations—the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* and the *dGongs pa zang thal*—and here we are, about a century later, with the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* being treated separately, and this under the pen of an author—Tshe dbang nor bu, if it is him indeed—who probably is the one who has made the junction between the traditions of central Tibet and those of Kaḥ thog (where he was initially trained and where, as is well known, he worked a lot at the end of his life).

A detailed comparison of the two texts—Padma 'phrin las's work and its “plagiarism” by the one we assume to be Tshe dbang nor bu—would require too much space to be carried out in the context of this article, and would basically take us away from our theme—the history of the *dGongs pa zang thal* practice manuals—by devoting to the *Yang tig gces sgron gyi zin bris* as such even more developments than I have granted it. I will limit myself to a few remarks.

The few pages of Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las' text which are closely related to the practice of *Guru rDo rje drag po rtsal* are, not surprisingly, deleted by Kha'u dGa' ldan pa; he also suppresses the introductory presentation of the lineage (this disadvantage for the historian is compensated by a presentation of his own lineage in the explanation of the *guru yoga* practice of the *gZer lnga*). In addition, he expands the chapters relating to the “four thoughts that turn the mind away from *saṃsāra*” or to the development of *bodhicitta*—unless the author of these modifications is Kun bzang rgya mtsho / dbang po, the master he claims to be following.⁸⁸ On the other hand, here is the most surprising point (and even, it must be said, the most disappointing): after the presentation of the three visualisations borrowed from⁸⁹ the *Ma rig mun sel sgron me*, Tshe dbang nor bu (?) is sloppy, as it were, at working

⁸⁸ Perhaps it is in this sense that one must understand the words attributed to the master Kun bzang dbang po in Kha'u dga' ldan pa's vision: the part that is clearly the work of the latter (the addition of the instructions taken from the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* after the *guru yoga* of the *gZer lnga*) reveals many imperfections in the composition—not to say: a rather slovenly drafting. It would be paradoxical if the same author had devoted so much care to elegantly developing the first half of his work—the least important, since it is the least original in terms of its subject matter—to cap it off with such a disappointing ending. Let us add that several parts of the “ordinary preliminary practices” have a rather *sa skya pa* flavour: it would be easy to show what the presentation of the taking of refuge owes, in particular, to Sa skya paṇḍita's *Thub pa'i dgongs gsal*. I would not be surprised if these well-structured scholastic developments, written in a concise, clear and firm style, were from a different hand (that of a monk trained in the traditions of Sa skya?) than the end.

⁸⁹ Those that Zur chen Chos dbyings rang grol had apparently been the first to extract from the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* when he included them in his *khrid yig*.

out the end of his manual—he simply sticks two very long quotations end-to-end, the second of which is definitely borrowed from the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*, while the first does not seem to be there, but has a very similar style and content.

Paradoxically, therefore, the only real practice manual for the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* preserved in the Byang gter tradition is... Padma 'phrin las' *Yang tig gces sgron zin bris*, which, between p. 170 of the edition cited and its last page (p. 218), arranges and comments almost exclusively on texts from the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*, despite occasional references to the *Thugs sgrub rDo rje drag po rtsal*. If Tshe dbang nor bu (?) had merely extracted the relevant passages from the *Yang tig gces sgron zin bris*, even without adding anything of his own, he would have had the material for a much more extensive manual, which would have been almost twice as long as the *Chos dbyings lam bzang*.

5. Reflections on the compositional imperfections of *Chos dbyings lam bzang*

Why didn't the author of the *Chos dbyings lam bzang* complete what seems to have been his project?

The works of Tshe dbang nor bu, at least in the state in which they have come down to us, contain a number of unfinished texts;⁹⁰ without imputing to their author a rough-hewn temperament, one can at least suppose that the great man of action that he was did not always get the leisure to carry out his literary projects.

We remember also that the date we have concluded to be the that of the end of composition is 1755—precisely, that of Tshe dbang nor bu's death. He may have run out of time to finish his enterprise.

The honest textual tinkering admitted by "Kha'u dga' ldan pa Chos dbyings rang grol" in his *Chos dbyings lam bzang*—collage of a section on rDzogs chen to a pre-existing commentary on the preliminary practices—is clearly visible in his text: it is betrayed by an inconsistency between the announced plan and the one actually incorporated in the text. The point at which this incoherence materialises is most likely the point at which the author has taken over a previously existing text to complete it. Let us recall that, in the vision (?) which led him to compose the *Chos dbyings lam bzang*,⁹¹ the author is told that there is already a manual of practice going as far as the *guru yoga*, and that he must

⁹⁰ This is notably the case of what is presented as his *dGongs pa zang thal* manual, the 'Chad thabs 'od kyi' khor lo, which I will study at the end of this chapter.

⁹¹ Op. cit. p. 372: *Kun dga' bzang po dang mjal te Ka dag khrid yig bla ma'i rnal 'byor yan legs par gnang ste | 'di man khyod kyis khrigs chags su grigs shig ces bgos bzhin du bka' stsal pa yid la brtan du bzung ste...* (already quoted n. 67 above).

complete it in order to integrate the whole practice of *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*.

Precisely, here is the plan announced at the beginning (p. 335 of *Chos dbyings lam bzang*):

1. *sNgon 'gro*
 - 1.1. *Thun mong gi sngon 'gro*⁹²
 - 1.2. *Thun mong ma yin pa'i sngon 'gro*
2. *dNgos gzhi*
3. *rjes*

One would therefore expect, quite naturally, at the end of the exposition of the *gZer lnga* (that is, precisely: at the end of the *guru yoga*), to encounter a “second,” announcing the *thun mong ma yin pa'i sngon 'gro* (which, here, consists of the following three practices, borrowed, *via* Padma 'phrin las and Zur Chos dbyings rang grol, from the *Ma rig mun sel sgron me* of the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*). However, the author continues with a “sixth” (p. 361), a “seventh” (*id.*), an “eighth” (p. 362), before he considers his inconsequence (in the last line of p. 363) and proceeds to patch up the text, without any further concern for consistency with his plan announcement: *'Di yan gyi thun mong ma yin pa'i sngon 'gro lus ngag yid gsum lam du 'dzud pa zhes bya ba sa bcad gnyis pa'o*.

This compositional awkwardness therefore comes into play exactly at the seam that Tshe dbang nor bu (?) stitched in his text to conjoin the two parts of Padma 'phrin las' writing, once the development relating to *Guru rDo rje drag po rtsal* had been removed.

However, it is difficult to explain his error, since Padma 'phrin las, his model, does not go astray, and one can read under his pen (p. 163): *gnyis pa thun mong ma yin pa'i sngon 'gro sems 'dzin la gsum te |*, with the subdivision into body, speech and mind that the author of the *Chos dbyings lam bzang* makes up for quite awkwardly afterwards. But when we look more closely, we see that Padma 'phrin las does something quite different. He devotes the following pages first to the preliminary practice of the body, which itself comprises three parts, body, speech and mind: visualisation of *Guru rDo rje drag po rtsal*'s body (pp. 163-167), then what concerns his “speech” (pp. 167-168) before arriving at the mind (pp. 168 ff.).

Padma 'phrin las then leads us to a second, speech-related part (this is where one should not get lost in the highly mastered but complex plan of this work), presenting the “*maṇḍala of Speech*”—a whole series of visualisations of the syllable *hūṃ* which recall what is usually found

⁹² In this context, this includes the *gZer lnga*, and not merely the “four thoughts that turn the mind away from the *saṃsāra*.”

in the specific *sNying thig* preliminaries under the heading of “purification of the speech” in the “purification of the triple portal”.⁹³ The practices presented by Tshe dbang nor bu (?) following the *gZer lnga* begin, in Padma ‘phrin las’ text, p. 170, and are placed under the title: *gsum pa thugs phyag mtshan la sems ’dzin pa*. The latter marks the transition from the texts of *Thugs sgrub* to those of *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* (p. 172). The author takes the trouble to quote the title of the text from which he borrows the following quotation: *rDzogs chen ka dag gi khrid yig gter gzhung Ma rig mun sel sgron me’am | snying po bcud bsdu kyj gnad khrid las |*, etc.

The strangeness noted in the structuring of the Tshe dbang nor bu (?)’s text continues, moreover, for the chapters of what should be the main part (*dnegos gzhi*) and the conclusion (*rjes*), since until the end of *Chos dbyings lam bzang* there is only a “ninth” (pp. 363-364), a “tenth” (pp. 364-365) and an “eleventh” (pp. 365-373 [end]). There are further small structural defects of the same kind—annoying as they may be for the reader, they are full of interest, as clues, for the philologist.

Let us now look at the “main part” of the *Chos dbyings lam bzang*. Perhaps it is not useless to recall that the order of practices which is most familiar to us, because it dominates entirely in the present era, was not engraved in marble from the very beginning. What in retrospect may appear to us as some degree of disorder in the organisation of practices certainly still reigned, even at the—quite late—time we are dealing with. For example, in a text as late as the *rDzogs chen dgongs pa kun ’dus* manual composed by ‘Gyur med rdo rje (gTer bdag gling pa), some of the specific preliminary practices of *rDzogs chen* are indeed implemented before *Khregs chod*—but others are done between the *Khregs chod* and the *Thod rgal*.⁹⁴

However, as far as the *dGongs pa zang thal* is concerned, if we stick to the texts themselves, there is little ambiguity (except for the small details that gave *sPrul sku* Tshul lo so much trouble in writing his manual). Indeed, in what this author calls the *khrid gzhung*, the “source manual” or “main manual”—the *Chos nyid mngon sum gyi khrid yig*—the sequence is more or less clear (pp. 360-368): if, in terms of ordinary and non-ordinary preliminaries, the text (p. 360) says nothing about the *gZer lnga* and confines itself to a reminder of impermanence, then

⁹³ See, for example, for the proper form of these practices in the context of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, Arguillère (2016), pp. 212-219.

⁹⁴ Actually, the complete set of the “specific preliminary practices” (*ru shan*, etc.) that are nowadays implemented between the “uncommon preliminary practices” (refuge to *guru-yoga*) and the *Khregs chod* appears in the *dGongs pa zang thal* exclusively in contexts where it is immediately followed by the instructions for *Thod rgal*.

we move on to the rDzogs chen specific preliminaries (p. 360-367), followed by a main part (*dnegos gzhi*, from p. 367 onwards), comprising two sections: *chos nyid stong pa'i ngang nas chos dbyings 'gyur ba med pa'i don gyi lta ba* (p. 368-379), corresponding to Khregs chod (although the term does *not* appear at this point in the text⁹⁵), and then *rang rig pa rang shar gyi dgongs pa ye shes mngon sum du gtan la dbab pa*, corresponding to Thod rgal (whose usual name also does not appear, though—p. 379-389).

Among the various authors studied so far, only Zur *chen* Chos dbyings rang grol is exactly true to this order, as *sPrul sku* Tshul lo will be. But in Zur *chen* Chos dbyings rang grol's practice manual, within this structure prescribed by the *khrid gzhung*, there was a beginning of an integration of the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* practices, leading him to organise his material in this way:

1. *Ka dag rang byung rang shar gyis gnas lugs kyi don gtan* [307] | *la 'bebs pa*—p. 307
 - 1.1. *sNgon 'gro*
 - 1.1.1. *Thun mong* = *sNgon 'gro gzer lnga*
 - 1.1.1.1. *sKyabs 'gro*
 - 1.1.1.2. *Sems bskyed pa*—p. 309
 - 1.1.1.3. *Maṇḍala*
 - 1.1.1.4. *rDo rje sems dpa'i bsgom bzlas*
 - 1.1.1.5. *Bla ma'i rnal 'byor* [including the meditation on impermanence and on the sufferings of the *samsāra*]
 - 1.1.2. *Thun mong ma yin pa*—p. 312
 - 1.1.2.1. *rDo rje dkar po la brten nas sems 'dzin pa*—p. 313
 - 1.1.2.2. *rDo rje mthing kha hūṃ yig dang bcas pas la sems 'dzin pa*
 - 1.1.2.3. *Thig le dkar dmar la brten nas sems 'dzin pa*
 - 1.2. *dNegos gzhi byung gnas 'gro gsum gyi sems kyi gzhi rtsa gcod*—p. 314
 - 1.3. *rjes*—p. 316
2. *lHun grub dgongs pa zang thal gyis thod rgal gyi rang rtsal rjen par ston pa*, etc.

⁹⁵ The absence of the “classical” terms of Khregs chod and Thod rgal in this text is strangely reminiscent of the Bon pos' *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud*, which seems to be comparatively ancient. In fact, it could also be said that this section which *sPrul sku* Tshul lo treats as one of the two Khregs chod systems in the *dGongs pa zang thal* rather corresponds to a “searching of the mind” that, in many texts, comes *before* the Khregs chod and is regarded as a mere preliminary introduction to it. Now, while editing the English version of *sPrul sku* Tshul lo's manual, I think that it is the quasi-absence of the Khregs chod that is more characteristic of the *dGongs pa zang thal* than any special way to present it.

Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu (?), largely inspired by Padma 'phrin las, goes a little further, although without much development: the “main part” (of the Khregs chod) was, in Zur Chos dbyings rang grol, the examination of the origin, subsistence and destination (*byung gnas 'gro gsum*) of the mind.⁹⁶ Now, in the *Chos dbyings lam bzang* (but already in Padma 'phrin las) we see the vague suggestion of a meditation on the sky in the instruction called *dpe dang dpe'i don zab mos rlung nam mkha'i dbyings su bstim pa la sems 'dzin pa* (p. 364),⁹⁷ the ninth point of his (rather shaky) plan.

This meditation precedes the passage to the “search for the mind” (*sems tshol ba*, pp. 364-365), which consists in the examination of its origin, abiding (or “abode”) and destination.

After that, in his eleventh part (pp. 365-372), the author merely copies long passages from two *gter ma* texts. I have not yet identified the

⁹⁶ This is roughly in line with the *Chos nyid mngon sum gyi khrid yig*.

⁹⁷ I wonder if this sequence (putting end to end *meditation on the sky*—if that is what it is all about, the text is not absolutely clear—and *searching for the origin, sustenance and destination of the mind*) might not be the matrix of the strange organisation of the Khregs chod section in *sPrul sku Tshul lo's* manual. I have insisted elsewhere (Arguillère 2016: pp. 230-234) on the rather astonishing character of this section of the *Khrid yig skal bzang re skong*, which presents *two* systems of Khregs chod put side by side—the first based on the “stirring of the three spaces” (*nam mkha' gsum sprugs*) and the second including, in particular, the search for the provenance, subsistence and destination of the mind. I have indicated (2016: p. 231) the internal reasons that may have pushed *sPrul sku Tshul lo* in this direction—reasons that are both exegetical (an obscure passage from *Chos nyid mngon sum gyi khrid yig*) and practical (linked to the rather elusive nature of the instructions about Khregs chod in this very text). But, for an author as rigorous and conservative as *sPrul sku Tshul lo*, a point of support of this kind among his predecessors may have contributed to his taking the step of this somewhat surprising innovation in view of the formal constraints he sets himself in the composition of his *dGongs pa zang thal* manual. — One could even go further and ask oneself, in view of what is found in the tradition of Kaḥ thog where the Khregs chod is frankly replaced by the *zhi gnas / lhag mthong* of the bKa' brgyud pa's Mahāmudrā, whether the sequence *nam mkha' gsum sprugs* / a more analytical search for the nature of the mind would not be an extension of it, but governed by the concern to strictly respect the framework of the *dGongs pa zang thal, stricto sensu*, (the only “first four volumes”, so without the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*). This is not pure speculation on my part: the motivation for this order—meditation on space and then the search for the origin, sustenance and destination of the mind—is, in fact, well explained by Padma 'phrin las (p. 178) by analogy with the practices of *zhi gnas* and *lhag mthong*: *De ltar thun mong dang thun mong ma yin pa'i sngon 'gro song rjes | dngos gzhi'i khrid rim pa sems chos nyid kyi dkyil 'khor ni | rTsa ba las | de rjes khrid gzhung dngos gzhi zhugs te | mnyam bzhaḡ gsal stong 'dzin med ngo bo skyong | zhes gsungs pa'i don spyir zhi gnas sngon du btang ba'i mthar sems 'tshol gyi (gyis?) gdar sha bcad de sgom thog nas lta ba 'tshol ba dang | thog mar sems 'tshol dang de nas zhi gnas su phab te | lta thog nas sgom pa 'tshol ba ste lugs gnyis las | 'dir snga ma ltar yin pas | dang po sgom thog nas lta ba 'tshol ba ni | ...* (Padma 'phrin las' treatise is, in all of its details, so rich, so interesting, so well-written, that one would like to quote it—and translate it—in full !)

first quotation (pp. 365-367),⁹⁸ but pp. 367-372 are borrowed from several chapters of the *Gegs sel nor bu rin po che'i mdzod* (p. 279, l. 6 - p. 286, l. 2 of the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*).

The *bKa' yang gsang bla na med pa rdzogs chen kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal gyi khrid kyi 'chad thabs 'od kyi 'khor lo by Tshe dbang nor bu (1698–1755)*

The attribution to Tshe dbang nor bu does not present the same difficulties for this short text: while it is not in the 4-volume *gsung 'bum* edited by the Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang (Darjeeling, 1973), it is found in the 6-volume edition⁹⁹ and finally in the 3-volume edition.¹⁰¹

This is unfortunately a mere fragment:¹⁰² the text, far from filling the whole programme indicated by its title, abruptly stops at the end of the “extraordinary preliminary practices”—so much so that it does not even deal with rDzogs chen at all.

A first important remark, however: this text is not excessively similar to the previous one (one might have feared, in fact, that this fragment on the preliminary practices was in fact the one that “Kha'u dga ldan pa Chos dbyings rang grol” had inherited from its master Kun bzang dbang po—but this is not the case, it is a significantly different text).

Indeed, in accordance with the *Chos nyid mngon sum gyi khrid yig* (*sPrul sku Tshul lo's “khrid gzhung”*), it begins with five points: examination of the qualities of the disciple, places, times, companions and equipment. However, these points are simply mentioned and not developed. It continues with a sixth point: the history of the transmission. Here again, the text is basically limited to a statement of principles, but, very interestingly, Tshe dbang nor bu names three masters from

⁹⁸ Apparently, Tshe dbang nor bu borrowed from Padma 'phrin las (who intertwined texts from the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*) and passages from *Yang tig gces pa'i sgron me smar khrid mngon sum gtan la dbab pa'i rgyud*, one of rGod ldem's *gter mas* whose style is extremely similar to that of *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*. Not having found the passage quoted by Tshe dbang nor bu in the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*, I believe—this would be the ultimate sign of a certain lack of care in the composition of his manual—that he unknowingly took it from the *Thugs sgrub rDo rje drag po rtsal* by borrowing a passage from Padma 'phrin las without taking the trouble to verify its source. This research would now be made much easier than at the time when the French version of this paper was written, thanks to the complete edition of the *Thugs sgrub rdo rje drag po rtsal* as vol. 6-8 of the *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*.

⁹⁹ Damchoe Sangpo, Dalhousie, 1976-1977: vol. IV, 22 pages of a manuscript in *dbu med*, numbered 517-538, the first being the title page and the last being blank.

¹⁰¹ Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, Beijing, 2006: vol. II, pp. 204-211. This is the edition I used.

¹⁰² This might be the reason why it was not included in the *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*.

whom he received the *dGongs pa zang thal*: *sPrul pa'i sku* Kun dga' bstan 'dzin, Nam mkha' chos rje of La stod dPal mo chos lding and *Yongs 'dzin dam pa* Ratnabhadrā of mNga' ris gung thang, at the cave called Ra la za 'od phug.¹⁰³

He then restores the lineages through which this teaching came down to him. The first (the one that leads to Ratnabhadrā) is the one I have reconstructed below in the tree recapitulating the lineages that led to the various known practice manuals of the *dGongs pa zang thal*. Here is another one: it is identical to the first one until *Sā kya rgyal mtshan*, then it goes to *Yol me* [Yol mo] *bsTan 'dzin nor bu* (1589–1644, BDRC P1690),¹⁰⁴ to *gCung Phyag rdor*, then to *sPrul sku* Kun dga' bstan 'dzin, from whom *Tshe dbang nor bu* received it.

The third one follows the first until *Kun dga' rgyal mtshan*, after who it passes to *sNgags 'chang gSang sngags rdo rje*, then to *rJe Sangs rgyas seng ge*, to *Blo gros rab gsal*, to *Thugs sras Ras chung rdo rje*, to *sNgags 'chang Nam mkha' gzi brjid*, to *Nam mkha' kun bzang*, to *Nam mkha' rdo rje*, then to *rDo rje 'dzin pa* Nam mkha' chos rje who passed it on to *Tshe dbang nor bu*.

He adds a fourth one, which we are more interested in, because we already know it: from *Rig 'dzin rGod ldem* to *bSod nams mchog bzang*, then to *Don yod rgyal mtshan*, *Thang stong rgyal po*, *Zab lung gter ston Kun dga' nyi ma*, *Ratnaketu*, *Ratnavajra*, *Bo dhe sing ha*, *bKra shis rgya mtsho*, *bsTan pa seng ge*, *Chos nyid rgya mtsho*, *Shes rab rgya mtsho*, *Klong gsal snying po*, *Khyab bdag 'khor lo'i mgon po* *Padma bde chen gling pa*, then *Tshe dbang nor bu*.

This is the lineage of *Kaḥ thog*, easy to recognise through the sanskritisation of the names: “*Ratnaketu*” is the *A rdo dKon mchod rgyal mtshan* who spread the *dGons pa zang thal* in *Kaḥ thog*; “*Ratnavajra*” is none other than *Rong po dKon mchog rdo rje*; *Tshe dbang nor bu* (or the copyist) forgets *Sā kya rgyal mtshan* and passes directly to a “*Bo dhe sing ha*” who is none other than *Byang chub seng ge*; after which we arrive to *bKra shis rgya mtsho* in whom we recognise the author of the second *khrid yig* studied above. In the following, we see a lineage starting from *bKra shis rgya mtsho*, whose first links we already knew from *Guru bKra shis*, but that *Tshe dbang nor bu* continues to *Klong gsal snying po* (P1686, 1625–1692) by another route than that indicated by *Guru bKra shis* and whose intermediate link is *Padma bde chen gling pa* (TBRC: P669; 1627 or 1663(!)–1713),¹⁰⁵ who is none other than *Padma mati*—most probably the author of the bulky practice manual for the *Yang ti nag po* preserved in the *Kaḥ thog khrid chen bcu gsum*, the

¹⁰³ This Ratnabhadrā is surely *Kun bzang rin chen* (P6990).

¹⁰⁴ See Benjamin Bogin 2013 and 2014.

¹⁰⁵ See Gyurme Dorje 2007: <https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Pema-Dechen-Lingpa/9297>.

Zab lam don gsal me long (it occupies the whole vol. VIII, p. 1-595¹⁰⁶).

Another interesting feature of this fragment is that it clearly determines the function of the five consecrations (*dbang*) that characterize the *dGongs pa zang thal*, in contrast to the four consecration system that prevail everywhere in Klong chen pa's writings: the consecration of the vase is preparatory to the development phase (here, more specifically: the *Zhi khro* practices); the secret consecration is preparatory to *gtum mo*; the consecration of *shes rab ye shes* is preparatory to the path of the "messenger" (both correspond to the practices developed in the *Lung phag mo zab rgya*); finally, what is most original: the consecration of the word is preparatory to *Khregs chod*, while the fifth, the *rig pa'i rtsal dbang*, is preparatory to *Thod rgal*.¹⁰⁷ This is an explanation that we do not find in Klong chen pa, and for good reason—as in his system there is no such fifth consecration that would really be separated from the fourth.

In the following, Tshe dbang nor bu clearly combines the *Chos nyid mngon sum gyi khrid yig* (the text *sPrul sku* Tshul lo calls *khrid gzhung*) and the *gZer lnga*. Tshe dbang nor bu (or his editor) copies the *gZer lnga* text in its entirety up to the "nail" of impermanence, at which point he takes the floor again to briefly mention the *blo ldog rnam bzhi* and the importance of meditating on them assiduously. He then goes back to copying the *gZer lnga*, with just a few notes about the practice of *guru-yoga*, most of which refers to the *Bi ma'i snyan rgyud khrid yig gzer bu gsum pa*, a text that, in fact, presents a *guru-yoga* specific to the *dGongs pa zang thal*. This brings us back to the text of the *gZer lnga*, copied up to the end of the *guru-yoga*, and there the text ends abruptly, in fishtail, if one dares to say so, with a *dge'o*, probably added by the editors of this fragment.

There are no clues in the text as to whether it is an unfinished work or a preserved fragment of a work not found so far. The two available editions stop at exactly the same point; but it is very likely that the one I used (in *dbu can*) comes directly from the other (manuscript in *dbu med*). The non-existence or disappearance of this sequel, which would have made this text a true *khrid yig* of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, is a great pity—because the part we have gives the feeling of a real familiarity

¹⁰⁶ The *rnam thar* of mGon po dbang rgyal by *sPrul sku* Tshul lo tells us (p. 23) that mGon po dbang rgyal received the *Yang ti nag po* from his father, *gTer chen* Nus ldan rdo rje of 'Khor gdong; the latter had received it in 1813 from *Bla ma* sKal bzang yon tan (cf. *Khor gdong gter chen 'gro phan gling pa gro log rtsal gyi rnam thar* by Ye shes don rtogs, p. 10). This surely implies that *sPrul sku* Tshul lo, besides his deep knowledge of Klong chen pa's tradition, was also not less versed in the *Black Quintessence* than his grandfather and his uncle were.

¹⁰⁷ *Op. cit.* p. 190: *bskyed rim gyi sngon 'gro bum dbang dang | gtum mo'i sngon 'gro gsang dbang | pho nya'i sngon 'gro sher dbang | Khregs chod kyi sngon 'gro tshig dbang | thod rgal gyi sngon 'gro rtsal dbang sogs...*

with the text and of the concern to give a manual that would conform to its letter, without the addition of foreign elements. That is all that can be said about it.

The *Kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal gyi dgongs don phyogs gcig tu bkod pa khrid yig skal bzang re skongs rig 'dzin dgongs rgyan by sPrul sku Tshul lo* (1884–1957)

Coming to the last link of the *catena aurea* of the *dGongs pa zang thal* manuals and, with it, arriving also at the end of this article, I have to conclude that the harvest was a little meagre. The first two *khrid yigs* (*Śā kya rgyal mtshan*, *bKra shis rgya mtsho*) are not really about the *dGongs pa zang thal* and the former is not even precisely a *khrid yig*. The *Chos dbyings lam bzang*, apart from the fact that it only deals with the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*, is a rather badly made tinkering with a text by Padma 'phrin las, which is rather related to the *Thugs sgrub rDo rje drag po rtsal* (but the latter is nonetheless one of the richest encounters I have made in the course of this research). As for Tshe dbang nor bu's manual, it is unfortunately only a fragment of no consequence for our purpose, though not devoid of interest.

In short, in the vast span of time that separates the practice manuals included in the *gter chos* (mid-14th century) from the one that *sPrul sku Tshul lo* composed in the first half of the 20th century, only Zur Chos dbyings rang grol's *Thar gling chos sku'i zhing khams su bgrod pa'i nye lam* stands out like an island in the middle of the (quite empty) ocean (if I dare divert, to make it say what it says without meaning to say it, the metaphor that is in its title).

Moreover, while *sPrul sku Tshul lo* was probably also heir to the tradition of Kaḥ thog, which his master mGon po dbang rgyal had received, as we have seen, still, the main lineage he claims is indeed that of central Tibet. The arrival of the Byang gter at 'Khor gdong monastery and its branches is much later than at Kaḥ thog. In fact, a short history of 'Khor gdong can be found in the life of mGon po dbang rgyal by *sPrul sku Tsul lo*, which mentions many generations of masters from the foundation by *Grub chen Sangs rgyas rdo rje* to the time of *Grub dbang Shes rab me 'bar* (1742–1814),¹⁰⁸ who first established the link with the Byang gter tradition: he received the initiations of the *dGongs pa zang thal* from the 5th *rDo rje brag rig 'dzin chen po*, *bsKal bzang Padma dbang phyug* (rGod ldem v, *aka Khams gsum zil gnor* or *rDo rje thogs med rtsal*—TBRC: P89; 1720–1771 according to the *Treasury of*

¹⁰⁸ These are the dates restored by the author of the *Byang gter chos 'byung*, p. 714. On *Khams sprul Shes rab me 'bar*, see my (2018) presentation on *The Treasury of Lives* (<https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Khamtrul-Sherab-Me-bar/13688>).

Lives; 1719–1770 according to the *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*) in *Mi nyag ra ba lha sgang*.¹⁰⁹

In his *rnam thar* of mGon po dbang rgyal, *sPrul sku* Tshul lo makes 'Khor gdong *gTer chen* Nus ldan rdo rje, alias 'Gro phan gling pa gro lod rtsal (1802–1864, his maternal grandfather and the master of his uncle and master, mGon po dbang rgyal, 1845–1915), the direct disciple of this Shes rab me 'bar; we find the same thing in the *rnam thar* of the *gTer chen* composed by Ye shes don rtogs and, which is even more decisive, in his own *gSang ba'i rnam thar* (autobiographical).

However, in another of his writings, the *Byang gter bka' dbang spyi sbyor rung gi lo rgyus gsal ba'i me long* (f° 26b sq. of the xylographic edition in 8 vol.), here is how *sPrul sku* Tshul lo presents the lineage for the use of those who would have to accomplish the rituals of empowerment (*dbang*) of the *Byang gter*, including, of course, those of the *dGongs pa zang thal*: Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, rNam rgyal mgon po, *thugs sras rdo rje rnam gnyis*, *mtshan ldan bla ma rnam gnyis*, Sangs rgyas dpal bzang, Chos rgyal bsod nams, Śā kya bzang po, *sngags 'chang yab sras rnam gnyis*, Rig 'dzin sTobs ldan dpa' bo, Padma dbang rgyal, Kun bzang rgya mtsho, Padma 'phrin las, bsTan pa'i rgyal mtshan, Padma dbang phyug, Padma bshes gnyen, Khams gsum zil gnon, bsTan 'dzin chos rgyal, mDo sngags bstan 'dzin, Nus ldan 'gro phan gling pa, *gSang 'dzin dPa' bo* dgyes rab rtsal (another name of mGon po dbang rgyal), *drin chen bla ma* (in this case: himself).

Perhaps "bsTan 'dzin chos rgyal" is another name for *Grub dbang* Shes rab me 'bar. As for mDo sngags bstan 'dzin, one of this name is well known in this region and not without links to the masters of 'Khor gdong—the Dar thang *sprul sku*, disciple of Mi pham and mKhyen brtse'i dbang po (BCRT: B6169). But, as he was born in 1830 and died in 1892, he is rather of the generation of the disciples of *gTer chen* Nus ldan rdo rje who was born in 1802¹¹⁰ and who died in 1864 (*shing byi*), according to his *rnam thar*, or in 1867 according to the *Life of mGon po*

¹⁰⁹ He wrote a long autobiography, *IHa rigs kyi btsun pa bsKal bzang padma'i ming can rang nyid kyi rtogs par brjod pa* (TBRC: W30122) whose study might make it possible to date precisely this inaugural moment of the transmission of the *Byang gter* to 'Khor gdong—but, so far, I have not found any mention of this episode in it. As for *gTer chen* Nus ldan rdo rje and his disciple mGon po dbang rgyal, their biographies show that each of them received the *dGongs pa zang thal* on numerous occasions, from various masters; they do not depend closely on a single tradition. On the other hand, the absolute preference of the 'Khor gdong masters for the *dGongs pa zang thal* among various similar comprehensive systems of rDzogs chen is beyond doubt—precisely because of their obvious desire to learn from all possible specialists in this system.

¹¹⁰ There is a difficulty here, because the same *rnam thar* that gives 1802 as his birth year and has him die in 1864 "in his seventy-third year," which would rather put us back to 1792 for the year of his birth.

dbang rgyal (p. 41).

The Byang gter tradition still needed consolidation in 'Khor gdong in the 19th century, so that that, according to the same source (p. 26 f.), Nus ldan rdo rje sent mGon po dbang rgyal to rDo rje brag around 1863 (*chu phag lo*) to carefully check the conformity of the liturgical practices of 'Khor gdong with those of the Byang gter mother monastery. If really he passed away in 1864, this shows that this concern was crucial to him, so as to say, even at the doors of death.

In any case, *sPrul sku* Tsul lo depends mainly on the traditions of central Tibet for everything related to the *dGongs pa zang thal*. Certainly, his master mGon po dbang rgyal, as has been said, received in 1857 (*me sbrul*), from a certain *rJe dbon* Byang chub rdo rje, the transmission of what is called (probably by mistake) "the manual of the key points of the *dGongs pa zang thal* composed by A rdo dKon chog rgyal mtshan,"¹¹¹ and it is quite possible that he transmitted it to *sPrul sku* Tshul lo; but the latter has no claim to this tradition from Kaḥ thog and there is no trace of its specific features in his own manual.

All in all, it must be admitted: all this meticulous exploration of the history of the *dGongs pa zang thal* manuals has hardly shed any additional light on the most curious aspects of *sPrul sku* Tshul lo's *khrid yig skal bzang re skongs rig 'dzin dgongs rgyan*.

One of the enigmas I came up against in my long study of this text was that of the identification of a certain *Las 'bras mun sel sgron me*, which is the subject of four very long quotations (Arguillère 2016: pp. 107, 108, 109, 110). It is finally accessible now: it is a very beautiful Byang gter text, included in the Avalokiteśvara cycle (*'Gro ba kun grol*), the *Las rgyu 'bras kyi dbye ba mun sel sgron me* (*Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. IV, pp. 237-278). It seems it was an initiative of *sPrul sku* Tshul lo to insert these little-known (?) passages from the revelations of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem in the chapter on the the infallibility of *karma* of the section on ordinary preliminary practices; there is no precedent for this, at least in the preserved practice manuals for the *dGongs pa zang thal* or the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*.

For the rest, I have shown in great detail in the notes of *Le Manuel de la transpiration immédiate* how the author, in addition to combining all the *khrid yigs* included in the *gter chos*, used very abundantly (without ever naming it) Klong chen rab 'byams' *Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin*—so much so that it is no exaggeration to say that he had it constantly in front of him while composing all the parts of his *khrid yig*, at least from the rDzogs chen specific preliminaries until the end. On this point too, we find nothing equivalent—to this degree of systematicity—in any of

¹¹¹ *Life of mGon po dbang rgyal*, p. 21: *Ka dag gter gzhung dang | dGongs zang gi gnad khrid A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan gyis mdzad pa ...*

his predecessors. The only thing that can be said is that the quotations from the *Klong gsal* (and thus the implicit connection with the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*) appear from the oldest of the *khrid yigs* studied, as the above review of quotations from Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan suffices to show (13 quotations).

In relation to the beautiful manual composed by Zur Chos dbyings rang grol, that of *sPrul sku Tshul lo* is characterised by his (unexplained) refusal to integrate any materials from the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*. Overall, the work of *sPrul sku Tshul lo* could be characterised as *purist*: as far as possible, he endeavours to produce as many passages from the *dGongs pa zang thal* as possible and to explain them either by paraphrasing them as little as possible¹¹² or by glossing them with other texts from the same corpus.

An examination of the *index nominum* of *Le Manuel de la transpuration immédiate* (Arguillère 2016: pp. 463-475) quickly verifies that *sPrul sku Tshul lo* does not cite *any* Tibetan author as¹¹³ an author (he mentions only a few in passing,¹¹⁴ just as examples of great men who were not spared by impermanence). In this, he emulates Klong chen rab 'byams twice: once by copying him abundantly, and a second time by omitting his name along with that of all the other Tibetans—which is a compositional habit of the master of Gangs ri thod dkar, that no doubt has the sense of showing that one depends only on the best and most reliable sources—on what the Tibetans would call *gzhung*, fundamental texts with canonical or para-canonical status. As Klong chen pa, *sPrul sku Tshul lo* directly¹¹⁵ quotes, in addition to Rig 'dzin rGod

¹¹² To such an extent that one is surprised in places by the heaviness of his style or the obscurity of his purpose (this is the case in particular in what I have called the “second system of Khregs chod”—Arguillère 2016: pp. 232-234 for general reflections, and p. 265-285 for the annotated translation), whereas *sPrul sku Tshul lo* is, otherwise, if maybe not the most elegant and fluid prose writer, at least an extremely clear, firm and penetrating mind, expressing his thoughts in a very concise and precise style. When one realises that his mode of composition, in the *khrid yig*, is resolutely that of a *patchwork* of texts with a minimum of added paraphrase, one is less surprised by the rather stringy character of certain paragraphs. I also think that his purpose in quoting is not always to corroborate or clarify the point he is making—but also to *elucidate the quoted texts themselves* by putting them in a context that explains their meaning. The reader who does not see this aspect of the matter may feel in places that his *khrid yig* is heavily redundant and gets bogged down in points that it has already explained sufficiently.

¹¹³ In fact, there are a good number of Tibetan authors in my index—but these are almost all merely those I quote in the notes and notices.

¹¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 100.

¹¹⁵ To be even more precise, there are *no* genuine *direct and explicit* quotations of *anything* besides the *Byang gter* in general and mostly the *dGongs pa zang thal* only: all the quotations of *tantras*, etc., are borrowed from either the *dGongs pa zang thal* or (without saying) of Klong chen pa's *Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin*, and there is no evidence at all (and even many hints of the contrary) that the author may have

Idem's *gter chos*, only texts enjoying such status, at least among the *rNying ma pas* (whose tantric canon is, as is well known, broader than that of the other branches of Tibetan Buddhism).

Apart from the concern to elucidate the *dGongs pa zang thal* as much as possible by itself, or thanks to the *Seventeen Tantras* and the *Klong gsal*, we can suppose that it is the influence of Klong chen pa's *khrid yigs*, and notably of the *Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin*, that led *sPrul sku Tshul lo* to evacuate the material borrowed by Zur Chos dbyings rang grol from the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*. Indeed, these three additional *sems 'dzin* have hardly any counterpart in comparable texts by Klong chen pa (and, to be fair, they are not mentioned either in the *dGongs pa zang thal*). Nevertheless, this implies a strong decision, which is the opposite of the line of interpretation favoured, for example, by K. Turpeinen: *sPrul sku Tshul lo* chose to regard the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* as completely alien to the *dGongs pa zang thal*,—as another system that should not be combined with it.¹¹⁶ So far, we do not know whether there were debates within the Northern Treasures tradition on this question; but in the context of the discoveries of *Zang zang lha brag*, while the *dGongs pa zang thal* was found, it is said, in the central "treasury" (*mdzod*), the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* belonged to the eastern, "conch-white treasury". They are basically completely independent cycles and it is the editors that have made the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* a "fifth volume of the *dGongs pa zang thal*"—surely with no other idea than that of gathering the *rDzogs chen* sections of the Northern Treasures.

To sum up, in order to achieve an authentically philological understanding of *sPrul sku Tshul lo's* work, it is the path (an ahistorical one, after all) that I had favoured in the footnotes of the *Manuel de la transposition immédiate* that proves to be the most fruitful: to look at the work of *sPrul sku Tshul lo* as a skilful and scholarly combination of extracts from texts, almost all of which (as far as *rDzogs chen* is concerned) belong either to the *dGongs pa zang thal* itself, or to what is considered to be the basis of uninterrupted oral tradition (*bka' ma*) common to all the teachings of this level (the *Seventeen Tantras* and the *Klong gsal*). With regard to the latter, all are quoted *indirectly*: either (notably as regards the *Seventeen Tantras*) they are quoted from the

checked on any edition of the "original texts" that he quotes. I do not have the feeling that he made use of any edition of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* or the *Seventeen Tantras* while he was writing his manual.

¹¹⁶ Apart from the *gZer lnga*, of course, but it seems that, from a quite early date (that I would not be able to specify more, though), they were regarded as the common set of "extraordinary preliminary practice" for the whole *Byang gter* and not only for the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*, to which they originally belong.

texts of the *dGongs pa zang thal* themselves, from which they are borrowed; or (in the case of all that is related to the *Klong gsal*) they are given exactly as they are found in the *Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin*.

In other words: if we consider only the composition of the *khrid yig*, apart from the transmission of practice instructions, there is no significant *literary mediation* between the *gter chos* of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem and *sPrul sku* Tshul lo. Unlike many Tibetan authors, he does not rewrite a predecessor, apart from the very abundant borrowings from *Klong chen pa*, which are directly due to him (but that is another matter: this does not detract from the originality of his work as a *dGongs pa zang thal* manual, especially since these borrowings are extremely masterful and never lead him to follow *Klong chen pa* in ways that would not match with the specific *dGongs pa zang thal* system—his manual cannot in any sense be labelled a syncretic construction, as those we have found in the *Kaḥ tog* traditions: it is quite the opposite).

Even if *sPrul sku* Tshul lo does not expressly state this judgement, his attitude of returning to the very text of the *dGongs pa zang thal* at the same time as his exclusion of all foreign material (except the *Klong gsal*, if it can so called) implies the project of putting back in the saddle a system which has fallen into some degree of disuse, on its own foundations and in a form which does not subordinate it to any foreign authority—*rang gzhung*.¹¹⁸

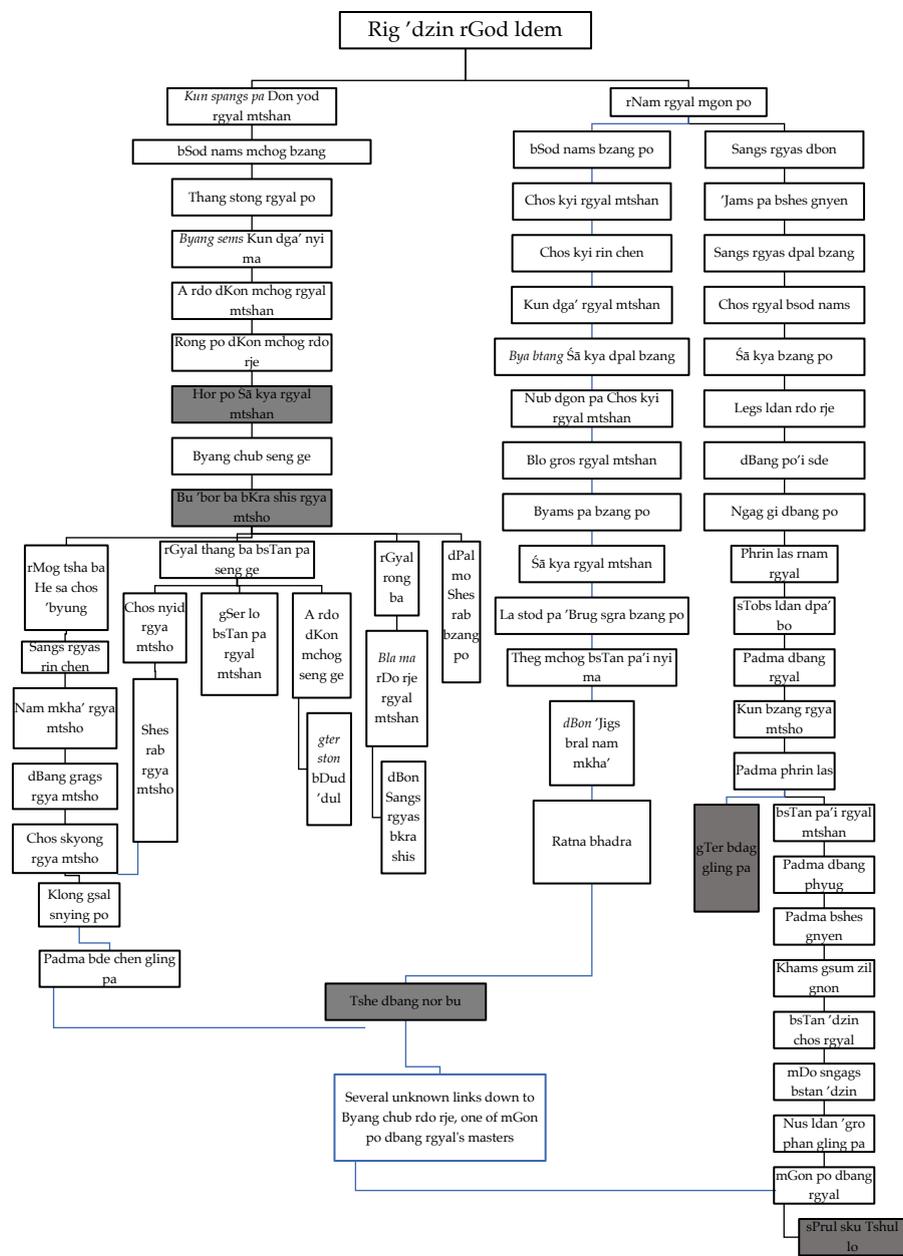
It is difficult for me, however, as regards the *Klong gsal*, to decide between two hermeneutical hypotheses: do the numerous quotations from this *tantra*—all borrowed from *Klong chen pa*—express a desire to hybridise the teaching of the *dGongs pa zang thal* with those of *mKha' 'gro snying thig* / *mKha' 'gro yang tig*? Or does the omission of this author's very name rather express the intention to use all these teachings derived from the *Klong gsal* only in a purely instrumental, ancillary way, in the service of the *dGongs pa zang thal*? It is true that *sPrul sku* Tshul lo merely follows the general tendency of his predecessors by amplifying it to the extreme—but precisely because he acts in this way *in opposition to the bias he systematically manifests elsewhere*, it is a subject of perplexity.

To conclude where we started, let us also ask ourselves, if *sPrul sku* Tshul lo wanted to emancipate himself from the model and the tutelage of the dominant currents, why he did not follow *Zur Chos dbyings rang grol* rather than *Klong chen pa*—by integrating materials borrowed from the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*. Or, as well, why he did not compose a manual integrating the instructions corresponding to

¹¹⁸ This attitude, moreover, is in keeping with the oldest spirit of *rDzogs chen* understood as a *rang gzhung*: based on its own scriptural foundations, which should not be mixed with any foreign element.

the first three consecrations (*dbang*) of the *dGongs pa zang thal*: why, for example, when there is, in his work, a very well-made *khrid yig* for the *Lung phag mo zab rgya*, did he not insert its content between the “extraordinary preliminary practices” (the *gZer lnga*) and the rDzogs chen specific preliminaries? He would thus have distanced himself from the model provided by the *khrid yigs* written by Klong chen pa for the two *sNying thigs* (and in particular from the *Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin* of which he is so fond), and from Klong chen pa's own way of glossing *aside* the elements of internal *yoga* of the tantric type found in the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*. But, if he had favoured this type of presentation, conforming to the real practice of certain followers of the *dGongs pa zang thal* (as we have seen by the example of Maratika Lama), he would have come closer, after all, for example, to Klong chen pa's great commentary on the *gSang ba snying po*, the *Phyogs bcu'i mun sel*. In this text, in fact, the four visions of Thod rgal are presented at the top of a vast tantric edifice including all sorts of internal *yoga* practices. This coincides well with K. Turpeinen's representation of the *dGongs pa zang thal* and the reasons she attributes to its success (without perhaps seeing enough that it is not extremely different, in this respect, from, for example, *mKha' 'gro snying thig*). Perhaps Tshul lo feared that, if he had done so, he might have strayed too far from the general idea of his contemporaries about what a rDzogs chen practice manual should be; perhaps he thought that, if he had gone in that direction, it would have sent to lower rDzogs chen to the level of the “subordinate vehicles,” and in particular the two classes of *tantra* which, in the *rnying ma* doxographies, are immediately below it?

Appendix: Shaft of the *dGongs pa zang thal* transmission lines resulting in preserved *khrid yigs*



Bibliography

DGONGS PA ZANG THAL

Complete editions of the *dGongs pa zang thal* :

(1) The reference of the texts in this *corpus* is given below and in the body of the article according to the following edition, which reproduces the xylograph of A 'dzom 'brug pa :

Byang gter dgongs pa zang thal, t. 1-5, Smanrtsis Shesrig Spendzod Series, vol. 64, Leh (Ladakh), 1973.

Two main other really different editions are available:

(2) The edition of *Chos rje Śā kya yar 'phel*, of which there are two separate reproductions:

- a. *rDzogs pa chen po dgongs pa zang thal gyi chos skor*. "Reproduced from a tracing of a complete set of prints from the gNas chung blocks carved through the efforts of *Chos rje Shakya yar 'phel*," Smanrtsis Shesrig Spendzod, vol. 93-96. Leh (Ladakh), 1979 [without the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*].
- b. *rDzogs pa chen po dgongs pa zang thal gyi chos skor: a cycle of rdzogs chen practice of the Rning ma pa Atiyoga*. "Reproduced from a tracing of a complete set of prints from the gNas chung blocks carved through the efforts of *Chos rje Shakya yar 'phel*," t. 1-5, Thub bstan rdo rje brag e wam lcog sgar, Shimla, 2000 [avec le *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*].

(3) *sNga gyur byang gter phyogs bsgrigs* (TBRC: W2PD17457; 2015). The *dGongs pa zang thal* can be found in vol. 1-2 and the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* in part of vol. 3. This collection is referred to here and in the body of the article as *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*.

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Khrid yig gnad kyi gzer bu gsum pa Bi ma la mi tras mdzad pa: vol. II, p. 335-352

Gegs sel nor bu rin po che'i mdzod: vol. V, p. 261-320.

sNgon 'gro rin po che gnad kyi gzer lnga: vol. V, pp. 3-31.

bCud len khyad par can bcud rtsi'i phreng ba: vol. IV, pp. 485-513.

Chos nyid mngon sum gyi khrid yig: rDzogs pa chen po yang gsang bla na med pa chos nyid mngon sum gyi khrid yig: vol. II, pp. 353-392.

sNyan brgyud rin po che'i lung byang ye shes thugs kyi lde mig: vol. I, pp. 27-36.

gNad yig gsang sgron: vol. III, pp. 141-162.

Bi ma'i 'grel tig: Bi ma la'i snyan rgyud 'grel tig chen mo, or Bi ma la'i snyan rgyud chen mo rgyal po la gdams pa yang gsang bla na na med pa rdzogs pa chen po'i 'grel pa ye shes rang gsal, vol. IV, pp. 183-401.

Ma rig mun sel sgron me bsdus lam gyi gnad khrid kyi rim pa: vol. V, p. 189-200.

Zab mo gnad kyi them bcu: vol. V, pp. 321-401.

Yang dag don gyi snyan rgyud: Yang dag don gyi snyan rgyud rin po che rtsa ba'i man ngag gnyis pa: vol. II, pp. 393-422.

Yang gsang bla na med pa Bai ro tsa na'i snyan brgyud dang po: vol. II, pp. 461-484.

Yang gsang bla na med pa Bai ro tsa na'i snyan brgyud bar ma: vol. II, pp. 485-536.

Yang gsang bla na med pa Bai ro tsa na'i snyan brgyud phyi ma, vol. II, pp. 537-577.

Yang gsang bla na med pa Bai ro tsa na'i thugs rgyud zab mo, vol. II, pp. 579-602.

Lung phag mo zab rgya: generic title of eight or nine texts found in the last third of the first volume of *dGongs pa zang thal* (vol. I, pp. 413-654). [This cycle was supplemented by the further revelations of bsTan gnyis gling pa, see at this name.]

gSang ba rmad byung: set of 5 texts in vol. IV, pp. 515-589.

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(1) in *dGongs pa zang thal*, appears at the very end of the two printings of the *gNas chung* (Sākya yar 'phel¹¹⁹) edition, n^o wo, vol. IV, pp. 419-451;

(2) in *sNga gyur byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. III, pp. 313-340.

¹¹⁹ This name has occurred a few times in the present paper as an editor of Byang gter literature. We barely knew anything more than that until Chr. Bell's book *The Dalai Lama and the Nechung Oracle* (2021: Oxford University Press) which contains quite some information about this figure and even (p. 187) a photograph of a his portrait (from a mural in the assembly hall of the Nechung Monastery in Lhasa).

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(3) *dGongs Pa Zang Thal - Boundless Vision by Tulku Tsultrim Zangpo (Tulku Tsulo) - A Byangter Manual on Dzogchen Training. An Outline Commentary on the Boundless Vision of Universal Goodness*, Wandel Verlag, Berlin, 2012 (to be distinguished from its English translation, below under the entry "Thondup, Tulku -" in "Other Western Language Sources;")

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(1) in the collection of *Kaḥ tog khrid chen bcu gsum* (see in this respect in "other Tibetan sources"): vol. V, pp. 1-89;¹²⁰

¹²⁰ This is a "hacked" copy of Tarthang Tulku's edition of the *dGongs pa zang thal* in one volume. This was a very handsome edition on thin paper, presented in an elegant cardboard box, of which I did not give the reference in bibliography because it does not appear anywhere, and I do not have access to it anymore: C. R. Lama borrowed my copy of it from me in 1996 and I never saw it again. It contained as

(2) in the *Byang gter phyogs sgrigs*: vol. I, pp. 271-291.

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(2) in the *Byang gter phyogs sgrigs*: vol. LIX, pp. 1-75.

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(2) in *Thugs sgrub drag po rtsal gyi chos skor* in the *gNas chung* edition *Sā kya yar 'phel* (4 vols., Bari Longsal Lama, Gangtok, Sikkim, 1980): vol. IV, pp. 7-108.

- (3) in the *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*: vol. XLIII, pp. 1-81, followed by its abridged version, the *yang thig gces sgron gyi khrid yig bsdus pa*, pp. 83-92.

Phrin las rab rgyas: see Chos dbyings rang grol, Zur –.

Bru rGyal ba g.yung drung, *Phyag khrid*: see below Achard 2008.

Tshul lo, *sPrul sku -*, *Byang gter dgongs pa zang thal gyi rgyud chen las byung ba'i kun bzang smon lam gyi rnam bshad kun bzang nye lam 'od snang gsal ba'i sgron me* :

- (1) 8-vol. edition: vol. I, end of volume, f° 1-28;
- (2) 16-vol. edition: vol. I, pp. 283-328.

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- (2) 16-vol. edition: vol. III, pp. 279-294.
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- (1) *gSung 'bum* in 4 volumes, Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, Darjeeling, 1973;
- (2) *gSung 'bum* in 6 volumes, Damchoe Sangpo, Dalhousie, 1976-1977;
- (3) *gSung 'bum* in 3 volumes, Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, Beijing, 2006.

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- (A) in edition (2) above: vol. IV, 22 p. of a manuscript in *dbu med*, numbered 517-538, the first being the title page and the last being blank;
- (B) in edition (3) above: vol. II, pp. 204-211.

Yang tig gces pa'i sgron me: see : (a) rGod ldem, (b) 'Gyur med rdo rje; (c) Chos dbyings rang grol, Zur –; (d) Padma 'phrin las.

Ye shes don rtogs, *'Khor gdong gter chen 'gro phan gling pa gro log rtsal gyi rnam thar*, a 38-page text (numbered from 1 to 38) in one of the volumes (not having access to the whole collection, I do not know more)

of the 12-volume edition of *gTer chen Nus ldan rdo rje's gter chos*, recently published in 'Khor gdong. The text is dated 2011 in its colophon. *Rig pa'i rdo rje, rDzogs chen snying thig mkha' khyab rang grol gyi lam rim gsang bdag dpa' bo rdo rje rig 'dzin chos kyi dbang po'i zhal lung*, vol. V, p. 1-245 in *Nyag bla Padma bdud 'dul, Nyag bla Padma bdud 'dul gyi gter chos skor, The Collected Revelations of Nyag bla Padma bdud 'dul*, 5 vol., without any indication or a publication place or date on TBRC ("blockprint;" W23695).

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bSod nams don 'grub (Bya bral ba —, Kaḥ thog khrid chen bdun pa), *Kun bzang dgons pa kun 'dus kyi dbu phyogs*, in *Kaḥ thog khrid chen bcu gsum*, vol. III, pp. 45-50.

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