

THE *BOOK OF NAMES OF NYANG STOD* BLA MA-S: MASTERS AND EVENTS OF THE YEARS 997-1354

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It is a consolidated practice that contributors to a Festschrift write on themes of research favoured by the savant to whom the volume is dedicated. I first wrote an article on the relations between Mongols and Tibetans for my friend Elliot who is an expert of these topics. But then I dropped it, for I thought I should opt for a change of horizon and venture into a different theme. Elliot's focus on the history of Khams has led me to consider writing about a little known Khams pa author, member of an eminent family of the region, which renewed its glory by moving to gTsang where it founded two of the most important establishments of the 14th and 15th centuries. This author, celebrated as an outstanding grub chen, wrote about the way religion in gTsang benefitted from great—yet sometimes obscure—masters. I deal here with his text. With this short piece of mine (inadequate in comparison with Elliot's many contributions to Tibetan history) I still hope to connect my work to his interest vaguely and, at the same time, to introduce a personal perspective within the guidelines of his past literary output.

On the fifteenth of the summer month of the earth male dog 1418, the princely monk Kun dga' blo gros (Kun blo) (1365-after 1439), completed his text on the eminent people of Nyang stod, the region over which his noble clan extended authority. Most of these personalities had lived during the previous centuries. Others, however very few, were his contemporaries.

Kun dga' blo gros was a seasoned member of the noble Shar kha pa family when he wrote his work on the *bla ma*-s of Nyang, the territory within gTsang, to which his people had transferred from sGa yul/IDan ma in Khams during the late 13th century.¹

His text is found in the *dPal brtsegs* collection of historical sources. It is a fifteen folio *dbu med* manuscript, entitled *Nyang stod bla ma'i mtshan gyi deb ther*. In his colophon, in which he defines himself as a *rnal 'byor pa* rather than a *grub chen* as is done in other documents, Kun dga' blo gros calculates that, when he completed his work, 3,551 years had elapsed from the Buddha *nirvana* to 1418 according to the calendrical system of the Sa skya pa, which fix the event, as is well known, to 2,134 BCE.

1 *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p.373,9-13): "IDan ma dbon po bZang po rgyal mtshan, father and son, escorted by some retinue, decided to migrate to the pure land of dBus gTsang and in particular to the [seat of the] Sa skya pa. They set out upwards (i.e. westwards)".

Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs (p.55,6-p.56,2): "[dBang rgyal rin chen] did not appear in his actual form to both his *dbon sras*, dpon yig bZang po rgyal mtshan and the latter's son bZang po (p.56) dpal ba. However, he did appear various times in their dreams, giving this prophecy: "I am the *pho lha* ("tutelary deity of the [Shar kha clan's] paternal side"). I became a *lha* after I died as a man". According to the prophecy given to the two of them at that time, they went to dBus gTsang, and so they arrived at Ser Idings (spelled so)".

The *deb ther*

Until the reappearance of *Nyang stod bla ma'i mtshan gyi deb ther*, the religious history of the Nyang/Myang region in gTsang was mostly known from *Myang chos 'byung*, a text extraordinarily rich in material on a plethora of people, events and holy places. This textual situation has changed. Grub chen Kun blo's work, despite its brevity, takes on a prominent place, not so much because it is one of the few works on the religious history of Nyang, but because it is intrinsically important to the point that it gives the impression that any other work on the subject, especially *Myang chos 'byung*, could not do without it. The treatment of the history of the region and its people in *Myang chos 'byung* is much more expanded than *Nyang stod bla ma'i mtshan gyi deb ther*. The *deb ther* is written succinctly but mentions a good number of masters from the region and touches a number of topics. However, it lacks the detail of *Myang chos 'byung*.

The latter text takes up *Nyang stod bla ma'i mtshan gyi deb ther* and expands it by making use of local documents for various temples and monasteries (full-length *gnas yig*, *rnam thar-s* and other material, exemplified by the brilliant summary of *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnam ky'i rnam thar*, aka *Gyen tho chen mo* by bSwi gung nyams med Rin chen). It arranges the entries in a rather stricter geographical order. Despite providing a more structured sequence of institutions and people based on their location, it does not change substantially the chaotic conception adopted by grub chen Kun dga' blo gros.

Intentional disorder and conciseness are the conceptual basis of grub chen Kun blo's *deb ther*. It is as if the *grub chen* had written down references to great people, events, temples, monasteries and localities of Nyang, as they came to his mind with no concern for structuring his material. This compositional chaos makes his work intriguing.

In his book, Kun dga' blo gros mostly concerns himself with people—as his title indicates—than religious institutions (much less secular ones) or the geography of the land, which are given great importance in *Myang chos 'byung*.

The *deb ther* provides the reader brief historical notes on the great people of Nyang stod (and smad) in several cases without too much relations between them, as if Kun dga' blo gros was putting together scattered notes he had collected. This obliges the reader to perform some mental acrobatics in order to jump from one personality to another, from one period to another, and one holy place to another. He mentions the masters he deems worthy of being remembered and adds a few biographical touches about them. It is up to the reader to make out why he mentions them and why he focuses on some aspects of their lives. The work tends to include people who left a mark on Nyang with reference to their affiliation to its monasteries. The inclusion of some and exclusion of others indicates whom grub chen Kun blo considered major actors in these institutions, and consequently, when the most important periods in their history occurred.

Kun dga' blo gros has an almost complete disregard for dates. Despite writing almost exclusively on (religious) history, the only one he mentions in his work is the completion year of his *deb ther*. To judge the writer's personality through his work, the impression is of a remarkable brain too busy with his thoughts to bother with diligence. This approach is quite distinct from

that of the authors that contributed to *Myang chos 'byung*, meticulous in providing the maximum amount of information.

This leads me to a short digression. *Myang chos 'byung* is anonymous, and going through it, one realises why no one claimed authorship. The impression is that it was based on a root text that underwent additions (and revisions?) in the course of time. On the one hand, reference is made to 'Brug pa Padma dkar po (1527-1592) at least twice in the text (p.97,14-16 and p.99,4-6), which is a *terminus post quem* for its most modern layer. On the other hand, the text makes no mention of rGyal rtse sKu 'bum, a most important monument of the region, construction of which was commenced in fire sheep 1427.

By focusing on people rather than monasteries and holy places, and therefore dealing with *bla ma-s* individually rather than compacting those affiliated to the same religious institutions, grub chen Kun dga' blo gros could be supremely selective. He does not need to trace the history of major temples, monasteries or holy places systematically (when this would be possible, i.e. when textual evidence was sufficient), but picks up people and, consequently, historical situations according to his judgement.

Some of Kun dga' blo gros's underlying ideas emerge from this chaotic treatment. Although he concentrates on *bla ma-s*, he gives limited attention to monasteries and temples inasmuch as they are major institutions of Nyang. Those about which he spends more words are gNas rnying, 'Chad mang, rKyang po/bu, lCang ra, rTsis gNas gsar, dGa' ba sdong, Thar pa gling, rGyan gong and Zhwa lu. The remainder focuses on *bla ma-s*.

Although little is said about the secular developments in Nyang during the period (late 10th century to mid 14th), the author does refer to well known clans. The major historical families mentioned in the *deb ther*, those which left a mark on the local events are the rGya (rather than the mGos), lCe, 'Bre, dPyal and Shar kha (before the beginning of the Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags's rule when *Nyang stod bla ma'i mtshan gyi deb ther* was concluded). More marginally important clans in the region were the Gru,² Cog ro, Khyung and Bran.

2 Grub chen Kun dga' blo gros dedicates a few biographical notes to three members of the Gru clan: (*Deb ther* p.471,3-6): "Gru Go cha went to [hold] yul sMad bu lung. He had a vision of Phyag rdor. He greatly benefitted sentient beings. He was given Gru'i sPe'u mo che. Some people, such as Gru'i bla ma Ratna and gTum mo, were [then] offered it [and] went there. Gru rGya gar built the *spe'u* ("turret") of rGya gNas lha khang [note: above rGyang ro'i lha khang]. dPon chen rGyal bzangs invited him to Shangs.

Gru ston Shakya 'bum went to [hold] Gra ma lung dgon pa. He received many [teachings on] *mDo* [and] *rGyud*. He learned *gSang sngags gsar rnying*, two in all, and became a master [of these scriptures]. His mind was clear and was virtuous. He later became a disciple of 'Gu ru Chos dbang, and benefited *Zhi byed*".

▪ *Myang chos 'byung* has quite a long passage dedicated to what the text defines as a lineage of the Gru (p.74,1-p.75,1), however this is rather more a biography of Gru Go cha, one of the Gru members mentioned by grub chen Kun blo: "The lineage of the Gru *bla ma-s* first resided at Klong thang sGrol ma'i lha khang. They were a line of *dge ba'i bshes gnyen-s* of *gSang [sngags] rnying ma* for many generations, subsequently invited to be the officiating *bla ma-s (mchod gnas)* of the Bod *rgyal btsad po-s*. Then, in stages, they [came] to reside in Myang stod rGyang ro. As for their lineage, Gru Tshul khirms chos kyi 'byung gnas was extremely learned in *gSang sngags rnying ma*. He gathered many monks in Myang stod rGyang ro and gave them teachings. He built a *gtsug lag khang*, namely lHa khang dmar po. He had three sons, the line of one of them being that of Gru nag Byang chub rgyal mtshan. Bla ma Gru Go cha rdo rje received the *dbang* and *lung* of Phyag rdor

A few conceptual considerations

I will generally follow the path chosen by grub chen Kun dga' blo gros in presenting some of the contents of his *deb ther*. His text is anthological in approach, i.e. inclusive but not exhaustive, and I will be even less exhaustive, for many Nyang stod *bla ma*-s he cites are little more than mere names to me.

The *deb ther* is rich in names but disorderly; *Myang chos 'byung* follows suit. They are deeply intertwined. Reading one compels the reader to tackle the other. This has led me to use *Nyang stod bla ma'i mtshan gyi deb ther* as the root source and *Myang chos 'byung* to support and expand on it, for the latter is the natural development of the former.

Using the criterion of representativeness, I have selected those who help me trace the unfolding of the religious history in Nyang from *bstan pa phyi dar* until before the author's period. I deal with their lives and deeds when these are related to the religious history of the region, omitting other activities.

My treatment deviates from the conception of the *deb ther*, adopted in *Myang chos 'byung*. Having found the history of Nyang fundamentally deconstructed in the *deb ther*, my intent has been to reconstruct a historical flow of sort from the mass of material provided by grub chen Kun dga' blo gros and—more systematically and comprehensively—by *Myang chos 'byung*. It may seem that I ended up using *Myang chos 'byung* more than *Nyang stod bla ma'i mtshan gyi deb ther*, but this is not so if one looks at the material I had forcibly to omit from the former text. Nonetheless, one basic aspect of my commitment to *Nyang stod bla ma'i mtshan gyi deb ther* is my overall adherence to its conceptual foundation—the preeminence given to people—in order to outline an embryonic history of a core area of Tibetan culture, such as Nyang.

[and] mGon po from Tsha Hor po at the lower side of Nya ri sgo phu. Having spent a span of fourteen years in Myang stod rGyang ro, he took residence at the rocky gorge of Zer mo lung and performed meditation. Moreover, he met bla ma rTa sgom at Mid pa dgon pa, also known as rGod khung of rGyal rtse or rGod lung, otherwise Ngo bo ri khrod dGe ldan, and became a *grub thob* dedicated to Phyag rdor. Moreover, bla ma Gru Go cha rdo rje had many visions of his *yi dam lha*. Since Phyag rdor actually appeared [to him] in the midst of green and red flames of wisdom, he sung melodies and [song] lines. Furthermore, he spent a time performing meditation at rGyang ro Brag dmar rdzong chung.

Moreover, Gru ban Nam mkha' rdo rje had a vision of the five deities of 'Phags pa Don yod zhabs at rGyang ro Bu lung dben rtsa ("hermitage"). Lum the ba, a *pandi ta* from rGya gar, came to rGyang ro. He met Gru ban Nam mkha'. There is an extensive account [of this Indian master] telling him he was a great *grub thob* of Tibet [note: he received bDe mchog from this [Indian] *siddha*]. (p.75) Gru jo bSod built sPe mo che in rGyang ro".

Elsewhere (p.47,5-10), *Myang chos 'byung* reiterates Gru Go cha's encounter with lHa sgom (spelled so for rTa sgom) dKon mchog 'byung gnas at Mid pa dgon pa, the hermitage-temple known as Ri khro dga' ldan in Shar kha times. He meditated there for three years and for other three years at Dug lung phu, where he had spiritual realisations.

▪ As for the Cog ro clan, three divisions are recognised in the literature: the Cog ro of dBus, the Cog ro of Shangs and the Cog ro of Nyang. The latter's ancestral place in Nyang was Nor bu khyung rtse, the birth place of Cog ro Klu'i rgyal mtshan. Here a *dgon pa* of this clan was located in pre-*bstan pa phyi dar* times (*Myang chos 'byung* p.112,10-19). Nor bu khyung rtse became a Shar kha pa stronghold, together with rGyal mkhar rtse and 'Brong rtse (ibid. p.113,1-3).

Grub chen Kun dga' blo gros (prince, writer, mystic)

With his *deb ther*, grub chen Kun blo sealed a long season in his life. The dates in his career could not have been more significant for his own people; he was born in wood snake 1365 (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.12,21-p.13,2), when the Shar kha family had recently laid the foundations of both rTse chen and rGyal rtse, their main seats at the two edges of their vast fertile plain that was the heart of their possessions. Grub chen Kun dga' blo gros belonged to rTse chen branch of the Shar kha family. Wood snake 1365 was one year after the foundation of rTse chen by his father ta'i swi tu 'Phags pa dpal bzang (1318?-1370). In the same year of his birth, rGyal rtse was founded, again by his father.

During the course of grub chen Kun blo's life (from the time of his birth in 1365 to 1418 when he wrote the *deb ther*) his family, the princes of Shar kha, left a deep mark upon Nyang.

Earth dog 1418 was another eventful year in the history of rGyal rtse. It marked the first step towards the realisation of the family's ambition for a major monastic seat, rGyal rtse dPal 'khor chos sde, the grandest such project attempted in Nyang for centuries. During the summer when he completed his text, work began at the dPal 'khor chos sde complex. It would seem that the completion of the *deb ther* was as a sort of trait-d'union between the glorious past of Nyang stod and the commencement of another great enterprise in the region. The glory of Nyang stod ran uninterrupted, the text being a sign of the continuity between past and future. If such triumphalism animated his entourage, however, none transpires from grub chen Kun blo's text. His work is a barrage of names (people, teachings and localities) without elaboration beyond the minimum. He takes the reader's knowledge of his subject for granted.

Nyang stod bla ma'i mtshan gyi deb ther was written at the behest of Shar kha princes chos rgyal ta'i swi tu bSod nams dpal and ta'i swi tu Rab brtan [kun bzang] 'phags, respectively from rTse chen and rGyal rtse.³

Grub chen Kun dga' blo gros was the son of the Shar kha ruler 'Phags pa dpal bzang's wife bSod nams 'bum (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.12,21-p.13,2) and not of

3 Grub chen Kun dga' blo gros writes as follows in his colophon:

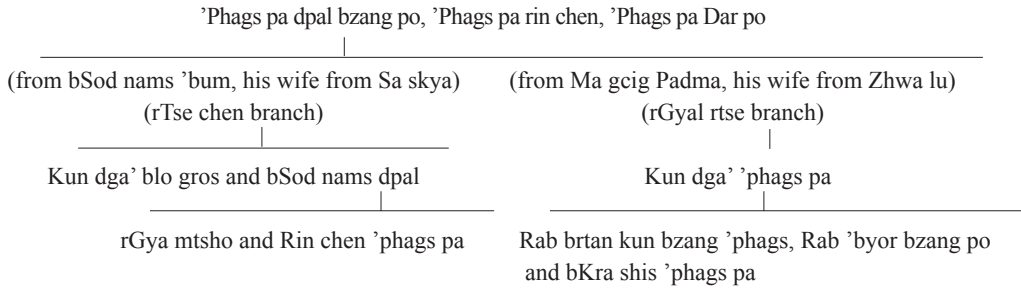
(*Deb ther* p.477,1-4) "At the behest of ta'i swi tu drung chen bSod nams dpal and ta'i swi tu Rab brtan 'phags, uncle and nephew, two in all, ... rnal 'byor pa Kun dga' blo gros rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po completed this [work] at the new monastery lHun grub bde chen (i.e. rTse chen) on the fifteenth of the *dbyar gnas* month of the year earth male dog 1418, known as *rnam 'phyang*, which falls 3,551 years after the Buddha *nirvana* according to the *bstan rtsis* system of the Sa skya pa".

Earth dog 1418 is also mentioned in a *bstan rtsis* of *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* (p.63,5-12), meant to introduce the foundation date of dPal 'khor chos sde and again based on the Sa skya pa calculation of the Buddha *nirvana*. Two entries in this chronological calculation are credited to Kun dga' blo gros. The second one echoes the calculation appearing in the colophon of his text: "Thereafter bla ma ti shri Kun dga' blo gros rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po calculated that 3,455 years elapsed [from the Buddha *nirvana*] to water male dog 1322, the year of the introduction of the *bsnyen rdzogs* [vow] in Tibet (?). In earth male dog, called *rnam* (spelled so for *rnam*) 'phyang by the Indians, the time of laying the *chos sde*'s foundations occurred one sexagenary cycle plus thirty-six years after the latter date (= 1418) or, calculated in a comprehensive way, 3,551 years after the Buddha *nirvana*. The foundations were laid during the middle summer month, following a gathering at rGyal phu on the second day of the summer month of *chu stod zla ba* (i.e. the sixth month). The estate for its support was transferred from lCang ra to here (i.e. rGyal rtse)".

dPal ldan 'bum, as the short biography in the *dkar chag* of the *dPal brtsegs* edition claims. She was from Sa skya, and with her progeny—her other son was the secular ruler Hor bSod nams dpal (b.1366) (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.14,6-7) I have mentioned above—began the rTse chen branch of the Shar kha pa family.

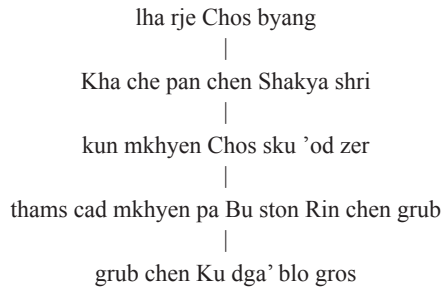
Grub chen Kun dga' blo gros was born at lCang ra. It seems that lCang ra was the seat of the Shar kha pa before they split into the branches with the foundations of rTse chen in wood dragon 1364 and rGyal rtse in wood snake 1365.⁴

The genealogical tree of three Shar kha pa generations in this period is:



In an interlinear note, *Myang chos 'byung* (p.93,14-15) refers to a *rnam thar* dedicated to grub chen Kun dga' blo gros, a text I have not seen but I suppose it is still available in Tibet. Hence, references to the life and deeds of the rTse chen *grub chen* are available to me in a scattered and non-systematic manner.

Grub chen Kun blo belonged to a line of rebirths (*skyes rabs*) of extraordinary significance for the religious history of Tibet (ibid. p.94,4-6):



At the age of eight (1372), he was given the monastic vow (*rab tu byung*) by his main teacher, the Sa skya pa bla ma Nya dbon Kun dga' dpal (1345-1439) (ibid. p.136,1).⁵ Nya dbon, a disciple

4 *Myang chos 'byung* (p.89,17-p.90,2): “Later, dpon yig nang chen 'Phags pa dpal was appointed *nang chen* of bZhi thog bla brang [note: [inclusive of the Khams pa divisions of] Gon gyo, Gling tshang, Shar kha and 'Dan ma] by rTa'i dbon Blo gros rgyal mtshan. Aged thirty-three (1350? b.1318?), he married Pad ma, the daughter of Zhwa lu sku zhang Hor rtsa Kun dga' don grub. It is said that lCang ra's estates, *gsug lag [khang]* and religious objects (p.90), these being the main [properties], were given in dowry to bu mo Padma. ['Phags pa dpal bzang's] younger brother 'Phags [pa] rin [chen] was lCang ra's keeper”.

5 Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa, *Jo nang chos 'byung zla ba'i sgron me* (p.40,11-25) has a biography of Nya bon, in which he gives different dates. It says he was born in wood bird 1285 (exactly one sexagenary

of bla ma dam pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan (1312-1375), had much to do with the Nyang region: he was the *slob dpon* of the contiguous dGa' ba sdong (in the area of Pa snam rdzong) (ibid. p.135,19-21) and, more than that, the abbot of the newly founded rTse chen *dgon pa*. The years of his tenure of the rTse chen religious throne are not clarified, but one should presume that he was appointed abbot soon after the foundation of the monastery in fire male horse 1366, attached to the rTse chen secular establishment (ibid. p.93,5), and held the post until wood male tiger 1374, when he chose his disciple Kun dga' blo gros to be his successor (ibid. p.94,2-4).⁶ The rTse chen prince received a composite education from him (*Phar phyin*, *Tshad ma*, *mNgon pa*, *'Dul ba* and *dBu ma*) and especially theory and practice of Dus 'khor (Ngag dbang blo gros grags pa, *Jo nang chos 'byung zla ba'i sgron me* p.41,17-18). Like his teacher Nya bon and several other masters of the previous generation, such as Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290-1364), Kun dga' blo gros embodied the doctrinal closeness between the Sa skya pa and Jo nang pa of that period.

The little else that it is known about Kun dga' blo gros from the sources at my disposal refers to various consecrations he performed in holy places around the region. One that stands out is the *rab gnas* of the famous flying Jo bo statue of Mag dGe sdings, which had been consecrated by his two previous rebirths, i.e. kun mkhyen Chos sku 'od zer (1225/6?-1289/90?) and Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290-1364) (*Myang chos 'byung* p.108,4-6: interlinear note). He is remembered for another *rab gnas*, that of Gangs kyi Gangs ro gtsug lag khang (ibid. p.92,4-5).

cycle earlier than the date indicated by *Myang chos 'byung*) and died in earth sheep 1379. He achieved familiarity with the Dus 'khor doctrine owing to his long attendance of Phyogs las rnam rgyal. Another deviance of the same short *rnam thar* from *Myang chos 'byung* is that it attributes the foundation of rTse chen *chos sde* to him around when he was sixty years of age (i.e. around 1345, which makes his birth date untenable and thus his death date, too). He is also attributed the making of a portrait of Dol po pa in the rTse chen temple's premises and the composition of *Phar phyin* and *Tsad ma ti ka-s*. He had Tsong kha pa among his other disciples.

6 *Myang chos 'byung* (p.94,11-p.95,13) outlines events in grub chen Kun blo's life and his uncommon personal qualities in a few paragraphs: "Owing to his graciousness, grub chen Kun dga' blo gros, the rebirth of Bu ston, extensively received teachings—a concentration of *mDo* [and] *sNags*—from [masters], such as the most excellent *bla ma*, Nya dbon—thanks are due to his kindness—and then from the *dpal ldan bla ma dam pa* [bSod nams rgyal mtshan (1312-1375)]; Khyung po lHas pa, [master of] the entire corpus of Zus teachings; the Dus 'khor gong gsum bDe chen pa; the Jo nang phyogs pa (i.e. Phyogs las rnam rgyal), follower of the Jo nang pa system; 'Khon rDo rje rin chen; chos rje Jo bzang pa chen po; lo tsa ba Rin chen rnam rgyal; sPos khang pa 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan; dPyal ston Kun dga' rgyal mtshan and the Theg chen *chos rje*. While staying at rGod khung, pan chen Nags rin dreamt in his night time dream that grub chen Kun blo was staying at dgon lHun grub bde chen (i.e. rTse chen). He went there. Past a small bridge (p.95), [he saw] the *chos rje grub chen* sitting as the main person in the centre of the Dus 'khor [*mandala*], surrounded by the people of the *dgon pa* [note: people sitting in the *gzhal yas khang* and the cycle of the Dus 'khor deities]. Pan chen Nags rin received the *dbang* of Dus 'khor. He had wondered: "Did I actually go to receive the *dbang* from lHun grub [bde chen] Kun blo whom I saw from outside? For instance, grub thob O rgyan pa received the *dbang* of Dus 'khor from rGod tshang pa in a dream". Moreover, pan chen Nags rin perfected *sByor drug*, *Sems nyid ngal gso* and *sNying po don grub* under grub chen Kun blo. He received many religious oral instructions such as *Tshe khrid*. Again, the Khams pa *bla ma kun spangs pa*, wondering about the great fame of grub chen Kun blo, having turned in his dream on his body's side, did not see the *rje*. After a while, he saw him sitting on his bed at the edge of a rainbow in the body *mandala* of bDe mchog. He then saw him in the great *mandala* of Phyag na rdo rje. He said: "I have travelled to many countries but there is no one better than this *chos rje* who lives in the land of snows Tibet?". The episode of their meeting at rTse chen is repeated in abridged form elsewhere in the same text (see ibid. p.48,1-6) but, on line 1, the name of the visiting master is spelled Nags kyi rin chen mid pa.

Grub chen Kun blo's sphere of activity also touched rKyang po/bu, the monastery in rGyang ro, the south-western part of Nyang stod, where he had numerous, profound realisations, of which he wrote in a praise (partially? completely?) reproduced in *Myang chos 'byung* (p.68,2-10). He also was responsible for the foundation of a locality, rGyal byed tshal above 'Brong rtse, later developed into gTsang rang gi Klu sdings (ibid. p.97,17-p.98,3). In this passage he is defined as a *mkhas grub gnyis*, an erudite and a spiritually accomplished person (i.e. "both being a *mkhas [dbang]* and a *grub [chen]*").

Grub chen Kun dga' blo gros was still alive in earth sheep 1439, for he consecrated, immediately after completion, the *gos sku* repaired by dpon mo che bSod nams dpal 'byor, the artist who redrew the *skya ris* ("basic outlines") of the images which had deteriorated, and completely remade ten Bodhisattva, finishing them in the third month of the same year (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.244,13-p.245,3). He thus survived the death year earth bird 1429 indicated for him in the *mDzad pa po'i lo rgyus mdor bsdus* in *Bod kyi lo rgyus rnam thar phyogs bsgrigs kyi dkar chag* of the *dPal brtsegs* edition of his *deb ther*. Relics of his body after cremation were installed in dgon pa Sho ma, below rTse chen (*Myang chos 'byung* p.97,8-10).

The reasons for being considered a *grub chen*—clairvoyance, levitation, manifesting himself in divine form, invisibility, ubiquity—are briefly indicated in one more passage of *Myang chos 'byung* (p.95,14-19):

"Grub chen Kun blo's behaviour was extraordinary. Like a *dgra bcom pa*, he effortlessly perceived clairvoyance without need of mental scrutiny. Sometimes people could actually see that his feet did not touch the ground. Sometimes they saw that his appearance was that of the body of a god. Sometimes they could not see him at all. Sometimes everyone saw that his body was imparting teachings at different *dgon pa*-s at the same time".

THE NAMES OF NYANG STOD *BLA MA*-S

The geography of Nyang

The *deb ther* opens with a brief geographical section (*Deb ther* p.451,7-p.454,2), which is soon dropped in favour of attention to the *bla ma*-s. After spending a few words on 'Dzam bu gling and Tibet in general, the text goes on to a brief classification of the regions composing the dBus gTsang *ru bzhi* before it gets to Ru lag, of which Nyang was part in pre-Chinese days (ibid. p.451,7).⁷ The focal point of Ru lag is Mang mkhar Myu gu lung, the monastery of 'Brog mi

⁷ *Nyang stod bla ma'i mtshan gyi deb ther* (p.452,1-2) says that Ru lag consisted of the *lung pa ming can lnga* (the "five famous lands"): Nyang ro, Shab, Bo dong, Sa skya and Grom pa. The composition of Ru lag in the *deb ther* is remarkably curtailed in comparison with the extension of the region during the dynastic period when Srong btsan sgam po's *yul dpon tshan* and *stong sde* were established (e.g., *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*, respectively p.256,21-p.257,6 and p.258,7-10). These classifications show that Ru lag included more distant lands, such as Mang yul, sNya nam and sPa gro.

lo tsa ba Shakya ye shes (993?-1077?) (ibid. p.452,1), this initial choice confirming the author's penchant for the Sa skya pa, which not always transpires from the rest of his text.

In its geographical section, the *deb ther* divides Nyang into three areas which Kun dga' blo gros calls *gzhung dang po*, *bar* and *'og ma*. The *gzhung dang po* corresponds to Nyang stod. Its three main holy places are sKye gNas rnying, 'Chad mangs dgon pa and lCang ra (ibid. p.453,3-5). The three main holy places of *gzhung bar* are 'Dol [chung], rKyang [dur] and rTsis gNas gsar (ibid. p.453,5-6). The *gzhung 'og ma's* main holy places are Thar pa, Zhal lu (spelled so) and dGa' ba gdong (ibid. p.453,6-p.454,1). The treatment in the geographical section of the *deb ther* has been adopted in *Myang chos 'byung* but with a broader scope (ibid. p.2,11-p.11,21).

In the main part of his text, grub chen Kun dga' blo gros abandons this classification and divides Nyang into *stod* and *smad*, although this division is only implicit. *Myang chos 'byung*, which goes for *stod*, *bar* and *smad*, also refers to a division into *stod* and *smad* (ibid. p.123,21), contradicting its own title and description of the region as having three areas. Similarly, the *deb ther* does not deal with Nyang stod exclusively, but extends to both Nyang bar and smad, and to other areas of gTsang and to 'Bri mtshams occasionally.

THE EARLY MONASTIC OBSERVANCE (THE A MDO LINK)

Lo ston rDo rje dbang phyug's proselitism (from Nyang smad to Nyang stod)

Kun dga' blo gros begins his treatment of Nyang stod *bla ma-s* from early *bstan pa phyi dar*. He ignores the foundations by the *chos rgyal mes dbon rnam gsum* in gTsang, only to record them with reference to later activities at those religious establishments. He briefly mentions Lo ston rDo rje dbang phyug from mGur mo Rab kha (*mKhas pa'i dga' ston* p.472,11; Mang thos lHun grub rgya mtsho, *bsTan rtsis gsal ba'i nyin byed* p.65,14) and Tshong btsun Shes rab seng ge from Shab sGo lnga (*mKhas pa'i dga' ston* p.472,11-12; Mang thos lHun grub rgya mtsho, *bsTan rtsis gsal ba'i nyin byed* p.65,15) already in his introduction dedicated to the geography of Nyang, as if out of urgency. He does so with an exaggeration concerning the monastic community Lo ston gathered at rGyan gong:

(*Deb ther* p.452,6-7): "Lo ston rDo rje dbang phyug established a *dge 'dun pa rang 'bum rang tshogs* (an "assembly of his own 100,000 monks") at rGyan gong of Zhal lu".

Lo ston's rGya gong in Nyang smad is appraised as the earliest temple foundation in gTsang, most commonly dated to the year of the bird 997 (*Myang chos 'byung* p.148,19-p.149,2 and p.156,5-9). If one looks at similar events in dBus, one cannot fail to note that the inception of *bstan pa phyi dar smad lugs* was not synchronous in dBus and gTsang. rGyan gong preceded by almost one duodenary cycle the earliest foundation in dBus—that of La mor 'gyel/gyel gtsug lag khang in the year of the bird 1009, credited to Klu mes (*mKhas pa'i dga' ston* p.474,2-3; Mang thos lHun grub rgya mtsho, *bsTan rtsis gsal ba'i nyin byed* p.69,12-13).

The reasons for linking the beginning of the Later Diffusion of Buddhism in dBus gTsang to foundations of temples are not made explicit in the literature. One could suggest that the construction of a temple resulted in establishing firm grounds to religious practice. The beginning of *bstan pa phyi dar stod lugs* was different, for it was proclaimed by royal decree, while in Khams and A mdo it was consequent to the bestowal of vows.

In the next sentence dedicated to Lo ston rDo rje dbang phyug,⁸ Kun dga' blo gros keeps the focus on his followers and, in his typically reductive style, introduces a group of twenty-four disciples who established monastic schools, without naming a single one. He first says they were twenty-four, as is often held, but obliquely refers to only eight, indicating the monastic schools they founded or ran:

(*Deb ther* p.452,7-p.453,1): “Each one of his (i.e. Lo ston’s) twenty-four direct disciples at La stod, rGyan mkhar, Thang spe, sTag lung, sBre lha khang, Ang (p.453) yig, Rong and Sa phug established a monastic community”.⁹

8 In lieu of involving his disciples in the care of the newly created *'Dul ba* centres, as was his custom (see p.523-524), Lo ston rDo rje dbang phyug from Tshong 'dus mgur mo did not delegate control of his native place to any of them, but reserved it for himself. He made a point to include Tshong 'dus mgur mo, whose *gtsug lag khang* had been founded by Khri srong lde'u btsan's minister lCe lHa bzang, among the places where he undertook his teaching activity (*Myang chos 'byung* p.145,1-7). The foundation of its 8th century temple confirms that the area of Tshong 'dus mgur mo, where Zhwa lu was built centuries thereafter, was a stronghold of the lCe at least since *bstan pa snga dar*.

9 I compact here a few facts about the monastic institutions attributed to Lo ston's disciples by grub chen Kun dga' blo gros.

- The *'Dul ba* temple in La stod was Mar la thang, as indicated in *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (p.477,21-22: “rGya Shakya gzhon nu built La stod Mar la thang”). Ne'u pandi ta attributes La stod Seng ge rtse to the personal control of Lo ston rDo rje dbang phyug. *sNgon gyi gtam me tog phrang ba* (p.40,17-19) reads: “Lo [ston] ran Las (spelled so) stod Seng ge rtse. Having founded many holy places, this [division] is [composed of] the communities of Las stod sTag tsho”.

- *Myang chos 'byung* assigns rGyang mkhar to Srong btsan sgam po. This source adds that this happened during *bstan pa snga dar*, but the introduction of the Earlier Spread is commonly attributed to one century later. The text (p.109,8-10) reads: “King Srong btsan sgam po founded a *lha khang* in the valley known as rGyang mkhar, [situated] in the upper part of 'Dus chung, during *bstan pa snga dar*. At the very beginning it was named Ba 'ug lha khang (“the temple of the cow and the owl?”).

Ibid. (p.109,14-18): “In the valley known as rGyang mkhar near Thug gu is Thug gu sPre'u zhig which was the residence of bla ma kun mkhyen 'Phags 'od Yon tan rgya mtsho. At sPe'u zhig (sic for sPre'u zhig), Bu [ston] rin po che obtained from him complete *Yo ga* [teachings], *Tantra*-s, commentary and instructions (*man ngag*), such as the two gSang 'dus systems and 'Dus khor according to the 'Gro tradition transmitted by the *kun spangs pa*”.

- Little is known about Thang spe. A master, namely Thang spe ba, born at Mag (*Myang chos 'byung* p.109,6-7), is of difficult historical placement. The lineage of Thur la masters includes one from Thang spe, but he must have lived remarkably after *bstan pa phyi dar*. This lineage was composed of one Bya khang pa, who was buried there; Tshul khriims skyabs; the same Thang spe ba, i.e. 'Phags pa skyabs, I have just mentioned; Ser sdings gZhon nu 'od; kun mkhyen Chos sku 'od zer; 'Phags 'od Yon tan rgya mtsho and Bu ston rin po che (*Myang chos 'byung* p.111,5-9).

- The history of sTag lung is traced in *Myang chos 'byung* in a few words about the work of mthu stobs Phan grags, leading to the creation of the local monastic division, the gZu tsho. This is perhaps the phase at sTag lung, associated by grub chen Kun blo with a disciple of Lo ston. sTag lung was then taken over by lCe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas who ferried this monastery from the observance of the A mdo vow to the Ma ga dha vow he brought from the Gangetic plain (see below p.529). The concerned passage (p.109,10-14) reads: “At rGyang mkhar sTag lung, mthu stobs Phan grags ruled rGya mkhar (sic for rGyang mkhar) sTag lung. Later, the ordained [community] multiplied and, having greatly increased, [rGyang mkhar sTag lung] was known as gZu tsho.

This may not be due exclusively to his elliptical manner of writing, for there indeed exists a tradition that classifies Lo ston's disciples as eight: Sum ston 'Phags pa rgyal mtshan, lCe ston Shes rab 'byung gnas, Glang ston Byams pa, Zhu/gZhu ston gZhon nu brtson 'grus, rGya Shakya ban dhe, rDar (spelled so) ston Shakya blo gros, sKyo ston Shes rab rdo rje and Kyi a tsarya Ye shes dbang po (*Myang chos 'byung* p.155,20-p.156,2). This is the classification favoured by Ne'u pandi ta, an authority on *bstan pa phyi dar smad lugs*,¹⁰ on which that of *Myang chos 'byung* is possibly styled. The *grub chen* has manifestly merged the two traditions into one.¹¹

The introduction of *bstan pa phyi dar smad lugs* and the *tsho* network in gTsang had pacification effects on Nyang smad, where strifes between clans living side by side in contiguous territories and internal dissent were not uncommon before the creation of the local 'Dul ba communities. After an initial conflictual phase, amounting to a personality clash rather than an institutional problem, Lo ston's settling down in Nyang smad due to the construction of rGyan gong was no more obstructed and the situation turned peaceful.¹²

Thereafter, the tradition of the vow at rGyang mkhar sTag lung dgon pa was lCe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas's sdom pa rGya gar ma".

The change in the monastery's denomination (from rGya mkhar to rGyang mkhar) may reflect a loss of control on the part of the rGya in favour of the proponents of the *tsho* system of monastic conduct.

- Ang yig is assigned in the literature to lCe btsun dKar po, active during *bstan pa phyi dar*, for this attribution is textually contiguous to a passage in which the activity of lCe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas is also described (*mKhas pa'i dga' ston* p.478,21-22, *Myang chos 'byung* p.105,19-20).
- Tshong btsun's disciple Ra (spelled so) Blo gros bzang po took hold of Rong Ngur smrigs (*Myang chos 'byung* p.117,7). He was also given Nyang tsho'i lha khang in Nyang sTag rtse in cohabitation with an associate, named simply the Khams pa (ibid. p.117,5-7).
- The founder of Sa phug during *bstan pa phyi dar* was rBad btsun chung according to a speech of bla ma mKha' skya sGyul chung, a master of Bran ston mTha' bral (*grub chen Kun blo's deb ther* p.469,1-2 and below n.68).

10 *sNgon gyi gam me tog phreng ba* (p.40,8-12): "His eight disciples were Sum ston 'Phags pa rgyal mtshan, lCe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas, Glang ston Byams pa, Zhu ston gZhon nu brtson 'grus, rGya Shakya ban dhe, Dhar (spelled so) ston Shakya blo gros, sKyo ston Shes rab rdo rje and Kyi a tsarya Ye shes dbang po".

11 *Myang chos 'byung* (p.156,18-p.157,16) enlists twelve of Lo ston's twenty-four disciples (numbers are mine): "His (Lo ston's) twenty-four disciples were 1) rGya Shakya gzhon nu who built La stod dMar la thang, known as rBa tsho inasmuch as [this division] expanded to 'Bri mtshams [with the addition of] Bul tog lha khang. 2) sTag lo gZhon nu brtson (p.157) 'grus who built sTag lo lha khang; [this division] then proliferated and became known as sTag tsho. 3) A mes Zhu gcig ma ruled 'Phrang and Brag dmar; [this division] then proliferated and became known as Zhu tsho. 4) 'Dar Shakya yon tan ruled gZus po; [this division] then proliferated and became known as 'Da' (spelled so for 'Dar) tsho. 5) Li Blo gros gzhon nu built Jo mo; [this division] then proliferated and became known as Li tsho. 6) Glag Byang chub rgyal mtshan built Chu mig; [this division] then proliferated and became known as Glag tsho. 7) Chag pa'i dGa' Shes rab bla ma built bsNyems. 8) rNgog Ye shes 'byung gnas built sPang dkar lHa lung. 9) Glag btsun Byams pa built 'On phug; he then ran gTsang 'Gram, and then Bum thang, Chag pa, Tri gong and Khrom ma [of] 'Gos ston, which became known as Glang tsho stod smad. 10) mGo ba [Ye shes] g.yung drung ran 'Dre lha khang; he also ran Zhwa lu; then [Zhwa lu's] *ka bzhi gdung drug* proliferated and became known as Zhwa lu *brgya skor*. 11) Kyi Ye shes dbang po built Shangs kyi mKhar lung; he then built Gyo re glang ra; [this division] proliferated from Glang ra and became known as Glang ra skor; it split from Nyug gi U lung and became known as U tsho; these two are known as Kyi tsho smad. Thereafter, 12) A me's (spelled so) disciple Zhang ston Tshul 'bar ran Bya rgyud".

12 Following the construction of rGyan gong, Nag po thog 'bebs from the dPyal clan of nearby sMan lung and Lo ston had a severe disagreement that ended up in an exchange of black magic curses meant at

The political system adopted in dBus gTsang following the *kheng log-s*, whereby Tibet's overall authority of the *lha sras btsan po-s* was substituted by the local authority of various clans, was, in turn, paradoxically antagonised by the subjects of the clans themselves. The acceptance of the practitioners of 'Dul ba smad lugs by the big and small potentates of dBus gTsang was not always spontaneous in that it helped remove confrontations of various kinds, such as internal turmoil. Following the foundation of rGyan gong, lCe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas fled for his life and sought shelter with Lo ston after his clan was exterminated by its subjects.¹³ lCe btsun passed to Lo ston control over his dominions, represented by the donation of an ancient text, an old time property of the lCe.

Lo ston laid the foundations of rGyan gong—it was his brainchild (*Myang chos 'byung* p.156, 3-4)—but the bulk of the work fell upon his *nye gnas*, lCe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas, who undertook its construction and brought it to completion (ibid. p.156,4-5).¹⁴ Like the related monastery of Zhwa lu, built sometime after it, rGyan gong was ruled by an abbot and a chieftain, not necessarily secular, the latter looking after mundane affairs (see below p.531-532). Sum ston was the one chosen to be the *dpon* of rGyan gong (ibid. p.156,2-3).

Tshong btsun Shes rab seng ge and some features of *bstan pa phyi dar* in gTsang

As to the diffusion in Nyang of the network of schools practising monastic observance Khams and A mdo style by the other “man from gTsang”, namely Tshong btsun Shes rab seng ge, and his disciples, Kun dga' blo gros is even more elusive. He only mentions three monasteries they are associated with:

destroying the rival. The unsettled situation led Lo ston to dedicate his temple to rDo rje Rab brtan ma for protection, and she annihilated Lo ston's enemy (*Zha lu dgon gyi lo rgyus mdor bsdus* p.5,8-p.7,8). Confrontations sorted out, the local communities (both religious and secular) found an *entente* induced by monastic practice. This is just one sign that the diffusion of the *tsho* network, carried out at the grassroots level, brought about a change to the lands of dBus gTsang, whose scale and importance should be stressed.

13 *Zha lu dgon gyi lo rgyus mdor bsdus* (p.4,3-5) reads: “At that time (i.e. when rGyan gong was founded), inauspicious omens [against the lCe family] manifested at Zho chu mKhar mo che. dPyal Ratna shri performed protection rituals (*rim 'gro*) which blocked [negative effects] for seven years”.

The same source (ibid. p.4,8-11) adds: “[Thereafter], on one occasion, the subjects of the lCe revolted and most lCe [people] were assassinated. lCe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas fled to stay with Lo ston. [lCe btsun] presented the *lCe 'Bum* text to him. He was ordained to the monastic vow (*rab tu byung*) and became [Lo ston's] *nye gnas*”.

Different attitudes towards their neighbours (Lo ston and the lCe) prevailed among members of the dPyal clan. Ratna shri supported the lCe, probably in view of reestablishing superior authority over subjects as a ruling principle. Nag po thog 'bebs nurtured hostility for Lo ston, a local like him but perhaps considered as an intruder and innovator of his own (different) religious practice (see the note immediately above). Despite observing monastic discipline, Lo ston did not disdain to use magical curse when threatened. He was indeed recognised as a specialist of protective methods (see below n.17).

14 *Jo bo yab sras las 'phros pa'i skyes bu dam pa 'ga'zhig gi byon pa'i tshul bstan rtsis* (*Zha* (spelled so) *lu mkhan rabs* f.10b,4-5) gives a time frame for Lo ston's involvement at rGyan gong: “Occurring in fire female bird 997 before *bstan pa phyi dar*, Lo ston laid the foundations of nearby rGyan gong in one year; his *nye gnas* lCe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas brought it to completion”. Hence rGyan gong underwent two building phases, the second one of unknown duration. Also see *Myang chos 'byung* (p.156,5-9).

(*Deb ther* p.453,1-2): “The keepers of the vow of Tshong btsun Shes rab seng ge [note: he was from Shab] maintained *dgon pa-s* at sKyegs gNas rnying, Rong,¹⁵ and sTag tshal”.¹⁶

Grub chen Kun blo’s allusions to both Lo ston rDo rje dbang phyug and Tshong btsun Shes rab seng ge’s students being involved in the activity of temple foundation carry some weight in detecting the nature and significance of these events. This involvement, however vague its formulation is, exemplifies the typical manner whereby the *tsho* network was conceived and functioned.¹⁷ Lo ston and Tshong btsun (as well as their colleagues with whom they went to get the vow from lha chen dGongs pa rab gsal) delegated to them the task of running the newly established monastic community and their temples. That was a practical solution, for they had to redistribute control of many monastic schools which they could not run themselves. This was done for the sake of proselitism, for the expansion of the *tsho* networks could not remain a personal enterprise, but depended on the work of the masters’ students. The example of

15 Ne’u pandi ta mentions Ngur smrig as the monastic school in Rong during *bstan pa phyi dar smad lugs*. He attributes this event to disciples of Tshong btsun Shes rab seng ge without specifying their identity. *sNgon gyi gtam me tog phrang ba* (p.39,19) reads: “His (i.e. Tshong btsun’s) disciples diffused [‘*Dul ba* teachings] from Rong Ngur smrig and Tshe dmar”.

16 sMon ’gros lo tsa Mar pa rDo rje ye shes, allegedly a disciple of Tshong btsun Shes rab seng ge, ran Bya chos mkhar po che at sTag tshal and protected its school (*Myang chos ’byung* p.113,14-16). However, a master by the name of Mar pa rDo ye, a native of sMon ’gro in the area of sTag rtse (ibid. p.115,16-17), was a disciple of Zangs dkar lo tsa ba ’Phags pa shes rab (ibid. p.115,16-17). The latter Mar pa rDo rje ye shes lived and was active towards the last quarter of the 11th century and the first part of the 12th. If he indeed was a disciple of Zangs dkar lo tsa ba, the transfer of sMon ’gro from Tshong btsun to Mar pa rDo rje ye shes was impossible, for no less than one generation separated the former from the latter.

Manifestly during *bstan pa phyi dar*, A mes Phyug mtshams built sTag tshal dKyus thang and offered it to Mar pa rDo rje ye shes. Mar pa, himself, built Bran ma sgang po (ibid. p.113,18-20). The Phyug ’tshams, associated with Dor te and sTe ’dzom as components of the *stong sde-s* of dBu ru during the dynastic period, were involved in the conquest of Central Asia during the reign of Khri srong lde’u btsan. On their deeds see *lDe’u Jo sras chos ’byung* (p.110,13); O rgyan gling pa, *Blon po bka’ thang* (p.438, 22-23); Chapter VIII of the *Tun-huang Chronicles* (line 386; *Tun hong nas thon pa’i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.56; and also my “From Sum ru to the great Central Asian “sea of sand”: hints on the role of mThong khyab in the state organisation of dynastic Tibet”).

A number of important masters graced sTag tshal with their activity. The site is ancient, for it goes back to the time of the *chos rgyal mes dbon rnams gsum*. Some of these masters were Ting nge ’dzin bzang po; Zangs dkar lo tsa ba’s disciple sMon ’gro lo tsa ba Mar pa rDo ye; Mar pa’s disciple gTsang Rong Mes ston chen po; sTod lung rGya dmar ba and Rong mNgon pa; Byams sems Zla ba rgyal mtshan’s disciple Nyi phug pa Chos kyi grags pa; Chag lo tsa ba Chos rje dpal who met pandi ta Dā na śri there; and Man lung pa bSod nams dpal.

17 The assignment of tasks to his students is contained in the well known message allegedly passed on by lha chen dGongs pa rab gsal to them (*Nyang ral chos ’byung* p.450,18-p.451,1: “When five men [of dBu s gTsang] were on the verge of going upwards [to Central Tibet], the *mkhan po* (i.e. lha chen dGongs pa rab gsal) sent this message with appointments: “Klu mes, who is learned and follows monastic discipline, should be the *mkhan po*; ’Bring, who is a master in offering protection, should be the *gnas brtan*; Lo ston, who is powerful, should be the protector of the teachings; Tshong Seng, who has a brilliant mind, should be the teacher and preach the doctrine; and [you] Sum pa! (p.451) you should attain spiritual realisations”). The implementation of these ideas was undertaken by the men from dBu s gTsang when they chose territories which became their sphere of competence.

sTag tshal, one of the three holy places, where—according to grub chen Kun blo—Tshong btsun’s disciples operated, is symptomatic: whoever Tshong btsun’s disciple Mar pa rDo rje ye shes was (whether his actual follower or Zangs dkar lo tsa ba’s, unless these were two persons with the same name), the monastic community at this locality was not kept by the master but transferred to a disciple (*Myang chos ’byung* p.113,17-18).

Another fundamental principle that characterised the creation of monastic schools within the *tsho* networks is apparent from the opening of the *’Dul ba* school at sTag tshal. A rather mysterious *yon bdag mo* (“female sponsor”), namely Mar shul sa (spelled so for *za*) sMyos mo, offered sMon ’gro to Tshong btsun in the first place. Grants such as this were common throughout Central Tibet during those years. The *tsho* networks benefitted of donations of localities, where *’Dul ba* schools were established, by local (small and big) potentates, when these old families did not yet have members who had embraced monastic observance. This must have been especially common in the initial years of *bstan pa phyi dar smad lugs*, as in the case of this grant to Tshong btsun Shes rab seng ge.

FROM RAL PA TO A TI SHA

The rGya of gNas rnying (the *bstan pa snga dar* paradigm)

Grub chen Kun dga’ blo gros’s attribution of a control of sKyegs gNas rnying by an unspecified disciple of Tshong btsun Shes rab seng ge does not correspond with the available records of this monastery. Instead there are minimal signs of interaction between the gNas rnying people and Lo ston rDo rje dbang phyug. An initial step, antecedent to the transfer of gNas rnying from the older period to *bstan pa phyi dar*, was taken by Jo sras Phur pa skyabs, who belonged to the rGya line of gNas rnying descending from rGya ’Jam dpal gsang ba (see n.18 and 21). He was given the *dge bsnyen* vow by Lo ston at rGyan gong and received the name rDo rje dbang phyug (*Myang chos ’byung* p.121,6-9).¹⁸ This may have not influenced the direction that sKyegs gNas rnying kept to during the successive decades (rGya Phur pa skyabs left for lHo brag mKhar chu in his old age, which is another indication that his brother Phur pa ’phel was in charge of the monastery’s affairs). It is a fact that the gNas rnying people, too, participated in the new flourishing brought to Nyang by disciples of lha chen dGongs pa rab gsal and were also open to successive religious movements.

Grub chen Kun blo’s (personal? textual?) closeness to the anonymous gNas rnying *drung chen* whom he cites as a source on a few occasions, did not lead him to deal with this monastery more

18 *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar* (f.5b,5-f.6a,1): “The elder brother [rGya Phur pa skyabs] retired to meditate from an early time [in his life]. He meditated on *rDzogs pa chen po* at the neck of Glang pa Thag byam. In all his life he did extensive work for the benefit of sentient beings. If a detailed account about him is to be mentioned, Jo sras Phur ba skyabs went from Tshe spongs to Zha lu rGyan gong to meet Lo ston rDo rje dbang phyug. He received the *dge bsnyen* vow [from him]. His name was changed into rDo rje dbang phyug, the same as his *mkhan po*’s [in the ordination]. He learned much religion. In particular, he became a master of *Yang Phur*. (f.6a) He was sixty-seven [when he went to get the vow] and did not have an offspring”.

accurately or more comprehensively. He says extremely little on gNas rnying after its founder rGya 'Jam dpal gsang ba, the *sngags pa* master of two *chos rgyal*-s, Khri srong lde btsan and Khri Ral pa can, was granted by royal decree the area in Nyang stod, where he built this religious institution.¹⁹

In spite of his succinct treatment of gNas rnying, grub chen Kun blo does not omit mention of its Sa skya pa affiliation. This lasted from mkhan po Rin chen dpal (1221-1279, in office 1255-1279), during whose abbacy the *khri skor bcu gsum* system was enforced (*gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnam kyī rnam thar* f.27,3-f.28a,1), until after the *grub chen* completed his *deb ther* in 1418, when the presence of rGyal tshab rje (1364-1432) at gNas rnying and then of mKhas grub rje (1385-1438) turned it into dGe lugs pa. This is a statement I read as underlining which school controlled the monastery:

(*Deb ther* p.455,1) “Chos rje Sa pan’s throne is still kept there at present, side by side with the religious throne [of 'Bre Shes rab 'bar]”.

Jo sras Phur pa 'phel (gNas rnying is donated to Yol Chos dbang)

Besides mentioning its founder, whom he names 'Jam dpal gsang ldan, grub chen Kun blo has no assessment of what happened at gNas rnying during mid-*bstan pa phyi dar*, when the monastery was donated by jo sras Phur pa 'phel, a successor of rGya 'Jam dpal gsang ba, to Yol Chos dbang, a disciple of Jo bo rje A ti sha (982-1054).²⁰

19 *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnam kyī rnam thar* (f.4b,1-2) attributes to rGya 'Jam dpal gsang ba several other foundations besides gNas rnying: “At first, rGya 'Jam dpal gsang ba founded rTsis kyī lha khang, Nyan tsho lha khang, Bye mda' lha khang, Chos phu lha khang and lHag phyung lha khang”.

As for rGya family, a résumé in *Myang chos 'byung* (p.25,17-p.26,11) says: “The extraordinary noble human beings, holders of this [lineage], are as follows. The greatness of the family of gTsang pa rGya ras is as follows (sic). During the time of Srong btsan sgam po, the names of the two excellent athletes who brought the Jo bo from China were lHa dga' and Klu dga'. Among the descendants of lHa dga' in the following generations there was rGya Sang shī [who lived] during the time of Khri srong lde btsan, and gSal snang, who made a strenuous effort to translate Buddhist texts. (p.26) He was the beloved one in the eyes of the king. He was given the name of Swa (sic for sBa). After sBa gSal snang's ordination to the *rab tu byung* vow, he became the *gdan sa*'s abbot and the *bla ma* of the king of Bod. The nephew (*tsha bo* sic, it could not be a *tsha bo* if he was a rGya) was rGya 'Jam dpal gsang ba [who lived] during the time of Khri Ral and attended upon [masters], such as slob dpon chen po Padma. It happened that he rose to the peak of the *sngags 'chang* lineages (*rigs*). This one founded sKye gNas (sic for sKye gNas [rnying]) of dpal sKye gNas in Myang stod, presently known as gNas snying (spelled so). Thereafter, due to the power of the times (i.e. implying a subversion of the situation), his descendants were transferred to sTag tshal. During *bstan pa phyi dar*, [rGya] brTson 'grus seng ge was the one who brought mkhas pa Jo bo rje to Tibet. [Among] the successors, this *chos rje* (i.e. gTsang pa rGya ras) was born in the lineage which migrated to Khu le”.

20 *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnam kyī rnam thar* (f.10a,5-7): “In that period, Jo sras Phur pa 'phel thought: “I am very old. I do not have an offspring to continue the lineage”. While he was pondering how best to complete the tasks of the rGya (*rGya'i las thabs*), Yol Chos kyī dbang phyug requested Jo sras Phur pa 'phel: “Have you any objection if I introduce a monastic community at your *dgon pa*?”. The *jo sras* was extremely pleased. He said: “My wish is fulfilled, the son has arrived in time when the father has become old. This is excellent”.”.

The event marks the end of the centuries-old control of gNas rnying by the local rGya, whose lineage is found in the related literature.²¹

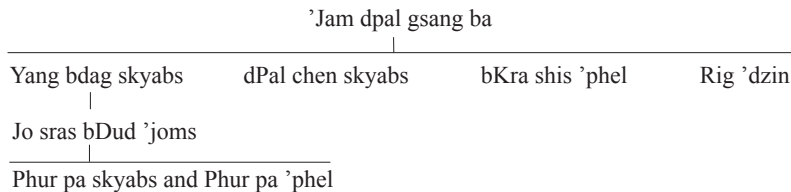
This shows that gNas rnying has a history during *bstan pa phyi dar* that deviates from that of most other holy places in Nyang. gNas rnying did not go through a *tsho* phase entailing the involvement of Lo ston or Tshong btsun's disciples but passed directly from a *bstan pa snga dar* situation, epitomised by the rGya family's control, to A ti sha and his followers, who somewhat reformed the situation in Central Tibet.

This state of affairs is evinced from *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar*, aka *Gyen tho chen mo*, which was in this case the main source for *Myang chos 'byung*, rather than *Nyang stod bla ma 'i mtshan gyi deb ther*.

A CASE OF EXTRATERRITORIALITY OF THE MNGA' RIS SKOR GSUM CULTURE rKyang po/bu Chos blo (lo chen Rin chen bzang po's teachings in Nyang)

An openness to the multiple expressions of the newly introduced *bstan pa phyi dar* teachings in Nyang is exemplified by the fact that the mNga' ris skor gsum religious system reached the region and put roots locally. Disciples of Rin chen bzang po made a point to return to their land Nyang at an early stage of Lo chen's preaching, bringing it with them. These teachings remained insular since the school practising the mNga' ris skor gsum doctrine was concentrated in rKyang po/bu, a monastery of rGyang ro near gNas rnying (showing that different traditions could coexist effortlessly), owing to the endeavours of rKyang po/bu Chos blo, one of Lo chen's disciples of the first hour.²² Grub chen Kun dga' blo gros says the following about him:

21 An incomplete genealogical line of the rGya clan of gNas rnying from the first half of the 9th century to the mid 11th is:



Jo bo yab sras las 'phros pa'i skyes bu dam pa 'ga' zhig gi byon pa'i tshul bstan rtsis (gNas rnying *mkhan rabs* f.11b,5-6) says: "Yang dag Shes [rab], Phur pa and dPal chen, these being three from the rGya [clan], were subsequent abbots of gNas snying (spelled so)".

The Yang dag Shes rab of the *bstan rtsis* is Yang dag skyabs of *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar*. He passed the religious leadership of the monastery to his brother dPal chen skyabs. He would have been succeeded by his grandnephew Phur pa 'phel. The gNas rnying text is not too profuse on the abbatial succession of the period. It details the transmission of the monastery's possessions, specifying the estates and the people connected with the institution (ibid. f.5a,1-f.5b,5), but lets one realise that Jo sras bDud 'joms held the abbatial chair before his son Jo sars Phur pa 'phel (ibid. f.10a,7-f.10b,1).

22 rKyang po/bu Chos blo attended upon lo chen Rin chen bzang po (958-1055) after the latter came back from Kha che the first and second time (*Myang chos 'byung* p.66,6-10 and p.66,12-14). Did he remain in sTod from 987 (the date of Lo chen's return to his land after his first journey to Kha che) to 1000/1001 (when he went back after his second journey to Indian lands)? Or did he go to mNga' ris skor gsum

(*Deb ther* p.471,7-p.472,3): “rKyang po Chos blo emerged in mNga’ ris as a powerful disciple of lo chen Rin chen bzang po. (p.472) He rendered service in the subjugation of Klu dKar (spelled so) rgyal. He learned *rDor dbyings*, *rTse mo* and gSang ’dus, three in all, and also dByangs (spelled so) chen. rKyang po’i rab ’byams pa rGya mtsho and rDo rje brag thog were [its abbots]. A lineage of the *dbang* existed in succession [at rKyang po]. [Chos blo] built rKyang po lha khang. He offered a golden *mchod rten* of the *bkra shis sgo mangs* [type] as a *nang rten* of Lo chen inside the [local] *gtsang khang lho ma*. It is said that remains of Lo chen,²³ his *rdo rje* and *dril bu* and his walking stick in a *ka ru* [wood] were kept there”.

Grub chen Kun blo fails to highlight that rKyang po/bu was the centre of *bstan pa phyi dar stod lugs* in gTsang. Originally founded by Srong btsan sgam po, Chos blo added sPre’u dmar lha khang there, a temple conceived in accordance with the tradition he inherited from his teacher (*Myan chos ’byung* p.66,4-10). He also established a school of *Yoga* and gSang ’dus there, based on the method of Ye shes zhabs (*ibid.* p.66,14-16). By this move at rKyang po/bu, he secured strong grounds for the practice of *stod lugs* in Nyang stod.

Zangs dkar lo tsa ba ’Phags pa shes rab worked at the *smad ’grel* of *De nyid ’dus pa* with Bal po Thugs rje chen po in its premises (*ibid.* p.67,5-9).²⁴ He also composed a *’grel pa* on *rTse mo* there (*ibid.* p.67,1), these being literary classics of the *stod lugs* tradition. Rather than these historical milestones, Grub chen Kun dga’ blo gros chos instead to concentrate on mentioning that Rin chen bzang po’s relics and personal objects were looted during the 14th century (see below p.566).

The *deb ther* is too concise to say which of his late disciples brought Rin chen bzang po’s relics and personal objects to rKyang po/bu after his death. No indications are provided in the various *rnam thar* of Lo chen, so that one can only attempt an educated guess. Given the presence of Zangs dkar lo tsa ba ’Phags pa shes rab at rKyang po/bu, although he did not study with Rin chen bzang po but with his associate lo chung Legs pa’i shes rab (Lo chen had just died when he came to meet him), he might have brought Lo chen’s remains and personal belongings to the south-eastern corner of Nyang stod, where the tradition of the great *lo tsa ba* was vibrant.

lCe Zhar (the one-eyed disciple of Lo chen)

The case of another Lo chen’s early disciple from Nyang was different; lCe Zhar, despite his affiliation to a local clan which left an important mark in the history of the region, did not

on both occasions? Chos blo studied under Rin chen bzang po, Dol po sgom chen and lo chung Legs pa’i shes rab (*ibid.* p.66,10-12).

23 A very small quantity of Lo chen’s remains must have been kept at rKyang po/bu, for *Rin chen bzang po’i rnam thar ’bring po* (Dharamsala ed. p.32,5-9) says that very little of his body—not bigger than sesame seeds—was found in the ashes after cremation.

24 It seems that the translation took place at the *dgon gnas* (“monastery”), spelled g.Yar thang and dByar thang in the Bell edition of *Myang chos ’byung* (*ibid.* respectively f.62b,1 and f.62b,3; but see their variants in *Myang chos ’byung* p.67,1-14) under the patronage of Jo sras lCe ’bar. These spellings generate some confusion with g.Ye dmar, but the placement of these events in the section dedicated to rKyang po/bu seems to be a decisive factor to dismiss that they took place at the former locality.

undertake the construction of any major institution, which would have followed the tenets of the mNga' ris skor gsum's system of teachings. Grub chen Kun blo mentions the name of his residence in Nyang before moving to sTod mNga' ris skor gsum, and Lo chen's passion for beautiful objects:

(*Deb ther* p.465,1-3): "lCe Zhar went first to Sri'u chung, which is below [Chos sdings]. When he received the *dbang* of rDor dbyings from Lo chen in mNga' ris [skor gsum] he gave him, as a token, gold powder for a *dkyil 'khor*. Being made of solid gold, the receptacle was to [his teacher's] satisfaction".

rTsis gNas gсар (from imperial patronage to *rNal 'byor rgyud*)

Grub chen Kun dga' blo gros deviates from his customary focus on *bla ma*-s to deal with the important temple complex of rTsis gNas gсар, called rTsis kyi lha khang by him (the latter being a different religious building in the neighbourhood of the former). He concentrates on the foundations undertaken there by the *lha sras btsan po*-s who were *chos rgyal*-s, but in doing so, neglects the earliest one, established by Srong btsan sgam po (*Myang chos 'byung* p.99,21-p.100,3, p.100,11-14 and p.102,1-5). He says:

(*Deb ther* p.464,7-p.465,1): rGyal po Khri srong lde btsan built rTsis kyi lha khang stod ma, [while] mnga' bdag Khri Ral pa can built [rTsis kyi lha khang] 'og ma.

What concerns *bstan pa phyi dar* rather than the imperial period at this temple complex is that rTsis gNas gсар, during the Later Diffusion, became partially conceived as a religious institution of the mNga' ris skor gsum tradition. The temple founded by Khri Ral pa can was restructured to contain four addorsed rNam par snang mdzad statues (similarly to the main image at Ta po in Pi ti) and the cycle of thirty-seven deities of rDor dbyings kyi *dkyil 'khor*, based on the first of the four chapters of *De nyid 'dus pa'i rtsa rgyud* (*Myang chos 'byung* p.102,5-12). This is a text associated, for its translation and practice, with the mNga' ris stod tradition. Hence rTsis gNas gсар, at least for the season that corresponded with *bstan pa phyi dar smad lugs* (if not for a longer time), can be assimilated, although on a lower scale, to rKyang po/bu as a stronghold in Nyang of the religious system which had been developed in mNga' ris skor gsum by the local royal house and their *bla ma*-s.

It seems more than coincidental that these temples bearing signs of the mNga' ris stod pa doctrine were founded by sPu rgyal dynasty rulers in the first place. Besides a criterion of provenance (Chos blo was indeed from rKyang po/bu), I wonder whether the claim of the mNga' ris skor gsum royalty to the heritage of the *lha sras btsan po*-s was instrumental in the choice of sites. Was this claim a motivation for the representatives of the mNga' ris skor gsum doctrine in Nyang to take over temples of imperial origin?

THE VOW: FROM A MDO TO RGYA GAR (ZHWA LU AND THE MA GA DHA LINK)

lCe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas (and sdom pa rGya gar ma)

lCe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas was the closest collaborator of Lo ston rDo rje dbang phyug. He was his *nye gnas* and the disciple who engaged in personally building Lo ston's rGyan gong, dedicated to rDo rje Rab brtan ma. In typical style, grub chen Kun blo says little about him and his famous establishment of Zhwa lu in fire hare 1027. He just mentions lCe btsun as the founder of its monastic community and attributes the construction of its *lha khang* to him:

(*Deb ther* p.473,7-p.474,2): "Lo ston rDorje dbang phyug's *nye gnas*, lCe btsun (p.474) Shes rab 'byung gnas, was the abbot of Zhal lu (spelled so) [note: he built its *lha khang*. He founded Zhal lu]. Later, his younger brother was [the abbot]. Thereafter, at the territorial enclosure (*ra ba*) in Nyang stod, when g. Yu thog sgra gSer zangs was the abbot, a son (i.e. lCe 'Bum me) was born to him, who ruled as *dpon sa* of Zhal lu. [lCe btsun] gave the *gdan sa* to mGo ba [/'Go ba] [Ye shes g.yung drung], to 'Dre [and] Khyung".

Grub chen Kun blo omits the developments that followed soon after the foundation of Zhwa lu in 1027 (bKra shis don grub, *Zha lu gSer khang gi bdag po lCe'i gdung rabs* f.12b,2-f.13b,3). lCe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas's intention was to receive a monastic vow purer than the one bestowed by lha chen dGongs pa rab gsal and transmitted by the latter's disciples in dBus gTsang (ibid. f.14a,3-4; *Zha lu dgon gyi lo rgyus mdor bsdus* p.5,3-4). He journeyed to rDo rje gdan, having left Zhwa lu, as is well known, to the care of 'A zhwa/mGo ba Ye shes g.yung drung.²⁵ He got his Indian vow from slob dpon A bha ya ka ra (bKra shis don grub, *Zha lu gSer khang gi bdag po lCe'i gdung rabs* f.14b,1-2).

That was the origin of lCe btsun's vow from Gangetic India, known as sdom pa rGya gar ma (*Myang chos 'byung* p.160,16-p.161,15). It also marked the introduction in dBus gTsang of the system of obtaining the vow from the Noble Land, as the *bstan pa phyi dar* masters from mNga' ris stod had done, rather than from north-eastern Tibet, as had happened till then in dBus gTsang.

Hence lCe btsun embodied the double *phyi dar* phase that came to dBus and gTsang: first from A mdo and then from India. After being a disciple of Lo ston (and thus a typical master of A mdo *phyi dar*), he was among the earliest Tibetans from dBus gTsang to have had an Indian teacher.²⁶

25 mGo ba (aka 'A zha) Ye shes g.yung drung ran 'Dre lha khang. *Myang chos 'byung* (p.105,10-14) says: "There were many extraordinary *dgon gnas* in the four directions of 'Dul chung in earlier times. In the south is [lacuna]; in the west is rKyang dur lha khang; in the north Ngang skya lha khang; in the east Dre (spelled so) lha khang. 'Dre'i lha khang (spelled so) is a *bstan pa snga dar gtsug lag khang*. In the vicinity of 'Dul chung is 'Dre lha khang (sic). This is the *lha khang* where mGo ba Ye shes g.yung drung, one of the twenty-four disciples of Lo ston rDo rje dbang phyug, protected teaching and learning. When lCe btsun went to India, he entrusted Zhwa lu to mGo ba Ye shes g.yung drung. Following this, he ran 'Dre lha khang of 'Dul chung and protected teaching and learning".

26 lHo brag Mar pa (1012-1097?) and gNyos lo tsa ba Yon tan grags (b.973) were two dBus gTsang Tibetans who went early to rGya gar. In 1028, when he was fifty-six years old (b.973), gNyos lo tsa ba Yon tan grags left for Gangetic India in a group which included lHo brag Mar pa, aged seventeen

While in Ma ga dha, lCe btsun obtained a statue of Ka sar pā ni, eventually installed inside Zhwa lu gtsug lag khang as its main receptacle.

One more sign of the openness and mobility of religious practice in Nyang was that lCe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas brought his sdom pa rGya gar ma to rTsis gNas gсар, the important monastery of Nyang, which bore tangible signs of the presence of the sTod mNga' ris skor gsum doctrinal system (see above p.528). lCe btsun held rTsis gNas gсар even before he went to Ma ga dha, for he left it, like Zhwa lu, to the care of 'A zha/mGo ba Ye shes g.yung drung.²⁷

rTsis kyi lha khang (an exemplary temple for vow observance)

Developments at rTsis kyi lha khang, in the vicinity of rTsis gNas gсар, epitomise the religious fragmentation that took place in Nyang during *bstan pa phyi dar*, which remained a salient feature of the region throughout the centuries dealt with by grub chen Kun blo. rTsis kyi lha khang was founded by Khri srong lde'u btsan's minister lCe Khri bzang lha byin (*Myang chos 'byung* p.103,14-16, but *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar* attributes it to rGya 'Jam dpal gsang ba; see above n.19). After the end of the *lha sras btsan po* dynasty and the dark period between the two diffusions, rTsis gNas gсар passed to Tshong btsun Shes rab seng ge, then to his disciple sBa (spelled so) btsun Blo gros yon tan, thus becoming part of the rBa tsho (one of Tshong btsun's *tsho-s*). rTsis kyi lha khang was run subsequently by A ti sha's disciple Yol Chos dbang (ibid. p.103,17-19) but not before lCe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas held it.

A ti sha at Zhwa lu (consecrations and *tsa tsa-s*)

In his quest for a pure doctrine, lCe btsun managed to invite Jo bo rje A ti sha to Zhwa lu (presumably around fire dog 1046). The Bengali master, a specialist of *rab gnas* which he was called to carry out often on Tibetan soil, at Zhwa lu performed it in front of the famed image of Yum chen mo (*Myang chos 'byung* p.161,15-18). This shows lCe btsun's intentions well; he saw India as the proper source of a pure vow and a correct consecration.

At Zhwa lu, A ti sha was responsible for identifying another holy image for the temple. He had a notion of a self-originated statue of sPyan ras gzigs at the bank of River Sing dha

at the time (b.1012). *Kha rag gNyos kyi gdung rabs* (f.2b,2-3) writes: "gNyos, who was fifty-six, was the oldest. rJe Mar pa, who was seventeen, was the youngest. Twenty children of Tibet went to rGya gar. They stayed for many days at the place called La stod Cung pa sa. Then they went to Gu lang gser kha to search for gold".

27 *Myang chos 'byung* (Bell ed. f.95a,5-f.95b,1; lHa sa ed. p.104,2-6): "Until lCe btsun returned from rGya gar to this rTsis gNas gсар, the outstanding disciple of lCe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas who founded Zhwa lu, i.e. his follower mGo ba Ye shes g.yung drung held rTsis kyi lha khang (i.e. rTsis gNas gсар in this case). From then on, the tradition of the vow of the rTsis gNas gсар monks was sdom pa rGya gar ma (f.95b) exclusively".

This indicates that at rTsis gNas gсар, too, the A mdo vow of lha chen dGongs pa rab gsal, introduced to gTsang by the Lo ston and Tshong btsun, was abandoned in favour of the vow from rGya gar in the span of one generation. See above (n.9) for a similar situation at rGyang mkhar.

(*Myang chos 'byung* p.161,18-21; bKra shis don grub, *Zha lu gSer khang gi bdag po lCe'i gdung rabs* f.15b,3-4 spells Sidhu). The search caused an acrimonious incident with the Chu mig pa,²⁸ who tried to steal the statue.²⁹ The statue spoke, manifesting its preference, and eventually was installed at Zhwa lu Ri sbug (ibid. p.164,4-7). It was in this way that Zhwa lu's two main statues came to the monastery, separated by some fifteen years (from soon after 1027 to around 1046). Zhwa lu remained a foremost religious centre of Nyang smad, but another dispute—this time internal—caused a major contention that took a bitter turn.³⁰ The running of the monastery caused a squabble between the *dpon sa* (g.Yu thog sgra gSer bzangs/zangs) and the abbot (Khyung po Grags se/Grags seng), which reached a nasty conclusion with the intervention of troops from rGya gong, summoned by the secular ruler; the religious head decided to leave for lHa sa, to return to Zhwa lu sometime later (bKra shis don grub, *Zha lu gSer khang gi bdag po lCe'i gdung rabs* f.17b,4-f.18b,4).

The stir between its secular and religious heads confirms that Zhwa lu, and rGyan gong, too, had a divided administration. Following g.Yu thog sgra gSer bzangs/zangs's release of the

28 There were two Chu mig in gTsang (see below n.48). One was in sNying ro/sGo bzhi of Nyang (Nying ro is above the course of the sGo bzhi river; see *Myang chos 'byung* p.34,19), the other, Chu mig ring mo, in the area of sNar thang, whose control was assigned by Lo ston rDo rje dbang phyug to his disciple Zhu ston gZhon nu brtson 'grus (*sNgon gyi gtsam me tog phreng ba* p.40,14-15). Nyang Chu mig was visited by rNgog lo tsa ba's Indian teacher 'Bum phrag gsum pa (see below the same n.48), who came to Tibet as a consequence of his disciple's return to the highlands in the early 1090s. His visit acts as a *terminus ante quem* for its foundation. The two Chu mig may have to be assigned to different but not too distant foundation times.

I tend to think that the Chu mig pa of this episode were those from Chu mig ring mo for the centrality the monastery gradually assumed, which culminated with its proclamation as one of the *khri skor-s* and the famous *chos 'khor* organised by 'grom mgon 'Phags pa in fire rat 1276. The exorbitant number of 70,000 monks would have participated in the religious council (Tshe tan zhabs drung, *bsTan rtsis kun las btus pa* p.191).

29 Typically, the Chu mig pa failed to steal the statue because it became too heavy to lift it (*Myang chos 'byung* p.163,15-18). The Zhwa lu pa and Chu mig pa eventually had a parley and the matter was solved in favour of the former. No reasons for such a choice transpire from the sources. The contention is ignored in bKra shis don grub's *Zha lu gSer khang gi bdag po lCe'i gdung rabs*.

30 g.Yu thog sgra gSer bzangs/zangs, the son of sTag gi rgyal mtshan, who received the monastic vow from lCe btsun (was it sdom pa rGya gar ma?) and became his *nye gnas*, was appointed Zhwa lu abbot (*Myang chos 'byung* p.129,18-21). He was the successor to lCe btsun's brother lCe Shes rab ye shes (ibid. p.162,19-20). Subsequently g.Yu thog sgra gSer bzangs/zangs left the vow and originated the Zhwa lu *dpon rgyud*.

However, *Jo bo yab sras las 'phros pa'i skyes bu dam pa 'ga' zhig gi byon pa'i tshul bstan rtsis* says that the Zhwa lu *dpon rgyud* was first assigned to g.Yu thog dgra gSer bzang/zangs's father lCe sTag gi rgyal mtshan. The concerned passage (*Zha* (spelled so) *lu mkhan rabs* f.11b,1) reads: "g.Yu thog dgra gSer bzang was the son of the elder brother sTag gi rgyal mtshan. The two (he and his father) were known as *bla dpon*".

g.Yu thog sgra gSer bzangs/zangs had a fallout with Khyung po Grags se/Khyung po Grags seng, the new *gdan sa* who had taken his place, over the petty issue of Zhwa lu's boundary wall and well (*Myang chos 'byung* p.162,16-p.163,3). Matters precipitated, for g.Yu thog sgra brought troops from rGyan gong. Khyung po Grags se/Khyung po Grags seng was displeased and left for lHa sa where he ran a school on lCags po ri (ibid. p.130,3-7). He eventually returned to Zhwa lu and was reinstated to the abbatial chair (ibid. p.130,7-8). For the segment of the genealogical tree of the Zhwa lu pa from the second half of the 10th century to the second quarter of the 14th see below (p.556).

religious chair in compliance with the requirements of 'Dul ba discipline, the lCe, significantly, called in an external abbot but kept the secular control in their family, so that matters, in keeping with the tribal organisation of old, remained in their own hands.

These events (the strife with the Chu mig pa and this internal contention, not to mention the revolt of the subjects against their lCe lords in 997) show that coexistence in Nyang, despite being steadfast and spontaneously adopted, was not always possible, as seems inevitable. Acrimony against the lCe and Zhwa lu materialised again in a few subsequent cases, which is an indication that, among the families of Nyang, this clan was keen to seek an assertive position.

THE BKA' GDAMS DOCTRINE COMES TO NYANG

The three Yol brothers (Jo bo rje's teen disciples of the first hour)

The introduction of the bKa' gdams pa school, which established A ti sha's teachings on a larger scale in dBus gTsang than mNga' ris skor gsum, was a task assigned in Nyang stod by the Bengali master to the three Yol brothers.³¹ Grub chen Kun dga' blo gros deals with them in typically elliptical style:

(*Deb ther* p.458,2): "Yol Chos dbang, one of the three Yol brothers, was a direct disciple of Jo bo rje. He held Nyan 'tsho (spelled so). Yol Thog 'bebs and [Yol] Drang srong held lCang ra".

Nyan tsho'i lha khang at sTag rtse goes back to the *bstan pa snga dar* phase of foundations in Nyang by rGya 'Jam dpal gsang ba (see above n.19) and promoted by Khri Ral pa can,³² whose temples were invariably reformed according to teachings introduced during *bstan pa phyi dar*. The name Nyan tsho'i lha khang raises the question whether *tsho*-s already existed during the imperial period, or whether this name was given during the Later Spread. This seems to be an isolated case, which suggest that a revision occurred.

Before coming to A ti sha's disciple Yol Chos dbang, Nyan tsho'i lha khang was given to Tshong btsun who passed it to his disciples Ra (spelled so) Blo gros bzang po and the Khams pa (*Myang chos 'byung* p.117,5-7). Like several other religious institutions, control of Nyan tsho'i lha khang was transferred from the masters of 'Dul ba, organised in the *tsho* system, to a follower of Jo bo rje.

31 The miraculous powers of the Yol brothers are often mentioned in the literature. I cite here a passage of *Jo bo yab sras las 'phros pa'i skyes bu dam pa 'ga' zhig gi byon pa'i tshul bstan rtsis* (*gNas rnying mkhan rabs* f.12a,1-2): "The eldest brother Yol Chos dbang hanged his robe on a sunbeam. The middle [Yol] brother, Thog 'bebs, struck the rock of the mountain to the south of gNas snying with a thunderbolt. The youngest Drang srong pierced a rock with his iron *rdo rje*, and blood spilled from its navel".

32 *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar* (f.3a,2-3): "At that time (i.e. during the reign of Khri Ral pa), gNas gsar lha khang at Nyang stod dKris tsha, Nyan tsho lha khang, Bye mda' lha khang, lHag chung lha khang and rTing po lha khang were built in gTsang (i.e. Nyang?), when rGya 'Jam dpal gsang ba came to supervise [appropriate localities], given his expertise in examining the [features of the] landscape [in order to found temples]".

The Yol brothers were born at Yol lCags of sTag tshal in Nyang (*Myang chos 'byung* p.114,12-13). They met A ti sha at sTag rtse, where Nyan tsho'i lha khang was located, after a premonition Jo bo rje had in a dream. The master paid particular attention to them, especially to the eldest one, Yol Chos dbang, who was just sixteen years old at the time (ibid. p.118,13-p.119,1). A ti sha gave Yol Chos dbang the *grub thabs* of the four cycles of *rTa mgrin Shā na* he had refused to major followers, such as Nag tsho lo tsa ba Tshul khriims rgyal ba (1017-?), lha btsun Byang chub 'od (984-1078) and 'Brom ston rGyal ba'i 'byung gnas (1004 or 1005-1064) (ibid. p.119,1-4).

It seems that the Yol brothers concentrated their activity upon their own land of Nyang rather than on dBus, where most of A ti sha's followers were active. Jo bo rje prophesied that Yol Chos dbang should take hold of sKyegs gNas rnying. The appearance of A ti sha's disciple was taken as a karmic sign by Jo sras Phur pa 'phel, the rGya family member who was running the monastery. Phur pa 'phel's decision to appoint Yol Chos dbang as the new abbot (*gNas rnying skye bu dam pa'i rnam thar* f.9b,3-7) meant that the authority over gNas rnying was no longer in the hands of the rGya family.³³ Hence by mid-*bstan pa phyi dar*, the old system of control of religious institutions and territories existing from the imperial period was modified, at least for some areas of Nyang stod.

The rGya estates in rGyang ro

With this in mind, those imperial appanages the rGya were able to preserve in Nyang stod are a matter of some significance. Grub chen Kun dga' blo gros provides clues on them:

(*Deb ther* p.471,2-3): "It is said that Sa lu rGya gNas,³⁴ rGya and rKyang po Drang chung, three in all, were the communities of mGos yul stod [gsum]. It seems that they likewise were the *gnas gzhi* ("estates") of the rGya.³⁵ They were held by the lHo pa subsequently".

33 *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar* (f.7b,3-4): "Jo sras Phur pa 'phel, the younger brother of rGya ban rDo rje dbang phyug (aka Phur ba skyabs) followed in the footsteps of his father. At that time, he said quoting the words of his father: "I am older than an old horse, and as for my dwelling place, I wish to stay on the nose of the dBus lung thang khugs mountain, this being a place where I can see gNas rnying from above". He built a *gzims khang* here, where he resided and died". Ibid. (f.7b,5-6): "[Jo sras Phur pa 'phel] renovated the *lha khang* and *tshogs khang* of Ba ga rGya grong, all those. He renovated gNas rnying *lha khang* and built its *las khang* and *rdo khang*. He rendered a great deal of service to the *lha khang*-s built by the kings".

34 rGya gNas at Sa lu was near rKyang po/bu in rGyang ro (*Myang chos 'byung* p.68,18).

35 All grub chen Kun dga' blo gros says about rGya brTson seng, an illustrious son of the Nyang soil from this clan, is as follows:

(*Deb ther* p.458,4-5): "In *Jo bo'i rnam thar* it is said that rGya brTson 'grus seng ge was from sTag tshal". rGya brTson seng, A ti sha's *nye gnas* when the Bengali master was still in Ma ga dha, was born at Phum bu ri of sTag tshal, which was rGya stod (*Myang chos 'byung* p.115,12-13). If rGya stod was sTag tshal and surroundings as it seems, which area of Nyang was rGya smad? Was it their ancestral land in rGyang ro, known during *bstan pa snga dar* as mGos yul stod gsum? A transfer of a group of the rGya to sTag tshal occurred, owing to an unspecified subversion of the status quo, after the foundation of gNas rnying but before *bstan pa phyi dar* (ibid. p.25,17-p.26,11 and above n.19). At Bye mda', A ti sha declared that, on the way, he had spotted Phum bu ri from distance. He bitterly added that his disciple rGya brTson seng ge was no more and wept (ibid. p.64,1-4).

His reference to the estates of the rGya manifestly goes back to the imperial period when this stretch of land was named mGos yul stod gsum (i.e. from south of gNas rnying to the Phag ri rdzong area), after blon chen Khri bzang yab lhag, a minister of Khri srong lde'u btsan from the mGos clan, was awarded this territory by the *lha sras btsan po* (gNas rnying *skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar* f.3b,3-f.4a,6, and Vitali, “The history of the lineages of gNas rnying summarized as its “ten greatnesses” in the sources” p.82-85). Kun blo's passage hints at a disintegration process of the rGya pa power in that he adds that unidentified lHo pa took hold of these fiefs, which may indicate that people from the south (i.e. from stretches of present-day Bhutan) took over, but no time frame is given. It may refer to the mid 14th century, a period taken into special consideration by grub chen Kun blo (see below p.566-569), which would mean that the rGya had steadfast control of their land possessions (did they lose it for a short period?).

The donation of gNas rnying to Yol Chos dbang around 1046 was preceded by a different grant by Phur pa 'phel's relatives, rGya A rya de ba, a descendant of 'Jam dpal gsang ba, and his son rDo rje bla ma. This concerned Sa lu sPe sar and rGya gNas lha khang (aka rGya gNas Tshe dpag med lha khang, see *rGyang ru Sa ma mda' khul gyi dgon pa lha khang khag gi lo rgyus* p.36,9-p.37,4), both being areas and monasteries under the control of the rGya (*gNyos kyi gdung rabs* respectively f.3b,4-6 and f.3b,7-f.4a,1). They were offered to gNyos lo tsa ba Yon tan grags (b.973) in return for teachings. This happened soon after gNyos lo tsa ba came back from his spiritual journey to rGya gar initiated in wood dog 1034. The donation indicates that the rGya also controlled lands in lHo Kha bzhi (i.e. future Bhutan), for they granted them to the same master.

rGya ston A rya de ba was probably the ultimate expression of the religious and secular complexity of the period. He belonged to the rGya clan, locally empowered by the *lha sras btsan po*-s, but he himself was the founder of a *tsho*, for he established the division named rGya tsho at sPo ru sna (spelled so in *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* p.479,2-3; *Bu ston chos 'byung* p.197,10-11 has sGo ru ru sna).³⁶ He thus had adopted the religious system brought from A mdo by the men of dBus gTsang before searching for teachings coming from India.

The Yol brothers again

Returning to Yol Chos dbang after this short digression, the *grub chen*'s statement that he controlled Nyan tsho and nowhere else,³⁷ is, once again, reductive. Yol chen po had a wider

36 rGya ston A rya de ba was a disciple of A mes who studied under Kyi ston Ye shes dbang po. The Khyi tsho division was originated from the latter. rGya ston A rya de ba's rGya tsho was one division under the Kyi tsho stod pa. *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (p.479,1-4) says: “At that time, of the four [A mes's] disciples of sTod, Khri ston brTson 'bar held Shong sna; Sa rbad bTsun chung held Brang chung; rGya ston Arya de wa held sPo ru sna; and 'Dar Shakya bzhon nu held Sar phug. These are known as Khri tsho, Bra tsho, rGya tsho and Sar tsho. [Altogether,] they were called the Kyi tsho stod pa and became four tax-paying communities”.

Grub chen Kun blo has variant assessments concerning two of these monastic centres. He says (*Deb ther* p.469,1-2) that Shong snar (spelled so) was built by rBad btsun chung (rather than Khri ston brTson 'bar), who was also responsible for the construction of Sa phug (spelled so) (on both see n.68 below).

37 Yol Chos dbang's tenure of Nyan tsho is not confirmed by another passage in *Myang chos 'byung* (p.117,9-12), which only says that A ti sha turned the wheel of the teachings at this locality for three

ranging sphere of influence in the region. Besides gNas rnying, he also took charge of rTsis kyi lha khang (*Myang chos 'byung* p.103,21). Whether this abbatial office was contemporary with that of gNas rnying is not clarified in the documents.

Yol Chos dbang's passing was in a most dedicated manner for a Buddhist master. He died on his throne while imparting teachings on a commentary to *brGyad stong pa*. His entire body was buried inside a *mchod rten* built at sTag tshal for the purpose (ibid. p.114,14-16).

His two younger brothers, too, left a prominent religious mark. While residing at Bye mda' with his siblings (*Myang chos 'byung* p.65,7-8), Yol Thog 'bebs founded dGe rgyas there (ibid. p.65,9). This was not all; *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar* (f.11a,2-4) credits a conspicuous number of holy places to Yol Thog 'bebs's activity in the Khu le area of Nyang stod: 'Chad mang,³⁸ Ze thang and Gra thang.³⁹

Yol Drang srong added more holy places to those under the family's control. He focused his attention upon lCang ra, a locality originally controlled by rGya 'Jam dpal gsang ba (*Myang chos 'byung* p.89,3-5), where he built a 'du kang, lCe spe lha khang, and a boundary wall. He established a 'Dul ba community there.⁴⁰ The fortunes of lCang ra from the first half of the 9th century, the days of rGya 'Jam dpal gsang ba, to around the mid 11th century are undocumented, a historical lacuna that corresponds with the dark period between the two diffusions, but a similar course of events to those at gNas rnying may have occurred there, given the same actors at play.

The pattern of the early bKa' gdams pa diffusion in gTsang differed from that in dBus, where A ti sha's best disciples were concentrated. They all engaged in building personal monasteries in honour of their teacher after Jo bo rje's demise, except for the expansion of sNye thang, the Bengali master's historical residence. In gTsang, A ti sha's disciples—the Yol brothers were important but less prominent than 'Brom ston pa, rNgog Legs pa'i shes rab and Khu ston brTson 'grus g.yung drung—did not establish large scale bKa' gdams centres, such as Rwa sgreng or gSang phu Ne'u thog. The Yol brothers either took over preexisting monasteries, founded during *bstan pa snag dar*, or added new temples and monastic communities to them.

The relative chronology of the early bKa' gdams pa diffusion in dBus and gTsang cannot be established beyond doubt. Dates are known for the bKa' gdams monasteries in dBus; they

months, where he met mGos lo tsa ba Khug pa lhas btsas who received instructions from the great Bengali master.

38 *Myang chos 'byung* (p.37,21-p.38,2): “This 'Chad mang [originally] was part of the Bhe po division. They were followers of rNgog Byang chub 'byung gnas, who belonged to the group of the four main disciples of Klu mes. With Bhe acting as *mkan po* and ...Yam shud acting as *slob dpon*, Grwa pa mNgon shes (p.38) was given the monastic vow (*rab tu byung*). He then founded g.Yo ru Grwa thang. Grwa pa mNgon shes's disciple, 'Be (spelled so) g.Yo rong btsun, founded Myang stod 'Chad mang”.

39 *Myang chos 'byung* (p.38,5-9): “[note: In *Gyen tho* of the gNas rnying people [it is written that], when Yol Thob 'bebs repeatedly travelled between Phye mda' (sic for Bye mda') and rMog pa, he stopped at Gra ma a few times for his lunch break. Having said: “There is need of a place for meals”, he founded Grwa thang. Having said: “There is need for a place for resting”, he founded both 'Chad mang and Ze thang]”.

40 *Myang chos 'byung* (p.89,5-8): “Thereafter, Jo bo A ti sha's disciple Yol Drang srong built lCe sPe lha khang. He introduced a monastic community at lCang ra, and constructed the 'du khang and the *lcags ri*. In the *gtsug lag khang* there is a *nang rten* of the Yol brothers, which bestows blessings”.

can only be tentative in gTsang. At least one case is indicative of the situation in Nyang; the account of Yol Chos dbang's takeover of gNas rnying lets one to presume that it happened quite early in his life, for it was consequent to a premonition A ti sha had in a dream of around fire dog 1046, while he was in gTsang and before moving to dBus, but this is not definite evidence (Yol Chos dbang may have not followed the Bengali master's instructions immediately). This takeover would have predated the foundation of major bKa' gdams pa monasteries in dBus.

RNGOG LO TSA BA'S SPIRITUAL INHERITANCE

New waves of religious insemination were brought about by the activity of important masters who were either from the land or active locally. An account describes rNgog Blo ldan shes rab (1059-1109) listening to the teachings of the Kha che master Dznya na shri at an unspecified locality of Nyang (perhaps in the surroundings of Pa snam rzung) in the presence of Khyung po Grags se/Khyung po Grags seng (*Myang chos 'byung* p.129,14-17). I suggest that this happened before the Tho ling *chos 'khor* of fire dragon 1076 and that, consequently, the young rNgog lo tsa ba may have travelled to Gu ge to attend the great religious council in the train of this Tibetan master, who was elder to him. Terse passages celebrate their respective contribution and personal interaction. 'Gos lo tsa ba gZhon nu 'dpal's *Deb ther sngon po* says that *Tshad ma rnying ma* was that of Khyung po Grags se/Khyung po Grags seng and *Tshad ma gsar ma* was taught by rNgog Blo ldan shes rab (*Deb ther sngon po* p.97,13-16; *Blue Annals* p.70).

His frequentation of Nyang in his earlier years may have been behind rNgog lo tsa ba's return there, after the seventeen years he spent in Kha che for his studies. An interlinear note in *Myang chos 'byung* (p.105,8-10) tells that, upon returning to Tibet, rNgog lo tsa ba turned the wheel of the teachings first at Myang stod 'Dul chung, then at 'Jad Bo dong, then at lHa sa and finally at localities in dBu ru and g.Yo ru.

His presence in Nyang seems to have led him to accept two major masters of the soil as his disciples. Among rNgog lo tsa ba's *bu chen bzhi* one finds 'Bre/'Dre chen po Shes rab 'bar and Khyung po Rin chen grags. The former, especially, left an important mark on the religious history of Nyang. The two together opened a school practising rNgog lo tsa ba's system at Zhwa lu. This is the last reference to activities at this monastery found in grub chen Kun blo's *Nyang stod bla ma'i mtshan gyi deb ther* for quite sometime.

Hence one can envisage four phases in the early history of Zhwa lu: 1) its foundation and lCe btsun's practice of Lo ston's 'Dul ba observance; 2) sdom pa rGya gar ma; 3) A ti sha's *rab gnas*; and 4) 'Bre Shes rab 'bar and Khyung Rin chen grags's *chos grwa* (see p.538-539).

'BRE CHEN PO AND THE CONFLUENCE OF RNGOG'S AND BKA' GDAMS TEACHINGS

A new phase came about in Nyang during the late 11th-early 12th century owing to 'Bre Shes rab 'bar, one of the foremost religious personalities active in the region and beyond (he was abbot of

rGyal lha khang; *Deb ther sngon po* p.402,11-12; *Blue Annals* p.330). A two-fold transmission source was behind the monastic inheritance of 'Bre chen po Shes rab 'bar, a versatile master of many doctrines. Being the best disciple of Yol Chos dbang, the monastic communities and temples that had passed under the control of the Yol brothers owing to Jo bo rje's religious charisma were transferred to 'Bre chen po.⁴¹ Disciples gathered around him because he was a great master, a follower of Kha che 'Bum phrag gsum pa and the *dBu ma* tradition of the latter's disciple rNgog lo tsa ba (*gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar* p.13,6-7), who learned it during his seventeen year sojourn in Kha che.⁴² 'Bre chen po was not only a major disciple of his but also one of the earliest to have studied under him, given rNgog lo tsa ba's teaching activity in Nyang before moving to dBus (see above p.536).

Grub chen Kun dga' blo gros pays homage to the master's life and deeds with one of his syntheses. 'Bre chen po is the first personality to be cited in his section on the Nyang stod *bla ma-s*. This choice affirms which one of them grub chen Kun dga' blo gros considers as preeminent.⁴³ He first mentions his birth place—an information he does not fail to pass when possible, perhaps showing some amount of local pride—and his being the most gifted of rNgog lo tsa ba's disciples:

(*Deb ther* p.454,6-7): “Dre (aka 'Bre) Shes rab 'bar, together with Khyung Rin chen grags, was the most eminent of the four great disciples of rNgog Blo ldan shes rab. He was born at lHa ri mo, the mountain on the other side of the river, in front of rTse sman”.

41 *Myang chos 'byung* (p.81,1-7): “Among the many followers of Yol Chos kyi dbang phyug, 'Bre chen po Shes rab 'bar was his most distinguished disciple. He attended upon many *mkhas grub* of rGya [gar and] Tibet, such as bla ma 'Bum phrag [gsum pa] from rGya gar [and] rNgog Blo ldan shes rab. He was appointed abbot [of gNas rnying] after he was given the *gdan sa* of the twenty-four rBa tsho by Yol Chos dbang, the great human being who was accepted (*rjes su bzung ba*) by Byams pa mgon po, and was given the land, power and his family by Jo sras Phur pa 'phel”.

42 *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar* has an abridged biography of 'Bre chen po. I focus here on the earlier part of this account (f.13a,2-6): “As for the greatness of 'Bre Shes rab 'bar's abbotship, 'Bre chen's native place was gTsang po Nang pa. In his youth, he went to see Yol ston Chos kyi dbang phyug and was ordained by him. He received exhaustive teachings from the Yol brothers and mastered them. This noble being was an adept of rje btsun Byams pa mgon po since many previous lives. Although Yol chen po had many excellent students, this one was the most illustrious master. He was given the *gdan sa* of mkhan po Yol, the twenty-four rBa tsho [and] all the lands and properties offered [to Yol chen po] by Jo sras Phur pa 'phel. As for his residence, he mainly stayed at Shod 'gur (spelled so). He held all the *gdan sa*. Moreover, he studied under outstanding *bla ma-s*, such as pandi ta 'Bum phrag gsum pa, rNgog lo tsa ba Blo ldan shes rab, and many *mkhas grub* of India and Tibet. He was a master of all texts and in particular of *Byams chos lnga*”.

43 According to *Deb ther sngon po* (p.122,11-p.123,1; *Blue Annals* p.93), 'Bre chen po went to Khams together with Khu ston and rNgog Legs pa'i shes rab. This is in disaccord with Las chen's *bKa' gdams chos 'byung* which says that the three who went to Khams to study under Se btsun were Khu, rNgog and Bang ston (ibid. Indian ed. vol.1 p.216,2). Las chen (ibid. p.219,2-3) adds that rNgog returned to dBus in the year of the bird 1045, one year after 'Brom left Khams to meet Jo bo rje. This contradictory statements do not help to assess when 'Bre should be placed. He could have hardly gone to Khams in the early 1040s and then to have been a disciple of rNgog Blo ldan shes rab, who was born in 1059 and began his career in Tibet as a fully fledged master in the early 90s of the 11th century to die in 1109. 'Bre did not go to Khams with Khu and rNgog. 'Gos lo tsa ba gZhon nu dpal—or his source—seems to be wrong in this.

Grub chen Kun blo goes on to introduce, among the many deeds ascribed to him, 'Bre chen po's work at gNas rnying, where he engaged in an intensive teaching activity but also mentions its founder 'Jam dpal gsang ba's construction work that appears in an interlinear note (was it written by him or added on?):

(*Deb ther* p.454,7-p.455,1): “[’Bre chen po] was offerered the locality [where] rGya ’Jam dpal gsang ldan (aka ’Jam dpal gsang ba) founded gNas rnying [note: the latter made its *dbu rtse rnying ma* and the central *lcags ri*].⁴⁴ (p.455) The throne of Sa pan is still kept there alongside with ’Bre chen po’s. The latter created the conditions for the existence of a religious institution at Bye mda’, which was beneficial for sentient beings, and also held Nying ro Shong gur”.⁴⁵

He then says that veneration for him did not cease to exist in his days:

(*Deb ther* p.455,4): “[’Dre’s] books, bowl and robe are kept here (at gNas rnying) still at present”.

In the gNas rnying *mkhan rabs* written by one Shar Mi nyag pandi ta Kirti badzra (f.12a,3; also see f.7b,7) and found in *Jo bo yab sras las ’phros pa’i skyes bu dam pa ’ga’ zhid gi byon pa’i tshul bstan rtsis*, ’Bre Shes rab ’bar is credited with the foundation of Gog mo in the upper valley (*phu*) of gNas rnying (ibid. f.11b,6). *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar* calls it gNas Gog (i.e. gNas rnying Gog mo) and attributes it to La stod dKon mchog mkhar (ibid. f.14a,5-6). This was one of the targets of Mongol wrath during the Sa skya pa/Yuan period (see *Jo bo yab sras las ’phros pa’i skyes bu dam pa ’ga’ zhid gi byon pa’i tshul bstan rtsis* f.11b,7 and below p.552-555).

Grub chen Kun blo also associates Bye mda’ with ’Bre Shes rab ’bar who turned the wheel of the teachings extensively there (*Myang chos ’byung* p.64,13-15). Earlier, the Yol brothers had elected residence at this holy place (ibid. p.65,7-8), which goes back to *bstan pa snag dar*: its *lha khang* was built by Khri Ral pa can, following a piece of advice given to him by rGya ’Jam dpal gsang ba (ibid. p.64,12-13; also see above n.19 and 32). Hence Bye mda’ was another place entrusted by the Yol brothers to ’Bre chen po. One may infer that the same transmission from rGya ’Jam dpal gsang ba to one of the Yol brothers which took place at gNas rnying and lCang ra occurred at Bye mda’.

The sphere of ’Bre chen po’s activity was extended to Nyang smad when he was called to Zhwa lu together with Khyung Rin chen grags, a disciple of rNgog lo tsa ba like him, but also his own disciple. The member of the lCe family who invited them was the son of that g.Yu thog sgra gSer bzang/zangs who had been involved as secular chieftain in the dispute with the abbot Khyung po Grags se/Khyung po Grags seng (see n.30 above). The *grub chen* talks about the invitation extended to ’Bre and Khyung twice in his *deb ther*, which led to the creation of a monastic school at Zhwa lu. I repeat here what he says:

44 *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar* (f.4a,5-6) attributes to rGya ’Jam dpal gsang pa the patronage of his yon bdag rGya Khyung rgod rtsal, the construction of a *lha khang* and *gzim khang* surrounded by the central *lcags ri* at sKyebs gNas rnying, and a hermitage and a meditation place nearby.

45 *Myang chos ’byung* (p.65,8-9) follows suit and says that it was one of ’Bre chen po’s main residences.

(*Deb ther* p.474,1-2): “When g.Yu thog sgra gSer bzangs was the abbot of Zhal lu, he had a son (i.e. lCe ’Bum me). So he held the *dpon sa* of Zhwa lu”.

(*Deb ther* p.474,2): “[Zhwa lu’s] *gdan sa* was given to mGo ba (i.e. Ye shes g.yung drung), ’Dre [and] Khyung”.

(*Deb ther* p.455,6): “’Dre and Khyung, two in all, established the Zhal lu *chos grwa*”.

Besides communicating the reason that led lCe g.Yu thog sgra to abdicate the abbatial chair and embrace a secular career, these passages contain historical inexactitudes. It was lCe btsun Shes rab ’byung gnas who called ’A zha/mGo ba Ye shes g.yung drung to be an interim *gdan sa* of Zhwa lu. It ensues that grub chen Kun blo favours an untenable postponement of events in the history of Zhwa lu. This casts a shadow of doubt about inclusion of ’Bre and Khyung in its abbatial line, for they do not appear among its throne holders in other documents (*Zha lu gSer khang gi bdag po lCe’i gdung rabs*; *rGya Bod yig tshang*; *Myang chos ’byung*; *Zha lu dgon gyi lo rgyus mdor bsdus*). On the contrary, there are no points to dismiss the fact that they opened a *chos grwa* at Zhwa lu. This means that ’Bre and Khyung would have brought the rNgog lo tsa ba religious system to the *dgon pa*.

A branch monastery of Bye mda’ was another locality chosen by ’Bre Shes rab ’bar to be the theatre of his teaching activity. Here, ’Bre chen po gave extremely extensive instructions and a great flower rain fell in celebration of that. The tradition holds that there was no other place in which ’Bre chen po gave as many teachings, for this reason the locality was named ’Chad mang (“many instructions”) (*Myang chos ’byung* p.38,2-5).⁴⁶ It then seems that ’Chad mang was lost to associates of ’Be g.Yo rong btsun, its founder and a transmission holder of a line of Klu mes’s disciples from dBus, who manifestly had control of some holy places in gTsang.

Possibly because it was part of the bloc of monastic schools inherited by him from the Yol brothers, ’Bre Shes rab ’bar also turned the wheel of the teachings at lCang ra (*Myang chos ’byung* p.90,10-11). This shows fairly well that ’Bre Shes rab ’bar’s religious exertions were characterised by a conspicuous amount of mobility. He also was at rGod po lung (earlier known as rGyan dkar gong ma) which was renamed as rGod po khung, since ’Bre chen po received *rGod kyi khung* there.⁴⁷

Further proving the extent of his presence in Nyang, a speech delivered by Bu ston Rin chen grub at Nyang stod Chu mig reveals that ’Bre chen po had resided at this monastery too. The omniscient Zhwa lu pa master also mentioned the past presence of the Kha che erudite

46 *Myang chos ’byung* (p.37,18-21): “[note: ’Chad mang was given this name [because] ’Bre gave instructions (’*chad*) on *mNgon pa* many times (*mang*) [here]. This is a branch monastery of Bye mda’. The so called *Bla ’Bum skya pod sgam bzhi* (“the four boxes of *Bla ’Bum* books on white paper”), abridged by ’Bre [Shes rab ’bar] into the *’Bum* in four sections hand-written [by him], are presently preserved at Nying ro gShong mgur”].

47 rGod po khung then was Rab brtan kun bzang ’phags’s hermitage, which led to rename it Ri khrod dGa’ ldan (*Myang chos ’byung* p.46,6-9). Bla ma Gru Go cha rdo rje stayed there after ’Bre Shes rab ’bar (ibid. p.47,5-6).

'Bum phrag gsum pa at Chu mig in his speech,⁴⁸ which makes one wonder whether 'Bre chen po Shes rab 'bar received this monastery not from the Yol brothers but through the rNgog lo tsa ba's spiritual inheritance.

RENEWED INDIVIDUALITY: 'BRE CHEN PO'S CONTEMPORARIES

IHa rje Chos byang (rebirth, physician, temple founder)

Grub chen Kun dga' blo gros dedicates no more than one line to IHa rje Chos byang, a contemporary of 'Bre chen po, although this master belonged to his own *skyes rabs*:

(*Deb ther* p.471,2): "IHa rje Chos byang, the previous birth of pan chen Shakya shri, built dBen dmar lha khang".

This was g.Ye dmar lha khang,⁴⁹ a temple complex I have dealt with in my *Early Temples of Central Tibet* (Chapter Two). Given his placement in the *skyes rabs* (*Myang chos 'byung* p.94,4-6), Iha rje Chos byang must have still been alive and active in the second quarter of 12th century. I hardly believe that he died around fire pig 1127, a commonly accepted birth year of Shakya shri (see, e.g., *Deb ther sngon po* p.1238,14-15; *Blue Annals* p.1064). I favour iron male monkey 1140 for the birth of Kha chen pan chen, as given by Rin chen sde in his *Yar lung Jo bo'i chos 'byung* (p.178,1-3: also see my "The Manjushri mountain and the Buddha tree: a history of the dPyal clan (7th-14th century)", forthcoming).

rGyang ro Gru'i lha chen rDo rje sems dpa' performed the *rab gnas* of g.Ye dmar. During the ceremony, *srin po*-s poured ambrosia from their hands (*Myang chos 'byung* p.69,18-20).

*Kha rag gNyo*s *kyi gdung rabs* (f.4a,2-3) calls this temple complex E ma ra'i bDud 'dul lha khang,⁵⁰ in reference to a monumental scene of the attack by the Mara demons that was its

48 *Myang chos 'byung* (p.38,21-p.39,10): "A little below it (i.e. 'Chad mang), Myang stod Chu mig is where rGya gar pan chen 'Bum phrag gsum pa came [to visit]. rGya 'Dul 'dzin acted as the holder of dgon pa Chu mig [and] its area. He turned the wheel of many basic teachings (*chos gzhis* for *chos gzhi*). [Here] he gave extensive discourses on 'Dul ba. (p.39) Ne rings pa Kyi ston Chos grags bowed to the feet of rGya 'Dul at Chu mig ring po (spelled so). Ka mo Ze'u ston pa of Khu le held Chu mig, and it happened that it was greatly expanded. It is likely that Chu mig dgon pa existed beforehand (i.e. before Ze'u ston pa expanded it). At the age of sixty-two in iron female hare (1351), Zhwa lu Bu ston rin po che went to mediate the strife between both g.Ya' [bzang] and Phag [mo gru]. On the way east to *nyi ma* dBus *rgyal khams*, he imparted many teachings on *Theg pa che chung* at Myang stod Chu mig. [Bu ston rin po che] said: "I am pleased to be here [at Chu mig]. It is a very long time after I came to the monastery of the rGya gar *pan chen* ('Bum phrag gsum pa) and mkhas pa 'Bre [Shes rab 'bar]". He spent the period of one month [there]. [This Chu mig] should not be mistaken with Chu mig nearby sNar thang, which is called Chu ming (sic for Chu mig) ring mo".

49 g.Ye dmar should not be confused with dBen dmar, the seat of the Rong pa family in gTsang, with which great religious personalities, such as Rong pa rGa lo the younger and his son Rong pa Shes rab seng ge, are associated.

50 *Kha rag gNyo*s *kyi gdung rabs* (f.4a,2-3): "Given that IHa rje Chos byang had built E ma ra'i bDud 'dul lha khang [note: this is called Kyang po], he asked the *lo tsa ba* (i.e. gNyo lo tsa ba Yon tan grags) to consecrate it. Moreover, he offered the *lo tsa ba* all the monastic quarters and places of mGos yul stod gsum and 'Bri mtshams".

most famous image. The text then equivocates, for it confuses g.Ye dmar with nearby rKyang po/bu, this possibly due to the presence of a similar scene at the latter temple.

The two rGya 'Dul 'dzin (a new phase of 'Dul ba observance is introduced)

Elsewhere in the region, new activities indicate that the flourishing of 'Dul ba did not lose momentum entirely in Nyang after Lo ston, Tshong btsun and their disciples. This tradition could boast of important exponents well after the introduction of the *tsho* network, because of the religious direction given locally by several contemporaries of 'Bre chen po, who made of these holy places vibrant school of learning and practice. dGa' ba sdong was certainly one of them, where the two great rGya 'Dul 'dzin (older and younger) found fertile grounds for their activity. Grub chen Kun blo differentiates them thus:

(*Deb ther* p.457,1-3): “Drung mkhan chen gNas rnying pa says that rGya 'Dul 'dzin pa chen po was from sTag gi rGya ma ra ba in the surroundings of rBa brCad. When the [gNas rnying] *drung chen* says that he was from Shal gyi Ma ra in the west of the 'Dol chung river, he refers to the later [rGya 'Dul 'dzin]. He subsequently was the abbot of dGa' ba gdong”.⁵¹

rGya 'Dul 'dzin dBang phyug tshul khirms 'bar (i.e. rGya 'Dul 'dzin the elder) (1047-1131), a native of Myang stod Mang ra ba (spelled Mang rab in *Myang chos 'byung* p.134,5-6),⁵² preceded rGya 'Dul 'dzin the younger at dGa' ba sdong, originally founded by Khri srong lde'u btsan.⁵³ He belonged to *sMad 'Dul* line that descended from Klu mes who had Rlung, sKyogs and gZus among his disciples. gZus rDo rje rgyal mtshan, in turn, had three disciples.

51 The gNas rnying *drung chen* often mentioned by grub chen Kun dga' blo gros in his *deb ther* could have been 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan (1364-1422), the gNas rnying abbot contemporary to the author, whose biography in *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar* (f.41b,1-f.46a,3) was penned by one Grags pa rgyal mtshan in an unspecified fire ox year (1457? or 1517?). This is just one sign that this text on gNas rnying is a compilation, which benefitted from contributions of various writers in different periods. When Kun blo mentions the gNas rnying *drung chen*, he often uses the verb *gsung*, which may not be read in its secondary meaning of “to write”. What the rTse chen *grub chen* incorporated in his work may have been personal communications with 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan.

52 *rGya Bod yig tshang* talks about the relocation to this locality of families of the Dung reng from Mon yul, defeated by the Shar kha princes of rGyal rtse and rTse chen in the mid 14th century (see below n.97). The passage (ibid. p.380,15-16) says: “The descendants of the [Shar] Dung reng are [still] settled at Nyang stod Mang rab at present”. The time when this happened fell around wood tiger 1434, the year in which dPal 'byor bzang po's *rGya Bod yig tshang* was completed.

53 The tradition of the *Byaspyod rnal 'byorpa*-s was introduced at this holy place by the spiritual successors to Sangs rgyas gsang ba. Khri srong lde'u btsan founded this monastery, following his well known failed attempt to invite Sangs rgyas gsang ba, who was at Ti se. One of the envoys sent to the Indian master was Pa tshab lo tsa ba Tshul khirms bzang po. Sangs rgyas gsang ba sent books and imparted teachings meant for the king and the monastic population instead of proceeding to Central Tibet (*Myang chos 'byung* p.131,12-p.132,1). The king did not give up and sent a second invitation brought by dBas The len, slob dpon Bran ka Mu rti (see the spelling Mu ru ti in n.71 below) and 'Jam dpal Madznu shri to summon Pa tshab Tshul khirms rgyal po from dGa' ba sdong. They eventually received *gSang sngags gsar rnying*, including *sPyod rgyud*, from Sangs rgyas gsang ba. Pa tshab Tshul khirms rgyal po, who hailed from sTag rtse, was the *lo tsa ba* for Sangs rgyas gsang ba in those circumstances. Pa tshab mainly stayed at dGa' ba sdong sNam rdzong rtse to impart teachings (*Myang chos 'byung* p.132,12-p.133,1).

rGya 'Dul 'dzin dBang phyug tshul khriims 'bar attended upon sKam gSang ba'i snying po, one of those three. He spent fifty-one years imparting teachings at dGa' ba sdong, from his thirty-fifth year of age to his eighty-fifth (1075-1125) (ibid. p.133,10-18).

rGya 'Dul 'dzin brTson 'grus 'bar (i.e. rGya 'Dul 'dzin the younger) attended upon Sog 'Dul 'dzin Tshul khriims bla ma in his early years. During the intermediate period he went to dGa' ba sdong and followed the instructions of rGya 'dul 'dzin dBang phyug tshul khriims 'bar. In his later period he studied under rMa tsho Byang rdor (ibid. p.134,9-12).⁵⁴

The work of the two rGya 'Dul 'dzin at dGa' ba sdong is a sign of the continuity of the *Vinaya* practice in Nyang. One wonders whether the various regions of dBus went through a similar situation. The persistence of the transmission lineage, to which rGya 'Dul 'dzin belonged, indicates that the bestowal of the vow descending from lha chen dGongs rab gsal carried on unabated in both dBus and gTsang. In particular, the one in Nyang went on side by side with sdom pa rGya gar ma introduced by lCe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas in the monasteries he controlled. In dBus the situation was different. A new season would take place there with the foundation of sKyor mo lung by sBal ti dGra bcom pa in earth ox 1169, which marked the (re)introduction of a pure vow. Hence the phases whereby *'Dul ba* flourished in Nyang were: 1) the *tsho* network of Lo ston, Tshong btsun and their disciples; 2) sdom pa rGya gar ma; 3) the work of the two rGya 'Dul 'dzin at dGa' ba sdong. A fourth phase, promoted, as is well known, by the presence of Kha chen pan chen Shakya shri occurred subsequently (see below p.547).

'BRE CHEN PO'S OWN SPIRITUAL INHERITANCE

Khyung Rin chen grags ('Bre's long-time associate)

Younger contemporaries of 'Bre Shes rab 'bar carried on the traditions that had been introduced in Nyang during the momentous one hundred years from the last quarter of the 10th to the last quarter of the 11th century. 'Bre chen po had numerous disciples,⁵⁵ some of the best brains of

54 rGya 'Dul 'dzin brTson 'grus 'bar gave sTeng lo tsa ba both the *rab tu byung* and *bsnyen rdzogs* vows at dGa' ba sdong, when the latter was respectively fifteen and nineteen years old. rGya 'Dul 'dzin the younger advised sTeng lo tsa ba to go to rGya gar, which he did (*Myang chos 'byung* p.134,12-16).

Rwa lo tsa ba rDo rje grags (1016-?), too, was at dGa' ba sdong which benefitted from one of his legendary donations. He gave a *'Bum* to rGya 'Dul 'dzin (ibid. p.135,17-18), but it remains unclear to which one of the two. The reliability of Rwa lo tsa ba's biography is disputable to the point that I rather omit a perusal to find confirmation on this topic (and others). The *rnam thar* is filled with historical fantasies rather than facts. Among a plethora of other ones, I mention here a few historical absurdities, such as that he repulsed the Du ru ka from rDo rje 'jigs byed lha khang at rDo rje gdan (Rwa Ye shes seng ge, *Rwa lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* p.75,2-3); that he sojourned at 'Ba' rom (ibid. p.117,9-10) or that he drove back the sTod Hor from dBus gTsang (ibid. p.135,3-7).

55 *Myang chos 'byung* (p.81,7-10): "Khyung Rin chen grags, Ar Byang chub ye shes, gNyal pa bSregs ston, mDog pa Byang chub grags and Bya 'Dul ba 'dzin pa brTson 'grus 'bar were the outstanding disciples of 'Bre chen po along with some exemplary 1,000 monks scattered around".

Among those cited in the passage above, grub chen Kun dga' blo gros spends two words for Bya 'Dul 'dzin brTson 'grus 'bar (1091-1166):

(*Deb ther* p.455,5): "Bya 'Dul was given the monastic vow (*rab tu byung*) by 'Dre chen po at Rong".

the period, but Khyung Rin chen grags was the closest to him. Besides being 'Bre Shes rab 'bar's student, Khyung and his teacher were co-disciples of rNgog Blo ldan shes rab. Grub chen Kun dga' blo gros gives, as usual, a minimum of information about him:

(*Deb ther* p.455,5-6): Khyung Rin chen grags was born at Glang. He was a master of *Tshad ma*. He held Byang 'chad. The Sa skya pa (i.e. Sa chen Kun dga' snying po (1092-1158)) learned *Tshad ma* at Byang 'chad [under him]".

The *grub chen* adds that Khyung founded the monastic school of Zhwa lu with his associate 'Bre/'Dre chen po, a fact I have briefly introduced above (*Deb ther* p.455,6: "'Dre and Khyung, two in all, established the Zhal lu *chos grwa*"), which seems to have marked the induction of rNgog lo tsa ba's teachings at one of the most prestigious institutions of Nyang, although its greatest splendour in terms of teachings and endowments to the monastery were to come in the 14th century.

Khyung Rin chen grags, a holder of rNgog lo tsa ba's *dBu ma* and *Tshad ma* transmissions, mainly stayed at Glang pa 'Phang thang, situated in his native area, where he engaged in imparting instructions. There, his principal disciples sTod lung rGya dmar ba Byang chub grags and rTag pa Kha che came to sit at his feet, for this was the locality where they could benefit from their teacher's knowledge (*Myang chos 'byung* p.72,17-19).⁵⁶

Again at Glang pa 'Phang thang, Nyi phug pa, the great *bsnyung gnas* master from Zhang zhung, received the name Chos kyi grags pa after ordination to the *rab tu byung* vow from Khyung Rin chen grags (ibid. p.72,19-21; on Nyi phug pa see Vitali "The transmission of *bsnyung gnas* in India, the Kathmandu Valley and Tibet (10th-12th century)").

Gangs pa Se'u (the supreme teachers' disciple)

Gangs pa She'u was a master of some importance, at least inasmuch as he belonged to prestigious transmission lines. The *grub chen* says about him:

(*Deb ther* p.455,6-7): "Gangs pa She'u was a *grub thob* of *dBu ma* and *Tshad ma* at Gangs phu'i sKyi thang. He also received teachings from rNgog lo [tsa ba]".

The *grub chen* seems to imply that this happened at Ngur smrig (on his ordination see *Deb ther sngon po* p.109,4-5; *Blue Annals* p.80).

Among his lesser known followers, Chu mig pa Shes rab grags pa, a master from Nyang stod, is dealt with in *Jo bo yab sras las 'phros pa'i skeyes bu dam pa 'ga' zhig gi byon pa'i tshul bstan rtsis* concerning his ties with 'Bre and Khyung and the latter's disciples. The text (f.4b,4-5) says: "Gro's *bla ma* was [the sNar thang abbot] Chu mig pa Shes rab grags pa. He was born at sDza ra in the Ze'u clan. When he was twenty-eight, he was ordained to the monastic vow by 'Bre chen po Shes rab 'bar and Khyung Rin chen grags, these two. For six years he studied *brTags* ("process of mental examination") under Shes rab grags and *Phar phyin* under 'Bre. He studied *dBu ma*, *Tshad ma* and *sPyod* under Khyung, Zhar chos pa and the two known as rGya [and] sTag".

56 *Jo bo yab sras las 'phros pa'i skeyes bu dam pa 'ga' zhig gi byon pa'i tshul bstan rtsis* (f.4b,5): "sTod lungs rGya dmar ba Byang chub grags and sTag pa Kha che ba were called rGya sTag gnyis" (see the note immediately above). sTod lung rGya dmar, also a disciple of Gro lung pa, chose, among the places of Nyang, to turn the wheel of the teachings at sTag tshal (*Myang chos 'byung* p.114,4-6).

Gangs pa She'u could boast of being a follower of another major master of the previous generation; besides having studied under rNgog Blo ldan shes rab, he was also one of Pa tshab lo tsa ba Nyi ma grags's four main disciples.⁵⁷ This indicates that the influx of Pa tshab lo tsa ba's religious system into Nyang could count on a few adepts personally trained by the master and, thanks to them, it put roots in the region.

Gangs pa She'u's main residences were gTsang Brag (*Myang chos 'byung* p.73,14-15), a monastery subsequently converted to the dGe lugs pa, as well as his own *dgon pa* and cave above lCang ra, where he studied and imparted teachings. It was at 'Ban grong that a funerary *sa 'bum* ("earth mound/*stupa*") was erected to house his full body (ibid. p.43,7-8 and p.92,2-3). More than anywhere else, his sphere of activity unfolded at rGyang ro Gangs pa (ibid. p.91,21-p.92,1).

La stod dKon mchog mkhar ('Bre chen po's favoured spiritual son)

The post *bstan pa phyi dar* phase in Nyang was characterised by the absence in the territory of any of the major religious schools—mostly the bKa' brgyud pa after Dwags po lHa rje Zla 'od gzhon nu (1079-1153)—which were taking shape elsewhere in Central Tibet and other regions of the plateau through the foundation of large scale monasteries.

In this panorama, where the religious environment carried on along the same lines as in previous periods, gNas rnying, a most illustrious institution of the region, continued to be run with a typically individualistic style. This was due to 'Bre Shes rab 'bar's choice of his heart disciple La stod dKon mchog mkhar (probably 1084-1171; see Vitali, "The history of the lineages of gNas rnying summarized as its "ten greatnesses" in the sources" p.96-97) as his successor. Grub chen Kun dga' blo gros deals with their earliest meeting, when La stod dKon mchog mkhar was not yet a monk and 'Bre chen po was an established master. This is a welcome addition, for *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar* begins its treatment of dKon mchog mkhar only after he took the robe and became a fully fledged disciple of 'Bre chen po (ibid. f.13b,2-f.14a,2). The *deb ther* reads:

(*Deb ther* p.455,1-4): "While ['Dre] was imparting teachings, a numerous group of bad laymen gathered. La stod dKon mchog mkhar had gone there for trade. A head of a frog appeared to him and he also had a vision that there was a fire in the market of Bye 'da' (spelled so). Having grown instant faith in ['Dre/'Bre chen po], he loaded [his merchandise on] a donkey and left to see 'Dre who tonsured him, made him a monk and trained him in *Phar phyin*".

57 Mang thos lHun grub rgya mtsho, *bsTan rtsis gsal ba'i nyin byed* (p.116,14-16): "His (i.e. Pa tshab lo tsa ba's) four disciples were Gangs pa She'u, master of verbal formulations; gTsang pa 'Bre snur, master of their meaning; rMa bya Byang brtson, master of both; and Zhang thang Zag pa, master of both, four in all". Grub chen Kun blo includes a different disciple—a native of Nyang—among Pa tshab lo tsa ba's *bu chen bzhi*: (*Deb ther* p.455,7-p.456,1): "lCang ra ba gTsang pa Sar sbos was one of the *bu bzhi* of Pa tsab (sic) lo tsa ba. (p.456) He founded a *dgon sde* west of lCang ra. He also founded a *chos gzhis* (spelled so) at rTa bres, given to him by a *sngags pa* of the rTa bres pa".

As for the circumstances surrounding dKon mchog mkhar's ordination, 'Bre chen po bestowed the monastic vow (*rab tu byung*) upon dKon mchog mkhar and his two brothers, the children of Jo mo Chung ba, in the presence of their father sngags 'chang Rin chen 'byung gnas, who had met the master in Shangs where the *sngags 'chang* was studying *Yang phur* (*Myang chos 'byung* p.64,15-19). The ordination took place at Bye mda'.⁵⁸ Eventually, 'Bre chen po assigned a most prestigious engagement to his disciple:

(*Deb ther* p.455,4): "Afterwards 'Dre gave [La stod] dKon mchog mkhar the throne of gNas rnying".

Jo bo yab sras las 'phros pa'i skyes bu dam pa 'ga' zhid gi byon pa'i tshul bstan rtsis (gNas rnying *mkhan rabs* section f.11b,6-7) adds an abbot who does not appear in *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar*:

"His (i.e. 'Bre's) disciple Nyang stod pa dKon mchog mkhar held both [*gtsug lag khang*] *rnying ma* and 'Bre's *gdan sa*. The younger brother of dKon mchog mkhar was their *gdan sa*".⁵⁹

dKon mchog mkhar made remarkable contributions to 'Bre chen po's holy places: 'Chad mang, Ze thang, Grwa thang, Shong mgur and rMog po (*Myang chos 'byung* p.38,9-11). He also restored Bye mda' lha khang, and an unidentified female disciple of his built a temple at this locality, which she offered to her teacher. He told her to make a boundary wall and reside there. dKon mchog mkhar also founded a *lha khang* at Shong mgur (ibid. p.65,5-7).⁶⁰

58 *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar* (f.12a,7-f.12b,4): "At that time, sngags 'chang Rin chen 'byung gnas, this one, went to Shangs kyi Gad (f.12b) phu ra to receive many religious instructions, such as *rDo rje phur bu*. He was accompanied by the sons from his younger wife, i.e. dKon mkhar and his brothers, three in all. The fame of 'Bre chen Shes rab 'bar having spread all over dBus gTsang in that period, the father had the three brothers, including dKon mkhar, ordained by the *mkhas btsun chen po* (i.e. 'Bre Shes rab 'bar). On the occasion, 'Bre chen was staying at Nyang stod Bye mda' to turn the wheel of the teachings. The three brothers went to see him. Following the undertaking of the ordination, they got fully absorbed into reading, learning and pondering. They received all the teachings of their *mkhan po* [in ordination] in an excellent manner. Due to the power of La stod pa chen po's learning during many lives and his karmic accumulation, he became proficient in all knowledge of *mkhan po* 'Bre chen po not long after [his ordination] by making of himself a recipient of it. Hence he became a reputed master".

59 This is not the view of *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar*. The text (f.15a,3-4) mentions a different personality as the next gNas rnying abbot: "La stod dKon mchog mkhar gave *mkhan po* dBang phyug rin chen what was offered to Yol ston Chos kyi dbang phyug by Jo sras Phur ba 'phel, such as the *lha khang*, the *gnas dgon* ("holy place and monastery"), the Ru lag kha gsum on the upper part and, in addition, the twenty-four rBa tsho, the Khu le Bod 'brog, which had come to include Gyin khung. [dBang phyug rin chen] was appointed *gdan sa*".

It is possible that grub chen Kun blo's confusion depended on the kinship among the dByil family of La stod dKon mchog mkhar (see below n.62). dBang phyug rin chen was the son of this gNas rnying abbot's stepbrother. *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar* (f.14b,1-2) says: "mKhan po dBang phyug rin chen had slob dpon Khyi mkhar for father, a master of *sngags rnying ma* and a powerful individual".

60 La stod dKon mchog mkhar's eminent disciples were a sign of his greatness. Three are mentioned in *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar* (f.14a,2): "La stod pa dKon mchog mkhar's disciples were people beyond common comprehension, such as dPal Phag mo gru pa, grub thob Nyi phug pa Chos kyi grags pa, and [gNas rnying] *mkhan po* dBang phyug rin chen".

'Bre chen po gave his thirteen most noble possessions (*khyad 'phags bcu gsum*), possibly his clan's belongings rather than his own, to dKon mchog mkhar.⁶¹ I see in these moves a wish by the master to secure continuity to his holy places, realising that this was possible if they were entrusted to the clan of his disciple and his brothers. Indeed this is what grub chen Kun blo means to say with his next statement about La stod dKon mchog mkhar:

(*Deb ther* p.455,4-5): "From then on, up to now, the succession in [gNas rnying's] noble abbatial lineage is the manifestation of sPyan ras gzigs".

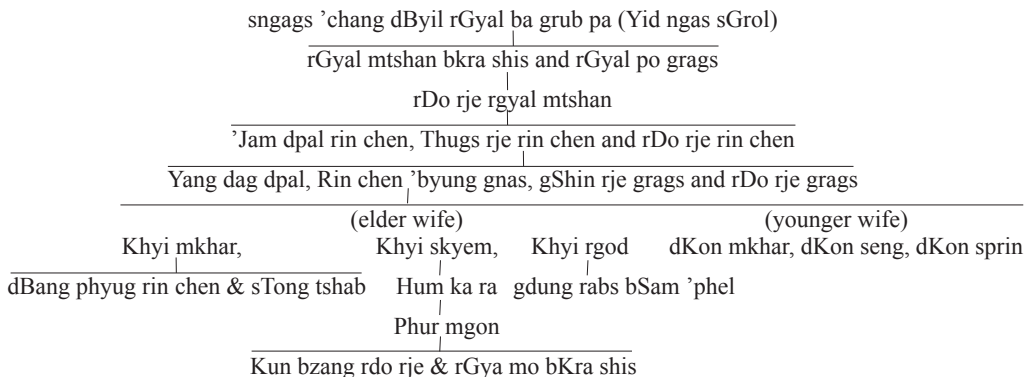
These "manifestations of sPyan ras gzigs" were dKon mchog mkhar's family members, the dByil clan from La stod Byang,⁶² the lineage of gNas rnying's successive throne holders. They are one of the ten greatnesses of gNas rnying enlisted in *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar* and the subject of one long section in this text, dedicated to their proximity to the deity (ibid. f.14a,5 ff.). They appear in the next chapters of this source, as many of its members sat on its abbatial chair.

NYANG MARGINALLY BKA' BRGYUD PA

A conceptual evolution took place among the bKa' brgyud pa subschools in the late 12th and early 13th century. These schools rose from an emphasis on the hermit lifestyle to becoming

61 *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar* (f.13b,3-5) (numbers are mine): "The *khyad 'phags bcu gsum* are: 1) the golden statue of Thub pa dbang po; 2) the four *Bla 'Bum* volumes in black ink on white paper; 3) the *gSer 'bum* bestowing blessings like a rainfall; 4) the white umbrella belonging to the 'Bre *bla ma*-s; 5) the auspicious religious conch with a scarf on the handle; 6) the incomparable *bla yol* ("curtain"); 7) the cymbals [whose sound can be heard] at the distance of one day; 8) the auspicious vase with a long neck; 9) the staff with a lion on its neck; 10) the bowl in which the moon is reflected [like] in a small well; 11) the carpet like the blue sky; 12) the lacker saddle shining with light; and 13) the horse which is a flying camel". Also see *Myang chos 'byung* (p.83,12-18).

62 The lineage of La stod dKon mchog mkhar's ancestors in the dByil family from La stod Byang (*gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar* (f.11b,3-f.12a,6) was:



The gNas rnying abbots after dKon mchog mkhar until the time of writing *Nyang stod bla ma'i mtshan gyi deb ther* were, according to *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar*, dBang phyug rin chen, Zang zang pa Padma rin chen, Chos kyi dBang phyug, Chos kyi rin chen, Rin chen dpal, 'Jam dbyangs shes rab rin chen, Rin chen bzang po, Rin chen 'byung gnas, Rin chen dbang phyug dpal, Rin chen blo gros and 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan.

religious powerhouses. They established diplomatic relations with kingdoms around the plateau and outside it.

These efforts seem to have opened a new perspective for the Tibetans in their relations with various centres of power that went beyond the religious sphere and, at the same time, allowed these potentates to avail themselves of the services the religious schools could offer in a typical *do ut des* situation. The bKa' brgyud pa strategy opened up new vistas in the activity of its subschools. Religious diplomacy entailed a somewhat new model, juggling their role as religious masters, prone to dwell in the solitude of hermitages, with their presence at the courts of both great and petty rulers.

Thar pa gling and Rwa lung (bKa' brgyud hermitages in Nyang)

Unlike elsewhere, the bKa' brgyud pa of Nyang did not favour this strategy, perhaps because there was no potentate in the region with which to establish contacts. A limited number of new monasteries were founded in Nyang, the bKa' brgyud pa ones of Thar pa gling and Rwa lung being among the most important. Rather than being large size monastic centres populated by a conspicuous community like elsewhere in Central Tibet, they were hermitages. Masters who belonged to various great monastic schools mainly carried out their endeavours at preexisting institutions, but they were also active in Nyang at these freshly established holy places.

Thar pa gling, the dPyal family monastery added to their older stronghold sMan lung, was a product of Kha che pan chen's interaction with his Tibetan followers. dPyal Chos bzang, who claimed to be the heart disciple of the Kashmiri *pandi ta* in sheer antagonism with Khro phu lo tsa ba Byams pa dpal (1173-1225), was Thar pa gling's founder, an event that took place sometime after wood rat 1204, when Shakya shri reached gTsang, and before fire hare 1207 (*lHo rong chos 'byung* p.332,21-p.333,3; 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* p.412,4-5; *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* p.15,31-32).⁶³

By promoting the purity of the monastic vow, Kha che pan chen captivated the devotion of great masters belonging to the Khro phu and dPyal bKa' brgyud pa, who became his best disciples, but an equally important interaction was with the major Sa skya pa exponent of the period. Shakya shri's bestowal of the *bsnyen rdzogs* vow to Sa skya pandi ta Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182-1251) is a milestone of Tibet's religious history.⁶⁴

63 Another major religious institution in Nyang to be credited to the impulse to 'Dul ba observance given by Kha che pan chen was one of Jo gdan *tshogs pa bzhi*, established in the wake of the activity of Shakya shri's disciple Jo gdan gTsang po ba. Chos lung tshogs pa in the area of mKhar kha was founded around the end of the first quarter of the 13th century by mkhan chen Byang chub dpal who was ordained to the monastic vow by Kha che pan chen at Khro phu in 1204. Byang chub dpal also founded rGyal gling tshogs pa in Grwa thang in 1224 and dGe 'dun sgang tshogs pa in gZhu sNye mo in 1225 (Akester, *Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo's Guide to Central Tibet*, forthcoming). He was the abbot of Chos lung tshogs pa for eight years (*rGya Bod yig tshang* p.512,14-15).

64 Sa skya pandi ta (1182-1251), a disciple of both Ko brag pa and Bran ston mTha' bral (*Myang chos 'byung* p.116,10-11), is one master who did not concentrate exclusively on the tradition of his own school and family. He showed openness towards bKa' brgyud pa teachings, one more sign of the liberality

gTsang pa rGyas ras (sTod 'Brug identity in twenty-one images)

Rwa lung, founded c. 1207 by gTsang pa rGya ras Ye shes rdo rje (1161-1211) and thus almost contemporary with Thar pa gling, originally consisted of a cave and *mchod khang*, but eventually became the major seat of the sTod 'Brug (Akester, *Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo's Guide to Central Tibet*, forthcoming). This is possibly why grub chen Kun dga' blo gros turns his attention to it in order to introduce a few masters of this school. He does so with a minimal amount of words, as ever.⁶⁵ Among them he tells the basics in the life of gTsang pa rGya ras, inasmuch as he was a major master born and mainly active in Nyang stod:

(*Deb ther* p.458,7-p.459,1): “Chos (p.459) rje gTsang pa rGya ras was born a happy child as a Khu le 'brog pa in lower Ra lung [note: his name was Shes rab 'khor lo bdud rtsi]. He benefited sentient beings in both dBus [and] gTsang [note: he founded 'Brug and Ra lung, two in all] and performed boundless deeds for the sake of people to be trained”.

(*Deb ther* p.459,2-3): “His disciples were as many as the stars. They included rgyal ba rGod tshang pa and Lo ras pa. [gTsang pa rGya ras] is known as the rebirth of Nā ro pa. Twenty-one sPyan ras gzigs appeared on his remains”.

The highlight in grub chen Kun blo's account of gTsang pa rGya ras, besides the foundation of Rwa lung and 'Brug in sKyid smad (the monastery from which the school derives its name, where he resided and died), concerns the remains found after his cremation. As customary, he only says that twenty-one sPyan ras gzigs appeared on his remains, without specifying that they spontaneously appeared, etched into the master's twenty-one intact vertebrae. Although he does not state so expressly, grub chen Kun blo cannot avoid implying that this was an extraordinary event among all cases of relics found in the ashes of *bla ma*-s after cremation—a not uncommon happening.

A combined reading of *Myang chos 'byung* (p.18,19-p.19,1) and 'Brug pa Padma dkar po's *Rwa lung gi dkar chag* (p.185,1-p.186,1) helps trace their whereabouts at an unspecified time in the centuries of 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud history: 1) 2) 3) Three of gTsang pa rGya ras's vertebrae were kept at Rwa lung just as they had been found; 4) 5) 6) another three were installed inside receptacle holders at the same monastery; 7) 8) two were at 'Brug in dBus, not far from lHa sa; 9) 10) one each was placed at mDo mkhar and Chos rdzong; 11) 12) one was at Byang U ri and another at mKho 'thing in lHo brag, subsequently moved to gSal rje in

and coexistence of several schools which influenced the attitude of eminent *bla ma*-s from Nyang. Sa skya pandi ta did not establish any monastery in Nyang but he received the *bsnyen rdzogs* vow from Kha che pan chen Shakya shri (1140-1225; see p.542) at rGyan gong. This event is famous for being the last episode in the transmission of a pure monastic vow in Tibet. Kha che pan chen was the *mkhan po* in the ordination and sPyi bo las pa Byang chub 'od the *slob dpon* (*Myang chos 'byung* p.158,1-3).

65 *Nyang stod bla ma'i mtshan gyi deb ther* (p.458,6-7) says:

“Grub thob Gling chen ras pa [note: Padma rdo rje] (1128-1188) was born in Phad khur. His benefit for sentient beings is well known. He is reputed for having attained [the status of getting on] the Path of Vision (*mtshong lam*). He built a *dgon pa* at sNa phu Chos lung”.

Myang chos 'byung (p.44,1-2) confirms that Chos lung was one of Gling ras pa's *dgon pa*-s. It adds that in the area there was a Gling ras pa cave carved out in the rock, where he meditated for three years.

'Byar yul; 13) one was kept at sPu tra in La stod lHo; 14) one was installed at sNe'u rings in lHo brag; 15) one was at dKar dum in Pu hrang, then moved to Gu ge; 16) one each was preserved at gNas rnying and Chos lung tshogs pa, both in Nyang; 17) one was placed inside a *mchod rten* at 'Bras mo; and 18) one was at lHo dgon of the Yon rdzong pa, eventually sent to Khams Rong (alternative version: sent to the Mongol emperor Tho gan the mur); 19) 20) 21) three are unaccounted for.

Among the vertebrae kept in Nyang besides those at Rwa lung, 'Bras mo was in sGo bzhi and thus not to be confused with Sikkim, as I did in my "Glimpses of the history of the rGya clan with reference to Nyang stod, lHo Mon and nearby lands (7th-13th century)" (p.17), a historically incorrect possibility; whereas the lHo dgon of the Yon rdzong pa people refers to sKyid sbug, a Karma pa monastery.⁶⁶ One of the two vertebrae, kept at these localities, ending up in the hands of Yuan emperor Tho gan the mur (r. 1333-1368) constitutes a *terminus ante quem* for their installation in Nyang stod and lHo Mon.

Dran/Bran ston mTha' bral (the first major master at Nyang Man lung)

Other practitioners from Nyang leaning towards the bKa' brgyud pa were active with an individual approach that was somewhat independent from their monastic headquarters. Among the many less famous masters of Nyang who kept to a non-comformist path, preserving the Nyang pa approach of pluralism and coexistence, a place of relevance is reserved by grub chen Kun dga' blo gros for a not so famous personality who belonged, nonetheless, to one of the great historical clans of Tibet. The *grub chen* writes:

(*Deb ther* p.461,6-7): "At Man lung, having learned both *sNgags* [and] *mTshan nyid* in a proficient manner, Dran ston mTha' bral, nicknamed Dran 'phrang ("Dran, difficult to negotiate"), dismissed all *bla ma* who were masters skilled in debate with his exposition of the teachings. He said that there were some 1,000 residents there, with 600 male and female *yogin*".

(*Deb ther* p.462,2): "[Dran ston] was a master of *sNgags* and *mTshan nyid*".

The passage shows that Man lung at sTag rtse, a monastery that received superior literary attention due to its next incumbent (see p.559-561), was already a major religious institution in the

⁶⁶ *Myang chos 'byung* (p.35,13-21): "As for the major [gTsang pa rGya ras's disciples] during the intermediate period, i.e. rGya and 'Bras, there existed the *dgon pa* of the 'Bras mo ba [in sGo bzhi]. Twenty-one [images of] sPyan ras gzigs appeared on gTsang pa rGya ras's twenty-one vertebrae. Two of them were in the possession of 'Bras mo jo btsun. When [his division] was called the *tsho* of 'Bras mo dgon pa, one was installed inside a *mchod rten* at 'Bras mo, the other was installed as a consecrational object inside the statue of Sangs rgyas. Nowadays this is known as the Jo bo of 'Bras mo. Concerning those two, when [the division] was called the *tsho* of the Rwa lung pa, one was kept being inside a *mchod rten* at 'Bras mo, the other was in the hands of the Yon rdzong pa in the land of lHo dgon pa (i.e. sKyid sbug, a Karma pa monastery). The one owned by dpon Grags pa ye shes, this being his inheritance, ended up in the hands of the Mongol emperor Thog gan the mur. It became known under the name Swa khrab".

For an extremely concise biography of 'Bras mo ba Sangs rgyas 'bum see *dPal ldan 'Brug pa'i gdan sa chen po Ra lung thel gyi gnas kyi bshad pa dang gdan rabs* (p.61,3-15).

days of Bran/Dran ston mTha' bral,⁶⁷ a disciple of rNgog mDo sde (1090-1166) (*Deb ther sngon po* p.493,12-16; *Blue Annals* p.408). In those days, the monastery excelled in the practice of *Yoga*, in the best bKa' brgyud pa tradition, having formerly been a centre of 'Dul ba observance, for it had been founded during the 11th century by disciples of ā tsarya Ye shes dbang po, an adept of Lo ston's vow.⁶⁸ Bran ston himself interacted with important bKa' brgyud masters of his day.⁶⁹

A long interlinear note in *Myang chos 'byung* talks about Dran ston mTha' bral's birth place, his family's monastery sKyid khud ("coat of happiness") and ancestors.⁷⁰ It goes on to mention the strained relations with Rwa lung, which did not prevent the hair of gTsang pa rGya ras from being kept at sKyid khud. The note then goes on to highlight the merits of the great Bran clan, in particular of Bran ka Mu ru ti, for he went to invite Sangs rgyas gsang ba who was meditating at Gangs Ti se during the reign of Khri srong lde'u btsan, and Bran ka dPal gyi yon tan, the chief minister of Ral pa can, who faced the same destiny as his ruler. The next member of the Bran clan mentioned in these lines was mTha' bral's father, bla ma mi snyon ("bogus") Bran chung.⁷¹

67 *Myang chos 'byung* (p.31,1-4) shows that Man lung was another important locality of sTag rtse, the area also comprising sMon 'gro, sTag tshal and mKhar kha: "Nowadays the descendance of Bran ston mTha' bral is at [a place in] sTag rtse, namely Man lung. On account of the fact that Bran ston mTha' bral's rebirth, Man lung gu ru, was its abbot, it is called Man lung".

68 I cannot establish the antiquity of Man lung (not to be confused with the dPyal monastery sMan lung). It definitely existed during *bstan pa phyi dar* (around the mid 11th century), for it is said to have been run by the second generation of 'Dul ba practitioners in Nyang after Lo ston rDo rje dbang phyug. *Myang chos 'byung* (p.115,17-21) says: "As for Man lung *dgon pa*, at the very beginning, Man lung was held by Mon btsun g.Yu ston and Phug ston Ye shes yon tan, two in all, who belonged to the group of the four later disciples of ā tsarya Ye shes dbang po, a disciple of Lo ston rDo rje dbang phyug".

69 Bran ston mTha' bral met Mi tra dzo ki at Tshong 'dus mgur mo. He also met Khro phu lo tsa ba (1173-1225) there (hence during the late 12th-early 13th century) (*Myang chos 'byung* p.115,4-6). A master of Bran ston mTha' bral is mentioned in the *deb ther*:

(*Deb ther* p.468,7-p.469,2): "West of upper Rin chen gling, bla ma mKha' skya sGyul chung learned *Zhi byed*. (p.469) His temporary name was A spyi mo [when] he was an occasional servant, for he was a *sbas pa rnal 'byor*. He became a *bla ma* of Dran ston. [He said:] "I hold Sa phug and rGyang ro Shong snar built by rBad btsun chung".

70 Grub chen Kun blo documents an episode in Bran ston mTha' bral's life. He moved to 'Bri mtshams to meet a great *rnal 'byor ma*:

(*Deb ther* p.459,6-p.460,1): "It seems that the great *rnal 'byor ma*, namely sNang tsha 'Od de 'bum, went to make [a statue of Kye rdor]. She was able to manifest the actual body of Kye rdo rje at sNgo tsha gling bu (in 'Bri mtshams). Dran ston mTha' bral, likewise, in order to bow his headcrown to her feet, (p.460) went to [see] the sNgo tsha Chos sku".

71 Dran ston mTha' bral, mentioned by grub chen Kun da' blo gros, is spelled Bran ston mTha' bral in a note of *Myang chos 'byung* about him and his family. Rather than on the modern lHa sa edition (p.29,21-p.30,15), I base myself of the Bell edition of *Myang chos 'byung* (f.27a,3-f.27b,4): "[note: sKyid khud, the *dgon pa* of bla ma Dran/Bran, is in the vicinity of Chu tshan, below where the *sgom [chen]* (i.e Bran ston) was born at the [family's] residence. Chu tshan is in the area of Pho rog rkang chag (the "crow with a broken leg"). "Given that Bran ston meditated there, this was especially beneficial for the fracture of the [crow's] leg. Collectors, like in lHa sa, are placed to collect taxes at this locality in ruins with a triangular crack on the surface of the bridge. In particular the people of Rwa lung are extremely harmful. The 'Brug pa teachings are eighteen-day journey away; (f.27b) sGo bzhi half a day journey". So it is said. gTsang pa rGya ras's hair is kept in a spot below the threshold of sKyid khud lha khang. The 'Brug divisions do not stomp their boots [here]. Later, a *sku gnyer* devoted to the 'Brug pa was transferred to north sGo [bzhi] but never went for a circumambulation [of sKyid khud]. Inside this *lha khang*

The text goes on to talk about the receptacles kept at sKyid khud, some of which personally made by Bran ston mTha' bral and the murals in Newar style depicting the life of his rebirth Man lung pa, a master of conspicuous importance (about him see p.559-561 and Vitali, "In the presence of the "diamond throne": Tibetans at rDo rje gdan (last quarter of the 12th century to year 1300)" p.176-187). Finally *Myang chos 'byung* comes to talk about the event in Bran ston mTha' bral's life which again attracted grub chen Kun dga' blo gros's interest:

(*Deb ther* p.462,1-2): "[Dran/Bran ston] issued a prophecy that Man lung 'Gu (spelled so) ru would appear as his progeny. He would be born to his son rNgog Shes rab seng ge".

These events taking place at Man lung document that, in the Bran family of Nyang, the system of direct lineal succession, followed since the ancient period, changed to the rebirth system in the 13th century.

Given the unfriendliness with the Bran clan (see above p.550), I hypotise that the foundation of Rwa lung might have led to the transfer of these people to sTag rtse. In view of its foundation time, all this may have happened during the life of Dran/Bran ston mTha' bral (for an assessment of the period of his existence see that of his grandson Man lung pa bSod nams dpal p.559-561), sometime after the early years of the 13th century. He is, indeed, defined as Man lung Bran ston mTha' bral in a passage of *Myang chos 'byung* (p.30,21-p.31,1), which would indicate that his actual residence was the latter locality, but this is far from being proved.

THE DEFENSE OF NYANG

Pho rog mDo sde mgon po (the magician)

Pho rog mDo sde mgon po (1195-1257), aka Bya skyungs pa from the name of the monastery where he lived, embodied the versatility of the religious approach popular in Nyang even during the period when schools, such as the Sa skya pa and bKa' brgyud pa, had begun to pursue more evident secular ambitions. As for the bKa' brgyud pa, he was one in the plethora of disciples of Ko brag pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan (1182-1261) (*Deb ther sngon po* p.853,4 and p.853,16-18; *Blue Annals* p.728),⁷² but grub chen Kun blo, given his own scholastic affiliation, prefers to talk about Pho rog mDo sde mgon po's Sa skya pa links and to refer to an episode to which he owes his nickname:

the speaking statue of Bran ston told thams cad mkhyen pa dGe 'dun grub: "I order [you to strive for] Bran mTha' bral's [same] purpose". [dGe 'dun grub] could not understand for a while. [The statue] exclaimed: "Please keep on going to mDo smad!". He said he had similar perceptions [as if he was there]. During the time of mnga' bdag Khri srong [Ide btsan], Bran ka Mu ru ti went to invite [Sangs rgyas] gsang ba and returned (sic) from Ma pham mtsho. Moreover, the Bran *chen po*, Bran ka dpal gyi yon tan was the name of the clan member during the time of Khri Ral [pa]".

72 Ko brag pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan is associated with Nyang owing to a few places where he resided and worked. A Ko brag pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan's cave was Chu mig dmar, on top of Byang ri bSe brag (*Myang chos 'byung* p.121,12-13). Another one of his caves was located above Pa snam Zhol po (ibid. p.123,8-9).

(*Deb ther* p.460,7-p.461,2): “Pho rog mDo sde mgon po went to [take charge of] Bya skyungs. He held sTe ra dngos gzhi (“main” sTe ra). (p.461) He was a disciple of Sa skya rje btsun chen po,⁷³ and a master of *Yo ga* and *gTsug sku*. He also was a master of both *sNgags gsar rnying*. He had visions of many *yi dam*. He could exercise control over many affairs. He is known as Pho rog (“raven”) because he sent a fleet of crows against enemies. At present, his descendants are in lHo dPa’ gro”.

Pho rog pa’s religious inclinations were thus wide ranging. A further evidence of the openness to various religious expressions, at Bya skyungs as well, is that after Pho rog pa’s death it was taken over by the dPyal, famous for their peculiar combination of different traditions.⁷⁴

Other evidence supports grub chen Kun blo’s idea about Pho rog mDo sde mgon po’s powers. At Bya skyungs, by pouring blessings from his body while holding a vase of plenty in his hand, he made crops ripen during the first month of winter (*Myang chos ’byung* p.116,11-13).

The reference to his sending a fleet of crows against unspecified enemies has significance for the secular history of the region. Besides proving Pho rog pa’s power over animate and inanimate nature, the flight of ravens seems to indicate that he could command the services of Maha ka la (Bya rog sdong can). Considering Pho rog mDo sde mgon po’s dates, the enemies against whom he acted were manifestly the Mongols. Several Mongol campaigns were undertaken against Tibet during his lifetime, the best known being those by Dor ta in iron rat 1240, by Do be ta in iron dog 1250 and by Hur ta in the next year. The latter two targeted dBus, while there is little known evidence that Dor ta’s campaign was also directed against gTsang, and Nyang in particular.

Dor ta’s invasion of Nyang

Secular events hardly find their way in the *deb ther*. However, two of them are recorded, none of which personally witnessed by the author, but important enough to have left a mark in a text that deals with religious people. One was the military campaign undertaken by Dor ta in 1240 that touched not only dBus and the lands to the south along the Himalayan range, but was also aimed at gTsang, as just said. The other was the looting of the relics of Rin chen bzang po from rKyang po/bu in the years immediately preceding the author’s birth (see below p.566).

Concerning Dor ta’s invasion of 1240, he gives an account of the efforts made by local *bla ma*-s to avoid the incoming devastation. One target was gNas rnying which was torched by the Mongols. A description of the damage done and the effort of one of their *bla ma*-s in particular to repair it is found in *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar* (see n. 76, 78 and 79). However, it is obvious that other monasteries suffered havoc or felt the pressure of the Mongol army’s presence, although they are neither indicated in the *deb ther* nor in *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar*. Kun dga’ blo gros says:

73 Was this Sa skya rje btsun either Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1167-1216), normally addressed in such terms in the literature, or Sa skya pandi ta Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan (1282-1251), who lived closer to the time of Pho rog mDo sde mgon po?

74 Slob dpon dBang phyug, the first son of dPyal Ba rtag, who, in turn, was dPyal Chos bzang’s eldest son, was appointed to run Bya skyung, Pho rog mDo sde mgon po’s *dgon pa* (*Myang chos ’byung* p.116,14-17).

(*Deb ther* p.462,2-5) “Before chos rje Sa pan went to brGya (sic) yul, splinter Hor groups belonging to the Hor troops (sic), mostly bad people, were creating grave disturbance (*gnar* spelled so for *snar*). When the times were not peaceful, religious exponents of Nyang stod as far as ’Bri mtshams confronted them for talks. The head of the mission to meet them, when they met at Za ri in the area, i.e. Man lung rin po che, Ka la drug rin po che, ’U brag rin po che and sNgo tsha rin po che from ’Bri mtshams,⁷⁵ those four, were the main leaders. It appears in old documents that [personalities], such as the gNas rnying mkhan po Chos [kyi] rin [chen] and the lHo pa’i *bla ma*, having worked [at the problem] locally, met the Hor, and this was when they laboured for a conciliation”.

It seems that two attempts were made in succession to neutralise the impending disaster. The first was by *bla ma*-s of the Nyang stod and ’Bri mtshams regions, the best known of them being Man lung pa Dran/Bran mTha’ bral (on him see p.549-551). The other was by local masters, manifestly when the matter boiled down to an attack to their own monastery gNas rnying, which confirms that this was the main target of the action described in *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar*.⁷⁶ That the events refer to the Dor ta invasion is meant by the reference that they took place before Sa skya pandi ta left for Hor yul (wrongly mentioned as rGya yul in the source), who began his journey to Byang ngos to meet Go dan in wood dragon 1244.

The involvement of ’U brag rin po che is telling, given the location of the homonymous monastery in the sGo bzhi area. ’U brag rin po che may have intervened for humanitarian reasons but it is probable that he felt threatened, like the others, by the impending appearance of the Mongols.⁷⁷ If the latter state of affairs was true, one cannot rule out that Dor ta entered Nyang

75 The territorial extension of Dor ta’s campaign in gTsang can be inferred owing to the involvement in the parleys of sNgo tsha rin po che from ’Bri mtshams, a land probably affected by the invasion. The border between Nyang stod and ’Bri mtshams was demarcated at a locality known as ’Bri mtshams sMug po during the reign of Khri srong lde’u btsan who bestowed these lands (the mGos yul stod gsum) to the mGos clan (*Myang chos ’byung* p.77,16-18).

76 *gNas rnying skyes bu rnams kyi rnam thar* (f.19a,4-f.19b,4): “When the Hor troops went on a rampage (*sdang pa*, lit. “became hostile”) in dBus gTsang, Dor to (spelled so) seized sKyegs gNas gsar mkhar [attacking it from] the side of Cor. Many people were killed. Everyone went to Dur khrod gling (“i.e. the cemetery of gNas rnying). People who travelled on the rGya road (i.e. the road from Nyang stod to lHo Mon), did not dare to leave unless accompanied by a few others. At that time, everyone heard that even various kinds of animals were lamenting. After all [kinds of] *mi ma yin*-s of Hor Bod appeared, and when everyone was in terror, [gNas rnying Chos kyi rin chen] subjugated these *mi ma yin*, and so he planted the seeds of liberation. He blessed all the places in order to restore peace. Having thought to protect all the people of the realm of Nyang po’i *rgyal khams* from fear, he spent three days at Dur khrod gling. He blessed some corpses with *mantra*-s and carried others on his body (*glo skyor*). By being there, [Chos kyi rin chen], taken by compassion for those who were spared, was responsible for three miracles, by which he made all the phenomenal gods to appear [against] the *mi ma yin*-s of Hor Bod. He behaved like a rje btsun Mi la’s *yogi* [throughout the territory] all the way to ’Brin chu. Likewise, inconceivable miracles took place”.

77 Grub chen Kun blo records a modicum of activity concerning ’U brag and its founder dMar sgom ras pa gZhon nu shes rab:

(*Deb ther* p.462,5-7): “The earlier founder of ’U brag, dMar sgom ras pa, was from dBus. One should verify whether there were four [sets of] *sTong phrag brgya pa* (i.e. *Yum*) [with him at the monastery]”.

dMar sgom ras pa was one of those neglected personalities who lived across two centuries at the end of *bstan pa phyi dar* when Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas settled in Ding ri for the last years of his life.

from sGo bzhi. Legends focus on this Mongol chieftain reputed for his ferocity that was new to the Tibetans. To the well known story that a rain of stones caused by sPyan snga rin po che (1175-1255) befell him at 'Bri gung might be added another, told by the *grub chen*: being attacked by a fleet of ravens sent against him by a *bla ma* from Nyang.

gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar confirms that violence was a major aspect of the campaign. The castle of sKyebs gNas gsar was seized and its temple damaged. The Hor troops, together with unspecified Tibetan allies, pillaged the place for three days, leaving behind a number of dead. Even animals were killed. This reminds one of the typical pattern of Mongol destruction, obliterating every form of life from a besieged site.

Neither Zang zang Padma rin chen, the incumbent on the gNas rnying throne at that time, nor his immediate successor Chos kyi dbang phyug took charge of repairing the damage. On the fourth day when the marauders left, Chos kyi rin chen (1199-1255, in office at gNas rnying 1247-1255) who succeeded his brother Chos kyi dbang phyug on the abbatial throne years later, was active in relieving suffering and performing rituals in the cemetery. He later reconsecrated the whole area.⁷⁸

The fact that *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar* attributes the reconstruction of the monastery to Chos kyi rin chen,⁷⁹ who ascended its throne seven years after the invasion,

Myang chos 'byung (p.29,1-17) records dMar sgom's major deeds briefly. It is unclear when he came to settle in sGo bzhi, the north-eastern part of Nyang, to hold 'U brag dgon pa. The text says that dMar sgom ras pa gZhon nu shes rab was a disciple of Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas. He practised meditation for a long time before coming to run the *dgon pa* at 'U brag. He promoted the teachings by gathering the exorbitant number of 2,800 monks there and an equal number of texts. Among them it seems there were legendary sets of the longest version of *Pha rol tu phyin pa*, about the existence of which grub chen Kun blo manifests some scepticism. *Myang chos 'byung* concludes that in no other monastery (of Nyang?) there were as many books. dMar sgom ras pa had a disagreement with a local Bon po who harmed him, infecting him with a disease, of which he was able to get rid. He extracted textual treasures from the sMan river. The Seng ge rtse pa invited him with an offer of a gold nugget. He resided at the local dBu rtse. There were rumours that he was responsible for the lineage of the Seng ge rtse pa to become extinct.

78 *gNas rnying skyes bu rnams kyi rnam thar* records (f.19b,2-4): "After three days, [Chos kyi rin chen] bound all *mi ma yin* to a vow. He bestowed ordinary material needs. People requested him for religious ties. He freed all sentient beings from the fear of the *mi ma yin*-s. Four days later, people went to 'Pros, taking the corpses to the mountains. After he interrupted his meditation, [Chos kyi rin chen]'s deeds became vast as the sky. In general, being responsible for finding a solution to the cause of all unrest in the realm of Nyang ro, he restored peace for everyone".

79 *gNas rnying skyes bu rnams kyi rnam thar* (f.19b,5-f.20b,2) adds: "Having gone to the *gtsug lag khang* at gNas gsar, [Chos kyi rin chen] made a fourteen *mtho* high statue of Thub pa chen po with a *torana* as the main receptacle. Many relics—extraordinary and unconceivable objects—were placed inside it, such as the bowl of bram ze Dri med snying po, the *dung dkar g.yas su 'khyil ba* of mkhan chen dBang phyug rin chen, the robe that Yol Chos dbang appended to a ray of sun, the *rdo rje* being the *rdo rje* with which Yol Drang srong drew forth blood after piercing it [into a rock], the crystal *mchod rten*, one *khru* high, that Yol Thog 'bebs extracted [from a rock]. [The statue was placed] in the dBu rtse so ma. Later, he had [texts] made, such as a '*Bum* written in gold. He [also] made over seventy volumes of '*Dul ba lung* written in black ink. Moreover, (f.20a) he made inconceivable manuscripts and images for the gods. At gNas gsar he repaired earlier existing manuscripts. Having offered a '*Bum* written in gold to 'Bri khung, he gave uncountable gifts to it, such as over 200 bags of brown sugar, along with gold, turquoise, brocade and silk, and handwoven woollen cloth. He built a '*bum mo che* at gNas gsar as *phyi rten* of mkhan po Chos dbang. He built a *gzims khang* at 'Phang thang, a *dkar phigs* (spelled so) at Grong chung, and hermitages at Phur sdings and lHa do. He practised the three vows without interruption".

casts doubt on the chronology of the episode and its association with Dor ta. But a postponement to another, unrecorded phase of Mongol military presence in Tibet is rather improbable, for the matter seemingly boils down to a hiatus of years in the rebuilding activities at gNas rnying, probably owing to practical circumstances.

One wonders, since the text stresses the violence and destruction of the attack to the extent that hardly anyone was spared, how much of the temple structures was damaged. One would imagine that the religious treasures going back to gNas rnying's foundation in the middle of the 9th century and the successive periods were pillaged or demolished. However, this may not have been entirely so, for the life-size crystal *mchod rten*, extracted from a rock by Yol Thog 'bebs by means of throwing nine bolts of lightning against it, was taken away subsequently by the Mongols and placed on the roof of Se chen rgyal po's T'ai-tu palace.

Myang chos 'byung, which manifestly derives information from the above source, accepts the attribution of the devastation of gNas rnying to Dor ta (see *ibid.* p.86,3-6).

The monastery may have been targeted by the Mongols for its strategic location on the route that links Nyang stod, one of the core areas of gTsang, to the Himalayan borderlands (the hills of lHo Mon and the territory that will be later known as 'Bras ljongs), and Bengala farther away.

The allusion to splinter groups of Hor warriors being in charge of the military action is a clue that the tactics adopted were to split the Mongol army and to assign them to the multiple fronts of the campaign. One can conjecture that Dor ta's campaign, said by t'ai si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan to have targeted a wide area from Kong po to Bal po (*Si tu bka' chems* in *Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* p.109,2-19), was a military action articulated along several fronts rather than a single one of improbably huge extension. After the Mongol warriors reached the centre of dBus in undescribed circumstances, where they attacked Rwa sgreng and then rGyal lha khang, their campaign split into at least three different fronts. One was in the direction of lHo kha, and affected areas such as bsNyal and Kong po. Another was directed towards lHo brag and must have reached as far as lHo Mon. This seems to indicate that Dor ta's Mongols did not advance so far south. A third front of the invasion moved into gTsang and perhaps advanced towards Bal po eventually, as mentioned in *Si tu bka' chems*, but this is denied by a statement in *Deb ther sngon po* that Lo ras pa and disciples, on that occasion, did not suffer at the hands of the Mongol troops when they were at Jo mo lha ri (*ibid.* p.792,8-10; *Blue Annals* p.675).

THE ZHWA LU WOMEN'S MARRIAGES

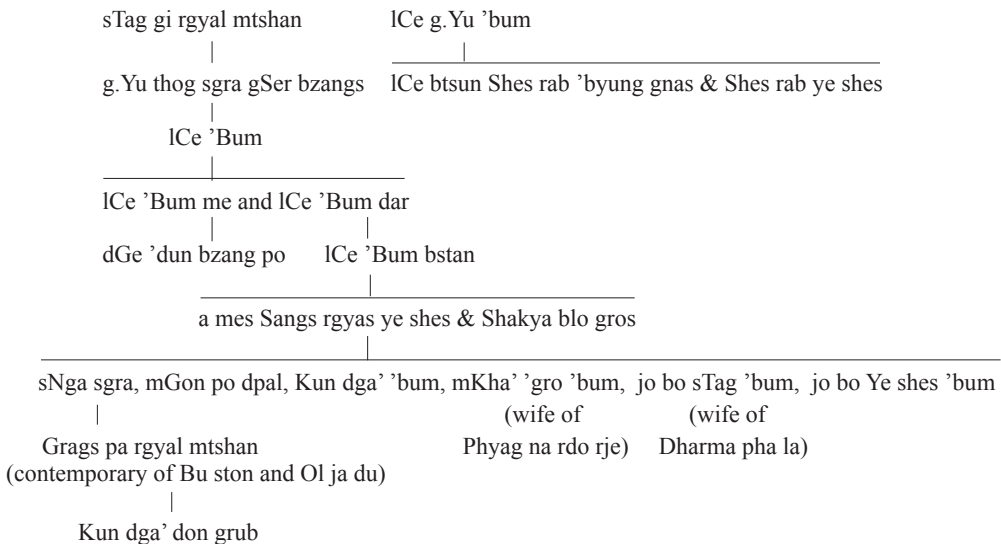
New times were coming to Nyang. The historical features of religious practice in the region continued unabated, but with a changing situation in Tibet on the background. With the bKa' brgyud pa also active locally, the Sa skya pa were surging to unprecedented importance, although they refrained from a dominant exercise of power in Nyang, at the door of their religious and secular headquarters.

Grub chen Kun dga' blo gros returns to Zhwa lu to introduce the well known historical circumstances under which its princes were granted the title *sku zhang* in the shadow of their Sa skya pa overlords:

(*Deb ther* p.474,2-4): “His (i.e. lCe 'Bum bstan's) son, the fourth generation in the lineage, was named [note: A me] Jo jo Sangs rgyas ye shes. His daughter ma cig mKha' 'gro 'bum was the wife of 'Phags pa's younger brother Phyag na [rdo rje]. The birth of their son Dharma pa la rakshi ta was the origin of their designation *sku zhang bla ma* [note: sku zhang mGon po dpal ba was the first one]”.

The *grub chen* provides a precise chronological framework that helps to find out when exactly the title *sku zhang* was first conferred upon members of the lCe from Zhwa lu. Its grant is not associated with the earliest marriage of a lCe princess—mKha' 'gro 'bum with Phyag na rdo rje—but with the birth of their son Dharma pa la rakshi ta in earth dragon 1268, after the death of his father in the previous year. 1268 was the year of the official enforcement of the *khri skor* system in Central Tibet. Hence, it seems that the appointment of the Zhwa lu princes to the title *sku zhang* occurred close to the choice of 'gro mgon 'Phags pa as imperial tutor and his fellows from Sa skya as the overlords of Tibet.

This is confirmed by a less precise calculation by *mi rabs*.⁸⁰ The lCe lineage of Zhwa lu from *bstan pa phyi dar* to the late 13th century is as follows:



80 bKra shis don grub, *Zha lu gSer khang gi bdag po lCe'i gdung rabs* (f.24a,2-5): “A mes chen po Sangs rgyas married jo mo Tsha tsha btsun ne. sKu zhang rNga sgra, sku zhang mGon po dpal and sku zhang Kun dga' 'bum, three sons in all, were born, and ma gcig mKha' 'gro 'bum, jo jo sTag 'bum and jo jo Ye shes 'bum sde, three daughters in all, were born, which makes altogether six brothers and sisters”. A mes chen po Sangs rgyas ye shes's daughter jo mo sTag 'bum, the sister of ma gcig mKha' 'gro 'bum, was summoned to Sa skya. She married Phyag na rdo rje's son Ratna pha la rakshi ta (*Myang chos 'byung* p.165,9-13).

The *sku zhang*-s were called by Se chen rgyal po to enforce the Mongol law in their area. A mes Sangs rgyas ye shes received the sMon 'gro *stong skor*. His son sNga sgra was given an unidentified share of power,⁸¹ while mGon po dpal was granted superior authority (the Zhwa lu *khri skor*).⁸² The post of Zhwa lu *dpon sa* in the organisation internal to the lCe family went to sNga sgra before it was taken over by mGon po dpal (bKra shis don grub, *Zha lu gSer khang gi bdag po lCe'i gdung rabs* f.26a,4-f.26b,2). These conferrals indicate that the empowerments the various Zhwa lu *sku zhang*-s received from the emperor fell within the traditional sphere of competence that their lCe family had had for some 250 years beforehand. The Zhwa lu pa did not rise to a particularly dominant power in Nyang, despite being the only *khri skor* of the region. Around the time they had been assigned to enforce the Hor *khirms*, their dominions were indeed raided by their neighbours, the 'A zhwa (spelled so),⁸³ whom I take as the people descending from 'A zha (aka mGo ba) Ye shes g.yung drung, holders of nearby 'Dre lha khang.

THE DPYAL/RONG PA RELIGIOUS CLUSTER

Later abbots of Thar pa gling (masters in the orbit of the Shar kha family)

Grub chen Kun dga' blo gros's treatment of the dPyal is once again too short to be representative of these people's composite and steadfast contributions to many fields of Tibetan culture (see my "White dPyal" and "The Manjushri mountain and the Buddha tree: a history of the dPyal

81 The text has a lacuna before the word *mtshams* that has been arbitrarily filled up by Tucci (*Tibetan Painted Scrolls* vol.2 p.659b) to read Bri (sic for 'Bri) *mtshams*.

82 A deviant classification of the *khri skor*-s of gTsang in *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnam ky'i rnam thar* is the prelude to a more detailed identification of the units composing two of them (ibid. f.27b,3-7). The six *khri skor* of gTsang, according to this source, were mNga' ris skor gsum (sic for mNga' ris smad?), La stod Byang, La stod lHo, Chu mig, Zhwa lu and sBra 'Bre Khyung, the latter three making together one *khri skor*. Chu mig's four *stong skor* were Khro phu, sNar thang, Bar sdings and, finally, dPal sdings and Grang phu making together one of them. The four *stong skor* of Zhwa lu were Thar pa gling, Phag, gNas rnying and one more composed by dGa' ba gdong and 'Byar.

The unconventional inclusion of the sBra 'Bre Khyung, clans of Nyang where gNas rnying is located, shows that the list of the components of the *khri skor*-s has variants. Leaving aside the existence of the sBra 'Bre Khyung *khri skor*, which may betray a literary focus on local realities, the topic of the actual extension of the Yuan administrative system in Tibet and the chronology of the creations of the *khri skor*-s need further research.

83 bKra shis don grub, *Zha lu gSer khang gi bdag po lCe'i gdung rabs* (f.23a,5): "The 'A zhwa (spelled so) rebels took away most of the dominions of the Zhwa lu pa".

Ibid. (f.23b,1-f.24a,2): "At that time, the [head of the rebels] became known as the 'A zhwa *rgyal po*. After A mes chen po Sangs rgyas ye shes reached an agreement with the Chu mig pa, the Zhwa lu pa subdued them. He reduced under his sway the subjects who had revolted. Having made conscriptions against the 'A zhwa, he repulsed their troops. At that time, he enforced the Hor *khirms*. Not having allowed hindrance by the troops of the rebels, he demarcated the *khri skor*-s and *stong skor*-s. A mes chen po Sangs rgyas ye shes said: "This Hor *khirms* may go on for fifteen years so that, (f.24a) later, we will be called the subjugated people under their control, or else it may last for one year, but then the rebels will be subdued"."

Another passage in the same text explains that the Zhwa lu pa had been involved, in the same period, in one more contention with the Chu mig pa, this time concerning rights of access to pastures for their cattle, which were eventually composed by fixing boundaries (ibid. f.23a,1-5).

clan (7th-14th century)", forthcoming). He omits the foundation of Thar pa gling and its most important masters,⁸⁴ preferring to concentrate on a collateral line of the dPyal family that allows him a rare exercise of self-indulgence, for he focuses on his own kin. Before doing so, he introduces important abbots of the monastery, active before his own time but well after the foundation:

(*Deb ther* p.460,3-4): "Gangs pa mkhan chen gZhon yes was the abbot of Thar pa. [Incumbents of the] *gdung rgyud* were the heads of ritual chanting. He was the *bla ma* of mkhan chen Thar lo. He made a *phyi rten*, *nang rten* and a great golden statue at Thar pa".

gDus ba gZhon nu ye shes, also abbot of Gangs pa, was an uncommon case of a Thar pa gling abbot who did not belong to the dPyal. He was from the 'Khon family but trained in all dPyal religious traditions. This possibly was the reason why, around the late 13th century, he was chosen to be its *ad interim* abbot for six years.

He was a teacher of Thar pa lo tsa ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan, a prominent personality of the monastery, who did not belong to the dPyal family either. Thar pa lo tsa ba was a reputed master of his time, a Sanskritist emeritus and one of the two Tibetans who were abbots of rDo rje gdan in Ma ga dha (see Vitali, "In the presence of the "diamond throne": Tibetans at rDo rje gdan (last quarter of the 12th century to year 1300)" p.170-171). These masters from Thar pa were predecessors to the few dPyal masters the *grub chen* introduces elsewhere in his text:

(*Deb ther* p.467,6-7): "sPrul sku Sangs rgyas 'byung gnas, the son of dPyal Ha ri pa Chos kyi bzang po, was born at Ro skams. He held Bya skyungs and Grags nas. He did much for Nyang stod [note: his (i.e. dPyal Ha ri pa's) sons were Sangs rgyas 'byung gnas and mkhas btsun Kun legs, two in all".

dPyal 'Phags rgyal bzang po (the guru of the early Shar kha princes of Nyang)

dPyal 'Phags rgyal bzang po's part in Shar kha pa affairs is dependable information, for one recipient of the separation of roles among brothers was grub chen Kun blo's father:⁸⁵

84 With a historical jump of several centuries, *Myang chos 'byung* connects the dPyal member of the Sad na legs's period with the Thar pa lineage which came to exist several centuries later, for it identifies in bZang pa dpal, the oldest of the three sons of Sad na legs's minister dPyal g. Yu sgra dpal legs, the ancestor of the Thar pa branch.

Besides bZang dpal, dPyal g. Yu sgra dpal legs's had two other sons: the middle one Nag po dpal legs phan, whose descendants were the Kon drug pa, and the youngest Phra bo 'Phen legs brtsegs, whose descendants were the sDong gi lCang ra at sKyer and the Rwa rdza g.yu lung pa (*Myang chos 'byung* p.180,2-6).

Various branches of the dPyal split off during the imperial period. The dPyal had settled in Nyang during the reign of Sad na legs (see my "The White dPyal: early evidence (from the 7th century to the beginning of *bstan pa phyi dar*)" and *Myang chos 'byung* p.68,10-17). dPyal g. Yu sgra dpal legs built his own palace at rKyang bu. His three sons were born there.

85 dPyal 'Phags rgyal bzang po is called bCal Chos 'phags in *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p.375,11-16). The text recounts the event that led this master to play some role in the life of the Shar kha prince: "Father, mother and son went upwards. At Thar pa dgon, the *dge bsnyen* [vow], blessing and the dignity of the *bla ma*'s name were bestowed upon the son in the presence of bCal (spelled so for dPyal) Chos 'phags. [The son] was given the name 'Phags pa dpal bzang".

(*Deb ther* p.467,7-p.468,1): “[Sangs rgys ’byung gnas’s] son dPyal ’Phags rgyal bzang po, divided the secular rule between ta’i swi tu ’Phags pa dpal and his two brothers, (p.468) and gave them the name ’Phags pa”.

The acquisition of the name ’Phags pa for all three Shar kha brothers—’Phags pa dpal bzang (1318?-1370), ’Phags pa rin chen (1320-1376) and ’Phags pa dar po (1326-?)—depended on dPyal ’Phags rgyal bzang po’s role as their guru. They were named after him.

Man lung pa bSod nams dpal (the pilgrim to India and China)

Grub chen Kun dga’ blo gros deals with the next great master in the Bran lineage of Bran ston mTha’ bral in an unusually longer excursus:

(*Deb ther* p.462,7-p.463,7): “The rGya stod’s daughter, (p.463) Pad ma [rin chen], born in a *mkha’ ’gro* family, [bore] Dran ston’s rebirth Man lung ’Gu ru, his name [at birth] being Mar me mdzad. [Man lung pa] learned all teachings without hindrance. He taught *Byams chos lnga*, bDe [mchog], dGes [rdor], Mahā ma ya, *gDan bzhi*, gSang ’dus and other [teachings]. He received Dus ’khor and *sByor drug* from bla chen Rong pa dGa’ lo and went through all struggles in meditation. His ordained monk’s name was bSod nams dpal. Rong pa Shes rab seng ge was his associate. [Man lung pa] eventually went to rGya gar and proceeded to dpal ldan ’Bras spungs mchod rten and lHo phyogs dPal gyi ri. He met Mi tra dzo ki. He proceeded to Ri bo rtse lnga. In rGya gar yul he saw the shadow of four eminent bodily forms. In rGya gar he upheld the *dbang*, *rgyud* and *man ngag* of Dus ’khor, gSang ’dus, bDe [mchog] and dGes [rdor]. He went to rGya nag [Ri bo] rtse lnga together with one companion. Dressed in a *dzo ki* attire, he went to Ri bo Po ta la [note: in the presence of sPyan ras gzigs]. Having attained outstanding siddhic power, even now his fame endures. Thereafter the *gdan sa* was given to the sNgo tsha’i *gdung rgyud*”.

The initial lines of a interlinear note in *Myang chos ’byung* (p.31,4-17), a brief biography, explain the terms of Bran ston mTha’ bral’s rebirth as Man lung pa bSod nams dpal (or Man lung gu ru) (1235 or 1239-?) and that the latter belonged to the prestigious Bran [ka] family. As prophesied by Bran ston mTha’ bral, his son Bran Shes rab seng ge had a *mkha’ ’gro ma* (Padma rin chen) in the garb of a nun at sTag rtse, who was like a wife to him. She said she would give birth to a child, which she did. He was Man lung pa. He was born at sTag rtse sTag lung.

The *grub chen* relates his life and deeds along the same lines as *Man lung pa’i rnam thar*, from which the information in the *deb ther* may have derived. The biography mentions his kaleidoscopic education ranging from training in the ’Bri gung pa tradition to the practice of deities associated with Rwa lo tsa ba (1016-?).⁸⁶ It also encompassed the system of the

86 After receiving the *rab tu byung* vow in fire sheep 1247, Man lung pa’s training in the ’Bri gung pa tradition included *Na ro’i chos drug*, imparted upon him at the main monastery of this bKa’ bgyud pa school, where he met gCung rin po che rDo rje grags (1210-1278, on the throne of ’Bri gung from 1255) (*Man lung pa’i rnam thar* f.3b,2-4).

dPyal clan masters—he studied the teachings of dPyal Chos bzang—and their associates, which led him to get in touch with the dBen dmar family of Rong after his appointment to the abbatial chair of Man lung (*Man lung pa'i rnam thar* f.3b,8).

Man lung pa is reputed for having been a student of Rong pa rGa lo rNam rgyal rdo rje (1203-1282) (i.e. rGa lo the younger; for a short biography of him see 'Khon ston dPal 'byor rgya mtsho, *gShin rje gshed chos 'byung* p.63,4-p.71,2), who imparted upon him his method of Dus 'khor and *sByor drug* along with the black *gShin rje gshed* according to the system of Rwa lo tsa ba and the red *gShin rje gshed* according to the system of dPyal Chos bzang.

Becoming learned in the doctrinal system of the dPyal clan members might have been a stimulus to follow in their footsteps. This accounts for his first journey to the south (1264-1268), where he concentrated on Bal po and rGya gar, as dPyal family members had done historically. He then diverted to Ya rtse, where he met the local king A sog lde, and finally reached his main destination, rDo rje gdan.

He repeated the journey during the years 1270-1276, returning first to Ya rtse and then to Bodhgaya. He travelled to South India for a fraction of water monkey 1272 and much of water bird 1273. This was due to the fact that his previous birth Bran ston mTha' bral had received a *Po ta la'i lam yig* during his interaction with Khro phu lo tsa ba.⁸⁷ In this light Man lung pa's pilgrimage to the Po ta la abode of sPyan ras gzigs, narrated in legendary terms in his biography (*Man lung pa'i rnam thar* f.9a,3-8), assumes the features of a fulfilment of his family destiny.

He obtained the power of transforming his body into rainbow and the ability to fly (ibid. f.10a,4). Extraordinary visions occurred to him, including that of the land of sTag gzig (ibid. f.10a,6). These deeds are described in a work by pandi ta Bi ma la shri, entitled *Chos 'byung rab gzigs* (ibid. f.10a,7-8). He finally returned to Tibet in 1276.

His third journey (?-1299) is not well accounted for. He returned to Tibet in earth pig 1299, where he received the recognition of contemporaries such as Thar pa Nyi ma rgyal mtshan and other major masters. These included his disciples bcom ldan Rig pa'i ral gri and Rong pa Shes rab seng ge, the son of Rong pa rGa lo the younger, and an expert in Dus 'khor according to the system of the dPyal.

The last part of his biography finds him at Ri bo rtse lnga. It is possible that, besides the mystical implication of this pilgrimage, his decision to go there was influenced by a scholastic interest in this holy mountain at a time marked by the contacts between Sa skya and the

87 *Myang chos 'byung* (p.115,21-p.116,10): "The earlier birth of Man lung gu ru, Myang stod sTag tshal's Man lung pa bshes (p.116) gnyen chen po Bran ston mTha' bral attained great knowledge and the highest spiritual experiences. Possessing unhindered clairvoyance, he had the vision of Nā ro pa coming [to see him] in his dream. The next morning a messenger was sent to him. Both father and son went to see rje Mi tra chen po upon his arrival at Tsong 'dus mgur mo. They received blessings and secret instructions. Brag (sic for Bran) ston also went to meet Khro phu lo tsa ba Byams pa dpal. On that occasion, he obtained a *Po ta la'i lam yig* and extensively established the practice of the accumulation [of merit]. His successive rebirth (i.e. Man lung pa) held the *dgon pa* of Man lung and proceeded to Po ta la. The monastery called Man lung, belonging to a great being such as Bran ston, and its estates are owned by Bran ston's descendants".

Yuan dynasty. It is in this sense that the *grub chen* mentions the Ri bo rtse Inga pilgrimage of the sMad 'Brug master 'Jam dbyangs mgon po:

(*Deb ther* p.469,2-4): “Jam dbyangs mgon po was the one who engaged in opening the door of the ancient, profound meaning of gCod at Chos yul. He circumambulated Ri bo rtse Inga. He became a direct disciple of 'Phags pa's”.

Man lung pa's wondrous life in Tibet, Ya rtse, Bal po, Ma ga dha and South India was depicted on the walls of the temple of sKyid khud according to an art style dominant in 13th-14th century gTsang (see above p.551).

Rong pa Shes rab seng ge (master of eclectic practice)

The close ties between Rong dBen dmar and Man lung were renewed through Man lung pa's interaction with Rong pa Shes rab seng ge (1251-1315), the son of his teacher rGa lo rNam rgyal rdo rje. In his treatment of Bran ston mTha' bral's rebirth, grub chen Kun blo says that they were associated by a common religious background:

(*Deb ther* p.463,7-p.464,2): “[Rong pa Shes rab seng ge], known as the *kun mkhyen rin po che*, had good heart and great fame. He mastered *mTshan nyid* (p.464) and became an outstanding master of *gSang sngags*. He held Man lungs (spelled so). Thereafter, [the succession of its abbots] went on unhindered [even] last year”.

The skeletal information on Rong pa Shes rab seng ge in the section of the *deb ther* dedicated to him is a *summa* of his activities. He indeed received, practised and taught an array of important teachings. In a short biography found in his *gShin rje gshed chos 'byung*, 'Khon ston dPal 'byor rgya mtsho describes other sides of Rong pa Shes rab seng ge's life and deeds, which help to expand understanding of his religious involvement with Sa skya pa and bKa' gdams pa *bla ma*-s, such as 'gro mgon 'Phags pa and mChims Nam mkha' grags, and his mastery of the dPyal system, to which he was exposed at Thar pa gling since a young age. The spectrum of his knowledge spanned from systems such as gShin rje gshed and Dus 'khor, which he learned at Rong dBen dmar and Thar pa gling, to *Tshad ma*. 'Khon ston dPal 'byor rgya mtsho also lists the many monasteries where he was active as teacher (Khro phu, bSam yas, sTag lung, gZhu Kun dga' ra ba, Shangs rTse gdong, Chu mig, sTon mo lung and g.Yus dGa' ldan) reflecting his eclectic approach.⁸⁸ His interaction with Man lung pa bSod nams dpal must have been at

88 'Khon ston dPal 'byor lhun grub, *gShin rje gshed chos 'byung* (p.71,5-p.73,3): “The second son [of rGa lo], Rongs (spelled so for Rong) pa Shes rab seng ge, was born in iron female pig 1251. In his youth, after learning to read and write, (p.72) he studied the gShed cycle and Dus 'khor. He taught Dus 'khor aged sixteen (1266). He went to Thar pa when aged twenty (1270) and received dPyal pa teachings, such as gShed dmar according to the dPyal system. Aged twenty-two (1272), he went in the presence of sTag sde Seng rgyal and learned *Phar [phyin]* and *Tshad [ma]* for five years (1272-1276). In particular, he became a master of *Tshad ma*. Aged thirty (1280), he was ordained to the *rab tu byung* and *bsnyen par rdzogs* vows by bla ma chos rgyal 'Phags pa and mkhan po mChims. He was invited by lo tsa ba Grags pa rgyal mtshan and received the *dbang* of *rDo rje 'phreng ba* and Tantric teachings, such as '*Jam dpal rtsa rgyud*, and *sMan dpyad Yan lag bryad pa*. He held the *gdan sa* of dBen dmar. He taught the gShed cycle and

the basis of his appointment to the abbatial chair of his colleague's monastery, but it is unclear whether he was his immediate successor.

Another abbot of Man lung is mentioned by the *grub chen* in his work:

(*Deb ther* p.464,2): “Gu ru Shes rab dpal, the seventh generation in the lineage of the *dbang* of Nā ro pa and a master of all rNgog's tradition, went [to Man lung] to benefit sentient beings greatly”.

The transmission lineage to which 'Gu ru Shes rab dpal belonged is not clarified by grub chen Kun blo, but the *dbang* of Na ro pa could have been the one transmitted to the 'Pham thing pa brothers, which was eventually transferred to members of the dPyal clan and therefore to Gu ru Shes rab dpal, who had ties with the Dran/Bran people from Man lung and their associates.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE SA SKYA/YUAN ALLIANCE

gNye ba Grags seng (a Sa skya pa in the erstwhile Tangut borderland)

The season that followed saw the Sa skya/Yuan interaction reaching its acme. Still, Nyang participated marginally in the turn of events that ensued. The involvement of Nyang pa masters occurred on an individual basis and in just a few cases. This is what can be gleaned from the scant instances of Sa skya pa proponents from Nyang, who are said to have had a nonessential role in relation with the Yuan dynasty. One is definitely worth noting:

(*Deb ther* p.469,3-6): “gNye ba Grags seng [note: from Brag sram] became a master of *Tshad ma*, Dus 'khor and *rTsis* at Nyung chung in the lower part of Gam sad [belonging to] upper Brag sram in Gam ro. He was a follower of chos rje Sa pan's multiple vow. He was invited to rGya yul to be the *mkhan po* in 'gro mgon 'Phags pa's *bsnyen rdzogs* ordination. He stayed at Ling chu gSer khab. He composed many schemes for *rTsis* calculation. There is a saying that 100 *lha khang*, 108 *mchod rten* and 100 bridges came into being at rGyang ro”.

The change of fortunes following the fall of the Byang Mi nyag kingdom led to a decrease in the influence of the bKa' brgyud pa subschools in the borderland of the erstwhile Tangut country, substituted by an influx of Sa skya pa adherents in the wake of the meeting between 'gro mgon 'Phags pa with Go pe la (the future Se chen rgyal po) in wood bird 1253.⁸⁹

Dus 'khor for a long time [there]. Moreover, he imparted teachings at many monasteries, such as Khro phu, bSam yas, sTag lung, gZhu Kun dga' ra ba, Shangs rTse gdong, Chu mig, sTon mo lung and g.Yus dGa' ldan. (p.73) Aged forty-one (1291), he entrusted the *gdan sa* of dBen dmar to bla ma rDo rje rgyal mtshan and went to dMu ru. He founded Sha 'bar and built [its] *gtsug lag khang*. He made a *rGyud 'bum* and a *'Dul ba lung*. He thus laboured for the benefit of sentient beings. Finally, after empowering chos rje bSod nams rgyal mtshan as soon as he was born, he died in wood female hare 1315”.

89 *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (p.1419,1-5): “In water ox 1253, when he was nineteen years old, bla ma 'Phags pa met Mu gu du la, Go dan's eldest son, and rgyal bu Go pe la Se chen. Se chen realised that 'Phags pa rin po che had excellent body, speech and mind, and was pleased. He said: “I accept the

Soon after their meeting and in the same border area, 'gro mgon 'Phags pa became a fully ordained monk. 'Gro mgon 'Phags pa received the *bsnyen rdzogs* ordination in wood hare 1255 (Tshe tan zhabs drung, *bsTan rtsis kun las btus pa* p.187). The abbot of sNye thang, Grags pa seng ge—the *mkhan po* in the ceremony—and Jo gdan pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan—the *slob dpon*—were the *bla ma*-s who bestowed it upon him (Don rdor and bsTan 'dzin chos grags, *Gangs ljongs lo rgyus thog gi grags can mi sna* p.326,17-20).

Ling cu (also spelled Leng cu and Ling chu) was the outpost in the Sino-Tibetan borderland prominent from the sPu rgyal period onwards. It was where Khri srong lde'u btsan brought successful warfare against the Chinese, documented in Chapter VIII of the *Tun-huang Chronicles* (lines 381-385; *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.56) and in particular in the entry for the year 758 in the *Tun-huang Annals*.⁹⁰ It is a locality mentioned in the documents relating the activities of sMri ti Dran pa ye shes grags pa (e.g. *Bu ston chos 'byung* p.202, 16-17 for sMri ti in Ling chu where he composed *sMra sgo*) and, later, events centred around the Tangut kingdom of Byang Mi nyag. Ling cu is to be located to the north-east of mTsho sNgon. In reference to the activities of Ti shri ras pa (1164-1236), *IHo rong chos 'byung* (p.214,15-16) associates Tsong kha with Ling cu in the itinerary that led Ti shri ras pa to Byang Mi nyag in the year of the monkey 1200.

Ling cu stands for Chinese Ling-zhou, Tibetan Byang ngos of Sa skya pandi ta's fame (see Sperling, "Further Remarks apropos of the 'Ba'-rom-pa and the Tanguts" n.49).⁹¹

As for regional matters concerning Nyang, the *grub chen*'s other statement about endowments in rGyang ro (the south-eastern stretch of Nyang) seems to imply a state of affairs that cannot be ascertained by a modern reader. I wonder whether the proverb concerning rGyang ro that the *grub chen* connects to sNye ba Grags seng somewhat reflected, despite the hyperbole, a Sa skya pa engagement in civil work in areas of Nyang, given the empowerment they received from the Yuan dynasty. If so, this could suggest a particular concern for making the routes across the Himalaya south of Nyang stod practicable for travel and trade a long time before Thang stong rgyal po.

Chos sku 'od zer (and the temple of a flying image)

The norm of religious coexistence with little or no involvement in current and wider-ranging secular affairs seems to have continued to be a feature of the region. This is at least what one

Sa skya pa [as the Tibetan under my aegis]!", and asked him to stay on. ['Phags pa] became his *bla ma* when Se chen was thirty-nine years of age".

90 *Tun-huang Annals* (line 107, 29-32; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.31): "The year of the dog: ... the winter council of mDo smad was convened at gTse nam yor. A calculation of the losses was made. The ministers Khri bzang and sKyes bzang (line 33) stag snang led troops against Khar btsan in the direction of Leng cu".

91 Ling cu/Leng cu is not Tibetan for Liang-zhou as indicated by R.Stein, *Les tribus anciennes des marches sino-tibétaines* (p.73); Rong, "mThong-khyab or Tongjia: A Tribe in the Sino-Tibetan Frontiers in the Seventh to Tenth Century" and, after the latter, by Uray, "The Location of Khar-can and Leng-chu of the Old Tibetan Sources" and Richardson "The Province of the bde blon of the Tibetan Empire, 8th to 9th Centuries". Both Ling-zhou and Liang-zhou were important localities in the 11th-13th century kingdom of the Tangut.

gleans from the activities of a few major religious masters of the period. The *deb ther* includes a historical prelude to the life and deeds of Chos sku 'od zer (b. after 1240?-d. before 1290?),⁹² of whom grub chen Kun dga' blo gros was a successive birth, in a few words dedicated to the former's father:

(*Deb ther* p.469,6-p.470,3): “Bla ma gZhon nu 'od was a great *grub thob*, master of gSang 'dus and Phyag rdor at gSer sdings. His son kun mkhyen Chos sku 'od zer, an even greater *grub thob*, was pan chen (p.470) Shakya shri's rebirth. [The latter] received gSang 'dus, Dus 'khor and *sByor drug* from chos rje 'Jam dbyangs gsar ma. He built a *dgon pa* at Mag dGe sdings. He benefitted sentient beings. He dreamt about 'gro mgon 'Phags pa at Chu mig and received teachings from him. He was delighted. He accompanied him up to lHa sa. The Jo bo rin po che spoke to him. His heart disciple was dam pa Jo nang Kun spangs [pa] chen po”.

gZhon nu 'od, founder of Ser sdings, met Kha che pan chen at his monastery, who revealed to him a prophecy about his own future life. Shakya shri said he would be reborn there as the son of gZhon nu 'od (*Myang chos 'byung* p.70,18-21). Nine years after the foundation of Ser sdings,⁹³ gZhon nu 'od's son Chos sku 'od zer was born to the sister of his father's disciple mGar Grags pa dbang phyug. He would be an eminent source of knowledge on gSang 'dus (ibid. p.70,13-18).

Apart from his leaning towards the Jo nang pa, proven by his disciple kun spangs pa Kun tu bzang po's proximity to him, and the bKa' brgyud pa, several doctrinal poles contributed to his eclectic religious inclinations. One pole was Sa skya pa with focus on rKyang dur, where Sa pan imparted teachings on Kye rdor upon him,⁹⁴ and sprul sku 'Jam dbyangs gsar ma trained him in gShed dmar, *dBu ma*, *Tshad ma*, Byams pa *chos lnga* and Dus 'khor (ibid. p.71,4-19 and p.110,8-10). Others were more individualistic, for he studied under such eminent people as Chag lo tsa ba (1197-1264), a recipient of the teachings of the Indian A bhayā kā ra;⁹⁵ Rong pa rGa lo, reputed for his links to the dPyal; and Lo ras pa dBang phyug brtson 'grus (1187-1250), the great sMad 'Brug master, rebirth of rje btsun Mid la (ibid. p.157,18).

The lHa sa Jo bo spoke to Chos sku 'od zer and told him that he would achieve command over Tantric instruction and eventually attain enlightenment. The statue also said he should perform 100 *sbyin bsreg* rituals, obtain a depiction of the Jo bo itself from Gangetic India, and build 100 *mchod rten*. He founded Mag dGe sdings gtsug lag khang and placed a statue of Jo bo

92 His dates are hypothetical, based as they are on the death year of his previous birth Kha che pan chen Shakya shri (1240) and the birth date of Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290), his next life.

Chos sku 'od zer is assigned the dates 1204-1282 in *rGya Bod chos 'byung rin po che* (p.253,3-4), completed in wood horse 1474 by dGe ye ba Tshul khriims seng ge (b.1428). Were they true, this would be another case of how succession of rebirths in the same *skyes rabs* defy biology and chronology: Chos sku 'od zer would have been born before Kha che pan chen's passing.

93 Was Ser sdings founded around 1217-1218, if Chos sku 'od zer was born soon after 1225?

94 Sa pan received *rNam nges* at rKyang 'dur (*Myang chos 'byung* p.110,5-6), which shows that he had a steadfast frequentation of this Sa skya pa monastery of some importance in Nyang, both in his days as a student and as a teacher.

95 This A bhayā kā ra should not be confused with the master who bestowed sdom pa rGya gar ma to lCe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas (see above p.529).

Shakya mu ni there, which came flying (*'phur sbyon*) from rGya gar. The spot where it landed became known as 'Phur lung (the “place where it flew”) (ibid. p.108,16-17 and Akester, *Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo's Guide to Central Tibet*, forthcoming). Chos sku 'od zer performed its consecration which was repeated by his next two rebirths, Bu ston Rin chen grub and grub chen Kun dga' blo gros, facts mentioned in the biography of the latter.

The full heart of Chos sku 'od zer was kept at Mag dGe sdings, while most of his remains were buried inside a local *mchod rten*. His disciple kun spangs pa chen po Kun tu bzang po made a golden statue of Thub pa as his teacher's *nang rten* and a rNam rgyal *mchod rten* as *phyi rten* (on all this see *Myang chos 'byung* p.108,3-20).

'Phags 'od Yon tan rgya mtsho (Bu ston rin po che's spiritual advisor)

The last religious master in my reductive analysis of the Noble Religion in Nyang is 'Phags 'od Yon tan rgya mtsho (b.1260), a specialist of Dus 'khor and abbot of Jo nang for seven years (dGe ye ba Tshul khri ms seng ge, *rGya Bod chos 'byung rin po che* p.253,9-10). He was a main teacher of Bu ston rin po che. Grub chen Kun blo dedicates several lines to him, while he says next to nothing in his text about his own previous birth, the great Zhwa lu abbot:

(*Deb ther* p.474,4-p.475,1): “Kun mkhyen 'Phags 'od, whose qualities were like an ocean, went to Jo mtsho.⁹⁶ He was a master of 'Phags ['khor], *Yoga* and Dus ['khor], three in all, and had wide [knowledge of] *gSang sngags*. He was the main *bla ma* of Bu ston. He was the heart disciple of kun spangs Jo nang pa. He stayed at bSam grub bde chen for a long time. He passed away at Mon mkhar of 'Grongs pa Gangs phu: mKhas grub lHa dbang blo gros was overwhelmed by grief. He was a master of *Tshad ma*. He was the abbot of sGrog gling, bDe [chen] and 'Dol chung. When Khams pa troops came for looting, he developed sorrow, sat in one-pointed meditation at Jo nang Sa bzangs and had a vision of sGrol ma. He made an iron sGrol ma [statue]. Meditation water leaked out [from it]. Incomparable realisations were born in him. (p.475) When he went here (where?) (p.475), ta'i swi tu 'Phags rin revered him as his *bla ma*”.

A short biography of 'Phags 'od Yon tan rgya mtsho is found in 'Gos lo tsa ba gZho nu dpal's *Deb ther sngon po* (p.507,17-p.510,5; *Blue Annals* p.422-425), which deals with his interaction with Bu ston Rin chen grub when the latter was already a celebrated master and abbot of Zhwa lu. Bu ston rin po che mainly received *gSang 'dus* and *Phyag rgya chen mo* from him (*Deb ther sngon po* p.1011,8-9; *Blue Annals* p.866). He was encouraged by kun mkhyen 'Phags 'od to engage in a life of teaching rather than meditation—Bu ston rin po che was the abbot of Zhwa lu for thirty-seven years (1320-1364)—a corner-stone decision that shaped the course of his life irreversibly.

96 Jo mtsho, the native place of 'Phags 'od Yon tan rgya mtsho, a disciple of the son of sNur Ye shes rgyal mtshan (*Deb ther sngon po* p.433,19-p.434,2; *Blue Annals* p.355-356) and Chos sku 'od zer (*Deb ther sngon po* p.444,3-8; *Blue Annals* p.365), is to be located in the area between sGo bzhi and rGyal rtse (see *Myang chos 'byung* p.45,15-19, where, nonetheless, there is no reference to 'Phags 'od).

THE RISE OF THE FIRST DOMINANT POWER (THE OLD PERIOD ENDS)

The other secular episode that found its way in *Nyang stod bla ma 'i mtshan gyi deb ther* was one that sealed the seminal 350 years of Nyang pa history. Its inclusion is probably due to the fact that it records a great achievement of grub chen Kun dga' blo gros's father, 'Phags pa dpal bzang. The Shar kha prince fixed the damage done to a historical temple of Nyang stod, the foundation of which is assessed by his son in the lines preceding this incident. Its founding, some three centuries earlier, has been described above (p.526-527). The *grub chen* writes:

(*Deb ther* p.472,3-4): “When the Dung reng [note: lHo brag pa] A ra seized and looted [rKyang po], they carried [the remains of Lo chen and his personal objects] away [from] the *chos 'khor*. Later, the great *ta 'i swi tu* (i.e. 'Phags pa dpal bzang) made a restoration by installing replacements. [rKyang po] has nine *lha khang*, a *'khyams* and *mgon khang*. 900 monks and laymen stay there”.

The Dung reng who looted rKyang po/bu could have belonged to the U ra group settled in lHo Mon (if the name A ra is missing a *shabs kyu*, and thus refers to the lHo Dung [reng]), were it not for the interlinear note adding lHo brag pa to their name, which would make the marauders Shar Dung [reng]. However the addition of the interlinear note “lHo brag pa” is not beyond doubt, and could be the work of a later editor who mistook the lHo Dung for lHo brag pa. Indeed the accounts of the war show that it was the lHo Dung rather than the Shar Dung who marauded Nyang.

The event documented in the *deb ther* must refer to the years before the military expeditions against the Dung reng, led by the Shar kha brothers, which eliminated them. They are mentioned in *rGya Bod yig tshang*,⁹⁷ and refer to the campaigns of the years water dragon 1352 and

97 *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p.376,17-p.380,1): “At that time, the Sa skya pa were exercising control over dBus gTsang and Khams, three in all, (p.377) but they could not subdue the lands of lHo Mon. Many Dung reng, known as the Shar Dung and lHo Dung, seized most lands in the southern ranges, up to 'O yug Gos sngon and Shangs sDong po thang [in the north]. A *gser yig pa* of Hor Bod (Mongols in charge of Tibet?) came to exercise the law. The road being unsafe, the *bla ma* advised: “With Khams pa dGe 'dun rgyal mtshan at their head, seven brave persons belonging to the group of secretaries should be selected. In order to subjugate the Dung reng, after going to Nyang stod, they should [put together] as many men as possible. Each [secretary] should send many [people to war]”. In consideration of the purpose [of the enterprise], six men together said: “On this occasion, we request to send 'Phags pa dpal bzang as our companion, a literate person who can give [us] good advice. [The need] of realising what action should be taken may arise”. [The *bla ma*] said: “Take him along”. He went along with them as their companion. They travelled to the camping places of the seven men, at 'Thil, bShol and Lungs. When the Dung reings (spelled so) came to Gong la phyga 'i gzhung in the eastern direction, the [Shar kha pa] dared to pitch their camp [in its vicinity]. The camp was in the centre of the area [delimited], in the north, by Sa dmar gong kha; in the south, by Phra gong ka and, in the east, by Dhe lung gong ka. Therefore they became known as the Gong gsum Shar (p.378) kha pa. Events precipitated after that. The Khams pa having kept their positions for a long time, ['Phags pa dpal bzang] stood firm against the Dung reng in order to subjugate them, but when he came to conscript the men of mGo (sic for mGos) yul stod gsum, 'Bri mtshams Gang sang dkar po and Phag sGang tsho drug [available] at that time and administer the law, Khams pa dGe 'dun rgyal mtshan died at Bong nag mdo chen. In his will he said: “You all should now meet at Kha ma rong and behave with no disunion. dPon yig 'Phags pa dpal will be useful as supreme leader. He should be appointed my successor, following which you must render service to the dpal ldan Sa skya pa”. After that, headed by lHa jo Khrid and Nam mkha' dpal ldan shri, six chieftains got together. They said: “We must follow

water snake 1353-wood horse 1354, respectively terminating the intrusions of the lHo Dung and the Shar Dung.⁹⁸

The Dung reng campaign was a fully fledged war between dBus gTsang against lHo Mon and parts of lHo brag. Otherwise it should be considered another warring episode in the troubled relations between the two, the significance and political extent of which has been conspicuously

[the advice of] the Khams pa. Being necessary to subjugate the Dung reng, owing to a favourable *mo*, we should choose our leader". At the meeting place between the [locality of] A mo, the great keeper of the Chu Mag lineage, Shel mgo and Ri chu thang, they made a *mo* and a little bird [landed] on the shoulder of 'Phags pa dpal, a laughter [was heard] and a handful of white flowers fell on bCu gsum la. This indicated that he should be the chieftain. The others bowed to his feet. He focused on gathering a meeting (p.379) and took steps to [prepare] what was needed, [to explain the mission] target and to remove obstacles. This was the beginning of the dpal ldan Shar kha ba's *bstan pa* ("period", "rule"), which was established henceforth. Eventually, given that they had plundered all the dBus gTsang *khri skor*, [people] gathered to hold a consultation [how] to subjugate the Dung rens (spelled so). Troops of the dBus pa *khri skor*-s were gathered at the flat area of A 'brog pho ma. 'Phags pa dpal's retinue pitched a camp with the Gong gsum Shar kha. With sKu zhang Kun dga' don grub at their head, the troops of the gTsang *khri skor*-s drove the Dung reng out of 'O yug Gos sngon. The [Dung reng] came to Ri dpal ldan zur gsum ("triangular"), at the border inside the Rong mountains that lead to the Shar ra gTsang kha pass, at the side of gTsang Bye ma dkar nag, and gathered there. The Dung reng chieftain Don grub dar rgyas said: "[You] should follow me!". Having marched against the camp of the Zhal lu ba (spelled so), he proceeded across the Gam [pa] Byang sBud ri pass and reached Gur gZha' ri. The Gong gsum [Shar kha] camp planned to chase the advancing Dung reng till the end. Don grub dar's message sent to [the Shar kha chieftain] said: "'Phags pa dpal! Although you think big, I will show [you] no less than my customary handling of [your] men and horses. Within the next month I will come to engage [your] men and properties with all the Shar Dung who are available. So what (p.380) do you think of my serious plans?". "

Despite being boisterous about his strength, the head of the Shar Dung eventually went for a parley in order to find an agreement with the troops led by 'Phags pa dpal (ibid. p.380,6-p.381,12): "At the end of the period of one month, Don grub dar gathered the best men of the Shar Dung and took them along. He came bringing good gifts and said: "You must be good with [my] men. I, too, will be good [with your's]. I bow to your feet from now on". All the impregnable castles and lands, high up, from Chu skyed lung gsum, lHo brag Gya ba bzhi and 'A lungs skyogs mo and lower down to Tsag sa wa bzhus were captured. All the people and possessions of the powerful families were taken over. The dignitaries of the Shar Dung, who submitted, were given *las 'dzin* ("officers") posts. Having settled down, Dung reng families are still at present staying at Mang rab in Nyang stod. After that, ['Phags pa dpal bzang], thinking of subjugating the lHo Dung, went to Phag ri Rin chen sgang. He invited sTag 'od, the chieftain (*slob dpon*, see Ardussi, "The gDung lineages of Eastern and Central Bhutan" n.16) of the sPas 'gro (spelled so) Ban 'phrang pa, (p.381) with a gentle speech and with pleasant offers of food, *chang*, hats and clothes on various occasions (*rim par*). Moreover, despite being his enemies, the most hostile chieftains (*slob dpon*) of the lHo Dung were invited to Phag ri. They were deceived with food and *chang*. Having gathered their most dangerous men, ['Phags pa dpal] assassinated some 160 of them. Their heads were severed and put below the thresholds of the doors of Rin chen sgang *mgon khang*. He built Phag ri rNam rgyal gyi rdzong in accordance with the *bla ma*'s instructions. All localities of the lHo Dung, such as sPa 'gro (spelled so) and Had sTag lung, were reduced under his control. He introduced small and big trade marts (*las sgo*) at Phag ri. He appointed his younger brother Phag (sic for 'Phags) rin to be its earliest *rdzong dpon*. Likewise he subjugated the Shar Dung and the lHo Dung in stages. The communities from Sa skya to the postal relay at the border of [La stod] lHo Byang lived in peace [since then]".

98 Whereas *rGya Bod yig tshang* is profuse in describing the campaigns against the Dung reng but without a precise chronology of events, *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* is concise but provides the dates of the military actions. The latter text (p.8,12-17) reads: "In water male dragon 1252, ... the lHo Dung were exterminated at Phag ri Rin chen sgang; the next year (water snake 1353), Shar Dung Don grub dar was decapitated".

Ibid. (p.8,19-21): "In wood male horse 1354, the younger brother 'Phags pa rin chen went to lHo brag and subjugated the Shar Dung. People should be immensely grateful to the dBus gTsang [alliance]".

underrated in the historiographical literature of Tibet, despite the space given to it in *rGya Bod yig tshang*. It seems that several Dung reng groups scored successes that allowed the lHo Dung from lHo Mon to loot and take hold of Nyang and the Shar Dung from lHo brag to establish control over areas contiguous to lHo brag all the way to Shangs beyond the northern bank of the gTsang po. This led the Dung reng to bring their sway over a huge area of Tibetan territory, such as hardly took place at any other time in the history of the highlands.

The seriousness of the situation required an alliance between dBus and gTsang—a surprise coalition given the bad relations prevailing between Sa skya and Phag gru in those years. This development led to a two-pronged campaign. The Shar Dung were defeated by allied troops of dBus gTsang led by Shar kha Phags pa rin chen, and one needs to wonder who were these troops from dBus (Phag mo gru pa?). On the southern front, the Tibetan forces were unable to get rid of their dangerous neighbours from lHo Mon, owing to the weakness of Sa skya pa in those years. Hence two campaigns occurred: a successful one against the Shar Dung all the way north of the gTsang po, undertaken by dBus pa and gTsang pa troops; and another (less successful), undertaken by Sa skya against the lHo Dung.

The contention against lHo Mon ended up being a war between Nyang (i.e. the Shar kha pa) and the lHo Dung, whose victorious conclusion in water male dragon 1352 was achieved by the Shar kha pa not through a military campaign but through treachery, for it seems the gTsang pa were unable to defeat the lHo Mon marauders in any other way.

The Dung reng's campaigns and their eventual defeat had no effects upon the dispute between Sa skya and Phag gru despite the remarkable extent of the marauders' advance into Central Tibet,⁹⁹ but had important consequences for the land of Nyang. The war against the lHo Dung brought a significant change in its history.

It is only apparently a historical paradox that the rise of the Shar kha pa family coincided with the downfall of their Sa skya pa mentors. Although the Phag mo gru pa took over from the vacuum of power they themselves had being instrumental in creating, inner strength and good diplomacy led the princes of rTse chen and rGyal rtse to exercise a limited power over Nyang and contiguous lands. This was the embryo of future developments that set the conditions for other rulers in gTsang to vie for supremacy in the confrontation with the dBus pa.

The root of Shar kha power over Nyang is to be found in their victory in the war against lHo Mon and the lHo Dung, which coincided with the loss of Sa skya supremacy at the hands of ta'i swi tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan's Phag mo gru pa. It is difficult to say how much the Phag mo gru pa's victory over Sa skya contributed to the Shar kha pa surge to prominence in Nyang, but it is a fact that the end of Sa skya pa control over the Tibetan highlands left a power vacuum that local principalities were quick to fill. This could not have been possible in Nyang, where, for centuries, neither a religious nor a secular entity had come to exercise

⁹⁹ The Phag mo gru pa exercised a loose control over Eastern Tibet, West Tibet and Upper West Tibet after they took over from the Sa skya pa in wood horse 1354 (see my "The introduction of Tsong kha pa's doctrine in the region of river Sindhu: a study of its secular implications", a paper presented at the XII Colloquium of the International Association for Ladakhi Studies, Leh July 2009; and also Czaja, *Medieval Rule in Tibet* vol.I p.196-218).

a predominant role. The IHo Mon war catapulted the Shar kha pa princes into a position whereby these Khams pa relative newcomers could fulfil their ambitions and surge to a commanding status in Nyang.

The foundations of Phag ri rNam rgyal dkar po in the year of the hare 1251 and Gan pa lHun grub rdzong in the year of the dragon 1252 (*Myang chos 'byung* p.90,2-3) occurred before those of rTse chen rdzong in 1364 and rGyal mkhar rtse in 1365. The locations of the former ones indicate that they were constructed to protect Nyang from aggression by their neighbours to the south and east, and that the latter two, the main Shar kha seats, were built after the enemies had been defeated.

The Shar kha-Dung reng war marks the end of the old phase of Nyang pa history and the beginning of a new one. Going back to the dates in grub chen Kun dga' blo gros's life mentioned at the beginning of this article, it is his birth year 1365 that marks the turning point, taking shape with the foundation of rTse chen and rGyal rtse. These enterprises sanctioned the enhanced status of grub chen Kun blo's father, owing to his victory on a war that should be considered as a major event in the history of 13th-14th century Tibet. The other poignant date in grub chen Kun blo's life (1418) marks the definitive annointment of the Shar kha pa with their capital rGyal rtse becoming the religious centre of Nyang. From secularism to religion, the steps to ascendancy were complete.

FINALE

During the centuries dealt with in *Nyang stod bla ma'i mtshan gyi deb ther*, Nyang as a whole was not controlled by any of the great families of the region or those who came to settle there. Religious and secular centres of the region seem not to have indulged in expansionism.

Among the many religious institutions founded during *bstan pa phyi dar* and thereafter, very few (possibly gNas rnying and Zhwa lu) surged to lasting importance through the centuries before the advent of the Shar kha pa. Religious institutions rather rose to preeminent status owing to the individual exertions of charismatic *bla ma*-s. Once those great masters were gone, they went back to a position of relative anonymity, while other religious institutions took on importance owing to the appearance of other great *bla ma*-s there.

The activity of Lo ston rDo rje dbang phyug, Tshong btsun Shes rab seng ge and their disciples in the late 10th and 11th century was crucial for the diffusion of the religious approach that prevailed in Nyang for centuries to come. Coexistence was a main feature of Nyang, which reflected the initial organisation of the region, based as it was on the network of *tsho* communities, observant of the '*Dul ba* vow.

As for the presence of A ti sha's followers in Nyang, the diffusion of the doctrine of Jo bo rje was not as vibrant as in dBus. Jo bo rje's heart disciples were concentrated in dBus, where their relations were, in some cases, torn by personal rivalry. This did not occur in gTsang. Although they did not have the same weight as 'Brom, rNgog, Khu or Bang had in dBus in the fields of the

doctrine or temple foundations, the three Yol brothers engaged in a remarkable activity of diffusion of the bKa' gdams pa school in Nyang, by taking over older monasteries or adding new temples.

The conducive atmosphere established in Nyang during the 11th century was still lively during the first part of the 12th, when the rNgog lo tsa ba and Pa tshab lo tsa ba's philosophical traditions were spread in the territory by 'Bre Shes rab 'bar, one of the most brilliant sons of the soil, and his associates.

The salient feature of the religion in this period continued to be fragmentation, with a number of centres scattered in the territory and held by individual masters. Major 12th century monastic schools with a network of institutions under their "mother" monastery did not find popularity in Nyang. On the secular side, historical clans of the region exercised control but without, again, a dominant power.¹⁰⁰

The same state of secular affairs carried on in the next century and remarkably during its second half. Major monasteries of Nyang, some of them (Zhwa lu, sMan lung) run by great historical families (lCe, dPyal), pursued their individual traditions as before. Despite Sa skya's dominance, the religious centres of Nyang retained their own religious specificities. Owing to

100 None of the Nyang clans surged to any steadfast condition of power, besides the prestige and importance deriving from their great *bla ma*-s. Not even the Sa skya pa or their major feudatories, such as the Zhwa lu pa, came to exercise overall control in line with their superior status, but it goes without saying that clans active in Nyang grew in importance or lost it during different periods.

The rGya and mGos had a remarkable influence over the lands in the south-eastern stretch of Nyang during *bstan pa snga dar*. Later, the rGya kept having a moderate charisma in rGyang ro, whereas no masters of the mGos seems to have left a significant mark in the religious field.

Among all other clans active in Nyang, the lCe had a steadfast importance from the imperial period onwards through the centuries, especially during *bstan pa phyi dar* and the Sa skya pa overlordship, when, unlike most other clans, they faced revolts of their subjects and were involved in disputes with neighbours. Their apogee in the region depended mostly on the towering personality of Bu ston rin po che, who was not a lCe, and their policy of marrying their women to the Sa skya pa, to lose a bit of momentum after the demise of the great Zhwa lu abbot.

The dPyal were the other local clan which, owing to a highly individual and complex religious practice, continued to exercise a steady and distinctive role in Nyang and beyond its borders, all the way to Bal po and Ma ga dha.

The 'Bre, on the contrary, although being originally from Nyang like the lCe (*mKhas pa'i dga' ston* p.187,6: "Nyang ro and Grom pa are the [ancestral] lands of the 'Bre and the lCe"), surged to preeminence occasionally, when a great master—I think of 'Bre chen po—left a mark over an entire period.

Sa skya pa power or, rather, Sa skya pa weakness was the trampoline to prominence for the Shar kha pa, immigrants rather than natives and thus less used to coexistence among equals, typical of Nyang.

Other great clans of Nyang, despite their status and history, played a more marginal role, owing to changes of fortune and contributions to the religion of uneven excellence. The Khyung's most remarkable season was the late 11th century and the first part of the 12th, when Khyung Rin chen grags trained followers in disciplines ranging from rNgog lo tsa ba's system to *Tshad ma*.

The importance of the Cog ro in Nyang, like the mGos, seems to have been confined to the pre-*bstan pa phyi dar* period.

The Gru who settled in Nyang were originally from 'Dan yul, where they resided at Klong thang sGrol ma'i lha khang. Their area in Nyang was rGyang ro, a land traditionally controlled by the rGya. They are reputed for their contribution to the teachings particularly during the 12th century. They also came to be active in the area where rGyal rtse was subsequently built (on them see above n.2).

The Bran [ka] surged to moderate prominence in Nyang bar (at Man lung) rather than at their ancestral monastery sKyid khud in sGo bzhi, owing to the work of major proponents in the family during the late 12th century and the 13th. They were eclectic bKa' brgyud pa, open to a wide array of other traditions.

the 'Bre/'Dre tradition, gNas rnying carried on (after having been controlled by the rGya and A ti sha's disciples) with a succession of abbots in the dByil family from La stod Byang, to which his disciple dKon mchog mkhar belonged.

Insularity persisted even during the Sa skya pa domination of Tibet. The religious institutions of Nyang were not coopted into the system of this school. This goes to the credit of the Sa skya pa approach—liberal in religious practice—rather more than any inner strength on the part of the religious communities of Nyang. A more decisive inclusion of religious institutions of Nyang into the Sa skya pa fold occurred after the appointment of Shar kha 'Phags pa dpal bzang to the bZhi thog palace.

If an overall idea of the history of Nyang be given in a nutshell, it reflects, on the one hand, the general trends that characterised life in Tibet for centuries: the region indeed went through the plateau's main historical phases, such as the imperial period of the sPu rgyal's *lha sras btsan po-s*, *bstan pa phyi dar* and the Sa skya pa supremacy; but on the other hand, there were traits remarkably distinctive from the common framework. The history of Nyang from the year of the bird 997 that marked the local inception of *bstan pa phyi dar smad lugs* to the Dung reng-Nyang war of 1352-1354 (the 350 years recorded in *Nyang stod bla ma'i mtshan gyi deb ther*) was a single, long phase in the name of multiplicity, versatility and coexistence, promoted by a succession of great religious masters in an array of different expressions and events.

It was in the span of grub chen Kun dga' blo gros's life that the ambitious policy of both Shar kha pa branches (rTse chen and rGyal rtse) reached a status that went beyond the boundaries of Nyang and projected the region into a new phase, thus becoming part of the overall game among the potentates of the plateau. Both bSod nams dpal and Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags, who had commissioned *Nyang stod bla ma'i mtshan gyi deb ther*, were members of the cabinet of the Phag mo gru pa rulers (*Deb ther dmar po gsar ma* p.86,10-11). This marks Nyang's definitive loss of its multiple independent insularity, which had been preserved even during the time of the Yuan dynasty's Sa skya pa plenipotentiaries, for it became a land whose fortunes depended on those of dBus gTsang at large.

ADDENDUM

TEXTUAL FILIATION

As for the issue of textual filiation in reference to the literature on Nyang used here, it appears that *Nyang stod bla ma'i mtshan gyi deb ther* is the text on old Nyang like no other, for it falls short of mentioning rTse chen and rGyal rtse, but for a marginal citation.¹⁰¹ It is the earliest dated so far known document which ends its treatment around the mid 14th century, earlier than any other text on Nyang. In this way, the *deb ther* is somehow the *ma yig* of all other texts which, therefore, are its *bu yig*.

101 *Nyang stod bla ma'i mtshan gyi deb ther* talks about a master active at rGyal rtse before the foundation of dPal 'khor chos sde:

(*Deb ther* p.465,5-6) "Chos kyi dpal ba went to [hold] Gong gsum bDe chen [note: he was a teacher of Tsong kha pa]. He also went to [settle at] rGyal rtse".

The chapters dedicated to early gNas rnying in the monographic work *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnam kyī rnam thar*, however, may long predate it. This is a multi-layered work, to which several biographies of a succession of local abbots were added over time, so that it is difficult to credit Swi gung nyams med Rin chen solely for its authorship. It seems feasible from the passages in the *deb ther* dedicated to gNas rnying that grub chen Kun dga' blo gros made use of this work or its sources.

The case of *Myang chos 'byung* is similar yet different from *gNas rnying skyes bu dam pa rnam kyī rnam thar*. It is the ultimate text on what I define as the new history of Nyang but, at the same time, it has incorporated and developed the material in the *deb ther* that was used as its guidelines. Hence, it is indebted to the *deb ther* for the earlier textual parts, more from a conceptual viewpoint than from the incorporation of historical material. *Myang chos 'byung* manifestly drew material from an array of local texts (*gnas yig-s*, *dkar chag-s*, *rnam thar-s* etc.), not used in the *deb ther*. But the inspiration for its writing is derived from grub chen Kun blo's work.

sTag sna rdzong pa dPal 'byor bzang po, the author of *rGya Bod yig tshang*, must have known and possibly made use of the *deb ther* or an early version of *Myang chos 'byung* for his geographical part of Nyang he has incorporated in his work to introduce the lCe family of Zhwa lu. But when he gets to discussing the lCe, he significantly deviates from the two sources. In his monograph on the Shar kha princes, the chapter on them neglects all activities in Nyang that are not connected with the princes of rTse chen and rGyal rtse. It is, thus, a chapter entirely different from *Nyang stod bla ma'i mtshan gyi deb ther*.

More complex to decode is the possible relation of *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyī rnam thar* and the *deb ther*. Both works are the outcome of the same cultural and family milieu, but Rab brtan's biography, in spite of its plethora of material, misses a good chance to trespass the limits of events focused on rGyal rtse and to expand its treatment to a wider context. There is an embryo of that, but I think it is purely topical rather than intentional.

Finally, the modern rGyang ro *gnas yig*, entitled *rGyang ru Sa ma mda' khul gyi dgon pa lha khang khag gi lo rgyus dad ldan mgu ba'i rna rgyan*, by S.S. Wangyal is a good document on the monasteries of this area. It is styled after *Myang chos 'byung*, and does not add much to it.

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