

The Second dPa' bo, gTsong lag phreng ba (1504–1566): Life and Works of the Great Sixteenth-Century Historian

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1. Introduction¹

The Tibetan Buddhist master dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba is best known for his extraordinary contribution to Tibetan historiography, his *Religious History: A Feast of the Wise* (*Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston*).² Lokesh Chandra states that he “stands out among Tibetan historians by his unusual and accurate use of the ancient inscriptions and archive materials in the monasteries” (Chandra 1959, vii). In addition to this, dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba composed a number of other works that are still in use today.

The life and works of this interesting and significant Tibetan master have not gained the scholarly attention they deserve. With this paper, we wish to remedy this unfortunate situation to some extent by providing a summary of dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba's life and a brief characterization of his best-known works.

His life is to be explored based on translation and comparison of “spiritual biographies” (*rnam thar*) as well as dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng

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² gTsong lag phreng ba, *Chos 'byun mkhas pa'i dga' ston. A detailed history of the development of Buddhism in India and Tibet*. For an introduction into and outline of this work, as well as an overview of the available editions, see Dell 2021c.

ba's fascinating "spiritual autobiography," *The Mirror Reflecting the Illusory Countenance* (*Rang gi rtogs pa brjod pa 'khrul pa'i bzhin ras 'char ba'i me long zhes bya ba*).³ Through this philological and historical research on dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba's life, we intend to provide some previously unknown historical information about his name and title, birthplace and family lineage, scholastic education, and passing away.

Furthermore, some historical information on a few of his most famous works are provided: the *Religious History: A Feast of the Wise* (hereinafter *Feast of the Wise*), the *Commentary to the Bodhicaryāvatāra* (*sPyod 'jug gi 'grel pa*), the *Treatise on Astrology: The Precious Treasury* (*rTsis kyi btsan bcos rin chen gter mdzod*), and the *Detailed Exegesis on the Vajrayoginī [Practice]* (*Phag mo'i rnam bshad chen po*).⁴ All these compositions became influential works and are still preserved and read today.

1.1 Outline

In this paper the historical-philological method shall be applied, i.e., we aim at understanding the primary sources within their historical context.

First, in the remainder of the introduction, a brief survey of the literary genre of *rnam thar* or "spiritual biography" is provided, and it is highlighted in which way this genre is distinct from what is known as "biography" in the Western literary tradition. Section 2 aims at providing an overview of the different sources on dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba's life. These include three spiritual autobiographies, a spiritual biography from the eighteenth century, and a number of twentieth-century compilations. Moreover, the state of academic research on his life is summarized. In section 3, the historical background of dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba's life is summarized. An assessment of the political situation and the religious movements of his time is provided. From a methodological point of view, this is important as it helps to understand the sources and thereby also dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba's life much better. In section 4, some significant events of dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba's life are to be evaluated based on translations of the different sources. It is mentioned that all these spiritual biographies without exception treat of certain standard events of dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba's life. These standard events are his birthplace and family lineage, name and title, ordination, education, travels, and passing away. Among those, this paper takes a closer look at dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba's birthplace and lineage, name and title, education, and his passing away. In the fifth section, some remarks on dPa'

³ For the different textual witnesses, see section 2.1.

⁴ For references to the Tibetan texts of these works, see their presentation in section 5.

bo gTsug lag phreng ba's most influential works are made. In all cases, information was extracted from the colophons of these works, as well as from the different biographical sources. Section 6 presents the conclusion of this paper, while the Appendix contains the Tibetan text of the colophons used.

Wherever possible, references to Tibetan texts also include a reference to the database of the Buddhist Digital Resource Center (hereafter BDRC) for the reader's convenience. Tibetan names and titles mentioned in this paper are transliterated according to the Wylie transliteration system (Wylie 1959).⁵

1.2 *The Literary Genre of Spiritual Biographies (rnam thar)*

One of the most popular genres of Tibetan literature is the genre of *rnam thar*. This is short for *rnam par thar pa* meaning "complete liberation" or in this context rather "[story of a person's] complete liberation." There is quite a variety of English renderings of this term, all stressing different aspects of it.⁶ In this paper the term "spiritual biography" will be used to render the Tibetan term *rnam thar*.⁷

Unlike ordinary biographies aiming at establishing historical information and expounding the life and career of certain individuals, the *rnam thar* genre found in Tibetan literature narrates the spiritual activities and achievements of a Buddhist master.⁸ On the one hand, the *rnam thar* genre functions as a guide on the path for the Buddhist practitioner, but on the other hand, *rnam thars*, of course, also comprise a great deal of historical information and in many cases form an indispensable source for the historian. *rNam thars* help us to understand the

⁵ Deviating from this, some popular Tibetan terms already common in the English language (especially names), were rendered in their established phonetic transcription, such as Dalai Lama (*ta' la'i bla ma*) and Milarepa (*mi la ras pa*). Similarly, all Tibetan place names were transcribed phonetically with Wylie transliteration in brackets.

⁶ For instance, "biography," "spiritual biography," "sacred biography," "life story," "liberation story," "spiritual story," "life example," "hagiography," "(hagiographic) life writing," "soteriography," and others. For enumerations and discussions of different English renderings, see also Roesler 2014, 117, as well as Rheingans 2014, 69–70, and Rheingans 2010, 252–53.

⁷ Spiritual biographies share traits with hagiographies, but they are different in that they are concerned with the complete liberation of a Buddhist master, a concept that is foreign to the Western or Judeo-Christian tradition from which the term hagiography arises. The aspect of liberation from the two obscurations forms the very core of the definition; see also Yísün 1985, "*rnam thar*" and "*rnam par grol ba*."

⁸ For a detailed analysis of the biography genre found in the Western traditions, see, e.g., Egeland 2000 and Keener 2001. For an excellent work on English biographies in the seventeenth century, see Pritchard 2005. For the comparative dimension of hagiographies within different religious contexts, see Conermann and Rheingans 2014.

life and works of historical persons, and provide insight into particular historical events and periods, geographical places, and much more.⁹ However, the provision of historical information in *rnam thars* is rather a side effect and has to be assessed critically. Willis has argued for a twofold function of *rnam thar*, firstly to inspire the reader, and secondly to provide instruction (Willis 1995, 5).

The genre of *rnam thar* has been classified in various ways. The most prominent classification is probably the following threefold division into outer, inner, and secret spiritual biographies.

1. Outer spiritual biographies (*phyi'i rnam thar*), i.e., the biographies proper.
2. Inner spiritual biographies (*nang gi rnam thar*), i.e., the list of teachings, empowerments etc. received (also *thob yig* or *gsan yig*).
3. Secret spiritual biographies (*gsang ba'i rnam thar*), i.e., mystic events, miraculous dreams, and various supernatural phenomena.¹⁰

In many cases, single representatives of the genre do not fall clearly into one of the categories in their entirety, but different passages can be attributed to different categories. In this paper, we are primarily interested in the outer and inner levels, as the aim is to collect biographical and historical data, as well as to get an idea of the education and teachings that dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba received from his different teachers. What has been said about spiritual biographies can also be applied to spiritual autobiographies to a certain extent.¹¹

2. Tibetan Sources and Previous Research

In the following, an overview of the Tibetan sources relevant to dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba's life is provided. To some sources, three-letter *sigla* will be assigned for easier reference. Other Tibetan texts that will be less referenced in this paper will just be referred to using the author-

⁹ However, there are also some accounts that are more legendary in nature and certainly do not contribute much historical information, such as the life stories of King Srong btsan dGam po (in the *Ma ni bka' 'bum*) and Padmasambhava (*Padma bka' thang*).

¹⁰ Vostrikov 1994, 186–87. This classification is ascribed to sDe srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653–1705). For a brief and accessible explanation of the three levels, see also Choegyal Gyamtso Tulku 2000, 21–22. Interestingly, Willis (1995, 5) has reinterpreted the three levels as “historical”, “inspirational”, and “instructional” dimension.

¹¹ Gyatso sheds light on the above categories from the viewpoint of autobiography (*rang rnam*); see Gyatso 1998, 4–10, 283 notes 20–21, 104–5. For some interesting considerations on Tibetan autobiographical writing, see also Roesler 2019.

title system. There are three different autobiographies, one short spiritual biography that was composed in the seventeenth century, and a number of twentieth-century summaries. Finally, there is some work on his life by Western scholars. All of this is to be presented in the section at hand.

2.1 *Autobiographies*

ML1, ML2, ML3, ML4: Mirror Reflecting the Illusory Countenance

The text called *dGe slong gtsug lag phreng ba rang nyid kyi rtogs pa brjod pa 'khrul pa'i bzhin ras 'char ba'i me long zhes bya ba bzhugs so* (*The Monk gTsug lag phreng ba, Account of My Own Realization, The Mirror Reflecting the Illusory Countenance*) is an autobiography of dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba, consisting of twenty-three folios in the block print edition. It is written in verses of nine syllables. We were able to identify two different prints from the same printing blocks at BDRC, neither of which are very pleasant to read due to poor printing quality (ML1; ML2). Apart from that, there are two modern book editions of this text. One was published by the Vajra Vidya Institute Library in forty pages in 2010 (ML3); the other covers forty-three pages and is contained in dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's *Collected Works* published by dPal rtseg in 2019 (ML4). For the reader's convenience, we will mostly refer to the Vajra Vidya edition, as it is both legible and easily accessible (BDRC).¹² For our translations and summaries, we additionally consulted the block print edition to clarify spelling differences. In the following, this autobiography will be referred to with the brief title of the *Mirror*. When referencing, we will use the *siglum* assigned to the respective edition.

According to the colophon (Appendix A), dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba composed this text in Tsāri¹³ in the female iron-ox year (1541), when he was thirty-nine years old.¹⁴ It had been requested by the sister of Bying pa Chos kyi rje kun spangs pa and his own root lama, the Eighth

¹² It also has an e-text version, which is sometimes useful for searching, but as it is produced from OCR (optical character recognition), spelling in it should be treated with care; see BDRC: W1KG6291.

¹³ Tsāri is a mountain located in southern Tibet and is one of the most important pilgrimage sites (*Treasury of Lives*, "Tsāri"). Huber (1999) dedicated a book to this pilgrimage site.

¹⁴ At first glance, this does not fit with his accepted year of birth, which is 1504. However, taking into account that thirty-nine years in Tibetan counting corresponds to only thirty-eight years in Western counting, and that Tibetan years do not overlap fully with Western years (i.e. about two months of the iron-ox year reach into 1542), it fits again.

Karma pa, Mi bskyod rdo rje (1507–1574).¹⁵ The *Mirror* will be one of the main sources used in this paper to summarize dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba's life.

NS1, NS2: Nine Sections

The text called *dPal gTsong lag phreng ba'i rang tshul mdor bsodus pa don tshan dgu pa'o* (*Concise Autobiography of the Glorious gTsong lag phreng ba, The Nine Sections*) is a short autobiography of gTsong lag phreng ba.¹⁶ In the block print edition, the text counts twenty-five folios of relatively short width at five lines and is written in verses of mostly eight, occasionally nine syllables (NS1). The text is also contained in dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba's *Collected Works* published by dPal rtseg in 2019 and counts twenty-six pages in this modern book edition (NS2). In this paper, this text will be referred to in short as *Nine Sections* or for referencing by its siglum (NS1, NS2).

According to the colophon (Appendix A), dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba completed this autobiography at his seat, at Gro bo lung monastery in Lho brag, more specifically in the Hevajra room of the famous Milarepa tower.¹⁷ The year of completion is indicated as the male iron-dog year (1550); this is at about age forty-six. It was originally published by gNas nang bsam gtan chos gling and produced in the printing house lHo brag lha lung dgon gyi par khang. As the ornamental title indicates, the text is divided into nine sections, which are listed in the colophon as:

¹⁵ The colophon of the *Mirror* seems to have been written by dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba himself, as it does not use honorific terms. For the Tibetan text see Appendix A. Bying pa Chos kyi rje kun spangs pa could not be identified clearly. BDRC has no exact match but there are several people with similar titles. It could be bSod nams ye shes dpal bzang po, who also had the title Kun spang chos kyi rje. He was a student of the Fourth Zhwa dmar pa, Chos grags ye shes (1453–1524), and lived around the fifteenth/sixteenth century, which could fit (BDRC, P2GS1031). The Eighth Karma pa, Mi bskyod rDo rje (1507–1554), is not explicitly referred to by his name. Only the title *rgyal ba* is used. However, *rgyal ba* appears as an epithet of the Eighth Karma pa throughout the whole text. Hence, there can be no doubt that it refers to him. For extensive information about the Eighth Karma pa, see Rheingans 2017.

¹⁶ gTsong lag phreng ba, *dPal gtsug lag phreng ba'i rang tshul mdor bsodus pa don tshan dgu pa'o*, BDRC: W4CZ41808.

¹⁷ In the colophon (Appendix A), the place name is given as sPrul pa'i pho brang chen po sras mkhar dgyes pa rdo rje'i gzhal med khang, lit. "the immeasurable room of Hevajra in the [nine-story] tower for the son [=Milarepa's famous tower; sras mkhar dgu thog] in the great palace of the emanation." Sras mkhar dgu thog literally means "nine-story tower" (BDRC, G3429) and is part of the Gro bo lung dgon, the monastery which was the seat of the dPa' bo Rin po ches from their first to their fifth incarnation (BDRC, G3618).

1. How [I] attained auspicious circumstances (*dpal 'byor thob tshul*).
2. How [I] studied and contemplated (*thos bsam mdzad tshul*).
3. How [I] went on pilgrimages undergoing hardships (*dka' ba spyad de gnas bskor tshul*).
4. How [I] requested teachings on ripening empowerments and liberating instructions (*smin grol gyi gdams pa zhus tshul*).
5. How [I] practiced meditation (*sgom sgrub mdzad tshul*).
6. How [I] practiced the [secret] mantra [vehicle] (*sngags spyod mdzad tshul*).
7. How [I] met [my] special deity (*lhag pa'i lha gzig tshul*).
8. How [I] recollected former lives (*skye ba dran tshul*).
9. How [I] benefitted others (*gzhan don mdzad tshul*).

The *Nine Sections* comprises slightly more than half of the length of the *Mirror* and was written about nine years later.¹⁸ In this paper, this text was not used, in order to keep the scope within a reasonable size. Nevertheless, it is a valuable source to be assessed to explore dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba's life in future research.

VH1: Very Hidden Talk

There is a secret autobiography called *Rang gi rtogs pa brjod pa zab gsal gi gter mdzod rab tu sbas pa'i gtam mo* (*Account of My Own Realization, The Profound and Clear Treasury: The Very Hidden Talk*). The block print consists of twenty folios. We could not locate this text in BDRC and it is not included in dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba's collected works published by dPal rtsegs either.¹⁹ It is, however, available via the Nepalese German Manuscript Cataloguing Project (NGMCP).²⁰ When referring to this text the ornamental title, *Very Hidden Talk*, will be used; for referencing we use the siglum assigned to it (VH1). In order to illustrate the nature of this text, a translation of the author's colophon is presented here:

In this way, I have clarified some of my experiences. I have not expounded common talk here, such as travels to many regions, wealth and non-wealth, fame and non-fame [and] experiences of joy [or] suffering. Compared to that, this talk is more profound and vast [...]. Furthermore, except for those with the eye of experience, there is no need to tell this to others, [i.e.,] to those without the eye of experience, in order for them to abandon fear and dread. This is profound and very

¹⁸ Comparison of page numbers between ML4 and NS2, as both texts are contained in volume 11 of the dPal rtseg edition and are therefore in the same format.

¹⁹ gTsong lag phreng ba, *dPa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba'i gsung 'bum*.

²⁰ For the NGMCP catalogs, see <https://catalogue.ngmcp.uni-hamburg.de//content/index.xml> (access July 23, 2021).

profound so keep it hidden! [I] hand over [and] entrust [these teachings] to the retinue of protecting māras such as bKa' drung gNod sbyin bzhi po and dPal ldan Dud pa'i sol ba ma. Protect [it]! Hide [it]! Defeat the obstacles and fulfil the wishes of those who take hold of these teachings. May supreme pure goodness pervade in this world. [I], the vajra yogi, dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba have clarified a few of my experiences [in this text] and it is very secret.²¹

This text is clearly a secret spiritual autobiography (*gsang ba'i rang rnam*). It is certainly an interesting source to study, but as the focus of this paper is more on the outer events of dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba's life, it was not taken into account.

2.2 Eighteenth-Century Source

Apart from dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba's autobiographies, no contemporary spiritual biography could be identified. The earliest such text that was found was compiled in the eighteenth century, which is roughly two hundred years after his death.

BT1: History of the Karma Kagyu School

In the famous *History of the Karma Kagyu School*, called *sGrub brgyud karma kani tshang brgyud pa rin po che'i rnam par thar pa rab 'byams nor bu zla ba chu shel gyi phreng ba* by the Eighth Situ, Chos kyi 'byung gnas (1699/1700–1774), also known as Si tu Pañ chen, and his student 'Belo Tshe dbang kun khyab (b. 18th cent.), there is a section about dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba comprising about four folios.²² It is included in volume 2, which was written entirely by 'Belo Tshe dbang kun khyab in order to complete the work of this teacher. Apart from the block print reproduction used in this paper (BT1), there are a number of both modern book versions and manuscripts available at BDRC. In this paper this work is referred to by the shortened title *History of the Karma Kagyu School*. It seems to be the most widely referenced source for his life, presumably due to its brevity and accessibility. This work constitutes the second main source for our summary of dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng's life.

2.3 Twentieth-Century Compilations

There are a number of twentieth-century Tibetan compilations that also contain entries on dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba. Some of them

²¹ For the Tibetan text of the colophon, see Appendix A.

²² BT1, vol. 2, 55–63. BDRC: W23435.

shall be mentioned here briefly. However, as they are mere summaries of earlier sources (mostly of the *History of the Karma Kagyu School*), the analysis of his life presented in this paper will not primarily be based on them, though occasional references to them are made for the sake of comparison.

BD1: mKhas btsun bzang po

The *Biographical Dictionary of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism (rGya bod mkhas grub rim byon gyi rnam tha)* by mKhas btsun bzang po (1920–2009) in twelve volumes contains an entry about dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba of about seven pages.²³ It is basically a summary of the *History of the Karma Kagyu School*.

TK1: Shes bya'i gter mdzod

There is a work in three volumes with the short title *Treasury of Knowledge (Shes bya'i gter mdzod)*, published by Mi rigs dpe mdzod khang between 1984 and 1997. It contains many short life stories of Tibetan masters. The third volume (*smad*) contains an entry on dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba's collected works (four pages) and his life (two pages).²⁴

GC1: Gangs can mkhas dbang rim byon gyi rnam thar mdor bsdus

Another similar work in two volumes, published between 1996 and 2000, is called *Gangs can mkhas dbang rim byon gyi rnam thar mdor bsdus* ("Short Life Stories of the Succession of Scholars of the Land of Snow"). It contains an entry of five pages in volume 1.²⁵ It seems to be a mere digest of the entry in the *Shes bya'i gter mdzod*.

MD1: Ming mdzod

Another well-known work about Tibetan masters is the *Biographical Dictionary (Ming mdzod)*, which has the long title *Gangs can mkhas sgrub rim byon ming mdzod*. It was published in 1992 and contains an entry

²³ BD1, vol. 9, 51–57. BDRC: W1KG10294.

²⁴ TK1, vol. *smad*, 170–74. BDRC: W19837. Despite the English rendering of the title "Treasury of Knowledge", this work is not related to the well-known *Shes bya (kun khyab) mdzod*, "The (All-encompassing) Treasury of Knowledge" by 'Jam mgon kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (1813–1899), which was translated into English and published in several book as "Treasury of Knowledge: ..."; see, e.g., Jamgön Kongtrul 2010.

²⁵ GC1, vol. 1, 237–242. BDRC: W25268.

on dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba (two pages).²⁶

Blo bzang 'phrin las

There is also a short modern biography of dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba that is not part of a dictionary. It was composed by Blo bzang 'phrin las (1927–1997) in 1985. It is contained in different books published by Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, and, depending on the edition, comprises two to four pages. It bears the title “Biography of the author of the ‘Religious History: Feast of the Wise’” (*Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston rtsom pa po'i lo rgyus*). It is contained in volume *nya* of Blo bzang 'phrin las' collected works²⁷, but also at the end of the editions of the *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston* published by Mi rigs dpe skrun khang.²⁸

Thub bstan 'od zer

At the beginning of the first volume of dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba's Collected Works edited by dPal rtsegs, there is a short biography called *dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba'i mdzad rnam mdor bsdus* (*Short Biography of dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba*) written by Thub bstan 'od zer (b. 20th cent.).²⁹ The first page consists of a personal data sheet and is followed by about seven pages of chronological biography written in full sentences with indication of Western years.

2.4 Previous Research on His Life

Research about dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba's life is still in its infancy. There is an article about him on *Treasury of Lives*.³⁰ Apart from that, he received some attention in the context of the study of contemporaries of his. The following paragraph intends to give a brief overview.

Chhosphel (2010) compiled a concise and useful summary of dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba's life on *Treasury of Lives*. The Tibetan sources he mentions are the *History of the Karma Kagyu School* (BT1) and the *Mirror* (ML3). Furthermore, among the twentieth century sources, he refers to the *Ming mdzod* (MD1) and the *Gangs can mkhas dbang rim byon gyi rnam thar mdor bsdus* (GC1).

²⁶ MD1, 995–96. BDRC: W19801.

²⁷ Blo bzang 'phrin las, *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston rtsom pa po'i lo rgyus*. BDRC: W28948.

²⁸ E.g., gTsong lag phreng ba, *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston*, vol. 2, 1528–31. BDRC: W7499.

²⁹ Thub bstan 'od zer, “dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba'i mdzad rnam mdor bsdus”. BDRC: W3CN25711.

³⁰ “The Treasury of Lives, A Biographical Encyclopedia of Tibet, Inner Asia, and the Himalaya”, accessed July 25, 2021, <https://treasuryoflives.org/>.

Rheingans analyzes the life and works of Karma 'Phrin las pa (1456–1539), who was one of the main teachers of dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba. In this context, he uses the *History of the Karma Kagyu School* (BT1) as a source to describe the relationship between Karma 'Phrin las pa and dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba, but also summarizes gTsug lag phreng ba's life in general.³¹ Though comparably short, his summary unearths interesting aspects and has clear references to the sources used (Rheingans 2021, 93–95). In his book about the Eighth Karma pa, Mi bskyod rdo rje (1507–1574)—gTsug lag phreng ba's root lama—Rheingans also occasionally touches on aspects of his life (Rheingans 2017, 44, 67, 95, 101, 110).

The entry on dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba on BDRC also contains some chronological biographical information in bullet points, as well as some references to Tibetan sources.³²

Dell presents an extensive introduction to dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's main opus, the *Feast of the Wise* (*mKhas pa'i dga' ston*). In this context, he also summarizes his life in about two pages (Dell 2021c, 118–20). His summary is based on the secondary sources mentioned here and an earlier unpublished version of this paper.

3. Historical Context

In order to fully appreciate the exposition of dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's life, it is crucial to get acquainted with the historical context of dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's place and time.

dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba lived in an era of political turmoil and religious growth. Following the death of Phag mo gru Byang chub rgyal mtshan (1302–1364), rivalry arose within the rLangs ruling family concerning the succession to the political seat. As the seat was eventually given to the young nephew of Byang chub rgyal mtshan called Grags pa 'byung gnas (1414–1446), a member of the rLangs family, tension arose between the rLangs and Rin spungs families. In 1435, the Rin spung duke, Don grub rdo rje (early fifteenth cent.) took control over the fortress (*rdzong*) of Shigatse (*gzhis ka rtse*), and later on, his son Don yod rdo rje (1463–1512) succeeded him. Don yod rdo rje quickly entered into a patronage alliance with the Fourth Zhwa dmar pa, Chos grags ye shes (1453–1524), and with time this rule became the doom of

³¹ To be more precise, apart from the *History of the Karma Kagyu School* (BT1), in one case Rheingans also uses the section about Karma 'phrin las pa in the *Feast of the Wise* (gTsug lag phreng ba, *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston*, vol. 2, 1164–65). This source was omitted in our presentation of Tibetan sources about dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's life, as he does not make much mention of himself there. He only describes one dream (see section 4.4 of this paper).

³² BDRC, P319, accessed July 25, 2021.

the Phag mo gru government still existing at that time in Lhasa. This government is sometimes also referred to as the Sne'u rdzong administration, which since the time of Byang chub rgyal mtshan supported the growing dGe lugs pa school.³³

In 1488, Don yod rdo rje conquered even more territory, namely the fortress of Gyantse (*rgyal rtse*), which dominated the southern route from Shigatse to Ü (*dbus*), and in 1490, he decided to build Yangpachen (*yangs pa can*) monastery in sTod lung valley, which became the main seat of the Zhwa dmar tulkus (*sprul sku*). Then, in 1498, Don yod rdo rje and his forces attacked the Lhasa region and won. The Sne'u rdzong administrators were forced to leave and fled to the dGe lugs pa monastery sKyor mo lung near Drepung (*'bras spungs*). Thereafter, from 1498 to 1517, Don yod rdo rje and the Rin spungs pas controlled Central and West Tibet. During this period the dGe lugs pa monks of Sera (*se ra*) and Drepung were not allowed to participate in the great wishing prayer festival (*smon lam chen mo*) initiated by Tsong kha pa (1357–1419) in 1409.³⁴ In this way, especially the dGe lugs pa settlements were severely threatened during the rule of Don yod rdo rje and the Rin spungs pas. The Karma Kagyu school, however, had good alliances and was able to grow greatly in this period. Also in the specific case of dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba, Don yod rdo rje seemed to have played an active role in supporting the livelihood of him and his family in his youth and in recognizing him as a reincarnation of the first dPa' bo lama.³⁵

In the years after Don yod rdo rje's rule, many disputes arose between Ü and Tsang (*gtsang*), and in 1565, a new power emerged, when Tshe brtan rdo rje (sixteenth cent.) took control of Central Tibet and Shigatse and became the ruler of Tsang. Tshe brtan rdo rje was succeeded by his son Karma bsTan srung dbang po (sixteenth cent.), who

³³ Paragraph summarized based on Richardson 1976 and Wylie 1980. For a more extensive treatment of the rLangs Phag mo gru pa during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, see Czaja 2013, chapters 4 and 5. Rheingans also provides a digest of the political background of that time (Rheingans 2021, 34–41).

³⁴ For two decades the dGe lugs pa monks were banned from the great wishing prayer festival; for further details, see Wylie 1980, 327. Jackson (1989, 48–49, endnote 64) mentions that in the 1490s the Seventh Karma pa, Chos grags rgya mtsho (1453–1505), was attacked by a group of dGe lugs pa monks and he was forced to seek refuge in the Jo khang temple in Lhasa. Jackson also notes that in contrast to the politically active Fourth Zhwa dmar pa, Chos grags ye shes, the Seventh Karma pa was a peaceful figure, who did not engage much in political affairs. He strictly forbade violence among his followers and did not allow any kind of retaliation for the attack from the dGe lugs pa monks.

³⁵ ML3, 232: *de nas sa skyong don yod rdo rje yis/ bla nas bdag cag (bdag dang bdag gi ma bur rdzi bla ma bsam 'grub dge slong grub pa dang dge slong chos dbyings pa sde rim gro pa gnyis rnam yin/ mchan) du ma'i 'tsho ba sbyar/*.

was a supporter of the Karma Kagyu school as well. He became a student of the Karma pa hierarchs and managed to overthrow the Rin spungs pas.³⁶ In this way, the Karma Kagyu school won approximately 150 years of religious patronage, described by Richardson (1976) as the age of the Karmapas. Therefore, even though the political rivalry was fierce and bitter and the different noble family lines took turns in exercising control over the central areas of Tibet, the spiritual leaders of the Karma Kagyu school managed to make good alliances. This secured their religious growth throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

In terms of religious and scholastic development, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were characterized by a widespread scholastic activity and intellectual efflorescence. Dreyfus (2003, 143ff.) labels this time as the “high scholastic” period where monastic settlements grew, and scholarship was institutionalized.³⁷ In this epoch, academic circles focussed more on maintaining a certain interpretation of the teachings according to their own Buddhist tradition than in the previous centuries. Smith (2001, 241) also mentions that from the fourteenth century onward, a process of doctrinal systematization was set into motion and the various teaching and transmission lineages became more and more unified, which brought about the establishment of distinct religious schools.

It is, however, noteworthy to mention that particularly within the Kagyu traditions a counter-reaction to this standardization and homogeneity occurred, namely the *smyon pa*, “mad yogi” phenomenon. These practitioners emphasized an independent lifestyle of solitude and meditation and never established their own schools. They more or less returned to the old values of the Kagyu tradition and had role models such as Milarepa, who had devoted his whole life to meditation in solitude, had a close connection to his guru, and relied mainly on oral instructions. One of the most well-known yogis of this movement was gTsang smyon He ru ka, “the madman of Tsang,” (1452–1507), who put into writing the life story of Milarepa (1052–1135) and also authored the life story of Marpa.³⁸ Another yogi of this kind was dBus smyong Kun dga' bzang po, “the madman of Ü,” (1458–1532), whom dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba met and from whom he received

³⁶ For further details on the rule of Tshes brtan rdo rje and later political changes, see Richardson 1976.

³⁷ For much more material about this period, see Caumanns and Sernesi 2017.

³⁸ For further details on the *smyon pa* movement and gTsang smyon He ru ka, see Smith 2001, 59–79. In the “Treasury of Lives” project, Larsson (2011a) provides a concise summary of his life. For an extensive presentation of gTsang smyon He ru ka's life, see his book (Larsson 2012); for his early years, see also Larsson 2011b; for the school of gTsang smyon, see Sernesi 2021. For Milarepa's life, see Tsangnyön Heruka 2010 and Lhalungpa 1977; for Marpa's life, see Ducher 2017.

teachings.³⁹ This event is mentioned both in dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's spiritual autobiography, the *Mirror*, as well as in the *History of the Karma Kagyu School*. As this event seems to have been very significant for dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba, it shall be described in section 4.4 of this paper.

In this way, dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba lived in an epoch where the scholastic environment became more and more systematized. The political turmoil had somewhat cooled down at his time, and through strong "patron–priest" (*mchod yon*) ties with local rulers such as Don yod rdo rje and Karma bsTan srung dbang po, the Karma Kagyu school benefited greatly and their activity was able to flourish for quite a few decades.⁴⁰

4. Standard Events in dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's Life

In this section, the predominant events of dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's life are described, primarily based on translations and summaries of the *Mirror* (ML3) and the *History of the Karma Kagyu School* (BT1). Occasionally, comparisons to the twentieth-century compilations are drawn.

4.1 Title and Previous Incarnation

According to the *Mirror*, the title "dPa' bo" can be traced back to his previous and first incarnation. dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba writes:

In my previous life, [I] was an eminent mighty one of the yogis [and] my name was Chos dbang lhun grub. [I] obtained higher perception and accomplished yogic discipline and therefore others called [me] by the name "dPa' bo".⁴¹

Hence, according to dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba, his descriptive name "dPa' bo" came about due to his spiritual accomplishments already demonstrated in his previous incarnation. More information on the origin of the title is found in the life stories of the First dPa' bo, Chos dbang lhun grub (1440/1455–1503):

³⁹ For the relationship between the madman of dBus and gTsang and the movement in general, see DiValerio 2011 and 2015, and for his life, DiValerio 2016. For an annotated summary of his life, see Erhard 2010.

⁴⁰ For more insight into that period, see also Jackson 1989 and Rheingans 2017, especially the chapter about the Eighth Karmapa's life, 71–122.

⁴¹ ML3, 230: *sngon tshe rnal 'byor dbang phyug dam pa cig/ mtshan ni chos dbang lhun grub ces bya ba/ mngon shes thob cing brtul zhugs grub pa byung/ de la gzhan gyis dpa' bo'i mtshan du bsgrags/*.

[He] performed miracles, such as walking on water and leaving foot- and hand-prints in rock. [...] Some people thought he was crazy (*smyo ba*), but most said he was like a [celestial] 'hero' (*pa'wo, dpa' bo*). This latter name was given to him and stuck, and would be the sobriquet by which his next incarnation [...] would be known.⁴²

dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba, furthermore, writes in the *Mirror* that this title followed him already when he was conceived in the womb of his future mother. The text reads that after the first dPa' bo had passed away, on the fourth day of the ninth month (*gro bzhin zla*) in the water-pig year (1503), the people of the region were gathered in order to make offerings and do circumambulations. During this time, the following event took place:

At noon on the eighth day, my [future] mother, who was performing a *gaṇacakra* ritual, was crying and suffering and making wishes to meet [me] face to face. When [she] passed by [my body] and touched the top of my head, it was clear that [I] had shifted from my absorption of luminosity, and therefore, it was determined that [I] would be born from this [woman]. Then [she] was given the instructions, such as to avoid contaminated food. This story was narrated many times in a line from one [person] to another. Then nine months later, [...] I was born from that woman, and therefore, all proclaimed that [I] was the rebirth of that lama.⁴³

With this unusual story, we are informed about how dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba took rebirth and was recognized by the public as the incarnation of the first dPa' bo, Chos dbang lhun grub. According to the same text, he was officially recognized a few years later by two disciples from his previous incarnation called Sha kya dhan dza (sixteenth cent.) and Sangs rgyas blo gros (sixteenth cent.) as well as the ruler Don yod rdo rje (section 3).

⁴² DiValerio 2011, 369. For a similar summary of this story with slightly different details, see also Rasmussen 2014a, who provides a brief overview of Chos dbang lhun grub's life. A somewhat longer overview of his life is found in DiValerio 2011, 368–73. Both authors also mention the Tibetan sources they used, which do not completely coincide.

⁴³ ML3, 231: *tshes brgyad nyin gung dus la bab pa'i tshe/ bdag gi ma yis tshogs 'khor khyer nas ni/ ngu zhing gdung zhal mjal bar gsol btab nas/ yol ba'i bar nas spyi bos gtugs pa'i mod/ thugs dam 'phos pa'i rnam pa gsal byung bas/ 'di las sku skye 'byung zhes kha tshon bcad/ grib zas sogs la 'dzems ces ngag yang bsgos/ gcig nas gcig brgyud mang gis glengs bar gyur/ de nas zla dgu ngo bcu 'das pa yi/ [...] bdag ni bu med de las btsas gyur pas/ kun gyis bla ma de yi sku skyer bsgrags/*. Khenpo Ngedon mentioned in a personal interview on April 8, 2007, Malaga, that it was clear for the people that the First dPa' bo lama had shifted from his absorption of luminosity (*lhugs dam 'phos pa'i rnam pa gsal byung bas*), because he released his meditation posture when the woman touched him.

In general, when the system of incarnation titles was established in Tibet, many of the masters received their incarnation titles retrospectively, like, for example, the first Dalai Lama incarnations, and the primary function of the titles was to bring about spiritual and political influence for both the lama and the one bestowing the title.⁴⁴ Snellgrove and Richardson (2003, 182) write that “[d]espite the mystique with which some Westerners like to regard the whole practice of reincarnating lamas, the custom was clearly adopted and maintained primarily for reasons of statecraft.”⁴⁵ In the case of dPa’ bo gTsong lag phreng ba, it might also have been true that Don yod rdo rje gave dPa’ bo gTsong lag phreng ba authority and significance by connecting him with the respected previous yogi called Chos dbang lhun grub, but at present we have no direct evidence proving this assumption.⁴⁶ According to dPa’ bo gTsong lag phreng ba himself, the history of his reincarnation line is not explained as a “political move” or the like, and in fact, this seems to be quite an important point for him, because he expounds the abilities of his previous incarnation on several occasions in his text. Nevertheless, nothing can be determined with certainty at this point, and perhaps it is more interesting to look at what function this information has in the text and why it is so important for dPa’ bo gTsong lag phreng ba to clarify it.

Here, as mentioned before, it is important to remember that the “spiritual autobiographies” were written for an inner circle of followers in order to generate trust and devotion. Therefore, when dPa’ bo gTsong lag phreng ba writes about his previous incarnation as a great yogi, he strengthens his authenticity as a genuine Buddhist master and thereby, most likely, accomplishes this devotional aspect of the genre. A second point that is important to consider is the expectation that close students would have had when reading his spiritual biography. The narration of previous lives forms a literary topos that is often

⁴⁴ Snellgrove and Richardson (2003, 182) write that dGe ’dun rGya mtsho (1476–1542) was treated as the successor and reincarnation of dGe ’dun grub (1391–1474) and was only retrospectively regarded as the Second Dalai Lama. For an explanation on the Dalai Lama title and its significance, see Snellgrove and Richardson (2003, 184). The Third Karma pa, Rang ’byung rdo rje (1284–1339), was the first to establish the reincarnation system in Tibet (Schwieger 2015, 18–22). The First and Second Karma pas only got the title retrospectively. With the Karma pas, the role of the *bar do’i rnam thar* in this context is particularly interesting (Berounský 2010, 8; Gamble 2018, 78–80; Dell 2020, 43).

⁴⁵ For an analysis of how the Tibetan reincarnation system worked, see, e.g., Wylie 1978. For a more recent and extensive analysis of the circumstances that led to the development of the reincarnation system, see Schwieger 2015.

⁴⁶ DiValerio (2011, 372) presents Don yod rdo rje as one of the most important patrons of Chos dbang lhun grub, but whether he supported gTsong lag phreng ba in order to take political advantage of this cannot easily be concluded from that circumstance.

found in the *rnam thar* genre, and even more so in spiritual autobiographies. This is not surprising, as these Tibetan genres evolved from the Indian genres of Āvadānas and Jātakas.⁴⁷

4.2 Birthplace and Family Lineage

dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba was born in spring, on the thirteenth day of the fourth month (*sa ga zla ba*) in the male wood-bird year (of the eighth cycle, 1504) when the moon and the Narma⁴⁸ (*snar ma*) star arose at the same time.⁴⁹ He was born in Urü Nyethang (*dbu ru'i snye thang*) in Central Tibet, south-west of Lhasa, in what is nowadays Chushyl (*chu shul*) county.⁵⁰ In the *Mirror*, the names of his parents are not mentioned, but in most of the other sources the father is designated as Bla ma dar and his mother as Lam rnyed sgrol ma.

It is consistently stated in all the sources, including the *Mirror*, that his paternal family clan (*rus*) was called the "Eastern Nyag" (*shar gyi snyags*) lineage. This clan's lineage descends directly from a royal family lineage (*rigs*) at the time of the Tibetan king gNya' khri btsan po, but at the time of dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba, this family lineage had degenerated to a secondary royal lineage. According to the *History of the Karma Kagyu School*, his family line (*gdung*) descends from one of the twenty-five legendary disciples of Guru Padmasambhava called gNyags dza nya Ku mā ra (eighth cent.), also known as gNyags Lo tsā ba.⁵¹

According to the *Mirror*, dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba was born with his eyes wide open, and not much time passed before he said to various people: "May I benefit beings."⁵² These two early events are also

⁴⁷ For the relationship between autobiographies and cognate genres, see Roesler 2019, 7–8.

⁴⁸ In Sanskrit, this star is called *rohini*, while its Western name is Aldebaran (Duff 2009, *snar ma*).

⁴⁹ ML3, 231: *shing pho byi ba dpyid tha sa ga'i zla/ zla ba snar ma lhan cig spyod pa'i dus/ bdag ni bud med de las btsas gyur pas/*. BT1, 55: [...] *shing pho byi ba lo dpyid tha sa ga'i tshes bchu gsum gyi nyin yum la gnod pa med par sphyan hrig ge gzigs bzhin par 'grungs/*.

⁵⁰ For further geographical information, see Dorje 2004, 158–59, map 2.

⁵¹ ML3, 230: *bdag yul dbu ru'i snye thang zhes bya stel/ rus ni shar gyi snyags ches bya ba yin/ rigs ni rgyal rigs rgyal srid nyams gyur nas/ rje'ur lhung ba zhig yin pha ma gnyis/ dbul po chos ldan dad can zhig yin nol/*. BT1, 55: *sprul pa'i sku rgyal ba gtsug lag phreng ba ni/ sku ba ltams pa'i gnas dbu ru snye thang gi sgang rgyud bya bar gnyags dza nya'na ku ma'ra yi gdung rigs yab bla ma dar dang/ yum lam rnyed sgrol ma'i sras su [...]*. dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's spelling of the family lineage "sNyags" seems to be an ancient spelling or misspelling of "gNyags" which is found in the *History of the Karma Kagyu School* and in most available Tibetan–English dictionaries as well as in the *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* (e.g., Yisün 1985, *gnyags*; Duff 2009, *gnyags*).

⁵² ML3, 231: *mig ni ma zum bye bar skyes ces grag ring por ma lon ngag yang bye gyur stel/ ngag du sems can rnam pa sna tshogs la/ byis pas 'gro don nus par shog zhes pa/ 'di ni*

copied by the *History of the Karma Kagyu School* (BT1), by mKhas btsun bzang po (BD1), and in all the twentieth-century spiritual biographies presented in section 2.3 Twentieth-Century Compilations with almost the same wording. This event is evidently also an important element of a spiritual biography serving as an indication of high spiritual rank due to great amounts of positive residual karma. It also serves to inspire and bring about confidence and devotion in the minds of his followers.

4.3 Ordination Name

dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba received the name "gTsug lag phreng ba" from the Eighth Karmapa, Mi bskyod rdo rje, when he was twenty-nine years old (see section 4.4.), but of course, before this event, he received several other personal names.⁵³ He received one of his most renowned names when he obtained the *upāsaka* (*dge bsnyen*) and the *śrāmaṇera* (*dge tshul*) vows from the Fourth Zhwa dmar pa, Chos kyi grags pa, at the age of nine in Lhagyé Gangkyi Rawa (*lha brgyad gangs kyi rwa ba*).⁵⁴ However, there seems to be some confusion as to exactly what name he received at this point. An attempt to clarify this is made in the following section.

In the *History of the Karma Kagyu School*, one learns that dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's full ordination name was "dPal Mi pham chos kyi rgyal po don thams cad yong su grub pa". dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba uses the abbreviation "Chos rgyal don grub" in the *Mirror*. The *Treasury of Knowledge* and the *Gangs can mkhas dbang rim byon gyi rnam thar mdor bsdu*s render another abbreviation, namely "Mi pham chos kyi rgyal po."⁵⁵ A different, albeit similar, abbreviation is used in some modern works: In the *Bibliographical Dictionary* and another compilation work called *Gangs can mi sna grags can gyi 'khrungs 'das lo tshigs*

gtam gyi thog ma yin no skad/. See also the quote from the *History of the Karma Kagyu School* in the previous footnote (BT1, 55).

⁵³ It goes beyond the scope of this paper to explain all his personal names in detail. For example, dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba received the name sPrul sku Kun bzang dzam gling nyi ltar grags pa from Kun dga' bzang po when he was twelve years old (see section 4.4). Surprisingly enough, none of the sources mention that dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba received any new ordination name when he obtained the full *bhikṣu* ordination (*dge slong*); see, e.g., ML3, 232, and BT1, 57.

⁵⁴ Unfortunately, the place *lha brgyad gangs kyi rwa ba* could not be located; however, BDRC mentions a similar place name, *kaṃ po gangs kyi rwa ba* (BDRC, G2CN11114).

⁵⁵ The description of this account in the *Biographical Dictionary of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism* (BD1, vol. 9, 52) is completely identical to that in the *History of the Karma Kagyu School* (BT1, 56), and the passage in the *Gangs can mkhas dbang* (GC1, 238) is identical with the passage in the *Treasury of Knowledge* (TK1, 173).

*re'u mig*⁵⁶ the authors provide “Mi pham chos kyi rgya mtsho” as an alternative name. This designation of “rgya mtsho” instead of “rgyal po” is probably a misspelling, as we have never seen it in any of the above-mentioned sources nor in his colophons. In the colophons, dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba frequently mentions two personal names, namely “Mi pham chos kyi rgyal po don yongs su grub pa” and “gTsug lag phreng ba,”⁵⁷ but we have never seen the term “rgyal po” replaced with “rgya mtsho”.

4.4 Education

dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's education is an extensive topic and cannot be dealt with in detail in this paper. In order to make it more manageable, only a few events where dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba met with some of his most influential teachers shall be depicted here. These events are his meetings with the Fourth Zhwa dmar pa, dPal Chos kyi grags pa (1453–1524),⁵⁸ also known as Chos grags ye shes, and Karma 'Phrin las pa (1456–1539)⁵⁹ when he was nine years old, his meeting with dBus smyon Kun dga' bzang po (1458–1532)⁶⁰ when he was twelve years old, and lastly his meeting with his root lama, the Eighth Karma pa, Mi bskyod rdo rje (1507–1554),⁶¹ when he was twenty-nine years old.

The Fourth Zhwa dmar pa, dPal Chos kyi grags pa, has to be acknowledged here, because he was one of dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's main lamas and acted as khenpo (*mkhan po*) when dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba received his *upāsaka* and *śrāmaṇera* vows in 1512. After his ordination, he attended the Zhwa dmar pa for almost half a year and received explanations on The Four Dharmas of sGam po pa bSod nams rin chen (*dwag po'i chos bzhi*) and the transmission on the special method for practicing mahāmudrā (*phyag chen*) according to the Drikung Kagyu tradition (*'bri gung bka' brgyud*) called *Inga ldan*.⁶²

⁵⁶ bSod nams don grub, *Gangs can mi sna grags can gyi 'khrungs 'das lo tshigs re'u mig*, 80. This compilation was not included in the overview in section 2.3, as it only contains tables with one row dedicated to dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba providing birth and death dates as well as the alternative name.

⁵⁷ For example, in the author's colophon of the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* both names are used (see gTsug lag phreng ba, *Chos 'byun mkhas pa'i dga' ston*, vol. 2, 707; for a translation, see Dell 2021c, 148–49).

⁵⁸ BDRC, P317. For an extensive treatment of his life and works, see Mojzes forthcoming.

⁵⁹ BDRC, P815. For an extensive treatment of his life and works, see Rheingans 2021.

⁶⁰ BDRC, P814. For a short biography, see DiValerio 2018.

⁶¹ BDRC, P385. For an extensive treatment of his life and works, see Rheingans 2017.

⁶² ML3, 238: *dge tshul yongs su rdzogs pa'i bslab pa nos/ gnas ni lha brgyad gangs kyi rwa ba'i dbus/ 'brang rgyas ri zhol yangs ldan gtsug lag khang/ mkhan po don gyi slad tu mtshan smos pa/ rgyal ba zhwa dmar dbang gi cod pan can/ chos kyi grags pa ye shes dpal*

After this event, dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba went to Lhasa in Central Tibet where he met with the fifty-seven year old Karma 'Phrin las pa in the abbot quarters (*gzims khang*) of Thub chen.⁶³ This was indeed a very important encounter and for the next nineteen years dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba would attend and receive teachings from Karma 'Phrin las pa.⁶⁴ To begin with, he received the initiation of the "Buddha of Limitless Life" (Amitāyus) called *Tshe dpag med mgon lha dgu ma dze ta ri'i lugs*, and he got the daily practice of Nāropa's consort called Niguma (Grub rgyal ma) and the practice of an Indian master called Te bu. He also received permission-empowerments (*rjes gnang*) on many tantric deities (*yi dam*) and Dharma protectors (*chos skyong*), such as the various types of white and black Manjushri (*'jam dbyangs dkar nag mi g.yo dkar po*), the Hayagrīva ritual according to the tradition of master Zla ba rgyal mtshan (*'Byung 'dul rta mgren zla ba rgyal mtshan lugs*), the four protectors called *Zhwa na bzhi* and a Vajrayoginī practice. He also obtained many transmissions and instructions (*lung khrid*), such as the oral transmission lineage of the yogi Ngan rdzong ras pa Byang chub rgyal po (*Ngan rdzong snyan rgyud*), the oral transmission lineage of sGam po pa bSod nams rin chen (*sGam snyan rgyud*) and the instructions on the Six Yogas of Mi tra (*Karma chos drug mi tra'i khrid drug*). He also received both complete and partial initiations and transmissions (*dbang lung tshang dang kha 'thor*) on the works of the Third Karma pa,

bzang nyid/ dge tshul nyid kyi las kyi slob dpon ni/ snar thang gdan sa sdom brtson shes pdal yin/ chos rgyal don grub ces par ming du btags/ mkhan po'i drung du spyen snga phyag chen dang/ lnga ldan dwags po'i chos bzhi'i rnam bshad thob/. According to Scheuermann (2015a, 122) the "Four Dharmas of Sgam po pa [...] is traditionally considered to be a short teaching of the stages of the path (*lam rim*) genre comprised of four concise formulations. [...] it is understood as a summarization of Sgam po pa's doctrinal system and described as the union of the Bka' gdams monastic system and the *mahāmudrā* meditation tradition." For an in-depth treatment of the subject, see also Scheuermann 2015b. For further information on the *lnga ldan* practice, see Sobisch 2003 and 2011. Sobisch has also, interestingly, pointed out (private communication, April 17, 2007, Copenhagen) that there is a *khrid yig* of the *lnga ldan* practice by the Fifth Zhwa dmar pa preserved in the *gDams ngag mdzod*, the treasury of instructions collection compiled by 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas; see dKon mchog yan lag, *Nyams rtogs nor bu'i 'byung gnas lnga ldan khrid yig rgya mtsho*.

⁶³ ML3, 238: *slar yang dbu ru lha ldan yul grur phyin/ dgun 'bring rgyal gyi zla ba'i tshes lnga la/ tub chen chos kyi 'khor lo'i sde chen por/ rgyal ba karma'i phrin las 'dzin pa'i zhabs/ dgung lo nga bdun bzhes pa cig mjal stel/*. According to Roerich (1996, 46) "lHa ldan" is equivalent to "lHa sa". BT1, 56: *lo de'i rgyal zla'i dkar tshes lnga la thub chen gzims khang du rje karma 'phrin las pa dang thog mar mjal te dgung lo dgu nas nyer brgyad bar du gtso cher rje de nyid bla mar bsten nas dam pa'i chos mtha' yas pa gsan nol/*.

⁶⁴ mKhas btsun bzang po (BD1, 52) writes that dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba stayed with Karma 'Phrin las pa until he was twenty-five, i.e., for only sixteen years, but this must be a mistake, as all other sources, including dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba himself, write that he stayed with Karma 'Phrin las pa until he was twenty-eight, i.e., for nineteen years.

Rang byung rdo rje (1284–1339), the works of the Fourth Karma pa, Rol pa'i rdo rje (1340–1383), the works of the Sixth Karma pa, mThong ba don ldan (1416–1453) and others. Finally, he received many instructions based on Karma 'Phrin las pa's own experience (*nyams khrid*), such as the full summary of the one-taste (*rog cig*) teachings found in the mahāmudrā text *lHan cig skyes sbyor* and some instructions on Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje's text called *sKu gsum ngo sprod*.⁶⁵ From the *Mirror*, it is not at all clear when and where dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba received all these teachings and transmissions, as he mentions them all in one page. dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba concludes this section by expressing his discontentment with his poor abilities and unfortunate circumstances during his time with Karma 'Phrin las pa:

Generally, I in fact adhered to this authentic [teacher], nevertheless, because [my] karmic lot was inferior, my diligence weak [and] the necessities for paying respect and serving [the teacher] was little and because [I adhered to this teacher] in connection with the time of [my general] studies [I] drank the Dharma-broth, the drops that [I got] during the other [studies], but I had no chance to drink from the deep and vast treasure of the Dharma-nectar.⁶⁶

Hence, even though dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba was not satisfied with his own abilities and the circumstances at the time of his studies, Karma 'Phrin las pa was a very significant teacher for him and accompanied him throughout his entire education. As mentioned by Rheingans (2021, 95), Karma 'Phrin las pa had a strong impact on dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's development, a fact that has not received the

⁶⁵ Among all the sources used, it is only the *Mirror* that briefly summarizes the teaching and transmissions dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba actually received from Karma 'Phrin las pa. Since the full Tibetan text of this passage is too long for a footnote, it is provided in Appendix B. It is noteworthy that dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba did not receive the transmission of the Fifth Karma pa, De bzhin gShegs pa's (1384–1415) collected works. This may be because the Fifth Karma pa did not manage to compose many texts during his short lifetime. For information about the Fifth Karma pa's life, see, e.g., Sperling 1980, the short biography in the *Bibliographical Dictionary* (BD1, 21–22), and Douglas and White 1976, 61ff. For some brief information about the *Ngan rdzong snyan rgyud*, see Smith 2001, 41 and 61. For more information on the *sKu gsum ngo sprod* (*Direct Introduction into the Three Embodiments*), see Draszczyk 2018. This text is often attributed to the Third Karma pa, Rang byung rdo rje, as it mentions Rang byung rdo rje as its author. However, Rang byung rdo rje is also one of the names of the Second Karma pa, most commonly known as Karma Pakshi. Draszczyk (2018, 147–52) puts forward some convincing arguments why Karma Pakshi is the likely author of this text. For the text itself, see Karma Pakshi, *sKu gsum ngo sprod*.

⁶⁶ ML3, 239: *phal cher dam pa 'di la bsten mod kyang/ shas cher skal pa dman zhing brtson 'grus zhan/ bsti bstang sri zhu'i yo byad dman phyir dang/ klog pa'i dus dang 'brel ba nyid kyi phyir/ gzhan zhor zags ma'i chos khu 'thung ba las/ chos kyi bdud rtsi chu gter gting yangs la/ ji tsam 'dod par btung du ma byung ngo/.*

acknowledgment or appreciation it deserves. One illustration of this, for example, is the dream that dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba had about Karma 'Phrin las pa when he was in retreat in Gro bo lung in a house called O rgyan bde chen rtse from 1526 to 1529. In this dream, dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba sees geese flying from the southern direction to the north. One of the geese is bigger than the others and flying lower. When it approaches, he sees that it is in fact Karma 'Phrin las pa riding a red lion and holding a red sword.⁶⁷ He asks for Karma 'Phrin las pa's blessing and Karma 'Phrin las pa thereafter places his two hands and head on dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's head and tells him "Son, whatever you wish for today I will truly grant. [I] will make long life wishes for you to live a hundred years".⁶⁸ After this dream dPa' bo gTsug la phreng ba received various Dharma teachings and offerings from Karma 'Phrin las pa. dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba writes that he took it as a sign and decided to enter into a long life retreat in sMyug la.⁶⁹

Another important event was dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's encounter with Kun dga' bzang po, also known as dBus smyon He ru ka chen po, the great madman of Ü.⁷⁰ This event is mentioned in the *Mirror* (ML3, 241), and in the *History of the Karma Kagyu School* (BT1, 56), as well as in Kun dga' bzang po's life story.⁷¹ According to the spiritual autobiography, dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba met with Kun dga' bzang po when he was twelve years old and they only stayed together for one week in Yerpa (*yer pa*), but it, nevertheless, made a lasting impression on him.⁷² When they met, Kun dga' bzang po told dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba that "In [my] past life, I was worthy of being your student and now I'm worthy of being your lama. I will bestow [on you]

⁶⁷ In the *Mirror* (ML3, 248–49) Karma 'Phrin las pa is not explicitly mentioned, but only referred to using the term *bla ma*. However, we can learn from the context and from other biographies, such as Karma 'Phrin las pa's biography authored by dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba, that it was in fact Karma 'Phrin las pa whom he met. The same dream is also described in the section about Karma 'Phrin las pa's life in the *Feast of the Wise* (gTsug lag phreng ba, *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston*, vol. 2, 1163–64). Rheingans (2021, 152–52) translated this episode. It seems to be the only passage in the *Feast of the Wise* where dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba grants autobiographical insight (apart from the colophon).

⁶⁸ ML3, 249: *bu khyod de ring gsol ba gang 'debs pa/ de ni bdag gis dam par sbyin no gsung/ khyod nyid lo brgya'i bar du zhabs brtan pa/ de ni gsol 'debs ces brjod pa'i*.

⁶⁹ According to BDRC (G2CN11100), the Karma Kagyu monastery sMyug la legs bshad gling is associated to Karma 'Phrin las pa.

⁷⁰ Ehrhard 2010 provides a thoroughly annotated summary of the life of Kun dga' bzang po from the main Tibetan source in his article, while DiValerio 2016 provides a complete translation of it in his book. The main Tibetan source about his life is Ngag dbang grags pa and bShes gnyen rnam rgyal, *Kun dga' bzang po'i rnam thar ris med dad pa'i spu long g.yo 'byed*.

⁷¹ Ngag dbang grags pa and bShes gnyen rnam rgyal, *Kun dga' bzang po'i rnam thar...*, 635.

⁷² Yerpa is situated in Central Tibet; see Ferrari 1958, 43, and 103–104.

all instructions completely".⁷³ Hereafter, Kun dga' bzang po bestowed various pith instructions (*smar khrid*) such as the mahāmudrā teachings called *Phyag chen yig bzhi lnga ldan*,⁷⁴ the four different texts on the mahāmudrā, a text called *lHan cig skyes sbyor shog dril bzhi pa* (*The Four Scrolls of Co-emergence Yoga*),⁷⁵ the oral transmission lineage of Ras chung pa (*Ras chung snyan rgyud*), secret conduct teachings of Nāropa (*Na ro gsang spyod*) and long life instructions (*Grub rgyal tshe khrid*). Thereafter, Kun dga' bzang po made continuous wishes, gave a special scarf to dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba to wear when obstacles would occur in the future, and he also bestowed on him the name sPrul sku Kun bzang dzam gling nyi ltar grags pa.⁷⁶

Also, Kun dga' bzang po's spiritual biography contains a section about his meeting with dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba:

On one occasion, the reincarnation of Gampopa [the Second Pawo, Tsuklak Trengwa] came with his students to visit the Master. When he was received at the window to the Master's sealed retreat, the Master said that it was like when Gampopa Daö Zhönnu, "Youthful Moonlight," first went before noble Milarepa. [...] After welcoming the boy in that way, they cut his hair. The Master gave him all the profound Dharma teachings that he needed, including the *tummo* practice as transmitted by glorious Galo. After finishing the instructions, the Master gave the boy a deerskin rug, a mother-of-pearl ladle, a horn made from an antler, and other things, thereby establishing many avenues of dependent connection between them. Carrying those objects, and bearing within his heart the honey of great respect for the Master, the young Pawo went back to Dakpo in the Kongpo area.⁷⁷

dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's meeting with Kun dga' bzang po indeed gives us significant information. Based on this encounter we learn that dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba in his first incarnation, i.e., as the master Chos dbang Lhun grub, was the teacher of the well-known dBus smyon Kun dga' bzang po. Interestingly, this information is only

⁷³ ML3, 241: *sngon tshe kho bo slob ma'i 'os yin la/ da ni kho bo khyod kyi bla mar 'os/ gdams pa thabs cad rdzogs par sbyin no bsungl*. This quote is identical in the *History of the Karma Kagyu School* (BT1, 56).

⁷⁴ For the *Phyag chen yig bzhi lnga ldan*, see the comment on *lnga ldan* in footnote 62.

⁷⁵ *lHan cig skyes sbyor* is a "practice for realizing [...] co-emergent wisdom" in the mahāmudrā system (Duff 2009, *lhan cig skyes sbyor*). For more information, see Schiller 2014 and Scheuermann 2015b.

⁷⁶ ML3, 241: *rten 'brel yod pas kho bos ming 'dogs ces/ sprul sku kun bzang dzam gling nyi zla ltar/ grags pa ces byar bdaq gi ming du btags/ nyid kyi sku las pus 'khyud phud nas ni/ re zhig 'di ni dad pa'i rten du chongs/ ma 'ongs 'cham pa'i dus su lus la gon/ rtsa rlung thabs kyi rten 'brel yod to gsungl*.

⁷⁷ DiValerio 2016, 172–73. His translation is from Ngag dbang grags pa and bShes gnyen rnam rgyal, *Kun dga' bzang po'i rnam thar...*, 635.

found in the *Mirror*, but not in Kun dga' bzang po' spiritual biography.⁷⁸

Hence, we can furthermore deduce that Chos dbang Lhun grub and also dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba must have had a noteworthy connection to the *smyon pa* tradition.⁷⁹ In relation to this, it is also interesting to note that dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba in the *Mirror* refers to his first dPa' bo incarnation as being a "powerful master of the yogis" (*rnal 'byor dbang phyug*). According to Rheingans (2004, 29), this was also a term that the disciples of the Seventh Karmapa frequently used to designate the *smyon pas*. Chos dbang Lhun grub was a contemporary to both the Seventh Karma pa and many of his students and therefore this information may also prove a link between the first dPa' bo master and the *smyon pa* tradition.

The last encounter that had a great influence on dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba's life was his meeting with the Eighth Karma pa Mi bskyod rdo rje in his twenty-ninth year when he was travelling through Central Tibet on his way to Kong po. In dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba's spiritual autobiography, this event is expressed with a lot of sentiment and devotion. He writes that his body hair stood on end, he could not stop crying, and forceful devotion developed in his mind.⁸⁰

After this first meeting, great renunciation arose in dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba and he decided to give all his worldly belongings to the Karmapa.⁸¹ After this point, the Karma pa asked dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba to draw an astrological chart and because the dPa' bo lama had done it very well, he bestowed upon him the new name "gTsong lag phreng ba" meaning "marvellous Dharma activities".⁸² The meeting with the Karmapa indeed seems to have been a turning point for

⁷⁸ In the translation of his life story by DiValerio (2016) no hint of Chos dbang Lhun grub being a teacher of Kun dga' bzang po is found.

⁷⁹ In the case of Chos dbang Lhun grub, evidence for playing a role in the *smyon pa* movement is also found elsewhere, see, e.g., DiValerio 2011, 368–73.

⁸⁰ ML3, 254: *bod yul lte ba dbus ri nag po'i rgyud/ kong yul bla med gsang sngags phyod pa'i zhing/ theng po 'bum pa sgang zhes bya ba ru/ sangs rgyas dngos su mjal ba'i skal ba thob/ rgyal ba'i pho brang chen po ring mo nas/ mthong ba tsam gyi lus kyi ba spu g.yos/ mig nas mchi ma'i char rgyun bzlog ma nus/ dad pa'i shugs drag rab tu rgyas pa'i sems/[...] dus gsum sangs rgyas kun gyis sku gsung thugs/ gcig du bsdus pa 'jig rten gsum gyi mgon/ bka' drin mtshungs med sphyan ras gzigs dbang gi zhal kyi dkyil 'khor zla ltar gsal ba mthong/*. Rheingans also occasionally touches aspects of their relationship in his monograph about the Eighth Karma pa (Rheingans 2017, 44, 67, 95, 101, 110).

⁸¹ Concerning dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba giving up all his worldly belongings, he writes (ML3, 254): *zang zing yo byad bdog pa ci mchis pa/ chags thogs med par mchod pa'i slaad du phul/ ngon tshe 'jig rten che thabs zang zing kun/ 'dor 'dod blos gtang shes pa rtag yod kyang/ rtsa na chod nyid tu 'dor bar ma nus mod/ bka' drin chen po mjal ba'i mod nyid la/ tshe 'di'i mdud pa rtsa na grol nyid tu song/*

⁸² ML3, 255: *rtsis kun bsdus pa'i ri mo thob cig gsung/ legs par btob pas gzigs pa'i tshul du mdzad/ gtsug lag phreng ba zhes byar ming du btags/*. In relation to the name "gTsong

dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba and it makes one wonder why it happened so late in his life, but, unfortunately, the sources do not mention anything concerning this.

dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba received many teachings and transmissions from Karma pa Mi bskyod rdo rje, both when they met for the first time and also later on in the years to come. For example, he received the four initiations (*dbang bzhi*) of the Chakrasaṃvara ('*Khor lo sdom pa*) tradition of the Indian Siddha Ghantapāda (Dril bu), the four initiations of Hevajra with consort (*dGyes pa'i rdo rje yab bka' yum bka'*), cycles of Mahāmāyā (*sGyu ma chen po*), Kālacakra (*Dus kyi 'khor lo*) and Catuḥpīṭha with consort (*gDan bzhi yab bka' yum bka'*). He also received the bodhisattva vow many times according to both the tradition of Nāgārjuna (Klu sgrub) and Asaṅga (Thogs med), and much more.⁸³ Mi bskyod rdo rje requested him to be the scribe (*zin bris*) for Karma pa Mi bskyod rdo rje's explanations on the view (*lta*), practice (*sgom*) and conduct (*spyod pa*) according to the *Same Intention* (*dGongs pa gcig pa*) by 'Jig rten mGon po (1142–1217). Furthermore, the Karma pa asked him to compose the introductory chapter (*gleng gzhi*) and to make the final compilation of the *Same Intention* in order for Karma pa Mi bskyod rdo rje to put it all in his collected works.⁸⁴ This information

lag phreng ba," the *History of the Karma Kagyu School* states (BT1, 58): "*gtsug lag* is the general name of all the teachings of the *piṭaka* and all fields of knowledge and hence [it] does not mean *gtsug lag khang* which translates *vihāra* [in Sanskrit]. *Vihāramālā* [i.e., *gtsug lag phreng ba* in Tibetan] therefore means 'marvellous Dharma activities'". The Sanskrit etymologizing here seems somewhat inconsistent: Tibetan *gtsug lag* indeed means either "temple" or "field of knowledge" (*rigs gnas*), but the Sanskrit *vihāra* never comes to mean "field of knowledge". In that sense, it is strange to put his name into Sanskrit as *vihāramālā* after having said that it does not mean "temple" (*gtsug lag khang*). Our translation of *ches rmod pa'i las* (literally "activity of ploughing greatly") as "marvellous Dharma activities" is somewhat free, but tries to incorporate the preceding explanation of how *gtsug lag* is to be understood. He does an immense job in "ploughing" the fields of knowledge and the teachings of the *piṭaka*. The Tibetan text reads: *gtsug lag ni sde snod dang rigs gnas thams cad kyi spyi ming yin pas/ bi ha ra bsgyur ba'i gtsug lag khang gi don ni min pas bi ha ram a la bri ba rnams ni ches rmod pa'i las so/*.

⁸³ ML3, 255: *rgyal ba nyid kyi sku yi dkyil 'khor du/ 'khor lo sdom pa dril bu pa yi lugs/ dbang bzhi yongs su rdzogs par legs par btsal/ klu sgrub zhabs dang thogs med las brgyud pa'i smon pa dang ni 'jug pa'i sems skyed ste/ byang chub sems sdom lan grangs du mar gnang/* dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba received a great number of transmissions and instructions from the Karmapa, which cannot all be mentioned here. Similarly to the situation with Karma 'Phrin las pa, also in the case of Mi bskyod rdo rje it is somewhat difficult to determine exactly when he received the different teachings and transmissions.

⁸⁴ ML3, 258: *dam chos dgongs pa gcig pa'i rgyas bshad bstal/ lta sgom sphyod pa'i tshoms la bdag nyid kyi/ gsungs las ji tsam nges pa zin bris bgyis/ lhag ma dka' ba'i gnas kyi 'gral pa tshal/ rgyal ba nyid kyi thog mar bsdu mdzad ste/ legs par btsal nas de nyid gleng gzhi dang/ bar gyi mtshams sbyor tha ma'i mthun 'gyur bcas/ zin bris nyid kyi tshul du gyis cig gsung/ de ltar bgyis ste bka' 'bum nang na bzhugs/* The "Same Intention" (*dgongs*

given by dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba is certainly interesting, as the status and history of the Eighth Karma pa's commentary was previously unknown. Through the documented interest of the Eighth Karma pa and the Sixth Zhwa dmar pa, Chos kyi dbang phyug (1584–1630), this text amounts to one of the most influential Kagyu texts on the “view, practice and conduct” (*lta sgom spyod pa*) topic.

dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba was one of the two main disciples of the Eighth Karmapa (the other being the Fifth Zhwa dmar pa, dKon mchog yan lag) and he also wrote the most extensive extant spiritual biography of him, which is contained in his *Feast of the Wise*.⁸⁵

4.5 *Passing Away and Closest Students*

Another standard event that is depicted in all the spiritual biographies, except the spiritual autobiography (for obvious reasons), is dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba's passing away. The *History of the Karma Kagyu School* describes that when dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba reached the sixtieth year he was not ill, but his physical strength had declined and he told his disciples: “Now, this is what my activity amounted to.”⁸⁶ He then dictated his testament to his secretary, but because he was requested to stay alive until the Fifth Zhwa dmar pa, dKon mchog yan lag, had returned with the new incarnation of the Eighth Karma pa, he told the secretaries to keep his testament hidden and stayed for a little while more. As soon as Zhwa dmar pa, dKon mchog yan lag, had returned with the new incarnation, they met all together in Tsurphu (*mtshur phu*) monastery and the young Karma pa incarnation received the *śrāmaṇera* vows and got the name dPal Mi pham Chos kyi dbang phyug (1556–1603). Shortly after this event dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba passed away at the age of sixty-three at dawn on the sixteenth day of the tenth month in the male fire-tiger year of the ninth cycle (1566). The *History of the Karma Kagyu School* holds that before he passed away

pa gcig pa or short *dgongs gcig*) is a text consisting of vajra utterances of the 'Bri gung bka' bryud founder, 'Jig rten mgon po rin chen dpal (1143–1217), collected by his disciple Shes rab 'byung gnas (1187–1241). Sobisch (2002, 329–35, and 335–39) provides a summarized biography of both. He also provides an outline of Shes rab 'byung gnas' *dgongs gcig* work and lists several commentaries of it, among them one from the Eighth Karmapa (Sobisch 2002, 339–41); he recently published a book where he dives deep into the subject based on a translation of Shes rab 'byung gnas' text and several commentaries (Sobisch 2020).

⁸⁵ Rheingans 2017, 67. For the spiritual biography, see gTsong lag phreng ba, *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston*, vol. 2, 1206–1334.

⁸⁶ BT1, 60: *de nas dgung lo drung cu'i skabs zhig sku zhed chung ba tsam ma gtogs bsnun gzhi gzhan med kyang da ni kho bo'i bya ba de tsam yin/ gsungs tel*. The description of the following events is also based on the *History of the Karma Kagyu School* (BT1, 60–61). dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba acted as scribe for the Eighth Karmapa for several of his works (Rheingans 2017, 44).

his students persistently requested him to give further instructions on where he would take rebirth, but dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba just said: "It will not be difficult for you, the spiritual son will see the teacher". Furthermore, later on the Fifth Zhwa dmar pa, dKon mchog yan lag, also said that "the reincarnation of the Dharma master will come as a Buddhist monk and [we] will be certain without disputes."⁸⁷

In dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's lifetime, some of his main students were the Fifth Zhwa dmar pa, dKon mchog yan lag (1525–1583), and the Fourth rGyal tshab, Grags pa don grub (1550–1617).

5. Some Notes on His Works

dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba spent a great deal of his life composing texts. However, until recently, his collected works were not easily available. Erwan Temple compiled a *dkar chag* of dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's collected works, which he published on the internet (Temple 2006). BDRC holds a work called *dPa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba'i gsung phyogs bsdus* (*Collection of the Teachings of dPa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba*). It consists of four volumes and contains a number of different texts of his, most of which are written in *dbu med*.⁸⁸ In 2019, the printing house Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying khang published his collected works in a modern book version comprising fourteen volumes. The texts were collected and edited by the research institute dPal brtsegs bod yig dpe rnying zhib 'jug khang. The full text of this dPal brtsegs edition is also available via BDRC.⁸⁹

All three sources about dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's collected works differ in terms of which titles are included. The attribution of texts to authors can sometimes be tricky. It exceeds the scope of this paper to present the complete *dkar chag* of dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's collected works or to analyze and discuss the differences mentioned above, though this is certainly a worthwhile undertaking for the future. Instead, only some of his most extensive and famous works shall be introduced here briefly:

1. *Religious History: Feast of the Wise* (*Chos byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston*)
2. *Commentary to the Bodhicaryāvatāra* (*sPyod 'jug gi 'grel pa*)

⁸⁷ BT1, 60: *khyed rang tsho la dka' las mi yong ste yab sras kyis gzigs yong gsungs pa'i bka' phebs tsam las ma byung ba phyis phyis rje dkon mchog yan lag gig sung las chos rje rin po che'i sku skye ban dher byon pa de rtsod med nges 'drons rang yin gsung byung ba [...]*. According to BDRC, P1385, the new incarnation, called dPa' bo gTsug lag rgya mtsho, was born in 1567/1568. For a short summary of his life, see Rasmussen 2014b.

⁸⁸ gTsug lag phreng ba, *dPa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba'i gsung phyogs bsdus*. BDRC: W3CN17900.

⁸⁹ gTsug lag phreng ba, *dPa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba'i gsung 'bum*. BDRC: W3CN25711.

3. *Treatise on Astrology: The Precious Treasury* (rTsis kyi btsan bcos rin chen gter mdzod)

4. *Detailed Exegesis on the Vajrayoginī [Practice]* (Phag mo'i rnam bshad chen po)⁹⁰

5.1 *Feast of the Wise*

A Feast of the Wise is a milestone in Tibetan religious history.⁹¹ dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba composed this extensive work, comprising five parts, over approximately two decades. The first part contains a general description of the external world, the second part includes a history of the origin and development of Buddhism in India, the third and most extensive part comprises a history of Tibet. Part 4 presents the history of Khotan, Early China, Tangut, Mongolia, and Later China, and the fifth part covers the five fields of knowledge. The opus has a strong focus on the history of the Karma Kagyu school and especially on the Karma pas life stories, which make up about one third of the whole text. A second focus is on the imperial period, where his work is highly praised for its accurate use of sources such as edicts and inscriptions. dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba writes in his colophon that the writing of this work was inspired by his own wishes as well as the persistent encouragement of the great ruler (*sa skyong ba chen po*) bSod nams rab brtan (sixteenth century).⁹² He started to compose the work in the female wood-snake year (1545) when he was forty-two years old and finished the composition when he was sixty in the second month of the male wood-bird year (1564) in the large temple dPal sangs rgyas mi 'gyur lhun gyis grub pa.⁹³ In the dPal brtsegs edition, the *Feast of the*

⁹⁰ For references to the Tibetan text of all four works, see the respective sections below; for the colophons in Tibetan, see Appendix A.

⁹¹ For referencing, the following block print reproduction is used: gTsong lag phreng ba, *Chos 'byuñ mkhas pa'i dga' ston. A detailed history of the development of Buddhism in India and Tibet*. There are a number of other editions not included in our bibliography. For an overview of these and an extensive outline and introduction of the work, see a recently published article in this journal (Dell 2021c). There is no comprehensive translation of this work, but many scholars refer to it, and some have translated comparatively short passages of it (e.g., Rheingans 2021, 149–55, and Dell 2020, 48–51; 2021a, 86–89; 2021b; forthcoming).

⁹² The identification of bSod nams rab brtan is not completely certain. It could be Karma mi pham bsod nams rab brtan. According to BDRC, he was the “ruler of the *yar stod* principality; a supporter of the *karma kaM tshang* tradition” (BDRC, P10352). For further discussion of the sponsors of this work, see Dell 2021c, 113–14.

⁹³ Lit. “the big temple where the unchanging [state of] the glorious Buddha is accomplished spontaneously”. This is the name of the temple of bSams yas monastery given by BDRC (G287) as dPal lugs gsum mi 'gyur lhun gyis grub pa'i gtsug lag khang. On the importance of this place for dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba, see Dell 2021c, 149, footnote 104.

Wise covers four of the fourteen volumes.⁹⁴

5.2 Commentary to the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*

In the colophon of the *Commentary to the Bodhicaryāvatāra*,⁹⁵ one learns that this work comprises a coarse explanation of the "word meaning" (*tshig don*) of Shantideva's commentary, a division explaining the difficult points, and a full explanation of the general points of the treatise. Furthermore, he renders the special differences found in all Indian and Tibetan commentaries, and he has in particular taken as witness the teachings of the Eighth Karma pa, Mi bskyod rdo rje.⁹⁶

Brunnhölzl (2004) has taken the first steps with his publication of the translation of the ninth chapter of dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's commentary to the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. According to him (Brunnhölzl 2004, 613–14), dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's commentary is, together with the Eighth Karma pa's *Chariot of the Tagpo Siddhas*,⁹⁷ the standard presentation of Madhyamaka in the Kagyu school. In addition to this, dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba also quotes a number of earlier Tibetan commentaries written by masters such as Sabsang Mati Panchen Jamyang Lodro (1294–1376) and the Kadampa master Tsonaba Chenpo Sherab Sangpo (fourteenth cent.). The *History of the Karma Kagyu School* also briefly comments on this work and writes that dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba composed the *Commentary to the Bodhicaryāvatāra* in order to preserve Mi bskyod rdo rje's position on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*.⁹⁸

According to the colophon, dPa' bo gTsug la phreng ba started the composition in Southern Tibet, in the meditation hut of spontaneous accomplishment [of] the empowerment of the female noble one, at the mountain of accomplishment (*gangs can gyi lho'i cha grub pa'i ri bo 'phags ma'i skur lhun gyis grub pa'i bsam gtan gyi khang bu*). He completed it in the fire-dragon year (1556), when he was fifty-three years old. The place of completion is indicated as his seat, at Gro bo lung monastery in Lho brag, more specifically in the famous Milarepa tower (*stras*

⁹⁴ gTsug lag phreng ba, *dPa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba'i gsung 'bum*, vols. 1–4.

⁹⁵ For referencing, the dPal brtseg edition is used, gTsug lag phreng ba, *Byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa'i rnam par bshad pa theg chen chos kyi rgya mtsho zab rgyas mtha' yas pa'i snying po zhes bya ba*. There are a number of other editions not included in our bibliography, see e.g., BDRC, W7500 (block print), W3CN21622 (block print), W1KG23091 (book), and W30014 (part of a book).

⁹⁶ The text contains three rather extensive colophons: one by dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba himself, one colophon by the sponsors of the compilation and printing of the original work, and one last colophon by the supervisor of the actual printing. Here, only the colophon by dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba himself is considered (Appendix A).

⁹⁷ Mi bskyod rdo rje, *dBu ma la 'jug pa'i rnam bshad dpal ldan dus gsum mkhyen pa' zhal lung dwags brgyud grub pa'i shing rta*.

⁹⁸ BT1, 62: *rje brgyad pa'i bzhed pa skyong ba'i spyod 'jug gi rgyas 'grel [...]*.

mkhar).⁹⁹ In the dPal brtsegs edition, the *Commentary to the Bodhicaryāvatāra* makes up two of the fourteen volumes.¹⁰⁰

5.3 *Treatise on Astrology: The Precious Treasury*

In the colophon of the *Treatise on Astrology: The Precious Treasury*,¹⁰¹ dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba writes that the text contains the teachings of all the commentaries on astrology in only one volume. By “all the commentaries,” dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba might refer to “all the commentaries by the Third Karma pa” because in the *History of the Karma Kagyu School*, it is explicitly written that it “[...] contains all the astrological teachings of the Third Karmapa Rang byung rdo rje.”¹⁰² This work thus forms a specific Karma Kagyu commentary providing the astrological tradition of the Third Karma pa. dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba composed the first two chapters when he arrived at Nagpu (*nags phu*) in his thirty-third year in the fire-monkey year (1536).¹⁰³ He finished the composition in the summertime, when he was thirty-four years old, staying in the mountains surrounding Samye (*bsam yas*). In the dPal brtsegs edition, the *Treatise on Astrology: The Precious Treasury* makes up about one of the fourteen volumes.¹⁰⁴

5.4 *Detailed Exegesis on the Vajrayoginī [Practice]*

The *Detailed Exegesis on the Vajrayoginī [Practice]*¹⁰⁵ explains the esoteric meditation practice on Varjayoginī according to the Kagyu tradition.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁹ In the colophon (Appendix A), the place name is given as *gDan sa chen po dpal gro bo lung sras mkhar sprul pa'i pho brang*. For further discussion of the place, see also footnote 17.

¹⁰⁰ gTsug lag phreng ba, *dPa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba'i gsung 'bum*, vols. 5 and 6.

¹⁰¹ For referencing, the block print edition is used: gTsug lag phreng ba, *dPal dus kyi 'khor lo'i man ngag rtsis kyi bstan bcos kun las btus pa chen po'i rgyas 'grel rin po che'i gter mdzod*. There are a number of further editions, some of which are found at BDRC, e.g., W1CZ1984, W30023.

¹⁰² BT1, 62: *rang byung ba'i rtsis kun bsdus pa'i 'grel par in chen gter mdzod*/. With respect to this, it is also interesting to note that according to the *Mirror* (ML3, 245) dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba receives teachings on the Third Karma pa's astrology from Karma 'Phrin las pa when he is around twenty-four or twenty-five.

¹⁰³ For further information on Nagpu, see Roerich 1996, 493–94.

¹⁰⁴ gTsug lag phreng ba, *dPa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba'i gsung 'bum*, vols. 8.

¹⁰⁵ For referencing, the dPal brtseg edition is used: gTsug lag phreng ba, *dPal rje btsun rdo rje rnal 'byor ma'i gsang ba'i sgrub thabs kyi rnam par bshad pa zab mo rnam 'byed*. There are a number of other editions, some of which are found at BDRC, e.g., W26626 (block print), W8LS31174 (block print), W30282 (*dbu med*), W3CN1539 (*dbu med*), W4CZ355757 (*dbu med*).

¹⁰⁶ For further details on the Vajrayoginī ritual, see, e.g., English 2002.

In the colophon, dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba mentions that he completed this text in Tsāri (*tsā ri tra*).¹⁰⁷ Supplementing the colophon, dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's spiritual autobiography, the *Mirror*, provides some information on the text. There, one learns that dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba received instructions on the Vajrayoginī practice at an early age, and that it seems that he had a special connection to this deity. One event that illustrates this quite well is the second time when dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba meets his teacher Karma pa, Mi bskyod rdo rje, at the seat of rTa bar rgyal 'dzin tshal gung. dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba writes that Karma pa Mi bskyod rdo rje said the following to dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba:

“The activity of the supreme siddhis is no other than yoginī practice. When you came here, there was the good ripening of dependent arising that my nectar [pills] turned into camphor and therefore you should do the yoginī practice!” [Then Karma pa Mi bskyod rdo rje] gave the instructions on the Vajrayoginī sādana.¹⁰⁸

In this way, he received a specific instruction by Karma pa Mi bskyod rdo rje to do the Vajrayoginī practice and also to make the nectar pills. According to the *History of the Karma Kagyu School*, great signs appeared when they made the ritual, and the nectar pills turned into camphor. Furthermore, it is written there that the pills were inserted into a physical representation of enlightened body, speech or mind (*rten*; e.g., a statue or a stūpa) in Zur mang, and he had even seen them himself.¹⁰⁹ dPa' bo's *Detailed Exegesis on the Vajrayoginī [Practice]* is the central Karma bKa' brgyud text for this practice, used in the three-year retreat programs of this lineage.¹¹⁰ In the dPal brtsegs edition, the *Detailed Exegesis on the Vajrayoginī [Practice]* makes up most of one of the fourteen volumes.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ For the colophon, see Appendix A. Tsāri is a mountain located in southern Tibet and is one of the most important pilgrimage sites (Treasury of Lives, “Tsāri”). Huber (1999) dedicated a book to this pilgrimage site.

¹⁰⁸ ML3, 255: *mchog gi dngos grub sgrub pa'i nye rgyu ni/ rnal 'byor ma yi sgrub pa las zhan med/ khyod nyid phyin tshe kho bo'i bdud rtsi ni/ ga bur gyur pa'i rten 'brel yang 'grig pas/ rnal 'byor ma yi sgrub pa gyis cig gsung/ phag mo'i sgrub thabs man ngag bcas pa gnang/*.

¹⁰⁹ BT1, 58: *dpon slob lngas bsgrub pa nar tags khyad par can mang byung/ bdud rtsi ga pur du gyur pa ni zur mang pa'i rten khrod du bzhugs pa bdag gis kyang mjal/*. The same event is described in greater detail in the *Mirror* (ML3, 255). For the location of Zur mang, see Dorje 2004, 535–36.

¹¹⁰ Personal interview with Khenpo Ngedon on April 8, 2007, Malaga.

¹¹¹ gTsug lag phreng ba, *dPa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba'i gsung 'bum*, vols. 7.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, some hitherto unknown aspects of dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's life and works have been elucidated. Through translation and comparative analysis of a number of spiritual biographies and autobiographies, it has been determined that dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba was born in 1504 in Central Tibet into the paternal family lineage called the Eastern Nyag. He received the *upāsaka* and *śrāmaṇera* vows in 1512 from the Fourth Zhwa dmar pa, dPal Chos kyis grags pa, and received the name dPal Mi pham chos kyi gyal po don thams cad yongs su grub pa. Some of his main teachers were the Fourth Zhwa dmar pa, Karma 'Phrin las pa, dBus sMyon Kun dga' bzang po, and the Eighth Karma pa, Mi bskyod rDo rje. From them, he received an inconceivable amount of teachings and transmissions. From the accounts explaining his scholarly education we learn, among other things, that especially Karma 'Phrin las pa had a huge impact on dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba, as the young dPa' bo met him at the early age of nine and studied under him for nineteen years. Furthermore, dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's strong connection to dBus smyon Kun dga' bzang po is significant because it indicates his bond to the sMyon pa tradition, both in his first and second incarnation. Lastly, dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's meeting with the Eighth Karma pa was a major event in his life, and in his spiritual biography he expounds extensively on his devotion to and trust in him. During their first encounter, the Karma pa gave him the name "gTsug lag phreng ba," and later on he entrusted him with important tasks such as being the scribe for his *Same Intention* teachings, writing the introduction, and making the final compilation of the text. He was also deemed one of his key disciples, next to the Fifth Zhwa dmar pa.

Lastly, we have contributed with a few remarks on some of his most famous writings based on the colophons and passages found in the spiritual biographies. Through these text passages, we learn that dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba spent almost twenty years composing his *Feast of the Wise* and finished it in 1564, only a couple of years before he died. Furthermore, it has become clear that dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's commentary to the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is an extensive work where he makes references to both early Indian and Tibetan commentaries. In the composition of this work, he particularly relied on the Eighth Karma pa Mi bskyod rdo rje's teachings, and composed them into a text in order to preserve the Karma pa's position on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. We also learn that his famous work the *Treatise on Astrology: The Precious Treasury* is a one-volume text comprising all the astrological teachings of the Third Karma pa, Rang 'byung rdo rje. He composed it within one year and finished it in the area of Samye in 1537.

Furthermore, we learn that he completed his *Detailed Exegesis on the Vajrayoginī [practice]* text in Tsāri. It is clear from the spiritual biographies that he had a very close connection to this practice. He already started to recite the Vajrayoginī ritual at the age of six, and received various teachings on this practice from the Eighth Karma pa and others.

With this paper, we have shed some new light on the life and works of dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba and taken further steps in exploring this interesting and influential Karma Kagyu master. Further research on his life and works will be of immense value in terms of our understanding of Tibetan historical and philosophical writing, as well as Buddhist practice in the Karma Kagyu lineage in the sixteenth century. An important contribution could, for example, be to further investigate his *Nine Sections* and his *Very Hidden Talk*. The *Mirror* also contains several interesting passages that belong to the secret level, such as dreams and visions, which have been left out of this paper. It could be interesting to analyze those that appear not only in the *Mirror* but also in his other spiritual autobiographies. Last but not least, dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba's works definitely deserve a more detailed study, especially now that his collected works have recently become easily available in the dPal brtsegs edition.

Appendix A: Colophons

In Appendix A, the colophons of the three different autobiographies of dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba (section 2.1) are presented, as well as the colophons of his works presented in section 5. For an English summary of the information from the colophons, see these mentioned sections. Here only the Tibetan text is included for the interested reader.

Mirror (Reflecting the Illusory Countenance)

rang gi rtogs pa brjod pa 'khrul pa'i bzhin ras 'char ba'i me long zhes bya ba
 'di ni/ lugs gnyis kyi yon tan rgya chen po mnga' ba bying pa chos kyi rje kun
 spangs pa lcam sring gis thog mar nan tan ches chen pos bskul bar mdzad pa'i
 rgyu dang/ lho gnas mchog dpal gyi ts'a ri tra'i gtsug gi nor bu rdo rje 'dzin
 pa kun dga' rnam par rgyal ba'i gsung gis 'phral du bskul ba'i rkyen lhan cig
 pa las bcom ldan 'das mi skyod zhabs snying gi dbus su 'dzin pa bsod snyoms
 pa gtsug lag phreng ba rang nyid kyi rang lo so dgu pa lcags mo glang gi lo
 nag pa'i zla ba la lho gnas mchog dpal gyi ts'a ri tra/ bde chen rigs bsod kyi
 pho brang/ kun snang sgyu 'phrul gyi zhing khams chen po'i cha/ yul smad
 mkha' 'gro'i pho brang gi bye brag/ dpal ldan lha mo re ma ti'i pho brang/

*nags tshal stug po'i dbus rong chung bsam gtan gyi khang bur sbyar ba'o*¹¹²

Nine Sections

/bsod snyoms pa gtsug lag rgya mtsho'i phreng ba can ming gzhan mi pham chos kyi rgyal po yongs su grub pas nyang stod 'brug phu gser khang gi gdan sa pa ston sgom kirt'i zhwa ras rje btsun mar pas byin gyis brlabs pa'i dpal shar kha ras chen gyi rnam thar nyid kyis mdzad pa/

dpal 'byor thob tshul/ thos bsam mdzad tshul/ dka' ba spyad de gnas bskor tshul/ smin grol gyi gdams pa zhus tshul/ sgom sgrub mdzad tshul/ sngags spyod mdzad tshul/ lhag pa'i lha gzigs tshul/ skye ba dran tshul/ gzhan don mdzad tshul/

*te don dgur bsodus pa zhig bstan nas khyad nyid kyi tshe 'di'i tshul 'di lta bur bsodus pa zhig dad pa'i rten du dgos zhes bskul ba don dang ldan par bya ba'i phyir don tshan dgu pa de nyid gzhir byas te rnal 'byor dbang phyug dam pa de lta bu'i yon tan bdag la mi ldan pas gser gyi mdun du lcags nag po bzhin du ngo tshar zad mod kyang tshe 'di ci dgar btang nas cung zad lon pas ngo tsha ba med pa'i phyir ji lta bar sprul pa'i pho brang chen po sras mkhar dgyes pa rdo rje'i gzhal med khang du lcags pho khyi lo sku mkhar gser thog gi dus thun mtshams gnyis su bkod pa'o*¹¹³

Very Hidden Talk

*de ltar bdag gi ngang tshul 'ga' zhig ni// gsal rab byas mod yul du ma ru// bgrod dang de tshe brnyed dang ma rnyed dang// grags dang ma grags bde sdug myong ba sogs// phal pa'i sgrung gtam brjod par ma byas so// 'di dag rnams las zab cing rgya che'i gtam//[...] 'on yang nyams su myong ba'i mig med pa// de dag skrag dang dmod pa spong ba'i phyir// 'di ni bdag la sems dang nyams myong gi// mig ldan mchod pa dam pa 'ga' zung las// gzhan la nam yang bstan par mi bya ste// zab cing rab tu zab pa sba bar byos// rdo rje'i bka' drung gnod sbyin bzhi po dang// dpal ldan dud pa'i sol ba ma dang ni// bdud ngon chen po traksha 'khor bcas la// gtad to gnyer ro srungs cig sba bar gyis// chos 'di gang gis 'dzin par byed pa de'i// mi mthun tshar chod 'dod dgu sgrub par mdzod// mchog gi dam pa'i dge legs snang ba ni// dzam gling khyab par rab du brdal gyur tsam// rdo rje rnal 'byor pa gtsug lag phreng bas rang gi tshul cung zad gsal bar byas pa de rab tu gsang*¹¹⁴

Feast of the Wise

dam pa'i chos kyi 'khor lo bsgyur pa rnams kyi byung ba gsal bar byed pa mkhas pa'i dga' ston zhes bya [...] rang gi dad pa'i blo dang/ sa skyon pa chen

¹¹² ML3, 264–65.

¹¹³ NS1, fols. 23r.5–24r.3.

¹¹⁴ VH1, fols. 20–21.

po bsod nams rab brtan gyis bskul bar mdzad pa'i rkyen las/ shakya'i dge slong
 dus gyi dbang gis chos smra ba'i re mos su son pa mi pham chos kyi rgyal po
 don yongs su grub pa ming gzhan gtsug lag gi phreng ba 'dzin pas rang lo
 zhe gnyis pa la skabs dang po gsum pa brtsams shing/ phyis rang lo drug bcu
 pa'i skabs ci rigs par le'u lhag ma rnams bris shing re gcig pa shing pho byi
 ba'i lo hor zla gnyis pa' tshes gcig la dpal sangs rgyas mi 'gyur lhun gyis grub
 pa'i gtsug lag khang chen po grub par bgyis pa dge bar mthar phyin to//¹¹⁵

Commentary to the Bodhicaryāvatāra

byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa'i gzhung don rnam par bshad pa
 theg pa chen po'i chos kyi rgya mtsho zab rgyas mtha' yas pa'i snying po/ zhes
 bya ba 'di ni gzhung bsod don du bcings/ tshig don rags par bshad/ dka' ba'i
 gnas bya brag tu phye/ med du mi rung ba'i spyi'i don rnams kyang gtan la
 phab/ rgya bod kyi 'grel pa mtha' dag gi khyad par tha dad pa brjod/ gtso bor
 rgyal ba'i gsung rab chen po rnams dang shing rta'i srol gnyis kyi bstan bcod
 kho na'i ched du rig pa'i gnas dang/ sde snod dang rgyud sde'i phyogs tsam
 'jin pa dus kyi dbang gis chos smra ba'i re mos su son zhing gangs can gyi
 dbus 'gyur tshal lha ldan gyi ljongs su byung ba shakya'i dge slong du khas
 'che ba mi pham chos kyi ryal po don thams cad yongs su grub pa ming gzhan
 gtsug lag rgya mtsho'i phreng ba can gyis gzhan la phan pa'i lhag pa'i bsam
 pa kho nas gangs can gyi lho'i cha grub pa'i ri bo 'phags ma'i skur lhun gyis
 grub pa'i bsam gtan gyi khang bur mgo brtsams de/ gangs can gyi ljongs 'dir
 bka' brgyud du grags pa thams cad kyi chu rgyud gyi 'byung gnas ri bo gangs
 can lta bur gyur pa/ gdan sa chen po dpal gro bo lung sras mkhar sprul pa'i
 pho brang du/ rang lo lnga gsum pa me 'brug gi lo la sangs rgyas mi 'gyur
 lhun gyis grub pa'i gtsug lag khangs chen po legs par grub pa dang lhan gcig
 par tha skar gyi zla ba'i dkar tshes bcu gnyis kyi snga dro legs par grub pa'ol
 sems can thams cad la phan bde rgya chen po 'byung la dar zhing rgyas par
 gyur cig//¹¹⁶

Treatise on Astrology: The Precious Treasury

rtsis kyi bstan bcos kun las btus pa chen po'i rgyas 'grel rin po che'i gter
 mdzod kun nas kha yongs su bye ba zhes bya ba bstan bcos thams cad kyi glegs
 bam gcig tu nye bar gnas pa 'di ni mang du thos pa'i dge slong bsod snyoms
 pa gtsug lag phreng ba ming gzhan mi pham chos kyi rgyal po don yongs su
 grub pas gdong ngan nam me spre'i lo ston zla ba rang lo so gsum pa'i dus

¹¹⁵ gTsug lag phreng ba, *Chos 'byun mkhas pa'i dga' ston. A detailed history of the development of Buddhism in India and Tibet*, vol. 2, 706–7. For a translation of the colophon, see Dell 2021c, 147–49.

¹¹⁶ gTsug lag phreng ba, *Byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa'i rnam par bshad pa theg chen chos kyi rgya mtsho zab rgyas mtha' yas pa'i snying po zhes bya ba*, vol. 6, 499–500.

*sgar chen 'dzam gling gi rgyan chen po dpal ldan nags phu'i ri bor gdan phab pa'i tshe klog pa'i grar rtogs pa phyi ma'i le'u gnyis pa yan grub par bgyis cing slar rang lo so bdun pa kun ldan gyi lo dbyar zla tha chung gi dkar po'i phyogs la chos 'khor bsam yas dang nye ba'i ri bo'i mgul du rdzogs par sbyar ba'o*¹¹⁷

Detailed Exegesis on the Vajrayoginī [Practice]

[...] *dpal lhan cig skyes ma'i gsang ba'i sgrub thabs zhal gdams dang man ngag gis brgyan te gsal bar phye ba 'di ni rdo rje'i slob ma'i don du rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug gtsug lag phreng bas grub pa'i pho brang tsā ri tra ye shes kyi 'khor lor sbyar ba bde legs su grub bo*//¹¹⁸

Appendix B: Teachings Received from Karma 'phrin las pa

The teachings received from Karma 'phrin las pa as enumerated in the *Mirror* were summarized in English in section 4.4. However, the Tibetan text was too long for a footnote. Therefore, it is presented here.

rgyal ba karma'i phrin las 'dzin pa'i zhabs/ dgung lo nga bdun bzhes pa cig mjal ste/ thog mar tshe dpag med mgon lha dgu ma/ dze te ri yi lugs kyi dbang bskur mdzad/ grub rgyal ma dang te bu'i rgyun khyer gnang/ 'jam dbyangs dkar nag mi g.yo dkar po dang/ 'byung 'dul rta mgrin zla ba rgyal mtshan lugs/ shwa na bzhi bskor phag mo 'dbang bka' dang/ ber nag lcam dral chos skyong phran lngar bcas/ tshogs bdag dmar chen ku ru kulle dang/ gur zhal dur khrod bdag po la sogs pa'i/ yi dam chos skyong du ma'i rjes gnang ni/ sgrub thabs yig snar bcas pa du ma dang/ ngan rdzong snyan rgyud sgam po snyan rgyud dang/ karma chos drug mi ta'i khrid drug sogs/ lung khrid mang zhig gzhan zhor tsam du thob/ phyi dus klog pa kha thon byed tshe yang/ sbyong dkyil bcu gnyis dbang rgyud 'grel par bcas/ dus mkhyen rol pa'i zhabs dang de bzhin gshegs/ don ldan zhabs kyi bka' 'bum tshang ba dang/ rang byung bka' 'bum po ti gnyis la sogs/ dbang lung tshang dang kha 'thor mang zhig thob/ lhan cig skyes sbyor ro snyoms sgang dril dang/ sku gsum ngo sprod la sogs khrid kyi tshigs/ mang nyams khrid lta bu'i tshul du gnang/ lo dgu nas ni rang lor nyer brgyad bar//¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ gTsong lag phreng ba, *dPal dus kyi 'khor lo'i man ngag rtsis kyi bstan bcos kun las btus pa chen po'i rgyas 'grel rin po che'i gter mdzod*, fol. 209r.

¹¹⁸ gTsong lag phreng ba, *dPal rje btsun rdo rje rnal 'byor ma'i gsang ba'i sgrub thabs kyi rnam par bshad pa zab mo rnam 'byed*, 512.

¹¹⁹ ML3, 238–39. For the English rendering, see section 4.4.

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