


The Transmission Lineages of the *Raktayamāri* Tantric Cycles in the Sa skya Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism: The *Gshin rje chos 'byung* of A mes zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga' bsod nams (1597–1659)¹

Aleksandra Wenta
(University of Florence)

Introduction

he tantric cycles of Vajrabhairava (*rdo rje 'jigs byed*) and Raktayamāri (*gshin rje dmar po*), dedicated to the wrathful forms of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī in his function as “Death-Destroyer”, reached Tibet during the later diffusion (*phyi dar*) of Buddhism in Tibet, although some minor works could have entered during the first dissemination (*snga dar*).² There were five main Vajrabhairava transmissions (*lugs*), named after the Tibetan masters who brought the cycle to Tibet, namely: 1) Zhang, 2) Skyo, 3) Gnyos, 4) Mal, and 5) Rwa. All of them were adopted by the Sa skya pas.³ In the late 12th century, after the advent of the Vajrabhairava transmission, the cycle of Raktayamāri entered Tibet. The spread of this cycle appears to have been essentially coterminous with the translation activities of the five bilingual lo tsā bas of that period, namely, Dpyal lo tsā ba, Chag lo tsā ba, G.yag sde lo tsā ba, Glo bo lo tsā ba, and Shong lo tsā ba Blo gros brtan pa. The Sa skya pa masters received different Raktayamāri transmissions stemming from the aforementioned lo tsā bas. Despite the existence of many lineages that provide ample opportunities for research, the topic of transmission of Raktayamāri cycle in Tibet has not received any attention from scholars. This article intends to fulfill this desideratum by providing a preliminary overview of this virtually unknown topic.

The focus of this article will be mainly the transmission lineages

¹ Dedicated to the memory of our Gen-La Tsering Dhundrup Gonkatsang (1951–2018).

² According to Tāranātha, a small number of Vajrabhairava-*sādhanas* entered Tibet with the advent of Buddhism (*snga dar*) when the cult was adopted by the first *dharma*-king Srong btsan sgam po (6th–7th century).

³ For the five Vajrabhairava transmissions adopted by the Sa skyas, see Wenta (2020) and Cuevas (2021b).

adopted by the Sa skya tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. Although the Sa skya pas are primarily known as the advocates of the “Path with its Fruit” (*lam ’bras*) and of Hevajra teachings, their involvement in the cult of Vajrabhairava and Raktayamāri had continued unrelentingly from the time of the early Sa skya masters. The great significance attached to these tantric cycles can be evinced by the proliferation of *thangkas* commissioned by the Sa skya pas to commemorate various Vajrabhairava-Raktayamāri lineage transmissions received by the *bla mas* of this school throughout its history.⁴ Suffice is to mention the 16th century Raktayamāri *thangka* in the Essen collection recently researched by Heller.⁵ The *thangka*, uniquely commissioned on the occasion of Sangs rgyas seng ge’s ascendancy (1504–1569) to the throne of Ngor, portrays Lha mchog seng ge (1468–1535), the ninth Ngor abbot, and Dkon mchog lhun grub (1497–1557), the tenth Ngor abbot. Both *bla mas* were deeply involved in the practice of these tantric cycles: Lha mchog seng ge regarded the *thangka* as his *thugs dam* (“object of worship”),⁶ while Dkon mchog lhun grub wrote at least four works on the *sādhana* practice focusing on Vajrabhairava.⁷

The analysis of different transmission lineages undertaken here will be primarily based on a textual study of A mes zhabs’s *Gshin rje chos ’byung*, which serves as one of the very few comprehensive accounts of the Raktayamāri lineages in Tibet. Even a customary glance at different lineages modeled on a family tree-like genealogy, reveals an extraordinary network of alliances between the Sa skya and the prominent lo tsā bas that played an important role in the rebirth of Tibetan culture during the *phyi dar* period. It may be argued that the Sa skya’s rapid rise to power in that period was accomplished to a great extent through their capacity to “forge alliances”⁸ with “new trends in Buddhism”⁹ and was directly connected to the parameters of the esoteric lineage formation. During the volatile times of the *phyir dar* period, filled with internal conflicts between different clans and mounting pressures of the looming Mongol invasion, many aristocratic houses made efforts to obtain esoteric Buddhist teachings; thus, the rise of lordly families, the proliferation of tantric lineages, and the enhanced status of the lo tsā bas could be seen as mutually

⁴ On the 15th century *thangka* featuring Vajrabhairava and commemorating the transmission of the Rwa lineage of Vajrabhairava to the Sa skya pas, see Jackson 1990b:137, 1996:84.

⁵ Heller 2009.

⁶ Essen and Thingo 1989: 228.

⁷ See, for example, *Jigs byed rwa lugs kyi sgrub thabs*, *Jigs byed rwa lugs kyi bsgrub thabs dang gtor chog gi zur ’debs bsnyen sgrub rnal rol*, *Dpal rdo rje ’jigs byed rwa lugs kyi sgrub thams bdud ’joms snang ba*.

⁸ Kapstein 2006:101.

⁹ Kapstein 2006:101.

inclusive processes.

This article deals with such questions as: who were the key-figures in the transmission and dissemination of Raktayamāri cycle in Tibet, and what was their position in the larger network of Buddhist scholars? Before revealing the identity of some of them, some reflections on the methodology that informs this article are in order. The common methodological approach to the study of lineages as an unbroken chain of guru-disciple initiations, often represented in a straight-line succession diagram, has been challenged by McRae¹⁰. He argues that such analysis presupposes the risk of committing the “string of pearls” fallacy and effectively simplifies diverse and complex religious and social dynamics involved in the lineage formation. Instead, he proposes an approach based on different phases, which brings to the forefront “qualitative differences along a chronological axis” that, in place of homologizing the individuals as members of a single, continuous confraternity, rather creates “meaningful distinctions”.¹¹ My own approach to the study of lineages differs from that of McRae. I argue that the analysis of masters in the line of succession can be seen as a dynamic process of transmission practice and, therefore, an articulation of mobility that does not flow unimpeded but is channeled through the cracks of specific encounters. This model of analysis places the category of “encounter” at the center of investigation, and implies that religious practice is transmitted through the circulation of audiences. The transmission practice is also in various degrees dependent upon the centers that often, due to their strategic geographical location, enable circulatory traffic movement. The emphasis on the aspect of mobility situates transmission as a form of social practice that simultaneously reveals an emergent process of site making. In this case, the transmission practice that could involve both formal tantric initiation and the translation of a Tantra is linked to certain geographical places that played a pivotal role in the dissemination of tantric teachings. This article will take a closer look at some among the locations that appear to have assumed a wider significance in the circulatory tantric network, and that provided a regular opportunity for the exchange of ideas and spread of Raktayamāri teachings through Tibet.

¹⁰ McRae 2003.

¹¹ McRae 2003: 11, 12.

1. A mes zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga' bsod noms (1597–1659) and his *Gshin rje chos 'byung*

A mes zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga' bsod noms was in many ways a paradigmatic and particularly successful example of a Sa skya master. He was born into a powerful family: the 'Khon lineage of the Sa skya throne-holders at the Dus mchod bla brang. His grandfather was Sangs 'chang grags pa blo gros (1563–1617), the twenty-sixth patriarch of Sa skya, who granted him numerous empowerments of tantric deities, including Hevajra, Cakrasamvara, Vajrakīlaya, etc.¹² From the early years of his life, A mes zhabs was exposed to rigorous studies of Buddhist scriptures and tantric rituals and had the advantage of being allied with influential figures of his era, who supported him on the ambitious path to clerical success. Following in the glory of his father's footsteps, A mes zhabs eventually became the twenty-seventh patriarch of the Sa skya pas and took up his residence at the Bzhi thog bla brang. He is regarded as one of the most important historians of his lineage, whose impressive body of works consisting of hundreds of texts—including official registers of teachings, genealogies, biographies, tantric cycles, and religious histories—provides an invaluable source of information on the Sa skya pa lineage.¹³ Recent scholarship on A mes zhabs has focused on his biography, and includes a detailed overview of various transmissions he received,¹⁴ the mapping of the Hevajra Tantras and the teachings of the “Path with its Fruit” (*lam 'bras*),¹⁵ as well as the analysis of the stylistic features of his *gsan yig*.¹⁶ However, to my knowledge, his work on the religious history (*chos 'byung*) of the Vajrabhairava-Yamāntaka tantric cycle has received scant attention to date. A mes zhabs's *Gshin rje chos 'byung* makes use of the historiographical genre of ‘religious history’ (*chos 'byung*) to consolidate and preserve the histories of particular lineage transmissions for the future generations of the Sa skya practitioners. The choice of the *chos 'byung* genre seems to indicate that Vajrabhairava and Raktayamāri were considered formative to the Sa skya identity. In A mes zhabs's *chos 'byung*, the personal lineages of A mes zhabs and Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po (1382–1456) are characteristically interwoven in the general structure of the main transmission lineages related to the Vajrabhairava and Raktayamāri cycles in Tibet. In the 17th century, the religious authority and political influence of the Sa skya was long in decline, while

¹² Sobisch 2007:13.

¹³ Sobisch 2008:2.

¹⁴ Sobisch 2002; 2007.

¹⁵ Sobisch 2008.

¹⁶ Kramer 2008.

the power of the long-standing Sa skya opponents, the Dge lugs pas, was rising.¹⁷ By documenting the tantric legacy of Ngor chen, A mes zhabs wanted to preserve the heritage of one of the most important Sa skya masters, who was known for his sectarian debates with the rival followers of Tsong kha pa.¹⁸

The description of each transmission lineage—which, to a large extent, resembles the linguistic structure¹⁹ of A mes zhabs's "record of teachings received"²⁰—usually begins with the name of a single teaching or a group of teachings that was/were transmitted, the name of the lineage-holder, and the names of the master/s from whom the lineage-holder originally received the teachings. The lineage-holder acts as an anchor point of the main lineage, wherefrom the orally transmitted tradition (*bka' bab*, *bka' khrid*) derives its name. In most cases, a single transmission or a group of transmissions are documented as descending from one master to one disciple in an uninterrupted, sequential line (*rim pas*) handed down through generation after generation of masters that helps to establish a single transmission lineage history. In that case, the transmission is specified as being transmitted in a single line of descent (*babs pa gcig*). Very often, however, the continuity of a single transmission lineage breaks up, establishing parallel transmission lineages.²¹ In most cases, this

¹⁷ Sobisch 2007:10.

¹⁸ For the debates between Ngor chen and Tshong kha pa's disciple, Mkhas grub rdo rje, see Heimbel 2017a.

¹⁹ A transmission-lineage when the teachings are bestowed from one master to one disciple or from one master to several disciples can be distinguished as three specific linguistic models. The first model uses the ergative marker *kyis* and its variants, added either to a proper name or to an indefinite pronoun *des* "by him" or *de nyid kyis* "by himself" that always follows the proper name, to indicate the person who grants the transmission, i.e. the master/lineage-holder. The person who receives the transmission, i.e. the disciple, who automatically becomes the lineage-holder in his own right, is indicated by the oblique particle, *la* "to". E.g. *rwa ye shes seng ges rwa 'bum seng la gnang*. The second model uses the phrase *de la* "under that [teacher]" indicating the person whose proper name was given in the preceding line. He is the master under whom the disciple receives the transmission. The disciple is indicated by the ergative marker *kyis*. E.g. *de la rgwa los zhus*. The third model makes use of ablative particle *nas* "from [that teacher]" that simply precedes the proper name of the person who grants transmission. The name of the disciple to whom this transmission is given follows *nas*: "from [that teacher] [to that] disciple". E.g. *rje thar rtse nas nam mkha' dpal bzang*. In case these models are employed to document a transmission to several individuals, a continuing particle *dang* "and" is sometimes used. Very often, however, *dang* is dropped altogether, instead the proper names of different recipients following in a single transmission line are listed.

²⁰ See Kramer 2008.

²¹ The creation of parallel lineages is indicated by the phrase *yang* "also" followed by the proper name of the teacher from whom the main transmission-lineage branched off to initiate a parallel lineage. The proper name of the teacher is fol-

happens when the master bestows the teachings not to one, but to several disciples. These parallel lineages may further evolve into different parallel lineages. Not infrequent are the cases in which the master receives different transmissions from several parallel lineages or from several teachers belonging to the same lineage (*bla ma so so la gsan*). For example, Ngor chen is referred to by A mes zhabs as the one “who was established in many transmission lineages” (*brgyud pa'i bka' babs mang du bzhugs pa*). If the author wishes to document his own ‘personal’ lineage, the honorific personal pronoun *kho bo cag* “we” is used, followed by the verb indicating transmission.

A mes zhabs uses two verbs to refer to the methods of transmission: *gsan* ‘listen’ (sometimes substituted by the passive form *thos* ‘heard’) and *gnang* ‘give’. While the former clearly indicates the oral nature of transmission, the meaning of the latter, highly polysemic verb is far more complex.²² Its usage in this context can partially be explained when we consider its co-appearance with the verb *zhus*, ‘request’, e.g. *zhus pa la gnang* (it [the transmission] was given, as he requested). The choice of those two verbs by A mes zhabs seems to suggest that *zhus* signifies the tantric custom of formally petitioning the master for initiation, whereas *gnang* indicates the fact that a given request was granted.

A mes zhabs’s reasons for writing the *Gshin rje chos 'byung* probably stemmed from two different factors, one personal and the other political. The personal factor derived from his tantric initiations. A mes zhabs’s turn to the Vajrabhairava and Raktayamāri tantras came relatively early in his career, when he was twenty-three years old, following his encounter with Mkhan chen thams cad mkhyen pa Ngag dbang chos grags (1572–1641), who became one of his main preceptors. According to Sobisch,²³ A mes zhabs studied under his guidance from 1619 onwards until Ngag dbang’s death in 1641. Ngag dbang features as the master of A mes zhabs’s first ‘personal’ lineage, as the one who bestowed on him the teachings of both the Black and Red cycles.²⁴ Insofar as the Black cycle is concerned, A mes zhabs

lowed by ablative particle *nas* “from” that is followed by the list of disciples who belong to this parallel lineage. The whole phrase goes as follows: *yang* PERSON A *nas* PERSON B, PERSON C, etc. E.g: *yang rong pa rgwa lo nas/ rong pa shes rab seng gel bla ma dpal ldan seng ge*.

²² Mélac and Tournadre 2021.

²³ Sobisch 2007:18.

²⁴ A mes zhabs’s *chos 'byung* divides the teachings into the Black cycle and the Red cycle, thus simplifying a rather complex matter of various cults that belonged to these taxonomies (see Wenta 2020; Cuevas 2021b). In general terms, the “Black cycle” includes the cults of Vajrabhairava/*Rdo rje 'jigs byed*, and Kṛṣṇayamāri/*Gshin rje nag po*) and the “Red cycle” includes the cult of Raktayamāri/*Gshin rje dmar po*.

reports the receipt of the teachings from the Eastern Rwa tradition initiated by a younger brother of Rwa Chos rab, namely Rwa Dharma seng ge.²⁵ Among the teachings he received from Ngag dbang chos grags were empowerments (*dbang*), authorizations (*rjes gnang*), experiential instructions (*nyams khrid*),²⁶ and the reading transmission (*bka' lung*) of the *Commentary on the Seven Chapters [of the Vajrabhairavatantra]* based on the tantric commentary of Jo gdan nam mkha' lhun bzang (13th-14th c.).²⁷ The text referred to by A mes zhabs is most probably the *Rdo rje 'jigs byed kyi khrid yig sbas pa rab gsal (Instruction Manual of Vajrabhairava [Called] "Illuminating the Secret")*, extant in thirty-seven folios.²⁸ As for the Red cycle, these were the teachings transmitted to A mes zhabs through the lineage of Tshar chen (see pp. 52-53) that Ngag dbang received from Klu sgrub rgya mtsho, one of Tshar chen's outstanding disciples. The transmissions of the Red cycle included the unelaborated instruction on ripening and development (*spros med kyi khrid smin rgyas*), and the so-called "three blessings" (*byin rlabs*): 1) Unelaborated Blessing of the Red Yamāri cycle;

²⁵ Rwa Dharma seng ge passed it down to his own son, Dkon mchog seng ge, who transmitted it to Shes rab mtshan (Rwa Shes rab rgyal mtshan), who passed it down to Rgya ston Dbang phyug rgyal mtshan (Dbang phyug brtson 'grus). From him, Kun dga' brtson 'grus a.k.a Rgya ston, who was believed to be the fourth incarnation of Rwa lo tsā ba Rdo rje grags, listened to the entire Rwa tradition without exception. *rwa shar pa ni gcung rwa dha rma seng ge nas gtso bor brgyud pa stel de yang rwa chos rab la rwa dha rma seng ges gsan/ des rang gi sras rwa dkon mchog seng ge la gnang/ des rwa shes rab rgyal mtshan la gnang/ des rgya ston dbang phyug rgyal mtshan la gnang/ de nyid la rwa chen lo tsa bar rdo rje grags kyi sku'i skye ba bzhi par grags pa rgya ston kun dga' brtson 'grus kyis rwa lugs kyi chos skor ma lus pa gsan/ Gshin rje*, p.128. According to A mes zhabs, Kun dga' brtson 'grus was a prolific writer. Among his many literary compositions, we find the *Teachers of the Rwa lineage, History of India and Nepal and Commentary on the Seven Chapters [of the Vajrabhairavatantra]* and Sobisch (2008: 54) confirms that according to Ngag dbang chos grags's *Record* these two texts formed a part of the Vajrabhairava teachings according to the Rwa tradition that were transmitted in the Sa skya pa sect. Recently, Cuevas (2021a: 283) has reported that Kun dga' brtson 'grus was responsible for the spread of the Rwa transmissions to the Khams region in eastern Tibet and as far north as Tangut (Ch. Xixia). See also Cuevas 2021b: 66.

²⁶ Ngag dbang chos grags bestowed on A mes zhabs several teachings, namely: 1) the "empowerment of the 13-deity Kṛṣṇayamāri according to the Rwa tradition" (*rwa lugs lha bcu gsum gyi dbang*), 2) very secret and profound "authorization [to practice] the death rituals", 3) "experiential instruction on the Ḍakīnī Hearing Lineage of the Rwa Instructions" (*rwa khrid mkha' 'gro snyan brgyud nyams khrid*). The last items on A mes zhabs's list of tantric teachings he received are: the "consecration [to practice] the mantra-extraction", and two volumes of the Vajrabhairava cycle, such as the *Complete [volumes] of Rwa's teachings* and a detailed practice manual. *Gshin rje*, p. 129.

²⁷ Jo gdan nam mkha' lhun bzang was a follower of the Rgya lugs branch of the Eastern Rwa tradition, see Cuevas 2021b: 110.

²⁸ Sobisch 2008:56 however identifies the text as *Nag 'grel gyi bshad pa*, which is an exposition of the *Rtog bdun gyi nag 'grel* by Rwa lo tsā ba Rdo rje grags.

2) Blessing of the Clear Light, and; 3) Blessing of Ambrosia. The first of the three blessings was based on the collation of two texts: a standard Indian text on the Red Yamāri composed by Virūpa and Śrīdhara, on the one hand, and a Tibetan text composed by Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po, on the other (see p. 35, fn. 51).²⁹

The second 'personal' lineage was associated with Spyan snga Rin po che Kun dga' don grub from Lo dgon pa in Bya yul (*dbus*) whom A mes zhabs met in 1622,³⁰ when he was twenty-seven years old. In the course of their initial encounter, Spyan snga received a series of premonitory dreams featuring different forms of Yamāri, which he understood as compelling evidence in favour of A mes zhabs's suitability to receive the Vajrabhairava teachings. A mes zhabs records his meeting with Spyan snga and the dream trope as symptomatic of divine providence in the following words:

In the year 'endowed with the eye of the profound *dharma*' (i.e. 1622), I thoroughly received the teachings [of Vajrabhairava-Yamāri] at the feet of Spyan snga Rin po che Kun dga' don grub. Thus, when he was explaining to me the purpose of granting me these cycles of teachings, he said that in his dream the *yab-yum* form of Yamāri emerged from the ground and appeared to be delighted, he thought it was an auspicious sign. The next morning, he said to me: "I have realized that this Karmayama (*las gshin*) transmission will bring enlightened activities to some of you Sa skya people". On the eve of the empowerment preparation, he again dreamt about all sorts of weapons and armors surrounding me, and he said: "This is a sign that if you rely on [Vajra]bhairava, the harm caused to you by other people will be pushed back and whatever injury they try to inflict upon you, you will be protected". Another time, when he was giving the teachings on the "Ḍakinī Hearing Lineage of the Instructions of Rwa", at night, he had a dream, in which a solitary form of [Vajra]bhairava filled up everything in the three realms, and he saw himself filling up [the space] in a similar fashion; that was a very clear indication that he would be able to annihilate all kinds of enemies and hindrances. The next morning, he said with great joy: "Last night, I had the following dream, now I realize that the transmission of the Vajrabhairava tantric cycle is meant for you."³¹

²⁹ *Gshin rje*, p.137.

³⁰ Sobisch 2007:19.

³¹ *zab rgyas chos kyi spyan ldan lo nas spyan snga rin po che kun dga' don grub kyi drung du kho bos legs par thob cing/ de ltar chos skor de dag gnanng dgos tshul gyi snyan/ gsan phab dus/ rje spyan snga rin po che'i mnal lam du las gshin yab yum sa 'og nas byon byung nas dges pa'i tshul mdzad pa sogs kyi mtshan ltas khyad par can byung ba la brten/ nang par rje'i gsung las/ khyed sa skya pa la las gshin 'di bka' bab cing 'phrin las sgrub pa 'dug gsungs pa dang/ dbang gi sta gon gyi nub mo rje de nyid kyi mnal lam du kho bo cag gi mtha' skor du go cha dang mtshon cha'i rigs sna tshogs 'dug pa rmis pas 'jigs byed la brten nas gzhan gyi byad ka bzlog pa dang bsrung ba grub pa'i rtags yin*

Spyan snga Rin po che Kun dga' don grub appears in the personal lineage through which A mes zhabs received the Red cycle through the lineage of Ngor in 1622 (see p. 59).³² The teachings included: 1) the 5-Deity Empowerment (*dbang*) of the Red Yamāri (of Virūpa) and 2) transmissions and instructions (*lung khrid*) of the unelaborated practice of the Red Yamāri based on the text of Thar rtse nam mkha' dpal bzang (1532–1602), the thirteenth abbot of Ngor.³³ Both of these personal lineages of the Red Yamāri transmitted to A mes zhabs through the lineage of Tshar by Ngag dbang chos grags and through the Ngor lineage by Spyam snga Rin po che Kun dga' don grub were the offshoot of the main transmission lineage of Glo bo lo tsā ba Shes rab rin chen (see p. 59).

The third 'personal' lineage mentioned by A mes zhabs follows a different trajectory since it was not associated with the oral teachings bestowed by flesh and blood masters, but with the textual transmission (*bka' lung*) coming from A mes zhabs's individual study. A mes zhabs says that the Black cycle of the Western Rwa tradition reached him through a serious study of *Rdo rje 'jigs byed kyi man ngag phyogs sdeb*, a collection of pith instructions on the nine-deity *maṇḍala* practice of Vajrabhairava, written by Dpal 'dzin grags pa (14th–15th c.), known as 'Bri gung pa Dpal 'dzin.³⁴ Dpal 'dzin belongs to the Western Rwa lineage coming from the parallel lineages of Rwa lo tsā ba. However, as A mes zhabs reports, the transmission of *Rdo rje 'jigs byed kyi man ngag phyogs sdeb* reached him through the line of the fourth abbot of Ngor monastery, Kun dga' dbang phyug (1424–1478). Since Kun dga' dbang phyug was no longer alive at the time when A mes zhabs was born, the transmission of Dpal 'dzin's text that A mes zhabs received from Kun dga' dbang phyug could simply refer to the fact that the text became a part of Ngor's tantric legacy when Kun dga' dbang phyug held his abbatial throne at Ngor monastery.

Over the years that followed A mes zhabs became increasingly engaged in the Vajrabhairava-Yamāri teachings and spent much of

gsungs/ yang rwa khrid mkha' 'gro snyan brgyud gnang ba'i dus su nub cig mnal lam du/ 'jigs byed dpa' gcig gis khams gsum thams cad gang nas rje rang yang de 'dra'i rnam pa gsal ba dang bcas dgra bgegs thams cad tshar bcad pa'i mtshan ltas gsal bar byung nas/ nang par rje'i gsung las/ mdang nub kho bo la rmi lam 'di bzhin byung bas khyed la rdo rje 'jigs byed 'di bka' bab 'dug ces thugs shin tu dges pa chen po dang bcas gsungs pa yin no/ Gshin rje, pp. 127–128.

³² Sobisch (2002:167) says that A mes zhabs received from Spyam snga the *lam 'bras* transmission through the Ngor pas and Tshar chen; however, this is not the case in the Vajrabhairava-Yamāri transmission, where Spyam snga is mentioned only in relation to the Ngor transmission lineage.

³³ *Gshin rje*, p.137

³⁴ For his connection to the Sa skya, see Cuevas 2021b: 110.

his time writing texts related to this cycle, including the *sadhāna* (*sgrub thabs*), practice (*nyams len*), and pith instructions (*man ngag*) of Vajrabhairava, the instruction manual for the unelaborated Red Yamāri (*khrid yig*), and the cycle's religious history (*gshin rje chos 'byung*). The *Gshin rje chos 'byung* contains historiographical material that attempts to reconstruct the lines of transmissions of the Vajrabhairava-Yamāri cycle embodied in various lineages, legacies, textual histories, and practices from the perspective of the Sa skya pas. From the colophon of *Gshin rje chos 'byung*, we learn that A mes zhabs finished the text on the third day of the waning moon in the month of Jyeṣṭha (May) in the female water-bird year, that is in the year 1633, while residing in the 'Od gsal snang ba room at the Gzhi thog bla ma palace (*bla brang*) of Sa skya.³⁵ He was assisted by a scribe (*yi ge pa*), and one of his closest disciples, a highly learned monk and *vajradhara*, Bsam gtan rgya mtsho.³⁶ In his dedication of merit, he makes it clear that one of the primary motivations behind writing this treatise was not only to show the manner in which the Vajrabhairava-Yamāri cycle flourished in India and Tibet, but also to seek protection from the enemies. He elaborates on it in the following words:

Here I declare:

With the sun of wisdom completely devoid of obscuration

O Mañjuśrī, dispel the darkness of ignorance of all sentient beings.

O guru Yamāri, you who have assumed the wrathful form in order to subdue evil

Once again, protect us from enemies!

I have explained thoroughly the manner in which these wonderful teachings on the supreme deity, which were not available here before, spread in India and here in Tibet.

I collated the account in order to benefit the doctrine.

However, in these exceedingly bad degenerate times, haughty tantric practitioners

Are good for nothing except for misusing the *dharma* for food.

Only once in a bloom, you find the *tāntrika* who is interested in practicing the *dharma* that is also profound.

For that reason, motivated by pure thoughts and deeds

Even though I have been teaching the supreme *dharma* days and nights,

The disciples are failing to apply themselves to the teachings.

[All my efforts] are like ringing the bells to the ears of birds.

When I see this state of affairs, I too become discouraged.

Even if it is so, because of the precious Buddha's teachings,

³⁵ *chu mo bya'i lo snron gyi zla ba'i dmar cha rdzogs pa gsum pa'i tshes la/ yon tan rin po che du ma'i 'byung gnas dpal sa skya'i chos grwa chen po'i gzhi thog bla brang gi 'od gsal snang bar legs par sbyar ba'i yi ge pa nil... Gshin rje, p. 141.*

³⁶ *Gshin rje, p. 141.*

Thinking that my instructions may benefit a few fortunate persons,
 I feel there is no fault in giving this explanation.
 As a result of the merit that we, teachers and disciples, have accu-
 mulated through this composition,
 Having purified all impurities amassed in the past, present, and fu-
 ture,
 May we achieve a long life and fulfillment of wishes.
 May we be able to promote the *dharma* both in large and narrow
 sense.
 Finally, when the light of this life sinks down,
 May I the teacher together with my disciples be reborn in the Pure
 Land of Bliss.
 Once again, by means of the plethora of magical emanations, may
 we do whatever is needed to help those who are to be tamed, and
 thus
 Continue to uphold the teachings until the end of the universe.³⁷

The dedication of merit suggests that the second reason for writing the *Gshin rje chos 'byung* was politically motivated. A mes zhabs understood the Yamāri teachings as having a primary apotropaic purpose, which is to ward off the enemies of the Sa skyas. This should come as no surprise considering that the 17th century was one of the most turbulent times in the history of Tibet.³⁸ The ecclesiastical conflicts of rival Gtsang and Dbus factions, complemented by the constant threat of the looming Mongol invasion, brought the issues of protection to the forefront. In an effort to establish their rule in Tibet, the Gtsang pa Desi government commissioned army-averting rituals against the Mongol armies and their Dge lugs pa/Dbus allegiances. As a result, expertise in wrathful rituals aimed at destroying the enemies became increasingly sought after and *bla mas* dabbling in such matters were commissioned by the ruling lords to perform large-

³⁷ 'dir smras pa/ sgrib gnyis kun bral ye shes nyi ma yis/ 'gro ba'i ma rig mun sel 'jam pa'i dbyangs/ gtug pa 'dul phyir khro bo'i skur bzhengs pa'i bla ma gshin rje dgra yis slar yang skyongs/ lha mchog gang gi bstan pa rin po che/ 'phags pa'i yul dang bod 'dir byung ba'i tshul/ legs par bshad pa'i sngon med ngo mtshar gyil/ gtam 'di gcig tu bstan la phan phyir bshad/ de lta na yang dus ngan cher snyigs pas/ deng sang dus kyi sngags par rlom pa rnam/ lto chos lag len phra mo ma gtogs pa/ zab yang chos tshul don gnyer re re tsam/ rgyu mtshan des na bsam sbyor rnam dag gis/ nyin mtshan kun du dam pa'i chos bshad kyang/ don gnyer med pa'i slob ma'i tshogs rnam lal/ 'dab chags rna bar dril bu'i sgra dang mtshungs/ 'di 'dra mthong tshe kho bo sgyid lug kyang/ 'o na kyang sangs rgyas bstan pa rin chen dang/ skal bzang re re tsam la phan rung snyam/ legs sbyar 'di la nyes pa med snyam sems/ 'di brtsams dge bas bdag cag dpon slob kyis/ dus gsum bsags pa'i sgrib pa kun byang nas/ tshe ring nad med bsam don kun'grub ste/ spyi dang bye brag bstan pa rgyas byed shog/ nam zhig tshe 'di'i snang ba nub mthag/ dpon slob lhan cig bde ba can skyes nas/ slar yang gang 'dul sprul pa sna tshogs kyis/ srid mtha'i bar du bstan pa 'dzin gyur cig/ *Gshin rje*, pp. 139-140.

³⁸ Schwieger 2021: 201-216.

scale repelling rituals.³⁹ The elevation of ritualists trained in wrathful rites had a direct impact on their increased influence on political stage. One of the most important Gtsang pa stalwarts of that period widely reputed for his skill in enemy-destroying rites also through the rituals of Yamāri was Sog bzlog pa blo gros rgyal mtshan (1552–1624), the “Mongol Repeller” who had an active share in Gtsang pa expansionist polity because of the enormous prestige he enjoyed among his contemporaries.⁴⁰ Ames zhabs and his closest family followed in Sog bzlog pa’s footsteps and promoted themselves as experts in wrathful rites. This is evident from the type of writings Ames zhabs committed himself to, such as, for example, a *sādhana* dedicated to the destructive use against the enemy through the practice of Mahākāla *Vajrapañjara (*gur gyi mgon po’i man ngag las tshogs skor*) of the Sa skya pa tradition. Ames zhabs had an occasion to prove his ritual prowess when he was commissioned by the Gtsang pas to perform rites for “repelling inimical forces” in 1622 and 1630, when the Mongol army was closing on the Bsam ’grub rtse fortress.⁴¹ Also Ames zhabs’s elder brother, Mthu stobs pa (1588–1646), the *bdag chen* of Sa skya, came to Lhasa to “perform rituals for averting Mongols” when the much feared Mongol militia led by Arsalang arrived to Central Tibet in 1633.⁴² As FitzHerbert⁴³ recently pointed out, in the mid-17-century Tibet, expertise in wrathful rituals was used as “war propaganda” that was designed to enhance the political status of the parties involved in conflict, on the one hand, and to influence the popular perceptions, on the other. That efficacy in magic rituals had a great impact of the Mongol perceptions of the Tibetan monks, such as ’Phags pa Chos rgyal, is evident also in Yuan China⁴⁴ and it is likely to have continued in the later centuries. By presenting himself as a powerful tantric ritualist, Ames zhabs was creating a certain image that could have influenced the fortunes of the Sa skya on the turbulent world-stage.

2. The Red Cycle

According to Ames zhabs, the Red cycle came to Tibet in the late 12th century, that is some time after the advent of the Black cycle. Especially the period after Sa skya Paṇḍita’s death in the year 1251 saw unprecedented flourishing of Raktayamāri. The spread of the

³⁹ Gentry 2010:145.

⁴⁰ Gentry 2010:145-146.

⁴¹ Sobisch 2007:20, cited by Templeman 2016:18, and FitzHerbert 2018:65.

⁴² FitzHerbert 2018:92.

⁴³ FitzHerbert 2018.

⁴⁴ Shen Weirong 2004.

Red cycle appears to have been essentially coterminous with the translation activities of the five bilingual lo tsā bas of that period,⁴⁵ namely: Dpyal lo tsā ba, Chag lo tsā ba, G.yag sde lo tsā ba, Glo bo lo tsā ba, and Shong lo tsā ba Blo gros brtan pa. These translators gave rise to the five well known and authentic traditions of the Red cycle in Tibet.⁴⁶ Each lineage transmission was, in itself, a confluence of various tantric teachings of the Red cycle that mainly included the 5-Deity Raktayamāri of Virūpa and/or the 13-Deity Raktayamāri of Śrīdhara. A mes zhabs discusses these five traditions individually, mapping out each transmission lineage based solely on a spiritual authority of teachers extending back to India and/or Nepal. His account suggests that the transmission of the Raktayamāri cycle was enacted by a small group of prominent intellectuals, who were in interaction with each other. This egalitarian and supranational community of intellectuals was responsible for cultural transfers that were taking place in spaces that were being constantly shared, shaped, and reproduced through a complex web of relations.

a) The Lineage of Dpyal lo tsā ba

The first tradition of the Red Yamāri originated from the Newar *paṇḍita* Niṣkalaṅka of Vajrāsana (Bodhgayā)⁴⁷ who, in a formal initiation ritual (*dnegos su byin gyis brlabs pa*), transmitted the teachings to his first Tibetan disciple, Dpyal lo tsā ba Chos kyi bzang po (12th c.).⁴⁸ He was succeeded by Rong pa Rgwa lo⁴⁹ also known as Rnam rgyal rdo rje (1203–1282) and Rong pa Shes bzang⁵⁰ and then gradually, in a series of transmissions, by Bu ston Rin chen 'grub (1290–1364), and

⁴⁵ *phyis bdag nyid chen po sa skya pan chen gyi sku ngo man chad la skad gnyis smra ba'i lo tsa ba rnam pa lnga'i sku drin las kha ba can gyi ljongs 'dir gshin rje gshed dmar po'i skor 'di dar ba yin te/ Gshin rje*, p. 129.

⁴⁶ *de yang bod 'dir gshed dmar gyi/ lam srol yongs su grags shing tshad thub pa lnga byon pa las/ Gshin rje*, pp 129-130.

⁴⁷ This agrees with Tāranātha's *Gshin rje chos 'byung* (p. 80), where it is stated that Dpyal lo received the 5-Deity Raktayamāri in the line of Vajrāsana Niṣkalaṅka: *bla ma dpyal lo tsa ba chos kyi dpal bzang pos/ rdo rje gdan pa ni ska lang ka la zhus/ lha lnga'i dbang dang man ngag lag len cha tshang bar yog/*

⁴⁸ *dang po ni/ dpyal lo tsa ba chos kyi bzang po zhes bya bas dpal gshin rje gshed dmar pos dnegos su byin gyis brlabs pa'i bal po pan di ta ni ska lang ka de bzhes pa la gshed dmar lha lnga'i dbang zhus/ Gshin rje*, p. 130.

⁴⁹ He was given the name [Rong pa] Rgwa lo because he came to be identified as the incarnation of Khams pa Rgwa lo (*khams pa rgwa lo'i skye ba yin pas mtshan yang rgwa lor btags/ Gshin rje*, p. 125.) Khams pa Rgwa lo was actually born in Amdo, but since his family was from Mi nyag Gha, he is called Khams in his biographies (Vitali 2009/10: 201).

⁵⁰ Rong pa Shes bzang is probably Rong pa Shes rab seng ge. For the overview of his biography, see Vitali 2014: 561-562.

others, and finally by Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po⁵¹ himself.⁵² The original set of teachings imparted by Niṣkalaṅka to Dpyal lo consisted of the "5-Deity Raktayamāri Empowerment (of Virūpa)" and the "Sādhana of the 5-Deity Raktayamāri of (Virūpa)". Dpyal lo was the first Tibetan translator responsible for introducing this new tantric practice into Tibet.⁵³ Among the five texts on Vajrabhairava and Red Yamāri that he translated,⁵⁴ two of them, namely the *Raktayamāri-yantratattovanirdeśa* (*Gshin rje gshed dmar po'i 'khrul lo'i de kho na nyid kyi gsal byed*, Toh. 2034) and the *Raktayamāntakayantrōddyotakā* (*Gshin rje gshed dmar po'i 'khor lo'i gsal byed*, Toh. 2033), are attributed to paṇḍita Niṣkalaṅka. Both texts focus on the ritual implementation of the Raktayamāri *yantra* employed for specific desire-oriented rites, for example, for attraction or subjugating of the enemy. However, by the time Dpyal lo began to spread these new teachings in the 12th century in Tibet, there was no one who could have bestowed on him the teachings of the "abbreviated [form] of the completion stage (*sampanna-krama*)" and the "13-Deity Raktayamāri (of Śrīdhara)", constituting a set of practices that became widely popular and thus, in some measure, influential in the later traditions. It is, therefore, significant that beginning with the first tradition initiated by Dpyal lo the practice of the Red Yamāri in Tibet was restricted to the "5-Deity Raktayamāri (of Virūpa)".⁵⁵ This fact suggests that the tradition had developed over time, enlarging its range of practices to include the set of teachings that was unavailable at the time of the initial launch.

The fact that Dpyal lo initiated the lineage that was passed on in a direct transmission to Rgwa lo confirms the argument put forward by Vitali⁵⁶ about the existence of a close-knit social network between

⁵¹ Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po is said to have composed the cycle of teachings, i.e. the *sādhana* and *maṇḍala* of the Red Yamāri that became widely disseminated. *ngor chen gyis gshed dmar kyi sgrub dkyil sogs gong du bstan pa'i yig skor rnams kyang mdzad de cher dar bar gyur pa yin zhing/ Gshin rje*, pp. 132-133.

⁵² *des rong pa shes bzang la gnang/ de nas rim gyis brgyud kun mkhyen bu ston sogs nas brgyud pa ngor chen kun dga' bzang po la bka' bab/ Gshin rje*, p. 132.

⁵³ *dpyal lo tsa ba chos kyi bzang po zhes bya bas dpal gshin rje gshed dmar pos dngos su byin gyis brlabs pa'i bal po pan di ta ni ska lang ka de bzhes pa la gshed dmar lha lnga'i dbang zhus/ birwa pa'i lha lnga'i sgrub thabs sogs rgya gzhung mang po yang bsgyur tel bod du gshed dmar gyi srol 'di dang por btod/ Gshin rje*, p. 130.

⁵⁴ Dpyal lo also translated the *Vajrabhairavasādhana* (*Rdo rje 'jigs byed kyi sgrub thabs*, Toh. 2607) along with paṇḍita Dharmasrīmitra, a text attributed to Aśoka; and the *Raktayamārisādhana-nāma* (*Gshin rje dgra dmar po'i sgrub thabs*, Toh. 2035) attributed to Sumatigarbha, a text Dpyal lo translated together with Nyi ma rgyal mtshan; and the *Raktayamāntakayantrōddyotakā* (*Gshin rje gshed dmar po 'khrul 'khor gsal byed*) attributed to Bodhigarbha.

⁵⁵ *de'i rdzogs rim shin tu spros med dang/ lha bcu gsum ma'i dbang bka' ni de dus ma lon la/ 'di nas brgyud pa'i dbang ni lha lnga mar nges shing/ Gshin rje*, p.130.

⁵⁶ Vitali 2009/10:178.

the members of the Dpyal clan and the Dben dmar family of Rong. In A mes zhabs's *chos 'byung* this connection is framed in the context of Rgwa lo's journey to Dpyal's monastery, called Dpal Byang chub Thar pa gling, as part of his endeavor to receive the tantric initiation of the Red Yamāri from Dpyal lo himself. The story, which is, in fact, a fragment of Rgwa lo's biography (*Dpal chen rgwa lo'i rnam thar*) that seems to have been inserted by A mes zhabs as a kind of paratext, revolves around the intricate details of the hindrances caused by the *rgyal po* spirits. Perilous ordeals that jeopardize Rgwa lo's efforts on his spiritual journey finally come to an end, and that itself is, as A mes zhabs records, clearly the result of Raktayamāri's blessings. Rgwa lo stays with Dpyal lo for three years and receives from him the empowerment of the Red Yamāri but also other tantric systems of Hevajra and Vajravārāhī.⁵⁷

Rgwa lo also himself thought that this kind of [*rgyal po*] spirit, even if he appears friendly, can cause a long-lasting harm, and being mindful as an antidote, he did his best to hold himself firmly. Some spirits transformed themselves into kinsmen and claimed: "Oh, for so many lifetimes we were related in this way and that way", displaying [before him] the family tree. Some others transformed themselves into charming *vihāras* [saying]: "This *vihāra* is mine, you should take care of it", acting as if entrusting the *vihāra* to him. Some of them in the guise of learned scholars [said]: "Because I have studied this text for a long time, I became a scholar skilled in that subject, therefore, you too, should do the same". A few others, displaying magical emanations gave the appearance of having obtained realization. Occasionally, they physically assumed the form of a bird, but they were speaking with a human voice. At dawn, with the sound of flapping wings, they called out: "Zla 'od gzhon nu, Seng ge rgyal mtshan, 'Od kyi snye ma! Get up, check around the *vihāra*, go into meditation, engage in studying the text, etc.!" With these words, as if encouraging them to practice the *dharma*, they were displaying magical emanations that were an obstacle to enlightenment. These kinds of disturbances were happening for a long time. At some point Rgwa lo decided to ask Dpyal lo for a formal initiation of the Red Yamāri. On the road to Thar pa [gling], the spirit again said: "Now, it's time to go home, because mum and dad are ill. You should go to visit them. As for this initiation [of the Red Yamāri], you can ask for it later". Rgwa lo replied: "It will be difficult [to obtain this initiation] in the future, it is better if I go now". The spirit said: "I have been so considerate towards you and you won't do

⁵⁷ *de lta bu'i rgwa lo des dpyal lo'i drung du lo gsum bzhugs/ dges rdor dang phag mo sogs kyang gsan/ khyad par gshed dmar gyi dbang gsan pas bshad ma thag ba'i bar chad las grol ba'i byin rlabs kyi rtags mtshan mngon gyur du byung ba de yin la/ Gshin rje, p. 132.*

even this much for me? Come on, go right now!"; he even lifted the bag. Rgwa lo said: "Even so, I am definitely going to get this initiation". [The spirit] casting the bag, shouted: "I have been betrayed by a long-time friend! Do whatever you want, I am off now. See me off for a short distance". Accordingly, Rgwa lo agreed and escorted him up to the ridge of the place called Thar pa gling Mo yan. On the ridge, there was a horse and the spirit mounted the horse and leaped into the sky. The horse changed into a snowy lion and the spirit transformed into a Sthavira called Guruma who, holding his jaw in his hands, went on singing while crossing every mountain pass. Since then, [Rgwa lo] was free from all the obstacles. You will find [this story] in the *Rgwa lo'i rnam thar*.⁵⁸

The above passage is an interesting example of the way in which transmission practice, combining as it does the interrelated categories of mobility and site making, operates. In this regard, Rgwa lo's journey to meet Dpyal lo tsā ba brings to the forefront the importance of Thar pa gling as a specific geographical location that played a crucial role in the diffusion of the Red cycle. The trips to Thar pa gling in order to obtain the teachings from Dpyal lo continued by other members of Rong pa clan, such as Rong pa Shes rab seng ge,⁵⁹ the second

⁵⁸ *rgwa lo rang gi thugs la yang 'di lta bu'i 'byung pos phan pa ltar snang yang/ phugs gnod skyel bar dgongs shing de'i gnyen por thugs dam la brtson par mdzad pas/ de nas kyang res 'ga' gnyen gyi tshul du bsgyur te/ skye ba mang por 'di dang 'dir gyur pa yin zhes skye rgyud sna tshogs ston/ res 'ga' gtsug lag khang yid du 'ong ba sprul nas/ 'di ni bdag gi ste/ khyod kyis 'di'i bdag bya dgos so zer nas gtsug lag khang gi bdag 'chol ba ltar byed/ res 'ga' ni mkhas pa'i tshul bzung nas kho bos gzhung lugs 'di la yun ring du sbyangs pas 'di lta bu'i mkhas par gyur pa yin pas khyed kyang 'di ltar gyis shig zer la la ni rdzu 'phrul cung zad re bstan nas grub pa thob pa'i tshul byed/ skabs 'gar bya'i gzugs la mi skad 'don pas tho rangs 'dab gshog rdebs pa'i sgra dang bcas/ zla 'od gzhon nul seng ge rgyal mtshan/ 'od kyis snye ma zhes 'bod cing/ yar la langs shig/ lta rtog mdzod cig/ thugs dam mdzod cig/ gzhung bshor cig ces chos la bskul ba ltar byed pa sogs cho 'phrul sna tshogs ston pa'i byang chub kyis bar chad du 'gyur ba zhig yun ring po'i bar du byung ba na/ re shig gi tshes rgwa los dpyal lo la gshed dmar gyi dbang zhu bar brtsams te/ thar par byon pas lam bar du yang de na re/ da ni yul du 'gro bar rigs so/ yab dang yum la sogs pa na'o/ de dag blta ba dang 'phrad pa la 'gro bar rigs/ dbang bskur phyis zhu ba 'thad ces smra'o/ de la rgwa los phyis thub pa dka' da lta zhu ba rang legs zhes smras pas/ ngas de tsam du khyod la bsams nas khyod kyis 'di ltar byed pa mi rigs/ de bas da lta 'dong zer nas khres po 'ang bteg pa na/ rgwa los de lta na 'ang dbang nges par zhu gsungs nas zhu bar thag bcad pas/ khos khres po bsgyur te yun ring 'grogs pa'i grogs pos bslus so/ khyed ci bder gyis nga ni 'gro'o/ khyed kyis skyel thung gyis zer ba ltar rgwa los thar pa gling gi mo yan sgang khar bskyal bas/ de na rta gcig 'dug pa la zhon nam mkha' la 'phag nas rta de seng ge'i rnam par gyur/ khong rang dpon gu ru ma zhes bya ba'i gnas brtan gyi rnam pas lag pas 'gram pa skyor nas glu len gyin mgo bo se ye re re la brgal nas song nas de nas bar chad las grol ba yin ces kyang rgwa lo'i rnam thar las 'byung ngo/ Gshin rje, pp. 131-132.*

⁵⁹ Gshin rje chos 'byung by 'Khon ston dpal 'byor rgya mtsho (pp. 71-73) confirms that Rong pa Shes rab seng ge went to Thar pa gling in 1270 and received the Red cycle of Dpyal lineage. See Vitali 2014:561.

son of Rong pa Rgwa lo, and the second in line of the Red cycle of the Dpyal lineage, who had undertaken this journey at the age of twenty.⁶⁰

Since its initial founding by Dpyal lo tsā ba in the beginning of the 13th century, Thar pa gling continued to remain an active centre of fruitful exchanges not only for the members of the Dpyal clan, but also for other prominent intellectuals of that era, such as the great *pandita* of Kashmir, Śākyaśrībhadrā (d.1225),⁶¹ who visited the monastery at the invitation of Dpyal lo.⁶² The intention to establish Thar pa gling as a prime center of Tibetan Buddhist world is also attested from its architectural design that was shaped with intention to resemble Bodhgayā.⁶³ Part of Thar pa gling's appeal as a meeting hub was its strategic geographic location on the old route from Zhwa lu to Ngor that crossed the mountains to the south-west of Zhwa lu.⁶⁴ It was perhaps its vicinity to Zhwa lu monastery that attracted Bu ston Rin chen 'grub to stay in Thar pa gling for four years studying Sanskrit under the guidance of Thar pa lo tsā ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan (ca.1260–ca.1330).⁶⁵ Thar pa lo tsā ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan and Dpyal lo were close associates. Not only were they the residents of Thar pa gling, who became the abbots of Bodhgayā for a number of years, but also, more importantly, both engaged in collaborative efforts to disseminate the Red cycle. In this regard, the *Raktayamārisādhana* (*Gshin rje dgra dmar po'i sgrub thabs*, Toh. 2035) attributed to Sumatigarbha and translated jointly by Dpyal lo and Nyi ma rgyal mtshan is a case in point. Among other works that Nyi ma rgyal mtshan translated in the *vihāra* (*gtsung lag khang*) of Thar pa gling were two works written by Śrīdhara, namely the *Raktayamāriṃḍalapūjāvidhi* (*Gshin rje gshed dmar po man dal du mchod pa'i chos ga*, Toh. 2027) and the *Raktayamārisādhana* (*Gshin rje dmar po'i sgrub thabs*, Toh. 2026).

Rong pa Rgwa lo was one of the most important figures in the transmission of the Vajrabhairava-Raktayamāri cycle in Tibet and appears to be a member of a powerful family with strong political associations, including a paternal ancestor dating back to the imperial period of the second *dharma* king Khri srong lde btsan (742–797) who happened to serve as the king's officiating priest (*mchod gnas*), name-

⁶⁰ Roerich 1996: 791.

⁶¹ On the two biographies of Śākyaśrībhadrā, see Jackson 1990a, and Kuijp 1994a.

⁶² Stearns 2012: 143.

⁶³ Vitali 2009/2010: 171, fn. 20.

⁶⁴ Dowman 1999: 272.

⁶⁵ According to Khyung po Lhas pa, Bu ston became known as "the great translator" after finishing his studies of Sanskrit with Thar pa Nyi ma rgyal mtshan in the 1310s. See Kuijp 2016: 226.

ly Gzhon nu snying po.⁶⁶ Gzhon nu snying po's son, Gzhon nu seng ge, and grandson, Rig 'dzin snying po moved from Yar 'brog to Rong where Rgwa lo's father, Ye shes rgyal mtshan, the eldest of the four sons of Rig 'dzin snying po's son, Rdo rje seng ge, was born.⁶⁷ It is possible that Rgwa lo's heritage and royal connections of his great-great grandfather entitled him to have a close association with the Sa skya patriarchs, that is with Sa skya Paṇḍita and his nephew, 'Phags pa Chos rgyal. A mes zhabs reports that the very 'Phags pa who, according to the historical accounts, served as the imperial preceptor of Kublai Khan's Yuan dynasty and the vice-king of Tibet⁶⁸ remained in close educational association with Rgwa lo for about two decades.⁶⁹ Rong pa Rgwa lo is an example of a scholar whose intellectual life was shaped by the hierarchies of power centered around a small group of prominent intellectuals. Besides receiving the Vajrabhairava and Raktayamāri teachings from his local masters, Rwa 'bum seng, and Dpyal lo, he attended several famous masters, such as Kashmiri *paṇḍita* Sākyaśrībhadrā, Sa skya Paṇḍita, the Indian *paṇḍita* Vibhūticandra,⁷⁰ and Khro phu lo tsā ba Byams pa'i dpal (1172–1237).⁷¹

b) The Lineage of Chag lo tsā ba

The second tradition of the Red cycle that flourished in Tibet was linked to the Tibetan lo tsā ba Chag lo Chos rje dpal (1197–1264), a particularly prominent exponent of the Raktayamāri cycle. Following the footsteps of his elder colleague Dpyal lo, Chag lo tsā ba also travelled to Nepal in search of tantric teachings and initiations from fa-

⁶⁶ A mes zhabs (*Gshin rje*, p.125) says that Rgwa lo's great-great grandfather, Gzhon nu snying po belonged to one of the eight lineages of Chinese priests of Mi nyag who seemed to have settled down in Yar 'brog in Central Tibet. He was invited by Sam shi – the minister of the king Khri srong lde btsan – to become the officiating priest (*mchod gnas*) of the king himself. For a slightly different account of Rgwa lo's family history, see Roerich 1996: 789-790.

⁶⁷ *rgwa lo ni bod kyi rgyal po khri srong lde'u btsan gyi dus su blon po sam shi bya ba spyang 'dren pa'i pho nyar btang bas/ rgyal po'i mchod gnas su gyur pa mi nyag ha shang bya ba des/ brgyud las yar 'brog sgang du mi nyag gzhon nu snying po bya ba byung/ de'i sras gzhon nu seng ge/ de'i sras rigs 'dzin snying po/ de'i rong rgya mkhar byon/ de'i sras rdo rje seng ges rong mkhar phug tu bab/ de'i sras bzhi'i che ba ye shes rgyal mtshan gyi sras yin/ Gshin rje*, p. 125.

⁶⁸ Franke 1978; Robinson 2008.

⁶⁹ *'phags pa rin po che sogs bla ma [i.e., Rgwa lo] bcu phrag gnyis tsam zhig bsten nas/ Gshin rje*, p. 125.

⁷⁰ Rgwa lo invited Vibhūticandra to his monastery Rong Dben dmar in Gtsang and to Kyog po and Sham bhar monasteries where he requested from him all the empowerments and pith instructions of the Kālacakra (Roerich 1996:780; Stearns 1996:146).

⁷¹ *'dis kha che pan chen/ dpyal lo chos bzang/ bdag nyid chen po sa pan/ bi pu ta tsa ndral/ khro phu lo tsa ba byams pa'i dpal/ Gshin rje*, p.125.

mous Newar masters.⁷² Vitali⁷³ shows that the practice of journeying to Nepal (and Bodhgayā) in search of tantric teachings was a type of “unofficial cultural movement” initiated by the members of the Dpyal clan that was adopted and continued in the Chag clan mainly due to their common training in various tantric cycles, the Kālacakra (*dus 'khor*) and *kriyātantras* (*sbyor rgyud*). To this list, the Red cycle should be added. The reasons for this mobility were a mix of factors. On the one hand, there was the political unrest in central Tibet caused by intercommunal rivalry, as well as the insecurities precipitated by the upcoming Sa skya-Mongol alliance; on the other, there was the “race to become the interlocutors of the upcoming overlords”.⁷⁴ At the time when Chag lo finally arrived to Nepal, *paṇḍita* Niṣkalaṅka had already passed away and it was Niṣkalaṅka's direct disciple, Newar *Ravīndraprabhā⁷⁵ (see below), who bestowed on him the “13-Deity Raktayamāri (of Śrīdhara)” and the “5-Deity Raktayamāri (of Virūpa)”.⁷⁶ Chag lo, assisted by his teacher *Ravīndraprabhā, set off an extensive translation project of the texts belonging to the Red Yamāri cycle that resulted in the translation of eight scriptures never translated before. He also engaged in a meticulous revision and edition of the texts dealing with the ritual practices of the Red cycle already translated by Dpyal lo.⁷⁷ Through his prominent translation work,⁷⁸ he quickly gained recognition as a leading

⁷² According to *Chag lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* (*The Biography of Dharmasvāmin*, Roerich 1959: 105), Chag lo spent eight years in the Kathmandu Valley (1225-1232) and almost eleven years in Magadha (1232-1242), mainly in Nālandā and Bodhgayā (*rdo rje gdan*). See also Vitali 2009/10: 163.

⁷³ Vitali 2009/2010: 199.

⁷⁴ Vitali 2009/2010: 194.

⁷⁵ The name reported by Bu ston and A mes zhabs is Ravīndra/Ravendra or Vendra.

⁷⁶ *yang srol gnyis pa ni chag lo chos rje dpal bya ba dpyal lo las gzhon pa/ bdag nyid chen po sa pan las cung zad bgres pa zhig gis bal po'i yul du byon pas/ paṇḍi ta ni ska lang ka ni gshegs/ de'i slob ma bal por ve ndra la gshed dmar bcu gsum ma dang/ lnga ma gnyis ka'i dbang gsan/ Gshin rje*, p. 133.

⁷⁷ *sngar gyi dpyal gyis bsgyur ba rnam la 'gyur bcos mdzad/ sngar ma 'gyur ba'i gshed dmar gyi gzhung bryad tsam bsgyur te/ lha lnga ma'i dbang dar rgyas su mdzad cing/ bcu gsum ma'i srol btod/ Gshin rje*, p.133.

⁷⁸ Some of the works he translated, often assisted by the Newar *paṇḍita* Nyi ma dbang po'i 'od zer, are: 1) *Śrīraktayamāriṃḍalopāyika* (*Dpal gshin rje gshed dmar po'i dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga*, Toh. 2024) attributed to Śrīdhara; 2) *Śrīraktayamārisādhana* (*Dpal gshin rje gshed dmar po'i sgrub thabs*, Toh. 2023) attributed to Śrīdhara; 3) *Śrīraktayamāriprabhasodayakrama* (*Dpal gshin rje gshed dmar pa'i byin gyis brlab pa'i man ngag 'od gsal 'char ba'i rim pa*, Toh. 2019) attributed to Virūpa and translated in collaboration with Varendraruci; 4) *Sasvādhiṣṭhānakramopadeśaraktayamāntakabhisāmaya* (*Rang byin gyis brlab pa'i rim pa'i man ngag dang bcas pa gshin rje mthar byed dmar po'i mngon par rtogs pa*, Toh. 2032) attributed to Matibhadra; 5) *Raktayamāntakasādhana* (*Gshin rje mthar byed dmar po'i sgrub thabs*, Toh. 2017) attributed to Virūpa; 6) *Yamāntakayantravidhi* (*Gshin rje gshed mthar*

translator and played a special role in launching the 13-Deity Raktayamāri tradition in Tibet.⁷⁹

It is important to note that A mes zhabs's version of Chag lo's biography concerning his meeting with *Ravīndraprabhā is at odds with that of Bu ston, who states that Chag lo studied with Niṣkalaṅka of Vajrāsana for ten years at Bodhgayā, assisting him with the translations of the Saṃvara and Raktayamāri cycles.⁸⁰ While the collaborative translation of the Saṃvara cycle is indeed demonstrated by a colophon of the Saṃvara treatise included of the Bstan 'gyur,⁸¹ a proof for Chag lo's training under Niṣkalaṅka in the Red cycle is more difficult to verify. Moreover, neither Chag lo's *rnam thar* nor the *Deb ther sngon po* list Niṣkalaṅka as Chag lo's alleged teacher. On the other hand, the *paṇḍita* who accompanies almost all of Chag lo's translations of the Raktayamāri cycle is a certain Nyi ma'i dbang po'i 'od zer, the name, which can be translated back into Sanskrit as *Ravīndraprabhā (and not Ravīndra/Ravendra). Also Chag lo's *rnam thar*⁸² attests to a very close master-disciple relationship that characterized their acquittance, thus corroborating the version of A mes zhabs and not Bu ston. Although Chag lo spent many years in Nepal with *Ravīndraprabhā, his main residence in Tibet was the Rte'u ra monastery (*lte'u ra dgon/gnyal rte'u ra dgon*), the hereditary seat of the Chag clan. Apparently, after returning from his journeys to India and Nepal, Chag lo stayed at Rte'u ra for twenty-three years (from 1241 until his death in 1264).⁸³ According to the *Deb ther sngon po*, his teacher *Ravīndraprabhā visited him there as well.⁸⁴ Chag lo tsā ba established his own transmission of the 5-Deity Raktayamāri of the Chag lineage that not only survived but also continued to flourish in 16th and 17th century Tibet.⁸⁵

The lineage of Chag lo tsā ba continued through G.yung phug pa Rgyal mtshan dge ba (13th c.), who features as a disciple of the Indi-

byed kyi 'khrul 'khor gyi cho ga, Toh. 2822); 7) *Raktayamāriyantratattovanird-eśanāmasādhana* (*Gshin rje gshed dmar po'i 'khrul 'khor gyi de nyid bshad pa zhes bya ba'i bsgrub thabs*, Toh. 2820) attributed to Bodhigarbha; 8) *Raktayamārisādhana* (*Gshin rje gshed dmar po'i sgrub thabs*, Toh. 2031) attributed to Vairocana-*vajra/Vairocanarakṣa*; 9) *Raktayamārisādhanavidhi* (*Gshin rje gshed dmar po'i sgrub thabs kyi cho ga*, Toh. 2021) attributed to Virūpa; 10) *Raktayamāribalividhi* (*Gshin rje gshed dmar po'i gtor ma'i cho ga*, Toh. 2030) attributed to Śrīdhara.

⁷⁹ *lha lnga ma'i dbang dar rgyas su mdzad cing/ bcu gsum ma'i srol btod/ lugs 'di ni 'gyur legs shing 'gyur byed nyid kyang mkhas par grags/ Gshin rje*, p.133.

⁸⁰ Bu ston's *History of Buddhism* (Obermiller 1932:222).

⁸¹ *Sahajasamvarasādhana* (*Bde mchog lhan cig skyes pa'i sgrub thabs*, Toh. 1436).

⁸² Roerich 1959:57.

⁸³ Roerich 1959: ix.

⁸⁴ Roerich 1996:1056.

⁸⁵ *de nas brgyud pa'i chag lugs kyi lha lnga ma'i dbang rgyun deng sang gi bar du dar rgyas du bzhugs/ Gshin rje*, p.133.

an *paṇḍita* Vibhūticandra (late 12th c.)⁸⁶ in a special practice of *ṣaḍaṅgayoga* (*rnal 'byor yan lag drug pa*) of the *Kālacakratantra* revealed to Vibhūticandra by Śavaripāda, also known as Ri khrod pa Dbang phyug (1181–1225). According to Stearns,⁸⁷ Vibhūticandra and G.yug phug pa met at Ding gi glang 'khor, the main residence of the Indian master Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas (11th century), where he bestowed the *ṣaḍaṅgayoga* of Śavaripa to Ko brag pa and “six other learned men”, including G.yung phug pa. Although at present the meeting between G.yug phug pa and Chag lo cannot be verified, nevertheless, they were probably in a disciple-master relationship. We know that Vibhūticandra knew Chag lo personally. The evidence of their collaboration in translating two works preserved in the Tibetan canon⁸⁸ confirms their meeting, probably in the Kathmandu valley in Nepal where they both studied under Newar masters.⁸⁹

The Chag lineage of the Red cycle continued through a certain Blo gros brtan pa (13th c.). His identity is, however, difficult to establish, for there have been multiple Blo gros brtan pas in the history of Tibetan Buddhism.⁹⁰ Among the possible candidates are Shong Blo gros brtan pa (the second half of the 13th c.) and Dpang Blo gros brtan pa (1276–1342), the famous Sanskrit linguist. At first sight it is more probable to assume that ‘our’ Blo gros brtan pa is in fact the Shong Blo gros brtan pa, the nephew (*dbon po*) or a younger brother of Shong ston rdo rje rgyal mtshan.⁹¹ Both authors feature prominently in the transmission lineages of the *Kālacakratantra*. Moreover, Shong Blo gros brtan pa is the author of a text on the visualization of the 5-Deity Raktayamāri *maṇḍala* of the Chag lineage (*Dpal gshin rje gshed dmar po lha lnga'i mngon par rtogs pa rnal 'byor gsal*) that belongs to the collection of texts concerned with the ritual practice of Raktayamāri according to the Chag tradition.⁹² However, Shong Blo gros belonged to the lineage of Chag lo through the line of Go lung pa Mdo sde dpal

⁸⁶ For the biography of Vibhūticandra, see Stearns 1996.

⁸⁷ Stearns 1996: 143.

⁸⁸ *A ra pa tsa na'i sgrub thabs* (*Arapacanasādhana*) and *Rmugs 'dzin 'chol ba'i sgrub thabs* (*Ucchuṣmajambhālasādhana*) were translated jointly by Chag lo and Vibhūticandra. See Stearns 1996: 164.

⁸⁹ Vibhūticandra studied under Ratnarakṣita in the Kathmandu valley in Nepal who initiated Ko brag pa (1170-1249) into the *Cakrasaṃvara* and was also the guru of Chag lo, where the studied with him at the Swayambhunāth in Kathmandu. See Stearns 1996:136.

⁹⁰ Verhagen 2021:267-300.

⁹¹ Smith 2001:315, fn. 602. Dkon mchog lhun grub, *Dam pa'i chos*, fol. 172r. Also in Verhagen 2021: 292.

⁹² *Gshed dmar chos skor*. 1 vols. Accessed February 9, 2022. <http://purl.bdrc.io/resource/MW1CZ1146>. [BDRC bdr:MW1CZ1146]

(and not through G.yung phug pa Rgyal mtshan dge ba),⁹³ and this line of transmission features in A mes zhabs's *chos 'byung* as a sub-lineage of Chag lo⁹⁴ that branched off from the main lineage. Still, one important fact suggests that Shong might be 'our' Blo gros: the next lineage-holder following Shong Blo gros pa is Mchog ldan leg pa'i blos gros/Mang khar lo tsā ba, and this agrees with the succession of the Chag lugs indicated by A mes zhabs. Nevertheless, this fact could also point to Dpang Blo gros brtan pa. Not only was Dpang blo gros brtan pa closely associated with the Shong tradition of the Kālacakra, but he also played an important role in "the tradition of Sanskrit studies in Sa skya monastery and the Sa skya school".⁹⁵ More importantly, he studied Sanskrit and poetics in Mang mkhar khra tshang with Mchog ldan legs pa'i blos gros/Mang khar lo tsā ba,⁹⁶ the same *bla ma* who follows Blo gros brtan pa as the next lineage-holder in the Chag lugs of the Red cycle.

Mang mkhar lo tsā ba was an important master who contributed to the dissemination of both Vajrabhairava and Raktayamāri teachings in Tibet. He usually features as the teacher of Dpal ldan seng ge from whom Bu ston Rin po che received both the Black and Red cycles as well as the *Guhyasamāja* transmission of the Jñānapāda school.⁹⁷ Mang mkhar lo tsā ba took full monastic ordination in the presence of 'Phags pa Chos rgyal, who also granted him his ordination name, as he requested.⁹⁸ Mang mkhar lo tsā ba promoted the *dharma* of the Red cycle in Mang mkhar khra tshang and Dkar cog on

⁹³ *lo tsa ba de nas g.yung phug pa rgyal mtshan dge ba/ lo tsa ba blo brtan/ lo tsa ba mchog ldan/ bla ma dpal ldan seng gel kun spangs chos grags/ ma ti pan chen/ sa bzang 'phags pa/ de la rdo rje 'chang kun dga' bzang pos gsan/ Gshin rje, p.133.*

⁹⁴ A mes zhabs (pp.133-134) reports the existence of many sub-lineages established by different teachers in the lineage of Chag lo tsā ba. Among these sub-lineages were transmissions coming from Go lung pa Mdo sde dpal (13th c.) and Shong lo tsā ba Blo gros brtan pa; 2) from Shangs pa Tshul shes; 3) from Dpal gyi rgyal mtshan, Klog skya pa and Spangs gang pa; 4) from Ma ti pan chen, and 5) from bla ma Dpal ldan seng ge that continued up to Bu ston Rin po che. Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po is said to have received different transmissions originating from these sub-lineages. For the three lines of transmission through which Ngor chen received initiations of the "13-Deity Raktayamāri [of Chag tradition]", see *Gshin rje, p. 134.*

⁹⁵ Verhagen 2021: 293.

⁹⁶ Verhagen 2021: 293. See fn. 98 below.

⁹⁷ The *Deb ther sngon po* (Roerich 1996: 764) places Mang mkhar lo tsā ba in a *Guhyasāmaja* lineage that entered Tibet through Rin chen bzang po. Just like in the case of the Red Yamāri, he is said to have transmitted the tantric teachings of the *Guhyasamāja* to Dpal ldan seng ge, who then transmitted it to Bu ston.

⁹⁸ *des mang mkhar lo tsa ba mchog ldan legs pa'i blo gros la gdams tel 'di ni mang mkhar lo tsa bar grags pa mang mkhar khra tshang dang dkar cog la sogs par bstan pa spel/ 'phags pa rin po che'i drung du bsnyen par rdzogs/ de'i tshe mtshan de nyid kyang khong rang gi 'dod zhus ltar btags pa yin par bshad la/ Gshin rje, p. 136.*

the border of Rong and G.yag sde as well as in other places. According to A mes zhabs, Mang mkhar khra tshang, located in the Mang khra valley, known for its many retreat caves as well as important centres of trade, was initially a place of activity of the Lam 'bras master Blo bzang dkar po⁹⁹ (alias Mang mkhar Blo bzang dkar po). The 15th century master relocated the place at little distance from the old one and thereafter it was known as the new Bsam 'grub monastery (*bsam 'grub dgon gsar*).¹⁰⁰ This was the place where Ngag dbang chos grags (1572–1641), the teacher who transmitted various transmissions of the Black cycle of the Eastern Rwa tradition and the Red cycle (see p. 27) to A mes zhabs, resided. Indeed, the biography of Ngag dbang chos grags confirms the last piece of A mes zhabs's account saying that Ngag dbang succeeded Blo gros grags pa on the abbatial throne in Bsam 'grub dgon gsar monastery.¹⁰¹ The Chag lineage of the Red cycle comprised of masters listed above eventually reached Ngor chen through his teacher Sa bzang 'phags pa. As Heimbel¹⁰² already pointed out, the majority of Ngor chen's training under Sa bzang 'Phags pa gzhon nu blo gros¹⁰³ was tantric in nature and together with the Vajrabhairava cycle also included the transmissions of major tantric deities, such as Guhyasamāja, Cakrasamvara, and Kālacakra.¹⁰⁴

c) The Lineage of G.yag sde ba (Bsod nams bzang po/seng ge)

After Chag lo tsā ba, the third tradition of the Red Yamāri that originated in Tibet was associated with the 13th century Indian *paṇḍita* Dānaśīla from the East (*shar phyogs*), who handed down the teachings on the 5-Deity Raktayamāri and the 13-Deity Raktayamāri to the Ti-

⁹⁹ For the biography and lineage of Blo bzang dkar po, see Kuijp1994b: 184.

¹⁰⁰ *de'i mang mkhar khra tshang ni thog mar lam 'bras pa blo bzang dkar po sogs kyi gnas de nyid del de nyid kyang gnas cung zad 'phos pa deng sang bsam 'grub dgon gsar du grags pa kho bo cag gi yongs 'dzin dam pa mkhan chen thams cad mkhyen pa ngag dbang chos grags kyis skabs kyi bzhugs gnas mdzad pa 'di yin no/ Gshin rje, p.136.*

¹⁰¹ See Tsering Namgyal 2014.

<https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Ngawang-Chodrak/10548>

¹⁰² Heimbel 2017:189.

¹⁰³ According to Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po's biography, Sa bzang 'Phags pa gzhon nu blo gros, often confused with Ma ti paṇ chen, his predecessor at Sa bzang monastery, was one of the three greatest teachers of Kun dga' bzang po (see Heimbel 2017: 179, fn. 594). For the biography of Sa bzang 'Phags, see Heimbel 2017: 179-186.

¹⁰⁴ For the detailed discussion of tantric and other teachings received by Ngor chen from Sa bzang 'Phags pa, see Heimbel 2017: 186-190.

betan lo tsā ba G.yag sde ba (c.1200–c.1299).¹⁰⁵ Dānaśīla was one of the “nine lesser *paṇḍitas*” who accompanied the great Kashmiri master Śākyaśrībhadrā, the abbot of Vikramaśīla, to Tibet during the Muslim invasion of Baktyar Khilji.¹⁰⁶ According to *A mes zhabs* it was the same Dānaśīla who also taught Sa skya Paṇḍita.¹⁰⁷ To prove his point, he turns to the authority of the *Ocean of Received Transmissions* (*Gsan yig rgya mtsho*) written by Ngor chen Kun dga’ bzang po where this fact is recorded.¹⁰⁸ Despite prolific translation works that came from the pen of Dānaśīla,¹⁰⁹ G.yag sde lo assisted him only with the translation of a single text on mantras related to the *sādhana* of the Red Yamāri entitled **Raktayamārimantroddhāra* (*Gshin rje gshed dmar po’i sngags btu ba*, Toh. 2046). According to the texts’ colophons, two of Dānaśīla’s translations¹¹⁰ on the Red cycle were completed on the mountain of Drang sron Srin po,¹¹¹ located in the upper part of the Yar stod brag pass.¹¹² The mountain situated between the Skyid chu and Brahmaputra river¹¹³ contained an important Sa skya temple built by Vibhūticandra, where he himself occasionally resided. The temple was famous for the terracotta image of Cakrasaṃvara made

¹⁰⁵ There seems to be a discrepancy of names. Even though *A mes zhabs* refers to G.yag sde lo tsā ba as Bsod nams bzang po, the BDRC records his name as Bsod nams seng ge.

¹⁰⁶ Rhoton 2002: 31, fn. 26.

¹⁰⁷ Note that according to the BDRC, the 12th century Dānaśīla who translated the works on the Red Yamāri is different from the 13th century Dānaśīla who appears in the transmission lineage of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* and who was also the teacher of Sa skya Paṇḍita.

¹⁰⁸ *lam srol gsum pa ni chag lo’i rjes su bdag nyid chen po sa pan gyi slob dpon rtog ge pa da na shi la byon pa la g.yag sde lo tsa ba bsod nams bzang pos lha lnga ma’i dbang dang bcu gsum ma’i dbang yang gsan par rdo rje ’chang gi gsan yig rgya mtsho las bshad pas na/ Gshin rje*, p. 134.

¹⁰⁹ Dānaśīla translated numerous works on the ritual practice of the Red Yamāri, including: 1) *Yamāriyantrāvali* (*Gshin rje gshed kyi ’khrul ’khor gyi phreng ba*, Toh. 2022) attributed to Vīrupa; 2) *Raktayamārisādhana* (*Gshin rje gshed dmar po’i sgrub thabs*, Toh. 2018) attributed to Vīrupa; 3) *Raktayamārisamādhivīdhi* (*Gshin rje gshed dmar po’i ting nge ’dzin gyi cho ga*, Toh. 2029) attributed to Śrīdhara; 4) *Raktayamārikarmasādhanamālācintāmaṇī* (*Gshin rje gshed dmar po’i las kyi phreng ba’i sgrub thabs yid bzhin nor bu*, Toh. 2047); 5) *Yamāricintāmaṇīmālānāmasādhana* (*Gshin rje gshed kyi yid bzhin kyi nor bu’i phreng ba zhes bya ba’i sgrub thabs*, Toh. 2083).

¹¹⁰ The colophon of the *Gshin rje gshed kyi ’khrul ’khor gyi phreng ba* says: *rgya gar shar phyogs kyi paN Di ta dpal mkhas pa chen po dA na shi la/ yul dbus kyi grub pa thob pa’i gnas drang srong rin po rir bsgyur ba’o*. The colophon of the *Gshin rje gshed kyi yid bzhin kyi nor bu’i phreng ba zhes bya ba’i sgrub thabs* says: *rgya gar shar phyogs bhang ga la’i paN Di ta dA na shi la zhes bya bas gnas gyis brlabs pa drang srong srin po ri rang ’gyur du byas pa’o*.

¹¹¹ For the narrative retelling the foundation of Srin po by Vibhūticandra, see Roerich 1996: 600-601 and Stearns 1996: 131-132.

¹¹² Ferrari 1958: 47.

¹¹³ Dorje 2004: 162.

by Vibhūticandra, which was consecrated by Śākyaśrībhadrā. The temple must have been an important place of tantric practice, not only for the Cakrasaṃvara, but also for the cults of Vajrabhairava and Yamāri. According to Tāranātha's *Gshin rje chos 'byung*, the *thangka* of Cakrasaṃvara *maṅḍala* at Srin po created by Vibhūticandra portrayed Cakrasaṃvara riding on the buffalo (thus alluding to the buffalo-headed iconography of Vajrabhairava), which was fashioned with an erect *liṅga*. Tāranātha's explanation of this iconographic detail points to its special destructive power. He says that in other *thangkas* designed in India, the depiction of Yamāri with erect *liṅga*, with two feet in the warrior-pose and palms clasped together was specifically meant to overcome the class of barbarians (*klo klo*) through *gtor ma* rituals.¹¹⁴ Dānaśīla must have come into contact with Vibhūticandra through Śākyaśrībhadrā, and given the political context of their escape from India during the Muslim raid, Drang sron Srin po with its Vajrabhairava/Yamāri iconography would have certainly appealed to him as a best place to undertake his translation project.

The two main ritual transmissions, the 5-Deity Raktayamāri and the 13-Deity Raktayamāri, were from Dānaśīla (or G.yag sde lo) onwards passed on in distinct lines of transmission that were received by Ngor chen himself. A mes zhabs records these transmissions as follows:

- 1) The 5-Deity Raktayamāri transmission was handed down from Dānaśīla to 'Jam gsar Shes rab 'od zer (12th c.),¹¹⁵ who was succeeded by the members of the Rong clan, i.e., Rgwa lo tsā ba, his son, Rong pa shes bzang po/seng ge, and others.¹¹⁶ 'Jam gsar ba 'od zer is better known as the master of the 'Bro tradition of the Kālacakra, who ensured its wider diffusion in Tibet,¹¹⁷ but he was also an ex-

¹¹⁴ *bi bhu ti tsa ndra'i thugs dam bde mchog dkyil 'khor drang srong srin po rin yod pa de nal ma he la phyibs (=chibs) shing ling ga g.yen bsgreng can bris 'dug/ rgya gar du bris ba'i thang ka gzhan la gtor mas kla klo'i sde bcom pa'i bkod pa'i tshul du byas zhabs gnyis mnyam par brkyang zhing bzhengs pa/ phyag thal mo brdeb pa/ ling ga g.yen bsgreng/ sku mdun du gtor ma'i man da la yod pa re long gyin 'dug/ Tāranātha, Gshin rje chos 'byung, p. 63.*

¹¹⁵ Heimbél 2017: 120 identified 'Jam gsar Shes rab 'od zer (his title name) as 'Jam dbyangs gsar ma, the author of the commentaries on the *Abhisamayālamkāra* and *Pramāṇaviniścaya*, some of which became part of Shar chen's (one of Ngor chen's main teachers) training. According to Vitali 2014: 564, 'Jam gsar ba 'od zer was a teacher of Chos sku 'od zer who imparted on him the teachings of the Red cycle and the Kālacakra, among others.

¹¹⁶ *lha lnga ma'i brgyud pa ni/ dA na shI la nas 'jam gsar/ rgwa lo/ rong pa shes bzang sogs chag lugs ltar brgyud pa ngor chen nas brgyud de deng sang gi bar du/ 'phel rgyas su bzhugs pa yin la/ Gshin rje, p. 134.*

¹¹⁷ Seyfort Ruegg 2010: 301.

ponent of Yamāri. The story narrated in the *Deb ther sngon po* mentions the existence of a strong karmic connection (*las 'brel*) that led the famous Kālacakra master Chos sku 'od zer (b.after 1240-d.before 1290)¹¹⁸ to meet 'Jam gsar in order to receive the Yamāri initiation from him.¹¹⁹ What is worth noticing in this particular line of succession is that 'Jam gsar is followed by the members of the competing Kālacakra transmission, the Rwa lugs, which stemmed from the Newar master Samantaśrī.¹²⁰ This, somewhat unusual, pairing can, however, be explained through the similar union attested in the Kālacakra tradition itself. According to Hammar, the 'Bro tradition of the Kālacakra was incorporated into the Rwa tradition;¹²¹ further, according to Bu ston,¹²² it was none other than Rong pa Rgwa lo who initiated this fusion. Thus, the presence of the members of the Rwa lugs following 'Jam gsar in this particular 5-Deity Raktayamāri lineage may in fact be another point in case for the merging of the two traditions.

- 2) The 13-Deity Raktayamāri transmission was handed down from Dānaśīla to his successor G.yag sde lo tsā ba, and then to Zhang ze dmar ba (a disciple of Sa skya Paṇḍita),¹²³ to Bu ston Rin po che, to Bu ston's disciple Rin chen nram rgyal (1318–1388),¹²⁴ and finally to Sa bzang 'Phags pa gzhon nu blo gros (1358–1412).¹²⁵

d) The Lineage of Glo bo lo tsā ba Shes rab rin chen

The fourth lineage of the Red Yamāri that flourished in Tibet was linked to Glo bo lo tsā ba Shes rab rin chen, a mid-13th century translator from the Mustang area (*glo bo*), who occupies his lofty place in

¹¹⁸ Vitali 2014:564.

¹¹⁹ See Roerich 1996: 769-770.

¹²⁰ Rwa Chos rab allegedly gave 300 golden *srang* to Samantaśrī to obtain the Kālacakra. For the Rwa lugs of the Kālacakra, see Roerich 1996:789.

¹²¹ Hammar 2010:65.

¹²² Hammar 2010:60, following Bu ston's *Dus 'khor chos 'byung*, pp. 61-74.

¹²³ Stearns 2001:26.

¹²⁴ Hsuan (2009:19) reports that Rin chen nram rgyal also features as the transmitter of the *'pho ba* teaching that was developed in the Yamāri cycle (*Gshin rje gshed kyi 'pho ba'i man ngag*) and transmitted to Bu ston. For the biography of Rin chen nram rgyal, see the *Lo rgyus rnam thar* 2 (vol. 51, pp.385-456) and van der Kuijp 2016:222-223. As reported by Heimbel 2017:181, fn. 603, the *Zhwa lu'i gdan rabs* (p.63.5) mentions Rin chen rgyal as a teacher of Sa bzang 'Phags pa and that the register of teachings received (see, the *Thob yig rgyo mtsho*) confirms that the teachings bestowed to Sa bzang by Rin chen rgyal were transmitted to Ngoren chen (*ibidem*).

¹²⁵ *pan di ta de nas brgyud pa'i bcu gsum ma'i dbang ni/ g.yag sde lo tsa ba/ grub chen ze dmar ba/ bu ston rin po che/ lo tsa ba rin chen nram rgyal nas sa bzang 'phags pa/ Gshin rje*, p.134.

the history of Tibet as the best student of Sa skya Paṇḍita¹²⁶ and a religious preceptor of Sa skya Paṇḍita's nephew, 'Phags pa Chos rgyal. Among the five transmission lineages of the Red Yamāri recorded by A mes zhabs, the lineage of Glo bo lo tsā ba is certainly one of the longest and most extensively documented within this record and it includes, among other details, some biographical information on Glo bo lo tsā ba himself as well as on his son and successor, 'Gro mgon sa¹²⁷ a.k.a. Sa pa and *bla ma* Blo gros dpal. The specific reason for devoting so much space to this particular transmission lineage was to emphasize the role Glo bo lo tsā ba and his illustrious disciples played in the history of the Sa skya pa sect. The famous 'Phags pa, the preceptor (*mchod gnas*) to Kublai Khan and the most powerful *bla ma* in China in the early Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) was initiated into the Red cycle by Glo bo lo tsā ba.

Glo bo lo tsā ba was born in Mustang (*glo bo*) in Western Tibet. He was initially known as "lo tsā ba" in Ladakh because he was acting as an interpreter for market traders. Glo bo's interest in the study of Buddhist scriptures was directly linked to his disapproval of the "lo tsā ba" nickname given to him by his fellow-traders: "Since I am not a fully-fledged lo tsā ba, I should not be called by that name; rather, I should study hard to be worthy of this title". Once this thought took root in his mind, he began his scholarly training.¹²⁸ The middle of the 13th century saw a shift in the political fortunes of Glo bo, when it was absorbed by Gung thang. The rise of Gung thang to a position of power in Western Tibet with the help of the Sa skya pas provided an opportunity for the upward mobility of different strata of society.¹²⁹ At that time, Glo bo, which formed one of thirteen myriarchies (*khri skor bcu gsum*) governed by the Gung thang kings under the jurisdiction of the Sa skya viceroy selected by the Mongols of the Yuan dynasty, was truly cosmopolitan in nature. It welcomed circulatory traffic between the northern and southern Himalaya that was used not only by the commercial trades but also by the lo tsā bas,¹³⁰ who took this route on the journey from the Kathmandu valley to the kingdom of Gu ge-Pu hrangs.

In the beginning of his scholarly training, Glo bo lo studied lin-

¹²⁶ For the high esteem that Glo bo held in the eyes of Sa skya paṇḍita, see Jackson 1976:46.

¹²⁷ *srol bzhi pa ni chos rje sa pan kyi slob ma'i mchog lta bu yang yin zhing/ 'phags pa rin po che'i bla ma yang yin pa glo bo lo tsa ba shes rab rin chen gyis/ 'gro mgon sa pa la gngang ba sogs nas 'phel ba yin tel/ Gshin rje, p.134.*

¹²⁸ *de yang glo bo lo tsa ba 'di 'khrungs sa glo bo yin zhing/ dang po tshong gi lo tsa ba byas pas bla dgas su lo tsa ba zhes grags/ phyis ni/ gsung rab kyi lo tsa yang mkhas par mkhyen la/ Gshin rje, pp.134-135.*

¹²⁹ On the mobility of Tibetan society, see Carrasco 1959.

¹³⁰ Davidson 2005:132.

guistics under the Newar master Bharendra and became a competent lo tsā ba. He also received from Bharendra an empowerment of the 13-Deity Raktayamāri. Later, he proceeded to the Rgyal po sku mkhar Nyi gzung, the place that was identified by Stearns¹³¹ as the royal citadel of Nyi gzungs (*sku mkhar nyi gzungs*) located at Pu hrangs, where he invited the renowned Indian *paṇḍita* Darpañācārya (alias Jagaddarpaṇa, 12th/13th century), known in tantric circles for his *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā*—a compendium of tantric rituals—and properly learnt from him the abbreviated version of the *sampanna-krama*, which none of his predecessors managed to accomplish prior to him.¹³² The issue of Glo bo's exact initiatory succession is, however, a matter of dispute. Even though it is true that Darpañācārya was the master from whom Glo bo had received the *sampanna-krama*, it is doubtful, says A mes zhabs, that it was Darpañācārya and not Bharendra who bestowed on him the empowerment of the Red Yamāri. In A mes zhabs's own words: "Since there is not even a hint mentioning this fact, it seems one has to be cautious in making such statements and investigate further how the lineage of the empowerment of this (Glo bo lo tsā ba) tradition led by Darpañācārya came forth".¹³³ By contrast, the *Deb ther sngon po*¹³⁴ is quite explicit that Glo bo lo tsā ba received the teachings on the Red Yamāri of the Virūpa lineage from Darpañācārya and Bharendra and spread them in Central Tibet. In another reference mentioned by Vitali,¹³⁵ Darpañācārya is said to have given the Red cycle to Glo bo at Rgyal po sku mkhar Nyi bzung, the same place that was mentioned by A mes zhabs. Tāranātha, on the other hand, keeps silent on the issue of formal initiation, but complicates the matter further saying that Glo bo met Chag lo's teacher *Ravendrapāla (*ra ven dra pa la*) and was thus the lineage-holder of the Chag lugs in his own right.¹³⁶ As for

¹³¹ Stearns 1996: 135.

¹³² *khong gi thugs la ngas lo tsa shes rgyu med pa'i lo tsa ba'i ming 'di mi rung/ de bas lo tsa don mthun cig bsal par rigs dgongs nas/ thog mar bal po bha re ndra la sgra bsalabs nas lo tsa thub par mdzad cing/ de nyid la gshed dmar lha bcu gsum ma'i dbang yang gsan/ de nas phyis pu rang gi sku mkhar nyi [g]zung du pan di ta dar pa na A tsa rya spyang drangs nas rdzogs rim shin tu spros med kyi khrid zab mo 'di legs par gsan/ Gshin rje, p. 135.*

¹³³ *des na glo bo lo tsa ba 'dis gshed dmar gyi dbang dar pa na A tsa rya la gsan pa'i sgros gang du yang ma byung bas/ lugs 'di'i dbang gi brgyud pa la dar pa na A tsa rya 'dren pa 'di ji ltag yin brtag par bya dgos pa tsam du snang la/ bal po bha rendra la bcu gsum ma'i dbang tsam gsan zhes pa lo rgyus kun las 'byung bas/ smin byed bha ren dra la gsan pa des go chod mdzad nas dar pa na la smin byed ma zhus pa yin nam snyam ste dpyad par bya'ol Gshin rje, p. 138.*

¹³⁴ Roerich 1996: 379.

¹³⁵ Vitali 1997: 155, fn. 206.

¹³⁶ *de las cung zad 'phyi bar glo bo lo tsa ba shes rab rin chen gyis/ chag lo'i bla ma ra bendra pa la yang thug/ Tāranātha, Gshin rje, p. 81.*

Darpaṇācārya, Tāranātha simply states that Glo bo indeed invited him and translated with him many new texts, such as Virūpa's *Spros pa med pa* and Śrīdhara's *Rnal 'byor bzhi rim*.¹³⁷ The former is probably the *Suniṣprapañcatattvopadeśa* (*Shin tu spros pa med pa de kho na nyid kyi man ngag*, Toh. 2020) attributed to Virūpa that was transmitted to the Sa skya.¹³⁸ The latter may be the *Caturyogatattvanāmasvādhiṣṭhānopadeśa* (*Rnal 'byor bzhi'i de kho na nyid ces bya ba rang byin gyis brlab pa'i man ngag*, Toh. 2025).

Despite the doubts concerning Darpaṇācārya's role in bestowing on Glo bo tantric initiation, the collaboration between the two in the translation of the Red cycle is well established. According to A mes zhabs, Glo bo translated a total of thirteen works of Śrīdhara¹³⁹ dealing with the ritual practices of the Red Yamāri, but only seven of them could be identified. All of these texts were translated in collaboration with Darpaṇācārya.¹⁴⁰ One of the locations where those translations were undertaken was the already mentioned royal citadel of Nyi gzungs,¹⁴¹ which was built in the beginning of the 10th century by Skyid lde Nyi ma mgon (the son of the Tibetan king Dpal 'khor bstan) with the intention of establishing it as the capital of a new state, which he instituted in Mnga 'ris.¹⁴² This was the same place

¹³⁷ *khyad par du dar pa na tsar ya spyang drangs te birwa pa'i spros med/ dpal 'dzin kyi rnal 'byor bzhi rim sogs gzhung phran gсар pa mang du bsgyur zhing/ Tāranātha, Gshin rje, p. 81.*

¹³⁸ According to Sobisch 2008:49, *Shin tu spros pa med pa de kho na nyid kyi man ngag* by Virūpa was transmitted to the Sa skya sect in the Red Yamāri cycle (the information is given in Ngag dbang chos grags's *Record*).

¹³⁹ A mes zhabs (p.135) reports that Glo bo translated Darpaṇācārya's *Jvātattva* (*Tsho ba'i de kho na nyid*), which is included in the *Collected Works* of 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje.

¹⁴⁰ *dpal 'dzin gyis mdzad pa'i gzhung bcu gsum po phal cher bsgyur te/ Gshin rje, p. 135.* However, only seven works attributed to Śrīdhara and translated by Glo bo in collaboration with Darpaṇācārya have been identified. These are: 1) *Caturyogatattvanāmasvādhiṣṭhānopadeśa* (*Rnal 'byor bzhi'i de kho na nyid ces bya ba rang byin gyis brlab pa'i man ngag*, Toh. 2025); 2) *Raktayamāryādhiṣṭhānadeśana* (*Gshin rje mthar byed dmar po'i byin gyis brlab pa'i rim pa*, Toh. 2038); 3) *Rakṣacakrādhiṣṭhānapriṣṭhyopadeśa* (*Srung ba'i 'khor lo'i byin brlab dang phyir bzlog pa'i man ngag*, Toh. 2045); 4) *Svaccittordhvasaṃkrānti-upadeśādhiṣṭhāna-samyuktā* (*Rang gi sems gong du 'pho ba'i man ngag byin brlab dang bcas pa*, Toh. 2041); 5) *Ag-nidevapūjā* (*Me'i lha mchod pa*, Toh. 2043); 6) *Adhiṣṭhānakrama* (*Byin gyis brlab pa'i rim pa*, Toh. 2042); 7) *Śrīraktayamāri-mantrasiddhisādhana* (*Dpal gshin rje gshed dmar po'i sngags kyi dngos grub sgrub pa'i thabs*). In collaboration with Darpaṇācārya, he also translated *Amṛtādhiṣṭhāna* (*Bdud rtsi byin gyis brlab pa*, Toh. 2044).

¹⁴¹ In this location he translated in collaboration with Darpaṇācārya the following texts: 1) *Dpal gshin rje gshed dmar po'i sngags kyi dngos grub sgrub thabs*; 2) *Dpal gshin rje gshed dmar po'i 'tsho ba'i de kho na nyid ces bya ba'i man ngag*; 3) *Byin gyis brlab pa'i rim pa*; and 4) *Bdud rtsi byin gyis brlab pa*.

¹⁴² Stearns 1996: 135.

where Glo bo lo translated other tantric works with Vibhūticandra.¹⁴³ Another place of Glo bo's activity, where he has completed at least one translation of the Red cycle (i.e., *Me'i lha mchod pa*), was Mang yul (probably referring to Gung thang mang yul). Gung thang mang yul was a border town with its main center at Skyid grong and its capital at Rdzong dkar. It was a crossroad between the Himalayas and the Gangetic plains of India and Nepal where many lo tsā bas proceeding from Tibet to Nepal and India stayed for a period to acclimatize to higher altitudes. According to Heimbel, the seat of Glo bo lo was the Bsam 'grub gling¹⁴⁴ (also referred to as bsam brling), a small monastic center located two thousand cubits south of the Kha khang chen mo.¹⁴⁵ It was established in the 12th century by Sa skya bla ma Rong sgom pa, a disciple of Sa chen kun dga' snying po (1092–1158).¹⁴⁶ From the outset, the place played a significant role in establishing cultural and educational links between Glo bo and Sa skya. Several Sa skya masters lived there for an extended period, while the natives of Glo bo completed some important works there.¹⁴⁷ By the year 1261, Glo bo lo had acquired sufficient reputation as the specialist of the Raktayamāri to be requested by 'Phags pa Chos rgyal,¹⁴⁸ the ruler of Tibet, to become his religious preceptor¹⁴⁹ and to bestow on him various tantric initiations, including the Red cycle.¹⁵⁰ This was the highest honour ever conferred on a native of Glo bo.¹⁵¹

The Red cycle lineage of Glo bo was transmitted from Glo bo to his own son, 'Gro mgon sa pa, and followed through the line of succession that we already know from other lineage transmissions discussed above, i.e., Mang mkhar lo tsā ba Mchog ldan legs pa'i blo gros to Dpal ldan seng ge to Bu ston Rin po che. Bu ston Rin po che transmitted the teachings to the fourteenth abbot of the Sa skya pas at the Bzhi thog bla brang, Dpal ldan bla ma dam pa Bsod nams rgyal mtshan (1312–1375). Other sources confirm that Bla ma dam pa was ordained by Dpal ldan seng ge, who gave him his initiation name,

¹⁴³ Stearns 1996: 135.

¹⁴⁴ Heimbel 2017: 327.

¹⁴⁵ Heimbel 2017: 255.

¹⁴⁶ Kitamura 2010:140-150.

¹⁴⁷ For example, Glo bo mkhan chen completed his *Mkhas pa rnam sgron 'jug pa'i sgo'i rnam par bshad pa rig gnas gsal byed* there in the year 1527. See Jackson 1984:136.

¹⁴⁸ For the role of Chos rgyal 'Phags pa and his disciples in the spread of tantric teachings at the Yuan court, see Aciri and Wenta 2022.

¹⁴⁹ Jackson 1976:45.

¹⁵⁰ See Dkon mchog 'jigs med dbang po, *Rje btsun thams cad mkhyen pa lchang skya rol pa'i rdo rje'i 'khrung rabs kyi phreng ba gtan tu brjod pa ngo mtshar dad pa'i ljon shing*, vol. II, p. 354, in Jackson 1976: 55, fn. 47. For the list of tantric initiations bestowed by Glo bo to 'Phags pa, see *Bla ma dam pa chos kyi rgyal rin po che'i rnam par thar pa rin chen phreng ba*, vol. 1, p. 308.

¹⁵¹ Jackson 1976: 45.

and that he was also a disciple of Bu ston, who gave him the Kālacakra initiation.¹⁵² Bla ma dam pa composed treatises, such as the unelaborated instruction of the Red Yamāri (that remains unidentified), and taught them to his two disciples, Theg chen chos kyi rgyal po Kun dga' bkra shis (1349–1425),¹⁵³ a nephew and a disciple of Bla ma dam pa, known as one of the ten or eleven polymaths,¹⁵⁴ and Jo nang Phyogs las rnam rgyal (1306–1386). Jo nang Phyogs las rnam rgyal was a teacher of Ngor chen's most important masters, Shar chen Ye shes rgyal mtshan (1359–1406).¹⁵⁵ According to Ngor chen, Shar chen commissioned the *thangka* of Cakrasaṃvara and Raktayamāri as an inner holy object (*nang rten*) in the memory of Phyogs las rnam rgyal.¹⁵⁶

A mes zhabs does not elaborate on the lineage that followed the second of Bla ma dam pa's chief disciples, Jo nang Phyogs las rnam rgyal, but he does give more details about the lineage of Theg chen that was followed by 'Jam dbyangs nam mkha' rgyal mtshan (1398–1472) and Mus chen sems dpa' chen Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan¹⁵⁷ (1388–1470). Those two "lineage streams" (*brgyud pa'i chu bo gnyis*) were given to 'Jam dbyangs's son, Bdag chen Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1444–1495). The rest of the Glo bo lineage transmission of the Red cycle follows the masters associated with the *lam 'bras slob bshad* tradition¹⁵⁸ and thus reflects the general pattern of the *lam 'bras* division initiated by Mus chen that brought with itself new lines of transmission.¹⁵⁹ Thus we find such masters as Rdo rings Kun spangs pa (1449–1525) alias Kun spangs rdo ring pa or Kun bzang chos kyi nyi ma, followed by Tshar chen Blo gsal rgya mtsho (1502–1568)—the founder of 'Dar grang mo che monastery in Gtsang, and the initiator of the Tshar pa division of Sa skya—, who received the Raktayamāri initiation at the age of twenty-four and spent five months in *dbus* in Vajrabhairava retreat, which eventually resulted in a vision of that deity.¹⁶⁰ A mes zhabs reports that Tshar chen specialized in the teachings

¹⁵² Townsend 2010. <https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Lama-Dampa-Sonam-Gyeltsen-Pelzangpo/2491>

¹⁵³ For the biographies of Theg chen, see Heimbel 2017: 395.

¹⁵⁴ Heimbel 2017:395.

¹⁵⁵ According to A mes zhabs (p. 136), from the time of Jo nang Phyogs rnam rgyal onwards, the continuity of the Glo bo lineage began to break up, and separate lineages were established. One of those sub-lineages stemmed from Shar chen Ye shes rgyal mtshan.

¹⁵⁶ Heimbel 2997:120.

¹⁵⁷ On Mus chen's biography of Ngor chen, see Heimbel 2007:24.

¹⁵⁸ For the masters associated with the *lam 'bras bshad* tradition, see Stearns 2001:42-46.

¹⁵⁹ For the discussion on the *lam 'bras* division into *lam 'bras slob bshad* and *tshogs bshad*, see Heimbel 2017:405-413.

¹⁶⁰ Stearns 2012:125.

of the Red cycle and as a result of his inspirational teachings he had many learned disciples, including Mang thos Klu sgrub rgya mtsho (1523–1596) and Bo dong mkhyen brtse ba (1524–1568). Mang thos Klu sgrub rgya mtsho was an important master of the *lam 'bras slob bshad* and the abbot of the Mnyam yod Bya rgod gshongs monastery in Gtsang, who is especially known as a strong opponent of the Mahāmudrā teachings of 'Brug chen Pad ma dkar po (1527–1592).¹⁶¹ Bo dong mkhyen brtse ba, on the other hand, served as the fourteenth abbot to the throne of Zhwa lu where he taught the *lam 'bras slob bshad* tradition, which he also received from Tshar chen. He is the author of the generation and completion *sādhana* practice focusing on Vajrabhairava entitled *Tantra of the Dākinī Hearing Lineage of the Rwa Command and Instruction on the sampanna-krama of Vajrabhairava* (*Rdo rje 'jigs byed kyi bskyed rdzogs man ngag rwa khrid mkha' 'gro snyan rgyud*). According to A mes zhabs, Mang thos klu sgrub rgya mtsho and Bo dong mkhyen brtse ba each completed a set of works, including notes on Tshar chen's *Instructions on the Generation Stage of the Red Yamāri*, which he taught orally, the *Khog phug*,¹⁶² and the *Unelaborated Instruction*.¹⁶³ From Mang thos klu sgrub rgya mtsho, the Red cycle of the Glo bo lineage was passed onto Mkhan chen thams cad mkhyen pa Ngag dbang chos grags (1572–1641), who was known as one of the main preceptors of A mes zhabs.¹⁶⁴

e) The Reading Transmission (*lung*) Lineage of Glo bo lo tsā ba

The fifth lineage of the Red Yamāri that reached Tibet is based on the reading transmission (*lung*) of the *Raktayamāritantra*. A mes zhabs explains the reasons for classifying this transmission as an independent reading transmission saying that Glo bo received the initiation (*dbang*) of Raktayamāri from teachers other than Darpañacārya and

¹⁶¹ See Krug 2019:113-117.

¹⁶² Sobisch (2008:49) confirms that Mang thos klu sgrub rgya mtsho wrote notes on Tshar chen's *Instructions on the Generation Stage of the Red Yamāntaka* and *Khog phug* that were transmitted to the Sa skya in the cycle of the Red Yamāri.

¹⁶³ *yang theg chen rin po ches bla ma dam pa'i drung du gshed dmar gyi khrid bka' gsan/ rdo rje'i tshig rkang gi rnam bshad sogs yig cha yang mang du mdzad de 'jam dbyangs nam mkha' rgyal mtshan la gnang/ de nyid dang sems dpa' chen po gnyis char la bdag chen rdo rje 'chang gis gsan tel/ de ltar brgyud pa'i chu bo gnyis 'dus kyis bdag chen rdo rje 'chang blo gros rgyal mtshan/ rdo rings kun spangs pa/ tshar chen blo gsal rgya mtsho'i bar du brgyud/ tshar chen nyid kyis 'di skor la 'chad nyan rtsal du ston pa mdzad pa'i slob ma yang mkhas pa'i dbang po mang thos klu sgrub rgya mtsho/ bo dong mkhyen brtse ba sogs byon pa las/ 'di gnyis char gyis tshar chen gyi gsung la zin bris mdzad pa'i gshed dmar gyi bskyed rim gyi rnam bshad/ khog phub/ spros med kyi khrid yig sogs cha tshang ba re re yod cing/ Gshin rje, pp. 136-137.*

¹⁶⁴ For the second lineage transmission of the Red Yamāri received by A mes zhabs in the lineage of Ngor, see p. 29 and p. 59.

before he even met Darpañacārya. There were two versions of the *Raktayamāritantra*: one in nineteen chapters and one in twenty-two chapters. Both of them formed the basis of Glo bo lo's reading transmission lineage. The earlier version consisted of nineteen chapters. According to A mes zhabs, it was Shong lo tsā ba Blo gros brtan, the younger cousin of Shong lo tsā ba Rdo rje rgyal mtshan (13th c.), who translated the nineteen-chapter *Raktayamāritantra*, which he received from the oral transmission of *paṇḍita* Vimalaśīla.¹⁶⁵ The colophon of the Tantra included in the Stog Palace manuscript of the Bka' 'gyur indicates that he translated it in collaboration with the Kashmiri *paṇḍita* Rahulaśrībhadrā at Dpal Sa skya gtsug lag khang at the orders of 'Phags pa Chos rgyal, sponsored by Kun dga' bzang po.¹⁶⁶ This indicates that the translation was completed sometimes in the mid-1270.¹⁶⁷ From the first chapter of the nineteen-chapters *Raktayamāritantra*, Glo bo taught the empowerment of the 5-Deity *maṇḍala*, and from the eighth chapter he explained the teachings on the 13-Deity *maṇḍala*. The second version was the twenty-two-chapters *Raktayamāritantra*. According to Tāranātha, the Sanskrit copy of this version was obtained from *ācārya* Dharmakīrti by the Tibetan Chos grags dpal (Kun spangs chos grags dpal, 1283–1363). The text was offered to Bu ston Rin po che who was requested to translate it from Sanskrit into Tibetan.¹⁶⁸ A mes zhabs specifies that this version of the Tantra contains an elaborated collection of rituals (*las tshogs*) based on the usage of ritual substances that are not to be found in any other Tantras.¹⁶⁹ From this version of the Tantra, Glo bo taught exclusively the

¹⁶⁵ There was also another translation of the *Raktayamāritantra*, which is not mentioned by A mes zhabs, that is found in the *dge ge* print of the Bstan 'gyur. For the discussion of this particular translation, see Kuijpp 2009:26-27.

¹⁶⁶ *yon tan mtha' yas pa mnga' ba'i bla ma dam pa chos kyi rgyal po rin po che'i bka' lung (sic?) gis/ dpon chen kun dga' bzang pos yon bdag byas pa'i dus na/ kha che'i paN Di ta ra hu la shri bha dra dang/ bod kyi lo tsa ba dge slong blo brtan gyis/ dpal sa skya'i gtung lag lhang chen po bsgyur ba'o/ Dpal gshin rje gshed dmar po, p. 360.*

¹⁶⁷ Kuijpp 2009:27.

¹⁶⁸ *gshin rje gshed mar po'i rgyud le'u nye gnyis yod pa 'di ni/ slob dpon dhar ma ki rti par grags pa/ kun spangs chos grags dpal bzang gi phyag tu rgya dpe byung nas/ mkhas mchog bu ston rin po che'i phyag tu phul nas bsgyur par zhus/ 'gyur yang mdzad/ Tāranātha's Gshin rje, pp. 81-82.*

¹⁶⁹ *srol lnga pa ni/ shong rdo rje rgyal mtshan gyi gcung po shong blo brtan gyis paN Di ta vi ma la shi la lung blang ste gshed dmar gyi rgyud le'u bcu dgu pa 'di bsgyur te/ de'i lung da lta yang bzhugs pa yin la/ rgyud 'di'i le'u/ glo bo lo tsa bas gshed dmar gyi dbang bla ma gzhan las thob rjes su dar pan A tsarya dang mjal dus gshed dmar gyi khrid rdo rje'i tshig rkang dang bcas pa gsan/ des na 'di la dbang bka' khrid bka' brgyud pa tha dad du byed/ dang po nas lha lnga'i dkyil 'khor bstan shing brgyad pa nas lha bcu gsum ma'i dkyil 'khor bstan par bshad/ bu ston rin po ches bsgyur ba'i rgyud le'u nyer gnyis pa nas mchog sgrub pa'i dkyil 'khor lha lnga ma kho na ston/ rgyud de na gzhan na med pa'i rdzas kyi sbyor ba la brten pa'i las tshogs shin tu mang ba zhig bzhugs par bshad dol Gshin rje, pp. 138-139.*

supreme accomplishment of the 5-Deity *maṇḍala*. A mes zhabs concludes his description of the reading transmission lineage of Glo bo lo tsā ba by saying:

This [reading transmission of Glo bo lo] is the fifth tradition that, except for the continuity of the reading transmission and the explanation of the Tantra, does not have any [other] empowerments, practice instructions, etc. Therefore, among the traditions that have just been explained, since this transmission coming from Glo bo lo tsā ba has been declared to be the most outstanding and reliable by various previous *bla mas*, this is how it has to be regarded.¹⁷⁰

Conclusion

There are several conclusions that can be drawn from the documentation of transmission lineages presented above. First, the circulation of audiences operated in both centripetal and centrifugal ways. While scholars have placed much importance on the centripetal aspect, attested for example in the journeys to India and Nepal to obtain tantric teachings—a practice adopted by all the lo tsā bas mentioned above—the centrifugal tendencies are less frequently accounted for. However, some part of the Red cycle's trajectory of diffusion in Tibet was indirectly linked to the arrival of the great Kashmiri *paṇḍita* Śākyaśrībhadrā (and his party of lesser *paṇḍitas*) to Tibet on the invitation of Khro phu lo tsā ba Byams pa'i dpal. Especially two of those *paṇḍitas*, namely Vibhūticandra and Dānaśīla, appear to have been closely linked to the network of masters associated with the *Raktayamāri* cycle in Tibet. Chag lo, G.yung phug pa Rgyal mtshan dge ba and Glo bo lo knew Vibhūticandra personally, and in case of Glo bo lo, the translations of the Red cycle undertaken in collaboration with Darpaṇācārya took place at the exact same location where Glo bo lo conducted other translation activities with Vibhūticandra. Also Dānaśīla, the teacher of G.yad sde ba, completed his translation of the *Raktayamāri* in the place built by Vibhūticandra. We also know that Rong pa Rgwa lo invited Vibhūticandra to his monastery of Dben dmar and requested from him tantric initiations. The picture that emerges from the above analysis points to a small group of intellectuals and channels of transmission located initially within the sphere of authority established around the figure of Śākyaśrībhadrā.

Second, the transmission of tantric teachings can be also described

¹⁷⁰ *srol lnga pa 'di la rgyud kyi lung bshad gyi rgyun lung tsam ma gtogs dbang dang khrid sogs med la/ des na de ltar bshad ma thag pa'i lam srol de dag las glo bo lo tsa ba nas brgyud pa 'di khungs btsun zhing khyad par 'phags par bla ma gong ma rnam gsungs pas de ltar du shes par bya'o/ Gshin rje, p.139.*

in terms of cultural geographies that in the initial phase appears to have been based in small, regional centers, creating more or less informal circulation network. Some of the places that played an important role in the transmission of the Raktayamāri cycle, such as the royal citadel of Nyi gzungs in Pu hrangs and the mountain of Drang sron Srin po, were again linked to Vibhūticandra and seem to have assumed a pivotal role in the wider diffusion of tantric scriptures. Other places, such as Thar pa gling, the seat of Dpyal lo and Nyi ma rgyal mtshan, assumed a variety of functions: it was a place where lo tsā bas travelled to receive formal initiation in the Red cycle; where the translations of the Raktayamāri scriptures were undertaken, and; where the prominent scholars trained to become translators.

Third, the statistical frequency of certain names that appear in many different transmission lineages discussed above indicates that some individuals assumed greater roles than others in the history of spread of tantric teachings in Tibet. One of these significant figures is Rong pa Rgwa lo of the Rong clan. More research is needed to understand the circumstances in which the Rong clan rose to the position of power in the *phyi dar* period. Another master that frequently appears in various transmission lineages of both the Black and the Red cycles is Mang khar lo tsā ba, a rather unknown figure, who usually features as a teacher of Dpal ldan seng ge from whom Bu ston Rin po che received both the Black and Red cycles as well as the *Guhyasamāja* transmission of the Jñānapāda school. The role of Mang khar lo tsā in the spread of tantric teachings in Tibet needs to be investigated further. Another important *bla ma* was Tshar chen Blo gsal rgya mtsho, who established the Tshar pa division of Sa skya. He does not only feature in the transmission lineages of the Red cycle of Glo bo lo that was transmitted through the masters of both the *lam 'bras bshad* and the Zhwa lu monastery (the same monastery where Tshar chen was enthroned in 1555), but also in the lineage of the Eastern Rwa tradition that stemmed from Rgya ston and was passed on after the 14th century mainly through the abbots of Zhwa lu monastery.¹⁷¹ Despite the enduring conflict that characterized the relationship between the members of the Tshar pa lineage and the supporters of the 'Khon branch of the Sa skya,¹⁷² the Tshar pa's Vajrabhairava and Raktayamāri legacy was incorporated into the Ngor branch. A mes zhabs, the twenty-seventh patriarch of the Sa skya throne-holders was a recipient of Tshar pa lineage in both the Eastern Rwa tradition and the Red cycle of Glo bo lo.

¹⁷¹ Cuevas 2021b: 66.

¹⁷² Smith 2001: 241–242; Stearns 2012: 20–21 n.16.

Red Yamāri
The lineage of Dpyal lo

Niṣkalaṅka
↓
Dpyal lo tsā ba Chos kyi bzang po
↓
Rong pa Rgwa lo
↓
Rong pa Shes rab seng ge/bzang
↓
Bu ston Rin po che
↓
Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po

Red Yamāri
The lineage of Chag lo

*Ravīndraprabhā
↓
Chag lo tsā ba Chos rgyal
↓
G.yung phug pa Rgyal mtshan dge ba
↓
Blo gros brtan pa
↓
Mchog ldan legs pa'i blo gros/Mang mkhar lo tsā ba
↓
Dpal ldan seng ge
↓
Kun spangs chos grags
↓
Ma ti pan chen/Blo gros rgyal mtshan
↓
Sa bzang 'Phags pa gzhon nu blo gros
↓
Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po

Red Yamāri
The lineage of G.yag sde ba (Bsod nams bzang po/seng ge)

13-deity Raktayamāri

Dānaśīla
 ↓
 G.yag sde ba (Bsod nams bzang po)
 ↓
 [Zhang] ze dmar pa
 ↓
 Bu ston Rin po che
 ↓
 Rin chen rnam rgyal
 ↓
 Sa bzang 'Phags pa gzhon nu blo gros

5-deity Raktayamāri

Dānaśīla
 ↓
 'Jam gsar Shes rab 'od zer
 ↓
 Rgwa lo tsā ba
 ↓
 Rong pa Shes rab seng ge/bzang
 ↓
 Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po

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