


# Biography and Historiography: The Fifth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug (1720–1771) and His Travels

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*In commemoration of Ladakh Am-  
chi Tashi Yangphel Tashigang  
(1938–2021), physician, scholar  
and friend.*

## 1. Introduction

he *Smanrtsis Shesrig Spendzod* series, published in Leh and Delhi since 1969, contains many works of Tibetan medical literature and has been of great influence in the study of Tibetan medicine (*gso ba rig pa*) in the difficult situation of exile. Among the works are also various rare volumes from all schools of Tibetan Buddhism, thus allowing access to monastic chronicles, lineage histories, biographical works and religious texts, including the Great Perfection (*rdzogs pa chen po*) and the Aural Transmission of Cakrasamvara (*bde mchog snyan brgyud*). These volumes contain prefaces and appendices that introduce individual traditions, including their monastic seats and doctrines.

Two volumes dedicated to the Northern Treasures (*byang gter*) of the rNying ma pa school were issued in the year 1973: the *rdzogs pa chen po dgongs pa zang thal* and *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* collections of the treasure teachings of Thub bstan rDo rje brag, the main seat of the tradition in Central Tibet. In an appendix to the first volume, one finds lists of the embodiments of the rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin, the residences of the chief incarnation lineages (*bla brang*) of the monastery together with the names of some of the affiliates of Thub bstan rDo rje brag in Central Tibet, Eastern Tibet and Ladakh. These were followed in 1975 by a collection of manuscripts and block prints explaining the rites and ceremonies of Thub bstan rDo rje brag and its affiliated monasteries, and in 1976 by a descriptive collection of the Vajrakīla rituals performed at these places. Earlier, in 1972, an account of the main masters in the transmission of the Anuyoga's 'Dus pa'i mdo tantra by the Fourth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las

(1640–1718) had been released. It was accompanied by a biography of the Third rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin Ngag gi dbang po (1580–1639) written by the Fifth Dalai Bla ma Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682).

In the year 1973, the autobiography of the Fifth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug (1720–1771) also became available. In the introduction to this volume, it is stated that at the time of his recognition as the embodiment of Padma 'phrin las the site of Thub bstan rDo rje brag was in ruins following the Dsungar persecutions of the rNying ma pa school. Slowly the great monastery of the Byang gter tradition was rebuilt. The author further notes that the reader will find much in his autobiography about the religious and social conditions of Tibet during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. *The autobiography and the historiographical work*

The table of contents of the autobiography presents three individual xylographs, bearing the margins *ka* (185 fols.), *kha* (104 fols.), and *ga* (104 fols.). The entries of all three personal records are arranged chronologically and the Tibetan years are given, followed by their Western equivalents and the corresponding page numbers. It is further noted up to which year and month the three texts cover events in the life of sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug: vol. *ka* ends abruptly, about the 4<sup>th</sup> month of *lcags rta*, i.e. 1750–1751; vol. *kha* ends during the second half of *me glang*, i.e. 1757–1758; and vol. *ga* ends about the 4<sup>th</sup> month of *lcags stag*, i.e. 1770–1771. Between the first and second text, a short untitled xylograph is inserted and identified as a “prayer to the lines of rebirth” (*skyes rabs gsol 'debs*), that is, more literally, “a reverential petition to the previous embodiments of the author.” It bears no margins and should be placed at the end of the three autobiographical texts.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For the preface and the appendix relating to the Byang gter tradition in the first volume of the *rDzogs pa chen po dgongs pa zang thal* cycle, see Choden (1973b: 1-3). The introduction and contents of sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug's autobiography can be found in Choden (1973a: 1-7). The account of the masters in the transmission of the '*Dus pa'i mdo* tantra and the biography of Ngag gi dbang po were published as vol. 37 of the series, the four volumes of the Great Perfection treasure teachings (from the A 'dzom Chos sgar blocks) as vols. 60-64, and the two volumes of the rites performed at rDo rje brag and its affiliated monasteries, as vols. 65-66. The collection of Vajrakīla rituals counts as vol. 75.

<sup>2</sup> The three autobiographical segments are contained in sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug: *rTogs brjod*, pp. 1-370, 379-585 & 587-793. For the prayer to the lines of rebirth Id., *sKyes rabs gsol 'debs*, pp. 372-377. In a catalogue of the works of the Fifth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin stored in the Potala Palace, this work is placed after the three autobiographical segments; see Thub bstan rgyal mtshan: *Po ta la bzhugs pa'i*

Although the years 1751 to 1752 and 1757 to 1759 are not treated in the autobiography, these works offer a full and rich account of the various events in the life of sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug, including his recognition as an incarnation and the renewal of the monastery of Thub bstan rDo rje brag, originally founded right on the shore of the gTsang po in Central Tibet in the fourth decade of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. These activities started soon after the instalment of the new rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin with the state support of Mi dbang bSod nams stobs rgyas (1689–1747) and the Seventh Dalai Bla ma sKal bzang rgya mtsho (1708–1757). Detailed accounts of the religious training of sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug are supplied, and one finds descriptions of various rituals performed for the dGa' ldan pho brang government performed up to the period of the Eighth Dalai Bla ma 'Jam dpal rgya mtsho (1758–1804) and the regency of the Sixth De mo sprul sku Ngag dbang 'Jam dpal bde legs rgya mtsho (1723–1777). The monthly entries document these events in detail, sometimes day by day, providing, for example, references to the personal spiritual retreats, to the different teachers' and donors' visits to Thub bstan rDo rje brag or to the teachings given to the monastic communities in the main monastery and its branches. sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug is known for his opening of various sacred sites, especially the Padmasambhava cave complex in sGrags Yang rdzong, which had been linked with Thub bstan rDo rje brag since the time of the Fourth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin. Special attention is also paid in these texts to his journeys to the border-taming temples of Tibet, such as Bu chu gSer gyi lha khang in Kong po and mDung chu lha khang in sPo bo. The main purpose of these travels was to perform rituals for the government and the welfare of Tibet. The Fifth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin also revealed his own visionary teachings, including the cycle *bDe gshegs bka' 'dus rgya mtsho*.<sup>3</sup>

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*rnying ma'i gsung 'bum*, p. 261. The untitled work contains a printing colophon, stating that it was written at the behest of the ruler of lCags la in Dar rtse mdo county in the tenth Tibetan month of the year 1769; see sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug: *sKyes rabs gsol 'debs*, p. 377.3-6. On the petty state of lCags la, a region in eastern Khams centred on the trade mart of Dar rtse mdo (Kangding), see Gruschke (2004: 21-22).

<sup>3</sup> For the location of rDo rje brag, the flourishing of the site under the early Pho brang government and the rebuilding starting in the 1730s under the young reincarnation, see Akester (2016: 354-355). For the cave complex of sGrags Yang rdzong and its affiliation with the monastery as a retreat centre, see Akester (2016: 346). A modern sketch of the life of the Fifth rDo rje Brag Rig 'dzin can be found at [Treasury of Lives](#); it is mainly based on Kun bzang 'gro 'dul rDo rje: *Thub bstan rdo rje brag dgon gyi byung ba mdo tsam brjod pa ngo mtshar baidūrya'i phreng ba*, pp. 55.15-58.13. A longevity practice from the visionary teachings known as *Dag snang mkha' 'gro chos skor* is contained in the *Rin chen gter mdzod*, compiled by

The first autobiographical segment has a final remark: “may the carving of the wood blocks be propitious” (*par skos [= rkos] bkra shis*), while the second text offers no concluding statement. It is only the third text which contains a detailed “printing colophon” (*par byang*), even though it seems that all three works were xylographed at the same time. The place of production is given as Grub dgon O rgyan theg mchog gling, a Byang gter affiliate located in ‘Ba’ thang in Khams. The project was finalized in the year 1774 by Rig ‘dzin dBang rgyal (18<sup>th</sup> cent.), a disciple of both sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug and the Second Grub dgon sprul sku sKal bzang ‘phrin las rgya mtsho (18<sup>th</sup> cent). The latter was a close associate of the Fifth rDo rje brag Rig ‘dzin and had, together with a nephew called Chos sbyin, previously asked the master for permission to execute the full autobiography as a xylographic print. This request was made at Mi nyag dPal lha sgang, regarded as the last of the border-taming temples ascribed to Srong btsan sgam po and located in the direction of China. sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug had stayed in this temple during his sojourn in the realm of the ruler of lCags la in Dar rtse mdo county in the years 1769 and 1770. The Second Grub dgon sprul sku was early on involved in the composition of the autobiography, as it is known that at the end of 1760, he had sent back a first version to sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug with suggested changes; this version is obviously reflected in the first two segments of the autobiography.<sup>4</sup>

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Kong sprul Blo gros mtha’ yas (1811–1899); see *Tshe sgrub rdo rje rgya mdud* [= No. 2076] in Schwieger (2009: 341). The table of contents of a manuscript edition of the collected writings of sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug stored in the Potala Palace lists further works from this cycle and a full set of the cycle *bDe gshegs bka’ ’dus rgya mtsho*; see Thub bstan rgyal mtshan (as in note 1), pp. 256–261. In addition to the mentioned cycles, the texts of the wrathful Padmasambhava and further works are now available in the edition of his collected writings; see *Rig ‘dzin skal bzang Padma dbang phyug ’jigs med grub pa’i sde chen po’i gsung ’bum*, vol. 4, pp. 1–557.

<sup>4</sup> The full printing colophon at the end of the third text is contained in *rTogs brjod*, vol. ga, pp. 789.2–793.6. Rig ‘dzin dBang rgyal states that he relied on the “written notes” (*zin bris*) of sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug and added necessary corrections. The autobiographies of the Fifth Dalai Bla ma Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682) and the Fourth rDo rje brag Rig ‘dzin are referred to as ideal compositional models. The reception of a first draft of the autobiography, forwarded from Grub dgon to Thub bstan rDo rje brag, is the last event mentioned in the twelfth Tibetan month of the year 1760; *rTogs brjod*, vol. ga, p. 605.1–2 (*grub dgon sprul skus phyug bris zhib gsal dar tshon sna lnga gser srang gsum shel dam cha sngon phul gyi nged rang gi rtogs brjod zhus dag gnang rgyu phul ba’i po ti dang gos chen khug ma mu tig gi hor yig can sbus legs sogs ’byor*). For the stay of the Fifth rDo rje brag Rig ‘dzin at Mi nyag dPal lha sgang and in Dar rtse mdo county in 1769 and 1770, see note 26.

The three texts must have circulated quite broadly, having been used as literary sources in historiographical writings of the rNying ma pa school when dealing with the “abbatial succession” (*gdan rabs*) of Thub bstan rDo rje brag. A case in point is the work of Guru bkra shis (18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> cent.), completed in 1813 and executed as a xylographic print between the years 1863 and 1871; it makes full use of all three texts and incorporates verbatim quoted passages from the autobiography. The short narrative of the life of sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug contained in it presents not only events up to the year 1770 but also provides some details on his last activities after he returned from a journey to Khams and while he was sojourning in Dar rtse mdo county.<sup>5</sup>

In the following I take the short narrative of Guru bkra shis as a blueprint for looking into some of the main events in the life of the Fifth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin, in particular his travels. References to the fuller accounts in the autobiography will be made when adding further details (for example, the teachings received) that are not fully covered in the historiographical work. The events will be presented according to the timeline furnished by the three texts.

### 3. The years 1720 to 1750

*Guru bkra shis's History* follows the first autobiographical segment when portraying the home region of the Fifth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin, his birth and the circumstances of his recognition as a reincarnation. His native region was Nyag rong in western Khams, described as having earlier been visited by previous Byang gter masters, including the “Northern lords, father [and] son” (*byang pa yab sras*); this refers to Byang bdag bKra shis stobs rgyal (1550–1607) and his son Ngag gi dbang po, the Third rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin. His family claimed descent from the ancient lHa dynasty of Tibetan monarchs in lCags bdud sPo 'bor sngang, one of the six mountain ranges of Eastern Tibet. The area is called a “hidden sacred site” (*sbas gnas*) in a quotation from the *Blon po bka' thang* listing four valleys and their natural quali-

<sup>5</sup> *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, pp. 688.12–697.16. Consult Ehrhard (2007: 166) for this work the association of Guru bkra shis with sTag [mo] sngang monastery in the vicinity of sDe dge. The account by Guru bkra shis served as the main source for the life of the Fifth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin in the recent history of the Byang gter tradition; see Chos dbyings: *Byang gter thub bstan rdo rje brag gi chos 'byung*. pp. 607–619. This section in the work of Guru bkra shis is preceded by the life of the Fourth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin; Id. pp. 682.5–688.11. It should be noted that in the latter case, the reader is referred to the “great biography” (*rnam thar chen mo*) of that master, namely *Padma 'phrin las kyi rang nyid kyi rtogs brjod rab dkar shel gyi me long*, of which two unedited versions are available; on this work, see Valentine (2022: 217, n. 5).

ties. The involvement of the ICags la ruler of Dar rtse mdo county at the time of the young boy's recognition as a reincarnation is mentioned, whereafter the latter was first taken to Li thang.<sup>6</sup>

Soon afterwards he was escorted to Mi nyag dPal lha sngang, and it was there that the first initiations were received. The teacher responsible for this was Theg mchog bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1685–1727), a disciple of Padma 'phrin las, who can be counted as the First Grub dgon sprul sku:

Then, in accordance with the prophecies of the Dharmapāla gNod sbyin chen po, he was met and brought on horseback by the king and the ministers of ICags la to Mi nyag dPal lha sngang, known as a border taming temple, where in early times many great beings including Thang stong [rgyal po] (1361–1485) had stayed, and in later times also [the Third rDo rje brag] Rig 'dzin Ngag gi dbang po, and where there are such distinctive sacred objects as a Jo bo [Śākyamuni]. After arriving with the whole retinue, he remained there for some time. Once, when he had learned to read and was ready to obtain the teaching from the primer, there was no need [to spell for him words like] "dragon" and "lion," and all were filled with amazement. At that time Theg mchog bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, the master from Grub dgon, he who had been a spiritual son of the precious [Fourth rDo rje brag] Rig 'dzin and was of great learning in the Buddhist doctrine and of incomparable knowledge, arrived as the teacher of the encampment [cloister] of Dar [rtse] mdo. Later he had gone to China, and was [now,] after one year, welcomed back to Dar [rtse] mdo, and so immediately went to meet the reincarnation. As an initial auspicious connection, he offered to him an extensive Phur ba initiation by way of a maṇḍala painted on cloth and based on the initiation manual *Rin chen bum bzang*.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, pp. 688.12–690.6, on the home region, the birth and recognition as a reincarnation; the detailed account in the autobiography can be found in *rTogs brjod*, vol. ka, pp. 19.3–23.3. The quotation is not, as claimed, from chapter 29 but from chapter 28 of the mentioned text, and the region of gNyal rong has been replaced by Nyag rong. For the original, see O rgyan gling pa: *bKa' thang sde lnga*, p. 402.10–13 (*gtsang rong gnyal rong lho rong dang: kong po rong ste las sgo bzhi: ri ni mtshon cha gnam gzings 'dra: chu ni rba klong ral nag gcig: zas su sngo sad shing tog za: gos su me rlung sbyor ba gyon: gnas sa brag dang chu yod der*). Compare the four hidden sacred sites according to the oral tradition of Nyag rong in Rab brtan rdo rje: *Nyag rong gtam rgan ma*, p. 53.13–16 (*da dung spo bo rong / tsha ba rong / nyag a 'dzi rong / rgyal mo rong bcas sbas gnas rong chen khag bzhi red lags*). According to this source, the Fifth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin is remembered as one of the outstanding masters born in the region; *Ibid.* p. 65.2–3 (*skal bzang padma dbang phyug zhing 'dir khrungs / bka' 'dus chos dang byang gter bstan pa bskyangs*).

<sup>7</sup> *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, p. 690.6–15 (*de nas chos skyong gnod sbyin chen po'i lung bzhin mtha' 'dul gyi gtsug lag khang du grags pa'i sngar grub chen thang stong sogs skyes chen du ma dang physis rig 'dzin ngag gi dbang pos kyang zhabs kyis bcags shing jo bo*

The next event mentioned in the historiographical work is the departure from the temple of Mi nyag dPal lha sgang. On that occasion the young reincarnation was sent off to Central Tibet by the teacher from Grub dgon and the family of the lCags la ruler:

In the early morning of the ninth day of the first month of the horse year (i.e. 1726), [escorted] by the noble [Theg mchog bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan], the lady A dga' and an entourage of a hundred servants, and accompanied by a combination of numerous good, auspicious things, including a horse escort, a parasol, a victory banner and musical instruments, he set off from dPal lha sgang. In the plain of bZhag [b]ra, the noble teacher and the lady ruler requested [for themselves] the auspicious connection of an extensive long-life ceremony and proper instruction in the present and the future. From the lady A dga' and the [other members of the] A kya [family] came the promise that an invitation would be issued [to return to Dar rtse mdo] after the age of twenty years had been completed.<sup>8</sup>

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*sogs rten mchog khyad par can yod pa'i mi nyag dpal lha sgang du lcags la rgyal blon gyis chihs bsu dang bcas phebs nas / re zhid der bzhugs / ljags klog phul dus ka dpe nas chos bsus gtong ba las / 'brug seng sogs dgos pa ma byung bas / kun gyis ya mtshan du 'dzin / 'di skabs rig 'dzin gong ma'i thugs sras su gyur pa'i bka' chos gsan rgya che la mkhyen dpyod mtshungs zla med pa grub dgon bla ma theg mchog bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan nyid der [=dar] mdo sgar bla mar phebs rjes rgya nag tu phebs pa yin 'dug pas lo 'khor nas phyir dar mdor 'byor 'phral du / sprul pa'i sku njal bar phebs / thog ma'i rten 'brel du phur ba'i dbang rgyas pa ras bris kyi dkyil 'khor du dbang chog rin chen bum bzang gi steng nas phul). Compare rTogs brjod, vol. ka, pp. 23.3-29.3, for the first stay at Mi nyag dPal lha sgang and the arrival of Theg mchog bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan. A biographical sketch of this master is contained in Chos dbyings (as in note 5), pp. 597-606. His incarnation was the above-mentioned sKal bzang 'phrin las rgya mtsho from Grub dgon, who received his religious name in Thub bstan rDo rje brag in 1737 from sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug; *Ibid.*, p. 221.4. The initiation manual, bearing the full title *Byang gter phur ba spu gri'i dkyil 'khor du dbang bskur ba'i cho ga rin chen bum bzang*, is a work of the Fourth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin.*

<sup>8</sup> *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, p. 692.4-9 (*rta lo zla ba dang po'i tshes dgu'i snga char grub dgon bla ma dang a dga' lcam dpon g.yog brgya skor gyis rta skyel gdugs rgyal mtshan rgya gling sogs rten 'brel gyi legs tshogs su du ma dang bcas dpal lha sgang nas btegs bzhag bra'i thang du bla ma dam pa dang sa dbang chen mo bcas nas brtan bzhugs rgyas pa zhid gi rten 'brel dang 'phral phugs gi bslab bya yang dag snyan 'bul zhus / a dga' lha lcam dang a kya rnams nas dgung lo nyi shu thugs rdzogs bzhes grub nas gdan 'dren la yong zer bar khas len kyang zhus). The whole passage is lifted verbatim from *rTogs brjod*, vol. ka, pp. 40.6-41.3. For Mi nyag dPal lha sgang (north-west of Dar rtse mdo) as a modern pilgrimage centre known especially for a statue of the Jo bo Śākyamuni (a replica left by Chinese princess Kong jo on her way to Lhasa), see Epstein & Wenbin (1999: 334-336 & 340, nn. 16 & 17). The temple is described as "well guarded on its east by grasslands and a mountain range which includes the great guardian *gzhi bdag* mountain Mi nyag Bzhag ra." Consult Warner (2011: 252-256) for the local legends in Eastern Tibetan historiography concerning the journey of the Chinese princess and the Jo bo Śākyamuni.*

The journey to Thub bstan rDo rje brag took nearly one year, the historiographical work summarizing the various places and individuals encountered on the way. Stops were made at sDe dge and rDzogs chen monasteries, and the young incarnation was introduced to the sDe dge king bsTan pa tshe ring (1678–1738) and the Second rDzogs chen 'Gyur med Theg mchog bstan 'dzin (1699–1758). In the eighth month of the trip the boy encountered also the Third Khams sprul Kun dga' bstan 'dzin (1680–1729) and spent three days in his presence. In Chab mdo he was welcomed by the Sixth 'Phags pa lha 'Jigs med bstan pa'i rgya mtsho (1714–1754). Afterwards the journey continued to sPang leb (a Byang gter affiliate located in lHo rong) and Kong po, whence the delegation finally reached Central Tibet. Although unable to visit 'Bri gung mThil, the party encountered the Second 'Bri gung Chung tshang Chos kyi rgyal po (1704–1754) at his residence called rDzong gсар. In the tenth Tibetan month of 1726 the young reincarnation arrived at Thub bstan rDo rje brag. Soon afterwards, on the first day of the first Tibetan month of 1727, he left for Lhasa in order to obtain his first ordination from the Seventh Dalai Bla ma. On the tenth day he received the religious name sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug from sKal bzang rgya mtsho in the Potala Palace; it was also on that occasion that a first meeting with Mi dbang bSod nams stobs rgyas was held.<sup>9</sup>

For the year 1727, the historiographical works mentions two teachers, both disciples of Padma 'phrin las, who transmitted initiations of the Byang gter tradition to sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug:

At that time, when he was staying at Shel grong, Chu bzang sprul sku [Kun bzang rgya mtsho] (17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> cent.) and gNyags ston, the teacher from Kham[s] lung [called] Rig 'dzin dBang [gi] rgyal [po] (1657–1731), arrived [there]. As they were disciples of the precious teacher who had not acted counter to their sacred vows [to their master], he listened to most of the initiations and reading authorizations of the Northern Treasures, and especially to the great *mDo dbang* [cycle].<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> For the journey to Central Tibet, the arrival in Thub bstan rDo rje brag and the first ordination under the Seventh Dalai Bla ma, see *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, pp. 692.9–694.11. Compare the detailed account in *rTogs brjod*, vol. ka, pp. 42.5–57.4. It should be noted that according to the latter source a visit to Shel grong was planned before the actual arrival in Thub bstan rDo rje brag, but it was finally only after the initial reception at the monastery that the young incarnation visited that place; *Ibid.*, pp. 51.4–52.4. Shel grong was known as the “manorial estate” (*gzhis kha*) of the Fourth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin and later served his reincarnation as a place for longer sojourns; see, for example, the stay in the seventh month of the year 1731, *ibid.*, pp. 107.4–109.6.

<sup>10</sup> *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, p. 694.11–14 (*de skabs shel brang [= grong] du bzhugs / chu bzang sprul sku dang gnyags ston kam lung bla ma rig 'dzin dbang rgyal byon gyur bar*



Chu bzang sprul sku, who arrived from his monastery in gTsang and returned there afterwards, only stayed a short time.<sup>11</sup> The visit of Rig 'dzin dBang gi rgyal po, who had arrived from South-Western Tibet, lasted longer and included a month-long initiation into the *mDo dbang* cycle.<sup>12</sup> He also transmitted to his young disciple a text of Long Life practice according to the treasure cycle *Rig 'dzin yongs 'dus* of mNga ris Paṅ chen Padma dBang rgyal (1487–1542).<sup>13</sup>

Soon afterwards the vows of a Buddhist novice were obtained from a Sa skya pa teacher named rMor chen Ngag dbang Kun dga' lhun grub (d. 1728). This is said to happen when Mi dbang bSod nams stobs rgyas had successfully ended the civil war of the years 1727/28:

At this time, when he had reached the age of ten years, he obtained in the presence of rMor chen Ngag dbang Kun dga' lhun grub the *śramanera* [vows]; he listened, further, to some doctrines [from this master]. During this time the army of gTsang had emerged victorious in the dispute between dBus [and] gTsang, and the great ruler arrived at Lhasa.<sup>14</sup>

During this period the young reincarnation undertook various travels with Rig 'dzin dBang gi rgyal po to sites like 'On-phu sTag-tshang, sGrag Yang rdzong and mChims-phu. The teacher was in Lhasa when the new ruler of Tibet arrived, and afterwards preparations were made in Thub bstan rDo rje brag for his return to Nub-dgon.

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*gong ma'i bu slob dam tshig sel med yin pas / byang gter dbang lung phal cher dang / khyad par mdo dbang chen mo sogs gsan*). The account in the autobiography separates the two meetings.

<sup>11</sup> *rTogs brjod*, vol. ka, pp. 59.3-60.6. Kun bzang rgya mtsho was the first member of the Chu bzang incarnation lineage, named after its monastic seat in the s/dPa[l] nam[s] region in Nyang; see Akester (2016: 355, n. 42).

<sup>12</sup> *rTogs brjod*, vol. ka, pp. 60.6-64.2. Concerning this master, his monastic seat (the Byang gter affiliate Nub dgon in La stod Byang) and his activities in transmitting the *mDo dbang* cycle in Mang yul, see Ehrhard (2008: 81, n. 34). Consult Dalton (2016: 79-88) on the formation of a new lineage of this root tantra of the Anuyoga class in Thub bstan rDo rje brag by Padma 'phrin las.

<sup>13</sup> The text is contained in the *Rin chen gter mdzod*. *Rig 'dzin tshé yi sgrub pa yang gsang bla na med pa'i snying thig ye shes 'od mchog* [= no. 706] in Schwieger (1995: 168-169).

<sup>14</sup> *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, p. 694.14-16 ('*di skabs dgung lo bcu par smor* [= *rmor*] *chen ngag dbang kun dga' lhun grub drung nas dge tshul bzhes / gzhan yang bka' chos kha shas gsan / 'di skabs gtsang dbus 'khrugs pa gtsang dpung g.yul las rgyal / mi dbang chen mo* [= *chen po*] *lha sar phebs*). Thanks to Dr. Jörg Heimbel for providing details concerning the ordination teacher. The two events of the ordination and the arrival of Mi dbang bSod nams stobs rgyas in Lhasa are referred to in the autobiography at the beginning and end of the year 1728, respectively.

sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug for his part was present in Lhasa at the end of the same year when the Seventh Dalai Bla ma was sent off to exile. On that occasion he met both sKal bzang rgya mtsho and the new ruler.<sup>15</sup>

The next event mentioned in the historiographical work is an invitation to the young incarnation to visit the Byang gter affiliate gSang sngags Chos 'khor gling in sNa dkar rtse. This was followed by studies under the Third Khri chen Rin chen rnam rgyal (1694–1758) at the newly rebuilt O rgyan sMin grol gling monastery and under the Fifth sLe lung bZhad pa'i rDo rje (1697–1740) at the latter's monastic seat of rNam grol gling in 'Ol kha. The short narrative of this journey has the following wording:

At the age of twelve years, in the iron [dog] year (i.e. 1730), he was invited by the monastic community of gSang sngags chos 'khor gling in Yar 'brog sTag lung, and accordingly he travelled to the sTag lung Brag ra sprul sku's (17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> cent.) monastery. On the way back he went to O rgyan sMin grol gling and listened to many teachings, mainly the treasure teachings of gTer bdag gling pa (1646–1719) from the [latter's] victorious son Rin chen rnam rgyal. On the day of the initiation of the Long-Life practice 'Chi med yang snying kun 'dus he suddenly saw the Guru [as] a red Amitāyus, holding a vajra and a flask; the minds [of teacher and disciple] merged together well, [reflective] of [their] earlier mutual relationship. In the same vein he was also invited to rNam sras gling, and after a consecration at Khra 'brug he made pilgrimages [to] [Yar klungs] Shel-brag and other [sites].

Afterwards he travelled by stages to ['Ol kha] sLe lung, and in the presence of the precious rJe drung [bZhad pa'i rDo rje] [listened to treasure cycles] of gTer bdag gling pa including the *Thugs rje chen po [bde gshegs kun 'dus]*, the root tantra *gSang [ba] ye [shes] bde mchog* and so forth, the *rGya can* cycle of the Fifth Dalai Bla ma [Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho], and the cycle of the visionary teaching of the rJe drung himself. It is said that a clear knowledge came forth in the [same] manner as when they were master and disciple in some previous life. On the return trip he travelled [again] to 'On phu [sTag tshang].<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *rTogs brjod*, vol. ka, pp. 64.2-3 & 72.2. *rTogs brjod*, vol. ka, pp.73.5-75.1. For the civil war in the years 1727/28, the instalment of Mi dbang bSod nams stobs rgyas as the undisputed leader of Tibetan political affairs and the exile of the Seventh Dalai Bla ma, see Schwieger (2015: 141-145).

<sup>16</sup> *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, pp. 697.16-695.1 (*dgung lo bcu gnyis pa lcags kyi lor yar 'brog stag lung gsang sngags chos 'khor gling pas gdan 'dren byung ba dang bstun stag lung brag ra sprul sku'i dgon par phebs / phyir lam o rgyan smin grol gling du phebs / rgyal sras rin che rnam rgyal drung nas gter bdag gling pa'i gter chos gtso bor gyur pa'i chos bka' mang du gsan / tshe sgrub 'chi med yang snying kun 'dus dbang gi nyin bla ma tshe dpag med dmar po rdo rje dang bum pa 'dzin pa zhig tug zigs / phan tshun sngar nas lugs legs pa'i thugs yid gcig 'dres su gyur / zhar la rnam sras gling du gdan zhus dang /*

According to the autobiography, this journey lasted from the first day of the seventh Tibetan month up to the tenth day of the tenth Tibetan month. The request to undertake studies at O rgyan sMin grol gling and rNam grol gling, together with the mentioned pilgrimage, had been forwarded to Mi dbang bSod nams stobs rgyas prior to the actual journey. Afterwards permission was granted and the necessary travel documents issued.<sup>17</sup>

The contact with sLe lung bZhad pa'i rDo rje continued after the stay in rNam grol gling, a visit of the teacher to Thub bstan rDo rje brag being dated to the sixth Tibetan month of the year 1731. It is also said that a special document was given during this period to the young incarnation:

Afterwards, when he performed a retreat at the [Thub bstan rDo rje brag] residence, the precious rJe drung [bZhad pa'i rDo rje] met [him] at the retreat house as he was travelling to sNye mo. At that time the ruler, the great Mi dbang [bSod nams stobs rgyas], conferred a succession of written judgements from the Great Fifth Dalai Bla ma, [each] bearing a golden seal and indicating approval for the imposition of various taxes, great and small.<sup>18</sup>

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*khra 'brug tu rab gnas dang shel brag sogs gnas gzigs rnames mdzad / de nas rim par sle lung du phebs / rje drung rin po che drung nas / gter bdag gling pa'i thugs rje chen po / gsang ye bde mchog rtsa rgyud sogs dang / gong sa lnga'i rgya can skor dang rje drung nyid kyi dag snang skor sogs / gnas skabs skye ba 'ga' zhig dpon slob du gyur tshul sogs gsal por shes byung gsungs / yar lam 'on du phebs). Concerning the foundation of gSang sngags Chos 'khor gling in sTag lung rdzong in the year 1660 by Zil gnon dBang rgyal rDo rje (17th cent.) of sNa dkar rtse, maternal uncle of the Fifth Dalai Lama, see Akester (2016: 355, n. 43). Consult Greensmith (2020: 186-188) for a short sketch of the life of the Fifth sLe lung, his studies of the *Thugs rje chen po bde gshegs kun 'dus* cycle in the sMin grol gling tradition and his later activities. The collected works of sLe lung bZhad pa'i rDo rje, including his visionary teachings dedicated to the *gSang ba ye shes* cycle, have been published (from the 'Ol kha blocks) as vols. 115-127 of the Smanrtsis Shesrig Spendzod series.*

<sup>17</sup> *rTogs brjod*, vol. ka, pp. 84.2-102.2. *ibid.*, p. 83.1-2: *sa skyong mi dbang chen por de kha'i gnas tshul dang dgongs khrol gyi zhu yig phul bar de bzhin legs tshul gyi bka'i gnang ba legs par stsal [= bstsal] zhing lam yig bka' 'dzin kyang brtse ba chen por bskyangs pa ltar mdzad pas grabs yul byas so.*

<sup>18</sup> *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, pp. 694.16-695.1 (*de nas gdan sar sku mtshams gnang bar rje drung rin po che snye mor phebs zhor la mtshams khang du mjal 'phrad mdzad / 'di skabs sa skyong mi dbang chen pos gong sa lnga pa chen po nas rim gyis bka' khra gtan tshigs khral rigs che phra chag pa'i [= chags pa'i] rgyab gnon gser tham bstsal*). Compare the description of the retreat, dedicated to the *gSang ba ye shes* cycle, which started during the first Tibetan month of the year 1731, and the visit of bZhad pa'i rDo rje in the sixth month of the same year in *rTogs brjod*, vol. ka, pp. 104.6-107.3. The approval of the tax documents for Thub bstan rDo rje brag was issued later, at the end of the year 1732; *ibid.*, p. 131.3-4. sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug encountered the Fifth sLe lung on two further occasions: first, in the seventh Tibetan month of the year 1735 when the Seventh Dalai Bla ma returned to Lhasa from

Special gifts were also forwarded to the Fifth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin from the Qing court in Beijing, and one of these episodes, dated two years later, is selected by the historiographical work:

In the water ox year (i.e. 1733), a very excellent ceremonial scarf and ten bolts of brocade of the great emperor of China together with a ceremonial scarf and two bolts of brocade were given by the respectable son. From then onwards there appeared successively presents from the emperors, father [and] son. Also, when from the respectable son of the emperor the request arrived that a teacher from [Thub bstan] rDo rje brag should be dispatched [to the Qing court], Bla ma bDe-mchog was sent [there].<sup>19</sup>

According to the autobiography, the first presents from the Qing court arrived on the third day of the tenth month of the year 1731, when the young incarnation was in Lhasa at the invitation of Mi dbang bSod nams stobs rgyas.<sup>20</sup> Gifts were received on that occasion from the Yong zhen emperor (r. 1723–1735) and also from the seventeenth son of the Kan xi emperor (r. 1661–1722).

After details of the activities of sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug in renewing Thub bstan rDo rje brag, including the erection of a new assembly hall, the last year recorded in that part of the historiographical work which corresponds to the first segment of the autobiography is 1739. The ordination as a Buddhist monk was obtained from the Seventh Dalai Bla ma in the Potala Palace at that time. The final statement concerning his spiritual practice is that the Fifth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin realized the Great Perfection doctrine, verses from the autobiography being quoted to that effect.<sup>21</sup>

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exile and they were both present for his reception; and, second, during a common sojourn at bSam-yas in the fourth Tibetan month of the year 1737; *Ibid*, pp. 183.4 & 212.4.

<sup>19</sup> *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, p.693.4-8 (*chu glang lor rgya nag gong ma chen po nas mdzod btags che legs gos yug bcu dang sras btsun pa nas mdzod btags gos yug yug gnyis bcas gtang ste / 'di nas bzung lo ltar bzhin du gong ma yab sras nas gnang skyes rim par byung / yang gong ma'i sras btsun pas rdo rje brag nas bla ma zhig gtong dgos pa'i phebs byung bar bla ma bde mchog rdzong bar byas*).

<sup>20</sup> *rTogs brjod*, vol. ka, p.111.2-4. Kan xi's son, Keng ze Chin wang a.k.a. Yin lu (1697–1738), was a great patron of the rNying ma pa and bKa' brgyud pa schools; see Smith (2001: 136-137). He is mentioned again at the beginning of the year 1734 when the request arrived, via Mi dbang bSod nams stobs rgyas, to send a teacher from Thub bstan rDo rje brag to the Qing court; further gifts are also recorded in the year 1737. *rTogs brjod*, pp. 153.5-6 & 217.1-2.

<sup>21</sup> For the renovation of the assembly hall, its consecration at the beginning of the year 1739 and the ordination in the Potala Palace, see *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, p. 696.8-15. The corresponding sections in the autobiography can be found in *rTogs brjod*, vol. ka, pp. 241.2-243.2 & 233.3-254.6. The ordination was received together with the Third Zur-chen sprul sku (d. 1754), a close associate of sKal bzang Pad-

In the first autobiographical segment, these verses summarize the period of studies under another master from Nub dgon in La stod Byang called Kham[s] lung pa gSang sngags bstan 'dzin (d. 1749). sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug became first acquainted with this teacher in the year 1731 when the latter arrived at Thub bstan rDo rje brag for the performance of rituals after the death of his uncle Kham[s] lung pa Rig 'dzin dBang gi rgyal po, who had passed away in Mang yul. This figure is described in the autobiography as the main “mentor” (*yongs 'dzin*) of sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug, but it was only at the end of 1743 that the master embarked on a longer period of stay in the monastery. Soon after his arrival he began the reading authorization of the “Collected Tantras of the Early Translation Period” (*rnying ma rgyud 'bum*), and in the following months also transmitted Byang gter teachings, including the cycle *Thugs rje chen po 'khor ba dbyings sgröl* of the Second rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin Legs ldan bdud 'joms rDo rje (1488–1596). On the tenth day of the first Tibetan month of the year 1745, the transmission of the *dGongs pa zang thal* cycle started, while the last teachings given at Thub bstan rDo rje brag date to the eighth month of the same year. Kham[s] lung pa gSang sngags bstan 'dzin is mentioned again at the end of 1749 when the news arrived that the master had passed away; the description of the rituals performed afterwards is one of the last events contained in the first segment of the autobiography for the year 1750.<sup>22</sup>

Another teacher, finally, recorded not in the historiographical work but in the first autobiographical text should be mentioned. This is Blo bzang bla mchog (1672–1747), another disciple of the Fourth

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ma dbang phyug from his arrival at Thub bstan rDo rje brag on. The closing lines of this section in the short narrative are lifted from the intermediary verses summarizing events from the eleventh Tibetan month of the year 1743 up to the beginning of the year 1745; *Ibid.*, pp. 307.1-3 (*kho bos rdzogs pa chen grol brtson byed kyi / nyams len snying la rus pa nyer bcug ste / brtson bas sngon med ngo mtshar ltas mo'i rigs / mthong yang gzhan la 'chad na zog por blta / rtsa gsum rgyal ba rgya mtshos rjes bzung ba'i / dus gsum bgyi ba'i blang dor mang mchis kyang / rang blor rang gis bgyis pa las / mi 'chab kha mang bgyis pa'i gnas ma yin*).

<sup>22</sup> *rTogs brjod*, vol. ka, pp. 131.5-132.5 & 295.2-310.5, for the two sojourns of Kham[s] lung pa gSang sngags bstan 'dzin at Thub bstan rDo rje brag. For the news of his death and the special kindness he had showed to his disciple, *Ibid.*, p. 309.1-5. In 1742 the master from Nub-dgon had also given the reading authorization for the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* in the region of Mang yul, where his residence, dNgos grub phug, was located; see Ehrhard (2013: 401-402). Consult Schiller (2021: 851-855) for a detailed list of the Byang gter teachings transmitted by the master according to the “record of teachings received” (*gsan yig*) of the Fifth Yol mo ba sprul sku 'Phrin las bdud 'joms (1726–1789); these transmissions took place in Mang yul in the year 1747. The first volume of the collected writings of sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug stored in the Potala Palace contains a total of 34 individual lists of teachings received; see Thub bstan rgyal mtshan (as in note 2), pp. 254-256.

rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin and a monk formerly associated with the monastery dGa' ldan bDud 'joms gling in lHo brag. In the latter part of his life, he resided in a "Hidden Land" (*sbas yul*) called Sengge ri in lHo brag and is known for having opened another sacred site in the region in the year 1733. In the ninth Tibetan month of 1733, he arrived in Thub bstan rDo rje brag to meet the reincarnation of his teacher. The many teachings transmitted on that occasion included various treasure cycles and the collected writings of the Fifth Dalai Bla ma Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho. In 1735, Blo bzang bla mchog returned once more to Thub bstan rDo rje brag, and during this sojourn sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug received for the first time the cycle *Thugs rje chen po 'khor ba dbyings sgrol*.<sup>23</sup>

The final entry in the historiographical work located in the first segment of the autobiography concerns the opening of sacred sites by the Fifth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin. The first mention of such activities can be dated to the beginning of the year 1748, when several sites related to the cave complex of sGrags Yang rdzong are mentioned:

During that time, he also performed on manifold occasions the new opening of doors to sacred sites in dBus: lHa rtse brag, Yang rdzong and so forth.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> An initial letter and gifts had already been sent from Sengge ri in lHo brag to the young reincarnation in 1732; *rTogs brjod*, vol. ka, pp.121.6-122.2. For the two encounters in Thub bstan rDo rje brag *Ibid.* pp. 148.4-150.3 & 187.2-188.1. The religious career of Blo bzang bla mchog, his residence at Sengge ri and his opening of the sacred site 'Or mo lha sa in 1733 are described in Ehrhard (2013: 365-368); the latter act took place upon instructions from the Fifth sLe lung bZhad pa'i rDo rje, who had been acquainted with Blo bzang bla mchog since his own travels in lHo brag in 1722. For the journey of sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug to both Sengge ri and 'Or mo lha sa in 1762, see note 40.

<sup>24</sup> *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, p. 695.23-24 ('*di skabs dbus phyogs lha brag [= lha rtse brag] yongs rdzogs [= yang rdzong] sogs nas gnas sgo yang gsar 'byed mang du mdzad*). According to the autobiography, the journey to lHa rtse brag started on the tenth day of the second Tibetan month of the year 1748 and lasted up to the eighteenth day of the third Tibetan month; *rTogs brjod*, vol. ka, pp. 349.6-355.3. During the initial part of this trip the various caves visited are successively identified as sPyi bo bDe chen phug, lTe ba sPrul pa'i 'khor lo and gSang gnas bDe skyong 'khor lo, it being noted that literary genres such as *lam byang* and *lung byang* were used to obtain this information; *Ibid.*, pp. 349.6-351.3. The designation of the sites corresponds to a topographical scheme relating to "Vajravarahī, Tamer of the Nāgas" (*rdo rje phag mo klu 'dul ma*); see Ehrhard (2013: 357 & 361). The following section of this trip describes the opening of further sites located in the vicinity of lHa rtse brag; *rTogs brjod*, vol. ka, pp. 351.3-354.6. A separate text exists for this latter section; see Appendix no. 6. There are other texts available concerning lHa-rtse brag, one of them describing its "southern door" (*lho sgo*), identified in the year 1751; see Appendix no. 4. This year is not covered by the autobiography. The opening of sacred sites in Yang rdzong can be dated to the tenth month of the year 1753;

## 4. The years 1753 to 1757

As already noted above, no personal records exist for the years 1751 and 1752, the second text starting from the year 1753 with a trip that lasted from the end of the sixth to the end of the seventh Tibetan month of 1753. The trip begins with a journey to the three-peaked mountain dPal chen Chu bo ri in Gong dkar county and a description of the “circumambulation of the summit” (*rtse skor*). sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug visited Nam mkha' lding, the mountain plateau just below the central peak, and went on to the region of Kha rag, west of dPal chen Chu bo ri. After crossing a snow-covered pass, he reached a place called gNas gsar, and from there made an excursion to another cave complex, identifying successively various sacred sites. This activity can be seen as related to that in the quotation mentioned above, since the mountain range of Kha rag marks the border between dBus and gTsang. On the return journey he paused at Chos bzang, an affiliate of rDo rje brag, and from there reached the monastery Chu bo ri lCags zam, founded by Thang stong rgyal po.<sup>25</sup>

The historiographical work recommences with the next year and provides a short résumé of the first journey of the Fifth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin to Kong po and the border-taming temple Bu chu gSer gyi lha khang, as contained in the second text:

In the wood dog year (i.e. 1754) he went to Bu chu in Kong po in order to fulfil a prophecy relating to Tibet's welfare. From then onwards, following prophetic injunctions, wherever he directed his steps, he brought about such [benefits] as understanding and medicine. He was thus well received and sent off [by his hosts]. He also performed the offering of nectar and so forth for persons of higher class. In Dwags po, he made a pilgrimage to places like Rol phu, the treasure site of the treasure discoverer Nyi zla sangs rgyas (14<sup>th</sup> cent.). [There] he visited the temple where a Vajrapāṇi statue extracted from a treasure was kept.

Via western Kong po he arrived at rTse la sgang and Bu chu. Without much effort he fulfilled the prophecy relating to the welfare

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*rTogs brjod*, vol. kha, pp. 392.1-395.1. These activities are recorded in two separate texts; see Appendix nos. 7 & 8.

<sup>25</sup> For the initial section of the second text, the journey to dPal Chu bo ri and Kha rag, followed by the arrival at Chu bo ri lCags zam, *rTogs brjod*, vol. kha, pp. 380.2-389.6. Akester (2016: 242-248) on dPal chen Chu bo ri and its sacred sites, including Nam mkha' lding. The various caves along the Kha rag mountain range were also opened in topographical succession: sPyi bo bDe chen 'khor lo, mGrin pa Longs spyod 'khor lo, sNying kha Chos kyi 'khor lo, lTe ba sPrul pa'i 'khor lo and gSang gnas bDe chen 'khor lo (the full set is mentioned in this case). Appendix, no. 2 for a text devoted to the opening of the sacred sites at Kha rag.

of Tibet, including [the performance of the] *bKa' nan rab brjid* [ritual] (i.e the firm order to the local deities) and the binding of the eight classes of demons to oaths. He proceeded to sPo bo and then, due to a change in prophecy, returned to his residence [of Thub bstan rDo rje brag].<sup>26</sup>

According to the autobiography, the journey to Kong po lasted nearly one year, from the twenty-seventh day of the second Tibetan month of 1754 up to the fifteenth day of the first Tibetan month of 1755.<sup>27</sup> During the first leg of the journey sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug stayed at Dwags lha sgam po, where he met the Fourth sGam po sprul sku Kun bzang Nges don dbang po (1702–1754) and received from the latter one treasure cycle of Rig 'dzin Chos rje gling pa (1682–1720). After this sojourn he travelled on to the former residence of Nyi zla sangs rgyas and saw in a nearby temple the statue of Vajrapāṇi from the latter's treasures. On the first day of the fourth Tibetan month, he began the pilgrimage to Rol phu, described as a "subsidiary sacred site" (*gnas lag*) of Tsā ri. He again identified various caves in this region: sKu'i gnas, gSung gi gnas, Thugs kyi gnas, Yon tan gyi gnas and 'Phrin las kyi gnas.<sup>28</sup> Soon after his arrival in rTse la sgang he opened sacred sites in the vicinity of the Bu chu gSer gyi lha khang. The scheme applied was the same as the one just mentioned.<sup>29</sup> The activities at the border-taming temple (dated to the sixth Tibetan month) included the restoration of its murals and the embellishment of the main statue, the so-called Bu chu Jo bo.<sup>30</sup> After further travels in Kong po he reached the monastery of sPang leb, the Byang gter affiliate located in lHo rong, on the third day of the tenth Tibetan month. There existed two incarnation lineages at this monastery, both known as sPang leb sku skye, and both of the young incarnations received their religious names from sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug

<sup>26</sup> *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, pp. 695.24-696.4 (*shing khyi lor bod yul bde thabs lung don bsgrub phyir kong po bu chur chibs bskyod gnang / 'di tsam nas bzung phebs bskyod gar gnang sar gsang lung bzhin go sman sogs bkod pas skyel bsu dang / rigs ldan dang bdud rtsi'i mchod pa sogs kyang mdzad / dwags por gter ston nyi zla sangs rgyas kyi gter gnas rol phu sogs la gnas gzigs dang / gter nas bton pa'i phyag rdor gyi sku bzhugs pa'i lha khang sogs gzigs / kong stod brgyud rtse sgang [= rtse la sgang] dang bu chur phebs bka' nan rab brjid dang / sde brgyad dam 'dogs sogs bod yul bde thabs kyi lung don rnam tshogs med du bsgrub par gnang / spu bor [= spo bor] phebs mdzad dang lung don 'gyur bas gdan sa phebs*).

<sup>27</sup> *rTogs brjod*, vol. kha, pp. 418.3-472.4.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 424.2-430.1.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 432.6-436.6. Concerning this topographical scheme, associated with Padmasambhava and the latter's sojourns at five "solitary places" (*dben gnas*), consult Ehrhard (2013: 363-364, n. 2).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. kha, pp. 440.6-443.1.



soon after his arrival.<sup>31</sup> He remained in sPang leb up to the third day of the twelfth Tibetan month of 1754, when the return trip to Central Tibet started; during that time two texts concerning sacred sites in lHa rtse brag and Yang rdzong were composed (see Appendix, no. 7). Before arriving in Thub bstan rDo rje brag he stayed at the beginning of the year 1755 in 'Bri gung mThil, where he met the Third Chung tshang dKon mchog bstan 'dzin rDo rje (1724–1766).<sup>32</sup>

After the narrative of this trip, only three more events were selected in the historiographical work from the detailed personal records in the second text; they can be dated to the years 1755, 1756 and 1757. The first one happened during a visit to Lhasa when rituals for the long life of the Seventh Dalai Bla ma were conducted in the Potala Palace and the Fifth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin had an audience with sKal bzang rgya mtsho. Some time after the audience, in the sixth month of the year 1755, special gifts were received from the abbot of the Sa skya pa monastery Ngor E vaṃ chos ldan:

On that occasion the offering of special gifts from the great Ngor scholar dPal ldan chos skyong (1702–1760) occurred.<sup>33</sup>

In the following year, Sa chen Kun dga' blo gros (1729–1783), the thirty-first throne holder of Sa skya, and his brother mThu thob dbang phyug (18<sup>th</sup> cent.) visited Lhasa and travelled to further places in dBus; during this journey they encountered the Fifth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin in Thub bstan rDo rje brag. The visit of Sa chen Kun dga' blo gros and his brother, during the second month of the year 1756, is described in great detail in the autobiography, which lists the gifts and teachings exchanged on that occasion:

The precious Sa skya hierarchs, the pair of brothers, arrived and met [sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug] at his retreat house.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 458.1-459.2.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 466.5-469.4.

<sup>33</sup> *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, p. 696.4-696.5 (*de skabs shig ngor mkhan chen dpal ldan chos skyong gi ched gnang gi 'bul zhabs 'bul bar byung*). also *rTogs brjod*, vol. kha, pp. 505.6-506.1 (*ngor mkhan po dpal ldan chos skyong gi zhabs phyi zhig ched rdzong kyis mtshan grags ja 'khor bcas gdogs pa'i gnang skyes bstar*). ). dPal ldan chos skyong was the thirty-fourth abbot of Ngor; see Heimbel (2017: 529). He served from 1740 until his death as court chaplain of the royal family of sDe dge. In between, from 1754 to 1758, he travelled back to Ngor and central Tibet and reached Lhasa in the tenth Tibetan month of 1754 in order to pay his respects to the Seventh Dalai Bla ma; see Heimbel and Caumanns (2022: 258-260).

<sup>34</sup> *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, p. 696.7-8 (*sa skya gong ma rin po che sku mched phebs pa mtshams khang du mjal*). The account ends with a personal note about this meeting. also *rTogs brjod*, vol kha, pp. 531.3-5 (*sa skya 'di sngar rig 'dzin gong ma'i dus thugs 'brel shin tu che bas dbang chos phar 'bul tshur gnang sogs thugs nang gtsang*

The last series of events selected by the historiographical work from the second autobiography are the transmissions of teachings received from the Seventh Dre'u lhas sprul sku g.Yung mgon rDo rje (1721–1769), who had stayed in Thub bstan rDo rje brag for some time after his first arrival at the beginning of the ninth Tibetan month of 1756; after further travels g.Yung mgon rDo rje returned to the monastery for the new year festivities of the year 1757:

From the Dre'u lhas sprul sku he received, among other things, the initiation and reading authorization of the *Zab lam bde chen rgya mtsho* of the Northern Treasures and the pure vision teachings of lJon dbyug [pa] rDo rje [called] *Grib nyes ba kun sel*.<sup>35</sup>

The next event described in the autobiography is the news that the Seventh Dalai Bla ma had passed away at the time of the Great Prayer festival in Lhasa; this is followed by a description of the related rituals performed at Thub bstan rDo rje brag. The second text ends with another journey, this time to sNa dkar rtse and to the monastic

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*bar 'dug kyang / nged rang gdan sar slebs nas yang yang mjal thub pa zhid ma byung bar da lam 'di 'khor shangs len zhabs tog rgya khyon che bar mi 'dug kyang mjal 'dod kyi 'dun ma shin tu che bar yod pas re 'bras don smin gyi 'dod pa rdzogs par byung*). Sa chen Kun dga' blo gros together with his brother had been enthroned as the thirty-first Sa-skya gong-ma in the year 1740; see Caumanns (2021: 151).

<sup>35</sup> *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, p. 696.8-9 (*dre'u lhas sprul sku las / byang gter zab lam bde chen rgya mtsho'i dbang lung dang / ljon dbyug pa rdo rjes [= rdo rje'i] dag snang grib nyes ba kun sel sogs gsan*). This transmission of teachings started at the beginning of the first Tibetan month of the year 1757 and ended at the end of the same month; *rTogs brjod*, vol. kha, pp. 560.5-565.5. The mentioned cycle of the Northern Treasures was a rare transmission, which g.Yung-mgon rDo rje had obtained previously from Kah-thog Rig 'dzin Tshe-dbang nor-bu (1698–1755); *Ibid.*, pp. 564.6-565.1 (*sku zhabs sprul pa'i skur gsung 'phros zhus par kah thog rig 'dzin chen po tshe dbang nor bu brgyud nas gsan yong tshul byung bas / da lam cis kyang nas bka' 'drin che dgos zhus par zhal byung bar*). The pure vision teaching was the last one given prior to g.Yung-mgon rDo rje's departure from Thub bstan rDo rje brag; *Ibid.*, p. 565.4-5 (*yang dre'u lhas sku zhabs su ljon dbyug pa rdo rje'i dag snang dam grib nyes pa kun sel dang tsha [= tshe] sgrub bcas zhus sang nyin snga bar bdud rtsi mchod pa khyug tsam gyi thog mjal phrad zhus te phebs rdzongs zhus*). sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug had been acquainted since 1735 with the Seventh Dre'u lhas sprul sku, the son of sLe lung bZhad pa'i rDo rje, they both having been present in Lhasa then during the arrival of the Seventh Dalai Bla ma; see note 18. They remained in close contact, as is documented by a visit of sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug to rNam grol gling, the monastic seat of sLe lung bZhad pa'i rDo rje, where he met g.Yung mgon rDo rje in the fourth Tibetan month of the year 1765. This was followed by another sojourn of the latter in Thub bstan rDo rje brag in the eighth Tibetan month of the same year; *Ibid.*, pp. 664.4-665.4 & 669.3-671.2. On this occasion the full transmission of the visionary teachings of the Seventh Dre'u lhas sprul sku were received in exchange for ones of the Fifth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin.

community of gSang sngags Chos 'khor gling; it breaks off during the sojourn at the latter monastery during the sixth Tibetan month of the year 1757. Rituals were also performed there for the deceased Seventh Dalai Bla ma, and it is noted that a prayer for the swift rebirth was composed at that time.<sup>36</sup>

### 5. The years 1760 to 1770

The third part of the autobiography covers a full decade in the life of sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug and contains a wealth of information on his activities in Thub bstan rDo rje brag and further travels. One finds, for example, such details as the death of the Second Chu bzang sprul sku sKal bzang Kun dga' bstan 'dzin (d. 1760), who passed away at the end of the second Tibetan month at the monastery, and once again the rituals performed are described. It is also possible to see how the Fifth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin made efforts to assiduously read the "Collected Tantras of the Early Translation Period" (*rNying ma rgyud 'bum*) at the end of 1760 and the beginning of 1761. Soon afterwards followed the production of a manuscript edition of this collection. By the tenth day of the first Tibetan month of the year 1761 the things required for such an undertaking (in the end provided by sDe pa rnam rgyal from Yar 'brog) were being considered. The writing out of the individual volumes of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* began in the fifth Tibetan month and ended with a Long Life initiation and a Byang gter reading authorization for the artists and craftsmen before they left Thub bstan rDo rje brag; it is stated in the autobiography that this manuscript edition of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* was realized within a period of one month and twenty-seven days.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> For the news about the death of the Seventh Dalai Bla ma, the rituals in Thub bstan rDo rje brag and the journey to gSang sngags Chos 'khor gling, *rTogs brjod*, vol. kha, pp. 565.4-585.2. The final event recorded in the second text is the arrival of the reincarnation of the teacher Blo bzang bla mchog from lHo brag. The so-called Sengge ri pa'i sku skyes received his first ordination and a religious name on that occasion; *Ibid.*, pp. 583.5-585.2.

<sup>37</sup> For the death of the Second Chu bzang sprul sku at Thub bstan rDo rje brag and the following rituals, *rTogs brjod*, vol. ga, pp. 593.6-597.4. sKal bzang Kun dga' bstan 'dzin had received his religious name in the year 1739 from the Fifth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin when he first arrived at Thub bstan rDo rje brag; *rTogs brjod*, vol. ka, pp. 261.6-263.1. For the initial effort to read the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* collection, *rTogs brjod*, vol. ga, p. 665.1 (*lung don du rnying rgyud sgrogs babs par gang thub bklags*). The goal was achieved during a retreat at the beginning of the first Tibetan month of the year 1761; *Ibid.*, p. 605.4 (*tshé bzhi nas bcad mtshams sngar bzhiñ byas te rnying rgyud 'phros rnam rim par bklags*). For the assistance of the official from Yar-'brog in the production of the collection, *Ibid.*, pp. 606.6-607.1

The historiographical work presents for this period first the journey to lHo brag, which took sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug up to [s]Ne'u ring in Mon, located near the border of present-day Bhutan:

At the age of forty-four, in the water horse year (i.e. 1762), he travelled to lHo brag. He walked up to Mon kha Ne'u ring, where he also opened the door of a sacred site anew and revealed some treasure caches [there].<sup>38</sup>

The journey to lHo brag began on the thirteenth day of the third Tibetan month in the year 1762, and the monastery of dGa' ldan bDud 'joms gling was reached on the eighth day of the sixth Tibetan month.<sup>39</sup> In the following month, he visited both Sengge ri Me tog gling and sBas gnas 'Or mo lha sa, located nearby. It is mentioned that both sites had been opened by dGe slong Blo bzang bla mchog, while sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug later identified further sites in the region, according to a "location list [of treasures]" (*kha byang*).<sup>40</sup> The journey continued to Mon kha [s]Ne'u ring, where he was welcomed at a temple called mTshan brgyad lha khang. The site which was reopened is called sBas gnas Rong mo steng, and he restored an old temple there called Sengge'i rdzong; his sojourn there lasted from the third day of the eighth Tibetan month up to the twenty-third day of the ninth Tibetan month.<sup>41</sup> The return journey passed again through lHo brag, and this time mKho mthing lha khang, another border-taming temple, was reached on the first day of the tenth Tibetan month.<sup>42</sup> After a stay in Sras mkhar he proceeded to lHa lung, where he met the Sixth Pad gling Thugs sras sprul sku (18<sup>th</sup> cent.).

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(*yar 'brog zhal ngo rnam rgyal nas rnying rgyud bzhengs grogs gsungs pa'i dgos cha 'byor bar dang len gyis bkod par byas*). The account of the actual writing out of the volumes and the duration of the project can be found *ibid.*, pp. 609.2-611.5. The *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* collection is mentioned a last time on the third day of the second Tibetan month when a reading authorization began for an assembly of one hundred individuals at Thub bstan rDo rje brag; *ibid.*, p. 616.4-5. A modern guidebook to Thub bstan rDo rje brag lists a high-quality edition of the collection among the library holdings of the monastery; see Chos-'phel: *Gangs can bod kyi gnas bshad lam yig gsar ma las / lho kha khul gyi gnas yig*, p. 11.24 (*rnying ma rgyud 'bum nag bris spus ldan*).

<sup>38</sup> *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, p. 696.9-10 (*dgung lo zhe bzhi pa chu rta lor lho brag tu chibs bsgyur gnaang / mno [= mon] kha ne [= ne'u] ring tshun zhabs kyis bcags gnas sgo gsar 'byed dang gter kha 'ga' yang bzhes*).

<sup>39</sup> *rTogs brjod*, vol. ga, pp. 619.3-622.6.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 624.3-626.4.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 626.4-629.4. Consult Akester (2016: 455-458) concerning Mon-kha [s]Ne'u ring, its various Padmasambhava caves and the reopening of sBas gnas Rong mo steng by the Fifth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin.

<sup>42</sup> On this temple, see Sørensen & Hazod (2005: 52, n. 52).

sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug arrived back at Thub bstan rDo rje brag on the nineteenth day of the eleventh Tibetan month of the year 1762.<sup>43</sup>

The next reference in *Guru bKra shis' History* is to a second journey of the Fifth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin to Kong po and the Bu chu gSer gyi lha khang. This time he performed at the temple rituals especially for the young Eighth Dalai Bla ma and the regent, the Sixth De mo sprul sku:

In the wood monkey year (i.e. 1764) he went one more time to Bu chu in Kong po.<sup>44</sup>

This second journey to Kong po began on the eighteenth day of the eighth Tibetan month after a corresponding letter had been received from the regent. The Bu chu gSer gyi lha khang was reached on the first day of the tenth Tibetan month; after offerings to the Bu chu Jo bo the first rituals performed were those of Guru Drag po in accordance with his own visionary cycle. sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug interrupted these rituals with a month-long retreat at a nearby site called Bu chu rDzong dkar, and afterwards stayed at the temple until the end of the twelfth Tibetan month.<sup>45</sup> The rituals for the Sixth De mo sprul sku were performed there at the beginning of the first Tibetan month of the year 1765; after further peregrinations in Kong po he departed from Bu chu gSer gyi lha khang on the twelfth day of the third Tibetan month. During the return journey further places in Kong po were visited before travelling back to Thub bstan rDo rje brag via 'Ol kha and rNam grol gling.<sup>46</sup>

The following narrative taken from the autobiography relates to the years 1767 to 1769. During this period the Fifth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin undertook another journey to Kong po and sPo bo; this time he continued on via sMar khams and Li thang to Dar rtse mdo and the residence of the lCags la ruler:

Afterwards, in the fire female sow year (i.e. 1767), when he had reached his forty-ninth year, he directed his lotus feet to Khams. Via the northern route [and] many encampments, [and accompanied by] a small entourage—twenty individuals [counting both] master [and] servants—he passed through Kong po and sPo bo. By stages, via Chab mdo, 'lDan Chos 'khor, Phyag rtsa, rDzogs chen and other [monasteries], he arrived at Me ling in sDe dge; [there]

<sup>43</sup> *rTogs brjod*, vol. ga, 629.4-634.5.

<sup>44</sup> *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, p. 696.10-11 (*shing sprel lor slar yang kong po bu chur lan gcig phebs*).

<sup>45</sup> *rTogs brjod*, vol. ga, pp. 647.5-655.1.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 661.3-665.6. For the visit to the latter monastery in the eighth Tibetan month of 1765, see note 35.

he met the Dharmarāja, the Cakravartin, the lord (i.e. the sDe dge king Blo gros rgya mtsho (1722–1774)), together with the latter's royal consorts. Following an invitation from the governor of Go 'jo he travelled on to the region of sMar khams, and then, by stages, on to Grub [pa] dgon in 'Ba' [thang]; and via Li thang [he came] to Dar rtse mdo, where the ruler, the lord am ong men, the great Brahma, the king of lCags la, rode out to greet him. Accompanied by a religious procession of [members of] Sa [skya pa], dGe [lugs pa] [and] rNying [ma pa] monastic colleges, he directed his lotus feet to the great royal palace and took up afterwards his residence in the encampment monastery of [Dar rtse] mdo.<sup>47</sup>

This extended journey to Khams started on the sixth day of the tenth Tibetan month of the year 1767. sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug travelled first, once again, to the Bu chu gSer gyi lha khang in Kong po, and reached the temple on the twelfth day of the eleventh Tibetan month.<sup>48</sup> This time he continued on to the mDung chu lha khang in sPo bo, arriving there on the sixth day of the first Tibetan month of 1768. During the sojourn at the Byang gter affiliate sPang leb, as during the previous stay in 1754, several members of incarnation lineages received their religious names. Afterwards he proceeded to Byams pa gling in Chab mdo, where he arrived on the fourth day of the fourth Tibetan month. A week-long Phur ba ritual was performed at the monastery, where he met both the Fourth Zhi ba lha 'Phags pa dge legs dpal bzang (1720–1799) and the Seventh 'Phags pa lha 'Jigs med bstan pa'i rgya mtsho (1755–1794).<sup>49</sup> Chos 'khor dgon in the 'lDan ma district of north-western Khams was reached at the beginning of the fifth Tibetan month. He also stayed at the sGrol ma lha khang, another of the border-taming temples ascribed to Srong btsan sgam po.<sup>50</sup> At the beginning of the sixth Tibetan month, sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug arrived in sDe dge and there, among other things, performed a week-long Phur ba ritual.<sup>51</sup> The arrival of

<sup>47</sup> *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, pp. 696.11-18 (*de nas dgung lo zhes dgu bzhes pa me mo phag gi lor khams su zhabs pad bskyod pa'i sgar mang byang lam dang sku 'khor nyung bsdu dpon g.yog nyi shu skor kong po dang spo bo bryud rim gyis chab mdo dang ldan [= 'dan] chos skor phyag rtsa rdzogs chen sogs nas sde dge me ling du phebs / chos kyi rgyal po stobs kyi 'khor lo bsgyur ba sa dbang lcam dral dang mjal 'phrad mdzad / go 'jo sde pa'i gdan zhu byung ba bzhin smar khams phyogs su 'phebs shing / de nas rim par 'ba' grub pa dgon pa nas li thang bryud dar rtse mdo sa skyong mi rje tshangs pa chen po lcags la rgyal pos chibs bsu dang / sa dge rnying gsum gyi grva tshang gis ser sbreng dang bcas rgyal khab chen por zhabs kyi padmo dgod par mdzad nas mdo sgar bla brang du bzhugs stan chags).*

<sup>48</sup> *rTogs brjod*, vol. ga, pp. 699.4-701.4.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 705.3-713.1.

<sup>50</sup> On this region and the mentioned temple, see Sørensen & Hazod (2005: 53-54, n. 55)

<sup>51</sup> For this stay in the sDe dge kingdom, *rTogs brjod*, vol. ga, 713.1-717.4.

the sMar khams Tha'i ji<sup>52</sup> on the first day of the seventh Tibetan month is recorded during the part of the trip that passed through the county of Go 'jo in eastern Tibet. The Fifth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin remained until the beginning of 1769 in sMar khams, long enough to celebrate the new year's festivities at the governor's estate. The region of 'Ba' thang and Grub dgon monastery were reached during the next leg of the journey, the latter on the sixteenth day of the first Tibetan month, when he was welcomed by 180 monks; specifically mentioned are the Second Grub dgon sprul sku sKal bzang 'Phrin las rgya mtsho and the latter's nephew. After a week, he continued on to Li thang, where he stayed until the end of the first Tibetan month.<sup>53</sup> The first encounter with the lCags la ruler and his family took place at Mi nyag dPal lha sgang on the tenth day of the second Tibetan month of 1769. On the fifteenth day, he was welcomed to the royal palace, gSer thog Pho brag, by the members of the monastic colleges before proceeding immediately to the Byang gter encampment monastery in Dar rtse mdo.<sup>54</sup>

The historiographical work provides in a closing statement the length of the sojourn in Khams and highlights the role of the lCags la ruler as the main host and donor:

For a period of three to four years he remained [in Khams], and then, having fully completed everything that needed to be achieved [both] generally and specifically according to the [earlier] secret prophecy for the benefit of the doctrine, the high-ranking family of lCags la, [both] king and ministers, offered many times their reverence and presents which a mind cannot fathom. [In the end] they saw him off with extensive parting gifts, and he left. Starting in the third Mongolian month of the iron tiger year (i.e. 1770), he travelled back to Central Tibet.<sup>55</sup>

During the sojourn in Dar rtse mdo county sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug remained for longer periods in Mi nyag dPal lha sgang and carried out a renovation of the temple during one stay which lasted from the first day of the sixth Tibetan month up to the twenty-

<sup>52</sup> This official, appointed by the Lhasa government, was the most important governor in Khams; see Gruschke (2004: 152).

<sup>53</sup> *rTogs brjod*, vol. ga, pp. 717.4-731.1.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 731.1-736.6.

<sup>55</sup> *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, p. 696.18-22 (*lo ngo gsum bzhi'i bar du bzhugs nas gsang lung bzhin bstan pa don spyi bye brag bsgrub dgos thams cad legs par grub nas lcags la mi chen si rgyal blon gyis gus 'dud dang bsnyen bkur blos mi 'khyud pa len du mar bstabs shing phebs rdzong rgya chen chibs skyel dang zhabs bteg [= btegs] ste / lcags stag hor zla gsum pa nas dbus su chibs kha bsgyur ro*). The secret prophecy related to the encounter with the lCags la ruler occurred during the stay in sMar khams, the verses being quoted at the time of his arrival at Mi nyag dPal lha sgang; *rTogs brjod*, vol. ga, pp. 731.6-732.6.

seventh day of the seventh month of 1769.<sup>56</sup> After his departure from Dar rtse mdo, he visited the temple one more time and concluded the renovation by providing the statue of the Jo bo Śākyamuni with a new head ornament.<sup>57</sup> It must have been during one of these sojourns that sKal bzang 'phrin las rgya mtsho and his nephew asked for permission to execute the autobiography as a xylographic print. The final event in the third text is dated to the twenty-first day of the fourth Tibetan month of 1770, when the “acting ruler” (*dpon sku zhabs*) of lCags la went to Mi nyag dPal lha sgang one more time to meet the master.

### 6. Conclusion

It is only the historiographical work which provides us with details of the final phase in the life of the Fifth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin. It states that he was present during a restoration of the bSam yas vihāra which was being conducted at the behest of the Sixth De mo sprul sku Ngag dbang 'Jam dpal bde legs rgya mtsho. sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug was invited to the consecration ceremony and received on that occasion the title of “royal preceptor” (*ti śri*) from the regent. The Fourth Zhi ba lha 'Phags pa dGe legs dpal bzang likewise received various teaching transmissions at that time. Without having mentioned when he died, the narrative continues with a description of sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug's death rituals, which were supported by the acting ruler of the lCags la family. The instalment of the reincarnation of sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug was mainly in the hands of this ruler family. The chapter on the abbatial history of Thub bstan rDo rje brag closes with the remark that the Sixth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin was active and alive at the time of the composition of the work.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> *rTogs brjod*, vol. ga, pp. 744.3-748.3.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 780.6-789.2

<sup>58</sup> For this last section in the historiographical work, see *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, pp. 696.23-697.16. According to the entry in [Treasury of Lives.org](http://TreasuryofLives.org), the Fifth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin passed away in the eighth Tibetan month of the year 1771, and his entire body was mummified and installed in a two-story reliquary at Thub bstan rDo rje brag. A sketch of the life of the Sixth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin Kun bzang 'gyur-med lhun grub (b. 1775?-d. 1810?) can be found in [The Treasury of Lives](http://TheTreasuryofLives.org); it is based on Kun bzang 'gro-'dul rDo rje (as in note 3), pp. 58.13-60.1. According to the latter source, the reincarnation was born in the vicinity of the royal palace of the lCags la rulers at a place called gSer tog. The latter toponym evidently is meant for the palace itself (gSer thog Pho brang); see note 54. On the birth of the Sixth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin as a son of the lCags la rgyal po of Dar rtse mdo, consult Smith (2001: 19).



The biographies of sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug are indeed a rich source documenting the religious and social conditions of Tibet during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They can be characterized as very detailed personal records of an influential master who restored Thub bstan rDo rje brag in Central Tibet and steadfastly maintained the teaching traditions of the Fourth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin. He spread, in addition, his own visionary cycles and was doing the same for those of sLe lung bZhad pa'i rDo rje and g.Yung mgon rDo rje. By reading the three sections of the autobiography through the lense of the historiographical work, it is possible to get a clearer picture of which regions were visited by the Fifth rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin during his travels and how he went about identifying sacred sites. One can also get a sense of just how much individuals and monastic institutions of the Northern Treasures were spreading their influence in the western and eastern parts of Tibet at a time when the main seat in Central Tibet was being renewed.

### Appendix

The works of the Fifth rDo rje brag Rig' dzin cover four volumes in the complete collection of Byang gter texts published in 2015. In vol. 54 one finds eight individual texts which describe sacred sites and their opening by sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug; see sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug, *Rig 'dzin skal bzang Padma dbang phyug 'jigs med grub pa'i sde chen po'i gsung 'bum* (vol. 54), pp. 547-566 & 583-615. Five texts deal with lHa rtse brag, two with Yang rdzong, and one text is devoted to the sacred sites of the Kha rag mountain range.

1. *dBus gnas su grags pa padma tshal gyi gnas lag / rang byung sgrub gnas phye tshul ngo mtshar snang ba'i rgyan*, 5 fols., pp. 547-555.  
No colophon.
2. *Kha rag gsang ba'i brag phug gi lho nub gu ru'i sgrub gnas kyi rang zhal gsar du phye ba'i lo rgyus bkra shis 'od 'bar*, 5 fols., pp. 557-566.  
Written in the tenth Tibetan month of the year 1754 in sPang leb Monastery.
3. *Byang phyogs sbas phug gi gnas nyid gtan la phebs pa ngo mtshar rol pa'i rgyan*, 2 fols., pp. 583-586.  
No colophon.
4. *lHo sgo me long can gyi gnas yig ngo mtshar 'dod steng*, 3 fols., pp. 587-592.  
No colophon.

5. *Nub phyogs mtsho nag gi gnas yig padma'i do ra*, 2 fols., pp. 593-596.
6. *Gu ru'i sgrub gnas lha rtse brag gi rgyab ri padma'i sgrub phug brag phug brag ngo'i ljongs phye ba'i lo rgyus bkra shis 'bum phrag gsar bris*, 4 fols., pp. 597-604.  
No colophon.
7. *Yang rdzong gnas lag gsar du phye tshul phan bde'i dpag bsam*. 3 fols., pp. 605-610.  
Written in the tenth month of the year 1754 in sPang-leb monastery.
8. *Shar sgo yang rdzong gsar gtan la phab tshul rdzong bshad rin chen spungs pa*, 3 fols., pp. 611-615.

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