

SPREADING THE *SNYING THIG* TEACHINGS:  
THE BIOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNT OF  
RDZOGS CHEN PA BSOD NAMS RIN CHEN (1491-1559)

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1. *Introduction*

In the process of investigating the print history of the works of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa (1308-1364), the great writer and codifier of the “Great Perfection” (*rdzogs chen*) teaching, it turned out that in the 16<sup>th</sup> century both the “Treasure of Words and Meanings” (*tshig don mdzod*) and the “Treasure of the Most Excellent Vehicle” (*theg mchog mdzod*) were carved on wooden blocks and distributed as xylographs. This happened in south-western Tibet, where the latter work was printed in the year 1533 through the efforts of a skilled Buddhist artist and craftsman, and in south-eastern Tibet, where the execution of a print of the first work can be described as the outcome of the religious influence of a master known as rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen (1491-1559). In a first note on the importance of this person for the spread of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa's teachings the existence of a biography was signaled and this literary source was used for tracing the transmission of the famous “Seven Treasuries” (*mdzod bdun*) and the way these lineages reached the region of Mang yul Gung thang.<sup>1</sup>

In order to have a closer look at the life and spiritual achievements of this master of the *rDzogs chen* doctrine I want now present the biographical account in greater detail, especially with the aim to document how Klong chen Rab 'byams pa's teachings were transmitted in Central Tibet in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and at which places the lineage holders were active in this regard. As it is already known that rDzogs

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<sup>1</sup> See Ehrhard (2000:X-XII). The printing of the *Theg mchog mdzod* was achieved by the Bo dong pa monk mNyam med Chos dbang rgyal mtshan (1484-1549) and among the persons, who were helpful in providing an original copy of the text, was Blo gros rgyal mtshan (15<sup>th</sup> / 16<sup>th</sup> cent.) from sMan rtse in 'Phan yul, one of the teachers of rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen; see (ibid.: XIII-XIX). The biographical account bears the title *dPal ldan bla ma bsod nams rin chen gyi rnam thar ngo mtshar snang ba'i me long*, 35 fols. (*dbu med* manuscript); NGMPP reel no. E 3064/3. The original is kept in the library of Chogyal Wangchuk Namgyal in the Gangtok Palace, Sikkim.

chen pa bSod nams rin chen spent the second part of his life in the region of Dvags po and Kong po, it should in a second step also be possible to get an impression how the traditions of the rNying ma pa school got a stronger foothold in south-eastern Tibet in the same period. It seems that the emergence of a print culture in the dissemination of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa's teachings coincided with the will on the part of the followers of Padmasambhava to share their tradition with local rulers and with a wider audience.

## 2. *The Birth and Spiritual Training*

The first chapter of the biographical account deals with “the behaviour in accordance with the doctrine of the world” (*'jig rten gyi chos dang mthun par spyod pa*) and covers the life of rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen up to his tenth year. He was born in the region of gNyal in the upper part of dKar po chos lung in a village known as [b]Se kun and his family—belonging to the Khyung clan—affiliated themselves with a translator at the time of king Ral pa can. The year of his birth is given as 1491 and when he had reached the age of three his father passed away; soon afterwards he accompanied his mother to the upper part of gNyal, where they met a Siddha who made auspicious statements about the child. First visions occurred at an early age and after having mastered reading and writing, a pilgrimage to the sacred mountain of Sham po is recorded for the year 1500. As we shall see later, the association of rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen with his home region was kept alive in the form of a nick name and he became known as “[the Yogin] with matted hair [from] [b]Se kun” (*bse kun ral pa*).<sup>2</sup>

The next chapter has the title “how he arrived at the end of the deeds of renunciation and of hearing and reflecting [the Buddhist doctrine]” (*nges 'byung dang thos bsam gyi bya ba mthar phyin par mdzad pa*) and presents first an encounter with a teacher called Kah

<sup>2</sup> For the first chapter of the biographical account see the text (as in note 1), fols. 2b/1-4b/1. A short sketch of the life of rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen is contained in the historiographical work of Gu ru bkra shis (18<sup>th</sup> / 19<sup>th</sup> cent.): *bsTan pa'i snying po gsang chen snga 'gyur nges don zab mo'i chos kyi byung ba gsal bar byed pa'i legs bshad mkhas pa dga' byed ngo mtshar gtam gyi rol mtsho*, Hsining: Krung go'i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, 1990, pp. 225.21-226.7; the birthplace is given there as *gnyal pe kun* (= *gnyal [b]se kun*). Concerning the location of the site on the western border of gNyal and that of the sacred mountain of Sham po to the north of it in “upper Yar” (*yar stod*), see the map in Gyalbo, Hazod & Sørensen (2000:241). Compare also the overview of the life of Dzogchenpa Sönam Rigdzin (sic!) in Nyoshul Khenpo Jamyang Dorjé (2008:362).

thog Chos rje bSod nams bla ma in the 'Phyong rgyas valley. This master introduced him to the treasure teachings of the rNying ma pa school, ordained him and provided the Buddhist novice with the name bSod nams rin chen. It was also from that teacher from the Kaḥ thog monastery in eastern Tibet that he listened for the first time to a Great Perfection teaching, namely the *rDzogs chen snying po bsdus pa*.

Having presented these initial spiritual trainings under the teacher from Kaḥ thog the biographical account comes forward with two sub-chapters, the first of which treats the studies of the tantric instructions in general. The first two teachers mentioned under this heading are a certain Bla ma Zhen log Chos rje and one Zab lung sPrul sku; from the latter he received in particular the “minor treasure teachings” (*gter chos thor bu*) of the treasure discoverer Rig 'dzin Padma gling pa (1450-1521). At the age of twenty one years, i.e. in 1512, bSod nams rin chen celebrated the birth of Padmasambhava in 'Ching phu in the vicinity of the bSam yas Vihāra and was blessed on that occasion with a vision of the “Precious Guru” (*gu ru rin po che*) which is interpreted as a prophecy that all future obstacles would be pacified. Four years later, in 1516, he stayed in Zab bu lung in the Shangs valley in gTsang—the place where obviously the above mentioned Zab lung sPrul sku came from—and received there the complete transmission of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa's *mKha' 'gro yang tig* from a teacher called rDzogs chen Śākya ba. This master had originally been affiliated with the Sa skya pa monastery of gSer mdog can before he became attracted to the *rDzogs chen* doctrine and attained great skill in its spiritual practices. The new disciple followed his example with great energy, but was also haunted by an earnest desire to visit the treasure discoverer Rig 'dzin Padma gling pa at the latter's residence in Bhutan; the prayers to realize that wish resulted in further visions of Padmasambhava and his paradisiacal abode known as Zangs mdog dpal ri.<sup>3</sup>

During that time arrived in Zab bu lung a teacher known as dKar po Kun grags or dKar chen Kun dga' grags pa, an influential lineage holder of the treasure cycles of Dri med Kun dga' (b. 1347) and Rig

<sup>3</sup> The period of spiritual training up to the year 1517 can be found in the biographical account (as in note 1), fols. 4b/1-6b/4. The first teacher Kaḥ thog Chos rje bSod nams bla ma seems to be no one else but bSod nams dpal ba, who also played a role in the early spiritual career of the treasure discoverer Rig 'dzin mChog ldan mgon po (1497-1530); see Ehrhard (2008:70, note 9). I have no further information concerning Bla ma Zhen log Chos rje, but concerning Zab lung sPrul sku, i.e. Zab lung gDan sa pa sPrul sku Padma dkar po, see note 4. For the important position of rDzogs chen Śākya ba in the transmission of the *mKha' 'gro yang tig* compare the historiographical work of Gu ru bkra shis (as in note 2), p. 241.16-23.

'dzin Sangs rgyas gling pa (1340-1395). Although bSod nams rin chen had entertained some doubts about the spiritual qualities of that master, he was in the end convinced about his authenticity and received numerous treasure teachings, including the cycle *Bla ma dgongs pa 'dus pa*. Only after that meeting was he then able to obtain the necessary financial means to travel to the Mon region in order to visit Rig 'dzin Padma gling pa on two occasions; there he received the masters own treasure cycles, including the *Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho*, and prophetic statements about his own person. In between these travels he stayed in Zab bu lung and in the region of lHo brag—the area he passed through during his travels to the south—and obtained further transmissions of Rig 'dzin Padma gling pa's teachings from the latter's disciples. Among those mention must be made of Nang so Chos mdzad, the local ruler of lHo brag, who was known as the author of the treasure discoverer's biography; upon his request bSod nams rin chen supervised also the erection of the reliquary shrine after Rig 'dzin Padma gling pa's death.

On one occasion he paid a visit to Lha sa in order to beautify the two statues of Jo bo Śākyamuni with “gold water” (*gser chab*); while praying to the icons he then received a prophecy that he should return after a period of six years. Among the teachers, whom he encountered during that pilgrimage we find one Byams pa Chos dbyings, residing at a monastery called dPa' bo dgon, and especially a pair of brothers, the illustrious couple mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal (1487-1542) and mNga' ris Rig 'dzin rDo rje bdud 'joms (b. 1512). The treasure cycles of Rig 'dzin Ratna gling pa (1403-1478) he received at that time from another teacher from the monastery of Kaḥ thog in Khams, namely Kaḥ thog pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan (1466-1540). A last teacher mentioned during that period of the spiritual training is known as dKar po Rab 'byams pa [dGe ba'i blo gros] who had his residence at a place known as Ri bo rtse in bSam yas; bSod nams rin chen obtained from him the transmission of the *Thugs rje chen po ye shes 'od mchog*, a treasure cycle of Dri med Kun dga'.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For the final part of the first sub-chapter treating the spiritual training, see the biographical account (as in note 1), fols. 6b/4-8b/3. The text lists two further teachers, i.e. 'Od gsal klong yangs and Zab bu lung gDan sa pa sPrul sku Padma dkar po; for further details concerning the first one, the reader is referred to the second sub-chapter. The latter one—and the above mentioned dKar po Rab 'byams pa dGe ba'i blo gros—can be identified as disciples of dKar chen Kun dga' grags pa and representatives of his teaching lineage in Zab bu lung and Ri bo rtse respectively. Concerning the person of dKar po Kun dga' grags pa and the fact that he kept up four residences to spread the teaching tradition of Rig 'dzin Sangs rgyas gling pa (the two



### 3. *Receiving the sNying thig lineages*

The second part of chapter two of the biographical account reads like a reconstruction of the different lineages of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa's teachings and places with rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen as the final recipient at the end of the different transmissions. This sub-chapter bears the title “the way how he had just listened to the Seminal Heart [Teachings] of the Great Perfection [Doctrine]” (*rdzogs chen snying thig gi gsan tsam mdzad tshul*) and begins with the statement that he had been in a previous life a personal disciple of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa known as dGe bshes bZod pa; because of these auspicious circumstances he was in the present life time able to master a clear understanding of all the various traditions of the Great Perfection teachings.

Having afterwards traced the *sNying thig* lineage from the Indian Mahāpaṇḍita Vimalamitra and Myang Ting [nge] 'dzin bzang po, the famous minister and preceptor of King lDe srong btsan Sad na legs (776-816), up to Me long rdo rje (1243-1314) it is stated that the latter's transmission split up in a “disciple lineage” (*slob brgyud*) and a “family lineage” (*gdung brgyud*), the second one being still alive when the biographical account had been composed. Among the disciples of Me long rdo rje the most qualified one was Rig 'dzin Kumārarāja (1266-1343), himself regarded as a reincarnation of Vimalamitra, the progenitor of the Seminal Heart teachings. Among his numerous disciples—including the Third Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje (1284-1365) and g.Yung ston rDo rje dpal (1284-1365)—we find Klong chen Rab 'byams pa, whose contribution to the preservation and distribution of the *sNying thig* literature is well known. Concerning the further continuation of his teachings, the transmission is once more split up in a ‘disciple lineage’ and a ‘family lineage.’ The first representative of the latter one was Grags pa 'od zer (1356-1409), a son of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa, who was born in Bhutan, and the family line prospered there with a son of his own, known as rGyal sras Zla ba grags pa. According to the historiographical writings of the rNying ma pa school

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other ones were known as dGong 'dus gling in Dvags po and rDo rje gdan in lHo brag), see Ehrhard (2007:84-85, note 15). dKar po Kun dga' grags pa is also known to have been a disciple of Rig 'dzin Padma gling pa and an important teacher of Rig 'dzin mChog ldan mgon po; the latter travelled as well to Mon on several occasions to receive the treasurer cycles of Rig 'dzin Padma gling pa from the master; see Ehrhard (2008:70-71, note 10). For Kaḥ thog pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan, among whose disciples one finds the brothers mNga' ris Paṅ chen and mNga' ris Rig 'dzin, compare Ehrhard (2007:86-87, note 18).

this is the second main lineage through which Klong chen Rab 'byams pa's teachings passed.

The 'disciple lineage' starts with one bDe legs rgya mtsho, also known as Thar pa gling pa after a hermitage which he had founded and where he practiced the *sNying thig* teachings of his master. He was followed by one Bya bral Chos rje bKra shis 'byung gnas, a native of Khams, who later settled in the 'Phan yul region to the north of Lha sa; there he founded a hermitage called 'Phan yul Zings pa sTag mgo. He attracted a great number of disciples and the teaching flourished well into the 16<sup>th</sup> century when one Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan kept up the site of 'Phan yul Zings pa sTag mgo. A personal disciple of Bya bral Chos rje bKra shis 'byung gnas was one Gu ru gZhan phan pa and he transmitted the *sNying thig* lineage once more in a 'family line' through his son Nam mkha' rdo rje and his grandson 'Od gsal klong yangs. The latter one was once again regarded as an incarnation of Vimalamitra and it was under him rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen received Klong chen Rab 'byams pa's teaching lineage, regarding him as his "main teacher" (*rtsa ba'i bla ma*). In the historiographical literature this lineage is described as the first and main one.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The lineages of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa's teachings up to 'Od gsal klong yangs and the studies of rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen under him are to be found in the biographical account (as in note 1), fols. 8b/3-12a/2; compare Nyoshul Khenpo Jamyang Dorjé (2008:354-362). Concerning the family line of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa and its formation as an independent religio-spiritual movement at the turn of the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, see Ehrhard (1992:54-56). For the description of this lineage and the one passing through bDe legs rgya mtsho and Bya bral Chos rje bKra shis 'byung gnas—also regarded as a personal disciple of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa—see the work of Gu ru bkra shis (as in note 2), pp. 224.6-240.15. According to this literary source Bya bral Chos rje bKra shis 'byung gnas was not born in Khams, but in 'Phan yul dgon rnying; see *ibid.*, p. 224.8. A description of the site 'Phan yul Zings pa rTa mgo (*sic*) at the time of Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan is contained in the autobiography of the treasure discoverer Rig 'dzin bsTan gnyis gling pa (1480-1535), who obtained the *sNying thig* transmission from that particular teacher; see *sPrul sku bstan gnyis gling pa padma tshe dbang rgyal po'i rnam thar yid bzhin nor bu* (xylograph), NGMPP reel no. L 143/5, fols. 26b/5-27a/1 (*de nas dgun der zings pa rta mgo zhes pa / kun mkhyen dri med 'od zer gyi bu slob mang po'i gnas / 'od gsal lhun grub 'char ba'i gnas su lung bstan pa der / mkhas shing grub pa brnyes pa'i skeyes chen dam pa sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan ces pa'i zhabs drung du / rdzogs pa chen po mkha' 'gro snying tig gi dbang gnang ste*). The spelling Zings pa sTag mgo seems to be the correct one according to a religious chronicle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, where the site is identified as an original retreat place of rMa Lo tsā ba Chos 'bar (1044-1089); see 'Gos Lo tsā ba gZhon nu dpal (1392-1481): *Deb ther sngon po*, Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1985, p. 286.12-19, and Roerich (1976:232).

Klong chen Rab 'byams pa's disciple bDe legs rgya mtsho is also known to have transmitted the *sNying thig* teachings to five disciples, who all bore the name Blo gros rgyal mtshan. Among them we find one sMan rtse Blo gros rgyal mtshan, the founder of another hermitage in the 'Phan yul region, known as sMan rtse. This particular lineage continued up to a certain bKa' brgyud pa Nam mkha' klong yangs, a *rDzogs chen* teacher also associated with the teaching lineage of 'Phan yul Zings pa sTag mgo. The latter's disciple was one sMan rtse sPrul sku Blo gros rgyal mtshan and it was under him that rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen received the reading authorization of the famous 'Seven Treasuries' of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa and further teachings. It was also this master from 'Phan yul sMan rtse, who was instrumental in providing a manuscript copy for the first xylograph of the 'Treasure of the Most Excellent Vehicle'. We know further that sMan rtse Blo gros rgyal mtshan—or just sMan rtse Chos rje—was also in contact with the already mentioned Rig 'dzin mChog ldan mgon po and with Thugs sras Zla ba rgyal mtshan (1499-1587), the son of Rig 'dzin Padma gling pa; he was discussing with both of them the possible military attacks of the Hor armies on Tibet and the necessity of taking refuge in the Hidden Valleys prophesied by Padmasambhava.

Nothing of this fear and paranoia is heard of in the biographical account of rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen. We are informed instead of other lineages of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa's teachings issuing from further disciples. One of these goes back to a scholar known as Paṅ chen Shes rab mgon po and it reached one dPal ldan seng ge from the monastery of [rKyen] Bya khyung in upper Kong po, a place which would play a great role in the latter part of the life of rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen. Another one was connected with Gangs ri Thod dkar, the favourite hermitage of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa in Central Tibet, where he wrote most of his celebrated works on the Great Perfection doctrine; this transmission reached him through rDzogs chen Śākya ba under whom he had studied in Zab bu lung in the year 1516.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For the teaching lineage of sMan rtse Blo gros rgyal mtshan and those issuing from Klong chen Rab 'byams pa's disciples Paṅ chen Shes rab mgon po and Gu ru Yes shes Rab 'byams pa from Gangs ri Thod dkar, see the biographical account (as in note 1), fols. 12a/ 14a/1. The latter lineage is counted in the historiographical writings of the rNying ma pa school as the third main lineage of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa's teachings; see the text of Gu ru bKra shis (as in note 2), pp. 240.16-242.6. For the characterization of the 'Seven Treasuries' as they were transmitted from sMan rtse Chos rje to rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen see the translation in Ehrhard (2000:X-XI). Concerning the contacts of this teacher from 'Phan yul with Rig 'dzin

After a lineage which had started with a direct disciple of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa from bSam yas 'Ching phu known as 'Od gsal rang grol we are brought back to the 'family lineage' and Grags pa 'od zer and his son rGyal sras Zla ba grags pa from Bhutan. The biographical account makes clear that among the latter's disciples was the treasure discoverer Rig 'dzin Ratna gling pa and one Kun bzang rdo rje, born in Bhutan. The latter's son, in turn, was known as rGyal mtshan dpal bzang po and rDzogs chen pa bSod noms rin chen heard from him works like the *Grub mtha' mdzod* and the *Man ngag mdzod*.

Another son of Grags pa 'od zer was called mKhas btsun Nyi ma 'od zer and he had two male off springs, the youngest of which bore the name sPrul sku Chos dbyings grags pa. rDzogs chen pa bSod noms rin chen stood in that line of transmission through several teachers, including the already mentioned 'Od gsal klong yangs. A direct disciple of sPrul sku Chos dbyings grags pa was dKar chen Kun dga' grags pa, whom we have already encountered in the context of the early spiritual training of rDzogs chen pa bSod noms rin chen; his representative dKar po Rab 'byams pa dGe ba'i blo gros had transmitted thus this particular lineage.

The second part of chapter two of the biographical account lists still further disciples of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa and their individual lineages. I want only mention the one of mKhas grub Chos grags [bzang po], who is generally known as the author of a biography-cum-bibliography of his master and who settled—like a certain Kun dga' rgyal mtshan—in the region of sTod 'brog in dBus. Interesting details are also provided in the case of a personal disciple of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa known as Ku ma bud dha; he was the one, who had requested his master to set down the *mKha' 'gro yang tig* in writing and founded later hermitages once again in the 'Phan yul region and in Yer pa. He is also said to have written out manuscripts of the *sNying thig* literature, including the “Seventeen Tantras” (*rgyud bcu bdun*) in gold script. This chapter of the biographical account closes with the following statement:

The Vidyādhara rDzogs chen [pa] bSod noms rin chen had scrutinized again and again the *sNying thig* [tradition] of the Upadeśas and in particular the Śāstras of the All Knowing one (i.e. Klong chen Rab 'byams pa) transmitted from most of what appeared in dBus [and] gTsang with the disciples of the All Knowing One. (*rig 'dzin rdzogs chen bsod noms rin chen 'di nyid kyis kun mkhyen gi slob ma la dbus*)

*gtsang du byung ba phal cher las rgyud pa'i (= brgyud pa'i) man ngag snying thig dang / khyad par kun mkhyen gyi mdzad pa'i bstan bcos rnam la yang yang zhun thar chos par mdzad do.*<sup>7</sup>

#### 4. *Practicing the Teachings in Central Tibet*

The first place mentioned as a site for the spiritual practices of rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen is dGa' ldan lhun grub gling in Zab bu lung in the Shangs valley. This episode introduces the third chapter of the biographical account, entitled “how he made meditation the chief aim of his spiritual practice” (*sgom pa nyams len gtso bor mdzad pa*). He stayed there for a period of three years practicing first and foremost *Thod rgal* exercises and “Guidances in Darkness” (*mun khrid*), i.e. the advanced stages of the *sNying thig* tradition. Afterwards in dPal ri dgon in the Phyong rgyas valley he conducted a retreat during which he remembered several of his previous existences. The next places were Ri bo che and two sites in the vicinity of bSam yas, i.e. g.Ya ma and 'Ching phu; there his spiritual experiences increased and he remained for seven days in a special state of contemplation.

A longer description of the actual spiritual exercises, including the control of the inner “wind” (*rlung*) for one year is given for the following retreat which took place in the region of sGrags, to the west of bSam yas. Especially on the basis of three times following the instructions of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa's *Bla ma yang tig yid bzhin nor bu* he mastered the *Khregs chod* and *Thod rgal* exercises and

<sup>7</sup> For the description of the remaining lineages of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa's teachings and how they were received by rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen see the biographical account (as in note 1), fols. 14a/1-16b/2. The lineage passing through sPrul sku Chos dbyings grags pa was spread by dKar chen Kun dga' grags pa also to the region of Mang yul Gung thang as can be seen from the writings of mDo chen pa Nor bu bde chen (b. 1617). See “Thob yig of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century: A Collection of Teachings and Initiations by Members of the Gur phu or Mdo chen Tradition of the Rñin ma pa”. Dalhousie: Damchoe Sangpo, 1980, pp. 141.5-145.6 (for the *rGyud bcu bdun*) and pp. 231.5-235.6 (for the *Bla ma yang tig*). This part of the ‘family lineage’ is not recorded in later historiographical writings of the rNying ma pa school; for the one passing from rGyal sras Zla ba grags pa to rGyal mtshan dpal bzang po, compare the work of Gu ru bkra shis (as in note 2), pp. 235.24-239.17. The biography-cum-bibliography of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa composed by his disciple from Khams is available in *Kun mkhyen klong chen rab 'byams kyi rnam thar mthong ba don ldan*, Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1994, pp. 167-232; for this work as a source for the number of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa's writings compare Wangchuk (2008:196-197).

reached the goal of the innermost core of the practice of the Great Perfection.<sup>8</sup>

### 5. *The First Disciples and an Invitation to Dvags po*

The longest chapter of the biographical account deals with “the way how he acted for the benefit of beings through the profound Buddhist doctrine” (*zab mo 'i chos kyi s 'gro don mdzad pa*). The first instance of rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen transmitting the Great Perfection teachings refers to the cycle *Kun bzang dgongs pa kun 'dus* of Rig 'dzin Padma gling pa at bSam grub dgon in lHo brag. This must have occurred at the time when he had travelled through the region during his visits to Bhutan. Among the persons, who received afterwards teachings from him including the *Bi ma snying thig* and the *Ḍākki 'i snying thig*—and once again treasure cycles of Rig 'dzin Padma gling pa—were one Ra lung Bla ma bKra shis rnam rgyal and another teacher from Kaḥ thog called dKon mchog rgyal mtshan. The reading authorization of the ‘Seven Treasuries’ were offered in their entirety to the brothers mNga' ris Paṅ chen and mNga' ris Rig 'dzin and also to dKar po Rab 'byams pa dGe ba 'i blo gros from Ri bo rtse in bSam yas. We can place these transmissions during the pilgrimage to Lha sa as rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen offered the reward received on that occasion to the statue of the so-called Jo bo Śākyamuni.

An initial exposition of the *sNying thig* teachings to a greater audience is then dated to the year 1524 when he instructed the mountain anchorites in Zab bu lung, headed by sPrul sku Padma dkar

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<sup>8</sup> The third chapter on the spiritual practice of the *sNying thig* teachings by rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen is contained in the biographical account (as in note 1), fols. 16b/2-19a/3. Concerning the innovation of the *sNying thig* tradition in comparison to earlier Great Perfection teachings, its focus on the “Spontaneous” (*lhun grub*) of the ground and its reincorporation of contemplative practices of internal movements of energy into the actual practices, see Germano (1994:278-281). The so-called *Bla ma yang tig* is Klong chen Rab 'byams pa's codification of the different *sNying thig* traditions associated with Vimalamitra; for the structure and composition of the *Bla ma yang tig yid bzhin nor bu* see Ehrhard (1990:24 & 105-106, note 78). It was written by Klong chen Rab 'byams pa only after the redaction of the so-called *mKha' 'gro yang tig*, his commentary on the *sNying thig* tradition of the Ḍākinīs; for the paramount importance of the latter tradition for Klong chen Rab 'byams pa see Germano & Gyatso (2000:243-245). A translation of the chapter on the ground in the work *Zab don rgya mtsho 'i sprin phung*, Klong chen Rab 'byams pa's voluminous introduction to the *mKha' 'gro yang tig*, is available in Scheidegger (1998:11-231). For translations of two works from the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* compare Yasuda (2008), Yasuda (2009) and Yasuda (2010).

po, i.e. the representative of dKar po Kun dga' grags pa, in the teachings of the *Bla ma yang tig* as he had received it from his teacher 'Od gsal klong yangs; during that particular transmission which included also the reading authorization and explanation of the *Theg mchog mdzod* to the group of fifty people he remembered in a dream how he had originally received the teachings and started from then on to disseminate the instructions of the *Bla ma yang tig*.

At the age of thirty five years, in 1526, the time of the prophecy he had received earlier at Lha sa seemed to be ripe and he travelled once more to the capital of Tibet; during that time he had manifold dreams indicating that he would be of benefit for beings. This event coincided with the search by a religious authority known as rTse le[gs] Chos rje bSod nams nram par rgyal ba and his son mKhan chen O rgyan bstan 'dzin for a teacher, who would satisfy their desire for the treasure teachings of the rNying ma pa school, and in particular for the writings of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa. It was dKar po Rab 'byams pa dGe ba'i blo gros, who pointed out that rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen, having just returned from Lha sa, might be the ideal person in that regard:

[People] like you have great concern for the teachings of the Old Ones! If you want to listen to them now, ask '[the Yogin] with matted hair [from] [b]Se kun' or 'rDzogs chen pa' [as he is also known]. Now he resides in a mountain hermitage at bSam yas, [but] once again he will be at no fixed abode. It is good if you rely on such a teacher! I can make the [necessary] connection. (*khyed lta bu rnying ma ba'i bstan pa la thugs khur che ba lags / da lta gsan par mdzad na bsu kun ral pa'am rdzogs chen pa yang zhu ba da lta bsam yas kyi ri khrod na bzhugs / slar gnas nges med mdzad / khong lta bu bla ma bsten pa (= brten pa) legs / ngas 'tshams (= mtshams) sbyor byed*).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The list of the first disciples and the circumstances of the contact with rTse le[gs] Chos rje bSod nams nram par rgyal ba and mKhan chen O rgyan bstan 'dzin can be found in the biographical account (as in note 1), fols. 19a/3-21a/2; for the quotation see *ibid.*, fols. 20b/6-21a/1. A first note on bSod nams nram par rgyal ba and his efforts of re-establishing the monastery of rTse le[gs] gSang sngags chos gling in Dvags po was given by Blondeau (1987:156-157). This information is based on a monastic chronicle written by rTse le[gs] sNa tshogs rang grol (1605-1677); see *rTse le gong 'og grva tshang dgon gsum po rnams kyi bstan pa ji ltar btsugs pa'i lo rgyus* in "The Complete Works of Rtse-le Rgod-tshan-pa Padma-legs-grub", vol. 1, Gangtok: Mgon po tshe brtan, 1979, pp. 313-383. Among the list of religious masters, whom bSod nams nram par rgyal ba invited to the Dvags po region we find [dKar po] Rab 'byams pa dGe ba'i blo gros, rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen and the treasurer discoverer ['Gro 'dul] Las 'phro gling pa (1488-1553); see *ibid.* p. 317.5-6. To this list can be added Rig 'dzin mChog ldan mgon po, whose journey to Dvags po

Although rDzogs chen pa bSod noms rin chen did at first not approve to become “the teacher of an important person” (*mi chen po'i bla ma*)—this statement referring obviously to the social status of bSod noms rnam par rgyal ba as the younger brother of the sKu rab Gong ma, i.e., the political head of the sKu rab principality of Dvags po—he nevertheless followed after repeated requests the invitation and arrived at the monastery of rTse le[gs] gSangs sngags chos gling. There he gave to a group of about fifty people, headed by bSod noms rnam par rgyal ba, who was regarded as an incarnation of the treasure discoverer Gu ru Chos [kyi] dbang [phyug] (1212-1270), and his sons the transmission of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa's teachings, i.e. initiations and instructions of the *Bla ma yang tig*, the reading authorization of the *Shing rta chen mo* and some of the ‘Treasures’; this event was followed by special signs and when he continued by giving the further transmissions, including the *mKha' 'gro yang tig*, the Seventeen Tantras and the remaining ‘Treasures’, he became the ‘main teacher’ of this group of disciples.

rDzogs chen pa bSod noms rin chen received a great amount of offerings and was asked to accept a monastic estate as residence. Instead he remained at a hermitage known as sMyos phug following mainly his spiritual practices. He continued also to give teachings to bSod noms rnam par rgyal ba and among further disciples we find members of the monastic community of rTse le[gs] gSang sngags chos gling and dGongs 'dus gling, i.e. the residence kept by dKar po Kun dga' grags pa in the region of Dvags po. During the many years that he spent in that particular hermitage, one disciple receives particular attention in the biographical account. He was a nephew of mNga' ris Paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal, with whom rDzogs chen pa bSod noms rin chen had entertained both a disciple and a teacher relationship. Due to these circumstances this nephew spread later the reading authorizations of the *sNying thig* writings and the ‘Treasures’ of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa in western Tibet and became known as “The Precious One [from] the Glacier Mountain (i.e. Ti se)” (*rin po che gangs ri ba*).<sup>10</sup>

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must have fallen in the year 1524, i.e., shortly before the arrival of rDzogs chen pa bSod noms rin chen; see Ehrhard (2008: 79-80, note 10).

<sup>10</sup> The teaching activities in Dvags po and the stay in the hermitage of sMyos phug are described in the biographical account (as in note 1), fols. 21a/2-22a/6. Concerning the social status of bSod noms rnam par rgyal ba and his role as an incarnation of Gu ru Chos [kyi] dbang [phyug] see the reference in the work of Gu ru bkra shis (as in note 2), p. 728.5-11. The hermitage of sMyos phug had also been frequented by ['Gro



### 6. *Spreading the Teachings in Kong po*

The next event in the life of rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen is dated to his fifty fourth year, i.e. to 1545. At that time he received an invitation from a local official called gSer khang pa'i nang so to visit the monastery of [rKyen] Bya khyung in the upper part of Kong po. This institution had been founded by a “master of the teachings” (*chos bdag*) of the treasure cycles of Rig 'dzin Sangs rgyas gling pa called dPal ldan seng ge, whom we have already encountered as a member of a lineage of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa's teachings starting from Paṅ chen Shes rab mgon po. The son of dPal ldan seng ge was known as Bla ma dPal 'bar dbang phyug and when rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen met him at [rKyen] Bya khyung a close bond between the two masters was established immediately. The visitor began his transmission of the teachings—once again the *Bla ma yang tig* and the ‘Seven Treasuries’ of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa, together with treasure teachings of Rig 'dzin Padma gling pa—and special signs were witnessed by all. On a latter occasion he gave at a site called Chos 'khor steng special teachings to the gSer khang pa'i nang so and the monastic community of [rKyen] Bya khyung; these included the transmission of *Bar do thos grol* teachings. Soon afterwards the more than eighty years old Bla ma dPal 'bar dbang phyug passed away and rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen conducted the funeral ceremonies.

The next monastery he visited in the Kong po area, known as sNyim phu, was again connected with the treasure cycles of Rig 'dzin Sangs rgyas gling pa, this time administered by direct descendants of the treasure discoverer. He met there Bla ma [sKu mdun] rGya mtsho, a grandson of Rig 'dzin Sangs rgyas gling pa, who had also issued the invitation to rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen. To a great number of people he propagated then the *sNying thig* and *Bar do thos grol* teachings, receiving vast offerings in return. Further monasteries he was invited to during that journey included Myang kha gnas gong, lTa ba sman lo sgang, Tshal dgon and Phrag dgon pa gsar. At all these places he spread first and foremost the teachings of Klong chen Rab

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'dul] Las 'phro gling pa during his stay in Dvags po; see id. *Rig 'dzin chen po bter bton las 'phro gling pa'i dus gsum gyi skye brgyud dang rnam par thar pa che long tsam zhig bkod pa me tog 'phreng mdzes*, Gangtok & Delhi: Gonpo Tseten, 1979, pp. 424.6-427.5. The ruler bSod nams rnam par rgyal ba composed during this stay a “laudation” (*bstod pa*) of the treasure discoverer; see *ibid.*, pp. 425.3-427.4.

'byams pa, retracing afterwards his steps via Dvags po back to Central Tibet.<sup>11</sup>

At the age of fifty six years, in 1548, rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen arrived in Central Tibet and the first stop of his journey was at Zab bu lung in order to celebrate the birth of Padmasambhava at that particular site; he also transmitted the *Bla ma yang tig* and the 'Seven Treasuries' at that time; this resulted in a further dissemination of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa's "teaching lineage" (*chos rgyud*) in gTsang. Afterwards he visited [m]Tshur phu in the sTod lung valley and met in sKyor mo lung the 'Bri gung Rin po che, i.e. Rin chen phun tshogs (1509-1557); during that time he received from the hierarch of the 'Bri gung pa school the latter's treasure cycle known as *dGongs pa yang zab*. Having offered his prayers at Lha sa to the statues of the Jo bo Sākyamuni he visited for a last time his teacher sMan rtse ba, who was residing in Yer pa at that time; a visit was also paid to the Vihāra of bSam yas, where he expressed his earnest wish that the Buddhist doctrine might prevail for a long period to come.

Returning to the Dvags po region rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen undertook a three months long retreat to relax from the hardship of the pilgrimage to Central Tibet. Only afterwards did he follow requests to visit another monastery in Kong po, known as rTsa gong. There he transmitted once again the teachings of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa, this time to a group of about three hundred people, and the amount of offerings received was accordingly. In this context he made an interesting remark concerning the situation of the rNying ma pa school in the region:

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<sup>11</sup> For the first journey to Kong po and the sojourns at [rKyen] Bya khyung and sNyim phu, see the biographical account (as in note 1), fols. 22b6-24a/5. The successions of abbots of these two monasteries of the teaching tradition of Rig 'dzin Sangs rgyas gling pa are described in the historiographical work of Gu ru bkra shis (as in note 2), pp. 742.7-743.14. The founder of the latter institution was the treasure discoverer's son called Ye shes rdo rje. In that particular line of transmission of Rig 'dzin Sangs rgyas gling pa's treasure teachings stood dKar po Kun dga' grags pa (a native of the Kong po area); see the historiographical work of Kun bzang Nges don klong yangs (b. 1814): *Bod du byung ba'i gsang sngags snga 'gyur gyi bstan 'dzin skyes mchog rim byon gyi rnam thar nor bu do shal*, Dalhousie: Damchoe Sangpo, 1976, p. 202.4-5 (*sras ye shes rdo rje'i dngos slob dkar po kun dga' grags pa nas brgyud pa'i slob brgyud dbus gtsang dvags kong rnam su khyab che*). For the position of rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen in the lineage of the *Bar do thos grol* teachings—he had received them from both his 'main teacher' 'Od gsal klong yangs and from rTse le[gs] Chos rje bSod nams rnam par rgyal ba—see Cuevas (2003:159-160 & 177). His teacher sMan rtse sPrul sku Blo gros rgyal mtshan from 'Phan yul was also a holder of the treasure cycle of Rig 'dzin Karma gling pa (14<sup>th</sup> cent.) known as *Bar do thos grol*: see (ibid.: 165).

After the system of the instructions of the Old Ones had been interrupted in the land of Kong po, a long time has [obviously] passed [and] now the system of the instructions is spread by me [once again]. (*kong po'i yul du rnying ma'i khrid srol chad nas yun ring du song 'dug kho bos khrid srol rgyas par byas yod do*).<sup>12</sup>

After this event we see rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen once again in Central Tibet and it seems that he was at that time visiting in particular the monastery of 'Phrang [sgo] rDo rje brag; there the teaching lineage of Rig 'dzin Sangs rgyas gling pa was maintained by one Nyi ma rgyal mtshan. He offered to this master *sNying thig* teachings and received in turn transmissions of the teachings of the mentioned treasure discoverer. Having visited the Vihāra of bSam yas for a last time and instructing a group of hundred mountain anchorites, he then returned to Dvags po and back to the monastery of rTse le[gs] gSang sngags chos gling; there he transferred upon mKhan chen O rgyan bstan 'dzin—who had already been instrumental in his original invitation to Dvags po—the complete empowerments and reading authorizations of the treasure cycles of Rig 'dzin Sangs rgyas gling pa.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The pilgrimage to Central Tibet in 1548 and the return trip to Dvags po and Kong po is contained in the autobiographical account (as in note 1), fols. 24a/5-25a/5. For the stay of 'Bri gung Rin chen phun tshogs in sKyor mo lung and the teachings he transmitted there (including the *dGongs pa yang zab*) see dKon mchog rgyal mtshan (b. 1963): *'Bri gung chos 'byung*, Peking: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2004, p. 433.8-17. The monastery in Kong po called rTsa gong had also been visited by the treasure discoverer ['Gro 'dul] Las 'phro gling pa during his visit to the Kong po region; see the autobiography (as in note 10), p. 480.5-491.3.

<sup>13</sup> For the final visit to Central Tibet and the stay at the monastery of 'Phrang [sgo] rDo rje brag, followed by the second return trip to Dvags po, see the autobiographical account (as in note 1), fols. 25a/5-b/5. In a further historiographical work of the rNying ma pa school we are informed that the abbot Nyi ma rgyal mtshan stood in the teaching lineage of Bla ma dPal ldan seng ge, i.e. the 'master of the teachings' of the treasure cycles of Rig 'dzin Sangs rgyas gling pa, who had founded [rKyen] Bya khyung in Kong po. See Karma Mi 'gyur dBang gi rgyal .po (17<sup>th</sup> cent.): *gTer bton brgya rtsa'i mtshan sdom gsol 'debs chos rgyal bkra shis stobs rgyal gyi mdzad pa'i 'grel pa lo rgyus gter bton chos 'byung*, Darjeeling: Taklung Tsetrul Rinpoche Pema Wangyal, 1978, p. 126.2-4. The site called 'Phrang po or 'Phreng po was soon afterwards taken over by Shes rab 'od zer (1518-1584) known from then on as the "Treasure Discoverer [from] 'Phreng po" (*'phreng po gter ston*). This transfer of the monastery happened upon the request of the just mentioned Nyi ma rgyal mtshan, also one of the teachers of Shes rab 'od zer; compare the work of Gu ru bkra shis (as in note 2), p. 548.14-16, A biographical note of mKhan chen O rgyan bstan 'dzin is contained in the monastic chronicle of rTse le[gs] gSang sngags chos gling; see the

rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen taught afterwards for four months the treasure cycles of Rig 'dzin Sangs rgyas gling pa at the monastery of [rKyen] Bya khyung in the upper part of Kong po, accompanied by teachings of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa like the *mKha' 'gro yang tig*. Having stayed there for about ten months he then left for a hermitage in Kong po, where he would first conduct a one year retreat; the name of the site was gTsang po mGo dgu and it would become his favourite place of spiritual practice for the last phase in his life. During that time he also met the Second dPa' bo Rin po che dPal gTsug lag phreng ba (1504-1566), who had been staying in rTse le[gs] gSang sngags chos gling, and a connection was established between the two masters. Satisfying the needs of all the teachers of the old and new schools in the upper and lower part of Kong po the efforts of rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen are finally summarized in his own words in the following way:

Having established the benefit of my own I produced the mind [of Enlightenment] for the benefit of others. This *sNyung thig* doctrine of the Great Perfection, it is better than gold! Due to the kindness of the teacher it was understood and then explained by me. Those, who did not practice [the teaching] were assembled by me; thinking 'I have performed the benefit of beings', [these were] gods [and] men. And once again, may the teaching of the Great Perfection be spread! (*rang don bzhag nas gzhan don sems bskyed byas / rdzogs chen snying thig chos 'di gser las lhag / bla ma'i drin las kho bos shes na (= nas) bshad / nyams su mi len pa tsho rang nyid bsdu / 'gro don byas so snyam mo lha mi tsho / slar yang rdzogs chen bstan pa dar bar shog*).<sup>14</sup>

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text (as in note 9), pp. 320.2-325.5; he acted as the abbot of that monastery in Dvags po and the one of sKu rab in the same region.

<sup>14</sup> The end of chapter four is contained in the biographical account (as in note 1), fols. 25b/5-27b/2. During the description of the arrival of rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen the author of the text refers to himself as one of the first recipients of the teachings; see *ibid*, fol. 25b/5-6 (*bdag gi gsol ba btabs (= btab nas) dang po chos nyan bdun phrag la / dgongs 'dus kyi snying po gser zhun / lam 'bras zung 'brel gyi khrid zla ba bzhi'i bar gnang*). A note on the history of the hermitage gTsang po mGo dgu can be found in the monastic chronicle of rTse le[gs] gSang sngags chos gling; see the text (as in note 9), pp. 350.6-351.5. This happens in the chapter of the biography of mTshungs med bsTan 'dzin rdo rje (1533-1605), the previous incarnation of the author rTse le[gs] sNa tshogs rang grol; mTshungs med bsTan 'dzin rdo rje had been responsible for the upkeep of rTse le[gs] gSang sngags chos gling and its branches after the death of rTse le[gs] Chos rje bSod nams rnam par rgyal ba and his sons. It is mentioned there that the site gTsang po mGo dgu had originally been opened by masters like the Third Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje (1284-1339), but was haunted later by local spirits; only due to the influence of rDzogs chen

### 7. *The Special Qualities and the Death*

The fifth chapter of the biographical account bears the title “How he demonstrated [a behaviour] passing beyond the impression of ordinary beings” (*skye bo phal gyi snang ngo las 'das par ston pa*) and recounts different episodes of the teaching style and some of the visions of rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen. These narratives are based for the greater part on the author’s own recollections and we are informed that he had acted as the personal attendant of the master already during the latter’s first visit to [rKyen] Bya khyung; he describes the ability of his teacher to give details about the rebirth of Bla ma dPal 'bar dbang phyug and how he was perceived by his disciples in the monastery when delivering the teachings of the *Dākki yang thig*. The author includes also reports from persons like mKhan chen O rgyan bstan 'dzin, who saw the master in the form of the Transcendent Buddha Vajradhara when the *Theg mchog mdzod* of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa was explained at rTse le[gs] gSang sngags chos gling.

The sixth chapter describes the “deed of passing at the end into Nirvāṇa” (*mtha' la mya mngan las 'das pa'i mdzad pa*) and begins with the stay of rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen at the hermitage of gTsang po mGo dgu. He had retreated there after several years of activities in the upper and lower parts of Kong po, being sick from an illness due to a blood infection. In the first Tibetan month of the year 1559 the time of death came near and he gave the final instructions to his disciples. For the author of the biographical account he clarified some points of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa’s *Shing rta chen po* and gave him several days afterwards all the latter’s writings which were in his possession; they should be kept in the monastery of [rKyen] Bya khyung as they would be of use in the future. All his other books and belongings should be transferred to the monasteries of rTse le[gs] gSang sngags chos gling in Dvags po and sNyim phu in Kong po. rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen passed away in the fourth Tibetan month of the same year after making the statement that he would realize the Dharmakāya, the “Great Clear Light” (*'od gsal chen po*) in the sphere of the “Intermediate State” (*bar do*).

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pa bSod nams rin chen—whose reliquary shrine had been erected in the centre of the place—it could finally be pacified.

After a song of mourning the disciple, who was close to the master until his end, describes the necessary funerary rituals for which he was responsible, and the occurrence of special signs when the body of the deceased Yogin was burned. When the “cremation shrine” (*gdung khang*) was opened some persons from the monastery of rTsa gong were present as well and all witnessed the relics left in the ashes. Statues of different Buddhist deities were erected later on and kept in the monasteries of [rKyen] Bya khyung and sNyim phu.

In a short colophon the author of the biographical account finally identifies himself as “Pad[ma] dkar [po] from [rKyen] Bya khyung” (*bya khyung pad dkar*) and he seems to be no one else but Kun mkhyen Ngag dbang padma from that monastery in Kong po. He is known as the main transmitter of Klong chen Rab ’byams pa’s first and main teaching lineage after rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen. In the end of his work he provides us with the sources used by him for its composition:

All these [narratives] I have set down to some degree, relying on the deeds of this Lord how they were seen by myself [and] others, on what I have heard by friends, on the scattered notes of the Lord [himself], and of what I have heard from most of the sayings [of other people].  
 (*’di dag ni rje nyid kyi mdzad pa bdag rang gi mthong ba dang / grogs las thos pa dang / rje’i zin bris thor bu dang / phal cher gsungs las thos pa rnams la brten nas cung zad bkod pa’o*).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> For chapters five and six and the colophon see the biographical account (as in note 1), fols. 27b/2-35b/6. Kun mkhyen Ngag dbang padma, the son of Bla ma dPal ’bar dbang phyug from [rKyen] Bya khyung, is recorded in the historiographical writings of the rNying ma pa school as the main disciple of rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen; see the note on his life in the work of Gu ru bkra shis (as in note 2), p. 226.8-16. He was in turn the teacher of rDzogs chen pa bSod nams dbang po (1547-1625), who played a great role in the transmission of the Great Perfection teachings to the next generation of disciples. These included the already mentioned rTse le[gs] sNa tshogs rang grol—also known as rTse le[gs] sPrul sku Padma legs grub—and lHa btsun Nam mkha’ ’jigs med (1597-1653), the so-called “Madman from Kong [po]” (*kong smyon*); see *ibid.*, pp. pp. 226.17-227.10. According to these details rDzogs chen pa bSod nams dbang po stayed for his spiritual practice particularly at the hermitage of gTsang pa mGo dgu, following the wish of mTshungs med bsTan dzin rdo rje. In the monastic chronicle of rTse le[gs] gSangs sngags chos gling it is further stated that this teacher established in 1577, i.e. eighteen years after the death of rDzogs chen bSod nams rin chen, a new hermitage at the site; see the work (as in note 9), p. 350.5-6.

## 8. Conclusion

It is known that in the Dvags po region Buddhist texts were produced as xylographs as early as 1520 and that the family of the provincial regent, the so-called sKu rab Gong ma, was active in promoting the printing of literary works including the famous *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* of the Second dPa' bo dPal gTsug lag phreng ba, completed in the year 1564. Exactly in this period rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen was spreading Klong chen Rab 'byams pa's teaching in Dvags po and Kong po, initially being invited to do so by members of the family of the sKu rab Gong ma. It is thus no great surprise that also one of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa's works, the 'Treasure of Words and Meanings', was printed on the initiative of Karma mThu stobs rnam rgyal, another son of rTse le[gs] Chos rje bSod nams rnam par rgyal ba. This happened at Thang 'brog, the newly founded branch monastery of rTse le[gs] gSang sngags chos gling in the Kong po region.<sup>16</sup>

The more than thirty years in the life of rDzogs chen pa bSod nams rin chen which he spent in south-eastern Tibet can thus be seen as a crucial period for the restructuring of the rNying ma pa traditions in the region which was dominated by the presence of monasteries belonging to Rig 'dzin Sangs rgyas gling pa's teaching lineages up to that point of time. His influence can especially be seen in the religious circles associated with rTse le[gs] gSang sngags chos gling and [rKyen] Bya khyung and in the popularity which Klong chen Rab 'byams pa's teachings gained thereby in Dvags po and Kong po in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It was thus with the person of '[the Yogin] with matted hair [from] [b]Se kun' that the *sNying thig* teachings of the Great Perfection doctrine could reach another part of Tibet at a time when the circumstances were ripe to transfer one more of the 'Seven Treasuries' into the medium of printed text; one might even imagine that like in the case of the *Theg mchog mdzod* also the original manuscript copy for the first block print of the *Tshig don mdzod* came from one of the

<sup>16</sup> For the printing of the collected works of sGam po pa bSod nams rin chen (1079-1153) in Dvags po, see Ehrhard (2002:12, note 3). The details of the printing of the religious chronicle of the Second dPa' bo see gTsug lag phreng ba: *Dam pa'i chos kyi 'khor lo bsgyur ba rnam ky'i byung ba gsal bar byed pa'i mkhas pa'i dga' ston*, Peking: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1986, p. 1527.11-19. The printing of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa's *Tshig don mdzod* is referred to in the text of rTse le[gs] sNa tshogs rang grol (as in note 9), p. 345.5-6. The monastery of Thang 'brog was founded in 1563 by mTshungs med bsTan 'dzin rdo rje, followed in 1579 by the establishment of bDe chen dgon, a further branch of rTse le[gs] gSangs sngags chos gling and located in the Long po region; see *ibid.* pp. 337.4 ff. and pp. 354.4 ff.

hermitages in the 'Phan yul area in Central Tibet, where the doctrine of the Great Perfection had been kept alive.

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