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BULLETIN OF TIBETOLOGY

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**RNYING MA STUDIES:
NARRATIVE AND HISTORY**

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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

RNYING MA STUDIES: NARRATIVE AND HISTORY

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The article by Lewis Doney presents Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124-1192), one of the great treasure discoverers of the rNying ma school and his literary oeuvre in relation to the *Testimony of Ba (dBa bzhed)*, a work dating back to Tibet's imperial period but mainly known from an eleventh century version. By comparing the shared narratives of Padmasambhava's life story in the *Zangs gling ma* and the *Chos 'byung me tog snying po*—the two most influential works of Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer—with those found in the *Testimony of Ba* and in yet another work attributed to the treasure discoverer, new ways are opened up to understand the different versions of Padmasambhava's time in Tibet and the relation between these different texts. Updating earlier research it is thus possible to see on which sources Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer's conception of imperial-period Tibet was based and how his biographical and historiographical writings shaped Tibet's self-image as a Buddhist country.

Jake Dalton introduces us to gNubs chen Sangs rgyas yes shes, an important lineage holder of Transmitted Precepts (*bka' ma*) of the later ninth and early tenth-century, generally known for his most famous work, the *bSam gtan mig sgron*. Building on the recent discovery of an important biography of sNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes claimed to be his final testament and probably compiled in the twelfth or thirteenth century, the article provides further evidence for the latter dating on the basis of yet another work of the master's spiritual line. The text bears the title *gTad rgya lnga'i don gyi brjed byang gi 'grel pa* and can be found in a two-volume collection of materials dedicated to the mDo dbang cycle. A summary is given of these volumes, together with an overview of the "Commentary for Remembering," a translation of this version of the biography of gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes, and further observations, especially in regard to the master's involvement in the mDo dbang ritual cycle.

My own article gives an overview of the biographical account of bSod nams rin chen (1491-1559), a lineage holder of the *sNying thig*

teachings of the Great Perfection doctrine. A native of gNyal he received his spiritual training in Central Tibet and after a first invitation to the region of Dvags po was instrumental in spreading the *sNying thig* teachings and those of the *Bar do thos grol* mainly in Kongpo where he also founded a hermitage in the latter part of his life. His transmission became quite influential in south-eastern Tibet, reaching, for example, lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med (1597-1653), the illustrious “Madman from Kongpo;” this period in the history of the dissemination of the Great Perfection doctrine can also be identified as the moment when works like the *Tshig don mdzod* were transferred to the medium of printed text with the support of local rulers.

The history of the rNying ma school, the evolution of its six mother-monasteries, and especially the role of dPal ri monastery in 'Phyong rgyas, the “Valley of the Emperors,” is the subject of the article by Marc-Henri Deroche. The latter institution was founded by the eclectic treasure discoverer Shes rab 'od zer (1508-1584), taking its name from the “Glorious Mountain” of Padmasambhava’s Pure Land. The monastery developed to a great extent and became also the seat of an incarnation lineage of Padmasambhava’s consort and is known for the printing of works like the *Sems nyid ngal ngal gso* and the *Padma bka' thang*. The historical sources available include a text written by the great 'Jigs med gling pa (1729/30-1798), who was trained in dPal ri and had there his initial revelation of the *Klong chen snying thig*. In later times the monastery fell into oblivion but continued to play a role in later rNying ma revivals, especially through its formulation of the “Eight Lineages of Attainment.”

The article by Nikolai Solmsdorf centres on the region of Mang yul Gung thang in south-western Tibet and presents the activities of four prominent treasure discoverers, i.e. Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can (1337-1408), Rig 'dzin mChog ldan mgon po (1497-1531), Rig 'dzin bsTan gnyis gling pa (1480-1536) and lastly Rig 'dzin Gar dbang rdo rje (1640-1685). The assessment of this particular group of rNying ma masters aims at the political and social implications of the opening of the “Hidden Valley” (*sbas yul*) sKyid mo lung located in the south of the former Tibetan kingdom. It can thus be shown that a continuity of a treasure tradition existed in Mang yul Gung thang by means of the interaction of its proponents with the royal house and that these dynamics were also reinstalled under changing political conditions. The “Valley of Happiness,” with its wider topography covering areas in both Tibet and Nepal, was still frequented as a treasure site as known from narratives in the biography of Rig 'dzin Gar dbang rdo rje.

NYANG RAL NYI MA 'OD ZER AND THE *TESTIMONY OF BA*

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Introduction

Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124–1192, henceforth Nyang ral)¹ was one of the great rNying ma *gter stons*, revealers of physical and written treasure (*gter*) supposedly buried during the imperial period. He identified himself as a reincarnation of the Tibetan dharma-king, Khri Srong lde btsan (742–c.800),² whom he believed to be one of the foremost disciples of the Indian Buddhist master, Padmasambhava.

According to generally accepted tradition, Khri Srong lde btsan invited Padmasambhava to tame the indigenous spirits of Central Tibet, in order that the king could then build the famous bSam yas Monastery. However, early tradition is split concerning how long Padmasambhava stayed in Tibet, and his relation to Khri Srong lde btsan. The *Testimony of Ba* (*dBa' rBa/sBa bzhed*) states that Padmasambhava left Tibet after arousing the distrust of ministers at court, having only partially tamed bSam yas. Nyang ral claimed that Padmasambhava took part in the consecration of bSam yas and then tamed other parts of Tibet until after the death of Khri Srong lde btsan. Before this, Padmasambhava bestowed many tantric lineages on Khri Srong lde btsan, then buried the texts containing guides to these practices as *gter* to be discovered and promulgated by his reincarnation, Nyang ral.

The *gter* texts buried for the benefit of future Tibetan Buddhists also include biographies of Padmasambhava himself. The earliest of these is called the *Zangs gling ma*, which Nyang ral supposedly recovered from the *Zangs khang gling* in the surrounds of bSam yas Monastery.³ I prefer to say that Nyang ral wrote it, and that as such it

¹ For recent discussion of these dates, see Kapstein 2000: 261, n. 24 and Hirshberg (2010: 62).

² On these dates, see Dotson 2009: 128–29.

³ To read more on this first full-length Padmasambhava biography, including the detailed arguments behind the discussion in this paragraph and the discovery of an unaugmented recension of the *Zangs gling ma*, see Doney *in press*. The monograph also includes reproductions of two exemplars of this oldest attested recension photographed by the Nepal German Preservation/Cataloguing Project (NGMP/CP). A

best approximates his conception of the reign of Khri Srong lde btsan and Padmasambhava's place in the conversion of Tibet to Buddhism. The *Zangs gling ma* was redacted several times, and the version that scholars have used recently, found as the first text in the *Rin chen gter mdzod* collection, contains a number of episodes not included in the other recensions of the text. Another, unaugmented version of the *Zangs gling ma* forms the basis for Nyang ral's description of the reign of Khri Srong lde btsan in his *magnum opus* religious history, the *Chos 'byung Me tog snying po* (henceforth *MTN*).⁴

This article compares the shared narrative of these two works with that found in the *Testimony of Ba*, and also in another work attributed to Nyang ral called the *Mes dbon gsum gyi rnam par thar pa* (henceforth *MBNT*).⁵ This latter is an anthology of the biographies (*rnam thar*) of three great dharma-kings of Tibet, including Khri Srong lde btsan. First, I argue that the *Zangs gling ma* (and *MTN* where it agrees with the *Zangs gling ma*) offers a very different version of Padmasambhava's time in Tibet to the *Testimony of Ba* tradition and *MBNT*, which takes the *Testimony of Ba* almost *in toto* as its source for the life-story of Khri Srong lde btsan. Second, I investigate the episodes that *MTN* interpolates into the *Zangs gling ma* frame-narrative on Khri Srong lde btsan. Some of these episodes resemble the *Testimony of Ba*. The evidence of parts one and two of this article, confirms the suggestions of other scholars writing on these works, who cast doubt on the attribution of the latter parts of *MTN*, and all of *MBNT*, to Nyang ral.⁶ It also brings into sharper focus the relation between Nyang ral and

further, unfortunately incomplete version of this recension is published by Ugyan Dorje as the *U rgyan padma 'byung gnas kyi bka' chems* (Sumra 1977). This text is currently included in Martin 1997: 229, entry no. 650, as an unattributed work. However it should, in any second edition of this indispensable bibliographic reference work, be placed under entry 20 as an exemplar of the *Zangs gling ma*.

⁴ There are four known versions of *MTN* extant today (a–d, see the bibliography and Martin 1997: 30–31, no. 18). Some slight differences exist between these versions (see Hirshberg 2012: 198–209), but they appear to tell the same narrative as each other in their sections on Khri Srong lde btsan. I use *MTNd* in this article, because it is the most easily available version for consultation; yet since it is an eclectic edition of manuscript A and B, its usefulness is limited to giving a sense of the narrative and where it diverges from other works discussed below.

⁵ See Martin 1997: 31, no. 19. Martin refers readers to the article in which János Szerb (1990) disputes *MBNT*'s attributed authorship, but then balances this with Sørensen's (1991: 79) appeal to the similarities between *MTN* and *MBNT* (*ibid*).

⁶ Leonard van der Kuijp follows Szerb (1990) in questioning the attribution of *MBNT* to Nyang ral (van der Kuijp 2013: 148–49, n. 75). He also relates that his doctoral student, Daniel Hirshberg, 'has cast very serious doubts upon' the attribution of *MTN* to Nyang ral (*idem*: 118, n. 6). The investigation of *MTN* in Hirshberg's PhD thesis

the *Testimony of Ba* tradition and repositions *MBNT* as an important source within that tradition.

The Testimony of Ba

The *Testimony of Ba* has its roots in the ninth-century imperial period. Though its earliest complete version is the fourteenth-century(?) *dBa' bzhed* reproduced and translated by Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger, the main narrative of this version may date to the eleventh century.⁷ The discovery of other, more fragmentary versions of a similar narrative, suggests that the roots of this recension of the *Testimony of Ba* may be older still.⁸ The narrative concerns the reign of Khri Srong lde btsan and his attempt to build bSam yas Monastery and establish Buddhism in Tibet. Padmasambhava alone is responsible for

(Hirshberg 2012) was indebted in part to my thesis (Doney 2011), which includes an early version of this article; but this article is also partially indebted to the progress Hirshberg made on analysing *MTN* in the mean time. A proper evaluation of *MTN* will have to await the publication of Hirshberg *forthcoming*, but until then I thought it worth taking inspiration from van der Kuijp's further suggestion that '[t]he close textual relationship that exists between this work's biography of Khri srong lde btsan, Nyang ral's chronicle [*MTN*] and the *Sba bzhed*-s still requires detailed investigation' (van der Kuijp 2013: 149, n. 75).

⁷ Pasang Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 126ff. The *dBa' bzhed*, reproduced and translated in Pasang Wangdu and Diemberger 2000, appears to be the oldest complete exemplar of the *Testimony of Ba* retaining many archaic features (see *idem*: Introduction). Michael Willis (2013: 146) gives a date-range of 1000 to 1100 CE as a working hypothesis for the core *dBa' bzhed* narrative, but notes its later amendments. Later versions of the *Testimony of Ba* display amplification, elision and alteration of the main narrative given in the *dBa' bzhed*.

⁸ Ninth/tenth-century fragments of the narrative or a source of the *Testimony of Ba*, concerning the invitation of Śāntarakṣita to Tibet, were recently found among the Dunhuang texts (Or. 8210/S.9498(A) and Or. 8210/S.13683(C), see van Schaik and Iwao 2008 and van Schaik *forthcoming*). Another, unfortunately incomplete exemplar from the same recension as the *dBa' bzhed* was published recently (contained in dPal brtsegs 2011: vol. 36, 63–70) I had the chance to examine this publication recently, and noticed that only the first four folios of the manuscript are part of the *rBa bzhed*. These folios are mistakenly combined with a very different history, which Longs khang Phun tshogs rdo rje failed to notice when he transcribed both texts as one (2010: 259–318; see under *rBa bzhed* the bibliography). van der Kuijp (2011) noticed that the majority of the narrative in Phun tshogs rdo rje's edition was completely different from the *Testimony of Ba* tradition, and by analysing the end portion was able to date this history to the early fourteenth century. However, he did not have access to the original manuscript, and so did not see that the opening narrative (2010: 259–270.1) is actually the beginning of different a text that contains a narrative similar to that of the *dBa' bzhed* folios 1–7a and the Dunhuang fragments. For a more detailed analysis of their correspondences, see Doney *forthcoming*.

the taming the Tibetan landscape that enables this building project to succeed. But in fulfilling this role, he is under the command of Khri Srong lde btsan. Indeed, the king asks him to leave Tibet just half way through the narrative; after which he plays no further part in the spread of the dharma there. Looking at the *Testimony of Ba* in outline, Padmasambhava plays only a limited role in bringing Buddhism to Tibet, and is ultimately of less importance than some of the other characters in the history, such as Śāntarakṣita or dBa' gSal snang.⁹ Padmasambhava's role in the *Testimony of Ba* is important and his depiction flattering. Yet, in the earliest extant recension of the *Testimony of Ba*, Padmasambhava does not hold the preeminent status that he does in the *Zangs gling ma*.

In the later *Testimony of Ba* tradition, Padmasambhava's role becomes more pronounced, yet it is still limited to taming Tibet *before* bSam yas is built. The same story outlined above is included in another exemplar of the *Testimony of Ba*,¹⁰ which expands and alters the entire narrative, for instance making Khri Srong lde btsan a more pious Buddhist and shifting the blame for dismissing Padmasambhava from the king to his jealous ministers.¹¹ This longer *Testimony of Ba*

⁹ For an outline of the *dBa' bzhed*, see Pasang Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 14–21. Stein gives a résumé of the longer *sBa bzhed* S in Stein 1961: vii–xii. See also Doney *in press*: 4–7 on the depiction of Padmasambhava in the *Testimony of Ba*.

¹⁰ This recension is reflected in the 1980 text entitled *sBa bzhed ces bya ba las / sba gsal snang gi bzhed pa bzhugs / rtsom pa po / sba gsal gnang* (*sBa bzhed G*), mGon po rgyal mtshan's eclectic edition of three manuscripts. Since the editor shows at no point which reading comes from which manuscript, this edition is not very useful for textual analysis, but it does suggest an expanded recension of the *dBa' bzhed*, omitting the latter's opening and closing narratives. A very similar narrative to *sBa bzhed G* is transcribed in the 2009 collection of *Testimony of Ba* texts called <<*rBa bzhed*>> *phyogs bsgrigs*, apparently edited by bDe skyid (see also van der Kuijp 2011: 71), pages 80–158. The text bears a similar title (*sBa bzhed ces bya ba las / sba gsal snang gi bzhed pa bzhugs* / 2009: 80.1–2) but contains some minor differences from *sBa bzhed G* that places it closer to the *sBa bzhed zhabs btags ma* recension. Since it is lacking that extended end section, and for other reasons discussed in Doney *forthcoming*, it is evidently not a part of that *zhabs btags ma* recension. It may be hoped that this transcription reflects only a single manuscript, perhaps even one of the ones forming the basis of *sBa bzhed G*.

¹¹ The increasing piety of Khri Srong lde btsan can be seen especially clearly when comparing the differing versions of the scene where he invites Śāntarakṣita to Tibet (see the texts transcribed in van Schaik and Iwao 2008: 484–6). On the changing depiction of the request for Padmasambhava to leave, see Pasang Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 58, n. 177. Note also that the part of Padmasambhava's speech in which he suggests that Khri Srong lde btsan falls short of the *cakravartin* ideal of Buddhist kingship (*dBa' bzhed* 13b 3–4) is omitted in the later tradition (e.g. *sBa bzhed G* 31.22).

recension is also quoted in a number of later histories. One such important source of the tradition is the many quotes in the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* by dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba (1504–1566), who appears to have had access to more than one version of the *Testimony of Ba* (henceforth the sum of these quotations will be referred to as *sBa bzhed P*).¹² At some later point, this narrative was condensed somewhat, and an extra section was added to the end that recounts the reigns of Khri Srong lde btsan's descendants and the descent and rise of the dharma after the fall of the Tibetan empire. This redacted text is known as the *sBa bzhed zhabs btags ma* (*Extended Testimony of Ba*). It will serve as the main point of reference for comparison with *MTN* and *MBNT*, because these two works appear to include large borrowings from this extended recension.¹³

Per Sørensen, in his masterly annotated translation of the *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long*, already compared some of these works, the *Zangs gling ma*, *MTN* and *MBNT* attributed to Nyang ral and *sBa bzhed G*, *P* and *S* that form the later tradition of the *Testimony of Ba*. He argues:

BZH, CHBYMTNYP [i.e. the *Testimony of Ba* and *MTNc*] (*ab* 292a5ff., though interspersed with lengthy sub-sections), MBNTH followed by the lDe'u versions (GBCHY, DCHBY)¹⁴ display a fair degree of correspondence in the chain of events related, suggesting that they draw from a common proto-version of BZH, possible bSam-yas Ka-gtsigs chen mo (cf. the Introduction). Nyang-ral, moreover, has employed a version identical or cognate to the Chin. ed. of BZH [*sBa bzhed G*], while he cites a part of its colophon ([*MTNc*] 439b3–6), but, most surprisingly, Nyang-ral (*ab* 440a6, cf. *ad* note 1385ff.) shares long verbatim passages with the annotated version of BZH (found in Stein ed. [*sBa bzhed S*]), which indicates that the so-called *zhabs btags ma* was in circulation and inserted (?) into a BZH-version already in the XI–XIIth century.¹⁵

¹² Kazushi Iwao is currently researching the versions of the *sBa bzhed* used in this text (personal communication 20th February 2013) and in-depth analysis of these sources will have to await his findings. My comparison of the episodes below suggest that, generally, dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba quotes a source from the same recension as *sBa bzhed S*.

¹³ For a more in-depth analysis of the redactional history of the *Testimony of Ba*, see Doney 2011: 27–46 and *forthcoming*.

¹⁴ I understand that Dan Martin is currently preparing a translation of the *lDe'u chos 'byung* that will no doubt address both the sources Sørensen cites here as lDe'u versions (see also Martin 1997: 43–44, nos. 54 and 55), so at present I shall leave them out of this analysis.

¹⁵ Sørensen 1994: 634–35 (to which I have added my nomenclature for the texts in

This analysis constitutes a pioneering attempt to make sense of the relation between *MTN*, *MBNT* and the *Testimony of Ba*. Yet it appears to contradict Sørensen's claim later in the same work that *MBNT* 'is nothing but a condensed or abbreviated version of the *magnum opus* [*MTN*].'¹⁶ In this analysis, Sørensen pays insufficient attention to the *Zangs gling ma*, and because of this he mistakes the correspondences between *MTN* and the other works as a) a primary rather than secondary characteristic of *MTN* and b) indicative of Nyang ral's authorial intention. These misconceptions can be cleared up by looking first at the *Zangs gling ma*, then the congruences between it and *MTN* against *MBNT*. This comparison suggests that, as János Szerb made clear, *MBNT* should no longer be attributed to Nyang ral. It also sheds light on some of the unique elements of *MTN*, and the relationship between its depiction of eighth-century Tibet and that of the *Testimony of Ba* tradition.

The Zangs gling ma

The *Zangs gling ma* tells a very different tale of the reign of Khri Srong lde btsan from the *Testimony of Ba*. Blondeau placed the two, the *Testimony of Ba* and the *Zangs gling ma*, on two sides of a distinction between narratives of Padmasambhava drawn from *bka' ma* or oral transmission and those drawn from the *gter* or treasure tradition.¹⁷ As Cathy Cantwell and Robert Mayer also point out, the *Zangs gling ma* 'can be considered as a rather different category of literature [from the *Testimony of Ba*], so we would not expect the same kind of language to be used.'¹⁸ The *Zangs gling ma* falls under the category of Padmasambhava biography. It amplifies some of the mythographic

question in square brackets).

¹⁶ Sørensen (1994: 641) maintained this despite citing János Szerb (1990) and thus being aware of the agreement of Blondeau and Szerb on the mistaken attribution of *MBNT* to Nyang ral. Sørensen tentatively concludes that the text should be 'ascribed, in all probability, to Nyang ral' (1994: 641; see also Sørensen 1991: 79). This statement seems to contradict Sørensen's claim just quoted from pages 634–35. Perhaps he means that the Srong btsan sgam po section of *MBNT* follows *MTN*, while the Khri Srong lde btsan section is based on the *sBa bzhed*, but he does not make this clear. Following Sørensen, Martin likewise credits Nyang ral as author of *MBNT* in his book *Tibetan Histories* (1997: 31, no. 19). As shall become clear below, it appears that *MBNT* is based on the later *sBa bzhed bzhabs btags ma* recension of the *Testimony of Ba*, rather than a common proto-version.

¹⁷ Blondeau 1980.

¹⁸ Cantwell and Mayer *forthcoming*.

elements also evident in the *Testimony of Ba*, such as Padmasambhava's somewhat superior attitude to Khri Srong lde btsan as a mundane king and his prophecy of the decline of the dharma. Yet it does not draw on the *Testimony of Ba* as a framing narrative. Instead, it gives Padmasambhava's earlier life-story in India, and does not depict him leaving Tibet until after the king has died and the tale reaches its end. Furthermore, Padmasambhava attains his apotheosis as a perfectly enlightened Indian master in the *Zangs gling ma*.

The *Testimony of Ba* only introduces Padmasambhava within the context of his arrival in Tibet, where he works for the benefit of the socially superior ruler of Tibet, Khri Srong lde btsan. The *Zangs gling ma* begins instead in Uḍḍiyāṇa, where King Indrabhūti adopts this child-incarnation of Amitābha. The young prince soon arranges his own exile in order to perfect higher tantric practices in charnel grounds all over India. He is thus simultaneously a Buddha's incarnation and a king's son; but he turns to a *siddha's* life as a young man, just like Nyang ral. Padmasambhava has exiled himself from social mores to become a master of both spiritual and wrathful powers, rejecting and thus transcending social status. Padmasambhava's status as a powerful outcast *siddha* thus gives him power over even the two Buddhist kings, Indrabhūti and Khri Srong lde btsan. His conversion of the first in Uḍḍiyāṇa prefigures his display of superiority to Khri Srong lde btsan when he arrives in Tibet, where the *Me tog snying po* also begins to cover the same story.

The Me tog snying po sbrang rtsi'i bcud

MTN is a *magnum opus* history of the dharma in India and Tibet. Both texts contain the same narrative concerning Khri Srong lde btsan, summarised below. Yet *MTN* is far longer than the *Zangs gling ma*. It narrates the history of the dharma, from the teachings of the historical Buddha right up to the twelfth century and Nyang ral's own times.¹⁹ The section on Khri Srong lde btsan, though roughly following the unaugmented recension of the *Zangs gling ma*,²⁰ is not placed within the framework of the life of Padmasambhava, whose childhood and training in India are completely omitted from *MTN*. What remains is sandwiched, appropriately enough, between the narratives of two other Buddhist kings (*chos rgyal*)—Srong btsan sgam po and Khri gTsug lde

¹⁹ See Meisezahl 1985: 21–23 for a summary of the content of *MTN*.

²⁰ See Doney *in press* on the claims for this recension to constitute the earliest attested in the *Zangs gling ma* tradition.

btsan (Ral pa can). While *MTN* omits the first five chapters of the *Zangs gling ma*, it retains the rest of that narrative (by far its majority) within its depiction of the life of Khri Srong lde btsan. Nyang ral probably authored *MTN* after the *Zangs gling ma*, borrowing the latter's Tibet section *in toto* but not *verbatim* as the basis of his narrative of Khri Srong lde btsan's reign.

The differences between the *Testimony of Ba* and the shared content of the *Zangs gling ma* and *MTN* are manifold.²¹ In the latter two sources, Khri Srong lde btsan is an incarnation of Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, and yet, when Padmasambhava arrives in Tibet, the Indian master nevertheless shows his superiority to the king by burning his robes of office and thus forcing Khri Srong lde btsan to bow. He eventually binds every Tibetan deity to an oath to protect Buddhism, and the spirits help to build bSam yas, as do the wives of Khri Srong lde btsan. Both Padmasambhava and Śāntarakṣita complete and consecrate the main shrine. When they then ask to return home, the king implores them to stay and teach Buddhism for the good of Tibet and the two masters agree. The narrative then moves on to other masters' feats on behalf of Buddhism, before finally returning to Padmasambhava. He initiates Khri Srong lde btsan into several *mahāyoga* lineages and prophesies that the king will discover the teachings again in a future life. He extends the lifespan of Khri Srong lde btsan, but eventually the king dies and Padmasambhava leaves Tibet to tame another country's demons. His lengthy farewell speech includes advice for all members of society, from the new king, Mu tig btsan po, downwards. It especially recommends practicing the mantra of Avalokiteśvara, *oṃ maṇi padme hūṃ*. Mu tig btsan po, his retinue and the disciples of Padmasambhava are anguished at his departure, but vow to practice Buddhism and govern the country in the manner of the master and Khri Srong lde btsan respectively.

Contemplating the many differences between this narrative and the *Testimony of Ba*, it could even be argued that Nyang ral intended to write an account that contradicted the perspective of the *Testimony of Ba* in all of the episodes that had bearing on Padmasambhava. This strong claim would be difficult to prove however, and perhaps puts undue emphasis on a posited authorial intent of Nyang ral that recent literary theory has done much to undermine. Nonetheless, the *Zangs gling ma* and *MTN* offer a coherent position on the matter that stands in contrast to that of the *Testimony of Ba*.

²¹ Again, see Doney *in press*: 20–22 for a précis of their shared content.

MTN also interpolates eight other episodes into the main narrative framework of the *Zangs gling ma*. Of these, five seem to be drawn from the *Testimony of Ba* (see the list below). Then, in the final part of *MTN* (which Sørensen refers to as beginning at *MTNc* 440a6 in the quote above), content that shares even greater similarity with the *Testimony of Ba* is appended after the *Zangs gling ma* narrative ends.

After the *Zangs gling ma* narrative ends in *MTN*, in other words after Khri Srong lde btsan has died and Padmasambhava leaves Tibet, *MTN* appends a summation of the king's life and then the bSam yas Debate between Hwa shang Mahāyāna and Kamalaśīla and its consequences (*MTNd* 395–411). This is also narrated in the *dBa' bzhed* (17b–25a), *sBa bzhed S* (54–64), *sBa bzhed G* (62–77) and *sBa bzhed P* (381–92), but the *MTN* narrative follows a version of the *Testimony of Ba* most closely resembling *sBa bzhed S*.²² The bSam yas Debate episode stands out most obviously as an alien addition to *MTN*, since Khri Srong lde btsan has already died before Padmasambhava leaves Tibet (see the outline, above). To narrate the bSam yas Debate, *MTN* then returns to a time when Khri Srong lde btsan is still alive. It is thus appended to the Khri Srong lde btsan section of *MTN*, drawn from the *Zangs gling ma*, rather than interpolated into it.

As Sørensen noted, *MTN* then continues to quote from this recension (but with some of its own unique additions) until *MTNd* 446.2. This content describes the bSam yas Debate during the reign of Khri Srong lde btsan, the life-stories of the later dharma-kings, and the travails of Buddhism in Tibet after the fall of the empire. These events in *MTN* fall beyond the scope of this paper on those narratives focusing on the reign of Khri Srong lde btsan.²³

²² *MTN* does not completely resemble *sBa bzhed S* here, however. As David Seyfort Ruegg (1989: 79) noted in his excellent comparison of sources on the bSam yas Debate:

It should be noted, moreover, that the words ascribed to dPal dbyaṅs in this *Chos 'byun* [*MTNYd* 404.13], in one version of the *sBa bžed* (G, p. 70) and in the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (ja, f. 117b) [i.e. *sBa bzhed P* 388.13] are ascribed in the *Žabs btags ma* version of the *sBa bžed* (S, p. 59) to a certain Sañ śi, a name (or title) borne by another member of the 'Ba family...

Pasang Wangdu and Diemberger (2000: 83 n. 318) agree in their analysis and add that the *dBa' bzhed* agrees with *sBa bzhed S* and the *Bu ston chos 'byung* (Martin 1997: 50–51, no. 72) agrees with the rest; then the next speaker according to the *dBa' bzhed* and *sBa bzhed S* is dPal dbyaṅs whereas it is Ye shes dbang po in *sBa bzhed G* and *P*. It seems to me that an ancestor of *sBa bzhed G* (quoted in *sBa bzhed P*) has been altered for some reason, after the *sBa bzhed zhabs btags ma* recension was formed from an even earlier exemplar of the *sBa bzhed*.

²³ See Hirshberg 2012: 224–25 and *forthcoming* for further analysis of the end portion

The Mes dbon gsum gi rnam par thar pa

The biographical anthology, *MBNT*, comprises of three biographies of Tibet's imperial dharma-kings, Srong btsan sgam po, Khri Srong lde btsan and Khri gTsug lde btsan (Ral pa can). Its depiction of Khri Srong lde btsan and the history of Buddhism after his reign are based on the *sBa bzhed zhabs btags ma* recension, and it seems that *MBNT* most resembles *sBa bzhed S* among the extant exemplars of that recension. Its quotation from the *Testimony of Ba* begins on 82a6, and the first omission that marks its divergence against *sBa bzhed G* and *P* in agreement with the *sBa bzhed zhabs btags ma* is at 82b6.²⁴ It then immediately diverges slightly from the whole *Testimony of Ba* tradition in listing only some of the five temples built at that time according to the latter.²⁵

MBNT continues to follow the *sBa bzhed zhabs btags ma* recension, but with its own minor omissions and additions, all the way through its depiction of the life of Khri Srong lde btsan.²⁶ *MBNT* then moves on to the *bzhabs btags ma* appendix and is based on its narrative (with minor divergences) right up to folio 150a1 (corresponding to *sBa bzhed S* 91.6). There it breaks off and goes into a little detail on figures like Brom ston pa, Nā ro pa, Mar pa and Mi la ras pa. *MBNT* appears to omit the colophon of the *Extended Testimony of Ba* from its end/colophon. However, folio 151 is missing, which links the end of the narrative to its colophon, and so it is not yet certain that this is the case.

of *MTN*'s narrative, its codas and colophons (including the part that Sørensen (1994: 634) recognised as taken from the *sBa bzhed bzhabs btags ma*). As mentioned above (and in van der Kuijp 2013: n. 6) Hirshberg concludes his PhD dissertation by expressing strong doubts over the attribution of *MTN* to Nyang ral (2012: 250–60).

²⁴ This whole narrative is omitted in the *dBa' bzhed*, ruling out this as a source. *sBa bzhed G* 1.15–16 and *P* 294.12–13 (with the part that *MBNT* 82b6 omits underlined) reads: *gser 'od dam pa'i mdo* (*P*: *dam pa*) *dang / kri ya dang / u pa ya* (*P*: omits *ya*) *shas tsam zhus glegs bam spyang drangs nas rgyal po'i mchod gnas su phul /*

sBa bzhed S 1.12 and *MBNT* 82b6 omit the underlined part, above, but include instead a part (in bold), reading: *gser 'od dam pa'i mdo* ***GNAS PA DE gnyis spyang drangs nas rgyal po'i mchod gnas su phul /***

²⁵ *sBa bzhed S* 1.13–14 (with *sBa bzhed G* 1.16–2.1 in parentheses) reads: *de'i zhugs khang lta bur lha khang lnga bzhengs te* (∧) *lha sa (na) 'khar (mkhar) brag / brag dmar (na) mgrin bzang / mtshims (mchims) phu (na) ne (na) ral / brag dmar (na) ka chu / bsam yas* (*G* omits *bsam yas*) *ma sa gong gi gtsug lag khang dang lnga bzhengs pas /*

MBNT 82b6–83a1 reads only: *de'i lha khang du lha mkhar brag dang / brag dmar 'gran zang zangs la sogs pa gtsug lag khang bzhengs pas /*

²⁶ For more detail, see Doney forthcoming.

MTN breaks off from the *Testimony of Ba* narrative earlier, (*MTN*d 450.4, corresponding to *sBa bzhed* S 87.4). Why *MTN* ends here is a question requiring further investigation. Yet this fact strongly suggests that *MBNT* did not base its narrative on *MTN*, since *MBNT* contains narrative agreeing with *sBa bzhed* S after *MTN* has stopped quoting this *zhabs btags ma* recension.²⁷ Before this, from the death of Śāntarakṣita to the monastic Buddhist abandonment of Central Tibet, *MTN* tells almost the same story as *MBNT*, perhaps with a few more divergences. This shared narrative is not necessarily due to their both being written by Nyang ral, but because at this point they are both quoting liberally from the appendix (*zhabs btags*) to the *Testimony of Ba*.

As Szerb first pointed out, the extant *MBNT* colophon only names Śākya rin chen (1347–1426?) as the owner (?) of that ‘copy’ (*dpe*).²⁸ However, the publisher attributed *MBNT* to Nyang ral.²⁹ The lack of internal reference to Nyang ral provides our first evidence to problematise attributing *MBNT* to Nyang ral. The second reason for doubt is the dissimilarity between the *MBNT* narrative on Khri Srong lde btsan and that shared by the *Zangs gling ma* and *MTN*.

Comparing *MTN* with the *Testimony of Ba* and *MBNT*

As mentioned above, *MTN* not only includes the majority of the *Zangs gling ma* in its life-story of Khri Srong lde btsan, but also interpolates eight other episodes into that frame-narrative, some of which resemble

²⁷ van der Kuijp (2013: n. 75) suggests that the details in *MBNT* figures like Marpa and Mi la ras pa may suggest a *terminus ante quem* for either this manuscript copy or the original compilation of *MBNT*. However, we do not know exactly where the author stopped, because folio 151 is missing along with the beginning of the colophon. We may again ask why the author of *MBNT* chose to break off from the *Testimony of Ba* here, but we do not know, indeed, whether there was any further narrative in the exemplar of the *Testimony of Ba* that *MBNT* is based on. As mentioned above, *MTN* breaks off earlier, but again we do not know what, at the point of inclusion into *MTN*, constituted the end of the *Testimony of Ba* narrative that it evidently used.

²⁸ The colophon is missing one folio, but the next (152a3–4) reads: *btsun pa shakya rin chen ces bya'i dpe / chos rgyal mes dbon rnam kyi rnam par thar pa / rin po ches'i sgron mo zhes bya ba / rdzogs sho //*. Szerb (1990: 143 and *idem*: 146, ns. 3–4) tentatively identifies him with ‘the *sgom pa* of ’Bri gung, a contemporary of Sa-skya Pandita’ (*idem*: n. 4). The dates of Śākya rin chen are based on the TBRC (www.tbrc.org, accessed 19/12/09).

²⁹ Szerb explains:

Nyang Ral Nyi-ma-'od-zer is indicated as the author in most libraries. This mistake is probably due to the error of the Bhutanese publisher... I am indebted to Prof. A.M. Blondeau for calling my attention to the wrong attribution of authorship to Nyang Ral-pa-can. (*idem*: n. 3)

the *Testimony of Ba*'s account. It is clear that *MBNT* does not resemble the *Zangs gling ma*'s portrayal, or *MTN* before it begins to follow the *Extended Testimony of Ba*. *MBNT* does not contain any of the episodes on Khri Srong lde btsan that *MTN* borrows from the *Zangs gling ma*. *MBNT* includes *some* of those episodes that *MTN* borrows from the *Testimony of Ba* tradition and interpolates into the *Zangs gling ma* frame-narrative, but it copies them directly from that tradition, using quite different language to *MTN*. Here is a list of the interpolated episodes in *MTN* with their corresponding occurrences (or lack thereof) in other sources:

1. Khri Srong lde btsan's speech aged five (*MTNd* 273) is not included in the *dBa' bzhed*, but is in *sBa bzhed* G (4–5), *sBa bzhed* S (4) and *sBa bzhed* P (*MTNd* 297–98). It is also contained in *MBNT* (85a).
2. The choice that he gives to his ministers regarding what to build in Tibet (*MTNd* 274) does not feature in the *dBa' bzhed*, but is in *sBa bzhed* G (36), *sBa bzhed* S (29–30) and *sBa bzhed* P (334). It also features in *MBNT* (101a–b).
3. His support for a heretic rite (*MTNd* 274–75) is not included in the *dBa' bzhed*, but is in *sBa bzhed* G (40–42), *sBa bzhed* S (33–34) and *sBa bzhed* P (338–39). It is not included in *MBNT*.³⁰
4. The lavish descriptions of the bSam yas temples in prose and poetry (*MTNd* 294–302) do not resemble the *dBa' bzhed* (16b–17a), *sBa bzhed* G (43–53), *sBa bzhed* S (35–45) or *sBa bzhed* P (340–49), or *MBNT* (104b–14b).
5. Padmasambhava taking the form of the mythical Garuḍa bird (*MTNd* 291–92) is not present in any versions of the *Testimony of Ba* tradition or *MBNT*.
6. The king's dream that leads to finding statues of the gods on a hillside (*MTNd* 293–94) is narrated by the *dBa' bzhed* (16b), *sBa bzhed* G (42–43), *sBa bzhed* S (34–35) and *sBa bzhed* P (339–40), and in *MBNT* (104a–b).
7. The appearance of a huge lotus at the consecration of bSam yas (*MTNd* 302–03) does not feature in the *dBa' bzhed*, but is in *sBa bzhed* G (57), *sBa bzhed* S (48) and *sBa bzhed* P (354–55). It also features in *MBNT* (117a–b).

³⁰ *MBNT* omits the entire episode (corresponding to *sBa bzhed* S 33.1–34.8) with the inclusion of a gloss that makes it appear that the model for bSam yas was decided in a speech by Khri Srong lde btsan.

8. Padmasambhava's attempt to prolong Khri Srong lde btsan's life with a vase initiation (*MTNd* 347–351) is included in the *dBa' bzhed* (12b–13a), *sBa bzhed G* (30), *sBa bzhed S* (24–25) and *sBa bzhed P* (326–27). It is not included in *MBNT*.³¹

Of these, episodes 1, 2, 3, 6, 7 and 8 are roughly similar to, and may be drawn from, the *Testimony of Ba* tradition—but probably not from the *dBa' bzhed* recension, which omits 1, 2, 3 and 7. Apart from numbers 3 and 8, *MBNT* contains all these episodes when they also feature in *sBa bzhed S*. However, neither *MBNT* nor the *Testimony of Ba* includes either the particular description of bSam yas or Padmasambhava as a Garuḍa (episodes 4 and 5) that are apparently either created from scratch or drawn from a tradition other than the *Testimony of Ba*. Below, I analyse a few of these interpolated episodes in *MTN*. Comparing the representation of these scenes in each of the traditions discussed above uncovers a matrix of witnesses attesting to the relative antiquity of each history in the matrix. There is only one episode in the life of Khri Srong lde btsan where such analysis can be wholly effective—the story of Khri Srong lde btsan's prophetic dream—since it alone is narrated by all the sources under discussion here.

The dream episode is in fact decisive for the argument built up so far, namely that *MBNT* follows the same recension as *sBa bzhed S* rather than *MTN* when narrating the life of Khri Srong lde btsan. The other episodes that I examine merely provide ancillary evidence for the same argument, but also show how *MTN* differs from the *Testimony of Ba* and *MBNT* in its description of these events. Finally, I analyse those episodes that are unique to *MTN*, and may be the most likely of all the interpolations to be written by Nyang ral himself. I shall focus on the dream narrative, with some corroborating evidence from other episodes, but shall not attempt to cover all nine from the list above given the space constraints of this article.

*The Episodes that Resemble the Testimony of Ba:
The King's Dream of bSam yas' Statues*

This episode is described in the *dBa' bzhed* (16b1–6), *sBa bzhed G* (42.14–43.10), *sBa bzhed P* (339.21–40.15), *sBa bzhed S* (34.12–35.6),

³¹ *MBNT* omits all the narrative corresponding to *sBa bzhed S* 23.3–26.7 (containing many of Padmasambhava's acts in Tibet before he is asked to leave), but adds a précis of these events (98b1–99a6). Then *MBNT* 99a6 omits Padmasambhava's prayer that he and unstinting benefactors may be reborn and practice Mahāyāna yoga in Akiniṣṭha heaven, and the ministers' plot to kill him (*sBa bzhed S* 26.8–13).

MTNd (293.17–94.6) and *MBNT* (104a4–4b5). Every other episode in the *MTN* list, above, is omitted in at least one other text. In this episode, Khri Srong lde btsan dreams that a guide shows him rocks on Khas/Has po ri Hill near bSam yas, which are in fact self-manifested statues of Buddhas and other deities. He awakes and transports the rock statues, notably one of Mahābodhi, to bSam yas to be worshipped in the central shrines. The *dBa' bzhed*, *sBa bzhed* G and P narrate similar versions of this episode. *MBNT* instead resembles *sBa bzhed* S's version. For example, part of the *dBa' bzhed* description (16b3–4) reads:

[Khri Srong lde btsan] arrived at Khas po ri [in the dream] and [his guide] made him examine all the rocks and said that this and this had such and such *tathāgathas'* names and the bodhisattvas had such and such names. [He] was also shown all the wrathful deities.

...khas po rir phyin pa dang / brag kun ltar bcug pa dang / 'di dang 'di ni de bzhin gshegs pa'i mtshan 'di dang 'di zhes bya ba dang / byang chub sems dpa'i mtshan 'di dang 'di zhes bya ba dang zhes mtshan smos so // khro bo kun yang bstan

sBa bzhed G (42.20–43.1) and *sBa bzhed* P (340.3–6, in parentheses) add detail to the *dBa' bzhed* version.³²

That [king] went to Has po ri; and after [the guide] made [Khri Srong lde btsan] look at all the rocks, [he] said the names of all [the deities]: 'These are the Buddha and such and such Bodhisattva.' There were nineteen deities. Being shown all the deities and (P: together with) the wrathful deities, the king laughed out of great joy.

de has po rir phyin pa dang / brag kun la (P omits la) bltar bcug nas / 'di ni sangs rgyas dang byang chub sems dpa' 'di dang 'di zhes kun gyi mtshan yang smos nas lha bcu dgu 'dug / khro bo dang (P adds bcas pa) kun bstan te / rgyal po dgyes ches nas he he byas

sBa bzhed S (35.1) omits much of the narrative featured in *sBa bzhed* G and P, including even those parts that *sBa bzhed* G and P share with the *dBa' bzhed*. *sBa bzhed* S therefore provides only a brief statement of the episode: 'When that [king] went, there were 19 deities. [He] laughed out of joy' (*de phyin tsa na lha bcu dgu 'dug / dgyes nas he he byas*).

sBa bzhed S only shares one word (*phyin*) with the *dBa' bzhed* here. *MBNT* (104b1–2) agrees with *sBa bzhed* S almost *verbatim*: 'When

³² They also omit one line (*de bzhin gshegs pa'i mtshan 'di dang 'di zhes bya ba dang /*), which may or may not have featured in the early recensions of the *Testimony of Ba*.

[the king] went there, there were 13 deities. [He] laughed with (?) joy' (*der phyin tsa na lha bcu gsum 'dug / dges grogs he he byas*).

It appears that *MBNT* agrees with *sBa bzhed S*, which has already removed much of the content included in *sBa bzhed G, P* and the *dBa' bzhed*. This adequately counters any claim that the omissions in *sBa bzhed S* are the result of centuries of transmissional errors, since *sBa bzhed S* and *MBNT* were transmitted completely separately. The long, almost *verbatim* quotes from *sBa bzhed S* in *MBNT* suggest that the *sBa bzhed zhabs btags ma* was created before *MBNT* was written. There are, undoubtedly, some transmissional errors in *sBa bzhed S*. A close comparison of the *Testimony of Ba* versions with *MBNT* would help to correct these. *MBNT* also differs slightly from *sBa bzhed S*. For example, it mentions thirteen deities in the quote above, whereas the *Testimony of Ba* versions state that there were nineteen deities on the hill. This discrepancy may be the result of *MBNT*'s compiler deciding to stray from his copy text, or a transmissional error.

MTN contains a short and confused narration of the same episode, based only loosely on the *Testimony of Ba* tradition.³³ It reads:

The king thought: 'How should the statues (*rten*) in my temple be built?' Then in a dream a god from the intermedite space prophesied: 'Since Your Majesty's tutelary (*vid dam*) deity stands in the place decided by the blowing of the red cow,³⁴ invite [that deity] and ask it to

³³ Clearly the later *Testimony of Ba* tradition is its source, rather than the *dBa' bzhed*, because almost every interpolated episode in the Khri Srong lde btsan section of *MTN* comes from the later *Testimony of Ba* tradition and nowhere else. Also, in describing this episode, *MTNd* 294.4 uses the phrase *rdo sku rang byon de dbu'i gtsug tor nyug gi byon*. This closely resembles the wording of *sBa bzhed S* 35.3–4, *rdo'i sku rang byung the'u'i rjes med pa gtsug gtor nag ldem pa*, or of *sBa bzhed G* 3.4–5, *rdo sku byung / the'u'i rjes med pa gtsug tor nag po ldem me ba*. This sentence is not present in the *dBa' bzhed*.

³⁴ It is difficult to know what this may mean, though the wanderings of a red cow (*ba dmar po*) occurs in a similar context in a text translated by Franz-Karl Erhrhard (2004). The cow refuses to give milk, but instead offers it to a sandalwood tree in a nearby forest, alerting locals to the appearance of statues of the four brothers *Mahākarunika* (*thugs rje chen po mched bzhi*) there (see the *rTa ljang* chapter II.4, transliterated and translated in *idem*: 164 and 237–38). Perhaps, though, *ba* is a later correction of *ra*, goat, influenced by the narrative of the four brothers. This possibility is suggested by Heller's (1985) description of Nyang ral's *rKyal 'bud* texts, in which the skin of a red goat makes a bag (*rkyal*) 'used as a support for the *bla* and *srog* of an enemy for the purposes of its subjugation by illness or death' (*idem*: 259). The practitioner blows ('*bud*) into the bag and then the deity sGrol ging dmar po appears as a red man brandishing a sword (*idem*: 261). He kills the practitioner's enemy, but 'without being transferred to a paradise' (*idem*: 263) This suggests its peripheral relationship to classic Buddhist "liberation" ritual.

reside in the monastery!’ Having heard that voice, [Khri Srong lde btsan] thought to decide the [the meaning] of the speech on the peak of Has po ri. Arriving at the peak of Has po ri and not seeing anything at all, the king thought ‘This is the [prophesied] spot.’ Scratching [the earth] with his hand, the self-arisen rock-statue [of] Mahābodhi poked its top-knot [out of the earth]. [Khri Srong lde btsan] invited and asked it to reside as the principal deity of [bSam yas] Monastery in the lower, Tibetan-style chapel.³⁵

Unlike *MBNT*, *MTN* does not quote any extant *Testimony of Ba* version directly.³⁶ This strengthens my hypothesis that *MBNT* is not based on *MTN*, even where it narrates the same episode. *MBNT* could not possibly have arrived at a version so close to *sBa bzhed S* by quoting *MTN*. *MTN* differs greatly from the *Testimony of Ba* narrative’s details, even in the truncated form that *MBNT* quotes. It does not mention nineteen (or even thirteen) deities, or the king’s laughter. Nor does it mention *tathāgathas*, buddhas or bodhisattvas; *MTN* speaks of a *yid dam* instead. The details are almost all different but *structurally* it is recognisably the same narrative. It also appears in the same place in the life of Khri Srong lde btsan where the *Testimony of Ba* positions the episode. Interestingly, *MTN* alone implies that the king discovers the means for his own liberation on Has po ri, since he finds there not merely statues, but instead his tutelary deity (*yid dam*).

The Prince’s Speech Aged Five

In this episode, Khri Srong lde btsan announces himself to be the son of the Chinese queen, Jincheng Gongzhu, in order to counter the claim of the sNa nam clan to the child. The *Old Tibetan Annals* and *Royal Genealogy* make it clear that Khri Srong lde btsan’s mother *was* born in

³⁵ *MTNd* 293.17–94.6 reads: *nga’i lha khang du rten ji ltar bzhengs dgongs pa dang / rgyal po’i gzims pa’i mnal lam na bar snang nas lhas lung bstan te / rgyal po khyod kyi yid dam gyi lha ba dmar po ’bud pa’i skad {thag} [added by editors] chad pa’i sa der bzhugs pas gdan drongs la / gtsug lag khang du bzhugs su gsol cig bya ba byung ba dang / de’i (294) skad byung ba thos pas skad thag has po ri’i rtse mor chad pa snyam byed pa byung bas / de ma thag has po ri’i rtse mor byon pas mngon sum par ci yang mi ’dug pa la / rgyal pos sa de ’di yin gsungs nas / phyag gis brad pas / byang chub chen po rdo sku rang byon de dbu’i gtsug tor nyug gis byon / de gdan drangs te ’og khang bod lugs kyi gtsug lag khang gi lha’i gtso bor bzhugs su gsol lo /*

³⁶ Because of this, I cannot ascertain which version of the *Testimony of Ba*, if any, is its source. *MTN* could here be based on another source that radically retells the *Testimony of Ba* narrative. We find no greater degree of fidelity in any of the other episodes in the list given above that are in both *MTN* and the *Testimony of Ba*.

the sNa nam clan.³⁷ This tale is absent in the *dBa' bzhed* but in the later *Testimony of Ba* tradition the prince is described as of Chinese descent:

The sNa (r)nam queen, (b)Zhi steng(s) abducted Gongzhu's (*kong jo'i*) son and said: 'This [boy] was born to me.' ... The prince said: '[I,] Khri Srong lde btsan, am a Chinese uterine descendant (*rgya tsha*³⁸), whatever sNa nam Zhang [khrom pa] does.' Then [he] went to the lap of the Chinese [queen]. So [his] name itself was self-given.³⁹

Kapstein proposes that this episode constitutes a rhetorical literary device. It perhaps reflects a later, Buddhist belief in Jincheng Gongzhu's parentage of Khri Srong lde btsan.⁴⁰ *MBNT* (85a2–5) agrees with *sBa bzhed* S (4.5–10), though it diverges more than in the episode above. Its source is evidently an ancestor of *sBa bzhed* S rather than of G or P. It spells (Jincheng) Gongzhu's name *ong jo* rather than *kong jo*; and the lines that *sBa bzhed* S omits are also absent in *MBNT*.⁴¹

³⁷ See Dotson 2009: 123 and n. 313; also Bacot *et al.* 1940: 25–26 and 82.

³⁸ I would like to thank Brandon Dotson for clarifying this point in the translation.

³⁹ *sBa bzhed* G (4.16–5.2), with P's (297.19–98.3) variations in parentheses, reads: *kong jo'i bu sna rnam (nam) bza' bzhi (zhi) stengs kyis (steng gis) phrogs nas 'di (omits 'di) nga la skyes pa yin zer / der blon po kun gyis brtag par (pa) bya ba'i phyir / thang tshigs kyi (zhig gi) bug gar (par) bu bzhag nas bu su (sus) thob byed du bcug pas / kong jos sngon la zin pa bzhi stengs kyis zhi (reads zin pa sna nam bzas shi) na'ang shi snyam te (nas) phrogs pas / kong jos bu shi dogs nas lhod (inserts kyis) btang ste / yin dang nga'i yin te dri (gri) mo khyod zer nas btang (inserts bas) / bu kong jo'i yin par shes / lo gcig lon tsa na zhabs 'dzugs pa'i dga' ston byas te (ste) / sna nam pa rnam ber chung ngu re lag na thogs nas zhang po'i pang du shog zer (inserts bas) / rgyal bu na re / khri srong lde btsan rgya tsha lags / [5] sna nam zhang gi (gis) ci bgyi 'tshal / gsungs nas rgya'i spang (pang) du song bas / ming yang rang gis btags so /*

sBa bzhed S (4.7: ...*zin pa bzhi stengs...*) agrees with G against P in the only major difference between the latter two here.

⁴⁰ The tale resembles that of Solomon's judgement over two conflicting claims to ownership of a child. It is contained in the *Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya*, but may just as easily have come through Khotan from Judeo-Christian narratives passed along the Silk Road. Kapstein, who has traced these influences, rightly notes that this story 'appropriated a canonical Buddhist tale to justify a claimed Buddhist genealogy for a Buddhist king' (Kapstein 2000: 36) rather than a pro-Chinese stance on the Tibetan line of kings.

⁴¹ For example, in the note above *sBa bzhed* G (P in parentheses) reads: *der blon po kun gyis brtag par (pa) bya ba'i phyir / thang tshigs kyi (zhig gi) bug gar (par) bu bzhag*; whereas *sBa bzhed* S (4.6) reads *blon po kun gyis thang rtsigs kyi bug par bu bzhag*. *MBNT* (85a3) reads: *blon po kun gyi thang rtsis kyi bug par bu chung bzhag*; also omitting the only words of this text found in the *dBa' bzhed*.

Without the *dBa' bzhed*, we cannot be sure that these lines are omitted from *sBa bzhed* S and not merely added later to an ancestor of *sBa bzhed* G and P. However, the evidence from the king's dream episode, above, shows that *sBa bzhed* S does omit

MTN again differs from all *sBa bzhed* versions in its details:

When the prince reached the age of five, sNa nam Zhang khrom pa skyes and the sNa nam pa [clan] said ‘Prince Khri Srong lde btsan is our uterine descendant’, they put great pressure on the Chinese queen [Jincheng Gongzhu, and] arrived to abduct the prince.⁴² All the royal ministers assembled one day for a large festival and bothered the son-prince, asking: ‘Is your mother the Chinese queen or are [you] the son of the sNa Nam pa? Take sides!’ The son, Khri Srong lde btsan, answered: ‘holding up [my] hand with a claim (*gral rim*), [I] Khri Srong lde btsan am a Chinese uterine descendant, whatever sNa nam Zhang [khrom pa] does.’ He became famous for that claim.⁴³

MTN is similar to the *Testimony of Ba* only when quoting the words of Khri Srong lde btsan at the end of this episode. This latter part of the prince’s proclamation is almost incomprehensible in the form it has come down to us;⁴⁴ but *MTN* still quotes it *verbatim*. Unfortunately, this quote cannot be traced to any single *Testimony of Ba* version against the others, since they all give the same quote here.⁴⁵

elements from *sBa bzhed* G and P in its narrative. The new evidence from this episode shows that *MBNT* agrees with *sBa bzhed* S in its own text.

⁴² Sørensen (1994: 359, n. 1152) glosses this sentence: ‘but as the Chinese Kong-jo was very powerful, the child was kidnapped (by Kong-jo [Jinchen Gongzhu]?)’, though his parenthetical doubt suggests that this reading is tentative. Such a reading would make Khri Srong lde btsan the sNa nam clan’s descendant in *MTN*, kidnapped by Jinchen Gongzhu but colluding with her to promulgate the lie of his Chinese descent. Such a reading would contradict Nyang ral’s earlier description of Jinchen Gongzhu divine insemination (*MTNd* 272.9–72.14).

⁴³ *MTNd* 273.4–11 reads: *de nas rgyal bu dgung lo lnga lon pa na sna nam zhang khrom pa skyes dang / sna nam pa rnam rgyal bu khri srong lde btsan nged kyi tsha bo yin zer nas rgya mo la dbang che byas / rgyal bu ‘phrog tu byung ba la / der rgyal blon kun nyi ma gcig thams cad tshogs nas dga’ ston chen po byas nas / sras rgyal bu la khyed kyi ma rgya mo yin nam / sna nam pa’i sras yin ngos ‘dzin tu gcug pa las sras rgyal po [=bu] khri srong lde btsan na re / gral rim gyis phyag g.yas pa gdengs nas / khri srong lde btsan rgya tsha la / sna nam zhang gis ci zhi gbyi / zhes gral rim gyis bsgrags so*

⁴⁴ See Sørensen 1994: n. 1165 for other variants of *ci zhi gbyi* such as *ci byar yod* or *ci bgyi ‘tshal*. *ci bgyi* could also mean ‘a servant, valet; one who does what he is ordered to do’ (Das 2000 [1902]: 380 col.ii).

⁴⁵ *sBa bzhed* S (4.9–10) reads: *rgyal bu na re khri srong lde btsan rgyal tsha legs / sna nam zhang gi ci bgyi ‘tshal*
sBa bzhed G (4.24–5.1) reads: *rgyal bu na re / khri srong lde btsan rgya tsha lags / [5] sna nam zhang gi ci bgyi ‘tshal*
sBa bzhed P (298.1–2) reads: *rgyal bu na re / khri srong lde btsan rgya tsha lags / sna nam zhang gi ci bgyi ‘tshal*

I do not think we can make too much out of the fact that *sBa bzhed* S currently reads *rgyal tsha legs* for *rgya tsha la*. *MBNT* (85a5) reads *rgya’i tshab la*, which is

The evidence of this episode corroborates that of the episode above. *sBa bzhed* G and P tell largely similar tales, whereas *sBa bzhed* S is abridged and *MBNT* agrees with it against the other *Testimony of Ba* versions. *MTN* gives a structurally similar account, but with different details. In the end, their characterisations of the Khri Srong lde btsan in this episode are quite similar.

The King's Choice to his Ministers

In this episode, Khri Srong lde btsan seeks to persuade his ministers to build bSam yas Monastery, by presenting it as the least extravagant of his proposed constructions in Tibet. While *MBNT* agrees with *sBa bzhed* S again, *MTN*'s version is *closer* to those of *sBa bzhed* G and P. However, *MTN* places the episode earlier in Khri Srong lde btsan's life, before Padmasambhava arrives in Tibet.

The *sBa bzhed* tradition (S: 29.13–30.2; G: 36.5–13; P: 334.2–9) positions this episode after Padmasambhava has left Tibet; the master has begun to bind the chthonic deities to protect the dharma but also turned many ministers against him by using unorthodox methods. The land is more conducive to erect bSam yas Monastery on, but the local clan leaders of Tibet are perhaps even less willing to support Buddhist building projects than the local chthonic forces are. So Khri Srong lde btsan gives them the choice of what edifice to construct in Tibet; involving them in the process while making all the alternatives to bSam yas untenable. The choices, as recorded in *sBa bzhed* G and P, include:

Covering Has po ri in copper, so that all the nail heads show on the inside; or hiding the gTsang po [river] inside a copper tube and making it [reach] as far as 'Chong (P: Phyong); or digging a well 991 fathoms deep into Ka chu plain.⁴⁶

obviously transmitted from *rgya tsha la* rather than from the current reading of *sBa bzhed* S. *MBNT* draws on an ancestor of *sBa bzhed* S rather than any other version, therefore that their shared ancestor most probably read *rgya stsha la*. *MTN* could, therefore, as easily have quoted from an ancestor of *sBa bzhed* G, P or S here.

⁴⁶ *sBa bzhed* G 36.10–13 (P 334.6–9) reads: *yang na* (omits *yang na*) *has po ri zangs kyis btums la (nas) gzer mgo thams cad nang du bstan pa gcig (zhig) bya'am / yang na* (omits *yang na*) *gtsang po zangs ma'i (kyi) sbubs su bcug cing 'chong (la phyong) du ring bar (ba zhig) bya'am / yang na* (omits *yang na*) *ka chu (chu'i) thang la khron pa 'dom dgu brgya dang dgu bcu rtsa gcig 'bru'am /* Either dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba or, more likely, some intermediary scribe of *sBa bzhed* P has omitted *yang na*.

sBa bzhed S omits several elements of this list, and *MBNT* agrees with its reading:

Covering Khas po ri in copper; or hiding the gTsang po [river] inside a copper tube; or digging a well 990 fathoms deep into Ka chu plain.⁴⁷

MBNT positions this narrative after Padmasambhava leaves Tibet, again like *sBa bzhed S*. *MTN* appears to correspond to *sBa bzhed G* or *P* when it says that ‘option four was to cover Has po ri with copper, so that the heads of all the nails showed.’⁴⁸ The latter part of this choice is absent in *sBa bzhed S* and *MBNT*. However, the *Testimony of Ba*’s order of options is different to that of *MTN*; while the latter also omits some choices and adds others in their place. Unlike *sBa bzhed S* and *MBNT*, *MTN* situates this episode *before* Padmasambhava’s arrival in Tibet.⁴⁹

It is now possible to see the pattern of shared readings and divergence among our texts that I discussed in the *Testimony of Ba* section of this article. *sBa bzhed G* and *P* are linked by some common ancestor that constitutes an extension of the *dBa’ bzhed*’s core narrative. *sBa bzhed S*’s truncated narrative on Khri Srong lde btsan suggests a further recension (*sBa bzhed zhabs btags ma*), perhaps redacted when the *zhabs btags* appendix was added to the end of it. *MBNT* follows this recension closely, which may date its existence to before or early in the fifteenth century (if the Śākya rin chen named in the *MBNT* colophon indeed lived from 1347 to 1426). *MTN* follows this recension after the end of the *Zangs gling ma* frame-narrative, but not necessarily before. *MTN*’s interpolations into the *Zangs gling ma* frame-narrative could be based on either the *sBa bzhed* or *sBa bzhed*

⁴⁷ *sBa bzhed S* 29.15–30.1 (with *MBNT* 101b1–2 in parentheses) reads: *yang na khas su (po) ri gser cha* (omits *gser cha*) *zangs kyi (kyis) gdum (btum) mam / yang na gtsang po zangs ma’i sbubs su ’jug (gzhug) gam / yang na bka’ chu’i (chu) thang la khron pa ’dom dgu brgya dang dgu bcu sa (pa gcig) bru’am /*

MBNT has been more faithfully transmitted than *sBa bzhed S*, and so agrees in some of its details (but not its general content) with *sBa bzhed G* and, to a lesser extent, *P*.

⁴⁸ *MTNd* 274.14–15: *has po ri zangs kyis phur (=phub) nas gzer thams cad kyi mgo nang du bstan pa byed dang bzhi*. Note too the spelling *has po ri* rather than *khas po ri*. Sørensen (1994: 634) believes that *MTN* ‘has employed a version identical or cognate to the Chin. ed. of BZH,’ i.e. *sBa bzhed G*. However the use of *nas* and the absence of *yang na* here could equally point towards an ancestor of *sBa bzhed P*.

⁴⁹ Interestingly, the *Padma bka’ thang* (1987: 343–45) agrees with *MTN* in placing this episode before Khri Srong lde btsan invites Indian masters to Tibet. This suggests that O rgyan gling pa may have had access to *MTN*, or at least been aware of that tradition of ordering the events. See Doney *in press*: 33–38 for correspondences between the *Padma bka’ thang* and the *Zangs gling ma*.

zhabs btags ma, or some other history loosely based on those recensions.⁵⁰ *MTN*'s novel re-ordering of the episodes suggests the latter, or at least a much stronger authorial presence than is shown in the last portion of *MTN*.

*The Episodes that are unique to the Me tog snying po:
The Poetic Descriptions of bSam yas*

MTN contains a number of unique sections. Their free-flowing narratives resemble Nyang ral's writing style, displayed in the unaugmented recension of the *Zangs gling ma* and the corresponding passages in the rest of *MTN*. The most arresting and poetic of these creations concerns the construction of bSam yas Monastery.

The *dBa' bzhed* (16b7–17a6) also contains a brief description of bSam yas. *sBa bzhed* G (43.10–53.17) and P (340.15–49.17) contain a wealth of extra detail.⁵¹ *sBa bzhed* S (35.6–45.9) includes most of this

⁵⁰ As quoted above, Sørensen (1994: 634–35) suggests that Nyang ral may have quoted a free-floating source that later became the *zhabs btags* appendix of *sBa bzhed* S. It is true that we do not yet know when the *zhabs btags* appendix was added to the *sBa bzhed* (though it evidently took place before the compilation of *MBNT*). Nonetheless, given the seamless move in both *MTN* and *MBNT* from the main narrative of the *sBa bzhed zhabs btags ma* to its *zhabs btags* appendix (while omitting its self-references), I think it unlikely that either *MTN* or *MBNT* may have borrowed these quotes from another source, which the redactors of the *Testimony of Ba* also used when extending their narrative to become the *sBa bzhed zhabs btags ma*. If the *Testimony of Ba* episodes were added to *MTN* after the twelfth century, then we need not suggest (as Sørensen does) an eleventh/twelfth-century date for this redaction, such that Nyang ral himself would have been aware of the *sBa bzhed zhabs btags ma*. We can with more certainty assert (with Hirshberg 2012: 224–28) that the *sBa bzhed zhabs btags ma* or a dependent history is quoted in *MTN*, but not necessarily by Nyang ral.

⁵¹ In the *dBa' bzhed*, the construction of bSam yas, begins with the installation of the statues found on Khas po ri. *dBa' bzhed* 16b7 (*de nas na bza' gsol / gser gyi ska rags bcings pa'i steng du 'jim pa g.yogso / /*) roughly equates to *sBa bzhed* G 43.10–13 and P 340.15–17 (in parentheses): *de nas khri la bzhugs pa dang btsan po dgyes te / man dhe (dhi) dang gser ga (rka) gsol / na bza' gsol nas btsan po nyid kyi gser gyi sku regs shākya thub pa'i* (P reads *na bza' dang rgyal po nyid gser gyi rka rags) sku la bcings so / cings pa'i (so / de'i) steng du* (omits *du*) *'jim pas g.yogs / phya (gzugs) mkhan na re /*

sBa bzhed S omits much of this material, including *all* the *dBa' bzhed* text, in its version (35.6–7): (S omits *de nas*) *khri la bzhugs pa dang btsan po dgyes te / man dhe dang gser ka gsol / phywa mkhan na re /*

The later *Testimony of Ba* versions then add a lengthy description of the construction of bSam yas, before returning to the *dBa' bzhed*'s text. At the end of their descriptions of bSam yas, *sBa bzhed* G 52.19–53.17 and P 348.21–49.17 copy the description of the central pole being erected in the southern blue *stūpa* from *dBa' bzhed* 16b7–17a6, but with extra added detail about a miraculous golden set of

information, but has lost some in the course of its redaction. *MBNT* appears to agree with *sBa bzhed* S at first,⁵² but contains its own details later on.⁵³

MTN again describes events in a different order to the *Testimony of Ba*. Some of this earlier detail (e.g. *MTNd* 287–93) agrees with this tradition.⁵⁴ However, the subsequent lengthy prose and poetry description of bSam yas (*MTNd* 294–302) appears to be Nyang ral’s own invention or based on a source differing from the *Testimony of Ba* tradition. Nyang ral must have been familiar with the layout of bSam yas; he would not have needed to base his description on any literary source. It is perhaps not intertextual historiography that he writes here, but a description of the monastery as it stood in his day.

armour. *sBa bzhed* S 44.14–45.9 follows the *dBa’ bzhed* more loosely here, omitting some parts of this description.

Between these two stories in the *dBa’ bzhed* (16b), there is an interlinear note on the different coloured *stūpas* of bSam yas. It is similar to *sBa bzhed* G 50.3–12, P 346.14–23 and S 42.2–9—except that all *sBa bzheds* give the description in different orders to the *dBa’ bzhed*. Michael Willis (2013: 146–47) claims and that many of the interlinear annotations in the *dBa’ bzhed* manuscript were added later, and did not belong to the original text. It is possible that this interlinear note was present in the version of the *dBa’ bzhed* that the later *Testimony of Ba* redactor copied, perhaps also as an interlinear note that he/she then incorporated into the main text. However, because of the sparse details and the difference in order between this note and the rest of the *Testimony of Ba* tradition, it is more likely that the later *dBa’ bzhed* scribe added the information in the interlinear note from his/her own knowledge of bSam yas. The question of the interlinear notes to the *dBa’ bzhed* remains part of the continuing mystery surrounding its creation.

⁵² *MBNT* 104b5–6 omits the same part that *sBa bzhed* S (35.6–7, above) omits. It reads: [*MBNT* omits *de nas*] *khri la bzhugs pa dang bisan po shin du dgyes te / man de dang gser sga gsol / de la phyra mkhan na re /*

⁵³ See *MBNT* 104b–14b. An in-depth study of the early description of bSam yas in Tibetan literature will have to await a more detailed comparison between the architectural features of the monastery as far as we know they existed in the twelfth century and the textual accounts given in *MTN*, the *Testimony of Ba*, and *MBNT* (among other sources), all of which lies beyond the scope of this article. What follows is merely an early indication of the divergences of *MTN* from the other sources under discussion here.

⁵⁴ For example, *MTN*’s list of *stūpas* (*MTNd* 287.16–20) corresponds to the later *Testimony of Ba* tradition rather than the *dBa’ bzhed*, in listing first the white, then red, black and finally blue *stūpas*. *MTN*’s list is in an earlier place in the description of bSam yas than that in the *Testimony of Ba*, though, and may merely be in accord with it because they both describe the same extant edifice. *MTN* positions the episode concerning the Has po ri statues later in the narrative (*MTNd* 293.17–94.6), therefore see above on its rough correspondence to the *Testimony of Ba* there.

Padmasambhava in the Form of Garuḍa

MTN includes in its section on building bSam yas, an arresting poem on *nāga*-subjugation that is not included in the *Testimony of Ba* tradition. Here, Padmasambhava takes the form of a mythical Garuḍa bird (*Khyung*), using this bird's natural predator-prey relationship with snakes to symbolise overcoming subterranean forces.⁵⁵ It reads:

The king and ministers went into the presence of the master.

In the great cave of mChims phu
They saw a frightening great Garuḍa incarnation (*sprul pa*).
It shone with plumes the colour of purified gold,
And all its fur was a fire of sharp *vajras*.
[Each] leading feather was like a brandished sword,
The tips like a turned razor.

It had a glowing-iron beak, bones and talons,
As if from a blacksmith's forge.
Its eyes, the sun and moon, were bulging and transforming.
The king of *nāgas*, Mal gro gzi chen,
And his minister Nag po glong rdol, both
Were seized by their snake bodies in its claw and subdued with its foot.

It forced their snake mouths open, lifted and shook their bodies.
Bringing their two palms together [in obeisance],
They bowed their serpent heads before the Garuḍa's face/ presence.
The Garuḍa's great fire being lit, the rocky canopy crackled.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ The episode itself is included in the *Zangs gling ma*, but the long poem about Padmasambhava in the form of a Garuḍa is unique to MTN. It is possible that this description is inspired from other earlier narratives or religious descriptions of the mythical bird (for instance, Brandon Dotson pointed out to me its similarity to part of the Khra 'brug Monastery narrative given in Sørensen, Hazod and Gyalbo 2005). However, an added poem is well within the limits of a master creator of religious imagery like Nyang ral, and may merely be based on his own visions of the Garuḍa or Padmasambhava.

⁵⁶ MTNd 291.17–92.6 reads: *der rgyal blon rnams kyis slob dpon gyi drung du phyin pa dang / {de yang} [added by editors] mchims phu phug pa chen po'i nang na / sprul pa'i khyung chen 'jigs shing skyi bun pa / {spu} mdog btso ma'i gser du snang ba la / ba spu tham cad mtshon cha rdo rje'i me / gshog pa'i sgro ni ral gri lham pa 'dra / spu rtse rnams ni spu gri lham pa 'dra / mchu dang rus pa sder mo lcags sbar can / mgar ba'i so mal nang nas bton pa 'dra / nyi zla'i spyan ni 'bur zhing 'phrul pa can / klu'i rgyal po mal gro gzi chen dang / klu'i ded dpon nag po glong rdol gnyis / sbrul kyi sked pa phyag gis bzung ste mjug ma zhabs kyis nman / sbrul gyi kha ni gdangs btsum sked pa 'khyog cing 'gul / lag gnyis thal sbyar sbrul mgo khyung gi zhal du gsol ba khad / khyung gi me chen spar bas brag phub tsheg sgra can*. See also MTNc T 214.1.1–213.2.1.

Padmasambhava frightens the king with his display, but the transformation is necessary in order to tame the ground for building bSam yas. This poem is unique to *MTN*. The episode is not contained in the *Testimony of Ba* tradition, therefore the compiler of *MBNT* does not include it in the narrative.

Conclusion

We can now seriously question the attribution of *MBNT* to Nyang ral, since it seems to lack any influence from the *Zangs gling ma* or *MTN*. *MBNT* does not contain either of the two unique episodes added to *MTN*, or any of the multitude of episodes that *MTN* borrows from the *Zangs gling ma*. Nor does *MBNT* resemble *MTN*'s rendering of the episodes that it perhaps based on the *Testimony of Ba* or a similar source. That is because *MBNT* follows the *Testimony of Ba* tradition and not *MTN*. *MBNT* thus includes many episodes found in *sBa bzhed S* but not covered in *MTN*. It also omits some details and includes its own unique additions, mentioned in footnotes 30 and 31 above. Generally though, *MBNT* remains faithful to an ancestor of *sBa bzhed S*, which would suggest it had no access to, or simply ignored the *Zangs gling ma* and *MTN* when describing the life of Khri Srong lde btsan. Its almost *verbatim* quotation of the *sBa bzhed zhabs btags ma* does not in any way lessen its value as either literature or as part of the story of changing historiography in Tibet.

Just as the door to interpreting *MBNT* as a work by Nyang ral finally closes, the door to interpreting its second half within the changing tradition of the *Testimony of Ba* opens. It is clear that *MBNT* follows an ancestor of *sBa bzhed S*, which resembles the *dBa' bzhed* less than *sBa bzhed G* does. As such, *MBNT* is a useful source for identifying transmissional or even redactional changes in *sBa bzhed S* against the other exemplars of the *sBa bzhed zhabs btags ma*, because *MBNT* quotes the *Extended Testimony of Ba* and then follows its own transmissional line after that. Hitherto, it was very difficult to know how much of *sBa bzhed S* had been affected by much later redaction or transmission. The *dBa' bzhed* now shows that the *sBa bzhed zhabs btags ma* is a redaction of the shared ancestor of *sBa bzhed G* and *P*. *MBNT*'s witness indicates that this redaction took place before the compilation of *MBNT*. If the identification and dates of Śākya rin chen are correct, then this dates the *sBa bzhed zhabs btags ma* to the early fifteenth century or earlier, as has long been assumed. The first half of *MBNT* still requires detailed comparison with the other similar life-

stories of Srong btsan sgam po (including those contained in Nyang ral's works), following Sørensen.⁵⁷

The case of *MTN* is more complex, raising a number of difficult questions. There are eight episodes interpolated into the *Zangs gling ma* story arc in *MTN*. Are they Nyang ral's, or later interpolations? Do they therefore constitute twelfth-century, or subsequent, depictions of Padmasambhava and Khri Srong lde btsan? All versions of *MTN* appear to contain the same episodes as each other, but may nevertheless all stem from a later recension.⁵⁸ The episodes interpolated into the *Zangs gling ma* frame-narrative do not appear to conflict with any of its details, unlike the return to a living Khri Srong lde btsan after the *Zangs gling ma* narrative ends in *MTN*. Furthermore, they lack the similarity to the *Testimony of Ba* that the later parts of *MTN* show. These interpolated episodes appear at one remove from the *Testimony of Ba*, as if they were uniquely adapted rather than copied *verbatim* from an exemplar in front of the author.

This is in contrast to the final portion of *MTN*, which resembles the *Testimony of Ba* far more closely. So, where both *MTN* and *MBNT* relate similar depictions of the bSam yas Debate and the history of Buddhism after the (second!) death of Khri Srong lde btsan, they also share this narrative with the *sBa bzhed zhabs btags ma*. *MBNT* stands closest to the *Testimony of Ba* in this regard, just as it was almost completely faithful to the same narrative in its entire life-story of Khri Srong lde btsan. The person who put down on paper the latter portion of *MTN* based it on the *Testimony of Ba*, but then apparently diverged from it (and it seems more often than the compiler of *MBNT*), though

⁵⁷ Sørensen (1994:641–42), despite attributing *MBNT* 'in all probability, to Nyang ral,' notes that its first half 'shows also a close affinity to KCHKKHM' rather than the *Maṇi bka' 'bum*, which Nyang ral is believed to have had a hand in producing (see Ehrhard 2000: 207). Evidently, having investigated the *Maṇi bka' 'bum* (which contains a life-story of Srong btsan sgam po that is similar to those above and also his life-story in *MTN*), Sørensen apparently believed it did not resemble *MBNT* as closely as the *bKa' chems ka khol ma* did. He does not specify which of the three versions of the *bKa' chems ka khol ma* (Martin 1997: 24, no. 4) that he investigated it most closely resembles (see *idem*: 639), and ascertaining the relation between all these texts would be a *desideratum* for any future analysis of *MBNT*.

⁵⁸ The late Gene Smith informed me that all four versions stem probably from the same recension (personal communication, 15th October 2008), and this certainly appears to be the case when comparing their accounts of the life of Khri Srong lde btsan (see Doney *in press*: 46–58). Therefore their shared details do not necessarily prove that the original *MTN* contained all these episodes until another recension of the text appears. All the currently available versions contain the additional episodes, but that is no proof of their antiquity. It is hoped that the future discovery of other *MTN* manuscripts will throw more light on the *MTN* tradition.

we cannot be sure what was and was not in their respective copy-texts. It also remains to be seen whether the episodes that resemble the *Testimony of Ba*, interpolated into the *Zangs gling ma* frame-narrative in *MTN*, were added at the same time as the later portion of the narrative, and/or at the same time as those that appear unique to *MTN* (the description of bSam yas and the poem about the Garuḍa). If allowed to make an aesthetic judgement, informed by wider reading of Nyang ral's narratives, I would guess that the unique additions maintain a greater claim to be his work than the adaptations of the *Testimony of Ba*. They at least seem to share his ease of style and flair for poetry, while the episodes that resemble the *Testimony of Ba* appear garbled or stilted and lack his fluid prose style and all of his poetry.

It is now possible to update Sørensen's pioneering attempt to understand the relation between these texts. *MTNc* 292a5ff. (i.e. on the life of Khri Srong lde btsan) does not follow the *Testimony of Ba* with lengthy sub-sections taken from the *Zangs gling ma*, but in fact the reverse.⁵⁹ Those parts that diverge from the *Zangs gling ma* are either unique to *MTN* or only roughly similar to extant version of the *Testimony of Ba*. In these latter cases, Sørensen may be right that *MTN* draws from a common version of the tradition. It is still unclear whether or not these interpolations are Nyang ral's own or those of a later scribe or editor. The degree of resemblance that Sørensen rightly saw between the later parts of *MTN* and *sBa bzhed S* could suggest that they were not by the same hand who earlier in the narrative (and in time?) interpolated the loose adaptations of vignettes from the *Testimony of Ba* tradition. However, for the present, it is necessary to halt before agreeing with Sørensen that Nyang ral (rather than some later compiler/editor of *MTN*) 'employed a version [of *sBa bzhed G*]...cites a part of its colophon...[or] shares verbatim passages with the annotated version' of the *Testimony of Ba* tradition. What Sørensen saw as signs of shared authorship actually reflects a more complex relationship between the narratives that may in the end defy simple categorisation, say in a critical edition or stemma.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Sørensen may not have noticed that the latter's entire description of the life of Khri Srong lde btsan is included in *MTN*, since he only had access to the interpolated recension of this narrative that is included in the *Rin chen gter mdzod* and the dependent edition published in 1989 (see Sørensen 1994: 640–41 for the sources he uses for the *Zangs gling ma*).

⁶⁰ Following the ideas of Paul Zumthor (1972: 65–75), who connects the anonymity of authorship in Medieval French poetry to a high degree of mutability of the textual tradition (see also Doney *in press*: 40–41, n. 50).

So it is unlikely that Nyang ral compiled *MBNT*, and perhaps the same is true of the *MTN* as we have it today. Nevertheless, both works' accounts of the history of Tibet from the ninth century onwards, as well their depictions of the important (if perhaps legendary) bSam yas Debate, make them important additions to the collection of sources that contain the *Testimony of Ba* in quotation. Their witness will aid any future textual analysis of this tradition and the possible dating of its strata back to the ninth century. *MTN*'s overall depiction of the eighth-century reign of Khri Srong lde btsan and Padmasambhava's role in bringing Buddhism to Tibet can be tentatively attributed to Nyang ral, with some doubt regarding those parts that resemble the *Testimony of Ba* account (but less concerning those that are unique to *MTN*). Together with the *Zangs gling ma*, on which I would argue the depiction of this reign in *MTN* is largely based, *MTN* is a largely trustworthy source of Nyang ral's conception of imperial-period Tibet, and thus a very important early source of changing Tibetan historiography. Such sources allow us to continue a discussion that Sørensen has been highly influential in forwarding. By this I mean the conversation about how memory, encoded in story, was passed down the generations and spread to become integral to Tibet's self-image as a largely Buddhist country.

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LOST AND FOUND: A FOURTEENTH-CENTURY DISCUSSION
OF THEN-AVAILABLE SOURCES ON
GNUBS CHEN SANGS RGYAS YE SHES

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The field of gNubs chen sangs rgyas ye shes studies has been flourishing in recent years. The way is being led by several attempts to translate the late ninth to early tenth-century Tibetan master's most famous work, the *bSam gtan mig sgron*,¹ and has been further enriched by the recent discovery of the *bKa' shog rgya bo che*, an influential biography of gNubs chen.² gNubs chen stands as the foremost Tibetan author of Tibet's so-called Age of Fragmentation, and the numerous and sometimes quite lengthy texts attributed to him offer innumerable insights into the formation of early Tibetan Buddhism.³ The present article offers one more minor piece of the puzzle that surrounds this intriguing figure. As I have argued elsewhere, the *bKa' shog rgya bo che* claims to be gNubs chen's final testament and thus a work of autobiography, but it is without question a later composition, probably compiled by the *phyi dar* inheritors of gNubs chen's spiritual line. In the same article, I date the *rGya bo che* to between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, and more likely to the twelfth or thirteenth centuries.⁴ Our most significant piece of evidence in this regard is an early quotation from the *rGya bo che* that appears in another recently discovered work from the same *sNga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* collection in which the *rGya bo che* itself appeared, a work bearing the title, *gTad rgya lnga'i go don gyi brjed byang gi 'grel pa* (*Commentary for Remembering the Significance of The Five Seals of Entrustment*). The latter is a short collection of notes on the mDo dbang lineage that may be attributed to Zur ham shakya 'byung gnas and his circle of students and therefore dated to around the mid-fourteenth century. The work's quotation from the *rGya bo che* appears toward the end of a

¹ The forthcoming Ph.D. thesis by Dylan Esler of Université Catholique de Louvain being a particularly promising example.

² For some preliminary remarks on this work, see Dalton, forthcoming.

³ On the Age of Fragmentation and gNubs chen's role in it, see Dalton 2011, 44-76.

⁴ See Dalton 2014.

discussion of gNubs chen's life and in particular of his encounters with the *dGongs pa 'dus pa'i mdo* and its mDo dbang ritual system. The present article offers a translation and transcription (the latter in an appendix) of this fourteenth-century biographical discussion and reflects briefly on its possible significance.

I. Summary of the Contents of the Volume

The *brJed byang gi 'grel pa* appears in middle of the second volume (*smad cha*) of a two-volume collection of materials entirely dedicated to the history and performance of the mDo dbang.⁵ According to the *dkar chag* at the beginning of each volume, the collection consists of just one work, an initiation manual (*dbang chog*) attributed to the late thirteenth-century master, gLan bsod nams mgon po. Closer examination reveals, however, a more complicated picture. What might be considered the *gLan chog* proper (though as we shall see, such judgments are difficult), which is, incidentally, our earliest full-length manual for the mDo dbang's complex initiation ritual, ends on vol. 22, f. 87b.1 (p. 174). That gLan bsod nams was indeed responsible for writing this first text is suggested at several points, including in the closing passage, where gLan refers to himself in the first person.⁶ Nonetheless, the lineage described in this same passage continues for three more generations, to end with Zur haṃ shākya 'byung gnas who is referred to with the honorific title of “*drung*” and reported to have granted the seal of entrustment to his disciples.⁷ It seems, then, that a later recension of gLan's manual occurred some time after gLan bsod nams' original composition, probably at the time of Zur haṃ and thus sometime around the second half of the fourteenth century.

Immediately following this initial text comes another manual for bestowing the initiations of the mDo dbang system. The previous manual does not actually provide much in the way of ritual detail, being

⁵ See *sNga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vols. 22-23. The two volumes are 320 folios (640 sides) and 300 folios (600 sides) in length, respectively. On the mDo dbang tradition, see Dalton forthcoming.

⁶ See vol. 22, f. 87a.5-6 (p. 173): *glan ban bsod nams mgon po bdag gis bkod pa*. See also a passage on the seal of entrustment (*gtad rgya*) lineage that reads: *khong gnyis la blan pan bsod nams mgon po bdag gis gtad rgya dang bcas nas zhus pa lags so*; vol. 22, f. 54a.6 (p. 107).

⁷ See vol. 22, f. 54b.1 (p. 108). And here we may add that, despite the volume title page's clear attribution of the manual to gLan bsod nams, in the earlier 110-volume version of the *bKa' ma shin tu rgyas pa* (TBRC Resource ID W21508), in which our texts appear in volumes 61 and 62, the left margin on the verso of each folio reads, “*zur haṃ mdo dbang*,” though the significance of this fact remains unclear.

more focused on the system's origin myths and so forth, and this second work fills in many of the gaps. The break between these two texts is marked by a *rdzogs so*, which ends the previous work, followed by a double *yig mgo* and an opening title printed in a smaller font: *A Ritual Manual for Entering into [the Vehicles of] Gods and Humans, Śrāvakas, and Pratyekabuddhas (Lha mi nyan rang 'jug chog bzugs)*.⁸ The second text itself is interrupted at various points by both “minor breaks,” each of which is marked by a gap followed by a decorative *shad*, and “major breaks”⁹ that are marked by a final *rdzogs so*, a gap, a single or double *yig mgo* (with no apparent rhyme or reason), and an opening “*na mo gu ru*,” but (perhaps significantly) no new title. This second manual continues in this way through vol. 22, f. 117a (p. 233), at which point one of the now familiar “major breaks” occurs, and a new section for performing the Mahāyāna *bodhisattva* initiations (for both Cittamatra and Madhyamaka, combined) begins. (Here it may help to clarify that the mDo dbang system involves a lengthy series of initiations into each of the nine vehicles of the rNying ma school's doxographical scheme, in an ascending order.) Why this section on the *bodhisattva* initiations was not mentioned in the original title (which names only the vehicles of gods and humans, of Śrāvakas, and of Pratyekabuddhas) is not explained. Nonetheless, what follows seems to be a continuation of the same text, i.e. the second text in the volume. At least one part of this *bodhisattva* section is said to have been written by Zur chos rje byams pa seng ge (who stands, with gLan bsod nams, two generations before Zur haṃ śākya 'byung gnas in the mDo dbang lineage, and was probably active around the same time as gLan bsod nams mgon po),¹⁰ but the section as a whole, and probably the entire text, was likely redacted later, possibly by Zur haṃ and his circle, as a lineage list that appears in the context of generating *bodhicitta* ends with these figures.¹¹

The text continues still further on vol. 22, f. 129b.2 (p. 258), where the initiations into the outer and inner vehicles of Secret Mantra begin, again with no new title. This section continues through f. 156b.1 (p.

⁸ In the earlier 110-volume version, there is also a line break (see vol. 61, p. 208). In general, the newer version appears to exclude line breaks. How this relates to the original manuscript remains unknown.

⁹ For an example of a major break, see the transition from the initiations of Gods and Humans and those of the Śrāvakas; see vol. 22, f. 96a.6 (p.191). Note that the Śrāvaka initiations here are divided into those of the *dge tshul* and the *dge slong*, with the transition occurring at vol. 22, f. 108b.5 (p.216).

¹⁰ See vol. 22, f. 121b.2 (p. 242).

¹¹ As suggested by vol. 22, f. 119a.4 (p. 237).

notes, and then a distinct text (ostensibly a translation) bearing a title in both Sanskrit and Tibetan: *A Garland of Jewels: The Activities for the Initiation and Mandala (dBang dang dkyil 'khor gyi las rin chen phreng ba)*,¹⁸ followed by a related *brjed byang* (unattributed)¹⁹ and a *las khrigs* (also unattributed).²⁰

Next is a very short (one and a half folio sides) lineage list, the earliest generations of which resemble a rDzogs chen lineage, passing as they do from Kun tu bzang po through Vajrasattva, dGa' rab rdo rje, and so on, but the later generations of which resemble more usual mDo dbang lineages. When the line reaches gNubs chen (here named Jo bo sangs rgyas), we learn the following biographical details:

He was the son of these two: his father, rGyal ba bsod nams, and his mother, Sras mo sgron ma. He went to India seven times, absorbed the essence of the scholars of India, and was granted initiation by Vasudhara. He was able to unite in actuality with goddesses and female *nāgas*. He made all the gods and demons his servants. He mastered all the teachings and mastered the humans and non-humans. He was actually a *bodhisattva* of the eighth level. While dwelling at Gangs rdzong, he was actually aided and served food by the children of *yakṣasas*. He was assisted by the children of *gandharvas*. While traveling to the charnel grounds, he was actually paid homage and received with great reverence by spirits. When he practiced (lit. “enacted the intention”) at rNubs mtsho gling,²¹ he was actually served by a six-headed *nāga*-serpent.²²

¹⁸ The work runs from vol. 22, f. 210b.3 to 245a.6 (p.420-489, with no translation colophon at the end. Note that dMnyal ba bde legs, Zur ham's student, used the same title—the *Rin chen phreng ba*—as the title for his own mDo dbang initiation manual (*dbang chog*).

¹⁹ Ends vol. 22, f. 247b.5 (p. 494) with the title, *dBang rin chen phreng ba'i brjed byang*.

²⁰ Ends vol. 22, f. 252b.2 (p. 504) with the title, *dBang nor bu phreng ba'i las kyi khrig*.

²¹ Probably sic for sNubs mtsho gling, located in Yar 'brog, to the southwest of modern Lhasa. See also n. 48.

²² Vol. 22, f. 253b.3-253a.1 (pp. 504-5): *yab rgyal ba bsod nams/ yum sras mo sgron ma gnyis kyi sras so/ rgya gar yul du lan bdun byon rgya gar mkhas pa'i bcud stims/ bas u dha ras dbang bskur/ lha mo klu mo dang dngos su sbyor ba byed nus/ lha srin thams cad bran du 'khol/ bka' thams cad la dbang bsgyur/ mi dang mi ma yin pa la dbang bsgyur ba/ sa brgyad pa'i byang chub sems dpa' dngos yin/ gangs rdzong du bzhugs pa'i dus su gnod sbyin phru gus dngos su gsol zas drangs so/ dur khrod du byon pa'i dus su yid wags kyi dngos su 'dud cing zhabs spyi bos glangs so/ dri za phru gu phyag gis zin/ rnubs mtsho gling du dgongs pa mdzad pas klu sbrul mgo drug pa gcig gis dngos su gsol drangs so.*

Following this brief biographical sketch, the lineage continues, to end with Zur byams pa seng ge, who, we might guess, may have authored the text.²³

Next comes a manual for establishing the mandala (titled at the end and in transliteration, a *Maṇḍala-nopika*),²⁴ and then another purportedly translated work bearing a title provided in both Sanskrit and Tibetan: *A Sādhana for the Wrathful Vajra Family* (*Khro bo rdo rje rigs kyi bsgrub thabs*), associated in some way with bDe ba gsal mdzad.²⁵ This is followed by a long series of manuals for establishing the mandala and oneself within it, in preparation for the granting of initiation. These run through the end of the first volume and into the second (i.e. into volume 23 of the *sNga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*).²⁶ The texts, perhaps better seen as mere sections, are not attributed, but the next series of short works on the “methods for bestowing initiation” (*dbang bskur ba'i thabs*) is said to have been “the system of the great lama lHa rje nya tshal pa” (i.e. gLan bsod nams mgon po).²⁷

After these, we move into a series of texts by Zur haṃ shākya 'byung gnas, beginning with a description of the *a ti'i rtsal dbang*,²⁸ and followed by some additional prayers on rDzogs chen that are similarly attributed to Zur haṃ.²⁹ Then come some further Zur haṃ-authored notes on the lineages of the highest vehicles of rNying ma pa tantra, and a series of vajra songs.³⁰ And now, finally, begins the text that is our primary concern here, the *gTad rgya lnga'i go don gyi brjed byang gi 'grel pa*.

Before turning to the *brJed byang* itself, however, we should note that the *brJed byang* is followed by one final and very long text that ends the second volume of the collection. The text contains an array of notes on the rites associated with the mDo dbang ceremonies, all arranged by vehicle. The lengthy 108-chapter discussion of the initiations into the vehicle of Yoga-tantra is of some interest for the refrain that ends each chapter, a prayer that the initiation may be received in the same way that Siddhārthasiddhi did atop Mount Meru,

²³ See vol. 22, f. 253a.3 (p. 505).

²⁴ Ends at vol. 22, f. 262a.3 (p. 523).

²⁵ Ends at vol. 22, f. 285a.4 (p. 569) with the line: *rgyu bde bar gsal mdzad/ lung gi zhi khro lhag ma dang bcas pa snang*.

²⁶ Ending at vol. 23, f. 12b.1 (p. 24).

²⁷ See vol. 23, f. 17b.1 (p. 34).

²⁸ Ends on vol. 23, f. 36a.4 (p. 71) with the claim that the preceding text represents the “handwritten notes” (*zin bris*) of Zur haṃ shākya 'byung.”

²⁹ See vol. 23, f. 41a.6 (p. 81).

³⁰ Ending on vol. 23, f. 53b.5 (p. 106).

in a clear reference to the opening scene of the *Sarvatathāgata-tattvasaṃgraha*.³¹ Unfortunately this last text is unattributed, but we may suspect the hands of Zur haṃ and his students.

II. Overview of the Commentary for Remembering

By now it should be abundantly clear that what we are looking at here, in volumes 22 and 23, is a collection of mDo dbang-related materials—a loosely organized ritual manual for the performance of the initiation ceremonies (*dbang chog*)—that grew out of the early Zur tradition and represents the work of three principal authors: gLan bsod nams mgon po, Zur Byams pa seng ge, and Zur haṃ shākya ’byung gnas. The former two figures lived two lineal generations before Zur haṃ, both probably in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, while Zur haṃ flourished in the mid-fourteenth century. Though the collection as a whole bears the marks of Zur haṃ’s redactorial hand, its individual works are arranged in a vaguely chronological order, at least in the sense that gLan’s writings open the collection and Zur haṃ’s close it.

The *brJed byang* itself, as I have identified it for the purposes of this article, runs from f. 53b.5-90b.5 (pp. 106-180) of volume 23.³² The work begins with a relatively clear title that is marked by a double *yig mgo* and a final “*bzhugs so.*” Like most of the “texts” contained in these two volumes, its contents are divided by a number of text-breaks of varying strengths. Given that all of its sections remain focused on the “seal of entrustment” (*gtad rgya*) and the lineages associated with that tradition (once termed a *gTad rgya snyan rgyud*),³³ it seems reasonable to identify them as a single “text.” By now it should be clear, however, that the lines between “texts” and “sections” in this volume are vague, at best.

No clear attribution appears in the text. Given the names listed in the various lineages that are discussed, however, and the structure of the volume as a whole, it seems safe to assume that the *brJed byang* represents the work of Zur haṃ and his circle of students. In various places, moreover, we see Zur haṃ referring to himself as “myself, Zur haṃ shākya ’byung gnas.”³⁴ That said, there is some reason to believe that the text may be built upon earlier writings by gLan bsod nams

³¹ Ending on vol. 23, 181a.3 (p. 361).

³² In the earlier 110-volume collection, it may be found at vol. 61, f. 438a.4 to 481a.3 (pp. 875-962).

³³ See vol. 23, f. 56a.5 (p. 111).

³⁴ See, for example, vol. 23, f. 63a.4 (p. 125) and 63b.4 (p. 126).

mgon po, as we have seen occurring elsewhere in the same volume.³⁵ In short, we can date the work with some assurance to around the second half of the fourteenth century. (Unfortunately Zur ham's dates remain difficult to pinpoint more precisely.)³⁶

III. *Translation of gNubs chen's Biography from the brJed byang*

The biographical notes that are our primary focus appear in the midst of this *brJed byang*. They are of particular interest not only for the details they provide, but for the variety of sources cited in them. Given that the recently discovered biography of gNubs chen, the *bKa' shog rgya bo che*, mentioned at the outset of the present article, does not make much of gNubs chen's involvements with the *dGongs pa 'dus pa'i mdo*, the notes translated here are also significant for being some of our earliest evidence on those activities. But before drawing any further conclusions, we should turn to the text itself.

We join the account of the lineage immediately following a discussion of Vasudhāra and Che btsan skyes, two early masters of the mDo dbang tradition (from Nepal and Bru sha, respectively), receiving the initiations at Rājagrha in exchange for an offering of gold. For more on these two figures and the Indian gTsug lag dpal dge, the reader is directed to the *Sutra Initiation Guidebook (Mdo dbang gnas yig)*, written by sLob dpon sangs rgyas himself.³⁷ Then the text continues as follows:

At that time, some masters prophesied that a man of the charnel grounds, the great mountain of sGregs, with the secular name rDo rje khri gtsug—a great scholar—would be born to the Zung mkhar ba of the bsGregs region,³⁸ the father gSang ba'i dbang phyug, and the

³⁵ “This was born from the mouth of lHa rje gLan chen po” (*lha rje glan chen po'i zhal nas 'khrungs pa*), we read at the end of one section; see vol. 23, f. 62a.1 (p. 123).

³⁶ Here we may note that our *brJed byang* has Zur ham teaching both dMyal ba bde legs, the author of the *'Dus pa chen po mdo'i dbang chog rin chen phreng ba*, and the treasure revealer rDo rje gling pa (1346-1405), which would seem to place Zur ham's dates squarely in the middle of the fourteenth century.

³⁷ Vol. 23, f. 78b. 4 (p. 156).

³⁸ *Yul bsgregs kyi zung mkhar ba*. bsGregs is an alternate spelling for sGregs, i.e. the valley just west of Samye (for a map, see Dotson 2009, 202). Zung mkhar (more typically spelled Zung kar) is located high in the same valley. Note that the grammar is odd here, with the three epithets for gNubs chen separated from his description as a “great scholar,” but rDo rje khri gtsug is supposed to have been his birth name, so I read it like this.

woman of the gNubs line, 'Chims mo bKra shis mtsho.³⁹ From youth, that one was possessed of faith and wisdom. He was granted initiation by lHa dpal gyi ye shes. Having been led to mChims phu and Phung po ri bo che by Khrab 'khyags pa dkar po, he offered four hundred and received initiation.⁴⁰

[79a] Furthermore, when that Sangs rgyas ye shes was twenty, he broke up his orchards for gold. Gathering up the profits, he departed for the valleys of Nepal.⁴¹ [There,] he met and studied (*sgra shes*) with the Nepalese Vasudhāra, receiving many tantras and *sādhana*s. When he requested the initiations, [Vasudhāra] prophesied that he should ask the Indian scholar *Dharmarājapala (Chos rgyal skyong). [gNubs chen] went to the land of India, and there he met with Ru *Dharmarājapala and made the request, whereby he was taught the tantra, the initiations, and many *sādhana*s.

According to some histories (*lo rgyus la la na*), he requested initiation from Ru *Dharmarājapala, who then prophesied that he should ask Master *Prakāśālamkāra. Here, there lived a great master *Prakāśālamkāra who was 1,600 years old. There is also what is said in the *Initiation Manual (Dbang byang)* by Lama gLan bsod nams mgon po: “[gNubs chen] was told, ‘you should go before him,’ so accordingly, having gone to India, he also received the initiations for the nine vehicles of the [*Dgongs pa*] ‘*dus pa chen po*. He received many [teachings] from the Accomplishment Class (*bsgrub sde*) and the Tantra Class of mantra.”⁴²

So, regarding the Sutra Initiations (*mdo'i dbang*) having been requested and granted: The guru *Dharmarājapala [taught] the *dharmarāja* of Nepal [i.e. Vasudhāra]. [79b] Also regarding that, when that king of Nepal, Vasudhāra, requested initiation from the wealth-holder [i.e. from *Dharmarājapala], he said the following: “On one occasion, having been invited to the land of Bru sha, I, the Indian scholar *Dharmarājapala, traveled there. Then the three—Dhanarakṣita, Ru Dharmabodhi, and the scholar of Brusha, Che btsen skyes—set out to translate it in the district of Bru sha. But, due to a

³⁹ *Rgya bo che*, 695.1 has the father as gSal ba byang chub snubs. Padma 'phrin las' version combines the two, when he gives gSal ba'i dbang phyug ('*Dus pa mdo dbang gi bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar*, 160).

⁴⁰ In the *rGya bo che*, the young gNubs chen travels to Samye to meet, make offerings to, and receive initiation from, the Nepalese master Vasudhāra (see f. 697). No mention of Phung po ri bo che is made at the parallel point in the *rGya bo che*, though the site does appear elsewhere in that work (f. 743) as one of gNubs' treasure sites.

⁴¹ Compare the similar account in *Rgya bo che*, 698.1.

⁴² For the apparent source of this passage, see *gLan chog*, f. 126.6-127.2. (Note that the “Accomplishment Class” appears to have been added here, as it is not in the original.) For more details on what *Dharmarājapala might have taught, see *rGya bo che*, 702-4.

lack of faith [among the locals], only the first part was translated.” So then they moved to India,⁴³ where the Nepalese Vasudhāra, the Brusha translator Che btsen skyes, and gNubs again requested the [remaining] three initiations [from *Dharmarājapala], so he granted them, and thus were the four rivers of initiation completely transmitted.

Later, through the blessings of that [initiation], the scholar *dharmarāja*, Dharmabodhi, the Bru sha translator, and gNubs sangs rgyas subsequently combined [the mDo dbang system] with the traditional teachings of Śāntarakṣita (sic)⁴⁴ and Master Padma[sambhava], and then the translation was finished in the district of the Bru sha realm, and it was taught to gNubs sangs rgyas. It also seems to be said in the *Clan History (Rigs brgyud lo rgyus)* that, because he [sought to] combine it with the initiation lineage of the protectors, having offered the [necessary] tools for the mDo dbang, gNubs Sangs rgyas requested [the teaching] from Ru *Sukhoddyotaka.⁴⁵

Moreover, in Lord [gNubs] sangs rgyas’ biography (*rnam thar*) it says more generally that when he was meditating in the region of the Crystal Cave, [80a] he was granted initiation by Vajrapāṇi with a wisdom-vajra. When he was meditating at Bamboo Grove (’Om mo’i tshal),⁴⁶ the son of a Gandharva named him Sangs rgyas ye shes rin po che, granting him the name initiation. When he was meditating in the place of *Pūrṇabhadra,⁴⁷ the son of a *yakṣa* granted him initiation with the good quality of greatness. When he was meditating at gNubs mtsho gling dgu,⁴⁸ the son of a *nāga* granted him an initiation for poison and poison’s antidotes. When he was meditating at Dur khrod lhas, the son of a hungry ghost granted him initiation for gaining power. He was granted initiation by many *paṇḍitas*—Dhanasamṣkrta, and so forth. The Chinese Heshang Moheyan also gave him many initiations and instructions. When the Indian Dhanatala came to Tibet, he gave him many initiations and instructions.

He went to India seven times. It is said that six times he translated wrathful mantras for protecting the dharma and the teachings, and once

⁴³ Note that Dam pa bde gshegs (*Yang khog dbub*, 48.4) has them returning to Nepal, which was the home country for Vasudhara.

⁴⁴ Probably should be Dhanarakṣita, as indicated by Padma ’phrin las (see *’Dus pa mdo dbang gi bla ma brgyud pa’i rnam thar*, 162.7).

⁴⁵ Dudjom 1991, 609 notes that this is the same as Prakāśālaṃkāra.

⁴⁶ Sic for ’Od ma’i tshal.

⁴⁷ See *rGya bo che*, 698.

⁴⁸ Note that above this same place is referred to as rNubs mtsho gling, elsewhere sNubs mtsho gling (see n. 21). See *Old Tibetan Chronicle* (Pelliot tibétain 1287), l. 469: *gnubs mtsho ni kling dgu’* (easily found online at: http://otdo.aa.tufts.ac.jp/archives.cgi?p=Pt_1287). The site is located northwest of Yar ’brog; see Hazod 2002, 35 n. 19.

he edited them (*zhu tig mdzad*). He occupied the sites, found power, and was renowned as a great scholar.

He had many students who became his disciples. His heart-sons were four or eight in number. The root system says they were (i) 'Bre khro chu of Nyang stod, (ii) the Supreme Great One of Nyang shor, [80b] (iii) Ye shes 'byung ba of Nyang chung, and (iv) Zur shākya 'byung. Of those, both 'Bre and Myang chen encountered him early on, while both Myang chung and Zur encountered him only later [in life].

Some say that Master Sangs rgyas granted [his lineage] to three precious ones—Shangs kyi stong tshab byang chub rin po che, and so forth. The explanation according to the Se tradition (Se lugs) says he gave it early in life to four: (i) brGya gzhon nu bshes gnyen, (ii) Me gnyag mchog gi rin chen, (iii) sTong tshab 'phags pa rgya mtsho,⁴⁹ and (iv) lHa rje 'ug pa lung pa zur chen shākya 'byung gnas.

IV. *Observations on the Biographical Passage*

The first point to remark upon is simply the number of other texts that are cited in this short passage. In all, we may list six different sources:

1. *Sutra Initiation Guidebook (mDo dbang gnas yig)*
2. some histories (*lo rgyus la la*)
3. *Initiation Manual (Dbang byang)* by gLan bsod nams mgon po
4. *Clan History (Rigs brgyud lo rgyus)*
5. Lord Sangs rgyas' Biography (*rnam thar*)
6. *rGya bo che*

By the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, it seems, gNubs chen had become the focus of considerable literary attention. Thanks to the new *sNga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, we may now read versions of two of the texts cited, namely the *dBang byang* by gLan bsod nams mgon po and the *rGya bo che*, but most of the texts cited are lost. Of particular interest would be the *mDo dbang gnas yig*, which might tell us much about the history of this tradition in early Tibet, the *Rigs brgyud lo rgyus*, presumably a history of the gNubs clan, and the unascribed but clearly early biography of gNubs chen. We can only hope that some day these works might come to light.

In terms of its contents, the passage is useful for how it ties gNubs chen's involvements with the mDo dbang tradition into the biographical account that we already have thanks to the *bKa' shog rgya*

⁴⁹ Note the existence of an Anuyoga tantra said to be translated by gNubs chen and sTong tshab 'phags pa, the *Rnal 'byor nang pa'i tshogs rgyud* (see rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum, vol. *tsa*, 176.4-251.4).

bo che. Of particular interest is the suggestion that gNubs chen might have been involved, along with several others, in the final redaction of the *dGongs pa 'dus pa'i mdo* and its ritual systems. This is a remarkably frank suggestion and one not repeated, to my knowledge, anywhere else.

Also of interest is the passage's account of the *dGongs pa 'dus pa'i mdo's* troubled and interrupted translation efforts, a project that likely included considerable *composition* as well as translation.⁵⁰ The account we see here may well have been the source for Padma 'phrin las' own narrative, written three or four centuries later, which uses much of the same language and follows more-or-less the same order of events.⁵¹ In comparing the present passage to Padma 'phrin las' account, we may observe that the later narrative writes gNubs chen completely out of the final redaction of the Mdo dbang ritual system. Instead, Padma 'phrin las tells us only that, "the scholar of Bru sha combined it with the teachings of Dhanarakṣita."⁵² Certainly from a later normative perspective, this is a far less surprising statement, as it has no Tibetan involved in the composition of the tantra and its rituals. Perhaps the change is a reflection of Padma 'phrin las' discomfort with the line. Certainly the lines translated here, and the entire volume in which they appear, seem to reflect a remarkably loose sense of what is canonical and what a locally produced text, a perspective from which the divisions between text, note, ritual manual, and translated text were fairly blurry. We are left to wonder whether this attitude is representative of the approach taken more generally toward textual composition within the early Zur tradition.

⁵⁰ On the composition of the *dGongs pa 'dus pa'i mdo*, see Dalton forthcoming, ch. 1.

⁵¹ Compare *'Dus pa mdo dbang gi bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar*, 162.2-163.1.

⁵² *'Dus pa mdo dbang gi bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar*, 162.6. *de yang bru sha'i mkhan pos d+ha na ra k+Si ta'i bka' dang sbyar te*.

APPENDIX

Transliteration of the gNubs chen Biographical Passage

from *gTad rgya lnga'i go don gyi brjed byang gi 'grel pa*, vol. 23, f. 78b.4-80b.4 (156-160)

de'i dus su yul bsgregs kyi zung mkhar ba/ pha gsang ba'i dbang phyug/ gdung rus gnubs ma 'chims mo bkra shis mtsho/ dur khrod pa/ sgregs kyi ri bo che/ mi chos kyi ming rdo rje khri gtsug/ slob dpon rnams kyis mkhas pa chen po 'byung bar lung bstan pa/ chung nas dad pa dang shes rab tu ldan pa des/ lha dpal gyi ye shes la dbang bskur/ mchims phu [79a] dang phung po ri bo cher khrab 'khyag pa dkar pos sna drangs nas bzhi brgya phul te bang nos so/ ! /yang sangs rgyas ye shes des lo nyi shu pa la ldum ra gser du dkrum ste khyed du gril nas bal po'i mthil du byon/ bal po ba su dha dang mjal sgra shes te/ rgyud sde dang bsgrub thabs mang du zhus so/ dbang zhus pas/ rgya gar gyi mkhan po chos rgyal skyong la zhus cig par lung bstan/ rgya gar gyi yul du byon te ru chos rgyal skyong la mjal bar byas nas zhus pas/ rgyud dang dbang bsgrub thabs mang du gnang ngo/ lo rgyus la la na/ ru chos rgyal skyong la dbang zhus pas/ slob dpon gsal ba'i rgyan la zhus cig par lung/ 'dir ni slob dpon chen po gsal ba'i brgyan bya ba la stong drug brgya lon pa cig bzhugs kyis khyed de'i spyang sngar song cig/ gsung pa ltar du rgya gar du byon nas 'dus pa chen po mdo theg pa dgu'i dbang yang gsan/ sngags kyi bsgrub sde dang rgyud sde mang po gnas ces bla ma glan bsod nams mgon gyi dbang byang na gsungs gda'/ mdo'i dbang bskur zhus cing gnang ces pa ni gu ru chos rgyal skyong de bal po'i chos rgyal [79b] lo/ de'an bal po'i rgyal po ba su dha ra nor 'dzin la dbang zhus pa'i tshe nga yi/ lan cig na/ rgya gar mkhan po chos rgyal skyong bru zha'i yul du spyang drangs der gshegs te/ dha na rakshi ta dang/ ru dharma bo de dang/ gsum la bru zha'i mkhan po che btsan skyes kyis bru zha'i khrom du bsgyur bar byas/ mos pa chungs bas dang po ma 'gyur skad/ de nas rgya gar yul du byon te/ bal po ba su dha ra dang/ bru zha'i lo tswa ba che btsan skyes dang/ gnubs yang dbang gsum gyis zhus pas gnang ste/ dbang gi chu bo bzhi rdzogs par bskur ro/ ! /de'i byin gyis brlabs kyis phyi mkhan po chos rgyal dang/ dharma bo dhe dang/ bru zha'i lo tstsha ba che btsan skyes dang/ gnubs sangs rgyas kyis/ physis ring lugs shan ta rak kshi ta slob dpon pad ma'i bka' dang sbyar nas bru zha'i yul gyi khrom du bsgyur nas gnubs gsangs rgyas la bshad do/ rigs brgyad lo rgyus de skad zer yang/ mgon po'i dbang rgyud dang sbyar bas mdo dbang gi phyag cha rnams btang nas ru bde ba gsal mdzad la'ang gnubs sangs rgyas kyi zhus pa 'dra bas spyad do/ de yang jo bo sangs rgyas kyi rnam thar spyir du 'di [80a] la shel brag ngos la bsgoms pa'i tshe/ phyag na rdo rjes ye shes rdo rjes dbang bskur/ 'om mo'i tshal du bsgoms pa'i tshe/ dri za'i phru gus sangs rgyas ye shes rin po cher/ ming btags te ming gis dbang bskur/ gang bzangs gnas la sgoms pa'i tshe/ gnod sbyin phru gus che ba'i yon tan gyis dbang bskur/ gnubs mtsho gling dgur sgoms pa'i tshe/ klu phru gus dug dang gdug pa sel ba'i dbang bskur/ dur khrod lhas su sgoms pa'i tshe/ yi

dwags phru gus mthu rtsal brnyes pa'i dbang bskur/ dha na sams kri ta la sogs pa paṅ ḍi ta mang pos dbang bskur/ rgya nag ha shang ma hā yā nas kyang dbang dang gdams ngag mang po gnan/ rgya gar dha na ta la bod du byon te dbang gdams ngag mang po gnan/ rgya gar gyi yul du lan bdun byon/ lan drug chos dang bstan srungs drag sngangs bsgyur/ lan cig zhu tig mdzad skad/ sa gzhi sa non pa dang/ mthu rtsal brnyes pa/ mkhas pa chen por grags pa lags so/ ! /de la slob mo mang yang thugs zin pa thugs kyi sras bzhi la brgyad de/ ! /rtsa ba lugs ni/ nyang stod kyi 'bre khro chu: nyang shor chen [80b] mchog: nyang chung ye shes 'byung ba/ zur shākya 'byung dang bzhi'o zer te/ de rnam kyi 'bre dang/ myang chen gnyis shin tu zhal mthong ba snga la/ myang chung dang zur gnyis phyi bas bzhal mthong tsam mo/ la la na re slob dpon sangs rgyas kyi shangs kyi stong tshab byang chub rin po che la sogs pa rin po che gsum la gnan/ des brgya gzhon nu bshe gnyen dang/ me gnyag mchog gi rin chen dang/ stong tshab 'phags pa rgya mtsho dang/ lha rje 'ug pa lung pa zur chen shākya 'byung gnas bzhi la sku tshe yi stod la bskur ces mdo se lugs ltar bzhed do.

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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 16th 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.¹

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 16th century and at which places the lineage holders were active in this regard. As it is already known that rDzogs

¹ 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 (15th / 16th 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 noms 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 noms 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 noms 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*).²

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 Kaḥ

² 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 noms rin chen is contained in the historiographical work of Gu ru bkra shis (18th / 19th 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 bsod 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.³

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

³ 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'.⁴

⁴ 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

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 16th 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.⁵

⁵ 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 14th to the 15th 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 15th 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 1516.⁶

⁶ 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 nams 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 nams 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 nams 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 nams 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 nams 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.*⁷

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

⁷ 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 17th 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.⁸

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

⁸ 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*).⁹

⁹ 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 nams 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 nams 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 nams 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 nams 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 nams 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 nams 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*).¹⁰

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

¹⁰ 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 nams 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

'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.¹¹

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:

¹¹ 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 (14th 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*).¹²

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.¹³

¹² 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.

¹³ 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 (17th 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*).¹⁴

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.

¹⁴ 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*).

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*).¹⁵

¹⁵ 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.¹⁶

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 16th 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

¹⁶ 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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HISTORY OF THE FORGOTTEN MOTHER-MONASTERY
OF THE RNYING MA SCHOOL:

DPAL RI MONASTERY IN THE TIBETAN “VALLEY OF THE EMPERORS”

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INTRODUCTION: HISTORY AND MEMORY IN TIBET

The present paper¹ deals with the history of the rNying ma school of Tibetan Buddhism, the school of “the Ancients.” Its origin is traced back to the zenith of the Tibetan *imperium* in the 8th century, with the *mkhan slob chos gsum*, the trio of the abbot (*mkhan po*) Śāntarakṣita, the master (*slob dpon*) Padmasambhava and the emperor and *dharmarāja* (*chos rgyal*) Khri srong lde’u btsan. I will focus on one of its major monasteries: dPal ri theg chen gling, built in 1571 in the ’Phyong rgyas valley (central Tibet), the necropolis of the Tibetan emperors. dPal ri monastery used to be considered as a “mother-monastery” (*ma dgon*), i.e. one of the main monastic institution of the

¹ A prototype of the present paper was given first at the 12th conference of the International Association for Tibetan Studies (IATS) in Vancouver (15-21 August 2010) and communicated online by the website of Kyoto University Erasmus Program which generously funded my participation. The present paper has been entirely rewritten by synthesizing larger results given in my doctoral thesis (see Deroche 2011) to be published as a book in French. I am particularly indebted to my former advisor Professor Matthew T. Kapstein, as well as to Professor Fernand Meyer, Professor Samten G. Karmay, Professor Katsumi Mimaki, Professor Heather M. Stoddard and Professor Franz-Karl Ehrhard for guiding and instructing me in the rich complexity of Tibetan religious history. Moreover I would like to express my gratitude to eminent traditional rNying ma pa authorities from whom the present paper has also benefited very much: the Tenth Rig ’dzin chen mo of rDo rje brag monastery (b. 1936) for a interview in Lhasa (March 2006), the late mKhas btsun bzang po (1920-2009) for an interview in Paris (July 2008), and Nyi lchang rin po che (b. 1932) for several interviews in Kyoto from November 2009. My heartfelt thanks also go to the Tibetan people of Lhasa, rTse thang, ’Phyong rgyas, dPal ri monastery and sMin grol gling monastery in central Tibet, who guided me, helped me and replied to my questions during a fieldwork done in May 2010. This fieldwork was made possible thanks to a generous grant of the Centre de Recherche sur les Civilisations de l’Asie Orientale (CRCAO, UMR 8155 of the CNRS), Paris. Many thanks are addressed to Dr. Alexander Gardner for kindly proofreading this paper and to Dr. Anna Balikei for her constant support during the editing process. Of course, all mistakes that might remain should be imputed to the sole author.

rNying ma school. Nevertheless, after its decline, dPal ri monastery became almost forgotten in the tradition itself and has remained generally ignored in the academia.²

By gathering and analyzing relevant Tibetan sources, I will show in this paper that dPal ri monastery formed a precedent for what I will heuristically call the “Renaissance” of the rNying ma school under the patronage of the Fifth Dalai Lama during the 17th century. This “rNying ma pa Renaissance” is characterized by two main aspects: the establishment of *new* large monastic institutions and the *reappraisal of the Ancients’ legacy*. The fact that the Fifth Dalai Lama was himself born into the noble family of ’Phyong rgyas gives to the history of dPal ri monastery an importance for Tibetan history as a whole and a privileged perspective to understand the symbolico-religious relation of the Fifth Dalai Lama’s regime with the ancient Tibetan empire and the rNying ma school. By making the history of the forgotten precedent of this Renaissance, we will get some new perspectives to understand the use of the imperial past and memory in the making of history by the Fifth Dalai Lama who reunified Tibet by establishing his new politico-religious regime with Mongol support in 1642.

We will also discover that even after the 17th century “Renaissance,” the successive “revivals” of the rNying ma school in the 18th and 19th centuries also contained significant relations with dPal ri monastery. Effectively, the great ’Jigs med gling pa (1729/30-1798) was born in dPal ri, trained in its monastery, and it is during a spiritual retreat in its hermitage that he had the first revelation of the *Klong chen snying thig*, afterwards probably the most widespread contemplative tradition of *rDzogs chen* (the foremost esoteric teaching of the rNying ma school). While ’Jigs med gling pa’s tradition was to spread in Eastern Tibet and to be continued in the so-called “impartial” (*ris med*) movement during the 19th century, we will see again how some major inspirations came, so far largely unnoticed by scholars, from the forgotten monastery of the Ancients located in the “Valley of the Emperors.”³

² Nevertheless, an important place is given to dPal ri monastery in the periodicization of the rNying ma school’s history by Tarthang Tulku and Leslie Bradburn (1995: 212-215, 219-220).

³ I use this expression for ’Phyong rgyas in Tibet, in comparison to the expression in usage to designate Egypt’s famous necropolis, the Valley of the Kings (Arabic: *Wādī al Mulūk*), West of the Nile, opposite Thebes (modern Luxor).

1. THE MODEL OF THE SIX MOTHER-MONASTERIES OF THE rNYING MA SCHOOL AND ITS EVOLUTION

The *rDzogs chen chos 'byung* provides a useful presentation of the classical classification of the rNying ma school's historiography: the "six great seats" (*gdan sa chen mo drug*) that are the "great root mother-monasteries of the rNying ma school" (*rnying ma'i rtsa ba'i ma dgon chen mo*). Formerly, these six monasteries were conceived as two geographical triads:⁴

I. In upper Tibet (*stod na*), or central Tibet, *rDor sMin dPal gsum*:

1. Thub bstan rDo rje brag E waṃ lcog gсар (*rDor*) founded in 1632;⁵
2. 'Og min gnyis pa O rgyan sMin grol gling (*sMin*) founded in 1676;⁶
3. 'Phyong rgyas dPal ri theg mchog⁷ gling (*dPal*) founded in 1571.⁸

II. In lower Tibet (*smad na*), Eastern Tibet, in Khams, *Kaḥ dPal rDzogs gsum*:

4. rGyal ba Kaḥ thog pa (*Kaḥ*) founded in 1159 and restored in 1656;⁹
5. dPal yul byang chub gling (*dPal*) founded in 1665;¹⁰
6. Grub dbang rDzogs chen pa (*rDzogs*) founded in 1685.¹¹

Nevertheless, dPal ri monastery declined in central Tibet while Zhe chen monastery was flourishing in the East. The classification evolved

⁴ *rDzogs chen chos 'byung*, 810: *de yang snga rabs mkhas pa'i zhal rgyun du / stod na rdor smin dpal gsum dang / smad na kaḥ dpal rdzogs gsum / zhes gangs ljongs rgyal bstan phyi dar gyi skabs su gsang chen snga 'gyur rnying ma'i rtsa ba'i ma dgon chen mo stod na thub bstan rdo rje brag e waṃ lcog sgar dang / 'og min gnyis pa o rgyan smin grol gling / 'phyong rgyas dpal ri theg mchog gling bcas gsum dang / smad mdo khams phyogs su rgyal ba kaḥ thog pa dang / dpal yul byang chub gling / grub dbang rdzogs chen pa bcas su yongs su grags [...]*

⁵ *Id.*, 813-819.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 819-829.

⁷ Most ancient sources have generally *theg chen gling* ("Place of the Great Vehicle") instead of here, *theg mchog gling* ("Place of the Supreme Vehicle"). We will generally follow ancient sources.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 829-835.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 835-842.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 842-845.

¹¹ On the foundation of rDzogs chen monastery by Padma rig 'dzin (1625-1697) see *Ibid.*, 323-331, and Gardner (2009).

accordingly and in the new form, Zhe chen monastery replaced dPal ri monastery. The classical six-fold model of rNying ma historiography was maintained by this simple replacement. In order to maintain a sense of balance and repartition within Tibetan geography, instead of two triads the model was changed into three dyads:¹²

I. In upper Tibet, *rDor sMin gnyis*:

1. rDo rje brag (*rDor*);
2. sMin grol gling (*sMin*).

II. In between (*bar na*), *Zhe rDzogs gnyis*:

3. dPal Zhe chen pa (*Zhe*) founded in 1695, extended in 1734 (or 1735);¹³
4. rDzogs chen (*rDzogs*).

III. In lower Tibet, *Kaḥ dPal gnyis*:

5. Kaḥ thog (*Kaḥ*);
6. dPal yul (*dPal*).

The latter presentation has become the most widely accepted. Even if the *rDzogs chen chos 'byung* reports a hybrid form of a seven-fold model in which dPal ri is kept, the classical model remains composed by six mother-monasteries.¹⁴ As we will see, the complete decline of dPal ri monastery in modern times leaves no room for contesting its replacement in the list. The purpose of the present paper is not concerned at all with such a polemical issue. Nevertheless, from a historical point of view, such a shift raises an interesting question. If a mother-monastery—a vital point of the tradition's transmission and

¹² *Ibid.*, 813 : *phyi dus su dpal ri theg mchog gling gi gdan sa gzhung sa chen mo'i srid dbang la phog thug byung rkyen ches nyams rgud du phyin pa dang / dpal zhe chen pa'i gdan sa chen mo gang du mkhas grub gnyis ldan gyi skyes bu rgyun ma chad par byon zhing ma dgon chen mo khag la snyeg bzod pa'i bshad sgrub kyi phrin las dar zhing rgyas pa byung bas stod na rdor smin gnyis / bar na zhe rdzogs gnyis / smad na kaḥ dpal gnyis zhes pa [...]*

¹³ On the two steps of the foundation of Zhe chen monastery by the first two Zhe chen Rab 'byams pa rin po che, see *Ibid.*, 493–497, and Chhosphe (2012a, 2012b).

¹⁴ In central Tibet, the triad *rDor sMin dPal gsum*: 1. rDo rje brag (*rDor*); 2. sMin grol gling (*sMin*); 3. dPal ri (*dPal*). In lower Tibet, the group of four *Kaḥ dPal Zhe rDzogs bzhi*: 4. Kaḥ thog (*Kaḥ*); 5. dPal yul (*dPal*); 6. Zhe chen (*Zhe*); 6. rDzogs chen (*rDzogs*). *Ibid.*, 813: *gzhan yang stod na rdor smin dpal gsum / smad na kaḥ dpal zhe rdzogs bzhi zhes pa'i tha snyad gсар du byung ba snang mod kyang / 'dir re zhig sngar gyi lo rgyus chos 'byung chen mo nams kyi rjes su 'brangs te snga 'gyur gdan sa chen mo drug gi gam cung zad brjod pa 'dod de /*

history—has disappeared in common historiography, what can tell us the memory of its actual role? And how to explain its oblivion?

If we consider the chronology of the foundation of the seven (six plus one) mother-monasteries of the rNying ma tradition (Kaḥ thog, 1159—restored in 1656—; dPal ri, 1571; rDo rje brag, 1632; dPal yul, 1665; sMin grol gling, 1676; rDzogs chen, 1685; Zhe chen, 1695/1734-5), it is very significant to notice that five of them (rDo rje brag, dPal yul, sMin grol gling, rDzogs chen, and Zhe chen) were founded during the 17th century. Even if it is true that rDo rje brag had antecedents in gTsang and was founded little before the reign of the Fifth Dalai Lama, all of these five monasteries fully blossomed during the rNying ma pa Renaissance under the patronage of the Great Fifth. Moreover, the Dalai Lama's support was also directly involved in the 1656 restoration of Kaḥ thog monastery. By observing this historical procession, we discover that dPal ri (1571) was the oldest of the mother-monasteries in central Tibet. Preceding the foundation in the mid-seventeenth century of rDo rje brag and sMin grol gling monasteries which were to play a larger role, we can consider that *dPal ri monastery formed the antecedent of the rNying ma pa Renaissance*. And as we shall see now, the continuity between dPal ri and this Renaissance under the Fifth Dalai Lama lay very much in the major historical site of the 'Phyong rgyas valley.

2. HISTORY OF DPAL RI MONASTERY IN 'PHYONG RGYAS, "THE VALLEY OF THE EMPERORS"

2.1 *The Rulers of 'Phyong rgyas: Patrons of dPal ri Monastery*

In the second half of the sixteenth century, the ruler (*sde pa, zhabs drung*) of 'Phyong rgyas,¹⁵ Hor bSod nams dar rgyas wished to establish a monastery dedicated to the rNying ma tradition in his lands. He made this request to his chaplain (*dbu bla*), 'Phreng po *gter ston* Shes rab 'od zer, alias Prajñāraśmi (1518-1584).¹⁶ This eclectic *gter*

¹⁵ The variant spelling of 'Phyongs rgyas also occurs but by considering the most current spelling in all our sources, we have opted for the same choice formerly made by Richardson (1963: 219-233) as 'Phyong rgyas.

¹⁶ For a full biography based on different versions (*Gu ru bkra shis chos 'byung*, 544-550; *gTer ston brya rtsa'i rnam thar*, 559-563; *Nor bu do'i shal*, 282.6-286.2; *Zhe chen chos 'byung* 262-269; *rDzogs chen chos 'byung* 829-835) and related sources, see Deroche (2011b). I use generally the name Prajñāraśmi since he was using this Sanskrit version of Shes rab 'od zer to designate himself in his writings.

ston initially trained as a *dge bshes* in the Sa skya and dGe lug schools, had received the transmissions of the bKa' brgyud and rNying ma traditions from his root master 'Bri gung Rin chen phun tshogs (1509-1557). Prajñāraśmi, who was residing in his hermitage of 'Phreng po, within the domain of rDo rje brag, had not accepted yet the project when Hor bSod nams dar rgyas passed away. His son, the next ruler of 'Phyong rgyas, Hor bSod nams stobs rgyal, embraced the vision of his father and repeated his request to Prajñāraśmi, who finally accepted.

The history of the noble family of 'Phyong rgyas has been written by his most illustrious descendant, the Fifth Dalai Lama, in his historical work on Tibet.¹⁷ Tucci has translated several extracts¹⁸ and charted a useful genealogical tree¹⁹ in which we can identify the two rulers mentioned in connection with the foundation of dPal ri monastery. The Fifth Dalai Lama makes the claim that his family belonged to the Indian royal lineage of Za hor or Bhaṭa hor,²⁰ including mythical figures of tantric Buddhism, the King of Dza, the King Indrabodhi and Padmasambhava. The lineage is supposed to have established itself in Tibet at the time of emperor Khri srong lde'u btsan. Later the family was closely involved in the success of Phag mo gru pa Byang chub rgyal mtshan (1302-1364)²¹ and seems to have remained loyal and close to the sovereign of sNe'u gdong.

From the fifteenth century until the early seventeenth century, in the recurrent civil wars opposing dBus and gTsang, the 'Phyong rgyas family displayed a remarkable religious eclecticism. The family patronized the various schools of Tibetan Buddhism, including both the dGe lugs pa and the Karma bKa' brgyud pa, the two most powerful religious orders of this time which were aligned with the political powers of dBus and gTsang, respectively. While maintaining its power through several military campaigns, the 'Phyong rgyas family also engaged in mediation between dBus and gTsang, calling upon the most eminent religious hierarchs in the process. According to Samten G. Karmay,²² all religious orders seem to have been very keen to establish relations with this noble clan of 'Phyong rgyas because of its key position in alliances, its power, and from another point of view,

¹⁷ *Bod kyi deb ther*, 163-171.

¹⁸ Tucci (1949: vol. 2, 643-644).

¹⁹ *Id.*, vol. 2, Table VII. The whole work was also translated by Ahmad (1995: on 'Phyong rgyas see 165-173).

²⁰ Thus the term Hor is not supposed to designate Mongolian ascendancy here.

²¹ *Bod kyi deb ther*, 166.

²² Personal communication in Kyoto University, December 2009.

because of the historical prestige attached to the 'Phyong rgyas valley in connection with the ancient empire.

The son of Hor rDo rje tshe brtan, Rin chen rgyal mchog, became the prime minister of the Phag mo gru pa sovereign precisely through his efforts in mediating between dBus and gTsang.²³ In the beginning of the sixteenth century, he invited the powerful Fourth Zhwa dmar pa Chos grags ye shes (1453-1524),²⁴ who was supported by the Rin spungs pa, and obtained the patronage of the Phag mo gru pa government for the construction of the Zhwa dmar pa's monastery of Yangs pa can. Few decades later in the line of the 'Phyong rgyas rulers, Hor bSod nams dar rgyas made extensive studies, both secular and religious, with the Karma bka' brgyud pa master dPal khang *lo tsā ba* (birth 15th century or 16th century according to TBRC). Hor bSod nams dar rgyas invited as well the Third Dalai Lama, bSod nams rgya mtsho (1543-1588), and a pacification was probably made through the graces of the latter, as reported in his biography.²⁵ Hor bSod nams dar rgyas married Tshe dbang rgyal mo, the sister of sKyid shod *zhabs drung* bKra shis rab brtan (1531-1589), support of the dGe lugs pa. The son born from their union, bSod nams stobs rgyal, was a powerful military conquerer. It is him who managed to invite Prajñāraśmi in 'Phyong rgyas and establish dPal ri monastery.

He invited also the dGe lugs pa master Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan who restored monastic discipline in the dGe lugs pa monastery of Ri bo bde chen in 'Phyong rgyas. According to the autobiography of the Fifth Dalai Lama,²⁶ other bKa' brgyud and rNying ma masters close to Prajñāraśmi were also invited in the 'Phyong rgyas court, establishing a chaplain-patron (*mchod yon*) relation: 'Brug pa Padma dkar po (1527-1592),²⁷ Byang bdag bKra shis stobs rgyal (1550?-1602) who married the daughter of the 'Phyong rgyas family, and 'Bri gung Chos rgyal phun tshogs (1547-1602), the son of 'Bri gung Rin chen phun tshogs.

²³ *Bod kyi deb ther*, 168.

²⁴ A colophon confirms that the Fourth Zhwa dmar pa was also one of the chaplains of the ruling family of 'Phyong rgyas. To the request of the queen (*dpon mo*) of 'Phyong rgyas, bSod nams lha mo, he wrote a ritual for the cult of Buddhas and Arhats: *sTon pa gnas brtan chen pon 'khor bcas mchod cing smon lam gdap pa'i cho ga*, in his *gSung 'bum*, 6 vols, Pekin, Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2009, vol. 5, 551-579.

²⁵ Tucci (1949: vol. 1, 44).

²⁶ *Du kū la*, vol. 1, 34-35.

²⁷ Padma dkar po wrote at the request of mGon po tshe 'phel, a son of the 'Phyong rgyas ruler, the text entitled *Thugs rje chen po'i smar khrid snying po'i don la 'jug pa*, in *gSung 'bum*, 24 vols. Darjeeling: Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1973-1974, vol. 11, 625-637.

2.2. 'Phyong rgyas and the Citadel of 'Phying ba stag rtse, Ancient Seat of the Imperial Power



Image 1. Today's city of 'Phyong rgyas viewed from the top of the Bang so dmar po. On the right, the little white building marks the site of the ancient *rdzong* of the *zhabs drung*. Above on the crest, the ruins are associated to the ancient imperial seat. In the middle, the ruins of Ri bo bde chen monastery, reconstructed on the left (May 2010, the author). Richardson (1998: 220) gives a useful sketch of the place with the tombs. See also his photographs originally taken in 1949 (Plates 2, 3, 6)

The 'Phyong rgyas valley, located in the south-west of the Yar lung region, 28 kilometers from the city of rTse thang, was originally a major seat of the Tibetan power before Srong btsan sgam po centered his new empire in Lhasa. The ancient imperial citadel was named 'Phying ba stag rtse, the “Tiger Peak” (*stag rtse*) of 'Phying ba. Stories diverge about its foundation. According to Hugh Richardson (1963, reed. 1998), the earliest reference is found in an inscription from Kong po dated of the ninth century. It states that it was the seat of seven generations of kings until the time of Dri gum btsan po, the father of sPu lde gung rgyal. Even if the king Lha Tho tho ri (Lha To do snya btsan), fifth in the lineage before Srong btsan sgam po,

established a new palace in Yum bu bla mkhar (Yum bu bla sgang), 'Phying ba stag rtse is mentioned in the section of chronicles in Dunhuang documents as the residence of Srong btsan sgam po's grandfather, sTag bu snya gzigs.²⁸ It seems even that Srong btsan sgam po himself lived there at some point.²⁹ With the expansion of Tibetan territory, several palaces were established where the Tibetan emperor could stay for longer and advanced expeditions, and from which his power could be consolidated. Although the origins of the Yar lung dynasty remain difficult to identify, it seems that this lineage had its seat in the palace of 'Phying ba stag rtse during the period just preceding the emergence of the Tibetan empire in the history of central Asia.³⁰

After the emergence of the empire, the land of 'Phying ba, also spelled in ancient sources Phying ba or Pying ba, became only mentioned as the burial place the Tibetan emperors. Nevertheless, the fort of 'Phying ba stag rtse remained a major historical and symbolic site. Richardson (1963, reed. 1998: 220) makes a distinction between the ancient imperial palace named 'Phying ba stag rtse and the fort (*rdzong*) of the later 'Phyong rgyas rulers (*zhabs drung*) known as 'Phyong rgyas rdzong. I have also identified the two sites as shown in Image 1 above. However, according to current inhabitants of 'Phyong rgyas, the whole was known as 'Phying ba stag rtse.

The fort of the 'Phyong rgyas rulers was completely destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. Nothing currently stands on the site save for a small modern building, probably built for the sake of commemoration, which is somewhat dilapidated. This poor edifice is nevertheless indicated as the palace of 'Phying ba stag rtse in today's town of 'Phyong rgyas. In the upper part of the hill's crest, the remains of the ancient imperial palace can still be seen. There are also lines of fortifications that local people told me to have been edified against the Dzungar invasion (1717-1720) which finally sacked the whole place.

2.3 *The Valley of the Emperors*

Facing the fort of the Tiger Peak is the valley of 'Phying ba, "the Valley of the Emperors," where lie the important tumuli containing the tombs of ten members of the Tibetan imperial dynasty: the immediate ancestors and successors of the unifying ruler of Tibet, the great

²⁸ See Bacot et al. (1940: 162-165).

²⁹ *Id.*, 132-136.

³⁰ See Beckwith (1993: 11-15).

conqueror and emperor (*btsan po*) Srong btsan sgam po. In the neighbour valley of Don mkhar, separated by the Mu la ri hill, are six others imperial tombs. The complex studied by Tucci (1950), Richardson (1963, reed. 1998), Haarh (1969), and Hazod (2007) was also the objet of traditional scholarship by a famous native of 'Phyong rgyas, 'Jigs med gling pa (1729/30-1798)³¹ who acted as a kind of archeologist and renovator of its ancient sites. Gyurmé Dorje³² has offered a description of the work, with the plan of the tombs, relatively close to Richardson's.

The main tomb, at the center of the 'Phyong rgyas valley is Srong btsan sgam po's, the "Red Tomb" (Bang so dmar po), a squared form with sides of approximately 129 meters, and 13.4 meters high according to Gyurmé Dorje. Although it is probable that the tombs might have been profaned during the 11th century after the fall of the empire, and again later during the Dzungar invasion in the 18th century, no archeological excavation has been conducted to inform us about their actual contents.



Image 2. Bang so dmar po, the tumulus of emperor Srong btsan sgam po in 'Phyong rgyas (May 2010, the author)

³¹ Among his *gTam tshogs*, is the *bKra shis srong btsan bang so'i dkar chag 'bring por byas pa n.ya gro dha'i chun 'phang*, in *'Jigs med gling pa'i gsung 'bum*, vol. 7, 374.2-381.5.

³² Dorje (1999: 201-206).

Tucci and Haarh have explored the magico-ritual schemes and operations of such constructions in ancient Tibet. 'Phyong rgyas valley has been the symbol of an "eternal Tibet," eternal residence of the Tibetan emperors, a link with the other world from which they were believed to watch upon Tibet's destiny. The fact that 'Phyong rgyas was chosen by the Yar lung dynasty for its burial site tells us about the importance it was granted by the dynasty itself, possibly in reference to its origins. Both as a mythical and historical place, the 'Phyong rgyas valley immortalized imperial Tibet, the period of the "Dharma Kings" (*chos rgyal*), age of political grandeur, early spread of Buddhism (*snga' dar*), and source of the rNying ma School.

2.4 *The Foundation of 'Phyong rgyas dPal ri theg chen gling Monastery (1571)*

It is in the midst of this environment that the ruler of 'Phyong rgyas patronized the establishment of the rNying ma monastery of dPal ri theg chen gling, "the Place of the Great Vehicle of the Glorious Mountain." "dPal ri," the "Glorious Mountain" refers to Padmasambhava's Pure Land, Zangs mdog dPal ri, the "Glorious Copper-coloured Mountain." dPal ri monastery was founded in 1571³³ nearby the tombs, further behind the Mu la ri hill. Hor bSod nams stobs rgyal sponsored all its buildings, donating labor, materials, and religious objects. Since the fall of the Tibetan empire, this event represented for the first time the creation of a large rNying ma monastic institution in central Tibet. Its community is said to have adopted externally (*phyi*) the precepts of monastic discipline (*vinaya*) and internally (*nang*) the esoteric instructions of the Great Perfection (*rdzogs chen*).

According to the history of Tibet written by the Fifth Dalai Lama, as well as the latter's autobiography,³⁴ the ruler of 'Phyong rgyas commissioned the edition and printing of *Prajñāpāramitā* texts, *rDzogs*

³³ *rDzogs chen chos 'byung*, 829.

³⁴ *Bod kyi deb ther*, 170 : *dus gsum mkhyen pa mtsho skyes rdo rje'i ring lugs pa slob dpon bai ro tsa na'i thugs sprul gter ston shes rab 'od zer ti shrir bsten nas / sa 'dzin dpal gyi ri la theg mchog sgrub pa'i 'dus sde btab / sher phyin sum brgya pa / shel brag gi thang yig sems nyid ngal gso rnam par du bzhengs / See also Du kū la*, vol. 1, 34: *slob dpon bai ro tsa na'i rnam sprul 'phreng 'go gter ston shes rab 'od zer yongs 'dzin du bsten / sngags rnying ma'i bstan pa'i 'phel rgyas la dgongs / dpal ri grwa tshang gsar du btab / sher phyin sum brgya pa / padma bka' thang / sems nyid ngal gso gzhung 'grel rnam par du brkos /*

chen treatises from Klong chen pa's (1308-1364) *Sems nyid ngal gso*³⁵ and the *Padma bka' thang*.³⁶ The latter work, a *gter ma* on Padmasambhava's legendary life and deeds, had been discovered close to 'Phyong rgyas, in the cave of Shel brag by *gter ston* O rgyan gling pa (b. 1323). According to Tucci,³⁷ most of the widespread versions of the *Padma bka' thang* derived from the single version revised and edited by Prajñāraśmi under the 'Phyong rgyas patronage, including the Fifth Dalai Lama's edition of dGa' ldan. As Tucci also rightly noted, all the *gter ma* revelations can be also seen as much as strategies to revive the Tibetan imperial unity and envision the destiny of Tibetan people in the mirror of Padmasambhava's prophecies.³⁸

During the 16th century, a period characterized by political fragmentation and sectarian conflicts, it seems that the ruling family of 'Phyong rgyas must have been very aware of the symbolic legacy of its domain. In close association to the Phag mo gru pa regime, the 'Phyong rgyas rulers were likely to intent to appeal to such symbols in order to reassess their power and authority. The magico-religious activation of these symbols was operated within the rNying ma school, in particular through the treasure traditions, which actively maintained a lively spiritual link with Padmasambhava and the ancient empire. It is with this in mind that we should, I think, consider the establishment of dPal ri monastery, a rNying ma institution in 'Phyong rgyas, as well as the revision and edition of the *Padma bka' thang*.

A contemporary guide to central Tibet's local history indicates that dPal ri monastery developed to a great extent; before the Dzungar invasion, there were six hundred fully ordained monks (*bhikṣu*, *dge slong*).³⁹ For the *rDzogs chen chos 'byung*, the religious community

³⁵ Professor Franz-Karl Erhard has kindly informed me that a copy of the *Ngal gso skor gsum* by Klong chen pa made at that time has survived in the collection of the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project (NGMPP), reel-no. AT 157-158/1.

³⁶ Again, I am indebted to Prof. Ehrhard for knowing that the "print colophon" (*par byang*) of this work is available in a manuscript copy of the original xylograph edition from dPal ri monastery; see *Padma bka' thang*. Patna: Rahula Collection Series, 1, 1988, 587.5-590.5.

³⁷ Tucci (1949: vol. 1, 110-115).

³⁸ *Op. cit.*, vol. 1, 112.

³⁹ *Lho kha sa khul*, 66 : *de nas rim bzhin 'phel rgyas 'byung ste jun gar bas ma gtor gong tsam na dge 'dun zhal grangs mang po 'phel te / dge slong kho nar drug brgya lhag tsam byung gsung /*

included at some point more than three thousands people for the triad *rDor sMin dPal gsum* of central Tibet.⁴⁰

2.5 The Abbatial Succession of *dPal ri Monastery*

After the death of Prajñāraśmi, there was no reincarnation or “emanation body” (*sprul sku*) of him at the head of *dPal ri* monastery. According to the indications given by the *Gu ru bkra shis chos 'byung*,⁴¹ 'Jam dbyangs mKhyen brtse'i dbang po (1820-1892),⁴² and the *rDzogs chen chos 'byung*,⁴³ the list of *dPal ri*'s abbots is the following:

1. Prajñāraśmi: founder and abbot from 1571, probably up to his death in 1584;
2. *rgyal sras* Karma kun bzang: son and spiritual heir of Prajñāraśmi.

⁴⁰ *rDzogs chen chos 'byung*, 829: *sngar dus dar rgyas che ba'i skabs dge 'dun 'dus pa stong phrag gsum lhag byung bas mtshon stod na rdor smin dpal gsum zhes yongs su grags /*

⁴¹ *Gu ru bkra shis chos 'byung*, 668: *gzhan 'phyong rgyas dpal ri 'di dbus phyogs rnying dgon snga shos zhig tu snang ste / thog mar gter ston shes rab 'od zer gyis btab / gter ston gshegs rjes karma rgyal sras kun bzang sogs kyis bskyangs / de nas rig 'dzin ngag gi dbang po'i bcung mtsho rgyal sprul pa rig 'dzin 'phrin las rnam rgyal mtsho skyes bzhad pa'i dbang pos gdan sa mdzad / bar skabs kyi gdan rabs ma rnyed / physis tshod de nyid kyi sprul pa'i sku ngag dbang kun bzang padma sogs nas mtsho rgyal skye sprul rim byon gyis bskyangs pas nyams med gong 'phel du gnas /*

⁴² *mKhyen brtse'i gsung 'bum*, vol. 18, 325: *yar klung 'phyong rgyas dpal ri theg mchog gling ni / 'phreng po gter chen shes rab 'od zer gyis btab / de rjes rgyal sras karma kun bzang / mtsho rgyal sprul sku rig 'dzin phrin las rnam rgyal / ngag dbang kun bzang padma / ngag dbang blo bzang padma / padma chos 'byor rgya mtsho / bstan 'dzin chos kyi nyi ma rnams bzhugs /*

⁴³ *rDzogs chen chos 'byung*, 829: *snga 'gyur gdan sa chen mo drug gi ya gyal 'phyong rgyas dpal ri theg mchog gling ni / spyi lo 1571 pa ste rab byung bcu pa'i skyes bdag ces pa lcags lug lor gter chen shes rab 'od zer gyis phyag btab cing / de rjes rgyal sras karma kun bzang / mtsho rgyal sprul sku rig 'dzin phrin las rnam rgyal / ngag dbang padma kun bzang / ngag dbang blo bzang padma / padma chos 'byor rgya mtsho / bstan 'dzin chos kyi nyi ma sogs mkhas grub gnyis ldan gyi skyes chen brgyud mar byon pas grol thig gts'o bor gyur pa'i snga 'gyur bka' gter gyi bstan pa shin tu dar zhing chos brgyud kyang bod yul tha gru kun la khyab /*

Then dPal ri became the seat of a succession of *sprul sku* of Padmasambhava's consort, Ye shes mtsho rgyal. This lineage was known as the "'Phyong rgyas dPal ri *sprul sku*."⁴⁴ They were:

3. mTsho rgyal *sprul sku* Rig 'dzin phrin las rnam rgyal : younger brother of Rig 'dzin ngag gi dbang po (1580-1630) founder of rDo rje brag monastery, and son of the union of Byang bdag bKra shis stobs rgyal (1550-1602) with a daughter of the noble family of 'Phyong rgyas.

The *Gu ru bkra shis chos 'byung* mentions that after him there were a certain interval between the succession of dPal ri's abbots. Then the lineage started again and continued without interruption with:

4. Ngag dbang kun bzang padma: contemporary of the Fifth Dalai Lama who made prayers after his passing away (see below);
5. Ngag dbang blo bzang padma: master of 'Jigs med gling pa;
6. Padma chos 'byor rgya mtsho: disciple of 'Jigs med gling pa;
7. bsTan 'dzin chos kyi nyi ma.

This list already shows us some privileged connections between dPal ri monastery, the 'Phyong rgyas family, rDo rje brag monastery, the Fifth Dalai Lama and 'Jigs med gling pa.

2.6 *The History of dPal ri Monastery by 'Jigs med gling pa (1729/30-1798)*

One of the sources generally mentioned concerning dPal ri monastery is 'Jigs med gling pa's *Story on the Glorious Mountain, Place of the Great Vehicle: Vajra Sound's Lute (dPal ri theg pa chen po'i gling gi gtam rdo rje sgra ma'i rgyud mngas)*.⁴⁵ This text of twelve folios is nevertheless more of devotional style than historical. There is for example no precise information about the abbatial succession (*gdan rabs*). In the first part,⁴⁶ the author relates the mythical and historical origins of Buddhism in Tibet according to well-established patterns.

⁴⁴ On a similar lineage of dPal ri *sprul sku* in Sikkim during the same period, see Ehrhard (2008). This monastery was also called dPal ri theg chen gling. The First dPal ri *sprul sku* of Sikkim, was Rig 'dzin lhun grub (d. 1650), the brother of Lha btsun Nam mkha' jigs med (1597-1653) who seems to have been also associated to 'Phyong rgyas dPal ri as we will show below according to the descriptions of 'Jigs med gling pa and Kañ thog Si tu pañ chen.

⁴⁵ *'Jigs med gling pa'i gsung 'bum*, vol. 7, 381.6-404.2.

⁴⁶ *Id.*, 381.6-388.2.

Then the foundation of dPal ri monastery is announced by Padmasambhava's prophecies. The second part⁴⁷ describes the religious objects of the monastery as witnessed by 'Jigs med gling pa in his time. As for the prophecies of the foundation of dPal ri monastery, the first is:⁴⁸

In 'Phyong rgyas, my emanation will come to do the good.⁴⁹
 [People] will not know who he is, and he will teach the doctrine of immediacy.
 To the south of the Bang so dmar po in 'Phyi ba mdo,
 Will also be built a monastery with a *stūpa* of the descent from the gods [the gods' realm of Tuṣita].⁵⁰
 If, in the temple, one prays a statue
 Of myself as a special auspicious factor,
 Then the doctrine of the Victorious' lineage will be diffused from the south to the south!

Another prophecy is extracted from the *Questions and Answers of Precious Palm Tree (dKon mchog ta la'i zhu lan)*:⁵¹

In the south-east direction of the Bang so dmar po
 Will appear a statue of Padma in his aspect of subjugating demons (*bdud 'dul*)
 And one *stūpa* of the descent from the gods [the gods' realm of Tuṣita].
 If according to this auspicious factor a religious community is established,
 Then the doctrine of the Victorious One's lineage will be diffused from the south to the south!

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 388.2-401.3.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 385.3-4: 'phyong rgyas nang du nga sprul don byed 'ong: su yin mi shes cig car smra ba 'byung : 'phyi ba mdo'am bang so mar po'i lhor : lha babs mchod rten sde dgon 'cha' yang srid : rten 'brel gcig tu padma nga nyid kyi : sku rten gtsug lag gsol ba thebs pa na : rgyal brgyud bstan pa lho nas lho ru dar :

⁴⁹ Here 'Jigs med gling pa might designate himself as he does in his autobiography with a similar prophecy. See 'Jigs med gling pa'i rnam thar, 6: dpal o rgyan chos kyi rgyal pos // 'phyongs rgyas nang du nga sprul don byed 'ong // su yin mi shes cig car smra ba 'byung // 'phying dbar mdo'am bang so dmar po'i lhor // lha bab mchod rten dgon sde 'cha' yang srid //

⁵⁰ One of the eight traditional types of *stūpa*.

⁵¹ 'Jigs med gling pa'i gsung 'bum, vol. 7, 385.6-386.1: bang so dmar po'i shar ma lho yi phyogs // padma'i sku tshab bdud 'dul cha lugs dang // lha las babs pa'i mchod rten zhig kyang 'byung // dge 'dun sde tshugs rten 'brel legs 'grig na // rgyal brgyud bstan pa lho nas lho ru rgyas //

Then, a prophecy under the seal of secrecy (*gab rgya can*) gives the name of bSod nams:⁵²

The present son of the gods, source of glory
 Of the family of the rulers of Za hor, in the palace of the tombs [the
 tombs'valley],
 Having the name of bSod nams, faithful and intelligent,
 Is connected to me, Padma, through many aspirations.
 He is a fortunate with a good [*karma*] and practices continuously
 My treasures (*gter ma*) with single-pointed devotion.

'Jigs med gling pa identifies the prophesied man as Hor bSod nams dar rgyas who took as his spiritual master *gter ston* 'Gro dul gling pa Prajñāraśmi, who himself was conceived as an emanation of Pa gor Vairocana. He then states that the religious community was established with the support of the son of Hor bSod nams dar rgyas, Hor bSod nams stobs rgyal, and writes that the main statue of the temple was Padmasambhava subjugating demons (Padma bdud 'dul), in accordance with the prophecy given above. The monastery was endowed with the commentaries of the great Indian chariots (*rgya gar gyi shing rta chen po rnam*) and it followed the scriptural tradition teaching the Great Perfection (*rDzogs pa chen po*) as the fruit of all teachings, i.e. Klong chen pa's exegesis.

'Jigs med gling pa deplores the destruction of the monastery done by the Dzungars in 1717-1720; his description concerns dPal ri monastery after his subsequent reconstruction. In this regard, the statue of Buddha Vairocana is the object of a marvelous story. During the Dzungar invasion, it is said to have been deplaced from dPal ri monastery to the fort of 'Phying ba stag rtse. At this moment, it reportedly became very heavy to carry on and its eyes cried out tears. After the tragedy, on the way back to the reconstructed monastery, it became this time very light to move. The interpretation given is that the founder, Prajñāraśmi, was the emanation of the imperial translator Pa gor Vairocana, himself considered as the manifestation of the great solar Buddha, Vairocana. 'Jigs med gling pa mentions that on each side of this statue were disposed the twenty-five volumes of the *rNyīng ma rgyud 'bum* that he had himself printed.

⁵² *Id.*, 386.2-3: *da lta'i lha sras dpal gyi 'byung gnas ni // za hor dpon brgyud pang so'i pho brang du // bsod nams ming ldan dad pa'i blo gros can // padma nga dang smon lam du mar 'brel // rtse gcig gus pas nga yi zab gter la // rgyun du spyod pas las ldan skal pa bzang //*

Among the objects offered to the monastery at the time of its foundation by the 'Phyong rgyas ruler was a copper statue (*zangs sku*) of Prajñāraśmi. In the main temple (*gtsug lha khang*), there was a mural painting (*gyang ris*) of the *vidhyādhara*s (*rig 'dzin*) associated to Prajñāraśmi's treasure lineage of the *Grol thig*. On the face of the door (*sgo gdong*) of the protectors' temple (*mgon khang*) there was a painting of rDo rje gshog rgod ma, protector of the *Grol thig*. In the main temple, another element of importance was a mural painting of the Fifth Dalai Lama, showing him in connection to the monastery as the descendant of the Za hor family and patron of the great *gter ston* Prajñāraśmi's lineage. There was also a mural painting of the ancestor (*yab mes*) of the Great Fifth, the 'Phyong rgyas ruler Hor bSod nams dar rgyas. Above the main temple was the *guru*'s chapel (*bla ma lha khang*) made at the time of the funerals of Ngag dbang blo bzang padma, abbot of dPal ri and master of 'Jigs med gling pa.

The text ends⁵³ with a prophecy made by Lha btsun sGyu ma'i rnal 'byor⁵⁴ which follow those mentioned before, and his *vajra* song (*rdo rje'i glu*) praising dPal ri monastery. The colophon⁵⁵ tells us that 'Jigs med gling pa (*rdzogs chen pa* mKhyen brtse'i 'od zer) wrote the text in his neighboring monastery of Tshe ring ljongs, Padma 'od gsal theg mchog gling.⁵⁶

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 401.3-403.3.

⁵⁴ Possibly Lha btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med (1597-1650), *gter ston* considered as the incarnation of Vimalamitra and Klong chen pa. Among his disciples was the third abbot of dPal ri, *sprul sku* Phrin las nam rgyal. He ended up his life in the temple of Shel brag not far from dPal ri (*rdzogs chen chos 'byung*, 280-281). A *khatvāṅga* which had belonged to him was also worshipped in dPal ri according to Kaḥ thog Si tu (see below).

⁵⁵ *'Jigs med gling pa'i gsung 'bum*, vol. 7, 403.3-404.2.

⁵⁶ On Tshe ring ljongs, see *'Jigs med gling pa'i gsung 'bum*, vol. 7, *Pad ma 'od gsal theg mchog gling gi rten dang brten par bcas pa'i gtam nor bu'i do shal*, 404-460; *dBu gtsang gnas yig*, 202; *Lho kha sa khul*, 65-66; Dowman (1988: 202); Dorje (1999: 205). The reader might have noted the parallel between the two names of dPal ri theg chen gling and Padma 'od gsal theg mchog gling, both related to Padmasambhava as the "place" (*gling*) of his tradition or "vehicle" (*theg*) said either "great" (*chen*) or "supreme" (*mchog*).

2.7 *Kaḥ thog Si tu paṅ chen's (1880-1923/25) Pilgrimage in dPal ri Monastery*

Around one century after 'Jigs med gling pa, Kaḥ thog Si tu (1880-1923/25) made a pilgrimage in central Tibet and visited dPal ri monastery. In this text, we observe the profound influence that had 'Jigs med gling pa in dPal ri. According to the given description, the assembly hall ('*du khang*) had twelve pillars. It had life-size clay statues of the eight *vidhyādhara*s of India, realized by 'Jigs med gling pa, and a statue of the master from Za hor, Padmasambhava, larger than life. In the upper part in the back, to the left, was the temple of the protectors, Mahākāla and Srī Devī marked with the seal of the Omniscient.⁵⁷ In the inner space of the assembly hall, was a silver reliquary of 'Phreng po *gter chen rin po che*, Prajñāraśmi, the size of one span ('*dom gang*). In the base of this, behind a glass, was a stone statue of the Buddha which was a *gter ma*. There were similar silver reliquaries of two of the dPal ri mTsho rgyal *sprul sku*.⁵⁸

The *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* (25 vols), produced by 'Jigs med gling pa, was displayed with the ancient root-tantra of Guhyasamāja open as an auspicious sign. At the center was 'Jigs med gling pa's catalogue (*dkar chag*). The main object of the cult was a bronze statue of the Buddha Vairocana (possibly the same mentioned by 'Jigs med gling pa above). To the left was a statue representing 'Jigs med gling pa and twenty other similar statues in bronze. There were the *bKa' gyur* written in vermillion and made by *bla ma Kun bzang 'od zer*, the *bKa' gyur* of Nar thang made by 'Jigs med gling pa, and other books.⁵⁹ In the center of the main chapel were placed prominently the clay

⁵⁷ *dBus gtsang gnas yig*, 206: 'phyongs rgyas dpal rir / 'du khang ka ba bcu gnyis pa na / kun mkhyen 'jigs gling bzhengs pa rgya gar rig 'dzin brgyad mi tshad 'jim / slob dpon za hor ma mi tshad che / phug g.yas nas thog tu ma mgon leam dral mgon khang kun mkhyen dam 'byar /

⁵⁸ *Id*: 'du khang sbug na 'phreng po gter chen rin po che'i dngul gdung 'dom gang par bre nang gter byon thub dbang rdo sku shel sgor yod / dpal ri mtsho rgyal sprul sku sku phreng gnyis kyi dngul gdung 'dom gang re /

⁵⁹ *Ibid*: kun mkhyen 'jigs gling gis bzhengs dbu nas ldeb snga yan shog nag ser / dmar / ljang / gser / dngul 'dul mthing spang gis bsgyur te bris / dbu lha legs pa'i 'phros snag bris rdzab rnying rgyud pod nyi shu rtsa lnga spus dag yod pa'i pod gcig zhal phye skabs gsang [207] rnying rtsa rgyud dang 'phrad pas rten 'brel legs / dbus su kun mkhyen dkar chag ltar 'u shang rdo'i rten gtso rnam snang li ma mi tshad / g.yon du rig 'dzin 'jigs med gling pa nga 'dra ma shin tu byin chags / sku 'dra li ma sna tshogs nyi shu tsam / bka' 'gyur mtshal par bla ma kun bzang 'od zer bzhengs / kun mkhyen 'jigs gling gis bzhengs pa snar thang bka' 'gyur / yang yi ge sna tshogs /

statues of Padmasambhava, *dākinīs* and gods of wealth (*nor lha*), made by Thugs mchog rdo rje⁶⁰ from sKyid grong and Jigs med gling pa, with the Indian *khaṭvāṅga* of Lha btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med. The enumeration continues with classical elements of the ten bodhisattvas, three Buddhas, eight bodhisattvas, Hayagrīva and Acala.⁶¹

The author notes that at that time, even though the monastery had been reconstructed after the Dzungar invasion, the monastery was again in a state of despair, with only a hundred monks in residence. The great ceremonies were based on the *Guhyagarbhatantra* cycles, the developed path of the *Grol thig*, general assemblies of the *maṇḍala* rites of the *dGongs 'dus*, and those of 'Jigs med gling pa's tradition of the *Klong chen snying thig*, etc. Monks used to go for retreat to bSam yas mChims phu where, following the first revelation in dPal ri, 'Jigs med gling pa had the second revelation of the *Klong chen snying thig*.⁶² There were also three *thang ka* about the life-story of 'Jigs med gling pa and other sacred objects such as many compositions of 'Jigs med gling pa and the footprints of rDzogs chen Padma rig 'dzin (1625-1697). The author observed the remains of Prajñāraśmi's house and, in the village below the monastery, the remains of the house where 'Jigs med gling pa was born.⁶³

2.8 Contemporary History

Following the visit of Kaḥ thog Si tu, dPal ri continued to decline. According to the *rDzogs chen chos 'byung*,⁶⁴ in 1957, the Sixth Grub

⁶⁰ See Goodman (1992: 199-200) for this root-teacher of 'Jigs med gling pa.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*: dri gtsang khang dbus skyid grong thugs mchog rdo rje dang rig 'dzin 'jigs gling gi bzhengs o rgyan mkha' 'gro nor lha'i 'jim sku thog mtho / lha btsun nam mkha' 'jigs med kyi kha ṭam rgya gar bskor ba / phyogs bcu'i byang sems mi tshad bcu / dus gsum sangs rgyas mi che tshad gsum / nye sras mi tshad brgyad / khro bo gnyis bcas /

⁶² *Ibid.*: dpal ri 'di sngar yod jun gar gyis gtor / phyis de mo tshang dang mnyam du gzhung bkyon phog pas da lta nyams / grwa brgya lhag yod / zla ba dang por bla ma gsang 'dus tshes bcu / de nas grol tig lam rgyas / dgongs 'dus dkyil chog tshogs chen 'dus pa 'jigs gling lugs sogs tshogs rgyu yod / mchims phur 'gro dgos /

⁶³ *Ibid.*: zhal thang kun mkyen 'jigs gling gi rnam thar thang ka gos spus can gsum sogs dang / 'jigs gling bka' rtsom mang po yod pa'i mtshan brgyad bgres pa legs pa dgu thang sogs yod / 'og tu rdzogs chen padma rigs 'dzin zhabs rjes / phar kar phreng po gter chen gzims khang shul / de 'og grong / kun mkhyen 'jigs gling 'khrungs khyim shul sogs yod / mchod rten bgres po mthon po'i bum pa nang sangs rgyas sku yod pa'ang 'dug.

⁶⁴ *rDzogs chen chos 'byung*, 829.

dbang rDzogs chen 'Jigs bral byang chub rdo rje came from Khams for a pilgrimage in dBus. He visited dPal ri monastery and conferred empowerments and teachings and grew concerned about the monastery's poor state. Having made a special request to the government of Lhasa, he obtained the donation of a monastic principality and made important renovations. However, after the Fourteenth Dalai Lama fled to India, the Sixth Grub dbang rDzogs chen could not achieve his plans for dPal ri. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the monastery was totally destroyed. Already weakened, the specific tradition of dPal ri connected to the treasure lineage of Prajñāraśmi seems to have disappeared apart from its inclusion in Kong sprul's *Rin chen gter mdzod*.⁶⁵



Image 3. The principal temple of dPal ri monastery
(May 2010, the author)

The monastery was rebuilt during the 1980's in its original place. A living transmission has been given again from Kham pa masters who restored the *Klong chen snying thig* to its place of origin. According to the *rDzogs chen chos 'byung*, the master Padma dkal bzang rin po che came in 1995 to give empowerments, teachings and a celebration (*dga' ston*). A religious scholar (*mkhan po*) bZung shrī seng chos sde chen

⁶⁵ For references see Deroche 2011b.

mo, was also active to revive practice and scholarship.⁶⁶ Keith Dowman has also given a contemporary description in his guide.⁶⁷ He rightly noted dPal ri's importance, adding that at some point bSam yas and mChims phu were under its control as well as the temple built on top of the Bang so dmar po: the Srong btsan lha khang.⁶⁸



Image 4. Main statue of Srong btsan sgam po in the Srong btsan lha khang, with his two wives, Bhṛkuṭī from Nepal (on the left) and Wengcheng (on the right) (May 2010, the author)

When I visited myself the monastery in May 2010, there were only four monks, two of them being detached in the Srong btsan lha khang, under the supervision of the government. dPal ri maintains very close relations with the nunnery of Tshe ring ljongs founded by 'Jigs med gling pa in the neighbour valley. At the time of my visit, two or three nuns from Tshe ring ljongs were residing in dPal ri for the practice of meditation. I was told by the senior monk that in 2007, Khams pa masters including the present A 'dzom rin po che came again to give the *Klong chen snying thig*'s transmission in both dPal ri and Tshe ring

⁶⁶ *rDzogs chen chos 'byung*, 830.

⁶⁷ Dowman (1988: 202-203).

⁶⁸ This temple was built in the 13th century by the master Nyang sman lung pa. See *dBus gtsang gnas yig*, 205-206; *Lho kha sa khul*, 67; Dowman (1988: 199-201); Dorje (1999: 204-205).

ljons. Monks and nuns told me that they devote their time to the practice of this contemplative tradition. dPal ri monastery is also performing the rites for the local village dPal ri grong tsho (having around sixty houses; see Image 5), where 'Jigs med gling pa was born.



Image 5. The village of dPal ri grong tsho seen from the entrance of dPal ri monastery (May 2010, the author)

Currently at dPal ri monastery, the sole element that remains in connection to his founder, Prajñāraśmi, is the daily recitation of his *Aspiration of the sūtras and mantras (mDo sngags smon lam)*. It is formed by two texts: the first on the *sūtras* written in dPal ri,⁶⁹ the second on the *mantras* written in rDo rje brag.⁷⁰ These texts are not found in the present state of Prajñāraśmi's collected works.⁷¹ In my forthcoming book, based on my doctoral dissertation,⁷² I have edited and translated these texts on the basis of the text photographed in dPal ri monastery and with reference to the commented versions found in 'Jigs med gling pa's collected works⁷³ and mKhyen brtse's.⁷⁴ These

⁶⁹ The title is *Byang chub spyod pa'i smon lam phan bde'i ljon pa*.

⁷⁰ The title is *gSang ba sngags kyi smon lam 'dod 'jo'i dga' ston*.

⁷¹ *Shes rab 'od zer gyi gsung 'bum*.

⁷² Deroche (2011a).

⁷³ *mDo sngags smon lam gyi 'grel pa*, in *'Jigs med gling pa'i gsung 'bum*, vol. 5, 541-620.

works constitute an inspiring rNying ma doxography written according to the genre of “aspiration” (*praṇidhana*, *smon lam*), from the initial refuge in the Three Jewels to the ultimate realization of the Great Perfection.

The contemporary rNying ma pa scholar Nyi lcang rin po che (b. 1932), an adept of the *Klong chen snying thig* and founder of a new “dPal ri theg mchog gling” monastery in Kalimpong, kindly told me⁷⁵ the ingenious prayer he wrote. It expresses the continuity of the rNying ma tradition through the “Three Lights” (*'od zer gsum*), [1] Klong chen pa, [2] Prajñāraśmi, and [3] 'Jigs med gling pa, while revealing the name of dPal ri theg mchog gling:

*Kun tu bzang po [1] Dri med 'od zer DPAL //
Ratna'i thugs sras [2] Shes rab 'od zer RI //
[3] mKhyen rtse 'od zer THEG MCHOG GLING pa yi//
bstan pa dar zhing yun ring gnas gyur cig*

May develop and perdure the teaching of the Place of the Supreme Vehicle

[Coming from] the Glorious Samantabhadra [1] “Immaculate Light” (Dri med 'od zer =Klong chen pa),

Mountain of [2] “Light of Wisdom” (Shes rab 'od zer=Prajñāraśmi), spiritual son of Ratna [’Bri gung Rin chen phun tshogs],

And [3] “Light of Knowledge” (mKhyen brtse 'od zer='Jigs med gling pa).

3. THE ROLE OF DPAL RI MONASTERY IN THE SUCCESSIVE REVIVALS OF THE RNYING MA SCHOOL (17TH-19TH C.)

3.1 *From the Ancient Tibetan Empire to the Fifth Dalai Lama's Regime: the “Renaissance” of the rNying ma School (17th c.)*

In his study of the treasure tradition's apotheosis of Srong btsan sgam po as Avalokiteśvara in the *Mani bka' bum* cycle and the emergence of the figure of Padmasambhava, Matthew T. Kapstein has shown the importance of the “imaginal persistence of the ancient Tibetan empire” which the Fifth Dalai Lama was to absorb ingenuously:

⁷⁴ mKhyen brtse'i gsung 'bum, vol. 6, *Byang chub spyod pa'i smon lam phan bde'i ljon pa'i zin bris*, 375-453; vol. 6, *gSang ba sngags kyi smon lam 'dod 'jo'i dga' ston gyi 'grel bshad bdud rtsi'i klung chen*, 455-525.

⁷⁵ Personal communication, Kyoto, November 2010.

The phenomenon that we see at work here drew its strength in large measure from the persisting presence of the old empire and from the continuing felt allegiance to it, rather than to the new and strictly local hegemony who rarely commanded much loyalty outside of their own narrow domains. Once more, it was the Fifth Dalai Lama who clearly understood this, and who systematically deployed the authority of his own regime.⁷⁶

In addition to his high status in the hierarchy of the dGe lugs order, the exceptional connection that the Fifth Dalai Lama had with the ancient empire formed a major source for his politico-religious reunification of Tibet. The “imaginal persistence of the empire” analyzed by Kapstein in connection to the treasure visionary revelations, was given in 'Phyong rgyas, a very sensible basis as the *physical persistence of the imperial tombs*. The fact of his birth in the fort of 'Phyong rgyas facing the “Valley of the Emperors” gave the Great Fifth a unique sense of predestination. Born in front of the “Red Tomb” (Bang so dmar po), he was to be installed in the palace of the Potala, the “Red Mountain” (dMar po ri) in Lhasa, and piously assimilated to Srong btsan sgam po, through the reincarnation chain of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. The works of his 'Phyong rgyas ancestors formed the precedent for his legitimizing strategy and patronage of the rNying ma school. I will give several illustrations of the connection between dPal ri monastery's tradition and the Great Fifth.

In the Fifth Dalai Lama's record of received teachings (*gsan yig*) we find a large section on Prajñāraśmi and the *Grol thig*.⁷⁷ It includes different prophecies announcing Prajñāraśmi,⁷⁸ as well as the teachings and rites of the *Grol thig*. Concerning the corresponding empowerments (*abhiṣeka*, *dbang skur*) that the Great Fifth received, he wrote:

[From] the primordial Lord Samantabhadra in union with his consort, [the esoteric transmission was passed down along the following transmission]: the enjoyment body Vajrasattva, the emanation body dGa' rab rdo rje, the second Buddha from Oḍḍiyāna [Padmasambhava], his victorious consort Ye shes 'tsho⁷⁹ rgyal, the great translator

⁷⁶ Kapstein (2000: 162).

⁷⁷ *Thob yig gangga'i chu rgyun*, 244.6-261.6. Concerning the Fifth Dalai Lama's *gSan yig* and the position of Prajñāraśmi's teachings in the text, see Ehrhard (2012: 95).

⁷⁸ *Id.*, 244.6-246.3.

⁷⁹ The Fifth Dalai Lama uses 'tsho instead of *mtsho*, “lake” or “ocean,” which is more usual for mTsho rgyal, the “Queen of the Lake.” Or to make a reference to the Arthurian legend, we could say the “Lady of the Lake.”

Vairocana, [and in a direct transmission through treasure-revelation] the treasure-revealer Shes rab 'od zer [Prajñāraśmi], [his son] Karma rgyal sras Kun bzang, *thugs sras* dKon cog chos dbang grags pa, *Zur thams cad mkhyen pa* Chos dbyings rang grol. The latter [conferred the transmission upon] me, the monk of Za hor [the Fifth Dalai Lama].⁸⁰

The connection between Zur and the Great Fifth Dalai Lama played also an important role for the practice of magical rituals in the midst of the civil wars between the Dalai Lama's camp in dBus against the prince of gTsang.⁸¹ The Fifth Dalai Lama's secret autobiography studied by Samten G. Karmay also shows us how the rNying ma rituals formed a framework for the Great Fifth's rich visionary life and became an important part of his State rituals. While these rituals were activating the symbols of Tibetan power, authority and legitimacy, multiform figures of Srong bstan sgam po, Avalokiteśvara and Padmasambhava inhabited the imaginal world of the Great Fifth. Samten G. Karmay has given interesting lists of the *gter ma* objects used in these ceremonies performed in the dGa' ldan pho brang.⁸² In particular, I will note the presence of objects revealed by Prajñāraśmi: images of Rigs 'dus Padmaguru and Rigs 'dus brda' dbang lnga pa. Among these fascinating objects belonging to both categories of revelation and archeology, myth and history, we find also a statue of Vajradhara made from a *ficus religiosa* (*byang chub shing*) and discovered by Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer from an imperial tomb in 'Phyong rgyas.

The Fifth Dalai Lama literally “made” Tibetan history in both senses of the term: just after he obtained power over Tibet in 1642 through the support of Gushri Khan, he wrote a history of Tibet in 1643 at the request of the Mongol ruler. In this work encapsulating the meaning of Tibetan history and destiny, the mirror of *gter ma* prophecies plays again an important role. I will just refer to a prophecy from Prajñāraśmi which mentions a “sudden king” (*glo bur rgyal po*) who was supposed to rule over the whole country.⁸³ The Fifth Dalai

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 256.1-3: *thog ma'i mgon po kun bzang yab yum / longs sku rdo rje sems dpa' / sprul sku dga' rab rdo rje / o rgyan sangs rgyas gnyis pa / rgyal yum ya [ye] shes 'tsho rgyal / lo chen bai ro tsa na / gter ston shes rab 'od zer / karma rgyal sras kun bzang / thugs sras dkon cog chos dbang grags pa / zur thams cad mkhyen pa chos dbyings rang grol / des bdag za hor bande la'o //*

⁸¹ Dudjom Rinpoché (1991: 679-683).

⁸² Karmay (1988: 39, 42, 62). See also Karmay (2005).

⁸³ *Op. cit.*, 189: *'phreng mgo gter ston shes rab 'od zer gyi thugs rje chen po padma'i dbang phyug gi lung bstan du / sgra snyan 'dra ba'i gnas sgo ru: 'jig rten dbang phyug sprul pa nyid : ar tha'i ming 'dzin byung gyur na : lho byang*

Lama reads it in connection to 'Brug pa Padma dkar po, but the prophecy is said to have not been fulfilled. Then follow other *gter ston*'s prophecies which enable the Great Fifth, himself among the various competing forces, to interpret the critical moment when Tibet entered into a new era: the reign of the Dalai Lamas.⁸⁴

In his autobiography, the Fifth Dalai Lama makes an interesting reference to the prayers he made for the reincarnation of dPal ri *sprul sku* Ngag dbang pad ma:

There were many practices of dedication [of merits] as support [for a good rebirth] after the passing away of dPal ri *sprul sku* Ngag dbang pad ma. I fully practiced these dedications and wishes which dispels obstacles on the path. According to the *Mirror illuminating completely the prophecies of the new inner treasures, the heart essence of the vidhyādhara*s:

The emanation body of 'Tsho rgyal, with the name of rGyal or Pad ma,

Will appear in the direction of the Red Tomb and through its association

All obstacles and conflicts will be pacified and the happiness of sentient beings will increase.

If we consider this prophecy of the emanation body of the Lady of mKhar chen [Ye shes 'tsho rgyal], 'Bri gung Rin chen phun tshogs [master of Prajñāraśmi] was the source of the good fortune for all people in this place of religious practice, benefiting each person in conformity with the doctrine and sentient beings. His root guru was Rig 'dzin Legs ldan bdud 'joms. I have in particular a great faith for the holder of his lineage, the *Dharma* king with the name of "Manga" ["bKra shis" stobs rgyal] and his son [Rig 'dzin ngag gi dbang po]. But the false treasure-discoverers greedy for sources of incomes, the holders of the lineages of sNang rtse, Gong [ra lo tsā ba] Sog [zlog pa rgyal mtshan],⁸⁵ whoever they might be, it is true to say that demons had entered their minds [when they made such critics directed to us]. Nevertheless from our point of view, we consider the disciples of Zhabs drung ma [Ye shes 'tsho rgyal] and their lineage practitioners as antidotes in order not to fall into erroneous thoughts. This is why,

glo bur rgyal po byed : sgrub pa snying po'i bstan pa 'dzugs : mi lo lnga bcur bde la 'god : skye ba'i rten 'brel ma 'grig na : yul de rang 'pho gud pa dang : mtha' ma lung gis 'khyer du nye : Translation is given in Ahmad (1995: 191).

⁸⁴ The competing use of *gter ma* prophecies by different factions struggling for hegemony over Tibet during this critical period of the civil wars during dBus and gTsang was also well shown by Akester (2001).

⁸⁵ Concerning the Fifth Dalai Lama and his relation to the *sNang sog gong gsum* see Khenpo Lhatsering (2006). I am indebted to Franz-Karl Ehrhard for this reference.

following the request from the people of [dPal ri monastery], I composed a prayer for the quick coming of [the abbey's] rebirth [as an emanation body (*sprul sku*)].⁸⁶

This passage is also instructive concerning the favor and disfavor given by the Fifth Dalai Lama to the different rNying ma familial clans and religious lineages. In connection with the 'Phyong rgyas family and rDo rje brag lineage, dPal ri monastery was part of the rNying ma monasteries sponsored by the Great Fifth's regime.

3.2 *The Child of dPal ri Monastery: 'Jigs med gling pa and the Revelation of the Klong chen snying thig (18th c.)*

The great 'Jigs med gling pa was born when the rNying ma school was just rising from the ashes, a decade after the persecutions it endured during the Dzungar invasions. 'Jigs med gling pa's biographies, which have been studied by Steven Goodman (1992), Janet Gyatso (1998) and Sam van Schaik (2004), report that he was born in the village below dPal ri monastery, trained in dPal ri monastery and did there his first retreat when he had the first revelation of the *Klong chen snying thig*.

⁸⁶ I would like to thank very much Professor Samten T. Karmay for kindly informing me about this passage and reading it together in Kyoto University during winter 2009-2010. *Du kū la*, vol. 3, 228: *dpal ri sprul sku ngag dbang pad ma gshegs pa'i bsngo rten rgya cher 'dug pa sa lam gyi bar gcod sel ba'i bsngo smon gyi rgyas 'debs yang dag pa bgyis shing / khong pa gter gсар rigs 'dzin thugs thig gi lung bstan rab gsal me long du /*

'tsho rgyal sprul pa rgyal lam pad ma'i ming :

bang so'i phyogs 'byung 'di dang phrad pa na :

mī mthun bar gcod kun zhi 'gro don rgyas :

zhes mkhar chen bza'i sprul par lung gis zin pa ltar tshul mthun zhig mdzad na bstan 'gror phan slebs che rung rang re sgrub sde pa'i chos skal 'byung sa 'bri gung rin chen phun tshogs yin / de'i rtsa bla rigs 'dzin legs ldan bdud 'joms / de'i brgyud 'dzin chos rgyal ma 'ga'i mtshan can yab sras la lhag par mos gus che dgos rgyur ga log gter brdzus mkhan snang rtse brgyud 'dzin gong sog la mdzad pa thugs rgyud la 'gong po phebs pa las 'os ci mchis / 'on kyang rang ngos nas zhabs drung ma'i phyag rjes dang / chos pa brgyud la bsams log sems ye ma shor ba'i gnyen po bstan / spyi so'i ngor sku skye myur 'byon gyi smon lam brtsams /



Image 6. Commemorative edifice of 'Jigs med gling pa's birthplace.
In the background, dPal ri monastery (May 2010, the author)

In his catalogue of teachings received (*thob yig*)⁸⁷ we see that he received the transmission of the seventeenth tantras through a lineage passing through Prajñāraśmi.⁸⁸ Similar connection is found for the *gter ma* transmission.⁸⁹ Having trained in the dPal ri monastery as an ordinary monk, he did two three-year retreats, the first in dPal ri monastery and then in bSam yas mChims phu. During his first retreat (1756-1759) in a hermitage of dPal ri called Śrī Parvata'i gling,⁹⁰ he focused on the creation and perfection of the *Grol thig*.⁹¹ 'Jigs med gling pa's retreat manual confirms his familiarity with the *Grol thig*'s

⁸⁷ The *Thob yig nyi zla'i rna cha* which has been entirely translated by van Schaik (2000).

⁸⁸ *Thob yig nyi zla'i rna cha*, 859.1-2.

⁸⁹ *Op. cit.*, 871.6-872.3.

⁹⁰ 'Jigs med gling pa'i rnam thar, 18.

⁹¹ *gTer ston brgya rtsa'i rnam thar*, 249 : rang dgon dpal gyi ri'i sgom khang thig le nyag gcig tu lo gsum gyi bca'd rgya dam bca' brtan pos / gtso bor gter chen chos kyi rgyal po 'gro 'dul gling pa'i zab gter rmad du byung ba grol tig dgongs pa rang grol ring brgyud dang nyer brgyud kyi tshul du bka' babs pa ltar de'i bskyed rdzogs kho na thugs nyams su bzhes pas drod rtags khyad par can brnyes /

practices⁹² as well as other important works he wrote on this tradition.⁹³ During this first retreat, 'Jigs med gling pa experienced a visionary journey to the *stūpa* of Baudha (Bodnāth) in Kathmandu and received the first *gter ma* of the *Klong chen snying thig*, which he kept secret for seven years. In his second retreat (1759-1762) in bSam yas mChims phu, he had three times the vision of Klong chen pa in his “body of gnosis” (*ye shes kyi sku*). These apparitions completed the revelation of the *Klong chen snying thig*.

As it is well established, 'Jigs med gling pa's tradition spread to Eastern Tibet, through the patronage of the Queen of sDe dge and his main disciple rDo ba grub chen 'Jigs med phrin las 'od zer (1745-1821). This tradition was also further continued in the activities of the so-called *ris med* movement, its main inspirator, 'Jam dbyangs mKhyen brtse'i dbang po (1820-1892) being considered as the reincarnation of 'Jigs med gling pa.

3.3 From the 'Phyong rgyas Epistles to the Ris med Movement (19th c.)

The *ris med* or “impartial” movement, seen in his aspects of religious pluralism in general, and revival of the rNying ma tradition in particular, seems to have been deeply connected to the kingdom of sDe dge with its pluralist politico-religious alliances in which four of the six rNying ma mother-monasteries (Kaḥ thog, rDzogs chen, Zhe chen and dPal yul) played an important role.

I understand here the *ris med* movement as an activity of trans-sectarian collection, compilation and transmission of Tibetan Buddhist lineages and teachings by the spiritual trio of the visionary and pilgrim 'Jam dbyangs mKhyen brtse'i dbang po (1820-1892), the encyclopedist and hermit 'Jam mgon Kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas (1813-1899) and treasure-revealer mChog 'gyur bDe chen gling pa (1829-1870). In particular, the realization of the *Rin chen gter mdzod* by Kong sprul, represents an important contribution of the *ris med* movement to the late revival and transmission of the rNying ma school, even though this was not done without critics within the tradition itself.

Following the works of E. Gene Smith (1970, 2001) and Matthew T. Kapstein (1996, 2007), I have discussed elsewhere that the paradigm of the *ris med* movement's approach lied very much in the classification of the “Eight Great Chariots of the Lineages of Attainment” (*sgrub*

⁹² *Ri chos zhal gdams ngo mtshar rgya mtsho* in 'Jigs med gling pa'i gsung 'bum, vol. 12, 517.5-518.2.

⁹³ See Deroche (2011b) for full references.

brgyud shing rta chen po brgyad), the eight lineages that conveyed esoteric Buddhism from India to Tibet and are at the origin of the Tibetan Buddhist established schools (*chos lugs*). This model made famous by mKhyen brtse and Kong sprul originated in fact from epistles given to the 'Phyong rgyas court by dPal ri monastery's founder, Prajñāraśmi.⁹⁴ It seems highly plausible that this model, as part of dPal ri monastery's tradition, was conveyed through 'Jigs med gling pa's lineage to the masters of the *ris med* movement who used it to its the fullest extent by compiling the eight lineages in Kong sprul's *gDams ngag mdzod*, the *ris med* canon *par excellence*.

CONCLUSION: A VIEW AT THE HISTORY OF THE RNYING MA SCHOOL FROM ITS FORGOTTEN MONASTERY

The following table recapitulates the perspectives that we have gained by recalling back the tradition's memory about dPal ri monastery. By standing from the 'Phyong rgyas valley, we can observe a sense of continuity in the course of the history and revivals of the rNying ma school from the 16th century to the 19th century, with a reverbering echo to its very antiquity, the old times of the Tibetan *imperium*. The progressive oblivion of dPal ri monastery is due to a combination of factors: first its eclipse by rDo rje brag and sMin grol gling monasteries (17th c.); then, after the destructions made by the Dzungars, the decisive influence of 'Jigs med gling pa and its new revelation (18th c.); and ultimately, the greater dynamism of rNying ma institutions in Khams (notably during the 19th c.). But what we have learned is that dPal ri monastery formed either a historical antecedent or a direct source for all these later developments.

Finally, I would like to underline the importance of the connection between dPal ri monastery and rDo rje brag monastery which remains to be explored further. rDo rje brag's family lineage appears to have been deeply related to Prajñāraśmi, to the noble family of 'Phyong rgyas, to the Fifth Dalai Lama and to the succession of the mTsho rgyal sprul sku in dPal ri monastery. In the same vein, more extensive research on the role and respective functions of *rDo sMin dPal gsum*

⁹⁴ These two epistles are (1) the *Ambrosia of Study and Reflection* (*Thos bsam 'chi med kyi bdud rtsi*), on the "Ten Great Pillars of Exegesis" (*bshad ka chen bcu*) (in *Shes rab 'od zer gyi gsung 'bum*, 231-242), and (2) the *Ambrosia of Meditation* (*sGom pa 'chi med kyi bdud rtsi*) on the "Eight Great Lineages of Attainment" (*sgrub brgyud chen po brgyad*) (*op. cit.*, 243-266). On this topic, see Deroche (2009).

under the Fifth Dalai Lama would bring new light in order to discuss what I have called here for heuristic purpose, the “rNying ma pa Renaissance.”

<p>Tibetan Empire (7th-9th c.)</p>	<p>- Establishment of Buddhism - <i>mkhan slob chos gsum</i> (8th c.)</p>	<p>Ancient imperial seat and burial site in 'Phyong rgyas: the “Valley of the Emperors”</p>
<p>Transmission of the rNying ma School: <i>bka' ma</i> and <i>gter ma</i></p>		
<p>Successive Revivals of the rNying ma School in Later History</p>		
<p>16th c.</p>	<p>dPal ri monastery</p>	<p>Supported by the 'Phyong rgyas family</p>
<p>17th c.</p>	<p>“rNying ma pa Renaissance” <i>rDor sMin dPal gsum</i>: triad of rNying ma monasteries in central Tibet as well as <i>Kaḥ dPal rDzogs gsum</i> in Khams Foundation of Zhe chen in Khams</p>	<p>Supported by the Fifth Dalai Lama - descendant of the 'Phyong rgyas family - who reunified Tibet under his politico-religious rule - assimilated to Srong btsan sgam po and Avalokiteśvara - reactivated imperial symbols by the mediation of <i>gter ma</i></p>
<p>18th c.</p>	<p>Revelations of 'Jigs med gling pa</p>	<p>- 'Jigs med gling pa: born, trained and first revelation in dPal ri monastery - New hermitage of Tshe ring ljongs close to dPal ri</p>
<p>19th c.</p>	<p><i>mKhyen Kong mChog sde gsum</i> & the <i>ris med</i> movement in Khams</p>	<p>- Continuation of 'Jigs med gling pa's tradition - Major role of rNying ma monasteries in sDe dge kingdom - Major activity of <i>gter ma</i> revelation, collection and compilation (<i>Rin chen gter mdzod</i>) - Use of the model of the “Eight Lineages of Attainment,” found in Prajñāraśmi's epistles to the 'Phyong rgyas ruler, as paradigm of the <i>ris med</i> approach & the <i>gDams ngag mdzod</i></p>

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SOJOURNING IN THE “VALLEY OF HAPPINESS”:
SHEDDING NEW LIGHT ON THE *SBAS YUL* SKYID MO LUNG

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In this sanctuary monkeys frolicked in the boughs of ancient fir trees that strove upward as if to compete with the grandeur of the surrounding peaks. We hiked through a forest of rhododendrons in full bloom, becoming immersed in pink and red blossoms that fluttered gently to the ground to form a soft carpet beneath our feet. [...] As we approached a temple sequestered deep within the hidden valley, the trail wound through an open pasture where wild mountain goats grazed unperturbed by the presence of humans.¹

The sun had yet to make its appearance above the peaks which were just turning into pure gold in its first rays. Nothing moved in the still, cold air of the morning except a slight breeze. The deep peace of this sanctuary, so well hidden from the outside world, could be felt as a tangible force all round [...].²

These quotations describe the impressions two scholars of Tibetan studies, i.e. Geoff Childs and Michael Aris, treasured during their respective visits to a small tributary valley of the Buri Gandhaki river in the mountainous Ku thang region in northern Nepal, i.e. the Serang valley (gSer thang; alternatively gSer brang). The romantic wording of both statements may very well be based on the knowledge of the other identity of this particular valley. That is to say, Aris and Childs thought themselves to be sojourning in one of the so-called famed “hidden valleys” (*sbas yul*), i.e. sKyid mo lung. However, this identification holds only partly good. This paper will examine the full geographical extent of the hidden valley. In order to do so, it will delve into the history of sKyid mo lung which is tightly connected with the bygone western Tibetan kingdom of Mang yul Gung thang and the activities of four prominent “treasure-discoverers” (*gter ston*), i.e. Rig ’dzin rGod ldem can (1337–1408), Rig ’dzin mChog ldan mgon po (1497–1531), Rig ’dzin bsTan gnyis gling pa (1480–1536), and lastly Rig ’dzin Gar dbang rdo rje (1640–1685). On the basis of this overview of the “treasure” tradition (*gter ma*) in this area, the political and social

¹ Childs (2004, p. 76f.).

² Aris (1975, p. 66).

implications of the opening of a hidden valley will be indicated. It will be shown how the designation of a sBas yul transcends the sphere of religious, sacred topography to the field of calculated, politically and scholastically motivated actions. Finally this paper will be rounded off with information I was able to gather during my own research trip to the areas which were visited by Michael Aris and Geoff Childs, shifting their identification of the hidden valley sKyid mo lung and introducing the hitherto unidentified centre of the sanctuary.³

The area in question is a part of the greater south-west Tibetan region Mang yul Gung thang. This region, comprising an area of roughly 30,000 square kilometres between Gu ge and sPu rang in the west and La stod lHo in the east, the gTsang po river in the north and the lower Himalayas in the south, was founded as a kingdom by the first monarch 'Bum lde mgon (1253–1280) under the patronage of the Sa skya pa school, headed by Chos rgyal 'Phags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1235–1280) presumably in 1267. This was accompanied by furnishing the head of the ruling family with the royal title mNga' bdag rgyal po by the grace of Sa skya, which meant that the family became affiliated with former great Tibetan kings, such as Srong btsan sgam po and Khri srong lde btsan. The continuous contact to and the patronage of Sa skya proved to have been beneficial for the sovereigns of the region throughout centuries, yet repeatedly it also had been contested. One of these ordeals occurred when Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can took action in the region from the second half of the fourteenth century.⁴

³ In 1973 a research expedition from the University of Berkeley led by Michael Aris ventured into the hitherto “unexplored” regions surrounding the Manaslu massif in northern Nepal, i.e. the valleys of Ku thang and Nub ris. Besides retrieving various unknown, rare Tibetan texts and documents it was also pointed out to them that the Serang valley corresponds to sKyid mo lung. For the remarkable expedition report, cf. Aris (1975). Geoff Childs spent time and again several months in the village of Samagoun/Nub ris in order to conduct anthropologically orientated fieldwork there. The results of this work were summarized in his highly readable account, in Childs (2004). Seemingly Childs simply followed Aris in his identification of the hidden valley sKyid mo lung.

⁴ The abundantly informative work of the *Gung thang rgyal rabs* by Kaḥ thog rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu (1698–1755) covers the entire royal era of Mang yul Gung thang from the founding of the realm in the thirteenth century to the decline of the dynasty in the early seventeenth century; cf. Kaḥ thog rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu, *Bod rje lha btsad po'i gdung rabs mnga' ri smad mang yul gung thang du ji ltar byung ba'i tshul deb gter dvangs shel 'phrul gyi me long* and Everding (2000), i.e. an analysis of Kaḥ thog rig 'dzin's work supplemented with a plethora of relevant biographical material from the respective periods covered; also cf. *ibid.* for further, detailed bibliographical references on Mang yul Gung thang. Particularly with regard to the political implications of the treasure-cult in this area one may refer to Everding

From the very beginning when rGod ldem can entered the stage as a gTer ston in Mang yul Gung thang, he was trying to get into close contact with the respective kings of his time, i.e. bKra shis lde (1313–1345), Khri Phun tshogs lde (1338–1370), mChog grub lde (1367/8–1389?), and presumably also bSod nams lde (1371–1404).⁵

In particular he did so by means of his treasure-findings—foremost mention should be made of the famous *gSol 'debs bsam pa lhun grub ma*, an integral text of the Padmasambhava-cult—in which he addressed the kings directly as the allegedly legitimate descendants of the glorified ancient Tibetan kings.⁶ Furthermore—also by making use

(2004). On the general rich “religious history and topography” of this area, in particular the sKyid grong valley, cf. the substantial work on the famous statue of Avalokiteśvara, Ārya Va ti bzang po, in Ehrhard (2004a). For a short, yet informative synopsis of the royal history of Mang yul Gung thang, cf. Everding (2004, p. 267). For detailed information on the foundation of the realm, cf. Everding (2000, pp. 391–440). Broadly speaking the name of the kingdom, Mang yul Gung thang, is made up of two toponyms, i.e. Mang yul, denoting the southern part of the region and particularly the sKyid grong valley, whereas Gung thang refers to the northern part surrounding the royal capital, rDzong dkar; an extensive outline of the geography of this area is provided in *ibid.*, pp. 279–308 and for cartographical material cf. *ibid.*, Tafel 4–6; also on the traditional etymology of the geographical name, Mang yul, cf. Ehrhard (2004a, p. 394 f., ns. 146 & 147). Further, on the early pre-royal history of Mang yul Gung thang and on the circumstances that led to the foundation of the kingdom, cf. Everding (2000, pp. 315–390). The title of a king (*rgyal po*) was conferred by the ruling Sa skya pa administration, legitimatizing the authority of the rulers’ family by affiliating their genealogy with the lineage of the ancient great kings of imperial Tibet; similar procedures were employed for the ruling houses of the other west Tibetan kingdoms of Gu ge, sPu rang and Ladakh; cf. Everding (2004, p. 267). Furthermore, the additional title mNga’ bdag was presented by the great Mongol Khan Öljeitü in 1307; cf. *ibid.*, p. 269, n. 5.

⁵ Rig ’dzin rGod ldem can’s biography was compiled by his direct disciple Nyi ma bzang po (14th/15th Cent.); cf. *sPrul sku rig ’dzin rgod ldem ’phru can gyi rnam thar gsal byed nyi ma’i ’od zer*. A comprehensive outline of rGod ldem can’s life, based on a number of short biographies, can be found in Schwieger (1985, pp. xxx–xxxviii). Cf. *ibid.*, p. xxxi ff., for a telling analysis of the various literary topoi applied in the texts that should serve to legitimize the gTer ston’s authoritative identity, i.e. his royal descent, the religious orientation of his parents, being an emanation of Padmasambhava, etc. Also in *ibid.*, two of his most important treasure-teachings have been catalogued, i.e. the rDzogs chen cycles *Kun tu bzang po’i dgongs pa zang thal* and the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*. Further, cf. Everding (2000, pp. 226–233 for an introduction to his life based on the forecited biographical work of Nyi ma bzang po.

⁶ For the *gSol 'debs bsam pa lhun grub ma*, part of the famed *Le’u bdun ma*, cf. Tucci (1949, p. 179 f.), Tucci (1970, p. 186), Houston (1975), and Schwieger (1988). According to its colophon, the *gSol 'debs bsam pa lhun grub ma* was eventually compiled as a proper text in 1403 by Rig ’dzin rGod ldem can; cf. Everding (2000, pp. 244–247 & Appendix 5).

of his treasure-texts—he prophesied the fate of the kings, or more precisely the ill-fate of the kings as all of them met a rather untimely death amidst times of considerable political turmoil. Supposedly this was viewed quite critically by Sa skya, it was even suggested that Sa skya plotted the deaths of kings as a reaction to their contact to rGod ldem can.⁷ However, it contributed considerably to the social status of the treasure-discoverer, who in his turn materialized as the legitimate heir to the great adept Padmasambhava. One indication for his elevated status is that he was furnished by an official royal decree (*bka' yig*) with his own monasterial estate in Mang yul Gung thang, i.e. Ri bo dpal 'bar, with all the accompanying benefits included, i.e. that the people living in the area of his estate had to pay tax to him. On the other hand it can be safely assumed that the contact to the treasure-discoverer also was beneficial for the prestige of the monarchs, who—once again after the conferment of the royal status by Sa skya in the first place—were able to “refresh” their affiliation with the great bygone imperial times, purporting to be the legitimate descendants of Srong btsan sgam po and such.⁸

⁷ Cf. Everding (2000, pp. 481–496) for a revealing and detailed breakdown of rGod ldem can's connections with the court of Mang yul Gung thang and some assumptions on the role of Sa skya in the midst of various internal as well as external political struggles during the 14th and early 15th centuries.

⁸ Around 1370 rGod ldem can was invited by Phun tshogs lde. It is further said that they henceforth established a patron-preceptor relationship (*yon mchod*) and that they set out to recover treasure-objects at Ri bo dpal 'bar. Cf. Nyi ma bzang po, *sPrul sku rig 'dzin rGod ldem 'phru can gyi rnam thar gsal byed nyi ma'i 'od zer*, pp. 47,6–48,4 and Everding (2000: p. 487 ff. & n. 1215) q.v. Accordingly the patron-preceptor relationship was actually evidenced by a royal *bka' yig* document, yet the wording of the decree is not documented in rGod ldem can's biography. The holy mountain Ri bo dpal 'bar (6797 m) is situated in the south of the sKyid grong valley; cf. Aufschnaiter (1976, p. 178), Brauen (1983, p. 41), and Ehrhard (2004a, p. 285 & n. 188) q.v. Following their treasure-hunt, the king and rGod ldem can headed on to a monastery and according to Everding (2000, p. 488 f.) this location presumably could be identified as rGod ldem can's very own monastery of the same name as the holy mountain, Ri bo dpal 'bar. Though rGod ldem can tried to get into contact with king bKra shis lde, a meeting did never take place; thus it must have been his successor king Phun tshogs lde who presented the treasure-discoverer with the estate. Therefore the foundation of the monastery must have taken place sometime between 1366 (i.e. the year rGod ldem can first met with the king) and 1370; *ibid.*, n. 1216 q.v. An inventory of the holy site can be found in, [anonymous], *Mang yul gyi gnas chen ri bo dpal 'bar gyi dkar chag*.

Having been invited later by the successor of king Phun tshogs lde, mNga' bdag mChog grub lde (1367/8–1389?), the king proclaimed rGod ldem can his principal religious teacher and issued an official royal *bka' yig* decree, setting forth an extensive tax exemption for rGod ldem can's monasterial estates, including Ri bo dpal 'bar. For the relationship to the king and the wording of the *bka' yig*, cf. Nyi ma

Furthermore, apart from his direct contact with the members of the royal family of Mang yul Gung thang, another action of rGod ldem can proved to have a strong effect on the history of this dominion, i.e. his disclosure of the so-called “hidden valley” (*sbas yul*), sKyid mo lung, within their country. Traditionally it is said of these remote mountain areas that, in line with the dynamics that govern the gTer ma tradition, Padmasambhava himself had concealed them so that, once they were revealed by a gTer ston, followers of his teachings could take refuge in these sanctuaries. Thus, not only did rGod ldem can act upon the beliefs of the members of the royal house by means of his prophetic treasure-teachings, but moreover he designated the topography of their home region as the holy domain of Padmasambhava and his adherents, the rNying ma pas.⁹

However, it has been argued that “a primary purpose of the sBas-yul was not necessarily to provide a haven for spiritual practice; more importantly, they were destined to be sanctuaries where the descendants of Emperor Khri srong lde btsan and his patrilineal kin could seek refuge when there was a threat to the continuity of their biological lineage”.¹⁰ Further, it was shown, that the greatest, if abstract

bzang po, *sPrul sku rig 'dzin rgod ldem 'phru can gyi rnam thar gsal byed nyi ma'i 'od zer*, pp. 64,6–67,3. mChog grub lde's life and regency are described in Everding (2000, p. 477 f.), his relationship with rGod ldem can is delineated in *ibid.* pp. 489–496, wherein one also finds a critical edition and a translation of the *bka' yig* decree.

⁹ The opening of sKyid mo lung is touched upon in, Nyi ma bzang po, *sPrul sku rig 'dzin rgod ldem 'phru can gyi rnam thar gsal byed nyi ma'i 'od zer*, p. 67,2 (*sbas yul skyid mo'i lung phyed*). Also the identification of 'Bras mo ljongs, i.e. present-day Sikkim, as a hidden valley is attributed to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can. In total he is credited with the authorship of various guides to several hidden valleys, seven of which are most commonly highlighted, i.e., according to his *Gu ru'i ga'u bdun ma* (pp. 11,6–14,3): bDe ldan sKyid mo lung, sBas pa Padma tshal, Rol pa mKha' 'gro gling, rGyal kyi mKhan pa lung, lHa yi Pho brang sdings, sBas yul 'Bras mo shong, and Gro mo khud. In later sources, however, the number and names of the various hidden valleys differ considerably from this enumeration and a general conspectus of the several locations is still a desideratum in research, though various lists can be found in Childs (1993, p. 5 ff.); cf. Schwieger (1985, p. xxxvii). Still a large number of researchers have focused on or touched upon the sBas yul thematic, e.g. Bacot (1912), Bailey (1957), Aris (1975, 1979b), Reinhard (1978), Bernbaum (1980), Brauen-Dolma (1985), Orofino (1991), Diemberger (1991, 1993, 1994, 1997), Childs (1999, 2004), Ehrhard (1994, 1996, 1998, 2004, 2008b, 2010a), and Dalton (2011). Furthermore, several hidden valleys have been identified as proper locations on the southern fringes of the Himalayas, i.e. 'Bras mo shong in Sikkim, mKhan pa lung either in Bhutan (Aris, 1988) or in the Khumbu region near Everest (Diemberger, 1992), gNam sgo zla gam as the Langtang valley near Kathmandu (Childs, 1993; Ehrhard, 1997), and Yol mo/Padma tshal as Helambu next to Langtang (Ehrhard, 2007).

¹⁰ Childs (1999, p. 127).

yet still possible threat for the ruling family and their people was posed by an invasion by a foreign army, in particular by the Hor, i.e. most commonly the Mongols, which in turn necessitated a pacifying deed, i.e. the opening of the hidden land as the place of refuge.¹¹ However, as no invasion by the Hor into Mang yul Gung thang is attested at the turn of the century and the downfall of the Yüan-/Mongol-backed Sa skya administration had already taken place in 1354, it nevertheless could be assumed that the sBas yul ideology was based on the “traumatic” experiences Tibet had suffered during the invasion of the Mongols/Hor in the middle of the thirteenth century.¹² On the other hand, it seems probable, based on several indications, that the life-threatening forces afflicting the fate of the four kings of Gung thang originated from internal or “provincial conflicts,” i.e. politically and religiously motivated campaigns.¹³

As already mentioned above, the affiliation of the royal family of Gung thang with the ancient rulers of imperial Tibet was inaugurated by Sa skya at the foundation of the kingdom with the conferment of the title mNga' bdag rgyal po. Recourse to the intriguingly grand period of the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet occurred time and again in its later history, e.g. during the Fifth Dalai Lama's reign. The recurring theme of this cult of royalty suggests more than a particular notion for nostalgia among the Tibetan people. It indicates moreover a fine grasp of the respective leaders kindling this cult for its political implications when needed as a means to confer, gain and/or sustain authority. rGod ldem can, who, as a treasure-discoverer, closely aligned himself with the imperial period, seemed to have been well aware of these political, i.e. nationalistic, implications when he disclosed the hidden valley seeing the signs of times, addressing the rulers of Gung thang as heirs to the ancient emperors, and recalling the trauma of the Mongol invasion, during an unstable period of political turmoil. On the other hand, rGod ldem can's actions could not have remained unnoticed by Sa skya—e.g. the issuing of the official *bka' yig* document(s) for him—which had inaugurated the cult of royalty in Mang yul Gung thang in the first place. Moreover, the increasing influence of the treasure-discoverer in the dominion, utilizing the recourse to the grand times, i.e., in the light of its political implications, a real threat to Sa skya's authority, must have prompted a reaction. However, it remains a matter of speculation whether it was Sa skya plotting the death of the kings

¹¹ Cf. *ibid.* for the analysis based on a well-balanced number of sources, including various prophetic guides to hidden valleys attributed to rGod ldem can.

¹² Similar notions are expressed in Dalton (2011, pp. 144–157).

¹³ Cf. n. 7.

who affiliated themselves with rGod ldem can. Anyway, the widespread presence of rGod ldem can's teachings in Mang yul Gung thang, and also in the other areas identified nowadays with the different hidden valleys, doubtlessly bespeak a successful gain of ground for his tradition.

Finally, the long-lasting implications of the stipulation of sKyid mo lung came to bear heavily on the actions of the treasure-discoverers who were to come after him.

Notably two further treasure-discoverers emerged in this regard, i.e. mChog ldan mgon po¹⁴ (1497–1531) and bsTan gnyis gling pa (1480–1536).¹⁵ At the court of Gung thang the favour for rNying ma proponents apparently continued after rGod ldem can, or more precisely recurred by the end of the fifteenth century, when the political sovereigns once more decided to rely on the religious expertise of treasure-discoverers. In the first place both mChog ldan mgon po and bsTan gnyis gling pa were committed to acting in their function as ritual specialists, i.e. they were to protect the royal dominion of Mang yul Gung thang from alleged foreign Hor assaults by means of specific liturgies.

¹⁴ mChog ldan mgon po's autobiography can be found in, *sPrul sku rig 'dzin mchog ldan mgon po'i rnam thar mgur 'bum dad ldan spro ba bskyed byed*. The printing of the original xylograph of this text was carried out in Mang yul Gung thang by the Bo dong pa Chos dbang rgyal mtshan when mChog ldan mgon po was 30 years old (i.e. in 1527), while the consecration of the print was performed by the treasure-discoverer himself; cf. Ehrhard (2000, p. 32 f.) and Ehrhard (in press) for Chos dbang rgyal mtshan's prolonged contact with mChog ldan mgon po. Further, there is a supplementary part to the biographical text, referring to the events after 1527 up to his death, which was also compiled and printed by Chos dbang rgyal mtshan in the year 1531 immediately after mChog ldan mgon po's demise, cf. *Rigs 'dzin sprul sku mchog ldan mgon po'i rnam thar mgur 'bum gyi smad cha rnams* and Ehrhard (2000, p. 37) with Ehrhard (2008b, n. 21). His stay in Gung thang has been outlined in, Everding (2000, p. 560 ff.) and Ehrhard (2000, pp. 32–35), and a detailed analysis of his life with an emphasis on his activities in Bhutan has been worked out by Ehrhard (2008b).

¹⁵ In his collected writings we find three biographical texts, two of which are attributed to bsTan gnyis gling pa himself, while the third was compiled by his direct disciple, Blo gros rab yangs (15th/16thCent.); cf. bsTan gnyis gling pa, *Rigs 'dzin bstan gnyis gling pa rnam thar las: rnal lam lung bstan gyi skor sogs* and *Rig 'dzin chen po bstan gnyis going pa'i rnam thar las mnal lam lung bstan gyi skor*, with Blo gros rab yangs, *Rigs 'dzin bstan gnyis gling pa'i rnam thar kha bskong gsal ba'i nyin byed*, and further Everding (2000, pp. 233–237) for a detailed discussion of the different versions and other biographical sources relating to him, as well as a summary of his life based on these. His stay in Gung thang has already been thoroughly described in *ibid.*, pp. 563–575, and Everding (2004). Further on the life of bsTan gnyis gling pa and his rDzogs chen treasure-cycle *Yang tig ye shes mthong grol* (*Yang tig ye shes mthong grol gyi chos skor*), cf. Achard (2004).

After he had been invited to come,¹⁶ mChog ldan mgon po arrived at the court of Mang yul Gung thang in 1527, and was reportedly very well received by the king Kun bzang nyi zla grags pa (1514–1560), his ministers, and a great number of religious dignitaries in rDzong dkar. It is further stated that he conducted several rituals, consecrated a newly established royal fortress, i.e. Khams gsum rnam rgyal in sKyid grong, and issued personal prayers for the princes of Gung thang. As to the real purpose of this visit—he was to deploy countermeasures in order to prevent the invasion of marauding Hor troops—there is a reference in Sog bzlog pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan's (1552–1624) general account of the various invasions of Hor troops into Tibet, stating that several raids took place among the Byang 'brog nomads in the year 1522, while further assaults happened in 1526 and 1527, upon which the invitation to mChog ldan mgon po was issued. Concerning the first date, we find another reference in the biography of mNga' ris pañ chen Padma dbang rgyal (1487–1542) that around the year 1523 several attacks by the Hor took place in the north-western parts of Mang yul Gung thang. Further, it is documented that before 1529 the famous Byams sprin lha khang of sKyid grong had been damaged severely by the Hor. mChog ldan mgon po had visited this important temple during his stay in the region as well, while he admonished the rulers of Gung thang to take measures in order to renovate the damaged temple. We thus can assume a *terminus ante quem* for the damages to this temple of 1527, the year of mChog ldan mgon po's visit. Moreover, it should be noted that he urged local religious dignitaries to open the hidden valley of sKyid mo lung, as attacks by foreign armies were feared. Yet other than that, we find no substantial evidence about the concrete identity of the assailants, or about actual military clashes. His stay, however, did not last more than a few months and shortly before his departure in spring 1527 he gave his blessing for the printing of his autobiography, which was produced in Mang yul Gung thang.¹⁷

¹⁶ mChog ldan mgon po had been invited by the rulers of Mang yul Gung thang a couple of times. However, only when he was travelling in the hidden valley of bDe skyid gling in Bhutan, after he had received another letter from Gung thang, he answered their request to protect the dominion with three missive letters in 1526. Shortly later he received yet another letter upon which he responded with a short message that he would set off for Gung thang from his residence mChog grub gling in lHo brag; cf. Ehrhard (2008b, p. 81 ff. & Appendix).

¹⁷ For the account of mChog ldan mgon po's stay in Mang yul Gung thang and the dating of the Hor assaults, cf. Everding (2000, pp. 560–563). The king Kun bzang nyi zla grags pa is introduced in *ibid.*, p. 558 f. For the royal fortress Khams gsum rnam rgyal in sKyid grong, cf. *ibid.*, p. 552. Sog bzlog pa's report is related in, *Sog bzlog bgyis tshul gyi lo rgyus*, pp. 221,6–222,1; it was shown in Ehrhard (2008b, Appendix)

To conclude, though we do not have real evidence of any actual military clashes between Hor troops and the armed forces of Mang yul Gung thang and of mChog ldan mgon po's involvement, on the basis of his activities, we nevertheless can observe a continuation of the similar dynamics that had governed rGod ldem can's actions in Mang yul. In memory of the latter's tradition and facing the threat of a foreign invasion, the court of Gung thang opted again to rely on the expertise of a rNying ma proponent, who would ensure the safety of the country by means of his rituals and activities like the call for the opening of the hidden valley. Further, as the threat of invading Hor armies persisted, mChog ldan mgon po's stay had set the stage for the visit of another treasure-discoverer only some years later, i.e. bsTan gnyis gling pa.

that his account was mainly based on mChog ldan mgon po's biography and the different missive letters he had issued concerning the advent of Hor troops; cf. preceding note. For mNga' ris pañ chen's account of the Hor attacks, cf. Schuh (1981, p. 354). The legal document, *Dharamsala 163*, referring to the damage to the Byams sprin lha khang is found in *ibid.*, and for the clarification of its dating, Everding (2000, p. 192 f.) q.v. The famous Byams sprin lha khang, located near sPang zhing in sKyid grong, is known as one of the so-called "border-taming temples" (*mtha' 'dul lha khang*); for the concept of the land of Tibet being identified with a supine demoness, which had to be tamed—i.e. pinned down—by the erection of various temples throughout the country in order to facilitate the introduction of the Buddhist doctrine, dating back to Srong btsan sgam po (605?–649), cf. Aris (1978, p. 17), Aris (1979b, pp. 3–33), Uebach (1987, p. 32 f.), and Sørensen (1994, pp. 253–297 & 551–583), for Byams sprin cf. Ehrhard (2004a, p. 283 & n. 174) and Sørensen & Hazod (2005, p. 52 & n. 53). mChog ldan mgon po's pilgrimage to sKyid grong has been outlined in Ehrhard (2000, pp. 32–35). His call for the opening of sKyid mo lung reads as follows: *gzhan yang snyigs ma'i dus su / stod phyogs mthar dmag gi 'jigs pa la skyob pa'i phyir / sbas pa'i yul skyid mo lung gi sgo 'byed pa la / chos de (r. rje) drang so ba dang / chos rje che mchog pa sogs mngags nas (sPrul sku rig 'dzin mchog ldan mgon po'i rnam thar mgur 'bum dad ldan spro ba bskyed byed*, p. 496,4–5). The two persons mentioned in this paragraph, Chos rje Drang so ba, also known as the first Yol mo sprul sku, sNgags 'chang Shākya bzang po (15th/16th Cent.), and Chos rje Che mchog pa (d. 1535), were respectively known as the head of the sGrub sde of Ri bo dpal 'bar and the caretaker of the Byams sprin lha khang; cf. Everding (2000, p. 564). For the activities of Shākya bzang po in Mang yul Gung thang, cf. Ehrhard (2007), and for his provenance, Drang so in La stod lHo, *ibid.*, n. 8 q.v. For the important exponent of the mDo chen bKa' brgyud tradition of the Gur family, sNgags 'chang Che mchog rdo rje, i.e. Chos rje Che mchog pa, cf. Ehrhard (2008a, pp. 68–72), and for his assignment as the caretaker of Byams sprin by mChog ldan mgon po, Ehrhard (2000, p. 34).

Dalton (2011, pp. 144–157) relates in general the repeated opening of a hidden valley to the necessity of taming the wild and uncultivated border regions of Tibet time and again as a nationalistic effort. Yet in this instance it seems clear from a micro-perspective that the real threat of an invasion by foreign armies and the prophetic guidelines expounded by Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can necessitated the opening of a hidden valley as a place for refuge in Mang yul Gung thang.

Although we do not have the precise date, bsTan gnyis gling pa is said to have been involved in a ritual to prevent an invasion by the Hor, which was performed in bSam yas under the patronage of the lHa btsun of bSam yas and the Gung thang king. We can assume that this event took place prior to his visit to Mang yul Gung thang, as the court must have learned of bsTan gnyis gling pa's proficiency in the *hor bzlog* rituals as a result of the episode in bSam yas, after which an official invitation to rDzong dkar was issued. Not only did he receive a letter of invitation from the king Kun bzang nyi zla grags pa, but also an additional one from his minister, Zhang blon bSam 'grub rdo rje (15th/16th Cent.) and the latter's rNying ma pa teachers.¹⁸

bsTan gnyis gling pa set off for Mang yul Gung thang in 1533 where he arrived most probably in early 1534. Without any specification of the political circumstances, it is further stated that bsTan gnyis gling pa then carried out the ritual to prevent more Hor attacks in rDzong dkar, after which he proclaimed to the king Kun bzang nyi zla grags pa that he would soon discover a gTer ma.¹⁹ As with mChog ldan mgon po's efforts to repel the Hor in Gung thang, here we also have no detailed information about who the aggressor was this time. The different probable Hor attacks in the years preceding bsTan gnyis gling pa's stay in Gung thang have already been outlined. A Muslim invasion heading for lHa sa led by the Kashgar prince Mirzar Haidar Dughlāt is attested for July 1533, though this attempt only lasted until the end of the same year. Thus we can assume that it is highly probable that the various Hor assaults happened in the wake of the military actions of the Muslim prince.²⁰

¹⁸ The ritual in bSam yas and the subsequent invitation to Mang yul Gung thang are related in Everding (2004, p. 272 f.). For information on the "minister [from the dPon] Zhang [family]," bSam 'grub rdo rje, cf. Ehrhard (2004a, pp. 135, 255, 260 & n. 94) and for the title *dpon zhang*, *ibid.*, n. 87 q.v. According to Everding (2000, p. 559) he probably also was the father of Kun bzang nyi zla grags pa's wife, Tshe ring rgyal mo from Yar 'brog sNa dkar rtse. The invitation he had issued was signed by him, and the aforementioned Chos rje Che mchog pa and Chos rje Drang so ba, i.e. Shākya bzang po (cf. preceding note). Further, cf. Ehrhard (2000, pp. 16 & 34–35) for the printing of the *bKa' thang gser phreng*, i.e. a Padmasambhava hagiography attributed to the treasure-discoverer Sangs rgyas gling pa (1340–1396), carried out in 1535 in Gung thang and for which bSam 'grub rdo rje acted as a donor, and further for the latter's connections with mChog ldan mgon po, bsTan gnyis gling pa, and Shākya bzang po.

¹⁹ On his way to Gung thang, towards the end of 1533, bsTan gnyis gling pa stopped in La stod Byang, where he conducted a ritual to banish the Hor on behalf of the prince of the region. Cf. Everding (2004, p. 273 ff.) for bsTan gnyis gling pa's approach to Gung thang, his reception, the audience with the royal court, and the *hor bzlog* ritual.

²⁰ Cf. Petech (1997, p. 245) for the Muslim invasion of 1533; Ehrhard (2008b, p. 87, n. 24) q.v.

The prospects of an imminent treasure-discovery must have been enthralling for the king. Since he was regarded as the ancestor of the great imperial kings by bsTan gnyis gling pa who idolised the ruler as the legitimate descendent of the early Tibetan kings and bsTan gnyis gling pa, as a treasure-discoverer, the heir of Padmasambhava's legacy, we again shall observe the same reciprocal dynamics of legitimation that governed the relationship of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can and the kings of his time.

Hence, bsTan gnyis gling pa set out for sKyid grong, visiting the Ārya Va ti bzang po statue in its temple, i.e. the 'Phags pa lha khang, and the royal fortress, Khams gsum rnam rgyal. He also travelled to the nearby region La ldebs, where he met with Chos rje Che mchog pa (d. 1535), i.e. one of bSam 'grub rdo rje's most important teachers who had also signed the invitation to bsTan gnyis gling pa and the caretaker of the Byams sprin temple. Further, he proceeded to this important site and conducted various rituals there in favour of the king. Eventually, attended by Chos rje Che mchog pa, bSam 'grub rdo rje and three more companions, he travelled to Ri bo dpal 'bar, i.e. the holy mountain and Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can's former monasterial estate, where he intended to raise a treasure.²¹

The party then reached the former abode (*gzims khang*) of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can, of which it is said that it was found in a deteriorated state. Having spent a night there, the following morning Padmasambhava appeared, admonishing them not to take out a treasure of rGod ldem can which had been left there by the treasure-discoverer as a so-called *yang gter* ("re-concealed treasure"), since the time for the rediscovery of the treasure had not yet come. Still the company proceeded to excavate the treasure, as Chos rje Che mchog pa was urging bsTan gnyis gling pa to carry on. Thus the female protective deity of the treasure and of Ri bo dpal 'bar, rGya gar ma, appeared, stating that she had been installed as such by rGod ldem can. Recalling the need for this treasure-discovery on behalf of the king of Gung thang, bsTan gnyis gling pa and his attendants were eventually allowed to excavate one single scripture of the gTer ma. However, the party did not comply with this requirement and took the treasure in its entirety, upon which the protective deity threatened them with revenge. And indeed, soon after, on their way back, Che mchog pa was struck by illness: in fact he was befallen by leprosy. bsTan gnyis gling pa hurried back to rDzong dkar, where he immediately learnt of Che mchog pa's

²¹ Cf. Everding (2004, p. 275) for bsTan gnyis gling pa's travel to sKyid grong. For Che mchog pa, cf. ns. 17 & 18. Two of his other three companions are mentioned by name, i.e. lHa chos bSod nams skyid and bDe chen Kun tu bzang po.

death due to the infection. He was deeply moved by the tragedy and wanted to return to his home region. Yet before he left, he met again with the king, and Kun bzang nyi zla grags pa invited the treasure-discoverer to stay one more year in Gung thang, as he apparently had been deeply impressed by the dramatic story of the treasure-hunt.²²

Henceforth a trusting relationship ensued between the young king and the treasure-discoverer. This development was accompanied by two texts the king had issued in favour of bsTan gnyis gling pa in the summer months of 1534. First, he composed a prayer for the gTer ston. Full of devotion for him, he prayed that the treasure-discoverer live a long and prosperous life, and that his teachings and adherents flourish and spread throughout the world. Second he endorsed an official *lam yig* document, which endowed bsTan gnyis gling pa with far-reaching and lifelong privileges. Not only did all the king's subjects, every religious and secular authority and any other individual have to pay the highest respect to the gTer ston, they also were ordered to provide him with accommodation, horses, fodder and anything else he required on his travels on the pain of physical penalties. The two texts illustrate that at that time the treasure-discoverer had become an utterly important "place of worship" (*mchod gnas*) for the king.²³

Thus, in the course of the actions of the two treasure-discoverers it became clear that they not only protected the political sphere from harm, through their rituals, but they also reinstated the very same reciprocal dynamics of legitimation that governed the relationship of rGod ldem can with the region and its rulers. That is to say, by excavating treasure-works in the region, establishing close contact to the rulers and the local religious teachers, and calling for the re-opening of Mang yul Gung thang's very own hidden valley, i.e. sKyid mo lung,

²² For the episode relating the treasure-hunt, cf. Everding (2004, p. 275 f.). Accordingly the revealed treasure bears the title *Phag mo zab brgya'i skor*; cf. its entry in the *Rin chen gter mdzod as rDo rje phag mo'i zab khrid*, (Schwieger & Everding, 1990–2009, vol. 12, pp. 56–67). Further, compare the events with the report of Che mchog pa's life, in Ehrhard (2008a, pp. 68–72), wherein one also finds a prayer by bsTan gnyis gling pa commemorating Che mchog pa. Further, it is stated in *ibid.* that the reincarnation of Che mchog pa was born as the son of bsTan gnyis gling pa, called Tshe dbang bSod nams rgyal po. The family lineage of bsTan gnyis gling pa, whose members were also invested as the caretaker of Byams sprin, starting from Tshe dbang bSod nams rgyal po up to Rig 'dzin 'Phrin las bdud 'joms (1726–1789), is found in, Chos kyi dbang phyug, *gTer dbon rig 'dzin brgyud pa'i gdung rabs lo rgyus tshangs pa'i do shal*, fo. 7a2 ff., and it has been outlined in Ehrhard (2007a, p. 40 ff.).

²³ The prayer and the travel-document were included in bsTan gnyis gling pa's biography, critical editions and translations of the two texts can be found in, Everding (2000, p. 267 f.) and *ibid.*, pp. 268–273 & Everding (2004, pp. 277–280) respectively.

they so to speak “plowed” and “fertilized” the field of actions for the rNying ma pas that had been set before by rGod ldem can. Their success in doing so can be evidenced in the case of mChog ldan mgon po as when he arrived in Gung thang he was welcomed by the royal members and a host of religious dignitaries with great pomp and splendour. Whereas bsTan gnyis gling pa in the course of his actions was granted an extensive official *lam yig* by the king, Kun bzang nyi zla grags pa, which provided him with far-reaching benefits.

However, not long afterwards, i.e. some 80 years later, the kingdom of Mang yul Gung thang should come to its end, first as a result of the war with the gTsang rulers at the beginning of the seventeenth century and soon later by the instalment of the central Tibetan dGa' ldan pho 'brang government under the great Fifth Dalai Lama.²⁴ In this regard it might have been expected that the continuity of the gTer ma tradition in Mang yul Gung thang would have ceased as well, which—as I have tried to indicate—was largely based on the relationship between the members of the royal family and the treasure-discoverers and the ensuing reciprocal dynamics of legitimation.

The life of Rig 'dzin Gar dbang rdo rje proves that quite the opposite was the case. He was born two years before the Great Fifth Dalai Lama would be installed as the new sovereign of greater Tibet, i.e. in 1640 in a valley called mNyam in the south-west of Mang yul Gung thang.²⁵ He grew up under rather poor circumstances; from an early age he had to work as a shepherd. Nevertheless he was also thoroughly educated mainly in the fields of the rNying ma and the bKa' brgyud traditions, receiving teachings of great local importance like

²⁴ Cf. Everding (2000, p. 581 ff.).

²⁵ For Gar dbang rdo rje's “mundane” life, cf. his “outer biography”, *sPrul sku rigs 'dzin chen po gar dbang rdo rje snying po'i phyi'i rnam par thar pa nges don rgya mtsho*, which was compiled by one of his most important disciples, rGyal dbang seng ge (b. 1616). Short biographies of him can be found in *Gu bkra chos 'byung*, p. 580 f., and in Ngag dbang bsTan 'dzin nor bu, *gCod yul nyon mongs zhi byed kyi bka' gter bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar byin rlabs gter mtsho*, fos. 53a3–60b4 (although both sources clearly relied on the outer biography of Gar dbang rdo rje); also, cf. Bradburn (1995, p. 250 f.) for another short account of his life. According to the former source he was born in a place called g.Yam in Nub ri[s], i.e. an area in the south-western part of Mang yul Gung thang; cf. Everding (2000, Tafel 5), Childs (2001) for pertinent historical information on Nub ris and Childs (2004) for a highly readable ethnographic account of the Nub ris valley, lying in the shadows of the Manaslu peak in present-day Nepal. A location named g.Yam could not be identified and I take it as erroneous for the approximately homophonic mNyam (cf. the concordant interpretation in, Childs (2001, n. 16)), i.e. the region where Gar dbang rdo rje's first education took place (cf. rGyal dbang seng ge, *sPrul sku rigs 'dzin chen po gar dbang rdo rje snying po'i phyi'i rnam par thar pa nges don rgya mtsho*, fo. 35a6).

rGod ldem can's treasure-teachings and the *Ras chung snyan brgyud*²⁶ of the bKa' brgyud school, thus finally being well versed in the local religious traditions. This background is also reflected in his actions as a treasure-discoverer, as which he figured from his 25th year onwards. Alike his predecessors he made use of the prevailing regio-cultural dynamics. One example being that he also heavily drew upon the continuous importance of the hidden valley sKyid mo lung by repeatedly revealing treasures there. Most notable is the hunt for a treasure focused on Vajrasattva, i.e. the *rDor sems thugs kyi me long*.²⁷ He initially received hints pointing to the emergence of a treasure on practices of Vajrasattva. No precise information is given as to what these indications were. Yet this aroused his strong conviction that it was necessary for him to go and practice at the middle opening to the hidden valley of sKyid mo lung. At the opening, called Mu rtse khrod, he then settled in a cavern which forms a part of a turtle-shaped boulder rock, where, after some time had elapsed, he was approached by a man all dressed in white riding on a horse. The man introduced himself as the guardian of the adjoining Mu le glacier mountain (*mu le gangs*, i.e. the Dhaulagiri Himal). He explained that Gar dbang rdo rje would receive a treasure which once was entrusted to him by the Rig 'dzin chen po dNgos grub rgyal mtshan, i.e. Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can.²⁸ Hence the treasure to be found is identified as one that has already been revealed earlier, but then concealed again, another so-called *yang gter* of rGod ldem can. Further, Gar dbang rdo rje met with three demons, who introduced themselves as the "ya bdud [demons] of Ra zam" (*ra zam gyi ya bdud*), known as rDzong lha dkar po, sKos rje dkar po, and Klu sman dkar mo. They thanked him for taming and purifying them by means of his compassion and thus encouraged the treasure-discoverer to continue with his search. He then proceeded following a red deer which led him to a mountain named bKra shis dpal bzang. At the foot of this mountain he eventually discovered the treasure, consisting of the typical scroll of yellow paper (*shog ser*). It bears the title *rDor sems thugs kyi me long*, i.e. a text focusing on Vajrasattva.

²⁶ For the transmission of the *Ras chung snyan brgyud*, cf. Ehrhard (2004b, p. 587 ff.) and Sernesi (2004, 2011) q.v.

²⁷ Cf. rGyal dbang seng ge, *sPrul sku rigs 'dzin chen po gar dbang rdo rje snying po'i phyi'i rnam par thar pa nges don rgya mtsho*, fos. 30a–32a and Gar dbang rdo rje, *rDo rje sems dpa' thugs kyi me long*.

²⁸ It has been mentioned in Ehrhard (1993), in a description of the sacred geography of the Mukthināth area, that the Mu le glacier mountain corresponds to the Dhaulagiri Himal. However, the reason why the guardian deity of this mountain is cited as the protector of the *yang gter* of rGod ldem can in sKyid mo lung remains unclear.

It seems clear that in this case by revealing a treasure of the famous gTer ston rGod ldem can, Gar dbang rdo rje himself sought to elevate his own status as a mystic treasure-discoverer—it should be noted that in the end he actually was quite successful in doing so as he became considered as the reincarnation of rGod ldem can.²⁹ So what we can observe is again the calculated recourse to the bygone grand times and figures for the benefits in the present—only this time not from the present to Padmasambhava but to earlier famous and successful gTer stons. Yet not only did Gar dbang rdo rje try to reinstate these same dynamics. After the overpowering of Gung thang, the central Tibetan government eventually installed representatives in the capital rDzong dkar and in sKyid grong, so-called rDzong dpon. It seems clear that these figures had no interest in reinstating any cult of royalty in the region. Still they repeatedly sought the close contact to the treasure-discoverer. They were asking for the conferment of his treasure-teachings and just like their predecessors they also employed Gar dbang rdo rje as a ritual specialist in order to counter foreign attacks. As, just like before, no noteworthy military conflicts for the region are attested for the respective time, I take these actions again as a symbolic and calculated effort to retain “old customs” in order to preserve the continuity of the regio-cultural dynamics thus again ensuring the social status of the political class. In this regard the life of Gar dbang rdo rje also serves as a good example of the *Zeitgeist* of the late seventeenth century that was set by the ubiquitous great Fifth Dalai Lama. By means of interests fuelled by political power, the Fifth Dalai Lama emerged to become the universal leader of a unified Tibet. One aspect that helped him to succeed in this endeavour was the calculated recourse to the grand bygone times of imperial Tibet. This undertaking was helped by his open support of the heirs of the ancient time, i.e. the rNying ma pas in general and the treasure-discoverers in particular. Eventually in this way the great Fifth was able to solidify his status as the new universal sovereign of Tibet, just as the proponents of the rNying ma school were, to a great extent, able to pursue the continuation of their tradition.

²⁹ Generally speaking, Gar dbang rdo rje is considered to be a reincarnation of sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms—as is Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can—i.e. one of the close disciples of Padmasambhava, who was sent as a messenger from king Khri srong lde btsan to accompany the adept to Tibet. This, for instance, can be observed in the *le'u lha* illustrations featured in the first folios of Gar dbang rdo rje's “inner biography” (cf. *sPrul sku rigs 'dzin chen po gar dbang rdo rje snying po'i nang gi rnam thar nyams mgur gyi rim pa*, fos. 1b–2a), as well as in the entry on his life in the *Gu bkra chos 'byung*, p. 580; also cf. the concordant interpretation of the Brag dkar rta so sprul sku Chos kyi dbang phyug in Ehrhard (2004a, p. 379 f., n. 115).

The imprint Gar dbang rdo rje had left in the region can be well observed even today. As mentioned above, the gTer ston Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can is commonly considered to be the person who once discovered and opened the hidden valley of sKyid mo lung in the first place. For western Tibetan studies this sBas yul was disclosed by Michael Aris during his expedition to Nub ris and Ku thang in 1973. It was pointed out to him the Serang valley corresponds to sKyid mo lung.³⁰ Yet on a visit to the main monastery of the valley, gSang chen

³⁰ For the opening of the sBas yul by rGod ldem can, cf. n. 9. Kaḥ thog rig 'dzin in his *Gung thang rgyal rabs* offers a notable elaboration in the description of the opening of sKyid mo lung: *rig 'dzin chen pos sbas yul skyid mo lung gi sgo phyes dpal 'bar dang skyid mo lung du yang gter mang du sbas (Bod rje lha btsad po'i gdung rabs mnga' ri smad mang yul gung thang du ji ltar byung ba'i tshul deb gter dvangs shel 'phrul gyi me long*, p. 649,8), “the Rig 'dzin chen po [i.e. rGod ldem can] opened the hidden valley sKyid mo lung, [and] in [Ri bo] dpal 'bar and sKyid mo lung he concealed many *yang gter*.” Apparently the discoveries of the *yang gter* by bsTan gnyis gling pa and Gar dbang rdo rje had not remained unnoticed by Kaḥ thog rig 'dzin. As to the guide to the hidden valley, cf. rGod kyi ldem 'phru can, *sBas yul skyid mo lung gi lam byang* and for an overview of the available literature focussing on sKyid mo lung which is attributed to rGod ldem can, cf. Childs (1999, n. 22). Notably a contemporary of Gar dbang rdo rje, i.e. the 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud pa and founder of the Shel dgon pa in Dol po, bsTan 'dzin ras pa (1644/46–1723), after he had received a vision of Padmasambhava near the end of his life, credits himself with [re-]opening sKyid mo lung, beside emphasizing the treasure-discovery of Gar dbang rdo rje in the sanctuary; cf. Ehrhard (2001, p. 238 & n. 14). For a thorough description of Michael Aris' observations during his exploration of the hidden land, cf. Aris (1975, pp. 56–59 & 62–66), and further Childs (2004, pp. 74–77) q.v., for an anecdote about a journey to the Serang valley. The strong identification of this particular valley with sKyid mo lung seems to be based on the lives of three prominent masters of the Ku thang region, i.e. Padma don grub (1668–1744), Padma dbang 'dus (b. 1697), and Padma lhun grub (b. 1708), who were all active in the hidden valley, e.g. conducting retreats there. Travelling through the Ku thang region and in particular the Serang valley, one cannot help but recognize the great number of Maṇi stones flanking the way (especially a couple of hours into the Serang valley, one passes the hamlet of *Sarang—in the sketch-map of Aris it is labeled as Sharang, cf. Aris (1975, p. 76)—which features a whole “maze” of hundreds of Maṇi stones on a ridge). In addition to numerous depictions of highly esteemed rNying ma and bKa' brgyud dignitaries, such as 'Ja' tshon snying po, bsTan gnyis gling pa, Mi la ras pa and his lineage, one also finds frequently recurring illustrations of these three masters (notably I could not identify a single depiction of Gar dbang rdo rje; for an illustration of Padma dbang 'dus, cf. *ibid.*, plate p. 72). Further, at one of the most venerated places within the valley, i.e. a spring with legendary “realisation water” (*sgrub chu*) lying at the western foot of bKra shis dpal bzung, it was explained to me that in this very place Padma don grub also had revealed treasures by gazing at a particular rock-face in which he deciphered the gTer ma script (interview with local resident, Nyin lha, April 2011). Though we have the biographies of the three masters from Ku thang at hand, I could not validate this claim; for the biographies, cf. Aris (1979a), selected parts of these texts were translated in Childs (1997, p. 145 ff.) and Childs (2004), and

rab brtan nor bu gling, it was explained to me by the head of the monastery, Karma Mi 'gyur rdo rje rin po che, that the Serang valley is indeed sKyid mo lung, but it forms only a part of it. Thus it was further outlined by Slob dpon 'Gyur med in Samagaun, Nub ris, that the valleys of bTsum, Ku thang, and Nub ris in Nepal and the bordering Tibetan areas of Rud, sNyings, and mNyam, all constitute the hidden land of sKyid mo lung. Moreover, it was asserted that the centre of the sBas yul, i.e. the most venerated place, is the small Sarphu valley (*gSar phug), just east of the Serang valley. It was reasoned that it was in this very place, at the upper end of the valley and at the eastern foot of the mountain commonly known within the local community as bKra shis dpal bzang, that Gar dbang rdo rje revealed the *rDor sems thugs kyi me long*. Further it was explained that it is gTer ston Gar dbang rdo rje whose name is most identified with the whole of sKyid mo lung today.³¹

Despite warnings about its inaccessibility, I eventually received permission from the local religious masters to travel to the centre of sKyid mo lung myself. However, unfortunately multiple attempts to enter the Sarphu valley failed due to unfavourable weather conditions and thus an exploration of the supposed centre of sKyid mo lung still awaits realization by future researchers.

further it is mentioned in Ehrhard (2004b, p. 590 & n. 11) that all three of them travelled to rGod tshang gling in Yol mo in order to receive teachings from Gar dbang don grub, i.e. the reincarnation of rGyal dbang seng ge.

³¹ The interviews with Karma Mi 'gyur rdo rje rin po che of the Serang monastery and Slob dpon 'Gyur med of Samagaun were both conducted during my fieldwork in the region in April, 2011. For a similar assessment of the full geographical extent of sKyid mo lung, also based on oral information, cf. Everding (2000, p. 298 f.). According to the information of Bla ma Ye shes, the Sarphu valley today is largely uninhabited except for some small buildings. At the entrance to the valley there lies the hamlet *Ras zam, which most likely corresponds to the site connected to the aforementioned *ya bdud* demons, i.e. Ra zam. The way up to its end is steep and at various places rather inaccessible, leading to a small run-down hermitage at the eastern foot of mount bKra shis dpal bzang, which commemorates the place where Gar dbang rdo rje found the *rDor sems thugs kyi me long* (cf. Plate, for the awe-inspiring west flank of the bKra shis dpal bzang pictured in the background and seen from Serang valley). The colophon to most of the chapters of the treasure-cycle further specifies that Gar dbang rdo rje withdrew the gTer ma from a peculiar boulder shaped like a "lion's face" (*seng ge'i gdong*). This boulder still exist and at this place the local religious dignitaries, such as Bla ma Ye shes himself, even today withdraw for retreats; (interview in Nyi lod/bTsum, April 2011).

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The assembly hall of the gSer brang monastery in the morning light;
background Ri bo bKra shis dpal bzang

BOOK REVIEW

Saul Mullard. *Opening the Hidden Land. State Formation and the Construction of Sikkimese History*. Brill's Tibetan Studies Library, Volume 26, Leiden Boston: Brill, 2011, pp. 281. ISBN 978 90 04 20895 7 (14 illustrations; 2 maps; 1 lineage, 8 appendices with original texts and translations, two bibliographies and index)

FRANÇOISE POMMARET
CNRS, Paris

Sikkim and Bhutan have often found themselves together at the crossroads of history and the documentation of their past is important to both.

While neighbouring Bhutan has recently seen several books on the history of the country (Sonam Kinga, *Polity, Kingship and Democracy. A biography of the Bhutanese state*, Ministry of education, Bhutan Times, Thimphu, 2009; Karma Phuntsho, *The History of Bhutan*, Noida-London: Vintage books Random House India, 2013; Yoshiro Imaeda, *The successors of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel Hereditary heirs and reincarnations*, Thimphu: Riyang books, 2013; Yoshiro Imaeda, *Histoire médiévale du Bhoutan. Etablissement et évolution de la théocratie des 'Brug pa*, Tokyo, Toyo Bunko, 2011), there has been a dearth of books on the history of Sikkim until now. Therefore Saul Mullard's book is more than welcome to the academic community working on the Eastern Himalayas. Of course we should not forget Khenpo Lha Tshering, *mKha' phyod 'Bras ljongs kyi gtsug gtor sprul pa'i rnal 'byor mched bzhi brgyud 'dzin dang bcas pa'i byung ba brjod pa blo gsar gzhon nu'i dga' ston. A Saga of Sikkim's supremely revered four pioneer Nyingmapa incarnates and their torchbearers*, Khenpo L. Tshering, Gangtok, 2002, and the momentous work of Saul Mullard and his Sikkimese counterpart Hissey Wangchuk, *Royal Records: A catalogue of the Sikkimese Palace Archive*, IITBS, Andiast, 2010.

However, is Saul Mullard's book a 'history book' as such? This question is underlined by the author himself in his lengthy and impressive Introduction/first chapter and the excellent review of his book by Luke Wagner in the *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* EBHR 41 (pp. 129-132). Wagner's review makes ours somewhat redundant since we tend to agree with it.

Besides the wealth of information, references and documentation on Sikkimese history that the book contains, it should not be mistaken so much for a history of this state but rather, as the book title clearly enounces, as an essay on *the construction of Sikkimese History*.

Saul Mullard follows the post-modern criticism of history and in particular the theory of Hayden White which he explicates at length (p.13-17) and largely adheres to in his study. According to White, and therefore Mullard in our case, “History is constructed by historians on the basis of their own preferences. These preferences take the form of ideology [...], argument or explanation [...] or emplotment” therefore, “all history is metahistory” (p.13-14). For Saul Mullard “it is important to make a distinction between the local historical narratives of Sikkim and the wider historical methodology and to accept in part Hayden White’s discussion of the representation of reality as narrative but also admit that narrative plays a fundamental role in articulating the past.” (p.16).

This first chapter is dense with theory and methodology as the author discusses different interpretations of the term ‘state’, defining “the Sikkimese state as a community living under an organisational structure where power and authority is defined in the form of a structured hierarchy [...]” (p.21). He also argues that “the Tibetan concepts of state and social organisation were fundamental to the organisation of the Sikkimese state.” (p.22) and that “the key religio-political theory is that of *chos srid lugs gnyis*” (p.24-25), the spiritual and political/temporal rules.

In addition to this, the first chapter also deals with the early inhabitation of Sikkim and the Lepcha migrations, the *gter ma* and identification of Sikkim as well as providing a complete guide to Mullard’s extensive sources.

This reviewer would have preferred for such a rich and complex chapter to be divided into two with the theories and methodology to be placed in a separate chapter.

The following chapters shed a fascinating light on the myths, the narratives and the figures, both religious and secular, who contributed to the formation of the state. Chapters 4 and 5 provide great insights into the role—as well as their rivalry—of Lha btsun chen po and Mnga' bdag Phun tshogs rigs 'dzin, the two religious figures considered in the historiography as the ‘founding fathers’ of Sikkim.

At the same time, Saul Mullard never loses perspective and places the ‘historical events’ in the particular context of Sikkim with its indigenous population and the overpowering influence from Tibetan culture in all its aspects.

These two components of the Sikkimese state get untangled in the 18th and 19th centuries with external forces from neighbouring countries, Bhutan, Nepal and British India which all wanted to annex the new state (ch. 7). It was the threat posed by British India that led, according to Mullard, “to the proliferation of histories and an attempt to redefine Sikkim as a nation” (p.186) and a state established peacefully “in accordance with the prophecies of Guru Rinpoche.” (p.188).

Saul Mullard’s book is really fascinating, thoroughly researched and very important not only for the history of Sikkim but also for the religious history of Tibetan culture and the Eastern Himalayas. Saul Mullard chose a complex subject tangled between different countries. He unravels it in his work through his immense knowledge comparing “later historical narratives” and “key sources from the period of Sikkimese state formation” (p.191).

Re-evaluating the state formation process is really the leitmotif of the book and Mullard, in his conclusion, argues against some of Hayden White’s ideas saying that “Whilst it is true that ‘history’ can be manufactured for a number of reasons [...] it is also true that these manufactured histories can provide insight [...]” They are “a sociological beacon of a society (or its elite’s) ideological parameters, its norms or its values” (p.191).

This reviewer agrees with the author’s re-evaluation of Sikkimese history within a political agenda but would caution the author concerning the consequences of negating any religious agenda in its state formation. As the author himself explains, the dual structure of government is a characteristic of culturally Tibetan states, and to dismiss the role of religious traditions in the formation of the Sikkimese state (p.196) might be in itself problematic and a simplification of a complex situation which is only partially documented.

But certainly the scholarship here is original and brings a totally new approach to the history of Sikkim through thorough research and comparative assessments of the available sources, many of them unknown till now. The primary sources which constitute the appendices are in themselves an added value to this work.

The writing is clear with personal touches which make the book enjoyable to read. The author expresses himself with great conviction, even with a passion which sometimes makes him forget the length of his sentences (up to 6 lines!).

A very evident shortcoming of the book is its lack of a detailed map and scholars not familiar with this part of the Himalayas will sometimes be at loss locating some of the more obscure toponyms.

However, this is a minor issue compared to the overall achievements of this formidable, courageous and ambitious book. It is an outstanding contribution and a first on that period of the history of Sikkim, using Tibetan and Sikkimese sources. It also contributes extensively to the history of the Bhutan-Tibet-Nepal-Sikkim relationships and therefore to the Himalayas.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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