


**Between History and Biography:  
Notes on Zhi byed ri pa's *Illuminating Lamp of Sun and Moon Beams*, a  
Fourteenth-Century Biographical State of the Field\***

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**I. Introduction**

he text entitled *The Life of Rje btsun Mid la ras pa: An Illuminating Lamp of Sun and Moon Beams* (Rje btsun mid la ras pa'i rnam par thar pa gsal byed nyi zla'i 'od zer gyi sgron ma) formed a landmark in the development of one of Tibet's best known literary traditions: the corpus of materials depicting the life of acclaimed yogin and poet Mi la ras pa (1028/40-1111/23).<sup>1</sup> The work appeared more than a century prior to Gtsang smyon Heruka's (1452-1507) famous 1488 version of the life story, and for nearly five hundred years it remained an important source for Bka' brgyud authors recording the yogin's life. Its author, one G.yung ston Zhi byed Ri khrod pa (born ca. 1320), did not simply craft a life story after the fashion of early works in the biographical corpus, although the text exhibits influence from numerous such sources. Rather, he has produced a composite survey of the entire biographical tradition itself, incorporating historical analysis, chronological clarifications, literary criticism, question and answer records, an atlas of sacred sites, an assessment of existing oral traditions, documentation of transmission lines, as well as a smattering of biographical narrative, all mixed together with a good deal of autobiographical reflection. The composition has the appearance of a work compiled from notes gathered over a long period of time, a process that Zhi byed ri pa himself describes in some detail. The text forms what in modern parlance might be called a "state of the field" survey of Mi la ras pa studies in the late fourteenth century, reading not unlike a somewhat rushed, and at times rather disorganized, graduate thesis.

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\* A brief synopsis of this paper was presented at the workshop New Directions in Tibetan Literary Studies: Perspectives and Prospects in Auto/Biography held at Columbia University in November 2008.

<sup>1</sup> The original manuscript is listed in the *'Bras spungs dkar chag* (Dpal brtsegs bod yig dpe rnying zhib 'jug khang 2004): *phi ra* 72, 017188, 105 folios, 45 x 8 cm. The edition in my possession is based on an edited version of the original manuscript. This was reportedly edited once and in the process much of the original orthography, including spelling deviations, were "corrected." The work therefore contains many inconsistencies, retaining, for example, the old spelling *mid la* on some occasions while using the more common *mi la* in others. The version has numerous typographical errors and several folios were reportedly entered out of their proper order. Unfortunately, original page numbers are not recorded in the printout and it has not been possible to compare the computer text with the original manuscript.

The *Illuminating Lamp* has come to light only recently, although translator Lobsang Lhalungpa previously described its author as a contemporary of the polymath Bo dong Phyogs las rnam rgyal (1377-1451).<sup>2</sup> A few scholars have since echoed Lhalungpa's remarks, but the present study stands as the first extended review of Zhi byed ri pa and his composition. Even as the early literature of Mi la ras pa's life story was largely superseded by the standard version, and the *Illuminating Lamp* has remained in the dark for contemporary scholarship, Zhi byed ri pa clearly maintained his status as a significant and authoritative voice in the tradition.

Zhi byed ri pa's contribution is noteworthy for several reasons. First, the work attests to the vibrancy, the complexity, and the sheer breadth of Mi la ras pa's biographical tradition—and of the Tibetan tradition of life writing more broadly—at a relatively early moment in its development. By the late 1300s, more than a century prior to Gtsang smyon Heruka's canonical versions of Mi la ras pa's biography (*rnam thar*) and collected songs (*mgur 'bum*), Zhi byed ri pa repeatedly claims to have seen 127 different versions of the yogin's life. While such a claim may not be ruled out as pious fiction, if accurate it would increase nearly tenfold the number of sources known in the tradition at the time of his writing.

Zhi byed ri pa also records a wealth of information regarding Mi la ras pa's life lacking elsewhere. We find, for example, a detailed reckoning of genealogy and marriage codes that recasts Mi la ras pa's loss of patrimony and descent into poverty as a study of regional social relations. We read of the yogin's travels to eastern Tibet and his visionary encounters with great Indian Buddhist masters of the past. We see also a comprehensive reckoning of the author's sources, from oral accounts to obscure written materials including catalogues of the yogin's favored childhood songs.

The *Illuminating Lamp* is perhaps most remarkable in that it makes transparent many editorial decisions faced by the would-be biographer: How to mediate the often conflicting concerns of voice, story, and structure? What information constitutes necessary, or even valid, biographical detail in an effort to balance comprehensiveness on the one hand with narrative clarity on the other? Tibetan biographical narratives frequently maintain a feeling of incontrovertibility, seamlessly smoothing out the wrinkles of conflict and contradiction found in earlier works of the tradition. Here, Zhi byed ri pa takes an unusual approach to the process of biographical writing, in some instances employing traditional narrative storytelling, but more frequently resorting to forms of historical documentation and polemic.

In what follows, I first introduce the author Zhi byed ri pa and his *Illuminating Lamp*. I then survey the terrain of his account, highlighting several of its more important and revealing features. I conclude by briefly addressing some of the questions that this remarkable text raises: What are Tibetan authors looking for when they write biography and, in turn, what are we as critics looking for when we read them? I want to specifically address how the author employs particular literary terms as a means of legitimizing his work within the broader corpus of literature on Mi la ras pa's life. The *Illuminating Lamp* leads us to raise fundamental questions

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<sup>2</sup> This is in the introduction to his translation of *The Life of Milarepa*. See Lhalungpa 1977, xxx.

about how Tibetan authors understood the biographical enterprise, what such literature required, and how it might be presented. It is hoped that this will lead us to further interrogate the ways in which Tibetan authors employ the terminology of literary genres, and how we might develop a more nuanced understanding of them.

To that end, a few broad observations will be of use before turning to the author and his work. The lines dividing Tibetan literary genres are neither clearly defined nor indelibly drawn; they blur even further when comparing works of biography and religious history.<sup>3</sup> While a more detailed discussion of the fluid nature of Tibetan genre categories is beyond the scope of the present paper, there is some evidence that Zhi byed ri pa may have self-consciously conflated narrative modes witnessed in other works of Mi la ras pa's biographical tradition from the same period. Although the author adopts in his title the term for biography most often associated with the Mi la corpus (*rnam thar*), the text consists of a simple and highly abbreviated narrative core describing the life story proper surrounded by an extensive yet discrete body of secondary historical and literary information.<sup>4</sup> The result is a record of Mi la ras pa's life unlike any other in the corpus.

Zhi byed ri pa refers to the work as a "biographical record" or collection of "biographical documents" (*yig cha rnam thar*), perhaps in reference to the variety of information it contains. Indeed, with the text's attention to lineage records and chronological analysis the term appears to mark an emphasis on a historical rather than the more fictional approach to life writing encountered in many other versions and culminating in Gtsang smyon Heruka's literary masterpiece.<sup>5</sup> Even Zhi byed ri pa's fictionalized narratives, especially those describing of Mi la's early life, seem to stress a documentary approach to life writing.

Indeed, at one point early on, Zhi byed ri pa refers to the text as a "historical account of the lama widely renowned by the name Mi la ras pa," (*bla ma mi la ras pa zhes mtshan yongs su grags pa de'i lo rgyus*) and in several instances describes it as a *rnam thar lo rgyus*, a term that might be translated as "historical biography."<sup>6</sup> The use of the term *lo rgyus* in this context is of particular interest and while its translation here as "history" or "historical" may be controversial it is, I think, not unwarranted. The word has been rendered variously as "history," "chronicle," and "annals," in some cases it

<sup>3</sup> Tibetan literature, it is now generally understood, knows of no single term that translates the entire semantic range of broad genre categories such as "history" or "biography," or for that matter, the notion of "genre" more generally. See, for example, the discussion in Cabezón and Jackson (1996, 20ff.).

<sup>4</sup> It is well known but perhaps worth reiterating that *rnam thar* is only one of many terms used to designate forms of Tibetan life writing. Others include *rang rnam* (autobiographies); *rtogs brjod*, a term translating the Sanskrit *avadāna* (literally "expressions of realization" but perhaps rendered here more generally as "biographical narratives"); *skyes rabs / 'khrungs rabs* (accounts of previous lives, lineage biographies), and *byung ba brjod pa* (literally "descriptions of [family] origins," perhaps rendered as "personal histories"). We might further consider various forms of daily chronicles and diary writing as autobiographical in nature. On the latter, see Gyatso 1997.

<sup>5</sup> I use the term "fictional" here after Natalie Davis, referring not to the story's falsity but to its coherent and crafted sense of narrative development. See Natalie Davis, *Fiction in the Archives* (Stanford University Press, 1987), 3.

<sup>6</sup> NDO, 41. See the colophon translated in Appendix 1.

is better understood more generally as “story” or “account.” Leonard van der Kuijp has noted that the term—in his rendering, literally “tidings of the year[s]”—frequently refers to works that “do not fulfill what is promised by such a rendition, that is to say, they do not at all give a year-by-year account of their subject matter, but rather present a narrative of events, historical, quasi-historical, or even ahistorical, in rough chronical sequence.”<sup>7</sup> Dan Martin makes a similar point, invoking A. I. Vostrikov’s classic study *Tibetan Historical Literature*, which is worth citing in full:

*Lo-rgyus* (‘history’ or ‘story,’ although in its etymology it apparently means ‘years familiarity’)...is by far the broadest genre-term that we might translate as ‘history,’ covering as it does both the secular and the religious, but as pointed out long ago by Vostrikov (THL, p. 204), *lo-rgyus* are often simply narrative works, or ‘stories,’ that may have little to do with history as such.<sup>8</sup>

The term *lo rgyus* is also found in the titles of some biographical works, where indeed it seems to imply a narrative account in the most general sense. I do not wish to make a general claim here on the semantic range of the compound *rnam thar lo rgyus*, although I will later return briefly to the question of this term and the category of writing it might describe. Here, I will simply note that Zhi byed ri pa’s emphasis does not seem to rest on understanding *lo rgyus* as simply “story” or “narrative.” The *rnam thar lo rgyus* is not simply a collection of “biographical anecdotes.” Rather, he uses the term to make a specific claim on the veracity, and therefore the authenticity and authority, of his biographical account vis-à-vis the wider biographical tradition.

## II. The Author

Little is known about Zhi byed ri pa apart from the information he presents in the text itself. Near the end of his work, he notes, “Just after I was born, when I was eleven months old, I received Rje btsun Mi la ras chen’s songs of realization from my kind mother. Thereafter, for fifty-three years I systematically requested Rje btsun Mi la ras chen’s dharma cycles, his biography, and collected songs....”<sup>9</sup> This would make him at least fifty-four years old (fifty-five according to Tibetan reckoning) when he wrote the text in 1373. Zhi byed ri pa was thus likely born sometime around 1320.

The author frequently identifies himself as a Śākya *bhikṣu*, referring to his status as a fully ordained monk, and also as G.yung ston, “the teacher from

<sup>7</sup> van der Kuijp 1995, 43.

<sup>8</sup> Martin 1997, 14-15.

<sup>9</sup> Zhi byed ri pa, NDO, 44. *de yang thog mar skyes nas zla ba bcu gcig lon tsa na | ma sku drin can de'i drung na rje btsun mi la ras chen gyi mgur rnam thob | de nas lo ngo gsum pa'i dus na* . . . The passage continues by recording his sources for Mi la ras pa’s doctrinal and biographical traditions. See note 24 below.

G.yung,” emphasizing his status as a scholar.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, he describes his accomplishments as a student of the Buddha’s teachings in no uncertain terms when he declares, “In general, among the Victor’s teachings—sūtras, tantras, oral transmissions, and instructions—as many as exist in India, China, and Tibet, there are none that I have not seen or heard.”<sup>11</sup> The author, however, most consistently uses the name Zhi byed ri khrod pa, the mendicant (*ri khrod pa*) of the Zhi byed lineage. The name Zhi byed ras pa, occasionally seen in references to this work, appears to be a corruption of the abbreviated form Zhi byed ri pa.

Hyperbole aside, the author does appear to have trained under a great number of religious masters representing a broad range of lineages and traditions. But he identifies himself most closely with the early masters of the Sa skya and Bka’ brgyud transmissions. In several instances, he describes the way in which he received the transmissions of Pacification (*zhi byed*), from which his name is derived, and Severance (*gcod*), as well as the Sa skya Path and Fruition (*lam ’bras*) instructions.<sup>12</sup> He repeatedly refers to the Powerful Lord of Hermits Maṇi pa, who may perhaps be identified with the Sa skya master Legs pa rgyal mtshan.<sup>13</sup> He pays special attention to his reception of and dedication to the Bka’ brgyud aural transmissions (*snyan brgyud*) stemming from Mi la ras pa’s disciples Ras chung pa Rdo rje grags (1085-1161) and Ngan rdzong Byang chub rgyal po (b. 11th century). He also notes that he received instructions directly from Gzi brjid rgyal mtshan (1290-1360), an important figure in the Ras chung snyan brgyud transmission lineage.<sup>14</sup> The author later records his place in a number of tantric transmission lineages, many of which have their Tibetan origins in the early Bka’ brgyud masters Mi la ras pa, Ras chung pa, and their followers. (See Appendix 2.)

Zhi byed ri pa also appears to have encountered a number of influential religious figures of his day, including the founding ruler of the Phag mo gru hegemony Ta’i Si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan (1302-1364).<sup>15</sup> He also met with the renowned Sa skya master Kun dga’ rgyal mtshan Dpal bzang po (1310-1358), the first incarnation of the Sa skya Lha khang bla brang and the twelfth Ti shri prelate who apparently vouched for the author’s credentials

<sup>10</sup> He should not, however, be confused with G.yung ston Rdo rje dpal (1284-1365), a disciple of the third Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje (1284-1339), whose dates are incompatible with those of this text. See Roerich 1949, 149ff, 493.

<sup>11</sup> Zhi byed ri pa, NDO, 44. *spyir yang rgya gar nag bod gsum du ’gyur tshad kyi rgyal ba’i bka’ mdo rgyud lung man ngag gi rigs la ngas ma mthong ba dang ma thos pa tsam med....* He later repeats this claim in the colophon.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, his statements in the colophon, translated in Appendix 1.

<sup>13</sup> See TBRC database (P4022). However, Zhi byed ri pa later lists Maṇi pa as a member of an unidentified *snyan brgyud* transmission line following Gzi brjid rgyal mtshan, described below.

<sup>14</sup> Gzi brjid rgyal mtshan is the author of one biography, and the subject of another, in the *Snyan brgyud yig cha* of Byang chub bzang po. See Byang chub bzang po, DKN, vol. 1. The dates tentatively provided for him in that publication (1230-1300) appear to be off by one sixty-year cycle. In order to fit with Zhi byed ri pa’s dates, they should be corrected to 1290-1360, which corroborates the evidence provided in Roberts 2007, 52.

<sup>15</sup> On the life of Ta’i Si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan (1302-1364), see van der Kuijp 1991, 1994, 2001.

and helped inspire his biographical project.<sup>16</sup> Zhi byed ri pa records his meeting with this Sa skya lama in the following way:

... Then at Dpal Din ri Glang skor [Kun dga' rgyal mtshan] took my hand in his and said, 'From Gangs Ti se to Ri bo rtse lnga in China, there is no one with a greater knowledge of Lama Rje btsun Mi la ras chen's life story and history than you. Therefore, you should set down an extensive biographical record (*yig cha rnam thar*) about him.' Thus he urged me with great insistence.<sup>17</sup>

### III. The Text

Zhi byed ri pa notes that he completed the text in the southern border region of Skyid grong while residing in the hermitage called Gra'i rtse mo ngang. He dates the composition to the eight day of the waxing moon of the horse month of the water-ox year (*chu glang lo*), 269 years after Mi la ras pa's death.<sup>18</sup> Only the year 1373 plausibly fits both with the time frame of Mi la ras pa's life and the dates of Zhi byed ri pa's teachers. The text was thus completed in 1373 and then, according to the colophon, revised eight years later in 1381.

The author famously claims to have seen 127 different versions of Mi la ras pa's life story, but he appears to have relied on two principal sources in crafting his study, neither of which has yet come to light. In the colophon, he notes:

In general, I have seen some one hundred and twenty-seven different attempts at the biography of Mid la ras chen. In particular, I have made [my version] taking as a basis the accounts of (1) Lord Khyung tshang pa Jñānaguru, and (2) the Dharma Lord Zhang Lotsāwa Grub pa dpal bzang who is unmistakable in his knowledge of the five sciences.<sup>19</sup>

Zhi byed ri pa repeatedly refers to these two masters throughout his study. The first, Khyung tshang pa Ye shes bla ma (1115-1176), is counted among

<sup>16</sup> Little seems to be known of this individual's life; the most extensive known account of his activities has been described as "miserably short." See van der Kuijp 2004, 28. A brief biographical sketch is recorded in Grags pa 'byung gnas and Blo bzang mkhas grub, MD, 705.

<sup>17</sup> Zhi bye ri pa, NDO, 41. See Appendix 1.

<sup>18</sup> The horse month (*rta zla*) refers both to the fifth lunar month in the Tibetan calendar, as well as the period from the sixteenth day of the twelfth month to the fifteenth day of the first month of the new year. An extended examination of Mi la ras pa's dates is beyond the scope of the present discussion, but I am currently preparing a detailed study of the confusion within the tradition surrounding the yogin's chronology. See Quintman forthcoming b.

<sup>19</sup> Zhi byed ri pa, NDO, 42. *spyir mid la ras chen gyi rnam thar la mdzad pa mi cig pa brgya dang nyi shu rtsa bdun tsam mthong ba dang | khyad par du rje khyung tshang ba dznya na gu ru dang | lnga rig shes bya'i gnas la ma rmongs pa | chos rje zhang lo tsha ba grub pa dpal zang po dang | de rnams kyi gsung gros la gzhi blangs nas byas pa lags cing |.*

Ras chung pa's closest disciples.<sup>20</sup> The *Blue Annals* (*Deb gter sngon po*, completed 1478) recounts Mi la ras pa's life based in part upon Khyung tshang pa's account, indicating that the latter was still considered an authoritative work even a century after Zhi byed ri pa's remarks, and a mere decade prior to Gtsang smyon Heruka's completion of Mi la ras pa's standard *Life and Songs*.<sup>21</sup> Zhang Lotsāwa himself codified several lines of the Ras chung snyan brgyud transmitted by three of Khyung tshang pa's principal disciples. The two works that appear to underlie much of the *Illuminating Lamp* thus represent some of the earliest, though unrecovered, sources in Mi la ras pa's biographical tradition.

Zhi byed ri pa further refers to the literary work of one Byang chub rgyal mtshan, an unidentified individual described simply as a teacher the line of aural transmissions (*snyan brgyud ston pa*).<sup>22</sup> In certain cases, the author seems to draw upon the work of Don mo ri pa (b. 1203), whose writings were compiled in the mid-fourteenth century.<sup>23</sup> Zhi byed ri pa also claims to have relied heavily upon oral accounts from living masters, including members of the most important Bka' brgyud religious institutions of the day.<sup>24</sup>

The close ties between the *Illuminating Lamp* and the early Bka' brgyud aural transmission lineages witnessed here is no accident. Much of the early literature of Mi la ras pa's biographical tradition explicitly identifies itself as part of the aural transmission cycles.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, Zhi byed ri pa here explicitly

<sup>20</sup> On his life, see Roerich 1949, 441-443.

<sup>21</sup> Roerich 1949, 435.

<sup>22</sup> Zhi byed ri pa, NDO, 6. In Byang chub rgyal mtshan's account, upon meeting Mar pa for the first time Mi la ras pa presents offerings of balls of hard molasses and a fine wollen blanket. After recording this narrative fragment, Zhi byed ri pa comments, "But he likely did not have anything to offer."

<sup>23</sup> Don mo ri pa's account appears in the collection of biographies by Rdo rje bdzes 'od, a 'Bri gung master active in the fourteenth century. See Don mo ri pa, JMN. On Rdo rje mdzes 'od, see Roberts 2007, 9.

<sup>24</sup> Zhi byed ri pa, NDO, 44. Zhi byed ri pa includes the following individuals among his sources: Bla ma ri pa Dkon rgyal, Bla ma ri pa Padma dbang po, Bla ma ri pa Byang bsod pa, Ris pad ye ba, Bla ma Nam mkha' snying po, protector of beings Thugs rje ye shes, Bla ma Chu ras pa, Chu dbon pa, Hor dkar reg bshes, Lha rje bde ba, Ri pa Dbang bzang, Bla ma Bde mchog dpal, Bla ma Rgyal dgon pa, Dge bshes Stabs dgon pa, Bla ma Nam mkha' rdo rje, the abbot of the glorious monastic seat of Sho dgon pa, La pa mkhan chen, Dge bshes Gu ru mdo pa, the Stag lung bla ma 'De bde ba, Bla ma Kam tshang Byal ba dpal, Bla ma Ru shal ba, Lama Nam dgod pa, the kind Dpal sgra ras chen, the kind Bla ma Gcod pa, the Karma pa'i ri pa Dge 'dun gzhon nu, Dge bshes Ye 'bum, Dge bshes Sher bzang, Rgu lung dge bshes, Ras pa Bzang rna ba, Bla ma Mog ston 'Jam pa'i dbyangs, and Bla ma Lha stong ro dpon. He concludes this list by noting, "I had detailed discussions about this with the precious teachers of Karma, Brag mkhar, Sga lung, Sprung [spung] ri, Yul phug, Rta rna, 'Bri khung, 'Tshal gung thang, Mthur phu, and 'Ur ri [monasteries], as well as scholars and their assembly of disciples such as Ri dge. We have [discussed these matters] in detail."

<sup>25</sup> The earliest of Mi la ras pa's great biographical compendia, the so-called *Twelve Great Disciples* (*Bu chen bcu gnyis*), concludes with the statement "This Transmission Wish Fulfilling Gem / of the Cakrasaṃvara Aural Tantra / Has been put into writing according to the lama's words / for fear that it might be forgotten by those of inferior minds / for future holders of the family line." See Ngan rdzongs ston pa Byang chub rgyal po, BCN, 243b.1 Here the "Transmission Wish Fulfilling Gem" refers to the first of three main divisions of the aural tantra curricula, a collection of literature devoted to recording the

follows this tradition, concluding his work with the following remark: “The *bhikṣu* Zhi byed ri khrod pa has finished laying out the lineage of masters of the of the Wish Fulfilling Gem Aural Tantra and the activities of the Great rje btsun Mi la ras chen and his sons.”<sup>26</sup>

If Zhe byed ri pa's *Illuminating Lamp* reached the hands of contemporary scholars only recently, it seems to have gained widespread acceptance by Tibetan authors as an authoritative work soon after its completion. And there is strong evidence that it maintained its influential status long after Gtsang smyon Heruka's standard *Life and Songs* were published. One early comprehensive biography of Mi la ras pa, tentatively dated to the late fourteenth to mid-fifteenth centuries, identifies Zhi byed ri pa's text as one of its three principal sources.<sup>27</sup> The *Illuminating Lamp* seems, however, to have served more frequently as a source for historians than for biographers per se. One of the earliest works to reference this text may be *Brilliant Light Rays Opening the Eyes* (*Mig 'byed 'od stong*), an important Bka' brgyud history composed in 1418 by Bsod nams rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po (1386-1434), an abbot of Gdan sa thel Monastery.<sup>28</sup> The influential 'Brug pa Bka' brgyud historian Padma dkar po (1527-1592) relied on the *Illuminating Lamp* for the brief biographical sketch of Mi la ras pa in his *History of the 'Brug pa* (*'Brug pa'i chos 'byung*), completed in 1581.<sup>29</sup> The supplement (*kha skong*) to Si tu Paṅ chen Chos kyi byung gnas's (1699/1700-1774) extensive Bka' brgyud history *The Fine Crystalline Gem* (*Nor bu zla ba chu shel*) refers to Zhi byed ri pa and his work directly.<sup>30</sup> Kaḥ thog rigs 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu (1698-1755) includes Zhi byed ri pa's calculation of the yogin's birth year in his chronological study of several early Tibetan figures, including Mar pa and Mi la ras pa.<sup>31</sup> Tshe dbang nor bu's disciple and historian Brag dkar Chos kyi dbang phyug (1775-1837) mentions having seen a synopsis of Zhi byed ri pa's work in the biography of Sgam smyon Phyag rdor nor bu (active 17th century), who in turn saw a copy of the text in the famed retreat center in Chu bar.<sup>32</sup>

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lives of masters in the lineage. An overview of this system is given in Zhang Lotsāwa Grub pa dpal bzang, TY, and is further discussed in Toricelli 2001 and Sernesi 2004.

<sup>26</sup> Zhi byed ri pa, NDO, 51. *snyan rgyud yid bzhin nor bu'i bla ma rgyud rim dang | rje btsun chen po mi la ras chen yab sras kyi mdzad pa | dge slong zhi byed ri khrod pas bkod pa rdzogs so |*

<sup>27</sup> This is one of the various works identified as the so-called *Black Treasury* (*Mdzod nag ma*), attributed to the editorial hand of the third Karmapa Rang byung rdo rje (1284-1339). I have tentatively dated this version to the period 1373-1451. For bibliographic details on the two extant editions, see DNM. My book on the literary history of Mi la ras pa's biographical tradition examines these texts in detail. See Quintman forthcoming a.

<sup>28</sup> Sørensen and Dolma 2007, 64 [folio 12a of the Tibetan text]. On his life, see *Ibid.*, 21-28; and Roerich 1949, 589-595. The author, also known as Chos rje Nyer gnyis pa, here refers to the “biography written by bla ma Zhi byed pa” (*bla ma zhi byed pas mdzad pa'i rnam thar*) in determining Mi la ras pa's dates.

<sup>29</sup> Pad ma dkar po, DCJ, 353-4. Padma dkar po's reliance on Zhi byed ri pa (or perhaps one of his sources) is apparent in at least one part of his narrative: when Mi la ras pa's mother rejects the suggestion of marrying Mi la's cousin, a narrative thread (discussed below) that Zhi byed ri pa describes in detail and found only in his version.

<sup>30</sup> Si tu Paṅ chen Chos kyi 'byung gnas & 'Be lo tshe dbang kun khyap, CSK, 81. The author notes, however, that he has not incorporated Zhi byed ri pa's many unusual stories into his own account.

<sup>31</sup> See Tshe dbang nor bu, SDN, 692. This text is translated in Quintman, forthcoming b.

<sup>32</sup> Chos kyi dbang phyug, DTL, 22b. Sgam smyon Phyag rdor nor bu was the younger brother of the third Yol mo sprul sku Bstan 'dzin nor bu (1598-1644). Chos kyi dbang



#### IV. The Story

The narrative core of Zhi byed ri pa's text, though brief, generally conforms to the structures found in the earliest strata of the biographical tradition, forming what may be understood as a proto-*rnam mgur*—an early form of combined biography (*rnam thar*) and song anthology (*mgur 'bum*). Such works employ a brief biographical sketch of the early life and the final passing (proto-*rnam thar*) to frame a series of abbreviated anecdotes recording songs or, more frequently, song fragments (proto-*mgur 'bum*) from the yogin's later teaching career.<sup>33</sup> As with most proto-*rnam mgur* texts, here the yogin's life is organized around an outline identifying two broad qualities (*yon tan*) evident in the life story: (1) the quality of his family lineage (*rigs dang rus kyi yon tan*) describing the period of his childhood, early religious training, and first retreats, and (2) the quality of his practicing austerities for the sake of dharma (*chos phyir dka' ba spyad pa'i yon tan*), which recounts various episodes of his life as wandering yogin. The latter section is further divided into seventeen "qualities," each each of which records several song-cycle fragments. (See Appendix 3.) Zhi byed ri pa concludes the proto-*rnam thar* with an extensive account of Mi la ras pa's poisoning and death, finally recording that,

On the fourteenth day of the tiger month of a bird year, just as the sun was rising on the peaks of the mountains, Mid la ras chen, universally known as lama rje btsun Mi la, Lord of Yogins, Dpal Bzhad pa'i rdo rje, departed into the *dharmadhātu*. He was eighty-four years old.<sup>34</sup>

Of particular note in this narrative section is Zhi byed ri pa's extensive description of Mi la ras pa's youth and the misfortunes he suffered at the hands of his relatives, which constitutes nearly half of the core narrative. Many works in the early biographical tradition treat the yogin's childhood in perfunctory fashion, describing the events in only a few lines; others leave out the episode altogether. Here, the author sets forth in painstaking detail the anguish Mi la ras pa suffers at the hands of his relatives. Moreover, Zhi byed ri pa's text is perhaps the only version of the life story to provide a substantive rationale for the infamous conflict between the maternal and paternal sides of his family. The episode is rich in ethnographic details about social and marital relations in early Tibet. A complete translation is provided

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phyug elsewhere identifies him as a reincarnation of Mi la ras pa's disciple Bse ban ras pa. Thanks to Ben Bogin for this reference. See Chos kyi dbang phyug, DKS, 51.

<sup>33</sup> Here, I use the term *proto* in its sense of "an early or preceding state of development," specifically locating such works as precursors to the larger, more mature biographical compendia produced later in the tradition. This form was widespread throughout Mi la ras pa's biographical tradition. It should be noted, however, that proto-*rnam mgur* texts continued to appear long after the biographical tradition had coalesced. In these cases, *proto* refers instead to the truncated structure of such works, regardless of when they were actually produced.

<sup>34</sup> Zhi byed ri pa, NDO, 40. *bya'i lo rta pa zla ba'i ye tshes bcu bzhi'i nyi ma ri rtse la se lhag shar ba dang | dus kha mnyam pa la bla ma rje btsun mi la rnal 'byor dbang phyug | dpal ldan bzhad pa'i rdo rje mtshan yongs su grags pa'i mid la ras chen de | chos kyi dbyings su gshegs so | dgung lo bco brgya bcu rtsa bzhi pa yin no |*.

in Appendix 4. Although an extended analysis of this material lies beyond the scope of the present study, it is taken up in the subsequent short essay "Marriage, Kinship, and Inheritance in Zhi byed ri pa's Account of Milarepa's Early Life." What follows is a brief summary.

In Zhi byed ri pa's reckoning, the family wealth had been split between the two brothers of Mi la ras pa's paternal side—that is, Mi la's father Sher rgyal and his paternal uncle Rin rgyal. The first share went to the yogin's uncle, who was older, married earlier, and thus had a larger family by the time the father came of age. When Mi la ras pa's father Sher rgyal turned eighteen, he received the family's remaining assets. Rin rgyal's wife (the infamous aunt) appears to have been dissatisfied with these arrangements, arguing that her own family was larger and thus deserving a greater share. When the father died, the uncle planned to marry Mi la ras pa's mother to his son (i.e., the mother's nephew through marriage), as a means of keeping the family's estate intact.<sup>35</sup> This appears to have been a traditional practice in the region at that time. Indignant at this request, the mother refuses. Uncle Rin rgyal then appropriates the mother's material wealth that, in his view, should have rightfully returned to his household. Mi la's family is thus cast into a life of poverty and servitude. At one point, after they have become destitute, Mi la suggests to his mother that they would all be better off if she would just comply with local conventions: "You, mother, could live with Uncle's son, and you could obtain a share of his possessions. Then we, mother and children, would have the strength to escape on our own. Wouldn't it be better if you did that?" The mother replies by throwing a handful of dirt in her son's face, screaming, "If I lived with Rin rgyal's son, when the time came for me to take a share of his possessions I would be carrying another child, and you two—brother and sister—would starve to death, wouldn't you?" The point seems to be that the extended family and local villagers clearly view the mother's actions as contravening traditional social relations and thus she is thought to deserve the fate that befalls her and her children. This stands in marked contrast to Gtsang smyon Heruka's standard version in which Mi la and his family are cast simply, if more poignantly, as the unwitting victims of their relatives' avarice.

This episode gives a clear indication of Zhi byed ri pa's concerns. The author is careful to document with great precision the origin of the yogin's family conflict even when it serves no clear didactic or narrative goal. In doing so, his version preserves an unprecedented record of Mi la ras pa's early life. Indeed, eminent historians such as Padma dkar po and Si tu Paṅ chen refer to this seminal episode in the context of their extensive studies of the Bka' brgyud lineage. One contemporary Tibetan scholar displayed his surprise to me upon reading this work noting that, unlike the standard version, "Everything happens for a clear reason with clear causes." But this

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<sup>35</sup> Polygyny became normative in Tibet beginning in the seventeenth century, in association with the land tenure system instituted under the Dga' ldan pho brang. (Personal communication, Geoff Childs, May 2011.) However, I know of no examples describing this particular kind of arrangement, perhaps a form of levirate marriage in which the nephew (i.e., the brother's son) takes the place of the brother. See Stein 1972, 98; Childs 2004, 135-9. According to the *Blue Annals* (Roerich 1949, 427), the arrangement was an actual levirate marriage in which Mi la's mother was forced to marry her deceased husband's brother.

is the sort of detail that would bog down the elegant narrative in Gtsang smyon Heruka's rendition of Mi la ras pa's life. In his canonical version, Gtsang smyon replaces this extended account with the simple gloss, "My uncle and aunt never agreed but were reconciled in their greed, and I was an only son while my uncle had many sons."<sup>36</sup> Zhi byed ri pa here fills the role of genealogist, more interested in the comprehensive accumulation of granular detail than the crafting of narrative through character development or story arc.

With this episode of Mi la ras pa's early life completed, Zhi byed ri pa abandons all pretense of narrative life writing altogether, turning instead to a long string of discrete story fragments joined together without transition. Some of these accounts attack what the author appears to view as scurrilous oral tradition; others add minor points of clarification to well-known episodes in the yogin's life. Almost none of Zhi byed ri pa's extensive record appears in the later biographical tradition or in Gtsang smyon Heruka's standard version of the *Life*.

First among his many fascinating claims are the descriptions of the places Mi la ras pa visited. Apart from many of the locations well known in the biographical tradition, he is said to have traveled to Tsong kha in Smad where he met the King Dar ma 'bum.<sup>37</sup> Zhi byed ri pa also records a curious conversation between Mi la and Ras chung pa, describing the yogin's travels to India:

When [Mi la] was imparting the vase initiation of the five families Vajrasattva to Ras chung pa, Ras chung pa asked, "How many times did the Rje btsun go to India?"

"Six times," replied [Mi la ras pa].

"During those times, what sort of buddhas or accomplished masters did you meet?"

"The first time, I met Master Ārya Nāgārjuna in pure vision and I received many dharma teachings on Madhyamaka and so forth. The second time, I met Ārya Āryadeva in Sri Lanka and he taught the *pāramitās*. During the third trip, I met the great master Lawapa on the banks of the Gāṅga in India and he taught "phenomena like an illusion." During the fourth trip, I met Candrakīrti and he taught the *sādhana* for Māricī Devī (lha mo 'od zer can). During the fifth trip, I met Matangi and he taught on Amoghapāśa. The sixth time, I met Ḍombipa and he gave the instructions on the Path and Fruition of the Powerful Lord of Yogins, the glorious Birwapa."

Ras chung pa asked in response, "Did the Rje btsun travel by means of miraculous manifestation or did he actually go himself?"

Mi la replied, "Whatever you like to believe is okay."<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> de Jong 1959, 33. *a khu dang a ne gnyis ci la mi 'cham rung lto la 'cham pa dang | nga bu gcig por song ba dang | a khu la bu mang po yod pa'i stabs kyis |* Cf. Quintman 2010, 24.

<sup>37</sup> Zhi byed ri pa, NDO, 23-24, 43. This is perhaps the source for Lhalungpa's comment that Zhi byed ri pa's text described Mi la's visit to eastern Tibet. See Lhalungpa 1977, xxx.

<sup>38</sup> Zhi byed ri pa, NDO, 31. *yang ras chung ba <pa> la | rdo rje sems dpa' rigs lnga'i bum dbang dngos su gnang dus na | rang <ras> chung pas rje btsun gyis rgya gar du lan du byed zhus pas | thebs drug phyin gsung | de'i dus na sangs rgyas sam grub thob ci 'dra dang mjal zhus pas | dang po re la slob dpon 'phags pa klu grub dang dag snang gis mjal | dbu ma la sogs chos mang po*

Zhi byed ri pa repeatedly argues against what appears to have been an oral tradition critical of Mi la ras pa. In several places he counters the notion that the yogin survived as something of an outlaw: “Some people say that lama Mi la was a thief or a bandit between Mang [yul] and Gung [thang], but those are foolish stories.”<sup>39</sup> The author later repeats this criticism adding a brief timeline of the yogin’s life as further proof of the claim’s implausibility:

Some foolish people tell absurd stories that the great Rje btsun acted as a bandit and thief between Mang [yul] and Gung [thang]. Such are crazy stories of those whose merit has been exhausted.

The Rje btsun was three years and four months old when his father died, and then lived with his mother until he was seven. He lived with Dge bshes Tsa pa for seven years and then again with his mother for four years. In his eighteenth year he went to Rta nag and Yar lungs, and he stayed practicing magic for eight years. He spent one year with ‘Dre ston lha dga’ and other gurus. He stayed in Lho brag for nine years. He spent a little over a year in Gzhung [with Rngog]. He spent a winter in Tswa, and twelve years at Brag dkar. From the age of fifty he worked for the benefit of beings. At the age of eighty-four, he departed into the pure *dharmadhātu*.

Where in those periods could he have acted as a bandit or in a deceitful way? This outline of Mid la ras chen’s biography has been written down by the *bhikṣu* Zhi byed ri khrod pa.<sup>40</sup>

In other cases, he is concerned with clarifying oral accounts of what appear to be minor, perhaps even trivial, details:

That Rje btsun Mi la ras pa requested the *sādhana* of Glorious Vajrasattva together with its oral instructions from the guru Ba ri Lotsāwa is a crazy story spread by everyone. It is said that the young man Zhi ba ‘od crossed the Bong River (Bong chu) and that Rje btsun

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*thob gsung | lan gnyis pa'i dus su | rgya gar seng ga la na 'phags pa aya de ba dang mjal nas phar phyin gnan gsung | lan gsum pa'i dus na | rgya gar gang ga'i 'gram na slob dpon chen po la ba pa dang mjal nas | sgyu ma lta bu'i chos gnan gsung | lan bzhi pa'i dus na | zla ba grags pa dang mjal nas | lha mo 'od zer can gyi sgrub thabs gsungs | lan lnga pa'i dus na ma tang gi dang mjal nas don zhags gnan gsung | lan drug pa la dom bhi pa dang mjal nas | rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug dpal ldan bir wa pa'i lam 'bras kyi gdams ngag rnams gnan gsungs | der ras chung pas rje btsun chen pos rdzu 'phrul gyis byon pa lags sam | dngos su byon la <pa> lags zhus pas | mi la'i zhal nas de ci yin 'o na yang khyod rang gang dga' ba byas pas chog pa mi 'dug gam gsung |*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 3. *mi la la na re bla ma mi las mang gung bar du rku jag 'ga' re byas zer te de ni blun gtam yin |*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 29. *yang mi blun pa la la smyo gtam la la bla ma rje btsun chen pos mang gung bar du ar jag byas zer ba yang yod par 'dug ste | de bsod zad kyi smyo gtam yin no | rje btsun gyis <gyi> yab grongs dus na lo gsum dang zla ba bzhi pa yin de nas yum gyi rtsar lo bdun gyi bar bzhugs | dge bshes rtswa <tsa> pa'i drung du lo bdun bzhugs | yang yum rtsar lo gsum bzhugs | lo bco brgyad pa la rta nag dang yar lungs su byon nas mthu mdzad tsho lo brgyad bzhugs | 'dre ston lha dga' dang gzhan bla ma rnams kyi drung du lo gcig bzhugs | lho brag na lo dgu bzhugs | gzhung na lo gcig lhag tsam bzhugs | de nas tsawa na dgun gcig bzhugs | de nas brag dkar na lo bcu gnyis bzhugs | dgung lo lnga bcu nas 'gro don mdzad nas | brgyad bcu rtsa bzhi la dag pa chos kyi dbyings su gshegs pa yin no |*

Mi la rode on the rear of his horse, but people who say that are crazy. What would be the point of crossing the Bong River to go south from Chu mig dngul bum? One would need to cross the Ra River (Ra chu). Those who tell crazy stories without checking them even once are laughable.<sup>41</sup>

Another interesting point of contention Zhi byed ri pa wrestles with is the question of Mi la ras pa's sexual activity. In one instance he records an exchange between the yogin and his disciple 'Bri sgom ras pa:

'Bri sgom ras pa said to the Rje btsun, "People say that Lord Mar pa's wife Lady Bdag med ma and Lama Rngog gzhung pa's lady gave the maṇḍalas of their bodies to the Rje btsun. Is that true or not?"

The Rje btsun replied, "The talk of bad people and the whirlwinds of spring have no stable point of reference. If you have such thoughts about me, you'll bring about the *dākinīs'* punishment."<sup>42</sup>

Zhi byed ri pa comments on this directly, arguing against what appears to have circulated as part of an oral tradition:

Some people ask, "Did Lady Bdag med ma give her body to Mi la ras pa?" but such conjecture is foolish talk. When Rje btsun Mi la was fifty-three he had the powerful lady of [long] life and so forth, emanation heroines, for physical consorts (*phyag rgya rten*). Did he rely upon any human women prior to that time? He said that up to that point he was untainted by sexual activity.<sup>43</sup>

Zhi byed ri pa also comments on Mi la's physical appearance, near the end of the text while describing the visualization for ritual practices commemorating the yogin's life. It is an unflattering portrait, at odds with the pious iconography that would become standard following Gtsang smyon Heruka's work:

Yearly offerings should be made on the fourteenth day of the waxing period of the horse month. If you wish to visualize him in meditation: On a squarish body, not really tall, he has a round face with a flat nose, narrow eyes, bloodshot and glistening. His hair goes

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 30. *bla ma ba ri lo tsha ba'i drung du yang rje btsun mi la ras pas dpal rdo rje sems dpa'i sgrub thabs man ngag dang bcas pa zhus | yang mi thams cad kyi smyo gtam la | khyi'u chung zhi ba 'od kyi <kyis> bong chu brgal ba la | rje btsun mi las rta 'phangs g.yar zer ba ni | mi tsho smyo ba yin no | chu mig dngul bum nas shar rtogs su 'gro ba la bong chu brgal don ci yod | ra chu brgal dgos pa lags so | btag zhig ma byas pa'i smyo gtam byed pa dgod bro bar 'dug go |.*

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 33. *yang rje btsun gyi drung na 'bri sgom ras pa mi rnams na re | rje mar pa'i jo mo yum bdag med ma dang | bla ma rngog gzhung pa'i jo mo dang | de bas rje btsun la sku lus kyi dkyil 'khor gnang ba yin zer ba yang 'dug ste | de 'dra bden nam mi bden lags zhus pas | rje btsun gyi zhal nas mi ngan pa'i kha dang | nam zla dpyid ka'i rlung tshub la gtad sa med pa yin | nga la de 'dra'i sems yod na mkha' 'gro ma'i bka' chad yong gsung |.*

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 7. *yang la la na re yum bdag med mas mi la ras pa la sku lus gnang ngam zer ba yang 'dug ste | de'i tshod kyi blun skad yin no | rje btsun mi las dngul lo lnga cu rtsa gsum pa'i dus na | sprul pa'i dpa' mo tsho'i dbang phyug ma la sogs pa phyag rgya rten gda' | de man chad mi'i bud med kyang brten nam | sngar yan chod grong chos kyi ma gos gsungs so |.*

straight up and back from his hairline. His teeth, from corner to corner, are even and bluish-white. There are moles half the size of beans on the left and right sides of his face. His hair is brown on yellowing-black [?]. His flesh is dark green but with a ruddy complexion. Since this description is genuine, anyone who adds or takes away anything in an improper manner, or does anything falsely without basis in tradition, will have his bloody heart torn out by Mahākāla with his iron chopper.<sup>44</sup>

The final line of this passage seems to elevate the proper recording of historical detail to the level of *samaya*, a sacred commitment whose transgression will entail the wrathful punishment of the dharma protectors.

Finally, Zhi bye ri pa devotes a good portion of his text to recording various transmission lineages, frequently instruction cycles that originate with the Bka' brgyud founders and culminate in the author himself. As we have seen, he is even careful to record the lineage through which he received the transmission of Mi la ras pa's life story itself. The story thus also serves in part as autobiography, recording its subject's life while simultaneously documenting the author's own credentials as biographer.

Among the rare pieces of information Zhi byed ri pa records is a transmission history of the songs and stories that Mi la sang in his early years.<sup>45</sup> These were not the songs of realization (*mgur*) for which the yogin became famous later in his life, but the traditional Tibetan tunes he learned in his youth. After surveying the subject and titles for many of these stories and songs, Zhi byed ri pa describes the transmission lineage for the song books (*glu yig*) that transcribe either the titles or perhaps the songs themselves. These texts appear to have circulated widely among the masters of the early Bka' brgyud lineage, and continued to be passed down in the period leading up to Zhi byed ri pa's writing. Regarding their transmission, Zhi byed ri pa states:

An old woman from Lcags yul living in Lho brag had his song books (*glu yig*) and she offered them to Rje btsun Ras chung pa rdo rje grags pa. He gave them to Lord Khyung tshang pa, who gave them to Ma cig ong jo, Mar ston tshul 'byung, and Star sgom Zhig po. All three of them gave them to Dharma Lord Zhang pañ chen, who gave them to Dhara shri, who gave them to 'Gro mgon Bsod rgyal, Drin can ras ma, and Dharma Lord Bde legs rin chen. The two relatives (*ne dbon*) gave them to Lama Gzi brjid rgyal mtshan, who gave them to Lama

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 44. *dus kyi mchod pa byed na | rta pa zla ba'i yar tshes bcu bzhi la yin no | mngon rtogs sgom par 'dod na | sku lus gru bzhi la sku bong ring rgyu tsam med la | zhal ras khyil le shangs leb leb | spyan dkyus phra se ba la spyan rtsa dmar chil le ba | dbu'i skra mtsham yar la zhur bag tsam yod pa | tshems zur dum sngo rtsal dkar se ba | zhal gyi g.yas g.yon steng na sme ba sran ma phyed tsam yod pa | dbu skra ra tsa pa khrin bu se le ba nag la smug pa | sku sha sngo smug la dmar ba'i mdangs chags pa | 'di rnams gsung lhad med yin pas da man chad yi ge la phri bsnan la sogs dang | tshul ma yin pa'i dbe rkun nam | bka' lung med pa gnyid chod dang gzu lims sam | ma rabs pa'i bya ba byas na dpal ma hā kā la gri gug lcam dral 'khor bcas kyiis snying khrag thon cig |*

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 50. *thog mar mi la thos pa dgas | glu sgrungs blang pa'i lo rgyus.*

Skye mchog chen po Maṇipa, who gave them to [me] the Śākya *bhikṣu* Zhi byed ri khrod pa.

'Gro mgon Rtsang pa rgya ras pa, Dharma Lord Rgod tshang pa, and Dharma Lord Lo ras pa, all three masters, found them in Lho brag and gave them to the accomplished master Me long rdo rje. [They then passed to] his son Blo ldan seng ge, the accomplished master O rgyan pa, and Dbu mdzad Bkra shis dpal. There is also a lineage from them.

Lord Khyung tshang pa gave them to Khams pa Dar ma dpal, who then gave them to 'Dul dkar ba bla ma Ro bhe ba. Lord Khyung tshang pa also gave them to Rje btsun Mnga' rigs pa Ye shes grags, who gave them to Zhig po rdo rje, who gave them to Rog rab 'od zer, who gave them to the accomplished master O rgyan pa, who gave them to Dharma Lord Kun dga' don grub, who gave them to Lord La stod pa, Mkhas btsun Bsod 'od, and Lama Zla seng.

At first, I considered such things unimportant and so did not pursue them. Later, Gzi brjid rgyal mtshan, Lama Skyes mchog chen Maṇipa, and Lord La stod pa, the scholar-adept, said that they were indispensable for [writing] Mi la ras chen's biography. I then eagerly received [the transmissions] from them.

[In another lineage, the transmission passed through] Rje btsun Ras chung pa, Dwags po lha rje pa, Dags po sgom tshul, and Zhang g.yu brag, who gave them to both Rtogs ldan Jo gdan rin ring and Glorious Phag mo gru pa Rdo rje rgyal po. Dharma Lord 'Bri lung pa requested them from both of these masters and passed them to Dbon rin po che, Rin sing pa, Ratnaśrī, and Lama Bsam gtan byang chub. Lama Skye mchog Maṇipa requested them from both of these masters, and he gave them to [me] Zhi byed ri khrod pa.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 50. *khyung pa mi la thos pa dga' l de'i glu yig rnams lho brag na bzhugs pa lcags yul ba rgan mo cig la 'dug pa l rje btsun ras chung pa rdo rje grags pa la phul bar 'dug l des rje khyung tshang pa l des ma cig 'ong co dang l mar ston tshul 'byung dang l star sgom zhig po dang gsum khar la gnang l de gsum kas chos rje zhang pañ chen la l des dha ra shri la l des 'gro mgon bsod rgyal drin can ras ma chos rje bde legs rin chen l de dbon gnyis kas bla ma gzi brjid rgyal mtshan l bla ma skyes mchog chen po ma ni pa l shākya'i dge slong zhi byed ri khrod pa l lho brag na 'gro mgon rtsang pa rgya ras pa dang l chos rje rgod tshang pa dang l chos rje lo ras pa dang l slob dpon gsum kas rnyed nas grub thob me long rdo rje dang sras blo ldan seng ge dang l grub thob o rgyan pa dang l dbu mdzad bkra shis dpal dang l de nas rim gyi rgyud pa cig kyang 'dug l rje khyung tshang pas khams pa dar ma dpal l des 'dul dkar ba bla ma ro bhe ba l yang rje khung tshang pa l rje btsun mnga' rigs pa ye shes grags des zhig po rdo rje dpal l des rog rab 'od zer l des grub thob u rgyan pa l des chos rje kun dga' don grub l des rje la stod pa dang l mkhas btsun bsod 'od dang l bla ma zla seng dang l de rnams la gnang bar 'dub ste l dang po bdag gi ni de 'dra la dgos pa med bsam nas don du ma gnyer ba lags te l dus phyis bla ma gzi brjid rgyal mtshan pa dang l bla ma skyes mchog chen ma ni ba l rje la stod pa mkhas grub chen po de dang l khong rnam pa'i zhal nas rje btsun mi la ras chen gyi rnam thar la l de rnams med thabs med thabs med pa yin gsung nas l der dang du blangs pa yin no l yang rje btsun ras chung pa l dags pol ha rje pa l dags po sgom tshul l zhang g.yu brag pa l des rtogs ldan jo gdan rin ring dang l dpal phag mo grub <gru> pa rdo rje rgyal po dang l gnyis ka la gnang l de gnyis ka'i drung du chos rje 'bri lung pas zhus l de nas dbon rin po che l rin sing pa l rad na shi ri l bla ma bsam gtan byang chub pa dang gnyis ka'i drung du l bla ma skyes mchog rin chen po ma ni bas zhus l des zhi byed ri khrod pa la gnang ngo l .*

Here, it is not only religious instructions that require a record of transmission. Even the catalogue of folk songs *Mi la ras pa* is said to have sung as young child rises to the level of sacred literature, “indispensable” for the accurate documentation of the yogin’s life story.

### V. Reflections on History, Biography, and Historical Biography

I would like to conclude here with a few brief remarks on how Zhi byed ri pa might have located his own work vis-à-vis the corpus of *Mi la ras pa*’s biographical tradition, and perhaps the genre of *rnam thar* more generally. To reiterate the preceding discussion, the *Illuminating Lamp* does not follow the narrative conventions witnessed in other examples of life writing produced around the same time.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, Zhi byed ri pa’s text clearly emphasizes unvarnished documentation over crafted narrative exposition, so that it reads more like a collection of discrete historical notes than a life story per se. This raises several questions: Is Zhi byed ri pa’s departure in style and approach meaningful—that is, does it represent a conscious effort to reimagine the function of *rnam thar*, at least within *Mi la ras pa*’s biographical tradition? And if so, what can it tell us about the way that Tibetan authors such as Zhi byed ri pa use certain Tibetan terms for marking particular forms of literature?

To start, I would like to suggest that the unusual features of Zhi byed ri pa’s text indeed point to a unique approach to life writing, one that deviates from that found in, say, *Mi la ras pa*’s biographical compendia or in the well-known standard version. In some respects, the author’s emphasis on the myriad details and general disinterest for the literary craft of story telling reflect the form of proto-*rnam mgur* described earlier. As noted above, one portion of the *Illuminating Lamp* follows the model of such works, copying the structure of other proto-*rnam mgur*. However, such texts usually form part of a combined lineage record, recording a single bead in the string of a so-called golden rosary (*gser ’phreng*) of lineage masters. Zhi byed ri pa’s work is instead a long autonomous text constituting a meta-reflection on the biographical tradition itself. The *Illuminating Lamp* is less a biography than a critique, clarification, and correction of *Mi la ras pa*’s extant biographical record. Where biography may serve a variety of programmatic agendas—legitimizing an important founding figure, authorizing a lineage of doctrinal instructions, or even inspiring followers to practice the path of liberation—the *Illuminating Lamp* is meant primarily to “get the facts straight” (at least as the author sees them) and to provide his credentials for doing so. It thus diverges significantly from other proto-*rnam mgur* works in terms of both form and function.

To consider the second question, how Zhi byed ri pa defines his own text, we need to return to the descriptive terms mentioned earlier: *rnam thar lo*

<sup>47</sup> In addition to comprehensive versions of the yogin’s life story such as *The Twelve Great Disciples* and various forms of the so-called *The Black Treasury*, mention might also be made of the extended narrative by the second Zhwa dmar Mkha’ mchod dbang po (1350-1405), Zhi byed ri pa’s contemporary.



*rgyus*, which I have chosen to translate in this context as “historical biography.” As noted in the introduction, I do not want to generalize too broadly about the intended meaning of either *lo rgyus* or *rnam thar lo rgyus*. It remains to be seen how such compound genre designations function in other literary works and during other periods.<sup>48</sup> But in this text at least, it seems clear that Zhi byed ri pa uses the term in order to affirm the veracity and legitimacy of his account vis-à-vis the rest of Mi la ras pa’s biographical tradition.

For brevity’s sake, a single episode from the life story should suffice to foreground Zhi byed ri pa’s position: Mi la ras pa’s loss of patrimony in his youth at the hands of his paternal relatives, an event discussed above. In Gtsang smyon Heruka’s standard version, this scene forms an emotional turningpoint in the story crafted for maximum dramatic effect. But as characters, the aunt and uncle seem formulaic; in Gtsang smyon’s words the pair were simply “reconciled in their greed.” Their rapaciousness is more a textbook model for the workings of *kleśas* than the product of genuine human interaction. Indeed, the entire scene appears to serve a single narrative conceit: to propel the yogin-to-be along a new path, first in the direction of black magic, and ultimately toward his guru Marpa. The yogin’s later career can then be understood retrospectively as a model for escaping the misery of *samsāra* through the purification of negative karma. Gtsang smyon Heruka has effectively “fictionalized” the account of Mi la ras pa’s life, stretching what may have been known about the yogin’s childhood in order to craft a more elegant—and expedient—narrative.

For Zhi byed ri pa, however, this period of the yogin’s life serves neither as a morality tale nor a metaphor for the workings of karma. There is no sense of the author “stretching the truth” as a function of either literary prowess or skillful means. Rather, the *Illuminating Lamp* forms an elaborate and exacting accounting of social and marital relations, describing their effects on a female actor (the mother) who disregards prevailing social norms. The author, in short, appears more concerned with documenting the cause of Mi la ras pa’s misfortune than with establishing a coherent narrative arc. Where Gtsang smyon Heruka’s version (the *rnam thar*) forms an evocative tale, Zhi byed ri pa’s account (the *rnam thar lo rgyus*) is a historian’s reckoning. The relationship between *rnam thar* and *rnam thar lo rgyus*, in this case at least, seems close to that posited elsewhere between biography (*rnam thar*) and religious history (*chos ’byung*), with each serving different, but complementary, aims.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup> For a useful study of genre terminology used in the titles of Tibetan texts, see Almogi 2005. I agree with her call to pay close attention to the various contexts in which descriptive genre terms can appear: title page, text body, colophon, printer’s colophon, marginalia, etc. It is not uncommon for a text to have multiple designations in various locations. One well-known example, perhaps relevant here, is the early-twelfth-century *Lives of the Eighty-Four Siddhas* (*Grub thob rgya bcu rtsa bzhi’i lo rgyus*, *Caturśītisiddhapravṛtti*), designated a *rnam thar* in the title page and a *lo rgyus* in the colophon.

<sup>49</sup> See Decler 1992, who argues that religious history (*chos ’byung*) is primarily “a concern for scholars” interested in the details of lineage transmission, translation, and so forth. Biography (*rnam thar*), on the other hand, “directly evokes, [and] by glimpses ‘shows us the Mystery’” (23). The latter seems particularly apt in describing the standard version of Mi la ras pa’s life.

The work of later Tibetan authors bears this relationship out. In some situations, scholars drew upon the *Illuminating Lamp* as a principal source for their record of Mi la ras pa's life. This was the case for later historians, who clearly viewed Zhi byed ri pa's extensive research (the *rnam thar lo rgyus*) as a superior source as they incorporated details from the *Illuminating Lamp* into their accounts. Yet as a proper liberation tale—that is, a model of the religious life and a blueprint for progress on the path toward Buddhahood—the Tibetan world has ubiquitously turned instead to Gtsang smyon Heruka's standard version. For a general audience, readers valued the dramatic power of a simpler cohesive story (the *rnam thar*), which rejected and perhaps even contradicted many of Zhi byed ri pa's claims.

We might reasonably wonder how Tibetan authors, and their readers, reconciled the contradictions apparent in these two approaches to Mi la ras pa's life. The solution lay in a form of liberal hermeneutics that recognizes and accepts the diversity of written lives. In describing the biographical tradition of Padmasambhava, for example, Padma dkar po suggests that all versions of the life story—descriptions both of the master's birth from a human mother and of his miraculous emergence from the center of a lotus—should be understood as being equally valid and true.<sup>50</sup> In a remark that seems to anticipate Padma dkar po's sentiments several centuries later, Zhi byed ri pa describes his own sources in this way: "Throughout their writing a few things may seem in error and there may seem to be minor variations. However, we can not know for certain an accomplished master's sphere of activity, so from here on [the story] should not be altered by intellectuals or its blessings will be corrupted."<sup>51</sup> It is not implausible that Padma dkar po's comments were in fact influenced by his reading of Zhi byed ri pa's work.

Zhi byed ri pa thus argues for as inclusive an editorial standard as possible, even as he positions his composition as *the* authentic record of Mi la ras pa's life, incontrovertible by virtue of its definitive sources. Although Gtsang smyon Heruka's *Life of Milarepa* largely eclipsed the *Illuminating Lamp*, later readers seem to have understood and accepted the blurred boundaries between the biographer's and the historian's project. As the meaning of genre terms may shift according to an author's particular aims, our understanding of such terms should be informed by a close reading of them within their specific textual frames. It is hoped that a more nuanced understanding of how Tibetan authors located their work within a given literary context, and the terms they used to do so, will help bring such blurred boundaries into sharper focus.

<sup>50</sup> Padma dkar po's comments appear in the famous pilgrimage guide to the Kathmandu Valley by the fourth Khams sprul Bstan 'dzin chos kyi nyi ma (1730-1780). See Macdonald 1975, 119 (29a of the Tibetan text). These two descriptions of Padmasambhava's birth are further discussed in Blondeau 1980

<sup>51</sup> Zhi byed ri pa, NDO, 44. See Appendix 1.

**Appendix 1: Colophon and End Matter***Translation*

[On developing the intention to compose]

[41] I have seen in detail what are definitely the instructions taught by Lama Mi la ras pa himself and the extraordinary sayings including those of the great son Ras chung Rdo rje grags. In general I, Zhi byed ri khrod pa, in my wanderings around the snowy land of Tibet, have seen and heard the Buddha's teachings to the extent they have been translated: sūtras, tantras, oral transmissions, and instructions. In particular, [these include instructions on] Pacification (*zhi byed*) to the extent that they exist in the world, the dharma cycles of the lord gurus of the 'Khon Sa skya pa in their entirety, and the instructions of the supreme individual Mar pa Lotsāwa in their entirety. It has been the fortunate karma of this Śākya *bhikṣu* Zhi byed ri khrod pa to make unprejudiced supplications to [the masters of] those oral transmissions and others. In particular, I hold the transmission of Lama Mi la ras pa's teaching tradition exactly as it is. There is nothing more than what I myself [possess]. . . .

In general, I have seen and heard the Buddha's teachings to the extent they have been translated in India, China, and Tibet—sūtras, tantras, oral transmissions, and instructions. At the center of my practice, I received in their entirety the Path and Fruition (*lam 'bras*) and Pacification (*zhi byed*), the ritual practices of Lord Kha rag sgom chung,<sup>52</sup> and the instruction cycles of the supreme individual Lho brag pa. I have seen some 127 written versions of the Life and Songs (*rnam mgur*) of the powerful lord Mi la ras chen. With the hope that I would realize them, it has been the fortunate karma of the Śākya *bhikṣu* G.yung ston Zhi byed ri pa to renounce this life and to spend it wandering in mountain retreats. Therefore, my own attitude and that of individuals who aspire for this life are in fundamental discord. I intended to make this biography of the great Lama Rje btsun more extensive than it is, but for fear of excess verbiage, I have left it at just this.

Many years before my present age, the Dharma Lord Rin chen dpal ldan<sup>53</sup> gave advice at Glang 'kor, and I repeatedly visited Mkhan chen Dbang phyug shes rab of La shing,<sup>54</sup> emanation of Ārya Avalokiteśvara. I repeatedly requested teachings from Gzi brjid rgyal mtshan, versed in the meaning of the aural tantras and who has the distinction of being learned, disciplined, and noble. I repeatedly visited the lama, powerful lord of hermits, the great supreme being Maṇipa and received advice. Furthermore, I was urged by mountain hermits (*ri pa*) of the three regions. In particular,

<sup>52</sup> This appears to be the Bka' gdams pa master Kha rag sgom chung Dbang phyug blo gros (b. 11th century).

<sup>53</sup> This is perhaps Dpal ldan rin chen (b. 14th century), a Sa skya master and guru of Maṇi pa Legs pa rgyal mtshan.

<sup>54</sup> This likely refers to a disciple of Gzi brjid rgyal mtshan, noted in the TBRC database (P10547), which would identify him as a teacher within the Ras chung snyan brgyud tradition. It might also be Mkhan chen gtsang pa Dbang phyug shes rab who is listed as a disciple of Chag Lotsāwa Chos rje dpal in the TBRC database (PORK1575). He does not appear to be the individual noted in the *Deb gter sngon po* as the long-time abbot of Rte'u ra Monastery, or the abbot of Tshogs pa bya rdzong. See Roerich 1949, 1059, 1072.

the great Ti shri Rin chen grags pa and Go shri Cho lo official, the emanation body Lama Kun dga' rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po said he renounced the world and wandered among great sacred sites and mountain retreats and then came down from Gangs Ti se to 'Brog La phyi; he also resided at Ri bo rtse Inga in China. Then at Dpal Ding ri Glang skor he took my hand in his and said, "From Gangs Ti se to Ri bo rtse Inga in China, there is no one with a greater knowledge of Lama Rje btsun Mi la ras chen's life story and history than you. Therefore, you should set down an extensive biographical record (*yig cha rnam thar*) about him." Thus he urged me with great insistence.

Then at a later time, *bhikṣu* Byang skyabs, on his way to make offerings at the *dharmacakra* of Swayambhū, presented me with a footprint of the authentic lama Dharma Lord Bsod nams rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po from Dbus, [42] and a letter from lama Kun rgyal ba himself. At that time, as well, he urged me with great insistence.

The powerful lord of hermits, Lama Byang sems Sangs rgyas dpal, resident at the seat of the Glorious Heruka's Palace in Sman lung Chu dbar also put me in charge [of such a project]. The master Ta'i Si tu Byang rgyal further entreated me [to do so], three times presented letters together with sacred supports. Many encouraged me in addition, and eventually I wrote this biography recollecting the kindness of Lord Rje btsun Mi la ras chen.

In general, I have seen some 127 different attempts at the biography of Mid la ras chen. In particular, I have made [my version] taking as a basis the accounts of (1) Lord Khyung tshang pa Jñānaguru; and (2) the Dharma Lord Zhang Lotsāwa Grub pa dpal bzang who is unmistaken in his knowledge of the five sciences. Throughout their writings a few things may seem in error and there may seem to be minor variations. However, we can not know for certain an accomplished master's sphere of activity, so from here on [the story] should not be altered by intellectuals or its blessings will be corrupted. There is no doubt that poetry and prose compositions that are not the sayings of previous [masters] have corrupted blessings.

[On the text's composition]

[45] . . . This historical biography of the precious lama, the supreme individual, the Glorious Bzhad pa rdo rje called Mid la ras chen, powerful lord of yogins free from all opponents who is like the second buddha, is titled *An Illuminating Lamp of Sun and Moon Beams*. It has come about in a female water-ox year, 269 years after the Great Rje btsun's passing into nirvāṇa. . . . The Śākya *bhikṣu* G.yung ston Zhi byed ri khrod pa has put this into words on the eighth day of the horse month of the female water-ox year (1373), in the Gra'i rtse mo ngang hermitage of Mang yul Skyid grong, abode of Ārya Avalokiteśvara Wati bzang po.

[Second colophon]

[46] . . . First, 269 years after the Great Rje btsun died, I put into words both an extensive and abbreviated *Sun and Moon Beams* in the Rtse mo ngang pa hermitage of Mnga' ris Mang yul Skyid grong. Then, 277 years after the Great Rje btsun died [i.e., eight years later], I [met] (1) Lama Ri khrod pa ,

the vajra holder Bsod nams rin chen who resided at Lama Mid la ras pa's seat at the great sacred site called Heruka's Palace of Sman lung Chu dbar; and (2) the kind lama, powerful lord of hermits endowed with supreme realization, the authentic being known as Rin chen gzhon nu.<sup>55</sup> They carried out their intentions with utter purity, and in this way I was encouraged by the hermits of the three sacred sites. In particular, I was rendered assistance by Bsod nams mgon po, a dharma protecting minister for the one called Ta'i Si tu Chos kyi rin chen, an official endowed with faith toward the noble three jewels and a *bhikṣu's* attitude of enlightenment. Maintaining a totally pure mind stream focused on the happiness of beings, he encouraged me with great earnestness. Then, based upon the completely pure [attitude of enlightenment in its two modes of] aspiration and application, I expanded upon my previous [composition] a little bit. . . .

To summarize all of this: Wherever Lama Mid la ras chen's feet trod and whatever he said during the course of his entire life, I G.yung ston Zhi byed ri khrod pa have been able to put into words without leaving out so much as a hair's tip.

*Tibetan Text*

[41] bla ma mid la ras pa rang gi zhal nas gsung nges pa dang/ bu chen ras chung rdo rje grags pa la sogs pa rnams kyi gsung sgros khyad par can rnams 'phra <phra> zhib tu mthong ba dang/ spyir yang zhi byed ri khrod pa bdag gis/ bod gangs can khrod na 'gyur tshad kyi bka' mdo rgyud dang/ lung man ngag rnams phal cher mthong zhing/ thos pa dang/ khyad par du zhi byed ni sa steng du 'gyur tshad dang/ rje bla ma 'khon sa skya ba'i chos skor rnams yongs su rdzogs pa dang/ skyes mchog mar pa lo ts.tsha ba'i gdams ngag rnams yongs su rdzogs pa dang/ de la sogs pa'i bka' brgyud rnams la phyogs ris med par gsol ba 'debs pa no/ shākya'i dge slong zhi byed ri khrod pa bdag gi las skal yin pa dang/ khyad par du bla ma mid la ras pa 'di'i bka' srol gyi brgyud pa ji lta ba bzhin du 'dzin pa ni/ kho bo rang tsam mang po yang mi 'dug go/ . . . spyir yang rgya dkar nag bod gsum na 'gyur tshad kyi bka' mdo rgyud dang/ lung man ngag rnams phal cher kho bos mthongs zhing thos pa dang/ rang gi nyams len gyi mthil la lam 'bras dang zhi byed dang/ rje kha rag sgom chung ba'i phyag len dang/ skyes mchog lho brag pa'i gdam bskor rnams yongs su rdzogs par thob cing/ shākya'i dge slong g.yung ston zhi byed ri khrod pa nga'i las skal ni/ tshe 'di blo btang nas mi tshe ri khrod la skyal ba de rang yin pas na/ gang zag tshe 'dir don du gnyer ba rnams dang/ nga'i blo sna rtsa ba nas mthun sa rang med do/ bla ma rje btsun chen po'i rnam thar 'di la/ 'di las [thams] cad las rgyas pa cig byed bsam pa yin na'ang/ yi ge mangs pas 'jigs nas 'di tsam la bzhag pa yin no/ 'di ni da lta'i lo grangs mang rab kyi

<sup>55</sup> Rin chen gzhon nu (b. 1333) was a 'Bri gung meditator who spent some thirty years in retreat at Kailāsa and Chu bar. For a brief biography, see Roerich 1949, 730-1; and Grags pa 'byung gnas and Blo bzang mkhas grub, MD, 1608. This figure is likely identical to Rdor 'dzin Gzhon nu rin chen, mentioned in Bstan 'dzin Chos kyi blo gro's guide to La phyi and Chu bar (LNY, 37). *Rdor 'dzin* is a term referring to religious administrators in both Kailāsa and La phyi/Chu bar affiliated with the 'Bri gung institution. On the *rdor 'dzin* see Petech 1978.

gong nas chos rje rin chen dpal ldan glang 'khor ba'i drung nas kyang zhal ta gnang ba dang/ 'phags pa spyan ras gzigs kyi sprul pa rhe la shing gi mkhan chen dbang phyug shes rab pa'i drung nas kyang yang yang byon pa dang/ bla ma mkhas btsun bzang gsum dang ldan pa'i khyad par yang snyan rgyud kyi don la sbyangs pa'i gzi brjid rgyal mtshan pa'i gsung gis kyang yang yang du bskul ba dang bla ma rin khrod kyi dbang phyug skyes mchog chen po ma ñi pa'i drung nas kyang/ zhal ta yang yang byon pa dang/ gzhan yang sa gsum gyi ri pa rnams kyis yang bskul ba dang/ khyad par du yang ti shri chen po rin chen grags pa dang/ go shri chos blo'i dbon po <cho lo'i dpon po?>sprul pa'i sku bla ba kun dga' rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po des 'jig rten blos btang nas gnas chen dang ri khrod 'grims nas gangs ti se nas mar byon na 'brog la phyi na tshur la byon te/ rgya nag ri bo rtse lnga la bzhugs pa yin gsungs nas dpal ding ri glang 'khor du khong gi phyag gis nga'i lag pa la bsung nas/ bla ma rje btsun mid la ras chen gyi rnam thar lo rgyus la/ khyed las rgyus che ba ni gangs ti se man chad/ rgya nag ni bo rtse lnga pa yan chad na mi 'dug pas 'di la yig cha rnam thar rgyas pa cig khyed shes [?] gsung nan cher mdzad pa dang/ yang dus phyis dbus nas kyang bla ma dam pa chos rje [42] bsod nams rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i zhabs rhes gcig dang/ bla ma kun rgyal ba rang gi gsung shog cig dang/ dge slong byang skyabs 'phags pa shing kun gyi chos 'khor 'bul du yong pa la bskur byung nas de dus kyang gsung nan chen po mdzad 'dug pa dang/ dpal he ru ka'i pho brang sman lung chu dbar gyi gdan sa pa/ bla ma ri khrod kyi dbang phyug byang sems sangs rgyas dpal gyis yang do dam cher mdzad pa dang/ slob dpon ta'i si tu byang rgyal bas kyang gsung shog rten dang bcas pa thebs gsum bskur byung ba dang/ gzhan yang mang rab kyi <kyis> skul cing/ lar yang rje btsun mi la ras chen 'di'i sku drin dran nas/ rnam thar 'di byas pa yin cing/ spyir mid la ras chen gyi rnam thar la mdzad pa mi cig pa brgya dang nyi shu rtsa bdun tsam mthong ba dang/ khyad par du rje khyung tshang ba dznya na gu ru dang/ lnga rig shes bya'i gnas la ma rmongs pa/ chos rje zhang lo tsā ba grub pa dpal bsang po dang/ de rnams kyi gsung sgros la gzhi blangs nas byas pa lags cing/ tshig la gong 'og nor ba 'dra ba dang 'dra min dum re snang ste/ grub thob kyi spyod yul la nges pa med pa lags pas/ da man chad rtog ge pas ma bcos cig/ byin rlabs nyams pa yin no/ gong ma rnams kyi gsung sgros ma yin pa'i snyan ngag dang sdeb tshig ni byin rlabs nyams dogs ma byas pa yin no/

[45] . . . bla ma rin po che skyes mchog mid la ras chen zhes bya ba'i dpal ldan bzhad pa'i rdo rje rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug rtsod zla thams cad bral ba/ sangs rgyas gnyis pa lta bu'i lo rgyus rnam par thar pa/ gsal byed nyi zla'i 'od zer gyi sgron ma zhe bya ba 'di no/ rje btsun chen po mya ngan las 'das nas lo grangs gnyis brgya dang drug cu rtsa dgu/ chu mo glang gi lo 'dis 'gro bar 'dug cing/ . . . shākya'i dge slong g.yung ston zhi byed ri khrod pas 'phags pa spyan ras gzigs wa ti bzang po'i bzhugs gnas mang yul skyid grong gra'i rtse mo ngang pa'i ri khrod du/ chu mo glang lo rta pa zla ba'i yar tshes brgyad kyi nyin mo nas/ yi ger bkod pa'i dge bas . . .

[46] dang po rje btsun chen po grongs nas lo nyis brgya dang drug bcu rtsa dgu zong ba'i dus na nyi zla 'od zer ma rgyas bsodus gnyis/ mnga' ris mang yul skyid grong gi rtse mo ngang pa'i ri khrod du yi ger bkod pa yin la/

yang rhe btsun chen po grongs nas nyis brgya dang bdun cu rtsa bdun song dus na/ he ru ka'i pho brang sman lung chu dbar zhes bya ba'i gnas mchog chen po/ bla ma mid la ras pa'i gdan sa yi/ bla ma ri khrod pa rdo rje 'dzin pa bsod nams cin chen pa dang/ de'i <de?> yang sku drin can gyi bla ma ri khrod kyi dbang phyug rtogs pa mchog du gyur pa dang ldan pa'i mtshan rin chen gzhon nur grags pa'i skyes bu dam pa des kyang/ thugs dgongs yongs su dag par mdzad pa dang/ de bzhin du gnas gsum gyi ri pa rnam kyis drag du bskul ba dang/ khyad par du yang rigs rgyud can ta'i si tu chos kyi rin chen zhes bya ba/ 'phags pa dkon mchog gsum la gus pa dang ldan pa de'i chos skyong ba'i blon po rin po che lta bu'i dge slong gi byang sems dang ldan pa'i dpon bsod nams mgon pos kyang brtan pa'i zhabs tog dang/ sems can gyi bde skyid la rgyud dkar po yongs su dag pa bzung nas/ 'bad pa chen pos bskul zhing/ smon 'jug gi rnam par dkar ba la brten nas sngar bas kyang cung zad rgyas su btang ba yin la/ . . . da ni don hril gyis dril na/ bla ma mid la ras chen gyi sku tshe gang la/ zhabs kyi gom pa gang du byon pa dang/ gsung tshig gang du byon pa rnam la/ lhag lus skra'i rtse mo tsam cig kyang ma lus par g.yung ston zhi byed ri khrod pa bdag gis yi ger bkod nus pa yod do/.

### **Appendix 2: Zhi byed ri pa's Transmission Lineages of Mi la ras pa's Teachings**

Yab bka' [tantras]: buddha Vajradhara > Lus med pa > Te lo pa and Nā ro po > Mar pa > Mid la ras pa > Ras chung pa Rdo rje grags > Khyung tshang pa > Mnga' rigs pa Ye shes grags > his son Zhig po rdo rje dpal.

Yum bka' tantras: Khams pa Dar ma dpal > Rje 'dul dkar ba > Mkhas grub Ram bhe pa > Bla chen Rog shes rab 'od gser > Chos rje Nyi seng and Chos rje Brtson seng > Chos rje Thams cad mkhyen pa > Chos rje Kun dga' 'od zer and Kun dga' don grub > Rje La stod pa > Rje Glang skor ba sku mched > bdag Zhi byed ri pa.

One tradition: up to Ras chung pa, same as before > Rgyal ba ten ne (at 80 years old) > Chos rje Thams cad mkhyen pa (at 9 months old) > Kun dga' 'od zer and Kun dga' don grub > La stod pa > Glang 'khor ba sku mched > bdag Zhi byed ri pa.

Lung gi snyan rgyud: up to Mi la, same as before > Ngam rdzong ras pa > Gung thang Ras chung pa > Rgya 'pho ba lung pa > Rje btsun 'Phrang ba > Chos rje Thams cad mkhyen pa > after him is same as before.

Another tradition: up to Khyung tshang pa, same as before > Ma cig ong jo, Mar ston tshul 'byung, and Star sgom zhig po > from all three to Zhang Lotsāwa Grub pa dpal bzang po > Tsho byed dha ra shri > 'Gro mgon Bsod rgyal > Ye shes mkha' 'gro Kun ldan dpal > Chos rje Bya bra ba Bde legs rin chen > Mkhas grub Gzi brjid rgyal mtshan ma > Skyes mchog ri khrod pa dbang phyug Ma ñi ba > bdag Zhi byed ri pa.

Nāro pa'i 'pho ba don gyi grong 'jug, Sems khrid yid bzhin nor bu, and Nā ro sdig brdugs kyi brgyud pa: Vajradhara > Lus med pa > Telopa > Nāropa > Mar pa > Mid la > Dwags po lha rje pa > Ka la dung mtsho ba > Mkhas btsun Dmogs ston pa > bdag Zhi byed ri pa.

Bdag med ma lha mo bco lnga'i brgyud pa: Vajradhara > Nairātmya > Telopa > Nāropa > Mar pa > Rngog Gzhung pa > Rngog Kun dga' gzi brjid > Lho skyid pa Khams pa rin rgyal > Bzhi zhing dhe pa Grags pa shes rab > Rtsang ston Bla ma rgyal mtshan > Brag gdeng pa Rdo rje dpal > Zhang ston Dkon mchog dpal > Zhang ston Mchog ldan > Paṅ chen Tshul khrimś 'od > Chos rje glang 'khor ba sku mched > bdag Zhi byed ri pa.

*Tibetan Text*

bla ma mid la ras pas gsungs pas chos 'di'i rgyud pa ni | sangs rgyas rdo rje 'chang | lus med pa | te lo pa nā ro pa | mar pa | mid la ras pa | ras chung rdo rje grags pa | khyung tshang pa | mnga' rigs pa ye shes grags | sras grub chen zhig po rdo rje dpal | yab bka' yin | yum bka'i rgyud pa ni | khams pa dar ma dpal | rje 'dul dkar pa | mkhas grub ram bhe pa | bla chen rog shes rab 'od zer | des chos rje nyi seng dang | chos rje brtson sens gsnyis ka la gnang | des chos rje thams cad mkhyen pa la gnang | de chos rje kun dga' 'od zer dang | kun dga' don grub la gnang | des rje la stod pa la gnang | des rje glang 'khor ba sku mched la gnang | des bdag zhi byed ri pa la gnang | yang lugs gcig la | ras chung pa yan chad gong dang 'dra | ras chung pas rgyal ba ten ne la sgos skyel mdzad nas gnang bar 'dug ste | gnas lugs kyang | sprul sku jo sras skyabs pa la | ras pa dang dags po lha rje gnyis kas khyed gyi sras 'di la grub thob chen po rnams kyi nang nas khu rgyan cig 'byon par 'dug pas nged khyi yang rgyud pa 'dzin par zhu gsung nas bla ma mid la ras pa'i chos rnams gnang gda' 'o | rje btsun rgyal ba ten ne dgung lo brgya rtsa la nye bar byon dus na | chos rje thams cad mkhyen pa sku 'khrungs nas | zla ba dgu songs ba de la gnang gda' | des chos rke kun dga' 'od zer dang kun dga' don grub la gnang gda' | des la stod pa la | des chos rje glang 'khor ba sku mched pa | des bdag zhi byed ri pa la gnang | yang lugs gcig la mid la yan chad gong dang 'dra | des ngam rdzong ras pa la | des gung thang ras chung pa la | des rgya Æpho ba lung pa la | des rje btsun 'phrang ba la | des chos rje thams cad mkhyen pa la | de man chad sngar dang dra | 'di rnams lung pa'i snyan rgyud yin | yang lugs gcig | khyung tshang pa yan chad gong dang 'dra | des ma cig ong jo dang | mar ston tshul 'byung dang | star sgom zhog po dang gsum ka la gnang | de gsum ka'i zhabs la mnga' rigs zhang lo tstsha ba grub pa dpal bzang pos thug gda' | des tsho byed dha ra śri la | des 'gro mgon bsod rgyal la | des ye shes mkha' 'gro kun ldan [48] dpal la | des chos rje bya bra ba bde legs rin chen la | des mkhas grub gzi brjid rgyal mtshan la | des skyes mchog ri khrod kyi dbang phyug ma ṅi ba la | des bdag zhi byed ri pa la gnang ngo | nā ro pa'i 'pho ba don kyi grong 'jug dang | sems khrid yid bzhin nor bu dang | nā ro sdig brdugs kyi brgyud pa ni | rdo rje 'chang | lus med ma | te lo pa | nā ro pa | mar pa | mid la | dags po lha rje pa | ka la dung mtsho ba | mkhas btsun dmogs ston pa | des bdag zhi byed ri pa la gnang ngo | bdag med ma lha mo bco lnga'i brgyud pa ni | rdo rje 'chang |



bdag med ma | te lo pa | nā ro pa | mar pa | rngog gzhung pa | rngog kun  
dga' gzi brjid | lho skyid pa khams pa rin rgyal | bzhu zhung dhe pa tshul  
khrims 'od | chos rje glang 'khor ba sku mched | des bdag zhi byed ri pa la  
gnang ngo |.

### Appendix 3: Rnam thar Outline

- |       |   |
|-------|---|
| 1.25  | I. rigs dang rus [kyi yon tan gyi gsal byed]            |
| 11.27 | II. chos phyir dka' ba spyad pa'i yon tan gyi gsal byed |
| 11.29 | i. 'khor ba la snying po med par gzigs pa'i yon tan     |
| 12.10 | ii. ting nge 'dzin shar ba'i yon tan                    |
| 12.34 | iii. dka' bas gtum mo bde drod 'phrod pa'i yon tan      |
| 14.33 | iv. zas gos kyi 'dun pa rang grol ba'i yon tan          |
| 17.32 | v. nyams myong bde bar shar ba'i yon tan                |
| 18.3  | vi. rtogs pa lam mkhan du shar ba'i yon tan             |
| 18.12 | vii. snang ba mthun rkyen du shar bai yon tan           |
| 18.17 | viii. nye 'brel chos brgyad rang grol ba'i yon tan      |
| 18.26 | ix. chos brgyad rang grol ba'i yon tan                  |
| 18.31 | x. pha ma'i drin lan gsab pa'i yon tan                  |
| 19.6  | xi. lha'i lha gyur pa'i yon tan                         |
| 19.27 | xii. rtsod pa mi brdzi ba'i yon tan                     |
| 20.4  | xii. ye shes sgron me brtams ba'i yon tan               |
| 20.20 | xiv. spyod pas ches ba'i yon tan                        |
| 20.39 | xv. nus pa che ba'i yon tan                             |
| 21.7  | xvi. byin rlabs che ba'i yon tan                        |
| 21.22 | xvii. ting nge 'dzin gyi rtsal gyi che ba'i yon tan     |

### Appendix 4: Zhi byed ri pa's Record of Mi la ras pa's Early Life

#### Translation

One of the eighteen family lines (*gdung rgyud*) is Be ri. One sub-division of that is Khyung tsha, among which there are both Khyung tsha stod and smad. From among these [Mi la ras pa's] paternal ancestry (*phu bo'i rgyud*) was the Khyuung tsha stod. To a nomad family in that line was born a small child<sup>56</sup> [named] Mid la, afflicted by the ill omen of a *cakra*. [The parents] consulted a Bon po scholar and by giving him the name Mid la chu sel, the ill omen was averted, the small child's body grew larger and he turned out well. He was then given the name Mid la G.yang blon rgyal po, so it is said. His son was Mid la G.yu rung rgyal and in turn his son was Mid la Bkra shis rgyal po. The latter went to La stod Byang and established a home at a distance from Bcung pa'i 'og skyid pa phug.

To him was born a son, Rdo rje rgyal po, who had a naturally pleasant disposition and was well liked among his friends. He lost all of his wealth through gambling at dice. He then befriended a man from Mnga' ris Gung

<sup>56</sup> *Bu chung*, in this case, perhaps premature and hence "underdeveloped."

thang Tsa pa nyang with whom he returned. In Mkhār Sgong thang in Tsa rong of Rgyal Inga yul [2] he was given a niece (*dbon mo*)<sup>57</sup> of Dge bshes Tsa pa Grags pa bsod nams [as a wife] who gave birth to five children: the oldest son was Mid la Rin rgyal, the younger son was Mid la Sher rgyal. The eldest daughter was Sgron skyid, then next was Sgron chung, and then Sgron ne.

Rin rgyal took a maternal cousin (*sru chung*) as his wife<sup>58</sup> and had some six sons and three daughters. [His family] had commissioned many religious objects, including golden statues, extensive, medium-length, and [abbreviated] scriptures, and the *Ratnakūṭa Sūtra*. Many such items in their possession, the extensive, intermediate, and [abbreviated] scriptures foremost among them, were given to Rin rgyal.

When Sher rgyal turned seventeen, Dge bshes Tsa pa had a grand-niece (*dbon mo*)<sup>59</sup> named Nyang bza' dkar legs and since she was a maternal cousin

<sup>57</sup> For a detailed examination of the kinship terms found in the translation, see the following essay "Marriage, Kinship, and Inheritance in Zhi byed ri pa's Account of Milarepa's Early Life." See also the genealogy chart at the end of this appendix. In general, the term *dbon* can refer to either nephew or grandson, and likewise *dbon mo* to niece or granddaughter. In very early Tibetan texts, it seems to have exclusively referred to a nephew or niece on the sister's side, although that may have changed in latter periods when the term became somewhat more flexible and referred instead to paternal relatives more generally. See Uebach 1979.

<sup>58</sup> She is later referred to as Smon skyid.

<sup>59</sup> In this story, Dge bshes tsa pa Grags pa bsod nams appears as the benevolent relative identified later as a maternal uncle (*zhang po*) who aids Mi la, his mother and sister, during their plight with Mi la's paternal relatives. In Gtsang smyon Heruka's account, this figure is identified as Mi la's maternal uncle (i.e. his mother's brother), although here he seems to be a grand-uncle. In addition, the Dge bshes is later described as Mi la ras pa's earliest tutor, from whom he received instruction in both logic and Rnying ma doctrine. (In Gtsang smyon Heruka's version, the early tutor is described as a Rnying ma master living in Mi thod gad kha of Rtsa.) Zhi byed ri pa records the precise lineages for those doctrinal transmissions as follows: (1) Ras chung pa made the request, "Please impart to me whichever lineages of madhyamaka and pramāṇa you possess." The Rje btsun replied, "The chief teachings of the Buddha [passed through] the brothers Maitreya and Asanga, Nāgārjuna, father and son, Dignāga and Candrakīrti, Guṇaprabha and and Śākyaprabha. From them and others, [they passed] to Jo bo chen po rje, the sole divinity Atisha, Nag tsho paṅ chen, Dge bshes 'Bron. And from them to Byang sems Zla ba rgyal mtshan and Dge bshes tsa pa Grags pa bsod nams. The latter gave them to me and I will teach them to you. In the future, these will be our own streams of explanation and the lineage will remain unbroken. (Zhi byed ri pa, NDO, 34. *yang ras chung pas dbu ma dang tshad ma'i rgyud pa gang lags | de yang gnang bar zhu zhus pas | rje btsun gyi zhal nas | sangs rgyas bstan gtso | byams pa | thogs med sku mched | klu grub yab sras | phyogs glang chos grags | yon tan 'od dang shakya 'od la sogs nas | jo bo chen po rje lha gcig a ti sha dang nag tsho paṅ chen dang | dge bshes 'brom dang | de nas byang sems zla ba rgyal mtshan dge bshes tsa pa grags pa bsod nams | des nga la gnang ba yin la ngas khyod la bshad pa lags pas | spyir rang re bshed rgyun pa yin yang rgyud pa ma chad tsam gyi gsung l.*) (2) [Ras chung pa] asked, "Is there a difference between the Vajradākinī of the old-translation teachings and the Vajradākinī of the new [translation school]?" The Rje btsun replied, "There [are differences in terms of the] stages of the activities of Buddhas, and the levels of capability among individuals, but there is no difference as to their essential point. The gurus in the system of the new school Vajradākinī are those of the path of means." [Ras chung pa] asked, "From where do the early translations stem?" [Mi la] replied, "I have explained that to you previously. Have you forgotten? [The lineage is as follows:] the *dharmakāya* Samantabhadra, the *saṃbhogakāya* Vajrasattva, the *nirmāṇakāya* Dga' rab rdo rje, guru Mañjuśrīmitra, Ting 'dzin Śrī Simha, Mkhas pa Vimalamitra, Lotsāwa Jñānakumara, Nyang sha'i spyān can, Chos rgyal Khri srong lde btsan, Rma Blo gros dbang phyug, Ye shes 'bar, Ldan ma Lhun grub rgyal, Seng ge dbang phyug, Zla ba rgyal mtshan, Nyi ma rgyal mtshan, Grub pa

(*sru chung*) she was betrothed to him. When he turned eighteen he had the means to welcome her and Mid la Rdo rje rgyal po brought the couple together. When [Sher rgyal] turned nineteen, and Dkar legs was twenty-one, he took her as a bride. All of his parents' wealth, headed by the *Ratnakūṭa Sūtra*, was given to Sher rgyal.

Rin rgyal's wife said, "We have many children but our material conditions have deteriorated. Because the two youngest sisters [Rin rgyal's daughters] will require a dowry from us, it is inappropriate for Sher rgyal to get all of the parents' remaining wealth." She then became mean-spirited and combative toward Rin rgyal, but once [the possessions] were turned over, there was nothing they could do. So it is said.

Then on the fourteenth day of the tenth month of a tiger year, a son was born to Dkar legs, and Dge bshes Tsa pa grags bsod nams named him Mi Klu grub mgon. When the son was three years and seven days old, a daughter was born who they named Mgon po skyid, but since she looked like a simpleton when she grew up, she was called Pe ta. This is what the Lha bon pa uncle (*zhang po*) Dge bshes Tsa pa himself said. The son was enamored when he saw a singing bard. Feeling no great desire to be near his parents, he went off to play [by himself], and as he became a singer of songs he was known by the name Thos pa dga' (Delightful to Hear). These two stories are clear in the great biography (*rnam thar chen mo*).<sup>60</sup>

When the son was three years and four months old, the daughter was four months, and Dkar legs was twenty-four, Sher rgyal died at age twenty-one. She performed the rites of virtue in a fine manner but still had a great deal of their family wealth. Then, when Dkar legs turned twenty-seven, her male and female relatives gathered and discussed the situation. They said, now that she was free from her period of mourning as a widow, Dkar legs should live together with Rin rgyal's son.

Dkar legs pledged, "Now that one such as Sher rgyal has died, for as long as I live, I will not stay with others who won't take care of these two children." And she had no interest in listening [to her relatives].

At this, Rin rgyal said, "If you won't live with my son, I will take your possessions." He then carried away all her possessions, beginning with the *Ratnakūṭa Sūtra*. All the relatives said that Rin rgyal was in the right and they turned belligerent toward Dkar legs. So it is said.

Dge bshes Tsa pa came to Dkar legs's aid and consoled her, yet even banding together she found no recourse and became completely miserable.

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rgyal mtshan, and Dge bshes tsa pa gave it to me. I will teach them to you so the lineage will not be interrupted." (Ibid., 35. *bka' snga 'gyur gyi rdo rje mkha' 'gro dang | gsar ma'i rdo rje mkha' 'gro la khyad yod dam zhus pas | rje btsun gyi zhal nas | sangs rgyas kyi 'phrin las dang | gang zag gi dbang po'i rim pa yin don la khyad med gsung | gsar ma'i rdo rje mkha' 'gro'am rgyu rim gyi bla ma ni | thabs lam gyi de lags | snga 'gyur de gang nas rgyud pa lags zhus pas | sngar lan kha yar bshad pa yin te rjed pa yin nam gsung | chos sku kun tu bzang po longgs sku rdo rje sems dpa' | sprul sku dga' rabs rdo rje bla ma 'jam dpal bshes gnyen | ting 'dzin shi ri sing ha | mkhas pa mi <bi> ma la mi tra | lo tsa ba dznyā na ku ma ra | nyang sha'i spyang can | chos rgyal khri srong lde btsan | rma blo gros dbang phyug | ye shes 'bar | ldan ma lhun grub rgyal | seng ge dbang phyug | zla ba rgyal mtshan | nyi ma rgyal mtshan | grub pa rgyal mtshan | dge bshes tsa pas nga la gnang | ngas khyod la bshad pa de yin pas rgyud pa ma chad pa gyis gsung).*

<sup>60</sup> Zhi byed ri pa is perhaps referring here to the text of Zhang Lotsāwa or Khyung tshang pa mentioned repeatedly elsewhere in the text.

The Rje btsun was five years old at the time, so it is said. Then Dkar legs's father and mother both died and she became even more miserable than before.

Then the Rje btsun turned seven years old and was left with Dge bshes Tsa pa while the mother and daughter lived in their empty house with neither food nor clothing. Neighbors and countrymen said to Dkar legs, "You won't stay with your brother-in-law's son," and became aggressive. She fell into deep despair. To Dge bshes Tsa pa as well the relatives said, "You shouldn't allow Thos pa dga' to stay [with you]," and said many disparaging things.

At that time the Rje btsun was very bright and so had an excellent facility for reading. The mother did spinning and weaving, and Pe ta went foraging for left-over *torma* offerings.

Rin rgyal, his wife, and children assailed the Rje btsun and Pe ta with rocks wherever they saw them. They dared not strike Dkar legs, but said many foul things to her. No longer able to bear it, the Dge bshes said, "Thos pa dga', you are most pitiable. You should go now," and sent him away. At that time, the Rje btsun was seventeen years old, so it is said.

The mother and two children were on the verge of starvation when a friendly former monk<sup>61</sup> gave them ingredients for making *chang*, which they prepared. [The mother] gathered her relatives together, poured [*chang*] for the uncle [Rin rgyal], and said, "Now mother and children will take a share of the possessions." [The uncle] replied, "I will give you a share," but then his wife changed his mind, and he no longer wished to give it.

Thereafter, the Rje btsun sang songs, Pe ta foraged for ritual cake offerings and took up begging, and the mother spun and wove but they had neither food nor clothing and there was never enough for them to live on. The Dge bshes and a friendly former nun (*go mi ma*) secretly gave them two measures of barley with which they prepared *chang*. [The mother offered it] to the uncle, and said, "Others may take hold of our wealth but we should have at least a milking cow to depend on."<sup>62</sup> Why should a widow and her children, your relations, die of starvation?" He became drunk and said, "If you keep this up, perhaps I should kill you three, mother and children." He threw a rock at Dkar legs, kicked the Rje btsun trying to kill him, Pe ta fled out the door and there was nothing to be done. When the uncle had gone, the mother and two children gathered, and as they wept they heard someone arrive at the doorstep. Thinking it was the uncle, the two children sat there crying and the mother took hold of a knife and a club and waited with them [hidden] in an auspicious scarf.<sup>63</sup> It was not the uncle but rather the former monk who brought them something to eat, and they were thus consoled. So it is said. In later times, [3] the great Rje btsun repeatedly said, "In that friendly former monk I had a helpful guide for escaping well the six realms." He said, "At that time we were all very [frightened] and all of my

<sup>61</sup> *Sngar gi go mi*. *Go mi* is generally defined as *btsun pa*, literally "venerable" or "ordained monk." But perhaps *sngar gi go mi* more generally refers to an old friend, which seems to be the meaning here.

<sup>62</sup> This passage is unclear, although the general meaning seems correct. . . . *khu bo la khong mi gzhan gyis ni | nyon spu btsong spu ngo len byed cing yang 'dug pa nga rang dag mo nor la rten yang chog ste |*.

<sup>63</sup> *Bkras kha > bkra shis kha btags?*

paternal aunts turned evil." He said, "Wherever we went, we were anxious about meeting with our paternal uncle's family." So it is said.

Then, one day while the mother was collecting firewood on a mountain across the valley, a family carried offerings for a thread-cross ritual and Pe ta went to take the ritual cakes. As she reached for the cakes, a dog grabbed her hand in its mouth. She kicked the dog's head and it released her hand but then lunged for her abdomen and bit her in the crotch. She cried out in great agony and the mother came running down the mountainside. She [slipped] and tumbled down part of the mountain [shaped like] a frog's open mouth. Her face was covered with blood, her teeth broken, and her body roughed up. When she reached her daughter they continued on together. The Rje btsun went up into the upper Rtsa valley<sup>64</sup> where he ran into his uncle's relatives. They beat him, kicked him, and cracked open his skull, which bled profusely. The mother and two children met on the path, covered in blood, yet even under these circumstances Thos pa dga' sang forth a song.

The mother said, "Ay, have you've lost your mind? There are none in the world more miserable than us three, mother and children. Your uncle is trying to kill us and we have found ourselves in this situation, and yet you sing songs." She went on thinking about their situation and then broke down in tears so the Rje btsun sat there for a while in silence.

"Well then, what should your mother do?" [she asked.]

[The Rje btsun replied,] "You, mother, could live with Uncle's son, and you could obtain a share of his possessions. Then we, mother and children, would have the strength to escape on our own. Wouldn't it be better if you did that?"

At this, the mother threw a handful of dirt in her son's face, beat her chest with her fists, and broke down in tears. She said, "A son such as you born to your father Sher rgyal! If I lived with Rin rgyal's son, when the time came for me to take a share of his possessions I would be pregnant again and you two, brother and sister, would starve to death, wouldn't you?"

As she was crying, Dge bshes Tsa pa, a male companion who said he had previously taken Sher rgyal's oath [to look after his family], and a friendly former nun arrived. They wiped the blood off of mother and children, recited mantras over their wounds, and offered something to eat. While they were consoling the family, the uncle's family appeared, each carrying a club, and beat the male companion and the female friend. To Dge bshes Tsa pa the uncle said, "How terrible that you have treated me with scorn. Death comes to everyone [including Sher rgyal] but Dkar legs has brought me great humiliation. She remains a widow who is young and eligible for marriage, but she doesn't listen [when I tell her] to live with my son." His temper rose and [the male companion and female friend] both fled.

Furious, the Dge bshes said to Rin rgyal, "You are filled with pride. I'll steal your wealth and entrust it to the Jo bo. Why did you all forsake your agreement? Upon whom will the karma of someone like Dkar legs fall? It is not acceptable to take away her wealth when her children are starving; you are too proud. She will not burden her children with misery, and neither will she go to another man." With this, Dge bshes pa became enraged. He

<sup>64</sup> This is an approximate translation: *rje btsun rtsa phu na yar skyur srun la song ba . . .*

said, "The local people are speaking sharply and the Mi la family has split apart, so I am unable to say anything."

Regarding this, in later times Mi la said, "My uncle (*zhang po*) was very kind." So it is said.

*Tibetan text*

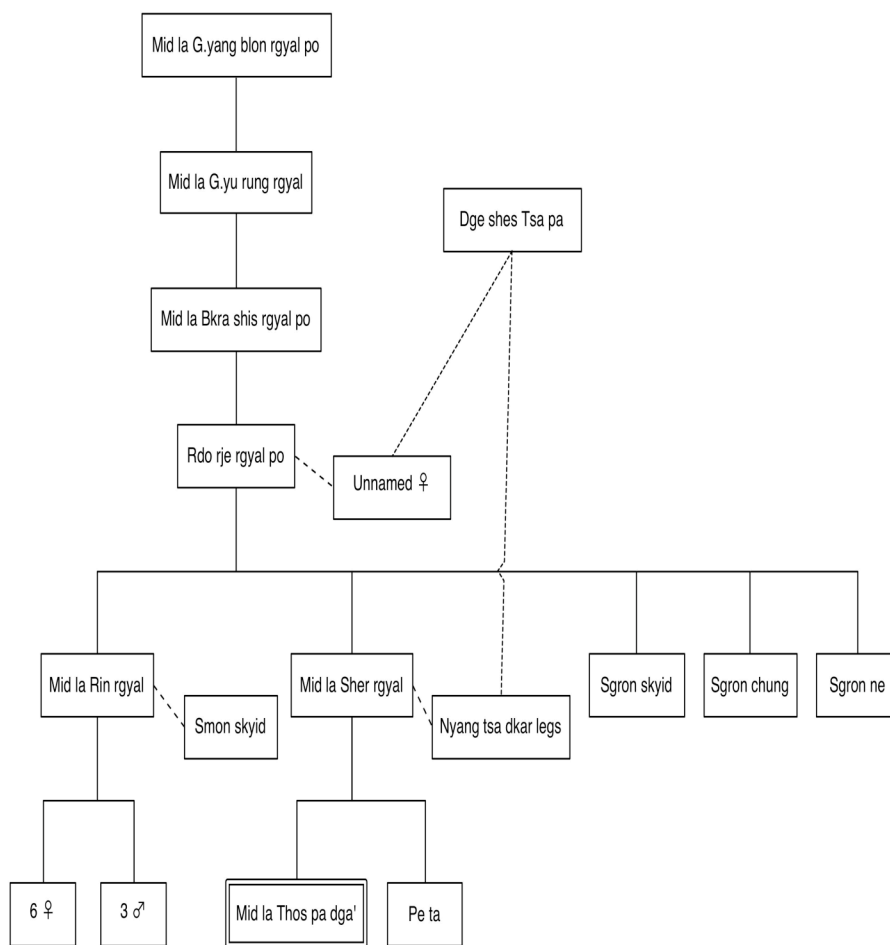
gdung rgyud chen po bco brgyad kyi nang mtshan be ri yin la/ de'i nang tshan khyung tsha yin la/ khyung tsha la stod smad gnyis yod pa'i nang tshan khyung tsha stod pa phu bo'i rgyud/ khyung tsha stod pa yin la/ de'i nang tshan 'brog pa mi tshang cig la bu chung mid la tsakras zin pa'i ltas ngan cig skyes pa la/ bon po mkhas pa zhig bos nas/ ltas ngan bzlog pa'i mid la chu sel byas pas ltas ngan bzlog nas bu chung sha lus rgyas nas legs por song ba dang ming yang mid la g/yang blon rgyal po bya bar brags skad do/ de'i bu mid la g.yu rung rgyal yin la de'i bu mid la bkra shis rgyal po de la stod byang na yar phyin nas bcung <gcung> pa'i 'og skyid pa phug ring nas khyim thab cig byas nas bdad pas bu rdo rje rgyal po skyes pa la rang bzhin mi gzhi dga' mo zhig yod cing rogs dga' ches nas sho rtsis pas cho lo pham nas nor yod tshad shor nas mnga' ris gung thang tsa pa nyang mi cig dang [2] shag po byas nas tshur yong nas rgyal lnga yul gyi tsa rong gi mkhar sgong thang na/ dge bshes tsa pa grags pa bsod nams kyi dbon mo cig gnang ba la bu tsha mi sring lnga skyes pa'i bu che ba'i ming mid la rin rgyal yin la chung ba mid la sher rgyal yin/ bu mo che ba sgron skyid/ de 'og sgron chung/ de'i 'og sgron ne yin/ rin rgyal la sru chung cig chung mar blangs pa la/ bu drug bu mo gsum dang mi <ming> sring dgu tsam skyes/ gser sku dang gsung rab rgyas 'bring rnam gsum dang dkon brtsegs la sogs chos mang po bzhengs nas bzhugs pa'i rgyas 'bring rnam gsum gyis 'og byas pa'i cha rkyen mang rab rin rgyal la phogs byas la sher rgyal lo bcu bdun lon pa'i dus na/ dge bshes tsa pa'i dbon mo nyang bza' dkar legs zer ba de sru chung yin pas gnyen byas nas lo bco brgyad lon pa dang bsu tshis yin pa la mid la rdo rje rgyal po bza' tsho gnyis kha gshibs nas lo bcu dgu lon dus na dkar legs lo nyi shu rtsa gcig lon pa de bag mar blangs nas pha ma'i thum gyi nor mdo sde dkon brtsegs kyis 'go byas pa'i nor thams cad sher rgyal la phogs phas pa la rin rgyal gyi chung ma na de <der?> rang re bu tsha mang po yod pa dang cha rkyen chung du song ba dang da rung sring mor chung ba gnyis kyang rang res rdzong dgos pa la pha ma'i shul gyi nor yod tshad sher rgyal la byin pa de ma legs zer nas rin rgyal la ngo gnag shing 'thab sha byas kyang gtad tshar nas byed thabs med par song skad/ de nas stag gi lam <lo?> zla ba bcu pa'i tshes bcu bzhi'i snga dro dkar legs la bu zhig skyes pa la dge bshes tsa pa grags pa bsod pas mi glu grub mgon bya bar gdags/ bus lo gsum dang zhags bdun lon dus su bu mo cig skyes pa la mgon po skyid bya bar btags la yar tshar zhing glen ma 'dra ba cig byung bas pe ta zer ba yin/ lha bon pa zhang po dge bshes tsa ba rang lags skad/ bus ni glu srung byed mi mthong na de la dga' bas pha ma'i rtsar mi chags par rtsed mo la 'gro zhing kho rang yang glu srung len pa cig byung bas der ming yang thos pa dga' bya bar grags la/ 'di la gnam rgyud gnyis yod pa rnam thar chen mor gsal zhing/ der bus lo gsum dang zla ba bzhi lon/ bu mos zla ba bzhi lon dus na/ dkar legs lo nyis shu rtsa bzhi lon pa dang sher rgyal po nyi shu rtsa gcig lon dus su der shi bas dge rtsa bzang po byas kyang da rung cha rkyen chen po yod la/ de nas dkar

legs lo nyis shu rtsa bdun lon pa dang pho gnyen mo gnyen tshogs nas gros byas nas da yugs sa yang sangs pas/ dkar legs rin rgyal gyi bu dang dus cig sdod dgos zer ba la/ dkar legs na re sher rgyal 'dra ba'i skyes pa shi nas bu tshab <tsha> 'di gnyis mi skyong bar da ngas tshe 'di la skyes pa gzhan dang sdod ri zer nas mna' bskyal nas nyan du ma 'dod/ der rin rgyal gyis khyod nga'i bu dang mi sdod na/ ngas nor tsho len zer nas gsung rab dkon brtsegs kyis 'og byas pa'i nor thams cad khyer ba dang nye du thams cad kyang rin rgyal bden zer nas dkar legs la 'thab skad/ dge bshes tsa pas dkar legs kyi phyogs mdzad nas kha bzung yang nye mnyam du song bas bya thabs tsam yang ma byung nas ma smad gsum nan tar sdug par yod pa las/ rje btsun de dus lo lnga pa yin zer/ de nas dkar legs kyi pha ma gnyis kar shi nas sngar las kyang sdug tu song yod par 'dug la/ de nas rje btsun lo bdun lon pa dang/ dge bshes tsa ba'i drung du bzhag nas ma smad gnyis po khang stong der sdod pa la zas gos ci yang med/ yul mi khyim mtshes rnams kyis kyang dkar legs ls khyod skud po'i bu dang mi sdod pa zer nas 'thab cing shin tu sdug pa'i tshod du song la/ dge bshes tsa pa tang nye du rnams kyis thos pa dga' sdod du ma 'jug zer nas skur pa 'debs so/ rje btsun ni de dus na yang thugs rgyus che bas klog bzang po shes yod par 'dug/ mas bkal thags byed/ pe tas yas 'dra len byed pa la/ rin rgyal pha spad bza' tsho rnams kyis ni/ rje btsun dang pe ta gar mthong yang rdo rdeg par byed cing/ dkar legs la yang rdung ni mi phod de/ kha ngan tshig ngan zlos te/ de nas dge bshes pas kyang thugs kyis mi phod na yang/ thos pa dga' da khyod snying rje bar 'dug ste/ da 'gro dgos par 'dug gsung ste bton nas btang/ de dus na rje btsun lo bcu bdun pa yin gsung/ ma smad gsum ltogs ris shi la khad nas yod dus sngar gyi go mi zhig gis chang rgyu cig byin pa de bcos te/ nye du rnams bsags nas khu bo la blud nas da nged ma smad la nor dum cig blang byas pas dum cig ster ba skad zer ba la su <bu> smad kyis bsgyur nas ster du ma 'dod/ de nas rje btsun gyi glu len/ pe tas yas len/ lam zan 'dra blangs/ mas bka' <bkal> thags byed cing/ gos med zas med la tshe ye ma phyid nas/ yang dge bshes pa dang sngar gyi go mi ma des phag tu nas bre do byin pa de chang btsos na khu bo la khong mi gzhan gyis ni/ nyon spu btsong spu ngo len byed cing yang 'dug pa nga rang dag mo nor la rten yang chog ste/ khyed rang gi tsha yug <yugs> 'di kun ltogs ris shi ba la dgos pa ci yod byas nas zhu ba byas pas kho chang gi bzi se byas nas nan tar rang yin na ma smad gsum kar bsad na ci yin zer te dkar legs la rdo cig brgyab/ rje btsun rdog ril byas nas do bsad/ pe ta sgo na mar bros nas bya rgyu med cing/ khu bo song tsa na ma smad gsum 'tshogs nas ngu yin yod tsa na/ yang sgo tsa na mi cig slebs grags pa dang/ yang khu bo yin bsam nas bu tsha gnyis ngu yin bsdad/ mas gri dang ber ka gzung nas bkras khar sgugs pas khu bo men <min> par go mi bza' rgyu 'dra khyer nas sems gso ba la yong pa yin par 'dug zer/ 'di la ni dus phyis kyang rje btsun chen pos go mi de rigs drug nas legs par 'don pa'i gnyer ka nga la yod pa yin/ yang yang gsung skad/ de dus na kho bo dag a cang che ste/ a ne kun ngan par byung gsung/ gar phyin pa na yang khu bo tshang dang 'phrad dogs pa'i sems khral chen po yod gsung skad/ der nyin gcig ni ma phar ri na yar me shing 'thu yin yod tsa na/ mi tshang cig gis mdos cig bskyal ba la pe tas yas len du phyin pas gtor ma la bsnyabs pas lag pa khyi'i khar shor bas khyi'i mgo rdog pa brgyab pas khyis lag pa btang nas 'doms na tshur bsnyabs te mo mtshan la phug pas sdug skad chen po shor ba dang mas thur la rgyugs nas yongs pas/ pha ri'i sbal pa kha gdangs

can du rhab la 'gril bas/ kha ngo brag la phog nas kha so chag/ lus po nyag nyog du song nas bu mo'i rtsar slebs nas 'dong ste yar yong tsa na/ rje btsun rtsa phu na yar skyur srung la song ba pha spun tsho dang phrad pas brdungs shing rdog ril byas/ mgo bcag nas mar yong ba dang/ ma smad gsum kar lam ka na khrag tsa re 'dzoms pas thos pa dga' ni da rung glu len cing 'dug pa dang mas a pa khyod 'dra ba'i bsam rlag can cig yod pa ang/ rang re ma smad gsum las sdug pa sa steng na med/ khu bos gsod la thug cing las 'di la slebs nas yod pa la/ khyod da rung glu len pa rang dran rgya che ba byas nas ngus pas rje btsun yug pa zhig kha rog bstad nas 'dug la/ de nas 'o na a ma da ci byas pa drag/ yang na da rung a mas khu bo'i bu dang yug cig bsdad nas/ nor dum cig lon pa dang de nas rang re ma smad gar shed bros na drag gam zer bas/ mas sa spar gang bu'i ngo la gtor/ mo rang gi brang la khu tshur brgyab nas ngu zhung/ pha sher rgyal 'dra ba la bu khyod 'dra skye ba/ nga rin rgyal gyi bu dang yug cig bsdad nor len ran tsa na/ nga'i lus la pu <bu> tsa cig tshud pa dang/ khyed ming sring gnyis ltogs ris shi ba cig mi yong ngam zer nas ngu yin yod tsa na/ dge bshes tsam <tsa> pa dang sngar sher rgyal gyi mna' bcud yin zer ba'i shag po cig dang/ go mi ma de dang gsum po yongs nas/ ma smad gsum gyi khrag tsho phyis/ rma la sngags btab/ bza' rgyu 'dra byin nas sems gso yin yod pa la/ khu bo bza' tsho rnams kyis mi res ber ka re khyer yong nas shag po dang go mi ma la brgyab/ dge bshes pa la yang a khu bas nged la khyad gsod byed pa zhan/ mi si ba kun la yong ste/ dkar legs 'dis nged la sma dbabs chen po byas/ mo kha na so ma brjes pa'i <pa? gna' <mna'> ma yug sar lus pa la/ nga'i bu la sdod ma nyan zer nas ngar ba dang/ khong gnyis po bros nas song/ dge bshes pa thugs khros te/ rin rgyal la khyod nan tan rang nga rgyal che na/ ngas nor tsho 'phrog nas jo bo la gtad/ khyed rang rnams 'ba' de ra bton na ci yin/ dkar legs 'dra ba'i las su la yong ba/ bu tsha ltogs ris bzhag nas nor khyer bas mi chog par da rung khyod nga rgyal che ba/ mo bu tsha'i thog na sdug sgur byas pa yin pa/ skyes pa gzhan la song ba ni ma yin zer na sdge bshes dge bshes pa khros pa dang/ dge bshes pa yul mi kha drag tu song ba dang/ mi la tshang mi 'khyams su song bas ci yang smra ma phod zer bas 'di la ni dus phyis kyang/ mi la'i zhal nas zhang po de sku drin che gsung skad/.



**Mi la ras pa's Genealogy According to  
Zhi byed ri pa's *Illuminating Lamp***



relation by birth —————

relation by marriage - - - - -

relation as *dbon* ·······

## Tibetan Language Sources

DNM *Mdzod nag ma*

**Editions:**

- (1) Indian edition. Cover title: *Rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug mi la bzhad pa rdo rje'i gsung mgur ma mdzod nag ma zhes pa ka rma pa rang byung rdo rjes phyog bcig*. Dalhousie: Damchoe Sangpo. 1978. 2 vols.
- (2) Smith edition. Cover title: *Rje rnal sbyor gyi dbang phyug dpal bzhad pa'i rdo rje'i 'gur 'tshogs tshad phyogs gcig du bsgrig pa lo rgyus kyis sbas pa zhes bya ba bzhugs so*. Unpublished *dbu med* manuscript.

Bstan 'dzin Chos kyi blo gros (1868-1906)

LCY *Gsang lam sgrub pa'i gnas chen nyer bzhi'i ya gyal gau dā wa ri'am/ 'brog la phyi gangs kyi ra ba'i sngon byung gi tshul las tsam pa'i gtam gyi rab tu phyed pa nyung ngu rnam gsal*. Gangtok: Sherab Gyaltzen. 1983

Byang chub bzang po (sixteenth century)

DKN *Bde mchog mkha' snyan rgyud (ras chung snyan rgyud)*. Reproduced from the rare manuscript in the library of Apha Rinpoche. 2 vols. Delhi. 1973.

Chos kyi dbang phyug, Brag dkar rta so sprul sku (1775-1837)

DKS *Dpal ldan gzhung 'brug pa bka' brgyud gser phreng*. Written 1820. Microfilm. Kathmandu, Nepal. NGMPP reel no. L381/1, 55 folios. *Dbu med* manuscript.

DTL *Grub pa'i gnas chen brag dkar rta so'i gnas dang gdan rabs bla ma brgyud pa'i lo rgyus mdo tsam brjod pa mos ldan dad pa'i gdung sel drang srong dga' ba'i dal gtam zhes bya ba bzhugs so*. Written in 1816. Microfilm. Kathmandu, Nepal. NGMPP reel no. 940/8, 52 folios. *Dbu med* manuscript.

Don mo ri pa (b. 1203)

JMN *Rje btsun mi la'i rnam thar*. In *Rdo rje bdzes 'od, Bka' brgyud kyi rnam thar chen mo rin po che'i gter mdzod dgos 'byung gnas*. Bir, India: D. Tsondu Senghe, 1985, pp. 176-218.

Grag pa 'byung gnas and Blo bzang mkhas grub

MD *Gangs can mkhas grub rim byon ming mdzod*. Lan kro'u: kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1992.

Ngan rdzongs ston pa Byang chub rgyal po (b. late eleventh century), et. al.

BCN *Bu chen bcu gnyis*. Newark edition. Cover title: *Rje btsun chen po mid la ras pa'i rnam thar zab mo*. n.p., n.d. 244 folios. *Dbu can* manuscript in the collection of the Newark Museum, microfilm master negative No. 0001, the *Tibetan Book Collection*, Folio 36.280, *Biography of Milarepa*, IIB R 16.

Padma dkar po (1527-1592)

- DCJ *'Brug pa'i chos 'byung*. Gang-can rig-mdzod series no. 19. Lhasa: Bod-ljongs Bod-yig Dpe-rnying Dpe-skrun-khang. 1992.
- Dpal brtsegs bod yig dpe rnying zhib 'jug khang. 2004. *'Bras spungs dgon du bzhugs su gsol ba'i dpe rnying dkar chag*. 2 vols. Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang.
- Si tu Paṅ chen Chos kyi 'byung gnas (1700-1774) & 'Be lo tshe dbang kun khyap
- CSK *Karma kam tshang brgyud pa rin po che'i rnam par thar pa rab 'byams nor bu zla ba chu shel gyi phreng ba'i kha skong*. In *Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas kyi bka 'bum*. Vol. Da. Kangra, India: Sherab Ling Institute. 1990.
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- SDN *Mar mi dwags po jo bo rje yab sras sog dam pa 'ga' zhug gi rnam thar sa bon dus kyi nges pa brjod pa dag ldan nyung gsal*. In *Selected Writings of Kaḥ thog Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang Nor bu*. 6 vols. Darjeeling: Kargyu Sungrab Nyamso Khang. 1973. Vol. 1, pp. 669-705.
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- TY *Zhang lo'i thim yig*. In *Bde mchog mkha' snyan rgyud (ras chung snyan rgyud)* edited by Byang chub bzang po. Reproduced from the rare manuscript in the library of Apho Rinpoche. 2 vols. Delhi. 1973. pp. 1-5.
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- NDO *Rje btsun mid la ras pa'i rnam par thar pa nyi zla'i 'od zer sgron ma*. Manuscript. in the archives of 'Bras spung Monastery. *'Bras spungs dkar chag: phyi ra* 72, 017188, 105ff, 45 x 8 cm. (pagination refers to computer print-out)

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