

**A King of Dharma Forgotten on the Jewel Island:
Was Me *ban Chos rgyal Rin chen gling pa*
Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's rDzogs chen Master?
(How Half of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* Got Included
in the *dGongs pa zang thal*)**

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Introduction

We do not have many clues about the masters who trained Rig 'dzin rGod ldem (1337–1408) in his youth. Gu ru bKra shis's *Chos 'byung*² as well as later literature do not say much on this point. The oldest source about rGod ldem's life, the biography written by his direct disciple Nyi ma bzang po,³ gives us a few of these names, but at first sight these are completely obscure even for a specialist of the rNying ma school in the 14th century—and the same could be said of the few additional names that can be gleaned from

¹ For this article, I owe the greatest gratitude, and I would like to express my very special and very friendly thanks to Dr. Jean-Luc Achard, whose many comments on the draft (and until the very final version) really functioned for me as the key and prophetic guide to the hidden treasure, pushing me much further into verifications and source research that opened up all sorts of unexpected double-bottoms. I would also like to thank for all their precious help in finalizing this paper both Pr. Jay Valentine, who made very valuable corrections and suggestions, and Tenpa Tsering Batsang, who clarified some obscure Tibetan passages and found the largest and oldest available biography of Rin chen gling pa (Sha gzugs pa Nag dbang bKra shis—see bibliography). As this source of all my sources appeared only when this article was already nearly completed, I used it only marginally, for verification; but it would deserve a complete translation.—I would also like to thank Cécile Ducher and Michael Burroughs for their careful review at the end of the edition process.

² Gu ru bkra shis' *bsTan pa'i snying po gsang chen snga 'gyur nges don zab mo'i chos kyi byung ba gsal bar byed pa'i legs bshad mkhas pa dga' byed ngo mtshar gtam gyi rol mtsho*, from here as Gu ru bkra shis 1990. The biography of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem is on pp. 283-488. Same features in Brag dkar rta so *sprul sku* (2011, vol. 13, pp. 452 sq.). In Kong *sprul's gTer ston brgya rtsa* (pp. 532 sq.), it is just vaguely stated that he studied the whole rNying ma tradition, without any indication about who were his teachers.

³ *A.k.a. Suryabhadra*. Quoted here on the basis of the version in vol. 59, pp. 1-75 of the *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*, as Nyi ma bzang po 2015.

other sources.⁴ Nyi ma bzang po writes that Rig 'dzin rGod ldem got trained in his family circle for the traditions of his clan (*pha chos*), and names the masters who gave him the transmissions of Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer's⁵ and Gu ru Chos dbang's⁶ *gter ma*; but he also tells us that he was taught rDzogs chen by a master that he calls Brag lung pa *mkhas btsun Rin chen dpal*.⁷ This article is an attempt to identify this figure.

To cut the suspense short, my conclusion is that there is a very high probability that Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's rDzogs chen master was in fact Me *ban Rin chen gling pa* (1289–1368),⁸ a *gter ston* nowadays quite

⁴ rGod ldem appears indeed in a few other lineages, e.g., in the *Records of Teachings Received* of 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang phyug (1524–1568), the 5th Dalai Lama (1617–1682) or gTer bdag gling pa (1645–1714). See in the present volume the article "Yamāntaka among the Ancients" for the lineage of 'Jam dpal rdzogs chen and the way in which 'Ju Mi pham assimilates it to a lineage of 'Jam dpal tshé bdag.

⁵ Nyi ma bzang po 2015, p. 16: *lcang ma ba la nyang ral pa'i gter kha gsan* l.

⁶ Nyi ma bzang po 2015, p. 16: *mkhas pa snang ldan rgyal po la gu ru chos dbang gi chos ka rnams gsan* l.

⁷ Nyi ma bzang po 2015, pp. 16–17: *de nas rdzogs pa chen po'i chos rnams brag lung pa mkhas btsun rin chen dpal ba'i drung du gsan te* l.

⁸ These dates, contradictory to those found on BDRC (P1GS124509: 1313–1382), are more probable given his very close interactions with Padma las 'brel rtsal (d. 1319) and the fact that he seems to be mentioned as still active in an episode of Klong chen pa's biographies that can be ascribed to his return from Bhutan in the end of his life (1360s). Me *ban Rin chen gling pa* is conflated by BDRC with the unrelated sMar pa bKa' brgyud master Rin chen gling pa (see sMar pa bKa' brgyud kyi rnam thar phyogs sgrig 2006, pp. 194–241). This figure is difficult to date but nothing matches with Me *ban*: he was from Eastern Tibet, became a purely *bKa' brgyud pa* monk, his parents' names are not the same, etc. Incidentally, Me *ban Rin chen gling pa* should also not be confused with the much later Ratna gling pa (1403–1479), nor with Sangs rgyas gling pa (1340–1396, also sometimes called Rin chen gling pa), and even less with bdr: P5986, a 18th century *gter ston* with the same name. The main available biographies of Me *ban Rin chen gling pa* seem to be, in chronological order:

- (1) Sha gzugs pa Ngag dbang bkra shis, *Zab khyad gter ma'i lo rgyus gter ston chos 'byung nor bu'i 'phreng ba*, MW1KG15884, *dbu med* manuscript, pp. 34b3–38b8. This "source of sources" (until we find anything older) was spotted by Tenpa Tsering Batsang who describes it (personal communication 10/08/2023) in the following terms: "According to p. 72 of *Po ta la ru bzhugs pa'i rnying ma'i gsung 'bum dkar chag*, Sha gzugs pa Ngag dbang bkra shis was a disciple of Rig 'dzin Ngag gi dbang po (1580–1639) and was known as the 'third Klong chen pa,' and so he belonged to the early seventeenth century." Tenpa Tsering Batsang procured an (unpublished) tentative transcription of the relevant parts of the *dbu med* manuscript (including the lives of Padma las 'brel rtsal, pp. 28b4–30A7, and rGyal sras Legs pa, pp. 30a7–30b7), which made things easier, as the manuscript is pretty tiring to read.
- (2) Brag dkar rta so *sprul sku* Chos kyi dbang phyug (1775–1837), 2011: pp. 397–804. Rin chen gling pa's biography is pp. 538–551.
- (3) Gu ru bKra shis' *Chos 'byung* (early 19th century), pp. 404–407.
- (4) Kong *sprul* Blo gros mtha' yas' (1813–1899) *gTer ston brgya rtsa*, sTod lung edition, pp. 416–419.

forgotten but definitely very important in his day. He played a decisive role in the transmission, and maybe even in the revelation, of the *Heart-essence of the Dākinī* (*mKha' 'gro'i snying thig*); at least five of his rDzogs chen revelations found their way into the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* (in vol. 14 of the mTshams brag edition, but I suspect that there are more)⁹ and two of his *gter ma* cycles are sampled in the *Rin chen gter mdzod*. The present article was therefore also an opportunity to rescue from oblivion a figure that must have enjoyed a solid reputation among the rNying ma pa at least up to the time when Ratna gling pa (1403–1479) consolidated the selection of *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* texts.

A biography of Rin chen gling pa (an annotated and completed version of the one found in Gu ru bKra shis' *Chos 'byung*) is given below and can be read beforehand, if one prefers to discover first the result of the inquiry, and only later its—admittedly complicated—details.

What is at stake with the identification of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's masters is to re-place him into concrete history. This has to start with locating him in the various social networks to which he belonged, although the dominant trend in traditional hagiography¹⁰ tends to emphasize only his direct, mystical links to the imperial era. Part at least of the Bon hagiography may insist on the idea that treasure revealers were uneducated people finding materials that they could not have elaborated by themselves.¹¹ But it is not the case that most rNying ma *gter ston* were illiterate folk, suddenly struck by the grace of complex revelations. They were most often well trained in the type of materials that they discovered. Reconstructing their social milieus and identifying their position and role in each of these is the first thing

All these sources also contain biographies of Padma las 'brel rtsal and at least a few lines about his disciple *rGyal sras* Legs pa and about Karmapa III Rang byung rdo rje, in all of which Rin chen gling pa is mentioned.

⁹ Many of Rin chen gling pa's *gter chos* contain, after a colophon that may describe the way in which the treasure was hidden and the prayer for it to be discovered by the predestined individual, a few verses, nearly always beginning with *e ma ho*, which, although they bear *gter ma* marks, sound more as if composed by the *gter ston* commenting on the value and meaning of his discovery. Combined with other clues (e.g., the names of his findings in the short biographical sketches that we have), this might help in the identification of those that are not explicitly connected to Rin chen gling pa.

¹⁰ The *gTer ston brgya rtsa*, for example, omits all of his masters and mentions merely bZang po grags pa, only as the source of the prophetic guides, not as someone who actually trained him. Indeed, they may never have actually met.

¹¹ Khenchen Tenpa Yungdrung, oral communication, July 2023, answering a question about *gShen chen Klu dga'* inspired by Dan Martin's *Unearthing Bon Treasures* (2001).

to aim at if we want to move from dry hagiography to living history.¹²

It is up to the reader to decide whether my arguments regarding the identity of rGod ldem's master, Rin chen dpal, are convincing or not. At most, we have a strong body of converging evidence suggesting the high probability of personal interactions between Rin chen gling pa and Rig 'dzin rGod ldem—but without any source formally asserting this link. However, what is—at the very least—demonstrated in the pages that follow is that Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, already in 1337,¹³ was not only familiar with the contents of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*, but also aware of the elaborations that had been added to its original core (1313) by both Rin chen gling pa (around 1321?)—which is what I wanted to document—and even by Klong chen pa (1308–1364)—which puzzled me somewhat when I found out about it.

The marginal position of Klong chen pa in the first generations of masters of the mKha' 'gro snying thig, compared to the central status of Rin chen gling pa in that context

Indeed, if we tend to associate the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* with Klong chen rab 'byams and his posterity, it is because this trend *later* became the dominant line. But, in fact, it is barely an exaggeration to say that Klong chen pa somehow *hacked* this transmission on the basis of a personal, inner, re-revelation of it. The *gter ston* Padma las 'brel rtsal (1291–1315/1319)¹⁴ had actually passed it to three¹⁵ main successors:

- Karmapa III Rang byung rdo rje (1284–1339), who then transmitted it to g.Yung *ston pa* rDo rje dpal (1285–1331);
- *rGyal sras* Legs pa (1290–1366/7), generally regarded as the main heir of Padma las 'brel rtsal's revelations;¹⁶ and

¹² Incidentally, the question of the *revealed character* of a text has been clearly dissociated by theologians (particularly Catholic theologians) from that of the *pre-existence of textual materials* mobilized in the composition of the revealed text. The revealed character of a textual corpus is, in this context, understood as implying not the creation of the text out of nothing, under divine dictation alone, but the motion of the Holy Spirit in the 'sacred author' *while compiling and editing the textual corpus in its final, 'canonized' form*. Perhaps the rNying ma pa clerics could evolve their understanding of the phenomenon of hidden treasures in this direction, so as not to be thwarted by the progress of philological research.

¹³ If we date the whole of the *dGongs pa zang thal* as it stands in recent editions at the ascribed date of the Zang zang lha brag discovery. In fact, we do not know anything about the editing process after the 'yellow scrolls' were found.

¹⁴ See Nyoshul Khenpo 2005, pp. 70-73. Padma las 'brel rtsal's dates remain to some extent a puzzle.

¹⁵ We will see that there was a fourth heir, fallen into complete oblivion: Myang *ston* Śākya byang chub.

¹⁶ See Nyoshul Khenpo 2005, pp. 73-75.

- *Chos rgyal* Rin chen gling pa.

Klong chen pa's tactics regarding these three persons, according to some sources historically quite close to the events, seems to have been to de-legitimize the first (however weird this might sound, as he was reportedly close to Rang byung rdo rje in his youth) and the third, and pick up the second (as it is said that he received the complete transmission from *rGyal sras* Legs pa,¹⁷ but maybe quite late in his life and after having taught the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* himself for years). It did not work quite well with Rang byung rdo rje, but, for any reason, "the King of Dharma from the Jeweled Island" nearly completely vanished from the rNying ma pa's memories.¹⁸

Some sources¹⁹ say that Rin chen gling pa was in fact the one who brought to Padma las 'brel rtsal the prophetic guides (*kha byang*) that allowed him to discover the *Heart-Essence of the Dākinī* in 1313. Rin chen gling pa was associated with Karmapa III Rang byung rdo rje, whom he chose—Gu ru bKra shis says—as the master of his Dharma (*chos bdag*), that is, as the heir of his own treasures.²⁰

¹⁷ This may have occurred between 1343 (Arguillère 2007: p. 104) and Klong chen pa's exile in Bhutan in the 1350s (op. cit. pp. 120-126). It is not even impossible that it happened in the very last years of Klong chen pa's life after his return from Bhutan (1360/61–64), as *rGyal sras* Legs pa was still alive then.

¹⁸ The transmissions for Rin chen gling pa's main rDzogs chen cycle, the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod* or *A ti chig chod kun grol*, were still available in the 17th century, as we find, e.g., complete, continuous lineages down to the 5th Dalai Lama in his *Record of Teachings Received* (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 1971: vol. III, pp. 589-595). But although Brag dkar rta so *sprul sku* writes an enthusiastic account of Rin chen gling pa's life in the early 19th century, Rin chen gling pa seems not to appear anywhere in the account of all the transmissions he received. The *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod* as it stands in the *Rin chen gter mdzod* is in fact a *yang gter* of mKhyen brtse'i dbang po (1820–1892), as we can read in the *gTer ston brgya rtsa* (p. 419: *rdzogs chen gcig chod kun grol gyi lung bstan las shin tu gsal ba ltar rje bla ma mdo sngags gling pa'i phyag tu rgyun phebs | gter ston chen pos smin sgröl stsal zhing sgrub thabs dang thugs rje chen po'ang gter gyi tshul du gtan la phab ste bdag cag rnam bka' drin chen pos khyab par mdzad pa yin no |*). This may have been one of the many fragile lineages that got lost because of the 1717–18 Dzungar invasion.

¹⁹ Especially Gu ru bKra shis 1990), p. 400: *dgung lo nyer gcig bzhes pa'i skabs su [1311] bla ma'i gsung gis lho phyogs su 'gro don la rgyug gsungs | de'i lho phyogs lo ro tshengrong nas byon pa'i sprul sku rin chen gling pas | 'bri thang ko ro brag nas gdan drangs pa [1310?]'i gter chos kyi nang nas khra mo brag gi kha byang dang | gter ston lung gtan (sic) dang bcas pa'i shog ser gnyis phul nas | ...* See discussion on this point below.

²⁰ If I am not mistaken about this connection between Rig 'dzin rGod ldem and Rin chen gling pa, then it becomes even more meaningful to inquire about the links between the (later) "rDo rje brag system" and the heritage of g.Yung ston pa rDo rje dpal (1285–1331), as the latter played a key role in the constellation formed by Padma Las 'brel rtsal, Karmapa III Rang byung rdo rje, g.Yung ston pa rDo rje dpal himself and Me ban Rin chen gling pa especially around the *Heart-essence of the Dākinī*. g.Yung ston pa actually appears, within the lineages that finally merged

*When did Brag lung pa mkhas btsun Rin chen dpal
teach rDzogs chen to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem?*

In the recent rewriting of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's biography by Chos dbyings,²¹ Brag lung pa mkhas btsun Rin chen dpal's teachings about rDzogs chen are placed right after the mention²² of rGod ldem's 13th year (so, in Western style, when he was twelve: 1349), when Rig 'dzin rGod ldem obtained the realizations of Mañjuśrī Nāgarakṣa, and before his 25th year (1361), when he started to have experiences connected to his future activities as a treasure discoverer. This may be due to Chos dbyings' wish to set a *thematic* order in the biography, leading him to gather in one place all information about Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's masters found in Nyi ma bzang po's text. Nyi ma bzang po's original narrative, however, places this episode after (*de nas*, 'then') the events dated to his 25th year (1361) and before his 30th (1366) when Rig 'dzin rGod ldem discovered his treasure in Zang zang lha brag.²³

Nyi ma bzang po's biography of rGod ldem quotes a prophetic text as follows:²⁴

The [one of the] kind that liberates anything (?) will meet with this Dharma in his 25th year; in his 35th [year, 1371], an uncommon realization [of it] will be born [in him].

This might be understood as meaning that Rig 'dzin rGod ldem was taught rDzogs chen by Brag lung pa mkhas btsun Rin chen dpal from 1361 on, and would have gained a perfect realization of it in 1371, five years after discovering his own rDzogs chen cycles in Zang zang lha brag.

In any case, we can assume that Rig 'dzin rGod ldem was taught some form of rDzogs chen, maybe not unconnected to what he later favored, by this Brag lung pa mkhas btsun Rin chen dpal, at some point

with Byang gter in the 16th century, in two other contexts: that of the uninterrupted oral transmission (*bka' ma*), on the one hand, and that of *Mañjuśrī Master of Life*, on the other hand.

²¹ Chos dbyings (2015), vol. 62, pp. 82-125.

²² Chos dbyings (2015), vol. 62, p. 88: *dgong lo bcu gsum par mdze nag las kyi 'khor lo'i sgo nas khyab bdag ye shes sems dpa' klu'i srin por bsgrub pas grub pa mthar phyin* ।

²³ However, as we will see below, Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's practice of Mañjuśrī Nāgarakṣa as early as 1349 is one of the hints that points to a long-lasting association with Rin chen gling pa, who was also a specialist of this rare practice.

²⁴ Nyi ma bzang po (2015), p. 17: *gtad rgya las | gang grol ba'i rigs rtsa lnga la chos 'di dang mjal : sum cu rtsa lnga pa la rtogs pa khyad par can skeyes so* :. Chos dbyings has suppressed this quotation from his biography of rGod ldem, most probably because he could not make sense of it—but it might indeed be meaningful for us, suggesting a strong continuity between his training before he discovered his own treasure and the practice he went on making after.

between 1361 and 1366. If this Rin chen dpal was well-versed in Nāgarakṣa, he could also (though this is much more speculative) be the one who taught it to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem as soon as 1349.²⁵ As Rin chen gling pa fits these two requirements, we have a set of clues that allows us, if not to formally conclude, at least to reach a very high level of probability in identifying him as being Brag lung pa Rin chen dpal.

*Summary of the arguments in favor of
Brag lung pa mkhas btsun Rin chen dpal's
identification as Rin chen gling pa*

To make the reading of this article easier, let us start with summarizing all the arguments in favor of this identification of rGod ldem's master as being Rin chen gling pa:

- First, Rin chen gling pa's personal name was Rin chen [rgyal mtshan] dpal [bzang po].²⁶
- His dates are most probably 1289–1368, so there is no chronological inconsistency—he was a reputed old master during Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's youth and passed away soon after rGod ldem opened Zang zang lha brag (1366)
- He was from Southern Tibet and dwelt in various places that may have earned him the surname “Brag lung pa” given to rGod ldem's rDzogs chen master.
- He was (at least in his early life) a well-educated monk, which is precisely what the title *mkhas btsun* means.

This series of points are *negative* arguments—merely establishing that there is *no contradiction* in assuming that he may have been rGod ldem's rDzogs chen teacher. But there are also *positive* reasons that make this hypothesis probable:

- As regards rDzogs chen, he was one of the two (three, if we count Klong chen pa) main lineage holders of the *Heart-Essence of the Ḍākinī* (revealed in 1313) active in the period 1349–1361. Rig 'dzin rGod ldem knew the *Heart-Essence of*

²⁵ He could also, of course, have been taught the practice Nāgarakṣa on the basis of Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer's *gter ma* by the unknown master lCang ma ba who trained him in that tradition, or on the basis of Gu ru Chos dbang's revelation by the equally obscure master sNang ldan rgyal po who transmitted him that lineage.

²⁶ See below the translation of his biography from Gu ru bKra shis (1990). In this source (p. 405), this appears to be his monastic name: *de bas chos sgor bzhuḡs* (sic) | *mtshan rin chen rgyal mtshan dpal bzang por btags* |.

the *Dākinī* very well: it can be proved that he taught it to his disciples, and full sections of it are included in his own main rDzogs chen cycle, the *dGongs pa zang thal* (1366).²⁷ The first point implies that he did not just get a copy of these (then rare) texts but got trained in them by some lineage-holding master.

- In fact, there is an allusion to Padma las 'brel rtsal, Rin chen gling pa and Klong chen pa in the *dGongs pa zang thal* itself, which, however obscure at first, becomes quite transparent if one is well informed of these figures' biographies.²⁸
- Rin chen gling pa also revealed a *gter ma* about Nāgarakṣa, it seems, in 1310 or 1311—so he could have taught it to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem around 1349, when, for an unknown reason, rGod ldem practiced that rare deity, which is mainly an antidote against the illnesses caused by the *nāgas*.²⁹
- This hypothesis also makes good sense with the prophecies that, in Nyi ma bzang po's biography of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, accompany the mention of *Brag lung pa* Rin chen dpal.
- Another perplexing issue in Nyi ma bzang po's biography of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem is the mention of his father practicing *rDzogs chen bram ze*. This may be alluding to the obscure doxographical category of the *Yang ti bram ze*, for which we have a (problematic) list of *tantras*, but no known system for practice. Now, Rin chen gling pa's rDzogs chen cycle *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*, though included (without explanations) by Kong sprul, in the *Rin chen gter mdzod*, in the *Padma snying thig* subsection of the *Man ngag sde*, presents itself as a section of the *Yang ti*, the other being the *Yang ti sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor*. This, for many reasons, does not work quite well with the traditional doxographies of rDzogs chen. However, it might mean that rGod ldem's father received a form of rDzogs chen that *he* identified as

²⁷ It is plain to any reader of both corpora, but should be established in detail in further research through a careful comparison of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, not only with the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*, but, in fact, with all know earlier *snying thig* literature, including the cycle *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod* revealed by Rin chen gling pa. To start with, I have set up a tentative table of comparison as an appendix of the present paper.

²⁸ See below.

²⁹ Incidentally, this is exactly the time of Black Death in Europe. It is believed to have started a few years earlier from the borderlands of Tibet. Europe in the 14th century also saw large-scale persecution of lepers, giving the impression that leprosy had long been widespread. Perhaps this was also the case in Tibet at the same time.

being the *Yang ti bram ze*, and which might have been—though that is, in the present state of research, mere speculation—Rin chen gling pa's *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*.

- And, finally, as we will see in the biography translated below, although this is a very minor argument, there is at least one uncanny formal similarity between the narrative of Rin chen gling pa's main treasure discovery and those of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem: the fact that he finds in a cave a treasure box divided into five repositories (*mdzod lnga*). This can maybe be regarded as one further—admittedly not very strong, of course—hint of some degree of closeness between the two figures.

Rig 'dzin rGod ldem and the Heart-essence of the Ḍākinī

The strongest of all these arguments is definitely the presence of large segments of the *Heart-essence of the Ḍākinī* in rGod ldem's *dGongs pa zang thal*. Of course, the literature of the *rDzogs chen snying thig* is pretty repetitive;³⁰ but the *dGongs pa zang thal* can really, in some regards, be presented as an expanded redaction of the *Heart-essence of the Ḍākinī*,³¹ completed by an important corpus connected to Vimalamitra (which is in many regards a practice-oriented rewriting of texts from the *Heart-essence of Vimalamitra*), to which is added a 'Vairocana corpus' that feels more original (or, rather: the origins of which have not been traced so far). The presence of rewritten elements from the *Heart-essence of Vimalamitra* is, however, much less significant than the borrowings from the *Heart-essence of the Ḍākinī*: the 'Vimalamitra corpus,' although not common knowledge, was more widespread in rGod ldem's time.³² By contrast, it is well-known, especially, that

³⁰ See especially C. Cantwell (2020: e. g. pp. 14-19) about the globally not so creative nature of the *gter ma* literature, even by Tibetan standards. It is not a special feature of the *dGongs pa zang thal* that many of its components are found, with very few variations, in both earlier and later literature. But this does not make rNying ma rDzogs chen literature the outflow of an indistinct pool of shared texts: to the contrary, it is quite possible to retrace threads of borrowings, genealogical lines of derivations.

³¹ This is not merely the philologist's point of view, but is stated in an allusive but indisputable way in the *dGongs pa zang thal* itself (see below).

³² The biographies of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's disciples show evidence that he granted them the transmissions of both *snying thig*. So if the one who trained him in the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* had also been a master of the *Bi ma snying thig*, it would make even more sense. There are no traces, in biographies, of Rin chen gling pa receiving the *Bi ma snying thig*. But we know that Rin chen gling pa was close to Karmapa Rang byung rdo rje to whom, Gu ru bKra shis says, he gave all the transmissions of his own *gter chos*.³² It is not unlikely that Rin chen gling pa received the *Bi ma snying thig* from Karmapa Rang byung rdo rje, who was a great specialist of that

Klong chen pa himself had difficulties getting a complete set of the *Heart-essence of the Dākinī* as late as 1339.³³

Thus, if we do not wish to follow a purely supernatural explanation, it seems reasonable to assume that there must have been a human link between the discovery of the treasure by Padma las 'brel rtsal in 1313 and Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's own findings 53 years later. And there are not, in fact, many candidates: in the early 14th century, as I already mentioned, there were only two active transmission lines for this corpus—the main one from the actual disciples of Padma las 'brel rtsal (Karmapa III Rang 'byung rdo rje, *rGyal sras legs pa* and Rin chen gling pa) and a secondary one (which later became the mainstream) through a direct revelation to Klong chen pa.

There are two further arguments, other than textual parallelisms, proving that Rig 'dzin rGod ldem was a master of the *Heart-essence of the Dākinī* (although this never appears in his own traditional hagiographies, which are so focused on his career as a discoverer of *gter ma* and hidden lands that they ignore that he may also have transmitted teachings received from human masters). One is found in the *Story of g.Yung*.³⁴ This small text is extremely important as it is one of the only contemporary witnesses of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem outside of the Byang gter hagiographic tradition. The second one is found in the *Garland of Light*, a collection of early biographies of rGod ldem's successors.

The Story of g.Yung, its author and date, as a proof of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's mastery of the Heart-essence of the Dākinī

The *Story of g.Yung* is a document appended to the *Heart-essence of the Dākinī*.³⁵ The text, quite allusive, is not easy to understand. Its anonymous author (there is no colophon) says, if I understand well, that he first received all the transmissions from 'the holy lama,' in an

system. There is a quite large practice manual on this cycle by him in the *Bi ma snying thig* corpus as it stands nowadays—the *Nyams len lag khriḡs ma'i khrid ngo mtshar can*—e.g., Dri med 'od zer 2009, vol. 4, pp. 9-46. This text, quite original in some regards compared to what later (when Klong chen pa's influence became hegemonic on this tradition) became the mainstream system, would deserve careful scrutiny if we start considering seriously that the *Bi ma snying thig* may have been passed to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem by Rin chen gling pa on the basis of this manual, or at least in the spirit of a style or type of understanding of the *Bi ma snying thig* exemplified by this manual. Rin chen gling pa could also have received the *Bi ma snying thig* from any close disciple of Rang byung rdo rje such as g.Yung ston pa, or from *rGyal sras Legs pa*, or even, after all, from Ku ma rā dza (1266–1343), who was the main holder of that lineage before Klong chen pa.

³³ See Arguillère 2007, p. 97.

³⁴ *g.Yung gi lo rgyus*.

³⁵ Dri med 'od zer 2009, vol. 6, pp. 157-160, or pp. 508-514 in the Dar thang edition.

iron-bird year, 48 years after the treasure was originally extracted. This has to be 1361.³⁶ It is not fully clear who is, in this context, the 'holy lama.' The first person to be mentioned next is 'Sho *ban*, the disciple of the treasure discoverer,'³⁷ i.e. *rGyal sras* Legs pa (1290–1365—so, still alive in 1361). But the versified first section is followed by a development in prose, which seems to contain an explanation of this point. The latter says that the author has received the texts (of the *Heart-essence of the Dākinī*) from Chos nyid shes rab,³⁸ who himself got them from Tshul khirms shes rab.³⁹ The 'holy lama' must then be Chos nyid shes rab, since, in both the verse and the prose passages, the transmissions are given in the same place, called 'the Palace of the Black Rock hermitage.'⁴⁰

None of the available sources about *rGyal sras* Legs pa tells us about a disciple called Tshul khirms shes rab, but Jean-Luc Achard's⁴¹

³⁶ Dri med 'od zer 2009, vol. 6, p. 158, l. 3-7: *de'i lung bla ma dam pa las | | bdag cag sprang po ri pas (sic) yis | | dben gnas brag nag pho brang du | | lcags byi zla ba gsum pa ste | | gter nas byon lo zhe bryad la | | dbang khrid lung dpe man ngag rdzogs | | btags grol dran pas grol ba'i chos | | yongs rdzogs zhus nas rang gzhan don | | gnyis ka gyis (sic) kyi rjes gnang thob |*.

³⁷ *gTer ston zhal slob sho ban*.

³⁸ There is no Chos nyid shes rab recorded as a person on BDRC. However, the name appears in the *Record of Teaching Received* of the 5th Dalai Lama (1971: vol. III, p. 175) or in this passage of Brag dkar rta so *sprul sku's gSung 'bum* (2011: vol. 2, p. 392): *phyag rdor gyi skor las | byang gling phyag rdor gtum po'i bryud pa ni | rdo rje 'chang | gsang ba'i bdag po o rgyan chen po | nam mkha'i snying po | byang chub gling pa dpal rgyal mtshan | rgyal mtshan bshes gnyen | bsod nams rgyal mtshan | chos nyid shes rab | nam mkha' grags pa | bde gshegs rgyal mtshan | se rin rgyal | mgon po zla ba | byams pa chos rgyan | etc.* In both cases, we are in the context of lineages connected to *gTer ston* Byang chub gling pa (P7259) and we find Nam mkha' grags pa as the disciple of Chos nyid shes rab. This makes perfect sense because the author of the *Story of g.Yung* is indeed Nam mkha' grags [pa]. The grand-disciple of this Nam mkha' grags pa is clearly *Se ston* Rin chen rgyal mtshan, a late 14th–early 15th century Byang gter figure, which also makes full sense if Nam mkha' grags pa was a direct student of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, at least for the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*.

³⁹ *dPal ldan bla ma dam pa shes rab tshul khirms de nyid la dben nas brag nag tu dam pa chos nyid shes rab kyi (sic) dbang dang chos skor thams cad yongs su rdzogs par thugs nyams su bzhed shing khyad par khrid kyi don khregs chod kyis yin lugs mngon du gyur pa mdzad nas | thod rgal gyis 'phyugs med gnad kyis mngon sum rang thog tu gtan la phab nas dus de nyid du kun tu bzang po'i dgongs pa mngon du mdzad do |*—All my gratitude goes to Jean-Luc Achard who corrected (private communication: 23/07/2023) a misnomer in my original understanding of this text.

⁴⁰ *dBen gnas brag nag pho brang* in the verse passage; *dben nas brag nag* in the prose version.

⁴¹ Achard (private communication, 23/07/2023) comments: "Actually Tshul khirms shes rab was Khro phu *lo tsā ba* and he was a master of *rGyal sras* Legs pa. In this *History of g.Yung*, Tshul khirms shes rab gave the transmission to Chos nyid shes rab who may apparently be the same as 'Prajñā Śrī' (aka Brag nag pa Shes rab dpal [bzang]—this needs further research) who gave it to Nam mkha' grags."

identification of this figure as being Khro phu *lo tsā ba* Byams pa dpal (also called Tshul khrimshes rab and reconned on BDRC⁴² as one of Padma las 'brel rtsal's *masters*) brings up a few steps closer in our inquiry: indeed, on BDRC's fact sheet on Khro phu *lo tsā ba*, one of his disciples is called IHo ba *kun mkhyen* Rin chen dpal. BDRC's identification of this Rin chen dpal as being P5298, a direct student of Sa skya *paṇḍita* (1182–1251) is not quite feasible. All seems to stem from a confusion about Khro phu *lo tsā ba*'s dates—or maybe rather from the conflation of two different 'translators of Khro phu' (as we see here and there allusions to the *earlier* and *later* 'translators of Khro phu').⁴³

IHo ba *kun mkhyen* Rin chen dpal is much more likely to be the one we are looking for here, rGod ldem's rDzogs chen master, whether or not he was the same person as Rin chen gling pa.

If we now get back to the *Story of g.Yung*, admittedly, when an action is described in Tibetan, it is not always easy, for grammatical reasons, to know for sure who is performing it. Thus, in the following passage,⁴⁴ it is impossible to decide with full certainty who, on the one hand, is the one who receives 'the own books of Sho *ban* [*rGyal sras* Legs pa], the disciple of the treasure discoverer,' and whether, on the other hand, the 'fifteen years before' refer to the period when Chos nyid shes rab gave the transmissions to the author of the text, or to the time when the text is written. Thus, there are two possible readings, of which I favor the second one:

What is more, rGyal po smon lam, the patron
Of the supreme holy place of Tsā ri,
Had, fifteen years earlier [1356],
Given [to Tshul khrimshes rab], because of his faith,
The books of Sho *ban* [*rGyal sras* Legs pa], the *gter ston*'s disciple.

This reading, though grammatically possible, makes little sense: *rGyal sras* Legs pa was still alive in 1356 and his books would thus not be scattered in such a way. Thus, I think the passage should be understood as meaning:

⁴² <http://purl.bdrc.io/resource/P4007>.

⁴³ I have already discussed elsewhere (Arguillère 2007: pp. 73-75) this issue, as Klong chen pa was also the disciple of a Khro phu pa which I then hypothetically identified as Khro pu ba *sems dpa' chen po* bSod nams seng ge (BDRC: P3098). All this requires further research as it does not seem, in my very provisional understanding of those matters, that Khro pu ba *sems dpa' chen po* bSod nams seng ge is the same person as Khro phu *lo tsā ba* 'the later,' Tshul khrimshes rab, connected to a *Kun mkhyen* Rin chen dpal who must be the same person as 'our' Brag lung pa *mkhas btsun* Rin chen dpal / Rin chen gling pa.

⁴⁴ *gZhan yang gnas mchog tsā ri yi | | yon bdag rgyal po smon lam gyis | | sngar 'das lo ni bco lnga'i gong | | gter ston zhal slob sho ban gyi | | phyag dpe dad pa'i shugs kyi phul |*.

What is more, rGyal po smon lam, the patron
 Of the supreme holy place of Tsā ri,
 Has, fifteen years ago [1366/7, when *rGyal sras* Legs pa died, at the
 earliest],
 Given [to me], because of [his⁴⁵] faith,
 The books of Sho *ban* [*rGyal sras* Legs pa], the *gter ston*'s disciple.

As we can imagine that the books would not be given away before their owner's death, this would imply that the text has been written at least fifteen years after *rGyal sras* Legs pa passed away—i.e., in 1381 at the earliest.

From the way this text is placed in the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* collection, next to writings that are genuinely of *g.Yung ston pa* rDo rje dpal (1284–1365), I originally imagined the 'g.Yung' whose story it tells to be him. But, as we have just seen, this would imply massive chronological difficulties. *g.Yung ston pa*, although nowadays nearly as forgotten as Rin chen gling pa, was even more of a public figure in his time, as a central disciple of Rang byung rdo rje and the tutor of the fourth Karmapa. So, there cannot be much debate about his chronology.

Other than the conclusion we have just reached about 1381 as a highly probable date for this part of the events reported in this text, its author further explains (p. 159, Tibetan text quoted above) that, though he gained some insight in the nature of Reality (*chos nyid*) through *khregs chod* on the basis of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* (as taught, I suppose, by Chos nyid shes rab), he did not obtain the real know-how about *thod rgal* before meeting Rig 'dzin rGod ldem.⁴⁶ This event is dated to a 'wood-female-bird'⁴⁷ year, which, in Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's chronology as we understand it, can only be 1384—twenty years, indeed, after *g.Yung ston pa* rDo rje dpal passed away.

⁴⁵ Either 'because of his faith in me,' or 'because of my faith in that tradition.' Both meanings are possible.

⁴⁶ *Dam pa prajñā de nyid las dben gnas brag nag gi pho brang du bdag nam mkha' grags kyis dbang dang lung rnams yongs su rdzogs par zhus kyang | khrid kyi nges pa ma rnyed pa la | dus phyis sprul sku rig 'dzin rgod kyi ldem 'phru can dang mjal dus chos kyi che ba dang | khrid kyi zab pa'i gnad lung bstan pa'i bka' drin la brten nas | dpal ldan bla ma chos nyid mtshan can de nyid dben gnas brag nag pho brang du spyang drangs shing shing mo bya lo'i ston zla 'bring dang ra ba gnyis la dbang lnga yongs su rdzogs pa lung rnams dang bcas pa bskyangs nas zhus te | khyad par khrid kyi skor khregs chod thod rgal rnams nyams khrid lag khrid du rdzogs par zhus shing | nyams gong 'phel gyi snang ba cung zad skyes pa dang | snang bzhi'i 'char tshul rnams go yul du gsal zhing | zab mo'i chos la nges pa'i shes pa dang | brgyud pa gsum gyi bla ma la mi phyed pa'i dad pa thob dus | | bka' rdzogs dpe rdzogs lung rnams yongs su rdzogs par gnang ste rang gzhan gyi don gnyis ka gyis shig pa'i rjes su gnang ba thob ste sa dang po'i dbang rdzogs | [...].*

⁴⁷ *Shing mo bya.*

What is more, the author of this text calls himself (p. 159) “I, Nam mkha’ grags.” This is definitely not one of g.Yung ston pa’s names, but it occurs in a lineage added to a text of the Northern Treasures collection.⁴⁸ In this context, Nam mkha’ grags figures as a disciple of rNam rgyal mgon po (1399–1424),⁴⁹ rGod ldem’s son.⁵⁰ At this stage, it is not yet clear why he is called ‘g.Yung’ and why the text of the *Heart-Essence of the Dākinī* is called *The Story of g.Yung* and placed next to texts genuinely written by g.Yung ston pa, in such a way that we can suppose the difference of the authors may not have been clear for the Tibetan editors themselves.

Be that as it may, what it proves is that, in 1384, Rig ’dzin rGod ldem was regarded as an eminent specialist of the *Heart-essence of the Dākinī*—which definitely implies that he had received it at some point.

*Rig ’dzin rGod ldem’s mastery of the Heart-essence of the Dākinī
further attested by the Garland of Light*

This is further confirmed by elements in the biographies of his disciples. For example, in *The Garland of Light*,⁵¹ in the context of the biography of rGod ldem’s son rNam rgyal mgon po, we read this passage about Rig ’dzin rGod ldem giving transmissions to his son and other disciples, towards the end of his life:⁵²

When the empowerment and guidance instructions were finished, with a single voice, they made the following request in the presence of his father, the Great Lineage Holder:⁵³ “To this son of yours, rNam rgyal mgon po, please give the complete empowerments, reading transmissions, and quintessential teachings, which includes the heart-treasures of Zang zang lha brag, the two *Seminal-Heart* (sNyung

⁴⁸ In the *gSang ba rmad byung* (the gCod of *dGongs pa zang thal*), in *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs* vol. 3, p. 384. This is further confirmed by the 5th Dalai Lama’s *Record of Teachings Received* or the passage quoted in note 38 above from Brag dkar rta so sprul sku’s *gSung ’bum* (2011), in which we saw a lineage with a master called Chos nyid shes rab and his disciple Nam mkha’ grags.

⁴⁹ Valentine 2018: ‘Namgyel Gonpo’ in *The Treasury of Lives*: <https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Namgyel-Gonpo/1639>.

⁵⁰ This Nam mkha’ grags might in fact even be the disciple of rGod ldem we know as Nam mkha’ dpal, the brother of rDo rje mgon po—but this requires further research. It should also be checked whether this is not the same person as a Nam mkha’i *mtshan can*, disciple of Rin chen gling pa and master of Me’i Śā kya bzang po (see below).

⁵¹ See Valentine 2017 for a general presentation of this text.

⁵² Unpublished translation by Jay Valentine, FCHNT internal working document (2023).

⁵³ ‘Great Lineage Holder’ is Jay Valentine’s understanding based on the spelling *rigs ’dzin*, instead of *rig ’dzin*, in this and some other texts.

tig) [cycles of] the Great Perfection,⁵⁴ *The Secret Net of Magical Illusions* (gSang ba sgyu 'phrul),⁵⁵ the ancestral teachings (known as) the Sūtra tradition of Vajrakīlaya (*Pha chos rdo rje phur pa mdo lugs*) that was revealed by Gu ru Chos dbang, *The Eight Pronouncements* (bKa' brgyad), and all the other cycles of the new and old translations.

This implies (among many other interesting things) that Rig 'dzin rGod ldem was not merely *aware* of the contents of the two *sNying thig* collections, but was also *qualified—and perceived as fully legitimate—to grant their full transmission*. In a Tibetan context, this, again, means that he was fully trained in these by one or more masters who were themselves holders of these lineages. Now, if Rin chen gling pa was his master for the *Heart-Essence of the Dākinī*, he may as well (though this assumption is more speculative in the present state of research) be the one who taught him the *Bi ma snying thig*. This would match quite well with Nyi ma bzang po's assertion that Brag lung pa Rin chen dpal taught Rig 'dzin rGod ldem “all the Dharmas of rDzogs chen” (*rdzogs pa chen po'i chos rnam*).⁵⁶

As said above, there is no trace in Rin chen gling pa's (sketchy) biographies of him receiving the *Bi ma snying thig*; but this does not prove anything: in his case as in rGod ldem's, there seems to be some reluctance to say whose disciple he was and how he got trained. From the knowledge we are starting to reconstruct of the milieu in which he was trained, it is very likely that he was well-versed in the *Bi ma snying thig* too.

The same idea of rGod ldem as a master of both *sNying thig* systems appears again further in the same source, in the life of another close disciple of his, rDo rje mgon po.⁵⁷

Other than that, [Rig 'dzin rGod ldem] gave [them] completely all the teachings of *The Seminal-Heart of Vimalamitra* and *The Seminal-Heart of the Dākinī*.

Rin chen gling pa and Padma las 'brel rtsal

Neither Padma las 'brel rtsal nor the *Heart-Essence of the Dākinī* are mentioned in Rin chen gling pa's biography by Gu ru bKras shis (and

⁵⁴ I.e., the *Bi ma snying thig* and the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*.

⁵⁵ Incidentally, we have no clue either about how rGod ldem became habilitated to teach the *sGyu 'phrul*. Although this is mentioned by Nyi ma bzang po, he does not clearly state who were the masters who trained him in this corpus.

⁵⁶ Nyi ma bzang po 2015, pp. 16-17.

⁵⁷ Jay Valentine's translation, FCHNT internal working document (2023).

only in passing in the version by Kong *sprul*)⁵⁸. We may therefore wonder whether perhaps the Rin chen gling pa mentioned here and there in the *Heart-Essence of the Dākinī* tradition might be another person—and whether, after all, the whole plot I had envisioned (in my 2002 dissertation—then to understand Klong chen pa's relations with the disciples of Padma las 'brel rtsal, and now extending it to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem) existed only in my imagination, as a perfect case of a self-confirming hypothesis—seeing everywhere in one's materials precisely what one is so eager to see.

But it is enough to read in Gu ru bKras shis' historical compilation Padma las 'brel rtsal's biography (pp. 399-403)⁵⁹ or that of Brag dkar rta so *sprul sku*,⁶⁰ or to return to their supposed common source, Sha gzugs pa Ngag dbang bKra shis, to dispel that doubt: they all state that the prophetic guide for Pad ma las 'brel rtsal's *gter ma* was granted to him by Rin chen gling pa, who had found it with his other discoveries in Ko ro brag in 'Bri thang. This occurred, they say, close to Pema las 'brel rtsal's 21st year.⁶¹ If we suppose that the 'iron rabbit' year in

⁵⁸ Kong *sprul*, *gTer ston rgya rtsa*, p. 418: *padma las 'brel rtsal gyi zab chos kyi bdag po gnang ba* |.

⁵⁹ One of the oldest sources for the life of Padma las 'brel rtsal is the *Lo rgyus rgyal ba g.yung gis mdzad pa* (in Dri med 'od zer 2009, vol. 6, pp. 142-153), which, unlike the *g.Yung gi lo rgyus*, is actually a writing of *g.Yung ston pa* rDo rje dpal. The author does not mention Rin chen gling pa (nothing is said about who gave to Padma las 'brel rtsal the *kha byang* and the *lde mig*). It is focused on *Lo ston* rDo rje 'bum, an unknown figure said to have been a companion or servant of Padma las 'brel rtsal when he discovered the *gter ma* and to have later given the yellow scrolls to Karmapa Rang byung rdo rje a year *lcags mo lugs* which can only be 1331. Globally, the main concern of this text is to present Rang byung rdo rje as the most legitimate master of the *Heart-essence of the Dākinī*. It also gives the names of Rang byung rdo rje's main disciples for this cycle: 'Bo ru ba *mkhan po* rGyal mtshan, *rTogs ldan* Ye rgyal, *sprul sku dbon po* sMan lung pa, and *g.Yung ston pa* himself (same list in Dudjom 1991: p. 574). The overall impression that emerges from all the historiographical literature on the first generations of *mKha' 'gro snying thig* masters in the 14th century is one of chaos and possibly competition for legitimacy, with Klong chen pa's final triumph (no doubt linked to the undisputable excellence and abundance of his writings on this cycle) perhaps only secured at the time of *gTer* bdag gling pa (1646–1714), or even 'Jigs med gling pa (1729/30–1798).

⁶⁰ Brag dkar rtsa so *sprul sku* (2011, vol. 13, p. 472): *De'i dus su lo ro che grong nas byon pa'i sprul sku rin chen gling pa bya bas ko ro brag nas gdan drangs pa'i gter chos kyi nang nas khra mo brag gi kha byang gter ston gyi lung bstan dang bcas pa'i shog ser 'bul du byung | gter rnam's 'don pa'i lung khyed la bstan 'dug lags | khyed kyi legs par thon la nged la yang thugs la 'dogs par zhu gsungs nas zhu'do* |.

⁶¹ *Loc. cit.*: *lcags mo dung lo nyer gcig bzhes pa'i skabs su bla ma'i gsung gis lho phyogs su 'gro don la rgyug gsungs | de'i lho phyogs lo ro tshe grong nas byon pa'i sprul sku rin chen gling pas | 'bri thang ko ro brag nas gdan drangs pa'i gter chos kyi nang nas khra mo brag gi kha byang dang | gter ston gyi lung bstan dang bcas pa'i shog ser gnyis phul nas* | ... An alternate version of the story, also reported by Gu ru bKras shis, speaks of 'an old monk' who gave Padma las 'brel rtsal the prophetic guide. Rin chen gling pa was indeed a monk, but, even supposing he was not born in 1289, but in the

which Padma las 'brel rtsal was born is 1291, we would be around 1311, which is fine if Rin chen gling pa was born in 1289. This would be a *terminus ad quem* for Rin chen gling pa's findings in Ko ro brag.

Incidentally, in this version of the story, Rin chen gling pa, while giving him the prophetic guide, asks Padma las 'brel rtsal to grant him the Dharma that he would find.

Gu ru bKras shis does not give his sources for these narratives, which are also not backed by the actual *kha byang* of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* in the received edition (which is not very specific) nor by the *mKha' 'gro snying thig gi lo rgyus*⁶² which merely says (p. 46) that the prophetic guide (*kha byang*) and the key (*lde mig*) for his *gter ma* "came into the hands"⁶³ of Padma las 'brel rtsal, without any further indication.

In fact, in another (undescribed) *gter ma* source about the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*, quoted e.g. in Brag dkar rta so *sprul sku* (2011: p. 473), four people are named together with Padma las 'brel rtsal as the predestined recipients of this teaching.

They are referred to by their year of birth, but the puzzle is fully explained on the next page (although with notes inserted in the text that express the chronological perplexities of either Brag dkar rta so *sprul sku* himself or his editors; these notes are translated in italics and between brackets):

Five [individuals,] born in the years of the tiger, dog, rabbit, dragon,
and ox
Will be the holders of this lineage and will go to Khacara.
Accordingly,
The one who was the son of the *vajra-dākinīs*,
The reincarnation of princess Padma gsal,
Born in the year of the dragon [*though the biography says: rabbit year*]
Was the treasure discoverer Las 'brel rtsal himself.
The rebirth of the Noble Lady of Shel dkar [Ye shes mtsho rgyal]

previous ox year, 1277 (which, in my opinion, is unlikely), he was not yet forty. If this were to be taken seriously, we might have to shift him to a slightly earlier date (we only have the animal of his birth year, not the element, and as he lived to be quite old, many suppositions are possible). But this would then bring other inconvenience.

In fact, the outcome of the present article is admittedly not a formal proof of its *demonstrandum*—but a tightly-knit network of explanatory hypotheses that are closely coherent with each other and provide a fairly good account of a number of texts that we would not otherwise know what to make of.

⁶² Dri med 'od zer 2009, vol. 5, pp. 46-49.

⁶³ *Lag tu son byung*—the Tibetan phrase used to mean: receiving, e.g., a letter. The source of this formula is the *Lo rgyus rgyal ba g.yung gi mdzad pa* (in Dri med 'od zer 2009, vol. 6, p. 148): *kha byang lde mig kyang lag tu son nas...* The author, g.Yung ston pa, surely knew who brought these elements to Padma las 'brel rtsal and maybe Klong chen pa is not alone to avoid, for any reason, mentioning Rin chen gling pa.

Was the son of the *padma-dākinīs*,
 Born in the tiger year, Se (sic)⁶⁴ *ban rGyal sras* Legs pa.
 As for the emanation of Princess Mandharava,
 The son of the *ratna-dākinīs*
 Was Myos (sic) *ban Rin chen gling pa* of the Ox year.
 The rebirth of the undecieving master Padma [-sambhava]
 Who was the son of the *karma-dākinīs*,
 Was Myang *ston Śākya byang chub* of the dog year.
 As for the emanation of the Abbot Bodhisattva [Śāntarakṣita],
 Who was the son of the *buddha-dākinīs*,
 It was Rang byung rdo rje of the rabbit year [though in his biography he
 is said to be of the monkey year].⁶⁵

The awkwardness of this prophecy was obvious even to the Tibetan pious reader who noticed that the dates did not match. Myang *ston Śākya byang chub*, who is presented as an extremely important person in this prophecy, is unknown to us and to the later tradition. It is also unclear why Rin chen gling pa is called Myos *ban*,⁶⁶ though it is plain from the context that this is the same person. Be it as it may, at some point, Rin chen gling pa was seen as belonging to a group of predestined masters of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*.

If we now get back to by Gu ru bKras shis' biography of Padma las 'brel rtsal, we read that two years after having received the prophetic guide (1313),⁶⁷ Padma las 'brel rtsal revealed the *Heart-Essence of the Dākinī* together with many other cycles, including his Rahula (gZa')

⁶⁴ This 'Se' seems to be a spelling mistake for 'Sho,' as *rGyal sras* Legs pa is commonly called Sho *ban rGyal sras* Legs pa. But this might prove, at a later stage of research, to be meaningful: the close association of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem and his posterity with various masters of the Se clan (Se *ston*) is quite obvious from many biographies. Pr. Jay Valentine drew my attention to an allusion to an unidentified 'Legs pa,' maybe as a master of the Se clan in rGod ldem's earliest biography (Nyi ma bzang po 2015, p. 14: *Se ston dpal chen bum pa dang | legs pa sku mched gnyis kyis | sku'i yon tan slob nyer mdzad pa'i slob dpon mdzad |*). In the context, the event recorded must be understood to happen soon after rGod ldem's father's death (early 1340s). It would then mean that rGod ldem was partly brought up by Padma las 'brel rtsal's closest disciple. But, in the present state of research, this is a pure guesswork.

⁶⁵ *sTag yos khyi 'brug glang gi lo pa lnga : 'di yi brgyud 'dzin mkha' spyod gnas su 'gro : zhes gsungs pa ltar | rdo rje mkha' 'gro'i sras su gyur pa ni : lha lcam padma gsal gyi skye ba ni : 'brug lo [rnam thar las yos lo par gsungs] gter ston las 'brel rtsal dngos yin : jo mo shel dkar bza' yi skye ba ni : padma dākki'i sras su gyur pa ni : stag lo se ban rgyal sras legs pa dang : lha lcam man dha ra ba'i sprul pa ni : rin chen dākki'i sras su gyur pa ni : glang lo myos ban rin chen gling pa dang : zog med padma bla ma'i skye ba ni : las kyi dākki'i sras su gyur pa ni : khyi lo myang ston śākya byang chub dang : mkhan po bo dhi sa twa'i sprul pa ni : sangs rgyas dākki'i sras su gyur pa ni : yos lo [rnam thar las spre'u'i lo yin par gsungs] chos rje rang byung rdo rje ste :...*

⁶⁶ This spelling occurs in some of the oldest sources.

⁶⁷ *Chu mo glang lo*.

cycle that is preserved in the *Northern Treasures Compilation* (vol. 28 & 29).⁶⁸

The next datable figure to be mentioned in this biography comes with the story of how, after finding the treasure, he blessed 'a *tantrika'* with the treasure-box. 'The next morning' (*phyir nang*), that *tantrika's* son—which would be his very important disciple *rGyal sras* Legs pa of Sho (1290–1366/7)—decided to follow him.⁶⁹ This fits chronologically, as *rGyal sras* Legs pa would have been in his early twenties—an age appropriate to follow an unknown charismatic master (though, in this case, the master was himself even younger than the disciple).⁷⁰

It seems that Padma las 'brel rtsal spent some time in his own region, found little faith, then moved to bSam yas where he was prophesied to go to Lhasa in order to meet Karmapa Rang byung rdo rje, to whom he gave the transmission of all his *gter ma* on the basis of the yellow scrolls. Now, if Gu ru bKras shis is not mistaken, this allows further chronological hypotheses, as Rang byung rdo rje traveled in Central Tibet between 1308 and 1314 only before he spent ten years in the sTod lung valley,⁷¹ and then again shortly on his way to the Mongol capital in 1332 (which is much too late—Padma las 'brel rtsal was dead already).

An episode quoted by Ruth Gamble (2020: p. 85) in her study of Rang byung rdo rje, though confusing if we take it at face value, might well be connected to this issue in a way that would match what we can

⁶⁸ This cycle, hitherto unavailable, resurfaced with the large compilation *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs* (it fills its vol. 28 and 29 under the general title *gZa' rgyud*). But as a collection of very short ritual texts without much narrative passages or even mere lineage prayers, it seems unfortunately poor in information exploitable for the historian.

⁶⁹ *Loc. cit.*, same page: *de nas tshur log nas gnyal gyi stod du slebs | gnyal stod sho yi tsher ma lung du sngags pa zhis gis zhabs tog phul bas | der sngags 'chang de la gter sgrom gyi byin rlabs mdzad | phyir nang sngags pa'i bu'ang rjes su 'brang nas byung ba rgyal sras legs pa'i rgyal mtshan yin |*.

⁷⁰ In *rGyal sras* Legs pa's biography as it appears in Gu ru bKras shis's *History*, however, it is said that he met Pad ma las 'brel rtsal in his 28th year [1317]—*op. cit.*, p. 501: *khyad par du dgung lo nyi shu rtsa brgyad pa la dpa' bo rin chen sgang pa sprul sku tshul khirms rdo rje'am | gter ston padma las 'brel rtsal gyi zhabs la gtugs nas |*. The same information is found in Kong sprul's *gTer ston brgya rtsa* (p. 521), but this does not add much strength to this chronological assumption. All the later authors are dependent upon *mKha' 'gro snying thig* histories in which Klong chen pa's hand is visible. Part of Klong chen pa's tactic (or that of his disciples) to establish his legitimacy was to present himself as the reincarnation of Padma las 'brel rtsal, which may have led to a twisting of the dates. Indeed, whether Padma las 'brel rtsal died in 1315 or in 1319, his death was in any case posterior to Klong chen pa's birth in 1308, and the rNying ma pa's embarrassment about this fact is still palpable nowadays in the tendency to evade the question by means of ready-made and rather vague formulas about Padma las 'brel rtsal's premature death.

⁷¹ See Ruth Gamble 2020: pp. 67–89.

reconstruct of Padma las 'brel rtsal's life:

In the Female Water Ox Year [1313], thanks to his relationship with the Guru [Padmasambhava], Rangjung Dorje retrieved the *Ḍākinī's Heart Essence* Treasure in Lhodrak. It was written on golden paper. He then spent three months at the confluence of the Lungchu River and one of its tributaries in Tsari, praying intensely to Padmasambhava, before meeting him directly and receiving empowerments and transmissions from him.

As Ruth Gamble rightly remarks:

...If he [Rang byung rdo rje] had claimed to have found this treasure himself, it is strange for him not to have written anything about this in his autobiography. Tsewang Gyel acknowledges this and says that Rangjung Dorje purposely did not write about his discovery because it was so secret. But this omission in his work could also be read as evidence for this text's *later* attribution to him.

Indeed, g.Yung ston pa's account of the *Heart-Essence of the Ḍākinī* lineage,⁷² although largely devoted to the glory of his master Rang byung rdo rje, does not go beyond stating that after Karmapa had received the *Heart-Essence of the Ḍākinī* from Padma las 'brel rtsal, he got a direct, visionary transmission of it. In fact, the passage translated by Ruth Gamble seems to be a distortion of the story as found in e.g., the compilation *Karma Kam tshang gi brgyud pa rin po che'i rnam thar*:

In the Female Water Ox Year [1313], Guru Las 'brel rtsal presented [Rang byung rdo rje] with the yellow scrolls of the *rDzogs chen Heart-Essence of the Ḍākinī* which he had extracted as a treasure in lHo brag.⁷³ After he [Rang byung rdo rje] remained [in retreat] for three months

⁷² g.Yung ston pa rDo rje dpaI 2009: p. 152.

⁷³ The seeming contradiction between Padma las 'brel rtsal's biography which tells us that he gave the transmissions of the *Heart-Essence of the Ḍākinī* to Rang byung rdo rje in Lhasa, and the mention of lHo brag in Rang byung rdo rje's biography is easy to solve in this way, as the locative *lho brag tu* does not have to be understood as meaning the place where the teaching was given, but can apply just as well to the place where the treasure was found. In Nyoshul Khenpo's life of Padma las 'brel rtsal (2005: pp. 71-72), the *gter ston* does not give the yellow scrolls to the Karmapa, but *shows* them to him and bestows the empowerments and oral transmissions directly on the basis of these scrolls, and not on the basis of transcriptions. This is more coherent with other narratives in which Padma las 'brel rtsal finally gives the scrolls to *rGyal sras* Legs pa. Indeed, Gu ru bKra shis (op. cit., p. 501) says that when Rang byung rdo rje later summoned *rGyal sras* Legs pa to receive again the whole *Heart-Essence of the Ḍākinī* "in his [rGyal sras Legs pa's] 43rd year, that of the water male monkey" (1332), *rGyal sras* Legs pa taught him on the basis of these scrolls (*'di shog ser steng nas phul ba yin zer ba'ang snang* །)—which seems to imply that he had kept them.

in Bon lung in Tsā ri, praying [to Padmasambhava], he actually met the Precious One of Oḍḍyāna who [re-] gave him the empowerments and oral transmissions.⁷⁴

So, this date of 1313 seems worthy of being taken seriously, but as the one in which Padma las 'brel rtsal bestowed the transmissions of the *Heart-Essence of the Dākinī* to Rang byung rdo rje, very soon after having retrieved the treasure. This would make sense also in case Gu ru bKras shis is right in stating that Padma las 'brel rtsal died in his 25th year, 1315. Gu ru bKras shis says that he gave the *Heart-Essence of the Dākinī* to Rang byung rdo rje, but the whole of his *gter chos* only to rGyal sras Legs pa of Sho and to Rin chen gling pa.⁷⁵

Nyoshul Khenpo's biography of Padma las 'brel rtsal in *A Marvelous Garland of Rare Gems* contains interesting information about Rin chen gling pa,⁷⁶ partly borrowed from Sha gzugs pa Ngag dbang bkra shis, either directly or through Brag dkar rta so *sprul sku*, about the association of Rin chen gling pa with both Padma las 'brel rtsal and rGyal sras Legs pa. I inserted an edition and translation of Nyoshül Khenpo's narrative in the proper place of my translation of Gu ru bKras shis's biography of Rin chen gling pa below. An element appears in this text, the sources of which I have not found: it would be rGyal sras Legs pa, rather than the *gter ston* himself, who gave Rin chen gling pa the full transmission of the *Heart-essence of the Dākinī* while Padma las 'brel rtsal was still alive, but in retreat. Nyoshül Khenpo also states that, later, in the same way as Rin chen gling pa had given Padma las 'brel rtsal the prophetic guide that allowed him to discover the *Heart-Essence of the Dākinī*, the latter gave the former the key to the treasures he would extract at the 'rock looking like a black tortoise.'

From this cross-readings of biographies of Padma las 'brel rtsal and

⁷⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 245: *Chu mo glang lo la gu ru las 'brel rtsal gyis | lho brag tu rdzogs chen mkha' 'gro snying thig gter nas bton pa'i shog ser phyag tu phul | tsā ri'i bon lung du zla ba gsum der bzhugs nas gsol ba btab pas | o rgyan rin po che dang dngos su mjal nas dbang lung rnams rdzogs par gnang |*. Maybe *phyag tu phul* could be understood literally, as meaning that Padma las 'brel rtsal merely placed the yellow scrolls in Rang byung rdo rje's hands.

⁷⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 401: *Sho yi rgyal sras legs pa dang | sprul sku rin chen gling pa gnyis la gter chos rnams tshang bar gnang |*. Same idea in gTer bdag gling pa's practice manual for the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*, p. 220: *...skal ldan padma las 'brel rtsal gyis gter nas bton pa mkha' 'gro snying thig rtsa ba'i skor rnams sho'i rgyal sras legs pa dang chos rgyal rin chen gling pa sogs la bka' babs pa dang |...* gTer bdag gling pa then explains how Klong chen pa mystically got the lineage. So it is plain that in the 17th century all memory of a rivalry between Klong chen pa and Rin chen gling pa had vanished; it is amusing, however, to note that, in this case, it is Rang byung rdo rje who gets omitted.

⁷⁶ English version (2005): pp. 72-73; French version (Padmakara, 2016, globally better): p. 150.

Karmapa Rang byung rdo rje, we can imagine that Rin chen gling pa's association with Padma las 'brel rtsal started in 1311 (just after Rin chen gling pa found his own first treasure); that it lasted until the latter's death in 1319 (or 1315); and that Rin chen gling pa had full authority on the *Heart-Essence of the Dākinī*, even more so after Rang byung rdo rje passed away (1339).

Now, to get back to our inquiry about the master who taught Rig 'dzin rGod ldem the *Heart-Essence of the Dākinī* during his youth, Rang byung rdo rje died too early to be one of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's teachers, and if he or Klong chen pa had been among rGod ldem's masters, the tradition would most probably have kept record of that. It must therefore be either from rGyal sras Legs pa or Rin chen gling pa, or one of their disciples, that he got the *Heart-essence of the Dākinī*—and, be it only because of the name Rin chen dpal mentioned in rGod ldem's biographies, Rin chen gling pa is definitely the most likely candidate.

Rin chen gling pa as a co-revealer of the mKha' 'gro snying thig?
The puzzling wonders of ms. KN 1984.

So far, our hints about Rin chen gling pa's very close association with the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* lay upon several narratives that seemingly stem from the same source, the 17th century author Sha gzugs pa Ngag dbang bkra shis.⁷⁷

There is, however, a non-standard edition of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* that is a relic of another tradition of that corpus, in which Rin chen gling pa obviously played a very central role. The Tibetan editors who, in 1984, published a facsimile copy (781 p.) of this corpus under the title: *mKha' 'gro snying thig gi chos skor—reproduced from an ancient but perhaps incomplete and disordered manuscript from the library of bla-ma Ņi-ma of glañ-phran*⁷⁸ were certainly unaware of the important changes this manuscript could bring to our perception of the early history of *mKha' 'gro snying thig*.

First, what do we know of the manuscript we call *KN 1984*?

The *mKha' 'gro snying thig gi gsol 'debs* (*KN 1984*, pp. 365-371), one of the only texts in which Klong chen pa's name (Dri med 'od zer) appears, is ascribed to Klong chen pa himself. It does not mention Rin chen gling pa at all. All its interest, however, lies in the later additions to the lineage after Klong chen pa, which allow us to locate the production of this manuscript: the lineage, indeed, ends with "Padma

⁷⁷ The fact that he was a master of this lineage is known from a contemporary source, rGyal sras bZod pa grags pa's history of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* (see below). But we cannot trace the source for the detailed narrative earlier than Sha gzugs pa.

⁷⁸ From this point on quoted as *KN 1984*.

'phrin las, Padma klong gsal, and myself" (*bdag*). This probably refers to sGang steng *sprul sku* I Padma 'phrin las (bdr: P2659: ~1565–1642), his disciple (P2729), and a grand-disciple who could be Pha rgod Nam mkha' seng ge (P2730). All these lamas were active in Bhutan and these are the latest figures mentioned in the whole manuscript. All its other contents are much older.

My conclusion is thus that its textual content, with the exception of this extension of a lineage to the 17th century, belongs at the latest to the 15th, but that it must have been copied in the late 17th century in Bhutan, that is to say, in a milieu in which Klong chen pa was the main authority.

Its content, however, reveals an older tradition of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* in which Rin chen gling pa enjoyed the central position—and Klong chen pa none.

Indeed, in this edition, we do not find any of Klong chen pa's additional compositions and complementary revelations. Instead, we find traces of Rin chen gling pa's presence, *which are never found in the colophons of the 'mainstream' edition.*

In some of them, the colophons may mean that he was the main recipient of Padma las 'brel rtsal's revelations. In others, it seems to be presented as the *gter ston*.⁷⁹

In the first category, we find:

- The *Slob dpon padma lha lcam padma gsal lung ston pa* (KN 1984, pp. 51-66), in the colophon of which Rin chen gling pa appears as the one who lent his text after having given the empowerment and the oral transmission.
- The colophon of the *rGyud bcangs pas yon tan 'byung tshul* (KN 1984, pp. 135-143) indicates that it was given (*gnang*) by Padma las 'brel rtsal to *Chos rgyal* Rin chen gling pa in Dam tshang shel phug.
- the *Khrid rgyab lung gi phreng ba* (KN 1984, pp. 463-483) is presented as having been taught on the basis of Rin chen gling pa's own books, which might not imply more than the fact he was a central disciple of Padma las 'brel rtsal.

More ambiguous are the texts strangely presented as *teachings of Rin chen gling pa*:

⁷⁹ The original core of Padma las 'brel rtsal's *mKha' 'gro snying thig* can probably be reconstructed by identifying the texts common to both Klong chen pa's corpus and KN 1984. It is indeed difficult otherwise to spot Klong chen pa's additions, since he often signs, in this context, with the pen name "Padma las 'brel rtsal."

- The *'Bras bu yongs rdzogs btags sgrol snying po* (KN 1984, pp. 145-167)'s colophon calls this text "the holy / authentic Dharma of Chos rgyal Rin chen gling pa" (*chos rgyal rin chen gling pa'i dam chos*). This could either mean that he was the predestined heir of Padma las 'brel rtsal's revelation, or that it was his own hidden treasure.
- The *Sangs rgyas kyi 'das rjes gsum pa* (KN 1984, pp. 179-182) ends with: *las can gcig dang 'phrad par shog : chos rgyal rin chen gling pa'i gdams ngag go* :. In many *gter ma* texts, the name of the *gter ston* appears directly after a formula of the type *las can gcig dang 'phrad par shog*. This might well be the meaning here.
- the *dBang gi cho ga rim pa* (KN 1984, pp. 193-254) also mentions Rin chen gling pa in its colophon in a way that may mean either that he was the *gter ston* or that he was the predestined *chos bdag*: *u rgyan padma'i bka' babs : chos rgyal rin chen gling pa'i phyag len no* :.

In some other texts, he appears, if not as the *gter ston*, at least as the one who decoded the yellow scrolls (or at least verified Padma las 'brel rtsal's deciphering):

- The *Khyad par gyi rig pa'i rtsal dbang gi gnad* (KN 1984, pp. 291-297) is clearly presented in its colophon as a *gter ma* discovered by Padma las 'brel rtsal together with *Lo ston*, but then edited by *Me ban Chos kyi rgyal po Rin chen gling pa* on the basis of the yellow scrolls. *Lo ston* is *rDo rje 'bum* is mentioned in *g.Yung ston pa's Lo rgyus rgyal ba g.yung gis mdzad pa* as having presented the yellow scrolls to Rang byung rdo rje. Here, Rin chen gling pa is a mystic editor with a superior capacity to read the *dākinī* scripts.
- The *Chags chen lam du 'jug pa'i dbang gi rim pa* (KN 1984, pp. 373-379) has the mention "corrected by Rin chen gling pa upon the yellow scrolls" (*rin chen gling pas shog ser la shus dag go* :).
- the *rTags tshad kyi yi ge* (KN 1984, pp. 485-492) ends with a barely readable formula mentioning *Chos rgyal Rin chen gling pa*.

However, although one could understand the colophons of the following texts as meaning that Rin chen gling pa was the main heir of Padma las 'brel rtsal's *gter ma* revelations, to me they sound as if Rin chen gling pa was their discoverer (they are indeed pretty similar to the colophons of Rin chen gling pa's own *gter chos*):

- The *mKha' 'gro snying thig chen mo'i don gsal me long* (KN 1984,

pp. 493-553) has a colophon that reads: *chos kyi rgyal po rin chen gling pa la : mkha' 'gro snying thig o rgyan bka' babs so* :⁸⁰.

- Another text entitled *sNying po gsal ba zhes bya ba'i khrid gzhung don gsal bla med* (KN 1984, pp. 555-595) finishes with: *o rgyan rjes 'dzin rin chen gling pa la : mkha' 'gro snying thig gsang ba'i bka' 'babs so* :. This text is remarkable because it contains (p. 595) a famous prophecy about Dri med 'od zer (Klong chen pa) *that is clearly not of the same hand as the text in which it has been inserted.*
- In the same way, the *mKha' 'gro snying thig gi rnal 'byor bzhi'i gdams pa* (or *man ngag*—KN 1984, pp. 607-619) ends with: *chos rgyal rin chen gling pa'i bka' babs so* |.

Additionally, as we will see below while editing and translating passages of it, the *Bla ma rgyud pa'i rim pa* (KN 1984, pp. 119-124), despite its *gter ma* mark, was clearly, at least, completed by Rin chen gling pa.

He is also mentioned as the successor of Padma las 'brel rtsal in a *rGyud pa'i gsol 'debs* (KN 1984, pp. 255-257) which, incidentally, does not go any further than him: this might be a sign of the antiquity, if not of the manuscript itself (which I think was produced in the 17th century), at least of most of its contents.

All in all, there are two possible readings of all these colophons: at the very least, Rin chen gling pa is presented as the principal heir of this Dharma, capable of correcting on the basis of the *mkha' 'gro brda yig* the deciphering done by its discoverer. At the maximum, he could, like Klong chen pa, have himself revealed (or re-revealed) parts of it. I tend to favor the second reading, which allows us to make better sense of passages found in Klong chen pa's biographies.⁸¹

As we will see below in the appendix of this article, a comparison of the contents of this edition of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* with what has become the standard version reveals that KN 1984 does not merely contain *less* than the mainstream version (which lead its Tibetan contemporary editors to suspect it to be "incomplete"), but also *more*—extra materials not found in Klong chen pa's edition of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*—and that these are more often than not the texts in which Rin chen gling pa is named. This gives the impression that there was an original core of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* that got expanded in one way by Rin chen gling pa and in another way by Klong chen pa.

We will now see that Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's *dGongs pa zang thal* actually presents itself as another, more complete version of the *mKha'*

⁸⁰ Plus an *ex libris* that might later prove to be interesting to trace the source of this manuscript: *Byam gling pa Su rya'i dpe'o*.

⁸¹ See below.

'gro snying thig.

*An allusion to the mKha' 'gro snying thig, Padma las 'brel rtsal
and Rin chen gling pa in the dGongs pa zang thal itself*

One of the texts placed at the beginning of A 'dzom 'brug pa's edition of the *dGongs pa zang thal* is the *sNyan brgyud rin po che'i lung byang ye shes thugs kyi lde mig*.⁸² It contains a general description of what the *dGongs pa zang thal* is, a narrative of its concealment and prophecies about its discovery. But the passage that is the most interesting for us is the one that presents this corpus as bringing an especially complete *variant* of something that also exists in other *gter chos*.

It reads:⁸³

The great, vast, fully complete version was hidden at the Lion Rock in Mon Bum thang.

It was abbreviated and its summary is hidden at the Variegated Rock in the country of Dwags [po].

The complete [version] that focusses on the meaning is hidden in Zang zang lha brag.

The one in which contemplation is the main thing, which conforms to the effortless [aspect of the practice] is in the belly of the *nāga* demon the southern rock (*lho brag*).⁸⁴

The complete method for liberating one single individual is hidden in the Bear's Den in Sha'ug.

Everything is interesting in these few obscure lines. First, it is partly identical with a passage quoted in Klong chen pa's *Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin* (the great practice manual of the *mKha' 'gro yang tig*) as being from the *Don gsal*.⁸⁵ Klong chen pa's version,⁸⁶ put in simple terms,

⁸² Cited edition (*dGongs pa zang thal* 1973), pp. 37-51.

⁸³ Cited edition (*dGongs pa zang thal* 1973), p. 48: *yongs rdzogs rgyas pa chen po : mon bum thang seng ge'i brag la sbas yod : mdor bsdus te dril ba : dwags lung khra bo'i brag la sbas yod : cha tshang don dril ba zang zang lha brag la sbas yod : dgongs pa gtso che ba rtsol med dang phyogs mthun pa lho brag klu bdud lte ba na yod : gang zag gcig gi grol thabs tshang ba sha 'ug dom tshang la sbas yod :*

⁸⁴ It will be clearer a few lines below why I do not understand this *lho brag* as being the Tibetan province of that name.

⁸⁵ I could not identify this text so far, although the *sNying po gsal ba zhes bya ba'i khrid gzhung don gsal bla med* of KN 1984 would deserve closer scrutiny, as it contains, indeed, similar prophecies. This is all the more interesting as it is a text of the Rin chen gling pa corpus that does not seem to have an exact equivalent in the Klong chen pa corpus—which would then imply that Klong chen pa got copies even of Rin chen gling pa's addition to the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* and made use of them without mentioning.

⁸⁶ *Bi ma mi tra 'byon dgongs nas | | tshig tsam rlung phyogs tsam du yang | | 'di nyid tshig tsam bshad du med | | phyi rabs skal ldan don byed du | | dwangs lung ldang lha'i*

only mentions three sets of texts: (1) a very extensive version connected to Vimalamitra, hidden in *dwangs lung ldang lha'i brag*—which I understand to be the *Bi ma snying thig*; (2) a version condensed by Ye shes mtsho rgyal, hidden in *dwangs lung khra mo brag* (or, again—which gives the feeling that the text is corrupt or has been clumsily manipulated—in *dwangs lung ldang lha'i brag*). I suppose this is the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* in its original form revealed by Padma las 'brel rtsal; (3) a very extensive version for scholars (*mkhas pa paṇḍita*) who enjoy detailed instructions (*gdams pa spros pa*) hidden in Bum thang. I suppose these are the additional revelations and commentaries by Klong chen pa himself, as the following parts of the text seem to be prophecies about him (Dri med 'od zer) though he is also called Padma las 'brel rtsal.

If we now turn back to the version of this text in the *dGongs pa zang thal*, the meaning is clearly different. First, to start with the simplest, in Rin chen gling pa's biography the "Bear's Den [Ravine] in Sha'ug [sTag mgo]" is the place in which Rin chen gling pa got a direct visionary transmission of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* from Padma las 'brel rtsal, in a bird year that might be 1321. "The complete method for liberating one single individual" might then be understood as being Rin chen gling pa's own additions to the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*.

Second, as for "the [variant of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*] in which contemplation is the main thing, which conforms to the effortless [aspect of the practice]" that is "hidden is in the belly of the *nāga* demon in the southern rock," it is quite reminiscent of "the rock looking like a black tortoise in India" (*rgya gar pha wang rus sbal nag po nas gter nas drangs pa'o*) from which Rin chen gling pa extracted the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*.⁸⁷ This may sound quite speculative, but a close examination of the fragments of the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod* preserved in the *Rin chen gter mdzod* may show that—despite its self-description as being *Yang ti(g)*—Kong sprul had some good reasons to regard it as belonging to the same family (which he calls *Padma snying thig*, meaning: Padmasambhava's tradition of the *rDzogs chen snying thig*) as the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* and the *dGongs pa zang thal*. Indeed, it seems

brag la sbed | | ces so | | gnyis pa mkhar chen mtsho rgyal gyis bsdu ba po byas te | | dwangs lung khra mo brag la gter du sbas pas ni | de nyid las | | mtsho rgyal khyod la gtad pa ni | | ku su lu yi gdams pa'i skor | | dwangs lung ldang lha'i brag la sbos | | da lta bstan pa'i dus ma babs | | zhes so | | mkhas pa paṇḍita gdams pa spros pa gtso che ba bum thang na yod par | de nyid las | bco bryad rgyud dang gdams par bcas | | ma 'ongs skal ldan don du ni | | bum thang seng ge'i brag la sbos | | snyigs mar 'gro don rgya cher 'byung |—The passage ku su lu yi gdams pa'i skor | | dwangs lung ldang lha'i brag la sbos | is explicitly applied by Gu ru bKra shis (op. cit. p. 400) to Padma las 'brel rtsal, but with a curious variant: ku su lu yi gdams pa'i skor | | dpang lung ldang lha'i brag la sbed |.

⁸⁷ See below for this cycle.

that we find in all the cycles included in this category the same deep integration of advanced tantric inner yogas and body techniques within the framework of visionary rDzogs chen.

Third, the line about the *dGongs pa zang thal* does not require any explanation. The only interesting point is to see it presented as a variant of something that also exists in other forms or formats. Its description as “the complete [version] that focusses on the meaning” is quite fit to its content: although it is not as encyclopedic as the fivefold collection known as the *sNying thig ya bzhi*, it is still much more extensive than the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* in any of its versions—also because of its Vimalamitra- and Vairocana-connected corpora—and it is noted for its tendency to go directly to the practical point in a straightforward language without devoting much space to purely speculative questions in “twilight language.”

We are left with the two first variants of the corpus, “the great, vast, fully complete version” and “its summary.”

The second one might correspond to what I supposed to be the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* in Padma las 'brel rtsal's original version; it actually works, because Gu ru bKra shis says, exactly in the same words, that the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* was indeed found “at the Variegated Rock in the country of Dwags [po].”

Now, the allusion to Bum thang is surprising in the context. It never was a place of concealing of the seventeen *tantras* or the *Bi ma snying thig* according to any traditional source. If we let aside rDo rje gling pa, whose links to the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* are more problematic, this can only be understood, however strange it may sound, as an allusion to Klong chen pa. Indeed, in the *kha byang* of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* (Klong chen pa's edition), we do find the exact same phrase applied to Klong chen pa under one of his many names, Dri med 'od zer (after a previous prophecy about Padma las 'brel rtsal):

Conceal⁸⁸ the *Sun of Kun tu bzang po's bright expanse*⁸⁹ and
The eighteen [other] *tantras*⁹⁰ together with [their] instructions
In the Lion Cave [of] Bum thang.
Dri med 'od zer [will] open the door of this treasure...⁹¹

It is not long before the *dGongs pa zang thal* was revealed (1366) that

⁸⁸ This text is presented as a dialogue between Padmasambhava and Ye shes mtsho rgyal.

⁸⁹ The *Klong gsal nyi ma'i rgyud* is the root *tantra* of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*.

⁹⁰ These are the seventeen *tantras* of the rDzogs chen *snying thig*, plus the *tantra* of E ka dza ti or *Nag mo khros ma*.

⁹¹ Dri med 'od zer 2009, vol. 5, pp. 4-5: *kun tu bzang po klong gsal nyi ma dang : bco bryad rgyud dang gdams par bcas pa rnam : bum thang seng ge'i rdzong la gter bu sbed : dri med 'od zer gter de'i sgo dbye ste ;*, etc.

Klong chen pa stayed for a decade (ca. 1350–ca. 1360) in Bum thang. It may sound surprising that his developments on the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* are mentioned first, as if it were the source of the others or had appeared prior to them. But in fact, the list clearly does not follow the chronological order of the revelations anyway (No. 2: 1313; No. 3: 1366; No. 4: 1311; No. 5: 1321).

We must also remember that the date of the discovery of the *dGongs pa zang thal* should not be regarded as that of the final establishment of its text, as we see Rig 'dzin rGod ldem (and maybe some of his disciples) busy for years deciphering the 'yellow scrolls.'

For various reasons, I concluded twenty years ago⁹² that Klong chen pa's works on the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* may have been completed in 1339. I think that there is no trace of Bum thang in the colophons of the parts of the cycle that may be ascribed to him, either as compositions or as *gter ma*. Be that as it may—whether the cycle was all edited and complemented as early as 1339 or whether it was finished only in the decade 1350–1360—in any case it existed prior to the revelation of the *dGongs pa zang thal*. It seems unlikely that Rig 'dzin rGod ldem got Klong chen pa's complete version of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* / *mKha' 'gro yang tig*. But now we can regard as proved that he was aware not only of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* as a whole, which he knew very well, but also of the fact that there were complementary revelations or exegesis by both Rin chen gling pa and Klong chen pa, whether he had a direct, personal access to one, both or none of them.

It is a fact that the *dGongs pa zang thal* is in some regards a more extended version of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*: the appendix of this article roughly displays the portion of the latter that got absorbed in the former. But in the passage just translated, this is quite openly assumed, in a configuration that brings together Padma las 'brel rtsal, Rin chen gling pa and Klong chen pa with Rig 'dzin rGod ldem himself. Only further philological investigations—isolating a Rin chen gling pa corpus in the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*, combining it with what we have of his other rDzogs chen revelations, and systematically comparing this material with the *dGongs pa zang thal* and maybe the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*—will establish whether, beyond the common *mKha' 'gro snying thig* legacy, traces of Rin chen gling pa's style or ideas, or event fragments of his revelations, can be found within the rGod ldem corpus.

⁹² In my PhD dissertation defended in 2002. Published version: Arguillère 2007, p. 148.

Rin chen gling pa's other revelations in the Rin chen gter mdzod

Two of Rin chen gling pa's own *gter ma* cycles are preserved (at least in anthology form) in the *Rin chen gter mdzod*: a cycle on Nāgarakṣa⁹³ and the above-mentioned rDzogs chen cycle called *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*.⁹⁴

In the case of the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*,⁹⁵ there was no continuous lineage down to Kong *sprul*, and, as noted above, the treasure was re-revealed (*yang gter*) by mKhyen brtse'i dbang po.⁹⁶ Indeed, when Gu ru bKras shis, as an appendix to his biography of Rin chen gling pa, mentions his next rebirths, he explains that the incarnation lineage rapidly became exclusively Karma bKa' brgyud pa, so that after some generations there was no custodian for his *gter chos* any longer. As for the Nāgarakṣa cycle, Gu ru bKras shis writes at the end of his biography of Rin chen gling pa that it had become and remained quite popular among all branches of Tibetan Buddhism.⁹⁷

A thorough scrutiny of all the colophons of those two cycles does not bring any result that would be directly exploitable for historical

⁹³ Known as 'Jam dpal klu bdud nā ga rakṣa, in *Rin chen gter mdzod*, vol. 29, pp. 5-102. Also called *Mañjuśrī King of [Occult] Science—Nāgarakṣa* ('jam dpal rig pa'i rgyal po nā ga rakṣa). It is interesting to note that the first text of this volume, also connected to Nāgarakṣa, ends (p. 3) with a segment of lineage in which we find Padma las 'brel rtsal, though, it seems, not as a *gter ston*, which is very rare: O rgyan padma; mnga' bdag khri srong lde btsan; jo mo [ye shes] mtsho rgyal; mnga' bdag nyang ral pa can [= Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer]; mnga' bdag 'gro mgon; yar lung sprul sku; slob dpon gnas lugs; sprul sku las 'brel rtsal; bsod nams seng ge. To date, I cannot make any precise sense of this—but we remember that we have met a bSod nams seng ge close to Padma las 'brel rtsal above: Khro phu pa bSod nams seng ge, who was also probably one of Klong chen pa's masters.

⁹⁴ In *Rin chen gter mdzod*, vol. 87, pp. 249-446. Fragments of this cycle are also found in the manuscript bdr MW2KG210268. As was already mentioned, the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod* is found in the *Padma snying thig* section of this anthology, which means that 'Jam mgon Kong *sprul* and any of his associates or precursors judged that it belongs to the same family, so to say, as the mKha' 'gro snying thig, the *dGongs pa zang thal*, and a few other cycles, notably by rDo rje gling pa. The *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod* should be included within a general philological comparison of the mKha' 'gro snying thig and the *dGongs pa zang thal*; this becomes even more necessary now that we are getting more persuaded that Rin chen gling pa was the living link between Padma las 'brel rtsal and Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, so that Kong *sprul*'s classification appears not as having a mere *typological* value, but as having a, so to say, *genetic* one too.

⁹⁵ This cycle is not represented only in the *Rin chen gter mdzod*: its main *tantra* is included in vol. 14 (pp. 888-952) of the *mTshams brag rnying rgyud*; but in fact, it seems that pp. 1-560 of this volume (26 *tantras* altogether) are all rDzogs chen revelations of Rin chen gling pa, partly belonging to the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod* and maybe partly to other cycles. This would require further investigation.

⁹⁶ See above, note 18.

⁹⁷ Op. cit., p. 407: *gter ston 'di'i gter byon nā ga ra kṣa ni gsar snying kun gyi thun mong du gyur te | tā ra nā tha'i sgrubs thabs rin 'byung du'ang 'dug go |*.

research, except maybe for the mention of a disciple who transmitted Rin chen gling pa's lineage, called 'Having the characteristics of / a name of Space' (Nam mkha'i mtshan can)⁹⁸—possibly the Nam mkha' grags pa of the above-studied *Story of g.Yung*. The bits of lineages found in the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod* are not of much help in the present state of research, as all the other mentioned persons are so far quite unknown.⁹⁹

The cycle of *Nāgarakṣa—Mañjuśrī Demon for the Nāgas* was found, as Gu ru bKras shis tells us,¹⁰⁰ in Ko ro brag in 'Bri thang; but none of the colophons give us any date—nearly all texts merely ending up with: "The King of Dharma Rin chen gling pa extracted this from the Dharma repository of Ko ro brag in 'Bri thang."¹⁰¹

In the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*, similarly, there are no mention of dates, besides the confirmation of the place where it was found,¹⁰² which matches with the biography composed by Gu ru bKras shis.¹⁰³

Rin chen gling pa's A ti rdzogs pa chig chod,
sNying thig or Yang ti?

This *rDzogs chen* cycle would, as such, deserve a complete study for many reasons. One of these, however, is especially relevant for us here. Indeed, in Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's biography by Nyi ma bzang po (ed.

⁹⁸ *Rin chen gter mdzod*, vol. 88, e.g., p. 374. We also find one Nam mkha'i ming can in the *Garland of Light*. In the *gTer mdzod* text, this name occurs in a segment of lineage after the *gter ston*: Me ban Rin chen gling pa (Me sgom chos kyi rgyal po etc.) passes it to the same *Mahāsiddha* Nam mkha'i mtshan can and to Rin chen smon lam, one of which transmits it to *Bla ma* A seng pa and to *Slob dpon* Kun byang, who both pass it to *Ras pa* Kun dga'. A bit further (pp. 379-380), we find another little piece of lineage: from Rin chen gling pa to Nam mkha'i mtshan can and to Rin chen smon lam, then from both to A seng pa called "the Lama of 'Go" ('Go'i bla ma) and *Slob dpon* Kun byang, and then from both to *Ras pa* Kun dga', now called *Ras pa* Kun dga' blo gros.—A prophetic text in the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod* (loc. cit., pp. 381-386) seems to be an esoteric biography of Rin chen gling pa, but it is so obscure that no information can be directly derived from it.

⁹⁹ I have compiled below a chart of all I could find as direct and indirect (second generation) disciples of Rin chen gling pa.

¹⁰⁰ See translated biography below.

¹⁰¹ *Chos rgyal rin chen gling pas 'bri thang ko ro brag gi chos mdzod nas gdan drangs pa'o*.

¹⁰² E.g., loc. cit., p. 302: *chos rgyal rin chen gling pas rgya gar pha wang rus sbal nag po nas gter nas drangs pa'o*.

¹⁰³ In this text, we find the interesting mention of a disciple of Rin chen gling pa called 'Sunyaratna,' himself the master of the text's compiler (*des bdag la'o* |). A quick search on BDRC reveals the existence of a 14th century Nyi ma rin chen: *Lo tsā ba* Nyi ma rin chen, master of Mus chen Nam mkha'i rnal 'byor. We do have a long (153 p.) biography of Nam mkha'i rnal 'byor: *Chos rje nam mkha' rnal 'byor gyi rnam thar*: bdr: W1KG15888. This text, despite its more globally *zhi byed* coloration, may be mentioning Rin chen gling pa (Img. 34 of the BDRC pdf document: *thog mar rin chen gling du chos rgyal ba'i drung du byon* |).

cit., p. 9), we find the mention that his father, *Slob dpon Srid bdud 'dul dpal* was well-versed in *rdzogs chen bram ze*.

Let us remind the reader of the complex (and not fully stabilized) doxographies of rDzogs chen.¹⁰⁴ As is well known, a general consensus has been reached centuries ago in the rNying ma school to divide rDzogs chen into three sections (*sde*) called *sems sde*, *klong sde* and *man ngag sde*. There is also a general agreement about the subdivision of the *man ngag sde* into four sub-sections, 'outer,' 'inner,' 'secret' and 'innermost secret.' To make things very clear, the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* as well as the *Bi ma snying thig* will all their complements by *Klong chen pa* belong to the 'innermost secret' cycle. That is also the case of *Rin chen gling pa's* additions to the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* and of his *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*—if *Klong sprul* is right to put it in the same category as the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*.

But there exists another division into *A ti*, *sPyi ti* and *Yang ti*, in which the four previous categories are considered subdivisions of the first, *A ti*, class. In that case, the *Yang ti* is understood as a cycle of uttermost depth, incommensurate even to the 'innermost secret' section of the *man ngag sde*. It is then further divided into two (or three) cycles: *Yang ti nag po* and *Yang ti bram ze*.

Now, *Rin chen gling pa's A ti rdzogs pa chig chod* presents itself, although in a somewhat aberrant way, as a cycle belonging to the *Yang ti*, unambiguously identifiable by the fact that it mentions the *Sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor* as the other main cycle of the same category.¹⁰⁵

Here is what we read in the *Omni-Liberating Frontispiece* (*Kun grol them byang*), a piece placed at the beginning of the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*:¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ These subdivisions are common knowledge among the rNying ma pas, although what they actually mean and what corpus of texts and practices they actually correspond to may be nebulous in the mind of most. This summary is a simplified rendering of Jean-Luc Achard 2018.1: "Section des Préceptes" (http://www.wikidz.artremy.com/wiki/Section_des_Préceptes) and Achard (2018.2): "Yangti" (<http://www.wikidz.artremy.com/wiki/Yangti>).

¹⁰⁵ How *Gu ru Chos dbang's Yang ti sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor* is supposed to belong to the same category as the *Yang ti nag po* is pretty obscure; but, while *Kong sprul* placed *Rin chen gling pa's A ti rdzogs pa chig chod* in the *Padma snying thig* section, he did not hesitate to place *Chos dbang's* cycle (vol. 90 of the sTod lung edition) side by side with the *Black Quintessence* (vol. 91). While *Rin chen gling pa's A ti rdzogs pa chig chod* does not mention the latter, it clearly claims, whatever this all may mean, to belong to the same category as the former.

¹⁰⁶ In *Rin chen gter mdzod* (sTod lung), vol. 88, p. 251: *sems sde klong sde gnad kyi sde : de yang gnad kyi sde ru 'dus : gnad kyi sde la phyi skor dang : nang skor gsang skor bla med skor : yang gsang skor dang lnga ru 'dus : de yang yang gsang skor du 'dus : yang gsang thig le'i skor la ni : yang ti sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor dang : yang ti chig chod skor du 'dus : chig chod kun grol chen po ni : kun gyi snying gi nor bu yin : sa ma ya :*

[In *rDzogs chen*,] There is the mind section, the section of abyssal space and the section of the precepts.

This belongs to the section of the precepts.

The section of the precepts boils down to five [subsections:] outer cycle,

inner cycle, secret cycle, unsurpassable cycle,

And innermost secret cycle.

This belongs to the innermost secret cycle.

As for the [quintessential] drop of the innermost secret cycle,

It consists of the *Quintessence of the Union of Buddhas* and

The Self-Sufficient Quintessence.

The Great Single Self-sufficient and Omni-Liberating [Principle]

Is the jewel at the heart of all [Padmasambhava's teaching].

Samaya!

The *Yang ti nag po* is well-known as it is still flourishing nowadays. The *Yang ti sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor* is supposed to consist of Gu ru Chos dbang's *gter ma* of this name. But the *Yang ti bram ze* exists merely as a series of *tantras* (the precise perimeter of which remains slightly floating)¹⁰⁷ without the equivalent of the *gter ma* section of the *Yang ti nag po* that allows for the actual practice of the *tantras* of this cycle which, by themselves, would be as ungraspable as those of connected to the *Yang ti bram ze*.

Of course, there are many reasons why this categorization sounds weird: indeed, the whole cycle has been ascribed to the *Padma snying thig* branch of rDzogs chen (with the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* and the *dGongs pa zang thal*, among a few others) by Kong sprul, and not at all to the *Yang ti* branch. What is more, its practice instructions resemble more those of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* and *dGongs pa zang thal* than the very specific system of the *Yang ti nag po*. And, in the 17th century already, when there still existed an uninterrupted transmission from the *gter ston*, the description of this cycle in the 5th Dalai Lama's *gSan yig* does not categorize it as *Yang ti* (but not otherwise either).¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ See Arguillère 2022: "Recovering the *tantras* of the *Brahmin Cycle* of the Dzogchen Yangti (*rDzogs chen Yang ti bram ze'i skor*)," in *Northern Treasures Histories*, 09/12/2022, <https://fchnt.hypotheses.org/360>.

¹⁰⁸ This passage of the 5th Dalai Lama's *Record of Teachings Received* (vol. 3, pp. 589-590) is extremely similar to the one just translated. It retains the subdivision of the *man ngag sde* into five sections, but without any mention of the *Yang ti* in general or the *Sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor* in particular. Instead, the fifth section is divided into *thig le* and *yang bcud*. In fact, the 5th Dalai Lama is actually quoting the doxographical passage mentioned above, but, for any reason, he removes the mention of the *Yang ti*: *gter ston rin chen gling pas rgya gar gyi pa bong klu bdud rus sbal nag po'i lto ba nas spyan drangs pa'i lta ba'i yang rtse | sgom pa'i rgyal po | spyod pa'i nying khu | dam tshig gi rtsa ba | 'bras bu'i mthar thug dam chos rdzogs pa chen po chig chod kun grol zhes pa yo ga rnam gsum las | a ti | de la rgyud lung man ngag gsum las man ngag | de la sems glong [sic] gnad gsum las gnad sde | de la phyi nang gsang ba*

Given the global obscurity of these “aberrant doxographies” of rDzogs chen, as Jean-Luc Achard called them (1999: pp. 54-56) and the fact that the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod* would really deserve an in-depth inquiry, we cannot decide on the substance of the question at this stage. However, the weird passage just quoted may have been enough for practitioners of the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod* who were not scholars to identify themselves, however disputable this might be, as practitioners of *Yang ti bram ze* (understood as ‘this form of *Yang ti* that is not the *Sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor*’, in a time prior to the flourishing of the *Yang ti nag po* in the 15th century).

If this were to be taken seriously, we would then have to shift one generation earlier in the association with Rin chen gling pa: this would indeed imply that rGod ldem’s father [Srid] bdud ’dul [dpal] was already a disciple of his—which would then in turn explain how rGod ldem could have received teachings and transmissions about Nāgarakṣa coming from Rin chen gling pa even as a child.

Rin chen gling pa, Rig ’dzin rGod ldem and Nāgarakṣa

Rin chen Gling pa revealed a large cycle of practice of Nāgarakṣa deemed important enough to be included in the *Rin chen gter mdzod* (maybe because, as Gu ru bKras shis says, it had become popular in all branches of Tibetan Buddhism).

Now, it is said in Rig ’dzin rGod ldem’s biographies¹⁰⁹ that, in his 13th year (1349), he obtained accomplishments through *The Wheel of Activities of Black Leprosy*. This is a *tantra* that is not unknown, as it figures in the *rNying ma rgyud ’bum*.¹¹⁰ Its colophon marks indicate that it is a hidden treasure, but there are no clues about its discoverer that might help to know more about its lineages of transmission.¹¹¹ This

bla med yang gsang lnga las yang gsang | de la thig le dang yang bcud las yang bcud snying gi nor bu’i skor la | ...

¹⁰⁹ Nyi ma bzang po (2015), p. 15: *de nas dgong lo bcu gsum pa la | mdze nag las kyi ’khor lo’i sgo nas khyab bdag ye shes sems dpa’ klu’i srin por bsgrub pas grub pas | ye shes kyi phyag rgya sku la thebs nas mthar phyin no |*. See Stéphane Arguillère, “The First Practice in which Rigdzin Gödem Obtained Signs of Accomplishment as a Teenager,” in *Northern Treasures Histories*, 03/12/2022, <https://fchnt.hypotheses.org/91>. On *mdze nag*, see also Roberto Vitali’s article in this volume: it is said that it was that illness that caused *dPon gsas* Khyung rgod rtsal’s passage through death from which he returned as a ‘*das log*’.

¹¹⁰ *mDze nag las kyi ’khor lo*, mTshams brag edition: vol. 45, pp. 156-196, in 14 chapters.

¹¹¹ In the versified *gsan yig* incorporated in *g.Yung ston pa* rDo rje dpal’s biography (Karma tshe dbang kun khyab, 1998, pp. 328-379), the title of this *tantra* appears (p. 346) in a long list of teachings he received from an otherwise unknown Yamāntaka specialist, She’u ston Śākya ’phel. In this text, the *mDze nag las ’khor* appears in a group of *sādhana* *tantras* for *tantras* previously listed. Although this section of *g.Yung ston pa’s Record of Teachings Received* would deserve further

tantra is about Yamāntaka in the form Nāgarakṣa—to be understood, in this context as ‘Demon for the Nāgas,’ or ‘Guardian against the Nāgas.’ These chthonian spirits are supposed to cause all sorts of illnesses that are put in the general category of ‘leprosy,’ but in fact include all kinds of diseases affecting body tissues that would range in modern medical science from eczema to cancerous tumors. Nāgarakṣa is described as an “extraordinary wrathful form of the deity Mañjuśrī; he is black, either with ten heads and eighteen arms, the principal face being that of a *rākṣasa* and extremely wrathful—or with nine wrathful faces; either way nine snake’s heads move in the air above; on the crown of the central snake’s head is the conqueror Akṣobhya; [the] eight right hands hold [curved] knives or swords; [the] eight left [ones] serpent nooses, while the first pair are together at his heart; his upper body is that of a *rākṣasa*; his back leaning on Mount Meru; his lower body is the tail of a snake, coiled in the depths of the sea; all his mouths are emitting hissing sounds; trampled beneath him is a black *caṇḍāla* (outcaste). He abides amidst a blazing mass of fire.”¹¹²

This form is also found in the treasures of Nyang ral Nyi ma ‘od zer and Gu ru Chos dbang, as attested in the *Rin chen gter mdzod*. So it can be from any of these traditions that Rig ‘dzin rGod ldem received it. But this is not a deity whose cult was ever widespread; it is seldom mentioned in biographies. Still, in Rig ‘dzin rGod ldem’s times, for whatever reason (plague?), it was brought back to the public attention by Rin chen gling pa’s *Mañjuśrī Demon for the Nāgas*.

Though much less decisive than all the argument around the *Heart-essence of the Dakini*, this is one more clue: if Rin chen gling pa was one of rGod ldem’s masters, it would be all the most natural that he’d practiced a deity connected to one of Rin chen gling pa’s revelations.

This being said, regarding the way in which Rin chen gling pa’s *Mañjuśrī Demon for the Nāgas* is connected to older tantric material about Nāgarakṣa such as *The Wheel of Activities of Black Leprosy* and about how Rin chen gling pa himself got trained in those, we have no clue. I might as well say that, as far as connecting Rig ‘dzin rGod ldem

investigation, it does not seem to include clear information about the source of this whole cycle. However, it nearly rules out the possibility that this *tantra* could be a *gter ma* of Rin chen gling pa: first, if I am not mistaken, Rin chen gling pa was a few years younger than g.Yung ston pa and it would not make much sense that there is an intermediary link (She’u ston Śākya ‘phel) in the lineage; and, what is more, it is clear from this immense list of teachings received by g.Yung ston pa that his tastes leaned more towards the venerable traditions of either *bKa’ ma* or the ancient *gter chos* of Nyang ral or Chos dbang, apart from the *mKha’ ‘gro snying thig* which he received from Rang byung rdo rje.

¹¹² This description is taken from BDRc:

<https://library.bdrc.io/show/bdr:T489?s=q%3D%2522nA%2520ga%2520rak%252Bsha%2522~1%26lg%3Dbo-x-ewts%26t%3DTopic%26n%3D1>.

to Rin chen gling pa is concerned, the Nāgarakṣa practice is rather something that would be better explained in rGod ldem's life through the hypothesis of an early association with Rin chen gling pa than a solid argument tending to prove that association. It may only bring a slightly higher degree of probability to the central line of argument of the present article, which rests mainly on the question of the transmission of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* and the obvious knowledge of Rin chen gling pa's contribution to it, which appears in the *dGongs pa zang thal*.

*Rin chen gling pa's presence in
Klong chen pa (1308–1364)'s writings*

Rin chen gling pa is mentioned as a living, active person (teaching the *Heart-Essence of the Ḍākinī*) in a prophecy that Klong chen pa received from the *ḍākinī* Vajra Lamp of Turquoise (rDo rje g.yu sgron ma) in a vision that can be dated around 1336–1337.¹¹³

This prophecy does not appear explicitly in what can be regarded as the most trustworthy and authoritative biography of Klong chen pa, authored by his direct disciple Chos grags bzang po (ca. 1300–ca. 1370),¹¹⁴ which merely alludes to the general idea in a verse: "...established by the *Ḍākinīs* as the master of [this] Dharma,"¹¹⁵ *i.e.*, the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*. But we have a more detailed record of the vision in a text of dubious authenticity,¹¹⁶ which is, however, regarded

¹¹³ Arguillère 2007: p. 99.

¹¹⁴ The *Kun mkhyen dri med 'od zer gyi rnam thar mthong ma don ldan*, in *Kun mkhyen klong chen rab 'byams kyi rnam thar* (1994) or in *Dri med 'od zer* 2009, vol. 4, pp. 181–235.

¹¹⁵ *Op. cit.*, in *Kun mkhyen klong chen rab 'byams kyi rnam thar* (1994), p. 184.

¹¹⁶ The *mThong snang 'od kyi drwa ba*, in *Dri med 'od zer* 2009, vol. 8, pp. 155–194. Cf. Arguillère 2007: p. 14, n. 13 and p. 183 n. 507 on the very dubious character of its attribution to Klong chen pa. The prophecy is on p. 178. The recorded event can of course not be posterior to Rang byung rdo rje's death (1339), and the vision alludes to Klong chen pa reaching his 30th year (*gzhan don 'ur 'ur l da lo sun cu thob zer l*), which, by the Tibetan system, would mean 1337. The details of the prophecy may have been made up, but surely by direct disciples on the basis of stories reported to have been told by Klong chen pa himself—hence the ambiguous presentation as an autobiography, but that, in places, shifts to the third person. So, although the *mThong snang 'od kyi drwa ba* cannot be what it pretends to be—a 'secret autobiography' of Klong chen pa—I still believe that it was composed by people close enough to the event that they could not be enormously mistaken about recent chronology. It tells us a lot, at least, about the degree of hostility that developed against Rin chen gling pa among Klong chen pa's followers, probably after both had passed away. Ironically, its words seem to echo two verses by Rin chen gling pa in the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod* (*loc. cit.*, p. 317): "If the *ḍākinīs* do not like it, such was not my intention and I beg them to bear with it" (*de la mkha' 'gro ma dges* (sic for *dga'?*) *na l rang 'dod med pas zod par gsol l*).

among the rNying ma pas as a spiritual autobiography of Klong chen pa himself.

Nyoshül Khenpo incorporated this polemical visionary dialogue in his history of rDzogs chen.¹¹⁷

[*Klong chen pa*:] “Well, since there seem to be so many people explaining these [*mKha' 'gro snying thig*] teachings, why should I teach? There are, for instance, teachers such as Karmapa and Rin chen gling pa.”

[*g.Yu sgron ma*:] “The way they are teaching it doesn't suit me. A clay pot also has a handle, but why would that be enough? There absolutely has to be a custodian of the teachings.”

[*Klong chen pa*] then asked: “How about Rin chen gling pa's revelations?”

[*g.Yu sgron ma*:]—“Whatever they are, they are not the pure [*Heart-essence*].”

This final mention of Rin chen gling pa's treasures is quite interesting, insofar as, in context, it sounds pretty incoherent, or motivated by personal hostility alone—unless it alludes to *gter ma* revelations relating to, or inserted into, the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*—which then sheds an interesting light on our perplexities about how to understand KN 1984's colophons and the texts of this corpus that seem not to be included in Klong chen pa's edition.

Other than this rather dubious *dākinīs'* prophecy around 1337, there is a mention of Rin chen gling pa elsewhere in this biographical literature—and, this time, it is from a much safer source: the biography authored by Chos grags bzang po. The passage is interesting as the event it reports belongs to the end of Klong chen pa's life (1360 at the earliest¹¹⁸) and because the text seems (though the Tibetan verb forms are not absolutely unequivocal) to refer to Rin chen gling pa as to a

¹¹⁷ Richard Barron's translation (Nyoshul Khenpo 2005, p. 111) is mistaken; Christian Bruyat (Padmakara)'s French version (2016, p. 178) is much better and I have followed his understanding of the text, especially regarding the pun about the double meaning of *lung* (oral transmission of a teaching / handle of a pot). Here is the original text of the *mThong snang 'od kyi drwa ba: 'o na snying tig* (sic) *'di bshad pa mang po 'dug pa ngas bshad ci dgos | lung byed pa karma pa dang | rin chen gling pa la sogs pa 'dug pa la brjod pas | de rnams kyi bshad pa la nged mi dga' | lung dag rdza la yang yod de des gar chog | | bdag po re yod pas de dgos pa yin mod zer ro | rin chen gling pa'i gter rnams ci 'dra yin dris pas | yin pa yin dag po med zer ro |*. Maybe the text would make better sense (and be less insulting) if we corrected *dag po med*, grammatically weird (or dialectal?) in Tibetan, as *bdag po med*, more consistent with the context—meaning that whatever Rin chen gling pa's *gter chos* may be, still the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* lacks a custodian (*bdag po*), a proper lineage holder.

¹¹⁸ See Arguillère (2007): p. 126.

living individual:¹¹⁹

When the Myriarch rDo rje rgyal mtshan told him about receiving the *Heart-Essence of the Dākinī*,¹²⁰ [Klong chen pa] answered: “You say that you are going to Kong po to [see] *Chos rgyal Rin chen gling pa*, [please] do so!”—saying that, he sent him [to Rin chen gling pa and later commented]: “The fact that you have received the *Heart-Essence of the Dākinī* from both Rin chen gling pa of Kong po and from the treasure discoverer’s direct disciple, *sPrul sku Legs ldan pa* [= *rGyal sras Legs pa*] of Dwags po Byar (?) is good. From now on, gossips will not occur about [whether] you received purely or impurely the lineage. But, absolutely [speaking], the master of this Dharma is myself.”

Given that the event recorded cannot be earlier than 1360, if I am not mistaken when I read this text as meaning that Rin chen gling pa is active, knowing that all sources consistently assert that he died in his 80th year, this would then imply that Rin chen gling pa’s ox year of birth is 1289 (and not the previous ox year 1277) and that he thus did not pass away before 1368—four years after Klong chen pa’s death, and even after Rig ’dzin rGod ldem revealed his own treasure.

We can see that the tone in this text is much less childishly hostile than in the imaginary dialogue between Klong chen pa and g.Yu sgron ma. Both texts suggest that although Klong chen pa is now the most famous Nyingma figure of the fourteenth century, the now largely forgotten Rin chen gling pa was considered a much more legitimate

¹¹⁹ Chos grags bzang po (direct disciple and biographer of Klong chen pa), *Kun mkhyen dri med ’od zer gyi rnam thar mthong ba don ldan*, in *Kun mkhyen dri med ’od zer gyi rnam thar* (1994), pp. 194-195: *khri dpon rdo rje rgyal mtshan gyis mkha’ ’gro snying thig* (sic) *gi zhu ba byas pas bshad par byas nas yod | khyod mkha’ ’gro snying thig ’tshol ba la kong por chos rgyal rin chen gling pa’i rtsar ’gro ba yin zer bzhin ’dug pa | de ltar gyis byas nas btang ba yin | kong po rin chen gling pa dang | dwags po byar na gter ston gyi dngos slob sprul sku legs ldan pa gnyis la | mkha’ ’gro snying thig zhus nas ’dug pa legs da gdong rgyud dag ma dag gi gtam mi yong ba yin | don dam par chos ’di’i bdag po nga yin |*, etc. In *Profusion de la vaste sphère* (Arguillère 2007, pp. 126-127), I gave a French translation of a rewritten version from Nyoshül Khenpo’s *History of the rDzogs chen sNying thig* (in English, see Nyoshül Khenpo 2005, p. 117). But Chos grags bzang po’s version, though slightly more difficult to understand, is richer in details.

¹²⁰ Barron (Nyoshül Khenpo 2005, p. 117) understands otherwise, following Nyoshül Khenpo’s reformulation of Chos grags bzang po’s narrative: “On that occasion, Gyalsé Zöpa [*rGyal sras bZod pa grags pa*] was explaining *The Heart Drop of the Dākinī* to Tripön Dorjé Gyaltzen.” In Barron’s understanding, Klong chen pa is congratulating *rGyal sras bZod pa* for having *already* received the *mKha’ ’gro snying thig* from both *rGyal sras Legs pa* and Rin chen gling pa. We know for a fact that he did from his own *mKha’ ’gro snying thig gi lo rgyus rin po che’i phreng ba* (in *Dri med ’od zer* 2009, vol. 6, pp. 188-214). But this text does not allow us to decide whether he received it first from Klong chen pa or from Rin chen gling pa. On *rGyal sras bZod pa grags pa*, see Arguillère 2007: pp. 126, 128, 134 and 184.

authority on the *Heart-Essence of Dākinī*.¹²¹ This may have made him a very natural choice to be Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's rDzogs chen master, sometime between the late 1340s and the mid-1360s.

Incidentally, it would be an exaggeration to say that a purely negative image of Rin chen gling pa was unanimously propagated in Klong chen pa's circle. In the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* there is a text by one of his students, *Bya bral ba bZod pa*—better known as *rGyal sras bZod pa grags pa*—in which the author mentions Rin chen gling pa without any negative comment as one of his masters, with a list of teachings received, including the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*.¹²²

Who is 'Legs pa' in Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's biographies?

This question didn't come to me spontaneously but was suggested by Jay Valentine when he read an early version of this article, and I think it makes perfect sense. In Nyi ma bzang po's biography of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, a figure named Legs pa appears twice, with no other identifying information. If Rin chen gling pa had a close relationship with rGod ldem, we are naturally inclined to wonder whether there might also have been a connection between rGod ldem and *rGyal sras Legs pa*, to whom everything suggests that Rin chen gling pa was close and who lived to a fairly advanced age (1290–1366/7).

The first occurrence of the name Legs pa comes immediately after the mention of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's father's death when rGod ldem was just a few years old (in the early 1340s, we can presume). Then, Nyi ma bzang po says, his mother taught him reading and writing, while “the brothers *Se ston dPal chen 'bum pa*¹²³ and Legs pa,” or maybe (less likely): “*Se ston dPal chen 'bum* and [rGod ldem's] brother Legs pa” provided him with other forms of education.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Cf. Richard Barron (Nyoshul Khenpo 2005, p. 108), in another visionary dialogue with a *dākinī*: “So won't people think me a charlatan?” ... A not insignificant part of Klong chen pa's biographies seems to have been written with the aim of demonstrating his legitimacy as a master of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*, which shows that this was not so obvious in his own time.

¹²² *mKha' 'gro snying thig gi lo rgyus rin po che'i phreng ba*, p. 213: *chos rgyal rin chen gling pa las | mkha' 'gro snying thig gi dbang khrid dang | rādzogs chen chig chod kun grol | phyag rgya chen po ma rig mun sel | bla ma yid bzhin nor bu'i skor | gu ru zhi drag | tshē dpag med la sogs gdams pa mang du zhus |*.

¹²³ The name *Se ston dPal chen 'bum* occurs here and there with the mention that he was a powerful *sngags pa*, but without any mention of 'Legs pa.' We also do not know if rGod ldem had siblings who could have helped bringing him up as a child.

¹²⁴ Nyi ma bzang po 2015, p. 14: *Se ston dPal chen 'bum pa dang | legs pa sku mched gnyis kyis | sku'i yon tan slob nyer mdzad pa'i slob dpon mdzad |*. I think that this is more likely to mean “the two *Se ston* brothers, *dPal chen 'bum* and Legs pa,” because the phrase *sku mched gnyis* would be much too ambiguous if it was intended to mean “and his [rGod ldem's] brother.” Hence, if this Legs pa was *rGyal sras Legs*

This passage is of course not very convincing as, here, Legs pa could be anybody. More meaningful (though quite enigmatic) is a passage further in the text (p. 41) in which Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, after having unearthed his *gter ma*, writes a letter to a *Bla ma* Legs pa to ask him what to think of some frightening things that occurred.¹²⁵ Now, this is not simply someone who gives him elementary education, but a master he consults in his thirties, while fully trained himself and having become a *gter ston*. This Legs pa must then be someone regarded as a lama with great competence regarding all the difficulties a *gter ston* may face—which fits quite well with *rGyal sras* Legs pa, who was surely still alive when rGod ldem opened Zang zang lha brag, although he was to die within a few months.

These elements are of course too tenuous to constitute even the beginnings of a presumption. We mention them for the record, however, so as not to lose what could be a clue at the start of an investigation such as the one here on Rin chen gling pa.

As Kong *sprul* says in the *gTer ston brgya rtsa*, in his time, nearly all the lineages of *rGyal sras* Legs pa's own *gter chos* were lost.¹²⁶ As for whatever is available of Rin chen gling pa's discoveries, it would definitely be interesting to compare any surviving portions of these that may be found¹²⁷ to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's *gter ma*, in case they might have become absorbed in it in the same way as large sections of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* were included in the *dGongs pa zang thal*.

After all this background research has been presented, let us now shift to Gu ru bKras shis's biography of Rin chen gling pa.¹²⁸

The life of Me ban Rin chen gling pa

After this [gTer ston Tshe brtan rgyal mtshan],¹²⁹ not remaining [in this world], will have passed into *nirvāṇa*,

pa, this would imply that he'd belonged to the Se clan, while he is always said to be of the *rus pa* of Sho. But we remember that we saw him once connected to the Se (see n. 64 above). This all requires further inquiry.

¹²⁵ *Bla ma legs pa ba la zhu yig btang pas 'jur por da dung mdzad par zhu* |...

¹²⁶ *gTer ston brgya rtsa*, p. 522: *Deng sang chos rgyun gzhan bzhugs pa ma mthong | pra 'bebs dang bsang brngan tsam gyi lung rgyun thos shing kam tshang gi bstan srung dpal ldan zhing skyong dbang po'i sgrub skor rnam gtso bor 'di las brgyud par snang ngo* |.

¹²⁷ *gTer ston brgya rtsa* (p. 521) mentions: 1. *rDzogs chen 'khor ba chig chod*; 2. *Phyag chen sangs rgyas gsal 'debs*; 3. *'Khor ba bde chen lam byed*; 4. *sNying thig 'das rjes rnam gsum*; 5. *Thugs sgrub thod phreng rtsa gsum dril sgrub*, all found in 1322 (*chu pho khyi'i lo*); and then 6. *Zhing skyong gi skor*, found in Tsā ri, without any chronological indication.

¹²⁸ Gu ru bkra shis 1990, pp. 404-407.

¹²⁹ *gTer ston* Tshe brtan rgyal mtshan. This prophecy occurs in more or less the same form in O rgyan gling pa's, Ratna gling pa's, and Padma gling pa's revealed biographies of Padmasambhava.

The expectation of the people of Central [Tibet] will unite,¹³⁰ the Earth
[and the] Mongols¹³¹ will be afraid,
The teachings of a demonic emanation with evil behavior will spread
[and last] for a long time.¹³²
Signs having occurred of [the need] not to leave [on the spot], but
[instead] to extract
This treasure of Ko ro brag in 'Bri thang,¹³³
A treasure discoverer called Rin chen gling pa will appear.¹³⁴

As for this treasure discoverer Rin chen gling pa:¹³⁵

This being who has authority on that treasure
Is now the foremost one of my, [Padmasambhava of] Oḍḍyāna's,
retinue.
This Indian scholar Prajñākara¹³⁶ will,
As the final [one] of five rebirths, assume a body in the frontier of rDo
and Tibet,
So as to guide ordinary transmigrating beings

¹³⁰ In Sha gzugs pa Ngag dbang bkra shis' *Zab khyad gter ma'i lo rgyus gter ston chos 'byung nor bu'i 'phreng ba*, this is explained as referring to the unification of Central Tibet by Ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan (1302–1371). On all this context, see L. W. J. van der Kujip 2003.

¹³¹ According to a very insightful suggestion of Tenpa Tsering Batsang (oral communication, 08/08/2023), this is a play on words: the obscure phrase *sa hor* actually refers to the Sa skya pas (*sa*, "earth" = Sa skya) backed by the Mongols (*hor*).

¹³² Given that the two previous obscure allusions refer to the political situation, this may allude to 'Bri gung *sgom chen* Kun rin, Ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan's enemy and Klong chen pa's patron. Indeed, in a prophecy ascribed to Padmasambhava that appears in Klong chen pa's biographies, *sGom chen* Kun rin is called "a son of the demons," but I suspect (Arguillère 2007, pp. 114–120) that this does not at all reflect Klong chen pa's sincere opinion on him: the actual history has surely been rewritten by his biographers to present Klong chen pa's association with *sGom chen* Kun rin as an act of pure charity meant to prevent a genuinely evil person from falling into hell. I for one am convinced that Klong chen pa believed (maybe naively, but philosophers often lack strategic and tactic insight in politics) in *sGom chen* Kun rin's chances of political success. It is difficult, however, to understand how the sentence: "the teachings of an evilly behaving demon emanation will spread [and last] for a long time" could apply to him. Another (maybe more likely) possibility would be for the "demonic emanation with evil behavior" to be Ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan himself, and his "teachings... lasting for a long time" to be the Phag mo gru pa tradition.

¹³³ 'Bri thang Ko ro brag.

¹³⁴ *De nyid mi gnas mya ngan 'das 'og tu : dbus pa'i 'dun ma gcig dril sa hor skrag : sdig spyod bdud sprul bstan pa rgyas yun ring : 'bri thang ko ro brag gi gter kha 'di : mi bzhag 'don pa'i rtags de bstan nas 'byung : gter ston rin chen gling pa zhes bya 'byung .:*

¹³⁵ This prophecy is found in the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*, in *Rin chen gter mdzod*, vol. 88, p. 381.

¹³⁶ Shes rab 'byung gnas: I suppose this is Prajñākaragupta, a.k.a. Alaṅkāra Upādhyāya, the logician. Sha gzugs pa Ngag dbang bkra shis is very rich in details about Rin chen gling pa's past lives.

[As] the great *bodhisattva*, the final rebirth of Handsome.¹³⁷
 Then when he will pass away, and as the sign that he will not return
 [to this world],
 At the end of his life, all [his] faculties will be obscured,¹³⁸
 He will not take a rebirth but will enjoy Sukhāvātī above.¹³⁹

And:

If my—[Padmasambhava of] Oḍḍyāna's—son with the name Ratna¹⁴⁰
 Spends a long time (*bskyangs*) studying, reflecting and memorizing, it
 will be beneficial.¹⁴¹
 This emanated son will be like a flower born from a lake
 And [his] predestined disciples will be like bees looking for the nectar
 [of this flower].
 It will be [for them] like escaping from the veil of *samaya* violation
 [and the] stain of broken *samayas*.
 He will be like the powerful ink-pestle (?) that invites the *dākinīs*.
 He will be like a storm that sweeps away the dust of those with
 erroneous views.
 So inasmuch as one makes a connection with him, for the tasks that
 one has to complete,
 Whatever prayer one makes, he will accomplish all aims.
 The son of Oḍḍyāna with such and other characteristics and qualities
 That are beyond what can be written down
 Will be famous under [the name] Rin chen gling pa.
 May predestined beings meet him!¹⁴²
 This prophesied mind-emanation of [Padmasambhava of] Oḍḍyāna

¹³⁷ This is a female figure occurring in the *sTag rna'i rtogs pa brjod pa* or '*Phags pa stag rna'i mdo* (*Sārdūlakarṇa-avadāna*, a section of the *Divyāvadāna*)—in *sDe dge bKa' 'gyur*, vol. 76, BDRC: img. 469 | 1—img. 559. See Andy Rotman 2017.

¹³⁸ This might mean that he became deaf and / or blind by the end of his long life.

¹³⁹ *gTer ston rin chen gling pa ni | gter 'di dbang ba'i las can skyes bu de : da lta o rgyan nga yi 'khor gyi mchog : rgya gar mkhas pa shes rab 'byung gnas 'di : skye ba lnga yi mtha' ma rdo bod mtshams : tha mal 'gro ba 'dren phyir mi lus len : gzugs bzang skyes mtha'i byang chub sems dpa' che : de nas tshes 'phos phyir mi ldog pa'i rtags : tshes yi mjug la dbang po gang rung 'grib : skye ba mi len bde ba can tu ya spyod : ces dang...*

¹⁴⁰ I.e., rin chen.

¹⁴¹ Rin chen gling pa was a scholarly monk, at least during the first part of his life.

¹⁴² *O rgyan nga yi thugs sras ratna'i mtshan : thos bsam 'dzin pa bskyangs na don ldan 'gyur : sprul pa'i sras ni mtsho skyes me tog 'dra : skal ldan bu slob bung ba rtsi 'tshol 'dra : nyams grib dam sel dus min sad dang 'dra : mkha' 'gro'i gdan 'dren dbang chen snag rgyug 'dra : log lta can rnam rlung nag 'tshub ma 'dra : de phyir 'brel tshad 'phrin las rdzogs bya'i don : gsol ba gang bltab de yis don kun 'grub : de la sogs pa'i mtshan nyid yon tan rnam : yi ger bkod pas mi langs o rgyan sras : rin chen gling pa zhes su grags pa yi : las can skyes bu de dang 'di phrad shog : .*

was born after five rebirths of the divine son.¹⁴³ His place of birth was Tshe grong in Lo ro dkar po.¹⁴⁴ His father was the physician (*lha rje*) dGos rdor 'bum and his mother was the Nepalese g.Yang bum pa. His birth year was that of the ox.¹⁴⁵

Brag dkar rtsa so *sprul sku* adds that it is said he was mute during his first three years because of some undescribed defilement.¹⁴⁶ Then he adds that he received such things as the *Yang grol phur pa* from his grandfather.¹⁴⁷

When he was playing as a child, on a rock, he produced a complete imprint of his body. Then having entered the door of Dharma,¹⁴⁸ he received the name Rin chen rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po. Having gone to the seat (*gdan sa*, monastery) of sTeng pa [rTing pa?] *lo tsā ba*, the holy place of dGe ri in Lower gNyal, he made a thorough study of all that concerns philosophy. From a lama in Drug dril Monastery in Lo ro, he received all the instructions from Ras chung pa, practiced them and had infinite pure visions.¹⁴⁹

Then at some point he went on pilgrimage to Lhasa and one night, in a dream, he saw a white man telling him: "Next morning there is something important to do." That morning, a crippled *yogi* called *Byang sems Kun dga'*, saying that he was from Ding ri in La stod, asked a lot of questions to him: "[Are you from] this Lo ro that is beyond Dwags po to the East?" In the same way, he asked him about such things as Ko ro brag in 'Bri thang, about his father's clan being

¹⁴³ In the *lo rgyus* of his preserved treasures, it is plain that Rin chen gling pa was supposed to be an incarnation of King Khri srong lde'u btsan. This is probably what is meant by "divine son."

¹⁴⁴ "A place in the East of g.Yu ru called rDo" (*g.yu ru smad kyi sa cha rdo*) according to Brag dkar rtsa so *sprul sku* (2011, vol. 13, p. 538).

¹⁴⁵ *Ces lung bstan pa'i o rgyan thugs sprul lha sras skye ba lnga mthar sku 'khrungs pa ste | 'khrungs yul lo ro dkar po'i tshe grong yab lha rje dgos rdor 'bum | yum bal mo g.yang 'bum pa'i sras su 'khrungs | dgung snying glang yin |*

¹⁴⁶ *Loc. cit.*: *De 'phral gsung byon yang grib kyis lo gsum zhal lkugs |*

¹⁴⁷ *Loc. cit.*: *Yang grol phur pa sogs rang gi mes po la gsan |*. I could not identify what is Yang grol phur pa. *Yang phur* normally means "Yang dag He ru ka and Vajrakīla," but I cannot make sense of *grol* in that context.

¹⁴⁸ Rin chen gling pa was a monk at least in some part of his life: the prophecy in the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod* (*loc. cit.*, p. 382) also describes him as such: *Sākya'i bstan pa skyong phyir rab 'byung nas | ...* But further passages seem to suggest that his later behavior was more open (*ma nges*) and even alludes women (*skye ba dman pa'i bud med*).

¹⁴⁹ *Byis pa'i dus sku rtsed mdzad pas | pha bong [Kong sprul : pha wang] la sku yongs rdzogs kyi rjes gsal bar byung | de nas chos sgor zhugs | mtshan rin chen rgyal mtshan dpal bzang por btags | steng pa [Kong sprul : rting pa] lo tstsha ba'i gdan sa gnyal smad dge ri'i gnas su [Kong sprul : dmyal smad bai ro'i chos grwar] byon nas | mtshan nyid kyi phyogs la gsan pa mthar phyin mdzad | lo ro drug dril dgon par bla ma zhig las | ras chung pa'i gdams pa yongs rdzogs zhus nas | sgrub pa mdzad pas dag snang dpag med shar |*

[from] Mi nyag,¹⁵⁰ their [original] region being Tshe las 'gras and whether his name was Rin chen rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po.¹⁵¹

As he happened to match with what was asked, this *yogi* told him: "I have the prophetic guide for Padmasambhava of Oḍḍyāna's profound mind-treasure [to be] extracted from the top of the red rock of sPa sgro btsal, hidden in Ko ro brag of 'Bri thang. But I [can] not get there. You are the man that fits the treasure prophecy, and as this is so, I offer you [the prophetic guide]." Then he offered him a paper scroll wrapped into silk from under his armpit. It happened to be the prophetic guide.¹⁵²

[Rin chen gling pa] went to Ko ro brag¹⁵³ and in a cave there was a rock in which copper nails were embedded as signs of the hidden treasure. There was a slightly protruding triangular part of the rock¹⁵⁴ and from it he extracted a dark red chest of rigid leather. In this leather chest were five compartments (*mdzod lnga*),¹⁵⁵ [each of] which had five divisions,¹⁵⁶ among which in the east was the cycle endowed

¹⁵⁰ The more standard spelling *me ban* "literally means me-nyag ban-chung, the little monk of the Menyak/Minyak" (Jean-Luc Achard, personal communication, 11/08/2023).

¹⁵¹ *De nas skabs shig lha sa skor du byon pas | nub gcig mnal lam du | mi dkar po gcig gis nang bar don grub par yod zer ba rnis | sang zhogs pa der | la stod ding ri nas yin zer ba'i rnal 'byor ba 'theng po byang sems kun dga' zer ba zhig gis | dri ba rgyas par byas te | dwags po'i smad nas phar lo ro zer ba e yod dang | de bzhin du de nas 'bri thang ko ro brag dang | rus mi nyag lung pa tshe las gras pa | mtshan rin chen rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po sogs | ...* The story is a bit clearer in *Brag dkar sprul sku* (2011, vol. 13, p. 538): *lha sar byon nas thugs rje chen po'i drung du bzhugs skabs la stod ding ri nas 'ong zer ba'i rnal 'byor pa rkang pa 'theng po | byang sems kun dga' bya ba yin zer nas... Byang sems Kun dga' is a figure associated with the beginnings of the Zhi byed tradition in the 12th century (see e.g. Davidson 2005, pp. 151, 248, 330). This is why Brag dkar rta so sprul sku writes: "saying he was..." (yin zer).*

¹⁵² *Ji ltar dris pa bzhin byung bas | rnal 'byor pa des nga la spa gro btsal gyi brag dmar steng nas byung ba'i o rgyan padma'i dgongs gter zab mo 'bri thang ko ro brag la sbas yod pa'i kha byang nga la yod kyang | nga der ma slebs | khyed gter lung dang mthun pa'i mi de yin 'dug pas 'bul zer nas | mchan khung nas dar gyis dril ba'i shog ril cig phul ba | gter gyi kha byang du byung |.* *Brag dkar sprul sku* (2011, vol. 13, p. 539) adds a confirmation to these prophetic indications: *gzigs pas thugs tshom | nangs par don 'grub ces de'i sngon gong thugs rje chen po byi dkar gzugs kyis lung bstan rnam dang yang mthun |.*

¹⁵³ As we will see below, this has to be in 1310 or 1311.

¹⁵⁴ *Ko ro brag tu byon brag phug nang na gter rtags zangs gzer btab pa'i pha bong la | brag chol gru gsum pa zhig 'dug pa byas pa'i nang nas | bse sgrom smug po gdan drangs | bse sgrom nang du mdzod lnga mtshon phyir ral mig lnga yod pa [Kong sprul: re'u mig lnga yod pa]'i shar nas khyad par lnga ldan gyi skor |.* I thank Tenpa Tsering Batsang for his suggestion about the meaning of *brag chol gru gsum pa zhig 'dug pa* as meaning that something was slightly protruding (as in a relief).

¹⁵⁵ Does it not sound as the prototype of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's findings in Zang zang lha brag?

¹⁵⁶ *Brag dkar sprul sku* (2011, vol. 13, pp. 539 sq.) provides the most complete description of the *gter ma* with its 25 subdivisions. But a large part of the texts seems to be lost and the list is as such not of any help for our inquiry about possible connections with Rig 'dzin rGod ldem.

with the five special qualities; in the south, the cycle of the five jewel [-like] *sādhana*s; in the west, the fivefold cycle of the wish-fulfilling auspicious connections; in the north, the fivefold cycle of the fierce *mantras*; and in the center, the fivefold jewel [-like] cycle of the prophecies. Else there were self-multiplying relics of the Sugata and pearl-like relics, as well as nectar from Guru [Padmasambhava], *rakta* and *amṛta* from [Ye shes] mtsho rgyal and [other] blessed substances, plus a catalog [of all this]. He took [from the cache] infinitely many blessed treasures.¹⁵⁷

Also, from the rock that looks like a *dharmodaya*¹⁵⁸ in Ko ro brag in 'Bri thang, [it is then that] he extracted the *dharmas* of *Mañjuśrī King of [Occult] Science—Nāgarakṣa*.

On his way back, the lords of the treasure [displayed] storms and [other] wonders [that] he subdued through [his] ungrasping View, after what they spontaneously vanished. Then, having sealed [himself into a retreat cell] in the Eastern Monastery (*shar dgon*) of his homeland (*'khrungs yul*), he planted the victory banner of single-focused practice. Experiences and realizations flourished increasingly and infinite pure visions arose."¹⁵⁹

Here is where we should insert the narrative of his interactions with Padma las 'brel rtsal, if Gu ru bKra shis and Brag dkar rta so *sprul sku* are right to assume that it was Rin chen gling pa who gave Padma las 'brel rtsal the prophetic guide to his treasures around 1311. This, indeed, does not appear in any of the biographic accounts of Rin chen gling pa himself, but only in some of those of Padma las 'brel rtsal. If this is right, these figures, that we may tend to imagine as dignified old masters, were in fact in the prime of youth: Rin chen gling pa, Padma las 'brel rtsal, and *rGyal sras* Legs pa (here called Legs pa rgyal

¹⁵⁷ *IHo nas sgrub thabs nor bu skor lnga | nub nas rten 'brel yid bzhin nor bu'i skor lnga | byang nas drag sngags nor bu'i skor lnga | dbus nas kha byang lung bstan nor bu'i skor lnga | gzhan yang bde bar gshegs pa'i 'phel gdung dang | ring bsrel rnam pa gsum | gu ru'i bdud rtsi | mtsho rgyal gyi rakta amṛta dang dam rdzas dkar chag dang bcas pa spyang drangs shing byin rlabs kyi gter dpag tu med pa bzhes |.*

¹⁵⁸ A triangle or a pair of interlocking triangles forming a figure similar to the Star of David. KN 1984 mentions (p. 122) 'Bri ldang (*sic*) *chos 'byung* as being the birthplace of Padma las 'brel rtsal (see below for an edition and a translation of the text), so *chos 'byung* could merely be a toponym here also. *Brag chos 'byung 'dra ba nas* would then mean: "from such places as Chos 'byung in Brag [lung]". This "Brag" is also of great interest to us, as we remember that rGod ldem's rDzogs chen teacher is called Brag lung pa *mkhas btsun* Rin chen dpal. Where actually is Brag lung is unclear to us, but it seems to be somewhere between Tibet and Bhutan.

¹⁵⁹ *Yang 'bri thang ko ro brag gi brag chos 'byung 'dra ba nas 'jam dpal rig pa'i rgyal po nā ga ra kṣa'i chos rnam spyang drangs | tshur byon pa'i lam khar | gter bdag rnam kyi 'tshub dang cho 'phrul byung ba rnam 'dzin med kyi lta bas zil gyis mnan pas rang zhi la song | de nas 'khrungs yul gyi shar dgon par 'dag sbyar byas nas rtse gcig tu bsgrubs pa'i rgyal mtshan btsugs pas | nyams rtogs gong 'phel du rgyas shing | dag pa'i snang ba dpag med shar |.*

mtshan) were in their early twenties. Remembering this gives us more of the adventurous flavor of these treasure-hunting lives and also explains why they were not always regarded as trustworthy—as in the case of Padma las 'brel rtsal, who seems not to have met with unanimous approval and whose life is said to have been shortened by adverse circumstances.

Nyoshül Khenpo offers additional pieces of information on events that took place right after Padma las 'brel rtsal discovered his treasure (1313):¹⁶⁰

[Padma las 'brel rtsal] then returned to the cliff of Ko ro brag on [the plateau of] 'Bri thang and spent seven months in [meditation] practice. He actually met the Guru [Padmasambhava] and his consort [Ye shes mtsho rgyal], who bestowed their blessings by [granting him] the realization of the mind-transmission (*dgongs brgyud*). During that time, he conferred on Legs pa rgyal mtshan all the oral transmissions for his spiritual instructions.¹⁶¹

[Padma las 'brel rtsal then went on to a site in front of the cliff of] mChod rten brag and spent three months [practicing there] while Legs pa rgyal mtshan stayed below [the cliff]. Then the Dharma king Rin chen gling pa came to see [Padma las 'brel rtsal]. Legs pa rgyal mtshan responded to Rin chen gling pa: “As the precious *gter ston* is currently in retreat, there is no chance of having an audience with him.”¹⁶²

“In that case,” Rin chen gling pa immediately replied, “you must transmit to me all the oral transmissions you have received from him.” Thus, *rGyal sras* Legs pa rgyal mtshan gave the entire body of oral transmissions for the *Heart Essence of the Dākinī* to Rin chen gling pa.¹⁶³

Once *sPrul sku* Las 'brel rtsal had finished his retreat at mChod rten brag, he journeyed to lower gNyal and they¹⁶⁴ met near Se chen 'bum pa. *sPrul sku* Las 'brel rtsal asked, “Where are you two headed?”¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ This is Richard Barron's translation (Nyoshül Khenpo 2005, pp. 72-73), emended for the sake of consistency on the basis of the Tibetan text (Nyoshul Khenpo 1996, pp. 195-197).

¹⁶¹ *De nas log ste 'brin (sic) thang ko ro brag la sgrub pa yang zla ba bdun byas | gu ru yab yum dngos su mjal te | dgongs rgyud rtogs pas byin gyis brlabs par mdzad do | | de dus legs pa rgyal mtshan la bka' lung thams cad yongs su rdzogs par gnanng |*

¹⁶² *Yang mchod rten brag mdun du sgrub pa la byon nas zla ba gsum bzhugs pa'i dus | legs pa rgyal mtshan shod na yod dus | chos rgyal [196] rin chen gling pa mjal du byon te | de dus rin chen gling pa la | legs pa rgyal mtshan gyis gsungs pa | da lta gter ston rin po che sku mtshams la bzhugs 'dug pas mjal kha med gsungs pa dang | ...*

¹⁶³ *'O na khyod kyis bka' lung rnams gang thob pa nga la byed dgos zhus pas | rgyal sras legs pas rin chen gling pa la mkha' 'gro snying thig gi bka' lung rnams rdzogs par byas so |*

¹⁶⁴ Padma las 'brel rtsal, Rin chen gling pa and *rGyal sras* Legs pa.

¹⁶⁵ *De nas sprul sku las 'brel rtsal sku mtshams grol nas | gnyal smad se chen 'bum pa'i drung du 'phrad byung nas | sprul sku las 'brel rtsal gyi zhal nas | khyed gnyis gar 'gro ba yin gsungs pa dang | ...*

"We have come to meet [you,] Lord of the Dharma," they replied.¹⁶⁶ "Well, then, come [with me.] I'm going to 'Bri thang."¹⁶⁷ The teacher and students then journeyed towards the plateau. [On the way,] they stayed at Chos gling Monastery, where [Padma las 'brel rtsal] gave Rin chen gling pa the key to *gter mas* concealed within a black boulder shaped like a tortoise on a mountain path on the road to China.¹⁶⁸ He said: "My son, take this key and retrieve the *gter mas* concealed in that boulder. [Use them to] ensure benefit for beings."¹⁶⁹

Although Nyoshul Khenpo does not give his sources, we have a completely different—and much older—version of the association between Padma las 'brel rtsal and Rin chen gling pa in a text of KN 1984, the *Bla ma rgyud pa'i rim pa* (pp. 119-124). After a narrative about the origins of this cycle and the way it was hidden as a treasure, here is the way it recounts its discovery:

Then the emanation-body endowed with the [proper] karma and predestinate [was] Rin chen tshul rdor [= Padma las 'brel rtsal], who was born [1291] in Chos 'byung in 'Bri thang.¹⁷⁰ In his 16th year [1306], after this was prophesied [by] *Bla ma mkha' 'gro*,¹⁷¹ the karma of [his past] training [or: purification] was revived and he realized all phenomena to be the *dharmakāya*—his own mind.¹⁷² As the masters of the place, the *dākinīs*, the *mātrkas* and the [guardian] lords of the treasure had prophesied to this master, the prophetic guide and the key befell to him.¹⁷³ In the water-female-ox year [1313], in the night of

¹⁶⁶ *Nged gnyis chos rje mjal du yong ba yin zhus pas* | ...

¹⁶⁷ Nyoshul Khenpo writes 'Brin thang, but I have modified the spelling to be consistent with what has been used in the rest of this paper (we have already found also the spelling: 'Bri ldang).

¹⁶⁸ Sic. India, not China, everywhere in all other sources.

¹⁶⁹ 'O na 'deng zhig nged rang 'brin (sic) thang du 'gro ba yin gsungs nas | dpon slob rnams rim gyis 'brin thang du byon | | chos gling dgon par bzhugs pa'i dus | rin chen gling pa la | rgya nag (sic) la kha'i pha wang rus sbal nag po'i gter gyi lde'u mig yang gtad nas | 'o bu khyod kyis lde mig [197] | 'di khyer la | pha wang rus sbal nag po'i gter rnams thon la | sems can gyi don gyis shig ces gsungs so | |.

¹⁷⁰ *De nas sprul pa'i sku las dang bskal pa ldan pa* : 'bri ldang (sic) chos 'byung du sku 'khrungs pa'i : rin chen tshul dor zhes bya ba de :.

¹⁷¹ This seems to be the name of a (female?) lama, as in the next sentence we read: *bla ma de la*.

¹⁷² *dGung lo bcu drug la bla (?) ma mkha' 'gro lung stan* (sic) nas : sbyangs pa'i las sad : 'khor 'das kyi chos thams cad rang sems chos skur rtogs pa'i... I read *rtogs pa'i*, of which I cannot make clear sense otherwise, as *rtogs pas*. This manuscript is full of spelling mistakes and the meaning often needs to be conjectured.

¹⁷³ *Bla ma de la* : gzhi bdag mkha' 'gro ma mongs (ma mo?) gter bdag rnams kyi (sic for kyis?) lung stan (sic) nas : kha byang lde mig phyag tu son :. It is difficult to guess whether *bla ma de la* refers to Padma las 'brel rtsal or to the *bla ma mkha' 'gro* of the previous sentence. Be that as it may, as the author / discoverer of the text that we are now reading is clearly Rin chen gling pa, it is curious that he does not mention himself

27th of the last autumn month, having offered a *gaṇacakra* to the master, the tutelary deity and the *dākinīs* [and another one] to the lords of the treasure and made supplication prayers, he extracted the treasure.¹⁷⁴ It was prophesied by Padmasambhava of Oḍḍyāna that this emanated master would have twenty-one disciples.¹⁷⁵ Among them, one was called the Dharma King Rin chen gling pa.¹⁷⁶

From this point, we can shift back to Gu ru bKras shis's narrative. With this complementary piece of information, we have the feeling that Rin chen gling pa then left Padma las 'brel rtsal, maybe never to see him again, and went on to discover further *gter ma*. It must have been between 1313 (discovery of the *Heart-Essence of the Dākinī*) and the death of Padma Las 'brel rtsal¹⁷⁷ that Rin chen gling pa unearthed his next treasures:

Then he went to extract the treasure from the rock looking like a black tortoise in India, enduring infinite hardships [on the way, in places] such as steep-sided gorges.

According to the prophetic guide:¹⁷⁸

May this be found by an emanation of the Noble One, endowed with courage,

[Born in] the year of the ox or that of the dragon, named *ratna*,

The predestined one.

Let the non-predestined ones not get this [treasure].

That which was hidden [on the] eighth [month of] the horse year,

Extracted [on the] eighth [month of] the horse year,

Should be spread [on the] eighth [month of] the dog year.¹⁷⁹

in case in was really the one who handed the prophetic guide and the key to Padma las 'brel rtsal.

¹⁷⁴ *Chu mo glang gi lo : ston zla mtha' chung gi nyi shu bdun gyi mtshan mo : bla ma yi dam mkha' 'gro'i tshogs : gter bdag la tshogs mchod 'phul (sic) nas : gsol 'debs zhu ba byas nas gter nas gdan 'drangs so :*

¹⁷⁵ *Bla ma sprul sku de la dad pa can gyi slob ma nyi shu rtsa gcig 'byung bar : u rgyan padmas lung bstan pa las :...*

¹⁷⁶ *Chos kyi rgyal po rin chen gling pa zhes bya ba la...* The next sentence in the text would hardly be intelligible at all, if we did not have Gu ru bKra shis' biography of Rin chen gling pa, in which the toponym *sha 'ug stag sgo*, etc., later appears in connection with other discoveries of his, after Padma las 'brel rtsal's death. I have thus inserted the passage in the relevant place of Rin chen gling pa's life.

¹⁷⁷ Brag dkar rtsa so *sprul sku* and Sha gzugs pa Ngag dbang bkra shis both have Padma las 'brel rtsal die in his 29th year, which would be 1319.

¹⁷⁸ *Slar rgya gar gyi pha bong rus sbal nag po nas gter bzhes par lam 'phrang sogs dka' ba dpaq med spyad nas byon | lung bstan kha byang las |...*

¹⁷⁹ *'Phags pa'i sprul pa snying stobs can | | glang ngam 'brug lo ratna'i ming | | skal ldan gcig gis rnyed par shog | skal med rnams dang ma phrad cig | rta'i lo brgyad la sbas pa | rta'i lo brgyad la thon | khyi'i lo brgyad la spel |* The translation is very hypothetical (based on a suggestion of Jean-Luc Achard, confirmed by Tenpa Tsering Batsang).

Accordingly, he went to India. From under a rock surrounded by venomous snakes¹⁸⁰ which looked like a frog,¹⁸¹ marked with the sign of the treasure—a crossed *vajra*—there was, as the outer recipient, a two-headed frog [made out of] sealing wax, one of the heads of which was on its back.¹⁸² In this head there was a copper vase from which he extracted five things: *The Heart-Essence (thugs bcud) of Oḍḍyāna [Padmasambhava], the Master's Blissful Three Kāyas*,¹⁸³ *The Great [Cycle] of rDzogs chen, the Single [principle] that Liberates All*,¹⁸⁴ *The Great [Cycle] of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities in which Great Bliss is Fully Complete; The Dharma Cycle of the Great Array of Sacred Substances*; plus a silver *vajra* the size of a nail.¹⁸⁵

As a trace [of his passage], he put five treasure books of profound Dharma. In this regard, in this treasure prophecy [we read]:

As a substitute for these treasures that [you] will extract,
 Insert¹⁸⁶ five old treasure books about five topics
 And [the other] appropriate treasure-substitutes.
 At the time when the old and new treasures will come in contact,
 Move [in] (*spos*) the old treasure-books of the five cycles
 afterwards.¹⁸⁷
 [Thanks to this], obstacles will be removed and realizations will
 come.
 If those treasure books of mine were divulged,
 This would spell disaster for the unholy (*dam med*) treasure-
 revealer.
 So do not spread the treasure texts [but] hide them.

¹⁸⁰ Another element also found with Rig 'dzin rGod ldem—there is a lot of reptilian symbolism around Zang zang lha brag.

¹⁸¹ In the longer versions (Sha gzugs pa and Brag dkar rtso so *sprul sku*), the *gter ma* found under a rock looking like a black tortoise and the one discovered in a rock looking like a frog or toad are more distinct.

¹⁸² I thank Tenpa Tsering Batsang for helping me to understand what the creature looked like.

¹⁸³ The *Bla ma sku gsum bde ba chen po'i gsang rgyud*, root *tantra* of this cycle, is found in vol. 14 of the *mTshams brag rnying rgyud*, pp. 534-560. The discovery is ascribed to "Rad na gling pa," but, in this case, it is clearly Rin chen gling pa and this text must be counted among his revelations.

¹⁸⁴ This is the *A ti [rdzogs pa] chig chod kun grol*. It must be noted that it is revealed *after* the *Heart-Essence of the Dākinī* and at a time when Rin chen gling pa has already received it fully.

¹⁸⁵ *Zhes gsungs pa dang mthun par rgya gar du phebs | dug sbrul gyis bskor ba'i pha bong sbal ba 'dra ba la gter mtshan rdo rje rgya gram gyis mtshan pa'i 'og nas | phyi snod la cha'i sbal pa mgo gnyis pa mgo gcig 'phongs la yod pa zhig gi mgo rang las zang bum nang nas | o rgyan thugs bcud bla ma sku [gsum] bde ba chen po rdzogs chen chig chod kun grol chen mo zhi khro bde chen kun rdzogs chen mo dam rdzas rol pa chen po'i chos skor dngul gyi rdo rje sen gang pa gcig dang lnga 'dug pa bton nas | ...*

¹⁸⁶ *bZhugs*, in the Tibetan text, is a misnomer for *bcug*.

¹⁸⁷ I.e., replace the new ones by them as soon as you can.

Keep fast to the treasure, *sa mā yā* (sic).¹⁸⁸

So did he accordingly. On his way back, he made a retreat (*sgrub pa mdzad*) in the *ḍākinī*'s cave of the Bear's Den Ravine in Sha'ug sTag mgo.

In this treasure cache of Sha'ug sTag mgo—a very pleasant great forest at the border between Tibet and the Himalayan regions (*Mon*)—there was a rock looking like a five-pointed *vajra* with a protruding *svāstika* drawing as a *gter ma* mark. Within a *vajra* [made of] sealing wax, one cubit long, and a rock-crystal spiral, [there was] a yellow scroll, luminous and perfumed, in which there was what is called *The Three Sealed [Cycles]*.¹⁸⁹

[These are:] the *Three Sādhanas* [marked] with the Seal [of secrecy], that is, the *sādhanas* for the master, the deity (*yi dam*) and the *ḍākinī*, with their [ritual] texts and the practical know-how (*lag len*); *The Completion Phase with the Seal* [of secrecy], with the practice manual and instructions for their gradual, simultaneous and non-dual¹⁹⁰ implementation; and *The [Book of] Prophecies Marked by the Seal* [of Secrecy], with its general, special and specific (*spyi bye brag khyad par gsum*) predictions. He extracted all these that were [there] and inserted [in their concealment place], as treasure-substitutes, the paper scrolls of the black tortoise,¹⁹¹ also writing [a text] such as the one above.¹⁹²

Then, according to Ye shes mtsho rgyal's prophecies and because he was invited by Kong btsun de mo,¹⁹³ he went to Kong po, and rDo rje legs pa in person presented him with a treasure-key—so he

¹⁸⁸ *Shul du zab chos lnga'i gter dpe bcug ste | de yang gter lung de nyid las | gter 'di phyung ba'i gter tshab tu | | skor lnga'i gter dpe rnying pa dang | | gter tshab ji ltar rigs par bzhugs | | gter kha gsar rnying phrad dus su | | dpe rnying slad kyi gter du spos | | bar chad sel zhing dngos grub 'byung | | nga yi gter dpe 'chol ba na | | gter ston dam med 'phung bar 'gyur | | de bas gter yig ma spel sbos | | gter chos 'chongs shig sa mā yā |*

¹⁸⁹ *Zhes gsungs pa ltar mdzad | tshur byon sha 'ug stag sgo'i dom tshang rong gi mkha' 'gro phug tu sgrub pa mdzad | mon bod gnyis kyi sa mtshams nags khrod chen po shin tu gnyen pa sha 'ug stag sgo zhes pa'i gter nas rdo rje rtse lnga 'dra ba'i brag la gter mtshan g.yung drung ris yod pa chol bur bton nas | la cha'i rdo rje rtse lnga 'dom gang pa dang shel rdo'i gril shing la dar gyis dkris pa'i shog ser dri 'od dang ldan pa la bka' rgya ma rnam gsum zhes pa...*

¹⁹⁰ *gNyis med*, i.e., in the context, neither simultaneous nor gradual.

¹⁹¹ It seems that in each new treasure-cache, he re-hides the original 'yellow scrolls' of his previous findings, instead of keeping them in a way that would allow him to show them, as Padma las 'brel rtsal did to Karmapa Rang byung rdo rje. The text may mean that re-concealing the *gter chos* after having copied / deciphered them is a protection against obstacles; maybe this is intended as an explanation of Padma las 'brel rtsal's short life. Be that as it may, we remember how important is this issue of the *gter tshab* in Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's biographies, even when it is not about re-hiding *gter ma* material.

¹⁹² *sGrub thabs bka' rgya ma | bla ma yi dam mkha' 'gro'i sgrub thabs yi ge lag len dang bcas pa | rdzogs rim bka' rgya ma la | rim gyis cig car gnyis med gsum gyi khrid yig zhal gdams dang bcas pa | lung bstan bka' rgya ma las | spyi dang bye brag khyad par gsum gyis lung bstan dang bcas pa | thun mong lo rgyus dang bcas pa rnam 'dug pa bton | gter tshab tu rus sbal nag po'i shog ser dang | gzhan yang sngar 'dra bar bris nas bcug.*

¹⁹³ Kong btsun de mo is rDo rje legs pa's consort.

discovered¹⁹⁴ many *gter ma*.¹⁹⁵

Here we meet with an event that is alluded to (pp. 122 *sq.*) in the *Bla ma brgyud pa'i lo rgyus* of KN 1984 (pp. 119-124), at the point at which we dropped it:

When The Dharma King Rin chen gling pa was [making a retreat] in the Crystal Cave—the abode of Padmasambhava—of the Bear's Den Ravine in Sha'ug sTag mgo, in a bird year [1321?¹⁹⁶], on the full moon of the month of lesser miracles (*cho 'phrul chung ngu*), the son of [Padmasambhava of] Odḍyāna, Padma las 'brel rtsal, came from Khecara in Odḍyāna. He bestowed [to Rin chen gling pa] the transmission of the meaning of the *Heart-Essence of the Dākinī* with oral transmission (*bka' lung*), the empowerments [and the] scriptures (*bka'*). As for the transmission of the words, taking [in his hands the texts of] the peaceful *Heart-Essence of the Dākinī* and the wrathful *gNod sbyin dmar nag*, [he said:] “The books will come from the region (*phyogs*) of Dwags po.¹⁹⁷ When you will practice them, practice this long-life *sādhana* in order to dispel the obstacles. It is of utmost importance as a *samaya* between you and me. I think that each of these will come [into your possession] from the three sacred abodes of the Vidyādhara in Khecara within twenty-three [days?] from now. If [you] think thus, you [are] the son of Odḍyāna [Padmasambhava, your] father.” Having said so, he went [back] to Odḍyāna. Then later in this year [or: in the next year?], though I¹⁹⁸ had no plan of going to

¹⁹⁴ *sPyan drangs*, literally: ‘invited.’

¹⁹⁵ *gZhan yang mtsho rgyal gyi lung bstan dang | kong btsun de mo'i spyan drangs pa la brten nas | kong por phebs rdo rje legs pas gter gyi lde mig mngon sum du phul bas zab gter mang po spyan drangs |.*

¹⁹⁶ There are some more bird years to come in Rin chen gling pa's long life, but 1321 would be quite natural: Padma las 'brel rtsal had passed away not long before.

¹⁹⁷ As we have seen in Klong chen pa's biography, it is *rGyal sras* Legs pa is associated with Dwags po, so it makes sense that the texts of which Rin chen gling pa receives a visionary transmission were kept in Dwags po. This detail in the biography corroborates my feeling that the text of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* were so rare that even the closest disciples of Padma las 'brel rtsal did not have a (complete) set of them. This further reinforces the need for a personal, human link between the *gter ston* and Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. It is difficult to say when the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* became more available: of course, it is very often mentioned in biographies of *rnying ma* masters; but even nowadays, its root-*tantra*, the *Klong gsal 'bar ba nyi ma'i rgyud* (in *mKhan po* Mun sel's *bKa ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 110, pp. 3-349), is not very well established: Tulku Thondup himself, working (2001) on *sPrul sku* Tshul lo's practice manual for the *dGongs pa zang thal*, was unable to spot in the published version of the *tantra* about 30% of the quotations found in that manual—quotations actually all borrowed from Klong chen pa's *Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin*, which itself copies them from various texts of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*. The version of the *Klong gsal 'bar ba* that was available to Padma las 'brel rtsal (and to Klong chen pa—if any) was clearly somewhat different from the text we have.

¹⁹⁸ It is clearly Rin chen gling pa speaking now.

Dwags po, *Slob dpon* bSod nams having invited me, I went to Dwags po, and in accordance with the prophecy we [just] mentioned, Se skya'o bla ma Tshar steng pa and dBon po Tshul dbang came carrying the two volumes of *rDzogs chen* [the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*] and *gNod sbyin*. As they had requested it, I corrected [the deciphering of the *dākinī* scripts]. This was [an account] of the succession of the lineage masters. *lthih*. Triple seal.¹⁹⁹

Let us now return to Gu ru bKra shis' biography of Rin chen gling pa:

He erected the victory banner of practice in Brag nang of Kong po, in Tsa ri gsar ma and in the Sky Fortress of Brag dmar ze chung and brought his practice to completion. Then he came back to Lo ro and took possession of some monasteries such as Rin chen lding. He took broad responsibility for the welfare of beings. Then, he moved to Tsa ri and Kong po, in which he extracted profound treasures, practiced meditation, and took care of beings. Thus did he increase his benefits to beings.²⁰⁰

'Jam mgon Kong *sprul* rephrases Gu ru bKras shis at this point, saying that "in Tsa ri and Kong po, he extracted profound treasures, practiced meditation, and was [chosen] by Padma las 'brel rtsal as the master of his Dharma (*chos bdag*)."²⁰¹ But this would mean that he did all his travels and further discoveries (the black tortoise rock, etc.) just between 1313 and 1319. 'Jam mgon Kong *sprul* may be right as regards Rin chen gling pa being one of Padma las 'brel rtsal's *chos bdag*, but it seems that this detail is misplaced in the storyline.

¹⁹⁹ *Chos kyi rgyal po rin chen gling pa zhes bya ba la sha 'ug stag sgo dom tshang rong u rgyan gzhugs gnas shel gyi phug tu : bya'i lo chu (sic) 'phrul chung ngu'i nya zla'i mtshan mo : u rgyan thugs sras padma las 'brel rtsal dbu (sic) rgyan mkha' spyod nas byon nas : mKha' 'gro snying thig gi don [b]rgyud ka (sic) lung dbang bka' dang bcas pa gnang : tshigs rgyud du zhi ba rdzogs chen mkha' 'gro snying thig dang drag po gnod sbyin dmar nag gi bsgrub bkor (sic) longs pa : dpe dwags po'i phyogs nas 'ong ngo : de gnyis nyams su len pa'i tshe : bar chad sel phyir tshe bsgrub 'di nyams su long cig : khyed rang dang nga gnyis... (?) g.yar dam du rdeng du cig : de re u rgyan nam mkha' spyod rig 'dzin gnas gsum yul nas : mi'i lo ga 'dir lo ni nyi shu [rtsa] gsum nas 'ong ngo sems : de bzhin dgongs na u rgyan pha yi bu : gsungs nas u rgyan du gshegs so : de nas phyi'i de'i lo la : bdag dags por 'gro rtsis med pa gcig la : slob dpon bsod nams gyis gdan drangs nas dags por byon nas : sngar gyi lung bstan dang mthun par : rdzogs chen dang gnod sbyin gyi dpe gnyis : se [?] skya'o bla ma tshar steng pa dang : dpon po tshul dbang gis 'khyer byung ba la : zhal zhus nas zhu dag byas so : bla ma rgyud pa'i rim pa'o : lthih : rgya rgya rgya .:*

²⁰⁰ *Kong po brag nang | tsa ri gsar ma | brag dmar ze chung nam mkha' rdzong rnams su sgrub pa'i rgyal mtshan btsugs te nyams len mthar phyin par mdzad | slar lo ror byon | rin chen lding sogs dgon gnas 'ga' re bzung | 'gro don rgya cher bskyangs | de nas tsa ri dang gong phyogs [Kong sprul: kong po] la byon | zab gter bzhes pa | sgrub pa mdzad pa | 'gro don skyong ba sogs zung 'brel du mdzad | 'gro phan kyang che bar byung |.*

²⁰¹ *gZhan yang tsa ri dang kong po sogs su byon nas zab gter bzhes pa | sgrub pa mdzad pa | padma las 'brel rtsal gyi zab chos kyi bdag po gnang ba |.*

Here is the end of Gu ru bKras shis's narrative:

He was said to be the rebirth of *paṇḍita* Prajñākara²⁰² and was someone who, besides revealing profound treasures, was also a scholar and [not merely] a practitioner. There is also a vast and profound story of his travel to Zangs mdog dpal ri [in a] pure vision. In bSam yas, he made prophecies to the Dharma Lord Rang byung rdo rje, offered him all his teachings and made him the master of his Dharma (*chos bdag*).²⁰³ He passed away in his eightieth year [1368] in Lo ro.²⁰⁴

Gu ru bKras shis then proceeds with the next two incarnations of Rin chen gling pa, explaining how his treasures, except for the Nāgarakṣa cycle, fell into disuse.

Rin chen gling pa's disciples: the colophons in ms. bdr:MW2KG210268, in Rin chen gter mdzod, and in the 5th Dalai Lama's gSan yig

All sources pertaining to Rin chen gling pa's life would not have been fully explored if we do not consider the documents available regarding his successors. I have found, so far, three main sources: the texts preserved in the *Rin chen gter mdzod*; the 5th Dalai Lama's *Record of Teaching Received* and a manuscript (bdr:MW2KG210268) which I have not yet described.

Compiling the information scattered in those three sources brings interesting results: although many figures are indeed obscure in the present state of research, some of them are not unknown to us from our research on Byang gter, as very similar names or sequences of names occur among the successors of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem: Nam mkha'i mtshan can (who could possibly be the same person as the Nam mkha' grags pa of the *g.Yung gi lo rgyus* explored above), 'Vajraśrī'i mtshan can' who could be sNgags 'chang rDo rje dpal—these two figures possibly being the same person under two names. As an indirect disciple of Rin chen gling pa, we also find *gSang bdag dDe chen lhun grub* (bdr:P10106) who seems to be an important figure—one of the first early masters to be found not only in Byang gter lineages, but also in other lineages (for example, according to the 5th Dalai Lama's

²⁰² See note 136 above.

²⁰³ This might require further inquiry, as, if I am not mistaken, Rin chen gling pa outlived Rang byung rdo rje by nearly thirty years.

²⁰⁴ *Di paṇḍita shes rab 'byung gnas kyi skye bar grags shing | zab gter bzhes pa gcig pur ma zad mkhas grub gnyis ka 'dzoms pa zhiḡ yin te | zangs mdog dpal rir byon pa'i dag snang gi lo rgyus kyang zab cing rgya che bar yod | bsam yas su chos rje rang byung rdo rje la lung bstan dang chos ka rnams phul zhing chos bdag tu mnga' gsol | dgung lo brgyad cu pa la lo ror sku gshegs so | |.*

Record of Teachings Received). Me'i Śā kya bzang po (bdr: P1698) may be the first Yol mo *sprul sku*, well-known in the Northern Treasures lineages, although this is less likely, because he seems to be a bit late to be associated with a direct disciple of Rin chen gling pa. All of this will require further investigation, but overall this lends further support to the idea of a close connection between the milieu of which Rin chen gling pa was a central figure and that which later gravitated around Rig 'dzin rGod ldem.²⁰⁵

MW2KG210268 is a manuscript containing selections of the two aforementioned cycles found in the *Rin chen gter mdzod*, without much additional material. It must be ancient, as in the few elements of lineages found in some of the colophons, there is rarely more than one person, called *rtsa ba'i bla ma*, after Rin chen gling pa. A careful examination of these colophons, however, provides us with a series of personal and close disciples which, strangely, are not mentioned in any of the available biographies.

The six texts selected from the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod* present a coherent picture, with the same names coming over and over again. A first text²⁰⁶ mentions Nam mkha' mtshan can as the successor of Rin chen gling pa,²⁰⁷ and then *bdag*, copyist or commissioner of the manuscript. A colophon added to the second text,²⁰⁸ tells us that the *tantra* was transmitted to *sPrul sku* Nam mkha' mtshan can and then to *sGrub rgyud* Śā kya bzang po who seems to be the copyist or the commissioner of the manuscript. Then come two more texts²⁰⁹ that display exactly the same information.

The fifth text²¹⁰ is, however, different, as here, Rin chen gling pa's successor in the lineage is "Vajraśrī'i *mtshan can*" (rDo rje dpal) and then "myself" (*bdag*). Some more words in cursive script show that this "myself" is Me'i Śā kya bzang po, but the intermediary link (Vajraśrī) is unclear. Either Śā kya bzang po was a student of two different

²⁰⁵ The inclusion of Zur haṃ Śā kya 'byung gnas as an indirect disciple of Rin chen gling pa for the Nāgarakṣa cycle is noteworthy, given his significant role within the rNying ma lineage during his lifetime (refer to Dudjom Rinpoche 1991: pp. 669-672). However, information about his birth and death dates remain unknown. But this is less relevant to us here as there is no known connection of this master with the Northern Treasures.

²⁰⁶ *Khog dbub stong thun* (pp. 3-24).

²⁰⁷ It would be important to verify whether Nam mkha' grags pa, the author of the *g.Yung gi lo rgyus*, is the same person as this Nam mkha'i mtshan can / ming can. This would further confirm the idea of an association between Rin chen gling pa and Rig 'dzin rGod ldem; but we could then wonder why Rin chen gling pa is not mentioned (at least under a recognizable name) in the *g.Yung gi lo rgyus*.

²⁰⁸ The first *rDzogs pa chen po chig chod kun grol chen po'i rgyud* (pp. 25-107).

²⁰⁹ The second *Khog dbub stong thun* (pp. 109-130) and the second *rDzogs pa chen po chig chod kun grol chen po'i rgyud* (pp. 131-213).

²¹⁰ *Dug lnga lam 'khyer* (pp. 215-233).

disciples of Rin chen gling pa, or Nam mkha' mtshan can be the same person as Vajraśrī.

In the sixth text,²¹¹ Rin chen gling pa's successor in the colophon calls himself *Ri khrod* Nam mkha' 'od.

If now we shift to the Nāgarakṣa cycle, its colophons bring different, but also very interesting, information: the colophon of the first text²¹² mentions a person called bsTan 'dzin 'gyur med. The second²¹³ and third²¹⁴ texts in this section do not provide any lineage information. The fourth²¹⁵ inform us that it was transmitted by Rin chen gling pa to bsTan 'dzin 'gyur med, with this additional precision: Zur *ban*. The fifth²¹⁶ was transmitted to *Shanting pha and from him to Zur haṃ Śā kya 'byung gnas. The sixth text²¹⁷ does not convey further historical indications.²¹⁸

The third series of texts included in ms. MW2KG210268 does not seem to be connected to Rin chen gling pa and I will not describe it here.²¹⁹

The *Rin chen gter mdzod* (sTod lung edition, p. 273) version of the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod* also has a colophon with an unknown disciple of Rin chen gling pa: "Su rya ratna,"²²⁰ followed by an unknown "myself" (*bdag*—Mus chen Nam mkha' rnal 'byor?). Su rya ratna must be *Lo tsā ba Nyi ma rin chen* (bdr: PORK684).

In the same edition, on p. 299, we read a segment of a lineage prayer in which we find, after *Chos rgyal* Rin chen gling pa, Nam mkha'

²¹¹ *Bar do sku gsum me long* (pp. 235-248).

²¹² *Klu bdud 'bum gyi ti ta* (?) *gsang ba'i rgyud* | *bsrung zlog gsang ba'i rgyud* (pp. 249-266), concluded by a strange eye-shaped amulet drawing.

²¹³ *Klu'i srin po nā ga rakṣa'i bsnyen sgrub gdon pa sum 'joms byed gnam lcags gter zhes rgyud man ngag gsal* (pp. 267-288).

²¹⁴ *Khyab bdag na ga rag sha* (sic) *las* | *khyung nag me'i 'khor lo* (pp. 289-309).

²¹⁵ *Khyab bdag nā ga rakṣa'i nor sgrub* (pp. 311-315), which ends with very beautiful line drawings of elephants carrying a magical jewel on their back.

²¹⁶ This text (pp. 316-317) does not have a clear title but is concluded by a fine line-drawing representing Nāgarakṣa in an unusual form that is identified as an illustration of the *Klu'i nor sgrub rin chen gter bum*, which I think can be regarded as the title of this text.

²¹⁷ *'Jam dpal nā ga rakṣa'i lo brgyus* (sic—pp. 319-320), without *gter ma* marks, but is presented in its colophon as having been discovered by Rin chen gling pa.

²¹⁸ Except for the mention that the book belongs to *rGyal sras* 'Jigs med, an indication that also occurs in the final group of texts of this manuscript, and which may in fact be the only reason why the last group of texts have been bound with Rin chen gling pa materials.

²¹⁹ The pp. 327-420 contain a cycle connected to Mahākāla. The connection with Rin chen gling pa is not obvious; he seems to be mentioned, however, in a barely readable colophon on p. 389. The name that appears more often is that of an unknown *sNgags 'chang* Rin chen 'bum; that of Rin chen gling pa does not show up at all in the short lineage account for that cycle (p. 332).

²²⁰ See note 103 above.

mtshan can and then *rtsa ba'i bla ma* (Me'i Śā kya bzang po?).

In the 5th Dalai Lama's *gSan yig* (vol. 3, pp. 590-595) we find three lineages stemming from Rin chen gling pa. Here is the first one, for the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*:²²¹

1. *Me ban gTer ston* Rin chen gling pa |
2. *Bla ma* bSod nams rgyal ba |
3. *Chos rje* bDe chen lhun grub |
4. *rTogs ldan* Nyi ma'i mtshan |
5. *rJe btsun* Surya Candra |
6. *mTshungs med* Sangs rgyas 'od zer |

Then comes one for a *Guru drag dmar cycle* (which seems to be lost):

1. *gTer ston* Rin chen gling pa |
2. *mKhas grub* Byang 'dzin pa |
3. *rJe dKon mchog* rgyal mtshan |
4. *mKhas grub* bSod nams bzang po |
5. *dPang ston* Chos kyi rgyal po |
6. *dPang ston* bSod nams rgyal mtshan |

Then we have one lineage for Nāgarakṣa:

1. *gTer ston* Rin chen gling pa |
2. *Bla ma* Nam mkha' 'od zer |
3. *rJe* Chos dbyings pa |
4. *Bla ma* dPal bzang pa |
5. *Rin po che* Nam mkha' legs pa |
6. *Slob dpon* Phun tshogs |

Though some of these figures could be the same persons with different names, we thus reach the following global result:

	His Disciples	His grand-disciples
Rin chen gling pa		Rin chen smon lam
	<i>sPrul sku</i> Nam mkha' mtshan can	
	Vajraśīr'i <i>mtshan can</i> (rDo rje dpal)	Me'i Śā kya bzang po

²²¹ In all these lineages, I have removed everything that comes before Rin chen gling pa, which has no useful historical value, and have kept only the first five generations after him, because whatever comes after that cannot lead us to any useful information about the *gter ston*.

	<i>bla ma</i> Nam mkha' 'od zer	<i>rJe</i> Chos dbyings pa
	Zur <i>ban</i> bsTan 'dzin 'gyur med	?
	Shanting pha	Zur ham Śā kya 'byung gnas
	Su nya ratna (<i>Lo tsā ba</i> Nyi ma rin chen?)	<i>bDag</i> (?)
	<i>Bla ma</i> bSod nams rgyal ba	<i>Chos rje</i> bDe chen lhun grub
	<i>mKhas grub</i> Byang 'dzin pa	<i>rJe</i> dKon chog rgyal mtshan
	<i>Ri khrod</i> Nam mkha' 'od	?

sPrul sku Nam mkha' mtshan can have a name that is very similar to that of the author of the *g.Yung gi lo rgyus*.

Perhaps it is not entirely extravagant to speculate that Vajraśrī may be *sNgags 'chang* rDo rje dpal, a direct disciple of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem.

If then (1) Nam mkha'i mtshan can be the same person as Nam mkha' grags pa (the author of the *g.Yung gi lo rgyus* explored above) and if (2) rDo rje dpal was another of his names, this might explain the title of the *g.Yung gi lo rgyus* and the fact that this text is placed next to writings by *g.Yung ston pa* in the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*: both being called rDo rje dpal and being connected to the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*, the editors may easily have conflated the earlier (*g.Yung ston pa*) and later (Nam mkha' grags pa) rDo rje dpal.

It is very likely that the successor of *Bla ma* bSod nams rgyal ba, bDe chen lhun grub, is *gSang bdag* bDe chen lhun grub, recorded as a disciple of rGod ldem's son rNam rgyal mgon po (1399–1424).

I am not convinced that Me'i Śā kya bzang po is the first Yol mo *sprul sku*, well-known in the Northern Treasures lineages, because this all seems to be too early (he was a direct master to the two mNga' ris brothers).

But if this were the case, then our Nam mkha' mtshan could be one of his two recorded masters "having space in their name:" Kong chen Nam mkha' dpal ldan or *Thugs sras* Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan. The second one is clearly connected to the Byang gter circles.

Conclusion

In this article I hope to have shown, if not formally proven, that there are strong reasons to believe that Rin chen gling pa was Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's rDzogs chen master. This in itself, although it may sound rather microscopic to non-specialists, is a point of great importance for 'jangterology,' insofar as it helps to tear rGod ldem away from the traditional portrayal of him as an autonomous genius, completely

isolated from any context, or at least one whose connections with his surrounding social and religious world (except for the Gung Thang royalty) were unknown and presumably insignificant.

But the more general issue is also to present, in the spirit of Cathy Cantwell's remarkable work on the liturgical compositions of Dūdjom Rinpoche (2020), or of Jean-Luc Achard (1999)'s pioneering remarks on textual borrowing in rDzogs chen literature, the idea that the *gter ston*, however their revelations come to them, must also somehow receive, through ordinary human channels, most of the components of the texts they are called upon to unearth. This encompasses not solely a question of spiritual transmission as explicitly recognized in Tibetan tradition, but also the genesis of *gter ma* literature itself, which, in many cases, can only be comprehended as a reiteration of pre-existing texts, albeit with subtle variations, suggesting that in numerous instances, an individual corpus was handed down and underwent a gradual organic evolution over time. This is distant from our notion of 'revelation,' which typically evokes the notion of *absolute novelty*.

In this sense, establishing the filiation between Padma las 'brel rtsal, Rin chen gling pa, Klong chen pa and Rig 'dzin rGod ldem means first and foremost giving a historical, human meaning to the evidence that strikes every reader of the texts without quite explaining why: The *Heart-Essence of the Dākinī*, the *dGongs pa zang thal*, maybe Rin chen gling pa's *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*, and no doubt many other texts more or less belonging to the same family (here, what 'Jam mgon Kong *sprul* refers to as the *Padma snying thig*; but of course the *bKa' brgyad* literature, etc., could be approached in the same manner), could be perceived more accurately as *diverse states or versions of the same text or corpus, revealed and deciphered by distinct individuals*, instead of being considered as entirely separate works (as we tend to understand traditional assumptions).

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Writings and Revelations of Rin chen gling pa

I. The *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*—in *Rin chen gter mdzod*, vol. 88, pp. 249-446 (fourteen texts); in ms. bdr: W2KG210268: pp. 3-248 (six texts). The root *tantra* is also found in the *mTshams brag rnying rgyud*.

- Rin chen gling pa, *Kun grol them byang* [of the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*], in *Rin chen gter mdzod*, vol. 88, pp. 249-253.
- *bKa' srung* [of the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*], in *Rin chen gter mdzod*, vol. 88, pp. 375-380.
- *sNgon 'gro* [of the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*], in *Rin chen gter mdzod*, vol. 88, pp. 295-302.
- *rJes kyi la bzla ba* [of the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*], in *Rin chen gter mdzod*, vol. 88, pp. 360-363.
- *bTags grol yid bzhin nor bu* or *Sangs rgyas sras gcig btags grol* [of the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*], in *Rin chen gter mdzod*, vol. 88, pp. 363-375.
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- *brDa don gsang ba'i snying tig* [of the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*], in *Rin chen gter mdzod*, vol. 88, pp. 334-360.
- *Bar do sku gsum me long*, in ms. bdr: W2KG210268, pp. 235-248.
- *dBang bzhi'i brda khrid* [of the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*], in *Rin chen gter mdzod*, vol. 88, pp. 278-295.
- *Tshig khrid gnad kyi sgron me* [of the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*], in *Rin chen gter mdzod*, vol. 88, pp. 302-317.
- *rDzogs pa chen po chig chod kun grol* or *Theg pa thams cad kyi snying po bsdu pa'i yang thig yang gsang chig chod kun grol*, in *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* (mTshams brag), vol. 14, pp. 888-952. In ms. bdr: W2KG210268: *rDzogs pa chen po chig chod kun grol chen po'i rgyud*, pp. 25-107. See also ms. bdr: W2KG210268, pp. 131-213: *rDzogs pa chen po chig chod kun grol chen po'i rgyud*.
- *rDzogs pa chen po chig chod kun grol chen po'i khog dbub stong thun*, in ms. bdr: W2KG210268, pp. 109-130.
- *Lung bstan sgo 'byed* [of the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*], in *Rin chen gter mdzod*, vol. 88, pp. 253-255.
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- *gSang chen gnad kyi don khrid* [of the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*], in *Rin chen gter mdzod*, vol. 88, pp. 317-330.

II. Other rDzogs chen tantras from Rin chen gling pa's gter chos in the the mTshams brag rnying rgyud.

The status of these four texts is so far unknown, as we do not know to what cycle (definitely rDzogs chen) they belong. They are found in the *mTshams brag rnying rgyud* in the same volume as the root *tantra* of the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*, without any further explanation.

Rin chen gling pa, *Theg pa chen po mngon par rtogs pa byang chub lam gyi rgyud nam mkha' dang mnyam pa*, in *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* (mTshams brag), vol. 14, pp. 104-246.

— *De bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi sku gsung thugs kyi snying po de kho na nyid nges pa ye shes mchog gi rgyud chen gsang ba yongs rdzogs*, in *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* (mTshams brag), vol. 14, pp. 390-494.

— *Bla ma sku gsum bde ba chen po'i gsang rgyud*, in *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* (mTshams brag), vol. 14, pp. 534-560.

This *gter ma* is ascribed to a "Rad na gling pa" which is in fact Rin chen gling pa.

— *'Bras bu gsang ba bla na med pa'i rgyud chen po dri ma med pa'i snying po* [*Byin gyis brlab pa'i yi ge klad du smos pa*], in *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* (mTshams brag), vol. 14, pp. 246-390.

III. The 'Jam dpal klu bdud nāgarakṣa cycle—in *Rin chen gter mdzod*, vol. 29, pp. 5-102; in ms. bdr: W2KG210268: pp. 249-320.²²²

Rin chen gling pa, *Klu bdud 'bum gyi ti ka gsang ba'i rgyud | bsrung zlog gsang ba'i rgyud*, in *Rin chen gter mdzod*, vol. 29, pp. 12-33; in ms. bdr: W2KG210268, pp. 249-266.

— *Klu'i nor sgrub rin chen gter bum*, in ms. bdr: W2KG210268, pp. 316-317.

— *Klu'i srin po Nāgarakṣa'i bsnyen sgrub gdon pa sum 'joms byed gnam lcags gter zhes rgyud man ngag gsal*, in ms. bdr: W2KG210268, pp. 267-288.

— *Khyab bdag nāgarakṣa'i las | khyung nag me'i 'khor lo*, in ms. bdr: W2KG210268, pp. 289-309. In *Rin chen gter mdzod: 'Jam dpal klu bdud nāgarakṣa'i srung ba bya khyung me'i 'khor lo*, vol. 29, pp. 58-64.

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— *'Jam dpal nāgarakṣa'i char 'bebs*, in *Rin chen gter mdzod*, vol. 29, pp. 77-87.

— *'Jam dpal nāgarakṣa'i phyag rgya lus la spo ba*, in *Rin chen gter mdzod*, vol. 29, pp. 87-90.

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— *'Jam dpal klu bdud nāgarakṣa'i brtag pa'i rin chen nyi ma'i sgron me*, in *Rin chen gter mdzod*, vol. 29, pp. 33-58.

— *'Jam dpal klu bdud nāgarakṣa'i byugs pa rgyan gyi 'khor lo*, in *Rin chen*

²²² As for the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*, the two selections are not completely redundant and the one complete the other. I have not spotted any text belonging to this cycle in the *mTshams brag rnying rgyud* so far; but it is not unlikely that some could be found among the Nāgarakṣa *tantras* listed in the article "Yamāntaka among the Ancients" in this volume.

gter mdzod, vol. 29, pp. 64-67.

IV. Rin chen gling pa's additions to the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* in KN 1984²²³

- Rin chen gling pa, *Kun grol rgyud kyi ti ka*, in KN 1984, pp. 79-92.
- *Khrid yig nor bu'i phreng ba*, in KN 1984, pp. 419-461.
- *rGyud pa'i gsol 'debs*, in KN 1984, pp. 255-257.
- *rGyud rtags bcang pa'i 'bras bu thob tshul*, in KN 1984, pp. 129-134.
- *'Chi med tshe'i bsrub pa*, in KN 1984, pp. 751-764.²²⁴
- *sNying po gsal ba zhes bya ba'i khrid gzhung don gsal bla med*, in KN 1984, pp. 119-124.
- *sNying po gsal ba zhes bya ba'i khrid gzhung don gsal me long*, in KN 1984, pp. 555-595.²²⁵
- *rTags tshad kyi yi ge*, in KN 1984, pp. 485-492.²²⁶
- *Thod rgal lam gyi don khrid nor bu*, in KN 1984, pp. 409-417.
- *Dākki thod rgal du bsgrub pa*, in KN 1984, pp. 381-390.
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- *Man ngag snying gi dgongs pa rgyal ba'i bka'*, in KN 1984, pp. 15-50.
- *sMin byed rig pa'i rtsal dbang*, in KN 1984, pp. 111-118.
- *gZhan don bsgrub pa'i lag len*, in KN 1984, pp. 125-127.
- *Rang byung rgyud kyi sa bcad*, in KN 1984, pp. 75-77.

²²³ As no careful comparative research has been conducted yet, it is presumed that all the texts found in KN 1984 that do not appear in the standard (Klong chen pa's) edition are additions by Rin chen gling pa. In some cases, identical texts may not have been recognized under different titles, while in others, similar titles may have been assigned to texts that were more or less heavily edited or even rewritten by Klong chen pa, or by both Rin chen gling pa and Klong *Chen Pa* based on Padma las 'brel rtsal's original core text. This would admittedly reduce the size of the original core of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* (from Padma las 'brel rtsal) to a much smaller corpus than what is generally believed.

²²⁴ Surprisingly enough, this text is clearly ascribed, in its colophon, to Padma las 'brel rtsal, but it does not seem to be found in the version I use as a reference edition for the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* (something more or less similar, however, is found in the sDe dge edition under the letter *te*).

²²⁵ This text should be carefully examined in comparison with its parallels in the "standard" *mKha' 'gro snying thig*: its colophon explicitly connects it with Rin chen gling pa, but the text has been falsified (visibly rewritten, p. 595, l. 3) in order to insert the name of Dri med 'od zer (Klong chen pa) as being the *gter ston*.

²²⁶ This text has equivalents in the "standard" *mKha' 'gro snying thig*; but its colophon explicitly connects it with Rin chen gling pa.

- *Rigs lnga mtshan du ngo sprod gdams pa*, in KN 1984, pp. 597-606.
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²²⁷ This source has not been fully exploited. It contains a large narrative framework explaining what are the various versions of the corpus, where they were hidden, and who is predestined to find them, which might well be the source of the narrative found in the *dGongs pa zang thal*.

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²²⁸ This is obviously not the most complete edition; this reference is given here only because it is this selection that is mentioned in the article.

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²²⁹ It is in fact the study of this text that was one of the starting points of the research presented in this article: indeed, without ever mentioning it, in this practice manual, *sPrul sku* Tshul lo—one of the most remarkable post-Mi pham rnying ma scholars—merges the *dGongs pa zang thal* with the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* through abundant quotes of the *Klong gsal 'bar ba nyi ma'i rgyud* (the root *tantra* of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*), all borrowed from Klong chen pa's *Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin*, the main practice manual for the *mKha' 'gro yang tig*. *sPrul sku* Tshul lo was clearly aware of the deep affinity, to say the least, of the *dGongs pa zang thal* with the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*, and this lead me to further investigate the connections between Padma las 'brel rtsal and Rig 'dzin rGod ldem.

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²³⁰ His versified *gsan yig* (from his autobiography—bdr:MW26463) has been incorporated in his biography in Karma tshe dbang kun khyab, 1998, which is the intermediary source that I have used in this article.

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Appendix

A comparative table of the two versions of the mKha' 'gro snying thig with an indication of the parallel texts in the dGongs pa zang thal

This table must be understood properly so as not to mislead the reader: while the two versions of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* (the mainstream one included in Klong chen pa's complete works and KN 1984) are integrally described, so that researchers can spot the differences easily, the third column includes only the portion of the *dGongs pa zang thal* that seems to be comparable to a greater or lesser extent to the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*.

Regarding the two versions of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*, globally, the Klong chen pa version (column 1) is richer than the Rin chen gling pa one (column 2). However, it can be observed, even before any careful philological comparison of the individual texts has been done, that the texts of column 2 in the colophons of which Rin chen gling pa appears are most often not found in column 1.

We can, as a very provisional hypothesis, assume that what is common between the two versions of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* has a good chance to be more or less the original core from Padma las 'brel rtsal, and that the additional elements are revelations either by Klong chen pa (in column 1) or by Rin chen gling pa (in column 2).

Indeed, we must not be confused by the presence of the name Padma las 'brel rtsal in some of the additional texts of column 1: obviously, Klong chen pa made use of this as a pen-name for his *mKha' 'gro snying thig*-related writings, at least when he did not want to assume openly an author's position.²³¹

Now, as for the comparison between column 2 and column 3, there are 33 texts in the latter which may be regarded (but this requires further philological research) as possible or probable borrowings from the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*. In some case the analogy is merely superficial—that of the ordering of the materials, such as starting with the *kha byang / them byang*, then a *lo rgyus*, then empowerment rituals, or ending with rituals for protective deities. But in other cases, the texts are virtually identical—and I did not spot *all* the parallels, but only those that were strongly indicated by similar titles.

Be that as it may, if we take as a basis the shorter (Rin chen gling pa) version of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* rather than the longer one

²³¹ Cf. Arguillère (2007): pp. 7, 9, 180. Now that thanks to this table of comparison of these two editions of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*, we have a rough criterion to discern what part of the corpus may come from Klong chen pa rather than from Padma las 'brel rtsal, many puzzles with the dates in the colophons, when they are not compatible with Padma las 'brel rtsal's short lifespan, might be solved easily.

(Klong chen pa), it is about half of that cycle that has become integrated in the *dGongs pa zang thal*.

However, to be fair, this half constitutes only a small (if not at all insignificant) portion of the *dGongs pa zang thal* as a whole. In the A 'dzom 'brug pa edition, it contains 107 texts, if we let aside the unconnected 5th volume of the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*; the sections from the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* that became absorbed in the *dGongs pa zang thal* would then constitute between 25 and 30% of it. The main differences may be:

- The long *tantras* that the *dGongs pa zang thal* contains (while the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* merely has six small *btags grol tantras*, the *Klong gsal*, upon which it is grounded, not being included on the collection),
- The large sections connected either to Vimalamitra or Vairocana,
- And the rather large *gcod* cycle *gSang ba rmad byung* (whether this cycle actually belongs to the *dGongs pa zang thal* or is something separate remains to be discussed, but A 'dzom 'brug pa included it in his edition).

The deepest similarity between the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* and the *dGongs pa zang thal* is certainly the way these two rDzogs chen cycles include the exact same type of tantric practices, each connected to the corresponding empowerment (*zhi khro* deities corresponding to the first empowerment and *bskyed rim*, and then a series of practices connected to Vajravārāhī and Hayagrīva corresponding to the next two empowerments and *rdzogs rim*, before reaching *khregs chod* and *thod rgal* corresponding to the 4th and 5th empowerment, in a system with five consecrations in the empowerment ritual).

The *dGongs pa zang thal* is however much more extensive regarding rDzogs chen proper and much less obviously connected to the *Klong gsal tantra*, which it barely quotes a few times in texts that may not belong to its *gter ma* core (while this *tantra* is absolutely central to the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*). The connection of *gCod* and rDzogs chen in the *gSang ba rmad byung*, which became something quite normal in the later rNying ma school (as in the very famous *Khros ma nag mo* cycle of bDud 'joms gling pa) may actually be an innovation of the *dGongs pa zang thal*.

The comparison would have been richer—but definitely more complicated—if another column had been devoted to Rin chen gling pa's *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*, which might be another variation on the same structure. But the cycle as we have it is scattered between three

partly, but not fully, redundant collections: the *Rin chen gter mdzod* selection, the contents of manuscript bdr:W2KG210268 and the selection from the *mTshams brag rnying rgyud*. It would thus first require editing efforts before any comparison with the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* and the *dGongs pa zang thal* may be conducted.

<i>KN Klong chen pa</i>	<i>KN 1984</i>	<i>dGongs pa zang thal</i>
1. <i>mKha' 'gro snying tig gi kha byang</i>	1. <i>mKha' 'gro snying tig gi kha byang</i>	1.1. ²³² <i>Them byang</i>
2. <i>rDzogs pa chen po mkha' 'gro snying tig gi bla ma brgyud pa'i lo rgyus</i>	See n. 11 below.	1.2. <i>Yid ches brgyud pa'i lo rgyus stong thun spyi chings chen mo</i>
3. <i>bTags grol stong gsal ti ka mtha' dbus bral</i>	2. <i>'Bras bu yongs rdzogs btags grol rgyud kyi ti ka</i>	
	3. <i>Man ngag snying gi dgongs pa rgyal ba'i bka'</i>	
	4. <i>Slob dpon padmas lha lcam padma gsal la lung bstan pa</i>	
	5. <i>'Bras bu yongs rdzogs dri med snying po mthar thug yang gsang (or 'Bras bu yongs rdzogs btags grol dri med snying po)</i>	
	6. <i>Rang byung rgyud kyi sa bcad</i>	
4. <i>gCig shes kun grol gyi rgyud</i>		
5. <i>Yang ti gser gyi 'bru gcig pa'i rgyud</i>	8. <i>'Bras bu yongs rdzogs yang ti gser gyi 'bru gcig</i>	
6. <i>Sras gcig sa bon gyi rgyud</i>		3.9. <i>rDzogs pa chen po'i man ngag sangs rgyas kyi dgongs pa rang chas su bstan pa'i rgyud</i>
		3.12. <i>Sangs rgyas thams cad kyi sras gcig pu'i rgyud</i>
7. <i>Rang byung rig pa'i rgyud</i>		3.11. <i>dPal kun tu bzang po'i man ngag btags</i>

²³² The two reference numbers for the *dGongs pa zang thal* should be understood as (1) the volume number (1973 edition) and (2) the rank of the text in the volume.

<i>KN Klong chen pa</i>	<i>KN 1984</i>	<i>dGongs pa zang thal</i>
8. 'Bras bu yongs rdzogs chen po'i rgyud		grol byon tshul ²³³ 3.15. Yang gsang bla ma med pa'i rdzogs pa chen po'i btags grol rgyab yig gsang ba'i gnad bkrol gnad kyi yi ge'i them yig kun mkhyen thugs rje 3.19. bTags grol gyi dbang 3.16. Rig pa gnad dgu'i btags grol shin tu zab pa 3.17. bTags grol nyams su len tshul
9. bTags grol rgyud kyi ti ka bTags grol gyi snying po'i ti ka		
10. gCig shes kun grol gyi ti ka	7. Kun grol rgyud kyi ti ka	
11. Yang ti gser gyi 'bru gcig ti ka		
12. Sras gcig sa bon gyi rgyud kyi ti ka nor bu'i phreng ba		
13. Rang byung rig pa'i rgyud kyi ti ka gsal byed dung kyi spar khab	10. Rang byung rig pa'i rgyud ti ka dung gi spar khab	
14. 'Bras bu yongs rdzogs chen po'i rgyud kyi ti ka gsal byed dri med snying po	9. Sras gcig rgyud kyi ti ka gsal byed	
19. bTags grol don khrid	16. 'Bras bu yongs rdzogs btags grol snying po	
20. bTags grol snying po'i don khrid mngon sum snying thig gi man ngag		
	11. sMin byed rig pa'i rtsal dbang	
15. mKha' 'gro snying thig gi lo rgyus		
	12. Bla ma brgyud pa'i rim pa	
	13. gZhan don bsgrub pa'i lag len	
	14. rGyud rtags bcang pa'i 'bras bu thob tshul	
	15. rGyud bcangs pas yon tan 'byung tshul	
16. Sangs rgyas kyi 'das rjes dang po	17. Sangs rgyas kyi zhal chems dang po	3.10. Sangs rgyas kyi 'das rjes dang po bar pa gsum pa
17. Sangs rgyas kyi 'das rjes gnyis pa	18. Sangs rgyas kyi 'das rjes gnyis pa	

²³³ The *bTags grol* cycle obviously has a very different structure in the *dGongs pa zang thal* compared to the two versions of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*, as if it were more concerned by practical issues than by the *tantras* which are their sources or with commenting these *tantras*. But this should be researched, as the *tantras* may in fact be grouped in another part of the corpus under different titles and include their own exegesis.

<i>KN Klong chen pa</i>	<i>KN 1984</i>	<i>dGongs pa zang thal</i>
18. <i>Sangs rgyas kyi 'das rjes gsum pa</i>	19. <i>Sangs rgyas kyi 'das rjes gsum pa</i>	
21. <i>bDe gshegs rigs lnga'i phyi sgrub</i>	20. <i>bDe gshegs rigs lnga'i phyi bsgrub</i>	1.14.a. <i>Rigs lnga'i phyi sgrub</i>
22. <i>Rigs lnga nang gi sgrub pa</i>	21. <i>Rigs lnga nang bsgrub</i>	1.14.b. <i>Rigs lnga'i nang sgrub dngos grub rgya mtsho</i>
	22. <i>dBang gi cho ga'i rim pa</i>	1.7. <i>Zab mo dbang lnga'i dbye ba</i>
23. <i>sMin byed don gsal sgron me zhes bya ba spros bcas bum pa'i dbang</i>		1.8. <i>sPros bcas bum pa'i dbang</i>
	23. <i>rGyud pa'i gsol 'debs</i>	1.13. <i>rGyud pa'i gsol 'debs</i>
24. <i>dBang khrid nor bu sgron gsal bzhugs pa lags so gsang dbang</i>	24. <i>gSang dbang bskur ba'i rim pa</i>	1.9. <i>sPros med gsang ba'i dbang</i>
25. <i>Shes rab ye shes kyi dbang</i>	25. <i>Shes rab ye shes kyi dbang</i>	1.10. <i>Shin tu spros med shes rab ye shes dbang</i>
26. <i>Tshig dbang rin po che</i>		1.11. <i>Rab tu spros med de kho na nyid kyi dbang</i>
27. <i>gSang dbang lus kyi ngo sprod</i>		
28. <i>Shes rab yum gyi mkha' ngo sprod</i>		
29. <i>dBang gi rgyab yig</i>		
30. <i>dBang gong ma gsum gyi sa ma 'grel— dang po gsang dbang gi sa ma 'grel</i>	26. <i>gSang dbang gnad kyi sa ma 'grel</i>	
31. <i>Shes rab ye shes kyi sa ma 'grel</i>	27. <i>Shes rab ye shes kyi sa ma 'brel</i>	
32. <i>Tshig dbang gi sa ma 'grel</i>		
	28. <i>Khyad par gyi rig pa'i rtsal dbang gi gnad</i>	
33. <i>bDe gshegs rigs lnga'i mchod 'bul</i>	29. <i>bDe gshegs rigs lnga'i mchod 'bul</i>	1.16. <i>rGyal ba rigs lnga'i mchod 'bul</i>
34. <i>Rigs lnga'i gtor ma'i lags len</i>	34. <i>Rigs lnga'i gtor ma bkod pa</i>	
35. <i>Rigs lnga'i tshogs mchod</i>	33. <i>Rigs lnga'i tshogs mchod</i>	1.17. <i>Rigs lnga'i tshogs mchod</i>
36. <i>mKha' 'gro'i las byang tshogs mchod rtsar phreng</i>	30. <i>mKha' 'gro'i las byang tshogs mchod kyi rim pa</i>	1.18. <i>Yang gsang bla na med pa rdzogs pa chen po'i mkha' 'gro'i las byang mchod phreng</i>

<i>KN Klong chen pa</i>	<i>KN 1984</i>	<i>dGongs pa zang thal</i>
37. <i>dBang sgrub dang bum pa sgrub thabs</i>	31. <i>Bum bsgrub</i>	
38. <i>dKyil 'khor rnam dag</i>	32. <i>dKyil 'khor rnam dag</i>	
39. <i>sNying thig gsang ba bla med kyi dbang don gsal ba'i rgyab yig gsang ba + texte complémentaire sans titre</i>		
40. <i>dBang bzhi'i go rim tho yig</i>		
41. <i>dBang gi rim pa khrid du bskur lugs</i>		
42. <i>rTsal dbang ti ka rig pa'i sgron ma</i>		
43. <i>Thod rgal khyad par dbang lnga</i>		
44. <i>Ngo 'phrod nas spro ba bskyed pa'i chos bshad</i>		
45. <i>Pra khrid chos thun khrid kyi zhag grangs</i>		
46. <i>Ḍākki'i gtor ma'i rim pa</i>		
47. <i>Ḍākki'i tshogs mchod</i>	35. <i>Ḍākki'i tshogs mchod</i>	
	36. <i>mKha' 'gro snying thig gi gsol 'debs²³⁴</i>	
48. <i>dBang gi rgyab yig</i>		
49. <i>dBang gi tho yig</i>		
50. <i>mKha' 'gro snying thig gsang dbang gi lhan thabs</i>		
	37. <i>Chags chen lam du 'jug pa'i dbang gi rim pa</i>	
	38. <i>Ḍākki thod rgal du bsgrub pa</i>	
51. <i>Ḍākki'i dus gnad gnad 'debs shis spyi gnad bla rdo</i>	39. <i>mKha' 'gro snying thig las : Ḍākki'i gnad kyi gdams pa dus gnad dang bcas pa</i>	1.14.i. <i>Ḍā ki'i dus gnad 'bebs shis spyi gnad bla rdo</i>
52. <i>mKha' 'gro ma'i nor</i>	40. <i>Ḍākki'i nor</i>	1.14.h. <i>mKha' 'gro gsang</i>

²³⁴ This text clearly does not belong to the original corpus of KN 1984, as it exhibits completely different features—a “longchenpist” Bhutanese lineage extending to the 17th century—whereas the bulk of the other texts show a strong presence of Rin chen gling pa and nothing later than the 14th century.

<i>KN Klong chen pa</i>	<i>KN 1984</i>	<i>dGongs pa zang thal</i>	
<i>sgrub gter gyi bum pa</i>	<i>bsgrub gter bum</i>	<i>sgrub dngos grub gter gyi bum pa (mkha' 'gro ma'i nor sgrub rin chen gter gyi bum pa)</i>	
53. <i>Thod rgal gyi don khrid nor bu'i snying po</i>	41. <i>Thod rgal lam gyi don khrid nor bu</i>		
	42. <i>Khrid yig nor bu'i phreng ba</i>		
54. <i>sNying po gsal ba'i me long zhes bya ba'i khrid, or mKha' 'gro snying thig gsal ba'i yang bcud – gter ma of Dri med 'od zer</i>			
55. <i>Khrid rgyab lung gi phreng ba</i>	43. <i>Khrid rgyab lung gi phreng ba</i>		
56. <i>Lag khrid gnad kyī man ngag pra khrid du bstan pa</i>			
57. <i>rTags yig tshad yig</i>	44. <i>rTags tshad kyī yi ge</i>		
58. <i>Tshad kyī yi ge</i>			3.30. <i>rDzogs pa chen po'i tshad kyī yi ge</i>
59. <i>sNying thig chen mo'i rgyab chos kyī rtsa ba</i>			
60. <i>sNying thig gsang ba'i yang bcud snying po gsal ba'i me long</i>	45. <i>mKha' 'gro snying thig chen mo don gsal me long</i>		
	46. <i>sNying po gsal ba zhes bya ba'i khrid gzhung don gsal me long</i>		
	47. <i>Rigs lnga mtshan du ngo sprod gdams pa</i>		
	48. <i>rNal 'byor bzhi'i gdams pa</i>		
61. <i>rNal 'byor bzhi las lta ba'i rnal 'byor</i>			
62. <i>rNal 'byor bzhi las sgom pa'i rnal 'byor</i>			
63. <i>rNal 'byor bzhi las spyod pa'i rnal 'byor dang 'bras bu'i rnal 'byor gnyis</i>			
64. <i>Zhus len bdud rtsi gser phreng</i>	49. <i>Zhus len bdud rtsi gser phreng</i> ²³⁵		
65. <i>mKha' 'gro snying gi ti ka las zhal gdams gsang</i>			

²³⁵ Although this text is present in the “standard” edition, in KN 1984, it has a colophon by Rin chen gling pa.

<i>KN Klong chen pa</i>	<i>KN 1984</i>	<i>dGongs pa zang thal</i>
<i>ba'i dum bu</i>		
66. <i>gNad kyi gdams pa lnga pa</i>		
67. <i>Ḍākki'i lam 'bras kyi skor</i>		
68. <i>mKha' 'gro snying tig lag 'grig</i>		
69. <i>Ḍākki gnad thig</i>		
70. <i>rDo rje chu 'thung ba</i>		
71. <i>Zhi ba bar do lam gyi mtshan nyid</i>	51. <i>Bar do las kyi mtshan nyid zhi ba'i bar do</i>	
72. <i>Khro bo bar do gnad kyi sgron ma</i>	53. <i>Khro bo'i bar do'i gdams pa</i>	
73. <i>Bar do'i gdams pa 'byung ba 'dus pa 'bral ba rtsags kyi rim pa</i>	52. <i>Bar do'i zhal gdams</i>	3.34. <i>Bar do 'od gsal sgron ma</i>
74. <i>'Chi ka bar do'i gsal 'debs bar do gnad dum</i>	54. <i>Bar do'i zhal gdams gnad kyi dum bu</i>	
75. <i>Chos nyid bar do'i yon tan</i>		
76. <i>Bar do ngo sprod bzhugs pa'i dbu</i>		
77. <i>'Od gsal</i>	59. <i>'Od gsal</i>	
78. <i>mKha' 'gro'i gtum mo khyad par can</i>	55. <i>mKha' 'gro ma'i gtum mo</i>	
79. <i>'Byung ba rdo'i bcud len</i>	56. <i>rDo'i bcud len man ngag</i>	4.8. <i>bcud len khyad par can bdud rtsi'i phreng ba</i> ²³⁶
	57. <i>'Chi med tshe'i bsrub pa</i>	4.7. <i>Bi ma la'i tshe khrid zab mo bla ma'i zhal lung</i>
80. <i>Dhākki snying tig gi bka' srung dpal srog sgrub</i>	²³⁷	4.15. <i>rDzogs chen dgongs pa zang thal gyi</i>

²³⁶ In this case as in many others, the texts of the *dGongs pa zang thal* are set aside of those of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* only because the topic and the general structure are similar, although the content is clearly different: the *bcud len* practice in the *dGongs pa zang thal* is based on water, not stones.

²³⁷ It is a very unusual feature of KN 1984 that the cycle as it stands contains no ritual for the guardian deities. A detail in the vision of Padma las 'brel rtsal that Rin chen gling pa had in 1321 (?) may however give us a clue as to how this was understood in the original *mKha' 'gro snying thig* system: Indeed, Padma las 'brel rtsal speaks in the vision of the "peaceful *mKha' 'gro snying thig*" and the "wrathful *gNod sbyin dmar nag*," which I take to be the Rahula system known as *gZa' rgyud* in the Byang gter context (vol. 28 & 29 of the *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*). This would require further research.

<i>KN Klong chen pa</i>	<i>KN 1984</i>	<i>dGongs pa zang thal</i>
<i>nag mo'i srog len spu gri or gSod byed lha mo'i srog sgrub nag mo'i rgyud</i>		<i>bka' srung mchod pa'i phrin las kyi rim pa</i>
81. <i>Srog sgrub nag mo'i sgrub thabs</i>		
82. <i>'Gyu dus thun drug</i>		
83. <i>'Gyu dus thun drug</i>		
84. <i>bKa' srung srog sgrub nag mo'i srog dbang</i>		
85. <i>sNying tig bla ma'i rnal 'byor</i> ²³⁸		2.16. <i>Bla ma'i sgrub thabs</i>
86. <i>Bla ma'i rnal 'byor phyi nang gsang gsum.</i>		
87. <i>Khregs chod ngo sprod mtha' grol klong yangs</i>	50. <i>Khregs chod kyi ngo sprod mtha' bral klong yangs</i>	
88. <i>rTsal dbang</i>		
89. <i>rGyud kyi bcangs thabs</i>		
90. <i>gZhan don</i> ²³⁹		
91. <i>rTags bstan</i>		
92. <i>Yon tan 'byung tshul</i>		
93. <i>Che ba bstan pa</i>		
94. <i>rTa mgrin yab yum lus dkyil</i>	58. <i>rTa mgrin yab yum lus dkyil</i>	1.14.e. <i>rTa mgrin lus dkyil dbang rnam gsum gyi bdag bskyed</i>
95. <i>Ḍakki rkyang sgrub bzhugs pa lags pas gzigs mdzod</i>		1.14.f. <i>Ḍā ki'i mngon rtogs yid bzhin nor bu</i>
96. <i>mKha' 'gro sngags kyi lde mig</i>		1.14.g. <i>Ḍā ki'i sngags kyi lde mig</i>
97. <i>sNying thig gi bdud rts'i phyag mchod</i>		
98. <i>Ḍakki dril sgrub gsang ba snying gi dum bu</i>		
95. <i>Thig le dwangs snyigs 'byed pa dang Rigs rgyud gzhag thabs lag len</i>		
95. <i>gZhan don sprul sku gzhag thabs</i> ²⁴⁰		

²³⁸ This text is remarkable, although its study would take us far from Rin chen gling pa, for it is a witness to another lineage which goes after Padma las 'brel rtsal: Rang byung rdo rje (Karmapa III); Legs ldan pa; Śākya gzhon nu; g.Yung ston pa; Rol pa'i rdo rje (Karmapa IV), etc. The same applies, with some variations, to the next text.

²³⁹ To be compared to n.12 of KN 1984.

²⁴⁰ To be compared to n.12 of KN 1984.

<i>KN Klong chen pa</i>	<i>KN 1984</i>	<i>dGongs pa zang thal</i>
96. <i>Bar do'i ngo sprod</i>		
97. <i>mNgon sum ngo sprod</i>		
98. <i>Bar do'i mtshan nyid bshad pa dang skye gnas rnams kyi bstan pa</i>		
99. <i>bTags grol phran drug gi ti ka</i>		3.14. <i>bTags grol rgyud drug dus gnad zhal chems</i>
100. <i>bTags grol bcangs thabs</i>		
101. <i>Lo rgyus</i>		
102. <i>rDzas</i>		
103. <i>Dākki'i lus dkyil chen mo</i>		
104. <i>Padma las 'brel rtsal gyi skyes rabs dang lung bstan</i>		
105. <i>gter gyi kha byang</i>		
106. <i>rGyal sras legs pa'i lung bstan</i>		
107. <i>'Pho ba</i>		
108. <i>gTer srung ldang ba'i sgrub thabs</i>		

